

Philatelic Bulletin



Volume 6 Number 11 July 1969



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Readers who live in the Manchester area are invited to visit the Post Office philatelic display which is part of the Alcock and Brown Exhibition at Manchester Airport. Full philatelic sales service is available and a special souvenir cover is on sale.

Admission to the main exhibition, which runs until 13 July, is 2s.

Introduction

With no new stamps to write about this month our leading article is on the Reginald M. Phillips Gold Medal. The first winner is David Gentleman whose recent interview is reported.

The Curator of the National Postal Museum told us that while there have been over 10,000 visitors to the current exhibition he would like many more to visit it and enjoy the magnificent display of stamps. The Museum is conveniently situated in King Edward Street, EC1, a couple of minutes from St Paul's underground station and is an ideal spot for a lunch-hour visit for Londoners or a longer stay for those with more time to spare. The Curator will be glad to give conducted tours of the Museum to parties. For details write to him at the address above or telephone (01) 432 3851.

The Graphite Lined Stamps of 1957–1960

Letter facing and segregating machines designed to detect 'graphite ink' lines on postage stamps were introduced into Southampton Head Post Office in December 1957. They were the result of prolonged research by PO engineers who had been experimenting with the recognition of stamps by means of photo-electric cells since 1937.

A machine had been devised which was able to pick out the colours of different denominations of photogravure stamps and so segregate lower-paid letters for separate treatment, but because the areas of dense colour on British stamps are very small, many envelopes bore postage affixed in positions which fell outside the machine's limited field of view.

A promising answer seemed to lie in making the stamps more easily recognizable by giving their entire area some special characteristic to which a machine could respond, and to this end a large number of trials were carried out including impregnating the paper on which the stamps were printed.

Salt solution was tried for electrolytic detection and ferric oxide for magnetic recognition. A number of other substances such as zinc and aluminium were also tested, but none produced results encouraging enough to warrant a field trial.

Another experiment was the insertion of metal strips into the paper and this led to the trials of graphite ink in 1956. Initially the substance used was 'Naphthadag', but subsequent trials produced more refined materials with very satisfactory properties.

Clearly visible bands of graphite ink $\frac{1}{32}$ in. wide were printed on the back of the stamps between the paper and the gum. By printing one band on the denomination used for reduced rate postage and two bands on the remainder it was possible to segregate letters when a high-voltage electric current was passed through the stamps as the envelopes progressed through the scanning area.

When this was done, the graphite band acted as an electrical conductor and completed a circuit which gave rise to a recognition

signal. A different signal was received when more than one band was scanned.

Experiments using ultra-violet light to detect phosphorescent material printed on the surface of stamps were already showing great promise, and from November 1959 stamps were issued with matching bands of phosphor on the face in addition to graphite lines on the reverse.

It quickly became clear that phosphor bands when used alone gave equally satisfactory results and the use of graphite lines was abandoned. The stamps were replaced by those of the first purely phosphor issue of June 1960 although as coils they continued as late as July 1961.

Their brief existence, coupled with the part they played in the history of postal mechanization, ensures the graphite lined issues of 1957–60 of a very special place in collections of Queen Elizabeth II postage stamps.

Picture to Post

PICTURE TO POST, the Post Office's first wide-screen coloured film – and its first on stamp design and production – has been made to show general audiences the complexities of this minuscule art.

Intended for showing to general audiences in Britain, it will later be dubbed for overseas release – at first into German, Italian, and Japanese – to support the Post Office's philatelic export drive.

Picture to Post has been entered for the 1969 Film Festival of the British Industrial and Scientific Film Association; it has reached the finals in its category and is being considered for BISFA's Export Award.

Using multiple images and imaginative colour effects, the film projects the thoughts of three leading British designers – Jeffery Matthews, David Gentleman, and Arnold Machin – so that the audience is present at the creation of some of Britain's outstanding stamps. Jeffery Matthews is shown working on his first designs for the British Bridges stamps,

David Gentleman shaping his original thoughts on the Concorde and Battle of Hastings designs, and Arnold Machin creating his plaster relief of the Queen's head for the new definitive issues. Each creative move forward towards the complete design is explained by the designers in the accompanying commentary.

Prince of Wales Investiture Air Letter



An air letter should not contain any enclosures.
If it does it will be surcharged or sent by ordinary mail.

Senders name and Address

Cyfrinchwyd y Llythyr Awyrl heb yn atynnu gae Swyddfa'r Post i ddaethu.
Arwngedig ôl Uchafbwr Brenhinol Tywysog Cymru, yng Nghwmsarnfawr ym 1969.
This Air Letter has been specifically produced by the Post Office to commemorate
the investiture of H.R.H. Prince of Wales in Glamorgan 1969.

Send by Post, Royal Mail, United Kingdom
BY AIR MAIL
AIR LETTER
PAR AVION AEROPORAMME



The special air letter designed by David Gentleman for the Investiture of the Prince of Wales.

Public Lectures and Film Shows at the National Postal Museum

During August the following Lectures and Film shows will be given at the National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, London EC1 (Tube station St Paul's).

Admission is Free

Wednesday 6 August 1 pm
Lecture The Birth of the Penny Black.

Thursday 7 August 2.15 pm
Film 30 Million Letters, followed by talk for schoolchildren.

Wednesday 13 August 1 pm
Lecture The Story of Postal Stationery.

Thursday 14 August 2.15 pm
Film The Story of Mail Transport, followed by talk for schoolchildren.

Wednesday 20 August 1 pm
Lecture The Stamps of Queen Elizabeth II.

Thursday 21 August 2.15 pm
Film The Story of the Letter Post, followed by talk for schoolchildren.

Wednesday 27 August 1 pm
Lecture The Surface Printed Stamps 1880-1901.

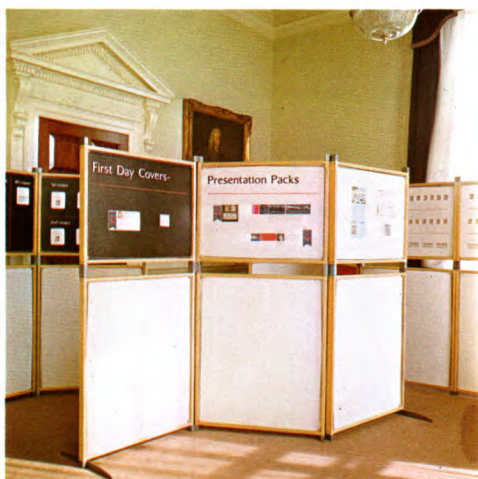
Thursday 28 August 2.15 pm
Film 30 Million Letters, followed by talk for schoolchildren.

Prince of Wales Stamps

When the Postmaster General, the Rt Hon John Stonehouse, MP, introduced the Prince of Wales Investiture stamps to the visitors at the first showing of them he mentioned that eight artists including some from Wales had been invited to submit designs. Many fine designs were studied by the Advisory Committee and those by David Gentleman were

judged to be the best.

A year's planning had gone into perfecting the designs and the printing processes, especially on the metallic inks used for the fine silver and gold backgrounds of the 5d and 9d stamps. Our photographs show some general views of the display seen by distinguished visitors and representatives of the press.



Reginald M. Phillips of Brighton Award for Postage Stamp Design



The name of Mr Reginald M. Phillips is well known to our readers, who will recall the opening by Her Majesty The Queen on 19 February of the National Postal Museum, of which Mr Phillips is the founder. Two days after the opening the Postmaster General announced yet a further instance of Mr Phillips' generosity and active interest in British postage stamps – the institution of the Reginald M. Phillips of Brighton Award for Postage Stamp Design.

This award takes the form of a gold medal to be awarded every five years to the artist who has made the greatest contribution to British postage stamp design in the intervening period. Thus Mr Phillips, having provided for posterity a unique collection of nineteenth-century postage stamps, has turned his attention to the future and to the encouragement in a very real way of twentieth century stamp designers.

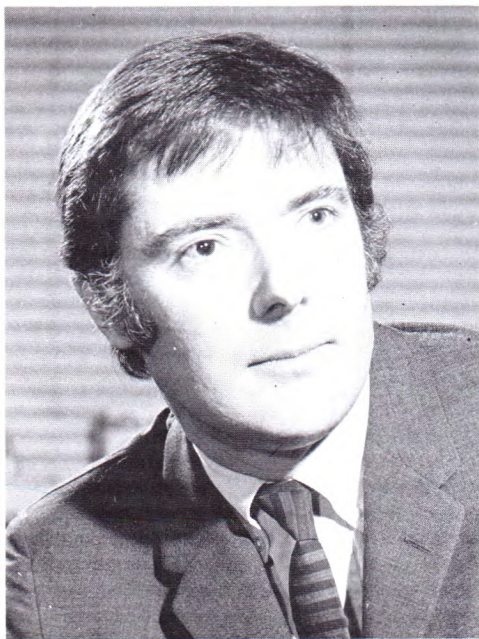
The medal is of 22 carat gold, 3 in. in diameter, and has been designed by Mr Michael Rizzello, President of the Society of Portrait Sculptors. On the obverse it shows a portrait of the donor and the inscription 'The Reginald M. Phillips Medal', while on the reverse is the legend 'For postage stamp

design. Awarded to with the name of the recipient.

The selection of the winner of this magnificent award was made by the Postmaster General, who had the expert assistance of two assessors, Sir Robin Darwin, Rector of the Royal College of Art, and Sir Paul Reilly, Director of the Council of Industrial Design. Their choice fell on David Gentleman, and it is a marked tribute to this great stamp designer, that at a time when the quality of British stamp design has never been higher or more widely regarded, he should have been selected as the first recipient of the new award.

In a recent exclusive interview Mr Gentleman told the *Bulletin* that he was delighted to be the first winner of the medal and very conscious of the honour paid to him. Mr Gentleman is, of course, well known for many successful stamp designs, including the Shakespeare, Battle of Britain and Battle of Hastings anniversaries, the last-named of which is his own favourite from designs which have been accepted in the Post Office during the last five years.

Mr Gentleman has a set pattern in the way he prepares designs. Once the subject is known he assembles the necessary material



David Gentleman

for research; makes visits to museums and libraries for background information; visits the actual locations or subjects to be reproduced and after considerable thought and 'trial and error' refines the subject matter to stamp size. If pleased with the result he then reproduces the design in the size appropriate for judging purposes.

I learned that he has no favourite type of subject and is equally at home with historical or modern subjects. He feels that the most important things in his professional life are the necessity to have confidence in his own judgement and the ability to ensure that his designs are sufficiently strong to stand the considerable scrutiny that a world-wide public of both collectors and laymen give to each of his stamps.

Mr Gentleman firmly believes that the recent trend from elaborate designs to the cleaner lines and simplicity of pattern will continue for many years.

In addition to his work on stamps he is well known for many other types of design. He has recently produced wood engravings for the covers of a new edition of Penguin Shakespeare and is currently occupied with lithographic prints of famous houses. He visited India to obtain authentic background material for the illustration of Kipling's famous 'Jungle Book' and has prepared wood engravings for an American version of 'The Swiss Family Robinson'.

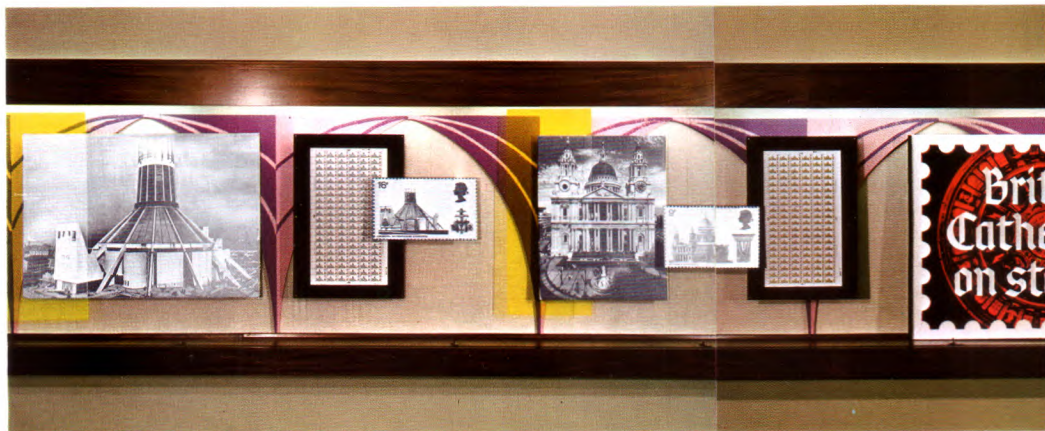
With his proven ability in so many forms of the designer's art we hope to see many more beautiful stamps from him and offer to him our warm congratulations on his well-deserved award.

Recent Changes

The 4d PD label is now available on coated unwatermarked paper with PVA gum and printed by photogravure.

The 4s 6d booklet with the Dreadnought cover and the 6s showing a Puffin are on sale.

Architecture Stamps on Display at Edinburgh



Following its very successful exhibition for the British Ships Stamps, the Bureau's gallery is now showing a special display for the British Architecture stamp series. All the cathedrals

depicted are featured in large-scale photographs set off by transparent panels of fluorescent perspex. This gives a three-dimensional effect which greatly enhances the photographs.

Protecting Stamps : PO Research

Stamp collectors could benefit from laboratory tests just started by the Post Office in London, aimed at finding a better way to protect stamps from fading.

At its Purchasing and Supply Department materials section in Studd Street, Islington, chemists are carrying out accelerated tests on two kinds of commercially available clear film – polyethylene terephthalate and polypropylene – normally used for other purposes.

Old Victorian stamps of low value, chosen because their dyes are more subject to fading than present-day inks, have been put under sheets of the film and are being exposed to large amounts of ultra-violet light. This is the most damaging part of the light spectrum.

The Post Office began the tests because of fears that some of the various types of film at present in use might not offer adequate long-term protection for its own very valuable collection of stamps at the National Postal

Museum in London.

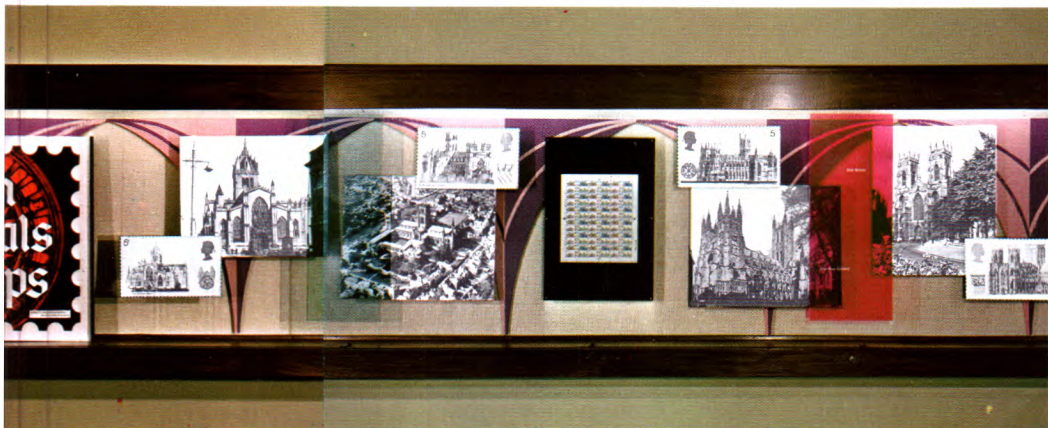
Polyethylene terephthalate film, chemically the same as ordinary terylene fibre, is normally used mainly for electrical purposes such as for binding-tape in cables. Polypropylene is a hydro-carbon polymer used mainly for packaging. Both are unaffected by moisture.

One problem which may need further investigation is the generation of static electricity, which tends to be worse when the material used is highly resistant to moisture.

Battery-Electric Mail Vans

Battery-electric mail vans are to be introduced experimentally by the Post Office in a number of areas later this year. Contracts have been placed for 10 of the vehicles and the first should be coming into service in three or four months' time.

With a top speed of about 20 mph, each van will be able to carry 240 cubic feet, or about



The exhibition, which was opened by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, has been much appreciated by many of the 1,200 or more ministers

who attended this annual gathering of the Church with their friends and families.

A further display is planned for the Prince of Wales Investiture stamp issue.

30 cwt, of mail. Initially, they will carry mainly parcels, but later they may be put to other uses.

A prototype van has been on trial at Leicester for the past year and a half.

The new vans will be apportioned to regions, one going to the Northern District Office in London, and the others to High Wycombe, Aldershot, Gloucester, Leicester, Newcastle, Blackpool, Edinburgh, Belfast and Newport (Mon.).

With a full load, each van will weigh about $4\frac{1}{4}$ tons. Existing diesel vans of the same capacity weigh about $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons with a full load. Much of the weight difference is accounted for by the heavy set of batteries needed.

Although first cost is higher than for diesel vans of comparable capacity, they are expected to be cheaper to run and maintain and to last longer. On runs with many stops, their lower speed will make little difference.

At High Wycombe, the aim will be to see whether it is economic to use vans of this type on certain letter deliveries in largely residential

areas normally performed by postmen on foot. Two postmen will use it as a mobile base.

Nearly 20,000 postal vans are at present in use throughout Britain. Just over 1,900 of these have the same load capacity as the new battery-electric vehicles.

Gandhi Centenary Stamp

First-Day Cover Services

The usual first-day cover services will be available from the Philatelic Bureau for the Gandhi Centenary Stamp to be issued on 13 August 1969, price 1s 6d.

The charge for a first-day cover service under service 'A' where the special envelope is provided and serviced will be 5s. Customers' own envelopes will be treated under service 'B' at a cost of 2s 6d.

Philatelic posting box facilities will be available as usual for the use of collectors who wish to prepare and post their own covers.

National Postal Museum Notes

Charles Heath – Master Engraver



Charles Heath.

The engraving of a master die from which postage stamps can be made in vast numbers demands a degree of artistic ability far in excess of mere craftsmanship. A first-class engraver has an interpretative role to play: working from a drawing he has to render it in terms of incised lines on a die in such a manner that prints taken from it capture the spirit of the original in an entirely different medium. Such expertise demands great sensitivity and an acute awareness of what can and what cannot be expressed in terms of intaglio mass-production printing.

Small wonder therefore that in the nineteenth century, when the illustration of books

was the main source of an engraver's income, there arose in this country a splendid 'school' of interpretative engravers. Men who were trusted by Royal Academicians and other prominent artists of the day to make for reproduction in Journals line engravings of their pictorial works.

Foremost among these interpretative engravers in the early days of the nineteenth century was Charles Heath. Because of the known quality of his work it was that same Charles Heath who was employed to engrave the dies for the world's first adhesive postage stamps of 1840 – the famous penny black and twopenny blue issued on 6 May that year.

In the engraving of his stamp die Charles Heath working from a number of line drawings made by Henry Corbould which were themselves interpretative of the young Queen Victoria's bas-relief portrait by William Wyon, chief engraver at the Royal Mint, which was incorporated in the City Medal struck to commemorate the Queen's Accession visit to London's Guildhall in 1837.

The rendering of the Queen's portrait in the medallion relief, Corbould's drawings and Heath's stamp die was *perforce*, because of the different media, as dramatically different as a photographic portrait head expressed as a carved wood bust or clay modelled for a bronze casting. Each 'interpretation', splendid in its own way, depends on the artist-craftsman's understanding of the material he chose to use.

Few artist-engravers of the day had a more distinguished background than Charles Heath who was born in 1785 and died in 1848. He achieved near perfection in the preparation of small plates for book illustration and was, early in life, a Fellow of the Society of British Artists. He was the chief promoter of illustrated 'Annuals' with such titles as 'Keepsake', the 'Picturesque Annual', the 'Literary Souvenirs' and the 'Book of Beauty'. The engravings in these works, many copies of which occupied a place of honour in the drawing-rooms of our Victorian ancestors, were executed with marvellous technical skill. The first-class interpretative engraver exercises his skill without loss of fidelity – this is part of the charm of such works.

When Jacob Perkins came to this country from Boston, USA, in 1819 Charles Heath was one of his first contacts. From 20 December that year Heath became a partner in Perkins security printing business together with Perkins' American partner the engraver Gideon Fairman: the firm at that time was known as Perkins Fairman and Heath. Among the National Postal Museum treasures in the Reginald M. Phillips' collection is a specimen page of engine turning printing by the firm's hardened steel process. As Fairman returned



The original die for the Penny Black of 1840. Engraved by Charles Heath.

to the USA in July 1822 it is possible to date this exhibit as having been made between December 1819 and July 1822 when the firm was renamed 'Perkins and Heath'.

During the Partnership of Perkins–Heath, *circa* 1822 – they produced, by Perkins hardened steel process, a print after Benjamin West, RA, showing William Penn concluding his famous Treaty with the American Indians in 1681. A very similar group of Indians was incorporated by William Mulready, RA, in the postal stationery he designed in 1840.

The links between Jacob Perkins' firm, Charles Heath, Henry Corbould and other artists of the day seem to have been firmly established. It was from a drawing by Corbould, again part of the R. M. Phillips' collection in the Museum, that the vignette portrait which appears on the Athlone Bank Note (*circa* 1822) was taken. Before Perkins came to this country Charles Heath had produced a series of interpretative engravings of Corbould's drawings for books printed by several publishers.

Collecting prints and engravings is not favoured today as it was earlier in this century. For the student of early classic British postage stamps a few examples of the non-philatelic work by the men who make the stamps can be rewarding. And, unlike early GB rarities, prints by or after Heath, Corbould, Mulready and John Thompson can still be acquired for a few pence.

F. MARCUS ARMAN

The End of the Halfpenny Stamp

First issued in 1870 the halfpenny stamps were withdrawn from sale after close of business on 30 June 1969. Collectors will however still be able to obtain them from the Bureau and other philatelic counters. The withdrawal is in preparation for the demonetization of the halfpenny which ceases to be legal tender on 1 August. Halfpenny stamps went out of general use for postage in May 1965 when the rate for 2 oz went down from 4½d to 4d, and during the last financial year only 36,000 were issued in sheet form.

The six remaining halfpenny stamp machines all situated on official Post Office sites at railway stations – Waterloo, Liverpool Street, Paddington, Euston, Kings Cross and London Bridge – are to be withdrawn and replaced where necessary by penny stamp machines.

From 1 July the late fee on letters posted on travelling Post Offices will be increased from ½d to 1d, the first increase since 1880.

Rounding-down on some overseas COD charges and total payments for some telegrams will also be made.

Special Handstamps

‘NCH’ (meaning National Children’s Home) will be used at South Eastern District Office on 9 July. It is of square design showing a mother and child as the central motif.

‘Louis Bleriot – Calais – Dover’ will be used at Dover on 25 July 1969. It is of square design showing a simple outline of the flight.

‘50th Anniversary – First Two-Way Atlantic Crossing R34 BFPO 1087’ will be used at RAF Binbrook on 13 July 1969. It is of rectangular design showing the R34 in outline. Fully-paid items for re-posting should be sent to:

Philatelic Section,
Royal Air Force Binbrook,
Lincolnshire.

‘21st Liverpool Show Anniversary – Wavertree’ will be used at Liverpool from 17–19 July 1969 and a posting box will be available at the Wavertree Show. It is of circular design.

‘S & W & SB Railway – 1879 – Lydney Gloucester’ will be used at Gloucester on 17 October 1969 and a posting box will be provided at Lydney. It is of rectangular design with the Severn Railway Bridge as a motif.

‘25th Anniversary of the Antelope Motor Cycle Club’ will be used at Coventry on 24 October 1969. It is of rectangular design with an antelope as a motif.

‘Andover County Secondary Boys’ School Fourth Annual Summer Fair’ will be used at Andover, Hants, on 12 July 1969. It is of circular design showing the school badge as a central motif.

‘FIP 1969 – 29th International Congress of Pharmaceutical Sciences NW1’ will be used at North Western District Office from 8–12 September 1969. It is of rectangular design.

Fully-paid items for re-posting should be sent to the Head Postmasters in the areas concerned except where otherwise stated.

Postmark Slogans

‘You can Play Bowls all year round at Bexhill on Sea’ will be used transposed at Bexhill on Sea from 1–31 August.

‘Bexhill on Sea Desirable Residential Resort’ will be used transposed at Bexhill on Sea from 1–30 September.

‘Buxton Centre of Britain’s 1st National Park Peak District National Park’ will be re-used at Buxton until 30 September 1969.

‘Canvey Island’ is being used at Canvey Island until 17 May 1970.

‘Visit the Cumberland Show 24 July’ will be used transposed at Carlisle from 16 June until 24 July.

‘I’m off to Pets Corner Harlow Town Park’ will be used transposed at Harlow from 30 August until 30 September.

‘Ilkley Trades Fair October 14–18 1969’ will be used transposed at Ilkley from 1 August until 18 October.

'Inverness the Highland Capital' is being re-used at Inverness until 8 January 1970.

'Jersey for Sunny Autumn Holidays' will be re-used at Jersey from 1 July until 12 October.

'Visit Historic Warwick in the heart of England' will be re-used at Warwick and Leamington from 1 August until further notice.

'Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod 8-13 July 1969' will be used transposed at Llangollen from 16 June until 12 July.

'Come to Malton Show 17 July' will be used transposed at Malton from 19 June until 16 July.

'Remember Peterloo 150 Years August 1819-August 1969' will be used at Manchester from 1-31 August.

'Port of Manchester 1894-1969 75 years of progress', will be in continued use at Manchester until 31 December.

'Newmarket Races Saturday August 23' will be used transposed at Newmarket from 9-22 August.

'Newmarket Races Saturday September 20' will be used transposed at Newmarket from 23 August until 19 September.

'Prestwick Indoor Bowls' will be re-used at Prestwick from 14 September until 1 November.

'Prestwick for Golf' will be re-used at Prestwick from 27 July until 13 September.

'Shrewsbury Musical and Floral Fete 20-21 August' will be used at Shrewsbury from 5 June until 20 August and not 22 May until 20 August as previously stated.

'Skegness Illuminations Nightly from August 17 on the dry Lincolnshire coast' will be used transposed at Skegness from 1 July until 30 September.

'Stranraer Welcome New Industry' will be re-used at Stranraer from 1 August until 31 January 1970.

'Do it Yourself Exhibition Olympia August 29-September 13' will be used transposed where possible at 21 offices in London from 23 August until 13 September. A selection of

these offices is as follows: Enfield; Edgware; Croydon; Watford; Sutton; Dartford and South Western District Office.

The slogan 'Visit United Counties Show Carmarthen 7 and 8 August 1969' will not be used at Llanelli as previously stated.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I have enjoyed reading my first few copies of the *Philatelic Bulletin*, but already I am writing a letter of complaint!

I hope that the decision to issue no more 4d commemorative stamps will meet with sufficient protest for it to be changed. Many of those who like to use special stamps will seldom want to use 5d ones; this is especially true at Christmas. Thus people will be either prevented from using special stamps or bribed into using 5d ones.

The comments in your February issue, about the change of colour of 4d stamps indirectly suggest the most obvious solution to the sorting problems caused by special issues, by emphasizing once more that the main object of colour on stamps is to enable different values to be quickly distinguished. When the use of many colours on one stamp obscures this distinction, then the stamp is failing to fulfil one of its primary functions. It would be possible to return to the basic colour code without excluding the use of subsidiary colours and without any consequent deterioration in stamp design. Designs have not improved since the introduction of multicoloured issues, and many of the best designs in recent years could easily have been adapted to the 'correct' colours.

If the colour code were reintroduced, we could once again have special issues for both first- and second-class letters, without causing bother to sorters.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN F. RIGBY

Cardiff

Dear Sir,

May I make a few suggestions concerning the forthcoming decimalization of our currency.

Might it not be an idea to aid a smooth changeover by issuing definitive stamps 6 or 12 months before D-day with both new and old pence on each stamp. Of course not all values will convert to their decimal counterpart without ugly fractions but this could provide an excellent opportunity to show shoppers and shopkeepers alike how to round up or down prices after D-day. Once decimalization had taken place the bi-valued stamps would gradually be replaced with decimal stamps similar in all but the 'd' to our present excellent definitives.

If the Post Office so desired it also has an excellent excuse to indulge in that favourite philatelic pastime of overprints.

Yours faithfully,

C. D. GROVE-WHITE

Dublin

Dear Sir,

I have read in the *Philatelic Bulletin* so many suggestions for new issues of stamps, I thought I should send in mine. Man is a roving creature and has now started on his greatest feat of exploration. In a few months time he will set foot on the moon. Many people don't appreciate the magnitude of this feat but if you think about this unrepeatable achievement – it is truly great. It is not necessary to glorify the Americans too much, they are lucky and can afford it! It is man we must glorify. The moon landing is a large milepost in man's life and is significant, important, and worthy of praise, to the world. Why not honour it, here in Britain, by issuing a set of stamps.

It is perhaps short notice to suggest this but I would like very much to see a true commemorative issue, for this feat. I hope this is a constructive suggestion.

Yours faithfully,

ANDREW J. STEVEN

Edinburgh

Dear Sir,

I am glad to say that I am very interested in reading the *Philatelic Bulletin*, and I am writing to you to back Mr Braithwaite's suggestion on the introduction of miniature sheets surrounded with a pleasing border. These sheets should contain about 15–20 stamps as Mr Braithwaite has already stated.

Being a schoolboy, fond of his stamp collection (British stamps), I am not able to buy sheets of stamps as they are too dear, but if miniature sheets were invented schoolboys and girls in my situation would be able to have a much better stamp collection.

I would be obliged if this suggestion was given consideration.

Yours faithfully,

A. N. ROWE

Bangor, Co. Down

Dear Sir,

At present living abroad, I should like to say how pleased I am to be able to keep up to date with the philatelic scene in Great Britain with the help of the *GPO Bulletin*. May I, through the medium of this excellent journal, comment on a few topics which have interested me quite recently.

Firstly, I should like to say that, quite seriously, I very much agree with Mrs Barlow's suggestion for a series of Coats of Arms of the Counties of the British Isles. Mr Hindle, however, points out quite rightly that this entails issuing 95 different stamps. But, honestly, is that really such a task? If France can do it (and the quality of France's stamps is far below the quality of British stamps) then I am convinced that Great Britain could, with this subject, make a real contribution to modern philately. Each stamp could be the size of our present definitives and could have values of 5d and 4d so that the general public could benefit from such an issue. Even if we issue two stamps every two months, one valued at 4d and the other at 5d, not only would this correspond exactly with our two-tier postal system, but would advertise our country

to the whole of Europe and, probably, much farther afield as well.

Secondly, I agree with Mr Ebbage when he says that a stamp should be an advertisement for its country of origin and should, quite naturally, contain as few inaccuracies as possible. I think, on the other hand, that the present method of selecting stamps produces stamps of extremely high calibre and, therefore, I can see no grounds for changing the system. I do think there is a case, however, for limiting the amount of commemorative stamps issued each year (to make room for a Coats of Arms series?). I base this comment on France where I believe that the PTT has sacrificed quality in order to put as many stamps as possible on the market each year. It is my opinion that the uninteresting designs and drab colours could be rectified merely by limiting the issue of stamps to a reasonable number each year. Surely 39 stamps in one year (in 1968) could be reduced by 60 per cent leading to noticeably better designs and more vivid colouring. On the contrary and in all fairness, it must be said that, in the same year, a fairly large number of stamps (25 plus one block of 4) were issued in West Germany covering a variety of subjects which were remarkably well presented, printed in excellent colours and which surely must be the pride of any collector.

Finally, an idea which could be imported into Great Britain from Europe. Would it not be a good idea to organize every year a competition to find the best British postage stamp of the year. The public would be invited to nominate the best stamp and a trophy could be awarded to the designer of the winning stamp: prizes could be awarded to the, say, 25 people choosing the winning stamp. In France, for example, Monsieur Robert Camy has just been awarded the 18th 'Grand Prix for Philatelic Art' and in Germany 100 people who chose the stamp which came in first place were awarded philatelic accessories as prizes. A competition of this nature, it seems to me, would stimulate public interest in philately

and also lead to a higher standard of art-work on our stamps. I wonder what other readers think of this suggestion?

Yours faithfully,

J. D. RICHARDSON

Cologne

Dear Sir,

I agree with Mr Ogden that there are far too many Commemoration Stamps issued. I also think that only subjects with some claim to beauty should figure on our stamps, which, of course, would rule out such things as aeroplanes, railway engines and other engineering devices.

I have a suggestion to make which would vastly improve the all-over presentation of any subject chosen for commemoration. It is this: Cancel the use of the royal effigy on *all* stamps except the definitives, as this effigy constitutes an intrusion, which continues to catch the eye and destroys the whole picture.

I know the GPO is wedded to the idea that the mail is 'The Royal Mail' and therefore the Monarch must appear on our stamps, but surely they are being inconsistent then when they don't place this effigy on postage due stamps, on pillar boxes, postal vans, or even in the post offices themselves. I should like to point out that such Monarchies that still survive on the Continent do not insist on this archaic idea, with the result that their commemoratives are usually more successful than our own – some of the Belgian ones being particularly pleasing.

However, I consider the new definitives are about the best stamps since the Penny Black. The only improvement would be if the value were alphabetical at the bottom of the stamps.

Yours truly,

N. WEBB-MORRIS

New Milton, Hants

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Subscriptions should be sent to the Philatelic Bureau, 2-4 Waterloo Place, EDINBURGH EH1 1AB

Printed in Great Britain by Westerham Press Ltd. for the General Post Office, St. Martin's-le-Grand, LONDON EC1.