



From Mrs Martin's Christmas collection, stamps featuring paintings of the Renaissance (left to right): Italo-Byzantine style, 16th century; *Madonna and Child* by Fra Filippo Lippi, *Virgin and Child* by Albrecht Durer, *Madonna of the Chair* by Raphael, and *Madonna and Child* by Titian.

acterised his works. He also had a great talent for music and natural history. He invented the first armoured fighting vehicle and projected aircraft and helicopters, and anticipated the submarine. Between 1500 and 1513 Leonardo appears to have spent most of his time in Florence or in Milan, working on hydraulics and construction of canals. In 1513 he went to work in Rome for Guiliani de Medici and when his patron died he accepted an offer from Francis I of France where he spent the rest of his life. His other interests included anatomy and geology.

Giorgioni da Castelfranco (1477-1510) studied in Venice with Titian under Bellini and was regarded as one of the founders of modern painting. He was the first exponent in Venice of the small picture in oils, produced specifically for private collectors rather than for public or ecclesiastic patrons.

Titian Vecellio (1488-1576) was one of the foremost High Renaissance painters of the Venetian School, and was a great exponent of the use of lighting and colour effects. His paintings appear very human and intimate with a sense of life. He was one of the oldest painters, and died of the plague.

Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520) was an architect and a most distinguished painter who excelled in beauty of expression, achieving a new depth into his paintings. He was extremely successful in his numerous 'Madonna and Child' commissions, which were exquisitely beautiful, and which included the well-known *Sistine Madonna*. His style of painting was greatly influenced by his master, Pietro Peruggino ●

## Stamp cards Richard West on the arrival of the PHQ card

IF YOU CAN'T BEAT, join them. Perhaps that was Royal Mail's attitude towards maximum cards, clearly seeing a potential market for linking post-cards with stamp designs. A 'Press and Broadcast Notice' of 10 July 1973 stated 'A picture-card with a cricketing theme designed and produced by the Post Office will go on sale in England and Wales at selected main post offices from the middle of this month (July).' The Post Office had chosen to reproduce the design of the 3p stamp, showing a sketch of W G Grace by Harry Furniss, issued on 16 May to mark the centenary of County Cricket. The age of the stamp card, or as still fondly referred to by collectors 'PHQ card', had begun.

As we saw last month, there was already an established market for cards with an appropriate stamp cancelled on the day of issue. To be a true maximum card, it should not simply reproduce the stamp design, but have a connection with it. Nevertheless over the years many collectors have affixed stamps to PHQ cards, often on the picture side, to have them cancelled on the day of issue.

With this first card, it is not possible to have the stamp cancelled on the card on 16 May, although some do exist, postmarked by favour. The Press Notice was accompanied by a sample of the card, and would have reached recipients the next day, 11 July. It was therefore possible to have such sample cards stamped and posted on that day, making 11 July probably the earliest possible date on which cards could be legitimately cancelled. The reality is that few cards were put in the post, so that any bearing the 3p Cricket stamp with a 1973 date command a premium, clearly preferably as close to 11 July as possible.

Despite collector interest, the PO seems to have viewed this card like any other picture postcard, for the press release continued: 'This new card makes its appearance in the height of the cricket season so naturally it will be on sale at main post offices near the better-known cricket grounds. It will also be on sale at main post offices at other tourist centres and at selected holiday resorts.'

A curious feature of this card was its size. As the Press Notice put it: 'Because they are slightly larger than the maximum allowed by overseas postal administrations to qualify for prepayment at post-card rate, the new cards should be stamped at the full letter rate for overseas posting.'

The cost of each card was 5p, so owners have seen a good return on their 'investment'. Despite the fact that it was planned as the first of a series, since the card is numbered on the address side as 'PHQ.1', it seems the PO treated its new venture with caution. Cards were produced for the Inigo Jones and Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference issues, but they were not announced at the same time as the stamps. Equally, as with the Cricket stamps, only one from each set was selected for 'stamp card' treatment: it was a while before there was enough confidence to release a card for all new issues, or for every stamp in a set.

Surprisingly, given the popularity of the 'commercial' cards that had reproduced the paintings shown on stamps in 1967 and 1968, the opportunity was not taken to give the Reynolds and Raeburn issue the 'PHQ card' treatment.

The Cricket card included a description on the picture side; from the Inigo Jones card, captions were printed on the address side. Starting with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, cards were reduced to a more accepted size. The first card to capture mass attention was that reproducing the 1973 3½p Royal Wedding design, and this was the first one printed by Questa. The name 'PHQ card' causes some confusion among collectors. Long before they started printing GB stamps, The House of Questa produced the cards and first day cover envelopes. Many collectors therefore assumed that 'PHQ' stood for 'Printed at the House of Questa', whereas it was in fact an abbreviation for Postal Headquarters.

Having produced cards, the PO was obliged to cancel stamps, even if affixed to the picture side. The re-posting facility has provided the answer.

Starting in 1976, the increasingly popular cards were produced for every special stamp design. At the end of 1999 the idea was extended to include miniature sheets, with separate cards reproducing the entire sheet and its individual stamps.

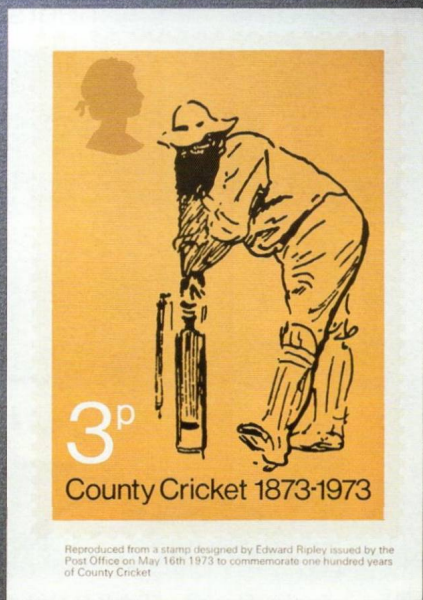
Although Greetings stamps were first issued in 1989, it was not until 1993 that they appeared on cards. Similar reluctance affected definitives for some time – the first to appear being the Castle high values (with silhouette portrait) issued on 24 March 1992, although the cards were not released until 16 February the following year, so again it is not possible to have the card cancelled on the day of issue of the stamps. A card was also issued for the £3 value released in 1995.

Cards reproducing definitives have been somewhat spasmodic, although it seems new designs are now given 'stamp card' treatment. Examples include the Country stamps of 2003 (without the white borders), those for England and Northern Ireland issued in 2001, the European Airmail rate stamp, the £1 Machin, certain re-issued Wilding designs, and the 1st class definitive in orange-red in landscape format as initially adopted for self-adhesive stamps, in gold and as issued for 2000.

For a while stamp books were released with a commemorative label, usually attached to four 1st class stamps. Starting with the first of these booklets, issued on 27 July 1994 to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the Bank of England, and for the majority thereafter, cards reproducing the label design were produced.

From time to time, PHQ cards have been used for specific purposes. Perhaps the best known, and almost vital for any cycling thematic collection, was the 11p Cycling stamp of 1978, the reverse of the card being printed for the Cycling Proficiency Test. Other examples include the 17p British Composers stamp card of 1985, used as a reply to an invitation to a concert at the Royal Festival Hall, and the £2 Edinburgh Castle card, noting the change of address of the British Philatelic Bureau on the reverse. The Rupert Bear 'Greetings' stamp card of 1994 was used to promote the Royal Mail Collectors Club, while the 20p Christmas stamp card of 1998 promoted the Royal Mail Collectables range at an exhibition held at G-Mex in Manchester in November that year.

PHQ cards are not the end of the story regarding postcards from the Post Office, or even cards depicting stamp designs: more next time ●



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After 20 years in Brandon Street the British Philatelic Bureau is on the move

As from 29 August 2000 you can contact  
John Wright

by mail 21 South Gyle Crescent  
Edinburgh EH12 9PB

by phone + 131 316 7100

by fax + 131 316 7102

by e-mail john.p.wright@royalmail.co.uk

A Royal Mail Special Card Service DM 3183

**Royal Mail**

High Value Definitive / Edinburgh Castle /  
Reproduced from a stamp designed by VIKIN The Duke of York  
and issued by Royal Mail on 24 March 1992  
Printed at The House of Quatre, England, SE5 7TP  
© Royal Mail, 1992

Clockwise from top left: the first PHQ card, 1973; Royal Wedding card of 1973; Robert the Bruce from the Great Britons issue of 1974; reverse of the Edinburgh Castle card of 1992; Greetings stamp design of 1996; and the card produced by Walsall Security Printers to celebrate the first definitives they had printed for Royal Mail.