

The circus comes to town Royal Mail's new



Technical details

Printer House of Questa

Process Gravure

Stamp size 37 × 35mm

Sheets 100

Perforation 14.5

Phosphor 2nd class one band,
others two vignettted bands

Gum PVA

Gutter pairs Horizontal

Cylinders and colours

Q1 greenish yellow ● Q1 magenta
● Q1 new blue ● Q1 black
● Q1 bright orange ● Q1 emerald
● Q1 silver ● Q1 phosphor

THE CIRCUS COMES TO TOWN next month. This year's theme for Europa stamps, chosen by the Posteurop organisation, is Circus. Five colourful stamps on this theme will go on sale at post offices, Royal Mail Tallents House, Edinburgh, and Post Office philatelic outlets on 9 April. They depict: 2nd class (19p) Slack Wire Act; 1st class (27p) Lion Tamer; E rate (37p) Trick Tri-cyclists; 45p Krazy Kar; and 65p The Equestrienne. The Queen's head and value are printed in silver at top left, the EUROPA symbol appears at lower left on the 1st and E stamps.

During a trip to Suffolk, Barry Robinson, Royal Mail's Stamp Programme Director, spotted a circus automata in a craft shop. The Circus contained a total of 11 acts on a moving circular base. Barry tracked down its creator, Ron Fuller, and selected five of the acts to put to the Stamp Advisory Committee as potential stamp images. The intention was to photograph the models for the stamps, but the SAC was so impressed by the watercolours Mr Fuller submitted as a guide that they adopted them on the spot. A photograph of Mr Fuller's complete circus automata is the main feature in the presentation pack, while his circus strongman is shown on the filler card.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail FDC envelopes will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets about a week before 9 April, price 25p. Orders for FDCs with the five stamps cancelled by a pictorial first day postmark of Tallents House or Clowne, Chesterfield must reach Royal Mail (address below) by the day of issue. Price £2.69 UK (including VAT) or £2.29 overseas (no VAT).

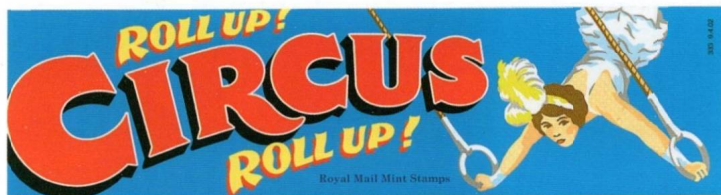
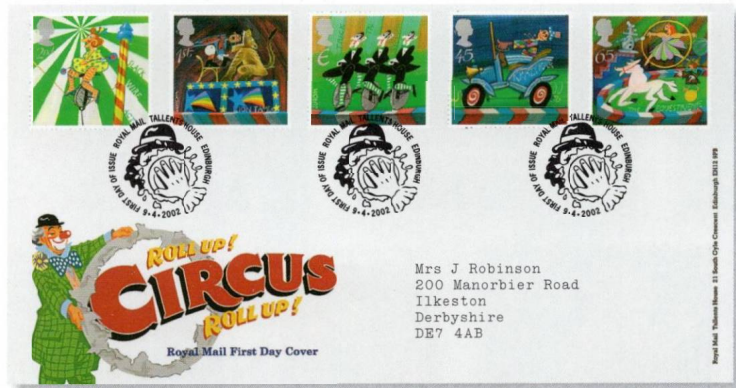
Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB (Tallents House postmark), or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, South Shields DO, Keppell Street, South Shields NE33 1AA (Clowne postmark), marking the outer envelope 'FDO211' (Tallents House), or 'FDO212' (Clowne). Covers can be posted or handed in at main post offices for the Clowne postmark.

Details of other handstamps for 9 April will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from Tallents House (£10 UK / Europe; £21.75 elsewhere). For a sample copy write to: The Editor, British Postmark Bulletin, Royal Mail, 2-14 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8HQ.

issue of stamps on this year's Europa theme



The designer Ron Fuller lives near Woodbridge in Suffolk. Automata making as a distinct craft has a long history, from the spring and wind mechanisms of the master clock and watchmakers of late 18th century Germany, to the penny arcades of the English seaside. Mr Fuller is a leading figure in contemporary automata making, having constructed 13 circus automata.



One of the most popular additions to Astley's original circus was the clown, whose basic character was derived from earlier forms of Roman and Elizabethan theatre. By the 1800s, clowns of all shapes and styles had established themselves as a staple of the circus, with no little thanks to the work of the inspired Londoner Joseph Grimaldi, whose white face and impeccably timed comic pratfalls provided the template for future performers.

Aerial gymnastics began to fly high in 1859, the year that the French acrobat Jules Léotard developed the first flying trapeze act and Charles Blondin crossed the Niagara Falls on a

The animal trainer Isaac A Van Amburgh was reputedly the first person foolhardy enough to stick his head in a lion's mouth. Though horses, lions and elephants are most closely associated with the circus, in earlier times camels, snakes and Nippopotamuses have been trained to amuse and delight.

The circus strongman was usually part of the sideshow, which was a collection of somewhat dubious attractions in smaller tents and in wagons surrounding the dominant big top. Particularly popular during the Victorian era, punters paid their pennies to gawp at the strange and the unfortunate, from bearded ladies and contortionists to obese or genetically

A presentation pack containing the five stamps (left, price £2.30) and stamp cards (25p each) will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets. The pack, designed by Tuttsells Enterprise IG, includes a photograph of the circus models of Ron Fuller.