

## Philatelic promotions Richard West examines Royal Mail's

FOR MANY YEARS the Post Office tried to keep at arm's length from any suggestion of promoting the products of others. True, there had been advertising on the back of stamps, and of course on stamp booklet covers and interleaves, but any direct association was strictly forbidden. Many will recall the furore that followed the realisation that Newport, in using a postmark slogan as 'The home of the Mole Wrench', was in fact advertising a commercial product.

A change of attitude became apparent around the time of decimalisation. Indeed, I would suggest that the first of the, as now-designated, prestige stamp booklets was the initial step into the 'promotional' world taken by Royal Mail. Back in 1969 the *Stamps for Cooks* £1 booklet was produced in conjunction with the Milk Marketing Board, and it is well known that other sponsors were considered at the time, including Fortnum and Mason and Sun Alliance. More 'blatant' were many of the subsequent booklets, produced with such institutions as Wedgwood, Stanley Gibbons, The Times, P&O and The Financial Times.

However, from the early 1970s began a trend of companies using stamps, booklets and similar items as incentives for on-pack offers. Two have been previously mentioned (April 2002). One involved the redemption of labels from Heinz soup, offering a special 'pack' containing six of the 2½p Christmas stamp of 1971. In 1981 Ty-phoo Tea offered a special pack containing one each of that year's two Royal Wedding stamps. A small booklet accompanied this pack, about British stamps issued to mark Royal occasions from 1935 to 1980.

**First day covers** One of the most significant promotions was that involving Kellogg's Corn Flakes. This was linked with the issue of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway stamps in 1980, offering a cover bearing the strip of five stamps. What made this promotion so much more important was that it launched the Stamp Bug Club, which was Royal Mail's way of introducing the hobby to a young audience. It certainly worked, for over 70,000 were enrolled into the club as a result.

## Collect British Stamps



This exclusive *Kellogg's* free offer introduces you to British Commemorative Stamps, with a set of postmarked stamps, a colourful book all about stamp collecting, and a Stamp Bug badge. Collecting British Stamps is great fun, because they are so bright and beautiful. And the more you collect, the more you learn. There will be stamps about Water Birds, London, Famous People, Sport and others. A marvellous selection is available now and every few months the Post Office issues a new set. Once you start collecting British stamps we guess that you'll soon turn into a Stamp Bug yourself.

### FREE STARTER KIT

#### Special Cover

The latest set of British stamps to be issued 12th March 1980 commemorates the opening of the railway from Liverpool to Manchester (where we make our Corn Flakes) which started in 1820.

There are five 10p stamps.

Send in the entry form on the side of this packet plus three tokens from the tops of special *Kellogg's* Corn Flakes packets. We will send you back the complete set free, franked and mounted on a specially printed envelope (called a 'special cover' by collectors).



#### The Stamp Bug Book

As well as the special cover we will send you: The Stamp Bug Book. In it the Stamp Bug shows you how to go about collecting British stamps. It is in colour and describes the history of British stamps; how the latest collections are devised, designed and printed and how to plan your collection.

#### Collecting British Stamps



#### The Stamp Bug Badge

With each special cover you will also find a Stamp Bug Badge, announcing that you are a 'Stamp Bug'.

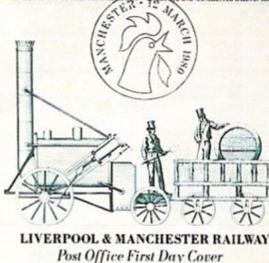


N.B. Your Free Starter Kit cannot be mailed to you before 12th March 1980.

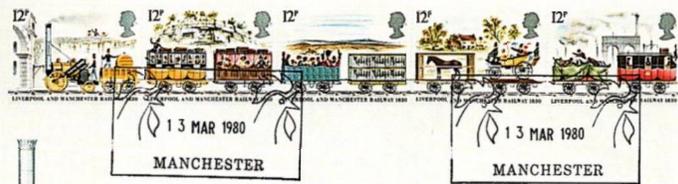
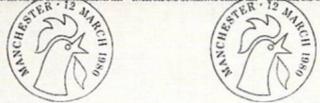
Special packs of Corn Flakes were on sale before the stamps were issued, so early birds could obtain the specially designed cover with the stamps cancelled on the first day of issue, 12 March 1980. The handstamp used on that day was circular, and featured the Kellogg's cockerel, with the text 'Manchester 12 March 1980'. The majority, however, sent in their requests after the day of issue, so their covers received a rectangular handstamp featuring two cockerels, 'Manchester', and a movable date from 13 March onwards. Interestingly, the special Corn Flakes packet referred to, and illustrated, the stamps as 10p values, whereas when issued they were of 12p face value.

The Kellogg's rectangular handstamp remained in use until 31 December 1980. Another Kellogg's promotion featured the 1981 Christmas stamps and a circular handstamp similar to that of 12 March 1980. It was used on 18 November 1981 and every alternate Wednesday through to 29 December 1982. The size of this handstamp varied somewhat.

# embracing of special offers, and looks at some of the results

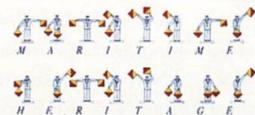


Opposite: the cover offer on Kellogg's Corn Flakes, which also launched the Stamp Bug Club, introducing the hobby to a young audience. Over 70,000 enrolled in the club as a result of this promotion.



R West, 96 Robin Hood Lane, Sutton, S11 2R4

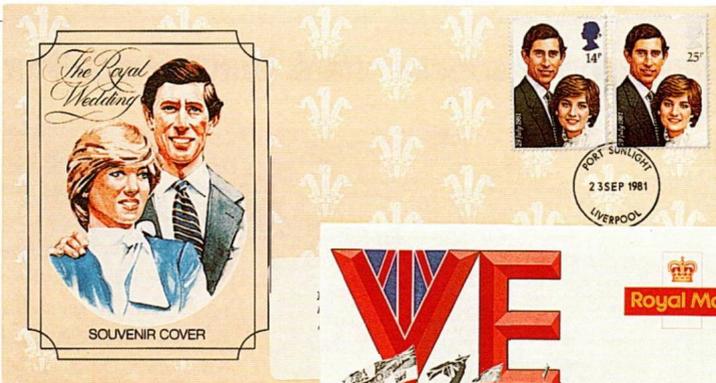
Left, the Kellogg's handstamp used on Post Office cover on the first day of issue, 12 March 1980. Below, the rectangular handstamp with moveable date, and circular handstamps used on subsequent 'first days'.



R West, 96 Robin Hood Lane, Sutton, S11 2R4

Below: in 1981, Persil offered a free souvenir cover bearing the Royal Wedding stamps, handstamped at Port Sunlight, Liverpool. The design on the simulated cover is not as the issued stamps, shown right.

Below right: covers offered by the *Daily Mirror* in 1995 and by *The Sunday Times* in 1989.



# The Royal Wedding



**FREE Souvenir Cover**

In July 1981 the Post Office issued two special Commemorative stamps to mark the occasion of the Royal Wedding. With the help of the Post Office we have designed a beautiful souvenir envelope (termed a 'cover' by stamp collectors) to carry these historic stamps. Claim one of these free covers now complete with Royal Wedding stamps using the postcard on top of this pack. The souvenir cover will provide you with a lasting memento of the event, and can also form the perfect start to the interesting and rewarding hobby of stamp collecting.

**PLUS Souvenir Book Offer**

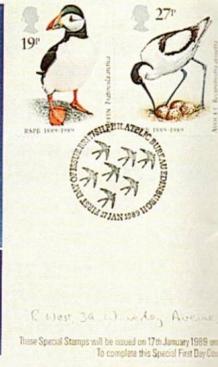
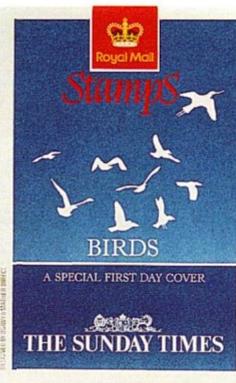
For many of the important Royal Occasions over the last ten years the Post Office has published a souvenir book. For the marriage of The Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer a similar publication will be available in July. The price is £1.50 and includes the two mint stamps mounted on the cover.

**1980 Collector Pack**

Collecting British Commemorative Stamps is a fascinating pastime. To get your collection off to a flying start you can purchase the full set of 1980 Commemorative Stamps in a handsome Collector Pack. There are 33 stamps in the collection, including the very popular stamps issued to commemorate the eightieth birthday of The Queen Mother.

The price is £5.22. And if you buy it together with the Royal Wedding Souvenir Book then you will receive, FREE, an album in which you can collect all the 1980 stamp issues. The six-page album describes the story behind each of the commemorative issues.

Write to us or our Retail Account at the address opposite the back of this cover and we will send you the information you need. OFFER CLOSES APRIL 30th 1982.



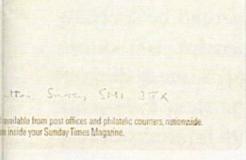
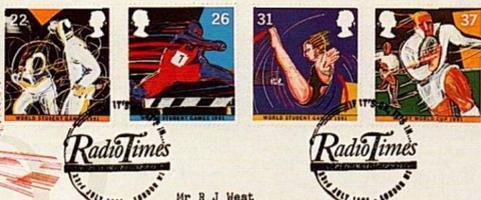
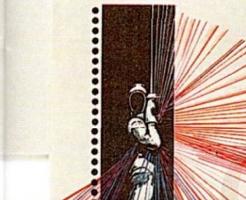
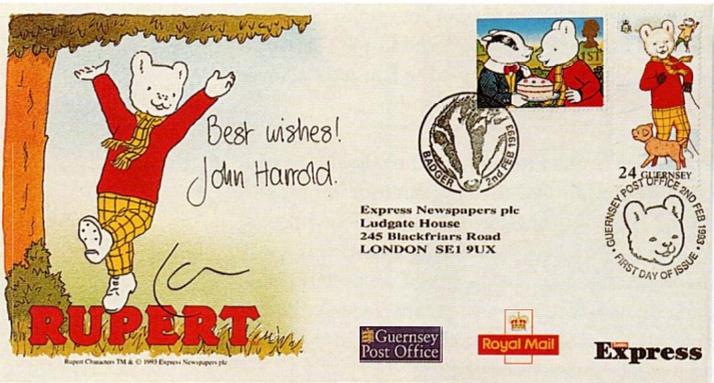
For the Royal Wedding in 1981, apart from the Ty-phoo offer already mentioned, packs of Persil offered a free souvenir cover bearing one of each of the two stamps, handstamped at Port Sunlight, Liverpool. Again the special packs of Persil were clearly designed before the stamps, as what appears on the simulated cover is not as the stamps finally appeared. This free cover offer was also linked with the opportunity to buy *The Royal Wedding* souvenir book and the 1980 Collector's Pack.

First day covers have been used for several other promotions, 'off the page' of newspapers

and magazines. Back in 1989 *The Sunday Times* gave its readers a specially designed cover to be used with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds stamps issued on 17 January. Only a blank cover was supplied; readers had to 'service' the cover themselves.

Rather unusual is the 1993 cover that linked the Royal Mail Greetings stamp featuring Rupert Bear with a similar stamp, issued by Guernsey. The cover, offered through the *Sunday Express*, bore both the British and Guernsey stamps, separately cancelled, the handstamp on both stamps reading 2 February.

This page: an unusual Rupert Bear cover combining issues from Guernsey and Royal Mail, and covers offered by *Radio Times* in 1991 and the *Evening Standard* in 1996.



In 1995 a cover was offered to readers of the *Daily Mirror* to mark VE-Day; it bears the 19p and 25p values from the Peace and Freedom set, cancelled on the day of issue, 2 May. This special cover was also produced in conjunction with The Royal British Legion.

Next it was the turn of the *Evening Standard*, who, on 14 May 1966, provided a cover bearing the Football Legends set, again a specially designed cover, and handstamp including the name 'Evening Standard'.

In 1991 the name 'Radio Times' had appeared as part of the handstamp on a cover promoted

through its pages for the World Student Games stamps, the handstamp being dated 23 July.

For the British Composers set in 1985, branches of W H Smith offered a free first day cover with any record or cassette of music by one of the composers featured on the stamps: Elgar, Delius, Handel and Holst. The covers were the standard Royal Mail first day envelopes for the issue, and each bore just one stamp, of the composer whose music had been purchased. The handstamp used was for High Wycombe, and while it was inscribed 'European Music Year' no reference was made to 'first day of issue'.

Before leaving this section on covers, mention can perhaps be made of that offered in 1983 by Royal Mail (right) to raise funds for the Famine in Africa Appeal of that year.

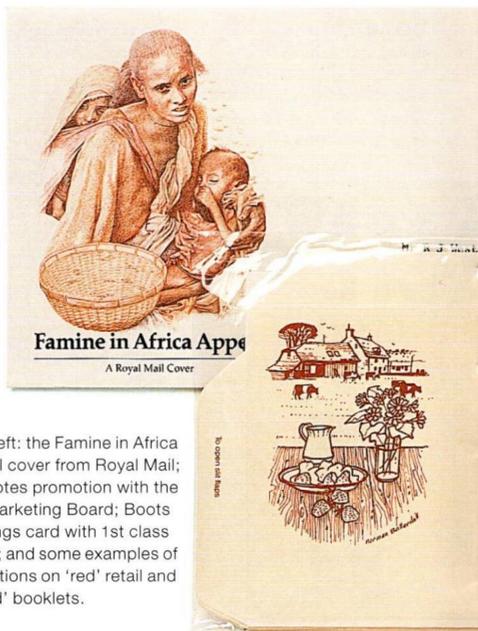
**Postnotes** In 1982 Royal Mail introduced the idea of Postnotes, similar to aerogrammes but intended for internal postage and pre-paid with a '1' indicium. The Milk Marketing Board was again involved, this time with packs of seven Postnotes, each of which bore on the front a specially created 'dairy' design (right). The offer also included a small book of recipes.

**Stamps and booklets** Over the years there have been many other promotions which have provided either mint stamps or stamp booklets as the redemption offer. These have been from such products as Kraft Dairylea, Cadbury's Smash, Katomeat, Branston Pickle, Quick-Brew Tea, plus P G Tips and Persil. However, in each case there was nothing 'different' about the items that were offered.

**Greetings cards** One of the most famous promotions is that instigated by Boots in 1994 involving greetings cards. For the price of the card, the buyer received a free 1st class stamp. The interest lay in the fact that the stamp was printed as part of a small sheet, which initially bore the Boots logo. The sheets were folded so that the 1st class stamp appeared over the top right hand corner of the greetings card, under the cellophane outer wrapping (see opposite page, centre). The sheetlets were also sold unfolded through the British Philatelic Bureau. These items are catalogue listed, and variations exist.

Later the small sheets were produced without the logo (initially printed by Questa, and then by Enschedé), still used with cards sold through Boots, albeit now the Boots logo was printed on the outer cellophane. These subsequent sheetlets were also available when buying gift vouchers from Woolworths, Comet or branches of mvc.

Marks and Spencer also offered cards with the cost of postage already paid, but in this case the envelopes bore a 'Postage Paid' indicium.



From left: the Famine in Africa Appeal cover from Royal Mail; Postnotes promotion with the Milk Marketing Board; Boots greetings card with 1st class stamp; and some examples of promotions on 'red' retail and 'folded' booklets.

**Stamp booklets** The name Marks and Spencer leads naturally to the subject of stamp booklets. It is widely recognised that once Royal Mail started offering booklets through non post office outlets, demand soared. While many retailers have the booklets available at the check-out, Marks and Spencer, in 1996, experimented by specially packaging books of 10 first or second class stamps on a card which would hang from a dedicated display. The books were sold at their face value of £2.60 or £2 respectively. Of interest to those who study booklets is that both come with the illustrations of the stamps on the booklet covers either with or without a white obliterating rule.

Over the years stamp booklets have been widely used for promotions, with items offered by Royal Mail, and on behalf of other organisations including chain stores. Perhaps the most significant have been enticements to buy booklets themselves, by offering these at a discount. In 1985 a book of ten 17p stamps was sold for £1.50, each stamp printed 'D' (discount) on the reverse under the gum. During the early 1980s many Christmas booklets were sold at a discount, the stamps often having a star printed on the reverse.



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Booklets have promoted ‘special offers’, usually in exchange for three or four stamps taken from the booklets. During the period of ‘folded booklets’ with pictorial covers, such offers included a Birthday Box, ‘Write Now’ letter pack, National Gallery greetings cards, a handwriting booklet, a ‘My Day’ word book, ‘Keep in Touch’ pack, ‘Ideas for your garden’ booklet, a ‘Brighter Writer’ pack, a ‘Jolly Postman’ pack, postcards, recipes, a party pack, ‘Write It’ wallet, and a pocket planner. In 1982 a Holiday Postcard book provided a coupon giving 10p off the purchase of six or more postcards from any of the participating retailers.

With the introduction of the ‘red’ covered booklets (often referred to by collectors as ‘window books’) the offers continued. A new trend emerged: such booklets were initially sold only through designated outlets. Only after the promotion had ‘closed’ were the booklets put on philatelic sale through the British Philatelic Bureau. The first such came in 1984, with booklets sold through branches of W H Smith containing a competition to win Paddington Bear kites. In the following two years came further W H Smith

promotions, offering 50p off stationery and leisure guides. Similar promotions have been arranged through branches of Sainsbury’s and ASDA.

For those with a sweet tooth, there has been the opportunity to obtain a box of chocolates from Thornton’s or from ChocExpress, or some iced cakes.

Competitions have been frequent, often using a simple ‘scratch off’ technique to see if you are a winner (a dilemma of course for collectors, for scratching the panel renders the booklet no longer mint – only to discover you’re not a winner anyway!). Prizes on offer have included a Peugeot car, Disney holidays, a trip to the Olympic Games, a camcorder, or a bouquet of flowers. Other items offered have included Greetings stamps postcards, personalised greetings cards, and various rubber stamps.

It has to be said that such promotions do seem to have declined in more recent times. Perhaps it is time for another ‘on-pack’ offer from a breakfast cereal to boost the hobby. In the meantime, there is much to collect, particularly if, in addition to the purely philatelic items, you include all the accompanying publicity paraphernalia ●