

May 1995

British Philatelic Bulletin



Royal Mail

Volume 32, No: 9 The Royal Mail Magazine for Stamp Collectors Price 75p



HG Wells 1866-1946

In Honour of R J Mitchell – Designer of the Spitfire



Royal Mail and Royal Mint are proud to announce a limited edition "Philatelic Medallic Cover" to mark the centenary of the birth of Reginald Joseph Mitchell, famous as the designer of the Spitfire and the Supermarine Seaplane – winner of the 1931 Schneider Trophy.

The cover bears the pane of four 1st class stamps and commemorative label from a special £1 book, cancelled by a Royal Mint sponsored special

postmark at Southampton home of the Supermarine factory. The postmark will be dated 20 May – the 100th anniversary of Mitchell's birth. Encapsulated in the cover is the Brilliant Uncirculated commemorative medal produced by the Royal Mint – unique to this cover.

Price £12.95 Early ordering advisable – earlier Philatelic-Numismatic/Medallic covers have quickly sold out.



British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT.
Tel. 0131 550 8989

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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Main Feature

Keeping Communications Open 268

Jean Matheson looks at how the Post Office kept vital links open during the Second World War. Over 4000 postal staff lost their lives at home or fighting overseas.



Royal Mail News

Science Fiction

Four stamps on the theme of Science Fiction go on sale at post offices, and philatelic outlets on 6 June. The issue coincides with the centenary of the first publication of H G Wells's *The Time Machine*, one of the best-known and most influential science fiction books.

The designs, by Siobhan Keaney, illustrate the novels of H G Wells. *The Time Machine* (1895) features on the 25p stamp which covers the basic rate for inland 1st class and European Union mail. The 30p stamp depicts *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) and provides for mail to European, non-EU, countries. *The War of the Worlds* (1898) is shown on the 35p denomination, for airmail postcards, and the 41p stamp features *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933)

Herbert George Wells was born at Bromley, Kent in 1866; his father ran an unsuccessful china shop. Although his parents wanted him to follow a similar trade, Wells had other ideas and was keen to get a good education. He attended

classes at the Normal School of Science in Kensington, studying biology with T H Huxley. He graduated in 1890 and worked in scientific journalism and teaching. His early books had a major impact on the thinkers of their time. He also wrote fiction based on the life of the ordinary man; such works include some of his best-known titles – *Love and Mr Lewisham* (1900), *Kipps: The Story of a Simple Soul* (1905), and *The History of Mr Polly* (1910). But he did not neglect his science fiction writing and *The First Men in the Moon* appeared in 1901.

Wells was an enthusiastic Fabian socialist, keen on social reform and after the First World War his political/social work was as important to him as his writing. He attempted to influence politicians, talking to Winston Churchill; Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin; and US President, Franklin D Roosevelt. He drafted a declaration of human rights, a forerunner to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The Second World War damaged many of his hopes for mankind, and science which he thought should improve man's life looked like destroying it. A saddened man, Wells died at his London home in August 1946.

His prolific output of over 150 books and numerous articles make him a literary giant of the 20th century.

Technical details

Printers: The House of Questa Ltd

Process: Offset lithography

Size: 35 x 37mm

Sheets: 100

Perforation: 14

Phosphor: Two phosphor bands

Paper: OBA free (OBA =
Optical Brightening Agent)

Gum: PVA

Plates Numbers & Colours

25p, 30p and 41p 1A (new blue) 1A (greenish yellow) 1A (magenta) 1A (black) 1A (rosine)

35p 1A (new blue) 1A (greenish yellow) 1A (violet) 1A (black) 1A (bright blue-green)

First Day Facilities

Unstamped first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets around a week before 6 June, price 25p.

The Bureau will provide a first day cover



science fiction

mint
Royal Mail stamps

BRITISH PHILATELIC BUREAU
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
6 JUNE 1995
HIDDERLEY

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
Wells
6 JUNE 1995



25p 6.6.95

Today' can be a long time.

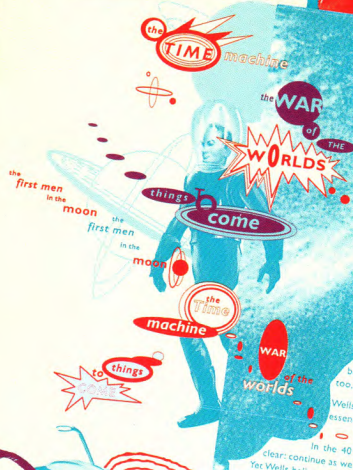
and avoid reading public. He dramatised these findings that excitement in a manner both scientific and poetical – and it Countless fantastic stories written during the past century have been influenced by this tale; none have bettered it.

Centuries of unified time are compressed into this poignant story.

Following *The Time Machine* came a number of imaginative novels. Most of them were written while Wells was still in his thirties, struggling to make a living by writing. One of the most enduring is *The War of the Worlds* (1898), in which a more advanced Earth is attacked by Martians. As the power of inventing also introduced the theme of alien invasion – an idea which has since proved very fusible.

His novel about travel through near space, landing on the Moon and the exploration of a different culture is *The First Men in the Moon* (1901); another staple of Wells' SF writers. In his sprawling discussion novel, *Things to Come* (1933), we have the vision of a better civilization here on Earth – one of the many utopias. In the brilliant Wells-scripted *Things to Come*, we witness the end of the Dark Ages and, eventually, a first journey of immensity to the future. The novel is 'You across the centuries and many other 'space' concepts.

Wells' mind was as well stocked with utopian plans as the two royal which occupy the future in *The Time Machine* – the delicate, the elegant, the Morlocks – represent these dark, futuristic – the far to what in the wrong light and dark in human nature. Rarely can they have been so vividly justified. Hence Wells' lasting popularity and influence. Hence, the popularity of SF, appealing to our hopes and fears for the future. Wells' technique of reflecting the present in the mirror of the future contains the clear, continue as we are and *The Time Machine*.



BRITISH PHILATELIC BUREAU
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
6 JUNE 1995
HIDDERLEY

BRITISH PHILATELIC BUREAU
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
6 JUNE 1995
HIDDERLEY



science fiction

Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbie Road
ILKESTON
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB



service – collectors may order the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps, cancelled with pictorial “First Day of Issue” postmark of the Bureau or Wells (Somerset), price £1.96 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £1.67 overseas (no VAT). Orders must be received at the Bureau by 6 June 1995.

Collectors may send their own stamped covers on 6 June for these pictorial cancels to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Wexham Road, SLOUGH SL1 1AA (for Wells postmark). Please endorse the outer envelope “FD9513” (Bureau), or “FD9514” (Wells).

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

Details of sponsored special handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* (Royal Mail’s magazine for postmark collectors), which is available on subscription from the British Philatelic Bureau: £10 UK/Europe; £21.75 Rest of World (Airmail).

Presentation Pack and Stamp Cards

The pack (price £1.65) and stamp cards (25p each) will be available from the Bureau, Post

Office Counters philatelic outlets and main post offices.

The Designer

Siobhan Keaney was born in 1959 and educated at the London College of Printing, graduating in graphic design. She worked briefly for three London design consultancies before becoming an independent designer in 1985. Her work is noted for its meticulous concern for typographic detail and skilful multilayered photographic illustrations. Her list of awards is ever growing, including the National Business Calendar Award (1986), and the Designers and Art Directors Association Silver Award for the most outstanding annual report and brochure (1990). She was shortlisted for the BBC Design awards in 1990. Ms Keaney has lectured at the Design Museum, London; North Carolina State University, USA; and the Royal College of Art. Exhibitions of her work have been shown at the Barbican, Royal College of Art, Royal Festival Hall, Design Museum, and at overseas venues. Her list of published works is equally impressive, including *Images II* (1987), *Typography now – the next wave* (1991), and *Computer graphics* (1993).

The Science Fiction set are her first stamps for Royal Mail.

D-Day Stamps

Further to the plate numbers recorded here last July (page 315), the National Postal Museum reports that stamps were also printed from plates 2A x 5, 3A x 5 and 4A x 5.

National Postal Museum News

The Museum will issue nine new postcards on 5 May – five connected with the “Victorian posts” exhibition (which opens to the public on 9 May) and four featuring stamps from the Museum’s Freddie Mercury collection. Details were published last month (page 229). Since it was acquired just over a year ago, the collection has proved a popular attraction at the Museum where fans of the rock legend can request to see and turn the pages of stamps collected by Freddie before he became famous. More than 800 visitors have already experienced the often moving moment, some leaving single red roses and others bursting into tears at the sight of the collection. Fans who have not seen the album at the NPM will be able to see it at the Fan Club’s Convention at Pontin’s Holiday Club, Southport, Merseyside on 5–7 May. The album

will be shown at other venues – to be announced.

Museum Manager, Stan Goron, said: "The interest customers have shown is so great that we wanted to give many people the opportunity to see the album. There has already been so much interest that fans have been making a pilgrimage to see it at the Museum and we felt we had to meet the needs of others and take it on the road."

The NPM bought the Mercury collection as part of a larger assortment of stamps amassed by the singer's father, Bomi Bulsara, for £3220 at a Sotheby's auction in 1993. The money went to the Mercury Phoenix Trust, an AIDS charity set up by the remaining Queen members following the death of their leader in 1991.

The National Postal Museum, which includes the famous R M Phillips Collection of British 19th century stamps, is situated in King Edward Street, London EC1, a few minutes walk from St Paul's Cathedral and underground station. Open Monday-Friday 09.30-16.30, admission free.

Obituaries – Former Members of SAC

We record the passing of two former members of Royal Mail's Stamp Advisory Committee. Sir Roger de Grey (1918-95), nephew of artist Spencer Gore, was educated at Eton College and Chelsea School of Art. He taught at the King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne and the Royal College of Art. In 1973 he became Principal of the City & Guilds of London Art School and from 1975 served on the Royal Academy's exhibitions committee. He was a distinguished President of the Academy from 1984 to 1993. Sir Roger served on the SAC from 1981 to 1983.

Somewhat belatedly we record the death of Sir

Anthony Lousada (1907-94) who was educated at Westminster and Oxford before becoming a solicitor. During the Second World War he worked in the War Cabinet Office. He inherited a group of Impressionist paintings and drawings (including Renoir, Monet and Fordain) and built up a fine collection. He served for many years on the council of the Royal College of Art and on the board of the Tate Gallery. He served on the SAC from 1968 to 1980.

New Stamp Books

Readers are reminded that five new books go on philatelic sale on 16 May:

£1 vended (4 x 25p) – Inspiration for Victory 3 (R J Mitchell)

£1 retail (4 x 1 st NVI) with R J Mitchell commemorative label (pane also available unfolded from Philatelic Bureau)

£1.40 retail (4 x 35p) with new cover design (as January 1st/2nd NVI books)

£1.64 retail (4 x 41p) with new cover design

£2.40 retail (4 x 60p) with new cover design

The books will be available from post offices and/or retail outlets as supplies of earlier books are used up. The £1 vended book was produced by Harrisons, the £1, £1.40, £1.64 and £2.40 retail books by Walsall.

No new individual stamps are involved but a new pane, incorporating a commemorative label, will be included in the £1 retail book. This marks the centenary of the birth of Reginald Joseph Mitchell, creator of the Spitfire. The label shows Mitchell and a Spitfire overflying a plan of the Mitchell-designed Seaplane that represented Britain in the pre-war Schneider Trophy. The Hall of Aviation at Southampton includes a Mitchell Museum.



R J Mitchell vended book cover (left) and commemorative label from retail book (right)

R J Mitchell was born at Kidsgrove near Stoke-on-Trent on 20 May 1895. A special Stoke handstamp, sponsored by Royal Mail, will be available on 16 May 1995 when the book is issued. Collectors may send covers bearing the pane, or any stamps to the value of 25p, to: Midland Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, BIRMINGHAM B1 1AA. Covers should be posted to the Handstamp Centre on 16 May; the outer envelope should be endorsed "Mitchell postmark". Other sponsored postmarks will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin*.

A joint Royal Mail/Royal Mint Medallion Cover, bearing the Mitchell pane and an encapsulated medal, showing Mitchell on one side and a Spitfire on the other, will be available from the Bureau, price £12.95 (see inside front cover of this Bulletin for details). Early ordering is advised – previous Numismatic/Medallion covers (Coronation Anniversary; Prince of Wales; and Bank of England) proved very popular and quickly sold out.

Dr Gordon Mitchell, son of R J Mitchell, is pleased with the commemorative label and medal; he was quoted in *The Times* (21 February 1995) as saying: "My father was a very modest man but I think he would have been rather proud."

Two further books go on philatelic sale on 6 June:

50p vended (2 x 25p) – Sea Charts 3 (St David's Head)

£2 vended (8 x 25p) – Rowland Hill 3 (Mulready envelopes)

The books are printed by Harrisons the stamps have 2 phosphor bands. They will go on general sale as supplies of earlier books are used up.

New Stamp Coils

Coils (rolls) of 500 and 1000 25p definitive stamps, printed by Harrisons with 2 phosphor bands, will be available from 16 May. Collectors may obtain singles or strips from the British Philatelic Bureau or Post Office Counters philatelic outlets. No first facilities will be available. These replace the earlier coils (November 1993) printed on Advanced Coated Paper.

New Heritage Agreement for Philatelic Records

In 1994, as Archivist to the Post Office Group, I entered into a formal partnership with John Tew, Director & General Manager of Royal Mail

National (RMN). The aim was a mutual one: to safeguard the Post Office's philatelic heritage.

The new agreement we signed in October was designed to ensure that systems were in place that would enable me to capture philatelic history in the making for the use of researchers in the future, and which would also help the National Postal Museum in its important task of selecting and preserving key material which illustrates that history, items ranging from artists' designs to essays and the "registration" sheets of issued stamps. The agreement also covers related philatelic products produced for sale to the public, whether over the counter or through mail order, for example stamp booklets and stamped stationery – or *anything* produced by RMN to prepay the carriage of mail.

This partnership agreement is intended to be truly two-way. In other words, not just to be a convenient vehicle for me, as the Post Office's "Departmental Record Officer" under the *Public Records Acts*, to define for RMN and the Museum their statutory duties under these Acts but also to serve as something that clearly identifies how the Archives & Records Centre can help them in return. This help is very varied and includes the provision of briefing for stamp issues, etc with a Post Office background, and articles for the *British Philatelic Bulletin*, etc; the production of finding aids with the particular research needs of philatelists in mind; me serving as a member of the Museum Board and, in an *ex officio* capacity, on the Council of the Association of Friends of the NPM – and our genuine wish to support the interests of the Friends in as many other ways as our resources will permit.

In compiling this agreement I was very fortunate in having the expert help of Douglas Muir, Curator Philately at the Museum, and his assistant, Lionel Jones; and in having the support and commitment of Barry Robinson, Design Director of RMN, who co-ordinated the latter's input.

This commitment to our philatelic heritage by John Tew and my other colleagues in RMN has set a splendid example to other important record-creating units and paved the way for similar partnerships throughout the Post Office Group. I am currently in discussion with the heads of several of these units and hope to conclude heritage agreements with them in 1995.

Jean Farrugia MBE
Chief Archivist, The Post Office

Stamp Scene

Railway Letter Stamps

The Mid-Hants Railway will issue a new 25p railway letter stamp on 27 May to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the reopening of the railway to Alton. A sixth stamp in the "Locomotives" series is scheduled for 2 September; this will feature N class loco No. 31874. Enquiries about MHR stamps to: Postal-Cordinator, Mid-Hants Railway, ALRESFORD, Hants, S024 9JG.

The Nene Valley Railway will issue three new 25p stamps on 2 May – these feature a Shed Scene at Wansford. The stamps are produced in horizontal strips of three within sheets of nine. Orders/enquiries: B White, Nene Valley Railway, Wansford Station, Stibbington, PETERBOROUGH PE8 6LR.

On 2 May the North Yorkshire Moors Railway will issue a new 25p railway letter stamp, reproducing a watercolour of ex War Department locomotive No. 90775 standing on the new turntable at Pickering with the castle in the background. The stamp marks the 50th anniversary of VE Day and its issue coincides

with the Royal Mail Peace & Freedom stamps. The stamp was designed by The Moors Studio, and printed in sheets of eight by Walsall Security Printers. Unused stamps are available at face value plus postage. Details of first day covers are given in *Commemorative Covers Review*. A set-tenant pair of 25p stamps will be issued on 7 July to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the York to Pickering Railway. All orders/enquiries re NYMR stamps to: Mrs M Atkins, 5 Tiber View, Brinsworth, ROTHERHAM, S Yorkshire, S60 5EA.

These railway companies operate Railway Letter Services under an agreement between Royal Mail and the Association of Independent Railways.

Astro Space Stamp Society

The first winners of the words competition announced here in February were T K Marshall of Nairn, Scotland and A Warner of Bradford, W Yorkshire. They receive stamps donated by the Crown Agents. The competition continues and is open to all readers age 12 upwards. See February *Bulletin* (page 181) for details.

For details of membership and activities of this Society, send a stamped addressed envelope or two international reply coupons to: Brian Lockyer, Astro-Space Stamp Society, 21 Exford Close, WESTON-SUPER-MARE, Avon, BS23 4RE. Thanks to the Crown Agents/Australian Stamp Bureau a free gift of obsolete Space set from



Australia plus a recent Crown Agents thematic set will be sent to new members who respond to this announcement, quoting *British Philatelic Bulletin*.

The 16-page February issue of the Society's journal *Orbit* contains many interesting features – a report on Project "Juno"; an appreciation of Helen Sharman, first Briton in space; Covers Page; Space News; New Issues Guide, etc.,

Northeast Philatelic Weekend Souvenir Book

A limited edition souvenir book has been produced to commemorate the 19th Philatelic Weekend at the Swallow Hotel, Gateshead, 19-21 May 1995. The book contains the 1994 Bank of England pane and a strip of 1st Class labels. The cover of the book was printed by the House of Questa. Price £2 per book plus SAE. Orders/enquiries: Mrs D M Martin, 46 Briardene Crescent, Kenton Park, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE3 4RY. Remittances should be payable to "Dorothy Martin". Please note that this book is a private production and is not available from Royal Mail or Post Office Counters outlets.

A number of the previous souvenir books, produced since 1982 and all printed by Questa, are also available. Details of these earlier books and of the 1995 Weekend are available by sending a SAE or international reply coupon to Mrs Martin.

Robson Lowe Honoured

Forty eight members of the Bournemouth & District Philatelic Society and their guests were welcomed by the Chairman, Ray Sharp, to a dinner held in honour of the 90th birthday of the Society's President, Mr Robson Lowe. The toast was proposed by Jeff Osborn and Mr Lowe delighted every one by displaying some of his collection of beautiful Valentine cards.

Robson Lowe is one of the best-known and most respected figures in British philately. He set up in business in 1920 and opened offices in Regent Street six years later. He has published extensively, amongst his best-known works being his *Encyclopaedia of British Empire Postage Stamps* and *The British Postage Stamp of the Nineteenth Century* - published in 1968 as a comprehensive guide to the R M Phillips Collection in the National Postal Museum. Mr Lowe is Editor of *The Philatelist/PJGB* and is the first Honorary Member of the Royal Philatelic Society, London. His own collecting interests



Robson Lowe with his display of Valentine cards

include forgeries and cinderellas; he is President of both the Cinderella Stamp Club, and the Revenue Society of Great Britain.

Autumn Stampex BPE 1995

The British Philatelic Trust Exhibition Committee has announced the fees for entry to the competition at the 1995 exhibition (10-15 October). Entry forms should be returned by 14 July, entries must be received by 25 August. Judging will take place in early September. Full information available from the Exhibition Committee Secretary: T R Finlayson, 86 Clarence Road, FLEET, Hants, GU13 9RS, Tel. 01252-614827.

Entry Fees

The entry fees for this years exhibition remain at £15 per frame, or in the case of literature entries, per entry. First time entrants (once only) are entitled to a 25% reduction. A first time entrant is an exhibitor who has not placed an entry in Autumn Stampex, or any other National or FIP recognised International exhibition during the ten years preceding the date of the Autumn Stampex in question.

National Classes

	First timers	Others
Two Frames (32 sheets)	£22.50	£30.00
Three Frames (48 sheets)	£33.75	£45.00
Four Frames (64 sheets)	£45.00	£60.00
Literature Class-each entry	£15.00	

International Class

Five Frames (80 sheets) £75,
Seven Frames (112 sheets) £105

Open Class

One or two frames (16 or 32 sheets) £10 per frame.

Competition

SPONSORED BY:
OMNIPHIL APPROVALS



Win a 1929 PUC £1 MINT!

The prizes for this month's competition have been supplied by OMNIPHIL, specialists supplying fine stamps on approval by post.

* 1st prize: GB 1929 PUC £1, SG 438, catalogued £550. A lovely lower marginal MINT example, so lightly hinged it looks unmounted. Perhaps the most beautiful and desired of all British special issues.

* 2nd prize: GB 1840 Penny Black Plate 5, letters RD, with clear black Maltese Cross and four large margins. SG 2, catalogued £150. Very desirable example.

* Two 3rd prizes: Canada 1852-57 3d red "Beavers", both attractive good used almost four margin examples cancelled by single target circular postmarks. SG 5 (shades), catalogued £160.



Introducing OMNIPHIL APPROVALS

LAST CHANCE FOR BULLETIN READERS TO RECEIVE THE FREE 2d BLUE BEFORE SUMMER. If you have not already tried OMNIPHIL APPROVALS you may be in for a pleasant surprise. One of the most important features of their service is that they offer each and every stamp individually available, without obligation, upon 12 days home approval so that you can fill your empty gaps.

Presently Omniphil are offering all *Bulletin* readers the chance to participate in their "WE'LL PAY YOU £100" Discounts Promotion – so if you have not already applied now is your chance.

The promotion has, not surprisingly, proved popular and all *Bulletin* readers replying have

received absolutely FREE OF CHARGE a GB 1841 2d blue, catalogued £35. Naturally there is a limit of one reply per household, so if you have not already replied you are invited to do so now, to receive your free 2d blue plus a selection of approvals without obligation to purchase.

The organisation of their stock does not permit them to handle wants lists or latest issues, but if your collection is missing stamps from 1840 to the 1980s all you have to do is tell them ALL the countries/areas that you collect and they will send a suitable selection as available without obligation.

Write now stating all countries you collect and whether you collect mint and used to:

OMNIPHIL APPROVALS

BULLETIN BLUE OFFER

PO Box 29

STROUD

Glos GL6 6RW



To enter the competition answer the questions below and send, with your name and address, on a postcard or back of an envelope to: May Bulletin Competition, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, LONDON EC2A 1NL to arrive by 23 June. You may submit as many entries as you like but each must be posted separately; multiple entries in one envelope will be disregarded.

1. Who designed the forthcoming Science Fiction stamps?
2. In which year was H G Wells born?
3. Which famous philatelist recently celebrated his 90th birthday?
4. Who is honoured by new stamp books on 16 May?
5. The recess printing process is also known by which other name?

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

The winners of the February competition were: A T Gebbie of Kent (Edward VII 10s); K Reader of New Zealand (Penny Black); R M Banks of Leicestershire (Jersey 10s); W de Beer of London SW16 (Czechoslovakia "Praga 1962"). The prizes were donated by Omniphil.

The answers were: 1. Stempel Garamond; 2. National Postal Museum; 3. Douglas Myall; 4. Colin Pawson; 5. Harrison & Sons Ltd.

Our thanks to all who entered.

1994 Special Stamps Poll

J R HOLMAN, *Editor*

Continued from April

Golf

Bulletin readers it would seem are not keen golfers as this was voted the second least popular set of 1994. E Hudson of Lancashire describes himself as “emphatically not a fan of sports stamps”, but “enjoyed their colourful design, uncluttered by excessive detail and without recourse to photography or scientific obscurity.” For R Featherstone of Hants “they conjure up lighthearted days of relaxation and cheerful fellowship in exhilarating surroundings, welcome in this drab climate of recession!”

Several commented on the similarity in subject matter between the Golf and Summertime sets and the closeness of their issue dates. J Miller of Devon thought the Golf set “depicts what it is meant to” unlike the Summertime issue. E Timmons of Wirral voted for this set and the 35p value as his favourite stamp as “I have stood by the side of this hole at Troon and have watched, with admiration, the world’s greatest golfers trying to land their tee-shots on the ‘Postage stamp’.”

Those less enthusiastic remarked on the “sameness” of the five stamps and the captioning which some found difficult to read. For C Pile of Hants this set “was spoilt by the spidery writing, sideways on the stamp.” Others felt the colour of The Queen’s head should have varied from value to value – as one the Age of Steam and Summertime issues.

Summertime

This, like the Age of Steam, Pictorial Postcards and D-Day issues appealed to many readers for reasons of pure nostalgia. Others praised Matthew Cook’s designs, and colours. A Bettine of Roxburghshire felt that the set, although depicting quite different activities, “has a real unity of theme and of design. The value numbers are very clear, useful in a postage stamp.” N Smith of Worcestershire described the artistic arrangement as “superb... uncluttered with no frame lines.” The colours, he felt, gave off “that aura of sunny days, of enjoyment.” He

prefers stamps reproducing drawings or paintings rather than photographs which he says are “not for me”. This set, says W Leamy of London, “dances with the light and atmosphere of Summer. The Queen’s head in the chosen colours gives added impact to the set when displayed on the album page.” To C Reich in Australia these stamps “capture in a few vibrant, colourful snapshots the essence of Britain in summer – that time of the year when all the things for which she is most renowned around the world come to life.” The designs reflect what we at home and overseas believe to be the British summer although many readers pointed out that it is a rather romantic notion and that many Britons (the Editor included), have never been to any of the events featured. They suggest, as I Muirhead of Canada writes, “peace and relaxation and enjoyment – features too often missing from our ever increasingly frenetical lifestyles.”

C Hallifax of Surrey likes designs showing “the traditional Britain” which he believes “is disappearing into greed, crime and loss of standards.”

On the subject of the Four Seasons series of stamps, many felt the Summertime set a worthy successor to Wintertime and Autumn – both popular in earlier polls. A few regretted that the nature theme of the two earlier sets had not been continued. Mrs S Sutton of Co Durham wrote “each Season set so far has been outstanding – I await Spring with pleasure.” R Davidson of Aberdeen wonders however if the Braemar Gathering was not more appropriate to Autumn rather than Summertime. Mrs P Padgham liked the designs but thought “holidaymakers huddled in a seafront shelter should also have been included.” J Miller of Devon considered the Postcard stamps would have been more appropriate to Summertime – a view shared by others.

Some thought the designs cluttered, with too much emphasis on spectators rather than the action, but there were few who really disliked this set. Bland and unobjectionable were amongst the views expressed. Final comment from A Whiteley of Lancashire: “All five stamps invoke pleasant memories of the quintessential spirit of the British summer – the smell of freshly mown grass, the taste of the first strawberries of the season, the sound of leather on willow and the sight of yet another British trouncing at Wimbledon!” As Dan Maskell might have exclaimed, “Oh, I say...”

Medical Discoveries

This set scored rather better than I expected – scientific subjects do not usually make for popular stamps. The general feeling against this set was that the designs appeared cluttered and difficult to comprehend. Yet those who liked them wrote enthusiastically. Mr E J Wilcox of Kent thought they “showed complex ideas in a modern way with two views on each stamp which complemented each other. I particularly liked the joy shown on the 25p stamp.” Dr F Hicks lauded the idea of showing patients and the latest developments “taking Britain into the 21st century – brilliant concept, colour and clarity.” Another doctor, consultant neuroradiologist W McNab of Perthshire, voted this his favourite set, and reminds us that 1995 marks the centenary of Roentgen’s discovery of radium.

S E Angelupulo of Greece praised the reality of the designs; N Newton of Oxfordshire commented “The X-ray photographs superimposed are a credit to the designer and printer alike.” For R Shaw of Essex this “bright, attractive and modern” issue “really did stand out” in 1994, otherwise he didn’t think much of the year’s stamps. A Cawson of Middlesex wrote: “This breaks a tradition in stamp design; which has previously used more old-fashioned graphic design – this modernist design is in tune with the technology – crisp and neatly laid out.” “The clear detail in the limited space” of these stamps encouraged M Sokel of Cyprus to enter the poll for the first time

R Dixon of Canada recalled stamps giving him as a boy “a view of the Earth’s geography, its people and events.” Through the electron scanning microscope these stamps have “given us a view of life never before seen. It is fitting that the postage stamp should carry on the tradition of taking us to far away and inaccessible places...” J Brookfield of Germany found this set reminiscent of Dutch stamp design, wondering “Is this why the Royal Mail decided to go to a Dutch printer for this set?”

L Joumees of Estonia described the set as “the most beautiful stamps about scientific research I have ever seen”, and M Middleton of Norfolk stated “The best in GB design, colour, and innovation, must be in line for an award.” We will see.

Christmas

The 1994 Christmas set did not prove as popular as its 1993 counterpart. Some of you liked the

idea of a children’s Nativity Play on stamps but did not appreciate the approach taken by Yvonne Gilbert. P Darby of Middlesex described the designs as looking “like a Mothercare advert” and S Cochrane of Suffolk found them “truly sickening and remind me of the work of the ghastly Shirley Hughes.”

Miss P Wedd, an ex-teacher from London, considered the designs “...too sentimental. The laughing child in the 25p value would not have happened they used to take the play and their part in it very seriously indeed and acted the kings with a quiet dignity that at times was very moving.”



*“like a Mothercare advert”
“chaos and joy of Christmas with young children”*

On the other hand, the stamps appealed to two other retired teachers. The 35p stamp reminded A Shipley of Surrey of the preparation for his school’s annual carol service and its “dramatic interludes.” Mrs J Johnson of Hants thought the set “sums up the chaos and joy of Christmas with young children.”

J Rapley of Somerset thought the designs “of universal appeal, especially to younger age groups.” He believes “most of the 1994 sets should encourage young collectors. A mixture of fun and interest.” J Wordingham praised the theme: “multi-racial without being overly overt... one of the better Christmas series” – a view shared by S Faulconbridge of E Sussex. R Seabrook of Herts warmed to “the wonderful expressions on the faces of the children”, but he didn’t think highly of other issues. He raised an interesting point: “Surely the Channel Tunnel was worthy of our first circular stamp?”

E Baker wrote on behalf of the the Greater Eastside Stamp Society in the USA. They voted for the Christmas set, described as “nearer to everyone’s hearts and homelife”. The Society’s second and third choices were Pictorial Postcards

and Age of Steam. Final view on the Christmas set to J Allistone of Dorset: "It sums up what Christmas is all about, Christianity and children, not robins and stagecoaches."

Greetings

As a set the Greetings stamps were not that popular but some individual stamps scored highly. Your favourite overall stamp of 1994 was the Peter Rabbit greetings stamp. Some wrote of the pleasure in using, rather than collecting. Greetings stamp – use on "social mail" is, after all, their *raison d'être*. For I Bennett of Cornwall "It is a pleasurable task choosing a stamp from this set for particular letters." P Lawrance of Hants considers them "very useful for special occasions such as birthdays. Attractive designs and very collectable. Accompanying stickers are also fun." Writing from Renfrewshire, S Low commented: "there's a stamp for everyone and they make the recipient know you care." R Hohndorf of Germany appreciated the humour of the stamps, praising them for "bringing fun to young collectors." G Chianetta of Italy wishes the Italian Post Office would issue similar stamps.

D Robinson of Tyne & Wear expressed a strong, and no doubt controversial, view: "They are the nearest thing in this country to pictorial definitives. If we could have them on a slightly smaller scale, we could replace those diabolical, outdated Machins."

Another reader with trenchant views, B Alcock of Essex, wrote: "Every year sets issued by Royal Mail get worse and worse with the notable exception of the Greetings stamps which always maintain the very highest standards."

Past days were recalled by M Hicks of Kent: "It is nice to see my childhood heroes Biggles and Dan Dare immortalised on stamps." C Phillips of N Yorkshire voted the Dan Dare stamp his favourite, explaining "I have all the original early stories from *Eagle* and reprints in book form, playing cards, etc, etc." Not surprisingly, he describes himself as a "Dan Dare fanatic".

Final word on Greetings to N Hewitt of Surrey: "it's nice to send a smile through the post."

General Comments

As always some added general comments on design and/or Royal Mail's stamp programme and policy. I have selected a few representative and interesting views. A Rhodes of Shropshire feels it a pity that "the proliferation of issues made each one obsolete before the public had a

chance to become familiar with them." G Burton of Kent wrote: "I thought special issues were supposed to celebrate and/or commemorate events of national importance – only the Prince of Wales, Channel Tunnel and D-Day sets do this."

Miss P Walton of Wolverhampton says she is giving up stamp collecting in the year 2000 as she "does not like any of the sets. We have far too many and there is too much detail on each which cannot be seen by the time they are franked." I can accept she may not like the stamps, but that is no reason to give up a wonderful hobby. Try another country Miss Walton, or make a study of postmarks, postal history, cinderella material – there is an enormous range to choose from, enough to last any collector many lifetimes!

Miss B Wilds of Essex did not vote for any issues, but merely commented: "They were all too fussy. Just labels." Don't forget Miss Wilds that in the early days stamps were described as "labels" (the "stamp" was the postmark). The Penny Black was officially a "label" and valid for use only within the UK – a very distinguished philatelist once described it as the very first "local carriage label."

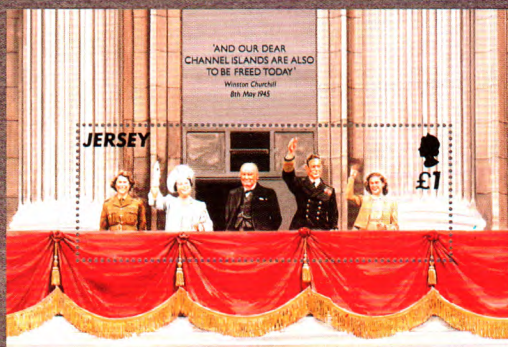
J Symonds of Essex found the 1994 issues "not at all inspiring and totally lacking in imagination... Compare British stamps with Channel Islands and Isle of Man stamps to see the difference! – maybe because they have 'inhouse' designers."

P Hampshire of London requested a mention of the new To Pay labels which he describes as "excellent". Mrs H Bolam of Berkshire was "delighted" with the Bank of England stamp book and Philatelic Numismatic Cover. She felt that the Bank of England's tercentenary or D-Day, rather than Northern Ireland, should have been the subject of the 1994 prestige stamp book.

My thanks to all who entered the poll and for your varied comments, opinions and suggestions. It is pleasing that this poll is still so popular with readers. I am looking forward to reading your views on this year's issues. The 1995 poll – which will be the tenth – will be announced here in December.

All voting forms went into a draw. The senders of the first five drawn will be sent a 1994 Royal Mail stamps yearbook. Congratulations to: W de Beer of London SW16; P Dowman of Quebec, Canada; D Silver of W Sussex; S Tandy of Lancashire; and B Dexter of Bedfordshire.

50th Anniversary of the End of the War



Shown here are some of the stamps issued by our fellow postal administrations in Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man to mark the end of the Second World War and in the Europa "Peace and Freedom" series.

Keeping Communications Open

The Post Office during the Second World War

JEAN MATHESON

Of this decade's anniversaries, none can evoke such memories as that of 1995 – fifty years since the Second World War ended. There will still be many to remember listening anxiously to the wireless for news of triumphs – and tragedies – on land, sea and in the air, while scarcely noticing the familiar sounds of letters coming through the box, or the telephone ringing.

Yet – like the armed forces – the General Post Office produced its own heroes – such as the postman in a Welsh village, wounded by a shell splinter, who refused medical aid until arrangements were made for the safety of his mailbag – then died in hospital. Staff trapped in burning buildings continued transmitting vital messages, and refused to abandon switchboards on top floors during air raids. In the Home Counties, a sub-postmistress bombed out of her office (and home), “commandeered” a private house nearby, and opened up business as usual the next morning.

When the war ended in 1945, the Postmaster General commissioned Ian Hay, a well-known author, to write the story of the GPO during these years. *The Post Office Went To War* (HMSO) was published in 1946. Nearly half a century later, the “Post Office at War” section of the “People in the Post” exhibition at the National Postal Museum (May 1992–April 1993) featured the Post Office Homeguards (there were air raid wardens and first-aiders also) who somehow – *The London Chief Post Office during the Blitz, 1941–42* (National Postal Museum postcard SS/16, 1983)



Second World War mail using economy labels – from War Cabinet Office

73,000 of their colleagues were absent in the Forces – found time to serve in this way. Also shown were photographs of the ruins of the Central Telegraph Office, completely destroyed in 1940, on the same night as another building, housing three vast automatic exchanges, was obliterated by incendiary and high explosive bombs. Staff in each abandoned the ruins at the last moment – and morning revealed that, by some fluke, Sir Rowland Hill's statue stood unscathed on its pedestal amid the devastation.

In 1943, it was Mount Pleasant's turn, when the three-storey Parcel Section was completely gutted. Fortunately, the only direct hit on the Post Office Railway's 6½-mile length was by day light – for at night, when the conductor rail had gone dead, it doubled as an air raid shelter and dormitory, with cots placed across the track.

Black-out

Even before bombs fell, the PO's problems had started with the black-out, when the huge glass roofs of sorting offices were painted over so that work might still continue as before. Inside, it was now always night, while outside postmen sought their way through unlit streets, and van drivers edged through the darkness, trying to reach their destinations in time to connect with mail trains. Then the air raids started, 23 London post offices were hit on one night, and every rail terminus was temporarily out of commission. Yet, Hay wrote, “somehow or other about breakfast time, or not long after, the grateful Londoner found his letters in his letter box – if

he still possessed a letter box". In the major provincial cities also, postal services continued, and telephone services were speedily restored. Even during the notorious 11-hour raid on Coventry, communication with the outside world was maintained through a special circuit.

Post Office engineers maintained lines for Fighter Command, stationed outside London, and provided the increased services vital in the defence of Orkney (feared specially vulnerable to German invasion) while men "unfit for active service" helped staff the Army Postal Centre at Nottingham. Among their duties was the sad task of retaining the returned mail of the dead and captured until next-of-kin received official notification. On PO staff at Dover fell the overwhelming – but welcome – workload of the aftermath of the Dunkirk evacuation – and the shelling and raids from occupied France which destroyed their Head Post Office, killing three telephone operators.

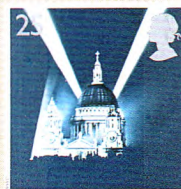
Sacrifice

Nearly 4000 GPO employees were killed while serving in the Forces, and over 400 of its civilians lost their lives in the war. Hay records that over 700 decorations and awards were conferred upon PO workers of all grades. It seems especially poignant that as victory came nearer with the D-day invasion, two PO cable ships were sunk with many casualties, as they preserved the link between the continental mainland and GHQ. Thanking the PMG and staff for their hard work and "excellent co-operation", the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces wrote in 1944: "The build up of the necessary forces for the current operations has involved the construction of a vast network of communications radiating from key centers of vital importance in the United Kingdom. The greater part of this work has been undertaken by the Engineers and Staff of the General Post Office".



1965 Battle of Britain anniversary stamps

George VI Military Cross and Military Medal (1990 Gallantry series); Princess Elizabeth in ATC uniform (second portrait on 60th birthday stamp, 1976)



End of War Celebrations on 1995 Peace & Freedom stamps

Commemorated on Stamps

In 1946, symbols of Peace and Reconstruction surrounded King George VI's head on 2½d blue and 3d violet "Victory" stamps (SG491/2). The Battle of Britain stamps of 1965 specifically recall the years of war. Six show British and German aircraft, and two depict anti-aircraft artillery and an air battle over St Paul's Cathedral (SG 671/8) The 22p (SG 1360) from the 1987 St John Ambulance Brigade Centenary series shows "Bandaging Blitz Victim, 1940". In the 1974 Churchill Birth Centenary set, the 5½p value shows him as war-time Premier (SG 963); stamps in the 1986 History of the RAF issue show war-time leaders and aircraft, including the controversial Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris with a Lancaster (SG 1336/40). Among the Maritime Heritage stamps of 1982 the 29p value shows Viscount Cunningham with HMS *Warspite* (SG 1191). The five D-Day stamps of 1994 feature the drama of that significant event (SG1824/8).

Stamps in the forthcoming Peace and Freedom set (2 May) will provide further philatelic mementoes of the war years.

© Jean Matheson 1995

Croydon Aerodrome Postmarks

MARTIN SMITH

There appear to have been six basic types of Croydon Aerodrome cancellations which have been numbered as types I to VI (Fig. 1). There are also two variations which I show as sub-types and I understand that there was a parcel cancellation in use after the 1939-45 War, inscribed "Croydon Surrey - Croydon Airport", but I do not have an example of this.

The airport was originally known as Waddon Aerodrome and became the Customs Airport of London on 29 March 1920. However, the first of the cancellations (Type I) appears in the Post Office proof book with other postmarks all dated 20 October 1921. A copy of the sheet was shown by Bill Legg in the December 1989, issue of *Air Mail News*, which would seem to prove the date of issue. This mark was certainly in use up to July 1925, and should presumably have

remained in use until the original airport buildings were demolished in 1926/27.

The first day of operations of the new Terminal Buildings was 30 January 1928, with the formal opening by Lady Maude Hoare (wife of Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for Air) taking place on 2 May of that year. In theory, therefore, the cancellation Type II should have been in use from the beginning of 1928, but the earliest date I have noted is 30 March 1929, on the occasion of the first of the regular flights to Karachi. This cancellation was used until December 1934 (probably 30 December).

Unique Handstamp

The first of the regular air mail flights to Australia left Croydon on 8 December 1934, and included a specially made silk bag of royal blue

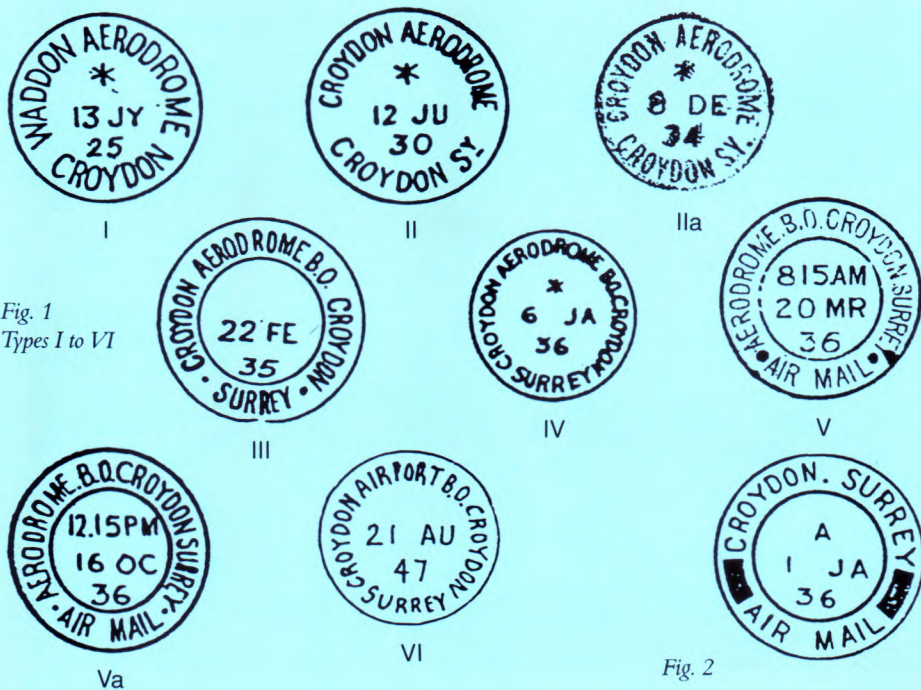


Fig. 1
Types I to VI

Fig. 2

containing letters from – amongst others – the King and Queen, the Prince of Wales, and the Prime Minister (Mr Ramsay Macdonald). The VIP letters were cancelled by the Postmaster General, Sir Kingsley Wood, using a unique silver and ivory handstamp (Type IIa) which is similar to (but 2mm less in diameter than) Type II. The canceller was included with the mail and taken to Australia; it is now preserved in the National Postal Museum.

I believe that the Type III handstamp came into use on 31 December 1934; I have not been able to obtain positive proof of this date but it certainly ties in with covers I have seen. It remained in use until 31 December 1935.

I can only assume that Type IV was brought into use at the same time as Type III because it is worded similarly; but that it was intended for counter work only, at least initially. Examples seen extend from 9 February 1936 (on the reverse of a registered cover carried on the first flight to Kano), to 3 August 1939 (cancelling stamps on a cover carried on the first Imperial Airways Trans-Atlantic flight from Southampton).

The Type V cancellation came into use on 1 January 1936: the same date as the CROYDON. SURREY/AIR MAIL handstamp (Fig. 2). This was a late date for the introduction of such marks.

At the beginning, Type V had the Y of SURREY blocked in and joined to the circle and this is apparent from covers dated February and March of that year. However, by the October it would appear that a new canceller had been issued – or the original one repaired – because the mark then showed the Y to be clear and separated from the ring (Type Va).

Black Thursday

It has been reported that the branch office in Terminal Building remained open until the day following “Black Thursday”. On this day (15 August 1940) Erprobungsgruppe 210 flying Me110 fighter-bombers with an escort of Me109s crossed the English Channel and headed for Kenley. No. 111 Squadron at Croydon got off its last nine remaining Hurricanes to meet them. It is reputed that the German leader, Hauptmann Walter Rubensdorffer, mistook Croydon for Kenley and at around 7pm commenced raiding the aerodrome and the surrounding area. Considerable damage was sustained in and around the airport's buildings during the raid, which also affected the post office. It is said that the office closed the next



The unique silver and ivory handstamp (Photo: National Postal Museum)

day, some telegrams being sent that morning.

During the war years following the raid, any mail cancelled at Croydon would have received a Forces' mark, but at some time after the resumption of civil use the Croydon Airport Branch Office obtained a further cancellation (Type VI), being the only type to refer to “Airport”. I have records of use from 21 August 1947, to 8 October 1956, but the office was only used as any other branch office at that time with no particular reference to aviation. The last aeroplane left Croydon on 30 September 1959.

As mentioned above, there was a parcel cancellation in use at the branch office after the war and I should be interested to know whether there had been one in existence previously.

© Martin Smith

Reprinted from *Air Mail News*, journal of the British Aerophilatelic Federation, by kind permission of the Editor.

A previous article on this subject – The Story of Croydon Airport, by Ewart Sanders – was published in the January 1980 Bulletin, pages 82-3. The Airport featured on the 34p stamp in the 1988 Transport and Communications set, SG1395. Ed.

The British Aerophilatelic Federation's Honorary Secretary is Martin C S Smith, whose address is ‘Catalina’, Howell Hill Grove, EAST EWELL, Surrey, KT17 3ER. The Federation will be attending MIDPEX 1995 on 10 June, at the Midland Sports Centre for the Disabled, Cromwell Lane, Tile Hill, Coventry; where they look forward to meeting visitors.

Look Before You Lick!

MATTHEW P HINTON

5: The Black Is Back! – The Sequel

In March I looked at the photogravure – printed Penny Black Anniversary Machins. In this article I give details of the lithographed examples as well as looking at other items issued as part of the occasion. All those still with me; if you're both sitting comfortably...

As I stated last time, two printers produced 15p and 20p litho stamps for this issue – Walsall and Questa; all appeared in books. Walsall's books have imperf edges and, thus, we have the 15p with top, bottom, right *and* top or right *and* bottom imperf, and the 20p with the bottom, top, bottom *and* right, top *and* right, left or right imperf. The books containing panes from the bottom row of the primary sheet usually contain stamps with the bottom row of perforation omitted, known as "Blind at base". The Walsall 15p book cover exists with an amusingly "jaundiced" (yellow-looking) Victoria's head.

Questa's 15p centre phosphor bar stamp can be found with the "bar" (Questa's variation on the bar where there is a considerable gap at the top and bottom) displaced vertically (either way) giving the impression of a short band. Also, while most of the Questa 20p ACP were on paper with a very low quantity of OBA, a few were on the normal bright ACP.

As well as the single stamps, a miniature sheet was issued for the occasion. It was printed by Harrisons using two different printing processes – recess and photogravure, recess for the Britannia design and photo for the 20p stamp. A number of major errors are recorded – one sheet is known with the recess printing totally omitted and another turned up with it inverted. The former is unique and occurred when a sheet was attached to the back of another shortly before undergoing the recess stage of the printing. Thus, an albino impression is visible on the reverse. Completely imperforate sheets also exists; I am informed that there are nine in circulation. The buff colour was displaced to various degrees on some of the sheets, with, on the best examples, the Penny Black illustration left with just two margins. It is certainly worth keeping a sharp eye out for!

There is a spectacular dry-print on a few of the sheets (around 100) which, on the best examples, results in a very grey Penny Black reproduction with a series of vertical smears across it. These sell up to around £40 depending upon the degree of dryprinting. There are a lot of copies, however, which bear the dry-printing but not the smears and, obviously, these are sold for less. There is also an interesting smudge across the "1840-1990" inscription on quite a number of examples. This, I think, is quite a bargain at around £3.

The multitude of window books issued for the occasion provides not only a whole host of cylinders and plates but also a Harrison 4 x 20p, (Walsall cover), with the cream colour omitted from Victoria's head on the cover, (retail around



4 x 15p Walsall books, lower one with "jaundiced" Victoria's head



Incomplete cylinder numbers on pane of 20p stamps from second Mills book

£5), or with a very pale cover, (around £15). The Walsall 10 x 15p book exists with incorrect postage rate information on the inside cover (about £7 upwards depending upon perforation type, etc.)

Most sheet stamps were produced from one cylinder each: 15p – 3, – 29p/34p/37p – 1. Two, 1A and 1B, were used to print the bicoloured 20p. The most interesting blocks are those with an extra extension perforation hole in the vertical perf row (row 19, 20 or 21). This feature exists on each value. Also, the 15p CB block shows the phosphor displaced downwards by 40mm so that the phosphor number is visible against row 20, the bottom row (retail from £2).

On the vending machine books, the second Mills book exists with various degrees of dry-printing visible in the cylinder numbers “B3A B3B” which appear as “B3A 3B” or “33A B”. The second 50p Aeroplanes book exists with the phosphor displaced horizontally creating the Harrison 15p LB COP, narrow or two band error as well as the 20p 2B with the left band not COP, or with a wide right hand band. This is sold as part of a pair where one booklet shows the colour cylinder number and the other booklet bears the phosphor number. This pair retails around £30. (A plain book with the displaced bands feature sells at about £10).

The items described do indeed make great material for a complex and fascinating collection, but be warned! To purchase all the items mentioned in this article would cost, perhaps, well in excess of £3000!! Perhaps one should stick to one's royal tea towels after all,

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Events - May 1995

6 May: Federation of South Wales Phil Socs 1995 Convention at Princess Royal Theatre, Port Talbot, 10.00-16.30. Admission 50p. Stamp, postal history, postcard, and accessory dealers; displays; “Kids Korner”; Post Office sales counter; souvenir postcard. Enquiries: G N Prior, 20 Heol y Sheet, North Cornelly, BRIDGEND, Mid Glam, CF33 4EY.

6 May: Worthing Phil Soc and Worthing Society of Postal Historians Jubilee Dinner at East Worthing Community Centre, Pages Lane, Worthing. Tickets £12.50. Enquiries: J E O Hobbs, Tel. Worthing 237440.

9 May-April 1996: “Victorian Posts” exhibition at National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, London EC1. Open Mon-Fri 09.30-16.30. Enquiries: 0171-239 5420.

13 May: “The Importance of British Revenues in Philately” – display by Gary Ryan, RDR, FRPSL to National Philatelic Society, at British Philatelic Centre, 107 Charterhouse Street, London EC1, 15.15. Enquiries: NPS, 0171-251 5040.

13 May: Midland Philatelic Federation Stamp Fair & Spring Convention at Civic Centre, Gravel Hill, Wombourne, Wolverhampton, 10.30-16.30. Hosted by Wombourne & District Phil Soc. Dealers, Competitions, Kid's Corner, refreshments, free car parking. Enquiries: Dr E R Clark, 122 Coniston Road, WOLVERHAMPTON WV6 9DU.

19-21 May: Northeast Philatelic Weekend at Newcastle upon Tyne. Enquiries: Dorothy Martin, 46 Briardene Crescent, Kenton Park, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE3 4RY.

20 May: Association of Essex Phil Socs Spring Stamp Day at High School, London Road, Bishop's Stortford. Enquiries: L C Stanway, 25 Clay Hill Road, BASILDON, Essex, SS16 5DD.

Postal Memorabilia Displays

David Harrop will be displaying material from his extensive collection at:

6-8 May Llandudno Victorian Weekend, Castle Hotel, Promenade, Llandudno, Gwynedd

20-21 May Isle of Anglesey Steam Rally, Plas Coch near Llanfair PG, Anglesey

28-29 May Carrington Rally, White House Farm, Frithville, Boston, Lincs

Enquiries: David Harrop, 15 Hawthorne Road, Heaton Mersey, STOCKPORT SK4 3DQ.

Philatelic Terms Explained

KENNETH F CHAPMAN

No 51: Recess Printing

The world's first adhesive postage stamps, Britain's famous 1d black and 2d blue of 1840 were recess – printed: that is, printed from a steel plate into which the design of the 240 stamps comprising a complete sheet was engraved in reverse. (The process is sometimes called *intaglio*, from the Italian word for engrave or incise.)

For printing, the ink was forced into the recesses of the design. The face of the plate was then wiped clean leaving the recesses ink-filled. Slightly dampened sheets of watermarked paper were placed over the plate and, under pressure, the ink was drawn out of the recesses and transferred to the paper.

The characteristic of recess printing is that the lettering or design stands proud, that is, above the level of the paper surface because the ink, drawn out of the recesses dries as ridges. The deeper the engraving, the more pronounced the ridge. In the case of stamps, printed on comparatively thin paper, the suction effect can be seen in the back, especially the deeply etched prints which appear as depressions in the paper.

The process was not novel in 1840 since large and small engravings of pictures, coats-of arms and other pictorial matter had developed since the 17th century, but printing was restricted to one subject at a time.

The revolutionary aspect of stamp printing was the production of 240 identical replicas at one stroke. This was made possible throughout the inventiveness of Jacob Perkins (1766-1849), an American engraver and printer who came to London hoping to apply his method to print banknotes for the Bank of England. Although he did not secure the banknote contract, his method was a god-send to the Treasury who were to be responsible for implementing Rowland Hill's uniform penny post with its requirement for millions of identical stamps.

Perkins, an expert *intaglio* engraver, brought with him exceptional experience of four processes not familiar to English engravers. This allowed him to engrave on "soft" steel, which he then hardened. He could transfer engraved



Jacob Perkins – American engraver and printer



British recess-printed stamps



Recess and Letterpress (typography) - 1973 Parliamentary Conference

designs from one piece of steel to another at will. Finally, he was trained in the use of the Rose-engine, a form of mechanical engraving by lathe which produced the geometrical tracery in the side margins of the Penny Black.

The process of plate production was involved. First on a piece of relatively soft steel the required design was engraved by hand (except for the Rose-engine participation) in reverse (called a negative). Known as the die, this was hardened and locked into the bed of a machine. Under severe pressure, a softened steel roller just the width of a stamp was rocked to and fro until the image of the die was taken up by the transfer roller in relief (ie not recessed) and in positive. The roller could take up several impressions in this way after which it was hardened.



Recess and photogravure - 1982 Maritime Heritage: 1984 Mail Coaches



Recess and Lithography - 1991 Maps 24p

Next, a plate of softened steel capable of taking as many impressions as required for a sheet of stamps (ie 240 in the cases of the 1840 1d and 2d stamps) was clamped down.

The hardened transfer roller with its positive relief impressions was rocked into the waiting plate. The operation was repeated until the plate had received the required impressions, back in recess and in negative. In the case of the first British stamps, the check letters (an alphabetical sequence of letters in the lower corners of the 240 impressions on the plate) were punched in by hand, the combination of letters on each stamp being different throughout the plate. The completed plate was then hardened and printing could begin, sheet by sheet as the dampened paper was fed into the machine.

The recess process was chosen for the first stamps for security reasons. The new stamps were virtually money, so all possible steps were taken to combat possible forgery. The individuality of the Royal portrait was the first line of defence. The precision of the engineering in the side panels came next, followed by the watermark in the paper and, finally, the check-letter system which meant that any attempt at forging the plate would involve 480 handstruck letter punches to provide two letters on each stamp impression.

Later developments led to the production of huge engraved cylinders instead of flat plates, thus permitting recess printing on rotary machines. Modern printing techniques on photo gravure and lithography are now considered to be as secure as the expensive recess process, the use of which has become the exception rather than the rule. In recent years some special issues have combined recess printing with other processes.

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Printed Postage Impressions – The Mailsort Service

RON NEGUS FRPSL

There are many things that always appear as “pet hates” in surveys taken amongst the general public. Going to the dentist, telephone calls from double glazing firms, and income tax demands are typical examples. In recent polls, the receipt of junk mail often features high on such lists. Yet, for the perceptive stamp collector, this same junk mail can offer a wealth of interest as most bears a Printed Postage Impression (PPI), instead of a postage stamp. Part of the PPI is a character showing the class of Royal Mail service that was used to send the item: this character is either “1”, “2” or “M”.

The figure “1” is applied to inland first class letters and packets, including Mailsort 1, where delivery is targeted for the next working day after posting. A “2” is applied when second class service has been paid for – including Mailsort 2 – and is targeted to achieve delivery within three working days. The “M” marking is reserved specifically for Mailsort 3 services where the delivery target is within seven working days.

The various services that are marketed under the Mailsort name by Royal Mail Streamline, the division that deals with the special requirements of large volume mail users, provide discounts on postage costs. Mailsort was introduced in the middle of 1989 to replace the former Rebate services that had been used for bulk mailings for over 20 years, and also bore PPIs of a similar type. Since their introduction, the Mailsort services have attracted approximately 4500 contracts. This number is the total across the individual services and, as some organisations contract for more than one delivery frequency, the number of companies involved will be smaller. But the volume of mail sent by the Mailsort service in 1993 was estimated to be about 25% of Royal Mail’s annual volume.

The principle behind Mailsort is a simple one: in return for undertaking some of the sorting of their mail, the senders obtain discounted postal rates. Mailings have to be bagged up according to the outward part of the postcode, i.e. the main district of delivery, so that the bags can be delivered by Royal Mail trunking vehicles to

those delivery offices for sorting to local level. This elimination of some handling within the Royal Mail offices enables discounts of between 13% and 32% to be earned on the normal postal rates.

Minimum Quantities

To qualify for these discounts, the organisation contracting for the Mailsort service has to meet certain criteria. There is a minimum number of items that can be sent in any single Mailsort mailing. This is 4000 letters or 1000 packets. This minimum number falls to 2000 for letters if they are all for delivery within the same main postcode area. At least 90% of all Mailsort items must carry, as part of the address, the full and correct postcode. All Mailsort mailings must be sorted, bundled and bagged. The bags must be tied and labelled and made available for collection together with the appropriate documentation.

The sorting method to be adopted is laid down by Royal Mail and the majority of users employ special computer programs to group addresses together into the required Mailsort order. The addresses are then printed on to gummed labels to be stuck on the actual items to be posted. The computer also produces the tie-on labels for the bags and all the other paperwork and statistics necessary for efficient handling of the distribution. Royal Mail provides detailed instructions and training for mailroom staff involved in this type of direct mail exercise. Commercial bureaux also exist that will undertake the relevant administrative work for those organisations who only use Mailsort infrequently.

The Mailsort 3 service, with its seven day delivery target, is amongst the most popular and the required PPIs bearing the “M” indicator can form an interesting sub-group within the wider context of a GB postal history collection. Royal Mail provides design specifications for PPIs that cover the overall sizes allowed, the type faces and sizes preferred, the colour of the impression and its positioning on the envelope.

Fig. 1 Standard PPIs



Fig. 2 Non-Standard PPIs

A set of 30 different basic designs for these standard PPIs are available to allow users a choice, and full instructions are provided for each design for passing to the design studio to ensure the specifications are met. Exceptionally, for large mailings such as stock exchange flotations, a custom designed PPI can be used provided it is approved by Royal Mail in advance. The majority of PPIs are printed, as the envelopes bearing them usually incorporate advertising material or cachets, but sometimes rubber stamp impressions are found. The application of PPIs by franking machines is also permissible.

There are a wide variety of shapes within the 30 standard designs – rectangles, ovals, circles, and triangles, but the elements to be incorporated are common to all (Fig. 1). The words Royal Mail Postage Paid, the identifier of the issuing office and the PPI contract number it allocated to the user are the obligatory elements, together with the “M” service indicator. These are the requirements laid down in the regulations, but, in practice, the words Royal Mail are often omitted and replaced by Mailsort. The contract number can be issued by a local office, in which case its name appears in the PPI, such as “Southampton 103” or centrally, when it is preceded simply by PHQ or HQ without a town name. Other centrally allocated types can be found that incorporate the words “Licence No.” or “Serial No.” in lieu of the HQ designation.

The Mailsort service is only available for deliveries made anywhere within the United Kingdom, including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. The service indicators “1” and “2” can be used in PPIs intended for international mailings, and for these the additional words “Great Britain” have to be included in the design. These extra words are sometimes found on the “M” type PPIs, but this is simply to allow consistency of design across all the PPIs used by the particular organisation for its UK and overseas mailings, and is not a Royal Mail design requirement.

Examples of non-standard PPIs are much harder to find (Fig. 2) but add interest to the collection. The use of simulated circular date stamps and the wavy lines associated with stamp cancelling machines are commonly found on these non-standard items. The normal reason for wanting a non-standard PPI is so that the impression can incorporate an advertising slogan of some kind.

Building a collection

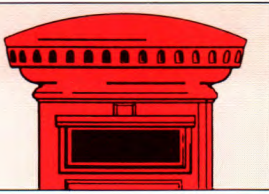
Forming a collection of PPIs that is comprehensive can present a significant challenge. Too much reliance cannot be placed upon the junk mail that drops through your own letterbox, since your name will only usually be on a limited number of mailing lists and, although you might receive many examples, they will tend to be repetitive. It is worth mentioning your interest to friends and relations, as well as other collectors, as people will often be happy to pass you the envelopes from their own junk mail even if they scrap the contents unread!

By this means, a reasonable selection can be built up – probably at no cost – and the hunt for main types and their variations can begin. Even within the standard 30 designs, there are many subtle differences to be found. Outlined shapes, for example, often have thick lines or thin lines, some are double-lined frames and some single and the overall size varies from one user to another. The positioning of the words within the PPI elements and the type faces employed all provide further scope for differences even when considering one specific standard design. Colour adds another variable to the list and it soon becomes apparent that the simple PPI offers scope for a worthwhile collection. An alternative, thematic-type, approach would be to attempt to collect all the PPIs that have been authorised by local offices in a particular county and bear the relevant post town in the design.

As with all facets of the hobby the opportunity exists to collect these items of modern postal history in the manner that suits yourself. For the future, there is work being done by the Direct Marketing Association in conjunction with Royal Mail to examine the use of bar-codes for bulk mail. Discussions have taken place to see if the introduction of bulk tariffs, instead of the discounts from public tariffs used by Mailsort, is practicable. It is possible that these types of developments will affect Mailsort and this could be a good reason for starting to collect PPIs now.

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Editor's note: Readers interested in PPIs are reminded that regular features on them appear in the *Quarterly Bulletin of the British Postmark Society*. Details of the Society are available from the Secretary: Mrs E. Thorp, 53 Selwood Road, Woking, Surrey, GU22 9HS. An earlier article on PPIs by Mr Negus was published in the January 1995 issue of this *Bulletin*.



Springtime Stamps

F L Hinings of Canada writes:

"I have been a stamp collector for more years than I care to remember, starting as a small boy and continuing, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, ever since, to the point that I now have grandchildren starting along the same path.

"For the first time that I can recall, I have to say that I have found an issue of stamps that offends me! Beautiful, interesting, 'blah', but never before offensive. I refer to the Springtime issue. Far from representing a season of new birth and renewal, for me the new stamps represent the destruction of living things for a very transient spectacle. For example, about 90 Sweet Chestnut leaves were stripped to construct the sculpture depicted on the 25p stamp, and I doubt that the one photographed was Mr Goldsworthy's first attempt. Similar points could be made about the other four.

"I am a gardener, and have many trees on my land. Planting and harvesting, pruning, cutting flowers, weeding, and all other similar garden tasks are a matter of normal routine, and I am not normally over-sensitive about the fact that such gardening does involve the loss of plant life. The sculptures photographed for the stamp issues are interesting and ingenious, and, in another context, probably would be pleasing. They do *not* represent Spring."

Collecting Christmas stamps

Dr Allan Hauck of USA writes:

For your readers who may not feel up to the German of the excellent publication of the Motivgruppe Weinachten, cited in the Postbag section of the February *Bulletin*, I would like to recommend two English (or at least American English) publications dealing with Christmas stamps. *The Yule Log*, which has just celebrated its 25th birthday, is published bimonthly and deals exclusively with Christmas philately. A sample copy can be obtained for \$2 from Vaughn H Augustin, 6900 W. Quincy Ave. #9E, Littleton CO 80123, USA. Another excellent source of Christmas issues is the *COROS* (Collectors of Religion on Stamps) *Chronicle*. Because

Christmas issues make up the largest minitopic in religion on stamps, the *COROS Chronicle* is an excellent journal for Christmas topicalists and has the additional attraction of offering an overview of all religion topics. Sample copies can be obtained for \$2 from Mrs Verna Shackleton, 425 North Linwood Ave #110, Appleton WI 54914, USA.

International Stamp Exhibition

R Holmes of London comments

"I read with interest the articles in the May and August 1994 *Bulletins* regarding the next British international stamp exhibition, although I did not take the trouble to reply at the time.

"However I was somewhat surprised that nobody has been thinking along the same lines as me, surely 2002 would be the best choice as it will be The Queen's golden jubilee in that year. This would give an added boost in trade to dealers, post offices, etc taking part as well as to the collector.

"Indeed I think it would need to be open for 14 days to cater for the interest that would be aroused, and where better to hold it than Alexandra Palace again."

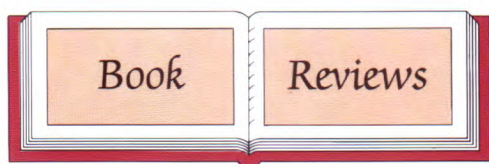
All letters to the Editor are carefully read; matters of general interest will be dealt with in "Postbag". The Editor regrets that he is unable to reply personally to letters.

W H Smith Stamp Book Promotion

Royal Mail has joined forces with leading stationers W H Smith for a new stamp book promotion. The inside back cover of the promotional book doubles as a voucher which customers can use to obtain the 50p discount off a range of the Quality Bond stationery. The vouchers are valid until 30 September 1995.

The promotion started on 24 April and the special books will be available only from W H Smith until the end of May or while stocks last. The books will go on sale through post offices and philatelic outlets from 3 October, once the voucher redemption date has passed.

Printed by Walsall Security Printers, the only difference between the promotional book and the usual 10 x 1st class book is the inside back cover design which bears the voucher. The promotional book contains no new stamp variety.



Douglas Myall's *The Complete Deegam Machin Handbook* was published in 1993 and proved highly popular with Machin collectors at all levels of specialisation. It is now out of print but a new edition is promised for 1996. Meanwhile Mr Myall has produced a **1995 Supplement** which updates the *Handbook* to the end of November 1994, dealing with the stamps resulting from the November 1993 postal rate increases and the introduction of a self-adhesive stamp.

The *Supplement* follows the *Handbook* system of information arranged under Level 1, 2 and 3 headings for increasing degrees of specialisation; each includes an appropriately-worded introduction. Level 1 provides simply a listing of new definitive and country issues; Level 2 includes notes on Gums and Phosphor; and a revised listing of the 20p and £1 large format Machins of 1970 and 1977.

Level 3 includes sections on Luminescent tagging, Enschedé's printing of varnish under the phosphor; Walsall "split" phosphor bands; and an account of the forged 24p and 2nd NVI stamps. The lists at this Level cover pre-decimal and decimal small format (low value) stamps, decimal large format (high value), 1840 anniversary issue and NVI stamps.

There are five appendixes, covering Imperforates; Booklet pane layouts (nearly 50 new or amended diagrams); Roll stock letters, Identification hints; and Compound perforation (the 17-pin variety). The *Supplement* concludes with a useful Glossary.

Supplied free with the *Supplement* is a set of *Profiles* for every level 3 entry. These comprise stamp-sized identity tags for use in writing up a collection. The information on the tags sets out in schematic form all the variables that uniquely identify any Machin small format definitive. Each profile includes appropriate visual information such as the correct perforation gauge and any straight edges or elliptical perforations. Profiles are supplied in single-sized sheets, convenient for cutting up and mounting with the stamps. (Profiles for stamps listed in the original *Handbook* are still available from Mr

Myall – details from address below.)

The *Supplement* and *Profiles* booklet costs £9.99, postage £1.25 UK, £1.75 Europe and Worldwide surface mail; £3.75 Zone 1 airmail, £4.25 Zone 2 airmail. Orders/enquiries to Mr Myall, address below.

Mr Myall has also recently published the third edition of his **Deegam Catalogue of Machin Se-tenant Pairs** – the only catalogue dealing with this subject. It covers all horizontal and vertical pairs involving the Machin head, both pre-decimal and decimal. A unique reference system identifies each pair. New to this edition is a useful appendix which enables any pair to be found in the lists. Other appendixes cover Deegam Types and Settings; Deegam short, notched and inset phosphor bars; and Booklet pane list and the Deegam PIPi system. There are over 550 illustrations with accurate depiction of the perforation gauge and phosphor band layout. Price £12.45 (postage £1.10 UK, £1.50 Europe/Worldwide surface, £3 Airmail Zone 1, £3.50 Zone 2) from: D G A Myall, 2 Elizabeth Avenue, BRIDPORT, Dorset, DT6 5BA

New from the American Topical Association is *Handbook No. 126* entitled **Theatre Philatelic**, compiled by Harrold C Shiffler. This 264-page book contains alphabetical entries, from Ida Aalberg to Stefan Zweig, for all aspects of the theatre arts, including actors, playwrights, scenery, puppets, theatre festivals, pageants, etc. Each entry gives biographical/historical information, with a listing of appropriate philatelic items: stamps, stationery, meters, and postmarks. Stamps are identified by Scott catalogue numbers; non-Scott listed items and cinderellas are included.

Not surprisingly there is an extensive entry for Shakespeare – the listing for GB material including 1850-59 pictorial envelopes, 1864-65 and 1899-1910 labels, and 1920 essay as well as the stamps of 1964, 1982 (Hamlet) and 1988 (Australia Bicentenary). The 1964 aerogrammes are listed, as are numerous special postmarks, two souvenir sheets, and meters. The section on Burns is relatively short, listing British, Rumanian and Russian stamps, the 1975 GB aerogramme and 1964 labels. Numerous other labels and several postmarks are not included.

Actor turned President, Ronald Reagan has appeared on stamps from Antigua, Barbuda, Korea and Liberia and on, we are told, over 100 different cacheted covers produced in the USA for his Presidential inaugurations. There is also an entry for his wife Nancy who, as Nancy

Davis, appears on a number of philatelic items. Thematic collectors specialising in Theatre will welcome this useful work – a worthy addition to the impressive list of ATA titles. Price \$20 postpaid from: Theatre Book, American Topical Association, PO Box 630, Johnstown, PA 15907, USA.

Thematic collectors will welcome the recently published English version of W E J van den Bold's **Handbook of Thematic Philately**.

Thematic collecting is a fancy term for a collection by subject such as Birds or Butterflies on stamps; or a collection which tells a story such as the "History of Britain" or the "Development of Printing Methods". Thematic collections should normally be visually attractive and should give the owner pleasure as he or she should be interested in the subject. It is often easier for a serious collector with knowledge of stamps, booklets, airletters, postmarks and related material to move to thematic collecting, rather than for a new collector to start thematic collecting.

I spoke to a friend who was reviewing this book for another journal and he said "this is a hard book to review". Not wanting to be influenced I did not discuss this any further. As the secretary of a stamp club and someone who has exhibited a thematic collection at an exhibition, I found this book wonderful. I am going to order a copy right away and it should be in every philatelic society library. This is not a coffee table book, nor is it light bedtime reading. It is the sort of book where you find a paragraph and read it over and over again until you know it off by heart. Written originally in Dutch this English translation can not be faulted for its accuracy, but translated books, and even those written by Americans, are always harder to read than those written by those privileged to have been taught English in the Mother Country.

The lazy reviewer would quote the publishers press release with which I could not find fault, or as an alternative lazy method I would rather quote from the book: "For whom is this book intended? The number of thematic collectors who collect solely for the enjoyment of taking part in their own hobby is many times larger than the number who enter exhibitions, or who consider entering. Can the first group make good use of this book? That depends entirely on the motives or the purpose of the collector. Everyone must decide this for themselves."

The most satisfying level to display

thematically is probably to a local stamp club or to your friends, where you are not constrained by rules. Then you can go forward and enter material in national and international exhibitions. If you see yourself in any of the above categories, buy this book before it is sold out. If you are a collector of the stamps of Great Britain and you fancy thematic collecting, order the book from your local library. After you have paid your 50p you may get a card with a perfin stamp which you might be able to use in a thematic collection of your local area. Not so many Councils are still using them. By doing this you will be helping the British Thematic Association and you can then decide if you would like to add the book to your collection.

As I near the completion of this review I see the book get better and better. The illustrations have given me ideas of areas to look for more interesting thematic material, though I would have liked to see illustrations of display pages as well. One of the problems of thematic collecting is that it is often visually more pleasing to have only a few items on a page but for competitive displays the more material the more points and points mean prizes. The book will help with techniques which will enable you to make the best use of your display pages.

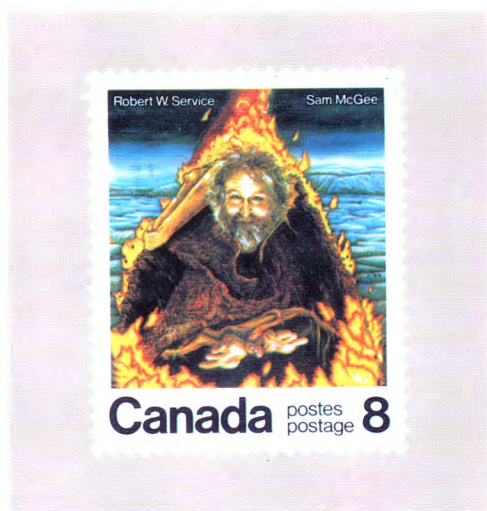
I would love to meet the author as I believe the Dutch are very like the British but have the advantage of being able to read other peoples' languages. The bibliography at the end is comprehensive but only a few of the references are in English or are readily available. Buy it or order it from your library, then try to get hold of the booklets by Margaret Morris and Alma Lee which were published 15 and 10 years ago and you will be well on the way to a lifetime of pleasure from thematic collecting.

I must finish this review and start a new subject for the club competition. What will it be? Recent stamp issues could point me in several directions. Railways, Cats, Golf or the War; no I will be more original and produce an exhibit on the Solent (30p Summertime issue of Cowes), and lots more in the past like the *Queen Elizabeth*, the Royal Navy, UPU Flying Boat, the *Mary Rose*, Cancellations, Booklets, Ship Stamps from Jersey and Guernsey and lots more. Similar subjects could be Kent or the North Sea, or perhaps the environment or Children's Poems and Stories would suit you better. 228 pages. Price £22.50 (US\$40) from: James Bendon Ltd, PO Box 6484, 3307 Limassol, Cyprus.

Crawford Alexander

James Mackay's word processor is rarely idle. When he is not writing articles for numerous philatelic publications, including the *British Philatelic* and *Postmark Bulletins*, he is busy at work on biographies. Following the success of his study of Robert Burns (1992), he was commissioned to write a biography of Scottish poet Robert William Service (1874-1958). Subtitled *Vagabond of Verse*, Mackay's **Robert Service: A Biography** unravels the web of half-truths and enigmas that previously obscured the story of the most widely read poet of this century. His first book of verse, *Songs of a Sourdough*, sold over 3 million copies! Service was more than a poet, he worked as a bank clerk in the Yukon following the Klondike Gold Rush, and as an intelligence officer in France during the Second World War. His last years were spent "keeping debonair company" at homes in Brittany, Hollywood, and Monte Carlo. Yet he was a reticent man who, writes Dr Mackay, "developed self-deprecation to a high art." He came to loathe his two most famous characters – Dan McGrew and Sam McGee.

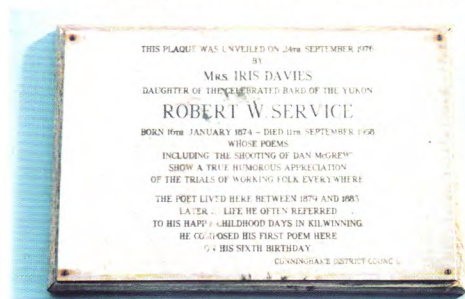
As a child Robert lived with his grandfather John Service – Sub-Postmaster of Kilwinning, Ayrshire for 25 years from 1861; enjoying an initial salary of just £15 a year. Not surprisingly, Mackay, as a leading postal historian, describes the duties that John Service carried out as postal services expanded. Savings bank services were introduced in 1862, the telegraph arrived in 1870, and the parcel post followed in 1883. In the 1880s the office was open for business 13 hours a day (07.00-20.00) Monday to Saturday, and for one hour on Sunday so that letters could be handed over to callers. In 1886 John Service tried unsuccessfully to have his office upgraded to a Head Post Office; instead it was classified as a Railway Sub-Office, signifying that it received and despatched mails direct by sealed bag via the railways. A plaque on the wall of the old post



office at Kilwinning now records the poet's years there as a schoolboy. In chapter 2 Mackay describes in detail young Robert's life with his grandparents and his four aunts, all of whom lived above or behind the post office premises. Three of the family assisted their father – Alexander as village postman, Agnes and Janet as telegraphists. When John Service died, his eldest daughter Jeannie took over the post office, later moving to larger premises. By the late 1890s, assisted by two of her sisters, she handled an average 116 parcels a week, and some 11,624 telegrams and 6532 postal orders a year. Jeannie gave up the post office when one of the sisters died in 1913; the remaining pair spent the rest of their days in poverty. Robert later regretted not giving them financial support. One of the illustrations in the book shows Robert Service at the time he lived at Kilwinning post office.

Mackay's book will appeal to admirers of Service's writings, and to all who enjoy biographies of complex and secretive subjects. In his final chapter, Mackay records that in 1976 Canada paid belated tribute to the man who had put the Yukon on the literary map with a stamp in the Canadian Writers series (SG 846). The 8c stamp bore Robert's name but not his portrait. Instead it showed one of his immortal characters. "The last laugh", writes Mackay, "went to the grinning figure of Sam McGee sitting up in his funeral pyre. Somehow, one feels that Robert would have approved."

Robert Service is published by Mainstream Publishing of Edinburgh and available from good bookshops. ISBN 1 85158 704 7. Price £20.



Plaque on the wall of the old post office, Kilwinning

Out of the Arc ...

Curiosities from the Post Office Archives

11. Vaile's Stamping Machine

In 1878 Mr Vaile, visiting London from New Zealand, hoped the Post Office would give his stamping machine a trial. Vaile put forward a variety of artistic designs he had drawn but John Tilley, Secretary of the Post Office, thought "it would be impossible for us to disfigure the letters of the public in the way in which I believe they would consider them to be disfigured by the proposed plan". So the machine, with the defacing stamp running the length of the letter, was not adopted.

Archive Reference: Post 30/329A E2708/1878

Kevin Squelch, Archivist

Hand-drawn examples of artistic possibilities of Vaile's cancellations

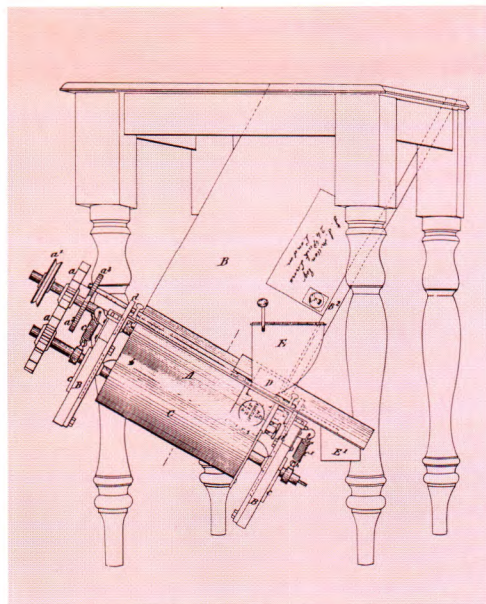
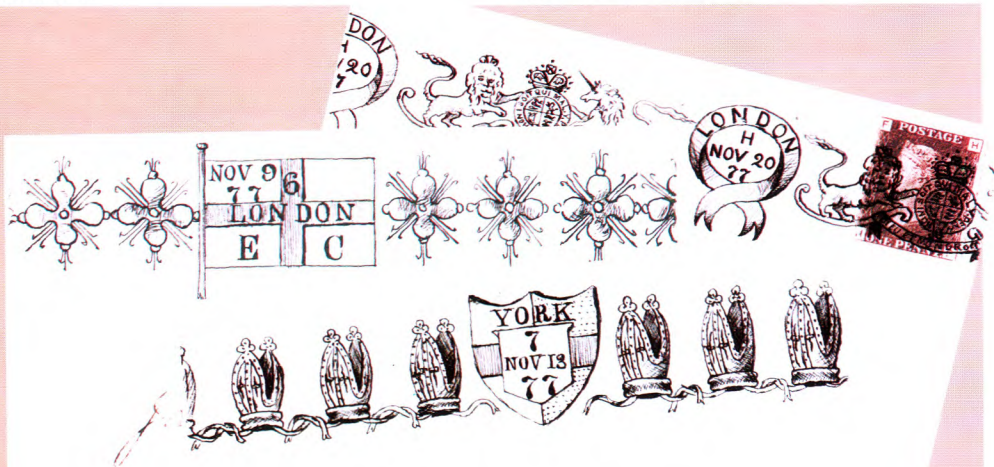


Diagram of Vaile's stamping machine



*George Loring Doyle
The Blue
Million
Hent.*

May Digest

To be issued in May

2 May: Peace & Freedom stamps and presentation pack

5 May: National Postal Museum "Victorian Posts" postcards (5 cards); Freddie Mercury postcards (4). These will be available to callers at the NPM shop and by post from the British Philatelic Bureau.

16 May: Retail stamp books – £1.40 (4 x 35p), £1.64 (4 x 41p), £2.40 (4 x 60p) with new cover design (as January books). Stamps as in previous issues

16 May: £1 vended stamp book: Inspiration for Victory No 3 – R J Mitchell. Stamps have 2 phosphor bands.

16 May: 4 x 1 st NVI book with R J Mitchell commemorative label (similar to Bank of England book of July 1994). Unfolded panes from this book will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau.

16 May: 25p definitive in coils of 500 and 1000. Printed by Harrisons with 2 phosphor bands.

30 May: Science Fiction stamp cards

To be withdrawn in May

2 May: Channel Tunnel stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards.

5 May: National Postal Museum "Postcodes" postcards. These will be withdrawn at the Bureau on 5 May but will remain on sale, to callers, at the NPM shop.

Collector Plates: We wish to clarify the prices of Royal Mail Collector Plates advertised on the inside front cover of the April *Bulletin*. The Autumn plates are £19.95 each, £89 the set of five. The Age of Steam plates cost £19.95 each; there is no set discount.

Postbuses: We regret the Postbus Guides, mentioned in April, page 230, are currently out of print. New printings will be available later in the year. The number of postbus services is now about 230, some 50 more than stated.

Late News

Friends of the NPM

The Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum made their first presentation to the Museum, on their 10th Foundation Anniversary which they celebrated with a special luncheon held in King Edward Hall on 8 April. Mr Andrew Watton, President and Chairman, made the formal presentation which consists of three letter scales, a rare Ladder Scale by Degrove, Short, Fanner & Co, London and two smaller 4 ounce capacity scales, c.1880 by Joseph and Edmund Ratcliff and R W Winfield. The Ladder Scale has three brass trays, with a wooden base, and is complete with its original weights. The three items, which were purchased at auction, formed part of the estate of the late Bernard R Smith of Charmouth Dorset, who was a member of the Association.

Mr Stan Goron Manager, accepted the gift on behalf of the National Postal Museum. Mr Barry Robinson, Design Director, Royal Mail National brought a very happy celebration to its conclusion by talking to Friends about future plans for the NPM. *Full report next month.*

London South Special Handstamp Centre

The London South SHC has now amalgamated with the London North SHC at the following address:

Special Handstamp Centre,
Royal Mail, Mount Pleasant,
Room 139 LOB, Farringdon Road,
LONDON EC1A 1BB, Tel. 0171-239 2671.

Cinema Industry Stamps

Royal Mail plans to honour the British Cinema Industry with a set of special stamps in April 1996 to mark the centenary of the first ever screenings in the UK and the first British-made films to be commercially shown in the UK.

