

BRITISH PHILATELIC

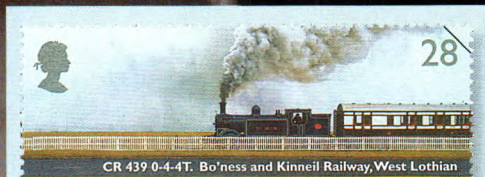
The ROYAL MAIL magazine for stamp collectors

Volume 41 Number 4

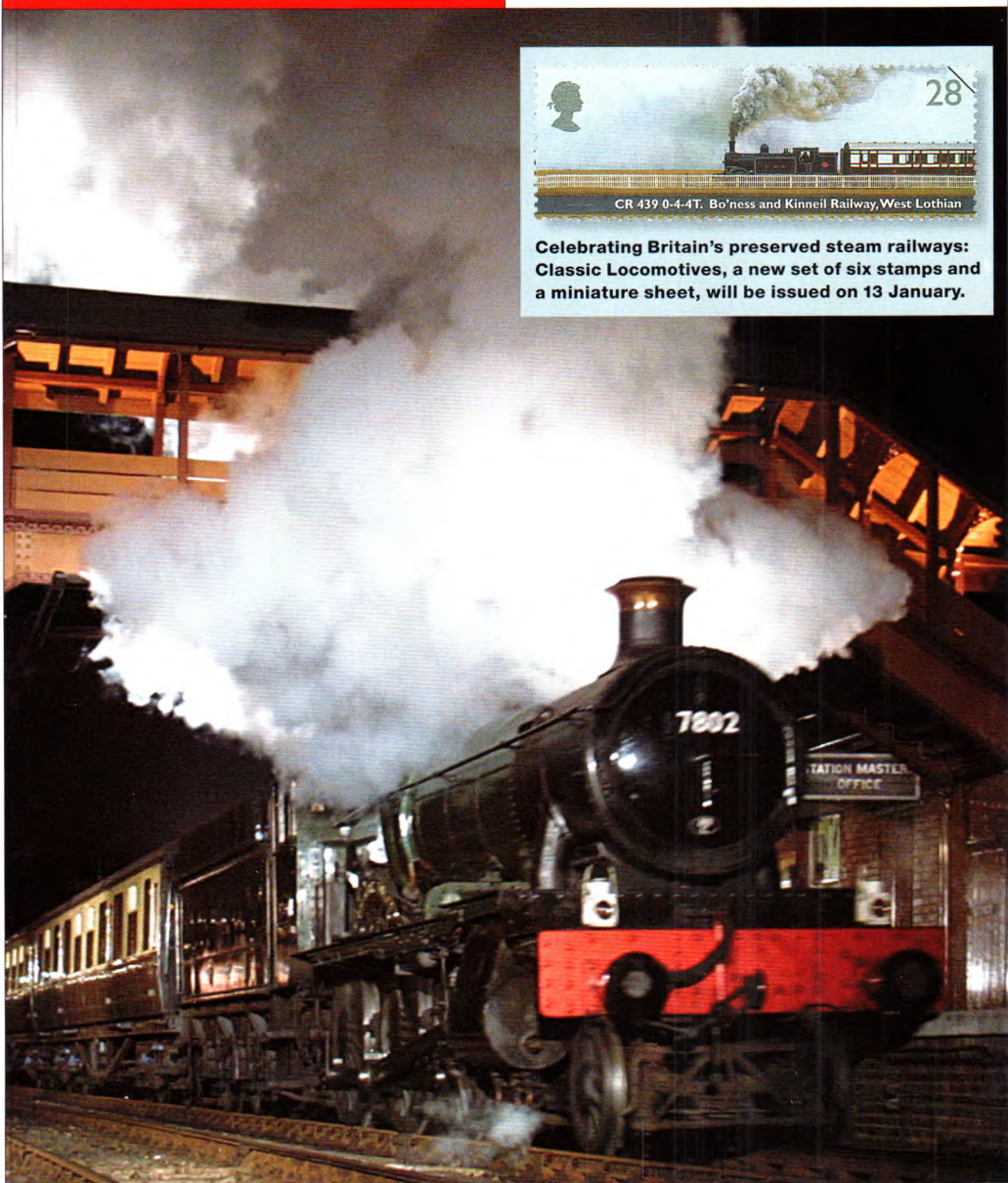
DECEMBER 2003 £1.10

Bulletin

Cast your vote in our stamp poll • Christmas worldwide



Celebrating Britain's preserved steam railways: Classic Locomotives, a new set of six stamps and a miniature sheet, will be issued on 13 January.



Forthcoming issues and withdrawals



Cover Night on the Severn Valley Railway, one of the six preserved railways featured in the Classic Locomotives issue previewed this month. Cover photograph (and p111 & 114-115) by John Wildgoose.

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

4 December	Withdrawal Wilding 1 miniature sheet (presentation pack already sold out).
6 January	Issue Classic Locomotives stamp cards.
13 January	Issue Classic Locomotives stamps, miniature sheet, presentation pack and coin cover.
13 January	Withdrawal Birds of Prey stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards.
20 January	Withdrawal Flowers Smilers sheet.
21 January	Withdrawal Coils of 500 2nd class definitives (issued 29 April 1997).
27 January	Issue Occasions 2004 stamp cards and Postboxes ingot cover No 5.

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The **British Philatelic Bulletin** is published monthly by Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ • **Editor** J R Holman • **Price** £1.10 single copies from Post Office Limited philatelic outlets • **Annual subscription** £11.75 in UK and Europe; £16.75 rest of the world. Subscriptions should be sent to Royal Mail Talents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB • **Binders** to hold 24 issues, price £7, are available by post from Royal Mail (Edinburgh address above) • Royal Mail also publishes the fortnightly *British Postmark Bulletin*, which gives details of forthcoming special handstamps. Available on annual subscription from Edinburgh address above: £12.25 UK and Europe, £24.95 rest of the world • **Copyright** Design & text Royal Mail Group plc, unless attributed to a specific author. All requests to reproduce any article should be addressed to the Editor, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ • **Design** Robert Maude • **Printed** in Great Britain by Perivan White Dove • **ISSN** 0953 8119 • Royal Mail is a trading name of Royal Mail Group plc. Registered in England and Wales, no 4138203, registered office 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ

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2002 Bulletin writers

Cliff Garside July, October

Peter Johnson August

James Mackay July

Dorothy Martin January,
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Glenn Morgan March, June

Douglas Myall February, April,
June, July, August, October,
December

Ron Negus each month

Colin Peachey November

Martin Robinson April

Manpreet Singh October

Don Staddon October

Robert Webber August

Richard West each month

ONCE AGAIN we invite you to vote for your favourite stamps and *Bulletin* writer of the year. The special stamps issued during 2003 are shown on pages 116-117. Tell us your top three sets and favourite individual stamp on the enclosed voting form. All forms will be entered in a prize draw: the first four 'out of the hat' will each win £50. Remember to return your voting form by 16 January. The favourite set of 2002 was London Bridges, with the 1st class Tower Bridge stamp from that set the most popular individual design.

We also invite you to vote (on the same form) for your favourite *Bulletin* writer – listed here, with the months their articles were published. All voting forms go into a second draw for two £50 prizes. The favourite author will receive £100 and the runner-up £50. Last year's winner was Douglas Myall, with Dorothy Martin second. Please note that articles by Royal Mail staff are excluded.

Details are given this month of the first special issue for 2004 – on the popular theme of steam locomotives. We also have our now customary article on Christmas stamps by Dorothy Martin, Douglas Myall's Mainly Machins, and Richard West interviews another leading Machin collector, Tony Walker. Mr Walker is also a member of Royal Mail's Stamp Advisory Committee.

On behalf of Royal Mail I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year. JOHN HOLMAN •

Stamp scene The Tapling collection • Isle of Man issue • Literature • Auction news

British Library enquiries

Philatelic Collections, British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB. Telephone 020 7412 7635. Fax 020 7412 7780. E-mail philatelic@bl.uk or visit website www.bl.uk/collections/philatelic.html

Centenary of Tapling collection The Tapling collection – conservatively valued at £10 million – is one of the treasures of the British Library's Philatelic Collections, containing many rare and unique stamps. It is a world collection covering the first 50 years of the postage stamp. It was the starting point of the Library's philatelic collections, now numbering over eight million items and considered among the world's most important. Tapling bequeathed his collection to the nation when he died in 1891, and it first went on show on 5 October 1903.

Arranged on 4500 sheets, the Tapling Collection is unrivalled, being the only major collection formed during the 19th century which is still intact, and contains more of the greatest and rare items than any other collection. The collection was also the first to be displayed in vertical slides, which kept the stamps in the dark when not being viewed, a method of display adopted across the world.

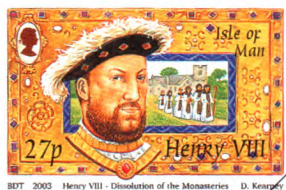
Rarities in the collection include Hawaii 1851-52 2 cents to 13 cents (both types), Mauritius 1847 1d and 2d 'Post Office' issue, Spain 1851 2 reales error of colour, Western Australia 1854-55 4d blue error inverted frame,

GB 1858-79 1d red, plate 77, and USA 1869 24 cents deep purple and green, error centre inverted.

Thomas Tapling was a wealthy Victorian businessman, running the family carpet making business along with his duties as an MP from 1886-1891. Tapling began collecting stamps aged 10, and his wealth ensured that his collecting could continue on a grand scale. He acquired the Image and Caillebotte Collections in 1882 and 1887, and became Vice-President of the (Royal) Philatelic Society in 1881.

Because of its size, the Library displays half of the Tapling Collection at any one time, and currently the countries lettered M to Z are on show, amounting to 2400 pages in 600 faces of sliding frames. The Library's philatelic exhibition also includes other collections: Mosely (British Africa to 1935), Bojanowicz (Polish Postal History 1939-46), Chand (Mauritius classic stamps and postal history), and Langmead (GB and Ireland Telegraph Stamps), totalling 3600 pages in 400 faces of sliding frames.

Some of the highlights of the Philatelic Collections are on display to the public seven days a week with free admission; the rest can be seen by appointment •



Tudor stamps from Isle of Man The Isle of Man Post Office issued six stamps on 15 September to mark the 400th anniversary of the end of Tudor rule. Elizabeth I died in March 1603 and, being childless, the English crown passed to James VI of Scotland, who became James I of England. The stamps, designed by David Kearney, feature Henry VII, Henry VIII (2 stamps), Mary, and Elizabeth I (2 stamps) but not Edward VI. The portraits of the monarchs are accompanied by scenes or symbols from their reigns •

Methodist Philatelic Society The Society was founded in 1970 to identify and study postage stamps, postmarks, postal covers and envelopes from around the world associated with Methodism and the Methodist Church's contribution to ecumenical activities. The Society provides the means for members around the world to keep others informed about new issues of stamps as well as the background to historical material going back to the beginnings of Methodism in the 18th century. The Society's quarterly newsletter records commemorative covers with appropriate cancellations, and many such covers are made available to Society members. There have been some very interesting articles illustrating, through philatelic material, hymns used in Methodist worship •

Isle of Man Tudor stamps

Stamps and a presentation pack are available from the Isle of Man Philatelic Bureau, PO Box 10M, Douglas, Isle of Man IM99 1PB. Telephone 01624 698430. Website www.iompost.com

Methodist Philatelic Society

The annual UK subscription is £8; for full details send SAE to the Membership Secretary: T M Smart, 11 Northwood Park, Woodlesford, Leeds LS26 8PE.

Stanley Gibbons catalogue

Available from stamp dealers and bookshops, the Gibbons shop at 399 Strand, London WC2 or by post from Stanley Gibbons Ltd, Parkside, Ringwood BH24 3SH. Mail Order Freephone 0800 611622.

Price £44.95, + postage: UK £3.50, Europe £8, rest of the world £12.

Literature The 2004 edition of the Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue – *Commonwealth & British Empire Stamps 1840-1952* (formerly Part 1) is now available. The main innovation is the introduction of colour illustrations for many stamps. This is welcome, although the quality of some images is better than others. Hopefully the less good ones can be improved in future editions. Following the positive response to the 'Defining Fine' articles in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* (February - April 2003), a much more detailed explanation of the condition criteria upon which the catalogue's prices are based has been added to the 'Information and Guidelines' section. There are useful illustrations of superb, very fine, fine, average, and poor in relation to margins on imperf stamps, gum (mounted mint stamps), centring, and cancellations. However to this reviewer, the stamp illustrated for the imperf stamps as a poor example looks as good, if not slightly better, than the one described as average. In his Preface the new Catalogue Editor, Hugh Jeffries, lists the main revisions in this new edition, following research on issues of Queensland, Australia, Barbados, Bermuda, Ceylon, Leeward Islands, Straits Settlements, Malta, Nyasaland, Ascension, Hong Kong, Cook Islands, St Helena, and Natal. He expresses his appreciation of the work of his predecessor, David Aggersberg, and of the catalogues' Production Manager, David Hardy, who sadly died in April. Both contributed to the high quality of the catalogues. There seem few changes to the prices of GB stamps since the *Concise* catalogue was published in April; however the 1948 Silver Wedding £1 is up £2 mint and used to £40 •



The 2004 edition of *Collecting British First Day Covers* lists all FDCs from the Uniform 4d Post (December 1839) to the Pub Signs stamps of August this year. All FDC and postmark types are listed in an easy-to-follow format with prices for special handstamps given in a two-column structure for ordinary (or commercial) and official (sponsored) covers. The collector will also find detailed listings of relevant CDs and slogan postmarks on FDCs. Definitive FDCs are listed in a separate section with sub-sections covering commemorative labels, prestige stamp books, regionals, booklets and varieties (changes to perfs, papers, phosphors, etc). As always the well-written General Notes section and the illustrations (albeit small) of special handstamps for each issue make this a most useful work of reference even for collectors not so concerned with the valuation of their covers. Price £12.50 (postage £1.95) from stamp shops or by post from the publisher, A G Bradbury, 3 Link Road, Leicester LE2 3RA, telephone 0116 270 5367 •

GB Philatelic Society Annual subscription is £25 UK, £27 Europe and worldwide surface mail, £33 worldwide airmail. For more information write to the Membership Secretary: Debbie Harman, Greylands, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1QE.

The September/October issue of *The GB Journal* (GB Philatelic Society) includes articles on covers bearing the Victorian 10d embossed, flexography printing relating to Wilding booklet panes of four, the size of a ream of paper, the end of the Maltese Cross obliterator, a new pin flaw on the Edward VII 1d, covers with 'L4' late fee marks, and a study of the 1844 1d red-brown, Plate 49, corner letters TF. There are the usual book reviews and advertisements from leading dealers in GB stamps and postal history. The accompanying Newsletter has notes and features on Shades, 1880-1912; Perforation Types on Later QV Controls; 85th Philatelic Congress at Gateshead; Second World War censorship; Glasgow Postal History; Home

District postmarks; Pre-Decimal Machin papers; and much else. Details are also given of GBPS activities and personalities. During 2004 the Society will meet at the British Philatelic Centre on 17 January, 13 March, 17 April, and 15 May, with a meeting at Spring Stampex on 28 February. Displays will cover Telegraph stamps and forms, George VI high values, aerophilately, and Victorian and Elizabeth II issues •

Auction news Spink's 'World' auction on 24 September included some fine GB material. A mounted unplated, complete sheet reconstruction of 240 stamps, all with red Maltese Cross cancels made £8500 (estimate £10-12,000), and a left margin block of 24 1858-79 2d blue realised £1800 (£1200-1500). Another block of eight 2d blues with left sheet margin inscription ('In wetting the back be careful not to remove the cement') went for £550 (est £450-500). A fine selection of 13 covers and cards bearing George V stamps, including first day of the 1924 Empire Exhibition stamps and 1934-36 4d and 9d on Express Delivery FDC, made £850 (£700-800). An unusual cover bearing Edward VII stamps (15 values from ½d to 5s) cancelled with the High Holborn cds (31 March 1930) went for £210 (est £300-400).

The 'Grant' Collection of GB stamps and covers auctioned on 25 September included 1840 Parliamentary envelopes (Houses of Parliament and House of Commons) which made £1200 each (estimates £800-£1000 and £600-700). A die proof of the 1d black with 'OLD ORIGINAL' inscription below made £4000 (£1800-2000), and a colourful illustrated cover of 1902 showing Paul Kruger and Transvaal Arms pub sign with Edward VII 1d stamp cancelled by Army Post Office postmark realised £320 (£250-300). The top price – £17,000 (est £15-18,000) – was paid for an Edward VII ½d pale bluish green with watermark sideways (SG 270b). This is believed to be the only example in private hands, the adjoining stamp is now in the Royal Collection. Some £7500 (£4500-5500) was paid for an Edward VII 6d IR OFFICIAL – another of the great rarities of British philately. However not all items in the sale were of such rarity; realisations began at £28. The 'Grant' collection was formed over a 25 year period and total realisations amounted to £448,297 •

Bonham's 12 September auction included some fine GB material. An important collection of personal possessions and memorabilia relating to Sir Rowland Hill went for £17,000 (est £10-12,000). It included a rosewood travelling dressing-case, silver watch with enamel Roman dial, books from his library, letters, photographs, etc. An imperf 2d blue (white lines) in violet-blue on thick lavender tinted paper realised £5200 (£4800-£5000), and a block of six George V 6d with corner folded over resulting in top left hand stamp having large blank section and King's head missing went for £290 (£250-300). A 1935 Jubilee 2d essay with hand-painted border around a three-quarter printed portrait of George V (ex Shaida collection) made £800 (£1000-£1500), and a cylinder block of six (1 no dot) of the 3d Machin missing phosphor achieved £460 (£450-500). A rare cylinder block of 15 of the 5d stamp on phosphor coated paper and two

Spink 69 Southampton Row,
London WC1B 4ET. Telephone
020 7563 4000. Website www.spink.com

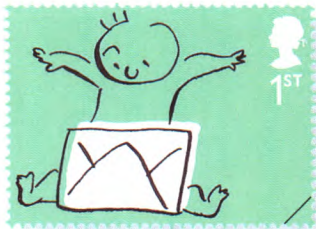
Bonhams 101 New Bond
Street, London W1S 1SR.
Telephone 020 7629 6602.
Website www.bonhams.com

Cavendish Philatelic Auctions
153-7 London Rd, Derby DE1
2SY. Telephone 01332 250970

phosphor bands went for £2700 (£2800-3000) and a specialised collection of £sd Machin coil stamps realised £980 (£1000-1100). A 5d 1969 Ships stamp with black omitted (Queen's head, value, hull, and inscription) made £480 (£200-250) •

Cavendish's 26 September auction included two very rare 1840 Houses of Parliament envelopes – a 1d used on the first day (16 January), and 2d used 21(?) February. They realised £2600 and £1000 respectively (ests £750 and £850). A Charles Whiting essay for a replacement for the Mulready – the 'Harwoods envelopes' wrapper – with bicoloured and embossed stamp essays, c August 1840 achieved £2300 (£850). A pane of 20 Edward VII 9d (SG 251) made £1600 (£1200) and a 1903 10d Office of Works official (SG 040, cat £2400) went for £1200 (£800). A three volume collection of Postage Due covers 1884-1984 (approx 170 items) realised £550 (£400). Among modern errors was a pair of 1962 3d NPV stamps, one with Queen's head completely missing, one partially missing – this went for £140 (£200), and a vertical pair of 1965 4d Churchill stamps with his head partially missing on the lower stamp realised £150 (£240). A large carton of decimal stamp books (face value £1151) went for £850 (£1000), and a block of four 1968 2d Postage Due with PVA gum (RPS certificate) achieved its estimate of £2000 •

Royal Mail news Future issues • Yearbook and Pack • Rowland Hill Awards • Smilers



Proofs of the forthcoming Occasions and Lord of the Rings issues.

Forthcoming special issues The 2004 programme starts on 13 January with an issue of six stamps and a miniature sheet entitled 'Classic Locomotives'. The stamps are previewed in this *Bulletin*. Some of the Classic Locomotive stamps will also feature, along with 'The Station' Pub Signs stamp, Machin definitives, and Scottish country stamps, in a Railways prestige stamp book to be issued on 16 March. Entitled *Letters by Night*, this will pay tribute to the Travelling Post Office service, which is scheduled to end in January after 166 years. The book will be printed by De La Rue.

There will be two issues in February – the now annual Occasions set and a set of drawings by J R R Tolkien, to mark the 50th anniversary of the publication of the first two parts of *The Lord of the Rings*.

The Occasions issue (3 February) comprises five 1st class stamps printed in a horizontal strip. Designed by Satoshi Kambayashi, they feature 'playful envelopes' with aeroplane, kiss, baby, postman, and duck. The Lord of the Rings issue (26 February) comprises a block of 10 1st class stamps. They reproduce drawings by Tolkien: map from *The Lord of the Rings* (redrawn by his son, Christopher), The Forest of Lothlórien (in spring), *The Fellowship of the Ring* (dust-jacket), Rivendell, The Hall at Bag End (residence of Bilbo Baggins), Orthanc, Doors of Durin, Barad-dûr, Minas Tirith, and Fangorn Forest. The drawings were sourced from the Bodleian Library, Oxford and are rarely reproduced. The images all relate to places and characters featured in *The Lord of the Rings*, although some are more commonly associated with *The Hobbit*. Both Occasions and Tolkien sets will be previewed in next month's *Bulletin*.

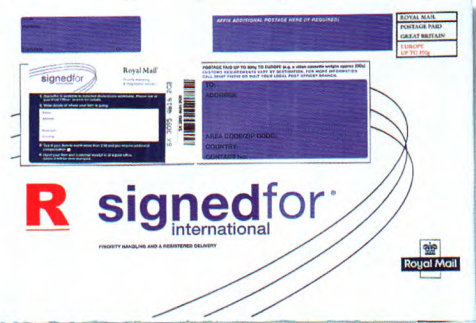
The British Journey series, which started with the Scotland issue this July, continues on 16 March with Northern Ireland and Wales on 15 June. The issue for London, originally announced for July, has been postponed.

A set featuring Ocean Liners, including the new *Queen Mary 2*, will be issued on 13 April, continuing the Transport theme issues of recent years. A further set will be issued on 6 April to mark the centenary of the Entente Cordiale; this will be a joint issue with La Poste, the French Post Office.

The bicentenary of the Royal Horticultural Society will be commemorated by six stamps, a miniature sheet and a prestige book to be issued on 25 May. Other anniversaries being commemorated are the 250th of the Royal Society of Arts (10 August) and the centenary of the Crimean War (12 October). The flora and fauna theme is continued with a Woodland Animals set on 16 September. The annual Christmas issue will go on sale on 2 November •

2003 Yearbook and Yearpack The new Yearbook, now on sale, contains information and spaces for all special issues of 2003: Birds of Prey; Occasions; Secret of Life; Fun, Fruit & Veg; Extreme Endeavours; Coronation Anniversary; Prince William; British Journey – Scotland; Pub Signs; Transports of Delight; British Museum; and Christmas. As always the book gives interesting background stories to each issue, with details of the designers. Price £33.95 standard version (order code AY077) or £75 de luxe leather-bound edition (AY078). The latter is available only from Royal Mail Talents House. The 2003 Yearpack containing the same special stamps costs £29.50 (AR055) •

Postal stationery Illustrated at right is one of the new International Signed For prepaid envelopes which went on sale at main Post Office branches on 9 October. This envelope is for use to European destinations; a similar envelope is available for destinations outside Europe (Worldwide). Both are prepaid to 300g and sell at £5.49 and £6.49 respectively •



Delivery address	Regular orders	One-off orders	Bulky items
UK	£0.30	£1.30	£ 2.95
Europe	£0.55	£1.55	£ 5.99
Other	£1.15	£2.15	£14.00

New Tallents House handling charges For orders despatched after 1 January 2004, Royal Mail Tallents House will be increasing the charges for the handling and despatch of items so they more closely reflect the cost of fulfilment. The new prices are shown at left. If you are a Tallents House customer, you will be receiving a letter with your regular communications explaining these costs further. However, if you would like to know any more about the new prices please contact the enquiry line on 08457 641 641 •

Awards enquiries should be sent to Rachel Lonsdale, Stamps & Collectibles, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ. Telephone 020 7250 2267.

Rowland Hill Awards Last month's *Bulletin* included a form for readers to nominate in both the Royal Mail Innovation and British Philatelic Trust sections of the Rowland Hill Awards. The nominations will then be short-listed for final judging. The awards for 2003 will be made at a ceremony in London next Spring. Forms should be returned by 31 December to Rachel Lonsdale at the addresses given on the reverse of the form. All forms will go into a draw for £100 worth of Royal Mail philatelic products •

Smilers sheets Readers are reminded that generic Christmas Smilers sheets are now on sale, containing 20 1st class 2003 Christmas stamps (£6.15) or 20 2nd class stamps (£4.20). The labels alongside the stamps feature winter animals (1st class) and ice sculptures (2nd). Also available is a sheet of 20 of the 1st class 2001 Christmas stamp showing robins (£6.15); the labels alongside the stamps depict a story of Father Christmas, a snowman, and robins. The stamps in these Smilers sheets are all printed by lithography, whereas stamps from other sources are printed in gravure. The next issue of a Smilers sheet will be for the Occasions stamps on 3 February 2004.

For details of how to order customised versions of the sheets, with your own image printed on the labels phone 0845 074 2000 (UK customers) or +44 131 316 7489 (overseas). At the Smilers website (www.royalmail.com/smilers), orders can also be placed using digital photos. Customised sheets will also be available through Snap Digital photobooths at selected Post Office branches and Safeway stores •

Posting dates for Christmas Readers are reminded that the recommended last posting dates for airmail letters are: outside Europe (except Canada, USA and Japan) 8 December; Eastern Europe and Canada, USA and Japan 12 December; and Western Europe 15 December. Final posting dates for UK mail are 18 December 2nd class and 20 December 1st class •

Pub Signs stamps Royal Mail conducts surveys with the general public on awareness of its special stamps. Some 2179 adults across the country were asked about the Pub Signs stamps on 22-28 August. Some 13% were aware of these stamps and 21% expressed an interest in the subject as a stamp theme. 64% thought the subject suitable for a stamp issue and 76% found the designs attractive. Of those who identified themselves as stamp collectors, the relevant percentages were 38 (awareness), 40 (interest in subject), 85 (appropriate for stamps) and 90 (attractiveness) •

Christmas around the world Part 1, by Dorothy M Martin

CHRISTMAS IS CELEBRATED all over the world. It is a time of feasting and fun, of gaiety and generosity; a time when children are given priority and every attention. These features are common everywhere. During this festive season, certain dates have significant meanings due to ancient traditions – for example, 6 December being St Nicholas' Day, people from many countries exchange presents on that day instead of on Christmas Day, and their children expect a visit from Father Christmas. Many countries have their own special customs and rituals so this year I will take you on a world-wide tour to visit some of these places.

Christmas in Britain Starting with Britain, for the benefit of overseas readers, Christmas is essentially a family time when all make a special effort to celebrate together. Much preparation takes place beforehand, homes are decorated with the Christmas tree taking pride of place, Christmas cards and greetings are sent to absent friends and family, and presents are wrapped, all amidst an atmosphere of excitement. Carol singing plays an important part; groups of people who go from door to door singing for charity originate from the waits of Victorian times. On Christmas Eve, young children hang up their stockings with great anticipation and expect Santa Claus to fill them with presents and other goodies; they are rarely disappointed! On Christmas Day many people go to midnight mass or morning service and return home to enjoy a sumptuous festive dinner consisting of a turkey or goose with all the trimmings, Christmas pudding and mince pies with brandy or rum sauce, accompanied by appropriate wines and other alcoholic drinks.

St Stephen's Day is a more relaxing occasion. In Victorian times, the Church alms boxes were opened and the contents distributed to the poor and sick of the parish; hence 26 December became known as Boxing Day. Families would go to the theatre to see the pantomime, but in modern days this tradition has more or less disappeared, and these visits take place any time during school

holidays. Parties are held during the festive season which ends on Twelfth Night when the decorations are put away for another year.

New Year or Hogmanay is of greater importance to Scots than Christmas celebrations. The first person to cross the threshold after midnight on New Year's Eve offers gifts of coal, a piece of evergreen and a coin, which represents warmth, continuing life, wealth and prosperity to a household. In Wales, mummers continue the ancient custom of 'the Grey Mare' representing the ass which was turned out of the stable to make room for the Holy Family.

Wren Boys In Ireland, festivities begin on Christmas Eve and finish on Epiphany (6 January). It is customary for the father of the house to place a thick candle on a window sill which the youngest child will light in honour of the Christchild. It is left to burn all night for anyone seeking shelter; wanderers are given hospitality and a gift of money before continuing on their way. A caraway cake is made for each family member. On Boxing Day the 'Wren Boys Procession' is the main event for children. The wren is called the devil's bird by the Irish and wren killing goes back to the Druid's belief that the bird's feathers possessed magical powers. The young people, dressed in brightly coloured clothes and wearing masks, carry a long pole which is topped off with holly and evergreen and supposed to hold a wren; they march in a musical procession while asking for money for the starving bird. In reality, the rewards go into their own pockets. This ceremony is also carried out in the Isle of Man.

Scandinavian celebration Preparations start early in Scandinavia, some as early as the first Sunday in Advent, but certainly by St Lucia Day (13 December) continuing until 13 January, St Knut's Day (Canute). Although customs vary in the different countries, house cleaning and the abundance of festive cooking is a common theme. A feature in Norway is the baking of seven kinds of biscuits – the heat from the ovens is so great that the thaw

which follows the first heavy snowfall just before Christmas is called 'the biscuit thaw'. Carols are sung around decorated Christmas trees, and the children put porridge on the doorstep for Nisse, the little gnome-like creature who is the national gift-bearer.

In Sweden, St Lucia Day is celebrated all over the country. Lucia was a Christian virgin who was martyred in the 4th century; according to legend, she took food each night to fellow Christians hiding in the underground catacombs. To keep her hands free, she wore a wreath of candles on her head. Very early on Christmas morning, a young daughter in Swedish families puts on a flowing white gown, a red sash, and a wreath of greenery on her head in which she places seven lighted candles, and takes coffee, St Lucia buns and ginger snaps to the family still in bed. She is sometimes escorted by her brothers, wearing pointed paper hats. Straw plays an important part in the yuletide ceremonies; it was once thought to have magical properties bringing good luck to future harvests. Now straw stars are hung on Christmas trees and a straw goat guards the tree.

Christmas Day is mainly a day of Christian observance and also a family time. Swedes go to church, in their sleighs whenever possible, where candlelit services are held. Afterwards they return home and gather in the decorated kitchen where, on the stove, a large pot simmers containing drippings of pork, ham and sausage. Rye bread on a fork is dipped into the liquid and eaten before the festive lunch, consisting of a smorgasbord, a fish course, ham, rice pudding or porridge, followed by coffee with almonds, sweets and raisins. After lunch the children open their presents which have been left under the tree by Jultomtem. Christmas parties start on 26 December and continue over the festive season.

In Denmark, Jultomten, helped by the sprites Julenisse, distribute the gifts to the children who put out a bowl of porridge for them. Preparations start as early as the first Sunday of Advent in Finland, when one candle is lit and placed in a candlestick for four. The children are given their first present and also a calendar with a window to open on each day before Christmas. Another

lighted candle is added on each of the other three Sundays prior to Christmas Day. Gingerbread is made in the shape of stars, moons, hearts and pigs. Cold ham is the main dish; salted meat and pickled herrings are also eaten with salads, carrots, turnips or salted cucumber. Flowers such as tulips, hyacinths and poinsettias are taken as gifts to friends. Finns usually attend an early church service on Christmas Day, where all the pews are lit with candles. Eskimos visit friends at Christmas and enjoy coffee and cakes together, and the exchanging of gifts; the men look after the women by serving and stirring their coffee.

Russia and Ukraine In Russia churches are decorated with Christmas trees, flowers and coloured lights. Family worship has a special place in the celebrations of believers who invite friends into their homes to share in simple celebrations. Russians do not associate any particular food for the festive season. Gifts and greetings are exchanged but on a comparatively modest scale; Baboushka or Grandfather Frost are gift-bearers to Russian children. A 39-day fast used to precede Christmas in the Ukraine. The first star in the sky on Christmas Eve was the signal to begin three days of celebrations with a 12-course feast in honour of the 12 disciples. No meat was eaten, but was replaced by fish; there would also be beet soup, cabbage stuffed with millet, dried fruit and a special delicacy, *kutya*, prepared from whole wheat grain soaked for many hours and seasoned with honey and crushed poppy seeds. Children then receive their gifts, after which the family would attend midnight mass.

Music and merriment Christmas in Spain is a time of music and merriment; the shops and markets are brightly lit and full of merchandise, and there is an air of festivity. Church bells ring out at midnight on Christmas Eve inviting people to mass. There is usually a family reunion for dinner on Christmas Day after which they gather round the Christmas tree to sing carols. The Three Wise Men bring presents to children, who put out their shoes filled with barley for the three camels. The youngsters waken early to find their shoes over-



Mrs Martin, and issues from countries whose Christmas traditions she describes in this month.

flowing with toys and fruit. The Nativity Scene is important to the Spaniards and is very elaborate, including the Holy Family, a donkey, an angel, the shepherds and the Three Wise Men, the innkeeper and animals including a bull – even the home of Herod is included.

In France, St Nicholas' Day (6 December) is observed as the day to give good children gifts; the bad ones are scolded. On Christmas Eve, Pere Noel leaves sweets and nuts for all the children. Trees are decorated a few days before the 25th, which is celebrated by religious services in brightly lit churches. The Christmas feast is not complete without crackers; the menu varies in different regions – it could be a roast fowl and baked ham, salad, fruit cake and wine. In Alsace goose is traditional; the Bretons serve buckwheat cake with sour cream; in Burgundy it is turkey and chestnuts; whereas in the Paris region the favourite dish is oysters followed by a Yule cake in the shape of a log.

Old traditions survive in the Flanders region of Belgium. Extensive preparations are made for the Nativity Plays presented with pride by church congregations. The characters are chosen with great care for their exemplary behaviour, and the children usually portray the angels. In another custom, three men walk the streets dressed as the Magi; they sing at the doors of the houses in their town and are invited in to take tea and pancakes. In some border towns, where smuggling is quite common, the cast will also include a poacher or a smuggler, to demonstrate that Christ came into the world to save all people, including sinners.

Black Peter In Holland, St Nicholas' Day is the great day for the children when they receive gifts from St Nicholas. A traditional ceremony takes place in Amsterdam. St Nicholas wearing a bishop's robe and mitre, accompanied by Black Peter (the devil) arrives on a steamer in the harbour, cheered by crowds of people. Peter carries a rod in his hand to hit the bad children and a sack of toys on his shoulder for the good ones. A motorcade of police followed by a brass band, then St Nicholas and Peter, the Mayor and dignitaries, form a procession and walk to the palace to be

welcomed by the Queen. Homes are decorated with holly, pine and a Christmas tree. On Christmas Eve, St Nicholas parties are held when elaborately wrapped inexpensive gifts are exchanged. After the children have gone to bed, the adults take tea and biscuits, and at 10 o'clock hot punch is served with hot boiled chestnuts. Christmas Day is celebrated by attending morning service, the afternoon with the family, and an evening meal followed by a musical programme in churches, concert halls or other suitable venues.

The Austrians are a religious people, and the Nativity Scene is all-important to them. St Nicholas visits the children on Christmas Eve accompanied by the devil; when bad children promise to be good they are all given sweets, fruit and nuts. After a meal of fried carp, the family gather round a decorated fir or pine tree surrounded by presents which are opened with great excitement. Midnight mass is celebrated in all churches, and the 25th and 26th are spent visiting family and friends and feasting on roast goose, ham, fruit cake and other special festive dishes. Nativity plays are performed during the season, and in the villages, the Manger scene is carried from house to house, the people singing all the way until they gather on the steps of the church where a service is held.

From 6 December, shops and markets take on a festive appearance in Germany. Christmas trees decorated with tinsel and bright ornaments are a great feature, and evergreen wreaths and holly are hung on house doors as a symbol of new life. Children receive their presents from the Christkind (Christchild), who is represented by a white-robed girl wearing a golden crown and having large golden wings. In some parts of Germany, the table is set on Christmas Eve with a soup plate for each child; on Christmas Day the Christkind is credited with filling the plates with sweets and fruit, and the presents are laid on the table. In Bavaria, St Nicholas visits homes attended by a boy dressed as a girl called 'Nikolo-Weibl' and 12 young men wearing animal masks, and with cowbells tied to their bodies •

Mrs Martin continues her Christmas tour next month.

Classic Locomotives Royal Mail celebrates the preserved railways of Britain: a new set of stamps featuring six working steam locomotives goes on sale on 13 January.



Talylyn Railway, mid-Wales



Great Central Railway, Leicestershire



Bluebell Railway, East Sussex



Bo'ness & Kinnell Railway, West Lothian



Severn Valley Railway, Worcestershire



Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, Yorkshire



Technical details**Printer** De La Rue**Process** Lithography (fine screen)**Stamp size** 60 × 21mm**Sheet size** 24 and 48**Miniature sheet size** 190 × 67mm**Perforation** 14.5**Phosphor** 2nd class one band others two bands**Gum** PVA**Gutter pairs** Vertical**Cylinders and colours****All values** D1 greenish yellow

● D1 magenta ● D1 new blue

● D1 silver ● D1 black ● D1

phosphor

The Classic Locomotives issue is the fifth set entirely devoted to railways, following issues in 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1994. This set has been designed by Roundel design group, with photography by John Wildgoose.

SHEETS These stamps will be issued to Post Office branches in sheets of 24. However sheets of 48 will be available from Post Office philatelic outlets and Royal Mail Tallents House; these sheets have two panes of 24 separated by a gutter, thus gutter pairs will still be available.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail FDC envelopes will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets about a week before 13 January, price 25p. The cover features a drawing by David Gentleman of a fireman at work on a steam locomotive. Orders for FDCs with the stamps or miniature sheet cancelled by a pictorial first day postmark of Tallents House or York must reach Tallents House by the day of issue. Price £3.27 UK or £2.79 overseas. Please state if stamps or miniature sheet required.

Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, South Shields DO, Keppell Street, South Shields NE33 1AA (York postmark), marking the outer envelope 'FDO401' (Tallents House), or 'FDO402' (York). Covers can be posted or handed in at main Post Office branches for the York postmark. A non-pictorial York postmark is also available from the Special Handstamp Centre, request 'FDO402 NP'.

Sponsored handstamps for 13 January will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from Tallents House (£12.25 UK/Europe; £24.95 elsewhere). For a sample copy write to: The Editor, British Postmark Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ.

PHILATELIC PRODUCTS A well-illustrated pack (price £2.95) and stamp cards (30p each) will be available from main Post Office branches and philatelic outlets and Tallents House.

A coin cover will also be available, price £13.95, from 13 January. The cover features a technical drawing of a steam locomotive with the six stamps affixed and cancelled by a special postmark for Penydarren where Richard Trevithick's first steam locomotive ran 200 years ago in 1804. The colourful insert card includes a map showing the location of 35 heritage railways in Great Britain, with illustrations and details of each of the six featured on the stamps. There is also a railway history chart showing developments from Trevithick's locomotive to the end of mainline steam on British Rail in 1968. The card also illustrates some tickets and luggage labels from the steam age.

PRESTIGE BOOK The *Letters by Night* PSB, to be issued on 16 March, will include a pane of 28p, E and 42p Classic Locomotives stamps. Other panes will contain definitive and country stamps and the 1st class 'Station' stamp from the Pub Signs issue. Details will be published in February's *Bulletin*.



The postmark for the Classic Locomotives coin cover.



CLASSIC LOCOMOTIVES

Royal Mail First Day Cover

Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbie Road
Ilkeston
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB

Royal Mail Talents House (1) South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH4 1JH

The presentation pack (below) for this issue is the first in a new format: the stamps are carried in clear mounts on the bottom panel, rather than in a separate holder. The folded pack will fit existing albums.

The pack includes an article by the record producer Pete Waterman, and illustrations by David Gentleman. Over the last 30 years, Mr Waterman has been heavily involved in steam preservation, and once owned the *Flying Scotsman*.

The miniature sheet is also shown below, at proof stage.

CLASSIC LOCOMOTIVES

Preserving the Steam Age

Royal Mail Mini Stamps

Classic Locomotives

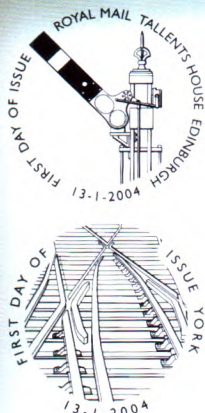
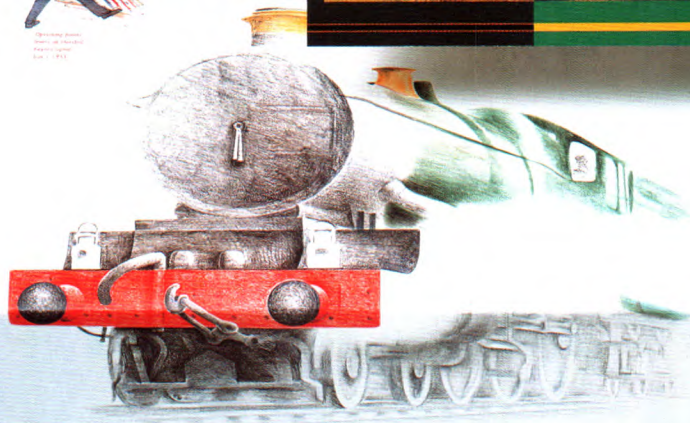


Like 1996, none very un-stationary. However, to me as a child the splendour of the passengers sitting at tables covered in white and illuminated by table lamps seemed the ultimate in luxury.

Although my own railway career was brief it will be forever etched in my mind. The working conditions were appalling but the camaraderie between the workers was unshakable. A locomotive crew was a partnership of driver, fireman and guard. I started work as a boy and spent the final six months doing what I still consider to be the job of my life - a fireman.

Over the last thirty years, I have spent most of my free time trying to preserve as much of the history as possible. Fortunately, I once owned the most famous locomotive in the world - the *Scotsman* - and now own the *Britannia*.

© Pete Waterman
Illustration by David Gentleman
First Day Cover
13-1-2004



Steam locomotives reached their peak in 1924 when about 24,000 were in use. British Railways reduced this number from the 1950s and the last was used in 1968. Many locomotives have been saved by museums, preserved steam railways, and by individuals. In recent years steam-hauled excursion trains have run over main lines. The age of steam, which seemed doomed in the mid-1960s is now very much alive, an important aspect of British heritage. Some details of the six preserved railways on which these locomotives now run will be included in next month's *Bulletin*.



The 20p stamp features locomotive *Dolgoch*, an 0-4-0 tank built for the 2'3" gauge Talyllyn Railway by Fletcher, Jennings & Co of Whitehaven in 1864. The locomotive is still in service. The Talyllyn was one of several narrow gauge railways in North Wales built primarily to serve the slate industry. *Dolgoch*, the second locomotive built for the Talyllyn, was in regular use until 1953 when it was withdrawn for repairs and a new boiler. Now, 40 years after its return to traffic, it is into its second century of operation.

The 28p stamp depicts class 439 0-4-4 T locomotive built for the Caledonian Railway by Nasmyth Wilson & Co. Some 124 of this class of locomotive were built between 1895 and 1925. The last was withdrawn from service in 1961. All but the final 10 were built at the St Rollox (Glasgow) Works, which generally painted its passenger engines blue. Some, painted black, were equipped with condensing apparatus in order to work on the Glasgow suburban lines.

The subject of the £ rate stamp is the Great Central Railway's 8K class (2-8-0) locomotive built at several works between 1911 and 1921. A total of 666 were built, the last in Britain withdrawn from service in 1966. This design was originally introduced by the GCR for heavy main-line mineral trains and, during the First World War, used for service with the British Army (Royal Engineers) in France. Some were sold overseas, one remaining in use in the New South Wales coalfield until 1973.



The 42p denomination shows a Great Western Railway 'Manor' class (4-6-0) loco. Some 30 were built at the company's Swindon works between 1938 and 1950, and remained in service until 1965. Manor class locomotives were introduced primarily to work on the former Cambrian Railways Main Line in mid-Wales. The final series preserved several features, including the domeless tapered boiler and distinctive outside cylinders, which had first appeared on GWR locomotives in 1903.

The 47p stamp depicts a Southern Railway West Country class (4-6-2) locomotive built at the Brighton and Eastleigh works from 1945 to 51. The last of the 110 constructed ended its working life on British Railways in 1967. This class of locomotive, introduced to work secondary routes in the West Country, was a scaled-down version of the powerful 'Merchant Navy' class of 1941. Both had unorthodox features – internal chain-driven valve gear and 'air-smoothed' sheet metal casing – aimed at reducing routine maintenance and cleaning. Both classes were rebuilt on more conventional lines from 1956.

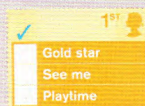
The final stamp, 68p, depicts a British Railways 'Standard 4' class (4-2-6-4T) locomotive of which 155 were built at Brighton, Derby, and Doncaster works, 1951-57. The last was withdrawn from service in 1967. In 1951 British Railways inaugurated a range of 12 standard steam locomotive classes, many based on pre-1948 LMS designs ●

GWR Manor class locomotive on the Severn Valley Railway, Worcestershire, as on the 42p denomination of the Classic Locomotives issue.

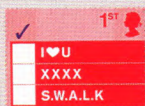
Favourite stamps poll 2003

FOR THE 18TH YEAR running we are inviting you to vote for your favourite stamps. Shown below are the special stamps of 2003. Tell us your top three sets and favourite individual stamp (numbered 1-79) on the enclosed voting form. Remember to return your form by 16 January for entry in our prize draw ●

Birds of Prey



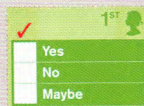
Occasions 11



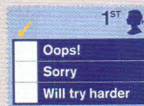
12



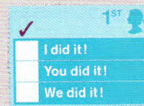
13



14



15

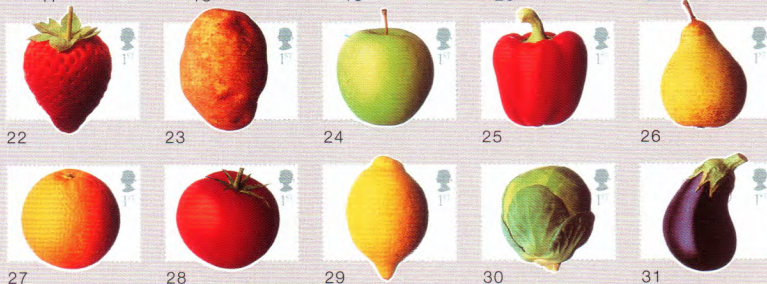


16

Secret of Life



Fruit & Veg



Extreme Endeavours





38



39



40



41



42

Coronation Anniversary



43



44



45



46



47



48



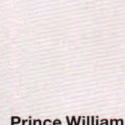
49



50



51



Prince William



52



53



54



55



56



57

Scotland



58



59



60



61



62

Pub Signs



63



64



65



66



67



68

Transports of Delight



68



69



70



71



72



73

British Museum



74



75



76



77



78



79

Christmas

A time for gifts Richard West looks at Royal Mail Originals



Vehicles, mugs, stationery, tie tack, letter opener, Christmas cards and cufflinks – just a few of Royal Mail's Originals.

At The Stamp Show 2000, Royal Mail launched a range of collectibles linked to the product for which it is best known, the postage stamp. Now a wide selection of items is available, called Originals from Royal Mail, which make the perfect gift, or simply a way of letting everyone know that yours is the home of a stamp collector.

There is space on a shelf for a miniature pillar box or two. There are currently four from which to choose, all ceramic, and tracing their history, from the Fluted Box of 1857, through the Victorian 'Penfold' box of c1866 and the 'A' Type Box of 1879, to the Airmail Box of 1930, at £14.95 each, or £49.80 for all four. The Penfold and Airmail are also available in pewter at £19.95.

Vehicles What better accompaniment to the shelf display than a selection of Royal Mail vehicles? There are three sets available: post-war, the 1960s and the 1970s. The first set is a Morris z van, a Morris J van, and a Morris Commercial. The second set is a Ford Anglia van, a Land Rover and a Bedford CA van. The third set is a Morris Minor van, a Minivan, and the unusual Reliant Super-van III. Each set costs £35, or £90 for all three.

A Morris J van is available separately at £9.95. Other Post Office vehicle sets are planned – details will be available in the Spring.

Complement your model display with framed stamps or postcards. The framed 2003 special stamps look very impressive, costing £69.95. Perhaps a Smilers Generic sheet framed, or the two Wilding miniature sheets, at £29.95 each. Framed reproductions of 11 historic postmarks are priced £19.95. Framed postcards include the first of the British Journey series (Scotland); the British Museum issue; and the Coronation Anniversary set, either the black and white stamp designs or the full-colour designs. Each of these framed sets is priced £24.95 (the two Coronation sets are £44.90 the pair). The complete Coronation Anniversary pane is available framed at £29.95.

You must offer your guests a drink. One of the most popular gifts produced by Royal Mail is the mugs. One set depicts famous Victorian stamps: the Penny Black, Penny Lilac, 'Jubilee' Shilling and Five Pounds orange, each also reproducing a typical postmark that would have been applied to these stamps. A second set features the Coronation stamps of 1953. Each set of four is £19.95.

Other mugs available depict pillar boxes, a selection of Machin definitives, or Post Office posters of the 1950s: each mug costs £7.95.

Christmas cheer Now is the time when you will be thinking of sending Christmas cards. Cards reproducing the designs of the 2002 Christmas stamps featuring plants (three of each design) are available at £4.95, while packs of cards with three of each of the six designs of this year's Christmas issue showing snow and ice sculptures are £5.95. If you prefer a more traditional look to your Christmas cards, there are two designs showing pillar boxes. Packs containing nine of each card are £5.95.

For writing to friends, why not use Definitive Notecards, with three definitive designs in gold? Packs with six each of the three designs are £5.95. There is also the Writing Set, with a reproduction of the definitive stamp design: 20 sheets of paper and ten envelopes cost £8.95.

Stamp ingots Ingots reproducing stamp designs are increasingly popular. The five Pillar to Post stamps issued in 2002 are presented on specially cancelled and designed covers, each cover encasing a sterling silver reproduction of one of the stamps. Each cover with ingot for each of the five designs costs £29.95. Also available are ingots of five classic Victorian stamps, each presented within a folder that provides fascinating background information on each of the stamps. Each ingot with pack costs £26.95, and the stamps reproduced are the Penny Black, Embossed Shilling, Halfpenny Red, Penny Lilac, Five Pounds orange and 'Jubilee' Shilling.

Also popular are covers that combine a stamp with a coin or medal. The Cecil Beaton portrait stamp of The Queen from the Coronation Anniversary set, with the Coronation Crown coin and a mint £5 note, all as part of one cover, is available at £44.95. Alternatively, the Coronation Anniversary pane plus Crown coin on cover costs £15.95 (or framed £39.95). A cover bearing the five full-colour Coronation Anniversary stamps, plus an ingot reproducing the classic 193d Coronation design of 1953 costs £39.95.

Gifts for children There are many other items that make perfect gifts, especially for those who may not already collect stamps. What better way to encourage a younger member of the family than with a Pillar Box piggy bank, costing £5.95? Or how about the challenge of a jigsaw puzzle: there are two available, one of the Penny Black, and a new puzzle, which really will tease you, builds into a picture of steam locomotive *Seaforth Highlander*. These puzzles are £19.95 each.

Also in a lighter vein are fridge magnets: there are three to choose from, showing posters, pillar boxes or definitives, at £4.95 each, or mousemats (definitives or posters) at £5.95 each.

For someone rather special, which certainly does not exclude yourself, there are stamp boxes, made from pewter, featuring either the Penny Black or the Maltese Cross cancellation, at £19.95 each, or £34.90 the pair.

Special gifts Sterling silver gifts include a stamp holder (£15.95), an 'antique' stamp box with Victorian stamp (£24.95), a teardrop letter opener (£29.95, not available to under 18s), a bear trinket box (£24.95) and a 'Jubilee' stamp dispenser (£24.95). Also in sterling silver are Maltese Cross cufflinks (£34.95), or tie tack (£12.95), or the two as a set (£42.90); a Penny Black tie tack (£10.95); 1st (in flame) or 2nd class definitive designs as cufflinks (£34.95 a pair); and 'Post Office/Express/Paid' stamp cufflinks at £14.95 the pair.

The ultimate gift must be the gold cufflinks, with a 22-carat gold sovereign within a 9-carat gold mounting, the pair costing £199. A selection of silk ties is available, with either definitive or Maltese Cross designs at £14.95 each.

These gifts are only available by mail order, from Royal Mail, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB: full colour catalogues detailing all these gifts for Christmas 2003 are available: telephone 08457 641 641.

And after all that exhaustion from making your selection, why not put your feet up and enjoy the classic Post Office film *Night Mail* on video (VHS) at £12.95, but now also on DVD at £14.95 with extras of *Mail Rail*, *Post Haste* and *Midnight Hours*. Have a happy Christmas! ●

Mainly Machins Specialist collectors report by D G A Myall

The new Country pictorials

The cylinder numbers on the gravure stamps are all D1 no dot and D1 dot. Those on the lithographed stamps are D1a on the left pane and D1b on the right pane.

The new white borders are to improve phosphor response in the sorting machines. Even allowing for the optical effect of the borders, all the colours are much brighter and sharper than before, which may help to overcome the sorting problem.



The Byfleet definitives The 37p was printed at Byfleet on 4 June and issued in mid-September. Its appearance is somewhat of a surprise. The only postal duty at this value is the worldwide surface letter/postcard rate up to 20g. This was increased from 36p on 4 July 2002 and was unchanged in the new tariff introduced last May.

It is interesting that no 36p stamp was issued for this service. (The ultramarine 36p stamp that was issued in 1993 was for a different service and had been sold to exhaustion by 1996.) A different view was taken when the 37p rate became effective and this value was re-issued on 4 July 2002 in dark grey (the third colour for this value), printed by De La Rue, then at High Wycombe.

Worldwide airmail postcards are only 5p more at 42p and there is comparatively little demand for surface mail especially as Royal Mail's delivery aims are five days for airmail and eight weeks for surface mail (*Guide to UK and International Mail Services*, p17). Nevertheless, stocks of this value must have sold out requiring a re-print and giv-

ing specialist collectors a new stamp. It has Novaglo or A2B phosphor, whereas the earlier dark grey stamp had the ordinary A phosphor phosphorescing only under short-wave irradiation. Singles of the two dark grey printings are easily distinguished. The new stamp, as well as having a different phosphor, has a thicker value and it is set higher in the frame than the previous one.

It seems there at least three different paper/gum combinations being used at Byfleet for the Machin definitives, and the subject is being investigated. As I write, there is no sign of the 68p, or the £1 without Iridion ink.

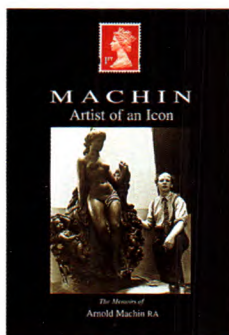
Country pictorials The 16 new values were issued on 14 October. The Northern Ireland stamps are printed by lithography; the rest in gravure. The gravure stamps are on coated paper with a dull fluorescence but have the shiny gum of the type finished by Tullis Russell. Gravure stamps have upright direction of printing and are APS perforated. The lithographed stamps are, of course,

on paper specially prepared for this process. It has a dull fluorescence, similar to that used for the gravure stamps, and is also a Tullis Russell product. The stamps are comb perforated, with right-hand panes perforated through the left margin.

The stamps now have white borders to improve the phosphor response in the sorting machines, which had been experiencing difficulty with the previous all-over designs and dark colours. The white borders are the same width as on ordinary Machin definitives. To achieve this, most of the designs were scaled down from those previously used. The Scotland £ stamp is only slightly smaller than before but some of the background edges have been removed so the design fills the space and appears to be larger. The Wales £ design is, however, larger than before and the white border has been achieved by removing quite a bit of the background.

These changes required some repositioning of the Queen's head and the value. Where these are at the right, most have been moved about 1mm to the left and the space between them is reduced. On the previous issues The Queen's head, a silhouette, was printed in silver on the England and Scotland stamps and a clear white on the Northern Ireland stamps, while on the Wales stamps it had a fine screen (250 lines to the inch) of black dots, giving it a grey appearance. There is a significant change on the four Wales stamps; all now have a clear unscreened white head. Although the 1st and 68p stamps still have a silver cylinder, it prints other parts of the design.

All the 2nd class stamps have a central 4.5mm phosphor bar, now standard width for this value. The other stamps have a 6.5mm bar at left and right from 13mm bands. The lithographed stamps have solid bands but the gravure stamps have the same vignetting feature as before, the bands being made up of the normal 9mm plus a 2mm band at left and right, which is printed at a coarser screen (150 lines to the inch). This can be clearly seen under a glass. The blue fluorescence is quite bright except on the Northern Ireland stamps where it is much duller, presumably as a consequence of using inks specially formulated for that process.



Machin: Artist of an Icon

This well-produced book, 176 pages plus 48 coloured plates, is available from Frontier Publishing, Windetts, Kirkstead, Norwich NR15 1EG, price £35 plus £3 postage.

Machin: artist of an icon The name Machin needs no introduction to *Bulletin* readers and the icon is, of course, his renowned image of The Queen which has been used on this country's definitives for more than 35 years. The story of its genesis is fully told and illustrated. Machin says that he regarded the stamp as his finest achievement. But what else did he do? Quite a lot, as this beautifully illustrated book of his memoirs makes clear. All who are interested in his work will want to know more of the man himself. This book provides as full an account as one could wish for.

Arnold Machin was born at Stoke-on-Trent on 30 September 1911 and lived for almost 88 years. Born in Stoke, it is no surprise that he worked in the pottery industry for much of his life. At 14 he began a seven-year apprenticeship with Minton. At 22 he worked for the Old Derby China Works whilst a part-time student at the Derby School of Art. At 26 he studied at the Royal College of Art in London, where he was the top sculpture student. During the war he worked for Wedgwood for whom he produced some of his best work.

One of my hobbies as a young man was lettering and illuminating. The latter word derives from the use of gold leaf burnished with an agate, and I still have mine. I found Machin's account of the various gilding techniques at Minton's very similar. His description of how different colours were created there is fascinating.

He says he must have been born with a pencil in his hand, and early proof of his talent is provided by a watercolour of a child fishing, made when he was only five or six. Almost his last work

was a 1998 pencil sketch of a scene from Dante's *Inferno*, fatefully called 'One Last and Sad Farewell'. In between he was sculptor, china painter, coin designer, landscape artist, miniaturist, wood carver, flower water-colourist, garden designer, grotto builder and furniture designer. It seems there was nothing he could not turn his hand to.

The Dante drawing was one of several exhibits that year at the Royal Academy to which he had been elected a full member in 1956. From 1959 to 1966 he was Master of Sculpture at Royal Academy Schools where a retrospective of his work was held in 2001.

The book is written in Machin's own words. It reveals him as a man of strict principles. His tastes were catholic, although he revered tradition rather than what he somewhat disdainfully refers to as Modern Art, complete with capitals. He was very interested in environmental issues. (He once got his wife Patricia to chain him to a Victorian gas

lamp in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the local authority replacing it with a concrete post.) Although he always advocated serious study he was not without a sense of humour. He was not a quick worker and took enormous pains over everything he did. Above all, he championed good craftsmanship, and every piece of his work demonstrates it. In short, he was a perfectionist; no bad thing in these instant times.

This account of his life and times is exceptionally detailed, honest and trenchant. He had an innate modesty coupled with a strong personality. His comments on people he met are acute if not always kind. But the true nature of the man is revealed in his reason for terracotta modelling being his favourite method of working: 'Whereas in stone-carving the sculpture is produced by cutting away and destroying the original stone, in work with clay one is building up and creating from the earth itself' •

Text © D G A Wyll 2003

A passion for Machins Richard West talks to Tony Walker

THERE was an attitude prevalent for many years: that modern material is just not worth collecting. If you don't collect line engraved, then you can't count yourself a GB philatelist. One man has taken that view by the scruff of the neck, given it a good shaking, and proved it wrong. Tony Walker collects Machins, and has done since leaving university in 1967, the time when these stamps first appeared. At the 2002 international exhibition in Amsterdam, he won a gold medal, repeating that success at Autumn Stampex in 2003: he has proved that a modern study can hold its ground among other exhibits.

He had collected earlier of course, as a schoolboy, carefully mounting his specimens with sello-tape and glue. This was all put aside when he left school, but on starting work he was able to afford the new material the Post Office was producing. He was fortunate: the pre-decimal Machins had a short life, so these stamps were to an extent ignored by collectors who were concentrating on



the new decimal values. He was able to acquire useful material at reasonable prices. He has long believed the Machin design has a timeless quality, combining beauty with simplicity. He goes even further, regarding Arnold Machin as one of the greatest personalities there has been, who from humble beginnings became a talented sculptor and teacher.

Formidable study Collecting Machins has proved most stimulating, like piecing together the parts of a jigsaw puzzle. Within these definitives is a reflection of life: changing postal rates and many technical advances have featured prominently. They have proved formidable to study. When, back in the early 1970s, he first submitted an entry to Stampex, his reward was a bronze medal. From that moment on, he was determined to show that collecting modern material can be just as fulfilling and just as demanding as compiling a classic collection.

Tony firmly believes that collectors of modern stamps are far too apologetic and introverted about their interests. He has been determined to enhance the prestige of the *Machins* within philately. Collecting material while current means it is possible to pick up much from the local post office. He established a rapport with two or three, always ensuring he visited during a quiet period to see what the new stocks might reveal. Auctions and dealers have also played their part in building the collection. One dealer who helped and influenced Tony a great deal was R A Loveland, trading under the name of A L Bert.

His best purchase came many years ago at a Phillips auction. He successfully bid for a cylinder block of the 3d value on uncoated paper. It would prove to be unique, and would today sell for many times its purchase price.

Mounting The collection is mounted on specially purchased card, chosen to pass easily through his computer's printer. The material is housed within protective mounts. Other parts of the collection are housed in Gibbons *Senator* albums. Tony works on his collection as and when time permits. However, entering a competition proves an invaluable stimulus to mounting up pages, and will see him working into the night to meet the deadlines.

However, Tony's interests do not lie solely with the *Machins*. He also collects British Naval Censored Mail, and finds his most useful philatelic work to be the handbook on the subject which was written by Michael Gould. He would now like to achieve success with this material, which has been acquired at low cost, and thereby demonstrate it is possible to undertake fascinating research, without the need to spend much.

Tony enjoys giving displays to societies, and is always amazed by the reactions, many commenting that they had not realised there was so much interest in the *Machins*. But he also has his pet hate, and that is those who try to promote items which really have no relevance to philately. His talks have also extended to 'non philatelic' societies, such as the Durham History Society. He plays his full part in the hobby, being a member of the 'Royal', of the Forces Postal History Soci-

ety, of Newcastle Philatelic Society, and of the North East Philatelic Association, being one of those involved in the organisation of the Philatelic Congress of Great Britain held at Gateshead in July 2003.

Believer in change Tony believes the hobby will have to change, and that collectors of modern material are crucial to the future. He realises that there are those who are striving to bridge the gap between the old and the new, but it needs more to do so. He feels that stamps will change, with postage labels resulting in postally used high values becoming much less common. Many covers showing the correct postal usage over the past few years are already very scarce.

Tony is now a member of Royal Mail's Stamp Advisory Committee. He marvels at the opportunity to view and handle so much original artwork and essays. He has also come to appreciate the staggering amount of research undertaken by Royal Mail for every issue, bending over backwards to avoid any errors.

Above all, he emphasises and re-iterates his prime message: he enjoys modern stamps, especially the *Machins*, and believes there are many, many others who share his passion, so why not make it known loud and clear •

TONY WALKER FACT FILE

Born East Anglia.

Now lives Newcastle.

Favourite football team Norwich, and now Newcastle.

Career Landscape architect, now as a consultant.

Favourite stamp Churchill Memorial issue of 1965, admiring the man, whose character was perfectly captured by David Gentleman's superb designs.

Least liked stamp Any that try to miniaturise a big scene, such as reducing paintings or photographs to stamp size, but prefers not to nominate any particular stamp.

Other hobbies Drawing and watercolours, plus wood-turning. Also enjoys writing.

Favourite holiday retreat Portugal.

Other family members who collect One of nine grandchildren is interested, but none of his six children. Does his wife collect? The answer is an emphatic 'no'!

Personal ambition To live as long as his mum, who is 97 and still going strong.

Philately on-line Ron Negus reviews a thematic chess site



www.tri.org.au/chess The opening page of this site is a gallery of chess stamps from various countries. To view images of the stamps it is only necessary to click on the name of any country.

DR COLIN ROSE is an Australian statistician who has developed computer software for use in the field of mathematical financial modelling. In his spare time he is also a stamp collector and a keen chess player. The combination of these various interests has led him to produce a web site entitled 'Chess on Stamps', which can be found at the address above.

The main part of the site is devoted to an on-line catalogue of chess stamps which Dr Rose is slowly completing. At present, it covers the period from 1947 to 1989. The 1990-1999 section is currently under construction, but the main page of the site includes a current news section that is updated regularly. Access to the entries listed in the catalogue can be achieved in four different ways. The first is by year of issue, when this is known. The alternative indexes give entry points by the country of issue, by players surnames, and by specific tournaments being commemorated.

The catalogue pages are in a common format that shows the name of the country at the top. The date of issue of the set concerned, and a description of the reason for issue follow. Full-colour illustrations of each stamp are shown below this description. Simply clicking on any original image can enlarge the illustrations on the catalogue pages, to allow the design details to be seen more easily. Dr Rose has numbered the stamps in his own sequence, but the listing also gives the catalogue numbers allocated by Stanley Gibbons, Michel and Scott. For the Rose series, stamps are numbered chronologically.

A set price for mint, never-hinged stamps, is quoted in us dollars. It is explained that the use

of a set price, rather than using prices for individual stamps, acknowledges the general practice whereby dealers are often reluctant to split sets and sell a single value to thematic collectors. Also, as used chess stamps are very difficult to find, no prices are quoted for specimens in this condition.

Varieties, such as booklets and sheetlets are priced, but not assigned numbers and are not illustrated. Miniature sheets are handled depending upon whether or not the stamps they contain can be regarded as new issues because they are not available separately. In describing the way the catalogue is constructed, Dr Rose says, 'we do not list imperf issues, deluxe sheetlets, CTOS, FDCs, maximum cards or other revenue-raising merchandise.'

His robust view of what is worth including in the Rose catalogue is supported by similar words in the introductory page of his site. For example, in deciding what is a 'chess' stamp, Dr Rose insists 'it must be a legitimate stamp created for postal use, by a country that is a member of the UPU. The chess motif must be found on the stamp itself, and not on the selvedge or margins of miniature sheets.' He goes on to point out that there are so-called chess stamps issued by uninhabited 'island nations' and others by people with a colour laser printer that 'look like stamps'.

The overall quality of this site is excellent and it provides a model for other thematic collectors who wish to prepare descriptive lists of their particular subjects. Hopefully, the missing years will be added shortly to make it even more useful to philatelic chess enthusiasts everywhere. ●

Cover corner 40th anniversary of Royal Mail Santa service



AS WELL AS BEING the 40th anniversary year of the British Philatelic Bureau (now Tallents House) and this *Bulletin*, it is also 40 years since the then GPO introduced its Santa mail service for children writing to Father Christmas. Each year hundreds of thousands of children write to Santa at fictional addresses such as Reindeerland, Toyland, or Snow Land as well as to the North Pole, Iceland, Greenland and other actual destinations. Mail addressed to fictional places is replied to by Royal Mail with a special card with a message from Santa. Initially the service was handled by the Philatelic Bureau and the envelopes containing the cards were given a Reindeerland postage paid postmark in red. Examples of this postmark on Bureau compliments cards were distributed with early issues of this *Bulletin* and are now collect-

able items. Since 1986 the paid postmark has been replaced by a printed postage impression (PPI), sometimes inscribed REINDEERLAND.

Louise Anderson, the Royal Mail Manager in charge of the Santa service, told us 'We are delighted the service has brought so much pleasure to thousands of children each year for 40 years. Writing to Santa is part of Christmas, a tradition Royal Mail is proud to be associated with'.

Shown above are this year's card and envelope, together with the Welsh version of 1991. Children who write to Santa in Welsh receive a reply in their native language. A book about the Santa Service, written and privately published by Glenn Morgan in 1989, lists all the cards, envelopes and postmarks in use until that time •

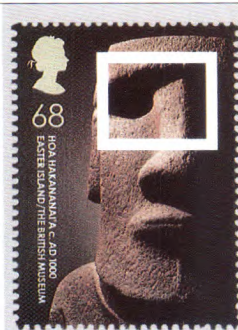
Prize draw Win a Bulletin 40th anniversary Stampex cover

FOR THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL DRAW we have ten Autumn Stampex covers bearing a 1st class stamp cancelled by a special handstamp marking the *Bulletin's* 40th anniversary. A display relating to the anniversary was on show on the Royal Mail stand at the exhibition. The covers have been signed by Frank Langfield, the *Bulletin's* first Editor, and by the current Editor, John Holman. To enter, simply write your name and address on the back of a postcard and send it to: Bulletin Draw, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ. Entries must arrive by 31 December •



Draw winners Winners of the Bulletin 40th Anniversary Draw in September were: D Stratton, R Holmes, A Marcus, Mrs D Dutton, Mrs A Picard, G Bates, K Lile, H Lush, R Ellis and M Taysum. The winner of the First Issue Competition in September was B Saunders; runners-up were T Laxon, G Mahoney, D Dahm, J Childs and L King. The answer was 3-4 months.

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



September identify The detail was from the British Museum 68p stamp. The winner was J Hajpel of Canada.

September knowledge The answers: 1) F Wegner; 2) 1994; 3) Frank Langfield. The winner was N Guy of Bedfordshire.

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

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

- 1 What colour was the 5d Wilding definitive?
- 2 In which hall in London is the Thematica exhibition held?
- 3 In which year did the Templeton Carpet Factory feature on a stamp?

Send your answer (addressed to either December *Identify* competition or December *Knowledge* competition), name and address on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to: British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ. The senders of the first cards drawn in each competition on 16 January will each receive £100. Ten runner-up prizes of presentation packs or first day covers will be awarded in each competition. The competitions are not open to Royal Mail employees •

Events

28-29 November Thematica II at Carisbrooke Hall, Seymour Street, London W2 (near Marble Arch). Dealers, activities for young visitors, souvenir sheet. **Enquiries** 020 8343 2434.

29 November Friends of Postal Heritage AGM at Phoenix Centre, Phoenix Place, London WC1
Enquiries C Macey, 23 Reading House, Hallfield Estate, London W2 6HD.

17 January GB Philatelic Society display: Telegraph stamps and forms by Dr Conrad Graham and Dr Alan Huggins at British Philatelic Centre, 107 Chaterhouse Street, London EC1, 11.00. **Enquiries** C Harman, Greylands, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1QE.

7 February Streetley PS Stamp Fair at Collingwood

Centre, Collingwood Drive, Pheasey, Birmingham B43 7NF, 10.00-16.30. Car parking near centre. National stamp dealers, displays, light refreshments. Admission 20p (children 10p). **Enquiries** M Chapling, 0121 329 2487.

25-29 February Spring Stampex at Business Design Centre, London N1. **Enquiries** 020 7490 1005.

28 February GB Philatelic Society display: George VI High Values by Peter Dawson, at Spring Stampex, 14.00. **Enquiries** C Harman, Greylands, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1QE.

28 February Welsh Philatelic Society meeting at Aberystwyth. **Enquiries** P Gaywood, 2 Fairways, Fulwood, Preston PR2 8FX •

Late news

Royal Mail update The locations featured on the British Journey: Northern Ireland set (16 March 2004) will be: 2nd class Ely Island, Lower Lough Erne; 1st class Giant's Causeway, Antrim Coast; £ (European rate) Slemish, Antrim Mountains; 42p Banns Road, Mourne Mountains; 47p Glenelly Valley, Sperrins; and 68p Islandmore, Strangford Lough. The issue will be shown next month.

Starting with the Classic Locomotives stamps (13 January) Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be in a new standard size of 220 x 125 mm. The presentation pack has been redesigned; the brochure will be larger, allowing more illustrations and information. However when folded the new packs are almost the same size as existing ones and will fit into existing pack albums. The stamps will be positioned under clear mounts on the pack itself rather than placed in a separate holder.

Tallents House in Edinburgh will be closed 25 & 26 December and 1 January •

Auctions Collections of GB stamps sold well at Harmers 14 October auction – a collection in a 'KaBe' album with issues to 1926 sold for £11,762, more than twice the estimate, and a selection in an album, stockbook and leaves made £4,705 (est £500). The auction on 16 December will include fine GB along with stamp boxes, postal scales and ephemera, and some notable American material. Enquiries: Harmers, telephone 020 8747 6100.

Spink will auction the noted Marcus Samuel Collection of Specimen Stamps of Great Britain on 3 December. This includes many unique, rare and exceptional items from all reigns. Enquiries: Spink, telephone 020 7563 4000 •

Exhibitions Congratulations to two of our occasional contributors on their success at Stampex (the Irish national stamp exhibition) in October. Margaret Morris received a gold award and the Michael Giffney Trophy for 'Communications in 19th Century Astronomy', and Brian Warren a vermeil and the Whytes Trophy for 'Northern Ireland Regionals'.

There were 23 British entries to the Bangkok 2003 international exhibition (4-13 October). Large gold medals were awarded to David Springbett and Arthur Woo, and gold medals to Alan Drysdall, Kenneth Clark, Barrie Jay, Alan Huggins, Christopher Harman, Christopher Podger, and Brian Trotter. (Interviews with David Springbett and Christopher Harman were published here in January 2002 and May 1996; an interview with Alan Drysdall appears next month.) The Grand Prix d'Honneur went to Hiroyuki Kanai for his 'Japanese Hand Engraved Issues 1871-76'. The 'Top of the World' exhibits included covers bearing the largest known frankings of the 1d black and 2d blue (Plate 2), respectively of 12 and 15 stamps, both exhibited by Michael Chipperfield. The British representative on the Jury was Jane Moubray, with Christine Earle as apprentice juror. Both have been profiled in the *Bulletin* – September 1996 and October 2002.

Next September Royal Mail will issue stamps to mark the 150th anniversary of the Crimean War. Readers may like to know that an anniversary exhibition is now on show at the National Army Museum, Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 until October 2004. Entitled 'A Most Desperate Undertaking', it tells the story of the war from the soldiers' perspective. The Museum is open daily 10.00-17.30, admission free. Enquiries 020 7730 0717 •

Collect British Stamps The 2004 (55th) edition of the popular *Stanley Gibbons Collect British Stamps* colour checklist is now available, priced £9.95, from Royal Mail Tallents House in Edinburgh as well as from Stanley Gibbons Strand shop and Publications centre at Ringwood, and stamp and book shops •

Obituary (Arthur) Ronald Butler, noted collector of Australian States stamps, died on 7 November, aged 87. Mr Butler, a chartered engineer, was President of the Royal Philatelic Society London 1978-80, and signed the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists in 1975 •

Pillar boxes

Miniature models to collect and enjoy



Ceramic pillar boxes, exclusive to Royal Mail Whether displayed as ornaments, as a collection, or used as piggy banks, these replica pillar boxes are full of charm. All four ceramic pillar boxes are 210mm high and priced at £14.95. Or buy all four together and save £10. Code PY837. Order on-line at www.royalmail.com/originals

'A' Type box First installed in 1879, these boxes continued in production until the 1970s. It bears the Elizabeth II Royal cipher. Code PY796.

Fluted box Modelled on a Doric column, this box was originally cast in 1857 by Smith & Hawkes of Eagle Foundry in Birmingham. It is painted red, which replaced green as the standard colour for letter boxes in 1874. Code PY798.

Victorian 'Penfold' box Made between 1866 and 1879, this box gets its name from the designer J W Penfold. It bears Queen Victoria's Royal cipher and is produced in Post Office red. Code PY795.

Airmail box A reproduction of a box used exclusively between 1930 and 1938 for posting airmail letters, hence it was painted 'air force' blue. A double collection plate showing last collection times and airmail postage rates was added in 1932. Code PY797.

Royal Mail

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