

16 March 1993



Five stamps marking the 14th World Orchid Conference, Glasgow 28 April-2 May 1993, go on sale at post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau, Collections, and philatelic counters, on 16 March 1993.

The **18p** stamp features *Dendrobium hellwigianum* which is widely distributed in the mountains of east New Guinea. It was discovered by Franz Hellwig (1861-89), an early explorer of the New Guinea interior. The flowers of this species vary from greyish blue to purple, to occasionally white or pale yellow. The leaves are unusual in that they are almost round in cross-section.

The **28p** value shows *Cymbidium lowianum* which has long, arching spikes with up to 40 flowers on each. It was originally introduced from Burma in 1877.



The **33p** denomination features *Vanda Rothschildiana*, a cross between *Vanda coerulea*, a blue-flowered species from the Himalayas and Thailand, and the spectacular *Vanda (Euanthe) sanderiana*, a native of the Philippines which has pink flowers with brownish chequered markings.

The final value, **39p**, depicts *Dendrobium vexillarius* var. *albiviride* which is from New Guinea. *Vexillarius* means "standard bearer" and, rather appropriately, it was a very fine primrose-coloured form of this which was named "Queen Elizabeth" to commemorate a visit by The Queen to the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, in 1985.

The five stamps cover the following postal needs: 18p basic 2nd class inland rate; 24p basic 1st class inland and EC rate; 28p Europe, non-EC basic rate; 33p worldwide postcard rate; and 39p basic airmail letter rate.

The **24p** stamp depicts *Paphiopedilum Maudiae Magnificum* which is a particularly good clone of *Paphiopedilum Maudiae*. This is a man-made cross between two fine green-and white-flowered varieties – *Paphiopedilum callosum* var. *sanderiae* from south-east Asia and *P. lawrenceanum* var. *hyeanum* from Borneo. This classic hybrid, raised at the end of the last century, remains popular in orchid collections.

The first world orchid conference was held in St Louis, Missouri, in 1954. This event now takes place every three years in a different continent and hemisphere, drawing together thousands of people of all nationalities, languages, cultures, ages and professions. Only once before has it come to Britain (London, 1960), so for many its staging in Glasgow in 1993 will be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see such a spectacular

ROYAL MAIL MINT STAMPS

ORCHIDS



Photograph: The Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

The double tubers of some European species were used as both a cure and an aphrodisiac and gave rise to the name given them by the ancient Greeks, for *zobis* literally means 'tender' in Greek. Shakespeare included 'dead men's fingers' and 'long purple' in Ophelia's garland. Around the same time also, the fragrant *Vanilla planifolia*, the first commercial orchid product, was introduced into Europe by the Spaniards returning from the New World. By the 1820s WILLIAM HOOKER in Glasgow and later at Kew was describing species sent home by plant explorers such as GEORGE URE SKINNER in Guatemala, THOMAS LOBB in Java and his



William Hooker (1785-1850) Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew



John L. Murray

orchid the first world wealthy Albans; employed more exotic

...the most popular as a cut flower with its flowers both delicate and colourful. The species vary greatly and are classified into several sections, one of which, section *Oxyglossum* (meaning 'sharp tongue' because of its lip shape), has its centre of distribution in the high mountains of New Guinea. As a result of collections made by staff of the Royal Botanic Garden at Edinburgh during several expeditions, some of these attractive, dwarf, sub-alpine species have been introduced into cultivation.

Slipper Orchids were originally all included in the genus *Cypripedium*. They share, among other characteristics, a pouch or slipper-like lip, hence their common name. They occur in temperate regions of the old and new worlds - there is one very rare representative in Britain - and in the tropics where the American species are classified in *Selenipedium* and *Phlegmipedium* and the Asiatic in *Paphiopedilum*, the last two both popular with the amateur orchid grower.



Photograph: J. Burrows, B. of D. & C. of London, Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Cymbidiums have for centuries been cultivated in eastern Asia, particularly China where they were held in high esteem by Confucius 2,500 years ago. They have been depicted on oriental paintings and porcelain for hundreds of years. They are, perhaps, the best known of the exotic orchids, being widely available as pot-plants, cut-flower spikes or as individual 'button-holes'.

Vandas are recognised by a distinctive habit of growth and large showy flowers and are distributed in tropical regions of the old world from India south and east as far as the Solomon Islands. The name is Sanskrit in origin and the genus has been popular among orchid hybridisers, giving rise to many spectacular cultivars.



Vanda rothschildiana



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wealth of orchids displayed under the one roof. The conference will be held at the prestigious Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre; the displays of orchids will be open to the public.

Stamps to commemorate the conference are also being issued by the Jersey Post Office (26 January 1993).

The stamps were designed by Pandora Sellars. Mrs Sellars was born in Herefordshire in 1936 and received her artistic education at Hereford and Cheltenham School of Art, eventually specialising in printed textiles. She has worked as a freelance botanical illustrator for the Kew magazine and other publications. Her husband's orchid collection provides her with inspiration for her work.



Her first stamp work was for the Jersey Post Office – the 13p stamp in the Jersey Lilies set (28 January 1986, S. G. 380) features her illustration of the Jersey Lily (*Amaryllis belladonna*); followed by three stamps in the Europa: Environmental Conservation set (21 April 1986, S. G. 386/8). She describes her work on the Royal Mail Orchid stamps as an “artistically rewarding project”. She worked closely with staff at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Edinburgh. Mrs Sellars comments: “Most people have an image of orchids as large showy blooms seen in florists shops or worn in corsages by celebrities. If these stamps can make people more aware of the great beauty and diversity of this genus and how

perilously close many species are to extinction then it will be more than ample return for any effort I have put into these designs”.

Technical Details

Printers:	Harrison & Sons Ltd
Process:	Photogravure
Size:	41 x 30mm, horizontal
Sheets:	100
Perforation:	15 x 14
Phosphor:	Phosphor Coated Paper
Gum:	PVA Dextrin
Presentation Pack:	Nos 236, price £1.75
Stamp Cards:	Nos 151 A-E, price 21p each

First Day Facilities

Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the Bureau, Collections, and philatelic counters approximately two weeks before 16 March, price 21p.

The Bureau will provide a first day cover service – collectors may order the Royal Mail cover bearing the five stamps cancelled with a pictorial “First Day of Issue” postmark of the Bureau or Glasgow price £2.03 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £1.73 to overseas addresses (no VAT). Orders for first day covers must be received at the Bureau by 16 March.

Collectors may send their own stamped covers, on the day of issue, for the Bureau or Glasgow cancels, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail Glasgow, George Square, GLASGOW G2 1AA. The outer envelope should be endorsed “Pictorial First Day of Issue postmark”.

The Glasgow pictorial postmark features the salmon from the city's coat of arms.

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for collectors who wish to post covers to receive the standard, non-pictorial “First Day of Issue” handstamps.

Details of other special handstamps, sponsored by Royal Mail, stamp dealers and others, will be found in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – the Royal Mail's magazine for postmark collectors. It is available on subscription from the British Philatelic Bureau: £10 UK and Europe, £21.75 Rest of World (Airmail.)

There will be no souvenir covers; these have now been discontinued.