

British Special Stamps

17. First Anniversary of European Postal and Telecommunications Conference, 1960



One can sympathise with any stamp designer having to include such a lengthy inscription as the above within the minuscule confines of a postage stamp, but Reynolds Stone achieved the seemingly impossible with his uniform design for the two CEPT stamps issued on 19 September 1960. (Incidentally, a similar issue in the following year for the Torquay Conference was in marked contrast, simply depicting the letters 'CEPT' within a post-horn motif.)

The stamps marked the successful completion of the first year of the Conference established in Montreux in June 1959 by nineteen European countries for closer liaison and the improvement of postal and telecommunications services. And, to further Britain's involvement in European affairs, the designer featured the word 'EUROPA' with an outsize 'O' in the form of a 19-spoked mailcoach wheel, the Conference emblem, but with the initials 'CEPT' (representing the French version of the Conference title) omitted. The

'Europa' theme had been the subject of uniform designs issued by numerous Western European countries since 1956, but this was the first time that the British Post Office had joined in with the selected emblem for the year 1960, which was designed by the Finnish artist and stamp designer, P Rahikainen.

Reynolds Stone's inscription—'Conference of European Postal & Telecommunications Administrations'—was in fact slightly different to my heading: it bears no reference to the anniversary! Above and below the 'Europa' emblem, he placed the inscription in scroll or riband form, the ribbons impinging on the oval frame enclosing the familiar 'Wilding' portrait of the Queen on the right. The figures of value appear to be rather cramped in the only available space, the bottom left corner.

These stamps—6d bronze-green and bright purple, and 1s 6d brown and blue—signified another milestone in British stamp printing: they were Britain's first photogravure-printed stamps in two colours and the first bicoloured stamps since the 'Jubilee'-style Edwardians of 1911-13. It all seems a far cry from the present time when eight or more colours are used on British special stamps, and multi-coloured stamps are the general rule everywhere!

Harrison & Sons printed the 'brighter than bright' stamps in sheets of 120 and the quantities printed were 6d 16,990,320; 1s 6d 7,682,520. Withdrawn 31 December 1960. There were one or two major flaws and retouches, notably the 'broken diadem' which occurs on stamp 2, row 1 on both values, a major retouch or patch above the 'PA' of 'EUROPA' on the 1s 6d, stamp 2, row 9, and a blurred 'E' in 'EUROPEAN' (the first letter) again on both values, stamp 5, row 13. Watermark 'Multiple Crowns'.

Miniature sheets of these stamps, imperforate and printed in monochrome, were produced as souvenirs for the 'Eurostamp 1962' London Stamp Exhibition, but these had no franking value or postal validity.

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