

THE BRITISH
POSTAL
MUSEUM
& ARCHIVE

LIONS, LEOPARDS,
UNICORNS & DRAGONS
THE FIRST "REGIONAL" STAMPS



DIFFERENT definitive stamps for the component regions of Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and the islands of Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man were first issued in 1958. Each design bore a symbol to represent its region, from Scottish lions and Norman leopards to unicorns and Welsh dragons. This exhibition marks the 50th anniversary of these stamps and explores how the designs came about.

1. Introduction

IN THE 1950s there was a nationalist sentiment that stamps be produced for different parts of the British Isles, particularly in Scotland, as well as a call for more pictorial definitives. In 1956, The Queen agreed that there should therefore be different definitive stamps for the component “Regions”. The idea for these “Regional” definitive stamps was originally expressed after World War II during the reign of King George VI when a few designs and essays were created but came to nought.



The main feature on the stamps was still the Wilding portrait of The Queen as used on national definitives. Symbols and heraldic *Wilding's portrait of The Queen* emblems for the various areas were then added, chosen by special committees set up for each country and island. Main features were lions and unicorns for Scotland, leopards for the Norman Channel Islands and dragons for Wales.

In 1958, three stamps each of 3d, 6d and 1s 3d were issued for the countries of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (but not England), with one 3d stamp for the islands of Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man. These stamps were primarily sold and used in their respective areas but they were also valid for postage throughout the United Kingdom. Later, other values were

added, mostly in the same designs, but with new versions for the islands.

2. Islands: Leopards & Vikings

SURPRISINGLY, the first ideas for “Regional” stamps arose shortly after the end of World War II. The Channel Islands had been liberated from German occupation on 9 May 1945 and they wanted to re-vive tourism. A way of doing this was for Jersey and Guernsey to have their own postage stamps. However, this meant there would need to be stamps for other countries within the United Kingdom – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – and the Isle of Man. It was decided to have six designs showing the coat of arms of the country or region, together with the head of King George VI, but in the end this did not go ahead.



1946 design for the Channel Islands

Then in 1956, it was agreed that stamps would be issued for the various “regions” of the British Isles instead. Only one stamp was to be issued for each of the islands – Guernsey (including Alderney and Sark), Jersey and the Isle of Man.

The **Guernsey** committee decided that the Guernsey Lily and William the Conqueror’s crown (taken from a coin) should be included in the design. Local artist Eric Piprell designed the final 3d stamp. An alternative design of his was used for the later 2½d value.



Guernsey's issued 3d

For **Jersey** the Island Mace was to be shown vertically plus the Arms of Jersey, very similar to the arms of England featuring “leopards”. Foliage should be included to represent agriculture, together with rays of the sun. The accepted design for the 3d



Unaccepted design by Gardner

Issued designs by W. Gardner and Edmund Blampied for Jersey



Six artists were chosen to produce designs – Robert L Gapper, V S James, H Martin, C Tunnicliffe, Mary Adshead (designer of one of the national Wilding designs) and Reynolds Stone. The last two, had no known Welsh connection. In total, some 25 pieces of artwork were submitted.

stamp was by William Gardner. For the later 2½d value an alternative by the well-known local artist Edmund Blampied was chosen.



Above: Essays of a design by V S James for Wales
Below: Essays of Mary Adshead's design



Issued designs by John Nicholson for the Isle of Man

To be included on the **Isle of Man** stamp were the

Three Legs on a Shield (the Arms of the Kingdom of Man), and the ring-chain pattern characteristic of the Manx runic crosses. The accepted design was by John Nicholson and an alternative also by him was used for the later 2½d.



3. Welsh Dragons

THE Welsh committee decided that the principal Welsh symbol should be the Welsh dragon (passant) but that the “Leek in flower” should be incorporated in the design. No variation of the symbols was allowed.

Later instructions to artists were changed to refer to the “common” leek (which doesn't flower).



Unadopted design by H. Martin with both dragon and leek.

Three essays by Stone became the first choice recommended to The Queen, with that by James as the reserve. All three by Reynolds Stone were approved, something which was unique in the “Regionals” series. All other countries had more than one designer.

Two of the issued designs by Reynolds Stone





Essay (far left) of Stone's third design approved for the issued 6d for Wales (left).

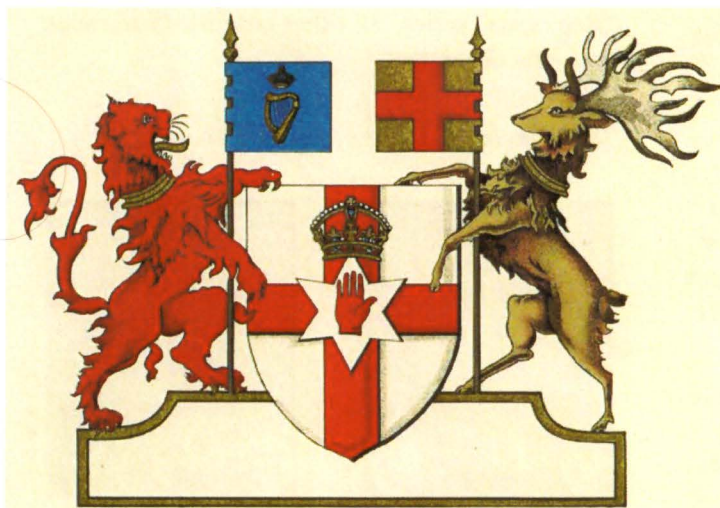
The committee decided on five symbols: the Red (right) Hand of Ulster; the Arms of Northern Ireland, (without supporters); the six-pointed Crowned Star with the Red Hand; the Flax Plant, (with or without leaves); a Field Gate with typical Ulster pillars. The shamrock was not mentioned, as representing the whole of Ireland, even though it had appeared on the national definitives.

Right: Unaccepted design by Leonard Pilton showing a weaving shuttle.



4. Irish Problems

THERE were problems creating the Northern Ireland definitives because of a lack of symbols representative of Ulster, and that weren't undesirable features of political significance.



Lions, Leopards, Unicorns & Dragons

The Red Hand, an emblem of the O'Neills (the royal house of Ulster) since ancient times was a must to be included in the design. Five local artists were recommended: Thomas Collins, Leonard Pilton, William Hollywood, Colin Middleton and Miss T. Robinson. A total of 24 sketches were submitted. Essays were produced of five

designs by Hollywood, Pilton and Collins with various amendments.

Right: unaccepted design by William Hollywood. Left: Armorial bearings of Northern Ireland.





Issued stamps from Northern Ireland of designs by Hollywood, Pilton and Collins

Mrs Elizabeth Odling, G W Lennox Patterson, Barrie Stuart, Archie B Imrie, John Pottinger, William McLaren and Len Fullerton. Care was taken that they were balanced between Glasgow and Edinburgh art schools and elsewhere in Scotland. Some

One from each designer became the first choices, which were approved by The Queen.

5. Scottish Lions & Unicorns

THE Scottish Committee, under the Lord Lyon King of Arms, suggested that heraldic symbols should be used in the designs. These were: Crowned Thistle (Scottish Crown); Saltire (may be environed of an open crown); Lion Rampant, (in a tressured shield); Sejeant lion, (on or off a crown or part of him holding both sword & sceptre); Unicorn (Crowned, may be collared and chained); any or all of the Honours of Scotland (Regalia with crown, sword, sceptre and cushion if desired).

47 designs were submitted, the highest total of all regions.

The inclusion of the Scottish crown in designs was to cause problems. It conflicted with the fact The Queen was already wearing the diadem in the Wilding photograph. In Imrie's accepted design the Scottish Crown was replaced by the Royal Cypher E R.



Unaccepted design by McLaren featuring the "Honours of Scotland"

Essays were produced from four designs by Fleming, Huntly, Imrie and McLaren and these were recommended, with that by McLaren as reserve. The first choices were later approved by The Queen.

All stamps at that time were printed on paper watermarked St Edward's Crown and the Royal Cypher E 2 R. It was felt that this might well cause protests if used for stamps intended specifically for use in Scotland.

So a new watermark with a stylised crown and no cypher (Multiple Crowns) was introduced for all British stamps prior to the new Regionals.

Submitted designs by A B Imrie (with Scottish crown) and Lennox Patterson (with Celtic patterns)

Also suggested were Pictish or Celtic symbols and designs, and the national floral emblem - the thistle.

A remarkable 12 artists were proposed by the Committee to work on the designs, all Scottish. They were: Roy Benzies, John B Fleming, Gordon Huntly, George Mackie, Conrad T McKenna,



McLaren's reserve



Issued designs by Gordon Huntly & John Fleming



Unaccepted design by John Fleming for Scotland

Issued Scottish design by Archie Imrie

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