National Postal Museum
Review of 1997/98

Contents

Cover Design:

Front: King Edward Building, with the airmail letter-box miniature, stamp artwork of Gibraltar from the Royal Philatelic Collection, and Sergeant Knight's Victoria Cross.

Back: Rowland Hill's statue in the 1930s, with a 1940s horse-drawn mail van leaving KEB and the London Chief Office interior in 1947.
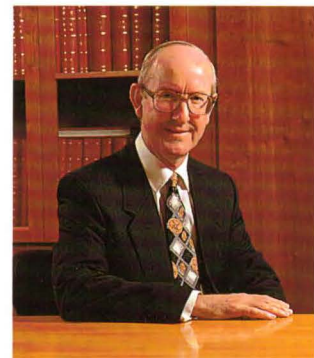
Foreword

By John Roberts CBE, Chief Executive of The Post Office

I was very pleased to be asked to re-open the National Postal Museum to the public in August 1997. This gave me the opportunity to both thank the staff who had worked so tirelessly during the period of extended closure and to meet a number of people from outside The Post Office, who are strong supporters of the Museum and its work.

The re-opening of the Museum was marked by the "Golden and Glorious" exhibition, which offered a philatelic celebration of the Queen's golden wedding anniversary. It was the first of a series of special exhibitions throughout the year, which have done so much to attract and entertain visitors. This programme, along with the publication of three further volumes on philatelic history, represent a successful year for the team who work in the Museum, and I would like to record my continuing appreciation of their efforts.

The National Postal Museum provides The Post Office with a unique showcase for its rich and varied history. However, it is also very much a part of the present organisation and cannot hope to remain insulated from the changes that affect a business of our size. The sale of King Edward Building will mean that the Museum will again need to close to the general public for a short period and our staff are preparing for the challenge of preparing the collections for temporary storage. I know that they are paying particular attention to ensuring that there will be only the minimum of disruption to researchers who wish to consult the collection during this period.

Despite the uncertainty that change inevitably brings, we remain fully committed to supporting the guardianship of our heritage. We are exploring ways in which we can continue to provide wide access to our philatelic history and I am sure that we will be able to take this opportunity to create an attraction that will do justice to the proud history of The Post Office.

John Roberts CBE

Insert:
The Post Office & King Edward Building
By Andrew Perry

National Postal Museum Opening Times:

9.30 am to 4.30 pm (Monday to Friday).
Closed at weekends and all Bank and Public Holidays. Admission free.

Introduction

The 18 months of 1997-8 at the National Postal Museum
by Christine Jones the Director, Heritage Services within
Support Services (part of Post Office Services Group).

Unlike previous *Annual Reviews,* this issue covers a year and a half in the life of the National Postal Museum - a period of uncertainty, change, excitement and eventual resolution. The year 1997 started off with the staff still going about their duties wearing hard hats. Wearing such safety helmets was a necessity caused by the ongoing building works during the refurbishment of King Edward Building. This restricted access to our collections housed in the basement and meant that many projects "below stairs" were curtailed and that we were not able to satisfy all public enquiries that involved accessing such material.

Nonetheless, and contrary to widespread belief, the museum staff were not idle during the enforced closure - far from it! Even though the museum galleries remained shut to the public for the majority of 1997, work "above stairs" continued, and wherever possible, the requests of researchers to visit both at King Edward Building and the outstore in Tottenham were accommodated. Members of staff continued to give talks and demonstrations away from the Museum and while Stan Goron kept the link with the International Association of Transport and Communication Museums alive, I took over the Chair of the Central London Museums and Galleries Group and also continued as membership secretary for the London Federation of Museums and Galleries.

Staff continued to write articles and prepare publications, such as the Stamp History series, items for *Crosspost* or the information leaflet prepared by Krystyna Koscia for the Museums and Galleries Commission Conservation Unit. She also represented the Museum abroad when she went to Warsaw to attend the 50th anniversary of the Academy of Fine Art's Conservation Department. Douglas Muir too went abroad on behalf of the Museum. He attended an international exhibition and conference on museums called Mutec 1997 held in Munich in June. This was an oppor-

tunity to view and experience examples of the latest museum technology and listen to lectures from curators and directors of other continental museums on how modern theories worked out in practice.

Sam Kelly, Krystyna Koscia and Keith Dumas headed the Museum team that was in regular contact with the contractors engaged on the KEB building works. It is thanks to them that the resultant problems and inconveniences were resolved as soon as practicable. Sometimes this did not seem soon enough as over the months the Museum at various points lost its fresh water supply, heating, toilets and even electricity. Each was short term, but cumulatively all very frustrating and making our jobs extremely difficult. Overtime and weekend working for over half a year was a constant feature of life for our custodians. So everyone on the staff is to be praised for their fortitude and good humour which enabled the Museum to achieve much in this period of adversity.

After several delays, the Museum eventually re-opened to the public on 4 August. The occasion was marked by the installation of a new exhibition *Golden and Glorious,* opened by John Roberts, The Post Office's Chief Executive. In the same month the Post Office launched a set of stamps to celebrate subpost offices. This was supported by a temporary display at the Museum, organised by Barry Robinson, Head of Royal Mail Design, of the artwork of Terence Millington, the artist commissioned to produce the stamps.

On 23 September, Sir Michael Heron, The Post Office Chairman, opened our third exhibition - *The Queen's Stamps - Mediterranean.* It is an honour to be again the recipient of such a prestigious loan from the Royal Collection. The National Postal Museum thus opened to the public with three major and diverse displays, each generating plenty of good publicity.

Lionel Jones had prepared a small exhibition to coincide with Museums Week in May 1997. Unfortunately, the prolonged delay in opening the Museum meant that we could not participate in Museums Week itself. We decided, however, that this display on the postal history of *The Dead Letter Office* should go ahead and it was in place for the August opening. In 1998, we were able to take part in Museums Week with the two-part exhibition entitled *Going Places... with the British Post Office.* Kevin Squelch, Kon Georgiou, Zara Matthews, Douglas
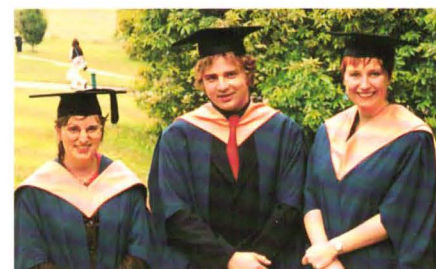
Kate Tildesley, Tony Butler and Zara Matthews on graduation

Muir and Tony Butler, were the creators of this colourful and diverse exhibition that featured stamp artwork from the philatelic collections, and posters and photographs from both the Archives and Photographic Library.

Behind the scenes, both the Museum and Archives have each undergone fundamental changes. No longer separate units funded from different parts of the Post Office, the two were, in January 1997, formally amalgamated into Heritage Services within a division of Royal Mail, called Support Services. From that point on closer working links have been established between the staff based at the Archives at Freeling House and the Museum. Most notably, the administration of the two has come under the guidance of Sam Kelly. To encourage a oneness of operation, under the editorship of Lesley Wright and then Tony Butler, the monthly *Heritage News,* a departmental newsletter, has been

produced to share and exchange information between the two locations.

Within Support Services, Heritage Services sits alongside Personnel, Finance, Facilities, Procurement, Pay and Benefits, Information Support and Business Excellence. This association with Support Services is more than just a link on paper. The Head of Heritage, as a member of the Support Services Executive Team (SSET), is involved with business planning, policy-making and cascading procedures and processes across Support Services, and also to our customers within the Post Office.

It was, however, recognised early on that, because of the nature of the work of the other component units of Support Services, Heritage does not easily fit into this organisational structure. The other units directly support the core activities of the Post Office - something which Heritage does indirectly. This is leading to a forthcoming repositioning of Heritage Services within the Post Office.

The announcement in the spring of 1997 that King Edward Building had been sold to a private company came as a surprise, so although plans were well underway to re-open the galleries to the public, we were also faced with the prospect of simultaneously developing plans for relocation to another site sometime in 1999. Once again we entered a period of uncertainty. It was greatly reassuring that at an early stage, the Post Office Executive Committee agreed to continue to safeguard the heritage and confirm that a new home would be found for the collections.

At the time of writing this *Review,* the situation is that Heritage Services will shortly transfer out of Support Services administratively and into Post Office Services Group - Communications Services. During 1999 Museum staff will temporarily be rehoused at Freeling House, sharing accommodation with colleagues at the Archives, while the collections will be dispersed throughout several locations. As part of this repositioning, the Records Management function will move from Heritage Services to the newly-formed Office Services within Support Services, with the transfer of some staff.

Over the past 18 months, members of staff have been involved with Post Office-wide initiatives. For instance, by the end of 1998 all our managers will have undergone a training course designed to improve understanding of leadership within the Post Office and how we can develop attitudes and working practices

that reflect the Post Office's own overall value scheme. The past year has also seen many changes in personnel. Since September 1997, Kevin Squelch has been seconded from the Archives to the project team overseeing the Museum relocation. He was joined for a short time by Kon Georgiou as his assistant. Simon Bates temporarily took over command at the Archives. Staff we have said farewell to include Terry Brown, Frank O'Neill, Barry Ilett, Amanda Engineer, Jane Pimlott, Barbara Stephenson, Catherine Orton, Giles Allen and Peter Hajbok. Lesley Wright left us to take up a place at Norwich University to undertake a postgraduate course in museum studies. We look forward to welcoming her back in September 1998. New faces in the curatorial departments included contract staff Kate Tildesley, Tony Butler, Kathrine Bailey and Madeline Baxter, while we have had several additions to the reserve panel of Custodians - Curtis Parris, John Goodson, Paul Hepworth, and Mustafa Sayed. Another personal change took place when Zara Matthews married Andrew Tuson in April 1997.

Zara Matthews on her wedding day

Sir John Marriott, former Keeper of the Royal Philatelic Collection, had been a member of the Museum Advisory Board since 1990. In 1998, shortly after his retirement from the Royal Collection, he decided to resign from the Museum Board. The Board presented him with an early map of Trinidad, an area of especial philatelic interest to him, at a farewell lunch to which Lady Marriott was also invited.

Sir John Marriott with his wife Mary, and James Foley

Despite the closure of the galleries, in 1997 the Museum attracted some £188,000 of free publicity. We discovered that the Museum featured on a London tourist map produced by the fast food chain - Macdonalds. A German television crew filmed a feature on HM The Queen's Golden Wedding Anniversary, using the Museum as a source

of information about the special issue stamps. The World Service broadcast to Romania an interview with me about postcodes. A similar interview with the broadcaster Malcolm Billings went out on Radio 4's *On Your Behalf.* Mike Bament, a Friend of the Museum, was also interviewed by Peter Snow for a further radio programme *Random Additions.* Derrick Page took the Freddie Mercury stamp collection for display at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham where he was featured on the local television news. On a festive note, the Museum galleries featured in the Christmas edition of *The Antiques Show,* when the antiques expert, Tom Wonacott, presented an edition about collecting Christmas cards.

As I write, the precise details for the future of Heritage are still unclear. Much work, however, has been undertaken (and is still going on) to clarify how it will be organised, exactly how it will fit into Communication Services, where the gallery space will be located and what the displays will consist of and look like. To this end, in January 1997, I undertook a visit to look at the exhibition *Der Brief* held at the Frankfurt postal museum. This gave me the opportunity to ask the exhibition creators questions as to content and design, as well as comparing our museum to one created more recently. In September, accompanied by Paul Budd (POSG Communication) and Peter Broomhead (Director, Support Services) a further visit was made, this time to the National Postal Museum in Washington. Part of the Smithsonian complex of museums, the Postal Museum has strong attachments to the American postal administration. We learnt much from its director, James Bruns.

With the assistance of Eric Mason, our Transitional Project Manager, we are now deeply involved in planning the relocation of staff and collections to temporary quarters. This is indeed a challenge for all members of Heritage Services. To be ready in time for our target date, we are reducing some of our public services, such as loans to other museums. All our efforts are now concentrated on two major activities: to make sure that when the removal van arrives the collections will be ready on time to be safely stowed on board; and secondly to plan our new galleries so that the opening exhibitions in our new home will be truly spectacular and of which we can all be justly proud.

The National Postal Museum, 1966-98

The National Postal Museum has resided in King Edward Building since its inception.
Here, John Holman, Editor of the *British Philatelic Bulletin,* tells the story of those 32 years.

Origins

The Post Office has long maintained a collection of proofs and registration sheets of British stamps, kept in its archives. Selected items were displayed at major stamp exhibitions such as the internationals in London in 1950 and 1960. However, it was not until the 1960s that the idea of a postal museum came to fruition.

Reginald Phillips handing his collection to Tony Benn and Ken Hind

In 1962 Reginald M Phillips, whose fine collection of Victorian stamps won a top award at the 1960 exhibition, wrote to the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, suggesting a museum. The idea was passed to the Post Office and after lengthy negotiations an agreement was signed between Phillips and the PO in April 1965 and announced in Parliament at the time. At a ceremony in Brighton Phillips handed volumes containing rare Victorian stamps to the then Postmaster General, a youthful Tony Benn. In all, Phillips handed over 80 volumes of his own and the Dendy Marshall postmark collections.

The Museum, housing the Phillips Collection, was opened by Benn's successor Edward Short (now Lord Glenamara) at King Edward Building in September 1966. At the opening ceremony Mr Phillips presented his philatelic library and die proofs of the first British Telegraph stamps to the PMG. Then, KEB was at the centre of the British postal world, housing the London Chief PO (at that time open 24

hours a day!) with GPO headquarters just across the road. The Philatelic Bureau, in the former Telegraph Office alongside, had only just moved to Edinburgh.

In announcing the new Museum, the GPO stated: "because this vast collection cannot be shown in its entirety, the Museum will show a series of changing exhibitions, each centred on a selected theme and each lasting for about two months. Items not on display will be available for inspection by approved students and historians. The first exhibition traces the general history of the 19th century adhesive postage stamps." The announcement continued: "the accommodation provided is but the first stage of the Museum. A greatly expanded area (some 2000 square feet) will be opened in two years' time." The small museum closed in April 1968 and the expanded premises were formally opened by The Queen on 19 February 1969, accompanied by Mr Phillips and another PMG, John Stonehouse.

The Queen with Reginald Phillips, Ken Hind, George Downes and John Stonehouse, at the opening

The Curator showed Her Majesty the complete proof sheet of the Penny Black and a special display of the stamps of her reign. Before leaving, The Queen signed a portrait of herself, now displayed in the main gallery.

It was announced that the enlarged Museum had display space for over 130 times as many stamps as it had been possible to show before. Even so the Museum has always been short of space, particularly for displaying artefacts. Much material remained in basement stores, available for inspection only by appointment.

Marcus Arman showing The Queen stamps of New Zealand, with John Stonehouse

The problem was partially solved in 1995 when the NPM took over the former Chief PO counter area, with a new *Post Haste!* exhibition of vehicles and artefacts and a temporary exhibition gallery on the site of the former philatelic counter.

Exhibitions

The Museum is well-known for many fine exhibitions. *The King's Stamps* display in 1976 included not only PO material but unique items from the Royal Collection reflecting George V's philatelic interests. Special exhibitions, with accompanying special postcards, postmarks and booklets, were developed during the 1980s, including *London Exhibitions* (1983), *Mail Coach Bicentenary* (1984-5), *Post Office at War* (1982-3), and *350 Years of Public Mail Service* (1985-6).

An impressive exhibition marking the 20th anniversary of the Machin (1987-8) was visited by Arnold Machin himself.

The *Railways and the Post* exhibition (1988-9) proved highly popular, especially a demonstration model of a TPO which sat on special rails in the foyer of the Museum and acted as a posting box. The exhibition marked the 150th anniversary of the first TPO - a converted horse-box, on the Grand Junction Railway.

1990 was an especially busy year, the Museum staging the *Postal Reform and the Penny Black* and *Rowland Hill* exhibitions, contributing a major part of the Court of Honour display at the Stamp World international exhibition at Alexandra Palace, and publishing Douglas Muir's book *Postal Reform and the Penny Black,* now the standard work on the subject.

Details of exhibitions are to be found in the appropriate annual *Review.* However, brief mention should be made here of the important *People in the Post, Britannia Depicta* and *Addressing Postcodes* exhibitions of 1992-94.

In 1996 and 1997 the NPM was privileged to exhibit Mauritius and Mediterranean stamps from the Royal Collection. The first of these, which included the celebrated "Post Office" stamps, was curtailed when KEB was suddenly closed for renovation in November 1996.

These exhibitions supplement the permanent displays from the Phillips Collection, the UPU collection of world stamps from the 1870s, and numerous smaller displays of British and thematic issues, postal history and artefacts.

Publications

From the earliest days the NPM has produced useful brochures, booklets and especially postcards. Some of the early cards are now highly collectable.

Several major books have been published including Robson Lowe's work on the Phillips Collection (1968, 2nd edn 1978), Douglas Muir's book on the Penny Black (1990), *Carrying British Mails* by Jean Farrugia and Tony Gammons (1980), and *Special Stamps History: 1953 Coronation* by Giles Allen (1997). Further books in the stamp history series are already in production. The 10 annual reports, introduced as *The Philatelic Year* in 1988 (now retitled *Review*), are a mine of intriguing information and excellent illustrations.

From 1986 to 1992 the *British Philatelic Bulletin* was published from the Museum, edited at first by Douglas Muir and later by myself. The *Postmark Bulletin* was also compiled at the NPM in 1988-92.

Acquisitions

The NPM's main collections have over the years been supplemented by donations [pillar boxes; vehicle fleet] and purchased material [Frank Staff collection]. In recent years greater attention has been given to acquiring artefacts, including the original woodblock engraving of the Mulready design, a rare self-portrait of William Mulready, and several paintings of mail coaches (some were illustrated in this *Review* for 1996). The postal history collection has been vastly expanded by the judicious purchase of, amongst others, Penny Post covers and Valentine cards. Such items strengthen the NPM's displays relating to the development of the post and are thus important aspects of social as well as purely postal history. The NPM is not just about times past; it is always adding to its collections current material which will be of significance in the future. Of principal importance amongst such acquisitions are the artworks and registration sheets of all new stamp issues.

Mindful of the need to attract visitors and raise its public profile, the NPM in 1993 purchased the stamp collection of pop star Freddie Mercury (1946-91). The collection has generated much interest both at the Museum and when displayed at stamp exhibitions. Many of Freddie's fans become quite emotional when they view his stamps and touch his album.

Conservation

Conservation of the NPM treasures is of vital importance and the Museum's full-time paper conservator, Krystyna Koscia, undertakes conservation treatment of individual items and prevents further deterioration of the collections. An in-house conservation studio was set up from December 1993, although work had already been carried out by outside conservators before that.

Attitudes to environmental conditions, handling, display and storage have all changed over the years. Now, these constitute a very important part of nearly all work. Environmental conditions are monitored constantly and great professional care is taken to ensure the survival of the Museum's objects.

Staff

The first Curator of the NPM, Marcus Arman, a long-serving PO official, was especially keen to attract young visitors. He was succeeded in 1970 by Anthony Rigo de Righi, a noted philatelist who had a somewhat scholarly approach to the Museum. The third and last Curator, Raife Wellsted, developed the special exhibitions and broadened the scope of the NPM. His tenure ended abruptly in 1985 when he was charged (later convicted) of stealing material.

For a decade from 1986 the NPM was managed by Stan Goron, who restored confidence in the Museum, and now by Christine Jones as Head of Heritage in charge of both the NPM and PO Archives. Douglas Muir was appointed Curator Philately in 1988.

The administration of the Museum has, over the years, come under various Post Office departments, including London Postal Region, Royal Mail Stamps, the PO Secretary's office and now Post Office Services Group. In 1992 the Museum was given its own identity and logo which symbolises the main aspects of its many collections and work.

Friends

The Association of Friends of the NPM was set up in 1985 to assist the permanent staff and help publicise the Museum. After a somewhat shaky start, the Association has become a very active organisation with a large membership enjoying numerous events and excursions to stamp printers, museums and places of interest to philatelists and postal historians. A number of Friends, principally Mike Bament, Cyril Macey and Don Staddon, freely give of their time on a regular basis to help develop NPM collections.

Conclusion

Having visited the NPM since 1967, I will be sorry to see it leave KEB. However, having worked there for four years I know only too well the problems of space, environmental control and maintenance. By the end of 1999 the Museum will have left KEB and the Post Office presence in that historic area of London will come to an end. I look forward to a new Museum where the dedicated staff will have better facilities to display stamps and artefacts and provide an improved service to many more visitors. Even so, I am sure many will join me in looking back with nostalgia and affection to the King Edward Street years.

Work in Progress

As in all museums and archives, a lot of work goes on behind the scenes, and some of this is long term, only becoming evident to the public much later. Here, some of this is summarised, including work undertaken by Post Office Archives.

Post Office Archives

Simon Bates reports:
In 1996 Amanda Engineer joined the Archives and began the task of producing new catalogues for all of the 133 different Post Classes which make up the Archives' collections.

This work continued to be the Archives' main priority during 1997. A total of 11 Post Classes were catalogued during the year, bringing the total of classes re-catalogued to 21 by the end of 1997.

As each class is catalogued, a number of different tasks are carried out. First, all the material which has not been catalogued is assessed for its historical value. Material which is kept is added to that already in the existing catalogue. Material which is not kept is either transferred to another archive/museum or destroyed. Each item is then listed and an introduction written which explains what can be found in that class. The new catalogue is first approved by the Public Record Office before being made available in the Search Room.

We have now catalogued nearly a quarter of our collections. The 11 classes catalogued in 1997 were initially quite small classes which in total contained around only 720 items. The work carried out by the Archives team over the year has added a further 7855 items to these catalogues, dramatically increasing the amount of information in these classes. The 11 classes catalogued in 1997 include records on Travelling Post Offices; mail collections, processing, sorting and delivery; Post Office Counters operations; internal publications and Union publications.

We intend that this work will continue to be our main priority during 1998-99.

National Postal Museum
Postal History

The postal history project continued with Tom Norgate and Mike Bament creating five new listings and adding to those already in existence. As of July 1998 they stand at:

Missent	205
Paid at	102
Fifth Clause	23
Ship Letters	183
India Letters	32
Post Offices Abroad	37
TPO/Railway	1857
Camp Postmarks	1166
Sideways Duplex	893
Spoon Cancellations	175
Penny Posts	1680
London Penny Post	447
Mileage Marks	28

This gives a total of items listed as 6,828, though not all of these have yet been computerised. The number of postal history albums also expanded, now totalling 182.

Remounting

George Hodges continued to remount our collections, though the project on special issue artwork and essays had largely come to a stop. The total number of pages remounted until July 1998 was 3,047 with 2,089 items entered on to the Edicon computer. This made a total of 24,000 files now on computer. All QEII special issues prior to 1975 are now computerised as are definitives, with the exception of some 15 albums of regionals from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

There were three main areas of material remounted. Five albums of SPECIMEN overprints have been created from various disparate sources. Postal Orders have been rationalised from Queen Victoria up to George V issues and mounted into no fewer than 26 albums. The stamp definitives of George V have also been rationalised and relocated into 16 albums. All of these are now on archival pages for the first time.

Lionel Jones completed the mounting of 1 volumes of reply coupons - International, Imperial and Commonwealth. These were the registration copies in the main, with only a few used. Lionel also mounted three volumes of airletters and continued to add volumes to the collection of modern cylinder blocks.

Registration Sheets

Lesley Wright continued to catalogue and mount 20th century registration sheets until September 1997 and during that time some 461 sheets were catalogued. The total number of sheets catalogued and boxed is now 3,642.

Stamps of the World

After Derrick Page completed the remount ing on to archival pages of the Common-wealth section of Stamps of the World,

Derrick Page

the stamps of the Rest of the World have been removed and are presently being remounted with gaps being filled wherever possible. From the Universal Postal Union came over 10,000 stamps (including miniature sheets and booklets) during the period. These will be integrated after remounting has been completed.

Collections Management (Artefacts)

Zara Matthews reports:
For most of 1997 access to the basement stores in King Edward Building was limite due to the presence of building contractor: and engineers. It was September before the stores were cleaned and staff were able to

begin the task of re-organisation. Objects had been taken off shelves and, over a period of several months, moved from room to room to facilitate the building works. In effect, much of the hard work undertaken by Karen Parr, Melanie Parker and the custodians in 1996 was undone.

Throughout the year staff in Collections Management (Artefacts) faced sporadic flooding in the basement area, most especially in the composite store where, on one occasion, a tributary of the River Fleet was temporarily released from its pipe. To add to the difficulties used cooking oil was accidentally poured through a hole in the ceiling from the kitchen above! The leaking kitchen floor has continued to be a problem in 1998.

It was, however, business as usual, as staff continued to facilitate loan requests from colleagues in Royal Mail and to other museums and charities, including: Royal Mail Salford, Royal Mail Crawley, Royal Mail *Leisure* Magazine, the Anthony Nolan Trust, Bletchley Park Post Office, Prestige International, and the British Embassy in Tokyo.

Chelmsford Museum Service borrowed the stamp dies for the Marconi stamp issue, as part of their exhibition celebrating the life of Marconi and his association with Chelmsford. Wakefield Museum co-ordinated a travelling exhibition celebrating the centenary of the Federation of SubPost-masters. Many objects from the NPM were loaned for this exhibition, which will be touring Britain until March 1999.

Staff continued to acquire objects and to document material. A total of 460 accession numbers were allocated in 1997, of which 63% were for items not previously documented. Researchers, particularly in connection with the Post Office Rifles and letter boxes, continued to be assisted by the department. An increasing number of enquiries were from children working on school projects about the history of the Post Office. Letter boxes continue to be the most popular topic with some 17% of enquirers requesting information on this subject.

Preparations for the relocation project got underway with work schedules being drawn up. Documentation and packing projects, to standards set by the Museums & Galleries Commission, were begun in 1997 and have continued into 1998.

Jane Pimlott, with Kate Tildesley, began working one day a week to catalogue and pack the Museum's collection of stamp dies, rollers and printing plates, prior to the Museum's relocation. This has proved to be a considerable task, with some 1,100 individual items to be processed. Nearly half of this material had, however, been processed by March 1998.

During 1997 steady progress was made to enter records on to the computer database, with some 1238 entries made in total. This type of documentation will facilitate the relocation of material in the future. This is not a simple task as care must be taken to ensure that records are not only accurate, but also consistent and easy to understand for successive curators.

Towards the end of the summer work restarted on upgrading the large object store in North London, and was completed by the end of October. Fans and heaters were installed to combat low temperatures and high relative humidity (RH). The upgrade has been partially successful in that the temperature has stabilised at a reasonable level, but the RH still fluctuates. External weather conditions still effect the internal environment of the store, and staff are considering the best way forward.

1998 has seen work focus on the relocation of the NPM with individual projects relating to packing up the collections. This involves working systematically through the stores, room by room. Kathrine Bailey and Madeline Baxter have been working hard to complete the project to catalogue and pack the stamp dies, rollers and printing plates, and to prepare the composite store for the move.

Friends

Friend **Mike Bament** continued to be extremely useful in the area of writing up material acquired for the postal history collections. Good progress was made during the year to put our holdings of London Penny and Twopenny posts on to computer databases. The results of this work were exchanged with the postal historian Hugh Feldman who is currently in the throes of getting a major new book published on the London post and its receiving houses. In return, Hugh has provided valuable feedback to the Museum of our stock of London material, providing a further example of how Museum and public are collaborating for mutual benefit.

Recently, Mike began work on listing our mileage marks from the first type issued in 1784 to those in use in 1829 when the Post Office issued instructions for the mileages

to be cut out of the handstamps. The listing includes details of all other markings on the covers and where sufficiently important (as with a provincial penny post), such a mark is cross-referenced with other listings.

Don Staddon continued to work on a one-day-a-week basis in three distinct areas: to write up and mount modern GB stamp booklets; to mount and describe accurately GB stamps as they were issued in the gallery display; and to provide information for the updates of the *Chronolist* as published in the StampMaster computer disk. **Cyril Macey** also continued to work one day a week on the documentation of the collections, especially that of Stamps of the World, assisting with the photocopying of the albums.
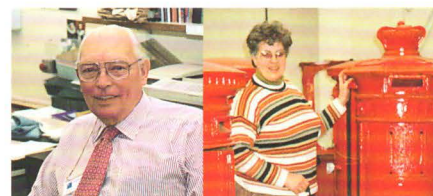
| Cyril Macey | Avice Harms |

Avice Harms, Secretary of the Letter Box Study Group, gave extremely valuable assistance to the Collection Management (Artefacts) department in identifying and recording the outstanding pieces in the letter box collection, especially in the listing of the wall and lamp boxes. **Russ Nichols** continues to work alternate Mondays at the Archives. He has undertaken thorough research on the uniform collection housed there.

Researchers & Visitors

Although the Museum was closed to the public for the first seven months of 1997 it was still possible to allow researchers access to the collections. Some 60 researchers examined the philatelic collections with a further 80 making appointments to see artefacts during the whole of 1997.

Visitors to the Museum during the period August to December 1997 were 8,811 and 8,478 from January to June 1998.

Freddie Mercury Collection

Since August 1997, when the Museum reopened, the collection formed by the late Freddie Mercury has been seen by some 369 visitors, 33 of whom came on 24 November, his sixth death anniversary. On that day there was considerable publicity on radio and TV. Visitors are shown the collection on request, by Derrick Page or Barry Tennant.

Post Office Archives

As in previous *Reviews* the Post Office Archives & Records Centre (part of Heritage Services) describes its year's activities, here reported by Simon Bates.

Staffing

The faces at the Archives continue to change. In the summer Kevin Squelch, then Head of Archives, left to lend his experience to the team working on the new museum project.

At the end 1997, Frank O'Neill, for many years a member of the Museum team and latterly the Search Room Manager at the Archives, left the Post Office to seek new challenges elsewhere. Many visitors to both the NPM and the Archives will have their memories of Frank over the years and I am sure that customers and colleagues will miss Frank and his knowledge of Post Office history.

Mike Orchard, a Philosophy graduate, joined the Archives in the summer. Mike had first worked with us the previous summer when he had worked with Martin Rush on cataloguing our collection of postal maps (reported in the *Review* of 1996).

Mike Orchard   Jill Mansfield

Jill Mansfield joined us in September, after obtaining her MA in Archives & Records Management at UCL.

Since their arrival both Jill and Mike have been working with Martin Rush, our Collections Manager. Jill has been chiefly involved with adding material to our catalogues and has also been involved with the acquisition and reviewing of new material. Mike is responsible for the Archives repository and the preservation of our considerable collections of posters and artwork.

Towards the end of July 1998 Lloyd Bowen came over from Post Office Counters to become the new Records Centre Manager. There was also a new Search Room Manager, Michael Bowden.

Key Activities

The Archives' main priority for 1997 continued to be the backlogs of material in the repository waiting to be reviewed, listed and added to one of the 113 Post Classes. More detailed information about this can be found in "Work in Progress" on page 6.

Technology arrived in the form of new computers. Once these had been installed we looked at our databases and have spent a great deal of time working towards the production of electronic finding aids that could be used either in the Search Room or via the Internet.

As promised last year, new Information Sheets were prepared towards the end of 1997. Some 14 were produced, dealing with a range of subjects from Pillar Boxes to Air Mail to Post Office Uniforms. Each sheet gives an introduction to the subject and refers the customer to the best sources of further information to be found in the Archives. We intend to release these before the end of 1998. As with previous Information Sheets, these will be available, free of charge, from the Search Room.

We also improved our customer facilities with the acquisition of a specialist book photocopier. This now makes it much easier to photocopy pages from our many bulky volumes.

Also in 1997, Martin and Mike completed a major microfilming exercise on behalf of the Singapore National Archives. They had requested that copies be made of material dealing with the activities of the GPO and its agencies in Singapore, in order that this information be made available to researchers in that country.

Altogether, a total of 10,500 pages were microfilmed, from files, reports and minute books - a huge undertaking.

Mike working on the Uniforms Collection

Work on the Uniforms Collection continued during the year. Much of the painstaking work of identifying and listing badges and buttons has been done by a volunteer, Russ Nichols of the Friends of the NPM. Mike and Martin have been busy in other areas. The eventual product of all of these labours will be a finding aid for use by researchers.

Hundreds more posters were acquired during the year. By the beginning of 1998 our collection had grown to include well over 4,500 and we were running out of places to store them. June 1998 saw the delivery and installation of custom-built storage units for the posters and the maps, together with racking for our paintings. The new racking and plan chests have greatly improved the storage conditions for these items and will ensure that we keep pace with the growth of our collections.

In 1998 we have begun to review the "Partnership" agreements introduced by Jean Farrugia some years ago (*Review* of 1994). These were intended to ensure a steady supply of significant material to the Archives direct from a number of key Post Office units. Martin's team have evaluated the results of these partnerships and will be signing revised agreements later

this year to ensure that the Archives will continue to tell the story of the Post Office and its people.

Outreach

During 1997 the Search Room team of Catherine Orton, Andrew Perry, Ayub Khan and Richard Barker did much to promote the Archives, the records we hold and how they can be of value to researchers.
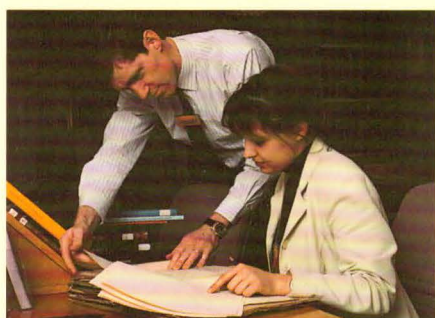
Richard Barker assisting in the Search Room

In May the Archives had a large stand at the Family History Fair in London. This two-day event, organised by the Society of Genealogists and attended by many thousands of visitors, was an excellent opportunity for us to explain to family historians just how much information the Archives has about people who worked for The Post Office.

Over the year we have maintained our close links with many postal and family history societies. This has involved making presentations to evening and weekend groups, and the Search Room has also hosted a number of open evenings. These latter events have been particularly popular, given that they have included a tour of the Archives not normally offered to visitors.

1997 saw two further additions to the range of Post Office Archives historical miniatures. The first of these was a figurine, a postwoman of 1916, which celebrated the first issue of uniform to female postal staff.

Prior to 1916 the comparatively small number of women employed in uniform duties meant that it was not cost-effective to issue them with a uniform. The onset of WWI had led to a dramatic increase in the numbers of women engaged in these duties and so a uniform was introduced. This is the uniform featured on the miniature which includes a delicate straw hat (dyed uniform blue). Examples of this hat can be seen today in the extensive uniform collection.

Postwoman figurine

The second new miniature was a pillar box, a special Air Mail box as used between 1930 and 1938. Unusually, this box was painted Air Force Blue and featured two collection plates rather than the more usual single plate.

Air Mail pillar box miniature

As usual, the considerable research required in the production of such detailed miniatures was conducted by the Search Room team. Each and every feature has to be checked for historical accuracy and each tiny detail has to be accounted for.

Also during 1997, the Search Room team, together with the NPM and members of The Letter Box Study Group, were assisting Royal Mail with the production of an educational CD-Rom focusing on the story of the British Letter Box. The Search Room contribution included both historical and visual information which can be seen in the final version when it is completed in early 1998. When finished, we intend to ensure

that Archives' customers can have access to a copy via the Search Room.

The Records Centre

The Records Centre maintained its recent remarkable growth during 1997. The Records Centre team of Barbara Stephenson, Keith Donohue and Colin Jasper now provide records management services to around 900 departments across the Post Office group of businesses.

Through its file management service the Records Centre now has around 78,000 files under management at any one time. Those files which are identified as having historical value are eventually transferred to the Archives and then made available to the public. This file management service is the main way in which, for example, files containing information about stamp design, automation, transport and policy, for example, make their way to the Archives.

The Future

The Archives' main priority will continue to be improving access to the collections. Hence our continuing efforts on the cataloguing front and the production of new finding aids during 1998. We will also continue to work with the PRO on ways in which we might make records available to the public earlier than under the current "30-year rule".

At the time of writing, it is unclear precisely how the proposed new Heritage structure will affect the Archives. What is clear however, is that the Archives team will continue to face interesting challenges in the months and years ahead.

Postal Motor Transport: 1897-1997

The centenary of postal motor transport fell in 1997. Its history is described here by Richard Barker of Post Office Archives.

Introduction

Amongst the vast array of heritage material such as original files, photographs, paintings, uniforms and all manner of artefacts currently held within the Post Office Archives and the National Postal Museum, there are many fascinating individual stories about the development and evolution of the modern Post Office. One such story is the development of the Post Office's motor vehicle fleet, which in 1997 celebrated its first centenary. Forming just part of the Post Office's long and varied history, the story of postal motor transport over the last 100 years provides an interesting example of the Post Office at the forefront of modern technology.

Early Trials: Oil, Steam, Electricity

The Post Office has always searched for the fastest and most efficient way of collecting and delivering the nation's mail. One of the more visual examples of this kind of innovation began in the latter part of 1897, when the Post Office began a series of tests into the use of motor vans in an attempt to improve further the conveyance of mail.

The first of these tests commenced in London during the week of 20 October 1897, using a small Daimler oil motor van belonging to the British Motor Syndicate. Its task was to carry letter mail between two London offices: the General Post Office in St. Martin's-le-Grand and the South Western District Post Office in Victoria Street. This vehicle made several trips daily and included shorter journeys between the SW office and Victoria Station adding to a daily distance of over 27 miles. The experiment lasted nearly a week, with the vehicle proving itself faster than its horse-drawn counterpart. (Figure 1)

Due to this success a further trial was carried out the following week, with the same van being used to carry parcels between London and Kingston-on-Thames, various stops being included for collection and delivery. Once again this experiment proved highly successful.

Shortly after the completion of these Daimler tests, the Post Office was made aware of a large steam-powered van known as a "Lifu", apparently derived from the two words "liquid" and "fuel". This vehicle was equipped with a 20 horse power engine, which only ever needed to be fully opened when tackling very steep hills.

At this particular time, the nightly horse-drawn parcel coach between London and Brighton was unable to cope with the number of parcels being dispatched. It was therefore decided to try out this vehicle between London and Redhill in order to assist the overburdened Brighton coach. This service commenced on 16 December 1897, starting from Mount Pleasant Parcel Office and then proceeding to London Bridge Parcel Office, where it collected further items. It departed London Bridge at 11.10 pm and arrived at Redhill at 1.16 am, some 26 minutes early! On the return journey it arrived back 17 minutes early, covering the round trip of 47½ miles in under six hours (including stoppages). On one particular journey from Redhill to London, just to show what it was capable of, this vehicle arrived back at Mount Pleasant one hour ahead of schedule. In the process however, it exceeded the then legal speed limit of 12 mph and was therefore prohibited from repeating this performance. (Figure 2)

During its final trial period in February 1898, however, this vehicle was involved in a near fatal incident, probably the first Post Office motor vehicle accident ever recorded. The account was recorded in the 1898 volume of *St. Martin's le Grand.*

The Brighton coach had set off from Redhill for London as per the usual schedule, with the steam vehicle leaving a few minutes later. Within a short period of time, both vehicles were happily chuntering along with the parcel coach in front closely followed by the steam van. The guard of the coach was in the back of the vehicle sorting parcels. He stopped this task and opened the rear doors to speak to the guard of the steam van following behind. Unfortunately, he lost his footing and fell out of the coach into the path of the oncoming motor vehicle. It was unable to stop in time and could not avoid running over the coach guard's legs. However, because of the rubber tyres on the vehicle, the guard escaped with only severe abrasions and contusions to his legs. He was able to climb back aboard the coach and continue to London. On arrival he was taken to St Bartholomew's Hospital where his injuries were treated, and then sent home in a cab, returning to normal duties a month later.

During the latter part of these trials, a third vehicle was tested out by the Post Office. The vehicle in question was an electric motor van, supplied by the Electric Cab

Figure 1

Figure 2

Company, Lambeth Street, SE London. This vehicle carried letter mail several times a day between St Martin's-le-Grand and Paddington District Office, calling on route at Western Central and Western District Post Offices. Covering a distance of three miles each way and with a deadline of 37 minutes per trip (including stoppages), the vehicle once again kept good time and covered nearly 22 miles daily. Unfortunately, it did encounter one or two minor mechanical problems during its month-long trial. (Figure 3)

Figure 3

After some success during these experiments the PMG concluded that:

So far as the experiments went, they showed that the motor cars were likely to prove in the near future a mode of conveyance for letter and parcels mails which would be attended with advantage both as regards speed and economy.

Early Contracts

Trials carried on for several more years, until in 1902 results became reliable enough for motor services under contract to operate for parcel mail between London and Redhill, Liverpool and Manchester, and Manchester and Altrincham. A trial of a motor tricycle carrier was also undertaken on some letter mail services in London.

However, motor vehicles were still not considered reliable enough for widespread use. By 1905, extended trials, combined with the further advances in design and reliability, had made the use of the motor vehicle a more dependable proposition and services were further extended.

There were nearly 70 contracted motor mail services by 1910, with the numbers increasing further to around 200 by 1913. Also in 1913 a few rural services began using contracted motor cycles with side cars. These were ridden by the contractors' employees.

During 1913 the Post Office considered purchasing its own motor vans, but due to the outbreak of WWI this project was put on hold. In 1914, however, the Post

Office purchased 20 motor cycles with side cars. These motor cycles would be ridden by postmen, and cover around 40 to 50 miles per day. The services commenced in July 1914 and with the exception of particularly hilly areas, proved a great success.

With the end of WWI in 1918, the idea of the Post Office owning its own fleet was pursued and led to an order for 50 GWK vans in late 1919, and a further 300 vans in 1921. The Post Office fleet continued to increase at a rapid pace and by 1926 was covering over eleven million miles a year. In addition, a small fleet of electric vehicles were placed on an extended trial in London. By 1937, the fleet consisted of just under 7,500 vehicles. (Figure 4)

Figure 4: 1935 Morris Minor

This ever-increasing advance of motor transport technology eventually spelt the end for previously popular modes of transport. In 1949 London's last horse-drawn mail van was withdrawn from service. By 1963 the Post Office fleet consisted of over 40,000 vehicles, 24,000 were used for telephone and telegraph work, with the other 16,000 being used for mail delivery. This whole fleet had over 65,000 drivers and covered an average 400 million miles a year (this being the equivalent of 16,000 trips around the equator!).

The mail delivery fleet grew steadily, and by 1983 was over 30,000 strong. It included vehicles from Morris Ital vans to 32 tonne Leyland Roadtrains, used for carrying bulk parcels. (Figure 5)

The Modern Fleet

In response to concern over damage caused to the environment by motor vehicles, the Post Office began a new series of tests with more environmentally friendly vehicles in the early 1990s.

Amongst these is the 38-ton Leyland DAF articulated tractor/trailer. Its attributes included reduced fuel consumption, catalytic converter, a more efficient body design, air suspension to decrease road

Figure 5

impact and a rear view camera to improve driving visibility.

July 1995 saw trials commence with the Ford Ecostar, a battery-driven electric mail van. These vehicles cover over 60 miles per day and initial reports are very favourable. These trials will continue in 1998. On 5 March 1997 in conjunction with Ford and BP, trials began into the use of gas-powered mail vans. These 27 vehicles use compressed natural gas (CNG) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). The trials will run for two years.

The current Post Office fleet of 28,000 vehicles carries over 69 million items daily and travels 442 million miles every year.

The Heritage Fleet

The National Postal Museum continues to maintain the Post Office heritage fleet of vehicles, dating from the 1930s. Today the Heritage Fleet consists of 56 motorised vehicles, having grown in number from 51 since it was first published in the *Annual Review* of 1994. Most of these vehicles were carefully restored by, and housed with, Royal Mail Transport Services at Kidbrooke. During 1994 the vehicles were transferred to the care of the National Postal Museum. Now stored in Gloucestershire, there is unfortunately no public access at present for health and safety reasons.

The oldest vehicle in the collection is the 1935 Morris Minor van which is currently on display in the Museum. Also on display are a BSA Bantam motorcycle, used in the Oxford area by Messenger Boys from 1973, and a Pedestrian Controlled Electric Trolley used in the London area in the 1980s.

The Fleet includes many vans and lorries dating from the 1930s to the 1990s, some of the more unusual are a Reliant Regal goods tricycle from 1970, a green Sherpa parcel van first registered in 1992, and a Postbus specially modified by the Post Office to provide access for wheelchair users. This Postbus is the most recent addition to the Fleet, and was in operation in the Sittingbourne area in Kent from 1991-1997.

Paper Conservation

Krystyna Kościa, the National Postal Museum paper conservator, here describes work carried out during the year and some of the preparations for the move.

The year has passed with the usual in-house conservation work being undertaken, augmented as always with exhibition work. The latter not only involves the assessment of items intended for exhibition and carrying out any conservation treatment required, but also devising and making the various forms of mounts for the objects, as necessary, and finally putting them up and taking them down for the various exhibitions we have held (as shown elsewhere in this *Review*).

In April 1997 I was fortunate to be able to attend The Institute of Paper Conservation's IVth International Conference held in London over five days. In July 1998 I also took part in *The Care of Photographic, Moving Image and Sound Collections* five-day international conference, held in York. Both conferences were highly informative and useful in all aspects.

Student Placements

This year we were fortunate once again to be able to offer two professional work placements for students from the University of Northumbria and Camberwell College of Arts.

Colin Liddie worked with us from 2 to 19 September 1997, at the start of his second year in MA Paper Conservation at the University of Northumbria. Megumi Mizumura, studying for a BA (Hons) in Paper Conservation at Camberwell College of Arts, London, came and worked with us from 28 October to 14 November 1997.

Colin helped assess, and then started, a project re-housing a volume of postal order sheets. Megumi continued the work during her placement with us and Jane Pimlott, Paper Conservation Assistant, has worked on it since, carrying out the overwhelming majority of the work.

Postal Orders pasted to album pages, prior to conservation.
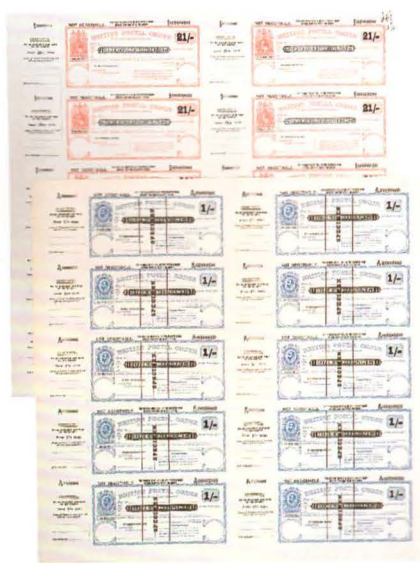
Sheets of Postal Orders after conservation treatment.

Postal Order Project

The Postal Order Project complements the research on postal orders carried out by Tony Butler. Conservation work has involved disassembling a volume of postal order sheets, which had been pasted on to the album pages. The album, entitled: *Postal Orders, Volume 18, Jan. 1895 to …*, was separated into its individual sections, in batches of eight or more sheets of postal orders. Each of the postal order sheets had been folded in half, top to bottom, and pasted at its central fold to each leaf of the album. In some cases two sheets were pasted together at the central fold, in others one sheet was pasted on each side of an album page.

The volume of work and the fugitivity of the inks used in the annotations and inscriptions found on every sheet did not allow for anything but so-called "dry" treatment. That is, apart from a deacidification solution being sprayed on to each sheet at the end of treatment to provide a preventative buffer protection, no other "wet" treatment was involved, such as washing of the items. The project will be completed once the separated sheets are all mounted, catalogued and boxed.

Victorian Registration Sheets

With the news of the Museum's imminent closure and move the Conservation section is also becoming involved, in one way or another, in the planning and preparation for it. The most tangible early sign of this has been the conservation survey, started in the summer of 1997, undertaken to assess the current state of the NPM's collection of Victorian registration sheets of GB stamps. Most particularly, the need was to work out a method of "mounting" and storing the sheets in the condition they are in now (prior to any conservation treatment).

Before being moved to any new location all the Victorian registration sheets (which have not been re-mounted and re-boxed to date; a time-consuming process) need to

be removed from the old, non-archival and cumbersome albums they have been stored in and put into archival, museum-quality storage mounts, listed and stored in archival quality boxes, ready for transport and storage elsewhere.

The time remaining before the NPM needs to move location does not allow for the conservation treatment of more than a tiny fraction of the whole Victorian registration sheets collection. The method put forward takes this into account.

Despite this, the most fragile sheets are being treated, of course, and all sheets will be "made safe" prior to the move: tears supported, adhesive and tape residues removed. The proposed method of storage takes into account the condition of the individual sheets, ensuring no movement and physical stability, whilst archival-quality storage materials enable an "archival micro-climate" to be created, as far as this is possible to achieve.

Method of Mounting & Storing

1. MicroChamber® board and a sheet of 75 micron '516' polyester are poly-welded together with two (for strength) parallel welds running along the left margin. The individual registration sheets are inserted between each board and polywelded polyester sheet.
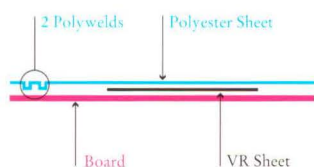
Cross-section of polywelded new-style VR-mount
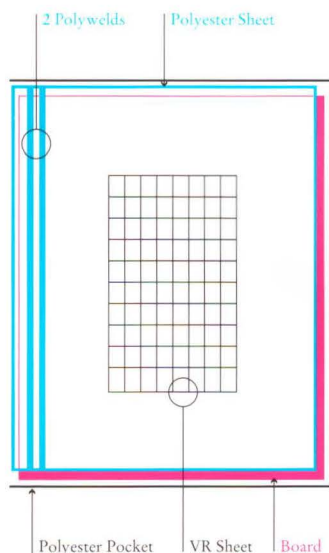
Drawing of polywelded new-style VR-mount.

2. Each Victorian registration sheet thus protected is then inserted into a 100 micron '516' polyester pocket through its long, left side. Since the open edges of the mount are all inside the pocket (polywelded edge at open side of pocket) the Victorian registration sheet cannot slip out.

N.B. **No hinging** is required using this method; tests have proved the sheet does not slip inside such a mount.

3. Where a sheet has any embossing, an over-mount - in the form of a made-to-measure window - is inserted over the sheet, inside the polyester pocket to stop any pressure falling on the embossing from any mounted sheet, which may be placed above it.
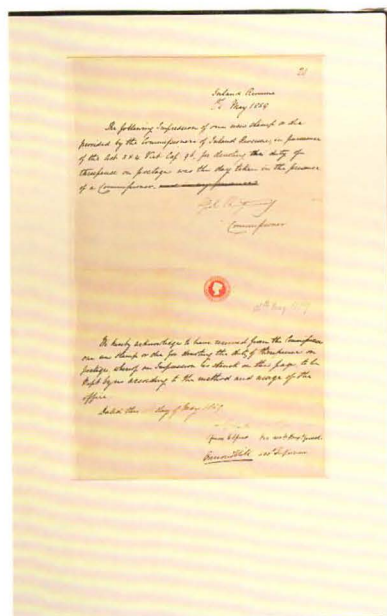
Embossed sheet in new-style VR-mount, with window over-mount inserted inside the polyester pocket

4. 10 re-mounted Victorian registration sheets, stored in the manner described above, are stored in each archival storage-box. These boxes are made of 60pt MicroChamber® board.

5. *Labelling:* each sheet is labelled on its mount board or polyester sheet with all its relevant details, such as: date, value, colour, number of stamps.

The material we are using for the supporting boards is MicroChamber® Alpharag and for the storage boxes it is 60pt MicroChamber®. Given the fact that the future, both transient and permanent, storage areas of the Victorian registration sheets are not yet known, the

MicroChamber® Alpharag gives a manufacturer's (and supplier's) guarantee to protect against any environmental pollutants and possible negative effects far more effectively and for a longer period than can the usual museum board (which is in itself good quality material). Not knowing when and if, in the future, the Victorian registration sheets will undergo conservation treatment, using the best storage materials available at present is one way of helping them to be preserved in optimum conditions till that time.

Resource Pack Reprint

In 1998 a re-print came out of the Museums & Galleries Commission's successful Resource Pack, entitled *Ours For Keeps?* Amongst the individual information leaflets it contains is one we prepared on the care of stamps and postal history.

Useful Addresses:

THE INSTITUTE of PAPER CONSERVATION
Leigh Lodge, Leigh, Worcester WR6 5LB
Tel: 01886 832 323 Fax: 01886 833 688

The Conservation Unit MUSEUMS & GALLERIES COMMISSION
16 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AA
Tel: 0171 233 3683 Fax: 0171 233 3686

(Some) Suppliers of MicroChamber®:

CONSERVATION RESOURCES (UK) LTD
Unit 1, Pony Road, Horspath Industrial Estate, Cowley, Oxfordshire OX4 2RD
Tel: 01865 747 755 Fax: 01865 747 035

NIELSEN UK
Unit 7, Frogmore Estate, Acton Lane, London NW10 7NQ
Tel: 0181 965 5949 (Admin.)
Fax: 0181 961 6368
Tel: 0181 961 0010 (Sales Orders)

Other Suppliers:

PRESERVATION EQUIPMENT LTD.
Church Road, Shelfanger, Diss, Norfolk IP22 2DG
Tel: 01379 651 527 Fax: 01379 650 582

CONSERVATION BY DESIGN
Timecare Works, 60 Park Road West, Bedford MK41 7SL
Tel: 01234 217 258 Fax: 01234 328 164

Collections

Recent Acquisitions

In this *Review,* unlike previous years, acquisitions are described over an 18-month period. As before, a large number were received by the Museum. Some of the more interesting are described here, together with information about those of Post Office Archives.

Statistics

It is difficult on this occasion to make direct comparisons with previous years in terms of the numbers of items coming into the Museum as statistics are over 18 months rather than the normal year. However, some areas have shown a clear increase. This is particularly true of stamp artwork and cards of essays, although a large number of the latter were duplicates. These statistics refer to acquisitions only of the National Postal Museum.

Stamp Artwork - modern (adopted & unadopted)	526
Registration sheets of stamps etc.	79
New cylinders & plates (stamps)	96
Proofs and essays (cards)	1306*
Postal history items	264
Decorative Arts	9
Guns	1
Handstamps	8
Letter boxes	4
Medals	23
National Savings Bank	1
Office & Counter equipment	24
Paintings and prints	4
PO Rifles	7
Printed ephemera	11
Scales & balances	7
Signage	11
social mail	65
Stamp Vending machines	1
Transport	5
Uniforms	8
Writing equipment	18
Toys & Games	2
Trophies	1
Artefacts (unclassified)	7

*including many duplicates; in addition there were 72 blocks of 25 proofs.

Stamp Artwork

Far more pieces of stamp artwork were transferred to the Museum from the Design Department than in previous years (560 over 18 months rather than 260 in the 12 months of 1996). As might be expected most were for issues that came out in 1997 or 1998 with only a few items from previous years. Both adopted and unadopted presentation visuals were included. Illustrated (on pp18-19) are a few of those unadopted visuals transferred.

One of the most spectacular was a paper maquette produced by Jonathan Milne of Canada showing Edinburgh Castle and, in the foreground, five symbolic citizens. This was for the commemorative label issued within a stamp book to mark the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Edinburgh in October 1997.

Post Office Archives

Over the past year the Archives have concentrated on ensuring that internal records of historical interest are identified and captured now, at the time of their production.

This has included internal negotiations to ensure receipt of Intellectual Property records, agreements with Royal Mail Consulting to ensure the receipt of contemporary uniforms and related files, and with the Post Office Supplies Division in Swindon for the regular acquisition of posters. The Archives will now receive all contemporary contracts for mail distribution by air, rail, road and sea, designs for major Post Office buildings and patents for Post Office trademarks, and we can now guarantee continuity and growth of our existing collections of building plans and mail distribution contracts dating back to the 1780s. We also now receive all Post Office posters as they are produced, and over the past few months have added 113 contemporary posters to our existing collection of over 4,500, dating from the 1930s.

The Archives continued to develop its collection of prints and engravings over the past year. This included the acquisition of two hand-coloured prints by Ludovici, and an addition to our series of Fores Coaching Incidents by Henderson, entitled *Knee Deep.*

A notable accession was the posters and artwork collection of Stan Krol, a graphic designer for the Post Office during the 1950s. Negotiations began in May 1996, and the project was finally completed with the successful acquisition of the collection in October 1997, consisting of several hundred examples of work by the artist.

a feather in his cap

Poster by Stan Krol

Stamps & Essays

A large number of essays were received from the production and design departments of Royal Mail. On rare occasions these go further in the production process but still remain unissued. At the last minute changes may be required which necessitate production sheets being withdrawn. One such occasion occurred this year when the Joyce Grenfell design of the Comedians stamp issue was initially printed with the 30p value rather than the 37p value as issued. Examples of the printed sheet with the former value were preserved in the NPM collections as illustrated.

The Museum also receives registration sheets of such items as booklets where the print layout is of the greatest interest. In 1998 the first prestige stamp book connected with the international exhibition in London in 2000 appeared. Many of the ideas for the contents and sources of design came from the National Postal Museum, as did those for the other forthcoming books. Part of the registration sheets of two of the panes are illustrated.
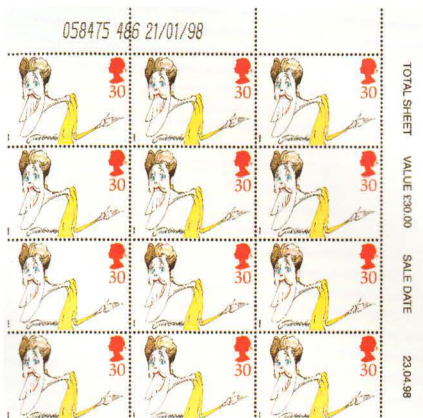
Corner of a sheet of the unissued 30p Comedians stamp showing Joyce Grenfell.
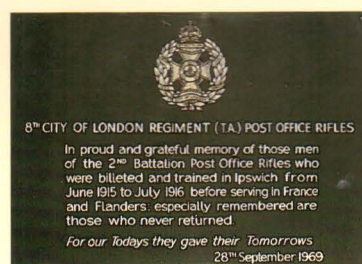
Artefacts

Zara Matthews writes:
Many outstanding acquisitions were made during 1997 despite the reduced collecting activities necessitated by the building works and limited access to the stored collections.

John Cole, the last Postmaster of Stoke-on-Trent and former Postmaster of Stafford, ensured that the material he had gathered during his many years with the Post Office was transferred to the National Postal Museum on his retirement. This material included: a GPO cloth pouch dated 1903; a GPO Morse key; a *Quickunpick* bag opener; a George VI double sided counter clock; a handstamp for Birmingham District Head Postmaster; a GPO galvanometer; a VR pewter inkwell; and a wooden frame marked "GPO Public Notices".

The brass plaque from the side of the Transorma came to the National Postal Museum in 1997. The Transorma was the world's first successful letter sorting machine. Dutch in origin, its first overseas installation was in Brighton for the British Post Office. There it operated from October 1935 until June 1968 when it was dismantled. It was believed that the plaque had survived but its location was not known until one morning a former Post Office employee brought it into the Museum.

The Museum acquired three oil paintings during the year by private treaty and auction. Two of these are contemporary 20th century works, whilst the third is from the early part of the 19th century. The first is by Lynton Lamb (1907-1977) entitled *Telegraph Boy in the Underground,* dated 1937 (see p23). It was displayed as part of the Lamb exhibit from August to November 1998, that supported the Golden & Glorious philatelic exhibition. The second by popular artist Terence Cuneo (1907-1996), known for his paintings depicted on the *Famous Trains* stamp issue of 1985, and also for his work with the Defence Postal & Courier Services Agency. This particular painting from the 1960s, depicts the then GPO Tower (now the British Telecommunications Tower). The third painting depicts a stage coach outside a rural post office, entitled *The Post Office Stage Coach,* by the artist Henry Alken senior (1785-1851), who also painted *A Halted Coach* which was acquired in 1996.

The Museum was also very pleased to acquire though donation, from the Institute of British Telecommunication Engineers Museum an unusual combination form of

letterbox. This is a rare type of telephone kiosk, the K4, produced between 1929 and 1933, that included a stamp vending machine and a posting box in its design. The kiosk is in poor condition and is currently undergoing restoration.

The Museum has been active in acquiring prototype equipment produced specifically for the Post Office. The Post Office Counters Limited Equipment Team contacted the Museum and arranged for prototype scales and signage to be transferred. The scales were manufactured by Avery Berkel and similar examples can be seen on Post Office counters today. Early examples of the green, yellow and red design for the new Post Office signage which is now being installed throughout Britain, also came into the Museum.

Staff at the Tower Ramparts Post Office in Ipswich contacted the Museum and transferred a large memorial that had been "lying around" in their tea room. It turned out to be the lost memorial to the 2nd battalion of the Post Office Rifles, which was stationed in Suffolk during WWI. This plaque was originally unveiled in the Head Post Office in Ipswich in 1969.

The Heritage Fleet was yet again augmented, this time with a postbus which was used in the Sittingbourne area of Kent from 1991 until early in 1997. This vehicle had been adapted by the Post Office so that it was accessible for wheelchair users. Post Office staff utilised it not just for delivering the mail, but also to enable disabled people in the area to take part in special events.

Two locomotive signs were brought to the Museum by Post Office employee Ken Crawley. The signs were made for special excursions organised by the Postal Head-quarters (Chesterfield) Recreational Club to Blackpool in 1987, and to Prestatyn, Rhyl, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno in 1993.

A gold medal struck in 1966 to commemorate the Easter Rising, in Ireland in 1916, was acquired at auction. This medal depicts the Dublin GPO in flames on the obverse and on the reverse has the signatures of the leaders of the Rising. The GPO building in the centre of the city briefly became the headquarters for the rebellion. The building was set ablaze by the gunfire of the British Government troops.

Success at auction resulted in the Museum acquiring two William IV flintlock pistols. Inscribed *For His Majesty's Mail Coaches,* they were made by the gunsmith Harding between 1835 and 1837, and are numbered 54 and 55. These are particularly fine examples of pistols from the latter part of the mail coach era, and were displayed in the upper gallery for the summer opening.

Following the demolition of the Post Office's Chetwynd House in Chesterfield, the contractors, WT Partnership, donated the slate crown and cypher that decorated the outside of the building to the NPM, early in 1998.

Ever keen to keep abreast of the latest technological developments, the NPM has taken a postal transponder (T-92P) into its collections. Donated by the company, Kasten Chase, the T-92P has been designed to collect reliable measurable data on the route that items of mail take. This has been written up as an article for *Cross Post,* the magazine of the Friends of the NPM.
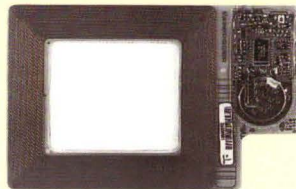
With the assistance of the National Federation of Post Office and British Telecom Pensioners Mrs Norsworthy kindly donated her late husband's collection of memorabilia. Robert Norsworthy was one of the last surviving Post Office Riflemen, a long-serving Post Office employee and a keen amateur sportsman. The collection includes memorabilia from WWI, as well as the Post Office Rifles Association, and many medals and trophies won by Mr Norsworthy.

A Salter spring balance was donated by Mrs Renner, whose relatives had used it at the Crown Office on Duck Road in Liverpool, before and during WWII. This balance is only 13 cm long!
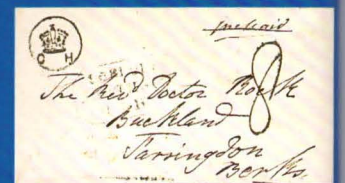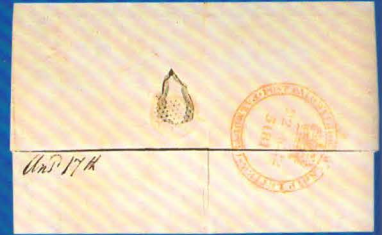
(reverse)

Postal History

The Museum's collection of maritime mail was enhanced by the acquisition of two more examples of "Post Paid Withdrawn Ship Letter" marks, both of which are illustrated here. These handstamps were used at only 10 ports including London and for a period of only 10 months, from September 1814 till July 1815.

The year figures in the Falmouth handstamp were transposed in error to read 5181, which provides an interesting feature to this rare handstamp (A). The Greenock handstamp is dated 18 February 1815 and travelled to Jamaica per the *Marquis Wellington* (B).

Another fine Ship Letter mark acquired during the year was sent in June 1829 from Falmouth, Jamaica to Whitehaven. On arrival at Eastbourne it received a very fine example of the "EASTBOURNE/ SHIP LETTER" mark in black together with a boxed "INDIA LETTER/ EAST-BOURNE" struck in blue and applied in error (C).

An important Ship Letter from Beaumaris of 1767 had the added attraction of being directed "To be left at Sorrels Coffee House" - an important source for "intelligence" and the collection of mail (D).

Ship Letter marks applied at Waterford (December 1712 in black) and Portaferry (July 1831 in red) were also added to the collection. The Portaferry item has the added interest of a PORTAFERRY/101 mileage mark and an octagonal Dublin transit mark for Sunday (E).

Letters smuggled into the Liverpool port and discovered there at the Customs House were applied with a framed "Crown/C.H." inspector's mark as illustrated. This mark was used only at the Liverpool Customs House and authorised the postal charge added by the inspector. The reverse side of this 1852 envelope shows a framed "LIVERPOOL/SHIP" datestamp in black, a London transit stamp and a "FARRINGDON" cds in blue applied on arrival at its destination. (F)

Just a handful of items were added to our collection of provincial penny posts including one for Moreton-in-Marsh in which the "Marsh" has been misspelt as "Mush". The handstamp is struck in black on a free letter dated 5 October 1833 (G).

Letters that were "refused" or could not be delivered, were, where possible, returned to the sender and they were charged the cost of sending the letter to its original destination. A series of handstamps which were struck on such letters to indicate the reasons for non-delivery were added to the Museum's collection during the 18 months, two of which are illustrated here (H - K). These handstamps resulted from an Act of Parliament of 1847 which made it compulsory for the sender of refused letters to compensate the Post Office for the inconvenience to which they had been put.

The Fourpenny Post period was the first implementation of Rowland Hill's postal reforms. It only lasted a short time and so the markings from it are both rare and of considerable interest. One was added to the postal reform collection - a handstruck 4 applied at Hertford. Dated 17 December 1839 it was on an entire sent from Hertford to Leadenhall Street, London. Hertford used a remarkable three different types of handstruck 4 during the period of just over a month. This is a fine example of the largest type (K).

On a more modern note a test label was added to the Postal Mechanisation collection. This was from the Transorma company and produced after World War II when a number of experiments were taking place in order to produce a machine which would face letters and cancel the stamps. The label, in English, was clearly intended to test such a machine but more research is required to establish its usage.

The earliest known British Ship Letter mark - the 1792 SHIP mark of either Dublin or Waterford - was a major addition to the maritime as well as the Irish collection. To date conclusive proof is not available as to where the handstamp was applied (M).

G

H

J

K

L
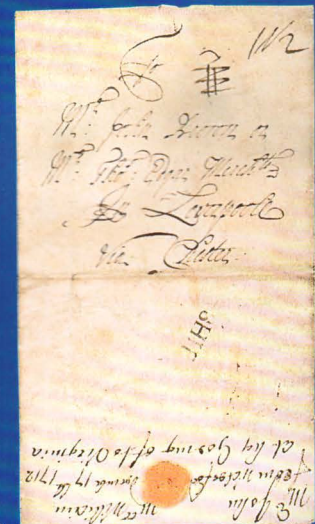
M

Collections

Stamp Artwork

A selection of unadopted presentation visuals for recent stamp issues transferred from the Design Department in 1997-98.

April 1996. Easter Issue. Paintings of Christ with the crown of thorns. Designs by Nick Thirkell
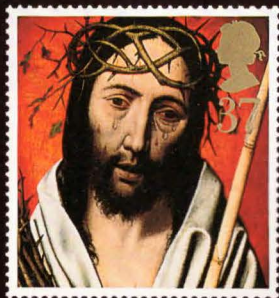
July 1995. British Cinema
Designs by Carroll, Dempsey & Thirkell

1995. Tudor Times. Contemporary paintings of personalities, designed by Kate Stephens

Orson Welles in *The Third Man*, 1949

Wallace and Gromit in *The Wrong Trousers*, 1993

John Grierson's *Night Mail*, 1936

Sabu in *The Thief of Bagdad*, 1940

Sir Thomas More

Thomas Cranmer

Thomas Cromwell

Erasmus
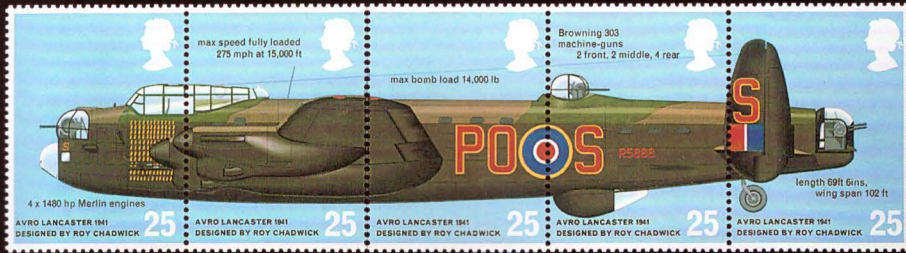
1996. Architects of the Air. Chadwick's Lancaster, designed by Crescent Lodge Design

February 1996. Missions of Faith
Designs by Simon Marsden

Canterbury Cathedral, Kent

Whitby Abbey, North Yorkshire

St David's Cathedral, Wales

Lindisfarne, Holy Island, Northumberland

April 1996. Missions of Faith. St Augustine and St Columba, designed by Graven Images

1996. Architects of the Air. The Avro Lancaster of 1941, designed by Crescent Lodge Design

1996. Architects of the Air.
Defence of Albion, 1933, painting by Paul Nash, designed by Crescent Lodge Design

November 1995. Tudor Times
Design by Graham Evernden

Exhibitions

For the second time a major exhibition of part of the Royal Collection (the Mediterranean) took place in the Museum. This was in addition to major exhibitions on Royal issues and Sport and several temporary displays.

Golden & Glorious

1997 marked the Golden Wedding of HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. This philatelic exhibition in the upper gallery showed some of the Royal stamp issues which have appeared since 1947 concentrating on two: the 1953 Coronation set and that of 1972 for the Royal Silver Wedding. It was designed by Paul Dennis of The Four Hundred and ran from August 1997 until June 1998.

For the Coronation issue over 76 pieces of artwork were originally submitted from some of the leading graphic artists of the day, as well as the main stamp-printing firms. The work of four different designers

3/4 profile head drawn by Edmund Dulac considered, but rejected, for the Coronation stamps.

Overall view of the Coronation section of "Golden & Glorious"

1972 Royal Silver Wedding

No stamps were issued for the wedding itself but it was marked by a slogan postmark, alternative artwork for which was on show. A proposed stamp a year later for the birth of the first grandchild to King George VI never materialised but did reach artwork stage. However, all subsequent, major royal occasions have been commemorated on stamps. Often, special portraits are commissioned and even more attention is paid by the Post Office, artists and printers alike to such issues. Hence, the wealth of artwork for the Coronation stamps and the number of variations in the Royal Silver Wedding essays.

The stamps for the Coronation were the first commemoratives of the new reign and were produced in tandem with the first definitives. Many of the problems were common to both - the need for suitable photographs, and symbolic surrounds - and several of the artists approached were of necessity also the same.

was eventually developed by means of essays to the final stamp formats. A lot of work was done by Edmund Dulac on a drawn version of The Queen's head, and one of his designs was chosen for the 1/3d. Unfortunately, he died shortly before the issue, which was regarded as his memorial.

A commemorative air letter was also designed by Stuart Rose and other special items by Lynton Lamb. All these were on display, supported by the publication of the research stamp history written by Giles Allen.

The other section of the exhibition, by way of contrast, illustrated the 1972 Royal Silver Wedding. Nearly all the work was carried out by Jeffery Matthews based upon portraits specially taken by Norman Parkinson, although a family group portrait was briefly considered. After initial sketches most variations and developments came

Part of the Silver Wedding section

in the form of essays of which there were a large number. The lettering used was hand-drawn by Jeffery Matthews.

Proof of Stuart Rose's Coronation airletter design with a letterpress stamp incorporating the Doubtfir head (unissued)

The Queen's Stamps - Mediterranean

As in the previous year the Museum was host to an exhibition of part of HM The Queen's collection, with panels designed by Mike Higgs of Sheard Thomson Harris. The subject was British territories in the Mediterranean. Shown by Gracious Permission of Her Majesty The Queen, the exhibition was arranged with Charles Goodwyn, the Keeper of the Royal Philatelic Collection. It enabled the Museum to display a fine specialised collection of the area's stamps of which only representative samples existed in the NPM collections.

An ancient focal point of civilisations, by the 19th century the Mediterranean was an imperial gateway to India. A number of strategic staging posts became British colonies or protectorates to guard this. Initially, either no postage stamps or British stamps were used but gradually these areas began to issue their own. The first was the Ionian Islands in 1859, quickly followed by Malta in 1860. In 1880 Cyprus issued its first stamps, overprints on British stamps, while

Stamp-sized artist's drawing (here enlarged) for one of the George VI pictorial definitives of Gibraltar.

1934 artist's drawing from Cyprus
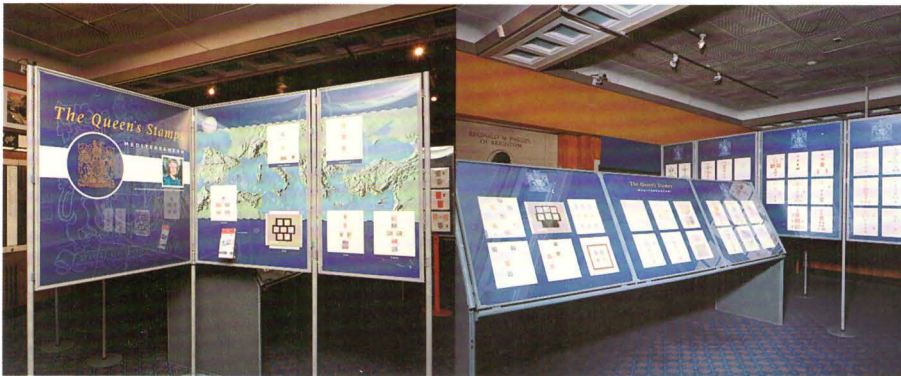
Part of The Queen's Stamps Mediterranean exhibition

Gibraltar did not have its own stamps until 1886 when Bermuda designs were overprinted.

Two other areas issued stamps under British control - part of Crete in 1898-9 and "Long Island" (the Turkish island of Chustan in the Gulf of Smyrna) in 1916 during World War I. The display followed Mediterranean geographically from west to east, from Gibraltar to Cyprus.

Of particular note was an error on the 10 centimos value of the 1889 Gibraltar issue in Spanish currency. Here the value was omitted. Stamp-sized artists' drawings for pictorial stamps of George V

and George VI were also highlights.

For Malta pictorial stamps came early, in 1899, and featured views or religious representations. Again artists' drawings (stamp-size) and die proofs were included for the 1922, 1926 and 1956 issues and the section ended with proofs of the stamp centenary set of 1960. Similar fine drawings were shown for the pictorial stamps of Cyprus, from 1928 when the 50th anniversary of British rule was celebrated and the following set of 1934.

One frame each was also devoted to the stamps of Crete and the Ionian Islands, both of whom later became part of Greece.

Well-known, if somewhat dubious, issues from occupied areas during World War I were also on display - from Long Island and Mount Athos. The Royal Collection's material was supplemented by several items from the Museum's own collection, which had come from official files.

1898. Handstuck stamp of Crete used in Herakleion

Going Places...

The exhibition *Going Places...with the British Post Office* was produced as part of the nationwide Museums' Week, in May 1998. This filled the temporary exhibition area on the lower floor and six frames in the upper gallery. Design was again by Paul Dennis of The Four Hundred. Rarely seen images, with a few old favourites, from the Post Office's own Photographic Library and Archives show the delivery of the mail from the 1890s to the 1990s, at home and abroad. Philatelically, artwork and stamps illustrated methods of transport and periods and types of exploration.

Part of the philatelic section of Going Places...

It's Only a Game

The main philatelic exhibition for 1998 was entitled "It's Only a Game" curated by Tony Butler and designed by Paul Dennis of Four Hundred Communications Ltd. It was based on a number of largely British sporting themes.

Overall views of the exhibition

Tony writes:
Love or loathe it, there can be no denying that Sport plays a huge part in British culture and society. In the year of the football World Cup Finals, fierce passions were raised in a desire to see favourite teams, sportsmen and women excel.

It's Only a Game emphasised the unifying effect of Sport. Support of national or local sides brings together often disparate sections of society; participation in recreational sports enables us to enhance our health; and major sporting events provide an excuse for a great day out.

A highlight of the display was a series of stamps and artwork for the World Cup issue of June 1966. They were the first British stamps to feature a sporting theme and nostalgically recall England's finest footballing hour. Other designs reflected expectations relying more on blind faith than realism. Included were presentation visuals prepared for Scotland winning the football World Cup in 1978 and England the European championship in 1996.
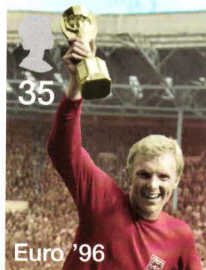
The exhibition also contained material from Britain and around the world commemorating the achievements of sporting greats; this included footballers Bobby Moore and Pelé, cricketers W.G. Grace and Brian Lara, and athletes Fatima Whitbread and Jesse Owens.

As the title suggests, playing sport does not have to mean winning an Olympic medal or scoring a goal in a World Cup final. *It's Only a Game* emphasised the mass participation of recreational sports through artwork and stamps from Sailing (1975), Cycling (1975) and Racket Sports issues (1976). Furthermore, sporting events such as the Grand National, Wimbledon and Cowes Week have also become highlights in the nation's social calendar. These were featured in material from Summertime (1994) and Horse Paintings (1979) issues.

A section was included on skiing. Despite lacking the appropriate climate or facilities for winter sports, Britain was a pioneer in the development of Alpine ski racing. The first Downhill ski race was held at Mürren in Switzerland on the initiative of the Kandahar Ski Club of Great Britain and the Schweizerische Akademische Ski Klub. In 1973 it was suggested that stamps be issued in 1975 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Anglo-Swiss ski racing.

These plans, however, were abandoned on the grounds that the sport was of little public interest. Some six designs were submitted by the printers Bradbury Wilkinson.

A small display of trophies won by Post Office sportsmen and women rounded off the display. *It's Only a Game* will be the NPM's last special exhibition at its present home in King Edward Building.

Unadopted artwork for the 1996 European Football issue showing Bobby Moore in triumph in 1966. Design by Sedley Place.

Design by Barry Wilkinson for a possible issue in 1978 had Scotland won the World Cup

1978 Caricature by Norman Thelwell used in the presentation pack of the 1979 Horse Paintings issue.
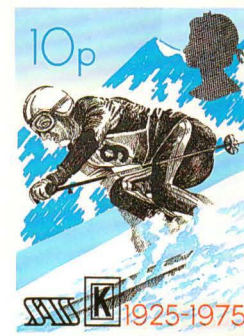
1974 Design by Bradbury Wilkinson for a proposed Skiing issue

Other Displays

Zara Matthews reports:
Some changes were made to the permanent displays and temporary exhibitions were also installed in 1997. The changes to *Post Haste!* included a new case at the start of this exhibition, containing writing equipment from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Life-size cut-out figures of a postman on a Penny Farthing handing a letter to a young girl were also installed. This interactive encourages visitors to imagine what is would have been like to receive a letter nearly 100 years ago; it has proved popular with visitors of all ages!

To coincide with the re-opening, two temporary displays were installed in the upper gallery. One case featured objects acquired during the period of closure: a pair of William IV mail coach pistols; a Morse key; a galvanometer; and the nameplate from the Transorma machine at Brighton.

A second case paid tribute to the artist Lynton Lamb and his association with the Post Office supporting his work on display in Golden & Glorious. This also offered the opportunity to display two recently-acquired images of postal workers. The oil painting *Telegraph Boy in the Underground* (dated 1937) and a pen and ink illustration of a swan attacking a postman (undated), were accompanied by the original artwork

| Life-size cut-out figure of a postman on a Penny Farthing

| A humorous valentine from the 19th century

for Lamb's Castle stamp designs of 1955 and a telegram celebrating the 1953 Coronation. In addition to this the book *County Town*, written and illustrated by Lamb, was loaned for display by Chelmsford Museums Service.

Six of the frames in the upper gallery were used to display examples of social mail

and ephemera from the collections. This included picture postcards of post offices from the 1900s to the 1920s, examples of humorous valentines from the 19th century, and examples of mourning stationery from the 19th and 20th centuries.

| Postcard of Beddgelert Post Office, Wales from the early 1900s

Christmas was marked by displays in both the upper and lower galleries. Visitors to the Museum were welcomed by a Christmas tree decorated with glittering stars and stamps, accompanied by Postman Pat's van, *PAT 1*, delivering Christmas presents. In the upper gallery one case displayed the prototype of a fibreglass lamp box with postally-inspired board games and modern greetings cards. The second case exhibited the popular oil painting by J F Herring entitled *The Postman* (circa 1830), accompanied by Victorian and Edwardian Christmas cards.

Early in 1998 a display of scales and balances was produced. This featured letter and parcel scales, from 1839 to 1996, manufactured for both private and counter use.

Terence Millington: Etchings into Stamps

An invited display of the work of Terence Millington was arranged by the Design Division of Royal Mail, taking place in the lower exhibition area and entitled "Etchings into Stamps". Millington was the artist responsible for the designs for the Sub Post Offices stamp issue and prints of these were included in the display. Other prints unconnected with postal affairs showed the range of his work. The introductory panel was designed by The Four Hundred.
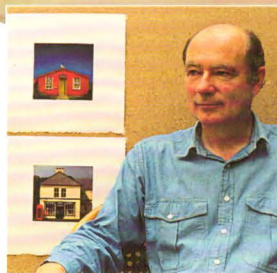
Terence Millington

External Displays
Rare Stamps at Claridges

For the second time the National Postal Museum was invited to exhibit at the "Rare Stamps of the World" exhibition at Claridge's Hotel, London from 24 to 26 July 1997. It was decided to show artwork and essays of King Edward VIII. Both the Accession issue and the proposed Coronation issue were displayed.

Over the Counter

Opening in March 1997, "Over the Counter" was a major exhibition presented by Wakefield Museum and Arts. Combining 2,000 years of writing and sending letters with the history of sub-post offices, the exhibition celebrated the centenary of the National Federation of SubPostmasters. The Federation was founded in the Mechanics Institute, Wakefield, a building which is now the town's museum.

A large number items on display in the exhibition were loaned from the NPM and Post Office Archives. These included a prototype electronic scales, writing equipment and a number of posters and photographs. "Over the Counter" runs until the end of 1999 and will tour to 10 other venues, including the Salford, Bexley and Pontefract museums. (The exhibition was jointly curated by NPM curatorial

assistant Tony Butler whilst Assistant Keeper of Social History at Wakefield Museum.)

Pentagram: A Taste of Stamps

An exhibition of stamp artwork was arranged at the display gallery of Pentagram Design, the well-known designers near Paddington, west London, from 10 November till 24 December. This was produced by Collis Clements and consisted of various aspects of finished stamp artwork for a number of different,

modern stamp issues. Combined with the issued stamps it was intended to show other designers the intricacies of stamp design and the many different responses of graphic artists. After the exhibition finished the framed panels were transferred to the Museum and put on show in the lower temporary exhibition area in 1998.

Israel '98

The Museum, in conjunction with the British Library and the Royal Collection, was invited to take part in the Court of Honour at Israel '98, an international stamp exhibition which took place in Tel Aviv in May 1998. The material selected was of Palestine and it was decided for the NPM to concentrate on the 1927 pictorial issue where we held all the artwork and most of the proofs. During the course of research several more pieces of artwork were discovered at the Royal Mint, and unknown proof sheets at De La Rue Security Print Ltd, formerly Harrison & Sons Ltd - the printers of the stamps. These were all added to the collection.
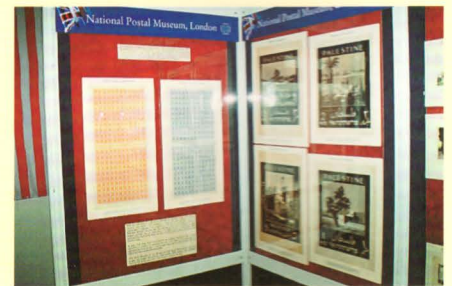
For the exhibition special backing and header panels were prepared, the latter designed by Mike Higgs, which made the exhibit stand out from other more conventional displays. Most of the nine frames contained information or items new to philatelic circles in the area and so the display caused a lot of interest, including to President Ezer Weizman who opened the exhibition.

At the same time, Israel opened its own National Postal Museum, within the complex of the Israel Museum.

Outside the new Israel Postal Museum

Research

The Dead Letter Office

De Mortuis Nihil Nisi Bonum - a summary of the background research for a display of postal history items by Lionel Jones.

For Museums Week in May 1997 the Central London Curators Group adopted the subject of "Mortality, Memorials and Museums" as a common theme. It was then up to individual museums to interpret this as best they could, given the diversity of their collections.

At the National Postal Museum we found two ideal and ready-made subjects in mourning stationery, and that period of returned letter working which attached to it the title of "Dead Letter Office".

I immediately set to work to uncover facts about the ambiguities of this little known and poorly documented subject. It was found that every text book on Post Office history made but a passing reference to the function of dealing with a growing volume of undeliverable public correspondence. No real facts emerged from the sum of all of the text books to which I had access.

Indexes to magazines and journals were then examined, the net result being just two substantial articles but only dealing with the printing and layout varieties of the wrappers introduced early in the 19th century. Material in the possession of the NPM and bearing reference to the "Dead Letter Office" was then minutely examined to establish an order of use of the various types of endorsement and wrappers devised for the purpose of returning undeliverable items. This examination was then transcribed into a chronology.

It was then time to scour the files held in our own Archives for operational clues and actual samples of schemes, which resulted in an Act, and printed wrappers and envelopes.

The outcome was rather disappointing in that there really is a lack of documentation. In fact, there is only the reference in the Dartmouth Papers in 1677 to the function of returning letters until an Act of 1711 permitted the PMG to open and deal with undeliverable items of mail.

A book of reminiscences entitled *Half a Century at the Dead Letter Office* published in retirement (after 1891) by former Returned Letter Office Controller, G.R. Smith, gives a good insight into the workings of the Branch, but only in a light-hearted way. The salient points concerning
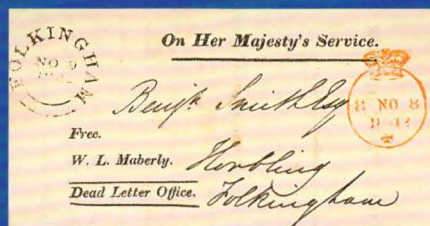
A wrapper produced pre 1840 to be sent free under the Frank of W.L. Maberly used post 1840 to return an undeliverable (Dead) letter sent by B. Smith of Folkingham, Lincs. The dated, crowned circle in red confirms prepayment whereas the words O.H.M.S in isolation would not.
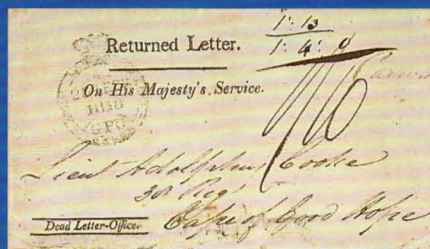
A Dead Letter wrapper used in 1818 to return an undeliverable letter to Lieut. Cooke 38th Regiment Cape of Good Hope upon payment by him of the original postage. Note the crowned circular India Packet Letter handstamp.

the Department during the period when the title "Dead Letter Office" attached to it, and identified from official files and primary source material are as follows.

The Dead Letter Office was established to examine letters that could not be delivered, or had been missent, and in certain cases to return them. The first known reference to Returned Letters is to be found in the Dartmouth Papers (1677) which contains a section on how the Inland Post Office is managed.

An Act of 1711 - 9.Anne c.11 provided that the Postmaster General be permitted to open all letters, the address of which could not be found - dead letters. These were becoming so numerous that in 1716 an officer of the GPO was especially appointed to check them. This checking process continued in a passage off St.Mary's Wolnoth but now with the staff increased to two, right up to early 1784. It is believed that concurrently with the formal establishment of the Dead Letter Office in London in 1784, similar offices were opened in both Dublin and Edinburgh.

Before these reforms the precise manner by which dead letters were treated is obscure. Thomas Todd was head of the Department from 1784 until 1790 but it would seem that during this period, and for a further 10 years, only the more important letters, and those containing property or enclosures, were given return treatment, the remainder being sold as waste paper.

It is recorded that prior to 1790 the period of retention of a dead letter was six months but in respect of items being returned by the Dublin office to England, this took place only quarterly. In the year 1790 Palmer ordered the period of retention of undeliverable letters to be reduced to two months. He also introduced a charge for returning a letter but Pitt quickly ruled this illegal and instructed it to be discontinued. In 1793, Mr Barlow, a Secretary's Office clerk took control of the DLO and arranged for all items to be returned monthly.

Between 1794 and 1795 the first Post Office County Directories were published in six large volumes, compiled by three PO servants over several years. These directories played an important part in reducing the volume of undeliverable letters and in creating a more professional approach to the working methods of the DLO. From this time, items were given a serial number. This serial number was conveyed to the sender in an advice which offered to return that letter on payment of a certain fee.

During the years 1808/11 specially printed wrappers were introduced in which undeliverable items were returned to senders and these exist in Dublin, Edinburgh and London versions. In 1813 the Returned Letter Office was set up within the DLO and both titles can be found printed upon the face of the wrappers. The title "Dead Letter Office" finally disappeared in 1857 when it was replaced by "The Returned Letter Branch".

Research

The Post Office Rifles: 1917 & 1997

The research project on the Post Office Rifles grew from numerous public enquiries, and drew on Kate Tildesley's experience in military museums. This research focused on the live of the individuals whose medals are in the collections, and also encompassed their careers within the Post Office as well as with the Rifles.

1917 was arguably the worst year that the Post Office Rifles saw on the Western Front. Slogging their way through the muddy, bloody year on the Ypres Salient, their losses were appalling, but their bravery unquestionable. While the Second Battalion *twice* lost over 50% of its fighting strength in the space of only five weeks (just over 500 men killed or wounded), the two battalions of this doughty territorial outfit showered themselves in glory, winning a high number of gallantry awards.

Eighty years on, the deeds of the Post Office Rifles are remembered with understandable, but somewhat vague, pride. Though the National Postal Museum has previously gathered together a fine collection of POR medals and ephemera, it was in danger of losing a socio-historical context for this material by not fully recording the stories that lay behind them. Increasing numbers of public enquiries concerning family members who served in the Great War also indicated that more needed to be known about the Battalion than was provided in the standard Regimental history, *Terriers in the Trenches*. Research started last year aimed to rectify these problems.

Sergeant Alfred Joseph Knight, who spent the latter part of 1917 fêted as the only Post Office Rifleman to win a Victoria Cross, is the best known of all the Battalion's servicemen. Many may remember the *Annual Review* articles published in 1992, which announced the arrival of Knight's medals in the Museum's collections, and celebrated his bravery. Yet 1997 still saw a significant addition to the information held on Knight. It was discovered, thanks to a local researcher, that Knight was buried in 1960 in Oscott Catholic Cemetery, Birmingham. In answer to our most popular POR enquiry, the National Postal Museum is thus able to fully describe a life that ended, peacefully, in almost the same place it was begun, and was made extraordinary by a lone act of heroism on Wurst Farm Ridge.

The research of the Collections Management Department does not, however, concentrate solely on deeds and awards for gallantry. The fact that Sergeant Charles Hayward won a Military Medal in 1917 for the Battle of Messines, is of great importance to us, but the knowledge that he stayed on with the Post Office and was awarded the Imperial Service Medal in the

Sergeant Hayward, seated, second right, wears his multiple wound stripes on his left sleeve

1950s is almost of greater significance, especially when the wound stripes he wore on his sleeve by the end of the War indicate that he had been wounded once in the head and three times in the stomach. His subsequent career almost certainly illustrates the attitude of the Post Office to returning servicemen, as well as testify to the robustness of the indefatigable Hayward.

The real highlight of the Post Office Rifles research in 1997 was the discovery of a hoard of information on Captain Home Peel, DSO, MC, who was the Adjutant of the 1st/8th POR in 1917. Peel was killed in action on 24 March 1918, but the determination of his widow to find his

Sergeant Knight's medals: Victoria Cross, MBE, British War Medal 1914-20, Victory Medal 1914-19, Coronation Medal 1937, Coronation Medal 1953

Captain Peel sits to the right of the picture. Seated next to him is Major, later Brigadier General, A. Maxwell, twice Commanding Officer of the Post Office Rifles.

body and buy the plot in which he was buried has provided the Museum with a treasure trove of over 40 letters and documents relating to his wartime service. From these sad reminders of the Great War is emerging a portrait of a typical public school officer - educated at Charterhouse and working for the India Office prior to 1914 - who was liked and respected by his contemporaries, and led the field with sufficient resolution to allow him to be mentioned in despatches on three occasions.

Most astonishing of all is the survival of a letter from the German soldier who appears to have found Peel's body.
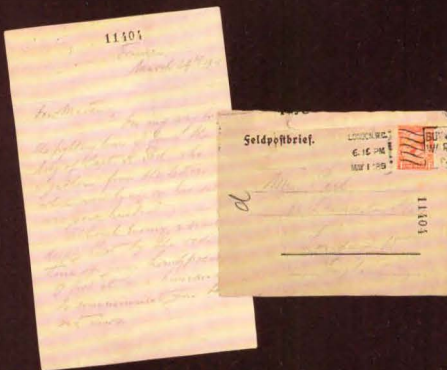
A rare wartime survival -E.F. Gayler's letter to Mrs Peel on German military stationery

This enigmatic communication invokes a startling battlefield scene and must be researched further at a future date. The struggle of E. F. Gayler, "late of 45 Stainton Road, Entcliffe, Sheffield", to find the words to comfort Mrs. Peel is palpable, but in writing the following he seems to have achieved his object: "although enemy & sometime deeply hurt by the ridiculous tone of your home press, I feel it a human duty to communicate these sad news. Capt. Peel was killed in action near Longueval & died, as it seems by the wounds received, without suffering".

Gayler recognised it was his human duty to record and remember an individual who died in a conflict beyond his control, and this duty is equally our own. In the 80 years since Passchendaele and Messines the memory of the Post Office Rifles has been lovingly preserved with monuments and memorials, but it would be useless to deny that individual histories have often been lost among the plaudits. If 1917 saw the Battalion battling through the worst months of the Great War, then it is to be hoped that the work of 1997 will revive an interest in the lives of the men that made that Battalion glorious.

A Brief History of the Post Office Rifles

There are long and obvious associations between the army and postal communication, but the direct linking of the Post Office with military service came in 1868 with the formation of the 49th Middlesex Rifle Volunteers, a regiment recruited solely from postal workers. The men of the 49th - later re-numbered as the 24th Middlesex - formed the backbone of the Army Post Office Corps in the Egyptian and Sudanese campaigns of 1882 and 1885, and also during the Boer War, 1899-1902. Though the regiment was relieved of its postal duties after the Haldane Reforms of 1908, it kept its association with the Post Office and continued to recruit postal workers into the Territorial Force under its new title, 8th (City of London) Battalion, The London Regiment (Post Office Rifles). Throughout World War I the men of the Battalion served gallantly in many of the major campaigns on the Western Front. The Battalion's career only came to a halt when it was amalgamated first with the 7th City of London's in 1921, and subsequently with a London Anti-Aircraft battalion. It finds its successor today in the Postal and Courier Depot, Royal Logistics Corps.

1917 - A Year of Trench Warfare

Ask anyone to describe the First World War, and they will generally begin with a scene from either the first day of the Somme, when 20,000 men simply walked across No Man's Land to their death in glorious July sunshine, or the bleak, twisted landscape of the Ypres Salient in 1917. Though safe from the carnage of the Somme until October 1916, the Post Office Rifles were in the thick of the fighting at Ypres from the start of the campaign.

What the Post Office Riflemen encountered was a world transformed by the horrors of a warfare never before experienced. At Messines an entire ridge of Belgian soil was blown away by 500 tonnes of high explosive in advance of the British attack.

The plight of Sergeant Knight, "entangled up to his waist in mud", is equally typical of the Battle of Passchendaele. Over 65,000 tonnes of shells had turned the Salient into a sea of mud. Many of the 173 "missing" after a POR attack of 26 October must have drowned before they could be found.

Veterans of the Battalion later remembered "the most ghastly of all the terrible battles fought on the Western Front", but those that survived were commended for the Battalion's achievements. "I thought," said the Divisional General, on parade after the aforementioned attack, "you were a lot of stamp lickers, but the way you fought ..., you went over like a lot of bloody savages".

For Further Information

Messenger, Charles, *Terriers in the Trenches. The History of the Post Office Rifles 1914-1918*, Picton Publishing, 1982

Westlake, Ray, *The Territorial Battalions. A Pictorial History 1859-1985*, London, 1986

Public Record Office, War Diaries of 1st/8th and 2nd/8th Battalions, The London Regiment, reference WO95/2731 and WO95/3006

Collections

Letterboxes

In the *Review* of 1996, Zara Matthews produced a new listing of the Museum's collection of pillar boxes. Detailed here is the completed listing of wall, lamp and other letter boxes in the Museum's care. It has been compiled by Zara and Kate Tildesley with the able and enthusiastic assistance of Avice Harms, a Friend of the Museum.

*Letter Box Study Group
Manufacturers of the
Letter Boxes given below:

W T Allen & Co	London
Allied Iron Founders	Falkirk
Bernard P Walker	Birmingham
Carron & Co	Falkirk
Derby Castings Ltd	Derby
Eagle Range Foundry Co	Birmingham
Andrew Handyside & Co	Derby
James Ludlow & Co	Birmingham
Smith & Hawkes	Birmingham

OB1994.51

VR Wall Boxes

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1998.550	70	Bracket Box	Woolwich 53	Office of Works	1883
OB1998.551	70M	Bracket Box	No 106	Office of Works	1883
OB1998.552	70M	Bracket Box	No 105, Double aperture	Office of Works	1883
OB1994.51	72/1	C	First standard	Smith & Hawkes	1857-9
OB1994.52	75/1	small	Second standard without hood	Smith & Hawkes	1859-61
OB1994.53	75/2	small	Second standard modified hood	Smith & Hawkes	1861
OB1998.553/1	77	large	Ex Bill Sait Collection	Smith & Hawkes	1861-71
OB1994.54	78	small	-	Smith & Hawkes	1861-71
OB1998.553/2	83/1	C	Ex Bill Sait Collection	Smith & Hawkes	1861-73
OB1998.553/3	83/2	C	Ex Bill Sait Collection	Bernard P Walker	1872-?
OB1994.55	83/2	C	-	Bernard P Walker	1872-?
OB1994.56	83/4	C	Escutcheon damaged	Eagle Range Foundry	1879-?
OB1994.57	84/1	A	-	Allen	1881-85
OB1994.58	85/2	B	-	Allen	1886-?
OB1994.59	85/3	B	-	Allen	?
OB1994.60	87/1	C	-	Allen	1882-85
OB1994.61	87/1	C	148 North End, Ravenstone	Allen	1882-85
OB1996.570	87/2M	C	-	Allen	1881-85

OB1996.391/1

EviiR Wall Boxes

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1994.179	90/1	C	No door	Allen	1901-04
OB1998.551	90/1M	C	-	Allen	1901-04
OB1998.552	91	A	-	Allen	1901-04
OB1994.51	91/M	-	Waterloo Station and Borough High Street	Allen	1901-04
OB1994.52	92	A	-	Allen	1904-10
OB1994.53	92	A	Stratford, London	Allen	1904-10
OB1998.553/1	93	B	-	Allen	1904-10
OB1994.54	93	B	New plate holder	Allen	1904-10
OB1994.54	94	C	Ex Bill Sait Collection	Allen	1904-10

GvR Wall Boxes

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1996.561	97	B	-	Allen	1910-30
OB1994.66	97/2	B	-	Allen	1910-30
OB1996.391/1	97/2	B	Unused	Allen	1910-30
OB1996.391/2	97/2	B	-	Allen	1910-30
OB1998.555	97/2M	B	No 43. Gilt crown with black lettering	Allen	1910-30
OB1996.562	98/1	C	-	Allen	1910-30
OB1994.67	98/1	C	-	Allen	1910-30
OB1998.489	98/1M	C	-	Allen	1910-30
OB1994.68	100/2	E	-	Allen	1910-30
OB1996.561	100/2	E	-	Allen	1910-30
OB1996.566	101/1	F	-	Allen	1910-30
OB1998.454	101/1M	F	No plate holder	Allen	1910-30
OB1994.70	103/3	B	No 398 Near Hanton Road	Allen	1933-36
OB1994.103	103/3	B	-	Allen	1933-36

OB1994.19

GviR Wall Boxes

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1998.565	110	B	-	Allen	1937-52

EiiR Wall Boxes

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1996.574	114/3	A	-	Allied Iron Founders	1957
OB1998.487	115/2	B	-	Allen	?
OB1998.556	115/2	B	Wales	Allen	?
OB1994.73	116/1	B	Large hood	Allen	1957-?
OB1994.74	116/2	B	Small hood	Allen	?
OB1994.164	116/3	B	Wales	Carron	1965-?
OB1998.557	116/4	B	Manchester	Carron	?
OB1994.558	116/4	B	Stockport	Carron	?
OB1998.485	120/1	E	-	Allen	1957-?
OB1998.486	120/3	E	-	Carron	1965-

Ludlow Wall Boxes

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1996.679	-	-	Hardwick, Norfolk	Garnier & Co, Ludgate Circus	1911
OB1998.559	155/1	-	-	Ludlow	1910-36
OB1994.19	155/2	-	Cast front piece only	Ludlow	1910-36
OB1997.291	155/3 or 4	-	Staple, Suffolk	Ludlow	1932
OB1998.580	157/2	-	Norfolk	Ludlow	1937-52
OB1998.560	157/3	-	-	Ludlow	1937-52
OB1998.561	160/2	-	Great Chart Order No 7628	Ludlow	1954-65
OB1994.20	164/1	-	Well-bottomed	Ludlow	1901-10
OB1998.581	166/1	-	Well-bottomed	Ludlow	?-1936
OB1994.21	167/2	-	EviiR plate on EviiR box. No plate holder. Double boxed back	Ludlow	1936
OB1998.562	171/2	-	Order No 2668	Ludlow	1952-54
OB1998.483	173/1	-	Wales	Ludlow	1954-65
OB1996.603	173/2	-	Extended	Ludlow	1954-65

OB1994.1

VR Lamp Boxes

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1994.1	201	-	-	Handyside	1896
OB1994.2	202	-	-	Handyside	1896-1901

EviiR Lamp Boxes

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1994.3	203	-	1033 Stonehill	Handyside	1901-?
OB1994.4	204	-	246 Green End	Handyside	?-1910
OB1994.5	205	-	-	Handyside	?-1910

GvR Lamp Boxes

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1994.6	206	-	367 Church Lane	Handyside	1910-?
OB1995.563	207	-	-	Handyside	?
OB1994.7	208	-	Hardmead	?	?
OB1998.564	209/1	-	-	Derby Castings Ltd	1931-?
OB1994.8	210	-	413 Stillington Road	Allen	?
OB1994.9	210	-	Allum Lane	Allen	?
OB1994.179	210	-	-	Allen	?
OB1996.604	210	-	-	Allen	?
OB1994.10	211	-	203 Brookville	Allen	1935-36
OB1994.11	211	-	St Looe	Allen	1910-?
OB1996.577	211	-	-	Allen	1935-36

OB1994.15

GviR Lamp Boxes

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1996.575	212	-	-	Allen	1937-49
OB1996.576	212	-	-	Allen	1937-49
OB1994.13	213	-	-	Allen	1949-52

OB1994.75

EiiR Lamp Boxes

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1994.14	214S	-	Scotland	Allen	1954-55
OB1994.15	215P	-	Fibreglass	?	circa 1963
OB1994.17	216/2S	-	Scotland	Carron	1974-76
OB1998.568	216/3	-	Plate holder missing	Carron	1969-74
OB1998.567	217/1	-	Plate holder missing	Carron	1978-80
OB1998.566	218/1	-	-	Carron	1980-?

Aperture Pieces

Acc. No.	LBSG No.*	Type	Notes	Manufacturer	Date
OB1994.75	-	-	VR cast iron	-	-
OB1994.76	-	-	EviiR cast iron	-	-

OB1994.76

Research

Palestine: A Matter of Research

Researching the background to stamp issues is not merely a matter of looking at a few books. Here Douglas N. Muir describes how he investigated the Palestine collection of the Museum for an international display.

Original artwork as submitted by the High Commisioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel - June 1924 showing: The Dome of the Rock, the Lake of Tiberias, the Tower of David, and Rachel's Tomb (mostly newly transferred from the Royal Mint).

Last year, the National Postal Museum was invited to display some of its Palestine material in the Court of Honour of Israel '98, the international exhibition in May 1998 which marked the 50th anniversary of Israeli stamps (and of course of the Israeli state). The Museum holds material transferred from the Inland Revenue at Somerset House and the Royal Mint, which means, in this case, registration sheets of the 1918 and 1921 E.E.F. issues of Palestine and artwork and proofs from the first pictorial issue of 1927. It was decided that we would concentrate on the later issue for the display and, in order to describe and present the items properly, research would be undertaken in whatever sources were available to find out the story.

This first entailed discovering what had been published on the subject and relevant booklets or articles were supplied by Norman Collins, who had researched the production of Palestine stamps at the Museum in the past, and David Beech of the British Library who hold the Crown Agents archive, both of essays of the issue and a production file. The trawl produced quite a lot of interesting, but disparate, information with no linking story.

However, our material had come from the Royal Mint and Graham Dyer, Librarian and Curator of the Royal Mint, kindly searched the minutes of the Royal Mint Committee, who had made decisions about the designs, for information about their discussions. Although very much in digest form this provided the story of how the designs had come about and why they had been changed from the original submissions. It was the breakthrough required for it led me to the files of the Royal Mint archives now held in the Public Record Office in Kew.

Anyone who has had occasion to do research at the P.R.O. knows it can be a source of immense frustration as well as pure gold. In the case of the Royal Mint files it was one of frustration - the main file, or files, had been destroyed at some time in the past. On the other hand, there were cross references to correspondence with the Colonial Office, which had been the controlling intermediary between the authorities in Palestine and both the Crown Agents and the Royal Mint. Here I found copies of much that had been destroyed elsewhere, together with internal memos that formed the basis of much of the correspondence. It was to prove a fascinating hoard.

Different Government departments kept their records in slightly different formats, and these varied over time. (They also often destroyed files which would now be regarded as of historical importance, as they were no longer of relevance to the workings of the department.) Despite the differences, the overall method of research is generally the same for all departments and may prove helpful to others working in different areas.

Normally, the department had a register for all incoming and outgoing correspondence, each item of which was given a number. In the case of the Colonial Office records for this period Palestine had its own register. Year by year, this was divided up into various sections such as Crown Agents, Home Office, Foreign Office etc whose initials would then prefix the numbering. The original entry gave a brief description of the contents of the letter and its subsequent destination within the files together with the new number. To find out what eventually happened to the letter or memorandum one had to search backwards and forwards through the register following a trail of numbers until eventually one found the file in which it reposed. Unfortunately, this was often marked to indicate that it had been destroyed. Happily, quite often a

description remained to give some idea of the contents.

It was surprising how often I had to trawl through the same registers for the relevant years, finding new references that had been overlooked. In the end nearly all of the important exchanges were recovered from one file or another, and most of them were stored on microfilm - which made reproduction much easier, if somewhat costly.

The extant files were also a source of frustration from time to time, though they also contained gold. Internal memos were often illegibly scrawled and nearly always only initialled with one scribble following another on the same paper. This made deciphering very difficult. However, the file cover recorded the movement of the file from one official to another and from this it was normally possible to reconstruct who wrote what. Then it was necessary to resort to other sources to find out who the various people were. In this I found Martin Gilbert's definitive biography of Winston Churchill invaluable (Churchill had set up the Middle East department of the Colonial Office in 1920).

In the end it proved possible to reconstruct nearly all of the story - from the initial designs submitted by the High Commissioner of Palestine to the final production of the stamps. On the other hand, virtually no primary sources were traced to detail some events in Palestine. Thus, I had to infer who the original designers were and the resulting article was more London-based than I would have wished.

During the course of my research Graham Dyer managed to find some of the original artwork which had been misplaced at the Royal Mint and which was thought no longer to survive. He also found source material for one of the designs that no one had any idea about. At the printers, Harrison & Sons Ltd (now De La Rue Security Print) sheets were discovered printed in the wrong colours, with different watermarks and strange HARRISON'S SPECIMEN overprints. All of these were officially transferred to the Museum to augment our, by now, considerable holdings. They were also put on show in Tel Aviv for the first time.

The story of how the first and only pictorial issue of Palestine came about has been told elsewhere, the full research article appearing in *The London Philatelist (Vol. 107, July/ August & September 1998)*. This is intended to indicate how it was compiled.

Two of the eight photographs supplied to create the revised Dome design (transferred from the Royal Mint)
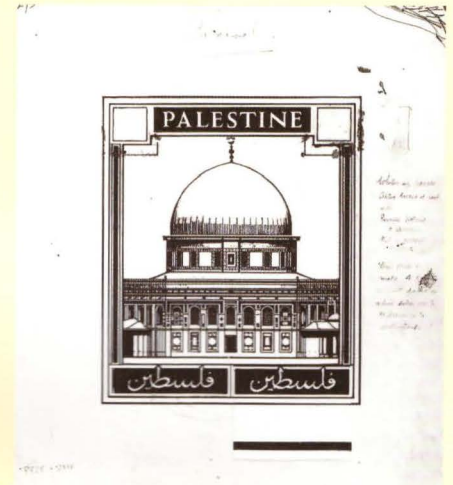
First stage of the revised Dome design artwork
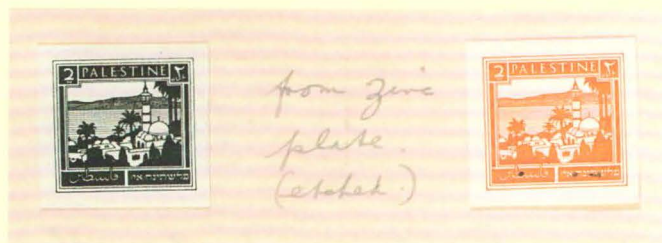
First colour proofs of the high value design showing The Lake of Tiberias
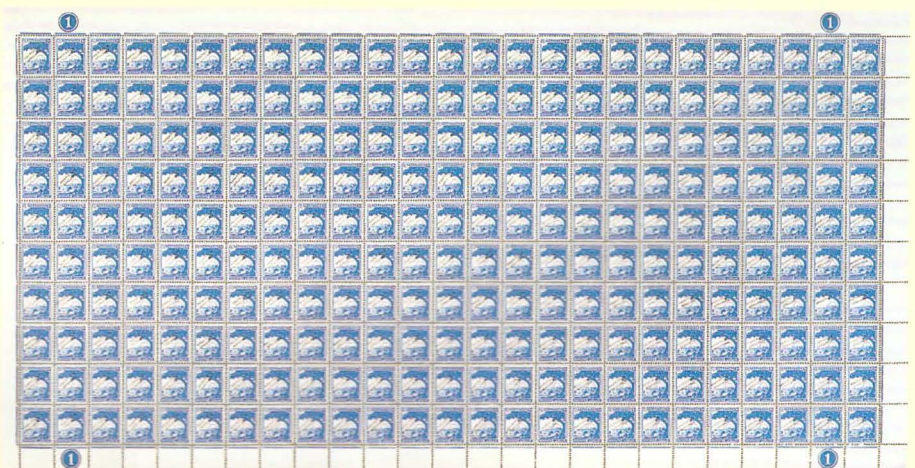
1927. One of the newly-discovered printer's sheets in the wrong colour, overprinted HARRISON'S SPECIMEN (transferred from the printers)

Research

The Early Years of British Postal Orders

A major project undertaken during 1997 was to research the background to the postal order collection. **Tony Butler** undertook research in Post Office Archives, the Bank of England and the Public Record Office and this resulted in a history detailing the service up to 1925.

Intended as a cheap and easy to use means for transferring money, Postal Orders have been widely used by all sections of society for nearly 120 years.

could flood the country's economy at will. Furthermore, they were afraid that the new system would come to rival cheques issued by individual banks. Samuel Lloyd MP stated that, as a bank director, he did *"not care about the Bill as affecting banking interests, but it affected the public interest and the currency question."* He maintained that *"the government might issue those 'shin plasters' to any extent payable at any post office, and without a single six pence of bullion on their backs."*

This bluster of self-interest from the bankers, managed to stall the implementation of postal notes, by insisting that the scheme be enshrined in an Act of Parliament. In 1877 the first "postal order" bill was talked out on its first reading and it was not until July 1880 that Chetwynd's proposals became law as the Post Office (Money Orders) Act. By this time the banks had forced two important concessions: firstly, no denominations other than the planned 10 (1/-, 1/6, 2/6, 5/-, 7/6, 10/-,

The architect of the postal order system was Post Office Comptroller and Accountant General, George Chetwynd. A proficient planner and organiser, Chetwynd had already been responsible for the setting up of the Post Office Savings Bank in 1861, which had deposits of over £1.4 million by 1872.

In 1874 he produced a report stating a case for the introduction of a *postal note* similar to those issued by the Bank of England. Chetwynd intended the *postal note* as a replacement for the rather cumbersome bureaucracy of low value money orders and would combine, *"the simplicity of a Postage Stamp, with the advantages of a small bank post bill, circular note and a Cheque."*

His paper highlighted a number of advantages which postal notes held over money orders: the notes did not require the customer to fill in an application form; and they were payable at any money order office or Post Office Savings Bank in the United Kingdom, (a money order was only payable at the office named by the sender). The note was also a benefit to those in sparsely populated areas where there were no money order offices.

Though warmly received by Post Office officials, Chetwynd's proposals provoked strong opposition from the fiercely independent banking sector, who feared the circular notes would become an alternative currency with which the government

1877 prospective Post Office Note design by Bradbury Wilkinson. The poundage head featuring Victoria is from a painting by Winterhalter.

October 1880 Bank of England postal order design. The yellow surround was intended as guard against photographic forgery, although the idea was later abandoned when it was discovered that the yellow ink could be removed by soaking in a chemical solution.

12/6, 15/-, 17/6, 20/-), could be added without change to legislation; secondly, that the name "Post Office Note" was to be replaced by "Postal Order".

During the attempts to steer the 1877 bill through the Commons, specimen *circular note* forms were produced by the bank note printers Bradbury and Wilkinson. They proposed that each value of note be printed on different coloured paper, so as to be easily recognisable to sorters and customers, and to act as a guard against forgery. These specimens were engraved on special hand made paper containing the words *Post Office Note* and the value of the denomination in the watermark. In the event Chetwynd considered these designs too elaborate. He wanted the postal notes to resemble bank notes similar to those issued by the Bank of England. In this light it was natural that the contract to produce the first postal orders be given to the Bank.

Postal orders were printed on paper slightly thicker than the normal bank note paper provided by Portals of Laverstoke, Hampshire. In late September, Portals sent the Bank an example of a design of the note face and watermark. The prototype order was printed in black ink with a superimposed yellow border which it was hoped would minimise the possibility of photographic forgery. However, this design was later abandoned after experiments in the Bank's laboratory found that the *"yellow colouring used in the border of the specimen approved by the Treasury is capable of being removed by a chemical process without injury to the imprint of the engraved position of the order. Thus rendering the device useless."*

Somewhat taken aback by this surprise discovery, the Bank hastily proceeded to print the orders in a soft shade of cobalt blue ink.

The Bank also proposed that each denomination of order should have its own separate watermark denoting the value in both figures and letters. The denomination was printed in letters along the bottom of the order with the value in figures appearing in each of the four corners. The words POSTAL ORDER were impressed at the top of the note, whilst the value was overprinted in black, each denomination printed in a different typeface. The design was the most elaborate of all postal orders.

The first postal orders went on sale on 1 January 1881, and proved an unmitigated

success. By March 1882 of that year a total of 2,735,632 had been sold. However, public criticism over the inconvenience of buying combinations of orders to make up certain values, led the Post Office to consider issuing further denominations. An amendment to the Post Office (Money Order) Act was made in 1883, raising the number of denominations from 10 to 14 (abolishing the under-used 12/6 and 17/6 and adding 2/-, 3/-, 4/-, 4/6, 10/6).

With the introduction of the further denominations the Post Office decided that a new design was appropriate. The new pattern was markedly different from the original issue and set the standard format for postal orders for the next 20 years. The most noticeable change was the addition of the value in figures, printed in black and placed in the top right hand corner. This was in response to criticism from sorters that they had difficulty in recognising the value of the order at a glance.

M.M. Brown, the Controller of the Postal Order branch of the Money Order Office wrote *"to obviate some of the anomalies which now result from the necessity of using two orders to make up certain amounts"*.

A year later a postal order for a guinea was introduced at the behest of the MP Sir John Henniker Heaton. He claimed that he had received a number of representations from clergymen who considered that there was *"the want of an order for £1 1s [to encourage] the payment of charitable and other subscriptions."*

Producing Postal Orders

From 1884 all postal orders were printed on a rotary machine supplied by R.W. Munro. Designed by Henry McPherson, the machine printed the orders eight to a sheet. By 1894 there were four such machines printing postal orders at the Bank's St Luke's printing works in Holloway, London.
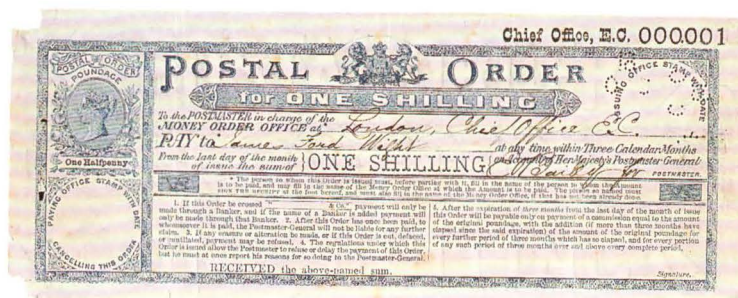
The first ever postal order, issued at the London Chief Office on 1 January 1881.

1903 Specimen overprint of an Edward VII second issue postal order. This was the first design to contain a counterfoil.

Reform of the System

By the turn of the century the demand for postal orders was such that a entire revision of the service was enacted. Some 88,388,000 were sold in 1900 alone. In 1902 the number of denominations was increased from 14 to 40; with values available from 6d to 20/- at sixpence intervals. The intention was, as

The years immediately leading up to the Great War were the high point of popularity of postal orders. On average over a hundred million were sold each year as they virtually became an alternative currency. By 1910 the Bank of England was producing around 132 million a year.

On occasions, demands for particular denominations would suddenly arise. A limerick competition organised by a national newspaper in 1907 led to a huge demand for sixpence orders as an entry fee, and output that year increased by 20 million. Even during times of such demand postal orders were still printed by a Henry McPherson machine, albeit one modified by his son Alfred, to allow 10 instead of eight orders to be printed at a time.

In 1912, provision was made for peak demands by the installation of a new rotary machine, which printed and numbered a sheet of postal orders at high speed. The machine, the only one of its kind, was designed and constructed by R. Hoe & Co. Ltd. and was similar to the large presses used for printing newspapers.

The Counterfoil Added

Reform of the system also brought with it a new design of postal orders, and one

"Stamp Boxes"

Despite the addition of the counterfoil, the new design of postal orders was still far from fraud-proof. This was largely due to rules allowing the affixing of stamps to orders to make up odd amounts. A maximum of 10 stamps were permitted to be attached to the face of postal orders. Forgers were thus able to stick postage stamps across the lettering of the denomination, and then alter its numerical value. The Postmaster General noted in a letter to the Treasury that a similar *"operation was carried out by a man named Stringer* [using the pseudonym N.H.Hill]. *A number of shilling orders thus altered were cashed by him for 21/- at town sub-offices in various parts of the country. The culprit has since been arrested and been given a custodial sentence."*

On 7 November 1905 *The Times* reported that a revised pattern of postal orders was to be issued, *"with a view to greater convenience and with the object of affording increased security against fraud"*.

Postal Orders & the Great War

When war broke out in August 1914 the government feared major disruption to commerce and were especially aware that the public and small businessmen would hoard their money, thus slowing down the circulation of currency notes and coins. To combat this, postal orders were made legal tender, a policy which proved unpopular with both business and the public at large.

However, if people were more than willing to use postal orders for specific one-off payments they were less keen to see them replace more "tangible" coins. Shopkeepers regularly complained of customers refusing to accept postal orders as small change. Furthermore, when takings were banked, cashiers declined to accept large amounts of postal orders in exchange for coins. Likewise, the public took every opportunity to rid themselves of postal orders. If they were unable to be exchanged for coins, postal orders were hastily paid into the Post Office Savings Bank or personal accounts at clearing banks.

The overriding aim of the Currency and Bank Notes Act of 1914 was for postal orders to augment the coinage for several months whilst existing currency stocks were consolidated. In fact, the policy had the reverse effect. As currency, postal orders were so universally disliked that the public could not wait to be rid of them. Consequently, more coins ended up in circulation than before the outbreak of war. Postal orders did however provide a breathing space of six months for the Bank of England to assess currency stocks and print enough 10/- notes and produce smaller denominations of coins to provide a reserve supply.

1905 paid Edward VII third issue postal order. Although this design provided three rectangular boxes in which stamps were to be affixed, some members of the public were clearly oblivious to their purpose.

markedly different from previous patterns. To the July 1903 issue a counterfoil was added so that postal orders resembled cheques. However, many people, especially the poor who previously had no cause to use bank cheques, were unaware of the purpose of the counterfoil as a record of purchase. Many people thought the counterfoil part of the order and failed to detach it before sending. This gave a golden opportunity to the fraudster to alter the value of the order and destroy the evidence of a matching serial number from the counterfoil. In 1905, a new issue made its purpose more explicit, when COUNTERFOIL in capital letters was printed on that portion with the instructions "To be detached and kept by the Sender." written in bold below.

A few days later the newly designed orders went on sale to the public. Three stamp-sized boxes were positioned on the face of the order containing the legend

Postage Stamps
not exceeding three in number or 5d. in total value may be affixed in these spaces, **but not elsewhere,** *to make up a broken amount (excluding an odd half penny).*

This issue also saw the words *Postal Order* replaced by *British Postal Order*. In addition, all denominations over 10/- were printed in red. This pattern remained standard until the Post Office took to producing a more compact postal order itself in 1926.

Postscript

The Edwardian era can be said to have been a golden age for postal orders. Restrictive banking practices allowed only the wealthy to obtain access to cheque accounts but rising prosperity amongst working people ensured that they had a substantial disposable income for the first time. They, too, needed means to pay bills or subscriptions, send money to friends or, as was very fashionable at this time, enter competitions. Postal orders bridged this gap and they proved so popular that during the first decade of this century 465,754 were sold every day.

Publications

During 1997 the first of the NPM stamp histories was published. This was followed by a further three in 1998. Some 17 postcards together with exhibition leaflets were also produced, similar to previous years. The computer disk catalogue was also updated. At the end of the year two versions of a Greetings Card were issued for the first time.

For the Golden & Glorious exhibition we published in full the first of the research stamp histories, that on the 1953 Coronation, written by Giles Allen. This 48pp booklet was based on official files and illustrates all the designs submitted, both adopted and unadopted, and the production stages through which they went to the final stamps. During 1998, a further three stamp histories were also published on the 1929 Postal Union Congress (by Alan Griffiths); a combined book on the 1935 Silver Jubilee (by Simon Bates) and the 1936 proposed George V Memorial issue (by Giles Allen); and the 1936 proposed Edward VIII Coronation issue (by Alan Griffiths).

Postcards formed the bulk of the remainder of publishing activity during 1997, with 17 cards and special postmarks marking their publication. Another first was the issue of a greetings card in two versions (for Christmas and blank). The GB *Chronolist* was also updated twice to include issues for 1996 and 1997 and then published in computer disk format as part of Stamp-Master produced by Philatelic Software Ltd in association with Royal Mail.

Prototype Letter Boxes
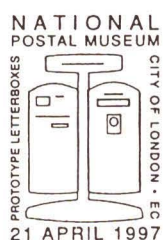
NPM 97/1
Combined Stamp Vending and Posting Unit, designed 1995. Prototype made of wood by IDEO Models. Production model made of glass reinforced plastic for key locations such as airports.

NPM 97/2
Combined Stamp Vending and Posting Unit, designed 1994. Prototype made of wood by IDEO Models. Unadopted.

NPM 97/3
Business Box, designed in 1994 for franked mail pouches. Production model made of zinc coated steel. Located on industrial estates and business parks.

NPM 97/4
Free-standing Box and Pedestal Box, designed circa 1991 for conference and exhibition use. Prototypes made of sheet steel. Unadopted.

Golden and Glorious

NPM 97/5
24 November 1971. Unadopted essay for the 1972 Royal Silver Wedding issue featuring the Royal Family.

NPM 97/6
14 February 1972. Unadopted essay in landscape format by Jeffery Matthews for the 1972 Royal Silver Wedding issue.

NPM 97/7
14 February 1972. Unadopted essay in portrait format by Jeffery Matthews for the 1972 Royal Silver Wedding issue.

NPM 97/8
March 1972. Unadopted essay of the rejected design by Jeffery Matthews for the 1972 Royal Silver Wedding issue.

Sub-Post Offices

NPM 97/14
The interior of Shipbourne Sub-Post Office, 1935.
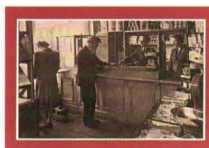
NPM 97/15
The interior of Rose Hill town Sub-Post Office, Derby, 1947.
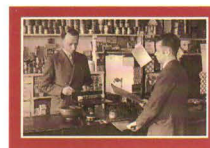
NPM 97/16
The interior of Shorne Sub-Post Office, 1939.

NPM 97/17
The interior of Cobham Sub-Post Office, 1939.

Aerial Post

NPM 97/9
First United Kingdom aerial post, Sunday 17 September 1911 from Windsor to Hendon, London. Gustav Hamel in his Bleriot No.2 with bag label No.2 carried by him.

NPM 97/10
13-14 October 1911. G. Higginbotham at Freshfield flying to Southport, with the cachet applied with official permission.

NPM 97/11
1919 RAF aerial mail from Hawkinge, Folkestone to the British Army of Occupation, Cologne. Captain A F Hordern AFC, the leader of the first aerial mail trip from Hawkinge, 1 March 1919, with a bag label for the return trip dated 9 April.

NPM 97/12
1919 RAF aerial mail from Hawkinge, Folkestone to the British Army of Occupation, Cologne. The DH10 which conveyed the first mail bag despatched at night, 14 May 1919, with a bag label from the same flight.

NPM 97/13
1919 RAF aerial mail from Hawkinge, Folkestone to the British Army of Occupation, Cologne. Checking the weight and location of mail before loading, with a bag label for Cologne dated 17 July 1919.

1997-8 Postmark Figures

21 April 97	Prototype Letter Boxes	1019
21 April 97	Golden & Glorious	1461
10 June 97	Aerial Post	1406
12 August 97	Sub-Post Offices	3558
23 Sept-17 Dec 97	The Queen's Stamps	1385
25 June 98	It's Only a Game	281
1997	Maltese Cross (full year)	4545

1997 Postcard Print Figures

21 April	Prototype Letter Boxes (97/1-4)	7,000 (sets)
21 April	Golden & Glorious (97/5-8)	7,000 (sets)
10 June	Aerial Post (97/9-13)	7,000 (sets)
12 August	Sub-Post Offices (97/14-17)	10,000 (sets)
November	Xmas/Greetings cards	2,500 of each (in packs of 10)

Cards Withdrawn or Sold Ou

1988	88/1, 88/3 Post Office Posters - Railways
1988	88/4, 88/6 Travel & Communications
1990	SWL 90/11-12 Charles Heath, William Mulr
1990	YY 90/1-3 Yesteryear
1991	91/1-4 Post Office in Edwardian Tim
1991	91/5-8 Stamping the Mail
1991	91/9-13 Maps and the Post Office
1992	92/2 The Queen's Stamps
1992	92/5-6 People in the Post

Christmas/Greetings Cards

Royal Mail in Snow by Samuel Henry Alken jnr (1810-1894) with & without text "Season's Greetings"

The Queen's Stamps: The Mediterranean

NPM Stamp Histories
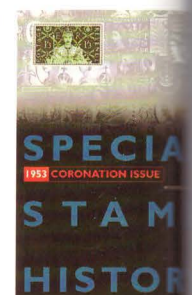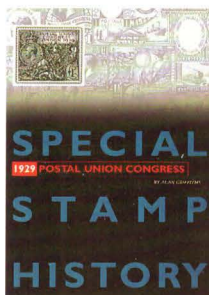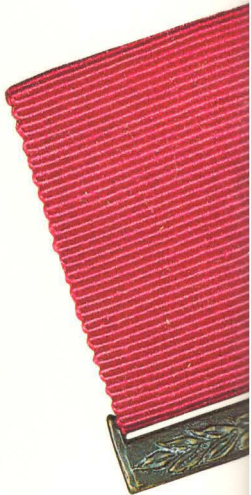
THE POST OFFICE

NPM Review Cumulative Index 1988-96

Compiled by Dr. Jean Alexander

Author Index