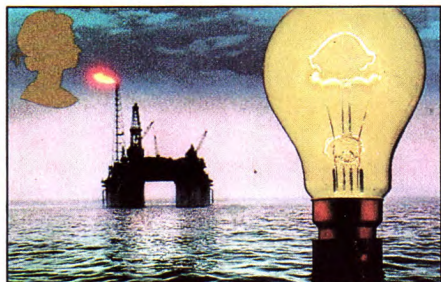


British Philatelic Bulletin

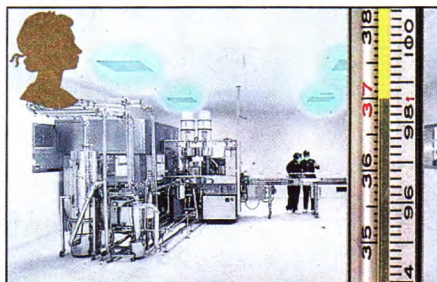
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17 PENCE • INDUSTRY YEAR 1986



22 PENCE • INDUSTRY YEAR 1986



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An early Christmas postmark

Editorial

As well as the regular features in this month's Philatelic Bulletin, we are pleased to include Part 4 of the series by Don Staddon featuring the essays of Queen Elizabeth II. Appropriately enough, the theme for the article this month is Christmas. Looking ahead to 1986, special features are planned on a variety of different philatelic subjects which will provide something of interest to everyone. These will include articles on Machins, stamp booklets, postmarks, postal history, the Universal Postal Union, postal mechanisation and George V issues as well as advice on collecting.

Of the 10 different Post Office Regions, the only one which has not issued any Regional postcards so far is Northern Ireland. However, the situation will be remedied shortly when they issue their first two cards. Full details are included in the Bulletin and the cards should prove of interest to the many enthusiasts.

Choosing the right Christmas present for relatives and friends seems to become harder every year. The range of stamps and philatelic products on sale at post offices and the Philatelic Bureau provides an excellent choice of Christmas presents for most collectors, and encourages newcomers.

As an alternative, a subscription to the Philatelic Bulletin, or to the Stamp Bug Club for younger collectors, makes an interesting and unusual present. Details of the subscription rates for the Bulletin are included, as usual, on the final page of this issue. Membership of the Stamp Bug Club costs only £1 for one year or £1.50 for two years, which is very good value for money. Members receive a copy of the club magazine, Stamp Bug News, six times a year as well as other benefits. The address to write to is as follows: Stamp Bug Club, Freepost, PO Box 109, Oakwood House, St John's Industrial Estate, Penn, HIGH WYCOMBE, Bucks, HP10 8BR.

Finally, we would once again like to thank all our readers for their past and continuing support and wish them a Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

CHARLES GOWEN

Part 4 Christmas Stamps

The British Post Office has issued a set of Christmas stamps each year since 1966. Over the years the theme has been religious on most issues as you would expect, especially the events surrounding the birth of Christ. Children playing with toys was used once, in 1968. Christmas carols have been used on a number of occasions.

For 1985 the designs capture the spirit of Christmas theatre with a colourful, star spangled selection of pantomime characters. The superb end result was achieved by a considerable team effort by the designer, Adrian George; the design adviser to the Post Office, Barry Robinson; the Post Office Stamp Advisory Committee, and the printers, Harrison & Sons Ltd.

The gold and silver stars on these stamps were added to the original design as was the large star containing the value. Unusually the letter 'p' for pence has been left off, after clearance by the Universal Postal Union (UPU). Presumably its inclusion would have necessitated a larger star than the design would allow.

It must be quite a challenge to find a different approach to the subject of Christmas, one which is appropriate to the subject and at the same time having a broad appeal to the millions of people in this country who sent out on average forty Christmas cards a year.

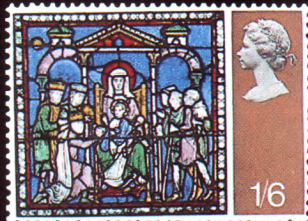
Essays are plentiful, and in this brief article I can illustrate only a few of them. Carefully stored in the National Postal Museum, London, they can always be made available to view by prior arrangement with the Curator, Mr Raife Wellsted.

British special stamp designs are made up of three primary elements; the picture, usually a reproduction of a painting, the Queen's head and the value. There may also be an inscription or inscriptions.

The bringing together of the three primary but unrelated elements can be done in various ways and these are the subject of a number of essays. This can be seen on essays of the accepted design for the 1/6 value of the 1967 Christmas stamps where the head was featured in different positions and colours. The design features 'The Adoration of the Shepherds' from a painting by Louis Le Nain.



Apart from the aesthetic aspect, the colour of the Queen's head can have an operational significance. On stamps having a design which does not lend itself to ready distinction in the sorting offices the colour of the Queen's head can be helpful. Essays for 1971 and 1984 Christmas stamps show the attention paid to this aspect of the design. For 1984 final approval was given to the essays with the head in different colours, and with no inscriptions. 1971 was the year Great Britain changed to decimal value stamps. Preliminary essays designed by Clarke-Clement-Hughes and produced many months before, show the stamp values in LSD currency.



The Court Bureau

One of the most interesting private posts that functioned in Britain in the 19th century was the shortlived service organised by the Court Bureau. The company was formed in 1889 and established a general agency business for supplying servants, letting houses and addressing and despatching invitations. It also undertook the collection of letters and parcels from London clubs, hotels and private subscribers on Sundays and at other times outside normal hours of postal collections and in 1890 issued a series of nine stamps for payment of fees charged. The stamps were lithographed in denominations of 1d, 1½d, 3d, 6d, 1/-, 1/6, 2/6, 5/- and 6/-. All were in the same design with the denomination in a central oval surrounded by an oval of pearls with COURT BUREAU inscribed above and below it. They were all printed in the same dull red colour. The 1d and 3d



A se-tenant strip of five 3p stamps and a separate 3½p stamp made up the set issued in November 1973, designed by David Gentleman. Note the first essays of the se-tenant stamps with the horns of the crescent moons facing to the right. On the final, approved essays they face to the left.

In addition to a phosphor bar essay with phosphor bars left the 1975 5½p value was the subject of colour trials. The 1975 set is also of interest because the values and colours were changed after the final essays had been approved. The stamps were designed by Richard Downer.

Finally, essays during the preparation of the 1976 set show attention to colour and inscriptions. On the 11p stamp the colour was made deeper and the inscription strengthened. The stamps were designed by Enid Marx.

DON STADDON



(Illustrations by courtesy of R M Willcocks).

stamps were printed together in the same sheet and all the values from 1/- to 6/- were printed together in another sheet. The 1½d and 6d were probably also printed together. All the stamps were perforated 11½ or 12.

Letters collected by the Court Bureau had to have the normal postage stamps applied in the usual way and the Bureau charged 1d for its service. The letters it collected were taken to railway stations to ensure delivery by the first post on Monday morning.

The normal cancellation on the Court Bureau stamps was COURT BUREAU/SUNDAY POST DESPATCH in an oblong frame, struck in violet. An example used in December 1890 is known cancelled in three lines FORWARDED/BY/COURT BUREAU.

It is believed that the 1½d stamp was used for heavier letters and the 3d and 6d for packets or parcels. The denominations from 1/- upwards were used by subscribers to settle small accounts with the Bureau.

The Court Bureau was forced to close on 24th January, 1891, on the petition of a printing firm.

All the stamps are now fairly scarce, the high values are rare and values used on mail carried by the service are highly desirable.

BILL NEWPORT

Decimal Stamp Booklets (4)

1985 Christmas Stamp Book — on sale 19 November 1985 — Twenty x 12p — £2.40.

The stamp, identical with the 12p sheet issue, was designed and drawn in pastel by the artist Adrian George and featured a Principal Boy — Dick Whittington — surrounded by a galaxy of stars, this year's theme being the age-old one of Pantomime.

The stamps were printed and perforated on the Jumelle press. The web was of single pane width with a 'sheet' size of twenty-two rows of ten in new blue, greenish yellow, bright rose, gold, grey black and silver. The single phosphor band is to the right of centre.

Before printing the stamps the giant rolls of coated and gummed paper were back printed on the Albert Press with the non toxic blue stars and slit to working size for the Jumelle Press.

When making up into booklets on the Libra machine the trimmed left selvage was used as the binding margin, the right selvage having been completely removed as waste.

One revolution of the cylinders is deemed a 'sheet'. In the folded booklet production a continuous web is used and individual sheets are only removed for registration or testing purposes. The sheet is bounded by printed arrows, two in the left margin facing right and the two in right margin facing left.

The only marginal markings that appear in the issued books are the horizontal cutting bars every alternate row and the cylinder numbers. Calling the position of the arrows as between rows 22/1 then the cylinder number is opposite rows 9/10 and reads upwards B2A B1B B1C B1D B1E B1F B83 in blue, yellow, rose, gold, black, silver and phospor. Opposite rows 17/18, too wide to be included in the books are the Traffic Lights also reading upwards but not in the same order as cylinder numbers — yellow, rose, blue, gold, black and silver. There is also opposite rows 17/18 a vertical cutting that may appear in the books.

The cover was also designed by Adrian George in the pantomime theme and is in red and blue. The front features Cinderella's glass slipper on a cushion and the back portrays a rat squatting on its hind legs, both covers being bordered on the lower edge with a continuous row of footlights.

L F NEWBERY



12. Origins of the 'Duplex'

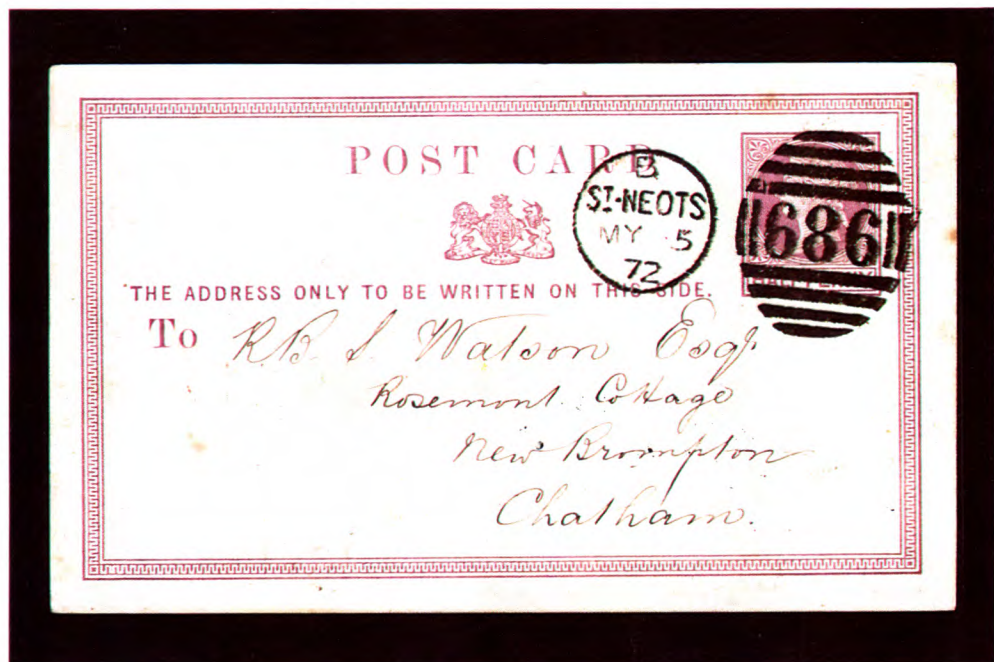
The standard duplex (or 'double') postmark canceller — a combined circular datestamp and oval barred 'killer' obliteration — emerged in British post offices *circa* 1860, following a long series of experimental prototypes which began in 1853. Hitherto each office had a distinctive numeral obliterator used for cancelling the adhesive stamp, and a separate town-name and dated stamp, usually applied on the back of the letter, identifying its origin.

The early duplexes were called 'spoons' because of the oval shape of the datestamp (later, of course, it was the numeral 'killer' which assumed the oval shape). Next came the 'sideways duplex' in which one component (or both) was on its side in relation to its partner, and there were numerous variations, particularly in Scotland where the circular datestamps (early types in dotted circles) were joined to numerals within two sets of horizontal bars. Edinburgh adopted the Brunswick Star (numeral 131 within) as its duplex obliterator in the 1860s. The

duplex cancellations for Ireland were slightly different again — the obliterator comprised the office numeral with a *diamond* of horizontal bars. The London Chief Office and District Offices also had their own versions of the duplex cancellation.

The first standard duplexes showed the town name *across* the datestamp — my example depicts the St. Neots (formerly Huntingdonshire, now Cambridgeshire) duplex of 1872 on one of the postal stationery cards first issued in 1870. Longer names, especially those incorporating 'Station', were however inscribed around the perimeter of the datestamp. The final phase of the duplex canceller — which in many instances lasted well beyond the turn of the century — was seen as a normal circular datestamp joined to a narrow vertical (or 'upright') oval 'killer' of three or four bars. Virtually every town and village, including those now city suburbs, had its own individual duplex: they form an integral part of Britain's postal history.

MALCOLM JAMES



Industry Year Stamps

Issue 14 January 1986

Industry Year 1986, initiated by the RSA (The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) aims to increase understanding of the role of industry and its service to the community. The Industry Year stamps highlight four areas where industry produces goods and provides services, and by these activities also provides the money (through payment of rates and taxes) which pays for the education and social services on which we rely as individuals and communities. The stamps illustrate the importance of industry to every one of us, whether we work in it or not, no matter what our age or occupation.

The subjects and denominations are as follows:

- 17p Energy
- 22p Health
- 31p Everyday Life
- 34p Food

First Day Cover Services

The following services for First Day Covers will be provided. Two pictorial handstamps will be available, 'Birmingham' and 'British Philatelic Bureau, Edinburgh.'

SERVICE A

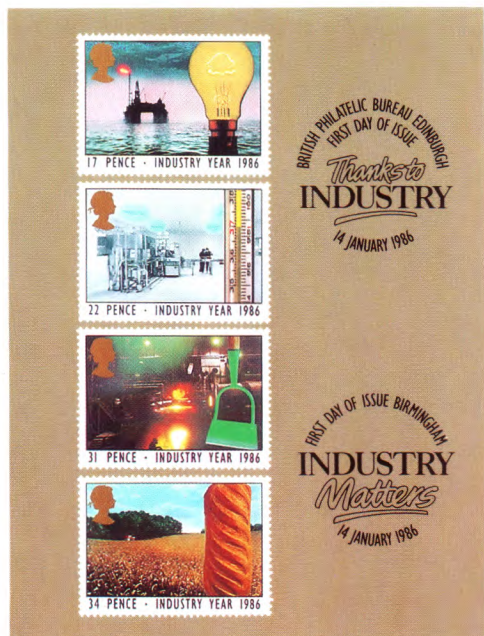
This service consists of the official first day cover — price 15p — addressed to the correct postal address of the destination required and bearing all four stamps. The cover will be cancelled 'Birmingham' or 'British Philatelic Bureau, Edinburgh' as requested and despatched.

SERVICE B

Customers' own pre-addressed covers bearing the correct postal address, will be given the stamps, cancelled as requested and despatched. The following charges will apply:

	Inland	Overseas
Service 'A'	£1.49	£1.30
Deposit Account Customers	£1.43	£1.25
Service 'B'	£1.34	£1.17

First day of issue facilities will be available at offices with philatelic posting boxes. Application forms available from the British Philatelic Bureau, Edinburgh, and at Head Post Offices should be returned not later than 6 January 1986.



Technical Details

Designed by Keith Bassford, with photography by Chris Morris, the stamps have been printed offset litho by The House of Questa. The format is horizontal measuring 41 mm x 30 mm with 15 x 14 perforations on unwatermarked, phosphor coated paper. There are 100 stamps per sheet and the adhesive is PVA Dextrin.

Reposting Facilities

Those customers who wish to send their own stamped and fully addressed covers for cancellation with the Birmingham postmark, should enclose them in an outer envelope, fully addressed and stamped, and send them to:— Special Postmark Duty, Letters Branch, Head Post Office, Royal Mail Street, BIRMINGHAM, B1 1AA.

Postcards

Postcard size reproductions of each of the four stamps will be available from 31 December 1985, price 14p each.

Presentation Pack

A presentation pack, number 168, and the first day cover are designed by Keith Bassford and illustrated by John Thirsk. The pack will cost £1.25.

Souvenir Covers

A souvenir cover, price 15p, also designed by Keith Bassford and illustrated by John Thirsk, will go on sale at philatelic counters from 15 January 1986.



of action
the Year
three m



Increased awareness of industry and its contribution will be used during the Year to demonstrate that successful industrial activity is essential if we are to achieve the quality and standard of life we all seek.

Linking education and industry
Industry Year aims to increase linkages between education and industry, building on existing initiatives and spreading them throughout the educational system.

Action within industry Industry itself – and all institutions and people involved in it – can do much to explain its role both to its

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directly to our lives, they also assist the financing of local education, social services and community needs

All the stamps are designed to focus on the fundamental role of industry in the community. They are part of the aim of Industry Year 1986 to increase understanding and awareness that successful industry not only provides goods and services – and therefore ultimately jobs – but makes a vital contribution without which we could not pay for essential social services or have the choice of leisure, entertainment and



BRITISH POST DAY OF USE COMMUNITIES
INDUSTRY
14 JANUARY 1986

BRITISH POST DAY OF USE COMMUNITIES
INDUSTRY
14 JANUARY 1986



Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbier Road
ILKESTON
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB

Plate I of the Line Engraved Stamps

The November 'Gem' featured an unused marginal block of seven stamps printed from the unhardened plate I (known as 1A), at an early stage. For this month's 'Gem' I have chosen an example (a pair) of a late impression from this plate before it was hardened and registered for a second time (1B). This pair, showing wear, is displayed on the same sheet (Page 7, Vol III) in the R M Phillips Collection at the National Postal Museum.

The Line Engraved or Recess printing method was the first of five basic methods that have been used for the production of stamps, the other four being gravure, letterpress, embossing and lithography.

In recess printing the outline of the pattern is cut into a smooth copper plate, the grooves are then inked and softened paper forced into them using a screw press to capture the pattern on the paper. This method of printing is called recess because it is the cut-out or recessed parts of the plates which take the design. However, if the stamp or engraving is being considered, it is the opposite characteristic which

attracts attention; the design is raised and the ink lies sometimes quite thickly above the level of the paper. When the finger is lightly run over the surface the raised lines can be felt.

Many philatelists take the view that the name Recess Printing is unsatisfactory because it describes the nature of the printing plate rather than the printing which is not 'recessed'.

It may help to understand, to look at the four stages of printing preparation in the following terms.

1. Die cut — design recessed and in reverse
2. Die impressed upon small roller of soft steel — design raised
3. Small roller after hardening impressed on to the printing plate — design recessed and in reverse.
4. Printing plate inked and paper pressed against it to print stamps — design raised.

This method is also known as intaglio, from the Italian meaning carving.

JOHN MEMMOTT Asst. Curator



124. Cycling Centenaries, 1978

The pleasures of cycling — past and present — were abundantly illustrated by the four stamps issued by The Post Office on 2 August 1978, marking the centenaries of the Cyclists' Touring Club and the British Cycling Federation, founded in the year (1878) of the world's first national cycling competitions. The Federation is the outcome of the amalgamation of the original National Cyclists' Union with the British League of Racing Cyclists formed in 1942, and its objects are to encourage, promote, develop and control the sport and pastime of cycling in all its aspects throughout Great Britain. It also supports and protects cyclists' rights and privileges in general, particularly safeguarding its members' interests, private members and those

belonging to affiliated clubs. The Federation is the supreme authority on road and track racing, and promotes regular national and local, professional and amateur championships.

The stamps, designed by Fritz Wegner, show (9p) a 'penny-farthing' of *circa* 1880, also known as an 'ordinary', with its enormous front wheel and direct pedal-drive, with a so-called 'safety' bicycle of 1884 with rear chain drive and what was to become the standard diamond frame. Note also the recognised cyclists' garb of the period — cap or helmet, jacket, knickerbockers and high boots for the gentlemen, a fashionable hat and crinoline dress for the lady. The 10½p stamp depicts a couple with touring bicycles of the 1920s, while the 11p shows modern small-wheel cycles of the Moulton type introduced in 1962. Road-racers of the present time are shown on the 13p stamp — after a lapse caused by the advent of the motor car, cycle racing was revived in 1942 when the annual 14-day Tour of Britain ('Milk Race'), organised on the lines of the famous Tour de France (first held in 1903), was started. Incidentally the most prolific use of the bicycle today is by The Post Office whose staff maintain some 30,000 machines.

The stamps were printed in sheets of 100 (two panes of 50, 10 x 5) on unwatermarked paper with 'All-over' phosphor. Quantities issued: 9p, 44,990,000; 10½p, 12,760,000; 11p, 11,980,000; and 13p, 10,980,000.

JAMES WATSON

New Stamp Books with Illustrated Covers

On 14 January 1986 two new stamp books, priced at £1.20 and £1.50, will go on sale. The £1.20 book will contain 10 x 12p stamps and the £1.50 book will contain 6 x 17p and 4 x 12p stamps. The covers will depict postboxes, continuing the theme started with the 50p and £1.70 books.

The two books will carry the 'Write Now' letter pack offer, as featured on BBC television. The pack comprises an attractive envelope-shaped folder which contains a set of 11 full colour reference cards with hints on composing a variety of letters covering a range of themes. The stamp books are designed by Michael Thierens Design Ltd.

Technical Details

Both the stamps and stamp book covers are printed by Harrison & Sons Limited; the stamps in



photogravure on the Chambon press and the covers on the Libra bookmaking machine.

The 12p stamps in the £1.20 book will bear a single central phosphor bar. In the mixed value book the 17p stamps will bear two phosphor bars and the 12p stamps will have a single side phosphor bar. The layout will be five 17p stamps, above one 17p and four 12p stamps.

Cylinder numbers of the stamps will appear on every sixth book. The books will appear in both left and right-hand formats. The stamp books will be generally available from all post offices, philatelic counters, and by post from the British Philatelic Bureau in Edinburgh.

British Philatelic Bureau Prize Draw

To celebrate The Post Office's 350 Years of Service to the public, the British Philatelic Bureau offered their Deposit Account customers the opportunity of winning one of the world's first stamps — a Penny Black — as a free prize draw.

Their customers, who were all sent the offer in an attractive mailing enclosed in a special drawn envelope last July, were invited to return their entry forms to enter the free draw.

The draw was made by Dr Jean Alexander, a member of the Stamp Advisory Committee, and the winner out of the many thousands of entries received was from Mr Dyson of the West Midlands. The illustration shows Dr Jean Alexander with Mr Tony Parton, the Bureau Manager, who is holding the winning entry.

The postal services offer a very wide field for the choice of a thematic subject, and very satisfying collections can be devoted to the carriage of mails, and postal practice and procedure. The title, however, (and I must emphasize this) has to cover and limit the actual scope of the collection, or set the boundaries for a particular section. The carriage of mail can start with the early messengers, and there are some delightful stamps and miniature sheets issued for various international exhibitions or stamp days that show the costumes worn from the times of the medieval couriers to town and country lettercarriers (GB 1980), and modern postmen. Postmen can also be found on the covers of stamp books and regional cards, and mounted post-boys in handstamps. Postal transport itself is a vast subject, and should be confined in some way, either to the vehicles used for a specific letter on a specific route, or sectioned under such headings as road, rail, sea and air or similar types of divisions. There is a great quantity of philatelic and postal material available. Great Britain's 200th anniversary of the world's first mail coach was commemorated by a strip of stamps, several of which depicted inns as fare-stages for West Country mails down the Great West Road. The Ostrich, Colnbrooke, another coaching inn on this route, used an attractive first day handstamp. The Bath Postal Museum issued postcards taken from contemporary prints of the original coach of 1784, its instigator John Palmer postmaster of Bath, and Ralph Allen another postmaster who introduced





cross-posts which, for example, routed Falmouth to Bristol mail across the Cornish Peninsula instead of wasting time and expense carrying letters up via London and back. Both the Falmouth packetship and the scene of the mailcoach leaving Bristol have been published by the Regional Postal Boards, and make excellent maximum cards with an appropriate handstamp. If a 'carried by mailcoach' cover is needed there are plenty of modern ones with relevant cachets, but these are philatelic covers, and it is better to use a pre-stamp cover, or indeed a Scottish one with 'additional ½d' tax that was imposed for a while on letters carried over the Border in vehicles with more than two wheels. These covers are common and can be picked up for little more than their modern equivalents. If possible it is always better in competition to show commercially used covers of the period under consideration rather than modern ones specially made for an occasion, although the latter make most attractive additions to society displays.

Until recently a competitive thematic entry was expected to be composed almost entirely of stamps,

and although these are still of basic importance, the emphasis has now shifted to bring British thematics up to the high continental standard. Thematicists are now expected to include a far greater proportion of philatelic material. Covers, pieces, handstamps, meter marks, slogans, stamp books, perfins, postal stationery, and postal history items can all be relevant, and need to be combined with stamps to make a satisfying whole. In some ways this makes the construction of a thematic more difficult, as the new style needs more imagination and certainly a wider knowledge, both general and philatelic. But the extra dimensions are a great challenge and much more fun. The eyes have to be eternally searching for suitable material. Advance notification of sponsored handstamps and slogans can be found in some philatelic magazines and in the Post Office Postmark Bulletin. Examples needed can be obtained through the reposting service by sending a stamped addressed envelope bearing at least 3p more than second class postage to the correct post office. The outer cover should be marked 'Special Handstamp' with an indication of the one required; for on occasion a Post Office has more than one on a specific date. Maximum cards can also take advantage of this handy service, but they must have the sender's name and address on the back, and be accompanied by an addressed envelope, unstamped, for their return. At the very latest such requests must be posted on the date specified for the special handstamp. This ruling enables newly issued stamps to receive special first day cancellations. From 1 October 1984 rules for maximum cards have been altered, and the stamp attached to the picture side of a postcard may now be cancelled at any post office offering a special sponsored or philatelic counter handstamp. Used with caution maximum cards make attractive and relevant additions to an entry. Normally the picture side of a postcard is classed with photographs, cuttings, drawings and other interesting but non-postal material that is ideal for a display but not acceptable in competitive entries where the accent is on *postal* matters. Of course the stamps and postal markings on the correspondence side may be very relevant to a theme, and rummaging amongst postcards can be a most rewarding exercise, and a fine source of postal history material.

Covers bearing stamps, cachets, handstamps, Sorting Tender and TPO marks are very necessary to a railway theme, just as ship letters, Sea Posts, paquebots, ship cachets, letters carried by named ships, and a host of other maritime marks enhance a maritime theme. Similarly Aerophilately covers every aspect of air transport, including Swiftair,

airgraphs and stamps and covers of the early pioneering and experimental postal flights, some of which combined the catapulting of mail-carrying aircraft from the decks of mailships half-way across the Atlantic. These items lift a thematic to another plane, besides demonstrating one's philatelic knowledge. But apart from this obvious romantic material, a wealth of items lurking in dealers' boxes demonstrates other aspects of postal procedures that are fascinating in their own right. Much of it hides behind very ordinary covers with instructional or explanatory markings and special Post Office labels. Some are quite unusual. Under a heading of 'Speeding the Mail' there are green Special Delivery labels for the limited Sunday service that made actual house delivery by messenger on a Sunday; and there was the Brighton Speedpost trial for same-day local delivery, and the modern contracted overnight door-to-door Datapost service. A 'Slowing the Mail' section embraces many handstruck or manuscript marks like 'POOC — Posted Out of Course' that appears on registered letters rescued from ordinary pillar-box mail. A wide range of unpaid cachets draw attention to overlarge postcards, incomplete metermarks, or the use of insufficient, invalid or illegal stamps all of which should, but not always do, attract Postage Due labels. Censored, Gone Away, Deceased, Your correct address is . . ., Missent, crash, damaged, wreck and charred remnants from bombs or pillar-box fires are self-explanatory. There is a whole host of intriguing reasons that cause disruptions in postal routes or tariffs or procedures, and a questing eye and an inquiring mind are invaluable. Never discard covers with markings you do not understand for one day illumination will come in unexpected ways. Much of this material is very modern postal history and interesting cachets are often consigned to the wastepaper-basket. Many are not easy to find, but are assets in this particular sort of thematic collection that relies so heavily on



covers. Depending on the angle of approach, a bundle of covers with Postage Dues can be written up and slanted to serve either thematic or postal history needs.

Another very modern section and integral part of 'Speeding the Mail' is mechanisation. This is no modern phenomenon or prerogative of postal historians, but started with any mechanical device that improved the processing or carriage of mail, whether it was the mailcoach and forms of transport, perforation machines, or mechanical, steam- or electrically-driven cancelling machines. The first postcodes were introduced by Rowland Hill's adoption of London districts which were founded on geographical location, and are still the basis for London codes today. Postcodes are the foundation stone of The Post Office's vast mechanisation programme that led from the Brighton Transomas to trials at selected towns with various types of phosphor or graphite that under UV light activated



the automatic letter sorting machinery (GB 1969 1s 6d). Many of these early mechanisation covers are rare and command high premiums because so much was unknowingly thrown away. Later machines converted postcodes into phosphorised dots, at first almost invisible and then dyed blue or turquoise, and some with a waxed opacified base. The codes are read and letters automatically sorted in each Mechanised Letter Office (MLO) they pass through in the journey to their destination. Many handstamps and slogans are available on humble commercial mail.

The logical extension of mechanisation is the automatic reading and sorting of mail entirely by machinery. After many laboratory trials a machine capable of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) was installed at London EC in 1983, which reads and sorts typewritten addresses at the incredible speed of 30,000 per hour. Blue phosphor bars composed of minute dots are jet-sprayed onto the envelope according to the postcode pattern. Other postal authorities use other chemicals and colours, and there is a growing interest in many varieties of mechanised and OCR markings in fluorescent yellow, pale cream, black and red.

There are plenty of stamps dealing with postcodes and automatic stamps from the Frama-type machines. But until very recently there were no stamps covering electronic mail, and it was virtually impossible to find material for the Postfax service that transmits photocopied documents from one city or country to another. However 1983 as World Communication Year brought a rush of postal and telecommunication equipment on stamps. Qatar (1974 75d) showed manual and mechanised sorting offices; Hungary (1978 1f) gave us automatic letter sorting equipment; and West Germany's UPU Congress miniature sheet showed the photo-electronic OCR scanner or 'eye' (1984 80pf). I am fascinated by every facet to the processing of mail from collection to time of delivery. This is a huge subject but falls naturally into manageable sections.

Thematic collecting is here to stay, and done properly it needs the expert knowledge and dedication of the traditional philatelist. Apart from obeying the necessary rules for competition work, what one collects, how one collects, and the method of presentation is an entirely personal thing. In this series my aim has been to throw out ideas that might flower into a thematic collection that will give a long-term interest, pleasure and joy, for that is what stamp collecting and thematics are all about.

BARBARA LAST

How It All Began

Part 1



It was a Saturday afternoon, I remember. I cannot satisfy the British passion as to the state of the weather at the time, nor indeed can I recall the time of year. But it was nearly thirty years ago, while shopping with my sister, who was apparently anxious to find a way to keep her younger brother quiet.

Woolworths provided the answer, with a packet of stamps, a few stamp hinges and a 'Blue Lagoon' stamp album. So it was my sister who was mainly to blame, although I must admit that a spark of interest in stamp collecting had been kindled by our next door neighbour who owned a collection of British stamps which greatly impressed me.

That neighbour's collection in fact contained such items as the 1953 Coronation in blocks of four — I often dreamt that the owner might split the blocks to present me with a set!

My visits to Woolworths were quite frequent in those days: packets of stamps and inexpensive accessories were fast selling lines. Recently, in discussion with the manager of one of the large branches of Woolworths in central London, he recalled that when the stores stocked such items, he would need to re-order packets of stamps two or three times a week.

It is a great pity that the stamp packet seems to have disappeared. It offered such a wonderful introduction to the hobby. While it is true that the labour cost of assembling packets has increased considerably, perhaps too much fear is placed on customer resistance if the price seems too high.

Many moan that young people are today lured by videos and computer games, but these are hardly cheap. Attractively packaged packets of stamps could still sell well, if marketed with careful thought.

The days are probably gone of 200 French Colonials or 1,000 Whole World, but 'thematic' packets might sell. Price should not deter.

That first stamp album cost 6d, and was the familiar junior type, printed on both sides of the paper, with neat squares for each stamp, too much space attributed to some countries, too little to others, and with certain stamps illustrated at the top of each page.

I still remember two of these illustrations: the Ascension 1956 1½d value and the 1956 British

Solomon Islands 1½d. These looked so attractive to me that I felt I wanted to add them to my album as real stamps.

The former proved no problem. The range of packets at Woollies included those from Frank Godden; these frequently contained five different ½d stamps from Commonwealth countries priced at 6d, or the ½d, 1d and 1½d values from each of three Commonwealth countries, selling for 1s 6d. One of the 1s 6d packets provided me with the Ascension 1½d — and ½d and 1d values.

The British Solomon Islands was more difficult. Fortunately my home town supported several stamp shops, into whose windows I frequently gazed, but not venturing further.

One day I plucked up courage, entered the tiny shop and asked if the particular Solomons stamp was in stock. The lady behind the counter, Mrs Kaye, was most helpful. She could not supply the particular stamp singly, but what about the British Solomons Islands 1937 Coronation 1d value? I made my purchase in the knowledge that I would now be able to add a stamp to the page headed British Solomon Islands.

Local stamp shops were a great inspiration to collect, mainly thanks to the window displays, but also due to owners who were prepared to talk about stamps. Sadly many of these shops have now disappeared: a general stock seems rare; a wide knowledge of stamps is uncommon; and a willingness just to chat about stamps almost non-existent.

The changes are not really for the better as far as the future of the hobby is concerned. If potential collectors, of whatever age, are not brought face to face with the prospect of the hobby, how will it continue?

Provided the shop was not full of customers, Mrs Kaye would always be prepared to talk about stamps, even if on occasions it did not result in a purchase.

In those days a quarter of a century ago everything seemed less frenetic. When a new British stamp appeared, it caused little panic but much interest. The start of my collecting coincided with the issue of the Jubilee Jamboree set — there had been no new British commemoratives for four years. I was able to afford the 2½d and 4d quite easily, but had to save up for the 1s 3d. No bother, for it remained on sale at post offices for several weeks.

The 1958 Commonwealth Games set was, I recall, featured quite prominently in the comic 'Eagle'. I doubt if today's new issues receive such coverage, simply because they appear so frequently.



Another landmark in my collecting career was the acquisition of my first £1 stamp. Not a stamp that cost me £1, but the £1 definitive showing Windsor Castle. There was a page of these, acceptably fine used to me, in the window of Kayes Stamp Shop (in Brighton, in case you had been wondering) priced at 2s 6d each. I had drooled over these from the first time I had looked into the shop window, and eventually I bought a copy — it seemed a great deal of money to spend on just one stamp.

It was 1958 that I bought my first stamp publication — Gibbons Stamp Monthly. After a while I decided to check if any other magazines were published about the hobby. As a result I added Stamp Collecting Weekly to my list of purchases. The one magazine, ironically, that I was not keen on was Stamp Magazine (my apologies to Arthur Blair, who was the then-editor).

It is claimed that young people are not collecting stamps today because there are so many conflicting interests. In the late 50s and early 60s there were just as many interests. Television, pop music, sport, Saturday morning cinema were all popular. Today stamps do not seem to make the same impact, when in fact they should be making a greater impact.

Colourful stamps are seen far more often on letters today compared with twenty odd years ago, but the inspiration to collect is lacking. If the days of

the stamp packet freely available and the local, friendly stamp shop could return, many more youngsters might follow the same path as me.

Ah well, perhaps not.

RICHARD WEST

Book Reviews

Stanley Gibbons Great Britain Specialised Stamp Catalogue, Volume 1, Queen Victoria.

The 8th Edition of this volume has just been published and includes recent research which has led to a number of additions and improvements to the listings. Among the additions are two new Penny Black varieties, several changes to the dates of use of surface printed issues and the inclusion of a new watermark error for the 9d with large corner letters. Dates of issue of some of the Officials have also been amended and more background information and a number of die proofs have been added to the Postal Fiscal section; the Mulready listings have also received considerable attention. A new appendix has also been added, giving details of postal rates operative throughout the period concerned. Prices have been thoroughly revised, reflecting increases in essay material and unusual cancellations as well as fine used items.

The catalogue can be obtained from most reputable stamp dealers and bookshops, including Stanley Gibbons 399 Strand shop, price £11.95. Copies can also be supplied by post, and orders with the appropriate remittance (plus £1.30 for inland postage and packing, £2.25 for overseas), should be sent to Stanley Gibbons Publications Ltd, 5 Parkside, Christchurch Road, RINGWOOD, Hants, BH24 3SH.

Collect British Stamps (37th Edition)

This new edition of the popular Stanley Gibbons publication is currently available from the usual philatelic outlets and all Post Office philatelic counters (including Taunton), at £1.95. It provides a clear, concise and easily understood listing, illustrated in colour, of all British stamps from the 1840 Penny Black to the 1985 Christmas issue. The catalogue includes all stamps with different watermarks and perforations, plate numbers on Victorian issues, graphite and phosphor band issues, first day covers and all special and commemorative issues as well as definitive and country definitives, presentation packs, postage dues, PHQ postcards, gutter pairs and Royal Mail postage labels. Prices have been updated and a number of increases recorded. The new edition is also available from

Stanley Gibbons Publications, 5 Parkside, RINGWOOD, Hants, BH24 3SH plus 30p extra for postage and packing (75p overseas surface mail) as well as to callers at the Stanley Gibbons 399 Strand shop. It is also available from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH, EH3 5TT, where normal handling charges will apply.

Collect First Day Covers (14th Edition)

The 1986 (14th) edition of this popular catalogue is now available. The catalogue contains 220 pages of information, with approximately 3,000 entries, nearly 400 postmark illustrations, and numerous colour illustrations. Several interesting articles by collectors are also included. All the covers are priced realistically, many in grades according to condition. Priced at £3.50 the catalogue represents good value for money. It is on sale at all philatelic counters, the British Philatelic Bureau in Edinburgh, and most reputable stamp dealers and bookshops. It can also be obtained direct from the publisher, BBP Publications Ltd, Ashton-Under-Hill, EVESHAM, Worc, WR11 6TB.

Christmas Stamps Issue 19 November 1985

Full details of the 1985 Christmas stamp issue appeared in the November issue of the Philatelic Bulletin. Since this was published it has come to light that a second cylinder was used for the printing of some of the 22p value stamps. As well as being printed with the cylinder combination shown in the November Bulletin, the 22p value is also available with the following cylinder numbers; 3A 1B 1C 1D 1E 1F.

Forces Covers

Christmas 1985

A special Forces first day cover (RFDC 40) entitled 'Greetings From the RAF Famine Relief Detachment in Ethiopia' is being produced. The cover will depict a Hercules aircraft from RAF Lyneham, dropping food. It will have the complete set of five Christmas Stamps affixed, cancelled on 19 November 1985, the first day of issue, at Llanelli, and will then be carried to Ethiopia to be flown on a food-dropping mission. The covers will be signed by the Officer Commanding the RAF Detachment in Ethiopia and

upon return to the UK by the Wing Commander, Operations at RAF Lyneham. Covers will be backstamped as appropriate and each will include an informative insert. The price of the covers is £3.75 each including postage and packing, but 50p should be added for overseas orders. Four weeks should be allowed for delivery and the covers should be available for Christmas. Orders with the appropriate remittance should be sent to the Director of Appeals, RAF Museum, Aerodrome Road, Hendon, LONDON, NW9 5LL. All proceeds will be devoted to Registered Service Charities.

70th Anniversary of No. 20 Squadron RAF

To commemorate the 70th anniversary of No. 20 Squadron RAF, a special philatelic cover has been produced. It depicts Harrier, Jaguar and Tornado aircraft of No. 20 Squadron over a background of the Squadron Crest. The covers have a 3p stamp affixed which is the current inter-Unit rate for British Forces in Germany. The covers have been cancelled with operational handstamp BFPO43 on 1 September 1985, the anniversary date. All the covers were flown in a No. 20 Squadron Tornado from its current base at RAF Wildenwrath and RAF Bruggen in West Germany, and bear a cachet to this effect. The covers contain a filler card giving the brief history of the Squadron, and have also been backstamped with the RAF postroom stamps of RAF Bruggen, Wildenwrath and Laarbruch, also a special No. 20 Squadron handstamp. The price of the covers is £1.00 each. A number of covers are also available at £1.50 each signed by the pilot and navigator of the special flight. Orders with the appropriate remittance made payable to '20 Squadron Anniversary Fund' should be sent to: The Philatelic Officer, No. 20 Squadron, RAF Laarbruch, BFPO43, together with a 7" x 5" stamped addressed envelope.

New Postcards

British Films

An unusual postcard has been produced in connection with the British Film Year stamps issued on 8 October 1985. It reproduces excerpts from the original programme of the first motion picture theatre to be opened in the City of London on 23 May 1906. Two short comic films and two news-reels were shown and the admission charges were 2d and 4d. The postcards have a 17p British Films stamp affixed cancelled with a special pictorial

handstamp at London EC1 on 8 October 1985, the first day of issue. The price of the cards is 90p each including postage and packing. Orders with the appropriate remittance should be sent to: Historic Relics, 95 Calbourne Road, Balham, LONDON, SW12 8LS.

South Eastern Postal Region

A new postcard (SEPR 47) will be issued on 6 December 1985 by South Eastern Postal Region. This will commemorate the opening of the new Mechanised Letter Sorting Office at Canterbury by Dr. Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury. The postcard shows the new Office and has a picture of Canterbury Cathedral inset. The card is priced at 14p mint, and 46p fully serviced (including a first class stamp, special handstamp, handling and reposting charges). Cards may be ordered from: The Head Postmaster (Philatelic Counter), 28 High Street, CANTERBURY, Kent, CT1 2BA (Girobank Account number 3150216), or by cheque made payable to 'The Post Office'.

Northern Ireland Postal Board

A set of two postcards will go on sale at all philatelic counters in Northern Ireland on 2 January 1986.

Four special first day of sale handstamps will be applied on that day only to postcards posted in special posting boxes situated at Ballymena, Belfast, Londonderry and Portadown.

The price of the postcards, which may also be ordered by post, is 14p each or 28p for a mint set of two. For orders of mint postcards only, there will also be a handling charge of 18p for orders under £18.00 and £1.28 for orders over £18.00.

Fully serviced cards, bearing a 17p definitive stamp and cancelled with a special first day of sale handstamp as required are available at 46p each and 92p for two.

All orders and remittances should be sent to: The Head Postmaster, 51-63 Wellington St., BALLYMENA, Co Antrim, BT43 6AA (GIROBANK transfer to account no 6157114); The Head Postmaster, 20-22 Donegall Quay, BELFAST, BT1 1AA (GIROBANK transfer to account no 6112005); The Head Postmaster, 3 Custom House St., LONDONDERRY, BT48 6AA (GIROBANK transfer to account no 6197116); The Head Postmaster, Mill Avenue, Portadown, CRAIGAVON, Co Armagh, BT62 1AA (GIROBANK transfer to account no 6128114).

Payments can also be made by cheque or postal order made payable to 'The Post Office'. Orders should arrive no later than 2 January 1986 and should be marked 'NIPB Regional Postcards'.

Posting Boxes



No. 78 The photograph this month has been sent in by Andrew Faulds MP and was taken by Keith Speed MP on a recent Parliamentary visit to the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Although no collection times are in evidence, the condition of the box would suggest that it is still in use.

Commemorative Covers

Halley's Comet/New 12p Definitive Stamp

A special philatelic cover was produced for the new 12p definitive stamp issued on 29 October 1985. Two x 12p stamps have been affixed, one with the star design on the reverse side and the other with a plain back. A third stamp has been mounted, reverse side up, showing the star pattern. The covers have been inscribed 'Halley's Comet, first sighting for 75 years' and 'New 12p definitive stamps 29 October 1985' on a stamped background. The price of the covers is

£1.20 each including postage and packing. Orders with the appropriate remittance should be sent to: Historic Relics, 95 Calbourne Road, Balham, LONDON, SW12 8LS, from whom further information is available.

Famous Trains, Last Day of Sale

To mark the withdrawal from sale of the Famous Trains stamps on 21 January 1986, the first in a series of last day of sale covers is being produced by Bryn Awel Covers. The cover illustrates a Swindon railway scene, and is available with either a 29p (Cheltenham Flyer) Famous Trains stamp only or the complete set of stamps affixed. The covers will be cancelled by a specially commissioned handstamp at Swindon. The price of the covers is £1.99 for those bearing the single stamp, and £3.50 for those bearing the full set of stamps. In addition a number of covers will be carried by InterCity 125 from Paddington to Swindon on 21 January 1986 and will bear a cachet to this effect. The price of the carried covers is £2.50 for those bearing the single stamp, and £4.00 for those bearing the full set. Orders with the appropriate remittance should be sent to: Bryn Awel Covers, Dept FT1, 153 Micklefield Road, HIGH WYCOMBE, Bucks, HP13 7HA. For overseas orders 50p per cover should be added for postage and packing.

The General Electric Company PLC (GEC) Centenary

A special philatelic cover is being produced commemorating the centenary of GEC, to coincide with the issue of the Industry Year stamps on 14 January 1986. The company has interests in three of the four industries to be featured on the stamps, namely Energy, Health and Food (the fourth industry is Leisure), and is Britain's largest manufacturing company employing over 150,000 people. The covers will be cancelled with a special handstamp at London W1, the Headquarters of GEC, on 14 January 1986. The price of the cover bearing a 17p Industry Year stamp only is £2.00, and bearing the full set of stamps is £4.00. Orders with the appropriate remittance should be sent to: GEC Centenary Cover, Greenberg and Porter, 13 Fordyke Road, Becontree Heath, DAGENHAM, Essex, RM8 1PJ. For postage and packing 50p should be added for inland orders and £1.00 minimum for overseas.

Ironbridge — Birthplace of Industry

A special philatelic cover is being produced to coincide with the Industry Year stamps being issued on 14 January 1986. The cover will feature an original watercolour of the world-famous Iron Bridge built in 1779 by Abraham Darby. He used the

iron smelting process, invented by his grandfather, that fostered the Industrial Revolution. The covers are printed in full colour and will be cancelled with a special handstamp bearing the wording 'Ironbridge — Birthplace of Industry'. The cost of the covers bearing a 17p Industry Year stamp only is £2.25 each, and for those bearing the full set of stamps is £4.00 each. The prices are inclusive of postage and packing for inland orders, and overseas customers are requested to include an additional 50p to cover airmail and remit in pounds sterling. Orders with the appropriate remittance made payable to A G Bradbury, should be sent to him at 2 Fairholme Road, LEICESTER, LE2 6GL.

New 12p Booklet Definitives

The basic second class letter rate will be reduced to 12p on 4 November 1985. To commemorate this, a special philatelic cover is being produced. The cover will have a part of the new 12p definitive stamps affixed, one with left and one with right phosphor band from the new £1.50 stamp book, cancelled with a Windsor pictorial postmark. Two cachets will also be applied to the covers, 'Posted at Windsor', and 12p 'Side Bands'. The price of the covers including postage and packing is £1.60 each, or 3 for £4.60. Orders with the appropriate remittance made payable to G Eldridge, should be sent to him at: 177 Mousehole Lane, Bitterne, SOUTHAMPTON, SO2 4TD.

Threave Anniversary

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the National Trust for Scotland's famous Threave School of Gardening, a special philatelic cover has been issued by the Trust. Apart from being an important teaching unit, the garden is visited annually by about 50,000 people. The cover has a 34p Insects stamp affixed (depicting an Emperor Dragonfly), and was cancelled with a special handstamp featuring a daffodil design on 18 October 1985 at Threave Garden. The price of the covers is £2.20 each including postage and packing. Orders with the appropriate remittance should be sent to: NTS Philatelic Agents, 33 St George's Place, CANTERBURY, Kent CT1 2XX.

The Thirtynine Steps

A special philatelic cover has been produced by the Biggar Museum Trust to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Alfred Hitchcock's film version of John Buchan's 'The Thirtynine Steps'. The cover reproduces the 'book of the film' dust jacket issued in 1935 to coincide with the appearance of Alfred

Hitchcock's film version of the John Buchan classic. It has a 34p British Films stamp depicting Hitchcock affixed, cancelled with the British Philatelic Bureau first day of issue handstamp on 8 October 1985. The filler card carries details about the film and also about the John Buchan Society and the John Buchan Centre, which is one of several places of interest created in the area by the Biggar Museum Trust. The price of the cover is £2.00 including postage and packing. Orders with the appropriate remittance should be sent to Biggar Museum Trust, Moat Park, BIGGAR, Lanarkshire, ML12 6DT.

Withdrawn Items

The following items will be withdrawn from sale on 24 December 1985 unless stocks have been exhausted: £2.40 Christmas 1985 stamp book. £6.00 Pack of 12p 1985 Christmas stamps.

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Editor Charles Gowen

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