

May 1994

British Philatelic Bulletin



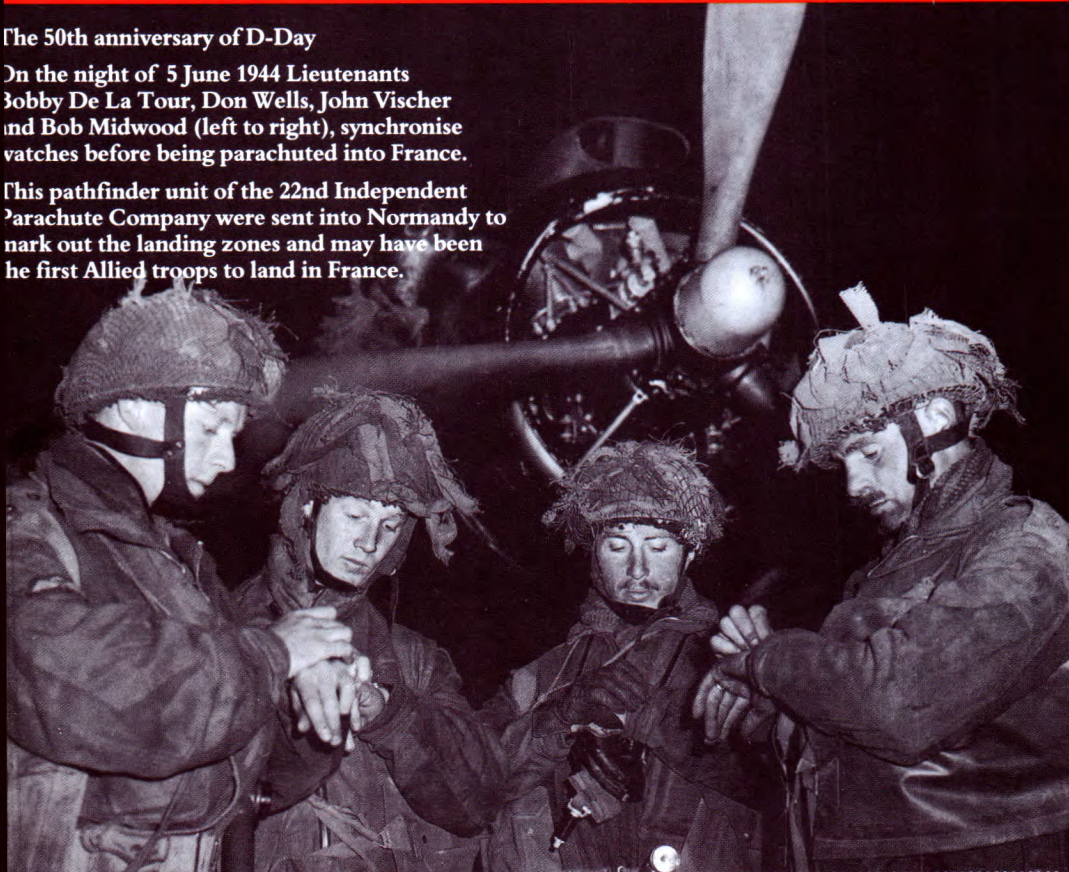
Royal Mail

Volume 31, No: 9 The Royal Mail Magazine for Stamp Collectors Price 75p

The 50th anniversary of D-Day

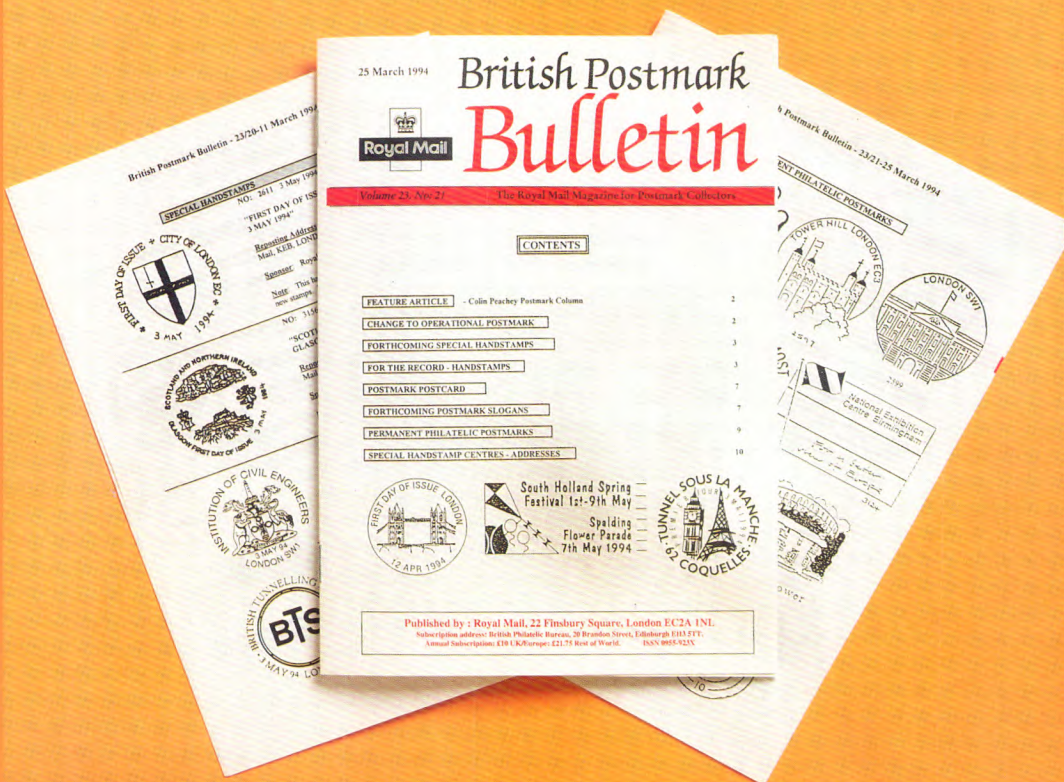
On the night of 5 June 1944 Lieutenants Bobby De La Tour, Don Wells, John Vischer and Bob Midwood (left to right), synchronise watches before being parachuted into France.

This pathfinder unit of the 22nd Independent Parachute Company were sent into Normandy to mark out the landing zones and may have been the first Allied troops to land in France.



British Postmark Bulletin

The Magazine for Postmark and First Day Cover Collectors



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British Philatelic Bulletin

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Royal Mail also publishes the fortnightly **British Postmark Bulletin** giving details of forthcoming special handstamps and postmark slogans. Available on annual subscription from British Philatelic Bureau (address above) UK & Europe £10, Rest of World £21.75.

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Contents

Royal Mail News – D-Day stamps; New stamp books	244
Sixty Years of the Orkney Air Mail – 1934 souvenirs recalled	248
Competition – Win Edward VII £1 stamp or other excellent prizes	251
Philatelic Terms Explained – Treasury Essays	252
Seventy Years of Commemoratives – Special Issues 1924-94	254
Bar Codes on Royal Mail philatelic products – P A W Overell asks if readers are interested	258
Prince of Wales Watercolours Exhibition – Visits Chester and York	259
1993 Special Stamp Poll – Readers' views	262
Stamp Scene – Thematica 94, Railway Letter Stamps, etc	268
Postbag – Readers' views on £10 definitive, To Pay system	270
Channel Tunnel Stamps – Cylinders and colours	271
Customers knows Best – Cartoon Fun	271
May Digest; Events – New issues, Exhibitions, Fairs, Displays	272

Main Feature

The Next British International – 260

Peter Jennings, FRPSL suggests that the next international stamp exhibition in Britain should be held at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham in the year 2000 or 2001. We invite your views on his proposals.

Prize draw – ten £10 definitives to be won.



The NEC. Airport and railway station at top left, Metropole Hotel in foreground.

Royal Mail News

D-Day

To mark the 50th anniversary of D-Day, Royal Mail will issue five special stamps on 6 June 1994. They will be available at all post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau, Collections, Post Shops Plus, and Philatelic Counters. The stamps are all of **25p** denomination, the basic rate for inland 1st class letters and letters to European Union countries. The stamps are printed as a horizontal *se-tenant* strip.

The design feature: Groundcrew reloading RAF Bostons; coastal bombardment by HMS *Warspite*; commandos landing on Gold Beach; infantry regrouping on Sword Beach; and advancing inland from Ouistreham.

postponement. In the early hours of 6 June, amid wind and rain, the first troops of the liberated armies set foot in Normandy. No fewer than 150,000 soldiers were landed. By 12 June the Allies had secured a bridgehead over 60 miles long, but more than a month of heavy fighting followed before the armoured breakout, intended to mop up the remnants of the German Army in northern France, took place.

After the battle of Normandy and the liberation of Paris, few doubted that the Allies would win the war in Europe – it was merely a question of when victory would come. In September 1944 the Home Guard (Dad's Army) was disbanded and the black-out became a "dim-out". Britain's beaches were cleared of mines and the barbed wire rolled back. The Air-raid shelters and pillboxes became the setting for children's games. In the Far East, of course, the Allies battle with Japan was far from won. But for the people of Britain, if not those in France or Germany, the war in Europe was nearly over.

The stamps were designed by Keith Bassford



During 1943 a master plan under the codename "Operation Overlord" was drawn up – the aim to attack Germany's Atlantic wall from England.

By 1944 the tide of war in Europe was turning. In great secrecy southern England and Wales became an armed camp for the fourteen US and British army corps and two tactical air forces that would eventually cross the Channel. More than 3000 vessels were assembled, and hundreds of aircraft and gliders were gathered at airfields in the Midlands. Altogether some 3 million service personnel were involved.

"England is expectant, almost hushed," wrote a contemporary diarist. "Every time we turn on the radio we expect to hear that the great invasion of Europe has begun." 5 June was chosen as D-Day, but bad weather caused a

who has previously designed the 1984 Mail Coaches, 1985 Film Year, 1986 Industry Year, 1989 Microscopes and 1992 Europa issues.

Technical details

Printers: The House of Questa Ltd

Process: Offset-litho

Size: 35 x 37mm

Sheets: 100

Perforation: 14

Paper: OBA free (OBA = Optical Brightening Agent)

Phosphor: Two Phosphor bands (with fluor)

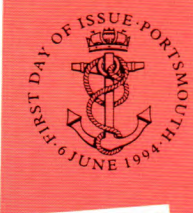
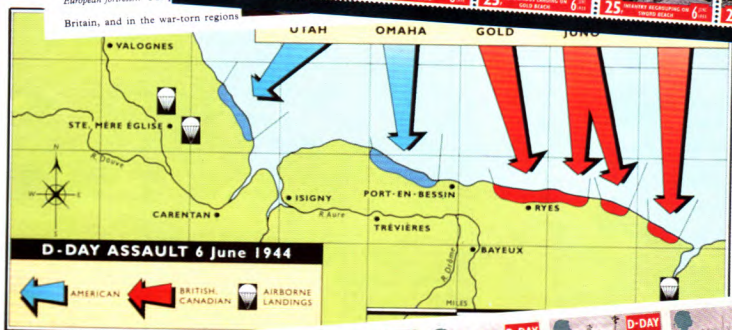
Gum: PVA

Presentation Pack: No. 248, price £1.60

Stamp Cards: Nos 162 a-c, price 25p each



On 6 June 1944, BBC heard some long-awaited news. 'Here is a special bulletin from John Snagge. D-Day has begun this morning the Allies have landed on the north-western French coast. European fortress...' For Britain, and in the war-torn regions



Number of stamps five, six-ten; Date of issue 6 June 1944; Postal number 248; Design: John G. Acknowledgements: Imperial War Museum. Further details about British postage stamps.



Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbie Road
ILKESTON
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB



First Day Facilities

Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the Bureau, Collections, Post Shops Plus, and Philatelic Counters around a week before 6 June, 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 Portsmouth, price £1.89 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £1.61 to overseas addresses (no VAT). Orders for first day covers must be received at the Bureau by 6 June.

others, will be found 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).

New Stamp Books

New 50p and £1 machine-vended books go on sale at the British Philatelic Bureau, Collections, Post Shops Plus, and Philatelic Counters on 6 June. They will be third in the Coaching Inns and Prime Ministers series which began in January. The new 50p book features “The Golden Cross”, London, the £1 Sir Winston Churchill who was Prime Minister 1940-45 and 1951-55. The designs are by Andrew Davidson and Harry Brockway respectively. Both books have been printed by Harrison & Sons Ltd and contain two and four 25p stamps respectively. The stamps are the same as those contained in the 50p books issued on 1 November 1993, 25 January and 26 April 1994 and in the £1 book of 26 April 1994.

These new books will be available from philatelic outlets from 6 June; they will be sold in vending machines as stocks of earlier issues are exhausted.



Collectors may send their own stamped covers, on the day of issue, for the Bureau or Portsmouth cancels, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT or South East Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Wexham Road, SLOUGH SL1 1AA. The outer envelope should be endorsed “Pictorial First Day of Issue postmark”.

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for collectors who wish to post covers to receive the standard, non-pictorial “First Day of Issue” handstamps.

Details of other special handstamps, sponsored by Royal Mail, stamp dealers and



Channel Tunnel – French Postmark

Royal Mail will be applying a French pictorial first day postmark by authority of *La Poste* but in accordance with British philatelic custom and practice. The postmark was specifically designed to be used on joint first day covers being produced on behalf of both Royal Mail and *La Poste*. Royal Mail have gained agreement from *La Poste* that it can also be used to cancel privately produced covers. The postmark will only be used to cancel French Channel Tunnel stamps and only on covers which also bear at least one British Channel Tunnel stamp, in order to facilitate the production of dual first day covers.

If you wish to have covers cancelled with this postmark, please submit them to: "Coquelles." Postmark, John Watson, British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT.

Reciprocally, *La Poste* will be applying a British postmark by authority of Royal Mail but in accordance with French philatelic custom and practice. This postmark will bear the words "First Day of Issue 3 May 1994 Folkestone" and will also be available from the South East Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Wexham Road, SLOUGH SL1 1AA. This postmark will be used to cancel British Channel Tunnel stamps incorporated within a "Philatelic Document" being produced by *La Poste*. The Philatelic Document is an informative folder which contains complete sets of British and French Channel Tunnel stamps and incorporates a unique "black print" of the stamp design.

Note: Because it may take collectors a little longer to obtain French Channel Tunnel stamps, Royal Mail has extended the usual deadline for submission of covers. All covers to receive these postmarks must be submitted not later than 31 May.

TPO Changes

Royal Mail is always reviewing the best way of moving mail by road, rail, ship and air to ensure the quickest delivery of post within the UK. Changes to the Travelling Post Office system are to be made later this month; this will be of interest to collectors of TPO postmarks. The Derby-Penzance TPO will operate for the last time on 28 May, being replaced from 31 May by a new Bristol-Penzance TPO. Similarly the York-Cardiff TPO will cease after 28 May, a new Crewe-Cardiff service will start on 31 May. The Chester Relief Sorting Carriage which operates between Crewe and Holyhead will cease after 28 May.

National Postal Museum

The Museum's main exhibition for 1994/95 opens on 9 May. Entitled "Addressing Postcodes", it explains the development of postal automation for letter sorting. Five cards are being issued in connection with this exhibition; they will be available from the Museum's shop (25p each) or as a set (£1.25) from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT. Please note that the exhibition is entitled "Addressing Postcards", *not* Postcards as wrongly stated last month (page 215).

The Museum's Annual Report for 1993 will shortly be published, available from British Philatelic Bureau, or to callers at the Museum's shop, price £5. It will be reviewed here next month.



Sixty Years of the Orkney Air Mail

RICHARD BEITH

When Highland Airways carried the first air mail bags from Inverness to Kirkwall, the capital of the Orkney Isles, on 29 May 1934, the airline was initiating the first regular internal air mail in the British Isles. True, there had been special short lived services such as the 1911 Coronation Aerial Post between Hendon and Windsor and emergency air mails at such times as the 1919 Railway Strike and the 1926 General Strike, but the events of 29 May heralded the first regular carriage of first class mails *without surcharge*.

Highland Airways had launched their Inverness - Kirkwall line in 1933 for passengers and freight. Such was their reputation for reliability, even in that first year of operation, that the Postmaster General placed a contract for the conveyance of all first class mails by air from 29 May 1934. Although there was no air fee, the

airline issued special vignettes for the first flights which were priced at 2s. Of course, their use was not obligatory, but they add to the appearance of flown covers. Some 1250 of these vignettes were printed. The Post Office paid Highland Airways the sum of four old pence per pound of mail carried; it may not sound much today, but regular income from the carriage of mail was essential for the early airlines if they were to survive. The first northbound plane was a De Havilland Dragon, registration G-ACCE, which left Inverness at 10.55 piloted by Captain E E Fresson carrying 2000 letters. Kirkwall was reached at 12.25.

Fresson was the founder, Managing Director and Chief Pilot of this airline and his name is still revered for introducing airmindedness into the Highlands and Islands. A statue of Captain



A Highland Airways DH Dragon at Kirkwall with the Provost and local councillors, circa 1934



A company first flight cover with INVERNESS 29 MY 34 cds, Highland Airways vignette and signature of Captain Fresson

Fresson was unveiled at Inverness Airport in 1991, the centenary of his birth, and a Fresson Trust established in his memory. (The Fresson Trust is a registered charity, one of whose objects is the promotion of aviation awareness to those in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.) The southbound plane piloted by F/O Coleman reached Inverness at 15.45 carrying 12,000 letters.

Souvenir envelopes were printed by the airline and 200 were flown in each direction. A number of other advertising envelopes were produced which have been catalogued in some detail by Peter Lister. Leonard's Stores in Kirkwall were responsible for three types, and *The Orcadian* newspaper had separate issues for the first air mail to the Orkneys and the first air mail from the Orkneys. Both sources also produced "General purpose" type envelopes for everyday use on the continuing air mail service.

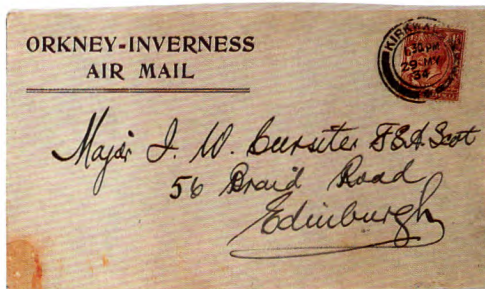
The contract granted by the PO to Highland Airways was an experimental one, but by December 1934 it was agreed to put the air mail service on a permanent footing. The mail planes had always called at Wick, in Caithness, on the journey to and from the Orkneys. With effect from 1 December 1934, mail was also carried to and from Wick and Highland Airways again provided an optional vignette to commemorate the first Wick mails. 1000 were printed in sheets of six and each vignette sold for 1s. First flight envelopes were provided by Highland Airways, *The Orcadian* and *The John O'Groat Journal*. From 10 December 1934, the PO also utilised the Wick stop to carry mails to and from Thurso. In March 1935 an accelerated service from the Shetlands to the mainland of Scotland was

introduced in which the southbound Shetland mail was sent to Kirkwall twice a week by sea for onward transmission by air.

In June 1935, Highland Airways merged with United Airways but still operated under the name of Highland Airways. United Airways then joined with other lines to form the pre-war British Airways Limited. On 12 August 1937 Highland Airways joined with another subsidiary to form Scottish Airways Limited, and the mail contract was then operated as a Scottish Airways' service. Scottish Airways continued to carry mail to the Orkneys during the Second World War and on until nationalised and incorporated into British European Airways. It must be said that Captain Fresson was no admirer of state bureaucracy and he found the early days of BEA rather uncongenial. Today, British Airways PLC operate the route and the mail contract as direct descendents of Highland Airways. Perhaps Captain Fresson would have been happier with today's British Airways than with the BEA of the late 1940s?

40th and 50th Anniversary Mail

The 40th anniversary of the start of the mail contract was celebrated in May 1974. Souvenir covers and a celebratory booklet were jointly sponsored by the PO and British Airways Scotland. Covers were flown in both directions in the Viscount G-AOHO. One day commemorative handstamps featuring the DH Dragon G-ACIT in the design were prepared for both Inverness and Kirkwall.



A Leonard's "Orkney-Inverness Air Mail" cover with KIRKWALL 29 MY 34 cds

In May 1984 the 50th anniversary of the mail service saw a similar "Dragon" one day postmark used at Kirkwall and a commemorative Scottish pictorial aerogramme was issued. 150 aerogrammes were flown from Inverness to Kirkwall in a BAe 748, cancelled with the Inverness Philatelic Counter

40th anniversary
FIRST REGULAR
BRITISH INLAND
AIR MAIL SERVICE



R Beith
2 Wallace Road
DUNBLANE
Perthshire

The 1974 40th anniversary envelope with handstamp showing Dragon G-ACIT

handstamp for 29 May and with the Kirkwall "Dragon" handstamp used as a backstamp of receipt.

60th Anniversary Mail: May 1994

There will be suitable celebrations in Inverness and Kirkwall over the weekend of 28-30 May sponsored jointly by British Airways, The Fresson Trust and Royal Mail Scotland. It is planned to have a commemorative handstamp and to arrange for the carriage of special flown covers and postcards. Readers wishing for more details should write to Hugh Lawson, The Fresson Trust, Highland and Islands Airports

Limited, Inverness Airport, INVERNESS IV1 2JB, including a SAE.

References:

Beith R, *Scottish Air Mails 1919-1979*, Dunblane, the author, 1981.

Fresson E E, *Air Road to the Isles*, London, David Rendel Ltd, 1967.

Lister P, "The Unofficial Scottish Advertising Envelopes, Part 1" *Air Mail News*, Vol 33, No 146, September 1990.

Acknowledgement: Many thanks to Eric Tawn of the British Aerophilatelic Federation for the loan of illustrations.

© Richard Beith, 1994.

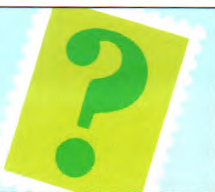
First scheduled UK inland air mail flight 1934



The Inverness-Orkney illustrated panel from the 50th anniversary aerogramme, again showing G-ACIT

Competition

SPONSORED BY
TONY LESTER



Win Edward VII £1 stamp

This month's competition is sponsored by Tony Lester, Philatelic Auctioneers, in Coventry. The prizes are as follows:

- ★ 1st prize 1911-13 £1 fine used
- ★ 2nd prize 1840 1d. black PL2 AF fine used
- ★ 3rd prize 1918 5s mint
- ★ 4th prize 1915-18 De La Rue 10s good used
- ★ 5th prize 1973 Explorers 5p gold omitted unmounted mint
- ★ 6th prize 1985 Year Book complete
- ★ 7th prize 1929 PUC 1½d. showing "1829" error fine used
- ★ 8th prize 1918 2s6d mint
- ★ 9th prize – 4 prizes of 1948 Silver Wedding set unmounted mint



Introducing Tony Lester

We have been running public auctions for nearly 15 years, and apart from selling on commission through our auctions, we are always keen to buy collections. Our regular auctions usually comprise 700 plus lots and are held in Coventry, with ample viewing facilities before the auction. For those unable to attend, bids by post or fax are welcomed. We always have a strong section of Great Britain early to modern (approximately 300 lots) and estimates vary from £7 per lot to £1000 or more. The rest of the sale comprises a good section of World lots, Commonwealth and Foreign single country collections and sets etc.

Our next auction is on Saturday 11 June and *Bulletin* readers are invited to contact us for a free copy of this catalogue. As a further bonus we are prepared to offer a £10 discount to any new customer who spends £30 or more at this

auction, so please be sure that you mention the *Bulletin* when asking for your free catalogue.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Tony Lester,
29 Momus Boulevard,
Binley Road,
Stoke,
COVENTRY
CV2 5NA
Tel: (0203) 454908
Fax: (0203) 650109.



To enter this month's competition answer the questions below and send your name and address on a postcard to: May Competition, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, LONDON EC2A 1NL. Entries should arrive by 30 June.

1. In which year did the British Post Office introduce "First Day of Issue" postmarks?
 2. Who wrote *Postal Reform and the Penny Black*?
 3. Who was the founder of Highland Airways?
 4. How much is needed to stage an international stamp exhibition in Britain in 2000?
 5. What is the first part of the bar code on Royal Mail philatelic products?
- The answers to all these questions will be found in this month's *Bulletin*.

The competition is not open to employees of Royal Mail or Tony Lester.

The winners of the February competition were: M Southall of Isle of Man (£75 of philatelic products), T Marshall of Scotland, M Staite of Australia, P Backe of Norway, Mrs H Sawyer of Essex and C Mitchell of Merseyside (presentation packs).

The answers were: 1. Ben Arkle, Sutherland; 2. Paris; 3. Hubert Brown; 4. Philips Technology; 5. John Wright.

Our thanks to all who entered.

Dealers interested in sponsoring the Bulletin competition should write, giving details of their company and prizes offered, to: The Editor, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, LONDON EC2A 1NL.

Philatelic Terms Explained

KENNETH F CHAPMAN

No. 45 Treasury Essays

The Uniform Postage Act, received Royal Assent on 17 August 1839, a major date in the story of the postal service. The Treasury, as the government department charged with implementing the reforms, announced on 23 August 1839 a public competition to establish the best way of providing for prepayment of letters when posted, one of the major means of reducing costs by eliminating the "logging" of letters to ensure that the recipient paid on delivery.

Proposals were to be submitted by 15 October 1839, only two months before the introduction of a countrywide 4d rate, (on 9 December 1839). The Post Office expected a rush of mail when the 1d uniform rate was introduced. This started on 10 January 1840. Postage still had to be paid in cash at the time of posting (or charged double on delivery) since no adhesive stamps or pre-stamped stationery was available.

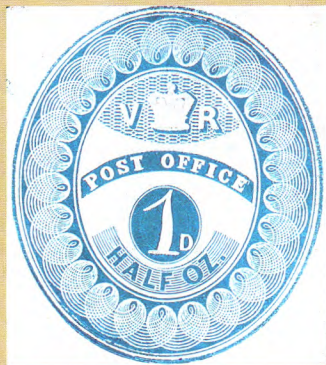
The comparatively modest £200 and £100

awards for the two best suggestions attracted over 2600 entries from the public. The vast majority of entrants submitted variations of pre-stamped stationery, either folded letter sheets or envelopes bearing a wide range of printed security devices indicating that postage had been paid. Very few entries were concerned with adhesive labels which could be applied to unstamped stationery. Right up to the last minute Rowland Hill had preferred pre-stamped stationery. Ironically, among the first suggestions received was one from Francis Coffin which included specimens of steel engraved labels with the thought that, if adopted, the issued labels might incorporate "the Queen's head as on coins".

Among the more elaborate ideas for both adhesive labels and stamped stationery were those of Charles Whiting which involved multi-coloured engraving and/or embossing. The labels were normally recommended for sealing the backs of letters or envelopes in place of the



Hand-drawn essays – George Dickinson



Embossed essays – Charles Whiting

universally used black or red sealing wax. These labels would be destroyed when opening the letters but, also, could be cancelled by the town post stamps of the pre-adhesive period.

Collectively, these competition entries are known as "Treasury Essays". Most of them, according to Douglas N Muir's book *Postal Reform and the Penny Black*, (published by the National Postal Museum, 1990), "went missing" at some point in the 19th century. Most of the genuine surviving examples are in the Royal Philatelic Collection, the National Postal Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum. Some of those in private collections are reprints or items never actually submitted to the Treasury.

Mr Muir's account of these Treasury essays includes the most comprehensive check list ever published, much of the information resulting

from new personal research in the Public Record Office at Kew and Post Office Archives.

Ultimately, none of the entries was used by the Post Office. Rowland Hill and Henry Cole (his assistant), working within the Treasury were doubtless influenced by some of the entries during discussions with the printers when the finally adopted Queen Victoria's portrait for the adhesive stamps and the design of William Mulready RA for the prepaid letter sheets and envelopes were adopted.

No entrant received the £200 first prize but four entries were awarded £100 each as they were judged to incorporate the most useful suggestions. These prizewinners were: James Bogardus and Francis Coffin (for a joint entry), Benjamin Cheverton, Henry Cole (before his appointment to the Treasury), and the prolific Charles Whiting.

© Kenneth F Chapman 1994

Editors Note: Douglas Muir's book, referred to above, is available from the British Philatelic Bureau, price £12.50. It was reviewed here in June 1990, page 249.



Henry Cole (1808-82), entrant in "Treasury competition" and assistant to Rowland Hill (NPM postcard)

Seventy Years of Commemoratives

JAMES MACKAY

The concept of special stamps, of restricted sale or validity, was long established before Britain produced its first adhesives of this type. Commemorative stationery had been pioneered by the USA in 1876 (for the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia) and adhesive stamps by German local posts (1887) and New South Wales (1888). By the end of the 19th century commemoratives were commonplace, having been issued by no fewer than 46 countries up to 1900. By 1920 there were few countries in the civilised world which had not issued such stamps.

From time to time requests for commemorative stamps were made by the general public or by national bodies, but it was not until a request from the organisers of the British Empire Exhibition, in October 1923, that such an idea was positively considered. The resulting stamps, issued on St George's Day 1924 only at the Exhibition grounds, Wembley though valid for postage anywhere in the UK, marked a break with normal practice, being recess-printed instead of surface-printed like the corresponding denominations of the definitive series, and being produced in a somewhat larger size. The design elements, incorporating the King's head, a crown and a symbolic motif, revealed an innate conservatism which continued in later issues. The stamps bore a brief caption indicating the purpose of issue, together with the date. When the British Empire Exhibition re-opened in 1925 the stamps were re-issued with the date suitably re-engraved.

Although the Wembley stamps established a precedent they did not immediately open the floodgates to further commemoratives. Four years elapsed before the next set appeared. This marked the London Congress of the Universal Postal Union for which there were ample precedents. It was the custom for the host country to issue a long and expensive set mainly with a view to giving the international delegates a worthwhile present. For this reason it was decided to include a £1 stamp, although there had been no need for such a denomination since 1915. The issue was greeted by the philatelic

fraternity with great dismay, but posterity has judged the PUC £1 stamp (based on one of Harold Nelson's rejected designs for the Wembley series) to be one of the all-time classics. Like the Wembley stamps, the "PUC pound" was recess-printed, but the four lower values, covering the most frequently required denominations, were printed by letterpress. The only pictorial element was the Union Jack, used as a background to the King's profile on the 1d and 1½d values, but the opportunity to feature aspects of posts and telecommunications was lost. This series was issued in booklets and coils as well as normal sheets, hence the sideways and inverted watermark versions.

No further issues appeared till 1935 when the Silver Jubilee of King George V was celebrated by a set of four in a horizontal format double the width of the definitive low values. These were the first photogravure commemoratives and were printed by Harrison and Sons who have continued to produce the bulk of special issues by this method to the present day. These stamps were likewise issued in booklets as well as sheets, the last to appear in booklets till 1984. The issue was also memorable for the accidental release of some three sheets in Prussian blue instead of the normal blue shade.

Thereafter photogravure was used exclusively for all commemoratives until 1964 when recess was revived for the Shakespeare 2s6d value. Since then recess has been used sporadically – the Westminster Abbey 2s6d (1966) and the London 1980 Stamp Exhibition 50p being notable examples – and combined with other processes in a few other instances.

The prewar commemoratives publicised important current events and royal celebrations. The first stamps to mark a historic anniversary appeared in May 1940 to celebrate the centenary of adhesive postage stamps. The early penchant for clear inscriptions disappeared by 1937 when the Coronation stamp merely gave the date of the event. So, too, in the postal centenary set only the double dates 1840 and 1940, and the names of the monarchs portrayed, provided clues to the purpose of issue.



Commemoratives – George VI

No further commemoratives appeared until 1946 when a pair fittingly celebrated the return to peace. The stamps were in the double-sized horizontal format which was to be used for the vast majority of commemoratives till 1970. No inscriptions were used, other than POSTAGE and REVENUE, and the public were left to divine the intention of the issue from the welter of symbolism. For the next issue, marking the Royal Silver Wedding in 1948, conjoined bust portraits of the King and Queen were regarded as sufficient identification, with double dates at the foot. In the same year two stamps were issued in the Channel Islands to mark the third anniversary of their liberation. The stamps bore neither caption nor dates, and their motifs, showing islanders gathering *vraic* (seaweed) for manure, were hardly edifying or informative. The designs, by Edmund Blampied, were the first to adopt a purely pictorial approach. This precedent was not followed in the UK as a whole till 1949 when one of the stamps marking the 75th anniversary of the UPU featured the monument at Berne. This was an isolated example, however, and it was not till 1960 that a pictorial design was again used, for the General Letter Office 3d showing a mounted postboy.

1948 was an expensive year for collectors, with three sets totalling £1 2s. 5½d. A set of four appeared in 1949 and a pair in 1951, followed by the Coronation quartet in 1953, but no further

commemoratives appeared till 1957 when there was a trio for the Scout Jubilee Jamboree and a single for the 46th Inter-Pliamentary Conference. The latter was, in fact, the definitive 4d (covering the foreign letter rate) re-engraved with a commemorative inscription. Although Britain has never resorted to an overprint to create a commemorative stamp, re-engraving had been done in 1925, and was repeated in 1966 when the 4d stamp of the World Cup set was re-issued with the additional inscription ENGLAND WINNERS. Incidentally, this stamp, often claimed as England's only "country" stamp, was sold in England, the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands and Forces post offices abroad, as well as in Edinburgh for the duration of the Festival that year.

The first bicoloured commemoratives appeared in 1960, and the first three-coloured stamps a year later; both sets marked the Conference of European Posts and Telecommunications and were adaptations of the Europa design used by CEPT member countries. After this promising start, however, Britain did not return to the Europa fold until



1960s – multicoloured and recess-printed

1980 and then only half-heartedly, featuring the CEPT logo on two of the four stamps in the Famous Authoresses set.

The first stamp using metallic ink (the 6d of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference pair) appeared in 1961, while the first stamps with phosphor bands (National Productivity Year) were issued in 1962. An important concession to collectors was the introduction of special "First Day of Issue" cancellations at major post offices, beginning with the Paris Postal Conference 6d of May 1963.

A major breakthrough came in 1964 with a set of five marking the Shakespeare Quatercentenary Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon. Not only was this accompanied by handstruck "First Day of Issue" postmarks, but for the first time the Post Office provided FDCs and presentation packs. At that time the criteria for special issues was that they should be confined to *current* events of national, royal or international importance. The idea of honouring historic personalities had been raised before (notably in the 1950s by the Scots agitating for a Burns stamp). The issue of stamps for Shakespeare appeared to breach this rule, until it was pointed out that they marked the Quatercentenary Festival rather than the playwright himself. The inclusion of Shakespeare's portrait on four of the stamps, albeit a reversal of the Droeshout woodcut from the First Folio, also strengthened the case for relaxing the ban on non-royal portraits. This point was conceded the following year when two stamps were issued in mourning for Sir Winston Churchill.

The return of Labour to power in 1964, with Anthony Wedgwood-Benn as Postmaster General, was a major landmark in the history of commemorative stamps. Special stamps had appeared each year since 1960, and the frequency of issues was gathering momentum anyway (with six in 1963 and four in 1964); but no fewer than nine sets totalling 24 stamps appeared in 1965, and included the first *se-tenant* stamps, a block of six 4d for the Battle of Britain anniversary. 1966 brought a large crop of "firsts": the first thematic sets (Landscapes, Birds and British Technology), the first commemoration of a historic personality, not linked to a current event (Robert Burns), the first Christmas stamps and children's designs, the first silhouette portrait of The Queen (Landscapes) and the first diestamped metal foil portrait (Battle of Hastings).

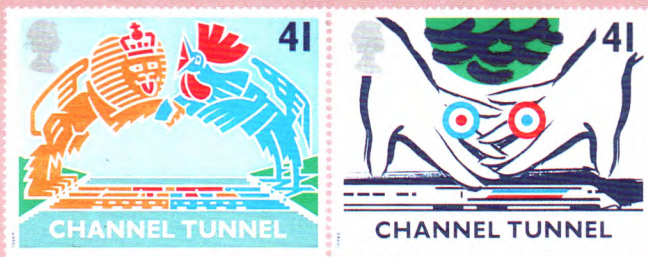
As the spate of subjects worthy of commemoration grew, a neat solution to the problem was to produce an annual Anniversary set, with four or five disparate events or personalities. This practice, borrowed from Switzerland, was confined to 1968-72. The first foreign celebrity to be honoured on a British stamp was Mahatma Gandhi (1969).

The Paintings series of July 1967 marked the adoption of a new format which has been used for the vast majority of special issues since 1970. Occasionally experiments have been made with other shapes, notably the triple-width Ships stamps of 1969 and the even longer Information Technology pair of 1982. Since 1987 several sets have been printed in an almost square format. Another innovation of 1963, little noticed at the time, was a joint issue with Australia and New Zealand for the inauguration of the COMPAC cable. Because this stamp was a free modification of the COMPAC design it was regarded in the same light as the Europa stamps of 1959-60. The first true twin issue, however, appeared in 1988 to celebrate the Bicentenary of Australia, when Britain and Australia used virtually identical designs.

With the set of 1969 marking the establishment of the Post Office as an independent corporation, Britain got its first lithographed stamps. These and the Commonwealth Games trio of 1970 were produced by De La Rue and lacked the deep



Special stamps of the 1970s and 80s



tonal qualities of photogravure. A decade later, however, Questa lithographed the Sports Centenaries set. Since then at least one set a year has been printed by this process.

In 1972 the Royal Wedding 3p stamp became the first to be printed in two panes with an interpane gutter, a layout used ever since. Between 1972 and 1979 colour dabs appeared in the gutter, and the resultant "traffic light gutter pairs" are now much sought after.

1973 saw the launch of the PHQ cards, whose picture reproduced a commemorative stamp. This idea was slow to catch on at first, but those collectors shrewd enough to take them from the outset made a fine investment. The County Cricket and Horse Chestnut PHQ cards of 1973-4 are now catalogued at £50 and £100 respectively. In the same year Bradbury Wilkinson produced the Inigo Jones set by a combination of lithography and letterpress, and later the same firm used recess and letterpress to print the stamps marking the 19th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. Since 1975 Harrison and Sons have combined recess with photogravure on a number of occasions, and used litho and recess for the 24p map stamp of 1991.

Britain's first charity stamp made its debut in 1975, with a 25 per cent surcharge in aid of the handicapped. Three years later Britain's first miniature sheet was released, with a small premium in aid of the 1980 London International Philatelic Exhibition. Miniature sheets were used sparingly in the run-up to the 1990 Exhibition, and culminated in a magnificent sheet combining a replica of the Penny Black and a first class stamp against a background of the Seahorse motif from the 1913 definitive high values.

The 1984 Christmas stamps marked a return to special issues in booklets after a gap of almost half a century. Furthermore, the stamps from the booklet were sold at a discount, and marked

Commemoratives – 1990s



with a double-lined star on the back. This practice was repeated in some later years. Greetings stamps for general purposes first appeared in January 1989 and have since become an annual feature, being released in *se-tenant* booklet panes. The 1990 "Smiles" booklet of 20p stamps was re-issued a year later with a nondenominated first class value. In 1990 there appeared the first Prestige booklet to include a commemorative pane (the Alexandra Palace 20p).

For the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the world's first adhesive postage stamps the wheel came full circle, with the release of the "double-heads". These were quasi-definitives, in that they were intended for use over a period of a year, and were, in fact, modifications of the Machin definitive design, but incorporating the Wyon profile of Queen Victoria. These stamps bore no commemorative inscription or date, but were patently commemorative in nature. They were technically of immense interest, having been printed by two processes (photogravure and lithography) by three printers (Harrison, Questa and Walsall), in sheets, booklets, Prestige booklets and even a miniature sheet with various gauges of perforation.

One wonders what the next 70 years of commemorative stamps has in store? Will we still have stamps in the year 2064?

© James Mackay 1994

Bar codes on Royal Mail philatelic products - Anyone Interested?

P A W OVERELL

I was recently browsing through *A Book of Facts* belonging to my grandson when I came across an explanation of how one "reads" the ubiquitous bar code that now appears on almost everything we buy. Since I am wont to compile all sorts of lists associated with my stamp collection, I thought it might be interesting to see how far I could get with a list of Royal Mail philatelic products whose first part of the code is 5 014721.

The above book explained that the final figure of the code is a "check digit" and is, therefore, ignored in any sequence. In these remarks I have put this in brackets.

The initial sequence of stamp book numbers was differentiated by Royal Mail by a 1 or 2 in the centre of the number (associated with the small letters on the back). So the initial section of my list begins with: 001(2) and 001(9) - 4 x 18p, and ends with: 011(1) and 011(8) - 4 x 27p. After which the centre 2 in the number and the rear letters were discontinued.



011(8) - 4 x 27p window book - October 1988

The next sequence in the series has common numbers for both the 150th Anniversary "Double Heads" and the first NVI book: 012(8) to 015(9).

Thereafter "valued" stamps and NVIs have different numbers:

016(6) - 4 x 29p

017(3) - 10 x 20p "Smiles" (6.2.90)

018(0) - 4 x 1st, Flame colour for the first time

This sequence is complete as far as:

031(9) - 10 x 1st "Memories" (28.1.92)

258



015 (9) - 10 x 15p "Double Heads" - April 1990 (Questa)

It might be noted here that the number for NVI books has not changed when postage rates increase. This is obvious given the nature of these stamps.

After 031(9) the sequence is broken up into sections, and as I don't collect all items I assume my list may be incomplete. I note that:

042(5) is the filler-card in FDCs, all issues of special stamps.

049(4) similarly in definitive FDCs.

050(0) "Country" filler cards, same for all three texts.

Then 065(4) appeared on the *Philatelic Bulletin* for the first time in September 1992 (price 70p) and is now 152(1) from December 1993 as the price is 75p.

This is the final number I have identified, in



101 (9) - 20 x 19p Christmas 1993

Number of stamps: five
Date of issue: 16 March
Design: Pandora Sellers
Printer: Harrison & Sons
Process: photogravure
Stamp design: © Royal
Format: horizontal
Size: 41 mm x 30 mm
Perforations: 15 x 14
Number per sheet: 100
Paper: unwatermarked
the lowest value which
Gum: PVA Dextrin

Dendrobium hellwigianum



photograph by kind permission of the Royal
specimens: *Dendrobium hellwigianum*, Royal

Pack number: 236
Design: Karen Wilks
Front flap photograph
Computer: matrixplus
Printer: Litho-Tech

Further details about
and philatelic facilities

British Philatelic Bureau, FREEPOST,
20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh, EH3 0HN



Royal Mail publishes two magazines for collectors of British stamps and postmarks.

The *British Philatelic Bulletin* is full of news about definitive, country and special stamps – all illustrated in colour. There are useful background articles by top philatelic writers and a monthly competition with excellent prizes.

The *British Postmark Bulletin* gives advance notification of special handstamps and postmark slogans – essential information for first day cover and postmark collectors.



5 014721 100814

FIRST STAMP: *Dendrobium hellwigianum* is widely distributed in the mountains of

144274 0000

British Philatelic Bulletin

British Postmark Bulletin

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a botanist who early explorers The flowers of or pale yellow.

ricularly good ween two fine . *sanderac* from 20. This classic d collections. ith up to forty in 1890 the firm ividual flowers epresent English

coerulea, a blue- etacular *Vanda* nk flowers with

New Guinea and *Vexillarius* means ne-coloured form it by Her Majesty

Islamic Garden, 2 and 1968 ration between Roads.

T.M. Receiv of the Corporation of

081(4) – bar code insert, 1993 Orchids pack
between I note:

066(1) – 2 x 39p “Kellogg’s” offer

067(8) – 20 x 18p Christmas 1992

Then a gap until a section covering
Presentation Packs from

076(0) Single European Market to

090(6) Christmas 1993

(But I have failed to identify 89).

Finally I have identified only the following:

096(8) – 20 x 1st Self-adhesive

100(2) – 10 x 25p Christmas 1993

101(9) – 20 x 19p Christmas 1993

106(4) 1993 Year Presentation Pack

126(2) – 4 x 35p

127(9) – 4 x 41p

128(6) Self-adhesive Presentation Pack

129(3) Self-adhesive FDC

Is anyone else interested in these numbers and should the Editor be asked to find space for a check list from time to time? No doubt he would be interested to hear peoples’ views – even if they wish to say that I have been wasting my time!!

Prince of Wales Watercolours Exhibition



Chateau Le Barroux, Provence, France, 1992

The exhibition of the Prince of Wales’s Watercolours can be seen at Grosvenor Museum, Chester (30 April-15 May) and York Minster Visitor Centre, St William’s College, York (21 May-8 June). The exhibition is sponsored by Royal Mail. Admission £1.50, children under 11 free.

The Next British International- Your Views Welcome

The May issue of *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* contains a guest editorial by Peter Jennings, FRPSL on the subject of the next international stamp exhibition to be held in Britain, expected to be in the year 2000. His comments are aimed at opening a debate on the timing and particularly the location of this exhibition. We are all aware of the problems facing "organised philately" in this country. Are collectors willing to support a major international exhibition? How will it be funded? How important is an exhibition of this nature in promoting the hobby of stamp collecting into the next century? With the agreement of the Editor of *GSM* and Mr Jennings, his views and suggestions are summarised below. We would welcome readers' comments; write to the address below. A selection of your views will be published later.

Mr Jennings writes:

In less than 2500 days a major international stamp exhibition will open somewhere in the United Kingdom, heralding the 21st century, and third Millennium AD. This exhibition will undoubtedly attract many of the world's greatest philatelic treasures, and finest competitive exhibits. It will be recorded in the annals of philately. It must be worthy of such an historic occasion.

London hosted international stamp

exhibitions in 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990. There will be numerous prestigious events during the year 2000. Would it, therefore, be more expedient to hold such an exhibition in the year 2001? Rather than be London oriented, the international might be named "Great Britain 2000" (or 2001) and held at a major venue outside the Capital. The exhibition might be held in April, May or early Autumn: open on a Friday, and close on a Sunday, 10 days later. Would such an exhibition be well supported by collectors and members of the philatelic trade?

In my view, we could do no better than choose the National Exhibition Centre situated on the outskirts of Birmingham. The NEC has a proven track record. Since it was opened by The Queen in 1976, it had undergone continual expansion, and hosts numerous national and international exhibitions and events every year. The International Motor Show, Crafts Dog Show, and the BBC's Good Food Show and Clothes Show have all been staged there.

The excellent facilities include car parking for 18,000 cars; there are good motorway and intercity rail links. Birmingham International main line rail station, (situated at the NEC) is just 1½ hours from London Euston, and about 10 minutes from Birmingham city centre. Birmingham International Airport has daily



Aerial view of the NEC



flights from cities throughout Europe, and the USA. The NEC has good restaurant, cafe and bar facilities.

Birmingham, offers the visitor extremely good value for money compared with London leaving the hard-pressed collector more to spend on his hobby. This can only be good for the collector and the philatelic trade. Accommodation in Birmingham ranges from finest luxury hotels to friendly bed and breakfast establishments. The Birmingham Convention & Visitor Bureau provides a free hotel bookings service. The Metropole Hotel, the largest conference hotel in the UK, is situated on the NEC site, only a few minutes walk from the exhibition halls. It offers over 800 bedrooms, banqueting facilities, and large and small meeting rooms which could be used by philatelic societies during the exhibition. It would also make an excellent venue for the Philatelic Congress of Great Britain.

Tourist attractions include the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; the National Indoor Arena; the Birmingham Royal Ballet; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; the Jewellery Quarter; and Cadbury World. Nearby are the magnificent Warwick Castle; the Black Country and Ironbridge Gorge Museums; and Stratford-upon-Avon with its Royal Shakespeare Theatre.

A huge plus in favour of the NEC is the size and versatile layout of its exhibition halls: some 158,000 square metres of space in 16 halls which can be interconnected. The halls do not have central columns. One hall could accommodate all the exhibits; another Royal Mail, the Crown Agents, and postal administrations from around

the world. Conference, seminar and hospitality suites are located throughout the NEC.

Support Needed

To make "Great Britain 2000" ("2001"), the finest international stamp exhibition ever, a budget of up to £4 million would be needed. Companies could be invited to take out sponsorship, and collectors invited to subscribe to a special "Great Britain 2000" share issue.

It is vital that the exhibition creates the wide media interest necessary to captivate a significant number of young people, and new collectors – essential if the great hobby of stamp collecting is to be kept alive in the UK during the 21st century.

Questions Raised

Preliminary discussions have been held with Alexandra Palace, venue of "Stamp World 1990", about holding an international stamp there in the year 2000. Before anything is finalised there are questions that need answering.

Should there be another major international stamp exhibition in the UK?, in the year 2000 or 2001? Should it be held in London, or at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham? Should admission be free or should there be a charge? Your views will be welcome.

To encourage a lively debate, all letters on this subject will go into a prize draw and the senders of the first 10 drawn on 30 June will be sent a £10 Britannia definitive stamp. The letters may be passed to the organising committee of any future British International Stamp Exhibition. Send your comments to: Exhibition Debate, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, LONDON EC2A 1NL.

1993 Special Stamps Poll

Continued from April

Autumn

Your favourite set of 1993 brought back to many of you memories of Autumn walks, the making of blackberry jam and conker fights. But they were liked not just for sentimental reasons but because of Charlotte Knox's designs which were praised as simple and uncluttered. The rich colours of the stamps, particularly the 24p and 39p values, were much admired. R L Hills of Suffolk especially liked the 18p showing "the chestnut case split to perfection to show the inner nut . . . the whole set is true to nature." H E Schafer of Bath praised the "three dimensional effect, the arrangement of leaves supplements the central point – the changing hues really epitomises Autumn." Mrs J Mayo of Hertfordshire described the set as "creative beauty . . . the reality of the fruits stimulating the desire to taste."



Autumn 24p – most popular stamp of 1993

A C Smith of Somerset found "the theme, artwork and proportion all work." He went on to comment on the first day cover: "They (the stamps) also fit beautifully with the restrained FDC design, in keeping with Royal Mail policy which highlights the sheer vulgarity of most commercial covers." Whilst A Adams of Essex liked the Autumn issue best of the 1993 sets, he described it "not a patch on the Winter set of 1992." He explains why: "...95% of all our stamps consisting of something plonked on to a white background are ruined before they start. Learn a lesson from that winter set." Mrs Semmens of Devon reminds us that stamps are for use on mail, of the Autumn set she wrote: "How designs will look when cancelled is very

important; our murderous postmarks had difficulty in obliterating these." Another view on stamps used on mail came from Rosemary Spencer of Bedfordshire: "The Royal Mail has found in Charlotte Knox an exciting addition to the list of artists who can really design postage stamps which look good on the envelope."

Whilst W J Ellingham of Herts liked the format, with consistent values and head, Joan Widdowson of Cleveland thought "the values rather unhappily placed" although she regarded the colours as "exquisite" and The Queen's head "sensitively incorporated". Returning to Mr Ellingham, he remarked that it was a "pity that this issue has not any justification, commemorating nothing, not even the dubious anniversaries of other issues!" H Foulkes of Blackpool thinks these "the most natural looking stamps yet produced", Mrs L Morters of Dyfed, Stan Bruce of Perthshire, and N Smith of Worcestershire all commented favourably on the Autumn stamp reproductions on the Royal Doulton plates. R D Brown lauded the postcards which he has "framed...for all to enjoy". Mrs J Lyon of Devon wrote of her pleasure in using these stamps "particularly on letters to foreign parts", and Charles Reich in Australia wrote approvingly: "they are quite different from the traditional Autumn images of trees and shrubs." L A Wood of East Sussex would "have substituted Bullace instead of Pear, to make it a hedgerow issue – a truly English selection." For Miss L Austin of Berkshire this is "just what special stamps should be – bright, colourful, evocative of the subject. Finely detailed but not cluttered which is important given the size of the stamp and all five complementing each other."

As always a few of you were inspired to verse; this from Norman Hudson of South Wirral:

Autumn's change from green to gold
Well-shown on stamps' small face;
Things of beauty, a joy to behold
Make us all a fruit and nut-case!"

Sherlock Holmes

A very mixed reaction to this set, some liked the dark colouring, reminiscent of Victorian streets and foul crimes; others found them drab and unclear. C R Briscoe of Essex applauded the format and printing thus: "depicts a British institution and demonstrates fully miniature works of art – the essence of stamp collecting." He feels that "many modern issues are abstract concoctions suitable for advertising hoardings." Paul Markwell of Cambridgeshire considered



SHERLOCK HOLMES & MORIARTY
"THE FINAL PROBLEM"



SHERLOCK HOLMES & MYCROFT
"THE GREEK INTERPRETER"

Final Problem and Greek Interpreter – Most and least popular of Sherlock Holmes designs

this set "not bad as a late substitute for the Channel Tunnel set. The selected style captures the Holmes period perfectly with all the intrigue and suspense of the original books." D Cox of Southport continues this theme: "the light-dark-light contrast from stamp to stamp typifies the blacker side of mystery and crime so well, giving an impressive picture of Holmes at work."

Allan Deeds of Northants described them as his least favourite issue of 1993 – "...filled with unnecessary background detail, something that should be avoided on an object as small as a postage stamp." He continues: "Nos 33 and 35 are so dark that, when cancelled, the postmark stands a 50% chance of being obscured by the dark background, since machine cancellations tend to be fairly light nowadays. These are defects shared by the Spanish Armada set of 1988 and also the Lord Mayor's Show set of 1989." For another Mr Briscoe, this time from Birmingham, Holmes was the worst set; Mr Briscoe asks "Why celebrate someone who never existed and probably has as many haters as fans?". Somewhat surprisingly few of you confessed to being decided "fans" of the Great Detective but perhaps that went without saying for many who voted for this set. But at least one reader, Leho Jõumees, was "stimulated to buy a newly issued Sherlock Holmes stories in Estonia."

J Carpenter of Bedfordshire extolled Andrew Davidson's "excellent interpretation of Conan Doyle's characters...Nos 33 and 36 are very dramatic, probably the most dramatic ever issued by Royal Mail." For Roger Bacon of London each stamp "creates its own Victorian melodrama". Eric Baker took a poll amongst fellow members of the Greater Eastside Stamp Society of Bellevue, USA; Sherlock Holmes was a clear winner – perhaps the recent showing on

local TV of "The Six Napoleons" influenced the choice. Marine Timekeepers and Roman Britain were the second and third choices of this Society.

J Lawson of Devon described this as "a lovely set" and awarded it 9%; out of 10 (his least favourite, Waterways, scored just 2). He wrote: "overall a better year – are the Post Office actually listening to collectors at last?". He expressed the view that the then forthcoming Age of Steam set should have been in colour.

Samuel Bradford of the USA thought the Holmes artwork "superb" but wished we had included the £10 Britannia definitive in the poll as he would have voted this his favourite individual stamp. As it wasn't included, he voted for stamp 36 – "The Final Problem". A patriotic comment from Mrs C Wright of Essex: who found the Holmes set "specifically British whereas, with the exception of Greetings and Christmas, the others could just as easily have been designed and produced by other countries." Last word on Holmes to another bard, R A Mostyn of Essex:

"A very good year for British stamps
And it's hard to be selective
But what could be more British
Than our classical great detective."

Christmas

Quentin Blake's interpretation of characters from Dickens's *Christmas Carol* met with general approval, but there was some concern as to the finished stamps. Ann Partington of Tyne & Wear found that "delightful as they are, they looked terribly insipid once stuck on envelopes." Rita Curtis of Middlesex prefers bolder designs, the Christmas issue "need to be seen through a magnifying glass." N Innes-Smith of Dorset considers each Christmas stamp "a miniature picture in its own right – interesting, has balance and demands close study, i.e. all the attributes of a potential classic." He contrasts them to the Timekeepers "with their odd bits of machinery or the Swans which were a great opportunity lost." For W Goodfellow of Canada the Christmas set "brought back so many happy memories of Christmas in the UK...a traditional time of reading *A Christmas Carol* and watching the classic film actor Alastair Slim playing Scrooge and all the wonderful characters." John Graham of the USA echoes the views of many readers: "the stamps bring joy to the recipients of Christmas mail – they convey a proper sense of the classical holiday season, colour, humor and a sense of giving." It

was heartening to read several comments pointing out that whilst the Greetings and Christmas stamps were not so liked in the stamp album, they were fully appreciated for their main purpose – use on social mail.

Mrs E Miller of Yorkshire wrote of her grandchildren's liking for these stamps and their wish to read *Christmas Carol*; she praised the educational value of the set. Dr Norman Dean of Norway finds the set "fun" and likes the clear placing of The Queen's head and value – in contrast to Holmes and Greetings which otherwise he considers of "great merit". For Joan Harris of Saudi Arabia, "the Queen's head and value having a different colour on each stamp is a definite plus." The designs themselves are "uncluttered, animated, vivid and fun." D White of Surrey wonders if "the linking of the stamps by the footprints must surely be a first?" Lynn Trickett of London thinks the Christmas set "proves that a traditional subject doesn't have to be treated in a traditional way". The stamps made her smile which she says was "even better". For Mr C Cowan of Berkshire the 1993 Christmas set was the "best Christmas set for a number of years". R Faber of the Netherlands voted this his favourite set comparing it favourably with the equivalent issue of his home country. B E Waygood of Cambridge considered Mr Blake's work "Good idea. Poor designs". Dr Morley of Essex thought the stamps "lovely but ruined by the Post Office's obliterating cancellation policy". Mr L Hobbs of Bristol wrote in support of the first day cover – "the perfect Christmas gift", but Mrs N Richardson of Devon considered the Bethlehem datestamp "was not a very suitable postmark for this subject." (This is the traditional pictorial "First Day of Issue" postmark for the Christmas stamps, but a London EC cancel showing a top hat, as worn by Mr Scrooge, was also made available and announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin*. Ed.)

Greetings

There were some strong words used against Greetings stamps – "vile" and "awful" according to A N Smith, Middlesex and R Noppen of Holland, William Leamy of London wrote "I don't collect Greetings stamps; I'm afraid I don't approve!"

Others of you like to use them on mail but are not so keen on adding them to your collections. But there were many who found them acceptable both for postal and philatelic purposes. Eric Cowley of Lincolnshire describes



Scrooge – most popular of the Christmas set

them as "cheerful, colourful stamps, suitable for 90% of the mail I send in these very depressing times." For K Denman of Hull they "glow from every envelope they are placed on" and remind him of his, obviously happy, childhood. Peter Williams of Berkshire is a supporter of such stamps as "they combine what is best about children's literature with philatelic design, thus potentially encouraging children into a hobby which can last a lifetime. Liam Whitelaw liked the fact that they feature "childrens books that span several generations. As such they can be used for grandparents, grandchildren and adults." Gary West of Canada writes: "as a teacher I am always looking for anything that would encourage children to read. The Greetings stamps, with their colourful creative and eye-catching characters could make reading more appealing." Mirka Cristina Cevoli of Italy suggests that "many more children would be interested in this hobby if at least once a year stamps were dedicated to children." To Mrs S Evans of London the Greetings stamps are "fun to use, fun to receive". Mrs Bolam of Berkshire is also a keen supporter: "Some wines have a



Peter Rabbit and Giant – top and joint bottom of the popularity poll for Greeting stamps (Peter Rabbit 110 votes, Giant and Genie 4 votes each)

good year, but for the Greetings issues it is a good year every year." Mr & Mrs Taylor of Hampshire jointly declare them "the most cheerful stamps seen in a long time – well worth five bob each!!" (Five bob – that's real money! Ed.) Last words on this set to D Winter of Gloucestershire: "They really stand out from the cluttered (Sherlock Holmes), illegible (Christmas), label-like (Inland Waterways), boring (Roman Britain), Messy (Europa) issues with which they are in competition. 1993 was not a vintage year — here's to 1994!"

General Comments

Mr Winter's viewpoint was shared by a number of you. Apart from the Swans issue, Mrs Bennett of Oxfordshire found "1993 memorable for its mediocrity in stamp design". The Autumn set was for R Kelman of Aberdeen "the best of a bad bunch...1993 definitely not a vintage year." Mrs McKeen of Wiltshire wrote off the 1993 issues as "uninspiring" and was especially disappointed with the Swans. Anne Perrett of Hertfordshire registered her protest about there being no set to mark the RAF's 75th anniversary by not voting for any of the issued sets. The exclusion of RAF stamps was, she wrote, "utterly disgusting, despicable and totally unbelievable." C G Harman of Essex likewise withheld his votes but not his opinion: "My favourite stamp is the one that you did not issue. There are just too many and for the most inadequate reasons. The definitives are even worse and quite unnecessary." I assume he refers to the numerous definitive variations rather than to definitive stamps in general. Even stronger comments were expressed by A Martin, also of Essex, who voted for Swans as "the least unpleasant of a lousy bunch produced by people more interested in profit than good looking stamps." R Taylor of Liverpool considered the 1993 designs "the worst yet" and wished that in 1994 "we can hope for something better for our money".

On the other hand K Barraclough of Yorkshire thought the 1993 issues "of a much higher standard than in the last few years... (with) no horrendous Europe in Space stamps." Mrs A Longhurst of the Netherlands wrote: "in 1993 you've excelled yourselves and produced the best collection of sets in one year for a long time." Patrick Lacey of New Zealand noted that it was "much harder to choose this year, there are so many excellent stamps to choose from." Ian Baker of Middlesex opined "overall a better year."

To finish three points raised by Simon Cockayne of Suffolk, Loring Ivanick of Japan, and A Charman of Kent. Mr Cockayne is "unhappy at the lack of post which is received with special stamps attached. It's no wonder children are not interested in stamp collecting if they don't get to see the lovely designs on special stamps." He wonders if special stamps could be sold in books instead of the NVI stamps. Your Editor agrees with Mr Cockayne about the importance of children seeing stamps on mail. I am often surprised that how much mail I receive from fellow philatelists and stamp collectors which bears just ordinary definitives. I believe we should all try to use special stamps more – my own New Year resolution!

Mr Ivanick expresses his hope that "the Queen will be depicted in the future, despite rumours to the contrary", but continues "I do believe it is time to retire the Machin portrait though." Mr Charman makes a plea for clarity and simplicity in stamp design for the benefit of the general user rather than the philatelist, as the former will not have read up on the subject matter. Mr Charman writes: "A purchaser should not have it explained to them what the issue represents...some of the issues are just too clever, for example Marine Timekeepers."

After reading all your comments, your Editor is reminded of the sayings "You can't please everyone" and "One man's meat is another man's poison". Stamp designs evoke strong opinions, as does the choice of subjects for special issues, indeed the very existence of special stamps. No two collectors agree exactly and no doubt that's as it should be. Debate, disagreement, even some cynicism is a sign of a healthy interest. All in Royal Mail concerned in stamp design, production and marketing welcome constructive criticism. The differences in opinion – even extremes of view – are not detrimental to the hobby providing we all agree to disagree on occasion. Whether we hanker for the traditional designs of yesteryear or relish today's colourful Greetings stamps, we are all stamp collectors and enjoy looking at, appraising and commenting on stamp design. If we didn't, it would, as a former Prime Minister lamented, be "a funny old world".

All voting forms went into a draw. The senders of the first five drawn are being sent a 1993 Royal Mail Stamps Yearbook. The lucky winners are: N L Sexton of Cumbria, M J Finch of Worcestershire, Mrs J A Juggins of Hants, F M Harvey of Isle of Wight and J J Lieb of USA.

Stamp Scene

Thematica 94

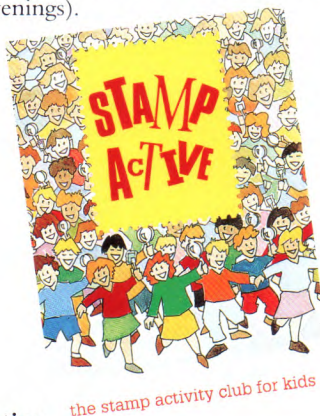
Britain's thematic stamp exhibition will be held at the Carisbrooke Hall, Seymour Street, London W2 (near Marble Arch) on 2-3 July 1994. Open Saturday 2 July 10.30-17.30, Sunday 3 July 10.30-1700. Admission free.

Thematica 94 is supported by the British stamp trade and the British Thematic Association assisted by the British Philatelic Trust. This highly successful annual event is increasing in popularity each year. In the Exhibition Hall, will be found the main thematic societies and the Grand Thematic Stamp Competition for the John Fosbery Trophy. Visitors to the exhibition will be invited to vote for the winner of this award. Prizes will be awarded to 25 lucky voters.

In the Dealers Hall, visitors will find not only the important thematic stamp and cover dealers from all over Britain, but also others who have a wealth of postal history and material suited to collectors of all levels. This is a rare opportunity to browse through an Aladdin's philatelic cave in a welcoming and friendly atmosphere.

Refreshments and bar services available, also plenty of tables and chairs for visitors to meet; swap stories or stamps.

Enquiries: Brian Sole, 3 Stockfield Road, Claygate, ESHER, Surrey KT10 0QG, Tel. 0372-467652 (evenings).



the stamp activity club for kids

Stamp Active

Stamp Active was launched in 1990 – its aim being to assist those running junior stamp clubs. Stamp Active is launching a new and improved programme in 1994.

The British Philatelic Trust already provides support for schools and junior stamp clubs. The Stamp Active programme which produces materials on a regular basis has been upgraded

with a new and larger starter pack, updates at the start of each school term and the provision of a monthly stamp magazine.

Here is a brief description of the complete package available to members:

New Members Welcome Pack: contains stamps, publications, games and further information about the Stamp Active programme.

Stamp Active starter pack: A complete guide on how to start and run a successful youth stamp club with full details on club organisation, sources of help and activity ideas. There is a special section of over forty activity ideas for young people.

Stamp Active achievement award scheme: This is designed to encourage juniors at all levels to improve their own standard and give tangible recognition of their achievement in the form of a badge and certificate as they progress from the Merit Award to Bronze, Silver and Gold.

Display scheme: Stamp displays and the Melville display panels are available on free loan. Subjects already available include; Scouting, Aviation, Birds, Royalty, Music, Postal History and Famous people.

Regional co-ordinators: Local support and practical help is available through a panel of youth advisers at regional level.

"Advice" service: If members have problems with stamp identification or other philatelic queries, Stamp Active can help with research.

The Stamp Fun activity programme is available to give additional help to maintain a lively and interesting club. It is important, not only to give a good start but also to provide new and interesting materials on a regular basis.

Three times each year, at the start of each school term, members will receive an update pack containing: Activity ideas; News round up of junior events and competitions; Spotlight "Around the Clubs"; Stamp Fun (Kids Puzzle Pages); Lists of speakers; and Information on Philatelic Topics.

Members also receive a monthly stamp magazine free of charge.

Benefits of membership for stamp club organisers are substantial at just £10 per year. This is only possible thanks to the generous support of the British Philatelic Trust. Collectors and school teachers and societies will find the Stamp Active programme of continuing interest and direct support to anyone involved in junior stamp collecting. To join Stamp Active, send details of your club and £10 to: STAMP ACTIVE, 3 Longfellow Road, BANBURY, Oxon, OX16 9LB.



Rowland Hill Statue

May will always be a significant month to collectors of British stamps and students of postal history. We commemorate the 154th anniversary of the issue of the Penny Black by illustrating the statue of Sir Rowland Hill in his birthplace, Kidderminster. The photo was kindly supplied by Stan Goron, Manager of the National Postal Museum – home to the unique proof sheet of Penny Blacks and the R M Phillips Collection which contains numerous Blacks, mint, used, in multiples and on first day cover.

Soliloquy of a Postage Stamp

John Orford of Harrison and Sons Ltd has submitted the following essay. We would be interested to know who wrote this and if it has been published anywhere before. Any reader who recognises it is asked to write to the Editor, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, LONDON EC2A 1NL.

Soliloquy of a Postage Stamp

I am the world's greatest traveller. I've journeyed from pole to pole, and all the climes between . . . by dogsled, camel and horseback, by every land, sea and air conveyance; even by submarine, dirigible and rocket.

I am the world's greatest art and portrait

gallery. The heroes and heroines of mythology pose within my borders. I portray the greats and the near-greats of all time; kings and queens, pharaohs and presidents, princes and princesses, poets and patriots, emperors and explorers, athletes, architects, aviators, artists and adventurers, tribal chieftains, inventors, moguls, musicians and martyrs, dramatists and novelists, shahs, sultans, saints and sinners. Even the vanished forms of the phoenix, dragon, centaur and unicorn appear upon my face.

I am the world's greatest picture chronicle and miniature encyclopaedia. I map communities, countries and continents, and reveal views from every strange remote corner of the earth. I depict mountains, and valleys; oceans, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, geysers, harbours, bridges and dams; native canoes, sailing ships and modern ocean liners; monuments and statues; castles, cathedrals, churches, missions, mosques, temples and ruins of temples; and every type of locomotion, from automobiles to zeppelins and steamboats to space ships. I delineate all manner of sports, handicrafts, customs, sacred rites and ceremonies; and nearly every variety of bird, animal, fish, fruit and flower.

I frame the horrors of war, the blessings of peace, the hardships of emigration, the plight of indigence, and the blight of famine. I illustrate the adventures of Don Quixote, the fairy tales of childhood and the legends of all civilizations. I reflect the symbols of art and culture, of natural resources and industry, of trade and commerce, of agriculture and architecture, and of all human endeavour. I commemorate the expeditions and voyages, and the inventions, discoveries and creations that make life worth living.

Millions of men, women and children are fascinated by me. Through my infinite variety they find boundless pleasure, relaxation and enchantment.

Yet . . . I am only a postage stamp!

Railway Letter Stamps

6 June 1994 is the 50th Anniversary of D Day, and also the 50th birthday of War Department 2-10-0 steam locomotive No 3672 "Dame Vera Lynn" which is based on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. A new stamp showing the loco and train passing beneath Darnholm bridge just north of Goathland will be issued. The stamp is printed in sheets of eight (two blocks of four with a central horizontal gutter) by Questa with "traffic lights" and plate numbers on the sheet borders. Price single stamp 25p, full sheet £2. Details of first day covers and postcards in

Commemorative Covers Review.

On 4 July 1844 an Act of Parliament was passed for the building of the York to Pickering Railway which would open up the Whitby and Pickering area to the Main Line to London King's Cross. On 4 July 1994 the NYMR will issue a se-tenant pair of stamps showing the National Railway Museum's Great Northern Railway Stirling Single No 1 during a visit to the NYMR (this class of loco ran into York), and a more modern locomotive - Standard Tank 80135 which is now based on the NYMR. These are printed in sheets of eight (two blocks of two pairs with a central gutter) by Questa, with "traffic lights" and plate numbers in sheet margins price 50p pair, £2 full sheet. For details or first day covers and postcards, see *Commemorative Covers Review*. Orders/enquiries: Mrs M Atkins, 5 Tiber View, Brinsworth, ROTHERHAM, S Yorkshire, S60 5EA. Remittances payable to "NYMR". Postage 25p on orders up to £1.40p over £1. Airmail outside Europe add 50p.

Eurotunnel has obtained a Royal Mail licence to run a commemorative Rail Letter Service for items posted through the Tunnel. A miniature sheet of four 55p rail letter stamps is being issued; the stamps feature Channel Tunnel trains. Some 50,000 of these sheets have been

printed. The sheet is available from Eurotunnel's philatelic agents: Benham (A Buckingham) Limited for £3 including postage and packing. There will be a series of first day and commemorative envelopes chronicling the history of the Channel Tunnel, and information about these is available from Benham at: The Bayle, FOLKESTONE, Kent, CT20 1SD, Tel. 0303 850041.

A second miniature sheet is already planned - details available from Benham, address above.

New Collectors Exhibition

"Hobbies, Toys, Collectors World" is a new event designed to attract the whole family. The aim of the show is to introduce the visitors to the widest possible range of hobbies and pastimes, providing a full days entertainment for collectors and enthusiasts alike, with demonstrations by experts and numerous "hands-on" opportunities to cater for all age groups.

Christie's are taking a large stand where their experts will value visitors collectables and during the last day they will be running an auction for visitors.

The following stamp dealers and postal administrations have already booked stands: Royal Mail, Steven Scott, Rushstamps, Graham



Bowden, Folkestone Stamps, Brian Reeve, and Isle of Man Post Office.

Other collecting areas which will be represented include Comics, Phonocards and Stocks & Bonds. An extensive Film and T.V. memorabilia area will include features and stands to appeal to *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who* and *Red Dwarf* fans and collectors.

The exhibition will be held at London's Barbican Exhibition Centre from 13-15 May 1994. Enquiries to: UK Sports and Leisure Show Ltd, Coppergate House, 16 Brune Street, LONDON E1 7NJ. Tel: 071-721 7391/2.



Penny Black Pub Sign

Mr and Mrs Paul Bolam of Berkshire have submitted a colour transparency of the sign of "The Queen's Head" public-house in Waltham Cross. The sign reproduces the Penny Black. Please note we are not starting a new *Bulletin* series on pub signs but thought readers would be particularly interested in this one.

Sheffield Philatelic Society celebrates its centenary

At a meeting of gentlemen held in the Central Cafe, High Street, on Tuesday 2 October 1894, it was resolved – "That a Society be formed to further the interests of stamp collectors in Sheffield, to be called the "Sheffield Philatelic Society". The Society has been in continuous existence ever since and is amongst the oldest in the country. Few societies have a longer continuous history.

Early meetings were for business or the discussion of a philatelic topic, not until October 1912 were displays held at every meeting. The first visiting display was in December 1903 when a Mr Heginbottam showed British West Indies, by proxy, with notes read by a Society member. Minutes of the early

meetings where displays were given have comments such as "complete" or "including all the rarities". How things have changed!

Eric Buckley joined in 1946 giving the Society an enthusiasm for postal history, and in 1948 Eric, with Ron Ward, became founder members of the Yorkshire Postal History Society which has flourished ever since.

The Society has operated an Exchange Packet ever since its inception and in common with many societies this forms the major source of income and allows annual subscriptions to be kept at a low level. Membership of the Society has fluctuated over the years and is affected by the popularity of the hobby and the economic situation. Currently membership stands at around 80, having achieved around 150 in the boom years of the hobby in the early 1970s.

This year Sheffield PS is host to the Annual Convention of the Yorkshire Philatelic Association. The Society has hosted the Convention on four previous occasions, and has contributed four Presidents.

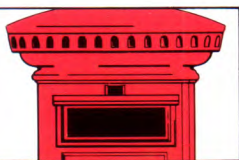
For details of membership write to the Secretary: J R Hartley, 9 Hollow Meadow Mews, SHEFFIELD S6 6GJ.

Stamp Duties and the Stamp Office

An exhibition marking the tercentenary of the Stamp Duties will be on show at the Courtauld Institute, Somerset House (Strand entrance), London WC2 from 5 July to 31 August 1994. The exhibition, open Monday – Saturday, 10.00 – 17.00, tells the story of 300 years of British revenue stamps, duty labels and documents.

This is an ideal opportunity to view a rare impression of the £1 million stamp duty die, the world's highest value stamp. Along with unique material from the Stamp Office archives, the British Library and private sources, visitors will see stamp impressions and documents dating back long before the Penny Black. Many of the exhibits have never before been on display to the public, and will fascinate anyone with an interest in Philately, Social History, Taxation or Law. Free admission and catalogue.





£10 Definitive and Self-adhesive stamps

C W Hawkins of Oxfordshire writes:

"As a keen philatelist for 40 years and a self employed small businessman for 15 years I have both the interest of a collector and as a user of stamps.

For many years I have been frustrated by the lack of a larger value stamp than the £5. To illustrate this frustration how many *Bulletin* readers have tried to attach up to £100 worth of stamps on a small but weighty overseas parcel? I was delighted at the announcement during 1992 of the intention to issue the £10 high value stamp. Imagine my disappointment on discovering that it is actually twice as large as the existing £5 stamp! There is therefore, no advantage to attaching 10 x £10 over 20 x £5 and so one has to ask the question that from a postal point of view (the prime purpose of a stamp) why was it issued? Why, if it had to be larger than existing high values was it not 30 or even 50% larger? As a collector I was impressed by the design and its security features, apart from the criticism, expressed by the other correspondents, of the large, bold numerical value. Surely the same could have been achieved on a smaller stamp?

"I was also interested in the second 'first' of 1993 – the self-adhesive 1st class NVI. Despite Royal Mail's decision to pilot this on a limited basis only, I decided to try it for myself, purchasing a supply from the Bureau. Apart from the imminent postage price increase I was attracted to the self-adhesives by the bend, peel and stick promotion, and the rather more hygienic method of attachment.

"Neither gum arabic nor PVA are very practical adhesives on modern packaging materials and tapes which tend to have a glossy and hydrophobic surface. We have for many years been attaching self-adhesive paper labels to taped packages in order to securely stick the postage stamps to the packet. The new self adhesive stamps stick well to all surfaces including waxed and waterproof papers and tapes.

"Unfortunately the problem is getting the stamps off their backing paper. This has to be a criticism of an over ambitious design which has failed in its prime purpose of supplying postage stamps to be used for postal purposes. Bend, peel and stick is simply not an acceptable slogan. Poke, prise and scrape would be more appropriate.

"A careful examination of the card laminate enables me to suggest the reasons for the problem. The cutter which forms the shape of the stamps not only cuts the stamp paper and adhesive layer it also penetrates the backing sheet from which the stamps are supposed to peel. Admittedly this does not happen on all the 20 impressions nor around the entire stamp. Where it does occur it results in the backing paper remaining attached to the stamp as it is removed rendering it non adhesive! It is obvious that the cutter has to penetrate the stamp itself and slightly into the backing sheet for the cut to be complete and effective. A slightly thicker backing sheet laminated to the card wallet could alleviate the problem. However the problem is somewhat more complex than this. When the cutter penetrates the stamp it compresses the backing sheet even if it does not cut through it. This pushes the outer margins of the cut edges downwards into the backing sheet itself. With normal self-adhesive labels bending the backing sheet allows the label to lift and be easily removed. The introduction of the close perforations associated with stamps complicates this since one is no longer peeling along a straight line in one direction. The row of perforations offer far more resistance to the bend and associated lifting of the stamp label. A simple calculation shows that for every centimetre of stamp edge there is about 1.5 centimetres of edge if the perforations are followed. The points of the perforations also make it more difficult to separate the stamp surface from its backing sheet. The simplest solution to this would be to have one or two sides of the stamps imperforate or even a portion of two sides at a corner non perforated which would allow the stamp to lift easily. There are many examples of stamps being issued in books with at least one edge imperforate.

"I hope that my comments might engender some discussion and hopefully philatelists will realise that the postal use of the stamp has to take priority over purely aesthetic considerations."

Mr Hawkins comments on the self-adhesive

stamp were shown to Mr Aazam Vesamia, the Royal Mail manager in charge of the project. Mr Hawkins has neatly summarised most of the areas under examination before it is decided whether or not to launch self-adhesive books nationally. The books have been on trial sale in the Tyne-Tees TV area, and are available to collectors from the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office philatelic outlets.

Cover Corner

Mr D G Phillips, age 86, read with interest the story of John Fletcher's Second World War cover in "Cover Corner" (January *Bulletin*, page 143). Mr Fletcher's cover addressed to Sydney, Cheshire was eventually delivered, having first gone to Sydney, Australia. Mr Phillips writes:

"I likewise remember my mother and father receiving a letter from my aunt in St Ives, Huntingdonshire addressed to Lakeside Road, Palmers Green, London. It was just pre-1914-1918 war, with a George V stamp and arrived safely – covered with various remarks and with "London" encircled in blue pencil and written in large writing 'not known London-Ontario try London – England!' My father kept it for many years but eventually it disappeared. May be it got the 'Wander Lust' again!"

To Pay System

Margaret Burfield of Cumbria has submitted an example of the receipt used by her local Royal Mail delivery office when collecting VAT due on packages. Postal historians interested in To Pay material will be aware that a number of systems of collecting have been trialled in various parts of the country in recent times. Later this year Royal Mail will assess the results of the different systems. I am obliged to Mrs Burfield for

CHARGE (VAT)

P129

RECEIVED for delivery (Rev'd Dec 76)

correspondence surcharged

Date Stamp

to the amount of

12/5/93

5.62

Signature of
Delivering Postman

OP/01822 12/88

M. Sharf

sending this example which I am sure will be of interest to a number of *Bulletin* readers. Mrs Burfield regrets that To Pay labels are not usually used in her area and expresses the hope they will be reintroduced at some time.

All letters to the Editor are carefully read; matters of general interest will be dealt with in "Postbag". The Editor regrets that he is unable to reply personally to letters.

Channel Tunnel Stamps

The cylinder numbers and colours are:

25p 2A (ultramarine) 1B (bright orange) 1C (scarlet) 1D (new blue) 1E (emerald) 1F (turquoise-blue) 1G (silver).

41p 1A (ultramarine) 1B (bright orange) 1C (scarlet) 4D (new blue) 1E (emerald) 1F (turquoise-blue) 1G (silver).

Collectors may obtain the French Channel Tunnel stamps (values F2.80 and F4.30) from stamp dealers or direct from the French Post Office, *La Poste*. Orders should be sent to: Service Philatélique de la Poste, 18 Rue François Bovin, F 75758 Paris Cedex 15, France.

CUSTOMER KNOWS BEST.



May Digest

Issued in May

3 May: Channel Tunnel Stamps, 2 x 25p, 2 x 41p, *se-tenant* pairs.

Designers: George Hardie and Jean-Paul Cousin.

Printing: Harrison and Sons Ltd, photogravure.

Sheets of 60, perf 14 x 14½, PVA Dextrin gum. Phosphor Coated Paper.

Pictorial First Day of Issue Postmarks: British Philatelic Bureau and Folkestone.

Presentation Pack: No 247, price £1.70.

Philatelic Products: Details in April Bulletin, pages 214-215.

6 May: National Postal Museum Postcode postcards. Five cards, 25p each from NPM shop, £1.25 set from British Philatelic Bureau.

31 May: D-Day stamp cards.

Withdrawn in May

10 May: Art in the 20th century stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards.

Events

7 May 94. Midland Phil Federation Spring Convention at Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, 10.00-16.30. Admission 25p, children 10p. Hosted by Streetly Phil Soc (celebrating its silver jubilee). Competitions, 30 dealers stands, refreshments. The first meeting of the new Association of British Philatelic Societies will be held at this event. Enquiries: Dr E R Clark, 122 Coniston Road, WOLVERHAMPTON WV6 9DU.

9 May 94 to April 95. "Addressing Postcodes" exhibition at National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, LONDON EC1A 1LP. Open Mon-Fri 9.30-16.30. Admission free.

National Postal Museum

Please note that the Museum galleries (*not* the shop) will be closed to the public 25 April-6 May inclusive, re-opening on 9 May.

13-15 May 94. Hobbies, Toys & Collectors' World exhibition at Barbican Exhibition Centre, London EC2. Royal Mail stand selling philatelic products.

20 May 94. Vintage Years Exhibition at Kensington Town Hall, London. Royal Mail stand selling philatelic products.

26 May 94. Display "Railways and the Mail" (H S Wilson), Sheffield Phil Soc, Carver Methodist Church Guild Room, Rockingham Lane, SHEFFIELD S1 4FW, 19.15.

Postal Memorabilia Displays

David Harrop is providing displays of postal artefacts and documents at the following venues:
30 Apr-2 May: Llandudno Victorian weekend.

29-30 May: Carrington Steam Rally, Boston, Lincs.

18-19 June: Parham Park Steam Rally, Storrington, Sussex.

25 June: Woodford International Air Show, Bramall, Stockport, Cheshire (Air Mail display).

25-26 June: "1000 Engine" Rally, Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire.

Mr Harrop provides permanent displays at the Manchester Transport Museum; Crewe Railway Age; and Brookside Garden Centre, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire. Enquiries: David Harrop, 15 Hawthorne Road, Heaton Mersey, STOCKPORT SK4 3DQ.

StampMaster

StampMaster – a Computerised Stamp Database for collectors of British stamps is now available from the British Philatelic Bureau, Collections, Post Shops Plus and Philatelic Counters, price £49.95. The system was reviewed by James Mackay in the April *Bulletin* pages 218-9.

British Stamp Design 1993

We regret that publication of this book has been delayed; we hope it will be available shortly and apologise for any inconvenience the delay has caused. See April *Bulletin* (page 238) for details of this book.

Stop Press

Books of self-adhesive stamps will be withdrawn from sale at post offices and retail outlets in the Tyne-Tees TV area at close of business on 31 May 1994. The books will remain on sale at the British Philatelic Bureau, Collections, Post Shops Plus and Philatelic Counters.

A new aerogramme commemorating the 75th anniversary of Alcock and Brown's trans-Atlantic flight will go on sale at post offices, the Bureau and other philatelic outlets on 14 June, price 45p. Further details next month.

