

Kew Gardens

5 June 1990



Four stamps will be issued on 5 June to mark the 150th anniversary of Kew Gardens becoming a national institution. The Gardens are amongst the best-known botanical gardens in the world and were described by the late Sir Huw Wheldon as the "plant capital of the world"; they are visited by some 1¼ million botanists and tourists each year. The Gardens, which occupy 300 acres, contain specimens of some 50,000 different kinds of plant.

The four stamps depict trees and several of Kew's finest buildings. The **20p** stamp (basic inland first class and EEC rate) features a cycad, a fernlike tree of ancient origin, and the Sir Joseph Banks Building which opened this year. Banks (1744-1820) actively promoted economic botany; the study of plants with particular uses. The Banks Building, with its appropriate theme of "the Thread of Life", is the latest addition to Kew's individual pieces of architecture.

House. This 19th century building was designed by Decimus Burton and R Turner; it has recently been restored to its former glory.

The **37p** stamp (Airmail Zone C) portrays a cedar tree and one of Kew's earliest buildings, the famous Pagoda, built as a folly in 1761-2. It reminds us that the gardens were originally constructed as a pleasurable escape for royalty from the formalities of court.

The Gardens were started by Princess Augusta, daughter in law of King George II, and Lord Bute in the 1750s. They quickly developed from a nine acre private garden; by the mid-1760s they were described by horticulturists as a "paradise of our world", containing many rare and exotic plants. During the reign of George III the Gardens came under the control of Sir Joseph Banks described by Sir Huw Wheldon as "botanic impresario", who opened the Gardens to the public — one day a week — in 1774. Both George III and Banks died in 1820 and for some years the Gardens went into decline and the Treasury tried, fortunately unsuccessfully, to persuade Queen Victoria to close them as an unnecessary burden on the Exchequer.

The eminent Victorian botanist Sir William Hooker (1785-1865) was appointed Director of the Gardens in 1841; during his period in office the Gardens grew from 11 to 250 acres in extent. By 1850 there were 2,000 species of plants. The famous Palm House was opened in 1848 — a great wrought iron and glass structure, inspired by the Crystal Palace. It measures 362 feet long and 66 feet high and was heated by an extensive system of hot water pipes; Hooker referred to it as the "Great Stove". The Temperate House, opened in 1863, was the largest plant house in the world. Like the Palm House, it was designed by Decimus Burton.

Sir William's son, Joseph (1817-1911) succeeded his father as Director in 1865; he had studied in the Himalayas and made journeys to New Zealand and Antarctica. He expanded the tree plantations, planting over 1,000 specimens of pines. The trees served to screen out some of the unwanted views of industrial London. He also developed the Rock Garden, expanded



The **29p** stamp (worldwide postcard rate) shows a stone pine, a Mediterranean tree with edible seeds, and the Princess of Wales Conservatory, the largest glasshouse at Kew. Opened in 1987, it contains 10 separate computer-controlled climatic zones ranging from desert to tropical rain forest.

The third stamp, **34p** value (Airmail Zone B) features a graceful willow tree and the Palm



Joseph Hooker Building

the remaining plants are under attack from acid rain. In Britain, almost a third of the trees are affected.

Trees are a valuable economic resource. Every year about 100 million trees are toppled to provide the paper requirements of the people of Britain - almost two trees for every person. But destroying the forests will not only rob us of foods and useful products, it could adversely affect climates. Forests soak up the sun's heat, whereas burning trees releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and adds to the global overheating known as the 'greenhouse effect'.

Forests are also a genetic resource. They harbour wild species of trees and other useful plants some of which are grown as crops. The genes of these wild plants can be used to improve trees and crops grown in plantations and on farms, raising yields while reducing the failure of harvests due to pests and diseases. If their wild forebears are destroyed, then the trees and crops in cultivation may become overbred with limited defences



Stately trees, Kew gardens

glasshouses at Kew are divided into ten separate computer-controlled climatic zones ranging from desert to tropical rain forest.

In the third stamp a graceful willow tree appears with the Palm House. Designed by Decimus Burton and R. Turner and constructed between 1884 and 1848, the Palm House has recently been restored to its former glory.

The final stamp portrays one of Kew's earliest buildings, the Pagoda, with a cedar tree.

Pagoda, a folly built in 1761-2 in the fashionable chinoiserie style, reminds us of the garden's origins as a pleasurable escape for royalty from the formalities of court.



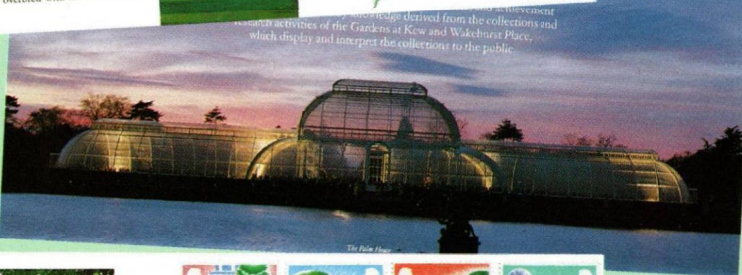
Willow tree, Kew gardens



Pagoda

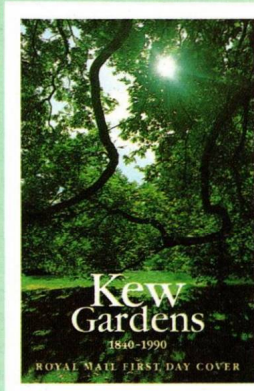


Willow tree, Kew



The Palm House

...heritage derived from the collections and research activities of the Gardens at Kew and Wakehurst Place, which display and interpret the collections to the public.



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A number of special handstamps sponsored by stamp dealers and others, will be used on 5 June - details of these will be found in the *British Postmark Bulletin*, available on subscription from the British Philatelic Bureau.

Souvenir Cover

A souvenir cover, of similar design to the first day cover, will be available from all philatelic counters from 6 June, price 18p. This will be on sale for one year.

Earlier Related Issues

The British Post Office has issued a number of stamps featuring flowers and trees, starting with the 3d stamp in the 1963 National Nature Week issue. Four stamps commemorated the 10th International Botanical Congress in Edinburgh in 1964, and the well-known flower illustrations of the Rev. Keble-Martin and used on six British Wild Flowers stamps in 1967. Two Tree stamps were issued in 1973 and 1974, respectively showing an Oak and a Horse Chestnut. Roses featured on four stamps marking the centenary of the Royal National Rose Society in 1976; Spring Wild Flowers was a popular issue in March 1979. Flowers and trees adorned the four British Gardens stamps of 1983. Photographs of flowers by Alfred Lammer were featured on four stamps in 1987; the alternative "First Day of Issue" postmark, inscribed Richmond Surrey, had the Kew Palm House as its design. The Yellow Waterlily and fungi were depicted on two of the Linnean Society stamps of 1988. Kew featured on the cover of the fourth book in the 50p Botanical Gardens series of 1987-8.

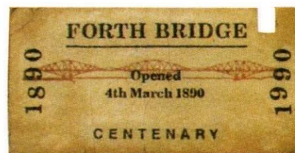
Scottish Aerogrammes

A number of friends have asked for a listing of Scottish aerogrammes which we are pleased to publish. For issues to 24 May 1988, the value in parentheses refers to the postage value of the imprinted stamp; since 4 April 1989 the aerogrammes have included the non value indicator. *Note:* Until 1981 aerogrammes were officially termed "Air Letters".

15 May 74	Glenfinnan Monument (6p)
13 Jan 75	Robert Burns (6p)
12 May 75	Glasgow 800th Anniv (8½p)
18 Jun 75	Highlands (8½p)
23 Jul 75	Scott Monument (8½p)

14 Jul 76	Folk Traditions (10½p)
25 Aug 76	Ailsa Craig (10½p)
4 May 77	Gathering of Clans (10½p)
23 Aug 78	Regimental Uniforms (10½p)
25 Apr 79	St Andrews Golf (10½p)
29 Aug 79	Regimental Uniforms (12p)
21 May 80	Regimental Uniforms (14p)
13 Aug 80	Soc of Antiquaries (14p)
29 Apr 81	Wildlife (20p)
28 Apr 82	Royal Navy (24p)
25 Aug 82	Tartans (24p)
13 Apr 83	Edinburgh (26p)
10 Aug 83	Boys' Brigade (26p)
29 May 84	Inland Air Mail (26p)
14 Aug 84	Edinburgh Festival (26p)
23 Apr 85	War Blinded (26p)
6 Aug 85	Andrew Carnegie (26p)
8 Apr 86	N Lighthouse Board (26p)
5 Aug 86	Mary Queen of Scots (26p)
4 Aug 87	James M Barrie (26p)
29 Mar 88	Year of the Bible (26p)
24 May 88	Glasgow Garden Festival (26p)
4 Apr 89	Famous Scots (32p)
8 Aug 89	William Playfair (32p)
24 Apr 90	Forth Rail Bridge (40p)

Only the Playfair and Forth Bridge issues are still on sale at the British Philatelic Bureau and philatelic counters; the Playfair aerogramme will be withdrawn from sale on 7 August 1990.



Society News

Visitors to Stamp World with an interest in local postal history have an ideal opportunity to meet informally with other enthusiasts on 9 May. The Midland (GB) Postal History Society is holding a meeting in Room C between 10.30am and 1.30pm. Postal history societies have been invited to contribute to displays and it is hoped that many members will be present. Enquiries to: W J Calladine, Dunley House, Cranham, GLOUCESTER GL4 8HQ.

A new society for collectors of revenue stamps of the world is being set up; a meeting will be held at the East India Club, 16 St James' Square, London SW1 at 4pm on 10 May. Enquiries to: John Whiteside, 4 Moorfields, Scott Hall Road, LEEDS LS17 6SJ.