

Charles Lucas and George Ingouville feature on a 2006 Jersey miniature sheet (March *Bulletin* p196), and earlier Jersey issues feature Ingouville (Huguenot Heritage) and Jack Counter (British Legion, left). Guernsey sets have featured Herbert Le Patourel (top left) and the VC's 150th anniversary (top right). Major Robert Cain (above left) has appeared on two separate Isle of Man sets. New Zealand issues include General Bernard Freyberg and Charles Upham (top centre). A 1995 Australia set included Tom Derrick (above centre), and a 2000 set honoured Australia's first recipient and the last three surviving VC holders: Arthur Roden Cutler (above, died 2002), Edward Kenna and Keith Payne.

On the cards

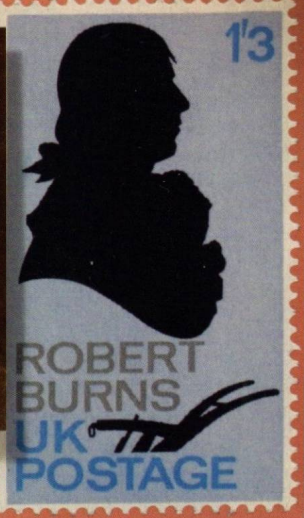
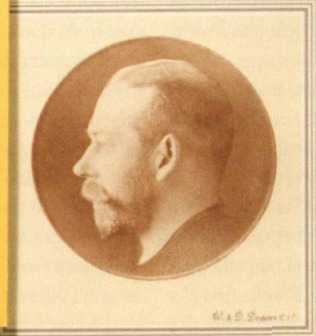
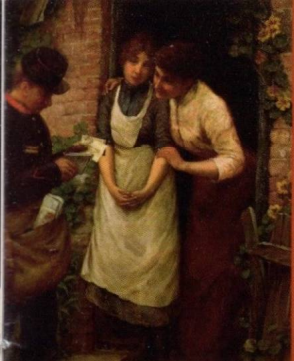
IT IS PERHAPS ironic, but one of the most popular features of the National Postal Museum when it was open to the public at King Edward Street, was the regular issue of special postcards. When the museum closed its doors in 1998, a branch of collecting drew to an end – although the British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) is now producing postcards, so perhaps there is a new chapter for collectors to explore.

It is understandable why the cards had such a strong following, for they provided much fascinating background, based on material from the collection. Soon after the official opening by The Queen in 1969 (the museum had opened in 'temporary' accommodation in 1966), the first sets of cards were being issued. As is widely known, the basis for the museum was the collection of 19th century Great Britain issues formed by Reginald

M Phillips, which he gave to the nation on the understanding that a National Postal Museum would be created. It is not surprising therefore, that the first NPM cards concentrated on the formative years of British stamps.

Five sets were issued in November 1969, each comprising six cards within an envelope. These first sets focused on those who had been closely involved with the development of the first adhesive postage stamp, the creation of the design for the Penny Black, the Mulready stationery, and the later work by De La Rue, including the so-called 'Jubilee' issue. Each of these sets had to be re-printed, reflecting their popularity.

Ten years later, on 22 August 1979, to coincide with the issue marking the centenary of the death of Sir Rowland Hill, a series of five cards focused on the man and his postal reforms. ▶



This is the night mail crossing the border,
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,
Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,
The shop at the corner and the girl next door.

W H Auden

No. 15.

POLAR EXPEDITION
DESPATCH OF MAILS FOR.

MAILS for the Polar Ships "Alert" and "Discovery" will be made up for conveyance from Portsmouth on or about the 25th May by the Steam Yacht "Pandora," Captain Allen Young having kindly consented to convey letters for the officers and crews of the Polar Ships, to be deposited at the depots.

All letters should be sent through the Post Office prepaid the inland rate of postage, and addressed "Arctic Yacht Pandora, Portsmouth."

It should be understood that these letters will be deposited at the depots on the chance of Captain Nares being able to communicate with the entrance of Smith's Sound by means of a small sledge party in the autumn of the present year, and that there is, therefore, some uncertainty whether the letters will reach their destination.



The idea of providing a 'potted history' of British stamp design was continued in the 1980s, with sets that focused on the reigns of King Edward VII, George V (one set for the definitives, another for the commemoratives) and King Edward VIII. These designs included such subject matter as a proposed Memorial issue for George V and the intended Coronation of Edward VIII, designs for which most collectors were then unaware.

One point worth noting is that over the years, many of the NPM cards were first put on sale on 6 May. The museum was a firm supporter of the idea of celebrating the day on which the Penny Black was first officially valid for postage, trying to establish 6 May as 'National Stamp Day'. A special handstamp was often used for the day of issue of new postcards and if appropriate these included the 'National Stamp Day' (NSD) legend. Over the past two years, the idea of a 6 May NSD handstamp has been re-established by the BPMA.

In 1971 the NPM produced a card to publicise its existence, featuring the Penny Black. On the initial card the stamp had the corner letters of P and M; subsequent versions saw the corner letters changed, first to N and J, and then to L and B. This last card was issued on 6 May 1989, and is one clearly recalled by Douglas Muir. The previous year Douglas had been appointed Curator, Philately of the NPM, maintaining the same role at the BPMA today. He was concerned that the reproduction of the Penny Black was as accurate as possible, appreciating it was not simply a black stamp on cream paper. He visited the printers to see that the colour was right, the stamp having a touch of deep blue. To achieve the background 'paper' colour, the printer began with off-white, and then gradually added yellow, a spoonful at a time, to the printing ink until, by comparing it to an original stamp, Douglas was satisfied that as close a match as possible had been achieved.

Similar publicity postcards featured the bust as developed by Arnold Machin for the British definitives (this can be seen at the BPMA). This Machin head was first shown in red, then in blue, green and black. A later card on the Machin head appeared in 1992. There was also a card depicting the 16p 'Frama' postage label.

Over the years, the museum often linked a new card with the release of a special issue by Royal Mail, illustrating appropriate material from the collections. Examples of these include essays for the Coronation in 1953, produced in conjunction with the stamps marking the 40th anniversary of the accession; a set of four in 1996 showing essays of the 1966 Robert Burns stamps; and essays for the 1972 Royal Silver Wedding stamps, issued for the Golden Wedding in 1997. Others recalled significant stamp issues such as the £5 orange and Seahorse design, and the proposed, but unissued, Anglo-French design. However, perhaps of more interest were the cards that invariably accompanied special exhibitions staged by the museum. The display cabinets at the museum, or in later years in the former 'banking hall' of the London Chief Office in King Edward Building, were used to good effect, with specially created exhibitions which were well worth visiting. (Similar, albeit by necessity smaller, exhibitions are still held in the BPMA's Search Room.) Cards, whether a single design or a set, invariably accompanied these exhibitions, naturally drawing on items within the museum.

However, most of the NPM cards, not linked with any exhibition or stamp issue, were quite simply of great interest thanks to their contents. The themes that were covered included ways of carrying and sorting the mail, with not only mail coaches and later postal vehicles, but by air, Packet or rail, including the underground PO railway, to the local post office and postman, items used by mail carriers such as timepieces, letter boxes, stamp boxes, postal notices, individuals involved in the development of postal services, cancelling machines, postal maps, Christmas cards, Valentines, postal uniforms, Post Office posters, even post office cats and pages from the Freddie Mercury stamp collection.

This brief survey hopefully indicates just how useful these cards were over the years not only in revealing the wealth of material to be found in the museum's collections, but also in adding to one's personal knowledge and interest. Perhaps the baton will be grasped by the BPMA, and a new generation of postcards will emerge ●