

## British Special Stamps

### 63. Investiture of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, 1969



Amidst the most colourful Royal pageantry within the great walls of one of the finest of all the old Welsh castles, Caernarvon, Her Majesty the Queen invested Prince Charles as Prince of Wales on the 1 July 1969. The investiture ceremony dates back to 1284 when King Edward I's infant son was carried on a shield to the castle entrance and proclaimed Prince of Wales, the title which has since been bestowed on the eldest son of each successive British Sovereign. It was the second time during the present century that the investiture of a Prince of Wales had taken place at Caernarvon. The last was in July 1911, when the Duke of Windsor was invested with the title by his father, King George V.

David Gentleman's accepted stamp designs were in keeping with the grandeur of the occasion, the ancient Welsh background and, by means of a striking portrait, the subject of the Royal investiture. The stamps were issued on the day of the ceremony – 1 July. The three 5d stamps depicted the most prominent edifices of Caernarvon Castle – the King's Gate and Queen Eleanor's Gate, two of the three places where the newly-invested Prince of Wales was presented to the people by the Queen with the Duke of Edinburgh after the ceremony; and the Eagle Tower, a key point in the investiture proceedings. It was in a small room of this tower, according to tradition, that the first Prince of Wales was born of Queen Eleanor nearly seven hundred years ago. Here also the Prince of Wales' personal banner was broken as he arrived at the castle.

The 9d stamp depicted a Celtic cross at the

12th-century Cistercian abbey of Margam in South Wales, while the 1s stamp showed a bold, full-face portrait of Prince Charles, from a photograph by G. Argent. The stamps were inscribed 'Prince of Wales' in Welsh (Tywsog Cymru) and English, only the second occasion that the Welsh language had appeared on British stamps (the first was the 1s 6d Menai Bridge (Pont Menai) of 1968), and the first time bilingual inscriptions were used throughout a special stamp since. The three 5d stamps were issued in the form of a triptych – together *se-tenant* in strips of three within the sheet – and were in eight colours, predominantly silver-grey, the 9d in four colours (including a gold background) and the 1s in black and gold. The stamps were the result of a full year's careful planning, design and research, and the silver backgrounds of the three 5d stamps required and involved new and revolutionary printing techniques.

The stamps were photogravure-printed by Harrison and Sons in sheets of 72 (5d 12 x 6) or 60 (9d and 1s 10 x 6) on unwatermarked paper with two phosphor bands. Recorded varieties include the omission of various colours on the 5d stamps, invariably occurring on all three stamps in the strip; phosphor omitted, noted on all values; and, on the 5d Eagle Tower stamp, a grey line just below the turrets, constant on Row 6, Stamp 2 in the sheet. Quantities sold were: 5d 99,467,496; 9d 13,384,380; 1s 12,972,720; English presentation packs, 256,709; German packs, 9,360; and Welsh schoolchildren's packs, 146,958.

JAMES WATSON