

BRITISH PHILATELIC

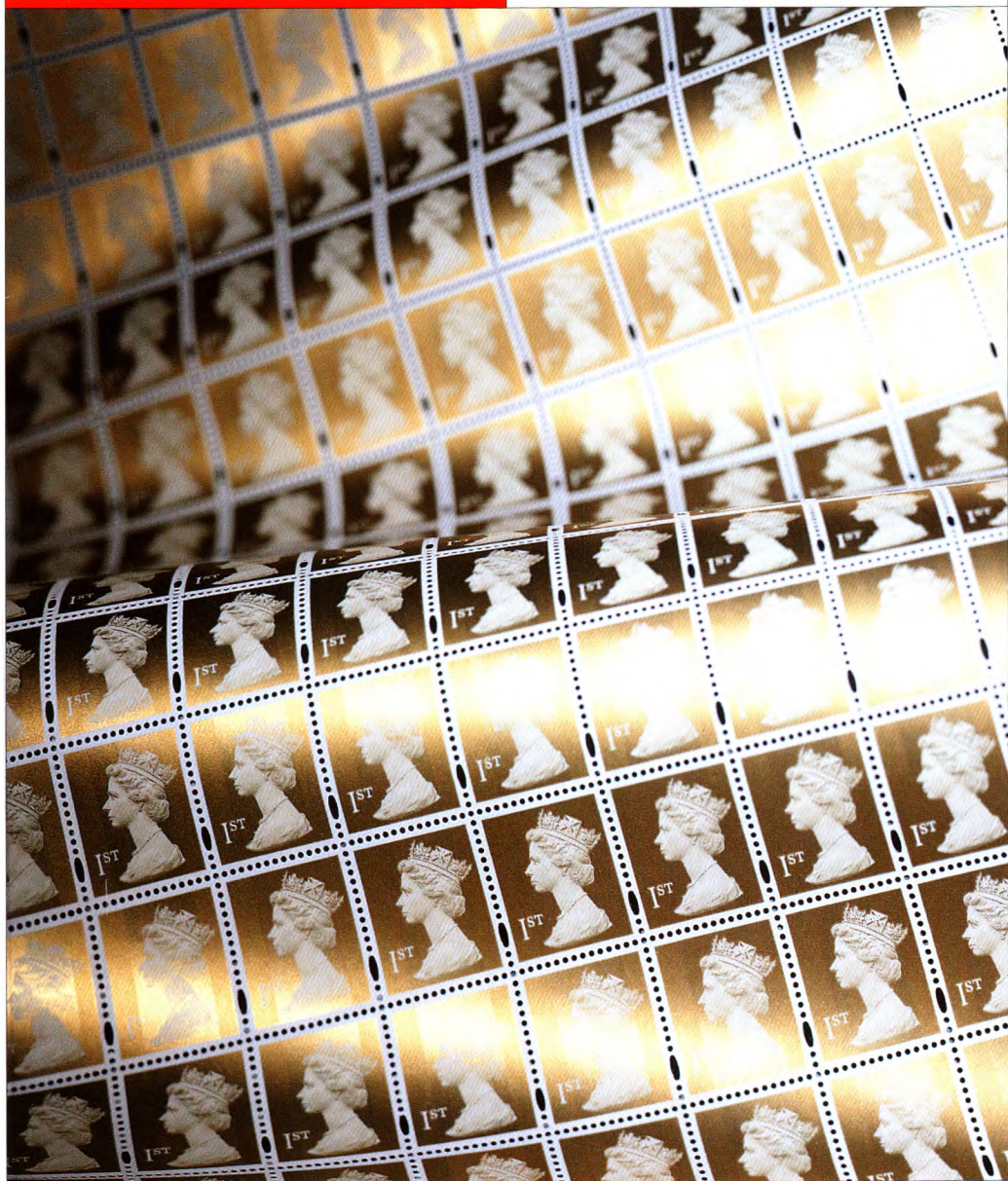
The ROYAL MAIL magazine *for stamp collectors*

Volume 34 Number 7

MARCH 1997 • 85P

Bulletin

Prize competition: win an
unused Penny Black



Forthcoming issues & withdrawals

Below are proposed issues for 29 April. Any changes or additions will be notified in this magazine.

29 April 20p national definitive printed by Harrison, 2nd Class NVI in sheets printed by Walsall. Both produced using EME cylinders ● 1st and 2nd class NVI stamps in coils printed by Harrison using EME cylinders ● 10 x 2nd stamp book printed by Harrison, EME cylinders

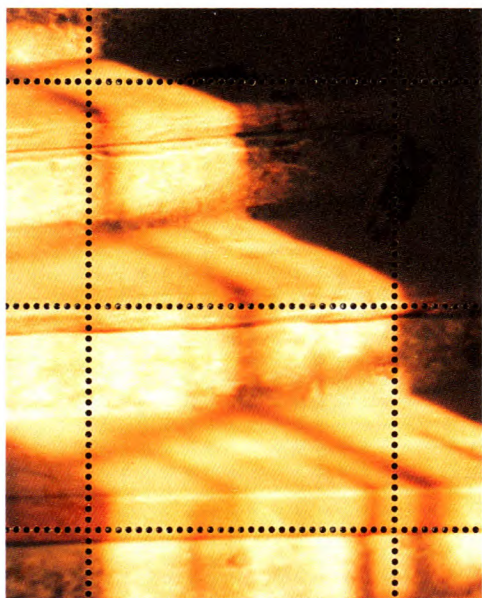
Late news One in seven rolls of the 1st and 2nd class self-adhesive stamps, to be issued on 18 March, will bear serial numbers on the reverse of the backing paper of every 10th stamp in the roll: 0010, 0020, 0030 up to 0100. These numbers are for production checking purposes.

Correction A stamp card reproducing the Hong Kong pictorial label was announced in error in January and February. The card was not produced, but may be issued later with future pictorial label cards. We regret any confusion or disappointment caused.

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

3 March	Issue Scottish aerogramme: Alexander Graham Bell
4 March	Issue St Augustine & St Columba stamp cards
11 March	Issue St Augustine & St Columba stamps and pack
11 March	Withdrawal Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust stamps, pack, and stamp cards
18 March	Issue 1st and 2nd class NVI stamps, self-adhesive rolls of 100 and pack (containing one of each stamp). <i>Note:</i> Available from 300 post offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland, Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets
18 March	Withdrawal Stamp books with Olympic logo: 10 x 1st Harrison, 4 x 35p, 4 x 41p, & 4 x 60p
25 March	Issue Pictorial aerogramme: Captain Cook. <i>Note:</i> Available from Bureau, Philatelic outlets and post offices in Greater London area; on sale elsewhere from 15 April
25 March	Withdrawal 20p definitive sea-green, 2 bands blue fluor, issued March '96
1 April	Issues Revised standard aerogramme (single and pack of six) ● National definitives 1p, 6p, 43p, 50p and £1.00 printed by Harrison using EME cylinders
1 April	Withdrawal Scottish aerogramme: Scottish football
15 April	Withdrawals 100 Years of Going to the Cinema stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards ● 4 x 1st class book with Queen's 70th birthday label; also label pane (unfolded) ● National Postal Museum Post Haste! postcards. <i>Note:</i> To be withdrawn at Bureau, will remain on sale at Museum
21 April	Issues 26p national definitive and 1st NVI printed in gold (in sheets), also presentation pack ● 10 x 1st stamp books containing gold stamps – printed by Harrison & Walsall (photogravure) ● NPM postcards: Prototype Letters & Queen's Silver Wedding, 1972

Contents



Detail from one of the 'stamp' sheets designed by students at the Royal College of Art, for trials of Walsall's new press.

A visit to Walsall DGA

Myall admires the Chesnut gravure press, now running at Walsall Security Printers

203

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Issues & withdrawals for March and April
194

Royal Mail news Self-adhesive update; Gold definitives; Revisions to definitives; New aerogrammes **196**

Stamp scene London Stamp and Postal History Fair; Stamp '97; Philatelic Society anniversaries; Railway letter stamps; Scottish Philatelic Congress; Stamps at Spink **200**

Posting boxes **202**

Private stationery stamped to order Part 3; Registered envelopes and other stationery, by Colin Baker **208**

Out of the Arc Launch of the latest miniature: 1916 Postwoman **211**



Scottish aerogramme Celebrating the birth of Alexander Graham Bell, by James Mackay **212**



Eminent early collectors Number 3; Judge FA Philbrick, by Ron Negus **214**

The OUS overprints Another episode in the philatelic history of Oxford, by Fred Gee **216**



Books New Machin catalogues reviewed by Don Staddon **218**

Competition sponsored by Omniphil Approvals: Win unused Penny Black **221**

Postbag **222**

Events **223**

Royal Mail news Golden wedding stamps

• Self adhesives • Changes to the definitive series • New aerogrammes



Both sheet and book stamps will have two phosphor bands (blue fluor), PVA gum, and are perforated 15 x 14 with elliptical perforations on vertical sides.

A presentation pack (price 90p) containing one of each sheet stamp will be available from the Bureau, Post Office Counters philatelic outlets, and main post offices. There will be no stamp cards for this issue.

Gold definitives As part of Royal Mail's celebrations of the golden wedding anniversary of HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, the 26p national definitive and 1st class non value indicator stamps printed in gold will be issued on 21 April – the birthday of HM The Queen. The gold printing will replace the existing 26p rust and 1st NVI in flame until the end of the year. Special commemorative stamps marking the golden wedding will be issued on 7 October and will feature a specially commissioned photograph of the Royal couple by the Earl of Snowden.

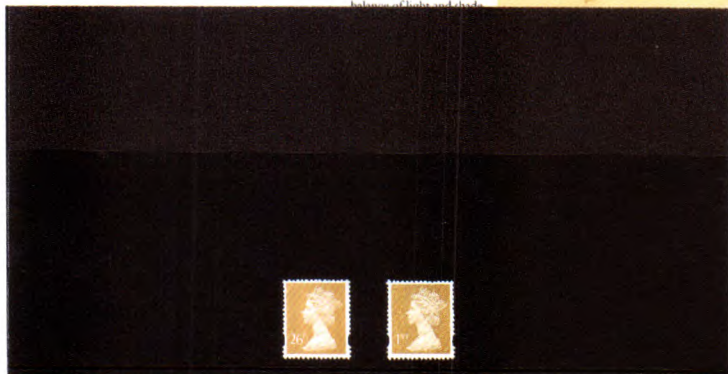
Both 26p and NVI gold stamps will be issued in sheets of 200, printed in photogravure using new computer-produced cylinders by Harrison & Sons Ltd (26p) and Walsall Security printers (1st). The 1st class stamp will also be issued in books of 10 produced by Harrison and Walsall, again printed in photogravure.



and, when not satisfied, remoulded and started the whole process again. In the course of a year's endeavour, he produced three plaster casts of The Queen's profile in bas-relief. His preliminary designs for the stamp surrounded the profile with rather elaborate frames and included the lettering POSTAGE and REVENUE. But the tonal effect depended upon the quality of the modelling in the head and the right balance of light and shade.



The previous sub-types still existed and those philatelists specialising in this series can become involved in paper, printing methods and gum as well as other factors. During the same period, The Post Office began to consider other methods of printing and, for the first time in more than 40 years, low-value definitive stamps were printed by a method other than photogravure when The House of Quetta, John Waddington PLC and Walsall Security Printers Limited printed values in offset lithography. John Enschedé Security Printing of The Netherlands took over the printing of definitives in 1979, and the return to printing the majority of definitives by photogravure, by Walsall and Enschedé, definitive has produced a wide variety of stamps. It had maintained the Post Office with its excellence of work and lived up to the hopes of its collectors of classicism and dignity.





ROYAL MAIL FIRST DAY COVER
NEW DEFINITIVE STAMPS

Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbie Road
Ilkeston
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB



Orders for first day covers

must be received at the
Bureau by 21 April 1997



FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets around a week before 21 April, price 25p.

The Bureau will provide a first day cover service – collectors may order the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps, cancelled with a pictorial ‘first day of issue’ postmark of the Bureau or Windsor, price 96p UK (includes VAT) or 82p overseas (no VAT).

Collectors may send their own stamped covers on the day of issue, for these cancels, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Wexham Road, Slough SL1 1AA (for Windsor). The outer envelope should be endorsed ‘FD DEF 9701’ (Bureau), or ‘FD DEF 9702’ (London SW).

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for collectors who wish to post covers to receive local (mostly non-pictorial) ‘first day of issue’ handstamps.

Details of other sponsored special handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – the Royal Mail’s magazine for postmark collectors. It is available on subscription from the British Philatelic Bureau: £10 UK and Europe; £21.75 rest of world (airmail) ●

Self-adhesive update New 1st and 2nd class self-adhesive NV1 stamps will be issued on 18 March, previewed here last month. They will be available at 300 main post offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland, from the British philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets.

First day posting boxes will be provided at all offices normally offering this service in Scotland and Northern Ireland and at offices in England and Wales with a philatelic outlet – regularly listed on the inside front cover of the *Bulletin*. First day of issue postmarks will be available only for these places. All first day covers posted in Scotland will be given the ‘first day of issue Scotland’ postmark, covers posted in Northern Ireland will receive the ‘first day of issue Belfast’ cancel. Collectors may post covers with just one or both of the new stamps to qualify for the ‘first day of issue’, philatelic counter and sponsored handstamps in use on 18 March ●





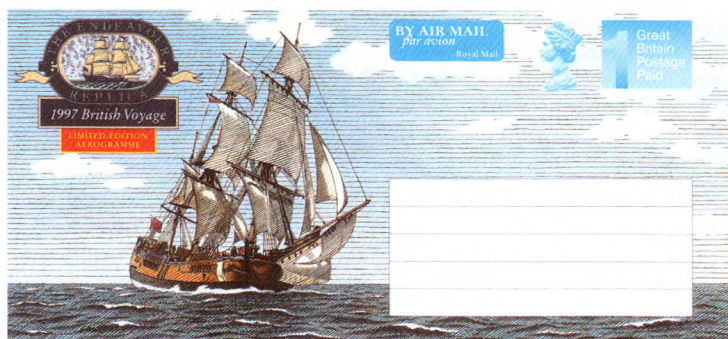
Detail from the aerogramme commemorating Captain Cook (below)

New aerogrammes Royal Mail International announces the issue of a revised standard aerogramme from 1 April. The standard Royal Mail logo will replace the Royal Mail International chevron logo currently in use. The new printing will be available from the Bureau and philatelic outlets from 1 April and from post offices as earlier stocks are exhausted. Price 36p single, £1.99 pack of six.

A pictorial aerogramme commemorating Captain Cook will be issued on 25 March, price 45p. This will initially only be available from the Bureau, philatelic outlets and

post offices in the Greater London area. It will go on sale elsewhere from 15 April.

An aerogramme for the Royal golden wedding is expected in August. The two Scottish aerogrammes for 1997 have already been announced for issue on 3 March (Alexander Graham Bell) and 1 July (Nature of Scotland). The Christmas aerogramme will be released on 7 October •



PO changes in Scotland and Wales Royal Mail has appointed Mr Alex Gibb as its new Director & General Manager for Scotland & Northern Ireland. Mr Gibb, age 50, has worked for the Post Office for 30 years. As General Manager he will be responsible for more than 16,000 staff and a Royal Mail division with a turnover of £480 million. He succeeds Mr John Mackay who retired last Autumn.

Mr Lewis Evans takes over as Chairman of the Post Office Board for Wales and the Marches from 1 April. Mr Evans, age 58 and a fluent Welsh speaker, was educated at Tregaron County School and Trinity College, Carmarthen. His career in banking started in 1962, ending as Managing Director of Girobank last April. He succeeds Mr Colin Burbage who was Head Postmaster of Bromley, Exeter, and Bristol and Postmaster Controller London ECDO & Foreign Section before becoming Chairman of the Wales and the Marches Board in 1986. He received the OBE in 1994 •

New Country stamp printings The National Postal Museum reports new plate numbers for Country stamps: Scotland 20p and 26p Q3Q3 and Q4Q4 (both values), also Q3Q3 and Q4Q4 Wales 26p •

Revised definitives Pending changes to the definitive series will be of interest to specialist collectors. The contract for printing all low value national definitives has now reverted to Harrison & Sons Ltd who currently produce only the 20p and 26p values; other denominations are printed by Joh Enschedé of the Netherlands. In future Enschedé will print the £1.50, £2, £3, and £5 Castle stamps instead of Harrison. The £10 Britannia stamp will continue to be produced by The House of Questa.

Harrisons will now be using computer technology in preparing the printing cylinders – as described here in December 1996 (page 105). The system is known as Electro Mechanical Engraving (EME). Collectors should notice a clearer and sharper impression of The Queen's head and variation in the depth of colour of the background.

The first definitives printed by Harrisons using the EME cylinders – 1p, 6p, 43p, 50p, and £1 values – go on sale at the Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets on 1 April. The 20p will follow on 29 April. They will be available at post offices as stocks of existing stamps are exhausted. There will be no first day of issue facilities for these stamps which are regarded by Royal Mail as varieties rather than new stamps. The colours, perforation, gum and phosphor remains unchanged.

Walsall are also using a computerised photogravure system – described by Douglas Myall elsewhere in this issue. EME cylinders are thus being used for new printings of the 2nd class NV1 stamp printed by Walsall in sheets and by Harrison in books, also for the rolls (coils) of 500 and 1000 1st and 2nd class stamps printed by Harrison. All will be available from the Bureau and philatelic outlets from 29 April, and from post offices as stocks need replacing. There will be no first day facilities •

Quantities issued Collectors may be interested in the numbers issued of some recent aerogrammes and prestige books.

Aerogrammes

1994	Alcock & Brown	51,675
1994	Christmas	852,050
1995	Glasgow School of Art	49,575
1995	Prehistoric Scotland	80,925
1995	Youth Olympics	130,575

Prestige Books

1992	Tolkien	313,200
1993	Beatrix Potter	300,000
1994	Northern Ireland	288,100
1995	National Trust	289,875

Summary of new definitives and books All printed in photogravure using new computer-produced cylinders

- 1 April** 1p, 6p, 43p, 50p and £1.00 printed Harrison (H) in sheets
- 21 April** 26p and 1st NV1 in gold, printed H in sheets
- 21 April** Books of 10 1st NV1 in gold printed H and Walsall (W)
- 29 April** 20p printed H in sheets
- 29 April** 2nd NV1 printed W in sheets
- 29 April** Book of 10 2nd NV1 printed W
- 29 April** Rolls (500 and 1000) 1st and 2nd NV1 printed H

Dates for the availability of other national definitives printed by Harrison using EME cylinders will be announced in due course.

NPM postcards The National Postal Museum has announced that its first set of postcards for 1997 – Prototype Letterboxes – has been postponed. It will now be issued on 21 April, instead of 25 March, together with the second set featuring the Royal Silver Wedding stamps of 1972. The Museum has been closed to the public, for rebuilding work, since November – it is expected to reopen during April •

NPM enquiries Telephone 0171 600 8914

Stamp scene New London event • Stamp '97 • Philatelic societies • Scottish Congress • Editorial anniversary • Stamps at Spinks

Fair opening times

6 March 11.00-20.00

7 March 10.00-18.00

8 March 10.00-17.00

Admission free

Enquiries The Fair has been organised by Trevor Davis and Chris Rainey: 0181 946 4489 or 01268 726687.

Stamp '97 opening times

24 April 11.00-19.00

25/26 April 10.00-18.00

27 April 10.00-17.00

Enquiries 01425 461353

London Stamp and Postal History Fair This new event will be held at the Royal Horticultural Hall, Greycoat Street, London SW1 – familiar to many collectors as the venue for Stampex from 1969 to 1994. Both the body of the main hall and the stage area will be occupied with dealers' scheme booths. They will have tables to sit at for the better comfort and relaxation of visitors. About 100 dealers, from UK and overseas, have booked booths and a number of societies will be holding meetings during the Fair.

The Royal Horticultural Hall is within walking distance of Victoria or St James's Park stations, and the area is well-served by buses. Catering and bar facilities are available •



Stamp '97 Following the success of the 1995 and 1996 exhibitions at Wembley Exhibition Centre and Stamp '96 Autumn at the National Exhibition Centre Birmingham, Stanley Gibbons and Royal Mail will be staging Stamp '97 at Wembley next month. Amongst the attractions will be free admission, prize draw, gift for every visitor and exhibition newspaper. The popular philatelic talks and workshops are being arranged, also the free valuation centre, and celebrity guests.

There is on site car parking and for those travelling by public transport a courtesy coach service from Wembley Park underground station to the Exhibition Centre •

Bridlington enquiries

Malcolm Stockhill on 01262 677394 or Ken Walker on 01262 672488

Newport enquiries J Perry, 12 Whitehall Gardens, Undy, Magor, Newport NP6 3EW

Walton & Weybridge enquiries J M McGrath, Easter Cottage, Oxshott Road, Leatherhead KT22 0DF

Philatelic society anniversaries Our best wishes go to the Bridlington & District, Newport (Gwent) and Walton & Weybridge Philatelic Societies, celebrating their 50th anniversary this year.

Bridlington is offering a range of activities including a Golden Jubilee Dinner on 7 March, a talk on the Postal History of Bridlington 1785-1926 on 6 April, a stamp fair and exhibition on 7 June and a philatelic weekend staged by the American Stamp Club of Great Britain on 3-5 October.

Newport will provide the society display at this year's Annual Convention of the Federation of South Wales Philatelic Societies at Port Talbot on 3 May. The Society meets alternate Wednesdays at the Civic Centre.

Walton & Weybridge will host the Spring Convention of the Surrey Federation at Weybridge Catholic Parish Hall on 19 April. The Society, one of the largest in Surrey, meets every fortnight in Weybridge Library. Visitors and new members are welcome; the Society has one of the best exchange packets in Surrey and a good reputation for the calibre of the speakers •

Railway letter stamps The North Yorkshire Moors Railway has announced three issues of railway letter stamps during 1997. The first, in April, will comprise a pair of stamps for the 150th anniversary of steam on the Whitby & Pickering Railway. Four stamps in June will mark the 30th anniversary of the NYMR Trust, and in October a stamp will commemorate the Royal Golden Wedding. All stamps are of 25p value. First day covers and special cancels will be produced.

New stamps are announced by the Bluebell Railway for issue on 29 March and 23 August. For details of the 29 March issue see *Commemorative Covers Review*. The August issue will feature industrial locomotive *Baxter* •

Editorial anniversary Congratulations to Richard West who this month completes 25 years as Editor of *Stamp Magazine*. Richard has been a collector since schooldays and joined Link House Publications after university and a short spell in teaching. Whilst at university he wrote for the magazine as a special contributor. He was appointed Deputy Editor in November 1971 and Editor the following March on the retirement of the late Arthur Blair.

Richard is active in organised philately in GB, for many years President of the National Philatelic Society, and still Secretary of the Brighton & Hove Philatelic Society. He serves on the British Philatelic Trust and is well-known as an exhibition judge. He still finds time for collecting GB 'window books' and model vehicles. As well as editing *Stamp Magazine*, he is Executive Editor of *Model Collector*. Richard wrote about his early days as a stamp collector in the *Bulletin* of December 1985 and January 1986. He received the Association of British Philatelic Societies Congress Medal for services to philately in 1995 •

NYMR enquiries

NYMR Letter Service, 5 Tiber View, Brinsworth, Rotherham, S60 5EA

Bluebell Railway enquiries

Bluebell Railway Letter Service, 64 Gordon Road, Carshalton Beeches SM5 3RE



Richard West This month celebrating 25 years as editor of *Stamp Magazine*

Scottish Philatelic Congress The 68th Annual Congress of the Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies opens at 09.00 at Falkirk Town Hall on 22 March. The event, hosted by the Paisley Philatelic Society on its 50th anniversary, will be attended by many top stamp and postcard dealers and the British Philatelic Bureau. After the official opening at 11.00, the major awards for the year and the trophies for the national exhibition will be presented. Sunday 23 March will be Collectors' Day with displays by local societies and meetings of specialist societies. Parties of school children will be most welcome. A souvenir cover will be available – see *Commemorative Covers Review* for details •

New Sussex stamp club Despite bad weather, 10 local stamp collectors attended the first meeting of the East Worthing Stamp Club in January. The following officers were elected: Stan Hudspith (Chairman), Paul Richards (Vice-Chairman) and John Hobbs (Secretary/Treasurer). Brian Baldock, President of the Association of Sussex Philatelic Societies was there to see the launch. Meetings will be held at the East Worthing Community Centre, Pages Lane on the first Monday of the month, commencing at 14.30 •

Enquiries T Woods, 32 Bryan Street, Hamilton ML3 0JW

Enquiries John Hobbs FRPSL, 12 Ophir Road, Worthing BN11 2SR. Telephone 01903 237440

Stamps at Spink Spink, the fine art dealers and coin, medal and banknote auctioneers, have announced that the International Stamp Department at Christie's became part of the Spink Group as from 7 January 1997. Spink was acquired by Christie's International in April 1993. The Spink Stamp Department will be headed by Richard Watkins, formerly Managing Director of Stanley Gibbons, who joins the Spink Board. A full programme of stamp auctions is scheduled for 1997 to be held in London, New York, Hong Kong and Singapore. The first Spink stamp auction will be held in Christie's Ryder Street Rooms, London SW1 on 12 March 1997. Commenting on the amalgamation Tim Hirsch, Managing Director of Spink, said 'this is a positive step bringing together the world's leading coin dealer and auctioneer with a major stamp operation. It will enable Spink, in association with Christie's worldwide network, to further enhance its services for collectors' ●

Posting boxes 166



Two interesting boxes are featured this month. The first contribution comes from Mr C Lander of Hertfordshire and shows the box outside the main Letchworth Post Office, taken in 1993. Mr Lander tells us the box was taken out of use after a new double pillar box had been erected nearby. The wrong spelling on the notice was corrected a few weeks later.

The second picture, submitted by Mr J Bennett of Blackheath, London shows the Victorian box in the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, London SE18. The Academy, which ceased training officer-cadets in 1939, was opened to the public for one day only in September 1996 when Mr Bennett was able to take the photograph. The

box is now a 'listed' historical object, seen only by a limited number of people over the past half-century.

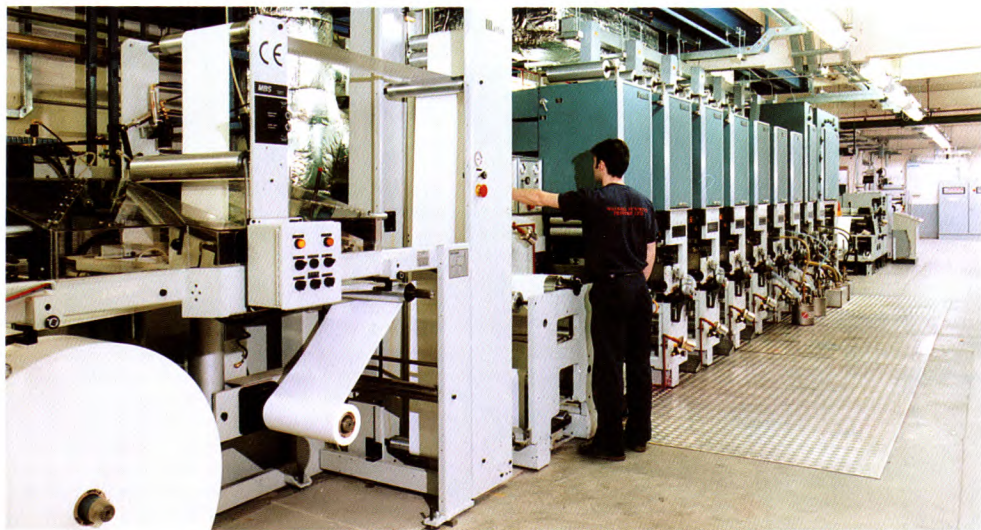
Readers interested in posting boxes should consider joining the Letter Box Study Group which has some 700 members. The Society publishes an interesting quarterly newsletter, postcards and other literature including data sheets and listings of preserved boxes in museums, letter boxes on postmarks, etc. Circulated with the newsletter is *Philately and the Letter Box*, compiled by Glenn Morgan, giving details of recent stamps showing postboxes, postmarks, cachets, and other philatelic material ●

For details of the Letter Box Study Group send a stamped addressed envelope to the Membership Secretary: Sally Jones, 43 Miall Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 9BS



A visit to Walsall

D G A Myall admires the Chesnut gravure press, recently installed at Walsall Security Printers



IT WAS STILL DARK when I left home one early January morning to catch a train 13 miles away. Snow and ice were everywhere. The temperature had been below freezing for several days and there was no prospect of a thaw. To cap it, an incident on the line meant that a journey which should have taken five hours took seven. All in all, not a good day for travelling you might think. But when your destination is one of Royal Mail's printers of GB postage stamps there is no such thing as a bad day. I was off to visit Walsall Security Printers to see their new gravure press, then still undergoing its running-in trials.

The parent company of Walsall Security Printers (wsp) have been at the same site for over 100 years. They have always been a forward-looking firm and have introduced many innovations to the philatelic world. As long ago as 1963, they printed the world's first foil circular stamps for Tonga. The following year, they printed the world's first free form self-adhesive stamps for Sierra Leone. Coming nearer to home, they were responsible for Royal Mail's first self-adhesive definitive stamps which were issued in booklet

form in October 1993. All those issues were printed by lithography, a process for which wsp have won many awards for excellence. Now, this enterprising firm are turning their attention to photogravure. They have just installed a brand new press and peripheral machinery to enable them to compete in world markets as well as for the demanding contracts for British stamp production.

New press The new press is a reel-fed nine-unit CHESNUT, made by a USA company of that name in Fairfield, New Jersey. At one end are reels of unprinted paper; at the other end are stacks of printed and perforated stamps. What happens in the few seconds in between is one of the miracles of modern technology. I am always surprised how complicated modern presses are and this one is no exception. Yet many of the processes and controls are electronic, needing just two operators for overall control and monitoring. As well as the press itself, there are a paper feeder, a sheeter, a perforator and a stacker, together measuring 86ft in length. So large is this set-up that an extension to the firm's premises had to be spe-

cially built to house it. Various parts of the installation were made by firms in the USA, France and Sweden, as well as in the UK. Such a system does not come cheap and it will be some time before the large investment involved is recouped. What this does is to demonstrate WSP's long-term commitment to the gravure process. I will now try to explain the sequence involved in printing gravure stamps as it will be practised at Walsall.

As stated, the press is reel-fed. The paper is supplied ready gummed with polyvinyl alcohol, PVA, by Coated Papers Ltd of Macclesfield. Incidentally, the gum is colourless and apparent changes in colour noticed recently are due to slight differences in batches of paper stock. The paper is single pane width, so it seems that the familiar dot/no dot cylinder blocks of other gravure printers will not occur. Theoretically, two panes could be printed one above the other instead of side-by-side but the cylinders would have to be quite large. The normal sized cylinder for the small definitives will have a circumference of 21 stamps, leaving one stamp height to provide a gutter each revolution which will form the top and bottom margins of the finished sheets of 200. (These numbers are, of course, different for the larger special issues.)

Two reels are loaded into a paper unit made by Martin Automatic of Rockford, Illinois, USA. The reels are used alternately. When one is used up the machine automatically switches to the other and the two ends are spliced diagonally. The join is marked with red tape to aid identification at the end of the process to ensure that the relevant sheet is removed. The used roll is then replaced with a fresh one ready for its turn. In this way, continuous printing is maintained. From start to finish, the paper is kept under the right tension to suit the printing speed. The paper will not be released for printing until there is sufficient 'pull'. The tension is checked and controlled at various points; for example, at the end of the ninth printing unit and before perforation.

By choosing a press with nine units, WSP have indicated that they are easily capable of printing special issues which are often multi-coloured. Indeed, the first product for Royal Mail will be



Two-sided printing Definitive stamps for books sold in 1982-83 endorsed with a letter D, for discount

the Tales of Terror (Horror) issue on 13 May. A unique feature will be the printing of certain parts of the design with a fluorescent ink, revealing a ghostly image under ultra-violet light. Multicolour printing is also required for some of the GB booklet stamps. Recent examples are the 1996 Christmas issue (printed in gravure by Harrison) and this year's flowers greetings stamps (printed in lithography by WSP).

Of course, not all nine units have to be used on each job, but the varying capabilities of each unit and their arrangement provide great flexibility. The first four in line units can print either side of the paper; the others print one side only. Not all units have to be employed at the same time and those in use do not have to be sequential. One could, for example, use four units as follows: unit 1, colour 1, printed on the front of the paper (ie not the gummed side); unit 3, colour 2, printed on the back over the gum; unit 4, colour 3, printed on the front; unit 7, phosphor, printed over colours 1 and 3.

Two-sided printing of postage stamps would be unusual but is occasionally required. For example, GB definitive stamps for books sold at a discount in 1982-83 were endorsed with a letter 'D', for discount, or a star, as an accountancy and security measure. (These were printed in photo-gravure by Harrison and, because the endorsement was printed over the gum, the ink was an edible one!) So, if Royal Mail were ever tempted to repeat their generosity, WSP would be able to cope.

Units 8 and 9 are larger than the others (9 is



also larger than 8). These cause the paper to travel further and give extra drying time if needed. In fact, a large part of the installation is concerned with drying and hazards associated with high speed printing. The inks use a volatile solvent to speed drying. This gives off an inflammable vapour which must be extracted in pipes and disposed of safely. A back grill has three large gas burners which supply hot air into each unit to dry the ink. Each unit has a row of hot air vents and there is an exhaust extract system. This combination of heat and flammable materials requires careful watching. An added precaution is a system of fire extinguishers which come into operation automatically; there is one inside the hood which covers each printing unit and others are placed at strategic points.

The ink buckets are surprisingly small, holding only 5kg but this is enough for quite a long print run. For very large runs, such as would be used for some of the Machin definitives, 20kg buckets are available.

Like most modern gravure presses, each unit has a system of electrostatic assist. Differential polarity is applied to the paper to ensure that all the ink is extracted from the tiny cells of the cylinders. Any slight failure in this regard results in scattered white dots appearing on the image. Collectors refer to this as the 'snowstorm effect', but printers know it more prosaically as 'dot skip'.

Camera control An important control is placed just after the last of the printing units. This is an overhead camera with a stroboscopic light which

can take a freeze frame of the printed web passing underneath. The main purpose is to check the registration. The results are displayed on a monitor and any faults can be corrected on line. While it is possible to photograph every sheet, a more workable proportion is of the order of every fifth sheet.

Precise registration of both inks and perforators is a vital part of high-class printing and wsp pay great attention to it. They have installed the Eltromat register system, whereby two operators can control the whole process. Each colour cylinder prints a triangle in the margin of the web. This is used as a reference for the next unit which prints a further triangle in its own colour. And so on. The Eltromat display and control panel enable fine adjustments to be made on line. A similar system is used for controlling the registration of the perforator. In this case, the control marks are thick lines on the opposite sides of the sheet and at right-angles to the direction of travel.

Perforation is done on line by a machine made by Ab Produktion Svenska of Sweden and which is known as an APS, from the firm's initials. The characteristics of APS perforators are well-known to collectors of modern GB stamps. One has been used on Harrison's Jumelle press for many years. A cylinder carries the pin layout in embossed form, including those which produce the ellipses. This does not punch out complete holes in the manner of the Bickel heads used for wsp's lithographic production. Instead, the raised pins push the paper into pimples which are then shaved off by a revolving blade cutter. The blades are curved at an angle, similar to the blades of a lawnmower, although much smaller and closer together of course. APS perforators usually leave traces of powdered gum and paper near the holes on the gum side, known to collectors as 'swarf'. As the blade cutters wear, this is likely to occur more often. To counteract this a second set of blades can be brought into operation. This method of perforating results in the waste being in the form of a powder rather than as 'confetti' discs. This dust is a potential hazard and has to be extracted through pipes into a hopper for safe disposal.

The pin perforating cylinders are made for

wsp by outside specialist suppliers. The one I saw had a circumference of 24 (small) stamps although ones with a circumference of 21 stamps are perfectly possible and usable. It is most unlikely that perforating cylinders smaller than printing cylinders would ever be made. One result of the larger size that is of potential interest to philatelists is that if a pin were damaged the effect would migrate and would not appear at the same position on all of the finished sheets (or booklet panes). 'Missing pin' blocks and panes are of great interest to collectors. (Is there anything which isn't?)

From there, and very much with the future in mind, wsp decided to install an on-line die cutter in the firm belief that the world's leading postal administrations will be turning towards self-adhesive stamps as the costs of producing them begin to compete favourably with traditional gum products.

The next press stage is an on-line sheeter. This is capable of dealing with variable sheet lengths. It delivers the sheets into one of two bays. It is a simple matter to switch from one bay to the other when sufficient sheets have been delivered. From time to time the operator may need to remove a sheet for examination. These are put back so that, although a pile may consist of the correct number of sheets, these may not always be in strict numerical sequence.

Finally, the press is equipped with re-reeling and slitting equipment to enable coils of stamps to be produced.

An important part of the trials of the new press is, naturally, cylinder making. The cylinders for the Chesnut will be made by Electro-Mechanical Engraving, or EME. This is similar to that used by Enschedé of the Netherlands, which was described by Douglas Muir in the *Bulletin* of January 1992. In that case, and for the cylinders to be made by Harrison (who are also changing to EME cylinder making), a Klischograph machine is used. One fact of interest to specialist collectors is that the images on the EME cylinders will be at 300 dots per inch (dpi). Various densities were tried out, including up to 600 dpi, but the best results for Machin stamps are provided by

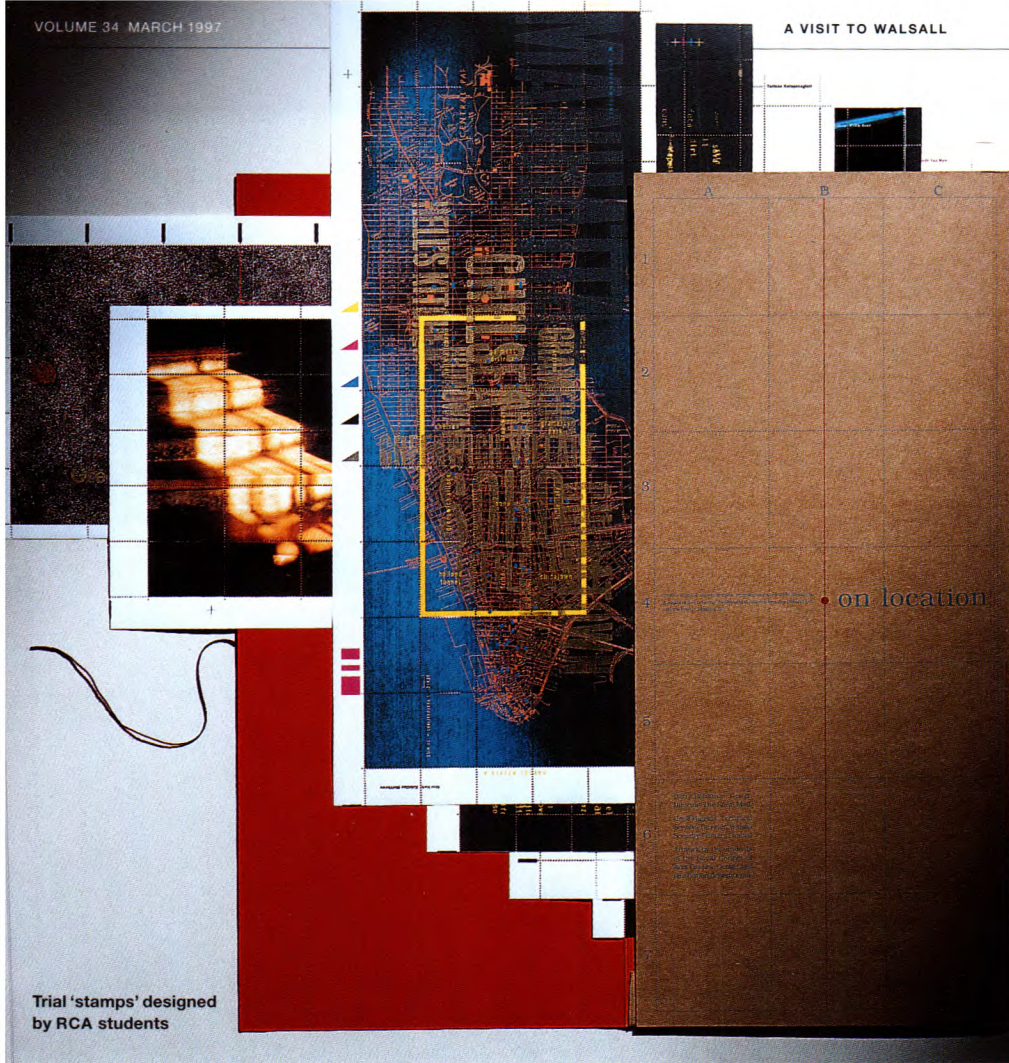
300 dpi. For this method of engraving, a single original image is sufficient. wsp's gravure cylinders, including those used to print the phosphor ink, will be numbered. The numbers will have the w prefix traditionally used by this firm.

It would be a waste of the Chesnut's capabilities if it were to be used only for monochrome GB definitives. To see just what it is capable of, extensive trials have taken place with multicolour printing. In collaboration with Barry Robinson, Design Director of Royal Mail, and the Royal College of Art, wsp have printed 12 original designs, representing worldwide locations. Each is an all-over design comprising 50 stamps of special issue size. They were designed as test pieces by students at the College. They employ many very fine lines, large areas of solid colour and some unusual colours, including metallic inks, exploiting the full range of the Chesnut, including printing over the gum. I can speak only as a layman, but I am very impressed with the near photographic quality of the printing which is such a feature of the gravure process compared with the rather flat appearance typical of lithography.

wsp have also had the foresight to further enhance the press's capability for producing self-adhesive stamps in sheets or reels. A special in-line die-cutting station ensures that exactly the same image can be printed on gummed or pressure sensitive materials in one pass. This strengthens wsp's position as a leading self-adhesive stamp supplier.

As readers know, one of my main interests is stamps in booklets. To make these, several other processes have to be undertaken after the printed and perforated sheets are stacked at the end of the print run. Unwanted margins have to be removed and the sheets cut into panes of four or 10, the standard sizes for everyday books of Non Value Indicators (NVI's). To ensure that the separation is accurate and does not spoil the carefully placed perforations, a system of bursting is used.

Booklet cover production will still be by lithography. Covers are printed on 250gsm board on a six-unit Man Roland press, capable of printing 700 sheets an hour. The units print: black, yellow, light blue (barcode and text), dark blue, red



Trial 'stamps' designed
by RCA students

and varnish. The black and yellow print the inside of the covers and the other units the outside, all in one pass. Interestingly, the text on the outside back covers is blue although the red background makes it look black.

New printing contracts were awarded last November and wsp's new press will eventually be used for all their definitive stamp production. One of the most important effects of the changes in supplier is that the 12 current Country issues and the two NVIs in sheet form will be printed by gravure for the first time. In fact, apart from

Questa's machine-vend booklets and their books of 10 × 2nd-class NVIs, all future Machins will be gravure.

Although I was facing another long journey, I left wsp's factory full of admiration for the skill and dedication of the staff. It was obvious to me that they all have a great personal interest in their jobs and a fully justified pride in their product. I extend my grateful thanks to Royal Mail and to Geoff Higgins, wsp's Technical Services Director, for making my visit possible ●

Private stationery stamped to order part 3 Registered envelopes and other stationery, by Colin Baker



DURING QUEEN VICTORIA'S REIGN no privately stamped registered envelopes were made which were officially approved for sending coin through the post, the use of scrim as a strengthening aid to the inside of envelopes being used solely by the Post Office. But many privately stamped envelopes were used as registered letters to carry papers, some being purposely printed with the necessary blue lines and markings while others had the crossed lines and registration symbols added by hand.

Privately printed registered envelopes were usually stamped to cover both the postage and registration fee, although in Victoria's reign only dies for the embossed postage stamps were used. The official Victorian 2d registration dies were never impressed on private material.

From 1935, however, until the end of George VI's reign, permission was given for the various values of combined postage and registration dies to be used on private envelopes, although much of the material produced in this way was for philatelic rather than true commercial purposes.

Opposite Lettersheet (top left and right) with dividend cheque (removed), showing income tax at 4s6d (22½ p) in the pound; private lettersheet (lower left) used from Pall Mall, London, probably philatelically inspired; letter card (lower right) in a similar size and format to Post Office issues, but without the standard heading.

Lettersheets The general public never really took to lettersheets, possibly because gummed envelopes which quickly became available in the 1840s were much more convenient and most people could not be bothered folding single sheets of paper and sealing them with wax. However, some private lettersheets were produced which were stamped at Somerset House at the basic letter rate. From the latter half of Victoria's reign continuing into the 20th century, it became the practice to use lettersheets rather than envelopes for items such as questionnaires, company financial results or dividend statements, the latter including tear off dividend payment cheques. These all make interesting reading, particularly the dividend payments with their contemporary interest rates and levels of income tax.

In addition to these lettersheets, which were prepared by businesses for their own use, some plain stamped sheets were also manufactured for sale to the public. Victorian items can easily be distinguished from the PO issues of 1840/50 as the latter were all printed on paper with silk threads and private lettersheets were printed on plain paper. Although early lettersheets were manufactured for commercial reasons, many of those produced in later years were philatelically inspired, with few having any commercial purpose.

Letter cards Few privately printed letter cards were produced, although surprisingly the earliest known private item predates to PO version by five years. Until the late 1930s, embossed stamps of the appropriate value were impressed on these letter cards, but in the last few years of George V's reign and during that of George VI letterpress stamps were employed. Some items were printed on their fronts with the wording 'LETTER CARD' rather like the PO versions. Since all letter cards were charged at the letter rate of postage, this was not an official requirement and many items omitted the heading.

Certificates of posting The PO first produced stamped certificates of posting in 1877, but these were not frequently used and only four years later, they were withdrawn from sale. All future PO certificates were issued unstamped and required the addition of an adhesive stamp of the correct value prior to being used. Since 1982, by EEC ruling, no charge has been made.

1d certificate of posting with additional 1d adhesive (making 1p). The format closely followed that of the unstamped PO issue and was approved by them.

CERTIFICATE OF POSTING
Unregistered Postal Packets (except Parcels)

Sender to enter below the name and address as written on the letter or packet. (See also OVERLEAF).

John Town
14 Home Shopping Service
PO Box 50
BURNHAM 23 574



A postage stamp or stamps to the value of 1d. to be affixed in the space above by the sender.

A letter, not for registration or recorded delivery, addressed as above, has been posted here this day.

Accepting Officer's Initials _____

Some privately produced certificates of posting are known with Queen Elizabeth II letterpress stationery stamps, all of these being prepared with the agreement of the PO. Like their Victorian counterparts, they were not used in large numbers and copies are not often seen today. Some of these were also philatelically inspired.



The earliest private stationery air letter (top) and typical forces airletter (stamped at the inland rate for forces use).

Airletters The postal stationery airletter was a gradual development from the simple sheet of paper, then known as an 'air mail letter card', which was issued to British forces in the Middle East in 1941. This in turn had been based on a similar air mail letter card used in Iraq from 1933 onwards. The British items either went post free for personnel on active service, or carried the 3d adhesive stamp where this concession was not applicable.

In 1942, an unstamped civilian airletter was introduced in Great Britain, pending the introduction of a postal stationery version in 1943. These quickly became very popular, being valid to many countries throughout the world. Following the cessation of hostilities in 1945, the use of the airletter eventually became world-wide, its name being changed to aérogramme by international agreement in 1952.

No private postal stationery airletters were prepared from the time the civilian airletter was first issued in 1943 until 1957 when one was submitted to Somerset House and stamped with the George VI embossed stationery stamp, five years into the reign of Queen Elizabeth, but prior to the equivalent QEII 6d stamp being available. Subsequently many of the Forces series of airletters, which were originally distributed without stamps, were printed with a variety of Elizabeth II stationery stamps. All these issues were philatelically inspired, many carrying commemorative handstamps. The reason for the lack of commercially produced airletters is simple. During this period, all standard PO airletters were sold at their face value and there was no incentive for businesses to produce their own stamped airletters since these would have been more expensive than buying the same item at a post office.

The end of an important era This insight into the history of stamped to order stationery shows that its story is as fascinating as its counterpart concerning the development of PO issues. New ideas for stationery design and campaigns by the trade for the relaxation of a variety of regulations lead to a constantly changing system of payment for many different postal applications. The 118 years of stamping private material, which came to an end in 1973, was an important stage in the constantly developing and changing postal system in this country, now replaced by high-tech prepayment methods, which no doubt will themselves be superseded by other systems in the future •

Out of the Arc Post Office Archives' first miniature to be released in 1997 shows a postwoman of 1916, wearing the first uniform issued to postwomen in this country.

Simon Bates reports

PRIOR TO 1914, although the Post Office employed over 5000 women, only a minute number of these were employed at a uniformed grade. As these numbers were not felt sufficient to warrant a full uniform of their own, women were issued only a waterproof cape and skirt, leggings or gaiters and a breast badge. Following the outbreak of the First World War the numbers of women employees in Britain grew rapidly as they rushed to replace the tens of thousands of men who left work to serve in the armed forces. At the end of October 1915 there were 1700 'Women Postmen' and 900 Girl Messengers. These figures continued to rise for the duration of the war and by the time of the Armistice there were approximately 14,000 Postwomen and 6000 Girl Messengers.

As the number of its women employees increased The Post Office began to think of providing them with uniforms similar to those already worn by Postmen. In February 1916 a Post Office circular stated that 'Uniform... will as soon as possible be supplied to Postwomen'.

This first uniform consisted of a coat in blue serge and red-piping and a long skirt also in blue serge. The hem of the skirt was edged in leather in response to the 'large amount of stair work' required of postal delivery staff. Though initially the skirt was plain blue, red piping was added in 1917.

The first hat to be issued to Postwomen was made of straw, with a broad circular brim. The hat was dyed blue and had a brass badge with the initials 'GPO' above a blue ribbon edged in red. This hat was not particularly popular with its wearers; there were complaints that it was too heavy and that the large brim made it unsuitable for use in high winds. Hats of the same type but with a smaller brim were duly ordered and both variants were available from 1917.

With the end of the war the thousands of women working for the Post Office made way for the returning ex-servicemen. By 1923 there were only 160 uniformed Postwomen.

Miniature No 11 will be made available to *Bulletin* readers at the special introductory price of £22.95 (normal price £25.95). This offer will be available only until 31 March 1997 and will be limited to one per customer. Please remember to quote *Philatelic Bulletin* with your order. Cheques should be made out to 'The Post Office' in £ sterling, all orders to the address opposite. A handling charge of 60p per order should be included. When ordering, please allow 28 days for delivery.

NB In response to an increase in production costs the prices of all miniatures were increased by £1 from 1 January 1997. An updated price list is available on request from the above address •



Miniature number 11 As with all of the figurines in this series, every feature of the 1916 Postwoman has been painstakingly researched by members of the Archives team in order to guarantee historical accuracy

Orders to Post Office Archives & records services, Freeling House, Mount Pleasant Complex, Phoenix Place entrance, London EC1A 1BB



Alexander Graham Bell by James Mackay

On 3 March a Scottish aerogramme, designed by Graven Images of Glasgow and printed by McCorquodale, celebrates the 150th anniversary of the birth of Alexander Graham Bell.

BELL WAS BORN IN EDINBURGH on 3 March 1847 and simply christened Alexander, after his grandfather, a pioneer of elocution. On his eleventh birthday Aleck announced that all he wanted as a present was a middle name, and he chose Graham, the surname of a young Canadian who was then lodging with the family. Educated at the Royal High School of Edinburgh, he later attended classes at the universities of Edinburgh and London but left before graduating.

During his student period he also worked as a teacher of English and elocution at a private school in Elgin. His father Melville Bell had followed in his father's footsteps and become a professor of elocution. He went much further, and devised a system called Visible Speech whereby every sound of the human voice could be faithfully reproduced by means of a symbol. In the furtherance of this work, Aleck himself was drawn into elocution and phonetics, but when he discovered that Visible Speech could be used to teach deaf-mutes to speak, his career changed dramatically.

The early deaths of their other two sons from tuberculosis, and fears for Aleck's health, induced Melville and Eliza Bell to emigrate to Canada in 1870, taking Aleck with them. They settled at Brantford, Ontario but two years later, Aleck moved to Boston where he established a school for training teachers of the deaf. In 1873 he was appointed Professor of Vocal Physiology at the University of Boston, while continuing to work privately with deaf-mutes, one of whom, Mabel Hubbard, later became his wife.

A talented pianist, Bell showed a party trick to the Hubbard family: if he sang a note into the

grand piano, the appropriate string would resonate. From this came the principle of harmonic or multiple telegraphy. Mabel's father, Gardiner Hubbard, backed Bell in his experiments to devise a practical method of sending several telegrams down the wire simultaneously, and it was while engaged in this work that Bell and his assistant Tom Watson stumbled on telephony, the conversion of sounds into electrical impulses which could be transmitted by wire and turned back into recognisable sounds at the receiving end. The principle of telephony was first enunciated at the family home in Brantford in 1874, and to this day Brantford is proud of its epithet, the Telephone City. Canada issued a stamp in 1974 to celebrate the centenary of the telephone, two years ahead of the rest of the world.

Turning theory into practice proved extremely hard work, and it was not until early in 1876 that Bell and Watson had produced their first primitive 'gallows frame' telephone (shown on the aerogramme). At the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia that summer, Bell demonstrated the telephone before a distinguished gathering of scientists, including Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil. In 1877 he organised the Bell Telephone Company, married Mabel, and spent his honeymoon in Britain. During that period he set up the British Bell Telephone Company. In 1878 he opened the first telephone exchange in Scotland, and a picture of the Bell exchange in Glasgow also appears on the aerogramme.

With the income from his shares in Bell Telephone, he could have afforded to sit back idly, but Bell worked tirelessly for the rest of his long life. He purchased an estate at Baddeck, Nova

Scotia, and thereafter spent each summer in Canada and the winter in Washington.

In 1880 he improved on Edison's phonograph and transformed what was little more than a curiosity into an efficient and commercially viable machine. Since his boyhood he had studied the flight of birds and this led him into aviation, working with both the Wright Brothers and Samuel Langley. At Baddeck he formed an aviation company, encouraging young inventors such as Glenn Curtiss, and it was here that the Silver Dart, the first aeroplane in the British Empire, took to the air in 1909.

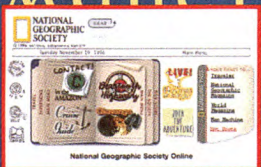
The tragic deaths of both infant sons from breathing failure led him to invent the iron lung which would later save countless lives from polio. Summoned to the bedside of President Garfield after he had been shot, he devised an electric bullet probe which was widely used during the Spanish-American and Boer Wars before the advent of x-rays. He invented the photophone and was also a pioneer of hydrofoils. Not least, he advanced scientific exploration, helping his father-in-law to found the National Geographic Society and subsequently becoming its President (also shown on the aerogramme). He invented the tetrahedron to make light but strong airframes, and this principle is now widely used in constructional engineering; and he was a pioneer in genetics, with long-running experiments in improved breeds of sheep.

He never lost sight of his original work, and till the end of his days he laboured to improve the lot of the deaf, training them to lip read and speak normally. He also worked with people who were blind, deaf and dumb, most notably Helen Keller (shown with her teacher, Ann Sullivan Macy, on a us stamp of 1980).

Bell has been portrayed on numerous stamps since 1940, when he appeared in the us Inventors series, and especially in 1976 when the centenary of the telephone was globally celebrated. On that occasion Royal Mail released a set of four stamps showing the uses of the telephone, but did not portray the inventor himself •

Bell, Alexander Graham

Edinburgh born and bred, Bell devoted his life to communication. In North America he pursued the family profession of elocution and showed how speech could be taught to the deaf. Meanwhile his telegraph experiments led him to devise an apparatus to transmit sound by electricity. In March 1876 Bell was granted the US patent for the telephone; days later he transmitted the first phone message. The photophone, his device to transmit sound by light, anticipated today's optical fibres. Furthermore, as president of the National Geographic Society, Bell was instrumental in refashioning its unique journal.



By 1879 the first British telephone exchange was wired up in Glasgow. Little more than a century later, most main phone lines use light rather than electricity. Digital technology now permits the phone networks to be the information superhighway of the internet.

Eminent early collectors 3 FA Philbrick, by Ron Negus

Just two decades after the Penny Black was issued, people had already started to collect and study stamps. Prominent among these enthusiasts was the ‘father of British philately’, Frederick Adolphus Philbrick.



As a barrister Philbrick enjoyed a large and lucrative practice, with chambers in the Temple, and specialised in railway company litigation

BY THE EARLY 1860s, just two decades after the Penny Black was issued, people had already started to collect and study stamps. One small band of these enthusiasts met every Saturday afternoon at the church of the Parish of Allhallows Staining in the City of London, which was the home of the Rev F J Stainforth. A prominent member of this little group was Frederick Adolphus Philbrick, a young lawyer, then in his late twenties, who has been referred to, in later years, as the ‘father of British philately’.

Philbrick was born in June 1835 at Colchester, Essex, where his father, a local solicitor, was appointed Town Clerk in the following year. His education began at the Colchester Royal Grammar School, where he proved an exceptional student who subsequently went to London University and obtained a BA degree in 1853. After serving articles in his father’s practice, he was called to the Bar in 1860.

His earnings enabled him to spend large sums on his stamp collection. Like many early collectors, he preferred mint specimens, where possible, and housed these in leather-bound albums. The right hand pages held the stamps, whilst the opposite pages were ruled with red lines on which were written relevant descriptions. As these albums were not loose-leaf, the available space gradually became congested and stamps were occasionally mounted one above the other.

Nearly complete The collection was only missing a very few issues, however, and Philbrick was often asked to pronounce on the genuineness of specimens sent to him by other collectors. He was a serious student and in 1862 had worked with the Rev Stainforth to produce the second edition

of Mount Brown's stamp catalogue – one of the earliest recorded. By 1864, he had started to contribute regularly to the philatelic magazines of the day and penned a number of articles under the pseudonym 'Amateur'.

In 1869, the informal meetings that had begun at Allhallows Staining led to the formation of the Philatelic Society of London (now Royal). Philbrick was elected as Vice-President of this newly formed Society, and its first committee meeting was held in his chambers on 17 April 1869. This venue was often home to the Society's early meetings. The young barrister was also an active member of the International Philatelic Union and is credited with drawing up the rules for that organisation's Exchange Packet: the first of its kind introduced in philately.

Sir Daniel Cooper resigned as the first President of the Philatelic Society in 1878 and, by popular vote, Philbrick was elected in his place. He held that office for 14 years and upon his resignation in May 1892 was elected as a Life Member. Amongst his many notable achievements, during this period, was his co-authorship with Mr W A S Westoby of the book entitled *The Postage and Telegraph Stamps of Great Britain*. This 384 page work, published in 1881, was the first 'standard work' produced by the Philatelic Society, although Philbrick and Westoby retained the copyright.

High office In his professional life, Philbrick enjoyed great distinction and he was appointed Recorder at Colchester in November 1870. Four years later he was made a Queen's Counsel. In 1884, he became senior counsel to the Post Office and in 1895 was named a County Court Judge on the Dorset and Hampshire circuit. Despite his status, the Judge was noted by his contemporaries as the 'most charming of companions' willing to share his deep knowledge of stamps with any who asked his assistance. He was an avid correspondent who always signed his letters simply as 'Fred A Philbrick'.

The Judge was a family man with two sons, Ernest and Arthur, and three daughters, Madeleine, Kitty and Barbara. His wife died at

the end of 1878. Apart from his philatelic interests, Philbrick collected birds eggs and was renowned for his horticultural skills, particularly with orchids. He was also an active Freemason and from 1884 to 1898 held the high office of Grand Registrar of England.

During 1882, Philbrick decided he could not devote enough attention to his general collection, reckoned at that time to be the finest in the world. So, he retained his Great Britain, but sold the remainder to Ferrary for a sum equivalent to a third of a million pounds in today's money. The material he sold included many very rare items, such as the first issue of Hawaii, sets of Confederate States of America stamps and the famous Post Office Mauritius 1d and 2d of 1847. He had bought the latter for just £20 in 1866 from the Belgian dealer, J B Moens.

He continued to build up his GB material and included essays, proofs, telegraph stamps, postcards and covers in addition to the stamps themselves. Eventually, however, in 1895 he sold off the adhesive portion of the collection to Stanley Gibbons Ltd, but retained the fiscals and the entires. It is believed that he kept these to prepare a second edition of his book, but the death of Mr Westoby in 1899 ended this project. Subsequently, much of this material was purchased by the Earl of Crawford for his own collection.

Judge Philbrick was always interested in philatelic literature and possessed a fine library. This was sold at auction by Sotheby's in May 1905 when he was in his 70th year and was beginning to give up active philately due to ill-health.

His last appearance in court was on 22 December 1910, when he caught a severe chill. This turned rapidly to pneumonia and in the early hours of Christmas Day he died at his Bournemouth home. His funeral in the town's Wimbourn Road Cemetery five days later was attended by mourners representing the legal profession, freemasonry and philately. In his obituary in the *Philatelic Journal of Great Britain*, the following sentence summed up his philatelic achievements: 'As one of the grand old pioneers, all present day collectors owe a deep debt of gratitude to Judge Philbrick' ●

The OUS overprints by Fred Gee

Another curious episode in the philatelic history of Oxford

IN AN ARTICLE in September 1996 I introduced readers to the stamps which were issued in the 1870s and 1880s, for use in connection with their Messenger services, by some of the Colleges in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. But these College stamps were not the only philatelic curiosities to emanate from the University of Oxford – and here I have in mind the OUS overprints.

'O.U.S.' stood for Oxford Union Society. The Oxford Union was not (indeed, *is* not, for it still prospers) a students' union as that term is now generally understood; it was more akin to the gentlemen's clubs in London, that is, a social, literary and debating club which offered its members dining facilities, meeting rooms, a library and reading room, and a debating chamber where aspiring politicians would practise their oratorical skills. One of the benefits which members enjoyed was the provision of free stationery for their private correspondence, and this included postage stamps.

Perhaps to discourage misuse of these free postage stamps, or perhaps just to advertise their origin to recipients of the mail which they franked, the 1d stamps provided by the Society for its members from around 1859 to 1869 were overprinted, in shades of red, with the initials 'O.U.S.' These letters were printed vertically – usually reading upwards, but occasionally reading downwards – between wavy lines 2.5mm apart, and the overprints are found both on the 1d reds with Maltese crosses ('stars') in the upper corners and on those with check letters in all four corners (the 'plate numbers' 1d reds).

Some authorities have suggested that the Society had adopted the practice of overprinting stamps in this way as early as 1857, but the earliest evidence of use of which I am aware is an



envelope posted in Oxford on 3 June 1859 (see illustration, opposite). This envelope, like the 1864 cover which is also illustrated here, was embossed

under the back flap 'MADE FOR THE OXFORD UNION SOCIETY BY SPIERS & SON', the latter being one of the local printers and stationery suppliers.

These OUS overprints were one of only a very few known instances during the Victorian era of any UK organisation (outside the public sector, that is) overprinting its stocks of postage stamps. GB stamps were, of course, later overprinted for use by British Post Offices and Postal Administration in the Colonies or in foreign countries (for instance in the Levant and in British East Africa) but overprinting for private use was frowned upon as being an unacceptable defacement of the Queen's portrait.

During the 1860s and 1870s less than a dozen firms in the UK are known to have overprinted postage stamps with their names or initials. None of these firms had adopted the practice at as early a stage as had the Society, and none of these other overprints were allowed to remain in use for as long as those of the OUS. It is surely surprising that it was not until 1869 – that is, after continuous and apparently unquestioned use for at least a decade – that the Post Office eventually required the Society to desist from the practice of using overprinted stamps, suggesting that the Society should instead, if it so wished for security reasons, use underprints in the then officially approved manner.

Since 1867 the PO had offered an underprinting service and from 1869 the Oxford Union therefore made use of this facility and substituted an underprint similar to the previously-used overprint, but with the vertical wavy lines 4mm apart. After the PO withdrew this service in 1882

Opposite An example of the overprint on a 1d red with check letters in the lower corners only (left), and the 'official' underprint (right).

This page Early use on an envelope posted in Oxford on 3 June 1859 (below), and overprint on an envelope of 1864. Both 60% actual size.



the Society continued for a year or two to underprint its 1d stamps, but the dimensions of this 'unofficial' underprint were identical to those of the original overprint – ie wavy lines 2.5mm apart. These narrower underprints appeared on the reverse of not only the 1d red 'plate numbers' stamps, but also the 1d Venetian red and both dies of the 1d lilac, with the underprint in violet as well as red on the die II stamps. From the point of view of the stamp collector, a very important difference between the two types of underprint was that the later, 'unofficial', underprints were printed on top of the gum and were therefore lost, or left as only a very faint impression, when the stamp was removed from the envelope, whereas the 4mm underprints were printed *before* the gum was applied and therefore remained on the back of the stamp.

But to revert to the period before 1869, and to the overprints, it has been surmised that the PO had not only tolerated, but even encouraged, the Society in its use of overprinted stamps by having the 1d reds overprinted at their expense before delivery to the OUS. This seems very unlikely, and especially so when one considers the evidence provided by the subsequent underprints. The underprint which was applied after 1882 'unofficially', ie definitely not under the auspices of the PO, was, unlike the underprint supplied by the PO, identical to the original over-

print. This suggests that the second type of underprint and the earlier overprint had been the work of the same printer and that the latter was not, after all, the result of an unpublicised PO 'favour'.

On the other hand, there is still an element of mystery about the production of these overprints as the Society's records from that period, so I understand, contained no references to orders or payments for overprinting of postage stamps, as one would have expected had the overprinting been done by one of the local firms such as Spiers & Son. Nor has any record been found of any request for, or grant of, formal PO permission. So who did overprint the 1d reds for the Society, and at whose expense? On whose authority was the overprinting permitted and carried out? And why did the PO tolerate these overprints on their stamps for so long?

I regret that I can provide no answers to these questions but, with regard to the last of them, I cannot help wondering whether there was any relevance in the fact that around the time that the OUS overprints were in use, one of the most powerful political figures in the UK was William Ewart Gladstone. In 1859 he once again accepted office as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and by 1868 was Prime Minister – and his ties with Oxford, and particularly with the Society, were very close. Indeed, the constituency he represented in Parliament from 1847 to 1865 was the University of Oxford (which in those days enjoyed the privilege of returning a Member to the Commons), and not only was he an ex-President of

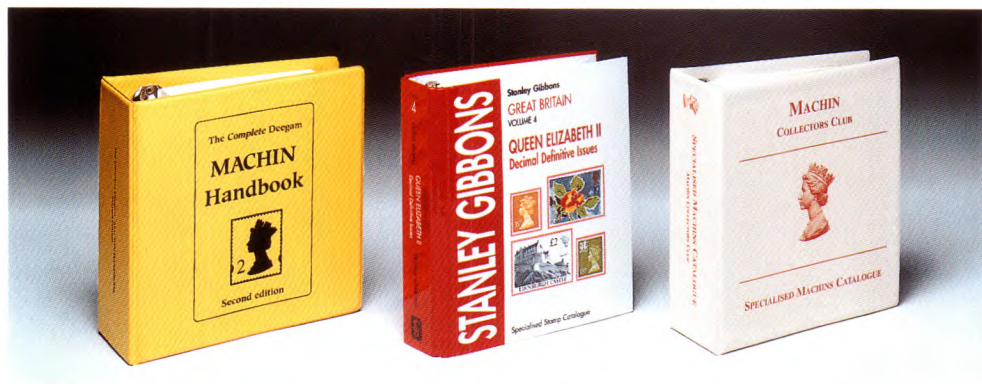
the Society, but such was his attachment to that body that he remained a Life Member. Might Gladstone have had a word in the ear of the Postmaster General on the subject of overprinted stamps? We shall never know!

These ous overprints are not as rare as might be expected. Although the College stamps described in my earlier article are relatively rare, because they would have been used by only a small number of people (the members of one

college) and only on their local messages, the Society had a much larger membership than any of the individual colleges, and the amount of postal correspondence generated by its members was very considerable – probably in excess of 100,000 letters per year. Most, during the decade in question, would have been franked by overprinted stamps.

So, look carefully at any 1d reds in your stock-book: you might just spot the ous overprint! ●

Books: 4.5 kilogrammes Don Staddon accepts a weighty task in reviewing three new Machin catalogues



WHEN YOUR EDITOR asked me to review three new publications I did not realise how weighty the task would be until I set out to carry them home in a carrier bag! (They weighed over 4.5 kilos.) The *Complete Deegam Machin Handbook* (Deegam) is made up of 719 double sided pages. The *Machin Collectors Club Specialised Machins Catalogue* (MCC) has 194 single sided pages plus advertising and blank pages for notes. Finally the Stanley Gibbons *Great Britain Specialised Catalogue Volume 4 Queen Elizabeth II Decimal Definitive Issues* (SG) has 392 double sided pages. None are realistically convenient for carrying round to dealers shops and stamp fairs!

Whatever else may have happened to him in the past Alan Wilson was responsible for a useful Machin catalogue, in a loose leaf form which has

now been adopted by others. Indeed the MCC uses the original Wilson format, and follows the order of the original Wilson edition. Of the three latest publications the SG catalogue is arguably more user friendly because there are larger page holes for use with the four ring binder. Examination quickly revealed that there are significant differences between the three, and that their usefulness will depend upon what you are looking for. Is it for research; for reference; as a checklist; or a pricelist? Do you collect constant printing flaws, shades, To Pay labels, Window Book plate number combinations or whatever? No one book records them all. Indeed there are items of interest to some modern GB collectors which are not in any postal stationery for example. But more of that later.

Deegam Handbook If, like me, you are seriously into Machins, not only from the point of view of collecting but in knowing the background as well, *Deegam* is a significantly important work of reference and research. In respect of its stated contents it is just about complete, subject to any unfound variants yet to be uncovered. The listings are provided in three levels, for basic collecting, intermediate collecting, and specialised collecting. In level 3 stamps are recorded in order of value, with each value in issue date order. This means that the various printing processes and printers are conveniently visible without having to turn to different sections of the book to find them.

At the foot of many of the pages is a note drawing attention to the explanations of the terms used in the Handbook to be found in the glossary, which is near the back. For readiness of access I would have preferred this to be near the front. As it is care needs to be taken to open the pages, a few at a time, until you get to the back. By then you may have forgotten what you were looking for. However, one of the advantages of a loose leaf format is that you can move pages or sections around to suit your own convenience. So one of the first things for me would be to bring the information pages and glossary together near the front.

It would not be possible to do this with the extensive footnotes beneath the NV1 pages. However as these notes are concerned with the stamps listed above them I have no problem there. Indeed they clearly show the problems associated with such a complex series and the considerable amount of work which goes into the subject. As stated in the press release there is no price information. There is some but not a lot of indication as to relative scarcity. As a consequence, if you use *Deegam* for ordering purposes be sure to check the prices with your dealer first unless you have a bottomless pocket. *Deegam* makes its own decision about the different grades of collecting. I can understand level 1 for very basic collectors, but the distinction between intermediate and specialised is rather blurred. The author recognises this on page P-7 where he writes that the three levels are not intended to be completely watertight, and that collections may be formed

which mix the various criteria. What he does hope is that collectors will be encouraged to advance from one level to another, and that the Handbook will be of assistance in that respect.

As we all know, collecting is an individual thing and that it is possible to pursue the hobby to the extent that you can both enjoy and afford. For example, not everyone has a UV lamp, and even those who do may need specialist help to interpret the information it reveals. Just ask dealer 'Jim' Bond of Exeter who is frequently called on to provide a validation service. For the work I do helping the National Postal Museum with its collections of modern GB material *Deegam* is an extremely useful tool.

Machin Collectors Club For some the *MCC* catalogue will have at least two advantages over *Deegam*. They are prices, and spaces for ticking off the items you have in your own collection. It is also laid out in the way that you may wish to organise your album or stockbook. That is by Printer, Paper, and Gums. I only wish that page numbers had been given for the beginning of each sub section, such as Harrison, Enschedé, Waddington, Questa, and Walsall, etc. There are some 17 pages of introductory information, and one page of abbreviations, somewhat sparse by comparison with *Deegam*, but most of the important bits are there.

In the Alan Wilson catalogue there were footnotes recording how many of the scarcer items were known. This information is not in *MCC*. Nor is any indication of prices for the comprehensive section on pre-decimal Machins. Wonder why?

A useful section shows the 'DP' numbers which were devised by the GB Decimal Stamp Book Study Circle for booklet panes and which are widely used by dealers and collectors alike. However I think the lack of issue/withdrawal dates to be a major weakness in meeting the needs of researchers. The recently popular warrant blocks are included as well as cylinder blocks. These will be welcomed by many.

In conclusion I find *MCC* particularly useful as a priced checklist rather than a serious research tool.

Stanley Gibbons Finally we come to *SG*, which has some 44 pages of notes. The clear printing of the pages makes for easy visual access of data which includes presentation packs, and first day covers as well as constant printing flaws. Near the beginning there is a useful check list of values and their sources such as sheets, coils and booklets.

I would have liked to see the litho and regional stamps of the relevant values in the same section as the photogravure stamps similar to the way they are presented by *Deegam*. I would also like to have seen a reputable catalogue like this discontinue the use of the word 'phosphorised' which I find to be misleading, and indeed have criticised in the past. Most important criticism of all is that *SG* makes arbitrary decisions as to what should and should not be included in its catalogue without apparent regard to what specialist collectors may need to know.

A particular example of this is the total ignoring of plate numbers on the Window Books despite the fact that they are widely collected. Elsewhere I have seen criticism of the 'verbose' descriptions above each stamp which presumably could have lent themselves to some abbreviation. This was particularly noted in regard to the recent Enschedé printings with 'one elliptical perf hole on each vertical edge. Two 9.5mm phosphor bands (Yellow or Blue fluor as appropriate) Nonfluorescent coated paper. PVA gum (bluish)'. Repeat that or similar above each Enschedé definitive and it uses up a lot of space.

I find the inclusion of withdrawal as well as issue dates to be very useful. I would like to have seen the booklet panes nearer the booklets instead of being separated by the high values, greetings stamps, Penny Black anniversary definitives, regionals, postage dues, the useful illustrated section on perforators, etc. However, as with *Deegam*, the loose leaf format allows sections to be moved around to suit. It is good to see the inclusion of the 'Frama' labels, nearly but not quite forgotten!

The page of recommended further reading on page 743 seems to me to be well out of date. It does not include any of the National Postal Museum's studies of the Machin design but it

does include others of no apparent relevance such as *The Stamp of Royalty. British Commonwealth Issues for Royal Occasions*.

On a general note I find the colour descriptions in each publication to be lacking in consistency and sometimes comprehension. Yellow Olive in one is Lime Green in another. Dull Purple here is Purplish Grey there, and so on. Perhaps they should have a working party to strive for a mutual agreement on colours. Or at least they could refer to earlier issues of this *Bulletin* for the purpose of adopting the official Post Office colours as announced when the stamps were first released. Finally, on price, the *SG* catalogue is the most expensive at £29.95. *Deegam* is £21.99, and *MCC* £15.95, all plus p&p. It seems to me very much a question of making your choice before you pays your money.

When making that choice there is another important catalogue, not reviewed here, but which deserves consideration. It is the *Connoisseur Catalogue* which is the only one to include postal stationery. The last edition of this catalogue was published August 1995, price £19.95. Dealer K Holten tells me it necessary to buy them all, because his clients use different catalogues as references. You may not need to follow his example unless you have both a deep pocket and a strong handled carrier bag!

These catalogues are available from philatelic literature dealers, some stamp shops and direct from the publishers:

Deegam John Deering, PO Box 2, South Molton, EX36 4YZ. Price £21.99, postage £4.10 UK, £7.60 overseas.

MCC Machin Collectors Club, 8 Jannys Close, Aylesham, Norwich NR11 6DL. Price £15.95, postage £2.50 UK, £4.50 overseas.

SG Stanley Gibbons Publications, Parkside, Ringwood, BH24 3SH. Price £29.95, postage £3 UK, £6 overseas.

Connoisseur Connoisseur Publications, 2 Pine-wood Avenue, Sevenoaks TN14 5AF. Price £19.95. Postage £3.40 UK, £4.30 Europe, £9.10 overseas airmail. (Catalogue reviewed here December 1995) •

Competition Win unused Penny Black: catalogued £3000!

IN THIS MONTH'S COMPETITION, sponsored by Omniphil, you can win a mint Penny Black plus a free 1841 2d blue cat £40 if you request approvals (yours to keep whatever you decide).

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Write to: **Omniphil Home Service Bulletin Blue Offer, PO Box 29, Stroud Glos GL6 6RW.**

To enter the competition answer the questions below and send, with your name and address, on a postcard or back of an envelope to: March Bulletin Competition, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1NL to arrive by 25 April. You may submit as many entries as you like but each must be posted separately; multiple entries in one envelope will be disregarded.

- 1 Which printer has been on the same site for over 100 years?
- 2 Who designed the new Alexander Graham Bell aerogramme?
- 3 On what date does Stamp '97 open at Wembley?
- 4 Who has been referred to as the 'father of British philately'?
- 5 What do the initials 'ous' stand for?

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



1st prize Above left: Great Britain 1840 1d Black mint four margins example, lettered K-J, virtually full original gum, cracked/yellow as usual, margins good to well clear. SG 2, catalogued £3000, Classics Without Tears retail £650.

2nd prize Above: GB Edward VII 1902-10 5s carmine De La Rue printing, SG 263 mint hinged full original gum example, well-centred with fine colour but couple creases, fresh appearance. SG catalogue £120, CWT retail £55.

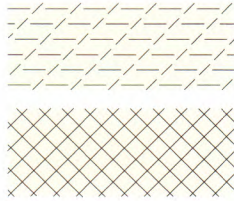


3rd prize GB Victoria 1883-4 2s6d lilac, SG 178 fresh appearance, full original gum example with minor imperfections, good colour, SG cat £225, CWT retail £60.

The winners of December's competition were E Provs of Monza, Italy; H Dickinson of Middlesex; and M Boreham of Wirral

The answers 1. Anne of Cleves; 2. £1450; 3. District Surveyors; 4. Gordon Smith. Our thanks to all who entered.

Postbag



Above horizontal and diagonal lines (original), and cross-hatching (enhanced).

Left detail from 1992 £1.50

Castle high values Further to your *Bulletin* article on the differences between the original and 'enhanced' versions of the Castles high values, I can add that on the £2 value the twin vertical lines on the right-hand battlement immediately below the upper building's right side are complete on the original and have a distinct break on the enhanced version (Thirkell position finder E9) – below the bottom loop of the '£' sign for those without the Thirkell gauge. One sure way of identification is The Queen's head: on the originals, it consists of horizontal and diagonal lines, while on the enhanced it is diagonal cross-hatching in both directions. The 1992 £1.50 and £5 are as shown, the £1 and £2 are reversed.

L J CLARK, WEST BRIDGFORD, NOTTINGHAM

Stamps for charity Miss Sharon Onion, a stamp collector for 17 years, is saving stamps for charities such as Guide Dogs for the Blind, NSPCC, RSPB, WWF and cancer charities. She would welcome any unwanted stamps from *Bulletin* readers and be pleased to hear from charities that take used stamps to raise funds. Write to Sharon at: 18 Elizabeth Drive, Park Lodge, Tamworth B79 8DE.

Bulletin back numbers I have back issues for complete years 1982 to 1996 (inclusive) in perfect condition. Anyone interested can have them for the cost of postage (or collect them from me). DJ Bracchi, Jucalo, 2B Townhill Road, Broadway, Swansea SA2 0UR.

Machin surfeit George Frazer of Liverpool (Postbag January 1997) asserted that despite still liking the design and that he enjoyed 'collecting the many variations in phosphor, gum, paper, etc' he felt that a new definitive series should replace the current (30 year old) Machin series. My comment is: Why?

The Machin stamp design is a classic, as both Mr Frazer, and the philatelic world, both amateur and professional, has acknowledged. For the collector it provides the ideal vehicle to start a collection; as a youngster (of whatever age!) concentrating solely on value, colour and type of print, litho or photogravure, ignoring the regional issues, these simple variations offer about 160 stamps which can be collected either used or unused. For the more advanced collector these expand to some 450 examples, and even these ignore the more detailed collection aspects such as whether they originate from coils, sheets or booklets; individual differences associated with direction of print; as well as minor and major errors or constant flaws. (Indeed, even the latest 63p emerald green has resulted in at least five different items for the specialist.) Thus there is plenty of variety to suit all aspects of collecting which is constantly enlarging.

I really wonder what more any collector could wish for in a progression of definitive stamps, stunning design, plenty of variety, and a 'living' in-use series. My advice is to echo the old adage 'if it aint broke, don't mend it'. Besides, do we collectors really want the Post Office to use it as an excuse to reissue the definitive stamps with a new design as well as all the coils, sheets and associated booklets? Don't we have too much change already – certainly we do for my pocket. STEVE NOTRUBRAW, STANMORE, MIDDLESEX

Machin surfeit Three cheers for Mr Frazer (January *Bulletin*). Let's hope 1997 is the last full year of the Machin. As a collector I like the series, but as a user of the post I feel our definitives compare poorly with some other countries. I receive many letters from friends and relatives in Europe,

the USA and New Zealand and compare their definitives with ours. Even if we keep the monarch's head as the basic design, why can't we change it from time to time as do Denmark and Sweden? The current Swedish stamps showing King Carl Gustav and Queen Silvia, engraved by Slania, put the Machin in the shade. Germany and the USA both have sets showing famous people and I enjoy researching those I know little or nothing about. Belgium has some attractive bird definitives as well as those showing King Albert. The current New Zealand pictorials are very pleasant, I especially like the 5c stamp showing Mount Cook. These stamps act as ambassadors

for the country; what impression does a Machin stamp give an overseas recipient? I try to use commemoratives on my letters overseas as I feel I am doing nothing to promote my country by using a Machin. Could we not retain the 1st and 2nd nvis for use chiefly on domestic mail and have pictorial definitives showing British castles, cathedrals, birds, animals, plants, famous people, etc? The theme could be changed every 10 years – there would be enough variation in a 10 year run to satisfy specialist collectors and, at the same time, provide stamps of greater interest to the young and for promoting Britain on overseas mail. JENNIFER MARTIN, LINCOLN ●

Events

Now showing A new 'Mail by Rail' exhibition, National Railway Museum, York, sponsored by Royal Mail.
Enquiries Candace Brownlee 0171 320 7078

Now showing Postal Memorabilia display, by David Harrop, at City Square Post Office, Leeds.
Enquiries D Harrop, 15 Hawthorne Road, Heaton Mersey, Stockport SK4 3DQ

Until 4 May 'Keeping You Posted' exhibition at Museum of Lancashire, Preston. Open 10.00-17.00 (except Thursday & Sunday). Admission £1 adults, children free. **Enquiries** P Gaywood 01772 684302, or J Rayment 01722 264061

1 March Scout & Guide Stamps Club annual exhibition at Baden-Powell House, Queen's Gate, London SW7, 11.00-16.30. **Enquiries** Peter Duck, 0181 891 5746

6-8 March London Stamp and Postal History Fair at New Horticultural Hall (Hall 2), Greycoat Street, London SW1. **Enquiries** C Rainey 01268 726687 or T Davis 0181 946 4489

9 March Cinderpex (cinderella, revenue stamps, ephemera) at Pudsey Civic Hall, opens 10.00. Parking, near New Pudsey railway station.
Enquiries T Williams 01709 548187

10 March Display Sir Rowland Hill, his reforms and anniversaries by Ivan Trinder. Frinton Phil Soc
Enquiries H Jessop, 01206 252222

15 March North Western Philatelic Convention at Our Lady's High School, Lancaster, 10.00-16.00. Hosted by Morecambe & District PS, celebrating its 50th anniversary. Dealers, displays, meeting of Society of Olympic Collectors, raffle. **Enquiries** J Garratt, 7 Alexandra Road, Carnforth LA5 9DT

22 March StampEssex county stamp day exhibition & fair at Mill Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. 10.00-17.00. Hosted by Rayleigh PS. Hong Kong & China displays, dealers, competitions. Refreshments. Free admission. **Enquiries** R How, 01702 544632

22 March Assn of Sussex Phil Socs Spring Convention at Civic Centre, Uckfield, 10.00-16.00. Dealers, inter-society competitions, talk on N Borneo & Labuan, auction. Refreshments, nearby car parking and station. **Enquiries** L Jones, 0171 600 8918

22-23 March Scottish Philatelic Congress at Falkirk Town Hall. Hosted by Paisley Phil Soc, celebrating golden jubilee. Dealers, exhibitions, Philatelic Bureau stand, displays by local societies on 23 March. Open Sat 09.00-17.00, Sun 10.00-16.00. **Enquiries** T Woods, 32 Bryan Street, Hamilton ML3 0JW ●

STAMPMASTER-GB COMPUTERISED STAMP DATABASE AND CATALOGUING SYSTEM

Stamp Details (Format 1)			
Class	GB Commems	Description	The Rose theatre, 1592 D3
Number	3894	Issue	Shakespeare's Globe. Opening of reconstructed Globe Theatre. Designed by C. Walter Hodges.
Cross ref 1		Notes	
Cross ref 2			
Date	8/08/1995		
Face Value	25p	Colours	multicolour
Plate no		Themes	Shakespeare theatre building
Cat Val(mint)	0.25	Perforations	14.5 x 14 Gum PVA
Cat Val(used)	0.25	Paper	OBA-free designer
		Watermarks	None post marks
		Phosphor Bars	2 bars User 4
		Printer	Walsall Sec User 5
		Printing Method	Offset Litho User 6
Close		NPM Year Data	NPM Stamp Data

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