

# GIBBONS Stamp MONTHLY

VIRTUAL STAMPEX  
MARCH 2021

£4.75

THE FIRST CHOICE FOR STAMP COLLECTORS SINCE 1890

PUBLISHED BY  STANLEY GIBBONS

## THE DYING ART OF ENGRAVING

The career of  
Denmark's last  
stamp engraver



## SEEKING CEYLON

On the hunt for  
the 1881 Pearl  
Fishery telegraph  
cancellations



## MALAYSIA

The Sultan Sir  
Abu Bakar issues  
of Johore



## OVERPRINTS AND SURCHARGES

A collector's guide to key  
errors and varieties



PLUS: STAMP HUNTING · MACHIN WATCH · GB NEWS



# GIBBONS Stamp MONTHLY Contents

THE UK'S NUMBER ONE STAMP MAGAZINE

Virtual Stampex

March 2021



Dear Reader  
Welcome to this bite-sized  
taster edition of *Gibbons Stamp  
Monthly*, which has been compiled  
especially for download during  
Virtual Stampex. I hope you enjoy  
this brief taste of what GSM has to offer. You will find  
much more content in the full-sized magazine each  
and every month. I hope you can join us.

Dean Shepherd  
Editor *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*

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## Virtual Stampex returns with exciting new features

Not to be beaten by lockdown rules, the Philatelic Traders' Society will once again be presenting a Virtual Stampex exhibition to replace the usual physical show that normally takes place around this time of year. As with last October's online event, Virtual Stampex, which runs 25–27 March, will take place 24 hours a day for three days, with the aim of bringing together collectors from all over the globe.

Virtual Stampex is part of a philatelic revolution which is capitalising on the resurgence of the hobby due to the global pandemic. The show encourages people to connect and enjoy a philatelic experience from the comfort and safety of their own home. Visitors will enter via an interactive lobby, which will be open for the full 72 hours of the show. From here, they will be able to connect globally through text, audio and video with Stampex stand holders, PTS members, auction houses, philatelic societies, postal administrations, philatelic museums, experts and social influencers – all completely free of charge.

The organisers are also planning a range of events for the show, including talks, appraisal services, live philatelic chat rooms, a new booth hall, philatelic exhibits and a new collectors' lounge celebrating the world's leading philatelists.

There will be some exciting new additions to this latest Virtual Stampex compared to last year's show. Sponsored by Corinphila and Heinrich Kohler, the Collectors' Lounge will allow collectors to meet, chat and connect. They can arrange to meet friends, join a relaxed session on collecting from one of the experts and meet the teams who are showing in the booth hall.

A new Gold Membership Hall will feature PTS Gold Members, including the likes of Mark Bloxham, Brian Bayford, Stanley Gibbons and Bill Barrell.

An Exhibitors' Hub will be provided for those who want to see the exhibitions run by the Association of British Philatelic Societies (ABPS) and award-winning collections presented by the Museum of Philately.

Once again sponsored by Spink, the Spink Auditorium will be home to ten talks, provided by experts from leading philatelic institutions around the world, including the NY Collectors Club, FIAP and the Royal Philatelic Society London.

Other attractions of the show include Stamps in the Attic, which will offer free stamp appraisals, a virtual Smiler Booth and a live chat function that will be available throughout the full 72-hour duration of the show. Of course, there will also be plenty of chances to take advantage of some great deals to help build your collection.

Virtual Stampex will run for 72 hours from 8am (London time) on 25 March until 8am (London time) on 28 March.



## GBPS and Collectors Club of New York to hold joint meeting

The Great Britain Philatelic Society (GBPS) is to hold a joint meeting with the Collectors Club of New York as part of their programme of talks by some of the world's leading specialist organisations. The meeting will feature some of the world's best collections of British stamps and postal history. The talk will take place

on Wednesday 13 October 2021 at 10.30p.m. (5.30p.m. EDT). Further details will be available nearer the date.

You can find more information and register your interest at [www.collectorsclub.org/society-program-series](http://www.collectorsclub.org/society-program-series). Full details of the GBPS can be found at their website ([www.gbbs.org.uk](http://www.gbbs.org.uk)).

## In Brief

### FEPA Awards for 2020

Nominations are now being sort for the Federation of European Philatelic Association's (FEPA) Awards for 2020. The Federation presents the awards each year to recognise outstanding contributions to European philately in three different areas: Exceptional Service to Organised Philately; Exceptional Philatelic Study and Research (construed as a literary prize); and Exceptional Support to Philately. Additionally, up to five certificates of appreciation are awarded to societies for the promotion of philately.

For more details of how to nominate a candidate, please see the FEPA website ([fepanews.com](http://fepanews.com)). Nominations must reach the FEPA Vice President, Giancarlo Morolli, by 30 April 2021.

### Monacophil postponed

The Club de Monte Carlo has announced that the next Monacophil exhibition, due to be held in Monte Carlo from 8–11 December 2021, has now been postponed until December 2022. Further details will be posted on the event website ([www.monacophil.eu](http://www.monacophil.eu)) when they become available.



# NEW COLLECTOR

By Richard West

For this month's New Collector, Richard West turns his attention to the issues that can arise when things don't go according to plan during the stamp production process.

Having designed a new stamp, production can begin. Naturally, the aim is to be as economical as possible, printing as many stamps as practicable in sheets of convenient size. Thus, for the world's first adhesive postage stamp, the Penny Black, there were 240 stamps in each sheet. (Ironically, later, many Post Offices printed stamps in much smaller sheets that fitted a stamp album page, to encourage collectors to buy a complete sheet—often such sheets comprised stamps of more than one design, sometimes even of more than one value.)

However, while the technology was available to print sheets of 240 in 1840, it was not used everywhere. A few early stamps were handstruck as singles, the most famous probably being the Bermuda 'Postmasters' struck by William Perot in Hamilton and J H Thies in St George's between 1848 and 1861 (Fig 1). Equally well known are the Falkland Islands' 'franks', the first struck in black known from 1869, with the colour later changed to red, which are known from 1876–78.

## Not as intended

In previous articles, I explained how the principal stamp printing methods converted a design into multiple, hopefully, identical, images to create the plate or cylinder from which the stamps could be printed. However, in some cases, the stereotype used to create the printing plate was made up of individual images or clichés. An outcome was some of the world's rarest stamps; stamps that were 'not as intended'.

The Cape of Good Hope issued the world's first triangular stamps on 1 September 1853. The so-called 'Cape Triangulars' are legendary in the history of Stanley Gibbons, with Edward Stanley Gibbons, then operating from Plymouth, reputedly buying a sackful from two sailors in 1863. While most of the Cape stamps were printed by Perkins Bacon in London, an apparent shortage led to two of the values, the 1d. vermillion and the 4d. blue, being produced locally in



Fig 1 The Bermuda 'Postmasters' were handstruck between 1848 and 1861



Fig 3 The unique 'Treskilling Yellow' is another colour famous colour printing error



Fig 2 An emergency local printing of the Cape Trinagulars in 1861 led to some 1d. and 4d. values being printed in the wrong colours; the 1d. being printed in blue and the 4d. in vermillion



Fig 4 The 1855 4d. Swan of Western Australia with its inverted frame

1861 (Fig 2). Despite the fact these local versions were engraved in steel, they are known to collectors as the 'Woodblocks'. Inadvertently, a cliché for the 1d. value was inserted in the stereotype for the plate printing of the 4d. value and vice versa, resulting in the 1d. being printed in blue and the 4d. in vermillion. Another example comes from Sweden – the famous 'Treskilling Yellow' (Fig 3). The first stamps of Sweden, showing the Coat of Arms, were issued in 1855 in sheets of 100. The 3s. was in green and the 8s. in yellow. It is believed that the stereotype of the plate to print the 8s. value became damaged and was repaired using a cliché of the 3s. value, which as a result was printed in yellow. Only one example of this stamp has been reported.

A similar situation affected the 'Black Swan' stamps of Western Australia, first issued in 1854. The initial value, 1d., was printed by Perkins Bacon, but two subsequent values, 4d. and 1s., were printed locally from the 1d. plate by the Government Lithographer, Horace Samson, who was succeeded by Alfred Hillman. It was in January 1855 that Hillman, preparing to print further supplies of the 4d., noticed that damage had occurred to

the 'transfer' stone. In making the repair, the frame was inserted upside down in four positions, creating the 'inverted frame' variety (incorrectly known for many years as the 'inverted Swan') (Fig 4).

## Plate re-entries

When producing the printing plate from the original design, whether reproduced from an engraved die using a transfer roller or replicated using photographic techniques, the aim is to finish with a sheet of identical images. Before computer technology was used to create the plates, even with the best of intentions, that could not always be achieved. It was left to the skill of individuals to 'correct' any flaws that might appear on the printed stamps.

With recess-printed stamps – the plates produced by reproducing a design engraved into a die using a transfer roller – there was often a need to strengthen the engraved lines on some of the images. These are known as 're-entries' and,



although the intention is to ensure that each stamp is identical, often the re-entry is clearly visible. Such re-entries have been evident from the Penny Black. Of course, the early stamps of Great Britain had corner letters, meaning that every stamp in the sheet was different. These letters were punched individually into the printing plate, so positioning can vary, and sometimes two attempts were needed, resulting in 'double letters'.

The example of retouching I am illustrating is from Australia – the 3½d. value of the 1957 Christmas set (Fig 5). It results in the doubling of some letters of both 'CHRISTMAS' and 'AUSTRALIA', found on the first stamp of row 10.

### Constant varieties

Other printing methods tended to use photographic techniques to replicate the design on the printing plate or cylinder. The process was not always perfect, with the result creating 'varieties'. A particular variety may appear on the same stamp of every sheet or at least for part of the printing: this is referred to as a 'constant variety'. Many are quite striking and become known by their appearance. Thus, from Great Britain, the 3d. value of the National Productivity Year set of 1962 is known for its 'lake in Scotland', 'lake in Yorkshire' and 'Kent omitted' varieties, while the following year, the 3d. value of the National Nature Week pair showed a 'caterpillar flaw' (Fig 6).

Sometimes, attempts will be made to obscure the variety. The 1s.6d. value of the ITU Centenary pair of 1965 showed, on the phosphor lined version on stamp 4 of row 1, a red arm projecting from one of the red pins (Fig 7). This variety was retouched but traces of the red arm can still be seen (the retouch occurring on stamps with phosphor bands and those issued without).

For a while, British stamps acknowledged the designer and printer, appearing below the stamp design. The first occasion was the two stamps to mark the Opening of the Post Office Tower in October 1965. During the first full year these imprints appeared (1966), there were several occasions when varieties were created. These were: most, sometimes all, of 'HARRISON' from 'HARRISON AND SONS LTD' missing on the 4d. Black-headed Gull design from the British Birds set (this variety was quickly corrected) (Fig 8); broken 'D' of 'LTD' on the 1s.3d. of the Landscapes set; a similar variety on the British Technology 6d. value; and the 'T' of 'T SHEMZA' missing on the 3d. Christmas stamp. The 6d. value of the Landscapes set showed the first 'D' of 'HARRISON AND SONS LTD' missing on stamp 3 of row 10 (Fig 9). An attempt was made to correct this variety, but the added 'D' is easily recognisable.



Fig 5 A re-entry on some of the text on the Australia 3½d. Christmas stamp of 1957 was made on the first stamp of row 10



Fig 6 The 'Caterpillar' variety found on stamp 2 in row 3 of the 3d. National Nature Week stamp of 1963



Fig 7 Stamp 4 of row 1 in the 1965 ITU Centenary 1s.6d. showed a red arm projecting from one of the pins (left). The flaw was later retouched (right)



Fig 8 The Birds set of 1966 showing 'HARRISON' and part of 'AND' missing from the imprint below the design



Fig 9 The 6d. value from the 1966 Landscapes issue showing the 'D' of 'HARRISON AND SONS LTD' omitted on stamp 3 of row 9. The missing letter was clearly added by hand later



The acknowledgement was dropped during 1969, but later stamps would carry a copyright date. In 1993, the copyright '1993 ©' was missing on stamp 6 of row 10 of the 33p value of the World Orchid Conference set from sheets with the cylinder numbers followed by dots (Fig 10).

Perhaps more interesting is when the variety affects the denomination. On the 12p Charlotte Brontë stamp from Famous Authoresses set of 1980, stamp 6 of row 4 from sheets without dots after the cylinder numbers (called the 'no dot' sheet), the 'p' from '12p' was omitted (Fig 11).

Even advanced technology with computer-etched cylinders cannot always eliminate varieties. Quite a stir was created in 2003 when the £2 appeared, printed in gravure by De La Rue, with the '£' missing. This is found on stamp 1 of row 18 from sheets with cylinder number D1 no dot (Fig 12).

However, the most startling variety has to be that found on the 13p value of the Roses set of 1976. Following repairs to the cylinder, the '13p' on stamp 9 of row 1 was inadvertently covered, resulting in the denomination being omitted. The mistake was quickly spotted, but two mint and one used examples are known, of which one of each are in the Royal Philatelic Collection. Forgeries exist of this stamp.

When it comes to varieties, it is probable that most collectors will have their particular favourites. I have two. The first is from Cyprus and is found on the 10m. value of the Olympic Games set of 1964. On stamp 2 of row 9 on one sheet in four, the runner has a large mask over his face (an ironic reminder of the times we are currently living through) (Fig 13). Described in the Gibbons catalogue as 'Blind runner', the variety was quickly spotted and the affected stamps removed from sheets.

My second favourite remains a mystery to me as to how it occurred. It is found on the 1p value of the Antarctic Birds definitives of 1998 from British Antarctic Territory. On the first stamp of the row 1 on sheets from the lower pane (the stamps were printed in two panes separated by a horizontal gutter), the caption, instead of reading 'Sheathbill Chionis alba' (Snowy Sheathbill), reads 'British Antarctic Terr' (Fig 14). Incidentally, the 1p value was included in a 'Free Gift' attached to the front cover of this magazine at the time to promote this new set. Sheets with the variety were used to produce the cover gifts, so many readers would have received an example – and perhaps have never realised it.

## Sometimes as intended

It should not be assumed, however, that the type of varieties so far described create stamps that are 'not as intended'. I know of at least one constant variety that was



Fig 10 The 33p value from the 1993 World Orchid Conference issue with the copyright date omitted



Fig 11 The 1980 Charlotte Brontë 12p showing the 'p' omitted



Fig 12 The £2 definitive with the '£' missing



Fig 13 Cyprus Olympic Games with the runner wearing a face mask



Below: Fig 14 The 1998 BAT 1p definitive that mysteriously has the caption reading 'British Antarctic Terr'



deliberately devised to add interest to a stamp issue. In 1981, Anguilla issued stamps to mark the wedding of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer. The \$3 value shows Windsor Castle, and the then-agent for Anguilla decided to add an 'extra flagstaff' variety to mimic the variety found on some of the 1935 Silver Jubilee omnibus series, the design of which similarly depicted Windsor Castle (Fig 15).

Sadly, overprints are also ideal for creating deliberate varieties, sometimes making it difficult to know which are 'not as intended' and which have been created for the collector market. I will not look closely at errors and varieties on overprints, as this is being covered by a series of articles in this magazine by Hugh Jefferies. However, it should not be assumed that varieties involving overprints have inevitably been deliberately contrived.

Often overprints, particularly surcharges, are to meet an immediate need and the task is handled by a local printer, who might well have limited supplies of the required typeface to hand. Additionally, if further supplies are needed later, they may not see the need to match exactly what had previously been produced. Among examples are the decimal currency surcharges of 1961 from Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland (Fig 16). There have also been occasions when overprinting has been undertaken both locally and elsewhere, each distinguishable, such as with 'GUYANA INDEPENDENCE 1966' (the overprint applied to British Guiana definitives by De La Rue and subsequently locally) or the Botswana new currency surcharges of 1976 (undertaken both in Pretoria and by Enschedé in The Netherlands) (Fig 17 and Fig 18).

Nevertheless, occasionally overprint varieties such as incorrect dates, wrong typefaces, different colours, missing full stops or letters applied inverted or double and so on, might be treated with suspicion (Fig 19). Equally, there are examples of overprints applied to the wrong stamps, sometimes because there are insufficient of the intended stamp to produce the quantity required (Fig 20).

However, two perfectly genuine examples were created accidentally when the overprint forme was set up. The first, from Abu Dhabi, is part of the 1966 New Currency set of surcharges. The 30n.p. stamp was meant to be surcharged 3f., but some sheets had an Arabic '2' instead of '3' in one position. The second is from Barbados, a 4c. on 25c. surcharge of 1974 with the '4c.' missing on one stamp in the sheet – this was subsequently corrected (Fig 21).

Thus, at both the design and preparation for printing stages, the outcome can be 'not as intended' – and that is before actual printing has taken place.



Fig 15 An extra flagstaff was deliberately added to Windsor Castle on Anguilla's 1981 Royal Wedding \$3 value



Fig 16 Bechuanaland Protectorate 3½c. decimal currency surcharge showing different styles of '3' and differing spacing



Fig 17 The 1966 Guyana Independence overprints applied by De La Rue in London (left) and locally



Fig 18 New currency surcharges from Botswana in 1976, the overprint being in letterpress by the Government Printer in Pretoria (left) or in lithography by Enschedé



Fig 19 OHMS overprint from Montserrat with the final full stop omitted. Was this a genuine error or was it created deliberately to create collector interest?



Fig 20 An overprint from Sierra Leone to mark the Second Anniversary of Independence. The 11s. surcharge was intended to appear on the 10s. stamp, but examples of the £1 value were used because of insufficient numbers of the 10s.



Fig 21 A 1974 4c. surcharge from Barbados, with the '4c.' omitted on one stamp on the sheet – this was later corrected



STANLEY GIBBONS

BRITISH  
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## National Parks



Royal Mail's first issue of the new year, released on 14 January, was National Parks, a set of ten 1st class stamps marking the 70th anniversary of the UK's first National Parks. These are areas of land officially recognised and protected by the government because of their natural beauty, plants, animals and fascinating cultural heritage.

In 1951, the Peak District was the first area to be designated as a UK National Park. By the end of the decade, the Lake District, Snowdonia, Dartmoor, Pembrokeshire Coast, North York Moors, Yorkshire Dales, Exmoor, Northumberland and Brecon Beacons had all been given National Park status, and the governmental protection that goes with it.

Today there are 15 National Parks in the UK – ten in England, three in Wales and two in Scotland. The most recent of which, South Downs, was established in 2010. These parks contain some of the nation's most beautiful and inspiring landscapes, thousands of ancient monuments and almost a third of the UK's internationally important wildlife sites. They also feature thousands of miles of public rights of way, over 800 miles of which is designated as

suitable for those with accessibility issues – giving people incredible opportunities to explore these amazing spaces.

## The stamps

The stamp set features images of ten of the UK's 15 National Parks. Established in 1951 as the first National Park, the Peak District National Park is 555 square miles in size and covers parts of the counties of Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire.

Also established in 1951, the Lake District in Cumbria is one of the most beautiful regions in England and took over 2 million years of glaciation to create. The park not only boasts England's deepest lake, West Water at 243 feet deep, it is also home to England's highest mountain, Scafell Pike, which stands at more than 3200 feet.

However, even this is shadowed by Mount Snowdon (3560 feet), located in the Snowdonia National Park in northwest Wales. Covering 823 square miles of diverse landscapes, Snowdonia was the first of the three National Parks to be established in Wales, achieving that status in 1951. This was followed by Pembrokeshire Coast in 1952 (also featured in the set) and Brecon Beacons in 1957.

Another park established in 1951 was Dartmoor, located in Devon in the southwest of England. As well as its beautiful open moorland and trails, Dartmoor is also famous for its tors rock formations, Neolithic tombs and Bronze Age stone circles.

North York Moors in North Yorkshire became a National Park on 28 November 1952. It covers an area of 554 square miles incorporating 26 miles of coastline. It also boasts

## Technical details

**Stamps:** 10×1st Class**Printer:** International Security Printers**Stamp size:** 37mm(w)×35mm(h), over-square landscape**Stamp format:** 2× *se-tenent* strips of five**Print process:** Lithography, PVA gum, 1st class phosphor bars



one of the largest expanses of heather moorland in England and Wales, covering an area of over 44,000 hectares, around one third of the National Park.

The Broads National Park, established in 1989, is a network of rivers and lakes that span Norfolk and Suffolk and makes up Britain's largest protected wetland.

The New Forest National Park, located in Hampshire and part of Wiltshire, is one of the UK's smallest and newest National Parks. It was established in 2005 and spans an area of 218 square miles. Despite its name, only half of the New Forest area is wooded. It is also home to heather-blanketed heaths, lawns, farmland, coastal marshes and mudflats, and, of course, the famous New Forest ponies, which can be found grazing all over the park.

Established in 2002, the 720-square mile Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park boasts some of the finest scenery in Scotland – from breath-taking mountains to the vast tranquil Lochs. It also features to one of the UK's largest National Nature Reserves – the Great Trossachs Forest.

Established in 2010, South Downs is not only the newest of the UK's National Parks, it is also the most visited, attracting approximately 39 million visitors per year. Its range of chalk hills extends across the

south-eastern coastal counties of England and contains some of the UK's most popular trails. This includes its most famous walk – the 100-mile South Downs Way, which stretches from the historic city of Winchester in Hampshire right across to Eastbourne in East Sussex.

## Retail booklet, presentation pack and f.d.c.

The issue includes a 1st class retail booklet featuring four red Machin definitives alongside two of the first UK National Parks: Peak District and Snowdonia. As the stamps in the booklet are printed in gravure and are self adhesive, these two stamps are different from the set and will be listed separately in the catalogue.

The presentation pack for the issue includes all ten stamps presented in an informative fold-out pack that provides historic and modern facts on all 15 of the UK's National Parks. The information card inside the issue's official f.d.c. provides a brief overview of each park and specifications for the stamp issue.



The official Royal Mail postmarks for the National Parks issue illustrate hiking boot prints and a compass

## Postmarks

The Talents House postmark for the issue features an illustration of a print from hiking boots, while the alternative postmark illustrates a compass. The historic market town of Bakewell was chosen as the alternative postmark location because it is the only town in the Peak District National Park; the first National Park, which was established in 1951.

## United Kingdom: A Celebration

On 26 January, Royal Mail will release a surprise, four-stamp miniature sheet in celebration of the United Kingdom's greatest strengths and accomplishments. Although not an official 'Brexit' issue, the timing of its release does seem significant, coming less than four weeks after the end of the transition period between Britain and the European Union.

The issue, which comprises two 1st class and two £1.70 values, explores some of the areas where Britain is leading the way on the world stage. Each stamp features a pictorial montage of British achievements in one of four categories: Great Sport (1st), Great Creativity (1st), Great Community (£1.70), and Great Industry and Innovation (£1.70). The shapes of the images shown on each stamp have been designs to form one quarter of the Union Flag. When viewed together in the miniature sheet the four stamps combine to show a stylised representation of the complete flag.

## Putting the great in Great Britain

The Great Sport stamp celebrates British sporting achievements and shows a



This four-stamp miniature sheet, celebrating the United Kingdom's greatest strengths and accomplishments, is a surprise release by Royal Mail for 2021 (Reduced)

wheelchair athlete, a cricket ball, football players and an F1 racing car. The Great Creativity stamp highlights Britain's starring performances in music, literature, television and film, and architecture. The montage of images shows a silhouette of a microphone stand, the pages of a book, a television studio and the glass façade of an office building.

The Great Community stamp celebrates the British sense of community. This is represented by images showing a pair of hands making a heart shape, a nurse reassuring a patient and the crowds at the 2011 London Marathon. The design also features a Rainbow for NHS drawing, which symbolises the huge support shown for the nation's health workers during the current pandemic. The final stamp, Great Industry and Innovation, showcases Britain's leading position in computing, biology, manufacturing and business. The design depicts binary code, carbon fibre material, DNA molecules and a London skyline.

## Postmarks

The Talents House and alternative postmarks utilise different cropped images of the Union Flag. The location of the alternative postmark is London EC1, which is the location of Royal Mail's Central London Mail Centre and Headquarters at Mount Pleasant, London.



# ARMY OFFICIALS AND THE BOER WAR POST 1899-1902

By David Milsted FRPSL

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the GB Overprints Society, several members have provided articles that showcase what collecting British overprinted stamps has to offer. Here, David Milstead presents a study of rare Army Officials used during the Boer War.

A full range of definitive values were overprinted 'ARMY OFFICIAL' in 1896 by De La Rue. However, the War Office did not authorise the use of Army Official overprints in South Africa during the Boer War (1899-1902) as it was seen as a security risk. Mail with Official stamps, which could contain Paymaster money orders and currency, would have been rife for looting by the Boers.

Despite being unauthorised, a small number of Army Officials did find their way on to covers for both internal and overseas mail. Small blocks or strips of stamps could have been carried on board ship in officer kit bags and used to mail home. As such, outbound mail sent from South Africa during the Boer War and paid with Army Officials is rare on cover.

## Army Post Office in South Africa

At the outbreak of the Boer War the Army Paymaster was Major Treble. Extracts from the proceedings of the Army Post Office Corps in South Africa 1900-2, reveal a discussion between Treble and the Postmaster General of Cape Colony concerning the use of postage stamps on mail that passed through the Army Post Office:

*'According to the instructions given by the Foreign and Colonial branch, all correspondence posted in the Army Post Office was to be prepaid in British stamps. The Postmaster General of Cape Colony stated that such an arrangement was undesirable on political grounds. He suggested that for as long as troops remained in Cape Colony, the Army Post Office Corps should obtain stocks of Colonial postage stamps for use on local correspondence. British stamps to be used for correspondence for overseas countries. The accounts and procedures of the Corps was thereby considerably complicated.'*

In November 1899, Lieutenant McClintock of the Army Post Office



Christmas mail arrives for the British Army in South Africa during the 1899-1902 Boer War

Corps held discussions with the Postmaster General in Natal, as Major Treble had done previously in Cape Town. The same difficulty occurred with the use of British stamps as at Cape Town, but the Natal Government went further and refused to permit the sale of British stamps at all in the colony. The Field Post Offices were therefore provided with stock of Natal stamps only. In return for this, Natal waived all transit rates on military correspondence.

The Base Army Post Office was set up in the Cape Town Post Office. From this radiated a number of forwarding offices, which served for the intermediate despatch of mail and for the reception and forwarding of cross-post letters. There were 71 fixed camp and station post offices which dealt directly with the receipt and delivery of mail to the troops at centres of operation.

Field Post Office locations were changed when General Buller, Commander in Chief, adopted a two-pronged attack on the Boers. This allowed for a second Base Army Post Office to be set up in Pietermaritzburg, Natal, in the early part of the campaign but was discontinued later.

The Army Post Office Corps at the beginning of the campaign consisted of three officers and 89 other ranks from one company of the 24th Middlesex (Post Office) Volunteers. These men were drawn from London Post Offices. They had specially enlisted for a period of six years in the Army Reserve, rendering them available for foreign service. This original force deployed to the Boer War in October 1899 soon became totally inadequate to the growing needs of the British Army. More men were drafted from the 24th Middlesex but later from the postal services of all the provinces of Great Britain and those of Canada, Australia, Cape Colony and India.

## Travelling post offices

The bulk of the work undertaken by the Army Post Office Corps was the distribution of inward mails and the exporting of the mails for overseas. There was a system of travelling post offices traversing the railways in box trucks and sorting carriages





Fig 1 A rare mourning cover with 88 Army Official stamps paying a registered letter rate from the Army Pay Office in Woolwich to Cape Town on 9 May 1901

specially fitted up by the Imperial Military Railways. These TPOs delivered and received mail, cashed and sold postal orders along the lines of service.

The railway service was beyond the control of the Post Office Department and could not be depended upon for automatic delivery. Trains were constantly delayed for military purposes and by enemy action. Mail bags were ransacked and trains were destroyed by the Boers.

The Boers attacked Roodewaal Station on 7 June 1900. An officer and 19 men of the Army Post Office Corps fought against the Boer troops. Five men were killed or wounded and 15 were taken prisoner. Two thousand mail bags were destroyed by the enemy and postal stock (stamps, postal orders) to the value of £4284 was lost. On two other occasions travelling post offices were captured by the Boers.

Another challenge the service faced was the constant movement of military units and individuals. Forces were broken up or transported rapidly from one theatre of war to the other. Troops leaving their units for hospital, leave of absence or for home meant that individual officers and men were not always traceable. This made the delivery of mail very difficult. Letters and parcels were also frequently insufficiently addressed; 'Private Smith, Field Force, South Africa' was an actual conundrum which confronted the Post Office

All covers are shown reduced

Fig 2 A letter sent from South Africa to Lieutenant-Colonel Phipps-Hornby at the War Office in London in 1901. It features a pair of 1900 ½d. blue-green Army Official stamps cancelled by London EC postmarks dated 12 December 1901



authorities. Instead of quoting the Corps of the intended recipient, letters would often merely quote a previous address. This could have been a place where the receiver only halted for a few hours or minutes. Finally, very many men, the Imperial Yeomanry as an example, arrived in South Africa without regimental numbers, and without attachment to a specific unit.

## Army Officials

OHMS mail outbound from England to South Africa had postage paid with a combination of ½d., 1d., 2½d. and 6d. Army Official values of two reigns – Queen Victoria and King Edward VII. Army Paymasters reduced their stock of 2½d. stamps following the introduction of the 1d. Empire Rate.

Figure 1 shows a rare mourning cover from the Army Pay Office in Woolwich, sent to Cape Town on 9 May 1901, with 88 stamps paying a registered letter rate. The cover itself weighed 4oz without contents. Maps or Payroll documents could have been enclosed.

Mail was sent weekly by sea from Cape Town to England, taking between 14 and 21 days. Figure 2 shows a letter sent to Lieutenant-Colonel Phipps-Hornby at the War Office in London in 1901. It features a pair of 1900 ½d. blue-green Army Official stamps cancelled by London EC postmarks dated 12 December 1901.





Fig 3 A pair of 1/2d. Army Official stamps, cancelled by a British Army field Post Office B.O. (Base Office) datestamp of 27 January 1900, sent from South Africa to Chatham

All covers shown reduced

Figure 3 shows an OHMS cover from South Africa to Chatham, with a pair of 1/2d. Army Official stamps cancelled by a British Army field Post Office B.O. (Base Office) postmark of 27 January 1900. A Chatham receiving mark on the reverse is dated 16 February 1900.

Figure 4 shows an OHMS cover from South Africa to Carlisle Castle, home of the Border Regiment serving in the Boer War. Another pair of 1/2d. Army Official stamps are cancelled by an Army Post Office postmarks of 1 August 1900. A Carlisle receiving mark on the reverse is dated 25 August 1900.



Fig 4 Another pair of 1/2d. Army Official stamps were used on this OHMS cover, which was sent from South Africa to Carlisle Castle, home of the Border Regiment serving in the Boer War, on 1 August 1900

The OHMS cover at Figure 5 bears a Queen Victoria 1/2d. vermilion and 2 1/2d. purple on blue Army Officials paying a registered letter rate from South Africa to Carlisle. The stamps were cancelled by an Army Post P.O.50 c.d.s. from the Advanced Depot, Pretoria, dated 31 August 1900. The cover was received at Carlisle Castle on 30 September. It was then redirected to the addressee, Mr J McEwan of the 2nd Border Regiment, at Bareilly, India, arriving 29 October 1900.



Fig 5 Queen Victoria 1/2d. vermilion and 2 1/2d. purple on blue Army Officials paid the registered letter rate from South Africa to Carlisle on this OHMS cover posted on 31 August 1900 at the Advanced Depot at Pretoria. It was received at Carlisle Castle on 30 September before being redirected to India

## Internal mail

During the siege of Ladysmith, 2 November 1899 to 28 February 1900, several internal covers were despatched from the Main Post Office. Figure 6 shows a cover dated 28 February 1900, the final day of the siege. It bears a Queen Victoria 1/2d. vermilion overprinted 'ARMY OFFICIAL' and was handstamped 'Ladysmith Siege Post Office February 28th 1900'. It was addressed to Lieutenant Colonel J A Stoneman, Headquarters Staff.

General Sir George White VC commanded the British forces in Natal. He was besieged at Ladysmith and proclaimed defiantly, 'I hold Ladysmith for the Queen'. General Sir Redvers Buller VC lead his forces across the Tugela river on 27 February 1900, taking both Pieters and Harts Hill. The Boers abandoned their positions and Ladysmith was relieved after 118 days under siege.

The Army Post Office Corps coped well in general with extraordinary ingenuity

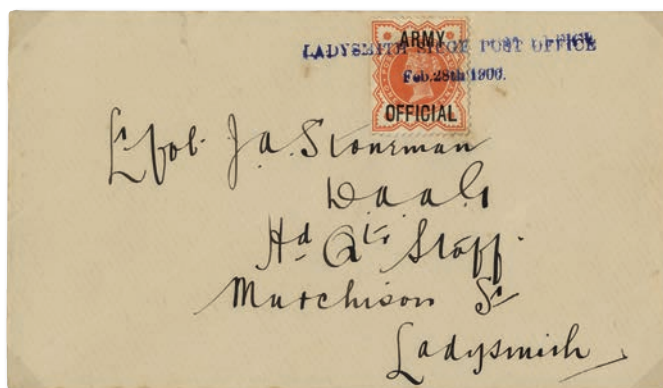


Fig 6 A cover sent on 28 February 1900, the final day of the siege of Ladysmith. It bears a Queen Victoria 1/2d. vermilion overprinted 'ARMY OFFICIAL' and was handstamped 'Ladysmith Siege Post Office February 28th 1900'

and success. Getting timely information to Army units and men, included a system of alphabetical rolls sent weekly from all hospitals, depots, departmental corps and casualty offices into the base office at Cape Town. The average number of articles received each week at Cape Town was 190,000 letters, 300,000 newspapers and packets, and 8400 parcels. The value of postal orders sold in the field was more than £1,000,000.



# MACHIN WATCH

By John Deering

In the latest column on modern GB collecting, John Deering explains how interrupted phosphor bands can occur and highlights some recent changes in Post & Go inscriptions that have led to some very elusive items.

It's hard to believe, but it's already time for the January 2021 *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* (published in the run-up to Christmas), and this is, therefore, my final 'Machin Watch' of the year! Owing to deadlines, I was writing this month's copy in late November, and pondering – in philatelic terms – what else might be about to appear before the year-end. It's all been non-stop these past few months. I imagine that whatever the Brexit outcome, there will be some philatelic implications early in the New Year.

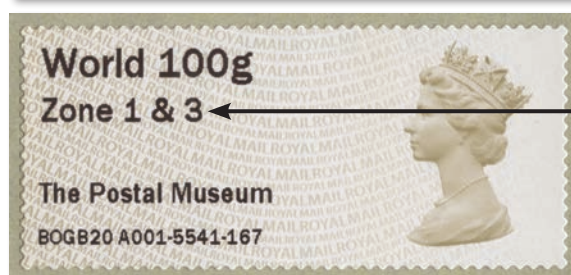
Although 2020 is coming to an end, M20L issues are still appearing. Thinking of low-value Security Machins, the 5p (SG U2922) has now surfaced with an M20L year code. I've just got my hands on some, and the printing date is 13/05/20, which is the same as the 1p M20L which I reported in the November article. In terms of the 'ROYALMAIL' backing, the 5p is Type PB-sL (the 1p was Ls). Another new M20L printing, but one that will have to wait for a future article, is of 100×1st class business sheets, so MBIL stamps, SG U3026.

I hope you enjoy this final 'Machin Watch' of the year. There is a large piece discussing interrupted phosphor bands, and particularly on 5p M19L counter sheets. I have also returned to the three new values which have affected Post & Go. Read on and enjoy this 'Machin Watch'. Thanks for joining me in 2020... see you in 2021; it won't be long!



From 100×1st class business sheets is the M20L version of the MBIL stamps, U3026

MBIL  
M20L



With an ampersand (&) is the new 'World 100g Zone 1 & 3' from museum Post & Go machines

M20L



Cylinder number block of six of the 5p with M20L year code (Type PB-sL). Also shown is printing date block of 13/05/20

sL





## 5p Security Machin with interrupted phosphor bands

In the introduction to the October 2020 'Machin Watch' I pictured a block of 5p (M19L) Security Machins with interrupted phosphor bands. The picture was a photograph that I'd taken under ultraviolet light and it certainly caused some interest! I received several enthusiastic comments and I detected a real keenness by some readers for me to explain just how such a variety can happen – so here goes!

Interrupted phosphor bands are unusual in every regard. Unlike short phosphor bands, which are short at the top or bottom of a stamp, interrupted bands don't happen very often at all. Beyond that, they just look really unusual. They are a real favourite of mine, primarily because of the visual effect. There is another aspect to them as well though; they tell us so much about the layout of the phosphor bands on counter sheets (or booklets) of self-adhesive stamps.

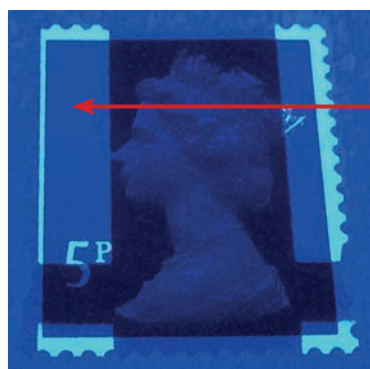
In essence, the variety I've pictured is caused by a vertical phosphor shift, but a huge and dramatic one. It's about 6mm, which, in terms of phosphor, is enormous! It is also a type of variety which came about essentially as a new phenomenon with the advent of self-adhesive stamps. Before somebody writes in to correct me, interrupted bands aren't unique to self-adhesives (I've seen them, for example, on ordinary gummed *Questa* litho printings). Still, for the most part, they owe their existence to the preferred way that self-adhesive stamps and their bands are printed.

Until I saw the 5p stamps that I am writing about here, I didn't know of any interrupted bands on sheets of Security Machins. I've occasionally seen earlier retail booklets with the variety, but the occurrence is far from common. Amongst others, I have examples of the 4x'Universal' Worldwide Postcard stamp booklets. Similarly, I have the 6x1st class with gold coloured Machins.

### Interrupted bands and why they can exist

So what are interrupted bands and why do they sometimes exist? In essence, an interrupted band, as its name clearly implies, is a phosphor band on a stamp that has a gap in it (an interruption). It's not a short band, but a band that stops and then starts again within the confines of one stamp.

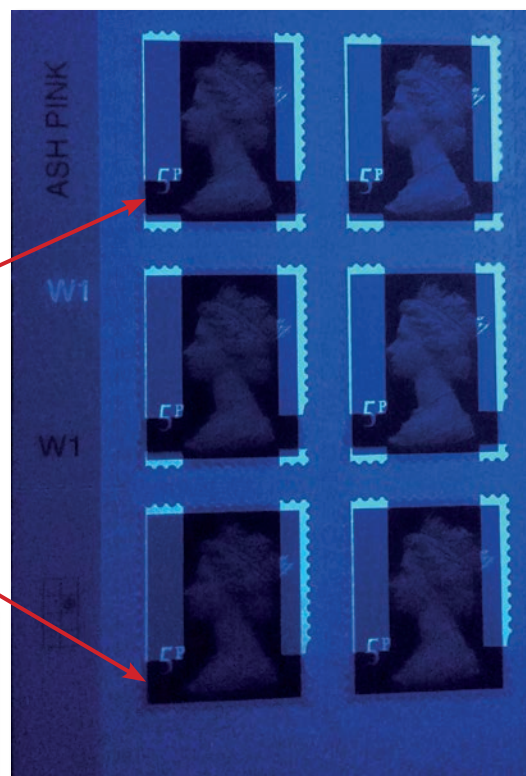
Interrupted bands are not possible when the phosphor is printed as a continuous (unbroken) band through a series of stamps, say, from the top to the bottom of a sheet. However, sometimes the band is deliberately printed with a break between each stamp. When this break is small, the band goes beyond the perforations by a few



A stamps with an interrupted band as well as an inset left phosphor band!

Large interruption

Photographed under ultraviolet light is the highly unusual 5p (M19L) with interrupted phosphor bands, shown here in a cylinder block of six. Four stamps have interrupted bands, while the two lower stamps have very short bands



Massive band short bottom



5p M19L with iridescent overprint inset at the right (and with an interrupted and inset band)

millimetres and overlaps into the space between the stamps on the sheet. In this instance, an interrupted band is anything from highly unlikely to virtually impossible. After all, with any substantial degree of overlap (where the phosphor goes well beyond the upper and lower perfs), a phosphor shift would need to be enormous and almost unprecedented to create interrupted bands. Continuous bands and bands that overlap were more usual when the stamps' matrix, the self-adhesive paper between the stamps, was left in place. When the matrix was intact, one could see immediately if the bands were continuous or broken, and if broken, by how much.

For all practical purposes, interrupted bands don't occur unless the phosphor printing cylinder has been made to only apply phosphor to the stamps. In this instance, the phosphor is not continuous, and there would not be an overlap. The deliberate gap between the ends of the bands would be the same size as the spacing between the actual stamps as they appear on a sheet. A stamp with an interrupted band only occurs when the phosphor cylinder is well out of registration, causing the gaps between the bands to fall in the wrong places. To make the point clearer, let me give a couple of specific examples of misregistration that create short bands in one case and interrupted bands in the other.

### Short bands from a small shift

Let's consider a counter sheet of 25 Security Machins with spacing between the stamps of about 4mm, and where the phosphor cylinder has been made to produce 4mm gaps between the ends of each stamp's bands. If the phosphor cylinder is out of registration by 2mm vertically, the gaps between the stamp's bands would be misplaced by the same amount. For convenience, let us suppose that the movement is upwards. In this case, all the stamps will have bands which are about 2mm short of the bottom (but not interrupted because the gap between the stamps is 4mm and the shift only 2mm).



However, the stamps wouldn't have short bands if similar misregistration happened on a printing where the gaps between the bands were smaller. Smaller because the layout was intended to leave a substantial degree of overlap (say 2mm).

#### Interrupted bands from a larger shift

When a phosphor shift is much more massive, say 6mm, the result will be an interrupted band rather than a short band! If the movement is downward (see Elton interrupted), the interruption will be at the top of the stamp, and vice versa. With a downward shift, the phosphor bands come to an end towards the top of the stamps and resume 4mm later to leave a 2mm band at the very top of the stamps. The gap that you see in the band was, of course, meant to be positioned between the stamps. The 2mm band at the top of stamps is really the end of the phosphor band. The end that would, without the shift, have been on the bottom of the stamps in the row above.

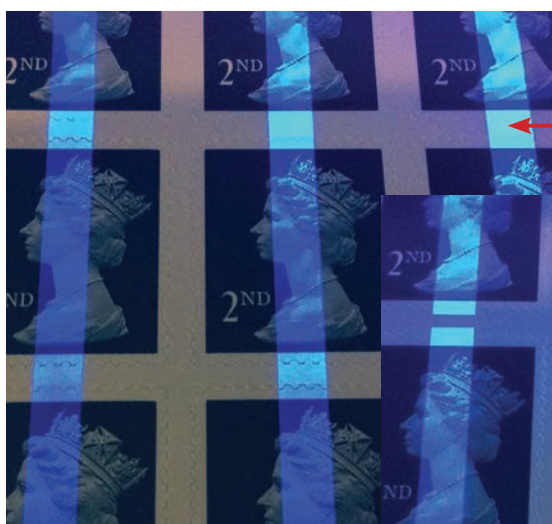
The story doesn't end here though. There are usually several counter sheets within a primary sheet and for the 5p value there are eight (confirmed by the eight-section grid box). They are printed in a 2x4 arrangement. In the same way that the phosphor doesn't extend between the stamps, it doesn't extend between sheets either. It instead starts and stops at the top and bottom of each counter sheet. The gap between the two sheets is much more than 4mm though, it's about 20mm.

This means that if there is a shift which produces interrupted bands, either the top or bottom row will have stamps with massive short bands (i.e. bands that fall short of the top or bottom of the stamp by a massive distance). An upward shift means the bottom row will have short bands bottom, while a downward shift would produce short bands top in the top row.

With an upward shift, a cylinder or date block becomes very interesting. The block has four interrupted band stamps and two stamps at the bottom with massive short bands. We must not forget the phosphor number either, because in this instance it now appears further up the left selvedge.

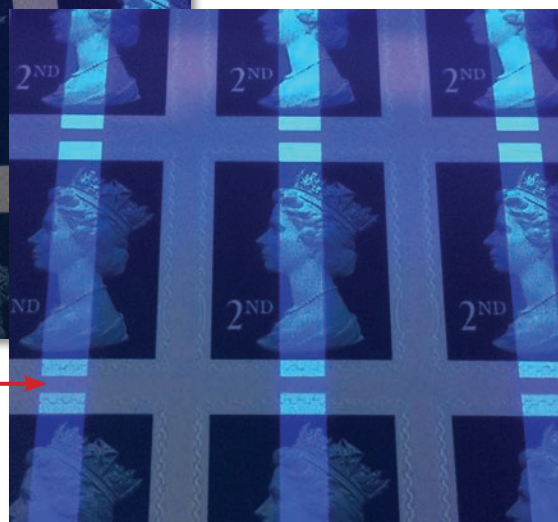
#### Inset band and inset iridescence!

As if the interrupted phosphor band and, from the bottom row of the sheets, the massive short bands weren't enough, these 5p values have two other varieties going on! It is very much a multiple variety, and may simply have been due to a problem with the gravure press and, perhaps, a printing technician having been distracted. Whatever the reason, the other two varieties are an inset left phosphor band and, on the same stamp, a sideways



An example of a continuous centre phosphor band as seen on a Questa business sheet printing c2000 photographed under ultraviolet light

An example of a broken but overlapping centre phosphor band, as seen on a Walsall business sheet printing c1998



movement (to the left) of the iridescent overprint. In case you were wondering, the printing date of the variety is 19 February 2019. Most of the 19/02/19 printing is, of course, normal. The 'ROYALMAIL' backing is Type PB-sL.

So, there we have it – a trio: a band shifted upward by 6mm to bring about the interruption; a comparatively small shift to the right to give a band inset at the left; and a movement to the left of the iridescent overprint so that the overprint is inset at the right. It's a corker of a stamp and in a vertical pair with the short-band version is rather lovely. I've also seen some interrupted versions without the other two varieties. It's all good fun!

#### 19/02/19 printing also with short bands bottom only!

If it wasn't obvious before that the 5p M19L (sL) printing of 19/02/19 had its fair share of problems, I think it is now. Not only does it exist with the interrupted bands I've described, it also exists with phosphor bands that are short at the bottom on all 25 stamps. I would imagine that at some point the phosphor cylinder got well and truly out of registration, and the lesser short bands might have come along first. Things may then have worsened to the point that the bands became interrupted.

#### Elton interrupted

After seeing the picture of the 5p counter sheet stamps in the October magazine, a reader (thanks PF) kindly sent me a copy of an Elton John 6x1st class mixed commemorative/definitive booklet. It too has interrupted bands. However, the interruption is towards the top of the two lower Machins (a downward shift), and the top two stamps have massive



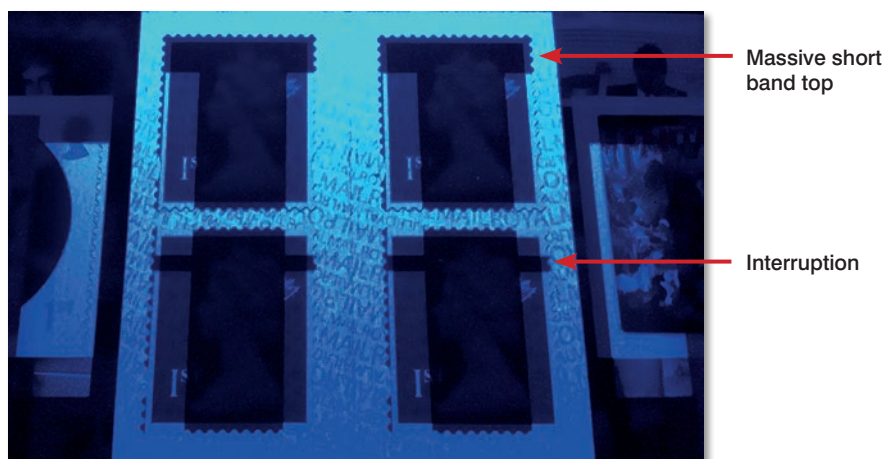
Photographed under ultraviolet light is a 19/02/19 printing date block of six, showing short bands bottom on all six stamps. The bands are not inset and nor is the iridescent overprint



short bands top. This example has Type PB-sL 'ROYALMAIL' backing. Take a look at the photograph I've taken under ultraviolet and you'll see not only the interrupted and short bands – but also that the bands are inset at the left, just like the 5p value!

You might also notice that the size of the interruption is smaller than on the 5p stamps. This is because in booklets the stamps are placed vertically much closer together than they are in counter sheets. In booklets, the spacing is about 2mm, and on the counter sheets it is 4mm. Consequently, in booklets, a shift doesn't have to be as large to result in interrupted bands.

I didn't know the Elton John booklet existed with a shift like this, so it was a real surprise. Anyway, if you come across any others, please be sure to let me know!



Part of an Elton John 6x1st class mixed commemorative/definitive booklet photographed under ultraviolet light with interrupted bands in the bottom row. See also the massive short bands in the top row and the inset left bands

## The new Europe and Worldwide Post & Go stamps

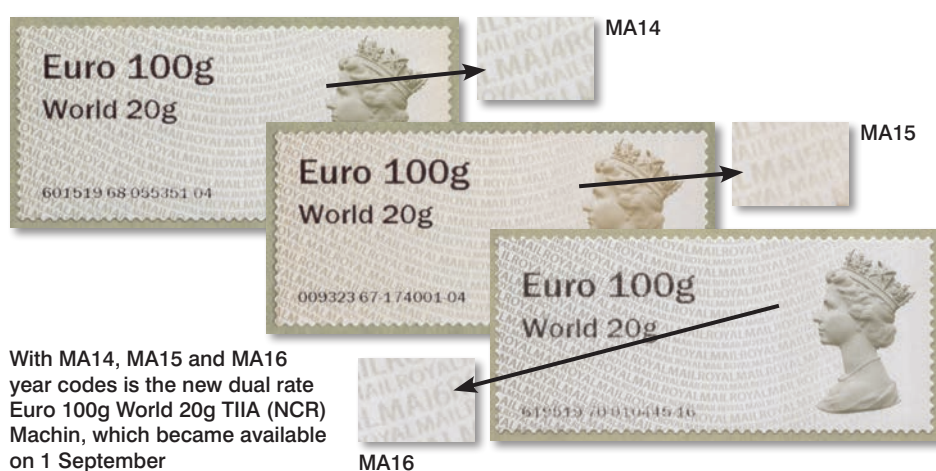
In the November 2020 'Machin Watch' I told you about a surprising change to Post & Go. This was the introduction on 1 September in post offices of three new (replacement) values to (NCR) machines. This report is to both remind readers of the changes and to further update you.

The three new stamps are a Euro 100g World 20g (a brand new dual-rate stamp), a World 100g Zone 1-3, and a World 100g Zone 2. They supersede the Europe up to 100g, Worldwide up to 20g, and Worldwide up to 100g, which no longer exist. The change came in without any advance warning, so three stamps just disappeared from the range, and three new values could be generated from Tuesday 1 September 2020.

Owing to a variety of older Machin stock still being available across the post offices Post & Go network, several different year codes are known with the three new values. I mentioned some of them in the November article but was not able to picture them all at the time. In the original year code format (MA##) there are, amongst other, MA14, MA15 and MA16. In the revised format of R##Y there are R17Y, R18Y, R19Y and R20Y. It's important to remember that older Post & Go stamps aren't withdrawn from sale; stock is instead used to exhaustion and not in any particular order.

### Museum Post & Go

The same change was also made to the (RMS II) machines sited in the museums, although not all museums were open to the public in the first few days of September. As far as I know, none of the five military museums were open on 1 September. With Covid-19 and restricted opening, the days that the different museums were open was a bit variable.



With MA14, MA15 and MA16 year codes is the new dual rate Euro 100g World 20g TIIA (NCR) Machin, which became available on 1 September



With R17Y and R18Y date codes is the new World 100g Zone 1-3 TIIA (NCR) Machin, which became available on 1 September



With year codes R19Y and R20Y is the new World 100g Zone 2 TIIA (NCR) Machin, which became available on 1 September

The National Museum of the Royal Navy Portsmouth, The Royal Navy Submarine Museum, Gosport, and The Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm, RNAS Yeovilton, were all open on Wednesday, 2 September. Those were the days that my friends or I visited. The National Museum of the Royal Navy Hartlepool wasn't open until the Friday, 4 September. The Explosion Museum of Naval Firepower, Gosport, was last (its opening times are very limited), as it wasn't open until the Saturday, 5 September. The Postal Museum remained officially closed to the public until Thursday, 29 October.



With the three new Post & Go values implemented and their doors open, all five museums were back offering the Machin and Union Flag designs. All of the military museums continued to dispense stamps with their standard generic inscriptions, so, apart from the three values, nothing else changed.

### Inscriptions

Let's re-cap on the standard generic inscriptions. The Royal Navy museums were (and still are) offering the 'Royal Navy' inscription (with the addition of the small circle logo on the Machins only). This is the same at Portsmouth, Hartlepool and Explosion. At Submarine, it reads 'RN Submarine' (again, with the addition of a circle logo on the Machins only). At Fleet, it is 'Fleet Air Arm' (and, as with the other museums, a circle logo on the Machins).

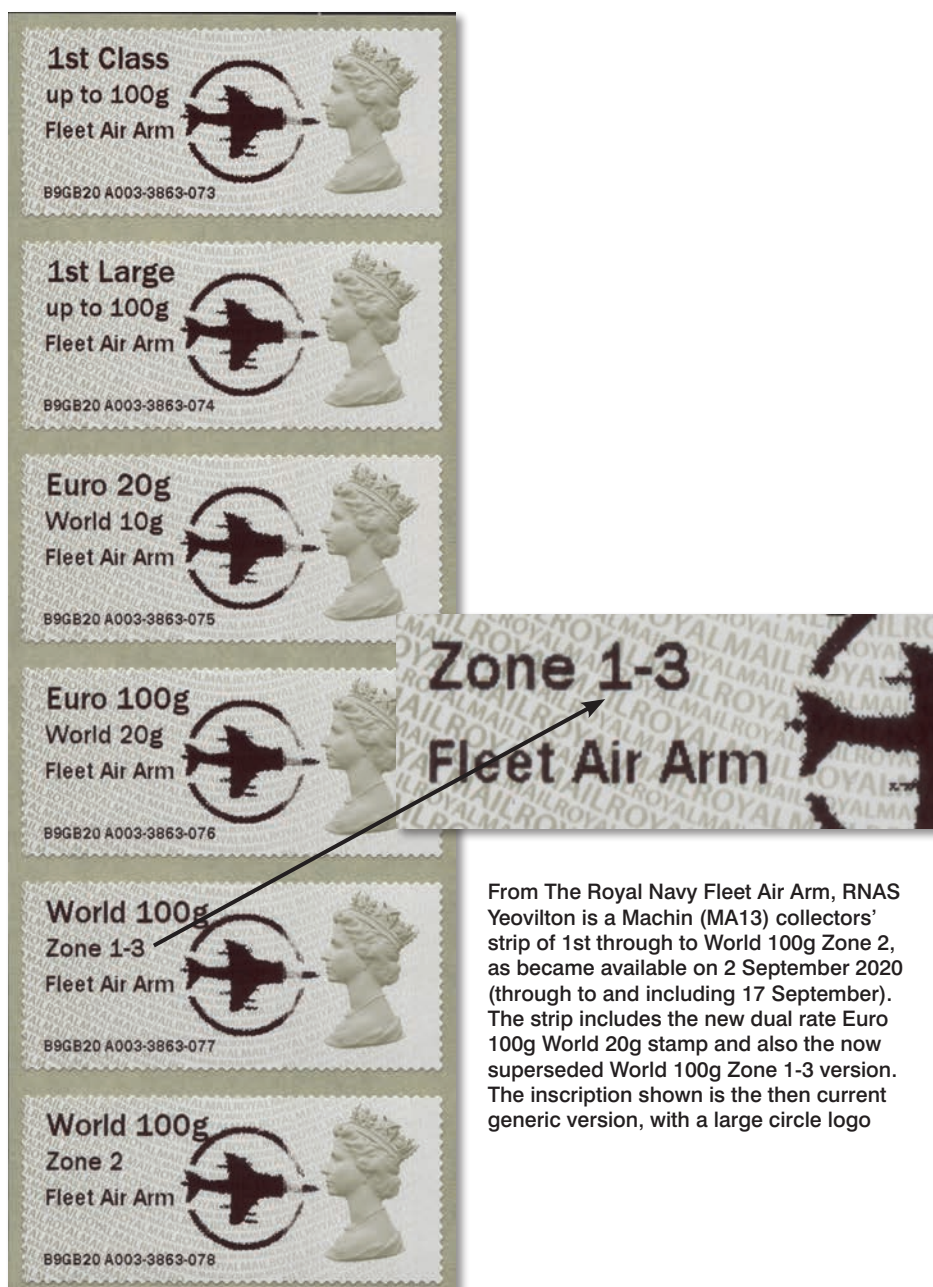
### The problem with a hyphen

In my November article, I commented on the World 100g Zone 1-3 stamp and said that the use of the hyphen was foolish. After all, it is open to misinterpretation. The intention of the Zone 1-3 stamp is for it to cover the cost of Zone 1 and 3 destinations. However, regardless of the intention, the use of the hyphen means that the service indicator would more usually be read to mean Zone 1 through to 3 (i.e. including Zone 2).

I have it on good authority that once Royal Mail realised the potential for confusion over the use of the hyphen, they were keen to make an amendment. It seems strange to me that the problem even came about in the first place. It took the stamp collecting fraternity only a brief moment to notice and comment on it (my phone was humming on 1 September). Still, it seemed to be beyond Royal Mail's radar until pointed out to them. The preferred amendment was then to replace the hyphen with an ampersand (&) used for 'and'.

There may be more to it though. There is a suggestion (on good authority), that there may be a technical reason preventing post offices' NCR machines from using an alternative to the hyphen. The ideal would be the ampersand, but apparently, this has not been possible with NCR machines. So, at the time of writing, the post offices' NCR machines are still generating stamps reading World 100g Zone1-3.

In contrast, the museums' machines (RMS II) have greater flexibility, and it wasn't too long before a download made the appropriate amendment to the service indicator. On 18 September the hyphen was replaced with an ampersand (with one space each side), and the service indicator now reads World 100g Zone 1 & 3. The change was implemented simultaneously across all



From The Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm, RNAS Yeovilton is a Machin (MA13) collectors' strip of 1st through to World 100g Zone 2, as became available on 2 September 2020 (through to and including 17 September). The strip includes the new dual rate Euro 100g World 20g stamp and also the now superseded World 100g Zone 1-3 version. The inscription shown is the then current generic version, with a large circle logo

the museums' machines on 18 September. Therefore, from that moment on, or when they were next open to the public, the machines dispensed the World 100g Zone 1 & 3.

### A life of less than three weeks

The implementation of the new Europe and Worldwide Post & Go stamps, the use of a hyphen, and the subsequent change introducing the version with the ampersand, Zone 1 & 3, has resulted in some very short-lived material. The three new values were unannounced and unexpected, and the amendment came about quickly and also without any advance notice. Things have come and gone, and some of the short-lived material is thin on the ground, to say the least.

### What exists?

I'll be back to the topic another day, but in simple terms (and ignoring any different year codes) there are Machin and Union Flag with 'Royal Navy', 'RN Submarine' and 'Fleet Air Arm' in both Zone 1-3 and Zone 1 & 3 versions. Owing to there being three Royal Navy sites, Portsmouth, Hartlepool and Explosion, with a variety of different year codes, there is quite a mixture of material – and some of it elusive. Some are best collected as collectors' strips, while some changes can be short-cut to just a single of the Zone 1 & 3 stamp. If the only difference is the Zone 1 & 3 stamp, i.e. everything else, including the year code, is the same, it seems perfectly reasonable and acceptable to include a single in a collection. This can be instead of another strip, and it can sit next to the collectors' strip of the earlier version.



When I come back to the topic, I intend to include a table of all the different versions and year codes. For now, I have included a few taster pictures – just to set the scene.

I mentioned earlier that The Postal Museum remained officially closed to the public until Thursday 29 October. When it re-opened, the Post & Go machines sited there were generating collectors' strips with the three new values, including the World 100g Zones 1 & 3 version. As The Postal Museum was closed between September and October, collectors' strips from there with Zone 1-3 do not exist. I'll be back to The Postal Museum issues another day, there are several, but here are some pictures to whet your appetite.

Below: Examples of the Machin and Union Flag design from The Postal Museum with the new World 100g Zone 1 & 3 stamps, which became available in late October 2020. More another day



Collectors' strips of two of the 1st through to World 100g Zone 2 Machin, MA15, from The National Museum of the Royal Navy. Shown at the left is a strip from the Portsmouth site obtained in early September, which has the World 100g Zone 1-3 version. At right is a strip from the Hartlepool site, which has the World 100g Zone 1 & 3 version, which was introduced on 18 September



## Tailpiece

Here we are at the end of yet another year (well almost). Before I close though, there is another M20L Security Machin printing that I'd like to tell you about. It's of the 6x1st retail booklets, which are finally starting to appear. So that is MSIL stamps (SG U3028) with an M20L. I've also got counter sheets of Royal Mail Signed For with M20L, and retail booklets of 4x1st Large.

As you can see, there is already enough to pack out more 'Machin Watch' instalments. So, if the Editor will have me, I'll be back in the New Year to keep you reliably informed with, amongst other things, matters Machin and Post & Go. On the subject of Post & Go though, here is a taster picture of something from The Postal Museum. It was only available for three days! Maybe I've said enough to whet your appetite and tempt you back next month. I wish you a very merry Christmas. Let's hope 2021 is somewhat different to 2020. Keep safe!





# STAMP HUNTING

**Nimrod** suggests some stamps worth looking for

## St Lucia

In comparison with the other islands of the Caribbean that used them, the Crowned-Circle handstamp of St Lucia (SG CC1) looks particularly good value at the current catalogue price, especially as really fine examples seem to be few and far between.



The 1860 Perkins Bacon stamps appeal to collectors of 'first issues'

Somewhat unusually, the early stamps of St Lucia were issued without face value, the differing colours deemed sufficient to be able to distinguish between them. The 1860 Perkins Bacon printing (1/3) appeals to both collectors of 'first issues' and those of the work of Perkins Bacon. Mint blocks of four or more in fine condition are very scarce and are worth a premium.

From 1863 the contract to print stamps for St Lucia passed to De La Rue (5/8, 11/18). Of the initial 1863 issue, the 4d. (7) appears to be somewhat uncommon in used condition, while of the later 1864-76 printings used examples of both the perf 12½ 4d. (12) and 6d. (13) are worthy of mention. The perf 14 6d. (17) is uncommon in fine mint.



The 1863 4d. is not common used



The used 1882 6d. may take some looking for

The 1882-84 perf 14 4d. (27) has long been recognised as a very scarce stamp mint, while both the 6d. (28) and 1s. (29) will require some diligence when searching for used examples.

De La Rue's 'General Keyplate' design was utilised from 1883 onwards. The first set (31/36) is seldom seen in fine mint condition, with plate number blocks and singles being very desirable. Used are more readily available, although the 6d. (35) may prove problematic.

Mint sets of the New Colours issue of 1886-87 (39/42) are dominated by 3d. and 1s. values (40, 42), but my focus would be on the 6d. (41) in used condition. With the changes to Die II, new values were added to the set to form the 1891-98 issue (43/52). Mint sets look remarkably good value at current prices, while used sets are completely dependent on the 5s. and 10s. (51, 52) which are very seldom seen.



Look out for the used Die I 6d. dull mauve and blue



The mint 1891-98 Die II set is looking good value

Most unusually, the initial issue of King Edward VII on Crown CA paper did not include any values above 1s. (58/62), which suggests that stocks of the previous issues high values were still very healthy. The 1s. (62) is the key value to a used set and is very scarce thus. The 1904-10 issue on Multiple Crown CA (64/77)

did include a couple of 5s. values (76, 77) the first of which is extremely scarce in used condition. Other used stamps to look out for include the 3d. purple on yellow paper (71), 6d. dull purple (73) and 1s. green and black (74).



Several of the Edward VII values on Multiple Crown CA are worth seeking out used

The Georgian period stamps are generally separated into those on Multiple Crown CA paper (78/88), those on Script CA paper (91/105) and the Pictorial issue of 1936 (113/24). Of the first, the three high values – 1s., 2s.6d., 5s. (86/88) – are key to a basic used set, but it is the



The Multiple Script 1d. rose-carmine is not an easy stamp to find

Die II 3d. purple on pale yellow paper (82b) that is the standout used stamp. From the Script CA set, the 2½d. orange (97) is exceptionally scarce fine used. While not quite as scarce, the 1d. rose-carmine (92) will still prove difficult in used condition. The highly attractive Pictorial issue is fairly straightforward to assemble in mint condition, although gum creasing can be a problem. Used sets are slightly more difficult, with the 10s. (124) the standout value.



The Die II 3d. on pale yellow paper is the standout used stamp in the 1912-21 set



The top value is the key to completing the 1936 pictorial set

In comparison to the foregoing issues, the 1938-48 King George VI issue (128/41) is relatively common in used condition, although trying to assemble a fine set will take some time as perforations are often damaged. The Decimal Currency issue of 1949-50 (146/59) is much less common in used condition. This set includes one of the rarest non-error stamps of the entire King George VI period, the 4c. grey perf 14½x14 (149a) of which just a handful of copies are known.

Unlike many other former colonies, the first Queen Elizabeth II issue (172/84) of St Lucia hasn't benefited from renewed collector interest, which means prices have remained fairly low for an extended period of time. The exception to this is the listed shades of the 5c., 6c. and 15c. (176a, 177a, 180a), all of which are worth acquiring in unmounted mint condition.



The used 1949-50 decimal currency set is much less common than the previous issue



# JEWELS OF QUEEN VICTORIA

## PHILATELY: BRITISH STAMPS

British Victorian stamps not only include the ground-breaking Penny Black in their number, they also boast many other highly desirable items. Here, we present some of the rarest and most popular classic British issues, which are keenly sought after by today's collectors.

This re-formed block of 12 mint 1s. Board of Education Officials is the largest multiple in private hands

### 1s. Board of Education

One of the most prized British Queen Victoria stamps was not actually issued during her reign – appearing a little over a year after her death. Overprinted Departmental Official stamps were used from 1902–4 during the reign of King Edward VII and were intended for sole use of essentially autonomous Government Departments. As such, none of the Departmental overprints were supposed to be sold or otherwise made available to the public in unused condition.

Official stamps overprinted for the Board of Education were first issued on 19 February 1902. However, at that time of their release, 5d. and 1s. stamps with the likeness of Edward VII were not ready, so stamps bearing Queen Victoria's portrait were overprinted and issued at the same time as the ½d., 1d. and 2½d. King Edward VII officials.

Both the 5d. and 1s. Board of Education Officials are rare, but the 1s. overprints are exceptionally so due to their short period of use. King Edward VII 1s. stamps were issued 23 December 1902, at which point the Queen Victoria 1s. overprints were withdrawn. This means that the Queen Victoria 1s. Officials were only used within a short, ten-month period. The King Edward VII 5d., on the other hand, was issued in February 1904, giving the Queen Victoria 5d. officials a much longer period of use.

Because of the rarity of the 1s. Board of Education Officials, fraudulent overprints are often applied to a genuine Queen Victoria 1s. stamps. While some forgeries are easy to detect, others require more sophisticated equipment. It is recommended to purchase these stamps only if they have a Royal Philatelic Society London or BPA certificate dated subsequent to 1973 guaranteeing their authenticity.

The largest multiple in private hands is a re-formed block of 12 mint examples comprising of a block of eight and a block of four.



### The Penny Black

We can't talk about Queen Victoria stamps without including the most famous of them all – the world's first postage stamp, the Penny Black. Thanks to the postal reforms introduced by Rowland Hill, by the time the Penny Black was made valid for postage on 6 May 1840 sending letters had become affordable for all and incentivised the public to learn how to read and write.

It took only five months to design, engrave, print and start selling the Penny Black. The iconic Queen's head design was based upon the City Medal by William Wyon, which depicts a 15-year-old Queen Victoria, and was struck to commemorate her visit to the Guildhall in 1837. It was to remain on stamps for the entirety of her reign. As the United Kingdom was the first country in the world to issue a postage stamp, it was not required to include the name of the country on the design of the Penny Black. This has continued to this day.

Penny Blacks were printed from engraved steel plates in sheets of 240 stamps (240 pence making up £1 in pre-decimal currency). The stamps were imperforate and each stamp was cut from the sheet by hand. Each sheet contained 240 letter combinations in the lower corners, starting with 'AA' at the top left and going down to 'TL' at the bottom right – you might be able to find a Penny Black with your initials on it! These letter combinations were intended as a precaution against forgery; however, consequently the subtle differences in the letters, along with other identifiable characteristics, have aided philatelists in the elaborate science of plating stamps.

Some of the most desirable examples of the Penny Black come from the rare Plate 11 printing. Originally, this plate was used to print Penny Red stamps. However, 700 sheets were produced in black as an emergency measure. Although fewer stamps were printed from Plate 11, mint examples of the Penny Black from Plate 10 are actually scarcer.

In all, more than 68 million Penny Blacks were produced. Despite this, today, the rarest pieces exceed £100,000 in value.

Fears that cancels could be cleaned off the stamps, allowing them to be reused, cut short the life of the Penny Black. On 10 February 1841, a little over nine months after it first appeared, the Penny Black was replaced by the Penny Red, which served the postal needs of the British public until 1879.



The iconic Penny Black revolutionised communication in Britain; however, it was to be replaced a little over nine months after it first appeared



## The Two Pence Blue

Although the Penny Black is credited as the world's first postage stamp, it has an almost identical twin, which was delivered at the same time. The Two Pence Blue, also issued on 6 May 1840, was struck from a die taken indirectly from the Original Die used to create the Penny Black. This means that the design of the Two Pence Blue is exactly the same as the Penny Black, apart from the value, which was altered to read 'TWO PENCE', and, of course, its colour.

The Two Pence Blue was introduced for packages weighing between ½oz–1oz which meant they were significantly less in demand at the time than the penny stamp. Because of this, the number of 1840 Two Pence Blue stamps produced was much lower. While 68 million Penny Blacks were printed, only 6.5 million 1840 Blues were produced, making them ten times rarer than the Penny Black.

In 1841, after less than a year in production, a new blue ink with more fugitive properties was employed to reduce the risk of fraudulent cleaning and reusing. To differentiate the two printings, a white line was added to the design on the 1841 Two Pence Blue. This can be seen below the word 'postage' and above the words 'TWO PENCE'.

Official perforations came into use in Great Britain in 1854, so, unlike the Penny Black, which was withdrawn in 1841, there are perforate and imperforate varieties of the Two Pence Blue.

In terms of collectability, the Two Pence Blue of 1840 is far rarer than that of 1841. Pairs from 1840 are scarce and blocks are rare. The largest known surviving block of the Plate 1 printing of the 1840 Two Pence Blue contains 38 stamps and was bought by King George V in the 1920s.

## £5 Orange Telegraph and Postage stamps

Stamps were not only introduced as a way to prepay postage costs for a letter or parcel, they were also used to prepay the cost of sending telegrams. When the first telegraph stamps were issued in 1876, the highest value was five shillings; however, large telegrams would cost up to several pounds to send and the necessary forms were not large enough to fit all the stamps needed to cover the cost. This is why the higher values, including £5 Orange Telegraphs, were added to the series in 1877.

The first £5 Orange Telegraphs, the equivalent of a month's wages of a farm labourer, were issued to cover the cost of lengthy telegrams. These telegraph stamps bore a Shamrock watermark to differentiate them from postage stamps.



Only 6.5 million 1840 Blues were produced, making them ten times rarer than the Penny Black



Mint £5 Telegraphs are particularly rare. Despite its inscription, very few £5 Orange Postage stamps were actually used for postage

The short-lived Mulready letter sheets and envelopes, issued at the same time as the Penny Black, were widely ridiculed and many humorous caricatures of their design were produced (Reduced)



In 1881 it was decided to abandon the use of telegraph stamps in favour of postage stamps. However, since their highest value was only £1, the need arose for the creation of £5 postage stamps. This was done by using the printing plates of the £5 Orange Telegraph stamps, which were adapted by removing the word 'TELEGRAPHS' and inserting 'POSTAGE' instead.

Despite the inscription, very few £5 Orange stamps were actually used for postage. They were mostly used for telegraphs and on receipts of excise duty on tobacco and whisky. The £5 Orange postage stamp was in use for 21 years, being the highest value pre-decimal stamp ever issued.

The £5 Orange telegraph stamps are much rarer than the £5 Orange postage stamps, since they were in use for little over five years. Mint £5 Telegraphs are particularly rare.

## Mulready postal stationery

Valued at 1d. and 2d. each, Mulready letter sheets and envelopes were Britain's first postage-paid postal stationery. Named after their designer, William Mulready, they were issued parallel with the first British adhesive stamps in 1840. Rowland Hill (somewhat incorrectly) expected that the Mulready stationery would become the future of the postal service. However, they were not as popular as expected and were removed from sale in January 1841. Instead, the success of the postal service is credited to the Penny Black.

William Mulready (1786–1863) was a member of the Royal Academy and specialised in romantic scenes of country life. The design used for the stationery, titled *Britannia Sending Letters to the World*, was his romantic view of the benefits of affordable mail. The focal point of the design is a personification of Britannia overseeing people reading and writing letters. The figures at the upper left and right suggest the continents of Asia and North America; in the lower corners, idealised families are engrossed in their mail.

Despite Mulready's best intentions, the idealistic design did not appeal to the artistic community or the general public. It was publicly lampooned and contemporary humorous caricatures of the Mulready envelopes are numerous. It is interesting that the Royal Philatelic Collection has an extensive collection of Mulready caricatures, as well as the actual stationery.

Less than a week after the Mulreadys were issued, Rowland Hill stated, 'I fear we will be obligated to substitute some other stamp for that designed by Mulready, which is abused and ridiculed on all sides, the public have shown their disregard and even distaste for beauty.'

The fact that Mulreadys had such a short life is what makes them very collectable today – they were issued in far lower numbers than the Penny Black stamp.



# MALAYSIA: SULTAN SIR ABU BAKAR OF JOHORE

By Susan McEwen FRPSL

After initially using overprinted stamps of the Straits Settlements, Anglophile Sultan Sir Abu Bakar of Johore issued his own stamps in 1891. Susan McEwen of the Malaya Study Group provides a guide to the stamps issued during his reign.

Johore, the most southerly state in peninsular Malaya is now part of Malaysia but was an independent State until it joined the new Malayan Federation in 1949. Johore was ruled by a succession of independently minded absolute rulers; the first of whom to feature on stamps was Sultan Sir Abu Bakar (*Fig 1*).

Born in 1833, he became Maharajah on the death of his father in 1862, assumed the prestigious title of Sultan in 1885 and died in 1895. The first postal service in Johore started in 1876, it went between Johore and Singapore, crossing the Johore Straits by ferry. It had closed by 1878 due to lack of use and the second attempt, which started in 1884, eventually became established. The stamps of the Straits Settlements were overprinted for use in Johore, initially Johore's Star and Crescent insignia were handstamped, and the second attempt had 'JOHORE' overprints; however, Sultan Sir Abu Bakar wanted his own stamps.

## Royal connections

Sultan Sir Abu Bakar was an anglophile, spoke English well, visited the United Kingdom a number of times and met Queen Victoria and the then Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII.

After continuous pressure from Britain, the Sultan signed a treaty with Britain in 1885, and as part of that treaty, he accepted a British Advisor. Johore was geographically and economically close to its big neighbour, the Straits Settlements, with Singapore to the south and Malacca to the north.

## The Sultan's issue

The Sultan got his stamps in 1891, which were designed and printed by De La Rue of London, and issued on 16 November (*Fig 2*). They were printed in doubly



Fig 1 Sultan Sir Abu Bakar

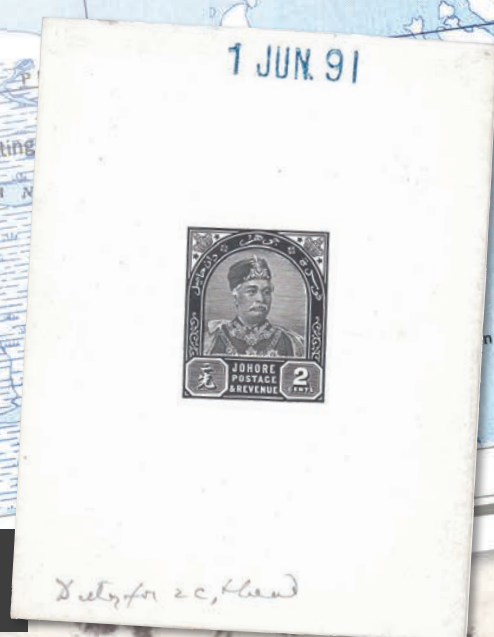


Fig 2 A die proof of 2c. value depicting Sultan Sir Abu Bakar



Fig 3 Numerous colour trials were produced for the 1891 issue, which suggests they were used by De La Rue to show other customers their work

fugitive inks, in purple and green. Doubly fugitive means that the colours run easily if the stamps get wet. This is a bit of a problem in Johore, which enjoys a tropical climate, temperatures of 78°–82°F and humidity of 35–60 per cent all year. The average annual rainfall in Johore is over 70 inches, by comparison London averages 25.6 inches. The Sultan's stamps can be found with good colours but care is needed especially on used examples.

The 1891 issue comprised 2c., 4c., 5c., 6c. and \$1 values. The cent values are in purple with coloured value tablets, while the \$1 is in green with the value in carmine.

The colours were chosen from the very wide range of colour trials produced by De La Rue (*Fig 3*). I have seen 40 imperforate and 14 perforated colour trials, which seems an excessive number for what was a rather small printing order. It has been suggested that these colour trials were used by De La Rue as samples to show other customers their work.

Sultan Sir Abu Bakar was happy with his new stamps and gave a reception to celebrate (*Fig 4*). Attendees were given a set of souvenir cards with the stamps stuck on and the date of issue alongside (*Fig 5*).

As Johore was not a member of the UPU during Sultan Abu Bakar's reign, the Sultan's stamps were only valid within Malaya, effectively that was Johore and the Straits



Settlements. For mail going further, a combination of a Johore stamp to pay the local letter 2c. postage to Singapore and Straits Settlements stamps to pay the postage onwards was necessary (Fig 6).

In early 1894, the local letter rate was increased from 2c. to 3c. This was a problem for Johore because they didn't have a 3c. stamp or even a 1c. to add to make the rate. New stamps of 1c. and 3c. values were ordered, using colours not chosen from the trials for the 1891 initial values (Fig 7). As this process would take some time, in the meantime, Johore's stamps were overprinted for the 3c. rate. There is one constant variety which occurs on all values, it is the 'missing stop' from row 5 stamp 11 (Fig 8). As well as being completely missing from that position on the printing, the stop varies in size from 'normal' to very small.

## A mystery

The narrow 3c. overprint is a mystery and is only known on the 5c. value (Fig 9). On the usual overprints '3 Cents' is across the Sultan's face, on the narrow overprint it is below his chin. Perhaps it was a trial, in which case why was the wider overprint chosen? And why are a few covers known with the narrow overprint? And if not a trial, what was it?

After Sultan Sir Abu Bakar died in London in 1895, his body was returned to Johore and buried in the Royal Mausoleum, Johore Bahru. His son, Ibrahim, succeeded him as Sultan. In 1896, existing Johore stamps were issued with overprints of *Ketahkotaan*, which means 'We mourn', and *Kemahkotaan*, which means 'Coronation', for the new Sultan (Fig 10). Apparently, this choice of overprints was deliberate but as none of the overprinted stamps arrived in Johore until March 1896, after the Coronation of the new Sultan, it seems pointless, or more likely just a lack of communication.

The first Sultan Ibrahim stamps were issued in August 1896, keeping the same doubly fugitive colours but with the cents values in green and the dollar values in purple.

Sultan Sir Abu Bakar was revered by his people. A sensible and diplomatic man, he steered a careful path of friendship with Britain and his near neighbour the Straits Settlements, whilst carefully maintaining Johore's independence. An absolute ruler, but he gave his people a written constitution in April 1895, shortly before his death in June 1895. He is considered to be the 'Father of modern Johore' for his work promoting agriculture and trade within the State.



Fig 4 The 2c. stamp in its issued colours



Fig 5 One of the souvenir cards given away at a reception to mark the new issue



Fig 6 A combination cover sent from Loonchu in Johore to Germany using a 2c. Johore value alongside a 5c. Straits Settlements stamp (Reduced)



Fig 7 New 1c. and 3c. values were issued in 1894 to meet an increase in the local letter rate



Fig 9 A mysterious narrower version of the overprint only appeared on the 5c. value



Fig 8 A pair of 3c. overprints, with the right-hand stamp showing the 'missing stop' variety



Fig 10 After the death of Sultan Sir Abu Bakar, Johore's stamps were overprinted 'Ketahkotaan' (we mourn). Stamps overprinted 'Kemahkotaan' (Coronation) were also produced for the new Sultan, Ibrahim

## The Malaya Study Group

For more information about the Malaya Study Group, our meetings (when they restart after Covid-19) and publications, visit [www.malayastudygroup.com](http://www.malayastudygroup.com) or contact the membership secretary. Martin Roper, 25 King Edward Avenue, Aylesbury, Bucks HP21 7JD or email [martinsroper@gmail.com](mailto:martinsroper@gmail.com)

The Group holds regular meetings in London, annual meetings in Worthing and Leicester, and meetings to coincide with major exhibitions in Singapore. *The Malayan Philatelist*, published quarterly, is the journal of the Malaya Study Group.



# COVID-19: A NEW COLLECTING FIELD

By Douglas N Muir RDP

Restrictions on movement caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has meant difficult times for many; however, one of the few advantages of spending more time at home has been the ability to spend more time with our collections and to explore new collecting avenues. Douglas N Muir RDP looks at one new collecting theme created by the pandemic itself.

One way or the other, almost everyone in the world has been affected by the Covid-19 (or coronavirus) pandemic this year. At least a million people have died, but most others have either been hospitalised, furloughed, confined or restricted in movements by lockdowns and in what they can do. Things of course move on and have changed quite rapidly. After initial fear, frustrations built and then sanctions eased. Opportunities for holidays came and went. But lockdowns have also been an opportunity for us to look at, and work on, our collections and, through the web, expand them and look to new horizons.

At least to begin with, air transport overseas virtually ceased. And it was this which prompted me to think about international mails and what was happening with them. There might also be labels or cachets as a result. That was then extended by the issue of stamps in profusion – to celebrate health workers in particular and the fight against the virus in general. All these aspects provide an area for modern collecting which is richly worthwhile.

## Availability

Although the virus originated in Wuhan in China (where an international stamp exhibition had taken place as recently as June 2019), the first stamp on the subject was issued by Iran (after China, one of the worst-hit countries initially) on 18 March 2020. The issue date was printed on the sheet margin but shown in the Iranian calendar – 28 Esfand 1398, Esfand being the 12th and final month of the solar Hijri calendar. It depicted medical workers, a paramedic in a protective mask and a graphical representation of the virus (*Fig 1*). Obtaining this stamp, although quite cheap, proved extremely difficult. Because of sanctions against Iran neither Paypal nor Skrill are available in that



Fig 1 The first Covid-19-themed stamp was issued by Iran on 18 March. This block of four shows the issue date in the Iranian calendar

country, nor any method of transferring money by credit card. In the end I was able to obtain my copies through a dealer in Pakistan.

I found this on the Delcampe website which proved far more useful for some reason than the various national and international eBays. A large number of overseas dealers in Covid-19 stamps and material, especially Chinese, seemed to use Delcampe in preference. For me, this meant that the simplest and most effective way to find out about the latest issues from around the world was often just a case of searching that website frequently (with the search term 'Covid-19' rather than 'coronavirus' or 'pandemic').

Another very useful source of information was a listing in English on the web by Vojtech Jankovič of the Slovak Philatelic Federation. Entitled 'Tribute to the First Line Warriors - Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic and Philately', it is updated periodically, although it was not always totally accurate. It can be found at [www.postoveznamky.sk/tribute-to-first-line-warriors-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-and-philately](http://www.postoveznamky.sk/tribute-to-first-line-warriors-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-and-philately). Finding accurate information can be surprisingly difficult, especially for postal stationery.

Once one knows that something has been issued by a reputable postal administration then there is another obvious source of supply – that country's philatelic service. This was the case with Switzerland, one of the next countries to issue stamps. Without prior warning, on 6 April it issued a 1f. stamp with a surcharge of 5f. each, in a sheetlet of ten stamps. Astonishingly, the sale price for the sheetlet of ten stamps was only 50f., Die Post bearing the cost of the postage, with the surcharge going to the Swiss Red Cross and a specific charity. The design indicated Swiss solidarity in the face of the disease and was created very quickly by Alexandra Steiner of Bern in her 'home office'. No philatelic products were available from Die Post. Nevertheless, illustrated first day covers and a maximum card were somehow produced and serviced with a first day postmark (*Fig 2* and *Fig 3*).





Fig 2 A sheet of ten of the 100f. +500f. charity stamp issued by Switzerland on 6 April. The 50f. sale price covered the cost of the charity surcharge; the cost of postage was covered by Die Post (Reduced)



Fig 3 A maximum card from Switzerland used on the first day (Reduced)



Fig 4 One of the presentation folders issued by China in April (Reduced)



Fig 5 An official personalised 'hearts and flowers' sheet from China with labels depicting key workers and medical personnel (Reduced)

## China

By far the greatest number of items to do with Covid-19 have come from the country where the virus originated – China. Although stamps were not issued until 11 May, by that time there were already several very attractive items available. On or about 7 April several items appeared, often sold in illustrated presentation folders. In one large folder there was a 'hearts and flowers' personalised sheet and an illustrated, stamped cover (Fig 4 and Fig 5). Another included two numbered covers with ATM stamps and an older postal stationery card with a new reverse (Fig 6). All were illustrated on the theme of medical and service heroes. Another card issued separately had the same design. These seem to have used new illustrations printed on previously existing types. *Zhongguo Bisheng* was the slogan in the pack – China Win!

At about the same time, a completely new set of postcards was issued by China Post with a new stamp imprint design featuring a doctor in a mask and infected lungs (Fig 7 and Fig 8). This is perhaps one of the most interesting of all the postcard sets, of which there were many more



Fig 6 Older Chinese postal stationery cards were also given new Covid-19-themed designs (Reduced)



Fig 7 and Fig 8 The front and reverse of a Chinese postal stationery card with a new stamp imprint (Reduced)



subsequently, and it would be extremely difficult, not to say very expensive, to collect them all.

Planned for issue on 7 April, China's adhesive stamps were postponed until 11 May, apparently for a revision to the design. When issued, there were two *se-tenant* designs featuring a paramedic in protective clothing and a pandemic combat unit – health care workers, soldiers and police officers, all masked (*Fig 9*). They were issued in two formats. One was a sheet of eight pairs together with a large illustration; the other a sheet, also of eight pairs but with no illustration, rather a central red band inscribed.

There followed a plethora of postal stationery items with a propaganda function. The style of illustration becomes familiar – bold images with strong colours. One set of stamped postcards shows typical scenes from all 32 provinces in support of Wuhan. Enclosed in an attractive folder, these also bear a special new stamp featuring a heart (*Fig 10 and Fig 11*). The heart stamp was also used on envelopes.

One also finds a profusion of propaganda cachets or chops used on mail. Some of the postmarks or cachets were clearly centrally produced; others were local. Most were illustrated and encouraged people to fight against the virus and keep safe. Or they lauded essential workers, or (before labels) indicated disinfection. Literally, hundreds have been produced in what is now almost an industry. Apparently, over 100 were used in Wuhan alone. A catalogue of them from January to June comprises almost 100 pages with an average of between 15 and 20 postmarks or chops per page. A few typical examples are shown here (*Fig 12*).

Many items have to be 'philatelic' – i.e. concocted for the philatelic market. They are normally offered in suspiciously pristine condition showing no wear and tear of having gone through the post, even though they often have receiving backstamps. In many ways they are reminiscent of first flight or Zeppelin covers of the 1920s and 1930s.

Then there are labels added to the postal items, sometimes very decorative, sometimes simply functional. Not being able to read Chinese, I have to take the dealers' descriptions of them at face value but what I can check is accurate. And what a variety there is! Some indicate that the letter has been disinfected, others that a pass has been issued. Yet more provide



Fig 9 The *se-tenant* stamp designs issued by China on 11 May



Fig 10 and Fig 11 The Front and reverse of one of 32 postcards from Chinese provinces (Reduced)

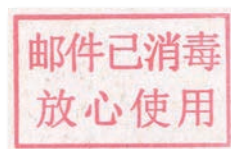


Fig 12 A variety of the Chinese propaganda cachets that have been produced



Covid-19 information via QR codes which the recipient is supposed to scan and read. Several are remarkably illustrated in full colour and can be very attractive. But who produced them all? (*Fig 13*).

One cover has it all. From Tianjin (formerly Tientsin) dated 11 June, it bears a multicoloured meter mark with a Covid-19 illustration and also a multicoloured disinfected label featuring masked key workers, as well as postal cachets (*Fig 14*).

A side effect of collecting these items is that I have certainly come to appreciate the beauty of many modern Chinese stamps and the wide variety of their postal stationery.

Despite having very few infections Macao also issued stamps and had a Covid-19 chop, but not Hong Kong (at the time of writing) (*Fig 15*). Quite separately, Taiwan issued stamps under the slogan 'Taiwan can help'. However, altruistically this was meant it is undoubtedly wishful thinking as far as mainland China is concerned.

## Design themes

In other countries several themes are universal in both stamps and postal stationery. As one might expect, medical staff and general heroes predominate. A few examples





Fig 13 A wide variety of Covid-related postal labels have also been created



Fig 14 A Tianjin cover dated 11 June with a disinfected label, Covid-19 meter mark and cachets



Fig 15 A Covid-19 chop or cachet used in Macao

will suffice. Apart from those already mentioned, solidarity is the theme from administrations such as Monaco, Brazil, Uruguay and in a booklet from France ('tout engagés'). The 12 self-adhesive French stamps thank medical and care workers as well as other key workers including food producers (Fig 16). Monaco is particularly poignant as it portrays Prince Albert who contracted the disease early on (Fig 17).

Masks are naturally to be found everywhere. French Polynesia has a gauguinesque illustration of local girls wearing them. However, perhaps the most interesting is a *se-tenant* pair from the Czech Republic which shows six protective masks with different symbols for the Red Cross, Czech Post, the army, firemen and so on. Bearing the text 'Děkujeme' (We thank you) they also link to the most popular theme, that of thanking key workers (Fig 18). This message was repeated around the globe.

From the British Isles there have been stamps from the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Alderney but not Jersey or Royal Mail (so far). Those from the Isle of Man (sheet stamps and machine-vended) concentrate on solidarity – 'Carry us through' (Fig 19). Guernsey and Alderney, however, chose a

Fig 16 A French booklet cover issued on 14 September features key workers

Below: Fig 17 Prince Albert appeared on a Covid-19 stamp from Monaco issued on 3 June

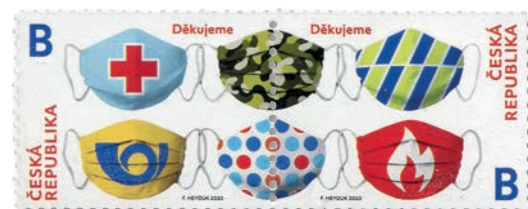


Fig 18 A pair of Czech stamps issued on 24 June shows various masks with symbols representing the country's key workers



Fig 19 The Isle of Man's 'Carry us through' sheet and machine-vended stamps, which were issued on 4 May





Fig 20 Guernsey and Alderney issued Covid-19 stamps featuring Children's drawings on 19 August



Fig 21 A Singapore stamp issued on 4 September featuring child-like images encouraging people to wear face masks



different theme, one which has also been utilised elsewhere – children's paintings. All are bright and cheerful in the colours of the NHS rainbow (Fig 20). Another country to feature children's paintings was Luxembourg in a very large (A4) miniature sheet available from their philatelic service. Several, like Greece and Singapore, had child-like illustrations (Fig 21).

'Stay at home' was another obvious theme. Here, Germany took the lead, firstly with designs for internet stamps appropriately printed at home and then sheets of predefined personalised stamps from Deutsche Post with some even having the text in English (stay at home – collect stamps) (Fig 22).

## Slogan propaganda

Royal Mail, and several other countries, have relied on slogan postmarks to get the message across. For Royal Mail there have

Fig 22 German internet stamp designs featuring Covid-19 messages were available from 8 April. Later examples, introduced from 1 May, included exhortations in English

been four related slogans: two versions of 'STAY HOME./ PROTECT THE NHS./ SAVE LIVES' (one for VE75) used from 28 March and 6 May respectively; one to mark the 100th birthday of the remarkable Captain Thomas Moore (Fig 23) and one for Loneliness Awareness week, which was deliberately used because of older people suffering under lockdown.

Germany also had a concerted campaign from 1 July indicating solidarity against the virus. (Fig 24). Others that I have seen include Canada and Singapore, although I am sure there have been many more.

## Delays in the mail

The aspect which first brought the idea of Covid-19 to me as a collecting area was that of delays to the mail – i.e. modern postal history. From April I kept a record of overseas registered items addressed to me and happily had access to some detailed tracking to discover what had happened to them. Delays of over a month were frequent. One item from Russia, posted on 26 March only left there on 3 April. It then went by truck overland to Germany and sat there for over four weeks before being despatched by air to London. Others had similar problems. Most unfortunately, not one of them was marked in any way to indicate the delay.



Nevertheless, some labels and cachets do exist. In both Slovenia and Poland international postal operations were suspended and mail returned to sender with explanatory labels. In Slovenia a label was used for one or two days at the beginning of April before a listing of countries for which there was no service appeared on the Slovenia Post website and made this redundant. Dated 7 April the label read: 'Vrniti Ustavljen Promet: Pandemija – 'Return/ Traffic Stopped: Pandemic' (Fig 25).

Similarly, in Poland in June a label was used to return an item being sent to Japan. It read: 'Zwrot do nadawcy./ Zawieszenie operacji/ pocztowych z Polski.' – 'Return to sender. Suspension of postal operations from Poland' (Fig 26). Germany was similar but used a cachet rather than a label on mail intended for countries with no postal connection (Fig 27). Again, there are bound to have been others.

## Humour

Given the seriousness of the subject, it is good we can still have a laugh. Someone at the agencies that produce stamps for the likes of Tchad and Sierra Leone certainly has a sense of humour. May 2020 saw the 180th anniversary of the Penny Black. Designs were prepared for this in sheetlets of six but with Queen Victoria's face covered by different masks (Fig 28). Several territories shared the same images. Not content with this, there followed a sheetlet of international cultural monuments similarly masked – Michelangelo's David, the Statue of Liberty, Mount Rushmore presidents and a demon gargoyle from Notre Dame in Paris (Fig 29). Not perhaps something I would normally collect but I could not resist.

This article makes no pretence of providing any complete listing. By the time it appears things will have changed (hopefully for the better) and there will certainly have been many more items to add to one's collection. Keeping up with it all is a full-time occupation!

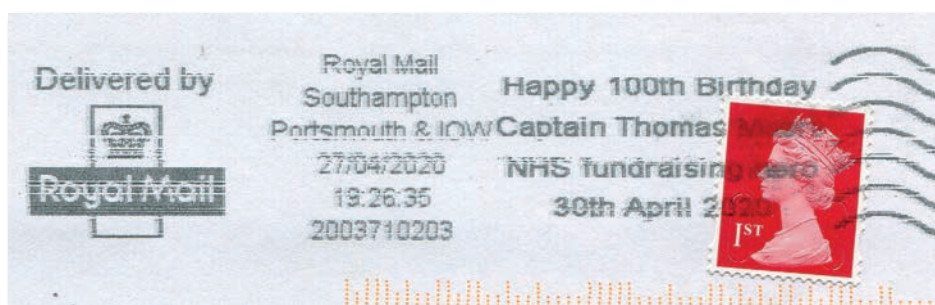


Fig 23 Royal Mail's slogan postmark used on 27 April for Captain Thomas Moore's 100th birthday



Fig 24 Germany's slogan postmark introduced on 1 July

Fig 25 The Slovenian label used to return mail that was undeliverable because of the pandemic

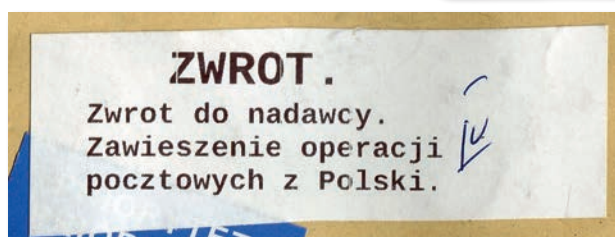
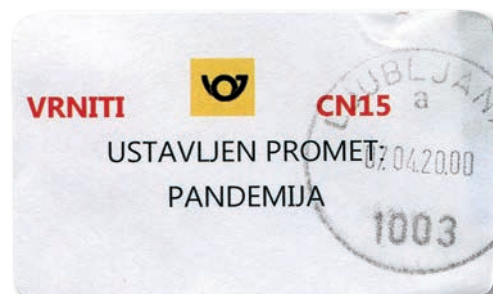


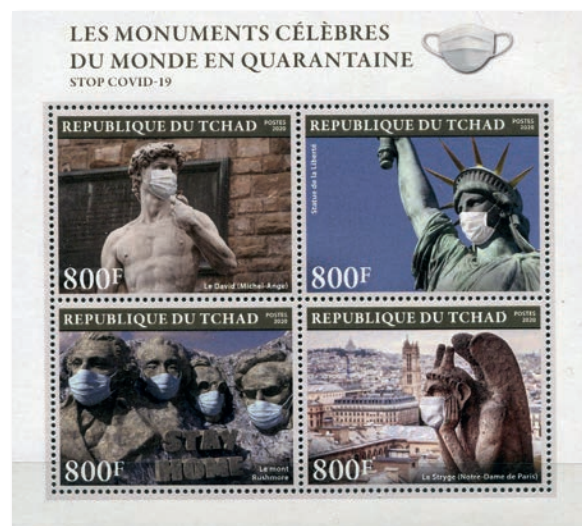
Fig 26 A Polish 'Return to sender. Suspension of postal operations from Poland' label

Fig 27 A German cachet used for undeliverable overseas mail



Fig 28 A sheetlet of six stamps from Sierra Leone, issued in May to mark the 180th anniversary of the Penny Black, with Queen Victoria's face covered by different masks (Reduced)

Fig 29 A sheetlet of four stamps from Tchad featuring international cultural monuments wearing masks (Reduced)





# BERTIL SKOV JØRGENSEN: DENMARK'S SWAN SONG

By Adrian Keppel

Sadly, today many countries have abandoned using the traditional art of engraving to produce their stamps. Adrian Keppel follows the career of Denmark's last stamp engraver, Bertil Skov Jørgensen.

For many decades, the Nordic countries had been proud suppliers of hand-engraved stamps, but one by one they abandoned this tradition of quality and artistic splendour in favour of more cheaply produced products. Denmark was no exception, and the country which once kept engravers such as Britze, Jacobsen, Slania and Kühlmann busy hasn't issued a single engraved stamp since 2016. One by one, the engravers disappeared from the scene, until there was only one man left standing: Bertil Skov Jørgensen (*Fig 1*).

When Bertil (born 1968 in Kolding, Denmark) grew up, there were two major influences in his life. One of those was the artistic influence of his direct family. Although none of his relatives were active in any artistic profession, his father was a press photographer, and very interested in art, pictures and typography. There was even a framed full sheet of the green 10øre Danish definitive stamp – of the Wavy Line design – hanging on the wall in the family home. On his 7th or 8th birthday, Bertil was given a set of technical drawing pens, and he has been hooked ever since. Studying masters such as Piranesi and Dürer, as well as work from Danish painters and printmakers, he admired the precision and amount of detail these artists displayed in their work.

The other main influence in young Bertil's life was his maternal grandfather, who was Bishop at Ribe Cathedral. Bertil used to discuss the more philosophical questions of life that a young man might ponder with his grandfather. Not that he was overly religious, but he was interested in religious history, scientific history and epistemology.

When the time was there for Skov Jørgensen to choose his future, he enrolled at Copenhagen University, where he started studying theology. His interests still mainly lay in the more philosophical questions; the exploration of the common ground for religion, philosophy and the natural sciences.

It may have given him an air of importance, as it would any student



Fig 1 Bertil Skov Jørgensen, the last Danish stamp engraver



Fig 2 Skov Jørgensen's entry into the stamp world was his design for the Danish Air Force stamp of 2000



Fig 3 Skov Jørgensen's engraving skills were tested to the limit with lines of microprint on his 2010 Danish Navy stamp



Fig 4 The Askov windmill, which Skov Jørgensen could see from his childhood bedroom, on a 2007 Danish stamp

of such classical themes, but all the while, Skov Jørgensen kept drawing and painting and he even had a few exhibitions. At some stage, he applied for a place at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. He never expected anything to come of it, as it is fiendishly difficult to get accepted. But like the proverbial sign from above, Skov Jørgensen was among the 16 candidates picked from a total of 800 applicants!

And so Skov Jørgensen embarked on the path of becoming the artist he is today. He spent most of his six years at the Academy concentrating on engraving techniques. Interest in the art form was at a low ebb in those days, and that meant that Skov Jørgensen basically had the engraving workshop to himself! Thankfully for him, interest in the print form has since been revived.

## The first stamp design

Although never a real stamp collector himself, Skov Jørgensen had always wanted to design a stamp. He admired the crystalline clarity of banknote and stamp engravings, and wondered at the possibilities to cram a whole universe of imagery onto such a small format. What also attracted him was that the art of a stamp or banknote engraver was available to be appreciated by a large audience, completely transcending the somewhat confined group of art lovers.

And so Skov Jørgensen jumped at the chance of realising this dream when a professor of his, who happened to be a member of a stamp advisory board of the



Danish Post, recommended him when a designer was sought for the upcoming stamp to mark the 50th anniversary of the Royal Danish Air Force in 2000. Skov Jørgensen was invited to design the stamp, which would eventually be engraved by Norwegian engraver Martin Mörck (*Fig 2*). The stamp is known for its line of minute microprint running along the top of the plane, but this was something not originally included in Skov Jørgensen's design. Rather, it was added later by the postal authorities. Skov Jørgensen did get to engrave his share of microprint some years later, when he engraved a value from the 2010 set celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Royal Danish Navy (*Fig 3*) and found the experience rather challenging!

At the time the Danish Air Force stamp was issued, Skov Jørgensen was living in Rome and he first saw his stamp on a bill that was sent to him from Denmark. It was almost, he said, as if the bill was that little bit friendlier.

## Becoming a stamp engraver

Fast forward some five years and we find the Danish Post without a 'home-grown' engraver. Their master engraver, Arne Kühlmann Hansen, had just retired, leaving them only with Martin Mörck to do work for them. This situation was deemed both undesirable and unsustainable and attention once again turned to Skov Jørgensen. In 2005, he was offered an apprenticeship of sorts under Martin Mörck who lived in Copenhagen at the time. This was the start not only of Skov Jørgensen's career as a stamp engraver, but of a lifelong professional and personal friendship between the two men.

In the years leading up to Skov Jørgensen's first actual stamp engraving, he was initially given the opportunity to prove himself by having to design stamps which would be engraved by Mörck. These designs would be in the shape of so-called key-line art. That is to say, the design would be drawn in such a way that the lines which the engraver should engrave are all included. The stamps, a set depicting various old and modern windmills, were issued in 2007. It included a 4k.50 value depicting the Askov windmill (*Fig 4*), which Skov Jørgensen could see from his bedroom window when he was a child.

After Skov Jørgensen had been practising for a while to become a stamp engraver, he felt he finally made a breakthrough with his 'spark plug' practice piece (*Fig 5*), created in 2007. The image has a minute caption reading '600%', and when Skov Jørgensen finally

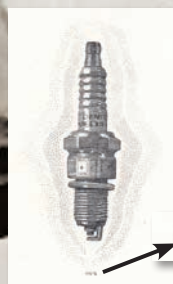


Fig 5 His spark plug practice piece convinced Skov Jørgensen he was ready for minute stamp engravings



Fig 7 One of the three definitives issued in 2010 which were finished by Skov Jørgensen



Fig 6 Skov Jørgensen's first stamp engraving was for a Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign issue, released in 2008



Fig 8 Skov Jørgensen's only stamp portrait engraving features the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard

managed to represent the % sign with actual circles rather than mere dots, he realised he was ready for the smaller parts of an engraving needed for stamp work.

## His first stamp engraving

In 2008, Skov Jørgensen at long last got to engrave his first stamp; a single value promoting the Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign (*Fig 6*). He remembers it being a hard task. The design consists mainly of large areas of cross-hatching, which asks for a very steady hand, because any wobbly lines would stand out immediately. But it was a good exercise, because the ability to create an area of cross-hatching is considered the basis for everything else during the training of an engraver. While in the old days such areas were often created with etching rather than engraving, Skov Jørgensen is proud to state that his work was purely engraved.

## Finishing touches

On a more modest level, Skov Jørgensen also worked on a few Danish definitives, these being the 300Øre and 400Øre values of the Wavy Lines definitives (*Fig 7*) and the 25k. value from the Small Arms definitives. Both would form part of newly introduced sets: the Small Arms from 2004 and the Wavy Lines from 2005. Skov Jørgensen's three values were all self-adhesive and issued in 2010.

Purportedly, Skov Jørgensen's work would simply be the engraving of the new value, but as always there's more to it than meets the eye. Skov Jørgensen explained that Martin Mörck had engraved a mother die which was based on the existing older versions of the stamps. His engraving was to a depth of 75 per cent of what was desired, leaving the part of the value blank. This die was subsequently transferred to a new steel plate, onto which Skov Jørgensen could engrave the actual value. Skov Jørgensen would then also engrave the final 25 per cent of depth and width of the whole design.

While in the old days, an original engraved die may have been fully finished before creating auxiliary dies to add the value on, this process of first engraving to 75 per cent makes sense. The problem is that when creating auxiliary dies by transferring the mother die to a new steel plate, there's always a loss of sharpness, because the v-shaped bottoms of the lines become more rounded in the process, resulting in a less distinctive impression in the final print. While it would be possible to repair the rounded line bottoms, this cannot be done without also widening the lines, creating its own problems. All this can be prevented by not finishing the lines in the first place, so that on the auxiliary die the lines can be finished, thereby preserving their sharp v-shaped bottoms and, therefore, sharper eventual print.

## Portrait stamp

In 2013, Skov Jørgensen finally got the opportunity to engrave a portrait stamp. Both Denmark and the Farøe Islands issued a single stamp to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (*Fig 8*), the famous Danish philosopher. The portrait which was used on the stamp was based on an original made in a combination of pencil and charcoal. Even though Skov Jørgensen was very much in favour of using this particular portrait, it did create another challenge, apart from it being Skov Jørgensen's



first portrait engraving: the original drawing was 'the softest of soft', which makes it hard for an engraver to create lines which both honour the original and yet create enough tonal variety to be printable, especially on such a small format. By using a combination of freehand engraving and a more traditional style of cross-hatching, Skov Jørgensen has succeeded remarkably well in recreating a soft yet expressive portrait (Fig 9). It makes one long for more of the same, but unfortunately he has never had the chance to create another portrait stamp.

## Greenland issues

Most of Skov Jørgensen's work was for Denmark, but he also engraved two stamps for Greenland, in 2009 and 2010. They were issued to mark the centenaries of Danish stations; the 2009 stamp had the North Star mission station as its theme (Fig 10) and the 2010 stamp the Thule trading station. They stand apart for their rather remarkable imagery.

The idea had been to create a juxtaposition of archetypal people in the foreground and a background that reflected the never-ending whiteness of the Greenlandic landscape. The unusual use of lines was to create an effect of flickering snow-blindness. Originally, the background image was to spread out over more than one stamp, but halfway through the process it was decided that more captions were needed which necessitated a reduced background. The idea of a multi-stamp background was abandoned, and the whole effect of being blinded by the brightness of the snow was kind of lost. Fortunately Skov Jørgensen was able to fully realise this design idea on the accompanying f.d.c.s which proved very successful (Fig 11).

## Favourite issues

Among his own favourites, Skov Jørgensen counts the 2010 Ribe stamps, for obvious reasons (Fig 12). Once again, we find an issue which links back to Skov Jørgensen's own life. The two stamps, marking the 1300th anniversary of the town, depict the statue of Queen Dagmar and part of Ribe Cathedral, the very same where Skov Jørgensen's grandfather was Bishop. Ribe also happened to be where Skov Jørgensen first moved to after leaving the nest.

Skov Jørgensen is also satisfied with two of his miniature sheets: the Niebuhr issue of 2011 and the Dybbøl sheetlet of 2014. The Niebuhr sheet (Fig 13) was based on engravings by Georg Wilhelm Baurenfeind, the engraver who accompanied the cartographer Carsten Niebuhr on his expedition to Arabia, the subject of the miniature sheet. The three engravings depicted Niebuhr in Arab costume, a horse-driven grain mill from Cairo and a scarab; the latter featuring on a non-postal label.



Fig 9 Skov Jørgensen's wonderful portrait of Danish philosopher Søren Aabye Kierkegaard created in 2013. Image copyright Bertil Skov Jørgensen



Fig 10 Skov Jørgensen's 2009 Greenland stamp commemorating the North Star mission station

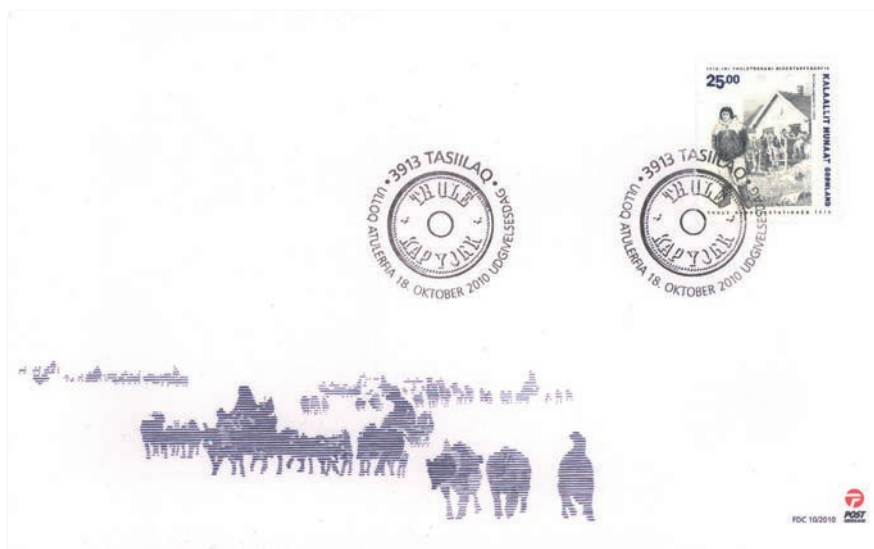


Fig 11 Although the concept was abandoned for the stamp design, the flickering effect of snow-blindness was used for the f.d.c.s (Reduced)



Figs 12 The Ribe issue of 2010 is one of Skov Jørgensen's own favourites

Engraving a copy of an existing engraving may seem easy; after all, it would be just a copy of existing lines. Someone else has already done the hard work with regard to light and dark tones, soft and hard lines, and the amount of details, etc. But it is rather tricky because the new engraving has to honour the original as much as possible, while also making sure that the engraving complies with modern-day printing requirements. In this case, especially, the originals of the two stamp engravings had to be downscaled quite a bit to fit the small stamp size. This meant a large reduction in the number of lines, while trying to preserve the character and 'feel' of the original engravings. The new engravings would also have to be similar in detail to the scarab engraving, which hardly needed any downsampling at all.

The eventual miniature sheet, which is printed in a combination of recess and lithography, has a rather dark background. For those wanting to admire the engravings, it would be advisable to locate the black print of the engraved parts only, which was printed in a limited number of 1500 (Fig 14). Failing that, an f.d.c of the miniature sheet might do the trick as well because its illustration is that of Skov Jørgensen's key-line art for the scarab engraving (Fig 15).



## CARSTEN NIEBUHRS ARABISKE REJSE 250 ÅR



Fig 13 Skov Jørgensen copied various existing engravings for the 2011 Niebuhr miniature sheet

Below: Fig 14 The limited edition black print shows off the engraving much better (Reduced)

مئتان وخمسون عاما على رحلة كارستن نيبور العربية

The Dybbøl miniature sheet (Fig 16) stands out for Skov Jørgensen because it was his first large scene he got to engrave. It was a very satisfying and fun piece of work to do, also because the original drawing was so powerful. One really feels the physical struggle of bringing all that war equipment up hill (Fig 17). As with the Niebuhr miniature sheet, the Dybbøl engraving was also issued as a limited edition black print by Post Danmark.

### Today's designs

Nowadays, Skov Jørgensen is still active in the world of stamps, though now as a designer rather than an engraver. Although many of his creations still resemble the engraved stamps of old, the process is now a little simpler. Most noticeable among his recent work is a series that was introduced by Greenland in 2017 and which is still running (Fig 18). The stamps depict various old Greenlandic banknotes, produced in a style which tries to resemble the intricate engravings of the notes. For these, Skov Jørgensen creates an ink drawing of the engraved parts at a size of 600 per cent. This drawing is then scanned and the scan guides the laser which 'engraves' the lines on the printing cylinder.

Although as a designer he may be proud enough of his work, as an engraver it grieves Skov Jørgensen to think he may no more create any hand-engraved stamps. Fortunately for him, Skov Jørgensen is still able to incorporate the art of engraving in his art work. At the moment of writing, he was busy preparing for a number of exhibitions in 2021, which will showcase his work using copper engraving, aquatint and line etching; all varieties of the engraving technique. Yet, he dearly hopes he may in the future once again be able to create some hand-engraved stamps because, as he says, classic hand engraving remains one of the most refined and delicate printing techniques.

Below: Fig 15 Skov Jørgensen's key line art features on the f.d.c. for the Niebuhr issue (Reduced)



Fig 16 Skov Jørgensen is proud of his 2014 Dybbøl miniature sheet as it includes his first 'large scene' engraving (Reduced)



Fig 17 A die proof of the 'large scene' stamp in the miniature sheet. Images copyright Bertil Skov Jørgensen



Fig 18 Skov Jørgensen's work as a designer on the current Greenland stamp series featuring old banknotes (Reduced)



# CEYLON: THE 1881 TELEGRAPH 'PEARL FISHERY' CANCELLATIONS

In 1881 a temporary telegraph and post office was set up at a township at Silavaturai, Ceylon, in order to serve the seasonal pearl fishery workers in the Gulf of Mannar. This was the only year that a telegraph office was located at the township. As a result, the c.d.s. and manuscript postmarks that were applied to telegraph stamps there are rare items indeed. Here we examine the Silavaturai postmarks applied to telegraph stamps in that short period.

The Ceylon pearl fishery of the Gulf of Mannar was one of the most tightly regulated fisheries ever to have been operated, with a remarkably well documented history that goes back to well before the time of Christ. It has even been suggested that the oyster beds or 'Paars' of Mannar may well have been where the appreciation of pearls as 'gems' first began in pre-historic times. By the time the British came to control the fishery in 1796 it was operated according to the then-current practice of leasing it out to private entrepreneurs. However, in 1833, it was decided that the British would operate the fishery themselves, as the Portuguese had done in the 16th century; a practice that continued until 1907, in which season it was again fished by a tenant, namely The Ceylon Company of Pearl Fishers Ltd. The company went bankrupt a few years later and the fishery was abandoned.

There are numerous colourful contemporary accounts as to how the fishery worked. Divers were carried to the seabed by a stone weight on a line. They gathered the oysters into a bag by hand and were then pulled to the surface via the weighted line. Divers made many dives in a morning and could stay under for prodigious lengths of time. They were very worried by the danger of shark attacks and two shark-charmers, which Marco Polo recorded as working in the fishery as long ago as the 13th century, were employed by the Government to ply their ancient craft, though this ceased in 1885. It was reported that the charmers would drink a great deal of toddy and by the end of the day were often completely inebriated.

On a boat landing its catch, the oysters were divided into three piles and an official would select two of these as the Government's share, the remaining



Fig 1 Proud Type PD1 cancellation used on 25 February 1881 a week before the opening of the fishery on 4 March. This is the earliest known telegraphic use of a c.d.s. in Ceylon



Fig 2 Examples of manuscript Pearl Fishery cancellations in red ink dated between 30 March and 3 May 1881, used at Silavaturai



## The fishery was only successful in certain years when it could take place on a huge scale

third being that of the divers. They were then auctioned off unopened so that there was a heavy element of gambling involved. The shellfish were either opened fresh or else they were placed in wooden troughs in sheds or buried in the sand and allowed to decay in the heat for ten days before the pearls were recovered by hand. It is reported that the resulting odour was repulsively foul and all-pervasive in the vicinity of the seasonal pearl town.

The fishery was only successful in certain years when it could take place on a huge scale. Indeed, between 1796 and 1907, pearls were only harvested in 53 years and the fishery was only judged successful in 11 of those seasons. The season of 1881 was one such, when the fishery was open for 47 days between 4 March and 27 April, excluding Sundays. In total, 27,338,596 oysters were landed. The Government's share consisted of 18,225,731 oysters or two thirds of the catch, raising revenue of Rs 598,688. The weather that year was unusually fine and it was reported that, if the Roman Catholic pearl divers had been prepared to work on Good Friday, 14 April, which they flatly refused to do, the catch would have been even greater.

### The telegraph and post office

In 1881, the fishery was operated from a temporary township at Silavaturai, on the coast just south of Manaar. A temporary telegraph and post office was set up, as both the number of people involved and the scale on which financial transactions took place necessitated the best available communication with the outside world. Although a post office was again established in 1887, the next year in which the fishery was successful, there was no telegraph office and messages



Fig 3 Proud Type D3 Pearl Fishery Cancellations for 1904, 1905 and 1906 used at Marichchukkadai

were taken to Manaar for transmission at night when the lines were quiet. The 1881 Telegraph at Silavaturai was thus a one off event.

We have seen telegraph stamps cancelled at the Pearl Fishery between 25 Feb and 3 May 1881. The earliest is a unique 1r. cancelled on 25 February 1881, bearing a Proud Type PD1 c.d.s. and is the earliest known use of a c.d.s. on any telegraph stamp of Ceylon. The digit '5' of the date is filled-in in manuscript (*Fig 1*).

**...a unique 1r. cancelled on 25 February 1881, bearing a Proud Type PD1 c.d.s., is the earliest known use of a c.d.s. on any telegraph stamp of Ceylon**

### Manuscript cancellations

It seems that this c.d.s. was for some reason thereafter reserved for use on postage stamps and all the subsequent 1881 Pearl Fishery cancellations we have seen, which are dated between 30 March and 3 May, bear a clear manuscript cancellation in red ink, invariably in the same hand, which reads 'Pearl Fishery', followed by the date written out in full; for example '10th April 1881'. These cancellations are predominantly known on the 1880 issue bearing the 'CEYLON.' overprint. We know of examples incorporating the 4a., 8a., and 1r. and also the 50c. blue of the following issue (*Fig 2*).

In 1889, the fishery headquarters moved from Silavaturai. It was at Dutch Bay in 1889 and at Marichchukkadai from 1903, where it remained until the fishery was abandoned. Proud records the use of Type D2 postal cancellations in March and April 1903 but we have seen no telegraphic cancellations from that year (*Fig 3*). However, we have seen a number of bisected telegraph stamps cancelled with Proud Type D3 c.d.s. postmarks for 1904, 1905 and 1906. These were the last three years in which the British ran the fishery before leasing it out. They were very successful indeed and 1905 was said to be the greatest pearl fishery in modern times, where Government derived revenue at that time equivalent to £251,073.

A selection of Pearl Fisheries Cancellations will go under the hammer as part of the 'Taprobana' collection of Ceylon Telegraphs, at Stanley Gibbons London, on 7 October. Contact [auctions@stanleygibbons.com](mailto:auctions@stanleygibbons.com) to request a catalogue for this landmark Signature sale.



# MORE OVERPRINTS AND SURCHARGES: PART 1

By Hugh Jefferies

Over five instalments of 'New Collector', earlier in the year, Hugh Jefferies reviewed some of the interesting aspects of collecting overprints and surcharges. Feeling that the job had not quite been completed, however, he now returns with some more comments and suggestions on the subject.



Fig 1 Handstamped overprint omitted in pair with normal – a questionable variety on the Zanzibar 'JAMHURI 1964' overprints

In the May issue of GSM, I concluded a five-part 'New Collector' series on overprints and surcharges. However, even over five issues I felt that there was a bit more to say on the subject and in the hope that you have now recovered from 'overprint excess', I will return to it, just to tidy up the last few aspects.

In the 'New Collector' articles, I reviewed the reasons why overprints and surcharges might be applied and the various methods by which that application was carried out, from individually writing on the front of every stamp, to overprinting complete sheets by letterpress ('typo' in the catalogue), litho or gravure. Those overprinting methods will have a significant bearing on the two major aspects of the subject not covered by me in 'New Collector'; errors and varieties, and forged overprints.

Before looking at the subject of errors and varieties, it might be worthwhile deviating briefly to discuss the difference between the two. Essentially, a variety can be any stamp which differs from a normal example, no matter how small that difference might be. The term 'error' is reserved for major variations from the norm – in terms of overprints this could mean overprint omitted, overprint inverted, overprint in the wrong colour, incorrect overprint and overprint on the back or both sides of the stamp.

Varieties are of lesser importance insofar as the production process is concerned (although not necessarily of lesser value) and will range from the faulty application of the overprinting plate to minor flaws in the type. From this it can be seen that all errors are varieties, but not all varieties are errors, so to refer to a broken letter in an overprint as an error would be incorrect – it is a variety. On the other hand, to refer to an inverted overprint as a variety would be acceptable, even though it would usually be termed an error.



Fig 2 Egypt official stamp with inverted overprint



Fig 3 Gibraltar 6d. New Constitution overprint double. The two overprints are close together, so the error is not always obvious



Double overprint

Single overprint

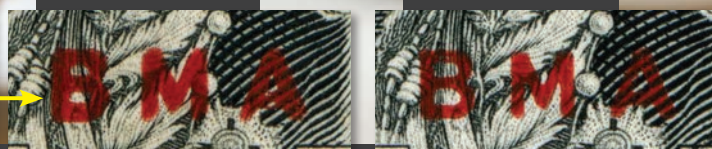


Fig 4 Another close double is the Sarawak 2c. 'BMA'

## Errors

I am afraid that, to me, this is the less interesting side of the subject. Firstly, they are mostly pretty obvious, so you are unlikely to find one, unrecognised, in a dealer's stockbook, and secondly, they are generally rare to very rare and therefore expensive to very expensive. So, unless you have an infinite philatelic budget, buying one error will probably preclude you from being able to buy several varieties. On the other hand, they are not all of astronomical price, so one or two will certainly add interest to any collection.

Discussing handstamps in the May issue, I noted that, because they were individually applied, the chances of them being printed upside-down, sideways, double or treble is relatively high and such varieties are excluded from the catalogue these days. The exception is 'handstamp omitted in pair with normal', which would normally be considered worthy of inclusion, although the 'JAMHURI 1964' handstamped overprints of Zanzibar are an exception to this rule as many appear to have been created to order and, as the catalogue notes, 'it is impossible to distinguish between cases of genuine oversight and those made deliberately at the request of purchasers'. On the positive side, they do make an accessible example of this type of error and you do not see them about with any frequency (Fig 1).





Fig 5 A bit more obvious is the Aden 15c. on 2½a. of 1951 (SG 38a)

Errors of overprint applied by printing plate or forme are all listed in the catalogue, providing they meet the criteria, such as having been officially produced and sold by the post office concerned. Such errors occur if the sheet of stamps being overprinted is fed into the machine upside down the wrong way up; or more than once.

Inverted overprints will stick out like a sore thumb, so the chances of a lucky purchase from an unsuspecting dealer are almost zero; however, if you just want an example of this type of error for your collection, some of the official overprints of Egypt are quite accessible, the 1915 2m. green being currently priced at only £20 thus, with some of the others not much more (Fig 2).

Double overprints and surcharges are another matter, however. If the sheets of stamps are being fed into the overprinting machine properly, but one gets fed in twice, it makes sense that the two overprints will be almost coincident. Here, it pays to know which stamps exist with this type of error and careful examination may show up something which others have missed. Look, for example at the 6d. Gibraltar 'NEW CONSTITUTION' (Fig 3) and the 1c. black Sarawak 'BMA' (Fig 4), both with doubled overprints and both, happily, bought as 'normals'. Obviously, the more divergent the two overprints, the less chance there will be for a lucky purchase. No one could miss the 15c. on 2½a. George VI definitive of Aden, but sometimes these things are irresistible (Fig 5)!

At the other end, there are double overprints, which, while authentic, are so well applied to be almost one on top of the other and these are generally excluded from the catalogue, or limited to a footnote entry. There are a few examples among the 1959 official overprints of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. The catalogue tells you which values they are and they are worth looking out for – although you will need a strong glass (Fig 6)!

If you want a good clear double surcharge, just so you can say that you have one, look no further than Orange Free State SG 75a, priced at just £13 (Fig 7), maybe you could even stretch to the triple surcharge (75b) at £70.



Fig 6 Not currently listed is the double 'OFFICIAL' overprint on the 1959 Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika 1s. stamp. A single overprint is shown for comparison below



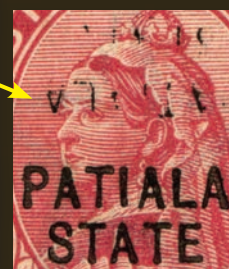
Fig 7 Orange Free State provides some inexpensive surcharging errors



Fig 8 A 'bounced' 'SPECIMEN' overprint on a New South Wales official stamp



Fig 9 Almost a double overprint, one inverted, but the press did not quite come down hard enough to count!



## Not quite so exciting

Before we leave double overprints, I should remind you of things not to get too excited about. The first is letterpress overprints which have 'bounced', leaving a partial or faint impression alongside the main one, as in the New South Wales 'SPECIMEN' overprint illustrated (Fig 8) – these do not count as they have not been through the press twice.

Slightly more interesting are items like the 3p. Patiala, which seems to have been put into the press upside down and the plate partially applied before the printer noticed his mistake and turned it round. The result is a lightly-applied double overprint, one inverted (Fig 9) – but too lightly applied to be considered as a catalogue-listed error! Finally, there are 'litho doubles', which I will cover under litho overprints towards the end of this article.

Overprints and surcharges on the back of the stamp are less frequently found, although the Ghana new currency surcharges of 1965/67 do provide a few more accessible examples. The only one I can illustrate is the 6p. on 6d. 1965 stamp with the 1967 '5 Np' on the back, but, as noted in the catalogue, this is a fake, albeit an interesting one (Fig 10).

Another inexpensive source of apparent overprint errors is the Pakistan currency surcharges of 1961. As explained in the catalogue note, due to the urgency with which the stamps were required, the work was split between the experienced Pakistan Security Printing Corporation and the much less experienced Times Press of Karachi. Another result of the hurried nature of the job was that the normal quality control checks were not carried out, resulting in a large number of errors and varieties, particularly from the Times Press output. To make matters worse, there is evidence that 'errors' were created to order and it is impossible to know which of them were the result of genuine errors by an inexperienced printer and which were deliberately created to satisfy the collector market. As a result, none of the Times Press varieties are listed in the catalogue – but they certainly look quite impressive and are not as frequently seen

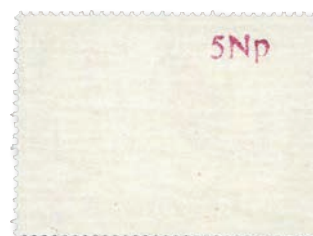


Fig 10 Faked '5Np' surcharge on the back of the Ghana 6p. on 6d. Fire-crowned Bishop stamp



as they were 50 years ago, so if you can find them they make interesting additions to a collection (*Fig 11*).

I return to Ghana for an example of an overprint applied in the wrong colour, where the 12p. on 1s. of 1965 has a black overprint, rather than the correct blue – another inexpensive error at just £10 used (*Fig 12*).

Mention of the catalogue footnotes concerning the Ghana ‘surcharge on the back’ and the Pakistan Times Press overprints reminds me to say just how helpful a thorough knowledge of the catalogue can be, as it frequently states why apparent errors are not listed – just look under the Rhodesia ‘INDEPENDENCE’ overprints of 1965, for example (359/373).

Overprints on the back, but in reverse – mirror image – are known as offsets and make another collectable variety, although they are not directly applied from the printing plate. Offsets can occur when sheets are stacked before they are properly dry, resulting in some of the ink from the underlying sheet being transferred to the back of the sheet above. Such offsets are generally fairly indistinct and in my opinion not all that exciting. However, a more interesting variety occurs when the plate is inked but no sheet of stamps is fed into the press. When this happens the ink will be applied directly to the platen (the base on which the sheet of stamps should have been placed before overprinting). If a sheet of stamps is then fed into the press, not only will it pick up ink from the plate but also on the back from the platen, giving a good, clear reversed overprint on the back (*Fig 13*). As it involves a mistake by the printer, this seems to me to be a genuine error, albeit one not recognised by the catalogue.

## Albino overprints

One type of variety which sometimes falls into the ‘error’ category is the ‘overprint double, one albino’. These occur on letterpress overprinted stamps, which, as discussed in May’s ‘New Collector’, show the indentation of the overprint on the back of the stamp. If there are double sets of indentations on the back, but only a single inked overprint on the front, then you have an overprint double, one ‘albino’.

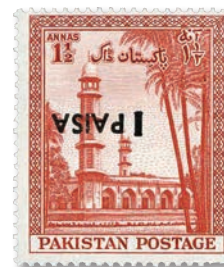
There are two schools of thought on how these occurred, both probably correct in their respective cases. The first is that, before printing, the first sheet was fed through an uninked machine to make sure the overprint fell in the right place. If it did, the plate could then be inked and the sheet passed through again, to give the two impressions, one albino. If the printer was not happy with the positioning of the overprint, he could make some adjustments and put the sheet through



**Fig 11** The Pakistan Times Press surcharges offer a good range of dubious errors, including double and inverted surcharges and surcharges on both front and back



**Fig 12** The 1965 12p. on 1s. of Ghana with the surcharge in black instead of blue



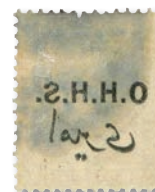
again, before finally inking the plate – this would give an ‘overprint triple, two albino’ variety (*Fig 14*).

The other possibility is that two sheets were fed into the machine at the same time, both receiving the overprint impressions but only the upper one being inked. When the mistake was spotted, the uninked sheet was fed through the machine again – to give the listable variety. I feel that, while for some overprints applied by less experienced printers the ‘overprint double, one albino’ varieties could have resulted from the first practice, most more recent examples came from the second; after all, there are examples of just ‘albino’ overprints’ (Aden 49a, New South Wales 309b (*Fig 15*) Sarawak 152a); presumably resulting from the sheet underneath not having been noticed and being put on sale – yet another overprinting variety error.

Once again, it pays to be aware of what is already listed in the catalogue. For some years I had been double-checking any example of the 20c. on 3a. Aden/Hadhramaut surcharge of 1951 (23) in the knowledge that it existed ‘overprint double one albino’, before striking gold in the club packet! (*Fig 16*). It also pays to keep an open mind and be aware of stamp issues which seem to offer a few examples of this type of variety. The Morocco Agencies overprints are a good example, so it is worth checking the values which are not listed with the variety as well as those which are – I found the 75c. on 9d. French currency surcharge of 1924 in this way and now it is listed in the catalogue as SG 198a (*Fig 17*).

## Varieties

Now we move on to varieties, and some of these will be peculiar to the method by which the overprint was applied, again covered in May’s ‘New Collector’. One type which occurs with most methods, however, concerns the positioning of the overprint on the stamp. Like other shifts, overprint



**Fig 13** A clear offset overprint on a 3m. Egypt official



**Fig 14** Overprint triple, two albino



**Fig 15** Albino overprint on the 1899 New South Wales 10d. For many years this stamp was listed as ‘overprint omitted’ but the albino impression is clear under the glass

shifts are generally outside the scope of the catalogue, simply because it is impossible to set a price for something which is so variable; a slight shift would be worth no more than a ‘normal’, while a really ‘visual’ one might attract a significant premium. Collectors, like dealers, have to decide how great that premium is – i.e. what it is worth to them. Stanley Gibbons cannot help in this instance.

One thing about overprints and surcharges, other than handstamped ones, is that they should be straight, vertically or horizontally (other than those, like the Malta Self-Government overprints of 1947, which were deliberately diagonal, of course). Any deviation from that creates a variety, although, as usual, the greater the deviation, the greater the interest. A block of the 1919 East Africa and Uganda 4c. on 6c. illustrated (*Fig 18*) would look quite impressive, but then again, I probably would not have been able to buy it as a ‘normal’.



A lot of philatelic expressions in current use come from the French – *se-tenant*, *tête-bêche*, etc. – but one I like which is not in general use in the UK is *a cheval* – on horseback, i.e. the overprint is misplaced in the middle of the two stamps, with part on either side. Where the overprint is supposed to be in the centre of the stamp it will of course fall over the perforations and will be perfectly obvious (Fig 19), but when there are two elements to the overprint, it will result in the bit that should be at the top or left falling at the bottom or right (Fig 20) and with one element omitted completely from one of the marginal stamps and a corresponding element, which should have fallen on the stamp, appearing in the margin at the other end or side of the sheet.

Such varieties are outside the scope of the catalogue these days, although some which were listed in the past when the criteria were somewhat different, are still in there, such as the various transposed overprints of British Bechuanaland, 30b, 31b, 38c, etc, while the marginal stamps missing one half of the overprint, 30ab, 31c, etc. are also in the catalogue.

Returning to the East Africa and Uganda 4c. on 6c., the 'bars omitted' variety from the edge of the sheet is listed as 64a, but the variety with the two elements of the surcharge transposed is not (Fig 21). I have to admit that this stamp was in my album for a good many years before I even noticed that there was anything peculiar about it, although with the country name obliterated by the bars instead of the original value, it is surprising that I hadn't noticed it earlier.

In extreme cases, the overprint may be shifted upwards, downwards or sideways to such an extent that an entire column or row of stamps misses it altogether. This will result in the type of variety which gives us some of the classic errors of the Commonwealth – pairs of stamps with and without overprint. New Hebrides SG 2a comes to mind. Where this has occurred, at the other end or side of the sheet there will be an overprint in the sheet margin – these are not listed in the catalogue, but seem to me to be equally rare. Look for example at the 15c. 'BMA MALAYA' illustrated (Fig 22). Here the entire overprint has been shifted down by one stamp. As far as I know, the error which must have occurred in the top row, with one stamp missing the overprint, does not exist in a pair with a normal, but the stamps from the bottom do – although the variety does not feature in the SG catalogue because it does not occur on the stamp.

## Litho-printed varieties

Before we move on to varieties on letterpress-printed overprints, I should



Fig 16 Surcharge double, one albino – always check examples of this stamp you come across – you too may be lucky



Fig 17 The discovery of this 1924 surcharge double, one inverted, led to its listing in the catalogue



Fig 18 A 1919 East Africa and Uganda 4c. on 6c. with the surcharge not straight



Fig 19 Overprint misplaced so as to fall across two stamps



Fig 20 Overprint misplaced so as to read 'STAMP WAR' instead of 'WAR STAMP'



Fig 21 Surcharge misplaced, with the normal shown alongside (right) to demonstrate what it should look like



Fig 23 Litho flaw resulting in inking failure, turning the 'B' of 'BAHRAIN' into a 'P'

Fig 22 Overprint misplaced so as to appear in the bottom margin. Presumably the top row of the sheet had the overprint omitted, but none have survived in a pair with a normal



perhaps mention that those on litho overprints are much less exciting and generally do not achieve catalogue status. This is because the ink is transferred from plate to paper via a rubber blanket and faulty inking or tension of that blanket can lead to faulty printing – sometimes quite dramatic faulty printing but seldom lasting for long. If you find an overprint variety, first check to see if it was applied lithographically, the catalogue should usually tell you, but if it doesn't your magnifier can – check the differences as shown and described in May's 'New Collector'.

I illustrate a couple of examples, firstly the 4a. 'PAHRAIN', which, again I have had for many years and I seem to remember showing in 'Through the Magnifying Glass' back in the 1980s, before I realised that it was not as exciting as I thought it might be (Fig 23).

Incorrect tension in the blanket can result in 'doubles', which in the case of overprints will look like the Burma 3a. 'MILY ADMN' stamp illustrated (Fig 24), with one full impression and a second 'ghost' impression alongside. As such, these, would not attract a premium although if

Fig 24 Litho double overprints, such as this Burma 3a. 'MILY ADMN' stamp, are not true doubles



the 'ghost' impression was a few millimetres away from the main one it would be worth something, but it wouldn't be time to book the Caribbean cruise just yet!

In the next part, I will turn attention to varieties on letterpress-printed overprints.



# THE MANHATTAN PROJECT MEETS POSTAL HISTORY

By Edward Barrow

A single cover sent in 1941 provides multiple threads to different aspects of World War II. Edward Barrow unpicks these threads to shed light on the development of the atomic bomb in the Manhattan Project, the selection of wartime airmail routes and the important role of Trinidad in censorship during the war.



For many postal history collectors, the covers we cherish the most link important events or people to particular times or places. The cover is usually part evidence, part connection. If we are lucky, once in a while, we may come across one which connects multiple strands – a sort of a Philatelic Rosetta Stone. The subject of this article is one such cover.

## Manhattan Project and the atomic bomb

The Manhattan Project and the atomic weapons it produced depended on securing a source of uranium. By far the world's best source was the Shinkolobwe mine in the then Belgian Congo, owned and operated by Union Minière du Haut Katanga, from whom this cover originates (Fig 1).

When the US Army, responsible for the Manhattan Project, began looking for uranium they naturally approached the US arm of Union Minière as a potential supplier. They must have been in disbelief when they were told they could have the ore now because a thousand tons of it were in New York.

This good fortune was due to the foresight of Edgar Sengier, the then director of Union Minière, and to whom this cover is addressed. Sengier had been tipped off by British scientists about the importance of the company's stockpile of uranium ore, and to prevent it from possibly falling into German hands, he pre-emptively shipped it to the US in 1940 and stored it in New York warehouses. This stockpile and the remaining ore in Belgian Congo became the raw material of the first atomic bombs.

For his critical role in helping the war effort, Sengier became the first non-American civilian to receive the Medal for Merit (set up by President Roosevelt in 1942 and awarded to civilians of

Fig 1 Cover sent from Union Minière du Haut Katanga in Belgian Congo to their director, Edgar Sengier, in New York (Reduced)



Fig 2 Edgar Sengier (centre) receiving the Medal of Merit

the US and its Allies for their service or courage in furthering the war effort) (Fig 2). Interestingly, the cover was sent by Jules Cousin – another director of Union Minere Congo operations who preceded Sengier in his role.

## FAM 22 – Pan Am's new Foreign Air Mail (FAM) route

Inauspiciously, Pan Am's new Foreign Air Mail (FAM) route linking the United States with the Belgian Congo was inaugurated on 6 December 1941; the day before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The route started in Miami, from there the Clipper Seaplane made scheduled stops on its route down to South America, most notably in Trinidad (my collecting interest). From Brazil, it veered east across the Atlantic to Africa, where it followed the African coast to Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) in Belgian Congo.

Until recently, the accepted rationale for FAM 22 was that it served as a means of bypassing the raging war in North Africa and Europe, and linked with existing services to South Africa and the Far East. However, the release of classified war documents and recent research by Dr Susan Williams have shown that its main purpose was to provide a safe, reliable air corridor between the US and the uranium mines of Belgian Congo. She has also shown that some uranium was shipped on these flights. Thus, it is no surprise that Pan Am facilities and airfields in Belgian Congo, especially near the uranium mines, were vastly improved with impressive haste and soon seaplanes were replaced by land-based DC-3s. It is also no surprise that the precursor of the CIA, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), had a significant presence in the region.





Fig 3 Cachet and handstamp from the first flight of FAM 22

This cover was carried on the return journey to Miami and bears the cachet 'PREMIERE LIAISON/CONGO BELGE/ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE/ depart Leopoldville Novembre 1941' – the delay in the start of the service from November to December 1941 meant an additional handstamp 'Départ reporté à Décembre 1941' was needed to correct the November date on the cachet (Fig 3).

### Wartime censorship

This cover was censored in Belgian Congo (the label on the left) and in Trinidad (the label on the right) (Fig 4). As a Trinidad postal history collector, it was this link to Trinidad that first caught my eye. During the war, Trinidad sat at the nexus of major air-routes to Europe, Africa, North and South America, which made it a natural choice for the British to set up a regional censorship station to monitor and intercept enemy communication (Fig 5). Mail in transit through Trinidad was removed from boats and planes, suspicious items examined and either held or released. It grew to be a large operation with hundreds of censors employed to sift through the mountains of mail (Fig 6). A portion of mail from this flight was censored in Trinidad, and this cover was one of them. It was resealed with a Trinidad censor label and, since it was registered, it has the coded pencil marks typically applied to registered mail by Trinidad censors.



Fig 4 The back cover showing the censor marks and labels

Fig 5 Map showing some of the air routes that passed through Trinidad

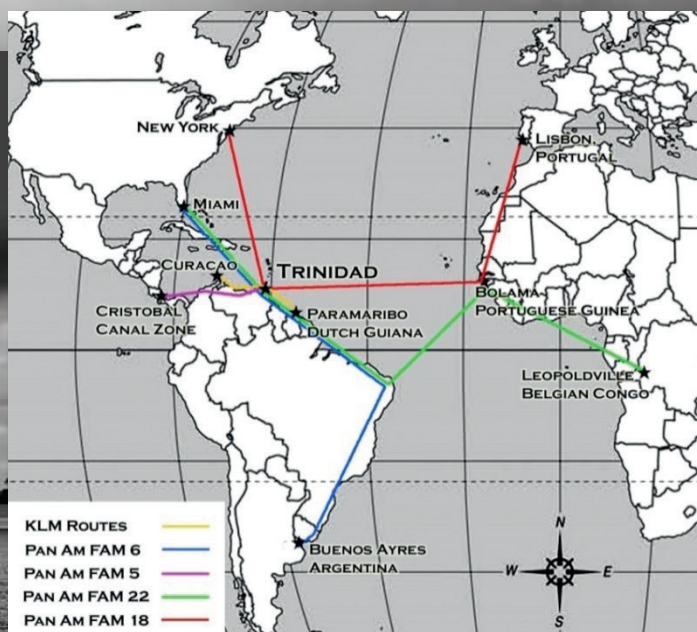


Fig 6 A later cover from Cameroon to the USA, carried on FAM 22 and censored in Trinidad (label to left)





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