

Definitives and souvenirs Richard West continues with his



From left: The 'Wilding' Regionals for Northern Ireland; the Machin low values in a pack with German text; a convenience pack containing low value decimal definitives; another pack of Northern Ireland Regionals, this one carrying decimal currency definitives; and a Souvenir Book for the Queen's 60th birthday.

PACKAGING of sets of stamps for ease of selling, and as a convenient way of collecting, saw its origins from Royal Mail with the Wilding definitives in 1960. As I described in the January *Bulletin*, the low values, Castle high values, phosphor-graphites and Regional definitives were all available in special packs that year. The presentation pack as recognised today was introduced in 1964 for the Shakespeare Festival set; however, the Regionals were the only definitives with the Wilding portrait actually to appear in presentation packs.

Just prior to decimalisation, on 12 December 1970, packs containing the then current definitives for each of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were issued. (While the Machin portrait had been introduced for standard definitives, it had not yet been extended to the Regionals.) As they contained values still available, the contents for each 'region' varied.

With the introduction of the Machin portrait the opportunity was taken to offer definitive presentation packs on a much more regular basis. The low values from ½d to 1s 9d, and the high values from 2s 6d to £1, were available in two separate packs, both issued on 5 March 1969. In addition to the normal packs with English text,

both were also printed with the text in German, and the English versions exist with insert cards with appropriate text in Japanese.

15 February 1971 was the day the UK converted to decimal currency: on that day new low value definitives were issued with the Machin portrait. The low values then comprised denominations from ½p to 9p. Presentation packs were available from 'decimal day' containing one of each of the low values. This initial pack additionally exists with either a German or Japanese insert card.

As is well known, over the years the upper limit of 'low value' has been extended considerably, and now stands at £1. Inflation over the years has necessitated a multitude of changed colours or new values, which have turned the low value Machins into a very complex study. Whenever appropriate, opportunities have been taken to update the contents of the presentation pack, both by adding or removing values, and also by making changes to the design of the pack itself. Indeed, Royal Mail has a policy of changing the design of the definitive pack approximately every five years. (Detailed lists of the various packs that have been produced will be found in specialised Great Britain stamp catalogues.)

examination of special stamp packs produced by Royal Mail



To help the public become accustomed to the new currency, high values in decimal currency (10p, 20p and 50p) were issued in 1970, and made available in a pack from 17 June. The £1 was not immediately affected by decimalisation, and so was not included in this pack. This pack can also be found with German or Japanese insert cards.

One very early change saw the 10p value transfer from being a high (large format, recess printed) to low (small format, photogravure) value. So from 25 November 1971, the contents of both low and high value packs was changed. The low value pack had the 10p added, while the high value pack contents became the 20p, 50p and £1 (both styles of the £1 can be found in the packs). The colouring of the packs was simultaneously changed.

Over the years the high value definitives have witnessed several changes, from the initial recess-printed large Machin designs to the Machin style in photogravure; a return to Castle designs, initially printed by Harrisons (with an intermediate change in the printing process used for the portrait, and a £3 value when the £1 became a 'low value'), then by Enschedé; before a small-format recess-printed Machin design was adopted, initially printed by Enschedé and then by De La Rue.

Each change to the high values has been accompanied by a new presentation pack (including one for the £3 Castle when introduced). An exception has been the photogravure printed stamps. While the £1, £2 and £5 when first issued were available in a pack (from 2 February 1977), the subsequent additional 'parcel post' values were not put into packs.

The now obsolete £10 definitive had its own presentation pack, available from 2 March 1993.

With decimalisation came the opportunity to change the design of the 'Regionals' (later designated as 'Country' stamps. By this time Guernsey and Jersey had left the fold (having gained postal independence from the British Post Office), but the Isle of Man remained, and a pack was issued on 7 July 1971 containing the 2½p, 3p, 5p and 7½p values. Likewise for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. For these latter three, subsequent packs were produced, again to accommodate additions and changes to the denominations.

However, from 1988 it was decided that the presentation packs should contain current stamps of all three 'Countries' together: again, over the years changes have been made to both the content and design of the packs.

Convenience The initial Wilding packs were primarily produced as a convenient way of selling the sets of stamps. With the introduction of decimal currency, a similar philosophy saw the low values made available in a tiny cellophane packet containing one of each, plus an additional 2p and 2½p to bring the cost to a round figure of 50p.

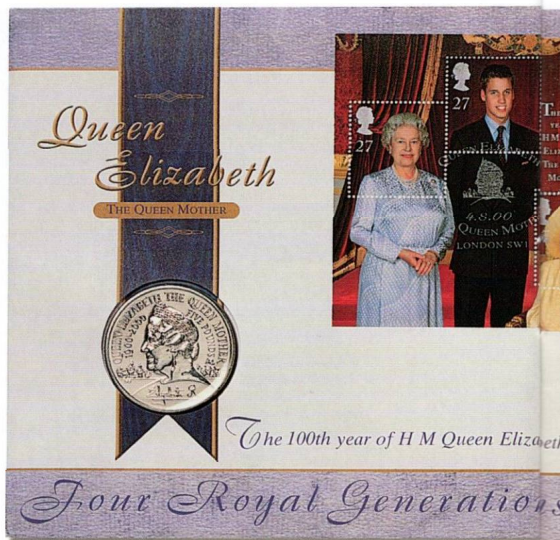
In 1984 the PO experimented with vending machine labels, usually described by collectors as Frama labels. These were issued from vending machines without denomination, the value being printed on at the time of purchase. Initially the values available were from ½p to 16p (later 16½p and 17p were added). As only five machines were installed, to enable collectors to obtain these labels, they were issued in two packs, one containing just three values (3½p, 12½p and 16p), and a second containing 32 values (from ½p to 16p). (Specialists note differences in the appearance of the 'printed numerals' on these labels.)

Souvenir books An extension of the presentation pack concept came about in 1972 when, for the Royal Silver Wedding issue, a Souvenir Book was produced. Including the two stamps, the book contained much background detail and photographs relating to the Royal couple.

Over the next two decade, similar Souvenir Books were produced for a selection of issues, generally not more than one a year, the same concept being adopted of an illustrated book, which included the set of stamps. These further books ranged from the County Cricket set of 1973 through to the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994. Subjects included the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Churchill, Railways, Royal Mail (the bicentenary of the first mail coach run from Bath and Bristol to London) and British Film Year. The book for the Australian Bicentenary in 1988 contained both the British and Australian stamp issue, while that for the Channel Tunnel similarly included both French and British stamps. Several 'Royal' occasions were also accompanied by Souvenir Books, namely the Silver Jubilee, 25th anniversary of the Coronation, Royal Wedding of 1981 and 60th birthday of The Queen. *To be continued* ●

Text © Richard West 2002

A list of philatelic medallic,



A NUMBER OF READERS have asked for a list of these covers which we are happy to provide here. Details are given of the stamps and coins/medals on the cover. The Tallents House order code and price are quoted for covers still available. Orders should be sent to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB.

- 1 **Coronation Anniversary** 2 June 1993: £10 high value stamp; £5 coin
- 2 **25th Anniversary of Investiture of the Prince of Wales** 1 March 1994: Investiture Anniversary stamps; medal
- 3 **300th Anniversary of Bank of England** 2 August 1994: Bank of England label pane; £2 coin
- 4 **R J Mitchell** 20 May 1995: R J Mitchell label pane; medal
- 5 **50th Anniversary of End of War** 15 August 1995: 19p & 25p Peace & Freedom stamps; £2 coin
- 6 **William Wyon** 1 November 1995: £1 definitive; medal
- 7 **Queen's 70th Birthday** 21 April 1996: Queen's birthday label pane; £5 coin
- 8 **Football Legends** 8 June 1996: Football Legends stamps; £2 coin
- 9 **Classic Cars** 18 November 1996: Classic Cars stamps; medal

numismatic and ingot covers



- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>10 Tudor Times 28 January 1997: Tudor Times (Henry VIII) stamps; £1 coin</p> <p>11 Hong Kong 21 July 1997: Hong Kong label pane; \$5 Hong Kong coin</p> <p>12 Architects of the Air 23 August 1997: Architects of the Air stamps; £2 coin</p> <p>13 Queen's Golden Wedding 20 November 1997: Golden Wedding stamps; £5 coin</p> <p>14 Queen's Heraldic Beasts 25 February 1998: Heraldic Beasts stamps; £1 coin</p> <p>15 National Health Service Anniversary 6 July 1998: Health Service stamps; 50p coin</p> <p>16 Carnival 26 August 1998: Carnival stamps; 50p coin AN012, £12.95</p> <p>17 Prince's Trust 13 November 1998: Prince's Trust label pane; £5 coin</p> <p>18 Berlin Airlift 12 May 1999: Berlin Airlift label pane; medal AM007, £12.95</p> <p>19 Scottish Parliament 1 July 1999: Scottish country stamps; £1 coin AN014, £12.95</p> <p>20 Rugby World Cup 1 October 1999: Rugby World Cup label pane; £2 coin</p> <p>21 Millennium Moments 31 December 1999: Timekeepers miniature sheet; £5 coin</p> | <p>22 Botanic Gardens of Wales 4 April 2000: Botanic Gardens label pane; £1 coin AN020, £12.95</p> <p>23 150th Anniversary of Public Libraries 1 August 2000: 26p King James Bible, 44p World of Literature, and 44p Right to Learn stamps; 50p coin AN021, £12.95</p> <p>24 Queen Mother's 100th Birthday 4 August 2000: Queen Mother miniature sheet; £5 coin AN022, £15.95</p> <p>25 The Archers 1 January 2001: 19p, 26p & 64p Farmers Tale stamps; medal AM008, £12.95</p> <p>26 St George & Dragon 23 April 2001: England country stamps; George VI 10s stamp silver ingot PY499, £39.95</p> <p>27 Submarines 24 May 2001: Submarine stamps; medal AM009, £12.95</p> <p>28 Queen Victoria 20 June 2001: 2 x 1st class Queen Victoria/Elizabeth II stamps; £5 coin AN023, £15.95</p> <p>29 Celtic Cross 3 October 2001: Northern Ireland country stamps; £1 coin AN024, £12.95</p> <p>30 Queen's Jubilee 6 February 2002: Queen's Golden Jubilee stamps; £5 coin AN026, £15.95</p> <p>31 Queen's Jubilee available from 20 March 2002: Wildings stamps prestige book pane, 1952 2½d definitive stamp silver ingot. Price £49.95</p> |
|---|--|