

# Royal Mail News

## Science Fiction

Four stamps on the theme of Science Fiction go on sale at post offices, and philatelic outlets on 6 June. The issue coincides with the centenary of the first publication of H G Wells's *The Time Machine*, one of the best-known and most influential science fiction books.

The designs, by Siobhan Keaney, illustrate the novels of H G Wells. *The Time Machine* (1895) features on the 25p stamp which covers the basic rate for inland 1st class and European Union mail. The 30p stamp depicts *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) and provides for mail to European, non-EU, countries. *The War of the Worlds* (1898) is shown on the 35p denomination, for airmail postcards, and the 41p stamp features *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933)

Herbert George Wells was born at Bromley, Kent in 1866; his father ran an unsuccessful china shop. Although his parents wanted him to follow a similar trade, Wells had other ideas and was keen to get a good education. He attended

classes at the Normal School of Science in Kensington, studying biology with T H Huxley. He graduated in 1890 and worked in scientific journalism and teaching. His early books had a major impact on the thinkers of their time. He also wrote fiction based on the life of the ordinary man; such works include some of his best-known titles – *Love and Mr Lewisham* (1900), *Kipps: The Story of a Simple Soul* (1905), and *The History of Mr Polly* (1910). But he did not neglect his science fiction writing and *The First Men in the Moon* appeared in 1901.

Wells was an enthusiastic Fabian socialist, keen on social reform and after the First World War his political/social work was as important to him as his writing. He attempted to influence politicians, talking to Winston Churchill; Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin; and US President, Franklin D Roosevelt. He drafted a declaration of human rights, a forerunner to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The Second World War damaged many of his hopes for mankind, and science which he thought should improve man's life looked like destroying it. A saddened man, Wells died at his London home in August 1946.

His prolific output of over 150 books and numerous articles make him a literary giant of the 20th century.

## Technical details

Printers: The House of Questa Ltd

Process: Offset lithography

Size: 35 x 37mm

Sheets: 100

Perforation: 14

Phosphor: Two phosphor bands

Paper: OBA free (OBA =  
Optical Brightening Agent)

Gum: PVA



## Plates Numbers & Colours

25p, 30p and 41p 1A (new blue) 1A (greenish yellow) 1A (magenta) 1A (black) 1A (rosine)  
35p 1A (new blue) 1A (greenish yellow) 1A (violet) 1A (black) 1A (bright blue-green)

## First Day Facilities

Unstamped first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets around a week before 6 June, price 25p.

The Bureau will provide a first day cover

BRITISH PHILATELIC BUREAU  
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE  
4 JUNE 1995  
Wells  
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE  
4 JUNE 1995

mint stamps  
Royal Mail  
**science fiction**  
238 6495



...day' can be a long time.

...both yesterday and today... believed Wells was born... technology and evolution were... He dramatised these findings... that excitement in a manner both scientific and poetical - and it... reflects... the mould for the new literary form of science fiction (SF)... Countless fantastic stories written during the past century... have been influenced by this tale; none have bettered it.



Centuries of unlined time are compressed into this poignant story.

Following *The Time Machine* came a number of imaginative novels. Most of them were written while Wells was still in his thirties, struggling to make a living by writing. One of the most intriguing is *The War of the Worlds* (1897), in which a desolate Earth is attacked by Martians. As the conqueror Earth is overwhelmed through high technology, Wells, who also introduced the theme of alien invasion - an idea which has since proved inexhaustible.

His novel about travel through time, landing on the moon and the exploration of a different culture is *The First Men in the Moon* (1901); another staple of later SF writers. In his subsequent discussion novel, *Things in the Sky* (1908), Wells has one of the best of a better civilization here on Earth - one of the many utopias. In the brilliant Wells-scripted *Things in the Sky* (1908), we have the first journey into the future - a first journey - in the modern sense of the word - 'out across immensity to the future'. The novel has seeds for *Star Trek* and many other 'space operas'.

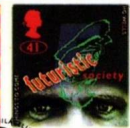
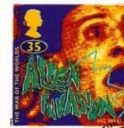
Wells's mind was as well stocked with concepts of utopian planets as the two races which occupy the future in *The Time Machine* - the delicate Eloi, the evil, ravenous Morlocks - represent these dual worlds - the one so vividly dramatized. Hence Wells's lasting popularity and influence. Hence, perhaps, the popularity of SF: appealing to our hopes and fears for the future. Wells's technique of reflecting the present in the mirror of the future contains the essence of SF. No writer has bettered the prescription.

In the 40 years from *The Time Machine*... clear; continue as we are and... Yet Wells...

make the so Political and Journ took over. One of Declaration of the established United. Wells. 'A unified pol now waste the might After his death, one genius and fun'. It is a



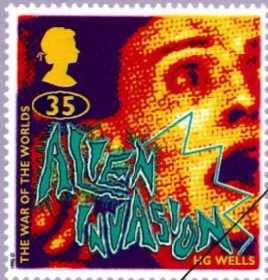
**science fiction**



BRITISH PHILATELIC BUREAU  
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE  
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BRITISH PHILATELIC BUREAU  
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Mrs J Robinson  
200 Manorbier Road  
ILKESTON  
Derbyshire  
DE7 4AB



service – collectors may order the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps, cancelled with pictorial “First Day of Issue” postmark of the Bureau or Wells (Somerset), price £1.96 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £1.67 overseas (no VAT). Orders must be received at the Bureau by 6 June 1995.

Collectors may send their own stamped covers on 6 June for these pictorial cancels to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Wexham Road, SLOUGH SL1 1AA (for Wells postmark). Please endorse the outer envelope “FD9513” (Bureau), or “FD9514” (Wells).

First Day Postage Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for collectors to post covers to receive local, non-pictorial “First Day of Issue” handstamps.

Details of sponsored special handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* (Royal Mail’s magazine for postmark collectors), which is available on subscription from the British Philatelic Bureau: £10 UK/Europe; £21.75 Rest of World (Airmail).

#### *Presentation Pack and Stamp Cards*

The pack (price £1.65) and stamp cards (25p each) will be available from the Bureau, Post

Office Counters philatelic outlets and main post offices.

#### *The Designer*

Siobhan Keaney was born in 1959 and educated at the London College of Printing, graduating in graphic design. She worked briefly for three London design consultancies before becoming an independent designer in 1985. Her work is noted for its meticulous concern for typographic detail and skilful multilayered photographic illustrations. Her list of awards is ever growing, including the National Business Calendar Award (1986), and the Designers and Art Directors Association Silver Award for the most outstanding annual report and brochure (1990). She was shortlisted for the BBC Design awards in 1990. Ms Keaney has lectured at the Design Museum, London; North Carolina State University, USA; and the Royal College of Art. Exhibitions of her work have been shown at the Barbican, Royal College of Art, Royal Festival Hall, Design Museum, and at overseas venues. Her list of published works is equally impressive, including *Images II* (1987), *Typography now – the next wave* (1991), and *Computer graphics* (1993).

The Science Fiction set are her first stamps for Royal Mail.

#### **D-Day Stamps**

Further to the plate numbers recorded here last July (page 315), the National Postal Museum reports that stamps were also printed from plates 2A x 5, 3A x 5 and 4A x 5.

#### **National Postal Museum News**

The Museum will issue nine new postcards on 5 May – five connected with the “Victorian posts” exhibition (which opens to the public on 9 May) and four featuring stamps from the Museum’s Freddie Mercury collection. Details were published last month (page 229). Since it was acquired just over a year ago, the collection has proved a popular attraction at the Museum where fans of the rock legend can request to see and turn the pages of stamps collected by Freddie before he became famous. More than 800 visitors have already experienced the often moving moment, some leaving single red roses and others bursting into tears at the sight of the collection. Fans who have not seen the album at the NPM will be able to see it at the Fan Club’s Convention at Pontin’s Holiday Club, Southport, Merseyside on 5-7 May. The album