

Royal Mail news The Queen's Beasts

stamps • New prestige stamp book • Disney stamp book • Exhibitions at the NPM

The Queen's Beasts Five 26p stamps featuring six heraldic beasts go on sale at post offices and philatelic outlets on 24 February. The stamps are printed in a horizontal se-tenant strip. The set is issued on the occasion of the 650th anniversary of the Order of the Garter – the oldest order of chivalry, instituted by Edward III in 1348. The beasts depicted are based on those created for The Queen's Coronation in June 1953. These were six-foot high sculptures which supported shields of Royal Arms and badges and were conceived to symbolise The Queen's royal descent and to guard Her entrance to Westminster Abbey. The five stamps feature: the Lion of England and Griffin of Edward III; Falcon of Plantagenet and Bull of Clarence; Lion of Mortimer and Yale of Beaufort; Greyhound of Richmond and Dragon of Wales; and Unicorn of Scotland and Horse of Hanover.



Presentation pack and stamp cards A well-illustrated pack (price £1.65) and stamp cards (25p each) will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets.



The pack has been written by J P Brooke-Little, formerly Clarenceux King of Arms, and one of the team that created the original Queen's Beasts in 1953. He has also written the filler card for the first day cover.

In accordance with tradition and protocol the Hereditary Earl Marshal of England, the Duke of Norfolk, arranged the ceremony of The Queen's Coronation, assisted by Garter King of Arms, Sir George Belling, and the heralds at Her Majesty's College of Arms, who are the Earl Marshal's staff officers. Sir George, for whom I worked during the Coronation, was a man of great artistic sensitivity and it was he who conceived the idea of creating a series of beasts. Sir George was also on the stamp advisory panel convened to



of Clarence, another Yorkist beast, supports the Royal Arms of France and England quartered. The Yorkist claim to the throne came from the ancient Mortimer family, and hence the white Lion of Mortimer occurs, supporting a shield of the white rose of York on a sun against the Yorkist colours of blue and murrey (mulberry colour).

Having commemorated York, a beast was sought to represent the House of Lancaster. The yale is a mythical, spotted antelope, reputedly with the ability to swivel its horns to defend itself from attack from all quarters. It holds the crowned portcullis, a Lancastrian badge, on a shield of the Beaufort colours of white and blue. This was a much-favoured badge of Henry Tudor (who became Henry VII), as may be seen in his chapel in Westminster Abbey.

Henry VII was a Welshman with a dash of Lancastrian blood in his veins. By his marriage with Elizabeth, heiress of the Yorkist Edward IV, he united the rival factions of York and Lancaster. Both roses are combined, royally crowned and on the Tudor liveries of white and green, on the shield supported by the next beast, the Greyhound of Richmond. Henry was once Earl of Richmond and used the greyhound associated with that Earldom. The Welsh personality of the Tudors is commemorated by the red dragon. This fierce beast was an ancient Welsh emblem which Henry VII and his Tudor successors used as a supporter to their arms. It holds a shield of the arms of the last native Prince of Wales, Llewelyn the Great. This is still borne on a wall shield, placed over the Royal Arms, by the Prince of Wales.

The Stuarts succeeded to the throne when James VI of Scotland was crowned as James I of England. He introduced the Scottish unicorn as a supporter of the Royal Arms, to which were added the arms of Scotland. George I, grandson of James and Elector of Hanover, acceded the throne in 1714. Thus the white Horse of Hanover was chosen as the final beast in the set, supporting the arms used until the claim to the French throne was finally abandoned in 1801 at which point the French lilies were removed and the lions of England, Irish harp and Scottish lion were placed in the positions in which they remain to this day.

J. P. BROOKE-LITTLE,
formerly Clarenceux King of Arms

was used by Edward III on his signet or private seal. This most ancient beast holds a shield on which is the most modern royal badge, featuring the round tower at Windsor Castle. This was approved by George V in 1917 as a badge of the royal family, henceforth to be known as 'the House of Windsor'.

Edward III claimed the French throne through his mother, Isabel of France, and so quartered the arms of France (a blue shield strewn with gold fleurs-de-lis). His tenuous claim led to the Hundred Years War. He also sired the dynasties of York and Lancaster which clashed over the throne in the Wars of the Roses. Although the white falcon was used by Edward III, it became a Yorkist symbol. "It's not easy", said the sculptor, "to depict gracefully a bird sitting down and supporting a shield". The black Bull





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Cyril Macey

The idea of the series of beasts was conceived by Sir George Bellew (1889-1993), Somerset Herald 1926-50, and Garter King of Arms 1950-61, who is known to philatelists as designer of the George VI 10s and £1 high values and 1949 UPU 1s stamp. Sir George was on the stamp advisory panel for the design of the first definitives of the present reign.

His idea was inspired by the series of beasts which decorated Henry VIII's pavilion at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1513 and the later series at Hampton Court and St George's Chapel, Windsor and can be seen on the stamps showing these buildings issued in 1975 and 1978. Royal Academician James Woodford was commissioned to produce *The Queen's Beasts*. After small plaster models he went on to make the six-foot high beasts which were moulded in clay and the final castings, in plaster, were coated to protect them from the elements. Amongst later models are the set carved by Mr Woodford in Portland stone which can still be seen at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Full details of the beasts and their historical significance is given in the presentation pack, written by Mr Brooke-Little.

These are the first stamps printed in intaglio and lithography since the 1995 Pioneers of Communications issue featuring Sir Rowland Hill and Guglielmo Marconi. Many collectors appreciate stamps printed in intaglio – the line-engraved process used for the Penny Black and Twopence Blue in 1840. Please note that the phosphor bands are so printed as not to overlap The Queen's head and the silver panel, naming the beasts, at the foot of each stamp.

The designer The stamps are the work of Jeffery Matthews, pictured above, well-known to *Bulletin* readers as the designer of many British stamps, including the 1984 and 1987 Heraldry sets which commemorated the 500th anniversary of the College of Arms and the 300th anniversary of the revival of the Order of the Thistle.

Features by Mr Matthews on his work on the 1972 Silver Wedding, 1984 College of Arms, and 1986 Queen's 60th birthday issues and the national symbols used on country stamps were published here in November 1972, January 1984, March and May 1986.



Technical details

Printers De La Rue Security Print

Process Intaglio (recess) and offset lithography

Size 41 x 30mm

Sheets 100

Perforation 15 x 14

Phosphor Two bands

Gum PVA

price £1.89 UK (including VAT) or £1.61 overseas (no VAT), must reach the Bureau by 24 February. Alternatively, collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Mount Pleasant, London EC1A 1BB (for London SW postmark), marking the outer envelope 'FD9803' (Bureau), or 'FD9804' (London SW).

First day posting boxes will be provided at main post offices for collectors to post covers to receive local (mostly non-pictorial) 'first day of issue' handstamps. Sponsored handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from the Bureau (£10 UK/Europe; £21.75 elsewhere)

PHILATELIC NUMISMATIC COVER A PNC bearing the five stamps cancelled with a pictorial City of Westminster London SW1 postmark for 24 February, and an encapsulated Royal Mint £1 coin will be available from the Bureau, price £12.95. These covers, produced in limited editions, are very popular – early ordering is advised ●



George Knipe's design of the 5d, 6d and 7d 'Wilding' – now used for 20p, 26p and 37p values in the prestige book.

Wildings return in new prestige stamp book The first of three special prestige stamp books to promote The Stamp Show 2000 (international stamp exhibition to be held in London in May 2000) will be issued on 10 March, price £7.49. The book, entitled 'The Definitive Portrait' will be of particular interest to collectors as it contains stamps of the Wilding portrait design but in decimal values – 20p, 26p and 37p. The stamps, printed in light green, rust, and rhododendron respectively, are in the design used for the 5d, 6d and 7d stamps first issued in July 1953 and January 1954. The stamps show the value in words – TWENTY, TWENTY SIX and THIRTY SEVEN, without pence, and as the originals bear the inscription POSTAGE REVENUE. The design, featuring the Wilding portrait of The Queen in an oval frame with the national floral emblems of the constituent parts of the United Kingdom in the four corners, was by George T Knipe, a staff designer at Harrison & Sons Ltd (now De La Rue Security Print). He also designed the 1948 Silver Wedding 2½d stamp and submitted designs for the 1948 Olympic and 1953 Coronation issue. The Royal portrait is from a photograph by Dorothy Wilding (Mrs D Leighton Pearce, 1893-1976), used on British stamps from 1952 until 1967.

The 26p and 37p stamps have two phosphor bands, the 20p one band at left or right, yielding four new single stamps. All stamps have elliptical per-