

Victory Issue

Date of issue: 11 JUNE 1946



The first recorded suggestion for a 'Victory' issue was on 3 April 1941, when Sir Ernest Graham-Little, MP for London University, put a parliamentary question asking the Postmaster General (PMG) to consider a stamp, the design of which should be thought out now and the preparation of which would have an excellent psychological effect. Sir Graham's proposal received scant attention until it was examined at a meeting between GPO and Government representatives on 19 June. The meeting decided unanimously that 'the time was far from ripe' for even preliminary consideration, although it was not finally shelved until 23 July. By the end of 1941 supply problems had effectively ruled out special stamp issues for the duration of the war. An internal Postal Services Department memorandum written by G W Southerst on 7 October 1944 stated that it had been decided at a very high level . . . that no 'victory postage stamps' should be produced in this country at the end of the war, but that special victory stamp cancelling dies should be used instead. It continued: 'We don't recollect that the papers, which were no doubt highly confidential, were even referred to us'. It seems as if this decision was imposed on the GPO and, as will be seen, a Cabinet meeting was eventually required to reverse it.

At the end of 1943 the question was revived following an article by the columnist Clement Yorke in the SUNDAY DISPATCH of 28 November, berating the GPO for not using stamps for propaganda. In a memorandum of 4 December, D P Dell of the Stores Department explained that labour shortages ruled this out, but wondered whether a suitable design commemorating victory might be prepared in readiness for the war's end. On 7 December this came to the attention of the Deputy Director General, Sir Raymond Birchall, who recalled the article as 'cheap journalese' that he had cursed audibly while reading. As other pressures were being brought to bear ('I read too that some MPs are on the warpath') it was felt work on a victory stamp should be put in hand - but not yet. Sir Raymond advised

waiting for the invasion of Europe 'before starting things up'. There the matter rested: despite queries from Stores in February and August 1944 as to what action was contemplated, it was not until October that year that the Controller of Stores, A Wells, was able to review the question with Sir Thomas Gardiner, the Director General. A stores internal memorandum of 26 October reported that 'a victory stamp is still very much in the air, but the Director General is considering the point from the postmarking angle'. Subsequently the idea of preparing a stamp in anticipation of victory seems to have been quietly abandoned.

Only a few days earlier the GPO received (and declined) its first unsolicited design for a Victory stamp, sent 12 October by Sydney H Carter. It was a handsome design of professional standard, resembling the Dulac Coronation stamp of 1937 with the King and Queen shown full face; also featured were the furled ensigns of the three armed services and 'Victory 1939-1944'. Mr Carter was thanked for the quality of his work: most subsequent such proposals up to the end of 1945, of which there were many, simply received a terse rejection. In November 1944 the New Zealand Post Office placed orders with the three leading British stamp printers - Harrison & Sons Ltd, Bradbury Wilkinson, and Waterlows - for 'Peace' stamps. This caused intense excitement among philatelists. Between February and November 1945 the GPO dealt with (at least) ten parliamentary questions, 21 'flag cases' involving personal replies to MPs, and 18 other suggestions or queries relating to the special issue of 'Peace' or 'Victory' stamps. The number increased during the year, spurred on by such events as the Greek government's call in April for a joint issue of common design by all the Allied nations, victory in Europe on 8 May, victory over Japan on 15 August, and the official signing of peace terminating all hostilities in September.

PEACE

Sealed packages of slogan dies were sent to all postmasters in 1943, to be opened only on subsequent instructions when peace broke out. These were the 'Victory Bells' postmarks in use on 400 dies from 8 May to 9 June, and again from 15 August to 15 September. The arrangements worked remarkably well, the only cases of premature usage being reported from Birmingham on 22 April and London W1 on 7 May.

In the meantime the GPO was badgered by philatelic societies from Exmouth to Aberdeen, whilst on 27 October STAMP COLLECTING approvingly reported the activities of L Syddall of the Stamp Dealers' Association, who had organised a Victory Stamp Petition and reportedly made an appeal in a talk he had given on 17 October for Children's Hour on BBC radio. PHILATELIC MAGAZINE on the other hand, seeing itself representing the 'vast majority of thinking philatelists' and 'responsible trade opinion', opted against the petitioners in its 5 October issue, characterising them as a noisy and unrepresentative minority of irresponsible individuals motivated chiefly by profit, under the headline 'Belated Victory

Stamps Not Wanted - Ill-Conceived Propaganda'. It was true that there was much speculation about the valuable dollar earnings that a special issue might reap; it was also true that the Treasury and Board of Trade recognised the importance to the economy of stamp exports in exchange for dollar credits since the summer of 1940, when they had approved the British Philatelic Association's plan to act as a clearing house for all philatelic exports to the United States. Dollar earnings as a motive for special stamp issues would be cited to the GPO to the end of the decade and beyond.

Although the 'Victory Bells' had generally been well received in lieu of commemorative stamps, the public's opinion was clearly changing, whilst many if not most philatelists were already firmly in favour of an issue. Further encouragement came with the issue of South Africa's 'Victory' set in December, and news of the Australian set to be issued in February 1946. The Colonial Office, which tended to follow the GPO regarding stamp policy, reported that it was being bombarded by many Colonies; by the beginning of 1946 it had refused pleas by Bermuda, Barbados, Fiji, and the Falkland Islands for a special Victory and/or Peace issue, and were offering the same answer to Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. Although it was not yet apparent, the GPO had begun to recognise the inevitable some months earlier.

FIRST SETBACKS

Once it became clear that the public wish for special stamps was not likely to abate, on 29 September 1945, Mr Leigh-Clare of the Postal Services Department (PSD) telephoned the Stores Department on behalf of R A Little, Director of Postal Services, asking to be briefed on the production of special stamps. D P Dell of Stores rang Leigh-Clare on 1 October and outlined the process undergone with the Postal Centenary issue of 1940; he also explained the time factor in the preparation and selection of designs and the photogravure process undertaken by the stamp printers Harrison & Sons Ltd. He concluded with a warning: 'There is a shortage of skilled male operatives at the moment which will prevent Messrs Harrison from giving anything like a full output . . . the question whether a Victory stamp could now be undertaken depends upon the labour situation during the next six months, which is difficult to forecast.' Other factors were that female labour used to check and tally bulk print runs were 'in short and diminishing supply' while the current lack of 'creative talent' among Harrisons' draughtsmen meant that any original designs would come from outside the firm.

On 22 October the Assistant Postmaster General (APMG), Mr Burke, answered a parliamentary question on 'a special issue of postage stamps . . . to commemorate the termination of the war or declaration of peace' by referring to the 'Victory Bells' slogans and concluded: 'My noble friend [the Earl of Listowel, PMG] does not purpose to do anything further in that regard.'

PLANS FOR ISSUE REVIVED

In January 1946, however, the Government announced that Victory celebrations would be held over the Whitsuntide bank holiday weekend in June. The GPO faced a renewed deluge of suggestions, advice and sketches from the public urging various social, religious or patriotic themes, many showing undeniable skill and imagination. Sydney H Carter resubmitted his design of the previous October, whilst the many other contributors included a young naval cadet, Anthony S B New, who 20 years later would produce many more stamp designs as a professional artist. Many 'Victory' stamps were in preparation by foreign and Commonwealth administrations. The Brighton EVENING ARGUS typically complained that 'there is scarcely any country that is not making a Victory issue'. While an exaggeration it was quoted by STAMP COLLECTING on 2 February. On 16 January a brief on the stamp design and production process was prepared by PSD for the newly appointed Director General, Sir Raymond Birchall; this set out an ideal timetable of 187 days for the whole process and compared it with the actual time spent on the Silver Jubilee and Coronation issues (325 and 76 days respectively). A week later, on 23 January, Mr Leigh-Clare of the PSD confidentially minuted Mr Dell of Stores that 'the PMG has more or less decided to issue a Victory stamp or stamps'.

At a meeting of Stores, PSD and Contracts Department personnel on 30 and 31 January, the DPS announced that a special issue had been agreed for 10 June (as this was a Bank Holiday Monday, the issue date was later changed to Tuesday, 11 June). This prompted much discussion, a key factor being the strong possibility that the April Budget would include a reduction of the 2½d inland letter rate to 2d. This would put a heavy production burden on Harrisons, which would take precedence over any special work; it would not be possible to perform both tasks simultaneously because of the scarcity of resources. Another problem was that no production work arising from the possible tariff change could begin until after its announcement in the Budget, to avoid any premature disclosure.

FIRST PROPOSALS IN DETAIL

In a minute of 31 January to D J Lidbury, the Assistant Director General (Services), the DPS summarised the meeting's recommendations:

(i) 2d only - this assumed that the Victory issue and the start of the new postal rate would take place on the same day in June. There would have to be a pre-Budget statement on the

latter in March to allow enough time; the alternative was to postpone the Victory issue by two months, making it ineffective.

(ii) 2½d and 3d - assuming that any change to postal rates announced in the Budget could be deferred until mid-August. The stamps would thus remain valid for current inland and overseas letter rates for two months; this option was felt the least taxing on the GPO's resources.

(iii) 3d and 1/- - the current base rates for overseas letters were 3d surface and 1s 3d airmail. Stamps in the proposed values could be produced for June celebrations, and subsequently used separately, or in combination for overseas post, depending on whether basic airmail was reduced to 1/- in the Budget, a possibility.

Of these options, Mr Little suggested, 'the balance of advantage seems to lie with the second. Production will be easiest, it will provide two commemorative stamps in distinctive colours, and ensure the widest use on the inland, imperial and foreign service letters.' The only disadvantage, 'if it is a disadvantage', would be deferring any postage rate changes until mid-August.

In the event the Budget made no change to postal rates.

Other possibilities considered and largely dismissed on 30 and 31 January were special 2s 6d, 5/- and 10/- high values, and a commemorative airletter: the last proposal was rejected because letterpress did not achieve sufficient quality for a special issue, although discussion continued until March.

As to the size of the stamps, the ordinary size (0.86in by 0.75in excluding perforations) was ruled out to avoid confusion on the counters. Similarly, it was recalled that 1½ times the normal size (0.86in by 1.13in) had proved awkward for counter staff to handle in 1940 and the Union of Post Office Workers asked to be consulted if its re-use was contemplated. The double size (0.86in by 1.51in) as used for the Silver Jubilee and Coronation was felt ideal.

CABINET DECISION

The PMG passed the recommendation to the Prime Minister, who asked that it be put to the Cabinet, accomplished by a memorandum dated 7 February. This included proposals that 'peace and reconstruction rather than military victory should be the main motive of the designs' which should include 'a non-traditional type omitting the King's head as well as a traditional type'. It was noted that South Africa, New Zealand and Australia had issued or announced commemoratives on similar themes, and also that 'the new Dominion issues all

dispense with the King's head'. At a meeting on 14 February the Cabinet accepted the proposed theme, 'peace and reconstruction', but considered that both stamps should bear the King's head. The following day the PMG formally notified the King's secretary, Sir Alan Lascelles, of the Cabinet's decision; official announcements were made in Parliament on 28 February. Henceforth the GPO would usually refer to the 'Peace' issue, although they are generally known as the 'Victory' stamps. An incidental result of the announcement was that the Colonial Office was able to relax its own policy: a total of 162 different stamps were issued by the Colonies and Dominions of the British Commonwealth during 1945-46.

Both the Royal Fine Arts Commission and the Council for Industrial Design (CoID) were consulted by the PMG on 5 February regarding suitable artists. While it was established that the opinion of the Fine Arts Commission be sought regarding stamp design, the CoID was only established under the auspices of the Board of Trade in 1944 and had not previously been approached. Official pressure was being exerted on the GPO to consult with the CoID, which the current President of the Board of Trade, Sir Stafford Cripps, reiterated in a letter to the PMG on 14 February: 'The Council is a young body with its way to make in a difficult world and I am very anxious they should have all possible encouragement.' The Fine Arts Commission had already ceded many of its advisory functions to the CoID; a letter from Professor A B Knapp-Fisher, the Secretary of the Commission, to Leigh-Clare of the PSD dated 11 February explained: 'We have an understanding that we deal with all types of building . . . and the Council with furnishings, fabric, artists' designs, etc.' It was also agreed at the 14 February Cabinet meeting that the Royal Fine Arts Commission for Scotland (a separate body) should be consulted.

LIST OF ARTISTS

On 15 February the CoID replied to a list of artists proposed by the PMG in his letter of 5 February; their only positive objection was to McKnight Kauffer, whom they believed to be a US citizen, living for many years in New York as an expatriate. They added a short list of their own which the GPO accepted without comment. The instructions to artists stated 'the main motive [sic] should be peace and reconstruction rather than military victory'. 'Postage' and 'revenue' should be included, but need only be in small lettering, and the King's head could be slightly larger than definitive size. It was left to artists as to whether their designs were symbolic or pictorial. The full list of artists contacted is:

Names out forward by the GPO:

Edmund Dulac
Harold Nelson
Royal College of Arms
Robert Austin
E J Jackman

Ernest Linzell
Mark Severin
A H Williamson

Names later added by the GPO:

Barnett Freedman
John Farleigh

Names submitted by the CoID:

Gwen Raverat
Percy Metcalfe
Stephen Gooden
Robert Gibbings
Reynolds Stone
Agnes Miller Parker

Stamp printers invited by the Stores Department:

Waterlow & Sons
Harrison & Sons
Bradbury Wilkinson
De la Rue

All invitees were asked to submit designs by 8 March.

Of the above, only Gooden, Williamson, Severin and the printers De la Rue and Waterlows failed to respond, while Gwen Raverat and Percy Metcalfe had to decline on health grounds. Ernest Linzell regretted that his retainer agreement with Bradbury Wilkinson precluded him liaising with Harrisons as stipulated in the 'Instructions to Artists'; however, Bradbury Wilkinson's staff artists, E J Jackman and W S Matthews, each contributed a design on the company's behalf, while Jackman submitted two more in his own name. Harrisons' staff submitted two designs, one by H L Palmer and one by an unknown artist; this rather belies the Stores Department's impression that Harrisons no longer had the capacity to produce original designs.

A belated reply was received from the College of Arms on 22 March, in the form of an enquiry by the Somerset Herald, George Bellew, whether it was too late to submit a design (he was responsible for the current 10/- definitive). The College had been sent a courtesy invitation, as it was routine to consult them over any heraldic matters. Bellew was not aware of the invitation sent to the College (he learnt of the intended issue from the press). It was consequently decided that in future designs should be solicited from the College, and from Bellew in particular, although it was now too late for the Victory issue.

The last response arrived in August, postmarked Western Samoa; this was an apology from Robert Gibbings, explaining he was on an extended holiday.

DESIGNS SELECTED

On 11 March the submitted designs were previewed by Gould-Smith, Shanks and Leigh-Clare (PSD), Wells, Lewis, Dell and Brent (Stores) and Victor Harrison, Rhodes, Smith and Tibbetts (Harrisons). Twenty designs were available, and numbered for reference:

- 1 - Robert Austin;
- 2 - W S Matthews for Bradbury Wilkinson;
- 3 - E J Jackman for Bradbury Wilkinson;
- 4 and 5 - Edmund Dulac;
- 6 and 7 - John Farleigh;
- 8 and 9 - E J Jackman;
- 10,11 and 12 - Reynolds Stone;
- 13 and 14 - Barnett Freedman;
- 15 and 16 - Harold Nelson;
- 17 and 18 - Agnes Miller Parker;
- 19 - H L Palmer for Harrisons;
- 20 - an unknown staff artist for Harrisons.

The meeting grouped these in the following categories:

- (A) 2-5, 8-9, 13-14, 19 – ‘suitable’;
- (B) 1, 10, 12, 15-16, 20 – ‘suitable if modified’;
- (C) 6-7, 11, 17-18 – ‘unsuitable’.

A full descriptive list with additional comments follows:

List no.	Artist	Design	Comments
(1)	Austin	Building & sowing	-
(2)*	Matthews	Ploughing	Bromide ordered at preview; POAC 2nd choice
(3)*	Jackman	Peace with laurel crown; city, factory & fields	-
(4)	Dulac	Rebuilding & industry with sunrise; mason's & architect's tools	Preview & POAC 1st choice
(5)	"	Scroll incorporating dove, tools of reconstruction, etc	Bromide ordered at preview, CoID 3rd choice
(6)	Farleigh	Westminster & river at night; unexplained legend 'April 24 1945' top left	-

(7)	"	Silhouette of London skyline; dove	-
(8)	Jackman	National floral emblems; city, factory & fields	Bromide ordered at preview, POAC 4th choice
(9)	"	National floral emblems; cenotaph & dove	POAC 3rd choice
(10)	Stone	Trowel, dividers & square; dove; ornamental 'flourish' forms border	Bromide ordered at preview, CoID & Scottish RFAC 1st choice; final choice for 3d
(11)	"	Trowel, etc; dove; London ruins & rebuilding	-
(12)	"	As (10) minus dove; trowel, etc more prominent	CoID 2nd choice
(13)	Freedman	King's head in laurel wreath; 'Peace' & olive branch	-
(14)	"	As (13) with arch & ruins	-
(15)	Nelson	Dove, smoking ruins, floral emblems	-
(16)	"	Old & modern London; base with dolphins	-
(17)	Parker	Theodolite, floral emblems, ships & industry	-
(18)	"	As (17) but more finished	-
(19)**	Palmer	Blueprint outlines of tractor, house, factory, ship; 'V' shading diagonals behind King's head; floral emblems	Preview & Scottish RFAC 2nd choice; final choice for 2½d
(20)**	Unknown	Industry, seaport & fields * For Bradbury Wilkinson ** For Harrisons	-

NB: E J Jackman submitted (3) as a Bradbury Wilkinson staff artist but (8) and (9) on his own account.

The best designs were felt to be no. 4 by Dulac and 19 by Palmer in that order; it was agreed that a different design might be used for each value, rather than an identical design for both as notified to the CoID on 5 February. Several other designs were also felt to show merit, and it was decided that stamp size bromides should be made of nos. 2, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 19. These were produced for the next day by Smith and Tibbetts of Harrisons, working through the night in the GPO Engineering Department photographic studio.

For the selection of designs that followed, Victory stamps issued by other postal administrations were available for comparison. Also to hand were sets of the four national

floral emblems, the rose, shamrock, daffodil and thistle; these were prepared by Harrisons following a suggestion of Lady Megan Lloyd-George at a Post Office Advisory Council (POAC) meeting on 1 March, to see if these could be fitted into any otherwise suitable designs which lacked them.

The POAC saw the designs on the morning of 12 March, preferring nos. 4, 2, 9 and 8 in that order and asked for a bromide of no. 9 to be prepared. That afternoon Sir Kenneth Clark, Sir Francis Meynell and Sir Sydney Cockerell spoke for the CoID, preferring unhesitatingly no.10 by Reynolds Stone. When pressed for alternatives they reluctantly picked no. 12 by Stone and no. 5 by Dulac; they felt that only no. 10 and possibly no. 12 had 'the merit of being a design in the proper sense'. Their objection appears to have been the pictorial (rather than purely symbolic) content common to all the designs except these three. Later it transpired that the CoID was not aware that a variety of designs rather than one basic design was now sought; the GPO representatives thought the CoID had been informed.

Later that afternoon the designs were seen by the Scottish Royal Fine Arts Commission, represented by Lord Hamilton of Dalziel, G. D. O. Pilkington-Jackson and their Secretary, A. E. Haswell-Miller. They swiftly chose no.10, and, after some hesitation, no.19, with the recommendation that Stone's design should be used for the 3d overseas rate, as representing the dove of peace carrying its message to the world, and Palmer's for the 2½d inland rate, depicting the symbols of reconstruction at home.

As a consequence, it was agreed that colour essays be produced of designs 4, 10 and 19. Reynolds Stone was contacted by telephone and agreed to visit Harrisons the following day to work on minor improvements to his design, which both the Scottish and CoID representatives had thought necessary for successful reproduction. These involved revised lettering and a lightening of the King's head. Edmund Dulac was also asked to redraw the King's head on his design no. 4, which was done on 20 March. Harrisons' chief difficulty was securing similar tonal qualities on the emblems included in Palmer's design. The following essays were submitted to the King on 29 March:

1 x 2½d	-	Palmer's design in	blue
"	-	"	violet
"	-	Dulac's design in	blue
"	-	"	violet
1 x 3d	-	Stone's design in	blue
"	-	"	violet

On 1 April the PMG was informed that the King approved the Palmer and Stone designs, only the latter requiring further work to improve the dove's tail and to curtail the 'flourish'

surrounding the central design. Stone regretted that he had not been allotted the 2½d, as he had gone to some trouble redrawing its value tab to his own satisfaction.

Revised essays of the 2½d in blue and 3d in violet were received at GPO Headquarters from Harrisons on 12 April; it was noted that the violet used was more 'reddish' than that on the first essays. On 17 April Harrisons confirmed they would be printing in the 'bluer' shade of violet first used. Details of the issue were given to Parliament on 11 April. Reynolds Stone and Harrisons each received 125 guineas (£131.25) for their successful designs. This was in addition to 25 guineas (£26.25) paid to all contributors in March.

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

Despite the limited time available an initial distribution of 153 million 2½d and 13.92 million 3d was made to counters by 11 June and adequate supplies were maintained thereafter; to achieve this Harrisons worked continuously through two weekends.

A press release was published on Friday, 7 June - unusual in preceding the issue by four days, but necessary as Saturday was Victory Day and Monday a Bank Holiday. The PMG also gave a short radio talk describing the stamps on the evening of 10 June, and was fortuitously able to publicise them further on the day of issue, in an address to the Imperial Press Conference held at Grosvenor House. There were 97 first day covers presented to the delegates and officials at the Conference, who represented newspapermen throughout the Commonwealth: these were registered envelopes bearing both stamps and containing personal greetings and a brief account of the issue.

First day covers were also sent to the following: Postmasters General of the Dominions and colonies, members of the Post Office Advisory Council, heads of the postal administrations of the wartime allied and neutral nations and Dominion Prime Ministers, totalling another 130 covers, of which all except those for the POAC contained a block of four of each stamp. (The cover sent to the Nigerian post office was returned 'gone away': it transpired that their PMG had been suspended - the matter was not pursued.) The royal princesses Elizabeth and Margaret were sent covers containing blocks of 12 of each stamp. The PMG made three more personal presentations of blocks of four during a visit by the Postmaster General and Assistant PMG of the United States and US Senator Tydings. About six sheets of each value were used for publicity. Finally Harrisons were allowed to make up an unspecified number of presentation cards bearing the two stamps for their favoured customers, provided an equivalent number was repurchased later: they had done likewise for the 1935 Silver Jubilee issue.

STAMPS PRINTED AND SOLD

It was announced on 11 April that the issue would comprise 240 million 2½d stamps (2 million sheets) and 24 million 3d (200,000 sheets); allowing for wastage, the actual print order was 264 million (10% extra) and 27 million (12½% extra) respectively. In fact a further order for 6 million 3d was placed before the issue date in anticipation of demand. This proved to be such that on 25 June, despite an earlier intention not to reprint, 60 million more 2½d and 12 million 3d were ordered. After this the sales of the 3d ironically slowed; the Stores Department did not issue the last stocks to postmasters until 31 October, and counter supplies were not exhausted until late November, aided by initial pressures of the Christmas season. The final stocks of 2½d left Stores on 16 August, and were reportedly sold out at counters by the end of that month. The decision to reprint the 3d as well as the 2½d caused the GPO some embarrassment as it had not been foreseen it would take almost six months to dispose of the higher value.

The final sales figures, reported on 14 April 1947, were as follows (sheets of 120):

	2½d	3d
Printed	2,700,000	375,000
Sold	2,565,271	359,881
Waste/specimens /overprints, etc	134,729	15,119

The overprints were for Tangier only; the only other British postal agency operating overseas at this time was at Tetuan in Spanish Morocco. Because of Spanish slowness in regularising with the rest of Europe the misalignment of their postage rates that had come about since 1940, it was decided to exclude Tetuan. A report of sales figures (in sheets of 120) for overprints, dated 9 December 1947 and thus presumably final, is:

	2½d	3d
Printed	5,000	5,000
Agency	600	610
Dealers	3,258	3,259
Unsold	1,142	1,131

The figures for 'agency' sales represent the total supply of overprinted Victory stamps to Tangier by Stores up to the final issue on 16 October 1946; other sources quote 'sales' of 545,540 of the 2½d (4,546 sheets) and 547,640 of the 3d (4,564 sheets) but these probably include quantities issued but unsold.

Total cash sales were thus about £3.75 million, while the cost of the issue was calculated at £8,000 - this included £5,584 to Harrisons for printing, paper and gumming, and the rest in

miscellaneous costs for distribution, etc. Purely philatelic sales were later estimated to account for about £57,000 of the total.

REACTIONS

There was excitement in philatelic circles when a 3d stamp was first found with seven instead of six berries on the dove's olive branch: it subsequently died down when it was realised that this defect occurred as often as one in ten or twelve stamps. After June most of these were identified and destroyed by the GPO, but reports of sales came in as late as October. Another variety was spotted on the 2½d, on which the ship was occasionally found to have an extra porthole.

The stamps were popular with the public, but less so with specialist opinion and sections of the national press. GIBBONS STAMP MONTHLY summed up its reactions in an editorial headed 'Peace Puerilities', while the DUNDEE COURIER AND ADVERTISER accurately predicted on 7 June that 'the national sense of humour will not save the new commemorative peace stamps from widespread ironic comment'. One of the kinder descriptions of the Palmer design was as a 'twopence-halfpenny bag of artistic tricks', while the outline symbols in the corners were thought reminiscent of children's cartoons by more than one observer. The 'calligraphic flourish' in the borders of Reynolds Stone's design, which it was hoped would 'suggest the celebration of peace and victory', merely earned it the nickname of the 'red tape stamp', the philatelic press reported.

There was curiosity at the apparently Masonic elements of a trowel, dividers and architect's square in Stone's design – these were noticed within the GPO as early as March. An extremely unkind comment was published in the DARWEN NEWS of 14 June, whose correspondent suggested that Stone's design represented the nightmares of the president of a racing pigeon club after a hectic night out at his Masonic lodge; in similar vein GIBBONS STAMP MONTHLY speculated whether the 'calligraphic flourish' was 'plotting the course of the returning reveller'. Despite these criticisms, however, there was also genuine appreciation expressed. Stone's design was much liked for its balance and simple dignity, and many thought it should have been the wider circulated 2½d value. Palmer's design was generally found fussy and overcrowded (although it had its defenders), but was admired for the way the photogravure process was utilised so that the varied diagonal shadings formed a symbolic 'V' for Victory behind the King's head. Both stamps were admired for their rich colouring, although more than one critic noted that the deep violet of Stone's 3d seemed curiously sombre. It was also Stone's design that caused a serious difference between the GPO and the Council of Industrial Design.

DISPUTE WITH CoID

The PMG received a letter dated 24 June from Sir Thomas Barlow, Chairman of the CoID, stating that Clark, Meynell and Cockerell had not been aware on 12 March that more than one selection was required of them - otherwise they would have pressed for the Stone design to feature on the 2½d, and would not have made the Palmer design their second choice. By the time the PMG replied on 27 June regretting the misunderstanding and sharing Sir Thomas's hopes for successful co-operation in the future, Sir Sydney Cockerell had independently sent a letter to THE TIMES of 25 June. He named the CoID trio and described their deliberations on 12 March ('Mr Stone's was the best and all the rest were nowhere').

The CoID clearly felt Sir Sydney had overstepped the mark with this breach of confidence, and quickly reassured the GPO in a letter of 28 June that 'he is not a member of the Council nor ordinarily associated with its work'. The same day Sir Sydney began a short but bad-tempered correspondence with the PMG, the highlights of which were as follows: he considered that the CoID's purpose on 12 March had been to choose a design, not simply advise on it, in which Meynell and Clark supported him; he had 'excellent authority' for believing gossip that the King had been forced to accept the Palmer design for the 2½d despite the aesthetic objections of the Queen; he urged the PMG to consult 'the first dozen representatives of the British public that can be collected from the street' the next time he required advice on stamp design. It was tersely noted on 11 July that the PMG did not think further reply necessary.

LESSONS

In retrospect the GPO felt that the four months (mid-February to mid-June) taken to produce the issue, although the minimum it had always advised necessary, was in fact barely adequate. A similar timescale later in the year would have been impracticable because of Harrison's requirement to print extra stamps for Christmas.

There had also been strong complaints from various artists about the three weeks allowed for submission of designs; the CoID urged that three months would be more appropriate. The 'minimum' production period for an issue was thus extended to seven months, more usually nine to provide a safety margin. Another lesson was that greater caution be exercised in future deciding the quantity of special issues to print. Finally, in the GPO's first dealings with the CoID there had been communication problems both would try to avoid in the future.

THE ARTISTS

REYNOLDS STONE, CBE, RDI, FRSA, was born on 13 March 1909. After education at Eton and Magdalen College, Cambridge, he studied printing at Cambridge University Press. Subsequently he worked under Eric Gill and for the Wessex Press, Taunton, before becoming a freelance designer specialising in book decoration. His work was commissioned by many public bodies including the National Trust, Arts Council and HM Stationery Office. After service in the RAF during 1941-45 he produced many stamp designs for the GPO, and was successful with the Commonwealth Games 3d and Welsh regional issue of 1958, the General Letter Office Tercentenary 3d and 'Europa' issue of 1960, and the Paris Conference Centenary issue of 1963. He was also involved in the design of banknotes, and designed and executed the Winston Churchill Memorial in Westminster Abbey in 1965. He died on 23 June 1979.

H L PALMER was 40 at the time of the Victory issue and had previously designed the Penny Post Centenary stamps of 1940. He had served his apprenticeship in the photogravure section of Waterlow & Sons Ltd and by 1946 was chief etcher and retoucher in Harrison's photogravure department. He continued producing designs for British stamps up to and including the 1953 Coronation, but was not again successful.

GILES ALLEN
18 June 1993

REFERENCES

PO Archive files

- 102/16 - Victory Peace & Reconstruction Issues
- 121/391 - Victory Issue: Public Suggestions & Correspondence
- 33/5584 - Postage Stamp Suggestions 1940-1960
- 33/5920 - Public Relations: Imperial Press Conference
- 52/0999 - Peace Stamps 1946
- 52/0994 - Centenary Issue 1940 [1943-44 correspondence attached to front of part 4 only]

BRITISH PHILATELIC BULLETIN

James Watson, 'British Special Stamps - 6. Victory, 1946', February 1975.