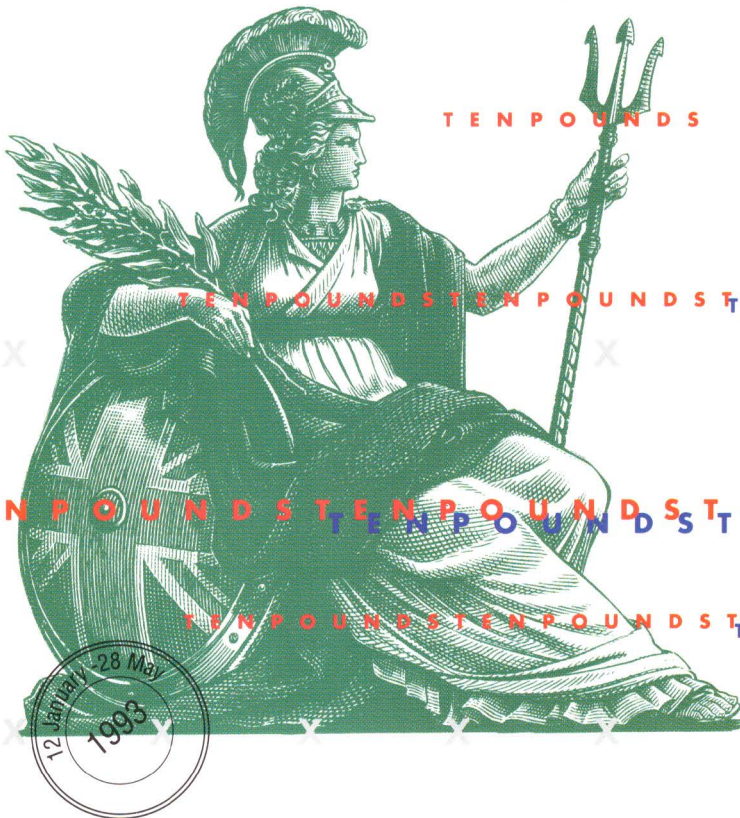




National
Postal Museum

Britannia Depicta

Quality, Value & Security



12 JAN 1993
28 May
1993

BRITANNIA DEPICTA

QUALITY, VALUE & SECURITY

On 2 March 1993 the Royal Mail issues a new £10 stamp featuring Britannia. It is designed by Roundel Design Group and printed in offset lithography (with many security features) at The House of Quеста. This exhibition illustrates the background to the evolution of the image of Britannia on coins, medals, banknotes and stamps and related items.

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Britannia: *The Name and the Image*

Britannia was the Latin name for the Roman province of Britain which together with Caledonia and Hibernia made up the British Isles. Originally, the name was one of two applied to the island from about 500BC, the other being Albion. First mention came with the explorer Pytheas, from the Greek colony of Massalia (Marseilles) who used the form Πρεττανία (Prettania) which probably reflected a genuine local Celtic name. The regular Greek form became Βρεττανία (Brettania) whence Britannia is derived.

As an image Britannia first took female form on coins of the Roman emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138), marking his subjugation of southern Britain. There she was depicted as a captive of the Roman Empire. Later coins of his successor Antoninus Pius (AD 138 – 161), builder of the Antonine Wall, portray her as a seated warrior complete with spiked shield. Subsequent emperors used similar images on some medallions and coins.

This image was revived in the late 16th century by the publication of William Camden's *Britannia* which illustrated in slightly later editions the Roman coins and took the image as part of the title page. With the union of the crowns of Scotland and England under James VI and I in 1603 the name of Great Britain was coined for the political entity and Britannia came back into vogue as a symbol. Other than as book

illustrations or in masques she first appeared on the medals and coins of Charles II modelled on one of his mistresses.

Thereafter she acquired some of the attributes of the Greek goddess of wisdom and war, Athena, (the olive branch), and the nationalistic, warrior resistance of Boudicca (or Boadicea). With the increase in Britain's maritime might she also became "ruler of the four seas" receiving tribute from Neptune. Trident, rocks, ships and lighthouses reflected this. This patriotic stance was emphasised by the publication of *Rule Britannia* in 1740, and the incorporation of the Union Flag on the shield.

As a symbol of the country, and increasingly imperial might, Britannia was used on many items produced in the United Kingdom and the British Empire including coins, medals, banknotes, stamps and other associated postal material.

Roman Britannia

Britain was first invaded by the Romans under Julius Caesar in 55BC but it was not until the invasion by the emperor Claudius in 43AD that it was incorporated into the Roman Empire. Later, Agricola conquered the tribes of Caledonia but it proved easier to defend a frontier further south on the Tyne-Solway isthmus and the famous wall was built by the emperor Hadrian (117-138AD). It was he who first portrayed "Britannia"

BRASS SESTERTIUS
of the emperor Hadrian.
BRITISH MUSEUM



on some of his coins in 119AD to commemorate his subjugation of the area. His successor, Antoninus Pius (138-161AD), extended the province temporarily, building the Antonine Wall from the Forth to the Clyde. He also featured Britannia on coins and medals as a female warrior seated with a spiked shield. This was the basis of later revivals when Camden illustrated these coins in 1600. The Romans formally left Britain in 410AD.



COPPER AS
of the emperor Antoninus Pius.
BRITISH MUSEUM



BRASS SESTERTIUS
of the emperor Antoninus Pius with Britannia seated with the war gear of the ancient Briton.
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TITLE PAGE
of the 1607 edition of
Camden's **BRITANNIA**
with the image taken from
coins of Antoninus Pius.

CHARLES II PATTERN
halfpenny undated.
QVATVOR MARIA
VINDICO
ROYAL MINT



(4)

Britannia Revived

In 1665 war broke out between Britain and the Netherlands. In the same year Jean Roettiers made a pattern farthing with the figure of Britannia on the reverse. He had been invited from Antwerp by Charles II to work at the Royal Mint and produced a long series of medals. For his model of Britannia he chose the King's favourite mistress and famous beauty, Frances Theresa Stuart (or Stewart), Duchess of Richmond and Lennox. Referring to a medal of Roettiers Pepys records in his diary for 25 February 1667 'At my goldsmith's did observe the King's new medal, where in little there is Mistress Stuart's face as well done as ever I saw anything in my whole life, I think: and a pretty thing it is that he should choose her face to represent Britannia by.'

The first coins did not appear until 1672. The design is modelled quite closely on the classical Roman precursors but with the shield becoming a baroque cartouche bearing the Union Flag and she clasps a sprig of olive instead of a standard or spear. The motto on the coin pattern reads QVATVOR MARIA VINDICO (I claim the four seas).



CHARLES II 1667 MEDAL
by Jean Roettiers showing
Britannia based on
Frances Stuart, Duchess
of Richmond and Lennox.
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CHARLES II
farthing coin, 1675
ROYAL MINT

Britannia on Coins

On British coinage Britannia first appeared on the copper halfpence and farthings of 1672 and she remained on those denominations until 1937. In 1797 she was used for the reverse of the first copper pennies and she continued to appear on this denomination until decimalisation in 1971. On occasion she has also been found on silver coins, appearing on some of the groats or fourpenny pieces of Queen Victoria and on the florins of Edward VII. She still appears, accompanied by a lion, on the reverse of the 50p piece.

In 1672 Britannia faced left and held an olive branch and spear. Later, during the reign of George III, the spear was replaced by a trident and a ship was introduced in the background. In the reign of George IV she was turned to the right and the ship was omitted, as was the olive branch. In the design by Pistrucci in 1821 for the farthing Britannia was shown helmeted for the first time. The ship was reintroduced in 1860 and Britannia is also shown with a lighthouse but both these features disappeared in 1895. In 1937 the lighthouse was restored.

On the florins of Edward VII Britannia is shown as a standing figure. The model for this design was Susan Hicks-Beach, daughter of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer and Master of the Royal Mint.



GEORGE III CARTWHEEL PENNY,
1797. *Nautical Britannia*
with the spear turned into
Neptune's trident.
ROYAL MINT



GEORGE IV PENNY,
1826 by William Wyon.
ROYAL MINT

EDWARD VIII PENNY,
1937 with Lighthouse only.
ROYAL MINT

*Britannia on Banknotes*

On 30 July 1694 the Court of Directors of the Bank of England, newly founded by a Scotsman William Paterson, decided that the device for their Common Seal should represent "Britannia sitting and looking on a Bank of mony". It was probably inspired by the current copper coins. This symbol then came to be used on issued banknotes. The earliest surviving banknote dates from 1697 where she is framed between two opulent fronds. Two years later the medallion showed a plain dotted circle and had been moved to the left-hand side of the note. In this design the leaves of the olive branch are very stylised, as they were to remain for many years.

In 1702 a design by John Sturt had an octagonal frame and the figure is looking over her shoulder in the opposite direction from her bank of money, which had come to resemble the "beehive" which was to become closely associated with banknote Britannias over many years. Various designs followed and in 1732 a crown was introduced to surmount the design. From 1809 the same vignette was adopted for all notes, remaining unchanged for 46 years.



1699 NOTE
for £17 10s with Britannia in a plain
dotted circle.
BANK OF ENGLAND

Daniel Maclise, a leading painter of the day, was invited to draw a new vignette in 1850. The result was shown on every Bank of England note issued between 1855 and 1956. Britannia is sitting full face with a naturalistic olive branch showing both fruit and foliage. The background shading represents the sea but the beehive is so clear that its origin in a "bank of mony" is completely lost.

From 1821 to 1928 no Bank of England note of less than £5 was issued. In 1928 notes of £1 and 10s bearing Maclise's vignette were issued with the watermark including a helmeted head of Britannia. With the 1960 notes Britannia



DRAWING OF BRITANNIA by Daniel Maclise first used on banknotes in 1855. BANK OF ENGLAND

yielded pride of place to the sovereign but she appeared in a medallion on both sides of the notes bare-headed and with spear, olive branch and true bank of money.

Britannia on Medals

After 1665 Britannia became a favourite means of representing Britain on medals. She is depicted with a variety of attributes and can be accompanied or unaccompanied. On John Croker's medal of the State of Britain, 1697 (i.e. after the treaty of Ryswick) Britannia is depicted with a naval crown, holding a trident and leaning on her shield. Croker's medal for the Peace of Utrecht, 1713 shows her bare-headed, holding an olive branch and spear. On one side are ships, on the other men ploughing and sowing.

Dassier's medal for the State of England 1750 has Britannia holding an olive branch and staff, topped by a liberty cap. A lion, an increasingly common companion, reposes at her feet. Towards the end of the 18th century Britannia takes on a more military look with her plumed helmet. Küchler's medal for the

Victories of the Year 1798 shows her thus helmeted with a spear in one hand and a small winged Victory in the other. Although the shield is usually decorated with the Union Flag Kempson and Kindon's medal for the Union of Ireland with Great Britain in 1802 shows it decorated with the quartered royal arms, including the Irish harp, plus centre shield. The plumed helmet remains a constant attribute for Britannia during later reigns.

It was common practice to depict Britannia on coronation medals, either with the monarch(s) or accompanied by allegorical figures. Most recently, one medal struck for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 shows a rather haughty-looking Britannia, standing, shield and trident in one hand and holding aloft the orb in the other. Her lion stands guard.



1697. JOHN CROKER'S MEDAL of the State of Britain. STAN GORON

Modern Britannia

In 1971, on decimalisation, the figure of Britannia was retained on both banknotes and coins. It no longer appeared on copper coinage but a rather slim design by Christopher Ironside with olive branch in hand and lion at foot was used for the 50p coin still in circulation.

From 1970 onwards were issued the series D banknotes all with the same image of Britannia by H.N. Eccleston OBE. The £50 note from this series is still current. Series E notes which replaced these have an image by Roger Withington and notes have appeared from 1990 to date.

Stamps and Stationery

From the very first, in 1840, Britannia was considered a suitable subject for postage stamps and postal stationery. She appeared as the central figure in the ill-fated stationery drawn by William Mulready and thus in the multitude of caricatures. As a substitute for the portrait of Queen Victoria she appeared sitting on sugar bales on the stamps of three colonies. It was not until 1913 that Britannia appeared on British stamps, together with seahorses deriving from medal representations.

The Mulready Stationery

In May 1840, postal stationery was issued at the same time as the Penny Black labels. The design, by William Mulready RA, featured a central Britannia and aspects of the Empire. In an explanatory note to Queen Victoria Mulready wrote "This Design is intended to convey the idea that the measure it assists in carrying out emanated from Great Britain, and that it is a very wide spreading benefit, facilitating our friendly and commercial intercourse with remote lands, and bringing, in a manner, our separated brethren closer to the sick beds and cheerful firesides of home."

It was intended that the Maltese Cross cancel the central figure of Britannia.

When it was issued the design was immediately ridiculed and spawned a large number of caricatures. Many poked fun at Mulready's Irish origins and political characters and events including the Opium Wars with China. The original design had to be withdrawn because of this.

1840. THE MULREADY design from the twopenny registration sheet.
NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM



Britannia on Colonial Stamps

With the success of the Penny Black, if not the Mulready, other countries began to issue postage labels. In the British Empire the design normally took the form of a portrait of Queen Victoria or perhaps a local allusion. For some colonies British rule was represented by an image of Britannia. The first was drawn by Edward Henry Corbould for stamps of Mauritius, Trinidad and Barbados

in the early 1850s and showed her seated on bales of sugar with spear in hand. This harked back to a design by Gideon Fairman, an engraver for Jacob Perkins, who had produced



1848. WATERCOLOUR SKETCH by Edward Henry Corbould for colonial stamps of Mauritius, Trinidad and Barbados. HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

specimen designs for banknotes. Spear, rather than trident, reflected Roman coins and the earliest English examples.

Seahorses High Values

The high value stamps issued during the reign of George V had a design known as the “Seahorses”. This was drawn by Bertram Mackennal with lettering by George Eve.



1912. COLOUR STANDARD for the 2/6d Seahorses. NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

There are a number of theories about the origin of the design but it seems to have been a combination of the stamp issue of Barbados of 1892 which featured the Carolingian seal of the colony and depictions on various medals.

The first depiction of seahorses on British medals seems to be that produced by Thomas Simon in 1665 for the Dominion of the Sea. On the reverse Charles II is shown in royal robes, crowned and bearing a trident, being drawn over the sea in a naval car by four seahorses. This idea was taken up again in 1714 by John Croker to celebrate George I's arrival in England. George is depicted as Neptune, attended by tritons and nereids. Neptune himself is depicted in a similar fashion on a medal by Croker to mark the second treaty of Vienna in 1731.



1895. REVISED DRAWING by De La Rue for the new Britannia designs. JOHN MARRIOTT

Later versions were used by Trinidad, and Trinidad & Tobago up to the reign of George V.



1896. HIGH VALUE in the issued colours. JOHN MARRIOTT

Neptune in his car being pulled by seahorses front-on has a longer history. There is a medal by the late 15th century medallist Lysippus of Giovanni Alois Toscani shown with two seahorses. One particularly interesting medal is that by Barnett issued in 1794 for the Battle of the First of June. On this medal, Neptune is shown on his naval car drawn by two seahorses. He is pointing with his right hand towards sinking ships while with his left hand he is handing a trident to Britannia seated on his right. Here you have the juxtaposition of Neptune, seahorses and Britannia. On the medal by Leonard Charles Wyon of 1854 Britannia is shown with four seahorses. A combination of these ideas seems to have been the inspiration for Mackennal.

1854 MEDAL by Leonard Charles Wyon of his father William Wyon with Britannia and seahorses.
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Savings Stamps

National Savings stamps came into existence in 1918 to replace postage stamps as a means of saving by installments. Originally, they were a means by which poorer people could assist the war effort by buying War Savings Certificates. They were sold over Post Office counters and from official agents.

The first example containing the word "War" was in use from July 1918. The artwork featuring Britannia, intended to stimulate patriotism, was by Sir Bertram Mackennal RA (1863-1931). Britannia was also ideal for a savings stamp because of the association with coins and banknotes from

1672. Printers were Waterlow Brothers & Layton followed by Waterlow & Sons until 1921 when Harrisons took over the contract and produced all further printings until the end of 1939. The early printings by Harrisons are probably the first stamps produced in gravure for Great Britain, over 10 years before gravure postage stamps for the Post Office.

In the third example the helmeted profile of Britannia was completely redrawn in 1935 and printed from late 1939 at HMSO. The Britannia design was phased out in July 1941. Ten years later, midway through the Festival of Britain, an updated version produced jointly by artists at HMSO and Mildred M. Ratcliffe of Savings Bank Division was placed on sale.

Cards to which these Britannia savings stamps were affixed began to appear from July 1918 but it was a further two years before these cards bore a replica of the stamp. Such cards continued to be available in varying layouts until September 1934.

NATIONAL SAVINGS STAMPS

- [1] July 1918, "War" Savings, litho, Waterlow Brothers & Layton.
- [2] September 1921, gravure, Harrisons.
- [3] October 1935, redrawn, letterpress, Harrisons.
- [4] 2 July 1951, bicoloured, gravure, HMSO, Alperton.

LIONEL JONES



Printers' Dummy Stamps

Dummy or sample stamps were often produced by security printers to illustrate the capabilities of their artists and presses. These were then printed in various formats such as coils and booklets. About the beginning of the 20th century the head of Britannia was used in several different designs (sometimes being referred to as a 'Minerva' head).

Sometimes these designs were also used to essay particular colours for use on other labels.

Imperial Reply Coupons

On 4 April 1927 a new type of reply coupon was placed on sale for use within the British Empire only. It cost 2½d and could be exchanged for a stamp representing the postage on a single rate letter to a destination within the British Empire. The design featured Britannia in traditional, classical garb and was produced and printed by Waterlow & Sons Ltd.



1926. Artwork for the first IMPERIAL REPLY COUPON by Waterlow & Sons. NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

George V Artwork

During the 1920s and 1930s the first commemorative stamps were issued in Great Britain. Though few in number they attracted a large number of artists of the period



1934. SUBMITTED DESIGN by Edmund Dulac for the 1935 Silver Jubilee issue. NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

1934. SUBMITTED DESIGN by Rex Whistler for the 1935 Silver Jubilee issue. NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM



to submit designs. For some of the more imperial subjects Britannia was used as a motif though none of these appeared on the issued stamps. Artists such as Rex Whistler and Edmund Dulac were prominent.

War Savings Card

During World War II a vast range of pictorial saving cards was produced for the National Savings Movement.

The painting *Unconquerable* was commissioned by the National Savings Committee from Sir William Russell Flint RA. It was used on the 90th card in their W.F.L. series and was available between 1942 and 1945.



1942. War Savings Card - "UNCONQUERABLE". LIONEL JONES

Festival of Britain

The Festival of Britain, held in 1951, celebrated regeneration after World War II and the centenary of the Great Exhibition of 1851. The symbol of the Festival, based on Britannia, was designed by Abram Games and he also designed one of the stamps which incorporated this symbol. At the time it was stated "The Symbol of the head of Britannia surmounting the points of the compass expresses the motif of the Festival, the British contribution to Civilisation." This symbol appeared on many commemorative items and stationery.



1950. FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN LOGO by Abram Games. POST OFFICE ARCHIVES

1951. APPROVED ESSAY of the 4d Festival of Britain stamp. NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

Queen Elizabeth II

By 1953 imperial might was no longer in fashion and so the image of Britannia was given less prominence. However, she was shown on a small number of designs submitted for the first issue of the reign of high value stamps, though none was finally used. However, for the miniature sheet issued in 1990 for the international stamp exhibition in London, and to mark the 150th anniversary of the Penny Black, a return was made to the Seahorse design used for the George V high values. This sheet combined the original Penny Black, the design of the Seahorses and modern security printing. The new £10 continues this theme.



1990. PROOF in black, cream and brown in intaglio from the master die with corner letters in the Penny Black but without the gravure postage stamp. NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM



Security Printing: 1840

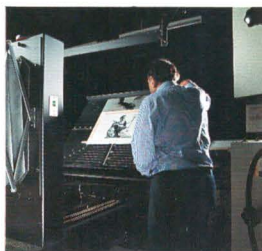
Before postage stamps were introduced in 1840 much consideration was given to the possibility of forgery and the means by which this could be avoided. Suggestions included aspects of paper, engraving and printing. For paper a watermark was proposed and for envelopes the special device of silk threads running through the material. Engraving was costly and therefore difficult of access to a forger and for printing various methods were proposed including that of embossing.

In Rowland Hill's report on entries to a competition he stated that in terms of the design it should be 'as beautiful a specimen of fine art as can be obtained; also that there is nothing in which minute differences of execution are so readily detected as in a representation of the human face.'

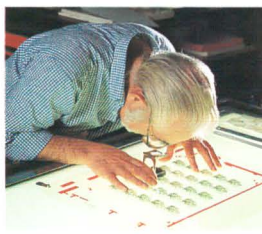
The resulting adhesive labels, the Penny Black and the Twopenny Blue, bore an engraving of the face of Queen Victoria set on a background of engine turning, engraved by fine craftsmen and printed in intaglio on watermarked paper. They were never successfully forged.

To prevent re-use the 1840 labels were defaced by a cancellation, the Maltese Cross. However, it was found that some ingenious people could remove the cancellation without destroying the label. Thus, new inks were tried out for both printing the labels and

cancelling them, and this resulted in new labels, the Penny Red and a different Twopenny Blue. At the same time new postal stationery was produced by a combination of embossing and special silk-thread paper.



Photographing the artwork of Britannia for the £10 stamp for reproduction stamp size.



Examining one of the colour separations of the sheet of £10 stamps.

Security Printing Today

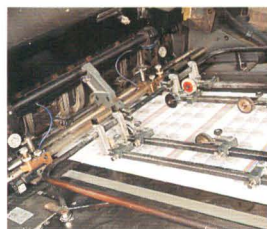
The House of Questa

The first postage stamps printed in offset lithography for the British Post Office at The House of Questa appeared in 1980. Since then a number of definitives, country and special stamps have appeared each year. In 1993 the first £10 high value stamp

to be printed offset litho appears with a range of special security features.

In 1966 the company was formed by Wally Rodgers, Ken McAllen and Charles Haswell. All are still associated with the firm though it became part of the John Waddington group in 1984, taking over the security printing of that firm. It began general commercial printing for the Post Office in 1968.

Although printing technology has improved greatly over the years the final product is still very much the result of craftsmanship. Images must be reproduced exactly, checked by trained eye and, if necessary, corrected.



Printing the £10 stamp in sheet-fed offset lithography.

For the £10 stamp processes additional to those characteristic of any printing job were also required – for the impressing of the Braille dots and the particular perforations.

The £10 stamp was designed by Roundel Design Group and features Britannia.

