The magazine for collectors of UK stamps

July 2019 | £2.15

Royal Mail

Philatelic Bulletin

Volume 56 No.11

Zany Britain!

Enter the world of our country's eccentrics as we preview the Curious Customs Special Stamp issue



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BRITISH FORCES BFPS PHILATELIC SERVICE

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Editor Tim Noble, Royal Mail, 185 Farringdon Road, Floor MP-03, London EC1A 1AA ● **Design and content creation** Ian Boardman, Adesso Creative Ltd ● Price £2.15 from Post Office Ltd philatelic outlets or by order from Post Office branches ● **12 months' subscriptions** £20.95 UK and Europe; £26.95 rest of the world. Send subscriptions to Royal Mail Stamps and Collectibles, PO Box 1373, Sunderland SR5 9PG, UK or subscribe online at royalmail.com/bulletin ● **Binders** (to hold 24 issues) £8.68 and storage boxes (about 30 copies) £9.95, are also available by post or online ● Copyright and editorial rights are reserved by Royal Mail Group Ltd ● All rights reserved ● Reproduction in whole or parts is prohibited without prior permission of Royal Mail Group Ltd ● **Printed** in Great Britain by Zenith Print & Packaging Ltd ● **ISSN** 0953 8119 ● Royal Mail is a trading name and registered trade mark of Royal Mail Group Ltd. Registered in England and Wales, number 4138203. Registered office: 100 Victoria Embankment, London EC4Y 0HQ ● Stamp images © Royal Mail Group Ltd.





FD1913-TH



FD1913-PL



FD1913-NP

There's nowt so queer as folk!

True Brits are a fun-loving lot who adore getting involved in our country's traditions, no matter how unusual or outlandish. So as Royal Mail releases the Curious Customs issue on 9 July, we pay tribute to the extraordinary variety of British traditions, festivals and rituals – some old and some not so old…

BURNING THE CLOCKS, BRIGHTON

It's the custom

On 21 December, the shortest day, locals parade through the town bearing personalised paper and willow lanterns (often decorated with clocks), and place them in a bonfire on the beach to mark the end of the year.

That's curious

And kind as well – the ceremony was launched in 1994 by arts charity Same Sky as part of its programme to promote a sense of community and bring people together.

Must-do

Make your mark on the parade by customising your Same Sky lantern kit – participants enjoy decorating them with names, animals, stars, and friendly slogans such as 'hope, happiness, humility'.

When to see it

21 December.



Curious Customs – Stamp Specifications	
Date of issue	9 July
Number of stamps	Eight (2 x 2nd Class, 2 x 1st Class, 2 x £1.55, 2 x £1.60)
Design	NB Studio; illustrations Jonny Hannah
Stamp format	Landscape
Stamp size	37mm x 35mm
Number per sheet	30/60
Printer	International Security Printers
Print process	Lithography
Perforations	14 x 14.5
Phosphor	Bars as appropriate
Gum	PVA

CUSTOMS



CURIOUS CUSTOMS

Royal Mail First Day Cover

Royal Mail Tallents House 21 South Gyle Crescent Edinburgh EH12 9PB

PADSTOW 'OBBY 'OSS, CORNWALL

It's the custom

Two 'osses – though they don't look much like horses – romp through Padstow's streets, led by a 'Teazer' who cajoles the beasts along (okay, they're actually people dressed up, but you get the idea…).

That's curious

The 'Obby 'Oss was first documented in 1803, but the beginnings of the festival are veiled in mystery; some believe it was originally a fertility ritual or a rain-making ceremony.

Must-do

Take your place along the beautifully decorated parade route to see the 'osses and their escort of drummers in white costumes bedecked with ribbons and sprays of cowslips. The streets themselves are garlanded in bluebells, sycamore twigs and forget-me-nots.

When to see it

Every May Day. ▶

The First Day Cover with the alternative pictorial handstamp. The stamp set comprises four horizontal se-tenant pairs: 2nd Class – Burning the Clocks; 2nd Class – 'Obby 'Oss; First Class – World Gurning Championships; First Class – Up Helly Aa; £1.55 – Cheese Rolling; £1.55 – Halloween; £1.60 – Horn Dance; £1.60 – Bog Snorkelling





The Presentation Pack that houses the four se-tenant pairs of Special Stamps

WORLD GURNING CHAMPIONSHIPS, EGREMONT, CUMBRIA

It's the custom

As part of the 750-year-old Egremont Crab Fair, men and women pull hideous expressions in a bid to make the ugliest face, their features framed by a horse collar. ('Are you calling me an ugly old nag?' etc.)

That's curious

Gurning comes from local Cumbrian dialect, sharing the same etymological root as 'grinning'. It first meant 'snarling', but as gurning became a sport at country fairs, it came to mean making a weird or funny face.

Must-do

Away from the gurning, watch the Fair's Parade of the Apple Cart along Egremont's high street, and catch an apple thrown to the crowds lining the route.

When to see it On the third Saturday in September.

UP HELLY AA, LERWICK, SHETLAND ISLES

It's the custom

Islanders celebrate the end of winter and the return of sunnier skies with a spectacular torchlight procession that also commemorates the 500-year occupation of the Shetlands by the Vikings.

That's curious

Clad in Viking outfits, winged helmets and sheepskins, and brandishing axes, shields and blazing torches, locals march through Lerwick lugging a life-sized replica of a Viking longboat behind them.

Must-do

At the end of the procession, join with townsfolk in singing the moving Norseman's Song as the boat, with its dragon-head prow, is ritualistically burned when the 'Vikings' hurl their torches into the hull.

When to see it On the last Tuesday in January.

CHEESE ROLLING, COOPER'S HILL, BROCKWORTH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

It's the custom

In a day of traditional races held since the early 19th century, hundreds of mad locals and international competitors chase an 8lb Double Gloucester rolled down the hill. First one down wins the cheese.

That's curious

It's almost impossible to stay on your feet, as Cooper's Hill is 1:3, and the ground heavily rutted. Which means many simply bounce and somersault down, sometimes resulting in broken bones and concussion as well as lesser injuries. Which is, we suppose, unsurprising rather than curious…

Must-do

If you want to win, it's vital you run and keep on your feet to stay ahead of the pack, rather than bounce or roll down, says champion Chris Anderson, who has won the most races to date. Stay upright, keep your head back and feet shoulders'-width apart, Chris advises.

When to see it

Every Spring Bank Holiday.

HALLOWEEN, DERRY/LONDONDERRY

It's the custom

Neighbourhood trick-or-treating this is not. The city's eight-day festival – the world's largest Hallowe en party – attracts around 80,000 visitors, many in ghostly/demonic fancy dress, from as far away as Canada and Russia. Highlights include haunted city tours, cemetery walks, firework displays and the Carnival Parade finale.

That's curious

This year's theme is 'Under the Samhain Moon' – a nod to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, when sacrifices were made to prevent the gods playing evil tricks on mortals.

Must-do

Watch the Carnival Parade on 31 October when around 1,000 performers present illuminated sculpture, huge ghostly lanterns, and dance while dressed as ghouls, skeletons, witches and worse.

When to see it

25 October-1 November 2019. ▶





Top right: the Presentation Pack Outer. Right: the Presentation Pack Inner, with Matt Harvey's poem – *Customs and Exercise,* that celebrates the eight customs featured on the stamps

ABBOTS BROMLEY HORN DANCE, STAFFORDSHIRE

It's the custom

Six men carrying 1,000 year-old reindeer antlers – the 'horns' – and medieval outfits parade through Abbots Bromley village and environs, doing their strangely unhurried horn dance. They're accompanied by a group of eccentric characters: Hobby Horse, Fool, Bowman and Maid Marian.

That's curious

No one knows the origin of the dance, but it is associated with ancient hunting rites, and is believed to have been first performed at the local Barthelmy Fair in 1226.

Must-do

Make sure the horn-dancers visit you during their ten-mile performance tour – it's said to be unlucky if they don't.

When to see it On the first Monday after the first Sunday after 4 September.

WORLD BOG SNORKELLING CHAMPIONSHIPS, LLANWRTYD WELLS, WALES

It's the custom

In this annual moment of madness, hundreds of ker-razy competitors battle to snorkel two lengths of a flooded, 55-metre trench cut into a Powys peat bog in the fastest time.

That's curious

Some competitors like to add to the sheer silliness of the event by donning fancy dress. Past outfits have included a pantomime horse and a man with an ironing board strapped to his back.

Must-do

Try and beat the world record time achieved by Neil Rutter last year – 1 minute 18.81 seconds. Mind you, you'll have to practise in a lot of dirty bogs to better that.

When to see it 25 August 2019.

Curious Customs – Prices	
Set of 8 Special Stamps	£8.92
Presentation Pack	£9.75
First Day Cover Stamps	£11.30
Stamp Souvenir	£11.30
First Day Envelope	£0.30
Postcards (8 in set)	£3.60

Crave more craziness? Don't fret – Britain has a seemingly limitless supply of curious customs. As well as the events behind the new Special Stamp issue, try these for size…

Football mad

There are hundreds on each side, the goals are three miles apart, and one of the game's earliest rules banned murder – Ashbourne Royal Shrovetide Football must be the hardest soccer event in the world. Every Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday, the Derbyshire town of Ashbourne Royal divides into two teams, who shove each other rather than use fancy footwork to push the ball towards their opponents' goal – which are in fact millstones either side of Ashbourne.

The mane event

Man v Horse almost does what it says in the title. Except, of course, that women as well as men take part in this frankly insane race between humans and (ridden) horses – which as we know are, er, much, much stronger and faster than Homo sapiens. The June race, over 21 miles of tough terrain around Llanwrtyd Wells, Powys (home to the World Bog Snorkelling Championships), started in 1980, but has only been won twice by a two-legged competitor.

Very well dressed

In the Peak District they're never happy just chucking a penny down a well for luck. Instead locals like to decorate them with amazing mosaics made with moss, leaves and flower petals (and even coffee beans these days). These 'well dressing' festivals take place from May to September, and are thought to have originated as Celtic or Roman ceremonies to thank the gods for the region's plethora of fresh water springs. The mosaics are made by pressing natural materials onto a wooden frame filled with clay ●



The Curious *Quiz*

1 What type of cheese is used in the Cooper's Hill event?
a) Stilton
b) Double Gloucester
c) Cheddar

2 The 'Obby Osses' in Padstow are led by what character?
a) Teazer
b) Leader
c) Whisperer

3 For how many years did the Vikings occupy the Shetlands?
a) 300
b) 450
c) 500

4 What charity launched 'burning the clocks'?
a) Sun Sky
b) Same Sky
c) Clear Sky

5 What is the fastest time to complete the World Bog Snorkelling Championships by a male swimmer?
a) 1 minute 18.81 seconds
b) 1 minute 28.81 seconds
c) 1 minute 88.81 seconds

How to enter Please send your answers, with your contact address or phone number, marked 'The Curious Quiz', to: Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB. Or by email to tim.noble@royalmail.com.
Prizes The first five correct entries drawn after the closing date win the Curious Customs Presentation Pack.
Closing Date 15 July 2019.

April solutions – Mini Marvel Quiz
1a 2c 3b 4c 5b

Winners – David McLellan, Bournemouth; Mr Ian Doggett, Paignton; Mr A D Laxon, Swindon; Mr P Jeffery, Teignmouth; C T Van Geenep, Netherlands.

Terms and conditions Promotions are open to any reader aged 18 or over, except employees of Royal Mail Group Ltd, their business associates and immediate families. Responsibility cannot be accepted for entries which are incomplete, damaged or not received. Proof of posting is not proof of receipt. Prizes must be accepted as offered; they are not transferable and there are no cash alternatives. Winners are notified within 28 days of closing date stated. For prize draws where readers must answer a question, winners will be the senders of the first correct entries drawn at random by an independent person after the closing date. Royal Mail's decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into. Entry implies acceptance of these rules. Prizes are subject to availability. The promoter reserves the right to a) substitute a prize of equal or greater value if circumstances so demand and b) to suspend or cancel or hold void any of the competitions or prize draws at any time without notice. The winners' names are available 28 days after closing date. To receive this please send an SAE to The Editor.

Operation Overlord

Following the evacuation of British troops at Dunkirk on 4 June 1940 and the subsequent Franco-German Armistice that followed the same month, Hitler was confident that British armed forces would not be returning. However, Churchill was commensurate in his belief that his dishevelled troops would re-group, rearm and return. Thus Overlord, Britain's most comprehensively planned military operation was born. Intensive training and large scale military exercises codenamed; Bumper, Spartan, Jantzen and Harlequin ensured that when Allied troops invaded Normandy they were ready for the formidable challenge. Indeed, their supreme commander General Dwight D Eisenhower tempered optimism for victory with his appraisal of the enemy, who he believed to be; 'well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely'. And so it proved to be – hard fought success on D-Day, and an arduous advance to Germany against dogged Nazi rearguard action, before ultimate victory.

Synonymous with the exhaustive detailed planning of the military operation was the forethought given to an efficient postal facility. Montgomery endorsed the importance of a regular mail service – claiming it to be 'the greatest morale factor in an army'. Consequently in all the aforementioned large scale military exercises, fully operational postal systems were assessed. Operation Bumper engaged the use of 350 men of the Army Postal Service, in order to provide a service for participants and to help determine processes for the invasion. Lively discussions ensued as to how to maximise the efficiency of postal operations whilst masking troop movements and locations pre-embarkation.

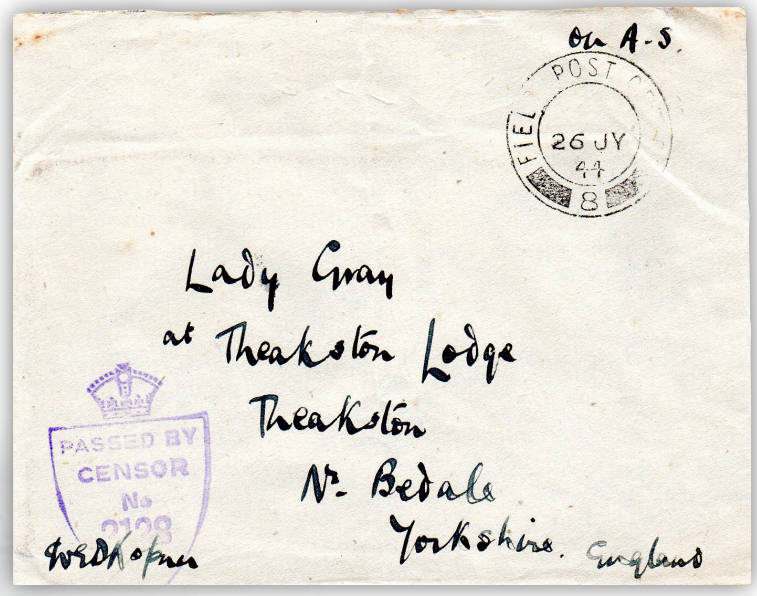
The actual assault phase of Overlord was codenamed Neptune and the area between Caen and Cherbourg is known as the Neptune area

The Army Post Office's D-Day despatch from Southampton included 56,000 newspapers. Some units received their allocations on D+2

No 8 Army Post Office was fully operational in Crepon on 20 June. The base was set-up in a brick barn after a RE Road Construction Company removed a 20ft stack of manure and straw

Postal services improved when on 6 July a two-way airlift was established for mail. On a daily basis, two RCAF Dakotas loaded with mail departed from Blakehill Farm airfield near Swindon. Their landing in Normandy was on temporary airstrips – 'steel mesh carpets' laid on flat fields

In the mayhem of supplier ships arriving from Southampton, deciphering which ships were carrying mail was difficult. Consequently a Postal Officer was given the task of patrolling the choppy anchorages in an amphibious Jeep. He approached ships, and with the aid of a megaphone shouted 'Are you carrying mail?'. This requirement ceased when a more formal arrangement operated with the establishment of Mulberry Harbours at Arromanches



FPO 8
dated: 26 JY 44
Issued to 8th Armoured Brigade which took part in the D-Day landings; unusual in that the datestamp number mirrored the Brigade designation

Image: Michael Dobbs

and the Army Postal Service heroes

Army Postal Service planners numbered among the few who were privy to the specifics of the battle plan. With this insight the Assistant Director of Army Postal Services – Second Army, Lieutenant Colonel C R Smith RE conceived a pre-location scheme for promptly setting up APOs/FPOs with the establishment of beachheads.

The British assault beach sectors of Gold, Juno and Sword were further sub-divided by military planners into three specific beach locations on which units would form Beach Groups. Their role was consolidatory – to ensure that after the assault troops had moved in, that no enemy or obstacles remained, and that supplies could be hoarded. Gold's beaches were Item, Jig and King; Juno's were Love, Mike and Nan; Sword's were Peter, Queen and Roger. As supplies amassed on beaches, Beach Maintenance Areas (BMAs) were established, code named: Sun in the Gold sector; Star in Juno; Moon in Sword. Each of these BMAs had Detail Issue Depots for storage of supplies including food, and it was alongside these DIDs that FPOs were established in the embryonic stages of the postal operations. At least one FPO was housed in a lorry. The experience of postal workers persevering in the hostile environs was described by an officer as recorded in Brigadier K S Holmes' excellent book *Operation Overlord:* he recounted how one sapper slept in a lorry overnight guarding the stock of stamps, postal orders and cash, but had to take cover from time to time as firing began – in a slit trench alongside the lorry. Other FPO staff had to spend the night in slit trenches in a nearby orchard. The Officer related how ►

Numbers of Army Postal personnel in Normandy

Day	Date	No.
D	6 June	40
D+1	7 June	80
D+2	8 June	83
D+3	9 June	86
D+4	10 June	155
D+5	11 June	185
D+6	12 June	200
D+13	19 June	430
D+20	26 June	520
D+27	3 July	600
D+34	10 July	660
D+41	17 July	680
D+48	24 July	700
D+55	31 July	710
D+86	31 August	800



FPO 424
dated: 23 AU 44
Issued to 30 Corps Postal Unit; 30 Corps were responsible for the landings on Gold Beach

Image: Michael Dobbs

Operation Overlord by Ian Boardman and with gratitude to Michael Dobbs, Secretary of the Forces Postal History Society, for supplying images and the definitive guide on the subject: *FPHS Newsletter no 220 (vol XXII:no10).* www.forcespostalhistorysociety.org.uk
Thanks also to The Postal History Society, publishers of *Operation Overlord* by Brigadier KS Holmes CB CBE, for Captain Hine's account contained therein

The 6th British Airborne Division's Postal Unit were unable to land as one due to space restrictions and operational requirements. It was, therefore, split into a number of parties. The parachute party landed at 01.15 hours on the morning of 6 June 1944, while the glider party landed at 21.00 hours the same day



Gliders of the 6th Airlanding Brigade land east of the *Orne River* to join the rest of 6th Airborne Division

one postal worker had been wounded in the stomach by a mortar shell but 'since the wound was more in the nature of burning than laceration, he had carried on with his job' – dedication indeed! That was a reflection of the zeal of all the postal administrative staff, who laboured long hours with little rest at night, having to contend with persistent air raid alarms, and anti-aircraft gunfire. There was also ongoing noise of gunfire from the battle front and salvoes from the battleships to further unsettle their equilibrium.

Overlord's postal operation being promptly established was contingent on postal personnel arriving with their respective assault formations. The first of these to land on Normandy were the 6th British Airborne Division who either parachuted in or touched (bumped!) down in gliders. This was well in advance of the seaborne assault, however the postal personnel's arrival was staggered as explained (left and below). Captain J G C Hine was the officer commanding the Division's Postal Unit and it's with his words, that we can reflect on his courage, and that of his associates in the APS on D-Day and the war beyond:

"I joined the 6th Airborne Division in the capacity of Postal Officer and Commanding Officer of the Division's Postal Unit in 1942. At first there were very few members of the Divisional Staff prepared even to entertain the idea of the Division's 'postmen' taking part in the actual airborne assault on the Continent. But by about the beginning of 1944 it was accepted that elements of the Postal Unit should go in with the Division's airborne assault forces prior to H-hour.

We began to train. First in gliders. More often than not we made up 'live loads' for the trainees of the Glider Pilot Regiment. This experience was not without its trials. The first gliders used for training purposes were relatively small. As often as not at least one of 'the load' would be air-sick. The later gliders were bigger and much steadier. Nor was the training without its alarming side. It was, for example, far from reassuring to find one's pilot of the day a gentleman who, when last seen the night before, was resisting all attempts to get him out of the local hostelry at closing time. But those were the days of youthful exuberance. My own chaps were full of enthusiasm and wanted to be in the swim and to show what they could do given the chance. Two of them eventually became glider pilots. Others went on a parachute jumping course at Ringway and came back 'on top of the world'. So, the training and the preparations went on until finally the time arrived for 'briefing'. O's C Units were briefed individually. When my turn came I was summoned to see the A.A and Q.M.G. He asked me whether we could maintain postal deliveries after the Marshalling Camps were sealed and right up to D-1. And could we then 'set up shop' again on the far side on D-Day or at the latest on D+1. The first requirement presented no special difficulties and I said I thought we could carry it out successfully - as we did in the event. The second requirement should be practicable too if we were going in with the airborne assault troops. In the event we were given half a dozen 'places' - three in the gliders and three with the parachutists. A 'follow-up' of 12 men was to come in by sea on D+1 or D+2.

In the days following briefing there was a noticeable tension in the air in the sealed camps. I sat talking one evening with a close friend of mine. He told me what he had to do on OVERLORD. He would be going over in a glider with a bull-dozer. He had the job of uprooting the obstacles the Germans had been busy erecting in the fields in which gliders might land. He would be setting out at 2200 hrs on D-1 and he had to finish his task before the main glider force was due to arrive. He told me his wife had just had a child and he hoped he'd somehow come through. He hoped letters would get through alright. For the first time I began to think about the hazards involved for all of us. My friend seemed suddenly to become a lonely figure and there was little I could do to help him. But suddenly the importance of the mail for men like him became more sharply fixed in my mind. Compared with him I was

FPO 441
dated: 26 OC 44
Issued to No 5 Beach Detachment; one of the postal detachments which accompanied the Beach Groups as they landed on D-Day. These Groups were responsible for the organisation and administration of the landing areas

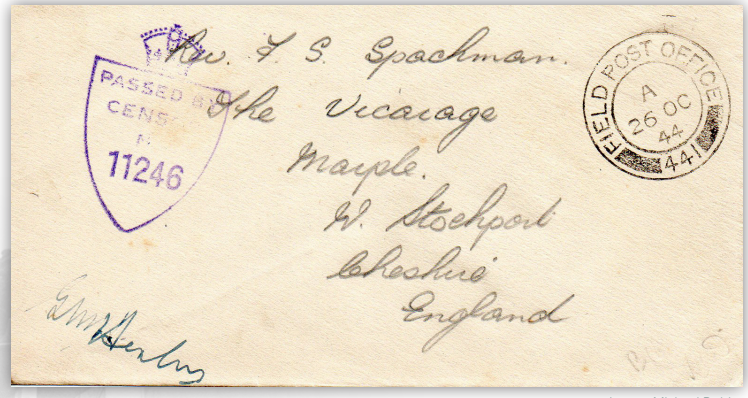
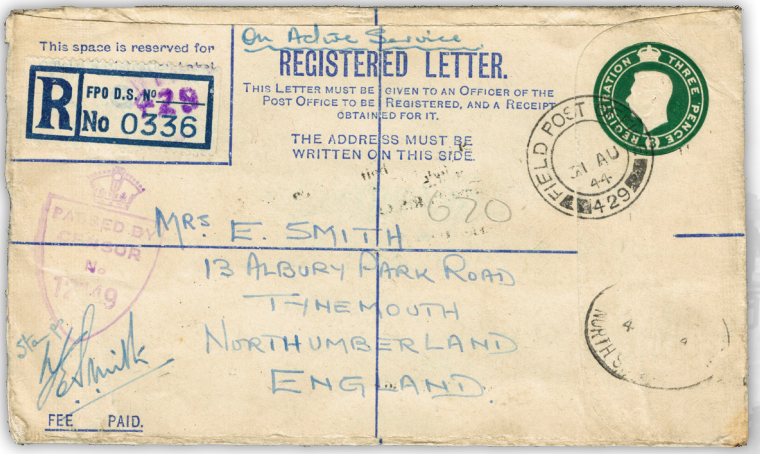


Image: Michael Dobbs

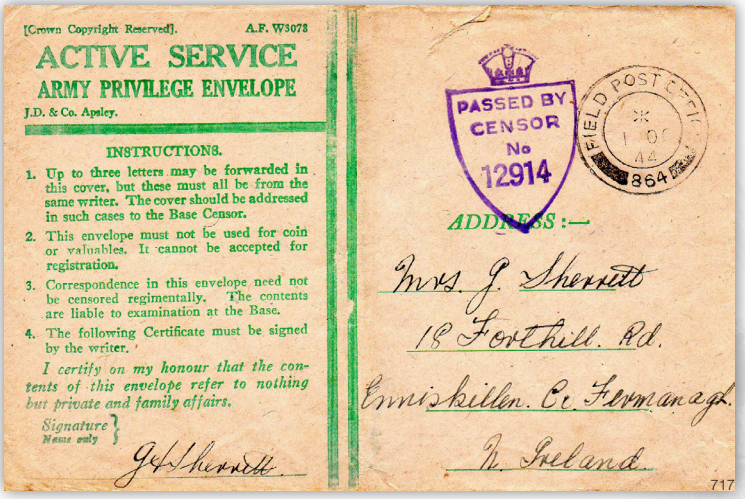


FPO 429
dated: 31 AU 44
Issued to No 3 Beach Detachment; this Field Post Office was originally located at APO S.689 at Bernieres sur Mer (Star)

fortunate. The requirements of the mail service kept me fully occupied and I had precious little time to think about what might lie ahead.

It didn't seem long before we were on our way to the airfield. I was in the back of a lorry looking out over the tailboard. Amongst the many people who were lining the roads to watch us go through there was a little old lady who looked as though she were well into her 70s. She took one look at me and called out 'Cheer up, son; it mayn't be so bad; and it'll soon be over.' I didn't quite know which way to take the latter part of the remark; but I'm sure it was well meant. We took our seats in the glider. There was minimum of fuss and I thought how routine it all seemed. Then we were off and with nothing to do for the time being, my imagination began to run riot. After a time I thought to myself, I wonder where we are now? We must be well out over the sea. I couldn't swim a stroke and I kept going over my lifebelt to make sure it was properly adjusted. I wondered how long it would be before we made land, and what sort of reception we'd get when we made it. The sea-sick pills I had been given stopped me from feeling sick: but they gave me pains in the stomach.

I worked out that we'd been in the air for something like three hours. That was a long time, and it started me thinking about our being attacked. I recalled that gliders are sitting targets. Then I remembered that we'd been told that there would be complete air protection. As the time wore on I began to think about the landing. I hoped and prayed it would be a soft one. And I began to wonder whether my friend had done his stuff with his bull-dozer and 'the obstacles''. Sadly he was killed just after he'd cleared his allocated zone. All this time I kept telling myself that the last thing I must do was to let anyone else see that I was in any way scared. Suddenly someone shouted that we were over the coast. I felt cold. A few more minutes and I felt the tow rope go and then we were down to a rough landing. The glider was groaning, cracking, and splitting open. Someone was shouting 'Out'. There seemed to be a hell of a noise going on. I grabbed for my tin hat, and marvelled at the sudden sense of security which it seemed to give me. Then I was out. Nearby a glider went up in flames. Another straddled a wall. It seemed as though all hell was let loose. I thought if I ever get out of this, I shall be lucky. I wondered how my 'jumper' lads had fared. (Subsequently I found to my dismay that one had been wounded in the leg and thigh and another in the backside). I'd no idea where we were, but discovered afterwards that we had come down west of Ranville, and close to one of the bridges over the River Orne which had been seized earlier by men of the Division who had crash landed in gliders right on target. It seemed to me at the time that the chances of getting a postal service started were about as good as those of winning the pools. ►



FPO 864
dated: 1 OC 44
This datestamp was held in reserve by 8 Base Army Post Office, but was later issued to the Army Post Office located at Nijmegen, The Netherlands

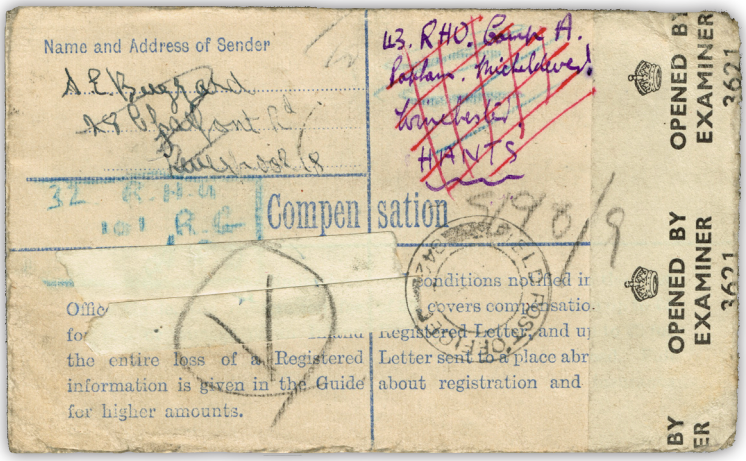
Image: Michael Dobbs

Then, all at once, the organisation began to take over. Someone was shepherding us off the landing zone. I remembered I'd somehow got to make my way to Div HQ, where ever that might be. I saw a Military Policeman and asked him if he knew where Div HQ was. Pointing to a lane, he said, 'Up there'. I set out and after walking for what seemed to be about half a mile, came to a house which, wonder of wonders, turned out to be Div HQ. Standing there was the DAQMG (Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General) who wanted to know what sort of trip I'd had and which way I had approached Div HQ. He said, 'You're lucky to have made it, old man. There are snipers busy down there and they have already got seven or eight chaps'. He also said there was a lot of activity between the Div area and the coast and that it was out of the question, for the time being, to think of getting back to the beaches to collect or dispose of mail as had been planned. A short time afterwards, one of my Corporals turned up. He'd left the UK with a stock of stamps and some other postal equipment but had become parted from it in the shock of landing. Having reported in, he went back to the landing zone, and after a search which took some time, he came back with the missing items intact. Soon, others of my lads reported in and we 'set up shop' in a barn in the Div area. Conditions were pretty primitive and we spent a lot of time in the slit trenches. But from D+1 (7 June 1944), post orderlies called daily and we despatched outgoing mail. How we got back to the beaches to make the despatches is another story. But we did, and I have personal proof that the mails we despatched got home, for on D+5 (11 June 1944), my mother (a widow) received a kilo Ranville butter wrapped in cabbage leaves in my emergency ration tin.

Although we got back to the beaches to collect mail on D+1 there was simply no mail there to be collected: it was lying on ships out in the anchorages as we later learned. At the time it seemed an age before the first mail from the UK trickled through to us. In practice it was not so very long considering all the difficulties of the operation. And once the flow got started the service rapidly settled down and there was little or no complaint about it. Once the airlift started, the post from the UK got to us with remarkable speed and there was general satisfaction with the service.

Few Officers of the Army Postal Services can have had the privilege of commanding such a fine lot of lads as made up my unit. Closest to me of course were the two Sergeants - Wilshaw and Moles, and their names I shall never forget. But I will not forget the rest of the lads either for they were all as ingenious, hard-working and loyal as a man could possibly wish. I suppose an operation like ours has never before been attempted and it may never be attempted again. But I for one would not have missed the experience for worlds and I am sure every one of my lads who went in by parachute or glider on Operation OVERLORD would say the same.”







Second Lieutenant Ernest Emes Buzzard served in the 5th Cameron Highlanders who were part of the 51st (Highland) Division fighting in the Battle for Caen. His mother Alice Elizabeth Buzzard sent him this Registered Letter that was posted from Liverpool 12 July 1944. The letter was initially redirected to Ireland and then to Hampshire, but the Division had already departed to France. FPO 842 shows the cover proceeded to France. Sadly her son aged 34 was killed in battle on 1 July 1944. Mail for men known to be killed or missing were marked 'Deceased' or 'Missing' as appropriate. Special steps were taken to ensure that such mail was not returned to sender until the next of kin had been notified. This cover is multiple franked and annotated DECEASED with the cachet: IT IS REGRETTED THAT THIS ITEM COULD NOT BE DELIVERED BECAUSE THE ADDRESSEE IS REPORTED DECEASED



Image: Michael Dobbs

FPO 759
dated: 28 NO 44
Issued to 8 Air Formation Postal Unit; this was the Army postal unit which supported the Royal Air Force squadrons and units

The Unit arrived at Normandy on 15 June and was issued with seven datestamps: 758-764 inclusive. After disembarking, the unit moved to its operational location at Crepon and was responsible for postal services to the advance elements of No 83 Group RAF, operating in Normandy

FPO Z.100 opened for business on 17 June for the collection and delivery of mail for RAF units; its datestamp FPO 764 has been struck as early as 18 June. This Navy Army & Airforce Institute cover has the FPO 764 datestamp – 26 JU 44. The letter dated two days earlier to Farnborough in Hampshire is addressed from HQ 83 group. The BWEF acronym is for British Western Expeditionary Force. In Chris Palmer's letter to James he's apologetic about their last meeting in which it would seem he didn't disclose upcoming activities relating to the invasion. Palmer arrived two days after D-Day and was impressed with the 'politeness and enthusiasm of the overworked officials directing beaching operations'. Also a nice sign off; 'give my regards to that land-lubber Hollins'

Royal Navy

Part one – Censorship

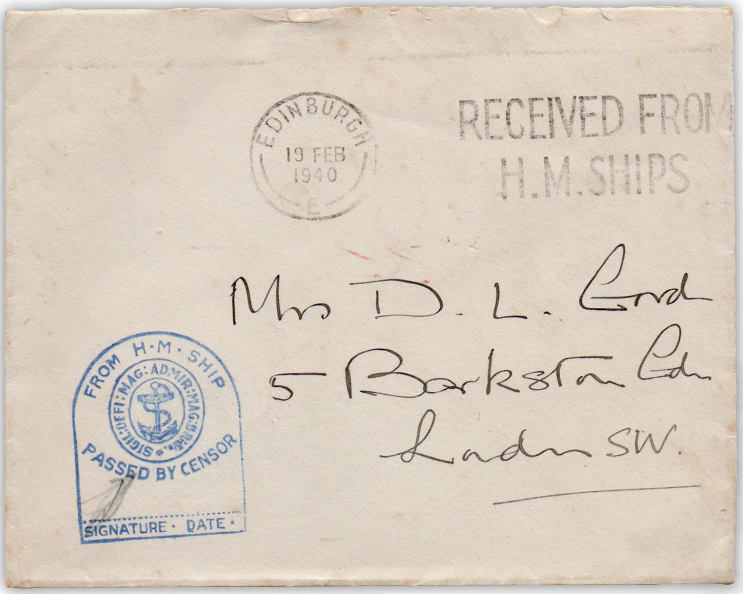
Philatelic writer Colin Tabeart whose works led to his prestigious appointment to the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists in 2017, shares insights into Royal Navy mail in WW2



Mail WW2

Mail from HM Ships was not censored at all until World War One, when it was introduced immediately on commencing hostilities. It may be that, since there was now a serious challenge to the supremacy of the Royal Navy at sea, some form of concealment of ships' movements was deemed necessary. Interestingly German naval mail was almost never censored.

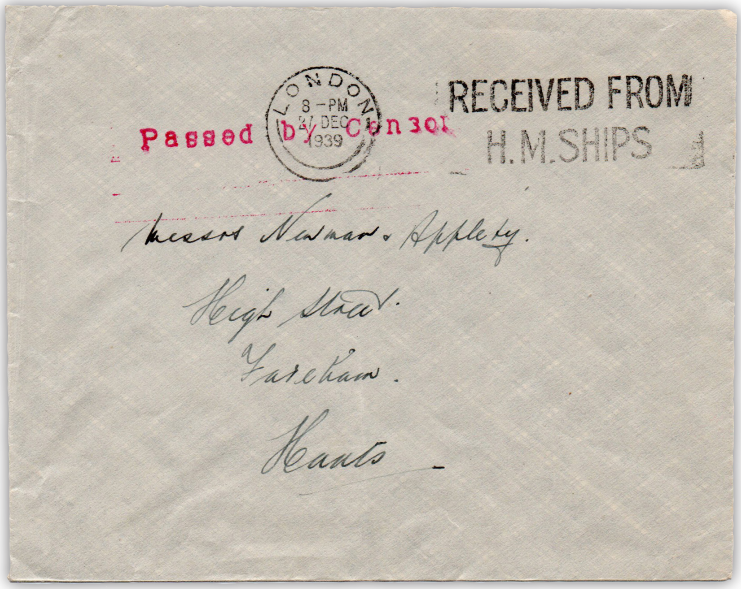
Letters sent from an HM Ship had to be censored by an officer authorised by the Commanding Officer. In big ships there would be more than one censoring officer. With a complement of around 1500, a large warship could generate perhaps 500 letters a day, even given Jack's usual reluctance to write home, often bemoaned by sweethearts and wives. Thus, for example, *HMS Hood* had at least four recorded censorship handstamps. Censoring officers were usually selected from junior officers and those with relatively minor duties on-board, such as surgeons, chaplains (in big ships), and very junior officers – midshipmen, sub lieutenants etc. Officers were trusted to censor their own letters, and could attest accordingly on the front of the envelope, often helpful in identifying the ship from which the mail originated, albeit use of initials only and poor calligraphy do not help. ▶



February 1940. The standard 'tombstone' type, here used aboard *HMS Challenger* by Lt DL Gordon to his wife

The UK declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, by which time most HM ships were en route to their war stations, or already there. A handful of covers are known censored from as early as 1 September 1939 – as the old naval saying has it: 'them as is keen gets fell in previous'. Initially there were no standardised designs or formats: ships made their own handstamps from local resources – often on-board or, for smaller ships, made for them at

December 1939. One of the many variations on the straight line 'Passed by Censor' but the much scarcer type in lower case lettering. Daynes type N625. Signed on the back by Wt Eng CR Calver, appointed to *HMS Maidstone* 1 Oct 1939



Below: 1939 cover showing Daynes Type N1064. Unknown vessel until this cover was found with the crest of *HMS Kent* on the back. Censored 'WRGK', being Warrant Engineer WRG Knott, who joined the ship 17 May 1937. The heavy cruiser was in the East Indies when the letter was written. She earned Battle Honours for Atlantic and Mediterranean in 1940, Arctic 1942-3, and Normandy 1944

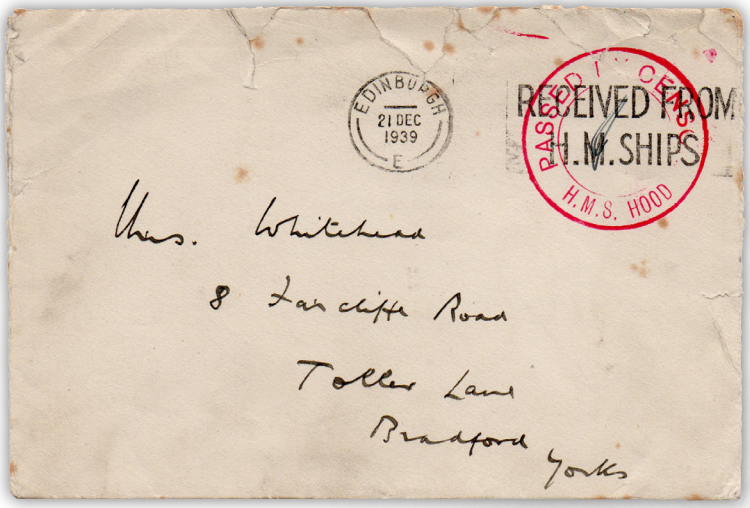




their base ports. From December 1939 a standard design began to be issued to ships, the so-called 'tombstone' type, for obvious reasons which has a few variations, but the main interest to collectors of RN censorship markings of WW2 lies in the individual markings improvised as required. These are much scarcer than the 'tombstones', which probably account for more than 90% of all WW2 RN censor markings, and so are all the more desirable to collectors. ▶

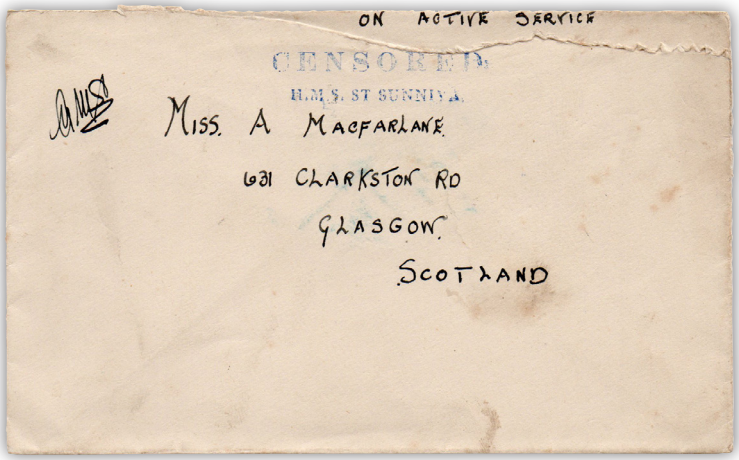


November 1939 named censor from the destroyer *HMS Hardy*, Daynes Type N212. Censored by Lt JF Fallwell, who joined the ship on 17 June 1939. Hardy led the attack at the 1st Battle of Narvik 10 April 1940 where she won lasting fame before being destroyed by heavily superior forces

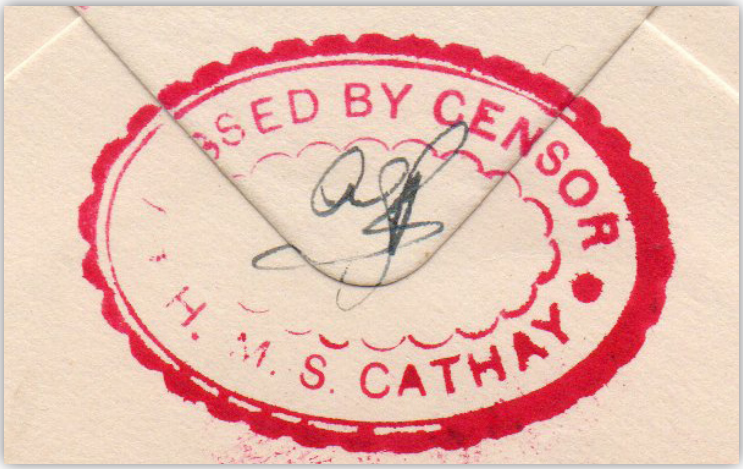


December 1939 from the battlecruiser *HMS Hood*, Daynes N200, one of four known censor markings for the ship, at 41,200 tons the largest WW2 RN ship. Sunk by the *Bismarck* on 24 May 1941, only three of her 1,418 crew surviving the explosion of her magazines

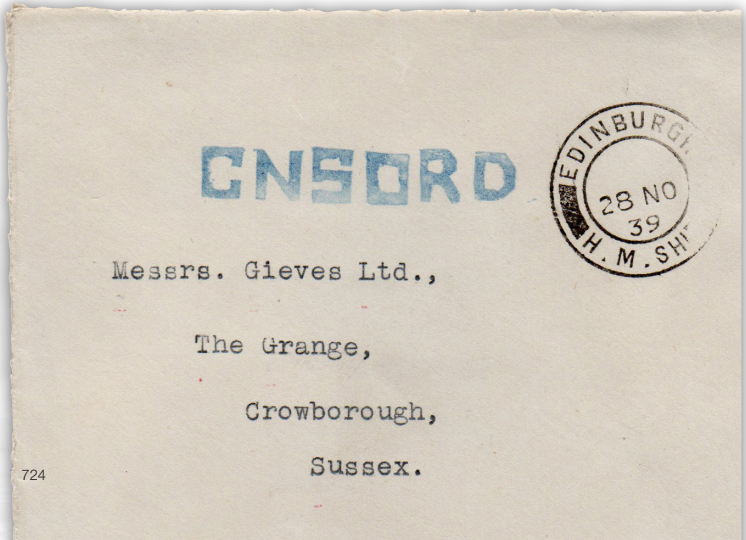
Undated from *HMS St Sunniva*, Daynes N213. One of the rarest WW2 censor markings, two examples only recorded to date. *Sunniva* was hired in August 1939 as a guard ship, then became a rescue ship, sailing at the rear of convoys to rescue seamen from U-boat victims, a highly dangerous task. Lost with all hands 22 January 1943, believed to have capsized under weight of ice on a Russian convoy mission



December 1939 marking of the armed merchant cruiser *Cathay*, Daynes N219. Another rare marking – two examples recorded to date. The P&O liner was converted at Bombay armed with 8 x 6" guns. Subsequently converted to trooping duties she was sunk off Algeria at the end of 1942



November 1939 with crude CNSORD stamp, presumably from a Rosyth-based ship suffering from a shortage of 'E's. Daynes N671



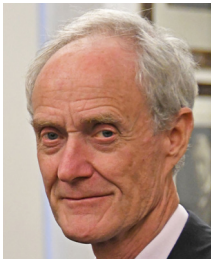


Very unusual cover from *HMS Northern Sun*. On the front is the straight line CENSORED Daynes N647, with the name of the ship pre-printed below. On the back is the very scarce PASSED BY CENSOR / HMS NORTHERN SUN, Daynes N210

As might be expected, some improvised censor markings, especially early in the war, are crude, and even sometimes mis-spelled. Many just say PASSED NAVAL CENSOR, or PASSED BY CENSOR etc in a variety of formats and sizes, framed or unframed; some incorporate the name of the ship, perhaps the most prized of all, and usually the rarest, except from the big ships. There are several hundreds!

This is a fun branch of the hobby, not too expensive apart from the rarer items. Many more examples are shown on the website of the Forces Postal History Society at http://forcespostalhistorysociety.org.uk and the definitive book is World War Two Censor Marks. Initially produced by the late John Daynes in 1986, an updated and coloured 2nd edition, edited by Dr Nick Colley, was published 2016. Contact: colleynic@aol.com. The numbers quoted in the illustrations are from Daynes, with occasional additional numbers from the Colley update ●





Stamp Scene Dane Garrod keeps you posted on events and activities in the philatelic world

DIARY DATES JUL 19

6 July Wigginton Stamp Fair, Wigginton Recreation Hall, Wigginton, York YO32 2LL, 9am to 2pm. Enquiries: Mike Lewis, 07742 153669, mikeval9b@yahoo.co.uk.

• Sutton Coldfield Stamp Fair, Trinity Centre, Church Hill, off Mill Street, Sutton Coldfield B72 1TF, 10am to 4pm, 10 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: John & Jane Rice, 01785 259350, stamps@john-rice-stamps.co.uk.

• Leicester Stamp Fair, Derby Room, Holiday Inn, 129 St. Nicholas Circle, Leicester LE1 5LX, 9.30am to 3.30pm. Enquiries: John Suschitzky, 01162 350441.

• MIDPEX, The Warwickshire Event Centre, The Fosse, Fosse Way, near Leamington Spa CV31 1XN, 10am to 5pm, over 50 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Steve Harrison, sharrison500@btinternet.com.

• Rawreth Stamp Fair, Rawreth Parish Hall, Church Road, Rawreth SS11 8SH, 10am to 4pm, 10 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Steve Search, 01702 323682, stevesearch@hotmail.com.

• Charing Cross Market, 1 Embankment Place, Villiers Street, London WC2N 6RH, 7am to 3pm. Enquiries: Bridget Petticrew, 01252 842906, bridget@charingcrossmarket.com.

• Cardiff Stamp, Postcard & Collectors' Fair, Cardiff City Hall, King Edward VII Avenue, Cardiff CF10 3ND, 10am to 4pm, 40 dealers. Enquiries: Malcolm Harrington, 01792 415293, malcolm.harrington1@hotmail.co.uk.

• Beckenham Stamp & Postcard Fair, Azelia Hall, 258 Croydon Road, Beckenham BR3 4DA, 9am to 3pm, 12 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Ray McQuade, 0208 395 9285.

7 July Milton Keynes Stamp Fair, The Irish Centre, Manor Fields, Watling Street, Fenny Stratford MK2 2HX, 10am to 4pm. Enquiries: Simon Shaw, 07534 496845, shawdunton@aol.com.

• Oxford Stamp Fair, Botley W.I. Hall, North Hinksey Lane, off Botley Road, Oxford OX2 0LT, 10am to 1.30pm. Enquiries: Tristan Brittain, 07957 158299.

• Worthing Stamp & Postcard Fair, Heene Community Centre, 122 Heene Road, Worthing BN11 4PL, 9.30am to 3pm. Enquiries: Chris Rapley, 01795 478175.

• Newhaven Stamp & Postcard Fair, Denton & Mount Pleasant Social Centre, Denton Road, Newhaven BN9 0PX, 10am to 4pm, 7 dealers. Enquiries: Tony Trevis. 07966 151073.

10 July Cheltenham Stamp & Cover Fair, St. Andrew's United Reformed Church, Montpellier Street, Cheltenham GL50 1SP, 10am to 4pm. Enquiries: Mark Grimsley, 01179 623203, mark_grimsley-stamps@hotmail.co.uk.

• Ripley Stamp Club Fair, Village Hall, High Street, Ripley GU23 6AF, 12.30pm to 3.30pm, 10 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Martin Mathewson, 01932 565814, martin.mathewson100@gmail.com.

12 July Strand Stamp Fair, The Galleon Suite, Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, Russell Square, London WC1H 0DG, 9am to 4pm. Enquiries: Kate Puleston, 0208 946 4489.

13 July Norton (Teesside) Stamp Fair, Norton Methodist Church Hall,

High Street, Norton TS20 2QQ, 9.30am to 1.30pm. Enquiries: Mike Lewis, 07742 153669, mikeval9b@yahoo.co.uk.

• North Wales Stamp & Postcard Fair, Ysgol Eirias, Eirias Road, Colwyn Bay LL29 7SP, 9.30am to 3pm, 12 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Steve Chapman, 01745 826434, northwalesstampfairs@gmail.com.

• Northampton Stamp Fair, The Abbey Centre, East Hunsbury NN4 0RZ, 10am to 4pm. Enquiries: Tristan Brittain, 07957 158299.

• Telford Stamp & Card Fair, Belmont Community Hall, Tan Bank, Wellington, Telford TF1 1LT, 10am to 3pm, 15 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Bob Pilkington, 01299 211737, sbpilkington02@outlook.com and Richard Camp, 01952 405458, mail@richardcamp.co.uk.

• Charing Cross Market, (as entry on page 726)

• Chichester Stamp & Postcard Fair, Donnington Parish Hall, Stockbridge Road, Chichester PO19 8QR, 9.30am to 3pm. Enquiries: Chris Rapley, 01795 478175

14 July Chelmsford Stamp & Postcard Fair, Old Chelmsfordians Club, Roxwell Road, Chelmsford CM1 2LY, 9am to 3pm, 7 dealers, tea and coffee available. Enquiries: Steve Burnell, 01708 229763.

• Bristol Stamp & Postal History Fair, Easter Compton Village Hall, Main Road, Easter Compton, Bristol BS35 5SJ, 10am to 3.30pm. Enquiries: Mark Grimsley, 01179 623203, mark_grimsley-stamps@hotmail.co.uk.

19 & 20 July York Stamp & Coin Fair, The Grandstand, York Racecourse, York YO23 1EX, Friday 11am to 6pm and Saturday 10am to 4pm, 95 stamp and postal history dealers, self-service restaurant. Enquiries: Chris Rainey, 01793 513431.

20 July Bilsborrow Stamp Fair, Village Hall, Bilsborrow PR3 0RE, 10am to 3.30pm, 12 dealers, hot and cold food all day. Enquiries: Terry Barnett, 01514 862610.

• Upminster Stamp Fair, St. Lawrence Church Hall, Corbets Tey Road, Upminster RM14 2AJ, 10am to 4pm. Enquiries: Simon Shaw, 07534 496845, shawdunton@aol.com.

• Charing Cross Market, (as entry on page 726)

• Addlestone Stamp & Postcard Fair, Community Centre, Garfield Road, Addlestone KT15 2NJ, 10am to 4.30pm. Enquiries: David Milton, 01895 637283, david.milton139@gmail.com.

• Dover Stamp & Collectors' Fair, Biggin Hall, Biggin Street, Dover CT16 1BD, 10am to 4pm. Enquiries: Jan Shepherd, 07729 967206, keithstamps61@aol.com.

• Margate Collectors' Fair, Union Church, Union Crescent, Margate CT9 1NR, 10am to 3pm, 20 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Clive Baker, 01843 862707, info@clivebaker.co.uk.

• Brighton Stamp Fair, Church of the Good Shepherd Hall, 272 Dyke Road, Brighton BN1 5AE, 10am to 4pm. Enquiries: John Perriman, 01903 244875.

• Exeter Collectors' Fair, The America Hall, De La Rue Way, Pinhoe, Exeter EX4 8PX, 10am to 4pm, 12 stamp dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Michael Hale, 01749 677669.

21 July Knowle Stamp Fair, Knowle Village Hall, St. Johns Close, Knowle, ▶

Events and Meetings

• The twice yearly York Stamp & Coin Fair at The Grandstand, York Racecourse, York YO23 1EX, returns on Friday 19 and Saturday 20 July. This event has about 95 stamp and postal history dealers' stands, as well as a large self-service restaurant, and will be already known to many readers. It is highly recommended. Opening times are 11am to 6pm on Friday, and 10am to 4pm on Saturday. The ground floor is the stamp dealers' area, which is larger than the upstairs which is the coin dealers' area. Additionally, there are specialist society meetings to which everyone is invited to attend, whether a member or not.

• The Warwickshire Event Centre hosts MIDPEX 2019 on Saturday 6 July from 10am to 5pm. With 50+ dealers in stamps, postal history, postcards, albums, catalogues and accessories, as well as 40 specialist society displays, this premier event has free admission, a large free car park, and refreshments available. The address for the Event Centre is The Fosse, Fosse Way, Radford Semele, Royal Leamington Spa, Leamington Spa CV31 1XN. A free shuttle bus service will operate from Leamington Spa railway station if you are not driving to the show. Enquiries: Steve Harrison, sharrison500@btinternet.com.

• The July meeting of the National Philatelic Society is at the society's venue of the Postal Museum, 15-20 Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DA, where on Saturday 13 July the Annual General Meeting (attendance for members only) will be followed at 2.45pm with members' displays, where visitors are welcome. Tea and coffee will be available.

• In the evening of Wednesday 7 August, Stanley Gibbons will hold an Evening Reception for members of the Great Britain Philatelic Society and the invitees of Stanley Gibbons. The reception will be from 6pm onwards at 399 Strand, London WC2R 0LX. Members of the society will bring GB related material for display.

Solihull B93 0NH, 9.30am to 3pm, 10 dealers, tea, coffee and light refreshments available. Enquiries: Dave Burnett, 07765 792998.

• Norwich Stamp Fair, Brook Hotel, Barnard Road, Bowthorpe, Norwich NR5 9JB, 10am to 3pm, 10 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Tony Hender, 01328 829318.

27 July Chester Stamp Fair, Hoole United Reformed Church, Hoole Road, Chester CH2 3AU, 10am to 3.30pm, 7 dealers. Enquiries: Terry Barnett, 01514 862610.

• Great Barr Stamp Fair, Collingwood Centre, Collingwood Drive, Great Barr, Birmingham B43 7NF, 10am to 4pm, 14 dealers, full refreshments available. Enquiries: Dave Burnett, 07765 792998.

• Northampton Stamp Fair, The Abbey Centre, East Hunsbury NN4 0RZ, 10am to 4pm. Enquiries: Tristan Brittain, 07957 158299.

• Wanstead Stamp Fair, Our Lady of Lourdes, 51 Cambridge Park, Wanstead E11 2PR, 10am to 3pm. Enquiries: Simon Shaw, 07534 496845, shawdunton@aol.com.

• Ealing Stamp Fair, Ealing Parish Church, St. Mary's Road, Ealing W5 5EU, 9am to 1pm. Enquiries: Tristan Brittain, 07957 158299.

• Charing Cross Market, (as entry on page 726)

• Bexhill Stamp Fair, St. Martha's Church Hall, Cooden Sea Road, Bexhill-on-Sea TN39 4SL, 10am to 4pm, 4 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: John Perriman, 01903 244875.

28 July Peterborough Stamp Fair, Holiday Inn, Thorpe Wood, Peterborough PE3 6SG, 10am to 3pm, 10 dealers. Enquiries: Richard Lewis, 01945 700594, richard@lewis8571.plus.com.

• Stevenage Stamp Fair, Novotel, Knebworth Park, Stevenage SG1 2AX, 10am to 4pm. Enquiries: Simon Shaw, 07534 496845, shawdunton@aol.com.

• Bracknell Stamp Fair, Red Cross Centre, 21 Martins Lane, Bracknell RG12 9EN, 9am to 1pm. Enquiries: Tristan Brittain, 07957 158299.

3 August Leicester Stamp Fair, Derby Room, Holiday Inn, 129 St. Nicholas Circle, Leicester LE1 5LX, 9.30am to 3.30pm. Enquiries: John Suschitzky, 01162 350441.

• Lichfield Stamp Fair, Boley Park Community Hall, Ryknild Street, Lichfield WS14 9XU, 10am to 4pm, 6 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: John & Jane Rice, 01785 259350, stamps@john-rice-stamps.co.uk.

• Rawreth Stamp Fair, Rawreth Parish Hall, Church Road, Rawreth SS11 8SH, 10am to 4pm, 10 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Steve Search, 01702 323682, stevesearch@hotmail.com.

• Ruislip Stamp & Postcard Fair, Methodist Church Hall, Ickenham Road, Ruislip HA4 7BZ, 10am to 4.30pm. Enquiries: David Milton, 01895 637283, david.milton139@gmail.com.

• Charing Cross Market, (as entry on page 726)

• Beckenham Stamp & Postcard Fair, Azelia Hall, 258 Croydon Road, Beckenham BR3 4DA, 9am to 3pm, 12 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Ray McQuade, 0208 395 9285.

• NEWQUEX, Trevisker St. Eval Community Centre, 750 Orion Drive, Wadebridge PL27 7TU, 10am to 4pm. Enquiries: Rex Eccott, 01288 381489, eccott@gotadsl.co.uk.

4 August Hopton Stamp Fair, Hopton Village Hall, Station Road, Hopton NR31 9BE, 9.30am to 2pm. Enquiries: Terry Allaker, 01502 563759.

• Oxford Stamp Fair, Botley W.I. Hall, North Hinksey Lane, off Botley Road, Oxford OX2 0LT, 10am to 1.30pm. Enquiries: Tristan Brittain, 07957 158299.

9 August Strand Stamp Fair, The Galleon Suite, Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, Russell Square, London WC1H 0DG, 9am to 4pm. Enquiries: Kate Puleston, 0208 946 4489.

10 August Norton (Teesside) Stamp Fair, Norton Methodist Church Hall, High Street, Norton TS20 2QQ, 9.30am to 1.30pm. Enquiries: Mike Lewis, 07742 153669, mikeval9b@yahoo.co.uk.

• Liverpool Stamp Fair, St. Columba Church Hall, Hillfoot Road, Hunts Cross, Liverpool L25 0NR, 10am to 3.30pm, 7 dealers. Enquiries: Terry Barnett, 01514 862610.

• King's Lynn Stamp Fair, Gaywood Church Rooms, Gayton Road, Gaywood, King's Lynn PE30 4DZ, 10am to 3pm. Enquiries: Tony Hender, 01328 829318.

• Kenilworth Stamp Fair, Kenilworth School, Leyes Lane, Kenilworth CV8 2DA, 10am to 4pm, 8 dealers. Enquiries: John & Jane Rice, 01785 259350, info@john-rice-stamps.co.uk.

• Charing Cross Market, (as entry on page 726)

11 August Chelmsford Stamp & Postcard Fair, Old Chelmsfordians Club, Roxwell Road, Chelmsford CM1 2LY, 9am to 3pm, 7 dealers, tea and coffee available. Enquiries: Steve Burnell, 01708 229763.

• Uckfield Stamp Fair, Ridgewood Village Hall, New Road, Ridgewood, Uckfield TN22 5TE, 10am to 4pm. Enquiries: John Perriman, 01903 244875.

14 August Ripley Stamp Club Fair, Village Hall, High Street, Ripley GU23 6AF, 12.30pm to 3.30pm, 10 dealers, refreshments available. Enquiries: Martin Mathewson, 01932 565814, martin.mathewson100@gmail.com •

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D-Day 75 years on – Remembered by the Normandy Memorial Trust

It has been the dream for many years of the Patron of the Normandy Memorial Trust, George Batts MBE, that a Memorial be built in Normandy to record the names of all the British servicemen and women and those from the civilian services who lost their lives in the D-Day landings and the Normandy Campaign (www.normandymemorialtrust.org).

The British Prime Minister Theresa May, French President Emmanuel Macron and Veterans took part in a ceremony to mark the formal beginning of the construction of the Monument at the site at Ver sur Mer in France on 6 June, the 75th Anniversary of D-Day.

BFPS have produced a commemorative cover to mark the anniversary and ceremony. Profit after production costs are donated towards the cost of the memorial. The image on the cover shows both the proposed Memorial wall and its statues. It has a First Class stamp from the Royal Mail D-Day stamp issue cancelled by the unique BFPS 1000 special handstamp.

A numbered limited edition of 75 covers, signed by a prominent member of the Normandy Memorial Trust, are also available.



Costing £7.50 and £15 respectively for the standard and signed versions these covers can be ordered from the BFPS online shop (www.bfps.org.uk) or by post by sending a cheque (payable to 'BFPS CIC') to BFPS, The Old Post Office, Links Place, Elie, LEVEN, KY9 1AX.

BRITISH FORCES BFPS PHILATELIC SERVICE

Machin high values



The pre-decimal, large format, intaglio high values

Images: Scott Kibby

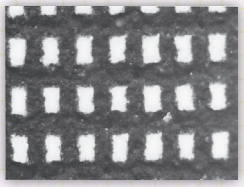
The first two articles of this series focused on the small format, lower value Machins, and so while reading you may have thought 'hang on – what about the high values?' The answer is that most of them differed from their cheaper cousins in size and/or printing method, so were deliberately left unmentioned to avoid complicating the story – and to save them for an article of their own.

What constituted a 'high value' changed over the years. For several decades it meant 2s 6d or above. In 1970 a 10p (2s) stamp was part of the first decimal high value set, but then inflation set in and by 1977 the term meant £1 and up. This lasted until a stamp for a £1.12 airmail rate was issued in 2003, at which point Royal Mail officially redefined the lower limit as £1.50 (though they had already done so in practice much earlier, see below). Subsequent rate rises have easily overtaken this, and 'high value' has fallen out of use as a contemporary term. The most obvious way in which high values had long differed was the use of intaglio printing (aka recess or line engraving), when most GB stamps were printed by letterpress (aka surface printing) or photogravure. This policy dated back to 1913 and the 'Seahorse' stamps – you may recall from January's *Bulletin* that the impetus for this came from a request by King George V, a keen collector. Intaglio was more expensive, but for stamps required only in modest quantities that was acceptable. So this was the process used when Machin high values were needed to replace the Wilding head 'Castles' design.

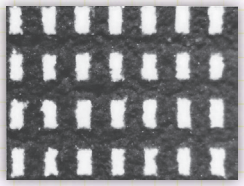
Large Format Intaglio High Values 1969-1977 The pre-decimal set was issued on 5 March 1969, in a larger and slightly squarer format compared to the low values. The stamps retained the traditional four denominations and general colour scheme of the Castles – 2s 6d brown, 5s red, 10s blue and £1 black. They were printed by Bradbury Wilkinson on a rotary sheet-fed press, in sheets of 160 stamps comprising four panes of 40 (8x5, a convenient 'post office' sheet size), and remained on sale until £sd stamps were withdrawn after decimalisation. Their decimal successors soon followed, with colours chosen to avoid confusion between stamps of different values – a 10p cerise (brighter red than the crimson 5s), 20p green (a brand new colour), and 50p blue (very similar to the existing 10s of equal value). These were printed in single pane sheets of 100 (10 x 10), and new £1 plates were made in the same format.



Images: Steve McGill



The original £1 value from the pre-decimal set with wider white areas



The £1 value, from the new format plates with narrower white areas





Registered letter sent on 21 December 1970 by stamp dealers Stanley Gibbons, generously providing their customer with a nice mixed usage of the new 50p and the pre-decimal 6d. The rate of 10s 6d is 3s registration + 7s 6d fivefold airmail at 1s 6d per ½oz. This appears to have got caught up in the Christmas mail though, as it was not backstamped in the USA until New Year's Day!

Interestingly, if you have a good magnifying glass handy it's possible to distinguish single £1 stamps from old and new format plates. The impressions were rocked in from the transfer roller in different directions, the pressure making the shading lines in the background thicker either horizontally (pre-decimal) or vertically (decimal). In practice though, the easiest thing to look for is the unprinted white paper rectangles between those lines – they show up as mostly squarish in the pre-decimal £1, oblong in the decimal.

The decimal set was actually issued some eight months in advance of 'D-Day' on 17 June 1970, the stated reasons being 'to ease some of the pressure on printing and distribution which the switch to decimals will bring', and 'to accustom the public to the changeover following the introduction of the 10p and 50p coins'. The latter was probably of limited benefit as the great majority of letters did not need a high value stamp – they were only called for on parcels and larger packets, airmail letters, and for extra fees such as registration. Consequently, used on cover before D-Day both pre-decimal and decimal stamps are scarce (especially the 10s, 50p and £1). Notably, the entire 10p printing was on the experimental 'phosphorised paper', as a continuation of the trials with the 1s 6d[1], which had not been sufficiently informative about the effect on the phosphor of bad weather (always an occupational hazard in Britain). When the experiment was discontinued in 1971, the remaining paper was used up for the 50p, and possibly the 20p (although none of the latter have been found). The uncertainty is because the existence of the 50p was discovered by philatelists – the printings were treated as normal production runs with no announcement and no specific records kept.

In 1972 the design of the decimal £1 was revised, with the value in Gill's 'Perpetua' typeface to match the other stamps in the set. Unfortunately, the steep inflation of the 1970s meant increasing demand for these values, and so the intaglio stamps were progressively replaced by cheaper photogravure versions in the small format – the 10p as early as August 1971, the 20p in 1976, and the 50p in 1977. This led naturally to the next development in Machin high values. ►



The Machins of 1970 that were printed using Intaglio: Die-Roller-Master Plate process and the revised £1 stamp of 1972 with the Perpetua typeface

Images: Scott Kibby

[1]See the May *Bulletin*.

Large Format Photogravure High Values, 1977-1988 On 2 February 1977 a new set of large format photogravure high values (and the small 50p) replaced the remaining intaglio stamps. The new set was genuinely high value for the time with stamps of £1, £2 (a new value), and £5. This top denomination had not been used since the famous £5 orange of 1882, although inflation had eaten away at the buying power it represented. (£5 in 1882 was the equivalent of about £80 or £260 in 1977, or £500 or £2500 now, depending on whether you compare prices or average wages[2] – that was REALLY what you call a high value.)



The new stamps were the same size as the contemporary vertical format commemorative stamps (which meant that for Harrisons, they were just a standard printing operation). Very unusually for Machins, they were printed in two colours, with a dark background and lighter head. As for a comparison with the previous issue… well, at the risk of provoking the wrath of the many intaglio fans in the philatelic world, it's probably fair comment to say that photogravure is a better fit for the Machin design, which benefits from a smooth gradation of colour without the 'cross-hatching' effect seen on both The Queen's head and background in the intaglio stamps.

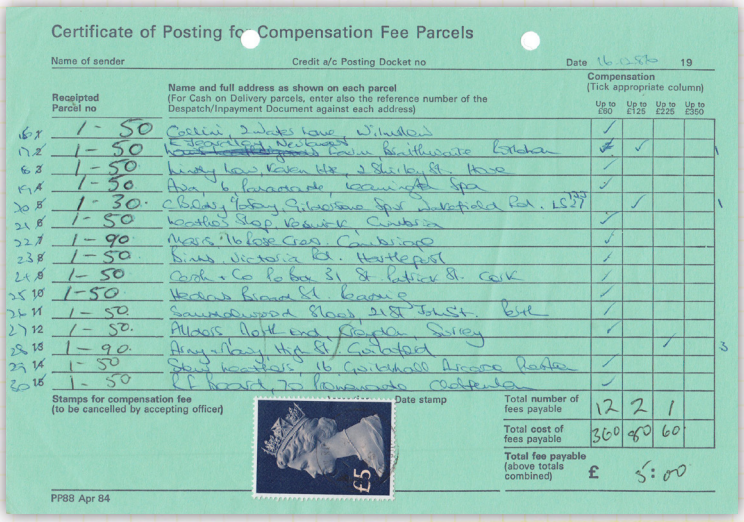
From 1983 single high values were issued for the basic national parcel post rate. The first was a £1.30 issued on 3 August 1983, which date of issue had the additional function of commemorating the centenary of the parcel post service. The stamp itself was in the standard high value format and had no special inscription, although the first day covers did. Replacement stamps were issued for each annual parcel rate change – a £1.33 in 1984, a £1.41 in 1985, a £1.50 in 1986 and finally a £1.60 in 1987. These were unusual in having a very specific use –most high values have been issued as 'make up' stamps for expensive rates, although you do occasionally find them used on their own on covers or forms that happened to require exactly that amount of postage.

Below: the large format, photogravure high values, that were issued between 1977-1988



Images: Scott Kibby

[2] www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ukcompare



Certificate of Posting for Compensation Fee Parcels

Name of sender | Credit a/c Posting Docket no | Date 16 OCT 86 19

Receipted Parcel no	Name and full address as shown on each parcel (For Cash on Delivery parcels, enter also the reference number of the Despatch/Inpayment Document against each address)	Compensation (Tick appropriate column) Up to £60	Up to £125	Up to £225	Up to £350	
16 1	1-50 Costin, 2 Yates Lane, Wilmslow	✓				
17 2	1-50 [illegible] Braithwaite London	✓	✓			1
18 3	1-50 Hardy Lane, Kelvin Hts, 1 Shiels Pl, Hove	✓				
19 4	1-50 Ada, 6 Promenade, Leamington Spa	✓				
20 5	1-30 C Bailey, Potary Silverstone Spar Dukinfield Port. LE99		✓			1
21 6	1-50 Woodhall Shop, Keswick, Cumbria	✓				
22 7	1-90 Mears, 16 Lake Road, Coniston	✓				
23 8	1-50 Binns, Victoria Rd, Hartlepool	✓				
24 9	1-50 Cash + Co P.O. Box 31 St Patrick St. Cork	✓				
25 10	1-50 Hedges Bernard St. Bourne	✓				
26 11	1-50 Saunderwood Stores, 21 St John's Rd	✓				
27 12	1-50 Allders Hoppa end, Reigate Surrey	✓				
28 13	1-90 Alan Wash, 19a St, Guildford			✓		3
29 14	1-50 Stan Hoskins, 16 Guildhall Arcade Preston	✓				
30 15	1-50 Ff board, 70 Promenade Cheltenham	✓				

Stamps for compensation fee (to be cancelled by accepting officer) | Date stamp

Total number of fees payable	12	2	1	
Total cost of fees payable	360	80	60	
Total fee payable (above totals combined)	£ 5:00			

PP88 Apr 84

A 1984 multiple certificate of posting for 'Compensation Fee Parcels', for which the fee was paid on the certificate rather than on the items themselves. Apparently one of a batch, in this case the 15 fees paid happened to total £5

Interlude, 1988-1999 In 1988 the photogravure high values were replaced by another intaglio set, its 'Castles' design harking back nostalgically to the Wilding issues – the same four castles were shown, with values of £1, £1.50, £2 and £5 (the concept of separate parcel rate stamps being dropped). These won't be treated in detail here as they aren't really a Machin design, although it's worth noting that The Queen's head used for the initial 1988-92 issue was engraved from a x8 photograph of the Machin diadem head. There was also a large format £10 stamp issued in 1993, but it lacked even that Machin connection (indeed, its design was *sui generis* in a number of ways). Other developments during this period would affect future Machins, however.

For a start, in 1992 the Castles were the first to use the now-standard 'elliptical' perforations, extended to Machins in 1993. Secondly, increased use of the no-longer-especially-high value £1 meant that it was replaced by a cheaper photogravure Machin in the standard small format in 1995. It was the first Machin to use 'Iriodin®' ink printed over the background as a security feature. (This ink is based on mica covered with a thin layer of a metal oxide. It gives the stamp a pearlescent sheen, and is difficult for forgers to reproduce.) Finally, the 'Castle' £1 was replaced by a £3 in the same design, a new value that continued in use afterwards. ►



Small Format Intaglio High Values 1999-2003

On 9 March 1999 Machin high values were reintroduced, this time in the standard small format. What was non-standard was that they continued to be printed in intaglio, first by Enschedé and then by De La Rue. The cross-hatching effect is still noticeable, although they are attractive stamps – both head and background were engraved by Czeslaw Slania, so Royal Mail went for the best in the world! He left a space for the printers to add the value, and specialists can distinguish the work of the two printers from small differences in this area. The values were the same as the final Castles set, ie £1.50, £2, £3 and £5 (ie no £10 value). The £ sign and figures were designed by Jeffery Matthews.

The small format, intaglio high values 1999-2003









Crossover in 1999 – the small format £3 intaglio Machin used with two £5 Castles on a form to pay the charge for mail redirection



The small format, Photogravure high values 2003-2009









Images: Scott Kibby

Small Format Photogravure High Values 2003-2009 As intaglio was still undesirably expensive, however, all four stamps were reissued in photogravure in 2003. The colours chosen were from the Jeffery Matthews palette described last month – and as you may recall from that article, the Iriodin ink caused problems in the case of the £5 brown, which came out far too dark. The stamp was issued in a grey-blue instead. This issue contained one of the major positional design errors on British stamps, the 'missing £' on the £2. This is pretty much what you'd expect from the name – the stamp in column one of row 18 of the first no dot cylinder has the pound sign omitted. As this is conveniently placed in the cylinder block, it was basically unmissable. The official description of the cause was as follows: 'A mistake was made at the pre-press stage. The master artwork is converted by the cylinder engravers to their own system programme. The programme deconstructs the artwork into a series of layers. In this instance, each layer is repeated onto the cylinder as an individual stamp during the engraving process. It was during this process that the £ symbol was inadvertently removed'. All of which sounds jolly impressive, but is simply a description of the general process, and says nothing about how one particular £ sign managed to go missing during the repetition! It does sound better than 'haven't got a clue, mate' though…

The 'missing £' positional design error, issued in 2003



Image: Steve McGill

Self-Adhesives, 2009-date To bring things up to date, on 17 February 2009 the four high values were among the first few stamps reissued in the 'security' format that has subsequently become standard for Machins – ie self-adhesive, with U-shaped slits and a wavy iridescent overprint. The £2 is the only one so far to be issued with a year code, in 2013. Arguably though, this no longer counts, because in 2011 the £1.50 boundary was breached with a £1.65 airmail rate and its corresponding single Machin, and subsequent rises have made 'high value' seem like an increasingly inapt term – indeed there are now stamps for the airmail 'large letter' rates, which currently go up to £3.60. The £5 still technically qualifies, although give it a few more years and that may change! However, that value does provide a suitable endpoint for this article. On 6 February 2017 a new version of the 1977-88 £5 printed in 'Sapphire Blue' was issued to mark the 65th Anniversary of The Queen's Accession. This is a handsome stamp – just as a high value should be ●



The £5 'Sapphire Blue' of 2017 and (below) the 'security' format Machins reissued in 2009

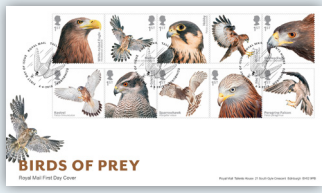


*By Maurice Buxton a long-term collector, and webmaster for the Great Britain Philatelic Society – **www.gbps.org.uk***

New Issues and Withdrawals

4 July

Withdrawal Birds of Prey: Stamp Souvenir.



9 July

Issue Curious Customs: Stamps (2 x 2nd Class, 2 x 1st Class, 2 x £1.55, 2 x £1.60 – 4 horizontal se-tenant pairs). Presentation Pack. Stamp Souvenir. Postcards (8 in set). First Day Cover. First Day Cover Envelope.

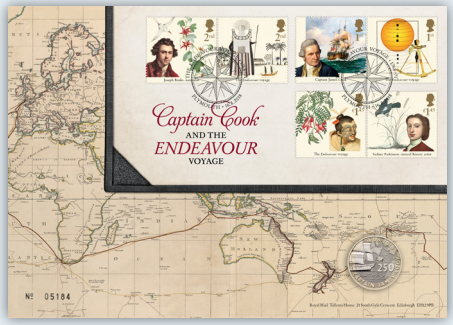


31 July

Withdrawal Hampton Court Palace: Stamps (3 x 1st Class, 3 x £1.55). Miniature Sheet (2 x 1st Class, 2 x £1.45). Presentation Pack. Stamp Souvenir. Stamp Sheet Souvenir. Retail Stamp Book. Press Sheet. Postcards (11 in set).

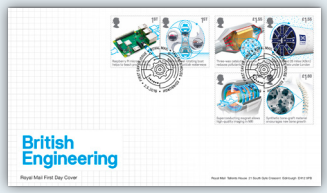


Withdrawal Captain Cook and the Endeavour Voyage: Stamps (2 x 2nd Class, 2 x 1st Class, 2 x £1.45). Miniature Sheet (2 x 1st Class, 2 x £1.45). Presentation Pack. Stamp Souvenir. Stamp Sheet Souvenir. Postcards (11 in set). BU Coin Cover with six stamps – limited edition 10,000.



2 August

Withdrawal British Engineering: Stamp Souvenir. Stamp Sheet Souvenir.



13 August

Issue Forests: Stamps (2 x 1st Class, 2 x £1.55, 2 x £1.60 – 3 vertical se-tenant pairs). Presentation Pack. Stamp Souvenir. Postcards (6 in set). First Day Cover. First Day Cover Envelope.

You can order any of the Royal Mail stamp products listed above, by visiting **www.royalmail.com/stamps** or from Royal Mail Stamps and Collectibles PO Box 1373, Sunderland SR5 9PG, UK. (Overseas subscribers will need to use a stamp.) Or use the Royal Mail telephone order service on 03457 641 641 (08.30 – 17.00 Monday to Friday). For overseas customers: +44 3457 641 641. Minimum handling charge UK £1.45, Europe £1.55, rest of world (airmail) £2.15.

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