

British Textiles

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The long-term policy of The Post Office to issue stamps designed to illustrate all phases of British history, culture and industrial development prompted the release of this British Textiles issue on 23 July 1982, the date being chosen to co-incide with the 250th anniversary of the birth of Richard Arkwright who is generally considered to be the founder of the industry. What had been largely a home craft became a mass production industry as Arkwright's power-driven spinning machinery was made available to mills in Lancashire in particular.

The stamps themselves were cleverly designed by the Peter Hatch Partnership to suggest examples of British printed cloths of various periods. The effect was heightened by the omission of the normal white margins between the stamps so that, in sheet form, each design presented an overall impression of a repeated pattern, as would be seen in a roll of cloth.

Seeing the finished stamps, Peter Hatch, the designer, said that the fabrics on which he had based the stamp designs were much more interesting than the Arkwright machine which had made the production possible!

by Paul Nash (1889-1946) who was commissioned in 1929 by Eresta Silks Ltd to produce seven designs. Entitled, for no apparent reason, "Cherry Orchard" the abstract chosen for the stamp proved very popular when it was screen-printed on silk in 1930.

Finally the 29p was from a 1973 design by Andrew Foster for Textra Furnishing Fabrics Ltd. Called "Chevron", the design was a good example of modern screen-printed cotton, extensively used for curtaining. This printing method eliminated the production of expensive



engraved rollers and encouraged cloth manufacturers to experiment with a range of designs, which could easily be proofed and was a great encouragement for young artists.

Printing was by Harrisons in photogravure, on phosphorised paper, perf. 14 x 15. Three major flaws are catalogued: 19½p, row 3 stamp 4, a "caterpillar" flaw on the right-hand of the tulip bloom in the top left corner of the stamp; 26p, row 2 stamp 7, a long horizontal scratch just above the bottom row of perforations; 29p, row 2 stamp 5, a dark patch of green between the top of The Queen's head and the base of the chevron design.

Sales by the withdrawal date (23 July 1983) were: 15½p 40,144,500; 19½p 9,236,000; 26p 8,732,600 and 29p 8,441,800.

The official Royal Mail first day cover featured an amusing coloured sketch of a thrush "stealing" a strawberry. The Philatelic Bureau at Edinburgh used a cancellation symbolising the weaving of fabric and at the Lancashire cotton mill town of Rochdale the cancellation incorporated a facsimile of Richard Arkwright's signature. Among privately-sponsored cancellations were two from Leicester, one marking the 99th year of the School of Textiles and the other the Leicester and District Knitting Industry Association. The usual four postcards reproducing the stamp designs were coded PHQ61a-d.



The 15½p reproduces William Morris's famous "Strawberry Thief" design of 1883 on chintz, a favourite with Victorian interior decorators.

The 19½p reproduced the untitled and anonymous design of stylised scarlet tulips printed in 1906 by F. Steiner & Co. who became the "William Morris" of the early 20th century.

The 26p illustrated a typical abstract design