

The Wilding definitives collection 1, 1952-53

A miniature sheet to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wildings



THE FOURTH MINIATURE SHEET this year goes on sale at main Post Office branches, Tallents House and Post Office philatelic outlets on 5 December, 50 years to the day since the issue of the first Elizabeth II stamps, the famous 'Wilding definitives'. The sheet, priced at £2.21, contains nine stamps and a label reproducing the UK national floral emblems as shown in the bottom left hand corner on the original 2½d, 3d, 4d and 4½d stamps.

The stamps in the sheet are of the following values (in the design and colours of the original value, shown in parentheses): 1st (1½d), 2nd (2½d), 33p (5d), 37p (8d), 47p (1s), 1p (½d), 2p (1d), 5p (2d), and 50p (1s3d). The sheet, which measures 123 × 70mm, was designed by Rose Design, with type by Mike Pratley. The original stamp designs are by: Enid Marx ½d-2d (1p, 2p, 5p, 1st); M C Farrar Bell 2½d (2nd); George Knipe 5d (33p); Mary Adshead 8d (37p); and Edmund Dulac 1s and 1s3d (47p and 50p).

To match the originals as closely as possible, the miniature sheet is printed on watermarked, uncoated paper with a tint around the stamps giving the effect of a creamy paper as used for the Wilding stamps until 1962.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail FDC envelopes will be available from main Post Office branches and philatelic outlets about a week before 5 December, price 25p. The design reproduces the national floral emblems as shown on four values in the Wilding series. Orders for FDCs with the miniature sheet cancelled by a pictorial first day postmark of Tallents House Edinburgh or Windsor must reach Tallents House by the date of issue. Price £3.01 UK (including VAT) or £2.57 overseas (no VAT).

Technical details

Printer De La Rue

Process Gravure

Stamp size 20 × 24mm

Sheet size 123 × 70mm

Perforation 15 × 14, with ellipses on vertical sides

Phosphor 2nd class one band, others two bands

Gum PVA

Watermark '50' (Golden Jubilee)

Paper Uncoated, cream tint to stamp borders



A well-illustrated presentation pack containing the miniature sheet (below) will be available from main Post Offices and philatelic outlets, price £2.60. The pack features portraits of The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh by Dorothy Wilding studios.

Stamp cards will reproduce five of the nine stamps, price 25p each.



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based on the photographs, but later it was decided to use the Wilding photograph on which Dulac carried out modifications to meet with the Queen's wishes.

Using the approved head, artists and stamp printers were invited to submit designs by 30 June. The 75 designs received were reduced to a shortlist of nine by a Committee established for the purpose. Eventually five designs were

by the members of the royal family. She had captured them on film since the 1920s and had taken the first official photograph of the 11-year-old Princess Elizabeth as well as the future monarch's official engagement photograph and images of the Princess on her wedding day. The photographer's work had already appeared on British and Commonwealth stamps including her portrait of George VI and Queen Elizabeth which was featured on the 1937 Coronation stamp and portraits of the King and Queen for the silver wedding stamps of 1948. In 1990 a Wilding portrait of the Queen Mother was featured on a special stamp

by early September. The Palace was contacted to approve amendments, including a colour change for the 25d. At last printing got under way; by mid-November some 100,000 stamps were being printed each week and the PMG told the House of Lords that the first two stamps featuring the Queen would go on sale in time for the Christmas post, and before the first overseas stamps bearing her image.



From top left to right: Princess Elizabeth 1942; Engagement photograph 1947; Wedding portrait 1952; Queen Mother, April 1952

Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Wexham Road, Slough SL1 1AA (Windsor postmark), marking the outer envelope 'FD0229' or 'FD0230'. Covers can be posted or handed in at main Post Office branches for the Windsor postmark. Details of sponsored handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* - available on subscription from Tallents House. For a sample copy write to: The Editor, British Postmark Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ.

Covers for first day and sponsored postmarks can bear the complete sheet or any stamps from it subject to a minimum 19p postage ●

Opposite below: National Portrait Gallery, London

The Wildings Planning of the first definitive issue of The Queen's reign began shortly after her accession on 6 February 1952. Later that month The Queen was photographed at the studios of Dorothy Wilding, a leading London society photographer. On this occasion The Queen wore a tiara. The images were not considered entirely suitable and a further session was held in April when The Queen wore the famous diadem made for King George IV. An image from this second session was approved for use on the stamps. Designs using the approved head were submitted by leading artists and designers and a Committee set up to select the best. Following Royal approval, work started on the 1½d and 2½d values, covering the two main inland rates. In mid-November when Harrisons were printing 100,000 of the stamps each week, the Postmaster General, Earl de la Warr, announced that these first two values would go on sale on 5 December in time for Christmas postings. The designs were well received by collectors at the time. Further values followed in batches, the series being completed on 8 February 1954 – two years and two days after The Queen's accession. The stamps are always referred to by collectors as 'the Wildings' after Dorothy Wilding. The Wilding stamps remained in use until 1967 when they began to be replaced by the current Machin design. George Knipe's design (5d-7d) was brought out of retirement for 20p, 26p and 37p stamps in *The Definitive Portrait* prestige stamp book of 1998, and Enid Marx's and M C Farrar Bell's 1½d and 2½d were reissued as 1st and 2nd class stamps in the *A Gracious Accession* book issued in February to mark The Queen's golden jubilee. Another miniature sheet, with other values from the Wilding series, will be issued in May 2003 •

Dorothy Wilding's success as a photographer was unusual for a woman of that time, as was her feat of simultaneously maintaining studios in London and New York. She had a flamboyant personality, and this photograph shows her posing with the large-format studio plate camera she used for her portrait work.

The diadem on the stamps is currently on display in the Royal Treasures exhibition at The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, until 12 January (see July *Bulletin* p329).



Dorothy Wilding's photograph used on the stamps that bear her name. Information on the design and printing of the original Wildings can be found in Bulletin Publication 9, *The Wildings: The First Elizabeth II Definitives*, included free with last April's *Bulletin*. Copies of the publication are still available from Royal Mail Tallents House, priced at £2.95 (order code PB362).

