

## Jubilee Jamboree Beginning a new series in which Richard

IT WOULD NOT COME as any surprise that with the increased adoption of special stamp issues by The Post Office in the 1960s came an awareness of the potential of first day covers. However, back in 1957, even before the culture shock had struck, first day covers were seen as important. The occasion was the World Scout Jubilee Jamboree, held in August that year just outside Sutton Coldfield. There had not been a commemorative set since that for the Coronation in 1953. However, the Jamboree was thought worthy of a set of three, in the symbolic style which was so prevalent at the time.

Probably much to the surprise of the GPO (as it was then), over 60,000 requests for first day covers of the new stamps were received. Something had to be done. Mind you, at that time there was no thought of providing a special envelope. That was left to private producers: in the case of the Jubilee Jamboree stamps, the most commonly seen cover (opposite page) is that produced by Francis J Field, the noted airmail specialist who conveniently operated from Sutton Coldfield.

Nevertheless, the problem arose of actually stamping and cancelling all the anticipated covers. Revolutionary for its time, the Post Office decided to commission two machines from Vacuumatic Ltd, which would automatically affix the stamps onto covers.

For this purpose, the stamps had to be supplied in the form of coils or rolls. Thus while post offices were provided with the stamps in the conventional sheets (of 120, comprising 20 rows of 6 stamps), separate rolls were also produced of 4800 stamps for each of the three values (2½d, 4d and 1s3d). The rolls were inserted in the machine, and one stamp of each value came forward to be affixed to each cover, a portion of which had been automatically moistened. The cover would then move on for a machine cancellation, the slogan reading 'World Scout Jubilee Jamboree 1-12 Aug 1957' with the date slug for Sutton Coldfield on '1 Aug 1957'.

The machines, while a good idea, were not entirely successful. The guillotine which separated

each stamp from the rest of the roll at times cut into the stamps themselves. Equally the moistening process was not always adequate, leaving the stamps not firmly affixed and thus damaged by the cancelling machine.

Covers on which stamps have been affixed by machine are usually easily identified: the stamps are in a row, with the 1s 3d value on the left, and the 2½d on the right. The slogan used for such covers had the dateslug fixed at 1 August.

Other covers, privately prepared, can be found (opposite page). These often have the stamps differently arranged, and were cancelled with the slogan in general use throughout the Jamboree, with a moveable datestamp.

Testing labels were well known to ensure the proper working of stamp machines. Described as 'poached eggs' they bear the text 'For Testing Purposes Only'. Understandably such labels were of definitive size, but to test the first day cover affixing machine, the labels were specially printed in grey as pairs imperforate between (that is, the size of the commemorative stamp).

The rolls of 4800 stamps were not only used for first day covers, they could be purchased – as complete rolls. However, few were so sold (20 of the 1s3d), so strips of Jamboree stamps with coil leaders attached for the 4800 rolls are indeed very scarce. However, to encourage sales of the stamps in roll form, they were re-wound into smaller quantities, 480 of the 2½d (opposite) and 4d, and 240 of the 1s3d: these smaller rolls were put on sale from 2 September at the Chief Post Office in London. Even so, sales were not startling, with just 33 of the 1s3d roll sold, so coil leaders are again scarce.

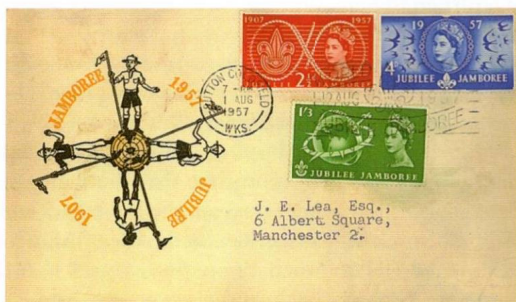
The camp site had its own post office, which was designated 'Sutton Coldfield J': as a consequence, registration labels and Parcel Post labels can be found so inscribed.

It may not have been a total success for the Post Office, but this was certainly a brave attempt back in 1957 to provide a worthwhile first day cover service ●

# West traces some of the first day covers of the present reign



Far left: a coil leader from a re-wound, smaller roll of the 2½d value. Left, above: a Francis J Field first day cover of the 1957 Jubilee Jamboree stamps, the stamps having been affixed by machine. Left, below: a privately prepared first day cover.



Below: the Durham County Scout troop at the opening of the 1957 Jamboree in Sutton Coldfield.

