

67. British Rural Architecture, 1970

Designs featuring typical cottage architecture in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland provided contrast and variety for the Post Office's first special stamps of the 1970s. Two of the selected designs — 5*d* Fife Harling and 9*d* Cotswold Limestone — were contributed by David Gentleman (the 14th issue in which he had been wholly or partly involved since his first 'N.P.Y.' designs in 1962); the other two — 1*s* Welsh Stucco and 1*s* 6*d* Ulster Thatch — by Sheila Robinson, who had previously designed the 3*d* Westminster Abbey stamp of 1966.

Harling is a kind of rough-cast cement wash, typical of the Fife region — the cottage depicted is at Culross, legendary birthplace of St Kentigern, between Dunfermline and Kincardine. The limestone cottage is located at Bibury, Gloucestershire, a picturesque Cotswold village, famous for its medieval stone bridge and old stone-built cottages.

The charming Welsh 'stucco' town house was 'discovered' by Sheila Robinson at Aberaeron (or Aberayron), a resort on Cardigan Bay at the mouth of the Aeron River. The design presented some initial difficulties — the large front window has a raisable centre section which was not apparent in the submitted drawings. The stamp was inscribed

in English and Welsh. Ulster thatch, originally designated 'Armagh', is found in south and east Ulster and is known as 'scollop thatching' — the example shown is in the grounds of the Ulster Folk Museum. Sheila Robinson was born in Nottingham in 1925 and attended the local art school. After the war she joined the Royal College of Art, and her freelance work has included illustrations and prints which have been exhibited at the Royal Academy and other galleries, murals and posters.

The stamps were printed by Harrison and Sons in the photogravure process — sheets of 120 (6 × 20) for the 5*d* and 9*d*, and of 60 (6 × 10) for the 1*s* and 1*s* 6*d*, on unwatermarked paper. The difference in sheet arrangement was due to the slightly larger format of the latter two stamps. Recorded varieties include, on the 5*d*, yellow omitted, or yellow missing on the left-hand chimney (later corrected), and a nick in the Queen's hair, below the ribbon; blue omitted on the 1*s* and 1*s* 6*d*; and broken panes in the middle window of the Ulster cottage (1*s* 6*d*). Missing phosphor bands occurred on all four values.

Quantities sold were: 5*d*, 81,581,880; 9*d*, 11,723,160; 1*s*, 10,258,320; 1*s* 6*d*, 8,969,280; presentation packs, 116,983.

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