

## Communications Stamps

Four stamps honouring two of the most famous men in Communications History go on sale at post offices, and philatelic outlets on 5 September. Two stamps feature Sir Rowland Hill, marking the bicentenary of his birth, and two Guglielmo Marconi, commemorating the centenary of his first wireless message.

The 19p stamp (basic inland 2nd class rate) shows a young Rowland Hill set against a petition for Uniform Penny Postage. The 25p value (basic inland 1st class and EU rate) depicts a better-known portrait of Hill as an old man against the background of the Penny Black. Both stamps bear the caption "Sir ROWLAND HILL 1795-1879".

The 41p denomination (basic airmail letter rate) shows a young Marconi with some of his radio equipment in the foreground and with a map of the North Atlantic in the background. The 60p stamp (airmail letters, second weight



set, to 100g) features an older Marconi with an SOS sea rescue in the background. These stamps are inscribed "MARCONI FIRST WIRELESS MESSAGE 1895".

The stamps have been designed by The Four Hundred, a London-based design consultancy; the portraits of Hill and Marconi are the work of Czeslaw Slania, the world's foremost stamp engraver. The portraits and lettering are printed by the intaglio (recess) process – essentially the same method as used for the Penny Black and Twopence Blue in 1840. The background, Queen's head and value are in offset-lithography.

### Technical details

Printers: Harrison & Sons Ltd  
 Process: Intaglio and Offset lithography  
 Size: 35 x 37mm  
 Sheets: 100  
 Perforation: 14 x 14.5  
 Phosphor: 19p one phosphor band (yellow fluor)  
 25p-60p phosphor coated  
 Paper: OBA free (OBA = Optical Brightening Agent)  
 Gum: PVA Dextrin

ROYAL MAIL MINT STAMPS

# COMMUNICATIONS

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postage stamp. These proposals were implemented on 10 January 1840. Both the pre-paid stationery and the Penny Black postage stamp were officially issued in May that year. To Hill's surprise, his secondary idea of a postage stamp was an immediate success, while the stamped stationery bearing a design by William Mulready RA was withdrawn following widespread ridicule. Hill began the transformation of the Post Office from being primarily a source of government revenue into a public service. More significantly, his reforms provided an incalculable impetus to improvements in literacy, social communications and business enterprise in Britain and, as other countries followed suit, throughout the world. At the same time, they laid the foundations of one of the world's most popular and enduring pastimes – stamp collecting.



central London. A signal was transmitted to another rooftop 300 metres away. The success of this and similar trials over increasingly longer distances earned Marconi international acclaim. In 1897, a company was formed to manufacture his equipment – this became the Marconi Company in 1900. By then, Marconi had, among other achievements, established wireless communications to France, pioneered news reportage and transmissions to vessels at sea, and seen his invention save lives when the first-ever distress signal was sent by a ship. Yet his horizons had extended to the idea of sending a signal across the Atlantic Ocean – a feat he achieved in 1901. Thus, in the dawn of a century in which it was to help forge a deeper sense of world unity, radio came of age.



ROYAL MAIL MINT STAMPS  
COMMUNICATIONS



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### Plate Numbers and Colours

19p P24 (phosphor) 1A (silver) 1B (red) 1C (black) 5D (black-intaglio)

25p 1A (silver) 1B (brown) 1C (black) 3D (black-intaglio)

41p 1A (silver) 1A (grey-green) 1C (black) 1D (black-intaglio)

60p 1A (silver) 1B (deep ultramarine) 1C (black) 2D (black-intaglio)

### Sir Rowland Hill

Sir Rowland Hill (1795-1879) was a remarkable man, described as "mechanic and inventor, artist, draughtsman and architect, astronomer and mathematician, teacher and administrator, human dynamo and Reformer Extraordinary" (Jean Farrugia: *The Life & Work of Sir Rowland Hill*, National Postal Museum 1979).



Rowland Hill, c 1840 (unknown artist, NPM postcard)

His father, Thomas Wright Hill, instilled in his six sons a love of freedom and hatred of injustice and tyranny. Like Rowland (his third son), Thomas Hill was inventive and a born reformer. His wife, Sarah Lea, possessing the commonsense her husband lacked, provided Rowland with a second remarkable parent. Rowland Hill was born in Kidderminster on 3 December 1795. In 1800, when family fortunes declined, the Hills moved to Horsehills (an old farmhouse) near Wolverhampton and two years later they moved again, this time to Birmingham where Thomas Hill ran a school. The prospectus for this school contained the five features that came to be known as the Hills' unique and progressive system of education. By age 12

Rowland was teaching in his father's school. Later to supplement the family income Rowland constructed and repaired scientific apparatus and took work in the Birmingham Assay Office. Rowland and his brother Matthew (1792-1872) became dedicated to the cause of educational reform and in 1822 published *Public Education* which brought them worldwide fame. Five years later a new branch of their model school was opened at Bruce Castle in London.

In the early 1830s Hill was associated with a body formed for the colonisation of South Australia (then unoccupied), later in the decade becoming involved in the project for which he is best remembered – postal reform. His famous pamphlet *Post Office Reform: its Importance and Practicability* was published in January 1837; a Parliamentary Committee was appointed to examine his scheme later in the year. Less than two years later the *Postage Duties Act* was passed (August 1839), and uniform fourpenny and penny postage rates followed in December 1839 and January 1840. Various methods of prepaying postage were considered, including the issue of adhesive postage stamps (or labels). Hill was sceptical about the public reaction to such labels, but they proved highly popular when issued in May 1840.

Hill did not at this time work for the Post Office, but under a two-year contract with the Treasury. In 1842 he was dismissed and subsequently became a director, later chairman, of the London & Brighton Railway. In November 1846 he was appointed Secretary to the Postmaster General, and in 1854 to the more prestigious post of Secretary to the Post Office. He was knighted in 1860. Ill health forced his retirement four years later; he received a Parliamentary Grant of £20,000 and his salary for life as a pension. He subsequently served on the Royal Commission on Railways and prepared his memoirs and a history of Uniform Penny Postage. Shortly before his death, on 27 August 1879, he was granted the freedom of the City of London. The casket containing the grant of freedom, is on display, with other Hill family plate, in the National Postal Museum. Hill was given a state funeral and buried in Westminster Abbey.

Fine statues of Hill – outside the former London Chief Post Office in King Edward Street, and at Kidderminster – were illustrated in the *Bulletin* of February 1989 (page 160) and May 1994 (p.267). Other monuments in Birmingham and Lancaster were shown here in July 1987



*Rowland Hill  
statue in  
Kidderminster  
(MPB postcard)*

(p.246) and May 1990 (p.231). There is a bust of Hill in Westminster Abbey. Good portraits by J A Vinter (after photograph of c. 1879) are in the National Portrait Gallery (register no. 838), and National Postal Museum. A plaque is mounted on the house in Orme Square, London W2 where Hill lived at the time he was working at the Treasury on postal reform (1840-42).

The Kidderminster and London statues featured on postcards issued by Midlands Postal Board and National Postal Museum in 1974 and 1979. Others in the NPM Rowland Hill set show a portrait in oils by an unknown artist, c.1840, and the silver-gilt casket containing his Freedom of the City of London.

Four stamps and a miniature sheet were issued in 1979 to mark the centenary of Hill's death (SG 1095/MS1099). Several special postmarks of 1979 and 1990 (sesquicentenary of Penny Black) feature Hill. Many countries have portrayed Sir Rowland on commemorative stamps – a feature article on these issues will be published here in December, on the anniversary of Hill's birth.

Hill has also featured on a British aerogramme (August 1979) and on the covers of four £2 stamp books issued in February, April, June and September 1995. His link with the Post Office lives on in the Fund that bears his name – details of its work were published here in January 1994 (p.132).

### *Guglielmo Marconi*

Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937) was born in Bologna, the son of a wealthy landowner and Anne Jameson, of the Irish distilling family. He was educated at the Leghorn Technical Institute and the University of Bologna. Hearing about Hertzian waves, young Marconi worked with Augusto Righi (1850-1920) to see if such waves could be transmitted over greater distances. His early experiments took place on his father's estate in December 1894, broadcasting a signal over a distance of one mile. The Italian government were uninterested in his work and he came to Britain, demonstrating his wireless apparatus to the British Post Office in 1896. He took out the first patent for a system of wireless telegraphy in June 1896. Later demonstrations took place between Lavernock point near Cardiff, Flat Holm Island in the Bristol Channel, and Breaun Down, Somerset in May 1897 (see *Bulletin* September 1972), and in 1898 when he was invited by Lloyds of London to install a link for shipping between Ballycastle, Co Antrim and Rathlin Island (7.5 miles). This was the world's first commercial use of wireless. He founded the Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company in 1897, later renamed Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company in 1900, to establish radio stations on land and sea. The following year messages were sent across the Atlantic. In the 1920s he tested short-wave rather than long wave reception and transmission; by 1930 Marconi ran a worldwide network of short-wave stations. In 1929 he was given the title Marchese (Marquis) and in 1935 toured Latin America and Europe defending Italy's invasion of Abyssinia. He died in July 1937 and as a mark of respect all BBC stations observed a two minute silence on the day of his funeral.



*Marconi's home at Hereford Street, London W2  
(Photo: John Holman)*

The 9p stamp in the 1972 BBC and Broadcasting History set (SG 912) featured an oscillator and spark transmitter used in the 1897 experiment. Special postmarks were used at Cardiff (13 September 1972) and at Ballycastle and Rathlin Island (6 July 1973) to mark the 75th anniversaries of the Bristol Channel and Northern Ireland experimental transmissions (postmark numbers 2041, 2283/4 in *Special Event Postmarks of the United Kingdom*, published 1984).

The Italian Post Office has commemorated Marconi on special stamps, and a curious "green portrait" appears on a Canadian stamp marking the centenary of his birth in 1974 (SG 796). Earlier this year the Brazilian Post Office honoured Marconi on a stamp (5 May), and a joint issue from Germany, Ireland, Italy, San Marino and the Vatican followed on 8 June.

A plaque exists on the house in Hereford Road, London W2 where Marconi lived between February 1896 and July 1897 when the first wireless telegraphy patent was granted to him.

#### *Czeslaw Slania*

Devotees of finely engraved stamps will welcome the Communications stamps as fine examples of the work of the foremost exponent of the art of stamp engraving – Czeslaw Slania. Born in Poland in 1921, Slania studied graphic art in Cracow and Vienna before joining the Government Printing Works in Warsaw to engrave bank notes and security documents. He first engraved stamps in 1951 and now has well over 900 designs to his credit. He is best-known for his work for the Swedish Post Office since 1960; in 1972 he was appointed to the post of Court Engraver. He has engraved stamps featuring King Gustav VI Adolf, and the present King Carl Gustav, Queen Silvia and their

children. Amongst many memorable commemoratives are the 1993 Stamp Day issue (SG1708/11), the 1972 set celebrating King Gustav VI Adolf's 90th birthday (716/20), the 1972 Sportswomen set (673/7), and the 1981 Film History and 1984 Music miniature sheets.

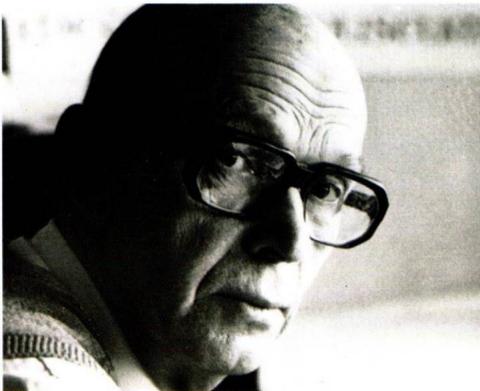
An a unique tribute, Slania engraved three stamps issued in 1991 to commemorate his own 70th birthday (SG 1602/4). These reproduce, in engraved form, a painting of the coronation of Gustav III in 1772. Two stamps, showing details of the King's head, are separated by a label depicting an engraved plate, a burin (engraving tool), magnifying glass, and legend "Czeslaw Slania 70 Ar". The third stamp, some 80mm across (the total width of the other stamps and label) reproduces the complete Coronation scene

Slania is also Court Engraver in Denmark and Monaco. His first Danish stamps appeared in 1962; his Royal subjects include the present Queen; her sisters, Princesses Benedicte and Anne-Marie; and their father, King Frederik IX. His work for Monaco includes exquisite historical portrait stamps of 1975-76 (SG 1213/4, 1271/2), and studies of the current Royal Family. The miniature sheets showing Prince Albert and his mother (the late Princess Grace) are particularly noteworthy (SG MS1110, 1611). A Slania engraving of Princess Grace (Kelly) was used in 1993 for a joint Monaco/USA issue (SG 2119; 2778).

The forthcoming Communications stamps will be Slania's fourth set for Royal Mail, following the 1982 Maritime Heritage, 1984 Royal Mail (Mail Coaches), and 1987 Victorian Britain issues (SG 1187/91, 1258/62, 1367/70). All were "dual printed" in intaglio (recess) and photogravure. For a critique of these issues, see Richard Wiggins's article, "Intaglio Plus...", in the August 1990 *Bulletin* (pp.291-5). The master dies of the Victorian Britain issue are currently on display in the "Victorian Posts" exhibition at the National Postal Museum.

There are now many collectors specialising in "Slania stamps", aided by a Slania Society and a catalogue of his stamps – *Mesteren Czeslaw Slania: Biografi og Katalog* by Ib Eichner-Larsen, published in 1986. Available from Aarhus Frimaerkehandel, Bruunsgade 42, 8000 Aarhus C, Denmark, price 120 Danish kroner. For details of the Czeslaw Slania Study Group write to PO Box 1382, Milwaukee, WI 53201, USA.

In next month's *Bulletin*, James Mackay describes his 12 favourite Slania stamps.



*Czeslaw Slania (Photo: Swedish Post Office)*



### *Slania stamps of Denmark and Sweden with Sweden's 70th birthday tribute*

#### *First Day Facilities*

Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets around a week before 5 September, price 25p.

The Bureau will provide a first day cover service – collectors may order the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps, cancelled with a pictorial “First Day of Issue” postmark of the Bureau or London EC, price £2.12 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £1.81 to overseas addresses (no VAT). Orders for first day covers must be received at the Bureau by 5 September 1995.

Collectors may send their own stamped covers on the day of issue, for these cancels, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Mount Pleasant, LONDON EC1A 1BB (for London EC postmark). The outer envelope should be endorsed “FD9517” (Bureau), or “FD9518” (London EC).

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for collectors who wish to post covers to receive local (mostly non-pictorial) “First Day of Issue” handstamps.

Details of other special handstamps, sponsored by Royal Mail, 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: £10 UK and Europe; £21.75 Rest of World (Airmail).

Collectors are reminded that it will be in order to affix just the 19p Communications stamp to covers to receive all special cancels (“First Day of Issue”, sponsored and philatelic counters), in use on 5 September. The minimum 1st class rule is suspended on this day as this set includes a 2nd class rate stamp. It should be noted that this concession applies only to the 19p Communications stamp; covers bearing other stamps must bear at least 1st class postage.

#### *Serviced First Day Cover*

Fully serviced first day covers, bearing the London EC pictorial first day postmark will be available from most W H Smith shops, offered subject unsold.

#### *Presentation Pack and Stamp Cards*

A presentation pack will be available from the Bureau, Post Office Counters philatelic outlets, main post offices, and most W H Smith shops. Stamp cards (25p each) will be available from the Bureau, POC philatelic outlets, and main post offices.

#### **NPM Postcards**

The National Postal Museum will issue four new postcards on 8 August, coinciding with the