

122. 25th anniversary of the Coronation, 1978

Once again the British people and those of the Commonwealth territories caught the infectious 'Coronation fever' with memories revived of the majesty and splendour – yes, and sanctity, too – of the Queen's Coronation in 1953. The Post Office were obliged to produce something special in commemorative stamps to mark the anniversary and this – with the aid of veteran designer, Jeffery Matthews, and the indefatigable printers, Harrison & Sons – they did, with undoubted success. The four stamps, issued on 31 May 1978, reflected all the 'pomp and circumstance' of the great event, depicting in gold ink the solemn objects and attributes of sovereignty and of the coronation itself.

The 9p stamp illustrated the Gold State Coach in which the Queen rode to her crowning at Westminster Abbey – the coach was completed in 1762 and had been used for every Coronation since that of George IV. Drawn by eight postillion horses, the coach is gilded overall and has painted panels depicting allegorical scenes. The St. Edward's Crown, originally made for the Coronation of

Charles II in 1661, is shown on the 10½p – it is worn only once in the sovereign's lifetime, for the coronation ceremony. The framework is of gold, set with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires and pearls, surmounted by a jewelled cross. The 11p stamp depicts the Orb – a globe of gold encircled by a band of precious stones and surmounted by a great amethyst set beneath a gold cross. During the state procession back to Buckingham Palace after the ceremony, the Queen carried the Orb, also the Sceptre with the Cross, with her in the coach. The Imperial State Crown (13p) was worn by the Queen on the return journey. It was originally made for Queen Victoria's coronation and remade for George VI in 1937.

The stamps were printed in sheets of 100 (two panes of 50, 5 x 10) on unwatermarked paper with 'All-over' phosphor. The listed varieties were mainly odd spots and dots, broken letters and retouches. Quantities issued were: 9p 66,700,000; 10½p 16,430,000; 11p 15,200,000; and 13p 14,080,000.

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Book Reviews

A Guide to Rare British Letter Boxes by Martin Robinson

Readers of the Philatelic Bulletin will be familiar with the series of photographs depicting unusual letter boxes. Although they are often taken for granted, there are nearly 400 different types of letter

boxes, including varieties dating back as far as 1852. Pillar boxes, wall boxes of various types and lamp boxes are included in this 30-page A5 booklet into which the compiler, Martin Robinson, has tried to pack as much information as possible. The booklet is largely based on the records of the Letter Box Study