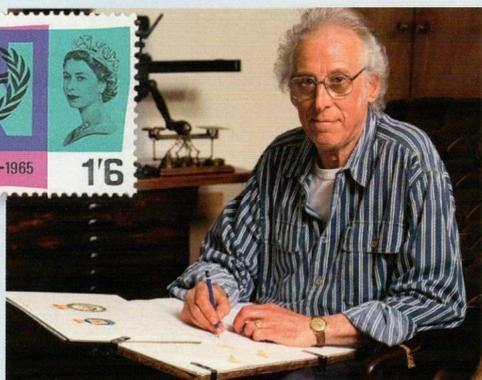


## Jeffery Matthews Glenn Morgan marks an anniversary in an influential designer's career



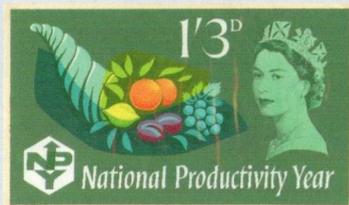
This month marks the 40th anniversary of the first accepted stamp designs by Jeffery Matthews, which were produced to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Organisation (UNO) in 1965.

JEFFERY MATTHEWS started his career back in the late 1940s, and he continues to be a major influence in his chosen fields of graphic design to this day. For all but around the first decade of this time there has been an unbroken association first with the General Post Office (GPO), then with the Post Office Corporation and now Royal Mail.

Jeffery had gone into partnership with a friend in 1952, both of them operating as freelance designers, but a few years later this friend was sadly to die in a drowning accident. Jeffery's wife, Chris, was there to step into the professional void created, and worked with him for many years to come.

The register of designers held by the Council of Industrial Design (now the Design Council) resulted in his first stamp commission for the GPO, when in 1959 he was invited to submit designs for the forthcoming Tercentenary of the General Letter Office (GLO) commemorative issue. It was to be some six years though before they accepted an artwork for production (although the GLO stamps were essayed), having previously – and since – been asked to submit designs for different subjects which never resulted in acceptance, as is normal for all artists. This process can be likened to an actor who auditions regularly for parts, but is only accepted every so often. It is not a poor reflection on the actor's work, but simply the desire of the commissioning agent to get a certain type of output.

Artworks had been submitted for the 1961 Post Office Savings Bank, 1962 National Productivity Year (below left), 1963 Paris Postal Conference and the Lifeboat Conference issues prior to the UNO set. Subsequent unaccepted commissions have included the 1968 (below right) and 1969 Anniversaries sets, 1973 Princess Anne's wedding, and the 1975 Charity issue.



Below: some of the definitive and special issues created by Jeffery Matthews. Opposite: the definitive miniature sheet issued for The Stamp Show 2000, illustrating the Jeffery Matthews colour palette, with labels showing a detail of his PO heraldry and his initials.

**Style of working** This designer still works in the traditional way, hand drawing or painting all the designs he creates, but in 1986, for The Queen's 60th birthday stamps, he broke the mould and, for the first time, used computer technology. This set utilised six images of The Queen (one from each decade) and Jeffery arranged for a computer-literate friend to slowly build the stamps on screen, making design tweaks as he went. He then printed copies of the artwork at life-size and four times up for the benefit of the Stamp Advisory Committee. Despite his total satisfaction with the final designs, he chose not to adopt this method of artwork creation on any later issues.

**Special issues** Jeffery is perhaps best known for heraldic and royal issues, having produced some of the best designs of the current reign in this regard. When asked by *Stamp Magazine* (March 2004) what his favourite stamp design was, he chose the 1980 Christmas Decorations set, on which 'the only thing that wasn't from my hand was the silhouette of The Queen's head. Also The Queen's Beasts because it was all my design and drawing and harks back to my early interest in heraldry'. He was also pleased with the definitive/commemorative 'Double Head' stamps of 1990 because he was able to bring together two other artists' work (the Penny Black and Machin head designers) from two different eras, creating a classic design.

His most recent addition to our albums was this July, when a miniature sheet for the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War was issued, to an exacting brief. This design was to incorporate five gold definitives in the shape of a letter v (for victory) and the 25p (revalued 1st class)



stamp depicting St Paul's Cathedral, the design of which also included a 'v', but this time in the form of searchlights illuminating a night sky. A contemporary black-and-white photograph together with a border of olive branches running down both sides of the sheet completes this dignified design.

**Machins** Jeffery has carried out much work over the years to maintain and improve the definitive range of issues, including the National, Country ('Regionals'), 'Double Heads' (marking the 150th anniversary of the Penny Black), 1970 'to pay' labels and the initial self-adhesive stamp (sold in booklets in horizontal format for a trial period only). This work has included drawing fonts and values, finding the best position for The Queen's head and face value within the design, and considering alternatives to the timeless Machin head.

So important has Jeffery's work been that even the palette of 33 colours that Royal Mail has at its disposal bears his name. This palette was started in 1984 in order to return to the original Arnold Machin concept of a light tone for The Queen's head on a solid background, because over the years there had been a steady, perhaps unconscious, move away from this ideal.



**Special stamps** Jeffery Matthews has designed, or has been heavily involved with, the creation of the following issues

1965	20th Anniversary of the United Nations Organisation
1968	British Bridges (4d and 1s9d values only)
1972	Royal Silver Wedding Anniversary
1978	25th Anniversary of the Coronation
1978	British Architecture MS (selvedge design work only)
1979	Rowland Hill MS (selvedge design work only)
1980	London 1980 exhibition 50p (counter sheet and MS)
1980	80th Birthday of HM The Queen Mother
1980	Christmas Decorations
1981	Royal Wedding, Charles and Diana
1984	College of Arms Quincentenary
1986	Royal Wedding, Andrew and Sarah
1986	60th Birthday of HM The Queen
1987	Flower Photography (not the photographs)
1987	Tercentenary of the Revival of the Order of the Thistle
1990	Stamp World £1 MS (double head, not selvedge)
1998	The Queen's Beasts

**Miscellaneous design commissions** Various first day cover envelopes, presentation pack designs, stamp book covers (1978 and 1992) and the Post Office corporate crest (or coat of arms) can all be credited to Jeffery, as can the logo for the London 1980 stamp exhibition, and the logo for the Machin Collectors Club. The first four exhibition sheets for the Thematica stamp exhibitions were not only his artwork, but they also depicted his Post Office commissions and some included unaccepted designs, focusing in turn on Machin definitives, Royal events, Heraldry and this year his 40 years of stamp design. Visitors to Thematica in November will be able to obtain a free copy of the 2005 sheet, subject to stock. See details in Stamp Scene nearer the time.

Jeffery has not exclusively worked for the Post Office, of course, and can be credited with well-recognised work such as the masthead design for *The Sunday Times*. He was also responsible for the

corporate logos of the Central Office of Information (COI), The Inland Revenue via Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), and Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), among others.

His entry in *Who's Who* shows that he has also produced coin and medal designs for the Royal Mint, including a 60th anniversary of the end of the war medallion this year (one of the few instances where a 'stamp and medal' commemorative cover is appropriate or justified). He has worked with Reader's Digest, Encyclopaedia Britannica and produced the cover design and lettering for the official 1981 Royal Wedding programme. With recreational interests shown as furniture restoration, playing the guitar, DIY and gardening, it is amazing that he finds the time for work.

**It's a family thing** The Matthews are clearly a very talented family, with not only Jeffery's late wife, but son and daughter all having an involvement in some aspect of the creative process. Coming from a long line of craftsmen, it was perhaps inevitable, or even pre-ordained, that Jeffery would follow suit. This short celebration of his skills would not be complete without mention of these family members: Chris, Rory, and Sarah Jane.

For many years, Jeffery worked with his wife, who used the pseudonym of Charity Boxall (her maternal grandmother's maiden name) when producing a range of philatelic products for the Post Office, including text for presentation and collector packs. The first collaboration between husband and wife was the British Bridges issue. From here on in it became increasingly difficult for Chris to work on her own commissions, and she turned down work to support Jeffery. (See the December 1994 *Bulletin* for her obituary by Richard West, which includes an extensive account of the major contribution that she had made to special stamp products of the time.)

Rory, a draftsman by profession, first came to the attention of philatelists following the once-secret work which he undertook with his father on the Machin head in the 1980s. This work has only relatively recently come to light, and relates to his redrawing the Machin portrait head in pencil. All viewers had assumed until the revelation that this drawing was a photograph, such was the quality of his imagery.

Sarah is not involved with stamp design, but like her father, brother and generations of their family before her, is a goldsmith and Freeman of the City of London. The Goldsmiths' Company is one of the 12 Great Livery Companies of the City of London.

**Recognition** It is not surprising that Jeffery's talents have been acknowledged down the years. In March Jeffery and Sarah attended the Rowland Hill Awards lunch, where unbeknown to them both, he was presented with two prestigious awards. The first was the Phillips Gold Medal, named after the great philatelist Reginald M Phillips, whose collection forms the basis of the museum element of the British Postal Museum and Archive. He also instructed that every five years a gold medal should be awarded to the person who has made the greatest contribution to stamp design. The second award was in recognition of 40 years service to the Post Office, and took the form of the Outstanding Contribution Award (so much nicer-sounding than a 'lifetime achievement' award, which seems to imply that there is nothing further to come!).

It is the letter that landed on the mat from Downing Street in late 2003 that has to be the greatest acknowledgement of his talents yet. It contained an invitation for him to become a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2004 New Year's Honours List, citing specifically his 'services to graphic design, particularly postage stamps' (see the August 2004 *Bulletin*, page 360).

**Personal favourite** My favourite Matthews set is the 1984 College of Arms Quincentenary issue, which was Royal Mail's first in a square format (34.7 × 34.7mm). The overall balance of designs, colours used, typography and white backgrounds all go to make this a stunning set. Shown at right is the artwork (at reduced size) for one stamp in the set. My only slight concern regarding the issue is whether the average person understands what a Quincentenary actually is! For any readers who are still unsure, it is 500 years.

Jeffery Matthews is well respected and a friend to the hobby of stamp collecting, so on behalf of *Bulletin* readers, I send him congratulations, wish him a happy '40th anniversary', and hope there will be more of his excellent stamp designs in the coming years ●

