BRITISH PHILATELIC

Bulletin

The magazine for collectors of UK stamps

VOLUME 52 NUMBER 3 | NOVEMBER 2014 | £1.50

War Stamps • New Christmas Truce Sheet • Soldiers' Post



Staff Sergeant Clement Barker 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards
In a letter to Montague Barker, his brother, Sergeant Clement Barker described an impromptu football match between British and German soldiers following a truce to bury the dead.



British troops reinforce damaged shelters
During an informal armistice in December 1914, soldiers from 2nd Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders work to strengthen shelters in their defences with bricks.



British and German soldiers in no man's land
The officer who took this photograph, Second Lieutenant Cyril Drummond, recalled one of the Germans saying, "We don't want to kill you and you don't want to kill us. So why shoot?"



Burying the dead
On Christmas Day near Fromelles in France preparations are made for a joint Anglo-German burial service for men killed during a night attack the previous week. It would be attended by soldiers from both sides.



Trench repairs
British soldiers stationed in Willow Trench, Rue de Bois, on the Western Front attend to repairs following a burst dam in December 1914. The night-time flooding led to a local informal armistice.

France fraternisation
During the Christmas Truce German soldiers meet with British troops from the Northumberland Hussars at Bridoux Rouge Banc Sector on the Western Front in France.

A British soldier pumps out a waterlogged trench
Even before the 1914 Christmas Truce, troops on both sides recognised the misery of flooded trenches. Many allowed enemy soldiers to make repairs above ground without opening fire.

Christmas dinner
Soldiers from 1st Battalion London Rifle Brigade relax after a Christmas meal in 1914. The men are based at Plugstreet Wood in Flanders (known as 'Plugstreet Wood' to British troops).

Posing for photographs
This image of British and German soldiers photographed on Christmas Day 1914 was reproduced in the *Daily Mirror* on Friday 8 January 1915 and would appear in illustrated weeklies and other newspapers.

Germans and British soldiers mingle
Seven soldiers mix with men of the London Rifle Brigade (far right and third from right). The photograph was taken with a pocket camera by a London Rifle Brigade soldier.

Stamp design © Royal Mail Group Ltd 2010



M FRY POST & GO UPDATE • J COOPER PHILATELIC STOCKING FILLERS • WIN POPPY STAMPS

Issues and withdrawals



Cover image: 1914 Christmas Truce Commemorative Sheet is issued by Royal Mail on 11 November. See page 84 for more details

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4 November	**Issue** 2014 Annual Collections: Year Pack, Year Book, Year of Miniature Sheets, Year of Presentation Packs.
4 November	**Issue** Christmas 2014: Stamps (1 x 1st Class, 1 x 2nd Class, 1 x 1st Class Large, 1 x 2nd Class Large, 1 x £1.28, 1 x £1.47, 1 x £2.15), Miniature Sheet, Presentation Pack, Generic Sheet, 1st and 2nd Class Stamp Books, Smilers® Sheets, Stamp Cards (8 in set).
5 November	**Withdrawal** Christmas 2013: Stamps, Presentation Pack, Stamp Cards, Stamp Books, Generic Sheet.
5 November	**Withdrawal** Children's Christmas Competition Winners: Stamps, Presentation Pack.
6 November	**Withdrawal** 2012 Year of Presentation Packs.
11 November	**Issue** 1914 Christmas Truce: Commemorative Sheet (10 x 1st Class Poppy Stamps).
13 November	**Issue** British Flora III – Winter Greenery: Post & Go Stamps (1 x 1st Class, 1 x 2nd Class, 1 x 1st Class Large, 1 x 2nd Class Large).
19 November	**Issue** Lunar New Year – Year of the Sheep: Generic Sheet, Coin Cover.
1 December	**Issue** Kuala Lumpur 2014 FIP Exhibition Sheet: includes 20 x 1st Class.
10 December	**Withdrawal** Lunar New Year – Year of the Horse: Generic Sheet of 20 x 1st Class.

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Information about Royal Mail products is that which is available at time of going to press. Issue dates shown in advance are subject to change. Stamps and postmarks are not shown to scale. Stamp sizes are listed on preview pages. Royal Mail is not responsible for opinions and information provided by independent writers in the feature articles of this publication.

Royal Mail

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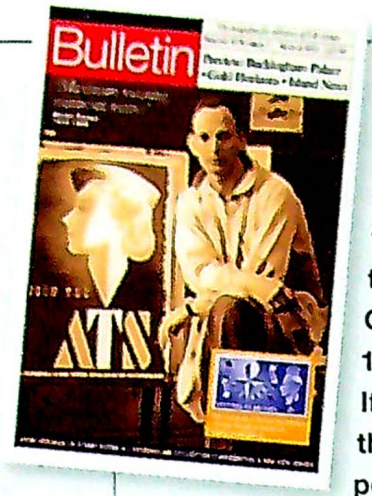


Keep Smilering through What better time than the Christmas season to pick up your phone and order a personalised Smiler®! **96**

The *British Philatelic Bulletin* is published monthly by Royal Mail, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB ● Editor: William Doherty ● Price £1.50 from Post Office Ltd philatelic outlets (see opposite) ● **Annual subscription** £12.95 UK & Europe; £17.95 elsewhere. Send subscriptions to Royal Mail Tallents House (address above) ● **Binders** (to hold 24 issues) £8.50, storage boxes (about 30 copies) £9.95, available by post from Royal Mail Tallents House ● Royal Mail also publishes the fortnightly *British Postmark Bulletin*, giving details of forthcoming special handstamps – available on annual subscription from Royal Mail Tallents House: £12.25 UK and Europe; £24.95 rest of the world ● Stamp images © Royal Mail. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or parts is prohibited without prior permission of the Editor ● **Printed** in Great Britain by Zenith Print & Packaging Ltd ● **ISSN** 0953 8119 ● Royal Mail is a trading name of Royal Mail Group Ltd. Registered in England and Wales, number 4138203. Registered office: 100 Victoria Embankment, London EC4Y 0HQ

Correspondence

Stamps of significance



I am writing to say how much I look forward to receiving and reading the *British Philatelic Bulletin* each month; it seems to go from strength to strength. The articles are very interesting and the previews of forthcoming issues are informative. I was particularly interested this year in the Designer Profile article in the March edition about Abram Games.

I have fond memories of the Festival of Britain in 1951 when, at the age of seven, I was taken by my family to the South Bank in London and my father bought for me the 2½d and 4d Festival stamps. This started my interest in collecting stamps, and to help me on my way my father also gave me the 2½d Royal Silver Wedding (I have yet to obtain the £1 value stamp) and the superb 1948 Olympic Games stamps – all in mint condition.

His encouragement influenced me to collect stamps and like all schoolboys at that time, I collected and swapped world stamps. But my main interest was in mint British stamps and he obtained subsequent issues for me until I was able to finance collecting myself. I now have every set of Commemorative issues since the Festival of Britain set, all safely mounted in my Royal Mail De Luxe albums. I also have all 30 special stamps year books.

Returning to the Abram Games article, this is the first time I learned he was the talented designer of a 1948 Olympic Games stamp and a 1951 Festival of Britain stamp. If it were not for the article in the *Bulletin* magazine I would possibly not have known.

I ordered the Facsimile Pack of the Festival of Britain from Tallents House as a result of the *Bulletin*. This is exactly the type of thing that makes the hobby so interesting; for me, it is not just about 'collecting stamps' but also about the meaning and history behind them.

Chris Watts, Kent

Thank you for your encouraging letter. The designs for the Festival of Britain stamps certainly got you started on a wonderful collection! The Festival of Britain facsimile pack (shown right) was issued on 25 March this year and brings back memories for many seasoned collectors. It is surely the stamp-lover's hope that the design and history of these stamps still has the power to capture the attention of a seven-year-old.

Our March edition was a favourite with the *Bulletin* team too, as everyone enjoyed exploring

Poppy proposal

13 September 2014

Dear Editor,

I read with interest that the Definitive sized First Class Poppy stamp is to be reintroduced on 21st October (sheets of 50). Would be lovely if this super stamp could be sold in retail books. Might this be possible in the future? Yours sincerely,

Mrs Lynn Bowry

We like your thinking, Mrs Bowry. We have passed on your idea to Royal Mail Stamps and Collectibles strategists and will report on their response in a future edition.



the life and work of the great designer. Our writer Andrew Neish got so involved in telling the story of Abram Games that he started to look like him! And most questions to *Bulletin* designer Paul Elmes are now met with the answer 'Mmmm', as shorthand for 'maximum meaning, minimum means' – Games' design philosophy. This philosophy is especially apposite to any discussion in the world of stamps and to the creation of the *Bulletin*.

Your letter also gives us a nice opportunity to thank once again Abram Games' daughter Naomi Games, who was extremely helpful when we were compiling the Designer Profile article. She and her brother Daniel have allowed access to the family archives and helped to portray the true Abram Games in a current exhibition – Designing the 20th Century: Life and Work of Abram Games runs until 4 January 2015 at the Jewish Museum in London. For details, visit www.jewishmuseum.org.uk/abramgames.





Keep the letters coming...

The Editor welcomes your letters and the senders of those that are published receive the First World War 1914 Prestige Stamp Book. Send your letters to: William Doherty, *British Philatelic Bulletin*, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB. Alternatively, email bulletin.enquiries@royalmail.com.









Question about quiz questions

The Question Time quiz in October *Bulletin* [page 62] has given us a problem, with one of the stamp issues shown marking the 150th anniversary of the Metropolitan Police, formed on 28 September 1829. If you want the answer to relate to the event, then there is no corresponding Prime Minister pictured, as in 1829 the PM was Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, who does not feature in the Prime Ministers issue.

If you want the answer to relate to the date of issue, then stamp b) showing Trafalgar was issued in 2005, where again there is no corresponding PM on the new stamps. You cannot have it both ways, so sadly the quiz is impossible! I would be interested in your comments. I always do your excellent quizzes so it is disappointing to have such an ambiguous question.

Dave Dorgan, by email

Your puzzling point is well made, Mr Dorgan; the links are not all date-perfect. However, we cannot help thinking that the British bobby will forever be connected with the name of a certain Prime Minister (who founded the first modern police force when he was Home Secretary) and only one Prime Minister was famously first to receive news of the Battle of Trafalgar.

But hush, we must not give away the answers here, as you will be reading this before the closing date for Question Time on 20 November. We do hope this helps you to send an entry and that this month's Poppy Puzzle on page 94 goes some way to redeem our puzzle-creating reputation.

Winter warmers Christmas collectors' specials will bring you cheer into the New Year and beyond

Christmas arrives first-class Christmas comes early again for philatelists this year with the launch of Royal Mail's 2014 festive issue on 4 November. The set is traditional Christmas writ large – buckets of snow, sledging, carol





Above and right: this year's Christmas issue Presentation Pack recreates the magic of a traditional country Christmas



Left: the 2014 Christmas issue First Day Cover

Below: the Year of the Sheep Generic Sheet out on 19 November

singing, snowman building, Christmas card posting, Santa visiting and Christmas tree buying are among the classic fun activities appearing on the seven stamps, in the Presentation Pack and on the First Day Cover. The stamps come in Second Class, Second Class Large, First Class, First Class Large, £1.28, £1.47 and £2.15 values. They are illustrated by artist Andrew Bannecker, who has created a festive rural idyll on the Presentation Pack: his depiction of the Snowy Village Christmas 2014 Fair features Santa's grotto, skating, a fun fair, a tug of war involving a giant cracker and a children's snowball fight. Also in the Christmas 2014 issue are a Generic Sheet and a Smilers® Sheet •

Baa humbug Christmas not quite your thing? Then celebrate Chinese New Year in style instead with the Lunar New Year – Year of the Sheep Generic ▸

Lunar New Year – Year of the Sheep Generic Sheet – Specifications

Issue date	19 November
Stamps	20 x Smilers® range Fireworks stamps
Design	hat-trick
Printer	International Security Printers
Print process	Lithography
Sheet size	297mm (w) x 210mm (h)





Above: the Year of the Sheep Coin Cover follows on from the Year of the Horse Cover (which has now sold out)

Sheet and Coin Cover issued on 19 November. The Sheet comprises 20 Firework Smilers® stamps with labels showing different types of sheep to illustrate the classic five elements (water, wood, fire, earth and metal), Chinese New Year celebrations held across the UK in Belfast, Cardiff, Cambridge, Sheffield and Edinburgh, and Chinese icons such as traditional lanterns.

This Generic Sheet is the fourth in the series, following on from the 2014 Year of the Horse Sheet in 2013, which was preceded by the Year of the Snake and Year of the Dragon Sheets. The Chinese Year of the Sheep lasts from 19 February 2015 to 7 February 2016. The Coin Cover features a one-ounce silver proof £2 coin designed by British-Chinese series artist Wuon-Gean Ho. The coin's reverse side features two Swaledale sheep and bears the Chinese character for 'sheep' – a pictograph of the animal's head and horns •

Amazing but truce Have you ever wondered how exactly British troops shared their Christmas Day with the enemy in 1914? Royal Mail's Christmas Truce Commemorative Sheet, out on Remembrance Day, tells the amazing story of those unofficial ceasefires. See page 84 for details •

Floral tribute Poppy stamps paying tribute to the sacrifice of millions in the Great War have been re-released in 'special editions' as part of the 1914 commemorations. The definitive-sized First Class Poppy stamp, from the First World War 2014 set, is now available in self-adhesive sheets of 50. The First Class Poppy Post & Go Symbolic Flowers stamp can now be purchased separately from the rest of the stamps in the series, on dedicated reels in Post & Go machines. In addition, the British Postal Museum & Archive is selling its own version of the Post & Go Poppy, from the foyer machine at its central London HQ •





Above: the Poppy stamp from this year's Post & Go Symbolic Flowers series and below it the Lest We Forget Poppy stamp of 2006, reissued this month on the Christmas Truce Commemorative Sheet (see page 85)

Left: the new Kuala Lumpur Exhibition Sheet celebrates Malaysia's first FIP show

Eastern greetings Royal Mail celebrates the Kuala Lumpur 2014 FIP show, from 1 to 6 December, with an Exhibition Sheet. The Sheet, out on 1 December, consists of 20 First Class Hello stamps with accompanying labels showcasing the history, beauty and modern urban culture of Malaysia •



Last chance to buy Royal Mail's 2013 Annual Collection comes off sale on 4 November, and the final day for purchasing last year's Madonna and Child Christmas issue is 5 November •

Personal touch Now is the time to order Smilers® with your favourite photos to use on your Christmas mail. On page 96 we pay a seasonal tribute to Marcus James, Head of Design and Editorial at Royal Mail Stamps and Collectibles. Marcus deserves his very own Smiler® for smiling through the creation of the stunning First World War stamp series launched this year •

January to May 2015 Special Stamp Programme

- 6 January – Alice In Wonderland
- 20 January – Smilers®
- 18 February – Post & Go Working Sail
- 19 February – Inventive Britain
- 5 March – Bridges
- 1 April – Comedy Greats
- 6 May – 175th Anniversary of the Penny Black
- 13 May – Post & Go Heraldic Beasts
- 14 May – First World War 1915

Please note that the above list may be subject to change. See December *Bulletin* for June to December 2015 issues.

Post & Go update Martyn Fry reports





Autumn Stampex success Royal Mail kiosks A003 and A004 were at Autumn Stampex with Machin and Union Flag stamps as well as the new Symbolic Flowers issue. For the first time, the Poppy stamp from the set was made available as a separate strip to carry the 'First World War Centenary' overprint. Another first for Royal Mail was the trial of the Series 2 machine (pictured left) as a payment terminal for the purchase of selected pre-packaged products from the display racks on the main Royal Mail stand. The aim was to help reduce queuing time on counter positions.

Poppy stamp flourishes The Poppy Post & Go stamp is now being distributed into the Post Office Post & Go network as part of the annual Remembrance activities. It is available from the Royal Mail static sites at the BPMA and the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) in Portsmouth. The stamp will be replaced by the Winter Greenery set on 13 November (except at the NMRN). See below.



Winter wonder The new Christmas Post & Go issue, Winter Greenery, is on sale from 13 November at all Post Office Post & Go machines and at the BPMA. There are two stamps for multi-value use (Butcher's Broom and Holly) and two Second Class (Common Ivy and Mistletoe). These Post & Go stamps can be bought from the machines until 24 December.

Trafalgar battle remembered The A002 kiosk at the NMRN in Portsmouth now has a 'Trafalgar Day' underprint on the Union Flag, which is available until the end of 10 November. The Poppy Post & Go stamp, with the 'The NMRN' static location identifier, is now replacing the current Machin Post & Go stamp and is available until 13 November.

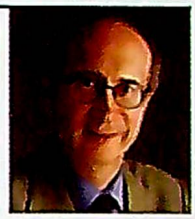
Post & Go exhibition programme

Stafford Stamp Show	7-8 November 2014
Spring Stampex	22-25 February 2015
86th Scottish Congress, Perth	17-18 April 2015

Note: exhibitions may be added or removed and Post & Go stamp listings for individual shows may change

Post & Go plus Newly configured Post & Go equipment giving you more buying choices has been installed at the BPMA. The standard machine has had an additional printer box fitted – allowing the sale of a wider range of stamps beyond the standard two reels •

Stamp Scene John Holman keeps you posted on events and activities in the philatelic world



UK diary dates

7 November Stuart Rossiter Lecture, The Future of Postal History, by David Beech, Grosvenor Philatelic Auctions, 399 Strand, London WC2R 0LR, 5pm. Admission free by ticket – apply to Rex Dixon: 39 Braybank, Bray, Maidenhead SL6 2BH, email rexdixon@btinternet.com.
7-8 November Stafford Stamp Show, Staffordshire County Showground ST18 0BD. 50 dealers. Information: www.jrs-stamp-shows.co.uk.
9 November Modern British Philatelic Circle AGM, Dunchurch Village Hall, Rugby Road, Dunchurch CV22 6PN, 9am to 3.30pm. AGM before lunch, then meet friends and find those elusive items for your collection. Information: Tony Wilkins, 01384 891373, email tony@mbp-circle.co.uk.
11 November Friends of BPMA talk on the Post & Go Revolution – for location and contact information, see BPMA section on page 78.
14 November Strand Stamp Fair, Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, London WC1, 9am to 4pm. Information: 020 8946 4480, www.stampshows.net.
14-15 November Leeds Philatelic Society Annual Stamp Fair, Pudsey Civic Hall, Pudsey LS28 5TA. Saturday, 10.30am to 5.30pm; Sunday, 10am to 4pm. Information: 01943 465236.
29 November GB Philatelic Society displays QEII Wildings (11am), Naval Mail (2.15pm), Royal Philatelic Society, 41 Devonshire Place, London W1. Information: 01753 887755.
3 December Grimsby and District Philatelic Society Annual Charity Auction, Central Hall, Duncombe Street, Grimsby DN32 7EG, 6pm. Information: Dave McMann, 01472 887523 or John Mileman, 01472 827396.
4 December Royal Philatelic Society London displays by Scottish members, RPSL, 41 Devonshire Place, London W1, 1pm. Open to non-members by prior arrangement. Information: 020 7486 1044.
12 December Strand Stamp Fair, see details above •

International exhibitions

Malaysia 2014, a joint World Youth Stamp Exhibition and Asian International Exhibition, will be held in Kuala Lumpur from 1 to 6 December. For more details contact Richard West: richjwest@btinternet.com. Next year international exhibitions will be held in London (Europhilex, 13 to 16 May) and Singapore (14 to 19 August). For information and application forms for Singapore, contact Peter Cockburn: pfcockburn@aol.com, 01444 811004 •

1840 EUROPHILEX STAMP EXHIBITION LONDON 2015

Stamp-related exhibitions and events

The main anniversary of 2014 is the centenary of the start of the First World War (and also the 75th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War). The first in a series of Royal Mail stamps commemorating the Great War was issued on 28 July.

Post Office Ltd is organising special travelling displays in its branches to show how the General Post Office fitted into the story of the First World War. The exhibition, curated with the BPMA, is part of a five-year programme ▸



of events by the Post Office to mark the centenary of the First World War. The Post Office Rifles fought at Ypres, the Somme and Passchendaele and were awarded 145 decorations for gallantry. The exhibition can be seen at the Angel Walk branch in Tonbridge until 14 November.

The exhibition, Behind the Lines: Personal Stories of the First World War, is on at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh until 11 November. The First World War and the Bank of England exhibition is at the Bank of England Museum, London EC4 until March 2015 (open Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm – enquiries: 020 7601 5545). For details of numerous local events and exhibitions see the Imperial War Museums website at www.iwm.org.uk.

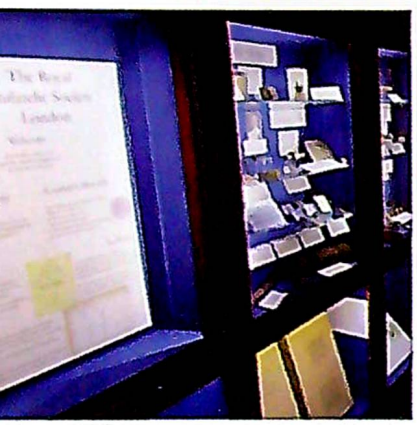
British stamps featuring past monarchs are popular with many collectors. Exhibitions relating to Kings George I, II and III can be seen respectively at Hampton Court Palace, Kensington Palace and Kew Palace until 30 November. A display, The Real Tudors: Kings and Queens Rediscovered, is on at the National Portrait Gallery in London until 1 March 2015.



Stamps were issued in 2011 to mark the 150th anniversary of Morris and Company. An exhibition, William Morris & His Legacy 1860-1960, is on at the National Portrait Gallery until 11 January (there is an admission charge).

Abram Games was one of the great graphic designers of the 20th century, with several stamps to his credit – see the feature in the March 2014 issue of the *Bulletin*. An exhibition, Designing the 20th Century: Life and Work of Abram Games, is on at the Jewish Museum, Albert Street, London NW1 until 4 January. Open Sunday to Thursday, 10am to 5pm and Friday, 10am to 2pm (admission charge). Visit www.jewishmuseum.org.uk for details •

Museum accreditation



The Royal Philatelic Society London is delighted that its Museum has been granted Accredited Museum status by the Arts Council England. There are more than 1,700 Accredited Museums in the UK, of which 137 are in London. This accreditation gives recognition to the strenuous efforts made by the Society in recent years to improve the management of its Museum and to make it more accessible to visitors and researchers. The Accredited Status demonstrates that the Museum is being professionally run to nationally agreed standards, and provides confidence to potential donors of artefacts, grant funders and other partners.

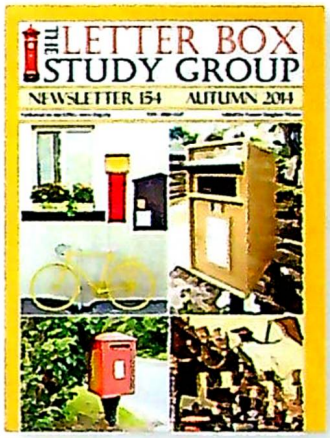
The Museum collections cover philatelic and security printing; postal service and other accessories; philatelic collecting; and philatelic exhibitions. Permanent displays, catering for philatelists and non-philatelists alike, show highlights and rarities from the collection, supplemented by a rolling programme of temporary displays. For further information see www.rpsl.org.uk or contact Curator Mark Copley at museum@rpsl.org.uk or on 020 7486 1044 •

Society journals

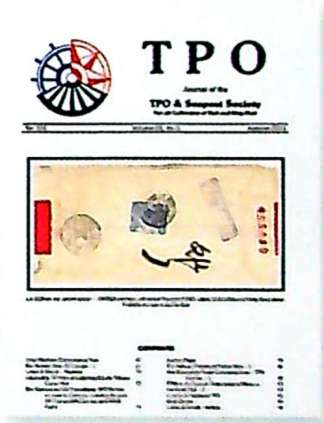
The Autumn 2014 *Newsletter* – No 154 – of the Letter Box Study Group (LBSG) comprises 52 pages packed with information and approximately 200 colour illustrations of letter boxes and related items from all over the world. Articles cover interesting boxes in Birmingham, gold-painted boxes, Australia's small cast iron letter receivers, fluted boxes, the Postal & Telegraphic Museum in Santiago, Chile, Queensland letter boxes and

collectable miniature boxes. The survey of international boxes covers the USA, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vatican City and Venezuela. There is a section relating to the BPMA, which includes artist's impressions of the lecture area and archive storage area in the new museum, due to open in 2016. There is extensive coverage of Royal Mail's recent announcement to install a further 2,000 boxes (there are currently 115,300) and changes to earlier collection times from many of the less-used boxes. No boxes are to be taken out of use.

A new publication on lamp boxes is reviewed, and there is an extensive listing of LBSG guides and publications. For details of the LBSG contact Val Scott at 38 Leopold Avenue, Birmingham B20 1ES, or email membership@lbsg.org.



The Autumn 2014 issue of *TPO*, the journal of the TPO & Seapost Society, includes features on the London & Holyhead TPO and a cover carried on the Grand Junction Railway in 1838. The listing of TPO services as part of war emergency postal communications is continued. There are notes and articles on overseas services as well as British.



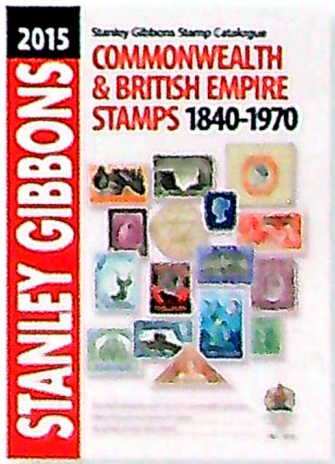
The main feature, entitled The Mystery Ship: RS Cyclops-1, concerns covers bearing Paquebot cancels and R.S. CYCLOPS cachet. These covers were produced by a Dr R M Baguley and have puzzled collectors for some time. The writer, Bruce Robertson, concludes that the covers are undoubtedly bogus, though the cancels appear to be genuine.

For details of the TPO & Seapost Society contact Julian Jones at 19 Richmond Lane, Romsey SO51 7LB or visit www.tpo-seapost.org.uk. The Society will attend Swinpex and Midpex on 13 June and 4 July 2015 respectively.

It is rare for *The London Philatelist*, the august journal of the Royal Philatelic Society London, to include features on modern GB issues. However, the September 2014 issue includes an article, Unrecorded Harrison & Sons Ltd/De La Rue Internally Funded Self-adhesive Trial, by Steve McGill. The article will be of interest to Machin specialists. Copies of *The London Philatelist* are available to non-members – price: £2.50 plus postage (annual subscription to journal £25). Contact Royal Philatelic Society London at 41 Devonshire Place, London W1G 6JY, or call 020 7486 1044 •

New catalogues

Stanley Gibbons published the 2015 (117th) edition of its *Commonwealth & British Empire Stamps 1840-1970* in September. There is now a fully priced listing of Indian stamps used in Muscat, and the South African 'Second Republic' definitives have been rewritten to include the two types of RSA watermark. Double 'Specimen' overprints are listed for the first time, as are the first Sarawak telegraphs set. Varieties now listed include the Rhodesia 1d 'Extra boatman' and nun variety on Sudan Camel postman stamps. Many thousands of prices have increased since the last edition, affecting both cheap and rare stamps. Price: £84.95 (deluxe leatherbound edition £110).



New editions are now available of the *Stanley Gibbons Australia* catalogue (9th edition, £29.95) and *East Africa with Egypt & Sudan* (3rd edition, £24.95). The six-volume 2015 *Stamps of the World* catalogue costs £275. Orders and enquiries: Stanley Gibbons, 7 Parkside, Ringwood, Hants BH24 3SH, phone 0800 611622 (UK) or +44 (0)1425 472363 (from overseas), or email orders@stanleygibbons.com •

British Postal Museum & Archive



The BPMA, located at Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1, near the famous Mount Pleasant sorting office, is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm (Thursdays until 7pm) and on Saturday 8 November and 13 December (10am to 5pm, but closed the following Mondays). Showing at Freeling House is a display of photographs of Mail Rail.

Visit the BPMA website, www.postalheritage.org.uk, for details of other exhibitions: Post Office in the Community (at Blists Hill Victorian Town, Shropshire), Last Post: Remembering the First World War (Brading Roman Villa, Isle of Wight, until 13 December and Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron until 27 March 2015). The BPMA also hosts 25 online exhibitions, including Aerial Post, regional stamps, Machins, David Gentleman, postal vehicles and letter boxes. A set of six Last Post postcards is on sale at the BPMA shop, priced £3.75.

Also see the website for details of Archive tours (10 December), Museum Store tours (5 November), Pillar to Post walks (22 November), and talks entitled Hounded from Pillar to Post: The Life of Conscientious Objectors in the Postal Service (6 November) and Glad Tidings: A History of the Christmas Card (2 December). Phone 020 7239 2570 to book or request a copy of the BPMA Events Guide. Advance booking and a small charge apply to some events.

The Friends of the BPMA have organised a talk on the Post & Go revolution on 11 November (2pm) at Phoenix Centre, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DG (next to the BPMA at Freeling House). The talk will be given by Bob Fothergill of Intelligent AR, who has been much involved with the development of Post & Go at Royal Mail. To book a place contact Brian Livingstone on 020 7498 8521 or at livingstone484@btinternet.com.

For more on the Friends of the BPMA, visit www.postalheritage.org.uk/friends or email friends@postalheritage.org.uk. Annual membership is £21, with a reduced rate for over-65s •

Railway letter stamps





The Festiniog Railway (FR) in North Wales has issued railway letter stamps since 1969. These are used by visitors to the railway and the Welsh Highland Railway (WHR), and are popular with philatelists. Special covers are carried on days of issue of new Royal Mail stamps and for FR and WHR events and anniversaries. Catalogues listing the stamps and covers were published in 1999 (covering the period 1969 to 1977) and 2009 (Vol. 2, 1998 to 2009).

The Railway has now published Vol. 3, which lists covers 1998 to 2014 and includes a listing of all 65 stamps issued since 1969. It gives details of the number of stamps printed and covers serviced on each date with information on the FR cancellations and Royal Mail postmarks used. All the stamps and a selection of covers are illustrated in colour. This is a useful work of reference for collectors of the FR/WHR issues. Price: £10, UK postage £1.25 from: Railway Letter Service, Festiniog Railway Company, Harbour Station, Porthmadog LL49 9NF, or email railwayletterpost@ffwhr.com •

Forthcoming auctions

Grosvenor's auction taking place on 18 November includes a gold medal-winning collection of Channel Islands Postal History. Further information: 020 7379 8789 or email info@grosvenor-auctions.co.uk •

New from the islands

Jersey Painted by local artist Nick Partlett and issued last month, a new set of six stamps from Jersey Post celebrates the fascinating history of the island's oyster fishing industry. The stamps measure 30mm x 40mm and are printed by Cartor Security Printing, France. A pretty Miniature Sheet (75mm x 110mm), Presentation Packs and Prestige Booklet are also available. Information: visit www.jerseystamps.com or phone the Jersey Philatelic Bureau on 01534 616320 •



Isle of Man A new issue with a very Manx theme is the Silk Painters Town Banners Miniature Sheet. The Sheet showcases a parade of colourful banners that portray the Isle of Man's heritage sites, buildings and activities unique to each area. The pictures are painted by members of The Isle of Man Guild of Silk Painters. The Sheet is a result of a collaborative project involving the Isle of Man Post Office and artists and organisers of The Celtic Kingdom Festival of Silk, The Island of Culture and Manx National Heritage. Information: www.iomstamps.com or phone 01624 698454 •



Guernsey Issued on 11 November, Guernsey Post's philatelic contribution to the commemoration of the start of the First World War comprises six stamps on the theme of Stories From The Great War. This is the first issue in an ongoing series and each stamp features an original portrait and name of a person whose service in the First World War has earned them a place in Guernsey history.

The stamps were designed by Charlotte Barnes and were lithographed by BDT International. Information: www.guernseystamps.com or phone Guernsey Post on 01481 733550 •





A gift from the Princess

An image of the Princess Mary gift box features on one of the £1.47 stamps in the first set of the Royal Mail five-year series commemorating the First World War, issued on 28 July. The historic gift to frontline troops remains a link with the past in many families, so we asked for your tales of the Princess Mary gift box and you loyally answered the call. Many wrote in with their memories of the box and of loved ones who received it. We print some of those memories here as we tell the story of this Great War icon and consider the lives of our ancestors a hundred Christmases ago.

They were gifts from a pretty teenage princess that touched the heart of every muddied, bloodied soldier and windswept sailor who received them. Nothing could shut out the blare of the enemy's shells or stop the scything of his machine guns. But the little brass box packed with comforts was a rare consolation in the French trenches or on dawn patrol in the North Sea.

The gift was by no means huge, but as much goodwill as possible was



Below: the classic configuration for Mary's Christmas present was the smoker's gift box. It comprised a packet of 20 cigarettes, an ounce of tobacco, a tinder lighter, pipe, Christmas card and picture of Princess Mary

Family treasure

'When I saw the gift box on the stamp and in the *Bulletin*, I was very excited. I thought to myself, "I've got one of those," says *Bulletin* reader Hedley Moss. The Princess Mary box belonged to his infantryman father Frederick, who served on the Somme. He died in 1945, and his widow Phyllis took the box on. It passed to Hedley, now 78, on Phyllis's death. 'I'm glad the box has stayed in the family. It is a lovely memento to have,' says Hedley, a collector for 60 years who has over 20 albums of British Empire islands stamps and 18 albums of GB issues. The retired logistics chief from Cheshire adds: 'I was always very proud of the box, glad to have retained something my father had during the war. When you have someone who fought in those battles, you've always got a certain amount of pride that they were there, and that they did their share.'

packed into the little tin: a packet of fags, tobacco and a lighter. But it was in some small way de luxe – Harrods was to supply the pipes, Asprey the tinder lighters. And in the opinion of millions of men holding the front line, these small tokens were fit for a king. No wonder: in addition to the premium brands was a photograph of Mary as well as a Christmas card from her. A Tommy could almost feel he was in the family...



Christmas Gift Fund The only daughter of King George V and Queen Mary, the Princess was only 17 when she announced she wanted to use her own private allowance to buy a Christmas gift for every soldier and sailor fighting. An impossible, childish dream, perhaps, but Mary's endearing innocence struck a chord with the great and the good. It was decided to finance her dream with a public fundraising campaign to which she could lend her name.

The Christmas Gift Fund was launched at the Ritz Hotel on 14 October 1914, with the Princess in attendance and the Duke of Devonshire chairing the Fund committee. The next day Buckingham Palace released a statement by Mary promoting the Fund. In it she said:

'I want you now to help me to send a Christmas present from the whole of the nation to every sailor afloat and every soldier at the front.

'I am sure that we should all be happier to feel that we had helped to send our little token of love and sympathy on Christmas morning.'

Who could resist such earnestness? Not the British public. Their donations raised around £162,500 – the equivalent to a staggering £16 million in today's money – to fund production of the gift box and the presents themselves.

This enabled some 426,000 gift boxes to be presented to frontline personnel in the European theatre on Christmas Day. Later, thousands more boxes were sent to British, Colonial and Indian troops serving ▸



Left: this First World War 1914 Stamp Set is the first of a five-year series commemorating the 1914-1918 period

elsewhere and British soldiers based in Britain, with deliveries continuing through 1915 and into 1916.

So, what to put inside the box? The smokes were a no-brainer. Everyone loved a puff in those days, so almost 45,000lbs of tobacco and more than 13 million cigarettes were provided for the boxes. Yet, even in the male-dominated, white triumphalist world of 1914 Britain, there were attempts to



Centenarian biscuit

Army bandsman George Cheasman had a sense of humour that would have cheered up his comrades in the grimmest of moments – if the contents of his gift box (below) are anything to judge by. For George (pictured right with his wife) used it to store a broken ration biscuit he had fixed by wiring the pieces together! 'I was very amused when I saw the biscuit inside,' says his grandson and *Bulletin* reader Keith, 59 (left) who inherited the tin. 'Why he'd used wire I don't know, it was presumably some kind of joke. But I was pleased to see the gift box had made an appearance in the stamp issue.' Keith, a collector of GBs for about 50 years, has loaned this souvenir of George's military service to the local village museum in Wollaston, Northamptonshire – where he lives – for its First World War display.



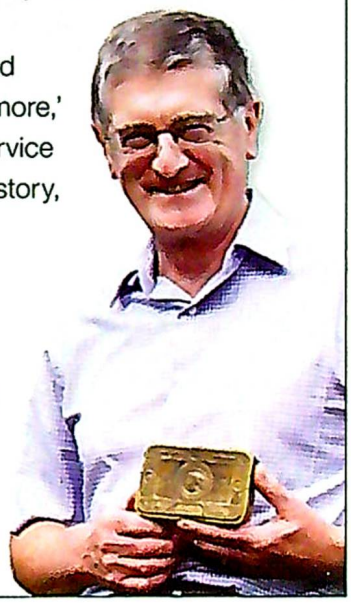


One postman's journey

It is an unspoilt link to a bloody past, a symbol of the service a brave relative gave in the Great War. Royal Mail pensioner Don Grey is the proud owner of his grandfather Harry Scott's 1914 Christmas box, handed down the family to him. Its contents are still intact, including the gift of tobacco.

'My grandfather never really spoke about the war and what he experienced. I wish we could have found out more,' says Don, who retired in 2003 as Head of Business Service Management. 'When I started delving into the family history, I found he was in the Border Regiment of the British Expeditionary Force. I followed his footsteps through France and Belgium and also those of his brother, Christopher, who was killed at Arras.'

Harry joined up in August 1914. Less than a year later, he was gassed at the Second Battle of Ypres while repelling a German attack. He returned to Britain, becoming a postman in Cumbria. Harry received the Imperial Service Medal for more than 31 years' service.



Timeline images © Alamy

Princess Mary: a life

1897 Born on 25 April at Sandringham, the only daughter of George V and Queen Mary.



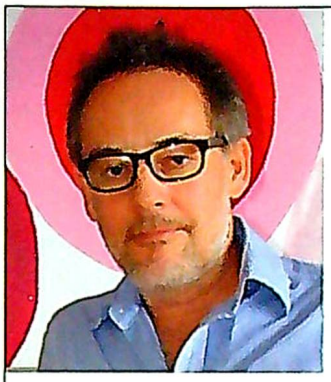
1914 Inspires the nation to set up the Christmas Gift Fund.

1918 Takes a nursing course, then works at Great Ormond Street Hospital.



1920 Becomes President of the Girl Guides Association.

1922 Marries Henry, Viscount Lascelles, the son of the Earl of Harewood, and becomes the Countess of Harewood.



Schoolboy history

Studying the stamp bearing the Princess Mary gift box took Andrew Neish, the writer of this article, back to his childhood in an instant: 'Suddenly I was a nine-year-old boy again, when I had owned an original box, bought for me by my mother at a bric-a-brac sale. For a few years, before it was lost to growing up and moving on, that box was my treasure chest. As a keen young militaria collector, I filled its brass corners with random souvenirs of battle. Bullet casings, medals, uniform buttons, cap badges. Royal Fusiliers badges were my favourite, with their flaming grenade motif. Also prized were my Royal Artillery jacket buttons, bearing a crown and cannon. I owned no gallantry medals, their value beyond the reach of pocket money. But I had Second World War campaign medals, for the march up Italy, the push into Germany, the struggle in Burma.

'But it was always the box that intrigued me. Brought up on comics packed with gung-ho adventures about the war against the Nazis and Japanese, I was ignorant of the Great War. I remember being puzzled when I first saw 'Japan' inscribed on the box's gleaming lid, along with Britain's other allies, France, Belgium, Russia. How had our friends become the merciless enemies in my comic books? Another memory came back, one I had quite forgotten until I laid eyes on this poignant stamp. As a boy I would run my hand over the box, thinking of the soldier who had kept it in his pocket amid the misery of the trenches. I always wondered what his name was, and whether he had survived to bring his gift home.'

cater for 'minority' tastes. For non-smokers – confound the awkward blighters – instead of the tobacco products, there were boxes containing a pack of sweets and a khaki writing case, pencil, paper and envelopes.

Indian troops were to receive a box with the cigarettes, sugar candy and a tin of spices. The Sikhs among them had the same but no cigarettes. But what about female military nurses? None of the above configurations were considered appropriate for ladies. Their gift boxes contained chocolate.

A symbolic memento The box itself is a gleaming advert for God, Country and Empire. With the legend 'Christmas 1914', The King's daughter takes centre stage on the lid, her elegant profile flanked by monograms. The title proclaims 'Imperium Britannicum' and is flanked by sword and bayonet to represent the British Army. The Royal Navy is also represented, by a pair of embossed dreadnoughts proudly slicing through the waves. And the glory is shared with other nations: on the edges and corners of the lid are inscribed the names of allies – France, Russia, Belgium, Japan, Montenegro and Servia [sic].

Whatever the politics, the gift boxes were gratefully received by men at the front, freezing and frightened by a conflict that had only just begun to be seen as serious in the minds of the British public and looked like it would go on and on. Many brought the boxes home and kept them for the rest of their lives. Those, of course, who survived the Christmases in the four dreadful years to come •

Below: a contemporary box based on the design of the original Princess Mary tin is available at www.royalmail.com/stamps for £9.99. Measuring 3.4cm x 18.2cm x 24.3cm, it is considerably larger than the original





1926 Is appointed Commandant in Chief of British Red Cross Detachments

1932 Becomes Princess Royal. **1953** Attends the Coronation of her niece, Queen Elizabeth II.

1965 Has a fatal heart attack on 28 March while walking with her son on the Harewood estate.

Christmas truce in the trenches

Commemorating an extraordinary day of goodwill when the killing stopped in December 1914…



Above: Private Turner of the London Rifle Brigade, photographed sharing the Christmas truce with two German officers

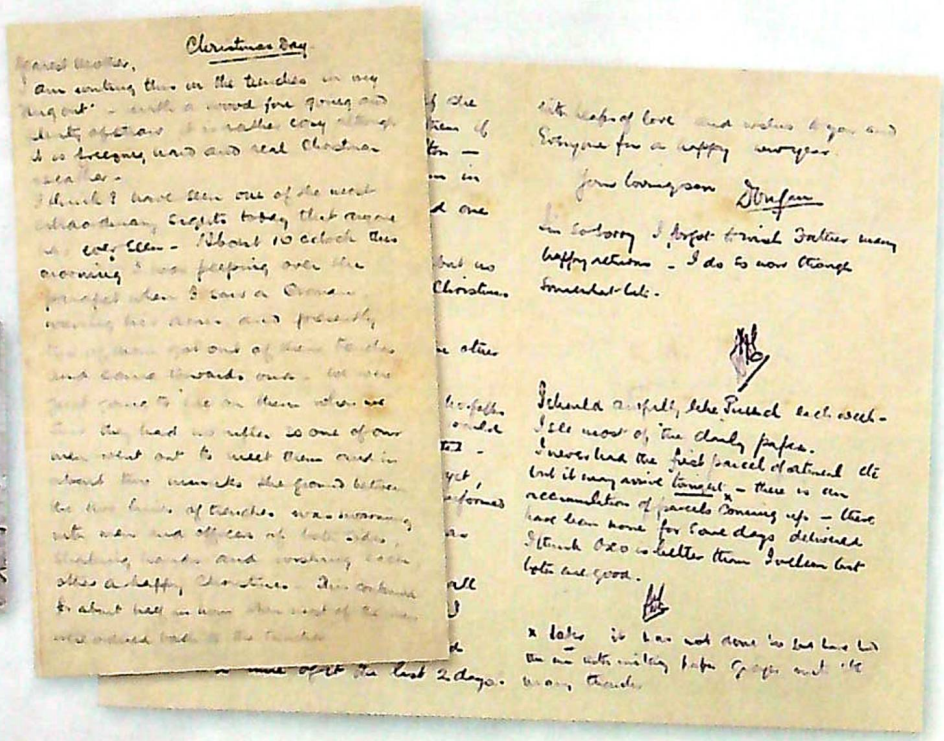
It was a general's worst nightmare but a dream come true for the rank and file dodging death in the trenches. On Christmas Day in 1914, British and German troops climbed from their dugouts and met as friends in no man's land. They shook hands, shared beer, swapped rations, played football. For a small moment, history was suspended and the killing ceased.

These brief celebrations of peace are marked by Royal Mail's extraordinary Christmas Truce Commemorative Sheet, aptly released on Remembrance Day, 11 November. The Sheet features the now-classic Poppy definitive of 2010 and ten labels with historic photographs showing different aspects of the Truce.

Inside the Commemorative Sheet pack is a facsimile of a letter written by Second Lieutenant Alfred Dougan Chater of the 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders, with his first-hand account of the Christmas Truce on his sector of the front. On the backing card Imperial War Museum Great War expert James Taylor details the various sites of the ceasefires represented on each label. (As much as two-thirds of the 27-mile stretch of the Western Front held by the British declared a truce for Christmas.)

On 25 December near Fromelles in France, for example, British and German soldiers held a joint burial service for comrades killed in a night assault the week before. Carols were sung. Cap badges and uniform buttons were swapped. The Germans handed sausage and schnapps to the British and were given British bully beef, cigarettes and tea. But the sanity could not last. The British and German high commands quickly banned any further fraternisation. The season of goodwill was all too brief. The world was at war again •

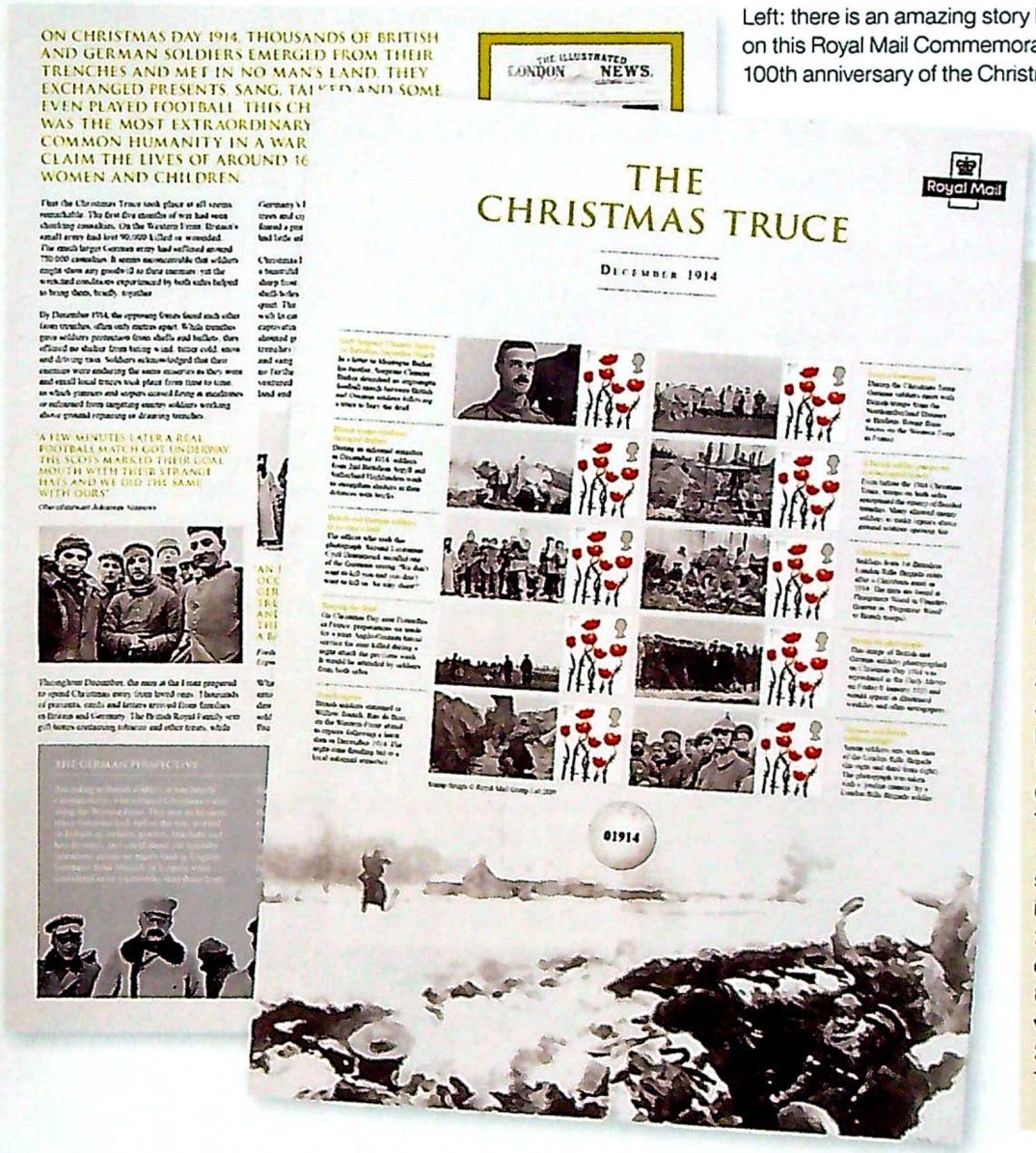
Right: this replica letter enclosed with Royal Mail's Commemorative Sheet gives a contemporary account of the 1914 Christmas Truce



Below: Bequia, St Vincent and the Grenadines has issued this sheetlet on the Christmas Truce theme



Background images © Alamy, © Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans



Left: there is an amazing story behind each of the ten labels on this Royal Mail Commemorative Sheet, which marks the 100th anniversary of the Christmas Truce of December 1914

1914 WW1 begins...

28 June Franz Ferdinand assassinated.
4 August Britain declares war on Germany.
20-30 August Russia defeated at Tannenberg..
23 August-11 September Austria-Hungary defeated in Galicia.
5-12 September Germany defeated at the Marne.
19 October-22 November Allied victory at Ypres after shockingly heavy loss of life.
3-5 November German victory at Tanga (now in Kenya).
7 November Germany surrenders Tsingtao in China.
22 November British occupy Basra (now in Iraq).
8 December British naval victory at the Falklands.
25 December Christmas Truce on the Western Front.

Christmas Truce Commemorative Sheet – Specifications

Date of issue	11 November
Number of stamps	10 x 1st Class Poppy Stamps
Stamp design	Hat-trick design
Sheet format	Portrait A4
Stamp format	Portrait
Stamp size	20mm x 24mm
Stamp printer	International Security Printers
Print process	Lithography
Perforations	Die-cut simulated
Phosphor	Bars as appropriate
Gum	Self-adhesive
Pack and sheet design	True North
Pack and sheet printer	Zenith Print and Packaging Ltd
Words	James Taylor
Price	£14.95

Christmas Truce Commemorative Sheet – Acknowledgements

Except those listed below, all images are © Imperial War Museums. *Stamp sheet background*: image of shooting match between rival trenches © Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans; Sergeant Clement Barker, bnps.co.uk; 2nd Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Q 56214); British and German soldiers in no man's land (HU 35801) – special thanks to Malcolm Drummond; burying the dead near Fromelles (Q 50720), Willow Trench, Rue de Bois (Q 56198); German troops and Northumberland Hussars soldiers (Q 50719); waterlogged trench (Q 49221), Christmas meal (Q 11729) and British and German soldiers on Christmas Day 1914 © Mirrorpix; London Rifle Brigade men and Saxon soldiers (Q 11745). *Backing card*: front cover of *The Illustrated London News*, 9 January 1915, iln.org.uk; British and German soldiers on Christmas Day 1914 (Q 11718), British and German soldiers in no man's land (HU 35801), British and German officers in no man's land (Q 50721) and shooting match between rival trenches © Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans; 2nd Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Q 56214); burying the dead near Fromelles (Q 50720); facsimile of letter from Second Lieutenant Alfred Dougan Chater, 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders, reproduced by permission of the family.

All presents and correct

James Cooper selects the perfect gifts for a fabulous philatelic Christmas…



Throne sweet throne The perfect decoration for anyone's home – a framed set of the 2014 Buckingham Palace issue (**a**). It features a print of the painting commissioned by Royal Mail for one of the stamps. Price: £35, www.royalmail.com/frames



Sealed with a kiss Send her crazy with this romantic silver necklace (**b**) with pearl and envelope containing an original Penny Red – and maybe your message of love… Price: £65, www.notonthehighstreet.com/limetreedesign

Chairmail The Artisana Chaise Longue (**c**), handmade with stunning velvet fabric and beech frame, definitely has the stamp of quality about it. Price: £1,181.50, www.furnituredivas.co.uk



Vintage year The luxury leatherbound Royal Mail 2014 Year Book (**d**) explores all the year's issues and has a special section displaying every stamp. Price: £156, www.royalmail.com/yearbook





Pristine collection The Royal Mail Post & Go Album keeps your Collector Cards in perfect condition (**e**). Price: £19, www.royalmail.com/albums

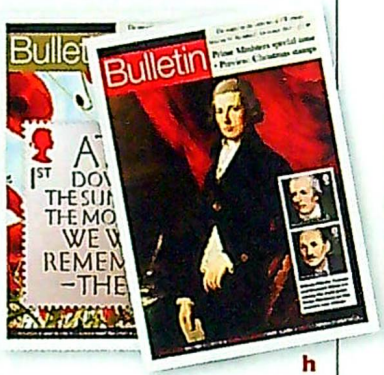


Fit for a king Douglas Muir's fascinating book, *George V and the GPO: Stamps, Conflict and Creativity* (**f**), views The King's reign through the lens of postal history – from airmail to Mail Rail. Price: £9.99, www.postalheritage.org.uk/shop or phone 020 7354 7272. *Bulletin* readers get free postage by quoting order code 'GEORGE14'.



Magnificent magnifier Supersize your favourite stamps and admire them in all their glory with the Pro10 Microscope (**g**). The Pro10 magnifies items 200 times and its integral camera captures your collection to show off to friends! Price: £250, www.stanleygibbons.com

A real page-turner Why keep all the philatelic fun to yourself? Give your favourite stamp magazine to a deserving collector with a *Bulletin* subscription (**h**). Price: £12.95 (a discount of over 25 per cent off usual price), www.royalmail.com/bulletin



Just good Friends The benefits of a gift membership of the Friends of the BPMA include 15 per cent off BPMA shop products, the same discount and priority booking for BPMA events, and BPMA journal *Cross Post* (**i**). Price: £20 (£15 for over-65s), www.postalheritage.org.uk/friends



Classic errors In the final instalment of his three-part series on Post & Go Machins, Douglas Myall FRPSL explores the intriguing world of collectable label errors

IT IS A QUIRK of stamp collecting that errors are often more highly prized than perfection. For me, their attraction is that the cause often reveals something about production methods. There are two kinds of error on Post & Go labels: one affecting the preprinted unused labels and the other affecting what the machine prints on them.

Shifting phosphor The Machin labels are preprinted in gravure by Walsall. Apart from those for the second-class services, they have, or should have, two 4.5mm phosphor bars. When in correct registration, the bars are placed left and right of the head with the right bar inset.

Correctly printed labels are, however, scarce, even rare. The bars are nearly always misplaced and both vertical and horizontal phosphor shifts are known. A horizontal shift results in the right-hand bar being narrower than the required 4.5mm and it is not inset. A vertical shift results in the single bar on the blue Machins, or both bars on the brown Machins, being short at either the top or the bottom.

Neither the printers nor Royal Mail are overly concerned by these shifts since they do not affect the efficiency of the mail sorting machines. They are, however, popular with collectors.

Watch out for 'Worldwide' As an example of the other kind of error, usually caused by a software malfunction, I have chosen one affecting the early Worldwide up to 10g stamp with the words 'up to 10g' missing (1). We know it is the 10g stamp which was affected, because it was vended as the fourth in a Collectors Set of five on a single strip and its print string ends in 04. The error is known to exist from the Manchester and London Eastcheap offices.



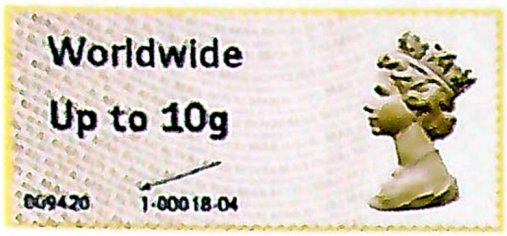
1

In both cases, the stamp also has another error: the office location code is overlapped by the machine session details. This affected all five stamps in the set.

There are other kinds of software error. We do not have space for a complete list of them, but perhaps two more examples will be of interest.

Mind the gap Between the location code and the machine number there is a gap which normally measures 1.75mm on Type 1 stamps and 0.9mm on Types 2 and 3. During the modification to vend the first pictorial labels at the Liverpool post office, a number of Type 2 stamps with a gap of 6mm were produced for all five collectors' services available at the time.

The modification of machines to vend pictorial labels could not, for some reason, be made entirely by remote control and took place in two stages. An engineer carried out the first stage on site and the change was then activated by a download. The wider gap in the text is a known state that occurred during this interval. At Liverpool, there was a problem ▸



2

installing the changes. The first stage occurred during the morning of 16 September 2010 but the final stage was not carried out until the next morning. During this interval, the machine was mistakenly put into public service and produced stamps with the 'error'. Again, the Worldwide 10g stamp differed from the other four overprinted values, this time in having the text in a mixture of Type 1 and Type 2 typefaces (2).

All five stamps with this error also have a double phosphor shift, producing stamps with bars short at the bottom by 1mm; the right bar is not inset and is only 3.1mm wide. The finder, who was present on both days, reported that only nine strips of five and 22 first-class singles exist. Sixteen of the singles were used for postage so that only six of them are in mint condition.

Repetition cycle In the next example, the counter for recording and printing the transaction number on the Wincor machines was set to repeat after 99. However, a software glitch occurred during one session while the Perth overprint for 2012 was being printed. This resulted in all six values of the Collectors Set being given a three-digit transaction number – for example the E20 stamp, first-class, first-class large, W10, W20 and W40.

A spectacular error occurred in the BPMA machine while printing the Airmail logo overprint on 16 September. The first-class and first-class large labels were printed on blue, second-class, stock (3 and 4). I understand that this was not caused by loading the wrong type of label into the machine; rather, a software issue appears to have caused the anomalous labels to be delivered from the carousel. The labels have the yearcode MA12 and make an attractive pair.



3



4

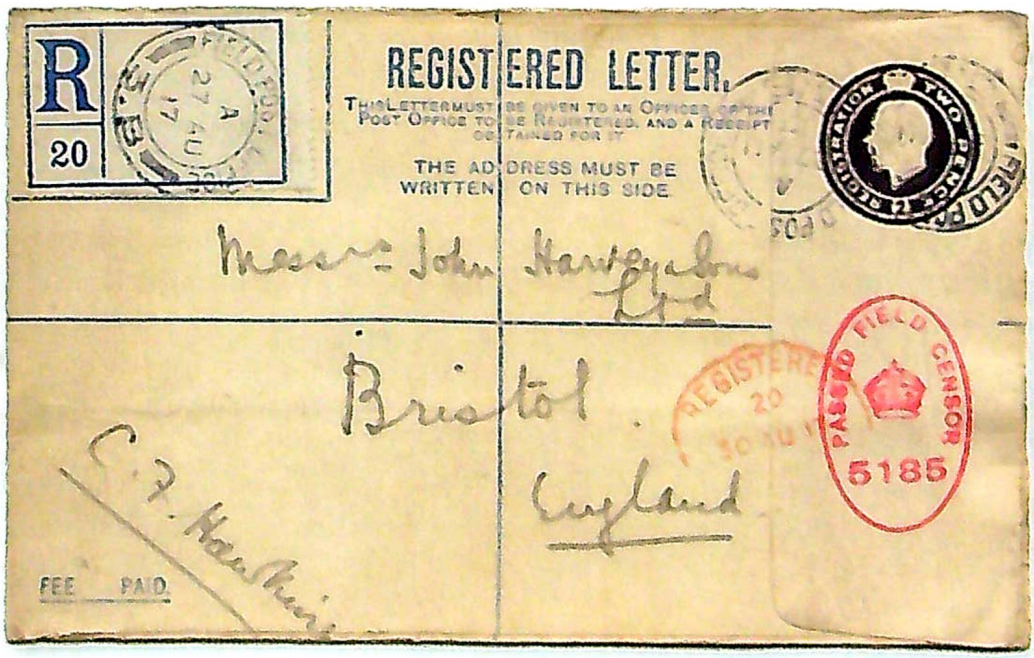
I have no effective crystal ball but it is clear from the huge investment made in Post & Go that self-service machines are here to stay. The public clearly like them and it is now probably just a matter of striking a balance between the installation costs and the workload of the post office (or maybe large store?) concerned. For the stamp collector, Post & Go stamps provide enough variety and interest to make them a worthwhile subject on their own, whether you prefer them as definitives or as pictorials. The number of Post & Go collectors is increasing and I am certain that we shall hear more of them in future •

Douglas is famous for his comprehensive study of British definitive stamps since 1967. His catalogue, 'The Complete Deegam Machin Handbook', is one of the main reference books for Machin collectors and is available on CD. Order at www.deegam.com.

Note Part two of Douglas Myall's series on Post & Go referred to Royal Mail's Hytech portable machines. These machines were short-lived, being updated and reconfigured as Royal Mail Series 1 machines after only a few outings to exhibitions. The Series 1 machines were subsequently replaced with Series 2 machines at 2014 Spring Stampex in February of this year.

Free post for WWI troops – and a P.O. admin nightmare

The registration envelopes created to offer a free service to troops writing home in the Great War gave the Post Office a headache when thousands had to be repurposed after peace came. Which makes them nicely collectible, says Colin Baker



Left: a Forces registration envelope used on 27 August 1917. It bears no indication of the place where it was posted – a wartime security measure

IT WAS A SMALL GESTURE but when you were dodging bullets and bombs in the trenches you needed all the gestures you could get. So, three months into the First World War, every member of the British Armed Forces on active service was given the privilege of free postage. They could write home to loved ones gratis, but the regulations granting this concession only applied to actual postage costs. The new rules did not cover other Post Office services such as telegrams, certificates of posting and registration fees.

The gesture may have been a comfort for the troops, but it proved a huge administrative challenge for the Post Office's stationery production and design programme. The problem centred on the pre-embossed stamp value on the 'registration envelopes' to be used by those on the front line. These specially strengthened envelopes had been available to the public for over 30 years, for carrying registered mail. They were ideal for sending coins and other valuables through the post. Since the start of the 20th century they ▸

Below: the Army handled a huge amount of mail for the troops in the First World War





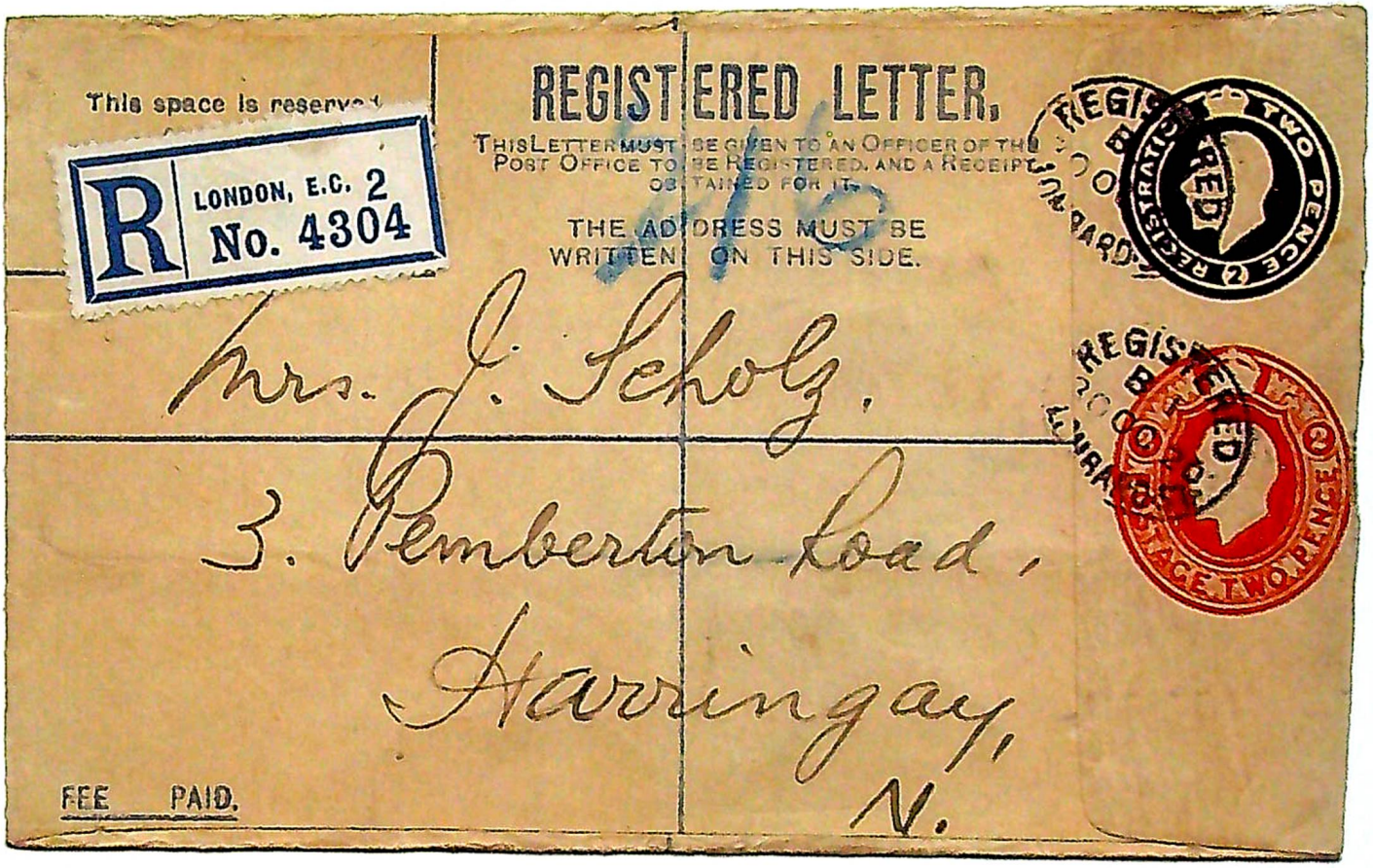
Above: an example of a registration envelope used on 12 January 1916. Although registration envelopes were intended only for troops overseas, some were cheekily posted in Blighty – like this one postmarked Aylsham

had been embossed with a 3d stamp, combining the basic inland postage rate of 1d and the 2d registration fee. But now that servicemen had free postage, these registration envelopes were not appropriate for use by those on active service. So to overcome the problem, the same type of strong envelopes were produced with the embossed stamp covering only the 2d registration fee, and were issued to Field Post Offices in 1915.

These new Forces registration envelopes were widely used, and are usually found with 'blank' registration labels, giving no indication of the location of the sender just in case they fell into enemy hands. But the administrative headaches continued for the Post Office after the war when the troops' envelopes were no long relevant, and into the 1920s when registration fees went up and postage rates both rose and fell.

Change of usage Following the end of the First World War in 1918, there was no longer any need for these tariff-free registration envelopes: servicemen were no longer on active service and so lost their privilege of free postage. The Post Office still held large stocks of the 2d envelopes, but as they did not include the cost of inland postage, they were not suitable for use by the public. In 1921 the registration fee rose from 2d to 3d to help the country pay for the past four years of fighting, making these 2d envelopes completely obsolete.

The Post Office did not want to waste them. The strengthened lining and embossed stamp made them expensive to produce. And some of the civilian issue registration envelopes were also now obsolete after rises in postage and registration fees. So extra stamps were embossed on the outdated envelopes, to give them the right postage rate for the combined postage and registration fee.



A price rise too far The 2d Forces issue had already had a 2d orange stamp added to the flap in 1920 to cover the new rates of 2d postage and the 2d registration fee. The following year a 3d violet stamp was added, this time for 2d postage and a 3d registration fee. This increase effectively doubled the postal rate that had pertained up to 1918, and proved too much for the public to bear. Following complaints from all quarters about the price rise, the inland postal rate fell to 1½d on 29 May 1922, making the uprated Forces registration envelopes obsolete once again. It was not possible to change the value of the impressed stamps to match the lower rate. This time there was no alternative but to send them for pulping •

Above: this 2d envelope was uprated to 4d in 1920, with a 2d orange embossed stamp



Left: an example of the registration envelopes uprated to 5d with a 3d violet stamp in 1921



This Month in History John Holman revisits special stamps of Christmas 1984 – and their numerous variations





Top: the 1984 Christmas set tells the story of the Nativity

Above: the second-class stamp book; discount stars; and the 6mm drop on the 22p

Below: the Lindisfarne Gospels Holy Island postmark





The 1984 Christmas set went on sale on 20 November and for the first time Christmas stamps were issued in books as well as in normal counter sheets. The five stamps were designed by Yvonne Gilbert (born 1951) who later designed the Arthurian Legends set in 1985 and the Christmas stamps of 1994. Her 1984 Christmas set featured the story of the Nativity: 13p The Holy Family, 17p Arrival in Bethlehem, 22p Shepherd and Lamb, 31p Virgin and Child and 34p Offering of Frankincense. The Queen's silhouette and value were positioned at top right (facing left) on the 13p, 22p and 31p denominations and at top left (facing right) on the 17p and 34p values. All were printed in six colours, including a stone (pale cream) background that enhanced the muted colours appropriate for the designs. The 13p value was overprinted with a single phosphor band, the others were on phosphorised paper.

The 13p second-class rate stamp was also issued in a Christmas stamp book, all previous Christmas books having contained definitive stamps. The book contained 20 stamps and was sold at £2.30, giving a 30p discount off the face value. The stamps bear a random pattern of blue double-lined stars printed on the reverse over the gum. (A detailed account of this Christmas book was provided by stamp book expert L F Newbery in the December 1984 *Bulletin*). The discount stars on the reverse of the stamps were printed by the Albert press, the stamp design by Jumelle. Newbery noted that after the printing and perforating on the Jumelle, the web was trimmed and reeled into work-size rolls for book making on the Libra machine. The cover of the stamp book, also designed by Yvonne Gilbert, features the baby Jesus in a manger.

The 13p is known imperf between stamp and bottom margin and the 17p totally imperf – priced at £6,000 and £4,500 respectively in the *GB Concise* and *Stoneham GB* catalogue. *Stoneham* also lists a major 6mm downward shift of The Queen's head and value on the 22p stamp, valued at £30. Three constant varieties are listed in the *Stanley Gibbons Specialised* catalogue – a dark spot on Joseph's left sleeve and a cluster of dots, resembling flies, over the donkey's right eye on the 17p, and a pink flaw appears as an extra jewel on the coat of the Magus on the 34p stamp.

First day of issue postmarks were provided at the Philatelic Bureau and Bethlehem, and a further 11 relevant special handstamps can be found on first day covers: these include Christian Heritage Year handstamps for Durham, Ely, Liverpool and Norwich, and others for the well-known Christian locations of Iona, Glastonbury and Holy Island.

The stamps were withdrawn at post offices on Christmas Eve, but they remained on philatelic sale for a full year. Numbers sold (sheet stamps) ranged from 12.7 million of the 34p to 251.6 million of the 13p. A further 120 million 13p stamps were issued in the special offer Christmas books. The 1984 Christmas aerogramme, designed by Victor Ambrus, illustrated Victorian mail coaches in a seasonal setting – appropriate in the bicentenary year of the first mail coach service (see This Month in History in the *Bulletin*, August 2014) •

World at war Royal Mail Editor William Doherty picks British Forces Philatelic Service covers commemorating the Marines and the Great War



Orders and enquiries

BFPS
The Old Post Office
Links Place
Elie
Fife KY9 1AX
www.bfps.org.uk

The Royal Marines are celebrating their 350th anniversary and this handsome cover from the British Forces Philatelic Service (BFPS) marks the historic milestone. They were first formed on 28 October 1664 but were only granted the title Royal Marines in 1802 by King George III. The cover bears images of early and modern-day Marines, the official Royal Marines 350 logo, the crest of the Royal Marine Commandos, and a Prime Ministers stamp. It is cancelled with a unique BFPS handstamp depicting the official Commando Dagger 350 logo. An insert reveals the history of the Royal Marines (CC22 £6 inc p&p) •







On 4 August 1914 British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith declared war on Germany, and the Great War had begun. This special cover commemorates the start of one of the deadliest conflicts in history. It features a First Class stamp from the First World War 1914 set showing young recruit Private William Cecil Tickle, killed at the Somme aged just 17. It is cancelled by the BFPS 3177 special handstamp announcing 'Britain Declares War'. The cover also shows the image of a contemporary newspaper headline. Included with the cover is an information insert. This is a limited edition of 100 covers (CC20 £6 inc p&p) •

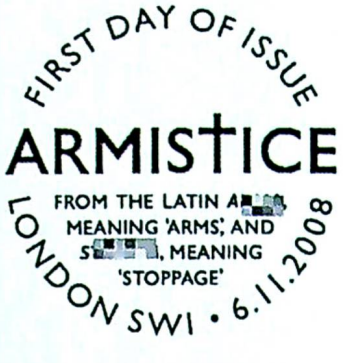
Poppy puzzler Demonstrate your knowledge of Remembrance stamps and you could win poppies in the post



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IN THIS SPECIAL November Remembrance edition, we dedicate our quiz to the First World War and the symbolic poppy, which has appeared on a number of classic Royal Mail stamps, sometimes reissued in the month of November to mark Remembrance Sunday. Answer the questions below for your chance to win. Remember, there are big clues in the stamps and in the pages of the *Bulletin*.

1 This poppy, painted by botanical artist Fiona Strickland, is on one of the stamps in Royal Mail's First World War 2014 commemorative set, issued on 28 July. How many stamps in total are in the set?

2 The first in Royal Mail's iconic Lest We Forget series of poppies, this 2006 stamp commemorated one of the most bitter battles of the First World War. Can you name it?

3 The same 2006 poppy stamp was reintroduced in sheets on 21 October 2014. How many stamps per sheet? AND 3b how many poppies per sheet?

4 The alternative first day of issue postmark for the final Lest We Forget stamp release in 2008 explained that 'armistice' is derived from two Latin words. What are they?

5 This postmark was used on the first day of issue of which poppy stamp this year?

6 Three poppy stamps came together in this stunning triptych. Left to right, what were the years of the original issue of each stamp?

Prizes The senders of the first five correct entries drawn at random from each section after the closing date win the First World War 1914 Prestige Stamp Book and other poppy-themed prizes.





Stamp images © Royal Mail Group Ltd
Tower of London images © Richard Lea-Hair/Historic Royal Palaces



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Name That Stamp From the detail under the magnifying glass, identify the stamp, its value, and its date of issue.

How to enter

Send your answers, marked 'November Poppy Puzzles' or 'November Name that Stamp' to: Bulletin Prize Draws, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB.

Closing date 19 December 2014.

August solutions and winners

Hello Sunshine solution 1b Wimbledon, 2c Change colour, 3a Beside the Seaside, 4b The ozone layer.

Winners Miss L Bowater, Staffordshire; Mrs L McBride, Worcestershire.

Name That Stamp solution Newquay, British Coastlines, 2002.

Winners Mr J Hutton, Cheshire; Mr J Paulson, Derbyshire. Winners receive a Royal Mail Prestige Stamp Book and a stampy T-shirt. *War Horse Break winner* C Laws, from Cornwall, wins top-price seats at the New London Theatre and two nights at The Cavendish Hotel on a SuperBreak •

Blood Swept Land and Seas of Red

The poppy, that poignant icon of suffering in war, is making appearances across the nation right now to remind us of the sacrifice millions made 100 years ago. Flooding the Tower of London's historic moat is an art installation of 888,246 ceramic poppies – one for every British fatality in the First World War. The poppies from this installation, entitled *Blood Swept Land and Seas of Red*, are being removed on 12 November for sale at £25 each. You can reserve one to buy at www.poppies.hrp.org.uk. Proceeds go to six services charities, including the Royal British Legion and Help for Heroes. The Royal British Legion has pledged to give free poppy seeds to every school in the UK to raise children's understanding of the flower's symbolic importance.



Prize draw rules and regulations 1 Promotions are open to all readers aged 18 and over, except employees of Royal Mail Group Ltd, their business associates and immediate families. 2 Responsibility cannot be accepted for entries which are incomplete, damaged or not received for any reason. Proof of posting is not proof of receipt. 3 Prizes must be accepted as offered; they are not transferable and there are no cash alternatives. The cost of transport to and from a prize venue, where applicable, is not included. 4 Winners are notified within 28 days of closing date stated. 5 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. 6 Promoter's decision on any aspect of the promotions is final. No correspondence will be entered into. 7 Entry implies acceptance of these rules. 8 Prizes are subject to suitability and 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. 9 Winners' names are available 28 days after closing date; send an SAE to The Editor, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB. The promoter is Royal Mail Group Ltd, 100 Victoria Embankment, London EC4Y 0HQ.



Send a smile for Christmas...

Royal Mail's Christmas 2014 stamps are available in Smilers® sheets with blank labels that allow you to add your own design or photo.

The simplest way to order is by smartphone* – just scan the code on the right, then follow the easy instructions to create personalised Smilers® with photos you keep on your phone.

You can also order them online at www.royalmail.com/smilers.

The First Class Christmas Smilers® Sheet of 10 costs £10.20 and the Second Class Sheet of 20 costs £14.60 •

*Available for most Android and iOS phones and tablets. Visit Android Market or Apple App Store for download details.

Royal Mail

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