

Penny Black Anniversary Definitives

Wednesday 10 January 1990



Last May Royal Mail Stamps & Philately announced that a set of "Special Definitives" would be issued in January 1990 to mark the 150th anniversary of the introduction of the Penny Post and the subsequent issue of the first adhesive postage stamps, the famous Penny Black and Twopence Blue. These special definitives will be issued on 10 January, the exact anniversary of the introduction of the Penny Post.

The five stamps will be of normal definitive size (21 x 24mm) and will show the Machin portrait of HM The Queen with the Wyon head of Queen Victoria behind, thus symbolising the 150 years of uniform postage and postage stamps. The Wyon head was used on the Penny Black and all subsequent issues of Queen Victoria's long reign. The head was first used on a medal (produced in 1838) to commemorate the Queen's first visit to the City of London in November 1837 following her accession to the throne (June 1837). The medal head, by William Wyon, was based on a sketch of Victoria as Princess in 1834 when she was just 15 years of age. Wyon was born in Birmingham in 1795 (the same year as Rowland Hill) and was appointed chief engraver to the Royal Mint in 1828. He designed much of the British and Colonial coinage of the reigns of George III and IV and was the first medallist elected to the Royal Academy, in 1838. He died in 1851.

The Machin head of HM Queen Elizabeth II is well-known to stamp collectors, having been used on British low-value definitives since June 1967, and on the high value stamps from 1970 to 1988. Arnold Machin was born in Stoke on Trent in 1911 and educated at the Royal College of Art; he was a tutor at the College from 1951 to 1958 when he was appointed Master of Sculpture at the Royal Academy School (until 1967). His effigy of The Queen was used for the British decimal coinage of 1968-84 and for the 1972 and 1977 Silver Wedding and Silver Jubilee crown coins. He was elected a Royal Academician in 1956 and awarded the OBE in 1965.

Technical Details

The five values chosen for these special defin-



itives represent the most-used denominations in the current definitive range: 15p (basic inland second class rate), 20p (basic inland first class and EEC rate), 29p (postcards outside Europe), 34p (Airmail Zone B) and 37p (Airmail Zone C). The colours will be as for the standard definitives, viz 15p light blue, 20p black, 29p purple, 34p slate and 37p red. The stamps have been printed in photogravure by Harrison & Sons Ltd, in sheets of 200, perf 15 x 14, PVA Dextrin gum. The 15p stamp is on fluorescent coated paper with one phosphor band, the other values are on Advanced Coated Paper.

Availability

The stamps will initially be available at all post offices; after the initial sales period it is intended they will replace the National definitives for the remainder of the year.

First Day Cover Facilities

A first day cover envelope will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau, philatelic counters and most main post offices approximately two weeks before 10 January, price 18p. First Day posting boxes will be provided, as usual, at most main post offices and standard, non-pictorial "First Day of Issue" handstamps will be applied. In addition pictorial First Day handstamps will be available for the British Philatelic Bureau and Windsor, Berks. All First Day handstamps will be applied in red ink.

A FDC service will be provided by the Bureau for the Bureau and Windsor postmarks. Application forms, available from the Bureau and most main post offices, should be returned by 10 January. Collectors wishing to prepare their own covers for these postmarks should send them, stamped, on the day of issue to:

British Philatelic Bureau 20 Brandon Street
EDINBURGH EH3 5TT

Windsor Special Postmark Duty
Windsor Post Office
Peascod Street
WINDSOR
Berks, SL4 1AA

Presentation Pack

A new pack containing one of each of the special definitives will be available from the Bureau and philatelic counters, price £1.60. This will have a new design and text and, unlike most definitive packs, it will be sold from most post offices, and not just philatelic counters.

Stamp Card

There will be no Royal Mail Stamp Cards for this issue although the National Postal Museum will be producing a card reproducing one of the designs, suitable for use as a maximum card. See National Postal Museum News in this *Bulletin* for details.

Stamp Books

The 15p and 20p stamps will also be in stamp (window) books and machine-vended books. The first issue of these will be on 30 January and more details will be given in the January *Bulletin*. The Penny Black Anniversary Definitives will also be included in the next Prestige Stamp Book, to be issued in March.

As all collectors should be aware, London will host one of the international stamp exhibitions next year. To be called "Stamp World London 90", it will be held at Alexandra Palace from 3-13 May. The Royal Mail will issue a Penny Black Miniature Sheet on 3 May and special postmarks will be available for each day of the exhibition.

The Royal Mail stand, covering 560 sq. metres and with 10 serving positions, will be a major and striking feature of the exhibition. It will be situated in the West Hall and will offer a wide range of Royal Mail philatelic products including a new "Philatelic Passport". This will contain pages giving details of the postal administrations represented at the exhibition; visitors can affix stamps in order to obtain a cachet. It is expected that the Passport will prove popular with casual collectors as souvenirs of the occasion.

Staff for the Royal Mail stand are being specially recruited from Post Office Counters Ltd and the British Philatelic Bureau. The Bureau will have an on-line computer link with Edinburgh.

The printers of British stamps — Harrison and Sons Ltd, The House of Questa and Walsall Security Printers Ltd will each have a stand in the West Hall.

For young visitors "Stampland" will be the main attraction. This will be housed in a candy-striped marquee of 1,000 sq. metres, decorated to create a carnival atmosphere. Upon entry, which will be free, visitors will be provided with a souvenir brochure to guide them around the various exhibits. Companies taking part will stage stimulating and educational activities for bright, young minds, demonstrating how stamps relate to the modern world. Children will be able to find pen friends from all over the world by keying in personal information about themselves into a Pen Pal terminal provided by Australia Post. Waddingtons Games will be providing many activities including a competition, involving fitting the missing piece into a stamp collage jigsaw projected onto a screen on their stand. The organisers anticipate about 8,000 children and adults visiting Stampland each day.

Further details of Stampland and other Stamp World activities will be given in the months ahead.