

# Royal Mail News

## Channel Tunnel

Four stamps commemorating the official opening of the Channel Tunnel will go on sale at post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau, Collections, Post Shops Plus and Philatelic Counters on 3 May 1994.

The stamps are printed in two se-tenant pairs; stamps of similar design will also be issued by *La Poste*, the French Post Office. The stamps are of 25p and 41p values, covering the basic rates for inland 1st class and EC mail and airmail letters. The designs feature the British Lion and French Cock extending the hand of friendship across the Channel. The left-hand stamp was designed by George Hardie for Royal Mail, the right-hand stamp by Jean-Paul Cousin for *La Poste*.

In 1981 the concept was again favoured by both governments and in January 1986 it was announced that a tunnel would be constructed. The British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and the French President, François Mitterrand, ratified the treaty allowing construction in July 1987.

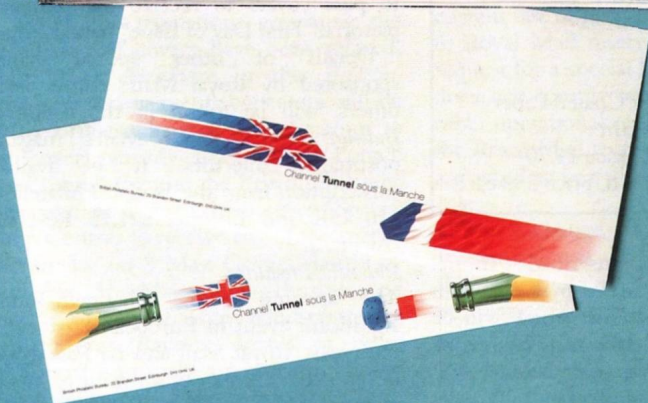
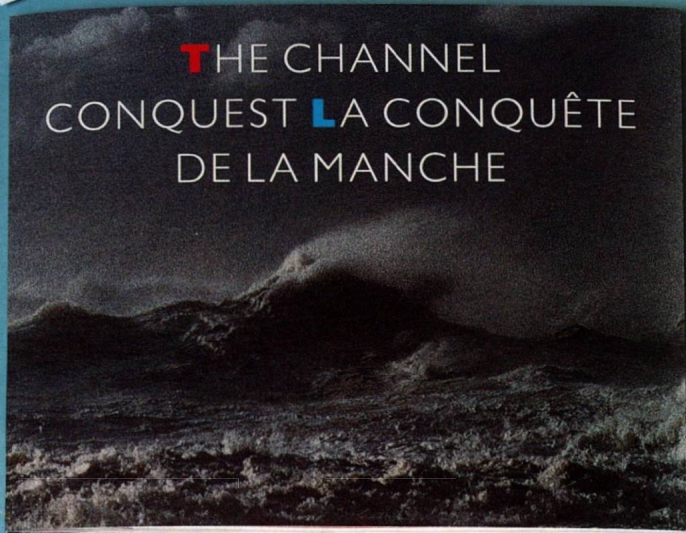
This great engineering project has involved building two railway tunnels and a central service tunnel that run from Folkestone to Sangatte at an average depth of 40 metres under the Channel seabed. The excavation work was mainly carried out by gigantic Tunnel Boring Machines. Some 15,000 people have been involved in construction work. Crews worked from the British and French sides, meeting up in each other's service tunnel on 1 December 1990. Terminals for the Tunnel are located at Folkestone and near Calais. The French terminal is the biggest land transport complex in Europe, with motorway and rail connections to Paris and Brussels.

Work on building the Tunnel was completed in December 1993 when the construction company, Transmanche Link, handed over the



The opening of the Channel Tunnel, the first fixed link between the United Kingdom and France, is the fulfilment of a dream that has obsessed generations of engineers for more than two centuries. The idea of a tunnel originated in 1802 but it was not until the early 1880s that digging was started by two private companies in each country. Work was soon abandoned. In 1964 the governments of the UK and France revived the idea of a link, plans for a bridge were drawn up but later a tunnel was agreed. Work commenced in the early 1970s but the project was cancelled in 1975.

Tunnel to the operators, Eurotunnel. Her Majesty The Queen and President Mitterrand will officially open the Tunnel on 6 May and it is expected that car shuttle services will commence shortly afterwards. Four trains an hour are planned for peak times, trains will travel at up to 87.5mph (140 kph). Passenger trains from London to Paris and Brussels are expected to start in the summer; these will operate to and from Waterloo Station until a new high-speed rail link is built from London to the Tunnel. The passenger trains will run at up to 100 mph (160 kph) and cover the journey between the



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