

The Bulletin of the Civil Service Philatelic Society

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Editor's Introduction

Welcome to the January/February edition of the Bulletin. The Society is sorry to report the passing in recent months of Gilbert Denton, David Lambert and Grahame Lindsey.

There is no news regarding a replacement civil service venue for face to face meetings and so they remain suspended. We have had three meetings on Zoom now, all attracting more members than would physically be in London. Your Council is still looking into the matter but with the ongoing pandemic, ageing membership and the high cost of travel into London, it is unlikely we will ever return to a full programme of ten physical meetings per year, but we may be able to have few and other options are still being considered.

Margaret

Zoom for meetings

The Society has now held three monthly meetings on Zoom at 7pm on the first Monday of the month as you will have read above. It was decided to change the start time to 7pm as we are not constrained by people coming from work and not wanting to wait around at the meeting venue or to finishing early enough to allow members to get home at a reasonable hour. The first Zoom meeting was attended by 14 members and 2 guests on 4th October and you can read the write-ups from all three meetings later in the Bulletin as normal. The second and third meetings had slightly fewer members but were still completely viable. If you would like to join and have not done so already, please send me your email address, as I have very few member emails, and I will send the invitation with the link to Zoom 5 to 7 days ahead of each meeting.

For security, please do not pass the email onto other people, but if you have a guest who would like to join as a topic is of special interest for example, they would be most welcome and if you forward their email details to the secretary, with their permission of course, a Zoom invite can be sent to them. This may seem over the top but one philatelic society had advertised a meeting on Facebook and a group of people joined the meeting with the sole purpose of disrupting it and as a result the meeting had to be terminated.

GB Special Stamp Programme 2022

20th January The Rolling Stones

4th February – To be announced but presumed to be an issue marking the Queen's platinum jubilee.

28th February – The stamp designs of David Gentleman
8th March – The FA CUP (150th anniversary of the First FA Cup Final)
23rd March – Heroes of the pandemic (Children's designs)
7th April – Migratory birds
5th May Unsung heroes (women of World War II)
2nd June – Cats
1st July – To be announced
28th July – Commonwealth Games, hosted by Birmingham
1st September – To be announced
29th September – Royal Marines
19th October – To be announced (Possibly an issue commemorating the Centenary of the BBC)
3rd November – Christmas
24th November – Tutankhamen (Centenary of the Discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb)

It is noted from the Royal Mail website that to pre-order all the stamp issues in 2022 will set you back £181.40.

As an aside, Royal Mail prices changed on 4th January 2022 but 1st and 2nd class letters and parcels were not increased. Postal discounts will continue for Mailmark customers. A quote by Royal Mail states, '*the modern mail industry is all about barcodes because they bring efficiencies*' and they '*want all the items they handle – letters and parcels – to carry a barcode*'.

As far as I can tell, the letter rates are therefore first class up to 100g 85p, a large letter to 100g £1.29 and second class letters 66p and 96p respectively. A small parcel up to 1kg first class is £3.85 and second class £3.20. Small parcels going by first class mail will have two weight steps at 0 to 1kg and 1 to 2kg, the latter being £5.57 but the rate for second class will cover 0 to 2kg.

Jersey Post

The first issue from Jersey Post in 2022 was made on 4th January and marked the Year of the Tiger. The single stamp is illustrated by Wang Huming, Beijing, China, and there is also a miniature sheet. Jersey Post go on to say that in Chinese culture, tigers rule the mountains as the king of all animals. They embody courage and strength and people born in the year of Renyin tiger are born leaders, full of strength and confidence.

100 years of radio

Following on from the GB stamp issue listing and a possible issue for the Centenary of the BBC, John Davies has written this article concerning the birth of the BBC.

This year, 2022, will see the Centenary of the British Broadcasting Company Limited. In June 1974 commemorative stamps were issued marking various events described on them and this was for the 50th anniversary. No doubt Royal Mail will issue something to mark the Centenary. To say that the BBC was born is reasonable. In order to give birth there must be a mother and indeed there was in the form of 2L0. This was the first radio station in London making its inaugural broadcast on the 11th May 1922. Its first name was Marconi's London Wireless Telephone Station and was broadcast on the 360 meters wave band. The studio or offices were located at Marconi House in the Strand (which was just a stones throw along the road from Bush House and the CSPS meeting venue until March 2020 Ed.) and a transmitter was at the Radio House in Wilson Square EC. Although radio waves have been discovered much earlier, I will leave its development to someone more qualified.

2LO became the London Station of the BBC from the 14th November 1922. It seems that about 300 wireless manufacturers and shareholders got together on the 18th October 1922 to form the BBC and its registration took place on the 15th December and received its license to broadcast from the Postmaster General, Neville Chamberlain on the 18th January 1923. The general manager was John Charles Walsham Reith who became Lord Reith (1889 to 1971). He was Director-General from 1927 to 1938 before becoming Member of Parliament for Southampton in 1940. He was knighted in 1927.

In the very early years the radio or wireless began as a crystal set and within 10 years many improvements were made especially with valves and loudspeakers. In order to use the radio, the public had to pay the license fee, and it is said that from 1922/23 some 18,000 licenses had been issued (bought) but within 10 years the number had risen to 5 million. The original fee was 10 shillings (50p) per year and classified as a broadcast receiving license, several decades later it was abolished.

In due course radio stations were named. The National Programme started on the 9th March 1930. It was so called because it could be relayed to stations outside London. With the outbreak of the Second World War on the 3rd September 1939, the National Programme was renamed the Home Service on the 1st September. There was one other station at that time called the Regional Programme which began broadcasting on the 21st October 1929 when 2LO moved to Brookmans Park, Hatfield, Hertfordshire and renamed itself London Regional. With the outbreak of war, it was discontinued and merged with the National becoming the Home Service. This name continued right up to the 30th September 1967 and was renamed Radio Four.

The alternative to the Home Programme was the Light Programme which replaced the Forces Programme on the 29th July. The Forces Programme came about because of the Second World War. It was a combination of the National and Regional programmes. It began on the 7th January 1940. As perhaps the title implies, it was a more lighthearted programme which consisted of dance band music, quizzes and comedy turns. The radio announcer would introduce the programmes as for example, the news as 'Here is the news on the Home and Forces Programme'. Always whoever read the news would state his/her name. With the coming of peace, the Forces Programme was renamed the Light Programme. This continued until the 30th September 1967 when it became Radio Two.

There is a host of names linked with the BBC's early days so here is just a few apart from Lord John Reith already mentioned. Arthur Burrows was the first programme director who came from 2LO. He was 'Uncle Arthur' of children's programmes, the first news reader and joint editor of the Radio Times which was published on Friday for the week beginning the 30th September 1923 costing 2d.

During the Second World War there was Allan Lidell with the news. For security reasons, as was the custom at the time, all news readers introduced themselves so that the listener would recognise the voice. He always began by saying, 'Here is the news and this is Allan Lidell reading it'. Freddie Grieswood was a deputy chief announcer who chaired many programmes in his time. Perhaps best remembered for In Town Tonight and question master for Any Questions. Stuart Hibberd joined the BBC 1924 and he was the longest serving announcer. On the programme 'Monday Night at Eight', he was the mystery voice. He retired in 1949. Others include John Snagge whose speciality was giving a commentary on the annual Oxford and Cambridge boat race and Richard Dimbleby whose voice was heard at great occasions. He posted from overseas as the war correspondent. He also commentated at the 1953 Coronation. He was a regular member of 'Twenty Questions' and host of 'Down your Way'.

It has been said between 1950 and 1965, Richard Dimbleby covered more than 500 outside broadcasts for both radio and television. It can be said that his voice was one of authority. So it

was on the programme Panorama that he introduced a film in black-and-white called 'Swiss Spaghetti Harvest' on 1st April 1957. The film as seems to be the tradition, had romantic music in the background. The whole commentary was spoken by Mr Dimbleby in his usual matter-of-fact manner. A very high proportion of viewers believed what they saw and it is known that some viewers wrote to the BBC asking where they could buy spaghetti plants.

It is known that spaghetti is an Italian dish but the programme or film was said to be in Ticino which is on the border of Switzerland and Italy overlooking Lake Lugano. In spite of the film being a hoax, it is one of the BBC's classic little gems and shown sometimes.

In 1972 when the 50th Anniversary took place one of the stamps depicted the television camera. Whether this was appropriate remains to be debated as the first scheduled transmission took place on the 30th October 1936. If the Centenary is to be commemorated then those who were pioneers should be featured such as Sir John Reith. From 1922 there were obviously many 'firsts', such as King George V's Christmas Day message to the Empire in 1932, the publication of the Radio Times in 1923 and still going on, which now includes television schedules. The Radio Times was registered at the then GPO as a newspaper. It will be interesting to see what Royal Mail comes up with this time. There is a great deal of choice.

One further aspect aimed at children between 9 and 14 was the comic Radio Fun which was published every Thursday priced at 2d. It's first edition appeared on the 15th October 1938 and featured characters such as Arthur Askey, Jack Warner, Tommy Handley, Wilfred Pickles and numerous others. From 1956 American characters started to appear such as Superman. In 1961 it merged with Buster which signaled the decline and fall of radio.

John Davies

What you missed at recent Zoom meetings...

4th October 2021 A Talk and Display by Margaret Emerson

For this first Zoom online meeting of the CSPA our Secretary Margaret Emerson gave a talk and display entitled 'Early Days of the Post 1660 to Postal Reform and Beyond' and a second shorter display 'Kent Connections'.

Margaret started by talking briefly about merchant mail, recalling an article in our 2008 Diamond Jubilee Bulletin written by John Dennett before moving on to the King's Posts set up by Henry VIII and then the start of Royal Mail after the Restoration. A map of Horse Post Roads from 1677 was shown focusing on Kent and an engraving of a Post Boy, a misnomer as they were not boys but usually ex-cavalrymen and this image showed the two ways mail was carried depending on its destination. The portmanteau on his back contained the Great Mail for the road and Bybag letters were in a satchel around his middle. Great Mail was bags of letters for his road and each postmaster took bags for his town. The Bybag carried by-letters and these were collected at post towns on his road and were for delivery to post towns on the same road.

Margaret showed a number of Bishop Marks, the concept of Henry Bishop Postmaster General in 1660 to have a postmark to avoid mail being held and delayed. The items highlighted the differences over time and between the marks applied in London and Edinburgh. The Bishop marks were also applied in Dublin. The oldest item displayed with a Bishop Mark was written to an addressee in Tunbridge Wells dating from 1700. The marks had a month and date of the month only and no year, so it is only possible to determine the year by the correspondence itself if it survives. The last two items in this section had a Sevenoaks arc and Deal straight line respectively.

The next part of the display covered the local London Penny Post started in 1680, being the brainchild of William Dockwra, an English merchant, along with his partner Robert Murray. There was no official postal system for mail delivery within the City of London and its suburbs and this

system operated within a radius of 10 miles and was successful. A couple of Dockwra marks were shown.

The next section covered mail to and from Kent and the postal markings it received. Kent is the focus of Margaret's postal history collection as although not born in the county, she has lived most of her life there. This section began with an image of a mail coach of 1787. The mail coaches were built by John Besant, one of the notable figures in improving the design of coaches. In 1792 Besant introduced a new mail coach design with a more effective "band" braking system, it could turn in a tighter circle without danger of turning over and most importantly had a novel method of preventing the wheels from coming off while the coach was moving, which Margaret considered important. John Besant and John Vidler built the best coaches of the era, becoming suppliers of coaches to Royal Mail who exclusively bought Vidler coaches for 14 years. Besant and Vidler cornered the GPO contract for coaches and also became almost exclusive in the business of repair and servicing.

A map of the Kentish post roads in 1790 was shown and a 1903 postcard depicting the Bull Inn, Rochester, a coaching inn for exchange of horses and mail. The building that stands today is about 400 years old and is now the Victoria and Bull Inn. A Maidstone arc postmark was shown and then various mileage marks including Rochester and Maidstone as distance and weight, determined by the number of sheets, was taken into account, with the mileage measured from points in London. Tenterden had a circular mark with the 60 mileage at the base. Mileages on the Dover London road were calculated to the south side of London Bridge. In 1829 the mileages were removed from the marks.

Heading towards the postal reforms of 1840 Margaret spent some time on Rowland Hill and his pamphlet *Post Office Reform: its Importance and Practicability* issued in 1837. Uniform 4d post was the first sign of change, coming into force 5th December 1839, partly to prevent massive loss of revenue. From 9th January 1840 Uniform Penny Post came into force but with no adhesive stamps at this stage. A Maidstone Uniform Penny Post item with a dated double circle of 12th June 1840 was shown and a cover from Maidstone with a Penny Black, 2nd March 1841 and a black Maltese Cross cancel, which by this time had replaced the initial red. Margaret went on to describe and display examples of the different postmarks that were employed within a few years of postal reform until the early 1900s, including the so called 1844 cancels with a number for the post town between bars, the duplex marks with the number between bars in various different layouts and also incorporating a CDS type cancel which was applied in one operation, saving time. However, it was not that simple. Mail from a sub-office would be cancelled by the sub-office on the reverse and then the stamp would receive the postal town cancel. With postcards the sub-office and post town cancels were on the face, but this double cancelling was later abolished.

The final part of the display was called Kent Connections and was illustrated with various items connected with Margaret's maternal grandparents who were born in Strood and Rochester. These included a postcard to tell her grandmother that she had received a Local Scholarship First Class 2nd September 1898, the card receiving a Rochester 650 duplex. A Rochester double circle cancel sometimes known as a Dulwich mark from 18th November 1904, was applied to a postcard of a family house in Strood. A receipt dated 13th May 1909 for a Singer Sewing machine Margaret's grandmother had purchased bore a 1d revenue tax embossed stamp at the base. Stamps were not first invented in 1840 and the Penny Black and Tupenny Blue should be more correctly be called the first adhesive prepaid postage stamps. There was a Rochester Squared Circle 22nd December 1905 on a postcard, but these were not a successful type of postmark as the corners of the cancellers were sharp and either became damaged or gouged holes in the mail.

Some postcards of Strood High Street followed and an archive image of Margaret's Great Grandfather outside his tobacconist shop. An indenture dated 1st October 1902 bore a 2/6 tax paid

revenue stamp and this was for Margaret's grandfather's apprenticeship. A number of WWI postcards sent to Margaret's grandmother from France were shown next. These included examples from Christmas and New year 1916 and 1917 including a couple of silk cards, one with the Royal Engineers military crest. The cards were bagged up and sent together so have no individual frankings. The display concluded with a letter from Margaret's grandfather's employer discussing repatriation to the building trade and his demobilization papers

1st November 2021 1936 Olympics A Talk and Display by Tony Bosworth FRPSL

Tony started by giving some background to the 1936 Olympics. The Winter Games in 1936 were the fourth and the Summer Games the eleventh of the new Olympiad, which was the concept of the father or founder of the modern games Pierre de Coubertin. He had the concept of a festival of sport every four years and the first of these was held in 1896 in Athens. These were games for gentlemen, so there were no athletes of working class and no females.

In 1912 the games had been offered to Germany but they were turned down and they were hosted in Stockholm instead, but then officials were told to get the Games for Germany to be held in 1916. Obviously, this was in the middle of the First World War and even after it ended Germany was not allowed back in the Games due to war reparations. Leni Riefenstahl was a top film maker in the 1930s and had impressed Hitler. She was given sole rights to film the 1936 Games by the German Olympic Committee and the film was called 'Olympia'. Germany had been awarded the 1936 Games by just one vote over Spain, which in that year descended into civil war.

Looking at the personalities of the games there was Dr Theodore Lewald and Carl Diem who were organisers. Lewald was found to have Jewish blood and replaced by Hans von Tschammer und Osten who was made head of the Reich Sports Office. Lewald was reinstated later as a consultant to the German Olympic Committee.

The Winter Games were held between the 6th and the 16th February 1936 at Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Tony displayed the three stamps and some cards showing mountain scenes. In this particular Winter Games Great Britain won the ice hockey gold, although half of our team was Canadian. Sonja Henie won gold in the women's figure skating for the third time. There was an Olympic exhibition and a marquee went to each town showing the history and events. There were eight stamps issued for the Summer Games and miniature sheets. Heavier paper and heavier gum versions were produced too. Fund-raising labels were shown on an Argentinian cover so it was a commercial item. There were 20 propaganda labels in 17 different languages. Tony included a cover with one used on the torch run. There was a telegram for the Winter Games and propaganda labels for the torch relay.

There were 14 official hand stamps in total and Tony displayed the Olympic Stadium cancellation.

Raising funds for Olympic sport was partly done by cards issued showing a particular sport. Tony also had a meter mark on display and these are difficult to find. The central information and tourist office in Berlin promoted the Games and there were cards. The road to Berlin was next and at this point Germany needed US dollars. On display were details of the Olympic voyage in 1936, a cover, a registered label and advertising by Lufthansa. There was a souvenir sheet of stamps and cancels and these sheets are difficult to obtain unfolded. The Olympic Bell, 'Ring out the glory of the German Olympic Games' featured next with a postcard and a meter mark shown. 'I call the youth of the World' was written around the bell.

The torch relay started with the Berlin Games and was the link to the Ancient Games in Greece. Each runner ran one kilometre and the torches were made in Essex and at the end of the display Tony held an actual torch up to the camera. There were images of the torch in the stadium and the eternal flame. The Olympic Village, 19 miles from the city centre, was supervised by

Captain Wolfgang Furstner who was dismissed as he had Jewish blood and committed suicide. The Olympic Village consist of 150 chalets, each sponsored by a German city and housing 20 men each.

The next part of the talk was about the Zeppelin, LZ129 with a cover shown from the maiden flight. The 26th March 1936 flight was a propaganda flight and the Zeppelin dropped leaflets asking people to approve the action to take back the Rhineland. It's base was at Friedrichshafen and it flew over the stadium at 12 noon on the 1st August 1936. Mail was dropped off at Berlin Templehof airport. Venues were shown on the special cards and the also the stadium. Deutschlandhalle was used for boxing, wrestling, weightlifting and an exhibition. There was also rowing and canoeing and sailing at Kiel. There was an open air theatre, Maifled, used for the polo and equestrian events. Argentina won the polo final 15-3 against Great Britain and a ticket of the event was shown.

The Kraft durch Freude, KdF, meaning 'Strength through Joy' organisation provided cheap food and had a restaurant in the Olympic complex and an original menu was shown. The opening ceremony ticket and a postcard to Italy was shown. The first gold was won by Tilly Fleischer in the women's javelin and the second by Gerhard Stock in the men's javelin. Hitler was told he was a guest of the International Olympic movement and he couldn't pick who he was to greet. Jesse Owens won four gold medals and despite talk that Hitler turned his back on the athlete, he was actually not in the stadium. The crowd liked Jesse Owens and Hitler needed the crowd to fight for his cause. Two Jewish athletes were removed from the USA team for the 4 x 100 m relay and they substituted Jesse Owens. The British athlete Harold Whitlock won gold in the 50km walk and the Great Briton team won the 4 x 400 m relay. The GB relay team trained at a rugby club as they had no facilities, but they still beat the USA and Germany into second and third place. The marathon was won by Sohn Kee-Chung, a Korean but at that time the country was occupied by Japan so he had to compete as a member of the Japanese team and by the name Kitei Son. The silver medal went to Ernest Harper.

A press ticket for the baseball was shown and festivals, exhibitions and events were next. There was an air display on a card from Templehof, a mini sheet and a label for the Brown Ribbon horse race and a chess tournament. A garden display and a philatelic exhibition were held. A card concluded the display referencing Hitler with 'What will he do next?' These Games proved to the world that the third Reich was the place to be successful. The USA were beaten in the medal table by Germany. From the 1936 Games the whole Olympic movement has been very political.

Margaret Emerson gave the vote of thanks and members showed their appreciation by on screen applause.

6th December 2021 Christmas A talk and display by Julian Bagwell

In AD 336 Constantine introduced the first Christmas Day on the 25th December and it was into the 19th century, 1824, that it became a bank holiday.

Prince Albert is often attributed with introducing the Christmas tree to the country, but it was possibly Charlotte his grandmother who started this tradition. Carols of course are an important part of Christmas too and Christmas cards, first introduced by Henry Cole in 1843. The first issue changes hands for about £13,000 today.

The first item shown was from 1787 and posted on Christmas Day with a 207 cancel and it was a letter written on the 22nd December and charged at 6d to travel from Chorley to London, about £4 today. From 1840 came a 25th December item with a Penny Black on cover. There was a Mulready envelope for the 24th December 1845 which travelled across London, a late use. Cancellations on these covers were on the top of Britannia. An item for the 25th December 1863 was next going from Glasgow to Lismore. There was an embossed Christmas envelope from 1868

with a 24th December receiving mark. Vale of Aylesbury County Council held a meeting on the 25th December and a postcard invitation for this meeting was shown, which did not receive a cancel. At this time stamps would be cancelled ahead of postal stationary cards at the Post Office.

Post and Telegraph offices issued special cards and the central telephone office was represented in 1889 with images of the Empire and London with Morse Wheatstone mentioned. There was a Labuan letter to London item, part of the Abrahamson correspondence and this was registered and dated the 25th December 1903.

There was an Edwardian railway letter with 2d paid to the railway company and then it was put into the post in Sheffield on the 25th December 1906. A Levant overprint on a card to Tonbridge was next which went by ship into the system in London and had a London mark for Christmas Day. Posted early for Christmas items on 24th for the 25th went unsealed for a halfpenny rate. Rochdale had a special cancellation, the only place in 1902 and then in 1905 Manchester had an MR in an oval. There was an extra machine cancel for Manchester 1908, X in a single circle and for Liverpool in 1909, the last year of use. From the World War I era was a Royal Naval Division item from 1917 as the Navy had men in the army on the Western Front.

There was an unused card of Kara Tepe using a heliograph to use Morse code. German prisoners of war were featured with cards from Dorchester with photographs. There was a 1915 card from Germany to Southampton with a Dobenitz Camp marking and a 1918 Salonica army special card to Bromley.

A 1927 item was next with a 2d USA stamp on an item to London, which went to Berlin first on the 25th December 1927 with a paid cancel then applied in London before it was sent back to the USA in 1928, arriving on the 10th January. There was a Christmas Airmail item between London and Sydney, on the First All Australian Air Mail dated 17th December 1931 but in actual fact this was not the case. Australian National Airways were the first to run a service. There was a Christmas airmail from Khartoum dated the 15th December 1931 travelling to Cape Town and it arrived on the 22nd. An extra 5d tax had to be paid and that was marked the 8th January 1913. There was another air mail item with a 25th December 1933 cancel going to Florence from Gilgil, Kenya. There was a transit mark of the 26th December but then a four day wait for a flight, so it arrived on the 5th of January.

A 1936 item with an Edward VIII 1½d stamp from Stockport was cancelled in Toulon on the 25th December and went by Paquebot. The next item was from Christmas Island to Gilbert Island and had a single ring cancel for the 14th February 1939. Part one concluded with a statement that in 1962 in England and 1966 in Scotland came the end of the Christmas Day delivery.

Part two started with a question, which country issued the first commemorative Christmas stamp? It is often thought that it was Canada in 1898 although that was not the purpose of the stamp. Julian had several criteria for a stamp to qualify: it must be a stamp and not a seal, Christmas should be written on it or be depicted by the design, there must be more than one stamp issued, there should be no other purpose for that stamp such as welfare, it must be issued in the calendar year and not just a first stamp for successive years.

The first contender then was Canada. Christmas 1898 which was written on it but it was not so. The Empire rate was one penny or two cents and this was a concessionary rate for the UPU. A comment was made by Queen Victoria asking about the stamp which was being issued for the birthday of the Prince of Wales, but this was quickly changed by an official to refer to the Prince of Peace, so it was issued on the 25th December. This Empire commemorative comes in three shades.

The second contender is Denmark in 1904 but this was a Christmas seal and not valid for postage. The third example was from Saar, but again it does not show a Christmas scene and it issued in 1928 and 1929 for a welfare fund.

Number four, the Netherlands who between 1931 and 1934 issued stamps with Christmas scenes on a few of them for the two middle years. Number five, the British Forces in Egypt issued a Christmas seal firstly in 1932 and it was applied on the reverse of mail. It was sold in the NAAFI and cancelled with a dotted 'retta' cancel. Then in 1935 Christmas seals had run out and an overprint was applied to regular stamps. The next contender was Austria in 1937 on the 12th December with Signs of the Zodiac with a first day cover. It is listed in Gibbons as such but it is not a Christmas stamp. Brazil in 1940 issued a welfare set with some Christmas scenes and this was really for February 1940 and Youth Week. Hungary in 1943 issued Christmas scenes but there was no 1944 issue to follow. A miniature sheet was even issued in 1993 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the stamp.

Number ten is Cuba in 1951 which issued stamps with the wording Navidades (Christmas) on the stamp which depicted a flower and the following year a tree. A first day cover was issued and shown. The Epiphany is on the 6th January and so it ticks all the boxes on Julian's list and so is suggested as the first Christmas commemorative stamp.

There are also some notable also-rans. New South Wales in 1898 issued a stamp with Christmas Bell flowers and between 1889 and 1891 the Duchy of Savoy issued a stamp with an emblem associated with the Order of the Annunciation. In 1906 Romania had a stamp depicting the Archangel Gabriel and Estonia in 1936 had a stamp to mark the 500th anniversary of the Abbey of Saint Brigitte Talin. There was a contender in 1937 from Italy and from Peru in 1938 with the arms of Peru and the star of Bethlehem. In World War II St Pierre and Miquelon applied a Noel overprint in 1941 on stamps and the following year, the Dominican Republic issued a Virgin Mary set and in 1943 Spain a set for the Holy Year. In 1945 Switzerland issued a peace and goodwill to all men stamp, in 1947 Belgium issued a set of Saint Nicholas and in West Germany in 1948 Cologne Cathedral issued a welfare stamp with Madonna and the Three Wise Men. In 1950 Spain issued stamps for the anti-tuberculosis fund, and there were also issues from France in 1951 and Monaco the same year for the Holy Year, with the five cent value having the a prophecy of Isaiah. In conclusion, Julian suggests that it's either Hungary in 1943 or Cuba in 1951 and he favours the latter. Today 100 countries issue Christmas stamps each year.

The vote of thanks was given by Margaret Emerson and there were several comments mentioning that this had been an interesting evening but that it also showed a fantastic amount of research.

Aspects of our hobby

Looking back....

The first post or pillar boxes

In general terms nobody really likes change. Opinions might range from 'we have always done it this way' to suspicion or concern about something new. I guess this could apply to the concept of holding stamp club meetings on Zoom, and here I am not just talking about the CSPA, and people may be wary of new things or technologies. Online banking springs to mind here or contactless bank payments. This is nothing new and looking back at history there was concern about the advent of railway engines and motor vehicles and I am sure when the first wheels were invented people may have been suspicious!

I was reading an old copy of Cross Post (The Journal of the Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum) from Spring 1996, which was left out at a stamp club meeting I attended for any member to take and an article in it caught my eye as it concerned the advent of the post or pillar box. What follows is information gleaned from the article, 'Before the Box' by Tony Gammons and also from the Historic England website, 'Royal Mail Post Boxes. A Joint Policy Statement by Royal Mail and Historic England'.

Following the postal reforms which led to uniform penny post in Great Britain and Ireland, the Post Office realised it needed to spread its services out to country areas outside the postal network of post towns and receiving houses. At this time letters usually had to be taken to the nearest letter receiving office which could be miles away. The Post Office had no idea of the scale of the problem they needed to solve and in 1851 the Rural Post Revision was set up to study towns and villages not in the postal network. The aim was to enable something to be set in place even without a Receiving House. The rural letter carriers would deliver to 2 or 3 villages on their outward walks, which were of 16 to 18 miles long, and on their inward legs would collect letters from residents. The process was therefore in two parts with a gap of 4 or 5 hours of waiting time for the carrier between each part. However, there was no guarantee of the time of arrival of the carrier on the inward leg, so the sender was in effect kept waiting outside to intercept the carrier. This was probably key to the introduction of the letter box or post box or pillar box as it is known today.

This and the growth in demand for postal services which was fueled by increasing industrialisation and also urbanisation, led to the need for more convenient places where prepaid stamped letters could be deposited. The novelist Anthony Trollope, a General Post Office (GPO) official, was sent to Jersey to make recommendations and he provided a solution. He adopted a system which was in use on the Continent of locked cast-iron pillar boxes placed at the roadside which would have regular collection times. This scheme began in the Channel Islands in 1852 and was extended to the mainland the next year. In 1857 the Surveyor of the Western District suggested supplying small villages and country places with 'some safe receptacles for letters' which would be less costly than the pillar boxes in towns. A similar idea was also put forward by the Surveyor of Birmingham.

Postboxes are a normal part of life for us today in all their different shapes and sizes but to go back to my first comments in this piece, some members of the public were suspicious of them. It was suggested by the author of the article in Cross Post that the public needed great faith to place their letter in an iron pillar and be sure that it would be collected by a carrier, although that person would never be seen by them.

Margaret Emerson

The Festival of Britain and its Commemoratives Remembered

Last year marked seventy years since the Festival of Britain took place occupying 27 acres on the South Bank of the Thames near Waterloo. The festival was opened by King George VI with Queen Elizabeth (the Queen Mother) on Friday 4th May 1951 and it ran until the end of September. The purpose of the Festival was to coincide with the centenary of the Great Exhibition of 1851 and also to demonstrate that Britain was getting back on its feet after the Second World War in spite of the rationing and austerity prevailing at that time. From a philatelic point of view two values of stamps were issued on the 3rd May 1951 which had a face value of 2½d and 4d.

The 2½d stamp was designed by Edmund Dulac (1882 to 1953) and the 4d by Abram Games (1914 to 1996). The stamps were printed in a single colour, red and blue to conform with the Universal Postal Union colour scheme to which the then GPO was not conforming, since the letter rates increased on the 1st May 1940.

The Festival of Britain stamps are the only commemorative issued in the reign of King George VI to comply. Taking the 2½d design, it shows the Britannia head facing King George with the dates 1851 to 1951 above the central design and the purpose of issue on the base of the stamp. The central design shows the Caduceus wand or staff which was held by Hermes, the messenger of the gods in Greek Mythology. The staff which has wings at the top also has a pair of snakes around it. This should not be confused with a similar emblem, namely the Hippocratic staff of Asclepius who is said to be the Father of Medicine. His staff only had one snake entwined on it

and it sometimes mistaken for the Caduceus. Examples of such an error can be seen in the 1957 7 cents stamp of Australia (SG297) for the Flying Doctor Service, the 1940 5 cents of USA (SG 874 Doctor Walker Reed) and 1960 Pakistan 2 Annas and 14 annas (SG 118, 119) celebrating the Centenary of King Edward Medical College in Lahore.

The cornucopia or the Horn of Plenty has a complicated story but it was the young Zeus who accidentally broke the horn off the head of a nanny goat named Amellhea which suckled him as a baby when in Crete. Eventually Hercules obtained the horn and carried it wherever he went so that he was not short of food. In fact this was arranged by Zeus.

The 2½d stamp represented the basic 2 ounce letter rate within the United Kingdom, which as mentioned above, was introduced on the 1st May 1940 and continued until the 1st October 1957. As we all know, the 1d (penny) postage was introduced on 6th May 1840 so for it to rise only 1½ d in 117 years is remarkable. The 2½d stamp being printed in red (complying with UPU regulations) was the Foreign postcard rate introduced on the 1st October 1950. This lasted until the 1st October 1957 when the rate became 4d.

The Festival of Britain 4d stamp was designed by Abram Games. He was born in the Whitechapel of London and his father's surname was Gamse, a photographer from Latvia. At some stage the surname was 'adjusted' to Games. By 1930, he attended the Saint Martin's School of Art and six years later won a competition for a poster to advertise London County Council. During the Second World War and just afterwards he was appointed official war poster artist and designed over 100 posters. In 1947 he put forward a design for the 1948 Olympic Games series which the GPO accepted, it was the 3d value entitled 'speed'. As for the Festival of Britain stamps, the central motif is a star with a Britannia like head denoting patriotism and the four compass points, British influence. The bunting represented the festival aspect. The symbol was used for many purposes especially on souvenirs from the Festival. It was the iconic emblem. At both sides of the central feature on the stamp are the years 1851 / 1951 in the ribbons and as was traditional at that time to indicate the reason for the stamp issue. To comply with Universal Postal Union regulations at that time, the 4d stamp was printed in blue for the overseas letter rate (up to 1 ounce) which came into force on the 1st October 1950 and continued until the 1st October 1957 when the rate became 6d. It was at the 13th UPU Congress held in Brussels from the 14th May to the 11th July 1952 that the universal colour scheme was abolished.

As for the Festival itself, much could be said. They were postal facilities both at the South Bank and the pleasure gardens at Battersea. However from a philatelic or cinderella aspect, there was a series of poster stamps rated at 3d, sold in a folder for 2/6d (half a crown) which depicted such features as the Shot Tower which was later taken down in the early 1960s to make room for the Howard Gallery, the Skylon, the South Bank Exhibition (aerial view), the Royal Festival Hall, the only structure remaining and is in use, the Dome of Discovery, a Flying Saucer and Travelling Exhibition, the Festival ship 'Campania', Emmet's Nellie and an illustration of the 1851 Crystal Palace. The folder with stamps stuck down had information printed about the scene and were all printed in a light blue colour. For example, the Shot Tower, an old London landmark to be used as a lighthouse, mounting a radio telescope which will project messages to the moon. Also there was a miniature sheet of 10 stamps printed in a bright red/brown colour. All these were sold in aid of the Greater London Fund for the Blind.

Finally, but not least, with mail posted at the Festival, it received a special slogan postmark as did registered mail.

Images of some of the labels are shown below, left to right the Shot Tower, the Royal Festival Hall and the Skylon.



The 10 stamps in aid of the Greater London Fund for the Blind are shown left, featuring left top to bottom the Crystal Palace, Royal Festival Hall, Campania, the Skylon, the Festival of Britain Emblem and to the right the South Bank Exhibition, the Dome of Discovery, the Flying Saucer's travelling Exhibition, the Shot Tower and Emmett's Nellie.

John Davies

Aspects of Victorian overseas mail - An important European connection

The Alps encircle northern Italy from Austria, Switzerland and France ending at the Mediterranean and historically had few crossing points before the age of more advanced engineering. Some of the crossings, especially west of the Brenner Pass were difficult. Hannibal is said to have used the Mont Cenis Pass, probably just a mule track, to take his army and elephants around 200 BC on a conquering expedition to France. Napoleon in 1803 could see the potential of a crossing and developed a carriage road enabling his armies to transport their equipment. The concept of a tunnel going through the Alps themselves was first proposed in 1856.

The amount of correspondence travelling from Great Britain overseas, particularly to India but also to China and Australia, meant that the overland route needed to be improved. In 1839 a route via Marseille was established by a convention between Britain and France and this led to the monthly steam packet service between Marseille and Alexandria, but it soon became apparent that this was not enough and it was increased to a weekly service. At the same time there was a connecting service between Suez and Bombay. Prior to this the mails had to round the Cape of Good Hope, a substantially longer journey.

By this time we were entering the age of the railway and the British and French railways had been built from London to Dover and Calais to Marseille respectively and a rail link was in place between Alexandria and Suez. This greatly reduced the transit time but the concept of joining the railways on either side of the Alps would shorten the journey even further with the addition of a rail link to Brindisi, southern Italy. It was felt that this route would be quicker than the route to Marseille and a ship voyage to that point. London to Alexandria was just over 2500 miles, with some 1700 miles by water, taking 8 days, but if the French and Italian railways could be joined using Brindisi, the sea journey was reduced to 954 miles.

It became obvious that the completion of a tunnel through the Alps would take longer and cost more than was envisaged, so nothing changes for big projects. While work progressed on the tunnel a temporary railway was built on the high road from St. Michel to the Italian border. This railway was a narrow gauge and the so called Fell Trains were used on the line. These had been invented by Mr J B Fell of Ulverston, Cumbria and had been especially designed to ascend and descend steep gradients. This 'Fell' railway was only used for three and a half years as the Mont Cenis tunnel was completed in September 1871.

Margaret Emerson

Using information from an article The Mont Cenis Pass Mail Route by Fred E Goatcher which was published in the Journal of the France and Colonies Philatelic Society Volume 43 number 3, September 1993.

Views from the Membership

Another commemorative issue missed

No doubt many members in our society have been disappointed in the selection of so-called commemorative or special stamps issued during 2021. None have been issued to mark any real important anniversaries. The year 2021 was the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Royal Albert Hall in South Kensington building having been started in 1867. As the name implies, it is a memorial to Prince Albert who died in 1861. Therefore the opening was 10 years after his death. The cost of the project in round figures was £200,000 and the seating could accommodate 8000 people. It is one of the largest halls in the world. Many musical events have taken place there including the annual November National Service of Remembrance. It was Sir Henry Wood (1869 to 1944) who founded the Promenade Concerts held at the Queen's Hall in 1895. The Queen's Hall which seated 3000 people was situated in Regent Street and destroyed by bombs in the early part of the Second World War (1941). It was on the 16th April 1941 that about 500 enemy aircraft dropped 100,000 bombs on London. Even so, Sir Henry Wood, who was knighted in 1911, secured the Royal Albert Hall to continue with the Promenade Concerts and these have continued to the present day. It should be mentioned that the Royal Albert Hall houses one of the famous Willis organs which has about 9000 pipes.

In its 150th year it is a pity that Royal Mail did not produce an issue for it. To be fair, in 1980 for the London landmarks issue the Albert Memorial was featured and is directly opposite the Royal Albert Hall.

John Davies

Not commemorated in 2021

Quite rightly, Royal Mail issued a small series of stamps commemorating the life of Prince Philip and the stamps incorporated the dates 1921 to 2021. However, in the same year in which Prince Philip was born so was Peter Alexander Ustinov, born in London of Russian parents on the 16th April 1921. By 1938 Peter Ustinov began his acting career. The Second World War interrupted his career but he starred in very many films such as the epic 'Quo Vadis?' playing the part of the Emperor Nero. He appeared in the black and white film 'Odette', who was a Special Operations Executive during the War and 'One of our aircraft is missing', a film directed by Michael Powell which included some of our distinguished actors. This was a serious film in which his part was a Dutch priest. As a result what he had to say was in Latin although some English words were used. On the lighter side there were the Disney films such as 'Blackbeard's Ghost' and 'One of our Dinosaurs is missing'.

In the 1978 film 'Death on the Nile' by Agatha Christie, he played, perhaps his most well-known part as the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. Ustinov wrote several successful plays such as

'The Love of Four Colonels' in 1951, 'Romeo and Juliet' in 1956 and the Unknown Soldier and his Wife', written in 1967, just to name a few.

On top of the above he wrote his autobiography 'Dear me' published in 1977. He won many awards and died at the age of 82 on the 28th March 2004.

John Davies

Possible stamp issues for 2022

Looking slightly into the future, there are three important anniversaries which should be considered for a special stamp issue.

The first is to commemorate the centenary of the death of Ernest Shackleton who died on the 5th January. He was on his fourth Antarctic expedition and was in South Georgia at that time and he is buried there. In his 1914 to 1916 expedition his ship 'Endurance' was marooned by the volume of ice and Shackleton with a small group made a trek of some 800 miles to safety.

Ernest Shackleton was born on the 15th February 1874, the same year that the General Postal Union, later renamed the Universal Postal Union was formed, in Kilkea in the county of Kildare and became an apprentice in the Merchant Navy, becoming a junior officer serving Robert Scott on the ship 'Discovery' in the National Antarctic Expedition of 1901 to 1904.

During 1908 and 1909 Shackleton reached a point 97 miles from the South Pole. As mentioned above during the 1914 to 1916 expedition he was marooned and he and his party made their way to Elephant Island.

The second important anniversary is the centenary of the introduction of postage meter frank machines on the 5th September 1922. The first type was made by Pitney-Bowes. One of the earliest users of such machines was the Prudential Assurance Company, which had a head office in London's High Holborn. Although Pitney-Bowes was an American manufacturer, Britain began to manufacture its own types such as the Universal multi-value which was an electric machine. The hand operated types were also made which were the Universal 'Simplex' which had limited values and an Universal 'Simplex' for parcel post tape. Also made in Britain was the Neopost machine. This too had limited values.

Over a period of time slogans were added and a change of 'stamp' design appeared in 1925 showing the Royal cypher. It might be worth noting that all the value indicated impressions all have the words Great Britain. It has been a custom in Great Britain for postage stamps not to bear the country of origin as a mark of respect to the fact that Britain introduced the postage stamp payment system and that the portrait of the monarch was sufficient. As meter post impressions do not have the royal portrait Great Britain was incorporated to comply with the rules. However, it must be said that certain other stamps don't carry the country's name, such as Postage Dues which are for internal usage.

Apart from machines used under license by firms, the General Post Office used counter machines for parcel post. Their design was totally different and omits the words Great Britain.

The third anniversary which should be commemorated is that for Howard Carter and the Earl of Carnarvan who discovered the tomb of the Pharaoh Tutankhamun in the Valley of the Kings in Egypt on the 26th November 1922. It is believed that Howard Carter came across a mention of Tutankhamen some 30 years previously and began looking for the tomb. It was the Earl of Carnarvan who sponsored Carter. The results of this historic find are in the museum in Cairo but in 1972 to mark the 50th anniversary of the find, some of the items were loaned to the British Museum for an exhibition which included the well-known mask. The Post Office issued a 3 pence stamp depicting a statuette of Tutankhamen in a general anniversaries issue on the 26th April 1972.

John Davies

Postal History and Postmarks

Looking back...



The mark to the left is dated 24th February 2016 and commemorates William Watt, O.B.E. who earned a worldwide reputation for his original work on carbons and graphites. He developed a commercially viable process for the manufacture of high-strength carbon fibres.

Recent inkjet postmarks

There was the usual mix of inkjet cancellations last year and a few are shown overleaf. From 21st January and applied in Chester and North Wales comes Stay home, Protect the NHS Save lives the government slogan for the pandemic restrictions and lockdown. Overleaf right is the cancel to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day on the 27th January, applied at Dorset and Hampshire mail centre with the Slogan Light the Darkness.



From March and applied on 26th of the month at Medway Mail Centre comes the slogan marking 150 years of international rugby England V Scotland 27th March 2021. Below right also from March, this time 29th and applied at Chester and North Wales, is the slogan for World Autism Awareness Week 29th March to 4th April 2021.



Overleaf left and applied at the Nottingham Mail Centre, is the slogan Royal Mail delivering with Pride for Pride Month, which was held in June. To the right is the slogan for SANDS a charity supporting people who have suffered baby loss and this was applied on 28th June at the North and West Yorkshire mail facility.



Next applied at Gatwick Mail Centre dated 2nd July is the slogan Thank You NHS marking the founding of the NHS on 5th July 1948. Dog Awareness Week 2021 featured on a cancel applied in July, below right and dated 5th July and applied at Chester and North Wales.



Below left from the same mail centre dated 20th September, is Send a Card, Deliver a smile, Thinking of you slogan. The cancel below right is for Breast Cancer Awareness Month 1st to 31st October 2021, again applied at Chester and North Wales.



The January/February Bulletin often contains a summary of December and Christmas slogans and this time your editor has seen just two. The first is shown below left, Shop Early Send Early this Christmas dated 19th December. There was no indication of last posting dates which is customary. The second was a Covid 19 public health slogan Get boosted now written between a black rectangle looking very much like a hazard warning sign. You will notice that there are just 3 wavy lines in each case and this form of cancelling has been introduced so that the sorting machines are not confused by the QR code strip to the right of the Christmas stamps.



The last example without a date and 7 wavy lines must have been applied when an older machine was pressed into service. I will have to try and match the Christmas card to the envelope and handwriting, as I omitted to make a note of the sender by which a rough location might be gleaned.

Permission to use the biro to cancel stamps

Items of mail posted over a Post Office counter with data matrix stamps, such as those illustrated in the July Bulletin and the Christmas issue illustrated above as the second class value, pose a dilemma. Counter staff have been asked to cancel these stamps carefully, as reported in Stamp Magazine January 2022, which may seem like good news for collectors. The bar code needs to remain readable for the machines and as mentioned above, the number of wavy lines has had to be altered to avoid confusing the machines. These stamps are still under trial. Postal officials have been told to only cancel the stamp portion and the code bar at the side should stay clean. In an instruction they were told that an item presented with several stamps attached should have the end stamp cancelled and the rest of the stamps should be struck though using a biro.

This is sacrilege in the extreme and it is well known that they prefer mail to be presented without stamps, so that a so called Horizon label can be issued for the postage and attached.

Horizon labels obviously save on accounting for loose stamps and when I (Editor) arrived at my local Post Office a few weeks back with 45 magazines for another club, they each ended up having a Horizon label attached. They were large letter size at just under 200g and the sub-postmaster had to log each postcode and building number on the system and print the label. I asked if he could have issued me with 45 batches of stamps to the value of £1.53 and he said, 'No'. I guess if I had asked for 45 2nd Class Large Letter stamps if it had been under 100g and attached them myself and posted the items in the postbox outside the Post Office, I would have been able to do just that. You can imagine his frustration though especially as the queue was building up being just days before the 2nd class last Christmas posting date, but fortunately there was a second window open.

An unusual cover

Many years ago, mail addressed to addressees in Wirral bore the postcode letter 'L' for Liverpool where sorting took place. For some reason it's all changed and the postal code for Wirral is now CH, for Chester and North Wales. Where sorting actually takes place is a mystery to me. Also, I'm surprised that with the postcode code of CH mail it's not sent to Switzerland which is their international code for Canton Helvetia.



The Chester and North Wales sorting office uses a part bilingual cancellation incorporating Caer a gog Cymru, shown left. Way back in 1958, regional issues appeared which were valid nationwide. Those using the 'Wilding' portrait of the Queen continued until the introduction of decimal currency in 1971. At this time the 'Machin' portrait of the

Queen was in general use (from 1967). The Welsh regionals followed the same basic design as all the other regionals with their own specific emblem at the top left corner. From 1971 to 1996 at least all values are expressed in pence as perhaps expected but this was objected to in Wales as pence was not a Welsh word. So in 1997 onwards the letter 'p' was admitted because the Welsh word pence is Ceiniog and it would be confusing if values are expressed as 20 c in the rest of the UK. Altogether there were just four values which omitted the letter P, namely 20p 26p, 37p and 63p.

In June 1999 regionals were introduced, a pictorial series consisting of four stamps. These were originally for second class, first class, Europe and the rest of the world. The European design incorporated the E and this was dropped for an actual rate in 2004.

On the 15th February 2000 Royal Mail issued a booklet costing £7.50 under the title 'Special by Design'. One of the pages consisted of a mixture of regional 'Machin' head designs for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, three for each region. These were printed in orange red. As expected, the Scottish and Northern Ireland first class stamps are No Value Indicated (NVI) and show 1st, but the Welsh stamp is bilingual showing 1AF/ST. The Welsh word for first is guntaf. At this point it should be mentioned that Wales did not have a Machin type second class issue until the 1999 pictorial series was introduced, The second class value depicts a leek and shows 2AIL/ND. Ail is a complete word for second. The image below left shows the 1st class Machin heads as mentioned above and below right the pictorial Welsh stamps as mentioned above on a mini-sheet for the National Assembly of Wales issued in 2006.



It is of course very difficult to establish usage of the Welsh first class stamp depicted on the portion of the cover shown below, which was of a light usage.



Posted to Italy in 2014, the up to 20 grammes letter rate was 97p. The United Kingdom letter rate at that time was 62p from the 31st March 2014, but when the Welsh no value indicated stamp was issued in 2000 the rate was 26p. The rate was increased by a penny on the 17th April 2000.

The other aspect of the cover shows the Welsh version of the airmail etiquette. It was the custom at one time to add the Post Office ordering code P 25A WELSH on the reverse. These are printed in sheets of 36 - 3 x 12, so that 18 are in English and 18 are in Welsh.

John Davies

Non-value indicator (NVI)

Following on from John's article about NVI stamps and the problems with the Wales regional issues above, I thought I would look up some more information about this type of stamp as many other countries also issue them.

The concept meets a certain postage class and the stamp retains full validity for that intended class even when the rate is changed, so in the UK our 1st and 2nd class stamps. Non-denominated postage was first introduced in the United Kingdom in 1989 for domestic mail. These stamps reduce the cost of printing large volumes of low-value stamps and were approved for international postal usage by the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in 1995.

Canada was early with this concept issuing its first non-denominational stamp in 1981, the so called "A" Definitive, featuring a stylized maple leaf. This stamp was used during a changeover in the first class domestic rate of 17 to 30 cents and was valued at 30 cents. In 2006, Canada's named its NVIs the "Permanent" stamp. This was shown by a white capital "P" overlaid on a red maple leaf, within a white circle but from 2009 varied colours appeared.

Czech stamps for domestic mail are marked with an A, those for international mail to European countries are marked E and stamps for international mail (non-European countries) are marked Z. New Zealand Post started issuing the Kiwistamp in 2009 and each stamp will always be worth the current postage of a Standard Post medium domestic letter. Multiple Kiwistamps or a mix

of these and denominated stamps can be used on a mail item for higher domestic rates or to make up the international mail rates.

The USA operated a different system from 1975 and the stamps retained their original monetary value. Some stamps, for example the bulk mail rate, were issued without a denomination. In 1975 there was uncertainty as to the timing and extent of a postal rate increase and Christmas stamps that year were therefore issued without denomination to save reprinting. In 2006, the United States Postal Service applied for permission to issue the Forever® stamp for first-class postage, the first issue being made on 26th March 2007.

Army Vehicles

On 2nd September 2021, Royal Mail issued a series of stamps which relate to Army vehicles. The four first class and four stamps at £1.70 for the European letter rate all depict various types of tanks. Many more vehicles other than tanks were/are used by the Army and it is a pity that these were not depicted. Perhaps the most familiar vehicles – one of several ‘work horse’ types- is the Bedford 4 Tonner which is used largely for troop transport and carrying domestic supplies. Then there is the Bedford Motor Transport 8 Tonner load carrier used by the Royal Corps of Transport. Then there is the Land Rover type numbers 90 and 110 used largely for going from A to B. There are the Foden chassis type of tankers which carry 22,500 litres of fuel, Retiol. These were often seen in Germany and so carried a warning on them indicated by the word ‘HAZCHEM’. Then there is the Scammell tank transporter called ‘the Commander’. There are one tonne Land Rover driven by members of the Royal Corps of Transport as ambulances for the Royal Army Medical Corps. The Army uses the Foden 16 tonnes for freight transport. The list can go on but to show just tanks gives the wrong impression. Last but not least the Army uses motorbikes for the despatch riders such as the Armstrong and Nortons, but that is a different story!

John Davies

Snippets of News

Royal Mail children’s stamp design competition

Last year Royal Mail held a competition for young people to design a stamp which highlighted the work of key workers and others in keeping the UK connected during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some 120 regional finalists were selected out of 606,049 entries from 7,479 schools. Thanks to all the entries, Royal Mail secured the Guinness World Records title for largest postage stamp design competition.

Of the 120 winning regional entries, 24 regional entries will then be selected and these in turn will be reduced to just 8 for the special set of stamps due for issue this Spring. This is the sixth time in the 500-year history of Royal Mail that designs by children have been used on stamp issues. The previous occasions were 1966 a Christmas issue following a competition held by the childrens’ BBC television show, Blue Peter, 1981 (Christmas), 1992 (the Green Issue issued in September), 2013 (Christmas) and 2017 (2 designs for Christmas).

Reported on allaboutstamps.co.uk 27th September 2021 with additional information by the Editor.

Parcel sorting machine at Royal Mail

A fully automated parcel sorting machine has been installed at the Tyneside mail centre facility and it can sort 180,000 parcels per day. The system uses 200 trays to sort up to 10,000 parcels an hour for sending on to local mail centres. The machine is about the length of six double decker buses and is capable of handling parcels of many different shapes up to 31kg in weight.

Details from an article on www.chargedetail.co.uk dated 16th November 2021

Mensa commemorated on Isle of Man stamps

The Isle of Man Post Office issued a set of six stamps on 1st October 2021 marking the 75th anniversary of Mensa, which is the world's oldest and largest high IQ society. The stamp designs show puzzles, codes and ciphers and in the lower left corner of each stamp is a three-word reference to "important Mensa places and locations on the Isle of Man" created using the what3words app.

Information from Linn's Stamp News 20th October 2021

Australia Post year album error

The 2020 Australia Post year album may prove to be more popular than usual for two reasons. Firstly, there is a new format with the stamps printed as full gummed pages and fixed within the book. Each of the stamps in the book is a new and distinct variety.

However the main reason why the year album may prove more popular is an error on the Art of the Desert page. One stamp has the word Australia and the year missing and this may well be a popular error. You have to ask the question was this a genuine error in production? Errors of this sort are quite rare on stamps now and so it could be a clever piece of marketing by Australia Post? *Details based on an article in the APF news March 2021 and submitted by John Davies.*

British Guiana 1c magenta

The British Guiana 1856 1¢ Magenta made headlines on 8th June last year as members no doubt remember reading here in the Bulletin when it was sold for slightly more than \$8.3 million at auction in New York City. Stanley Gibbons quickly announced it was the purchaser of the stamp and since then the company has launched an effort to give collectors and others an opportunity to own a part of this stamp through fractional ownership. Shares in the asset are sold to individual shareholders.

On 4th October, Stanley Gibbons announced that it has selected the online platform Showpiece to facilitate fractional ownership of the stamp. Those registering will have the opportunity to acquire shares in the stamp "during the first, early access period," according to Stanley Gibbons, when shares will be sold at a lower price than future offerings. The first shares were due to go on sale last November.

Based on an article in Linns Stamp News October 12th

And finally ...

Swiss Post issued a stamp in September 2021 that appears blank apart from the value and the word Helvetia, so what is going on? Paintings are produced on canvas and the material can be considered a symbol of art in general terms. The blank canvas could mean there is no funding to produce the painting. A fact that may not be well known is that Swiss Post has been collecting and promoting contemporary art works since 1924. This amounts to around 400 works and a portfolio of architecture pieces around the country. This new stamp raises awareness of the promotion of culture and corporate art collections. The 8 stamp mini-sheet has a QR code which on scanning reveals more about the canvas stamp.

A New ABC of Terminology (Continued)

ZIP block: This is a USA term for a marginal marking block with the selvage bearing the image of the "Mr. ZIP" cartoon character and/or an inscription trying to persuade the public about the benefits of using the ZIP code. It first appeared in 1964 and a ZIP block is normally a block of four stamps.

ZIP code: The ZIP code itself is a numerical post code helping to speed and mechanise mail handling and delivery. ZIP stands for Zoning Improvement Plan.

That brings an end to another series of the ABC of Terminology.