

The Investiture

The 40th anniversary of the celebratory special issue, by Richard West

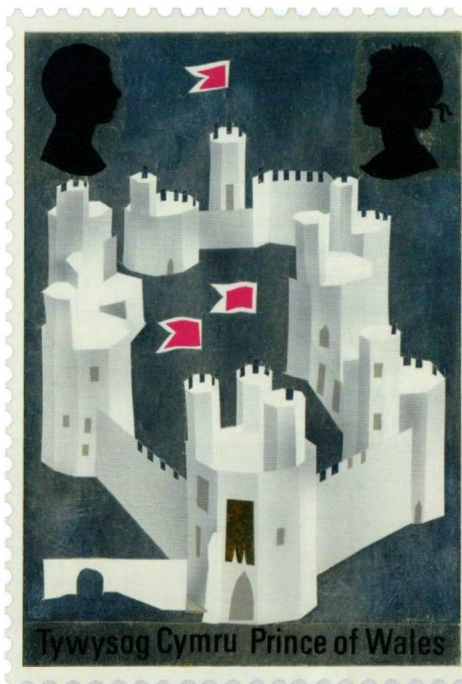
1969 was a good year for David Gentleman, with his designs being adopted for four special issues of the year. These were the series on British Ships, to mark the maiden voyage of the *Queen Elizabeth 2*, the maiden flight of Concorde, the Post Office Technology series, when the British Post Office became a Corporation, and the issue to celebrate the Investiture of The Prince of Wales.

In May 1967 The Queen had announced that Prince Charles would be installed as Prince of Wales in 1969. That same day, the then Postmaster General, Edward Short, advised that the occasion would be marked by a set of stamps. The usual practice was adopted, of inviting various artists to submit ideas, this time involving both David Gentleman and Rosalind Dease (separately), Jeffery Matthews, Roy Morgan and David Jones, while in addition invitations were also extended to the stamp printers Harrison and Sons and Bradbury Wilkinson and Co, and to Newport College of Art and Cardiff College of Art. Various suggestions were offered to the artists, ranging from a portrait of Prince Charles to Caernarvon Castle, St Davids Cathedral, Welsh scenes, and associations with the Prince of Wales.



Disappointing start No fewer than 83 designs were received, some unsolicited, including six from Cardiff College of Art and 27 from Newport College of Art. However, the recently formed Stamp Advisory Committee was disappointed that none of the designs satisfactorily conveyed a feeling of pageantry and occasion. Further designs were received, including more from David Gentleman. These included the three most prominent external features of Caernarvon Castle, which David suggested be shown as a strip of three. As David explains in his book *Artwork*, he tackled the stamps 'by turning the subject into fantasy, treating it as a fairy tale, and transforming its setting – Caernarvon Castle – into a white wedding cake, set against a tinselly silver backdrop'. ▶

Top (from left): designs by Rosalind Dease, Roy Morgan and Cardiff College of Art. Bottom: three early designs by David Gentleman.



Four early designs by David Gentleman, submitted to the Stamp Advisory Committee in June and July 1968.

The SAC wished to pursue David's further designs, liking his idea of the three gates of Caernarvon Castle, to be shown on a metallic ink background, as well as his designs featuring a portrait of Prince Charles, an aerial view of the Castle, and a Celtic Cross, a specifically Welsh design. The triptych, Castle view and Celtic Cross were essayed with silver, gold or green backgrounds.

Queen's decision The question as to whether one stamp should feature a portrait of Prince Charles was left to The Queen. She favoured the portrait, (although David preferred a profile), and this replaced the aerial view. The Queen also approved the triptych and Celtic Cross designs, shown on silver and gold metallic backgrounds respectively. The designs feature the King's Gate, the Eagle Tower and Queen Eleanor's Gate of Caernarvon (5d), a Celtic Cross at Margam Abbey (9d) and a portrait of Prince Charles by Godfrey Argent (1s).

The metallic ink backgrounds did cause some problems, even though the printer, Harrison and Sons, used the best inks available. David was disappointed that the phosphor overprinting dulled

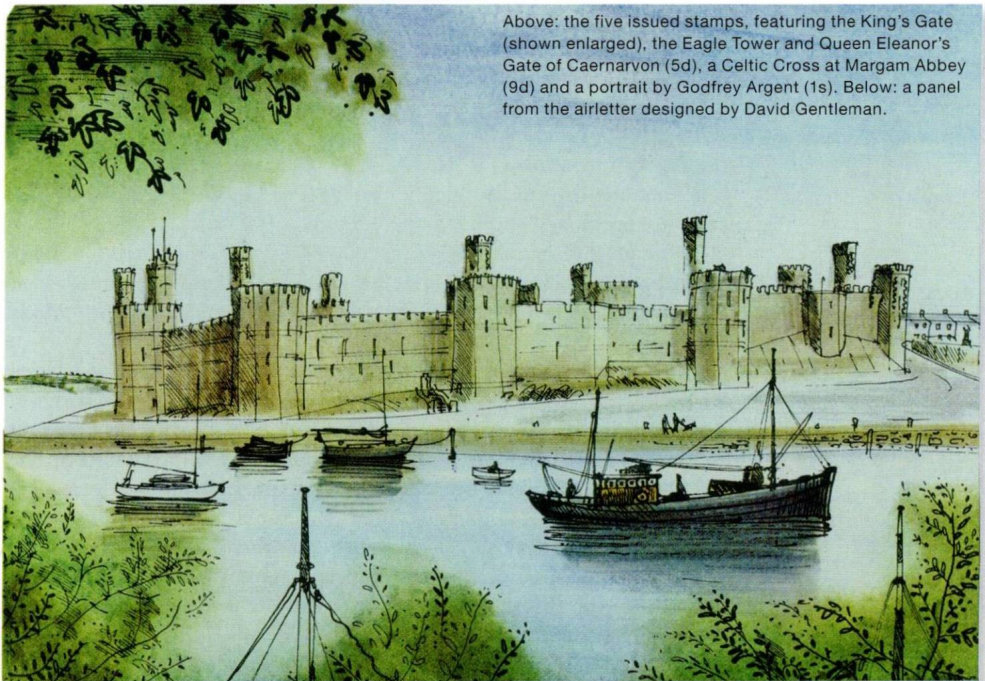
the metallic ink. It was found that the metallic finish also meant it took a long time for the cancellation ink to dry, and items such as first day covers had to be handled very carefully after cancellation. It was also found that normal postmarks could be removed from the metallic finish by rubbing.

Additional items As well as the stamps, David also designed a pictorial air-letter to mark the Investiture. The stamps and airletters were issued on 1 July 1969. The 5d values are known with various colours omitted; all three values exist with the phosphor omitted.

In addition to first day covers, the Post Office made the three stamps available in a presentation pack. The standard pack was available with the text in English, and also in German for sale through the Post Office agents in West Germany. However, in addition on this occasion, a special pack was made available to local education authorities in Wales to be given free to schoolchildren. It had a grey cover as opposed to the deep blue of the standard version, and had the text in Welsh and English •



Above: the five issued stamps, featuring the King's Gate (shown enlarged), the Eagle Tower and Queen Eleanor's Gate of Caernarvon (5d), a Celtic Cross at Margam Abbey (9d) and a portrait by Godfrey Argent (1s). Below: a panel from the airletter designed by David Gentleman.



FIRST FOLD HERE

An air letter should not contain any enclosure;
if it does it will be surcharged or sent by ordinary mail