

Gilbert & Sullivan

21 July 1992



Five stamps are to be issued on 21 July to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sir Arthur Sullivan, Britain's leading composer in the late Victorian era. Creator of many orchestral and choral works, he is best remembered for the comic operettas produced in collaboration with the satirist and playwright W S Gilbert (1836-1911). These light-hearted Gilbert and Sullivan masterpieces have introduced many to memorable music.



The **18p** stamp (inland 2nd class basic rate) features characters from *The Gondoliers* which was first performed at the Savoy Theatre in London in 1889.

The **24p** value (inland 1st class and EC basic rate) depicts a character from *The Yeomen of the Guard* which was performed at the Savoy in 1888.

The **28p** denomination (basic rate to non-EC European countries) features a scene from *The Mikado*, dating from 1885.

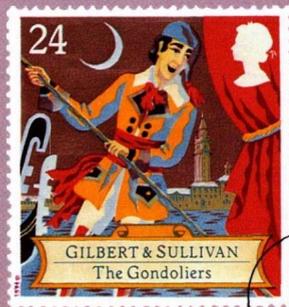
A scene from *The Pirates of Penzance* appears on the **33p** stamp (worldwide postcard rate). This work was first produced in 1879.

The final value, **39p** (basic airmail letter rate) features *Iolanthe* which dates from 1882.

Gilbert & Sullivan

Arthur Seymour Sullivan was born at Bolwell Terrace, Lambeth on 13 May 1842, of a musical father who was violinist at the Surrey Theatre in

Blackfriars Road. After training in Leipzig, Arthur became the first Principal of the National Training School of Music, later taken over by the Royal College of Music. He was knighted in 1883. He met W S Gilbert in 1869 and their collaboration made both household names. Their first work, *Thespis*, was commissioned by John Holingshead of the Gaiety Theatre for Christmas 1871. In 1875 Richard D'Oyly Carte (1844-1901) produced their *Trial by Jury* at the Royalty Theatre. In 1877 D'Oyly Carte became Manager of the Opera Comique in the Aldwych and in the same year produced the first Gilbert & Sullivan opera *The Sorcerer*, followed by *HMS Pinafore* in 1878, *The Pirates of Penzance* in 1879 and *Patience* in 1881 which transferred to the new Savoy Theatre that year. The Savoy, financed by D'Oyly Carte for the production of Gilbert & Sullivan works, was London's first public building lit by electricity. Productions of *Patience* were followed by *Iolanthe* (1882); *Princes Ida*, *The Sorcerer*, and *Trial by Jury* (1884), *The Mikado* (1885), *Ruddigore* (1887), *The Yeomen of the Guard* (1888), and *The Gondoliers* (1889). In 1890 Gilbert quarrelled with D'Oyly Carte over the production expenses of *The Gondoliers*, in particular the cost of £500 for new carpets. Sullivan supported D'Oyly Carte and the famous partnership broke up. Their last work together – *The Grand Duke*, 1896 – was judged a failure. Sullivan died at Queen's Mansions,



Victoria Street on 22 November 1900 and was buried in St Paul's. A fine bust of him can be seen in the Victoria Embankment Gardens; a mourning female figure of Music weeps against the plinth which bears lines by Gilbert:

Is Life a boon?
If so it must befall
That death when e'er he call
Must call too soon.



William Schwenk Gilbert was born in London on 18 November 1836, son of William Gilbert, the novelist. After studying at King's College, he became a clerk in the Privy Council Office, 1857-62. He was called to the Bar in 1864 but was not a successful lawyer. By 1861 he was writing for the publication *Fun* (under the name "Bab"), and later for *Punch*. In the late 1860s and early 1870s his plays were performed at St James's and Haymarket theatres. His collaboration with Sullivan began in 1871. After Sullivan's death he worked with Edward German but productions, such as *Fallen Fairies* (1909) were less successful. Gilbert, who was knighted in 1907, lived mostly in Kensington from 1883 to 1890, thereafter at Harrow Weald where he died on 29 May 1911 after suffering a heart attack trying to rescue a young woman from a lake. A plaque of Gilbert, opposite Embankment underground station, bears the inscription "His Foe was Folly, & His Weapon Wit."

The Designer

The stamps are the work of Lynda Gray who was born in 1947 in Braintree, Essex. She

studied illustration at Portsmouth and Leicester Colleges of Art and has lived in London, working as a full-time freelance illustrator since 1971.

Her first stamps for Royal Mail were the 1986 Christmas issue featuring traditional Christmas Customs. Ms Gray wrote about her research for these stamps in the November 1986 *Bulletin*. She also designed the cover for the 1986 Christmas stamp book, Christmas stamp pack, aerogramme, first day cover and provided illustrations for the presentation pack. The text in the pack, by Suzanne Wolstenholme, was based on original research by Ms Gray.

Further designs followed in 1988-89 on three 50p books in a Gilbert and Sullivan Opera series. These featured *The Yeomen of the Guard* (issued 5 September 1988); *The Pirates of Penzance* (24 January 1989) and *The Mikado* (25 April 1989).

Printing Details

The stamps, measuring 35 x 37mm, were printed in photogravure by Harrison & Sons Ltd in sheets of 100, PVA Dextrin gum, perforation 14½ x 14. The 18p has one phosphor band, the others are on phosphor coated paper.

Presentation Pack

The pack (No. 229) will cost £1.75. It was designed by Silk Pearce with text by Christopher Somerville and photography by Anthony Pickhover. Printing was by Raithby, Lawrence & Company Limited of Leicester. The pack features characters from Gilbert and Sullivan operas, theatre posters and biographical details of Gilbert, Sullivan and Richard D'Oyly Carte.

Royal Mail Stamp Cards

Cards, featuring enlargements of the stamp designs, will be available approximately two weeks before the stamp issue, price 21p each. They are numbered 145A-E.

First Day Cover

The Royal Mail first day cover will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau, Collections, philatelic counters and main post offices approximately two weeks before 21 July, price 21p. Two pictorial postmarks will be used for the first day cover service — one for the Bureau, the other for Birmingham where the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company is now based.

A first day cover service will be provided by the Bureau with the official Royal Mail cover addressed to the destination required with the stamps cancelled with the requested postmark.

Application forms, available from the Bureau and main post offices, should be returned not later than 21 July.

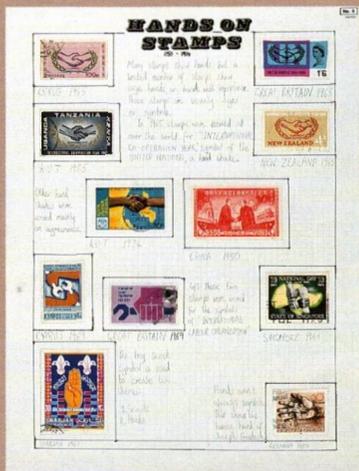
Collectors may send their own cards/covers for the pictorial postmarks; these should be sent on the first day of issue in a stamped outer envelope endorsed "Pictorial First Day of Issue Postmark" to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT (Bureau postmark) or Midlands Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail Birmingham, BIRMINGHAM B1 1AA (Birmingham postmark). Collectors wanting their cards/covers returned under cover should enclose a suitable addressed envelope. This need not bear additional postage stamps, the postage being already paid by the stamps affixed to the covers for postmarking.

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for those collectors who wish to post covers to receive the standard, non-pictorial "First Day of Issue" handstamps.

Details of special handstamps, sponsored by stamp dealers and others, will be found in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – the Royal Mail's magazine for postmark collectors. It is available on subscription from the British Philatelic Bureau: £9.35 UK, £11.25 Europe; £20.75 Rest of World (Airmail).

Souvenir Cover

A souvenir cover, of similar design to the first day cover, will be available from Collections and philatelic counters for one year from 22 July, price 21p.



Hands on Stamps – Jonathan Reay



The Changing Face of Europe – Dominic Vella

Stamp Bug Club Album 91 Competition

Every year young members of the Stamp Bug Club are asked to submit a thematic page from their stamp album, to be entered into the annual competition. There are two age categories: 5-11 and 12-16.

The club magazine *Stamp Bug News* gave tips to members on how best to impress the judges with their entries.

Hundreds of members sent in entries with themes ranging from "Lighthouses" to "Astronomy Through the Ages" which gave the judges a wide variety of themes to select from.

However, after much deliberation, the judges decided that the 5-11 age category first prize should go to Dominic Vella, age 10, from Bletchley; Dominics's theme being "The Changing Face of Europe".

First prize in the 12-16 age category went to Jonathan Reay, age 12, from Liskeard. Jonathan's theme was "Hands on Stamps".

Both winners were treated to a VIP day out in London, which started at Stampex (where Dominic and Jonathan were presented with their silver trophies, certificates and Penny Black stamps) and finished at The Guinness World of Records, Piccadilly Circus.

John Ryan, Royal Mail National