Games & Toys

16 May 1989

The theme of this year's Europa issue is Games & Toys – stamps depicting this subject will be issued by member countries of the Conference of European Postal & Telecommunications organisation. The four colourful British stamps, to be issued on 16 May, feature an artistic impression of a number of popular games and toys.



The 19p stamp (inland first class and EEC basic rate) features building bricks, the 27p (airmail postcards) a toy aeroplane and train, the 32p (airmail Zone B) board games and the 35p (airmail Zone C) toys in general.

Until the 19th century children tended to be treated as miniature adults, were required to be useful members of the family and were often dressed in a similar way to their elders. For children of the working class (the vast majority of the population) toys were almost non-existent. The children of the better-off did have toys and most of those which have survived have come from the homes of the upper middle class and the aristocracy. Visitors to many stately homes now open to the public can see delightful examples of the toys played with by the sons and daughters of the nobility.

Toys have survived from ancient times – such as pull-along animals, spinning tops and balls from Ancient Egypt and knucklebones and clay dolls from ancient Greece and Rome. In 16th century Europe, tops, hobby horses,



hoops, marbles, kites, pull-along carts and toy animals were sold by travelling packmen. In the next century the doll's house developed from the cabinets used by ladies for displaying miniature treasures. In the 18th century the rich often had their estate carpenter build a model of their home for their children. Board games, intended to instruct as well as amuse, made their debut. Some of these games had rather grandiose titles, for example the *Royal Game of Goose* (1775) and the *New Game of Human Life* (1790) which stressed its "utility and moral tendency".

The Napoleonic Wars may well have inspired the appeal of metal toy soldiers at the end of the 18th century – the first type consisted of little flat figures cast, wafer thin but marvellously detailed, in tin. The family firm of Britain Ltd became the great name in the manufacture of toy soldiers – by 1900 they offered about a hundred sets, of all different regiments, at a shilling a set.



Toy replicas of forms of transport have proved popular with children (and some adults!) throughout the ages. Soon after the first passenger-carrying trains ran in the 1820s and 1830s, they became subjects for the toy manufacturers. The early toy trains were of a simple, pull-along nature, referred to as "carpet trains"; later working models were produced with water-filled boilers heated by a methylated spirit burner – nicknamed "dribblers" or "piddlers" after the trail they left behind. By the late 19th century, clockwork became the chief motive power for toy trains. Since the 1920s the name Hornby has become almost synonymous with toy trains – their early train sets (in good condition) are now prized collectors' items. Toy aeroplanes came on the market soon after the Wright Brothers flights in 1903; as children the Brothers were inspired by a toy powered by an elastic band "which would lift itself into the air".

Construction toys, such as building bricks, became popular in the 18th century; the wellknown "Bayko" came into production in the 1930s.

Today old toys and games (also childrens' books, annuals and comics) are much sought after and specialist shops and auctions supply a growing number of collectors. Many museums have toy sections and both London and Edinburgh have specialist museums – the Bethnal Green Museum, London E2; the London Toy and Model Museum, London W2; Pollock's Toy Museum, London W1 and the Museum of Childhood, Edinburgh (the toys illustrated in the presentation pack can be seen in the Edinburgh Museum).

Technical Details

Designed by Dan Fern, of the Royal College of Art, the four stamps have been printed in photogravure by Harrison and Sons Limited. They are of vertical format, 41 x 30mm, printed in sheets of 100 on phosphor-coated paper with PVA dextrin gum. Perforation is 14 x 15.

Royal Mail Stamp Cards

Royal Mail Stamp Cards (formerly referred to as PHQ cards) featuring each of the four stamps will be available from 1 May, price 16p each. They are numbered 118A-D.

Presentation Pack

The presentation pack (No 199) will cost $\pounds 1.35$ and was designed by Trickett and Webb Limited with text by John Heyes of the Museum of Childhood, Edinburgh. The many toys illustrated were photographed by Chris Hall at the Edinburgh Museum. The pack was produced by Litho-Tech colour printers.

First Day Cover

The first day cover will be available from 1 May, price 17p, from the British Philatelic Bureau, philatelic counters, the National Postal Museum and main post offices. Two pictorial postmarks will be used for the first day cover service, one at the Bureau and one at Leeds – home of Waddingtons, a leading manufacturer of games.

A first day cover service will be provided by the Bureau with the official Royal Mail cover addressed to the destination required with the four stamps cancelled with either postmark – charges \pounds .62 UK (including VAT), \pounds 1.41 overseas (no VAT). Application forms, available from the Bueau and main post offices, should be returned not later than 16 May.

Customers requiring only the special pictorial postmarks may obtain them under the reposting facility by sending on the day of issue a stamped envelope under an outer cover endorsed "Special First Day of Issue Handstamp" to:

20 Brandon Street EDINBURGH EH3 5TT
Special Postmark Duty Customer Services Leeds LDO 29 Wellington Street LEEDS LS1 1AA

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main offices for those collectors who wish to post covers to receive the standard, nonpictorial "First Day of Issue" handstamps. In addition pictorial First Day handstamps are available at the London Chief Office (arms of the City of London) and Durham (Cathedral). Covers for reposting should be sent to: Special Postmark Duty, City of London LDO, King Edward Street, LONDON EC1A 1AA and Pictorial First Day of Issue Postmark Duty, 33 Silver Street, DURHAM DH1 3RE.

A number of special handstamps, sponsored by stamp dealers and others, will be used on 16 May – full details of these will be found in the *British Postmark Bulletin*.

Souvenir Cover

A souvenir cover, of similar design to the first day cover, will be available from philatelic counters from 17 May, price 17p. This can be used to obtain relevant Games & Toys postmarks after the first day of issue and will be on sale for one year.

