

Royal Mail News

Rugby League Centenary Stamps

Five stamps commemorating the centenary of the founding of the Rugby League and the Rugby League World Cup in England and Wales (7-30 October), go on sale at post offices, and philatelic outlets on 3 October.

The stamps feature famous players from the Rugby Hall of Fame in Leeds. The **19p** stamp (inland 2nd class basic rate) features Harold Wagstaff (1891-1939) who during his career, 1906-25, captained Huddersfield's "Team of All Talents" that managed some 44 games without defeat. Known as "The Prince of Centres", Wagstaff combined superb rugby skills with tactical awareness and inspired leadership. He is considered by many as the finest ever League player.

The **25p** value (inland 1st class and EU basic rate) depicts Gus Risman (1911-94) who played between 1929 and 1954 and was the oldest person to appear in a Cup final at 41 and had the longest career at senior level. He played Union

during the Second World War when the rules were relaxed. He made some 36 international and test appearances and captained two Challenge Cup-winning teams. He made the second highest number of appearances ever (873) and scored the third highest number of points (4050).

James Sullivan (1903-77) features on the **30p** denomination (basic rate to European, non-EU countries). A former Union player, his League career spanned the period 1921-46. He was the first to score over 400 points in a season and over 6000 in his long career. He was arguably the greatest full-back and the most prolific goal-kicker of all time, winning every honour, playing more games (928) and kicking more goals (2867) than anyone before or since.

The **35p** stamp (worldwide postcard rate) portrays Billy Batten (1889-1959) the most celebrated pre First World War player. He is noted as one of the great characters of the game. A powerful and uncompromising centre, he was renowned for barging through or even jumping over tackles. A member of the Hunslet team which won All Four Cups in 1907-8, Batten played international rugby for 13 seasons.

The final stamp, **41p** (airmail basic rate) depicts Brian Bevan (1924-91), who scored 796 tries in his career, between 1945 and 1964, over 200 more than the next best career total. He never played test rugby for his native Australia. Described as "hairless and harelike" Bevan is regarded as perhaps the deadliest winger in the history of the game, noted for a combination of blistering pace and bewildering elusiveness



See front cover for 25p stamp

Rugby History

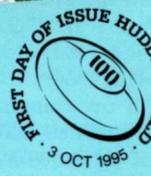
Football has been played – in various forms – in England since medieval times. Different types of football were played all over the British Isles and various monarchs tried to ban it as a distraction from more important pastimes such as archery and horse-riding. Such prescriptive attempts failed. Rugby football owes its origins to the town of Rugby, and in particular to the famous public school. The well-known story tells how, in 1823, a sixth-former William Webb Ellis (1805-72) broke existing rules and ran with the ball. Thus a boy described as of "fair average abilities" helped create an international game. The rules for rugby football were adopted in 1846.

The game is divided between Rugby Union and Rugby League. Union – the original form – is played by teams of 15, whereas League teams,

Royal Mail Mint Stamps

RUGBY LEAGUE CENTENARY

And these players who you see their fire as of thomatoid boys umbrella'd under a watch-chained gaff drooping with mop as they march out, youth, comrades!



RUGBY LEAGUE CENTENARY
Royal Mail First Day Cover

Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbier Road
ILKESTON
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB

which play to modified, professional rules, comprise 13 players. League is generally regarded as a faster game; the more running and passing making it a rather more appealing spectator sport.

A Rugby Union was established in 1871 and the Rugby League seceded from the Union in 1895. On 29 August 1895, rugby union clubs from Lancashire and Yorkshire met at the George Hotel, Huddersfield and voted to quit the Union and form their own organisation. This move was caused by the Union's refusal to allow players to be compensated for taking time off work to play rugby. Originally known as the Northern Union, it adopted its present name in 1922. The Rugby League Challenge Cup was introduced in 1897, followed by a League Championship competition in the early 1900s. Many thousands now enjoy watching League games at the following clubs: Barrow, Batley, Bradford Northern, Bramley, Carlisle, Castleford, Dewsbury, Doncaster, Featherstone Rovers, Halifax, Highfield, Huddersfield, Hull, Hull Kingston Rovers, Hunslet, Keighley, Leeds, Leigh, London Broncos, Oldham, Rochdale Hornets, Ryedale-York, St Helens, Salford, Sheffield Eagles, Swinton, Wakefield Trinity, Warrington, Whitehaven, Widnes, Wigan, and Workington Town.

League is now a popular game in France and New Zealand – members of the All Black team watching League, during the first tour in 1905-6, were impressed with the new game. A NZ national club competition was launched in 1994, and New Zealand Post commemorated the League Centenary with five stamps on 26 July 1995 – 45c, \$1, \$1.50 and \$1.80 values in sheets of 100 and an additional 45c in books of 10.

Readers keen on rugby history might be interested to know of the James Gilbert Rugby Football Museum in Rugby. The museum is situated in the building where Gilberts have been making rugby footballs since 1842. William Gilbert, who founded the firm, was a boot and shoe maker to Rugby School. The boys used to bring their shoes to him so he could reinforce the toecaps – they could then "hack" better. Hacking involved tripping an opponent by a well-placed kick across the shins. Although the museum highlights the history of ball manufacture, it is also a treasure trove of rugby memorabilia from all over the world. Enquiries: James Gilbert Rugby Football Museum, 5 St Matthews Street, RUGBY, Warwickshire, CV21 3BY, Tel. 01788-542426.



Rugby League World Cup

The Rugby League World Cup, sponsored by the Halifax Building Society, is being staged in England and Wales from 7 October. Matches will be played at Cardiff, Gateshead, Keighley, Huddersfield, Hull, Leeds, Old Trafford (Manchester), St Helens, Swansea, Warrington, Wigan, and Wembley. The semi-finals will be played at Old Trafford and Huddersfield on 21-22 October, with the final at Wembley on 30 October.

The inaugural Rugby League World Cup competition took place in France in 1954. In the final, watched by 30,000 fans, Britain beat France 16-12. Britain also won in 1960 and 1972, the Australians in 1957, 1968, 1970, 1975, 1977, 1988, and 1992. Great Britain was split into England and Wales for the 1975 competition. Australia and New Zealand were the hosts for the 1977 World Cup which was the last to be played under the traditional format. In 1985 a new format was introduced and new International Board members Papua New Guinea were added to the list of contenders. The tournament was to be decided on a home and away basis over a three year period at the end of which the top two teams were to meet in the final. The same formula was used in 1992 – in the final at Wembley Australia beat Britain 10-6.

This League World Cup should not be confused with the Rugby Union World Cup held in South Africa (24 May-25 June 1995) for which a number of countries issued stamps.

The Designer

The stamps have been designed by Christian Birmingham, his first designs for Royal Mail. Born in 1970, Christian graduated from Exeter College of Art & Design in 1991. In December 1992 he joined Startworks, the group of young artists, and is now a fully fledged member of The Artworks. He has worked for several design groups and has illustrated several books, including *The Dancing Bear* and *The Magical Bicycle* (published by Collins) and historical science books on Marie Curie and Pasteur (published Matthew Price Ltd).

Earlier Rugby Stamps

Britain has issued just three Rugby stamps – a 9p value in 1971 to commemorate the centenary of the Rugby Football Union (SG 889), a 13½p stamp in 1980 marking the centenary of the Welsh Rugby Union (1135), and a 37p denomination for the Rugby (Union) World Cup in London in 1991 (1567). All were part of general Anniversaries or Sport issues; the forthcoming set is the first devoted wholly to the sport.

Rugby has featured on two aerogrammes – a Welsh issue of September 1976, and a Scottish issue of March 1991 which commemorated the Scottish Rugby XV Triple Crown and Grand Slam success in 1990 and the 1991 Rugby World Cup.

A number of Rugby postmarks have been used, mainly in 1980 for the Welsh Rugby Union centenary and in 1991 for the World Cup – for details see the British Postmark Society's publications *Special Event Postmarks of the United Kingdom* Vols 2 & 3, covering the years 1963-83 and 1984-93 respectively (reviewed here June 1994, p.300).

Technical details

Printers: Harrison & Sons Ltd

Process: Photogravure

Size: 35 x 37mm

Sheets: 100

Perforation: 14 x 14.5

Phosphor: 19p - one phosphor band
25p-41p two phosphor bands
Blue fluorescence in bands

Paper: OBA free (OBA = Optical
Brightening Agent)

Gum: PVA Dextrin

First Day Facilities

Unstamped Royal Mail 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 3 October, price 25p.

The Bureau will provide a first day cover service – collectors may order the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps, cancelled with a pictorial "First Day of Issue" postmark of the Bureau or Huddersfield, price £2.18 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £1.86 to overseas addresses (no VAT). Orders for first day covers must be received at the Bureau by 3 October 1995.

Collectors may send their own stamped covers on the day of issue, for these cancels, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Forth Street, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE1 1AA (for Huddersfield postmark). The outer envelope should be endorsed "FD9519" (Bureau), or "FD9520" (Huddersfield).

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for collectors who wish to post covers to receive local (mostly 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).

Collectors are reminded that it will be in order to affix just the 19p Rugby League stamp to covers to receive all special cancels ("First Day of Issue", sponsored and philatelic counters), in use on 3 October. The minimum 1st class rule is suspended on this day as this set includes a 2nd class rate stamp. It should be noted that this concession applies only to the 19p Rugby League stamp; covers bearing other stamps must bear at least 1st class postage.

Serviced First Day Cover

Fully serviced first day covers, bearing the Huddersfield pictorial first day postmark will be available from most W H Smith shops, offered subject unsold.

Presentation Pack and Stamp Cards

A presentation pack (price £1.85) will be

available from the Bureau, Post Office Counters philatelic outlets, main post offices, and most W H Smith shops. Stamp cards (25p each) will be available from the Bureau, POC philatelic outlets, and main post offices.

Souvenir Postcard Book

One of the best souvenirs available of this historic year for Rugby League, our lavishly illustrated booklet includes 10 postcards featuring the special stamps artwork (minus Queen's head and value), interesting league facts and details of the sportsmen immortalised in the Rugby League Hall of Fame. Price £2.95 postpaid from: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT. Order code PB200. Also available from Post Office Counters philatelic outlets. This is the second such postcard book – the first, reproducing the Cat stamps, is still available from the Bureau, price £2.95.

New NVI Stamp Label

A new stamp label containing a 1st class Non Value Indicator (NVI) stamp will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets from 11 September. This will be similar to the "Boots" label of August 1994 but will not include that company's logo. The new label can thus be used in packs of greetings cards sold by other retailers. The wording on the pane has been amended and now reads: "Valid for Royal Mail First class up to 60g within the UK" and "©The Post Office 1995". The label has been printed by Questa. The stamp bears two phosphor bands with blue fluor. Please note that no first day of issue facilities are being offered.

Castle High Values

A number of readers have asked about the "enhanced" versions of the £1, £1.50, £2 and £5 Castle stamps. The term "re-engraved" has been used although this is not accurate. The printers, Harrison & Sons Ltd, have provided the following description of the process: The original hand-engraved steel dies were very accurately photographed. The film positives produced were then used as the originals to produce the engraved copper plates etched by a special photo-mechanical method. From the copper plates, nickel machine plates were produced by using the electrolytic plating method.

Details of these "enhanced" stamps were given

here in October 1994 (page 37), April 1995 (p.227) and July 1995 (p.321).

1995 Christmas Aerogramme

The Christmas aerogramme for 1995 goes on sale at post offices, the Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets from 3 October, price 45p. The main design is robins, to complement the Christmas stamps, due for issue on 30 October. The aerogramme, designed by Silk Pearce (design group) and illustrated by Allan Drummond, was printed by McCorquodale Envelopes Ltd. It will be on sale at post offices until 23 December and at the Bureau and philatelic outlets until October 1996. The 1994 Christmas aerogramme will be withdrawn from sale at the Bureau and philatelic outlets on 3 October. Christmas aerogrammes were introduced in 1965.



Greetings Stamps Win Top US Award

Royal Mail is pleased to announce that the 1995 "Art of Greeting" Greetings stamps, designed by Newell and Sorrell, recently won a gold medal in the Best Illustration Category in the Print Media Competition of the New York Festivals 37th annual international competition. A record 4315 entries were received from 55 countries. Judging was carried out by creative directors, art directors, copywriters, designers and radio producers in New York and in 20 cities around