

## Elizabeth II Coronation

Date of issue: 3 JUNE 1953



On 6 February 1952 King George VI died and was succeeded by his eldest daughter, Princess Elizabeth. Five days later the Director of Postal Services, R H Locke, held a meeting with officials of his department regarding stamps for the new reign of Elizabeth II. The meeting saw an immediate problem over stamps to mark the Coronation, which was thought might take place as early as late July or the beginning of August as the period of official mourning was only until 31 May. On this assumption it was decided to limit the issue to the 2½d inland letter rate only, in double the definitive size.

It was provisionally agreed that invitations to artists be sent in early March, with designs to be received by the end of the month, so that selected design could hopefully be ready for the Queen's approval by the end of April. E Carr, who attended the meeting on behalf of the Supplies Department, thought that Harrison & Sons, the stamp printers, would need two months to print sufficient stamps, and that they could then be distributed to offices within two weeks, that is by mid-July. It was decided to confirm with the Palace that a Coronation issue was wanted and, if so, whether it should include Prince Philip. Meanwhile the Council of Industrial Design (CoID) would be asked to nominate suitable artists.

On 13 February a telephone enquiry to the Postal Services Department (PSD) from the Queen's Private Secretary, Sir Alan Lascelles, asked what steps were being taken about new stamps. The Postmaster General (PMG), Earl de la Warr, did not reply until 25 February, when he outlined current plans for definitives and proposed a special Coronation stamp. He asked whether suitable photographs of Her Majesty were available either for direct reproduction or as the basis of an effigy. The question of Prince Philip's inclusion was left temporarily in abeyance. Lascelles answered on 27 February that the Queen gladly agreed to a Coronation stamp and that a number of photographs had recently been taken for official purposes, and a set would be forwarded once approved.

By the end of February it was known that the Coronation would not take place before May 1953, and for the next two months little activity is recorded, the main consideration at this time being a suitable effigy of the Queen for permanent use. An announcement to Parliament of the intention to issue a Coronation stamp was made in March. While

discussions took place with the CoID during March and April, it seems no clear consensus was reached:

‘One possibility would be to incorporate in the design a photograph or drawing of some historic building, such as Westminster Abbey, intimately associated with the Coronation. Another ... would be to charge the artists with the production of a design symbolic of the Coronation, or of some closely associated theme such as the Commonwealth, leaving them free to express this theme in a design of their own creation. Still another would be to leave the artists with complete freedom to express their concept in the way they think best.’

(Draft letter by DPS to Lascelles, 19 April – but not sent.)

As no opportunity had arisen by the end of April to discern the Queen’s feelings on ‘subject and symbolism’, and it was decided to give the artists a free hand.

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## APPROACHES TO SELECTED ARTISTS

The CoID supplied a list of artists on 5 May. Five were already well known in the field of stamp design (Edmund Dulac, Percy Metcalfe, Mary Adshead, Abram Games, and Enid Marx). Four were put forward for the first time - Eric Fraser, Barbara Jones, Michael Goaman and (as a reserve) G Foster Fletcher, all having established reputations in areas other than stamp design. The CoID considered the last four to have a flair for decorative and symbolic work fitting the joy of the occasion. Several more names were subsequently added: these included former Harrisons’ staff artists John Stobie and Harold Palmer now turned freelance, while Harrisons gave special permission for two of their current employees, Lancelot Thornton and Arthur Porter, to submit designs completed in their own time. Captain Barnett Freedman RN and Hans Tisdall were also included in the final list. In Freedman’s case he indicated his willingness in a telephone conversation with Miss Liley of the Public Relations Department, for whom he had just redesigned the standard valedictory letter to retiring GPO employees; this came as a surprise to PSD, as Freedman was thought no longer interested in stamp design. Mrs Tomrley of the CoID confirmed that Freedman had previously written them ‘a very rude letter’ indicating this, and had also been ‘very uncomplimentary to Post Office officials’; she added, ‘Mr Freedman is a very difficult person to handle and she did not think the stamp printers would be at all pleased to have to deal with him.’

A previously unknown person would also emerge, Harold W Bird, who submitted unsolicited designs for new definitives as early as 20 March. These were not acceptable for technical reasons, but were of markedly high quality. Therefore the unusual step was taken of notifying him that he would be asked to submit work for the Coronation issue (as a consequence he submitted another three impressive but unacceptable designs on 7 April).

Harold Palmer similarly also submitted an unsolicited design, for the 2½d definitive, on the strength of which he was invited to work on the Coronation stamp: his unsolicited design, although admired, was received too late for consideration for the definitive issue (7 June) while his credentials as a stamp designer were already well established.

As usual, invitations were also extended to the four major stamp printing firms and the College of Arms. It was thought that Sir George Bellew might wish to contribute designs on behalf of the College, as he had done since the 1930s. However, in his office as Garter Principal King of Arms, which he had held since 1950, he was already heavily committed on ceremonial arrangements for the Coronation, and so nominated E G Fuller, a College staff artist with whom he had collaborated over a long period. Finally, in response to suggestions from several quarters, the CoID urged that an invitation go to the Royal College of Art (RCA): the Post Office (GPO) agreed to this with some reluctance after the RCA's prestigious status had been argued by Gordon Russell on behalf of the CoID.

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## THE QUEEN'S HEAD

Preparation of the draft instructions to artists was delayed while attempts were made to select a suitable portrait of the Queen's to use on the Coronation stamp. Lascelles had arranged for the DPS and Lionel Thompson, Deputy Master of the Royal Mint, to meet the photographer Dorothy Wilding as early as 22 February. This was to brief her on their requirements from a portrait session with the Queen at Clarence House on 26 February (it was these photographs which Lascelles referred to in his letter to the PMG the following day). A set of photographs was supplied on 7 March including two three-quarter face profiles, one on a light and one on a dark background, the former being noted as the Queen's personal preference for use on the Coronation issue. (As these both looked rightward, a suitable leftward-looking profile as normal for stamps was supplied on 17 March. Three-quarter face is correctly referred to as a 'proper', while full face is the 'formal' profile.) The photographs were examined by the PMG and two CoID representatives on 13 March, and by a full meeting of the Post Office Board on 20 March at which it was decided that a panel of experts be set up to assess available or future portraits on artistic grounds. This was quickly arranged with the CoID and held its first meeting on 1 April. Present were the PMG, Assistant PMG and DPS, as well as the representatives of the CoID, the Postal Service and Supplies Departments of the GPO and Harrisons plus Sir George Bellew and the stamp designers Edmund Dulac and Percy Metcalfe. Later the panel would address wider design problems.

The PMG personally favoured a three-quarter effigy of the Queen as a break with the past, welcomed by Sir Francis Meynell of the CoID and the meeting generally (although Dulac and Metcalfe put it on record that they preferred a full profile). The best photograph available

was selected (numbered S.6 in the set provided), but it was agreed it could be improved with the Queen facing left rather than right. Sir George Bellew advised that a coronet rather than a tiara as in S.6 should properly be worn, the essential feature being that crosses patées and fleurs-de-lys were clearly shown set alternately on the rim. It should be the same size as the tiara in the photograph, and worn at any angle. It was decided to request a further photograph from the Palace showing the Queen facing left wearing a coronet, but Dulac would prepare a drawing based on a reversed print of S.6, replacing the tiara with a coronet. Although it was recognised that photographs lent themselves to photogravure printing, photograph-based drawings such as Dulac's standard head of George VI were seen as the best way of overcoming the inevitable imperfections of photographs. Dulac was particularly averse to incorporating photographs in his designs. Metcalfe was also asked if he would prepare a drawing but declined, pleading pressure of work and inability to do the subject justice.

Dulac's three-quarter face drawing of Her Majesty was ready by 21 April, while further photographs as requested were taken by Dorothy Wilding on 15 April. Two full profiles and one three-quarter were supplied by the Palace on 5 May, with the proviso that the Queen felt the coronet was shown too far back on her head and hoped this would be rectified in any subsequent drawings. The coronet (strictly speaking a diadem) in the photographs dated from the 1820s; despite the remarks of Sir George Bellew, its rim was decorated with roses, shamrocks and thistles between the crosses rather than fleurs-de-lys. On 8 May the PMG held a meeting at which Dulac agreed to make minor alterations to his completed drawing as a result of the three-quarter face photograph, and to produce a fresh drawing from a full profile photograph, with the coronet shown a little further forward on the head. It was agreed he should receive 100 guineas (£105) for the work. The intention was that designers might choose either the Dulac drawing for use as the head or the full face photograph. The latter had not yet been supplied (although Wilding had included full face portraits in her 15 April session with the Queen) and was not available in time to accompany the artists' instructions.

Dulac was supplied with copies of the full profile photographs from which to work on 16 May. The first revision of his original three-quarter face drawing was ready by 13 May, but was felt to be unsuitable. Sir George Bellew suggested on 19 May that 'the coronet had been over-emphasised a little ... it seemed to rest on the Queen's head in a way which was not entirely natural'. He felt this could be remedied by a more natural redrawing of the hair to overlap the coronet in places, and also that the latter should be slightly shaded to relieve its somewhat stark appearance. These suggestions were passed to Dulac on 1 June. He undertook further retouching and 'toning down' of the coronet, so the new drawing, received on 6 June, was felt to be 'considerably improved'. Dulac's full profile drawing was submitted the same day. However, both Harrisons and the PMG felt the photograph supplied on 8 May to be a more attractive likeness, so it was decided that this should be

enhanced by retouching, while Dulac's drawing was considered a satisfactory alternative as it stood.

Dulac carried out further retouching to his drawing after a meeting with CoID representatives on 18 July - in response to their criticisms he made amendments to the neck and corsage and added a necklace, in time for a meeting of the advisory panel on 23 July. At this meeting, however, it was decided to use the Wilding photograph rather than Dulac's drawing. On 25 July Dulac agreed to see if he could improve the position of the coronet in the photograph by retouching (Harrisons being loath to attempt this) and supplied PSD on 30 July with a version on which the foremost cross had been slightly tilted forward to give the impression of the whole being further forward on the head. This was seen by the DPS on 13 August, together with M C Farrar-Bell's own retouching of the photograph for his 2½d definitive design, in which he had accentuated details of the coronet, earrings, hair, necklace and neck. Mr Rhodes of Harrisons undertook to combine both Dulac's and Farrar-Bell's retouchings into a single effigy. On 27 August Sir Michael Adeane, the Queen's Equerry, reported that this had been seen and approved by Her Majesty for general use.

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## INVITATIONS AND DESIGN INSTRUCTIONS

Meanwhile, after further consultation with the Director General, Sir Alexander Little, and with Mrs C G Tomrley of the CoID, the invitation and instructions to most of the artists were sent out on 3 July, with those to Freedman, Bird, Thornton, the Royal College of Art and the stamp printers following by 8 July. The invitation requested designs for a 2½d value only, although it was felt as early as 5 June that 4d and 1/- values should certainly be considered. The instructions stated that designs should embody a theme either directly 'symbolic of the coronation or intimately connected therewith', but left the interpretation to the artists - a memorandum of 25 June records 'a very discreet sounding' of Sir John Wilson of The Royal Philatelic Society London, in which he strongly urged that artists should be left entirely to their own initiative rather than risk inhibiting their creative freedom by even tentative suggestions. The only other stipulations were to use the words 'postage' and 'revenue'. The subsequent afterthought that all denominations should be shown with a 'd' after the figures was felt important enough to be circulated to all artists on 31 July, although this was not finally rigorously applied.

Rough wash drawings were to be submitted by 1 September, a fee of 20 guineas being payable for each design up to a maximum of 40 guineas for each artist. Artists would be given another four weeks to complete those designs 'deemed to be of such merit as to warrant their being proceeded with'. A 20 guineas fee would again be payable for each completed design. After the final selection was made, the successful designer would be

eligible for a further 160 guineas, thus receiving 200 guineas (£210) in all. This applied also to the Royal College of Art and the printing firms, the same as for those artists invited individually. The large number of artists invited (16) had caused some anxiety but it was hoped that the two-phase selection process would eliminate many at the earlier stage. Accompanying the instructions were specimens of the George VI Coronation, Olympic Games, and Festival of Britain special issues and copies of both Dulac's three-quarter face drawing and the three-quarter face photograph (as yet unretouched).

Queries were received from Adshead, Stobie and Thornton about which items of the Coronation regalia might be incorporated in a design. Sir George Bellew was consulted and suggested the following in a note of 16 July: Royal Sceptre with the Cross; Sceptre with Dove; Coronation Ring; Sword of State; Sword of Mercy; Jewelled Sword; Sword of Spiritual Justice; Sword of Temporal Justice; Orb of England; St Edward's Crown; Imperial State Crown; Crimson Cap of State; Golden Spurs; Royal Maces.

Sir George also suggested Westminster Abbey or the Coronation Coach as acceptable symbols. He was opposed to including the Ampulla, the eagle-shaped container for the oil used to anoint the sovereign, because it was 'too sacred' to be incorporated in a stamp design. However, Mary Adshead pointed out that the Ampulla had been used in the previous Coronation stamp of 1937 (in the event it would feature in many of the submitted designs). Adshead also advised that she found a booklet recommended by Sir George to be an invaluable source, namely 'The Historic Story of the Coronation Ceremony & Ritual' by Lawrence E Tanner.

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## ROYAL FAMILY GROUP PROPOSAL

On 29 July the PMG met with Mr Locke and suggested that the issue might incorporate a group portrait of the Royal Family (the Queen, Prince Philip, Prince Charles, and Princess Anne). Rather than interfere with the work the artists were already undertaking it was decided to develop this idea 'in parallel'. A telephone enquiry brought a reply from Palace officials of 'entirely in agreement ... an excellent idea', although it was made clear that an up to date group photograph could not be obtained before mid-October as the Queen was on holiday at Balmoral. The Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, was also contacted in case Prince Philip on a stamp caused any constitutional problems. After some discussion it was agreed that provided the Queen's head appeared in the standard position on the stamp, a family group could be included in addition. The PMG's own idea was that the family portrait should be in a central oval, similar to the 2/6 and 5/- high values depicting HMS 'Victory' and the cliffs of Dover.

At a meeting between PSD, Supplies, and Harrisons the following day B T Coulton of Harrisons suggested a balanced design of twin ovals, one with the family group and one with the Queen's head. It was agreed that Harrisons develop its own designs on these lines and that those artists not eliminated at the first stage after 1 September be given the opportunity to produce their own ideas based on the PMG's proposal. On 1 August the Palace was again contacted to see whether special arrangements could be made to secure a suitable photograph before October. Sir Michael Adeane warned that the Queen might veto the proposal altogether if pressed too closely, so the matter was dropped. However Sir Michael was able to supply a group photograph of the Royal Family taken in August the previous year, on the understanding it would not be used on a stamp. This was sent to Harrisons on 7 August to use until such time as a contemporary portrait was available.

As the full face photograph portraits of the Queen promised earlier by the Palace was still not available, on 6 August the Royal Mint was asked if it could supply anything suitable. On 12 August the Deputy Master, Mr Thompson replied, enclosing two photographs of effigies - one approved for use on Colonial coins and certain medals, the other recommended for use on UK coinage subject to various amendments. Despite the Mint's readiness to help, these were not of practical use, designed for reproduction by means not remotely similar to Harrisons' photogravure process. There was also the point that, following the convention of coinage, both heads faced right, whereas over a century of custom had established that the sovereign's head on British stamps faced left.

On 1 August a query was received from Edmund Dulac (despite the three-quarter face portraits supplied with the instructions) asking if the design could show the Queen full face, as the PMG had not been adverse to this idea at their previous meeting. He was told this was acceptable but that no photographs could yet be supplied. Dulac also asked for any available details of the Coronation robes, suggesting his submitted design was already taking shape. A similar query was received a few days later from Abram Games, wondering whether there would be any change to the Royal Standard to denote the new reign. It was not possible to contact Sir George Bellew until 19 August, when it was confirmed that neither the symbolic official Crown nor the Royal Standard would change. On the question of the robes, Bellew did not yet know whether these would be as worn by George VI in 1937, but felt it would be in order to depict them as identical, since they could be interpreted as symbolic of the Coronation and not an exact replica. The reply was passed to Dulac and Games the next day. An article in the July edition of 'Public Relations Newsletter' which was reprinted in the 'Federation of Master Printers Magazine' for August came to PSD's attention: 'The Royal Arms are slightly different for each Sovereign but it is unlikely that for the new Arms any material deviation will be made from the Arms of the late King George VI.' The article also reproduced of the new EIRR royal cypher produced by the College of Arms and the symbolic crown of the new reign commissioned by the CoID from the artist Milner

Gray, RDI, FSIA. The lettering and figures of these would later influence the Coronation stamps.

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## FIRST DESIGNS EXAMINED

By the deadline of 1 September a total of 76 designs was ready including two 'mock-ups' by Harrisons incorporating group portraits of the Royal Family. These represented the work of at least 28 different designers (only Percy Metcalfe had declined the invitation, due to the after-effects of a serious operation). A descriptive listing follows [with name of designer; description of design, the date submitted – those designs which were subsequently short-listed are indicated by (\*) together with the number they were allocated]:

DULAC – Royal sceptre with cross, orb, Imperial State crown (\*) - 1) (21 August).

GAMES – St Edward's crown, ampulla (\*) - 2) (28 August).

MARX – Two designs, one with Imperial State crown and orb, one with royal sceptre with cross and orb (27 August).

FRASER – Two small St Edward's crowns (\*) - 5) (28 August); two large St Edward's crowns (28 August).

JONES – Imperial State crown (28 August); St Edward's crown (28 August).

GOAMAN – St Edward's crown, orb, ampulla (29 August); St Edward's crown with 'bishop's hands', orb, ampulla (\*) - 10) (29 August); St Edward's crown, silver trumpets of state (29 August); floral emblems, St Edward's crown, orb, ampulla (29 August); hands, St Edward's crown, trumpets (after 29 August/before 2 September); variant of previous design, less trumpets (after 29 August/before 2 September).

FLETCHER – Two designs with lion, unicorn, daffodil, shamrock and trumpet, of which one also with orb (31 August).

STOBIE – One design with Westminster Abbey and St Edward's crown; one ditto plus orb; one vertical with St Edward's crown, orb and ampulla (all three 26 August).

TISDALL – Royal standard (18 August); variant of the design (18 August).

PALMER – St Edward's crown, orb (29 August); Coronation chair, St Edward's crown, orb, ampulla (29 August).

FULLER – St Edward's crown, orb, ampulla, royal sceptre with cross (25 August); St Edward's and Imperial State crowns, sceptres (cross and dove), orb, ampulla (\*) - 24) (25 August).

BIRD – Sceptres (cross and dove), sword of mercy, one of swords of justice (31 July); orb, angel symbolising hopes for Her Majesty's guidance and protection (31 July); sceptres (cross and dove), trumpets (31 July); improved version of previous design (30 August).

THORNTON – Stamp size sketch in two colours (25 August); orb, ampulla, plus small two-colour sketch (25 August); St Edward's crown (25 August); St Edward's crown, plus small two-colour sketch (25 August); orb, ampulla, plus small two-colour sketch (25 August); orb, ampulla (25 August); St Edward's crown, plus small two-colour sketch (25 August); six

stamp size sketches in two colours, various regalia (25 August); St Edward's crown (29 August).

KNIPE – St Edward's crown, orb (27 August); variant of the design (27 August).

FARRAR-BELL – Sceptres (cross and dove), crowns (two St Edward's) (\* - 40) (27 August); St Edward's crown, royal cipher (27 August)

JACKMAN – St Edward's crown, orb, royal cypher (26 August); variant of this design (26 August); orb, royal sceptre with dove (26 August)

MATTHEWS – Orb, ampulla (26 August).

FLEURY – St Edward's crown, orb, sceptres (cross and dove) (27 August, but sent on 29 August).

SCOTT – St Edward's crown (27 August).

PORTER – St Edward's crown (26 August); orb, Imperial State crown and royal sceptre with cross (26 August); orb, St Edward's crown and royal sceptre with cross (26 August); Orb, ampulla and royal sceptre with cross (26 August); variant of previous design plus St Edward's crown (\* - 52) (26 August).

FREEDMAN – St Edward's crown, laurel wreath and olive branch (30 August).

LECKIE – Orb, ampulla (30 August).

BECK – St Edward's crown, orb (\* - 55) (30 August)

WILKINSON – Lion and unicorn (30 August).

UNKNOWN – Details unknown (30 August)

BRINKLEY – St Edward's crown (30 August).

ADSHEAD – St Edward's crown (1 September); St Edward's crown, silver trumpet of state, banneret with Royal Arms (1 September); crowns (St Edward's and Imperial State) (1 September); St Edward's crown, Coronation coach, Royal cypher (\* - 62) (1 September).

DE LA RUE – St Edward's crown (29 August); variant of this design (29 August); orb, ampulla, St Edward's crown, spurs (29 August); Royal Champion on horse, ampulla (29 August); orb, St Edward's crown, ampulla, Royal cypher (29 August); orb, St Edward's crown, sceptres (cross & dove) (29 August); orb, Imperial State crown, sceptres (cross and dove) (29 August); sceptres (cross and dove), sword of state, ampulla (29 August); Imperial State crown, ampulla, Buckingham Palace (29 August); St Edward's crown, lion and unicorn (29 August); St Edward's crown, Royal cypher (29 August); Westminster Abbey (29 August).

FARRAR-BELL – Royal family in separate oval (2 September); Royal family and Queen in twin ovals, plus royal sceptre with cross, St Edward's crown (2 September).

Of the above, Lance Thornton, George Knipe and Arthur W Porter were employees of Harrisons. Both Thornton and Porter had prepared designs in their own time as Harrisons could only spare Knipe from other work. M C Farrar-Bell was a freelance artist whom Harrisons had commissioned. E J Jackman and W S Matthews were employed by Bradbury Wilkinson, and Hugo Fleury and Stanley D Scott by Waterlows. The Royal College of Art submitted designs by R Leckie, F W Beck, C E Wilkinson, one unidentified artist, and John Brinkley. The firm of Thomas De La Rue & Co submitted designs three of which were the

work of E G Walls. As many as four other De La Rue artists may have been involved. The Royal Cipher is only noted for those designs using the officially approved version.

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## EARLY COMMENTS ON ARTWORK

On 2 September a meeting at GPO Headquarters to reviewed the designs. Those present were Brigadier K S Holmes and K Hind and T J Griffiths of PSD, E Carr of Supplies, W H Rhodes and B T Coulton of Harrisons, and, for the CoID, Sir Francis Meynell, Sir Kenneth Clark, Gordon Russell and Mrs C G Tomrley. Nine designs were provisionally short-listed - nos. 1 (Dulac), 2 (Games), 3 (Fraser), 10 (Goaman), 24 (Fuller), 40 (Farrar-Bell), 52 (Porter), 55 (Beck) and 62 (Adshead). Mr Hind drew attention to the PMG's suggestion of a design incorporating a Royal family group and the Queen's willingness to co-operate. It would be possible to issue a 4d stamp in addition to the 2½d, with one stamp showing the group portrait and the other illustrating a theme more directly linked to the Coronation. The CoID representatives, however, were 'entirely opposed' to showing a family group on a Coronation stamp, and there was some feeling within PSD that the idea was inappropriate. Mr Locke had given his opinion in a memorandum as early as 14 August that 'if we adopt as one of the designs the family group idea ... we would not have ... anything which marked in the design itself the idea of the Coronation'. The question of two-colour printing was also raised, Sir Kenneth Clark remarking that he could not recollect having ever seen a satisfactory two-colour stamp, but would refresh his memory in the British Museum stamp collection before the next meeting.

In fact this was the following day (3 September), a formal meeting of the PMG's advisory panel on postage stamps. Brigadier Holmes and Gordon Russell were absent, but Sir George Bellew attended and the PMG and DPS were both present. The previous day's short-list was reduced still further to the Dulac, Goaman, Fuller and Farrar-Bell designs. It was decided that versions of these with a full face portrait of the Queen should be prepared once the Palace supplied a suitable photograph. Sir Kenneth Clark recommended that the Elizabethan artist Nicholas Hilliard's portrait of Elizabeth I should be borne in mind when preparing these. (The PMG found Dulac's full face treatment of the Queen reminiscent of Hilliard's portrait, and may have been the inspiration of his proposal for a £1 stamp which followed very shortly.) Another point established was that where two crowns appeared in any design one should be the Imperial State crown and the other St Edward's crown - if only one crown was featured it should be the latter. Modifications to the four designs were sought from the artists as follows:

**DULAC** – The background of Tudor rose emblems was to be adapted to include the other national emblems of daffodil, shamrock and thistle. Bellew was asked to check whether the Queen would actually hold the orb in her left hand and sceptre in the right during the

ceremony as shown (the answer was that this would briefly be the case when leaving the Abbey at its close).

GOAMAN – The artist was asked to redraw the ‘bishop’s hands’ holding the central crown to make them ‘somewhat more realistic and elegant’. Fresh versions of the design should be prepared with (a) a new three-quarter portrait of the Queen and (b) an uncrowned full face portrait, set slightly higher within the design but with a gap remaining between the crown and the top of the head.

FULLER – Fresh versions of the design were required with: (a) the new three-quarter face; (b) full face with coronet; (c) full face uncrowned. The two crowns were to be more fully detailed to distinguish the differences between them.

FARRAR-BELL – Fresh versions were similarly required (new three-quarter face, full face with coronet, full face uncrowned). The crowns were to be shown as St Edward’s and the Imperial State and, as in the Fuller design, distinguished by close attention to detail. The head should be reduced in size in all versions to be in proportion to the crowns.

The advisory panel was firmly against the Royal family group design, as ‘totally unsuitable’ - there was no justification for pursuing the idea ‘in view of the high standard of the designs received’. Sir Francis Meynell, however, pointed out that much of the work received had also been of a very low standard. The suspicion was voiced, not for the first time since the inception of the CoID, that certain artists, who ought not to be invited in the future, had made only a token effort in order to earn the basic 20 guinea fee.

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## COLOURS, VALUES, AND SYMBOLS

On the subject of two-colour printing the CoID representatives were against contrasting colours, but not against varied tones of the same or similar colours. However, as the 2½d and 4d definitives were to be issued in standard red and blue, a change in colour practice was not desirable for the same values of Coronation stamps. Regarding the denominations the PMG wished at least one of the base airmail letter rates, preferably either 1s 3d or 1s 6d, to be included as well as the basic inland and overseas letter rates covered by the 2½d and 4d, and added that a special air letter would also be considered. Harrisons agreed that it could produce a set of up to three different designs by the Coronation date, now known to be 2 June 1953, although did not disagree with the CoID’s suggestion that this might not be practicable if two-colour printing was involved. The company’s position on this last point, however, was that two-colour printing was ‘worth consideration and experiment in the future’. In the meantime it would aim to produce colour essays of the revised designs by November.

Sir George Bellew criticised the use of the daffodil as a symbol for Wales: ‘the majority of Welshmen, and also the Welsh Guards’ favoured the leek as a symbol. The PMG countered

that no less a Welshman than Lloyd George had introduced the daffodil in 1911 on National Insurance stamps, where it remained until 1948. Daffodils had been used on postage stamps since 1937 and would appear on the new definitives, while the Cymmrodorion Society had never objected to the daffodil as the proper representation of Wales on stamps. It was generally agreed that a daffodil was easier to represent than a leek at postage stamp size, and finally, 'it would, moreover, look odd for Wales to be represented by a vegetable while the other three countries of the UK were represented by flowers or a flower leaf'.

The Royal Mint had already chosen the leek to represent Wales on new coinage, on the assumption that the daffodil would feature on stamps. There was no clear-cut feeling on the matter in Wales itself as illustrated by an article in the Cardiff 'Western Mail' of 16 October, in which 'a leading expert' was quoted: 'Wales is hopelessly divided. We must, I think, resign ourselves to having the leek for some things and the daffodil for others'. The leek could be traced back as far as 1536 as a national symbol, but the daffodil only to 1906, when John Morgan Edwards advocated its use almost as a joke and had been startled by the seriousness with which leading Welshmen took it up. At the Coronation of 1937, however, the article pointed out, daffodils had featured both on the Queen's robe and the official invitation card.

Subsequently to the advisory panel meeting Mr Locke had further thoughts on which values to include. This would depend on the number of designs finally selected: if one design were chosen, then 2½d and 4d stamps and an air letter with the same design should be issued; if two, then one design for the 2½d and 4d, and the second for 1s 3d, 1s 6d and an air letter; if three, then the 2½d and 4d in separate designs and the third for the airmail items; and finally if as many as four designs were chosen, which he thought might be excessive, the fourth could be used for a £1 stamp. Locke thought that if 1s 3d and 1s 6d values were chosen, these denominations should be added to the range of definitives (PSD had been pressing for new denominations at airmail letter rates since at least 1940). The suggestion of including both an air letter and a £1 came from the PMG, who personally favoured a vertical portrait of the Queen in full robes for the £1, rather than any of the designs currently to hand. Locke pointed out that the best artists available were (presumably) those fully engaged in modifying their existing designs as requested by the panel. Other difficulties were whether the Inland Revenue would accept the wording 'postage' and 'revenue' on a £1 stamp and how a £1 stamp would be printed: Harrisons had the best photogravure facilities but Waterlows had a contractual monopoly on printing the high values.

On 9 September Dulac asked whether he could retain the Imperial State crown on his design rather than replacing it with St Edward's crown, as the Queen would actually be wearing the former at that point of the proceedings when carrying the orb and sceptre as shown.

Consulted the following day, Sir George Bellew was inclined to support Dulac on the basis of strict accuracy, but conceded that this was not essential to a design that might be taken as symbolic rather than strictly factual. Meanwhile the full face photographs of the Queen were finally supplied by Dorothy Wilding Ltd on 18 September.

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## DESIGN CHANGES AND OTHER PROPOSALS

Developments concerning the proposed £1 value occurred on September 23, when Supplies reported that Waterlows would not, in their view, have time to produce a line engraved stamp. Since the Silver Wedding £1 of 1948, Waterlow's contract had been extended to all high values, and Harrisons could not again print a £1 issue by photogravure without permission from Waterlows. Whether this permission would be given is debateable, coupled with Harrisons' already heavy commitments. Discussion continued until 25 September when the PMG seems to have been finally dissuaded by reminders of the exceptional hostility to the 1948 Silver Wedding £1, such as appeared in the introduction to the 1949 'Stanley Gibbons Postage Stamp Catalogue' regarding 'that nasty flavour of commercialism ... [which] places our country on a level with others - of low repute with philatelists - which issue stamps with the main objective of extracting money from collectors'.

In addition the Inland Revenue on September 10 advised that a £1 stamp with 'revenue' was 'embarrassing', as it produced its own stamps for fees over 2s 6d and there was in any case no £1 fee. Without the Inland Revenue's sanction this meant that no existing design could be used for a £1 without modification and inevitable delay.

The advisory panel met again on 3 October, with Sir John Wilson and Sir Leigh Ashton, the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, being present for the first time on behalf of the CoLD. It was agreed that St Edward's crown should replace the Imperial State crown in Dulac's design, despite the artist's plea to retain it which Sir George Bellew supported: the St Edward's crown was felt to be the more beautiful. Dulac was to be asked to remove the coronet by retouching from the full face Wilding portrait most suitable for use (in the event this was done by Harrisons). Further modifications were recommended to the Goaman and Farrar-Bell designs in addition to those already in hand. It was desirable for the 'bishop's hands' in the former to remain clearly symbolic while becoming more realistic, and the denominations on the latter were to be redrawn to avoid cutting into the background.

After a discussion between PSD and Supplies on 7 October it was decided that fresh bromides should be obtained now that full face portraits of Her Majesty were available. The design requirements were essentially unchanged from those specified on 3 September, apart from the following:

DULAC – The necklace and earrings to be removed from the artist’s own full face portrait of the Queen. Two versions to be done, one with each crown (St Edwards and Imperial State).

GOAMAN – Due to the advisory panel’s confusion over whether the ‘bishop’s hands’ should be symbolic or realistic, no change to the hands should be made.

FULLER – No change.

FARRAR-BELL – The lower corners of the background should be completed to make a perfect rectangle by removing quarter circles containing the denomination.

Discussions also included a special stamp cancellation for the Coronation, to be simple so as not to inhibit the design of the stamps. (An identical point was made independently by Harold W Bird in a letter of 10 November, containing a rough sketch for a postmark with a large central space ‘to help keep the important part of the stamp clean’: this was not followed up.) It was decided by the end of October to develop a slogan postmark.

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### ADVISORY PANEL CONSIDERS ESSAYS

The DPS met again with Supplies, Harrisons and his own department on 23 October. It was advised that essays of the four designs would be available the week beginning 17 November, printed on special esparto grass paper in the colours appropriate to the 2½d, 4d, 1s 3d and 1s 6d stamps. It was only during October 1952 that the issue of the two higher value denominations in the definitive series was formally agreed, but it had already been established that these should be in either blue or green.

A total of 760 guineas (£798) was paid out on 5 November in artists’ fees for original designs. These were 40 guineas (£42) for each artist, with the exception of Games and Freedman, who both received 20 guineas (£21) for one design each, and Porter who was paid nothing. It had been agreed that as Porter’s designs were volunteered rather than solicited, he was not covered by the terms of the invitation. In the case of Lance Thornton, although he had originally volunteered designs for the new definitives, he had been given to understand that further designs for the Coronation issue would be welcomed.

Bromides of the completed designs were supplied by Harrisons to PSD on 31 October with a duplicate set on 3 November, and went without immediate comment other than a query by the PMG on 5 November whether Fuller might be persuaded ‘to reduce the amount of material’ in his design, which the DPS referred to Harrisons. The bromides were available for a preview meeting on 17 November, attended by Lady Cecilia Sempill (vice president of the Design and Industries Association), Sir Francis Meynell, Sir John Wilson and Mrs Tomrley of the CoID. The DPS explained that it was being considered to issue a 1½d or 4d value stamp as well as the 2½d announced, and possibly a 1s 3d or 1s 6d, so that there was no pressure on the CoID to confine itself to one design, while no more than two were required to cover

four values. A lengthy discussion took place in the course of which Fuller's finished design, despite the PMG's earlier comments, was agreed to require no further alteration. It was a good second best to Dulac's, 'the only really Coronational design', although the Queen's face needed to be truer to life. The St Edward's crown was an improvement on the original. Sir Francis Meynell and Lady Sempill found Farrar-Bell's design 'too disjointed to be acceptable', while Sir John pointed out that it was essentially a version of the artist's accepted 2½d definitive with side embellishments – 'it would be open to criticism as showing a lack of artistic imagination'. Despite Mr Locke's reminder that it was the only design of the four to include the Coronation date, it was rejected as unsuitable, as was the Goaman design, 'although the theme had much to recommend it'. A provisional recommendation was made that the Dulac looked better in blue than red, and should be the 1½d or 4d, while the Fuller should be in red for the 2½d.

On 18 November essays of different variations on the four designs, each in red, blue, steel blue, brown or emerald green, were received from Harrisons. These were printed on George VI watermarked paper and mounted on four large cards as follows (all essays were in the 2½d value):

GOAMAN - Three heads (full face with and without jewellery, three-quarter face) – 15 essays.

FULLER - Four heads (full face with and without coronet, three-quarter face lighter and darker tones) – 20 essays.

DULAC - Two crowns (St Edward's, Imperial State); two backgrounds (Tudor rose only, and with other floral emblems) – 20 essays.

FARRAR-BELL - Three heads (full face with and without coronet, three-quarter face) – 15 essays.

A full meeting of the advisory panel took place the following day. Nothing was added to the previous verdict on Fuller's design (now listed by the panel as 24-A) and was unanimously recommended for the 2½d. Sir Francis Meynell thought that both the value and the 'ER' needed improvement on the Dulac (1-B) although the lettering might possibly be improved by merely reducing the figures. The panel agreed with Sir Kenneth Clark that the head needed to be wider at eye level and the eyes less closely set together. In the general opinion of the panel the design's great strengths were 'a pronounced Coronation flavour and a three-dimensional appearance which made it very attractive'. The only other design the panel felt able to recommend was Goaman's previously rejected design no. 12 (now 12-C) featuring the national floral emblems, which it was felt needed a darker background. Goaman's 'bishop's hands' design and the Farrar-Bell (10-E and 40-D respectively) were now relegated to the status of possible alternatives, only to be submitted to the Palace with explicit reservations. Sir Kenneth Clark criticised 10-E because the bottom part seemed unfinished; however, he stated that he was not opposed as such to 40-D, although, as before, other panel members criticised it as simply an embellished expansion of the new

2½d definitive, the parts being brought together without co-ordination in 'an absence of design'. Farrar-Bell's 40-D was defended by the PMG because he thought its simplicity would appeal to the layman, and by Mr Locke because it was the only design to show the Coronation date. It was presumably at this meeting that it was decided to use the three-quarter face coroneted head as standard throughout the issue (apart from Dulac's design) but no comment is recorded in the files.

In subsequent discussion between PSD, Supplies and Harrisons it was decided that Dulac's design should be the 1s 3d value and that Mr Locke should contact him about those changes recommended by the panel. On 20 November the PMG forwarded four colour essays (24-A, 1-B, 40-D, and 10-E) and a bromide of 12-C to the Palace; it was explained that 10-E was now only a reserve choice and that 40-D had been largely opposed by the panel. The PMG urged the necessity for stamps in the 4d, 1s 3d and 1s 6d values as well as the 2½d to take in letter rates to Europe, the US and the majority of the Commonwealth. He emphasised it was not necessary to choose four separate designs 'just to make the number up' as the 1s 3d and 1s 6d could be of identical design but differently coloured. The changes now in hand to the Dulac design were also outlined. In answer to a request for supplementary information the following day it was explained that 24-A would be the 2½d in red, 1-B the 1s 3d in airmail blue, 12-C in blue (probably the 4d) and, if it was decided to issue a 1s 6d, 40-D, probably in olive green. The Queen's Assistant Private Secretary, Lt Colonel Sir Martin Charteris, replied on 25 November expressing Her Majesty's general agreement with the PMG's recommendations (including the necessity of changes to her own portrait on 1-B) and querying only the presence of a small fleur-de-lys under her head on Goaman's 12-C.

In the meantime Sir Francis Meynell had supplied Mr Locke with specimens of lettering and figures to assist Dulac in improving the value and 'ER' on his design; these appear to have been the new Royal cypher as designed by the College of Arms, and the CoLD's own 'symbolic crown' design by Milner Gray. On 28 November Brigadier Holmes wrote to Harrisons to update them on essay requirements for the special stamps: the right hand side of the Queen's face was to be lightened on 24-A, which was to be in red; 1-B was to be essayed in both airmail blue and olive green with the 1s 3d denomination once Dulac's amendments were completed; 12-C was to be essayed with the 4d denomination in blue, with the fleur-de-lys removed and the approved head included; 40-D was to be essayed in the 1s 6d denomination in both airmail blue and olive green, with the right side of the face lightened and a dark right eye particularly improved; 10-E was not to be proceeded with. These instructions did not mean the denominations were finalised; an internal PSD memorandum from Brigadier Holmes to K Hind on 2 December indicates that 1½d and 5d values were being considered. In another memorandum the same day, D O Lumley, the Deputy Director General, notified Mr Locke of his pleasure that 40-D had not been rejected, but remarked, 'I don't think the designs are up to the standard of those for the ordinary series.'

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## REVISED ESSAYS SEEN

The improved essays were brought to the GPO by W H Rhodes of Harrisons on 11 December and seen by the DPS, Brigadier Holmes and Mr Hind, plus Mr Carr of Supplies. Subject to minor amendments (see 23 December below) these were found acceptable. The 1s 6d was felt to be better in olive green and the 1s 3d in airmail blue, and it was therefore specimens in these colours that were submitted to the Palace on 15 December, plus the red 2½d and blue 4d. The PMG however indicated that he thought the colours of the 1s 3d and 1s 6d should be reversed in the final version: this followed some last minute doubt on his part as to whether the 1s 6d should be proceeded with in view of the criticism it had received from the CoLD. Once again the argument by Mr Locke that it was the only design of the four bearing the Coronation date won the day. No comment was made on the fact that Dulac had not included a 'd' in his revised value figures for the 1s 3d, despite the ruling made on 31 July.

At the same time as the colour essays went to the Palace, a set was sent to the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres consisting of bromides of the 2½d, 1s 3d and 1s 6d and a colour essay of the 4d. Lord Crawford, although a member of the advisory panel, had not had an opportunity to see any of the designs, and had been promised a chance to comment by the PMG. The Queen's reply was sent on 17 December approving the essays. She was still not over-happy about her portrayal by Dulac but had reportedly cheered herself with the reflection that, at 1s 3d, its sales would be less than the lower values. Lord Crawford's answer the same day was somewhat less obliging - he described the 1s 3d as 'a failure' and restricted his comments on the 4d largely to 'HM looks out of a formidable jungle'. He listed a number of other defects, most of which however were much less apparent in colour essay form than on the bromides.

The DPS minuted Supplies and Harrisons on 23 December listing the amendments still required. These represented the recommendations from the 11 December meeting, Lord Crawford's more pertinent remarks, and the final thoughts of the PMG, as follows:

1s 3d (DULAC) - The cross on top of the crown needed to be fully reproduced between the frame of the main design and the perforation; the Queen's mouth and eyebrows should be very slightly elongated to see if this obtained a truer likeness; the value figures were to be very slightly toned down; the crown was to be made more prominent by a slight whitening of its outline; the colour to be olive green.

4d (GOAMAN) - The 'R' of 'EIR' and 'Revenue' and the 'd' of the value should be brought into conformity with the style of lettering in the approved Royal cypher.

2½d (FULLER) - The approved three-quarter face Queen's head (as altered by Dulac to bring the coronet forward) should be used; two leaves of foliage under the outer wing of the

ampulla should be eliminated; the two diagonal branches of foliage were too stiff and straight. (These two last points were Lord Crawford's recommendations.)

1s 6d (FARRAR-BELL) - The Imperial State crown should include the velvet cap worn beneath it, as in the Fuller design; the approved three-quarter face Queen's head should be used; the detail of the coronet should be more clearly defined, and further highlighted by a darker background to the head; the head should be printed with greater definition to avoid overshadowing by neighbouring parts of the design; the bottom horizontal of the 'E' in 'EIIIR' should conform to the style of lettering in the Royal cypher; the colour to be airmail blue. It was emphasised that these changes should only be made if the artists agreed that they were advantageous; on 10 January 1953 Mr Carr of Supplies reported that each had agreed.

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### DESIGNS FINALLY APPROVED

The final colour essays were seen on 20 January by the DPS and various of his officials plus Supplies Department with Harrisons' representatives being present as usual on these occasions. The 4d was found to have a minor fault in one of the Queen's eyes, and the 2½d to be imbalanced by overshading on the left and too much whiteness on the right hand side of the design. Mr Coulton of Harrisons was confident that both could be remedied when preparing the cylinders for production. It was felt that as much had been achieved with the 1s 3d as could usefully be done and there would be no further alteration other than some improvement to definition at the top of the crown. As for the 1s 6d, Mr Coulton reported that attempts to bring out more detail in the definition of the coronet had only coarsened the overall effect, and in this area the design would revert to that on the colour essay last seen by the PMG. However, the sceptre with cross would be more firmly centred within the left hand border of the design. It was suggested by Mr Lewis of Supplies that the 'd' should be omitted from the value to conform with the 1s 3d; Mr Locke agreed, with both amendments undertaken by Harrisons during cylinder preparation. The final decision on stamp colours was that the 2½d should be a magenta shade of red, the 4d a standard shade of blue ('ultramarine'), the 1s 3d olive green and the 1s 6d steel blue (similar to the Royal Silver Wedding £1 of 1948). The PMG approved the essays next day.

Details were announced in the House of Commons on 28 January and in a press release on 29 January. It was decided on 2 February that the issue be available from 3 June to 31 October (or 1 November in the case of the few counter facilities offered on Sundays). Although the Coronation took place on 2 June, this was a public holiday with postal and counter facilities should be kept to the bare minimum.

On 24 February final payments of 200 guineas (£210) went to Dulac and Goaman, made up in each case of two payments of 20 guineas each for completed original designs and 160 guineas (£168) for an issued design. It will be recalled that Dulac had completed two

different versions of the same original design and that Goaman had completed a second design after his first completed design was rejected. Fuller was paid 180 guineas on the same date, made up of 20 guineas for one completed design plus 160 guineas, and Harrisons the same amount for the Farrar-Bell design on 2 March. Harrisons had also been paid 20 guineas in January for the two family group mock-ups by Farrar-Bell, as these did not come under the terms of the invitation to artists.

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## CORONATION AIR LETTER PROPOSED

On 22 August 1952 the first meeting of a specially formed committee on GPO plans to mark the Coronation had proposed the overprinting of all stationery items including air letters with a special Coronation symbol in three colours, to be kept on sale for three months after the event. This suggestion seems to have been rather too much, but Miss C Kennedy of the Overseas Mails Branch of PSD telephoned Supplies on 25 August to ask about the practicability of a Coronation design or symbol in up to three colours being overprinted at the top of the air letter form between the 'By Air Mail' logo and the stamp with these special forms remaining on sale for two or three months.

At this time plans had been afoot to amend the standard form since early June, since the new reign gave an opportunity to make various modifications that had been proposed since the previous revision, issued in April 1949. The printers McCorquodale & Co had already looked into several of the problems raised by PSD's proposal, and were able to report as early as 27 August that the effect on normal costs or output of reproducing two colours on their rotary printer would be negligible, but that the printing of a third colour would require the use of a flat-bed press. This would severely affect output as the use of two or three flat-bed machines might be necessary to maintain the normal requirement of 800,000 forms a week, and this in turn would add to costs considerably. In a letter of 1 September McCorquodale's manager, K D Carter, added that the possibility of adapting their rotary press to take a third colour cylinder had been considered, but was now ruled out, also pointing out that the type of Coronation symbol used was a key factor in determining speed of output. A critical element was how close together the two colours would appear (registration could vary by as much as 1/16 inch when the machines were running at high speed).

On 6 September Miss Kennedy sent Supplies a memorandum that PSD now wished any Coronation logo to be at bottom left of the form (ie, away from other design elements) and in not more than two colours. Other requests were that the imprinted stamp should be in the design of one of the Coronation stamps; the word 'aerogramme' should appear below the legend 'air letter' in the same type but reduced size; the design should include a border in either red and blue, or blue only; the conventional 'By air mail / Par avion' label should be

reproduced at top left, in blue and white only as it had been found impossible to print the black elements legibly. Meanwhile preparation of the Coronation air letter should take priority over that of the standard form. It was felt that the revised form should more closely resemble the conventional airmail envelope.

On 9 September Supplies reported that McCorquodales had offered to produce 10 million forms - three months' supply - at £1 3s 7½d (£1.18) per 1,000 in one colour, £1 3s 9½d (£1.19) in two colours, or £1 5s 1½d (£1.25) in three, plus £15 per plate for each colour. McCorquodales were told on 11 September: 'It has now been decided not to modify the stock air letter at present, but to make a special coronation issue which would be put on sale on 2nd June, 1953, for three months in place of the ordinary form ... [We] would need to have about a month's supply, or say, 3½ million forms, four weeks before 2nd June.' The printers warned in reply that they would therefore need firm details of any alterations or new designs - whether for the Coronation emblem or other features - by 1 March; later this was amended to 1 February if two colours were used. The decision to proceed with the special air letter was confirmed on 19 September 1952.

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### AIR LETTER STAMP CONSIDERED

The first question subsequently considered was the stamp for the air letter, with two options. One was, as already provisionally decided, to adapt one of the Coronation postage stamp designs, changing the value to 6d - the designs first suggested were no. 1 by Dulac, no. 24 by Fuller or no. 20 by Hans Tisdall, although Farrar-Bell's 40-D seems in the event to have been a more or less automatic choice once it was approved for the 1s 6d in November. As an alternative it was decided on 7 October to procure a simple adaptation of the existing air letter stamp, with an engraving of the three-quarter Wilding portrait of the Queen replacing that of George VI, and a reworking of the surround to replace the current crown with St Edward's crown, to be undertaken by the Royal Mint. The Queen's head would be engraved by Waterlows, who reputedly had 'the best man in the country' for this work (in the event Waterlows required six months for the job, and a De La Rue artist, Mr Doubtfire, was given a special commission at £300 to complete it by the year end so that a composite die might be available by the end of February). Whichever stamp was used would essentially be an adaptation of an existing design, and would be printed by the process for which that design was intended - in the first instance by photogravure and in the second by letterpress.

It was established as early as 3 October that the air letter stamp should not include 'revenue', correspondence with the Inland Revenue having established that the cut-out 'stamp' of an air letter was not acceptable for fiscal purposes, although valid for postage. As a result, when the choice of stamp for the air letter form fell on Farrar-Bell's design, it

was necessary not only to change the denomination to 6d but also to replace 'revenue' by a second 'postage'. This question did not arise with the alternative design - the De La Rue / Royal Mint adaptation of the existing stamp - as it contained only the single word 'postage'. The Inland Revenue's ruling did away with the obligation for air letter 'stamps' to be printed in doubly fugitive ink, as was the case with 6d stamps in sheets.

Nevertheless McCorquodales had considerable problems in finding a suitable ink. It was hoped to improve upon the 'muddy' appearance of the reddish-purple stamp on the 1949 air letter. On 5 November Mr Carter wrote to Supplies: 'We are informed by the ink makers that it is very difficult to produce a letterpress ink to give a bright appearance to the (air letter) stamps, as the blue paper kills the brightness of any pigment which they may use.' Nevertheless he enclosed proofs (nos. 1 and 2) from two new samples of ink 'which are certainly a little brighter than the stamps we are now producing' and others (no. 3) from an ink 'with more of a violet tint in it, which is a lot brighter although it is not so near to the present colour'. The proofs were examined by Mr Tinniswood of PSD, who reported back on 12 November that 'we are not particularly happy about any of them ... The one most likely to be acceptable is no. 3.' He asked for further proofs of no. 3 both in its present shade and 'slightly more pink', if McCorquodales could manage this, plus in blue as considered for the air letter in 1949. The firm supplied these as requested on 18 November numbered 3(a), 4 and 5 respectively, plus pulls of each colour on plain white paper, 'just to show you that although our inks are of a good colour, it is the blue paper that is causing the dead look'.

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## DESIGN FOR CORONATION FORM

The question of the design to be used on the main body of the air letter had also to be settled. Sir Francis Meynell of the CoID suggested three artists in order of preference - Berthold Wolfe, Stuart Rose and Charles Hasler. Invitations went to all three on 10 November 1952 with a deadline of 15 December. Rough mock-ups of how the new form should appear were supplied, incorporating the changes listed by PSD in the memorandum of 6 September. Each had two current air letter stamps affixed to show the space and position that Farrar-Bell's Coronation stamp would take up. Version 'A' of the mock-up was produced with a blue border and space indicated at bottom left for a two-colour symbol, 'B' with a red and blue border and space for a one-colour symbol. Samples of the ordinary 1949 form were also supplied.

Each artist was also invited to design a commemorative slogan postmark, and supplied with blueprints of the postmarks designed for the 1947 Royal Wedding, the 1948 Olympic Games and the long-running blood donor campaign. This was a departure from custom as the design of most postmarks hitherto had been left to the Engineering Department at GPO Headquarters, where it was carried out by draughtsmen in the Power Branch (because the

slogan dies were for use in electrically powered stamp cancelling machines). Instructions for the postmark design were largely confined to prohibiting the use of the orb or sceptre and specifying the use of St Edward's crown. The Engineering Department were also asked to contribute a design; in the event only two designs were actually received from the invited artists and the Engineering Department design was chosen.

Stuart Rose's preliminary Coronation emblem for the air letter was swiftly accepted. It was placed at the centre of the left-hand border rather than the bottom left-hand corner and comprised an ornamental version of the Queens 'ER' monogram beneath the national floral symbols - rose, daffodil, thistle and shamrock - in a similar red to that of the air letter stamp. During development Rose went on to place scrolls with the legends 'By air mail' at top left and 'Coronation' at bottom left, added an extra flourish to the monogram and inserted '1953' at its foot, finally placing his own initials in very small lettering next to the floral symbols. Had this final gesture been noticed by GPO officials the artist would almost certainly have been asked to remove the initials, but they appear to have been overlooked because of their minuscule size. Rose also dropped the idea of an 'airmail' border, and this was accepted without recorded comment. In mid-January he was given a sheet of specimen typefaces originally supplied by McCorquodales. PSD had originally suggested Clarendon and now favoured Perdita, but left the decision to Rose himself. On 27 January Supplies returned the sheet to Mr Carter of McCorquodales stating that it has been very useful and enabled our people to select a suitable fount [sic] for the Coronation Air Letter', the type chosen being Aldine Bembo for both large and small lettering.

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## AIR LETTER STAMPS ESSAYED

On 9 January 1953 Harrisons was asked to run off proofs of Farrar-Bell's design on unstamped 1949 air letter forms supplied for this purpose, using 'ordinary 6d ink' and substituting 'postage' for 'revenue'. It appears that the design had already been amended to replace '1/6' with '6d', whether by the artist or the printer's own staff is not clear. Meanwhile De La Rue's engraver Mr Doubtfire completed his head of the Queen based on the Wilding portrait by 13 January, and the Royal Mint supplied a master die incorporating the head and an amended crown on 22 January.

On 26 January Supplies wrote to T J Griffiths of PSD enclosing 12 proofs of the Farrar-Bell 6d printed on the standard forms:

'The difference in colour between these printings and the normal 6d stamp is stated by the contractor to be due to a deeper etch on the Coronation stamp together with the effect of blue paper. Two photographic proofs of the composite die produced by the Mint and embodying the De La Rue Queen's head are also enclosed for approval. It is not practicable to produce colour

impressions from this die as only the master die (which is in positive form, and would produce a negative impression) has as yet been made. Preparation of working dies from which colour impressions can be produced will be put in hand by the Mint immediately the master die is approved.'

The die was rejected on 28 January on the grounds that the Doubtfire head was a poor likeness. P H Pettiford of the Royal Mint was told on 3 February: 'The PMG has declared in favour of the photogravure impression. All work in connection with these dies should therefore cease forthwith' (despite this Harrisons seem to have had at least brief access to a working die, as described below). Harrisons' photogravure proofs of the Farrar-Bell design were seen, regarded as a distinct improvement on the 1949 air letter stamp the day after rejection of the composite die. Colour trials of the Farrar-Bell stamp in magenta-red began immediately, the object being to match the intended shade of the new 8d definitive issued the following July. Although the record is not clear it appears that a satisfactory result was obtained at the third attempt on 3 February.

As soon as this was done essays of the new form including Stuart Rose's commemorative design followed. The finished artwork for this had shown the two scrolls and '1953' in blue with the central emblem in red; a version of this (composite die-stamped) with only the upper scroll in blue, and the emblem, '1953' and lower scroll in the same magenta-red as the stamp, was approved on 5 February. A similar essay with the red of Rose's design a slightly different shade to the magenta of the stamp was rejected on the same date. Two colour proofs 'A' and 'B' of the approved essay followed on 9 February, and two further essays (one stamped and one unstamped) in Rose's original colour scheme on 11 February. These were forwarded for approval by the PMG and the Queen. It was recorded on 13 February that the choice had fallen on 'B', in which the emblem was described as being in the 'bluer' shade of the two proofs approved on 5 February.

Sir Francis Meynell and Stuart Rose were both shown copies of the 9 February proofs and asked for their comments. Sir Francis remarked only that the lettering in the two scrolls should be opened up slightly to prevent its over-filling with ink during printing; McCorquodales confirmed on 23 February that this was already in hand and new plates would be ready in about 10 days. Rose expressed concern in a letter of 21 February that his design should be absolutely vertical rather than slightly inclined to the right, as it seemed to be on the proof he had seen: 'It's not easy to find the true level with a design that's all curves, but AIR LETTER & 1953 should be horizontal, & so should the opposite points of the ribbons.' Again on 23 February, it was noticed by PSD that this had already been remedied in subsequent essays.

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## CHANGES TO BASIC FORM

McCorquodales had already supplied unstamped proofs on 18 February incorporating other new features thought desirable. These included five address lines 1/3 inch apart and three senders' address lines similarly spaced. The firm had already been asked on 13 February if it could extend the gummed flaps to the length and breadth of the address panel, this being a long-standing requirement on the grounds of the users' right to confidentiality. It was agreed on 20 February that the length of the flaps could be reduced from the full dimensions by 1/8 inch to allow for the cut and stretch of paper. It was anticipated that the corners of the flaps would be cut at an angle of 45 degrees rather than in the curved cut previously employed. In the event McCorquodales was still awaiting the supply of a proper cutter as late as 27 March, with the result that both types of cut are known on the Coronation air letter. The only remaining requirements after 20 February involved minor re-positioning of the dotted address lines, folding and cutting instructions, etc, which were implemented without difficulty.

The first printing warrant issued on 27 February for 10 million air letters required 3½ million items by very early May at latest, followed by the balance at about 900,000 forms a week. It was envisaged that supplementary warrants might later be issued for a further 7½ million forms. Rather more than this were finally required, due to extension of the air letter's sales period.

As the printing arrangements for the Olympic Games air letter of 1948 had worked satisfactorily it was decided to follow these again. McCorquodales printed the unstamped forms by letterpress in sheets of eight measuring 20¾ inch by 33¾ inch and delivered them to Harrisons' High Wycombe plant, where the stamps were printed onto the sheets by photogravure at a cost of 5s 6d (27.5p) per 1,000. They were then collected by McCorquodales to go to the Wolverton premises for cutting and gumming. In 1948 Harrisons found it difficult to carry out its normal close inspection of stamp impressions, due to the size of the '8-on' sheets, and it had been arranged that McCorquodales carry out a single examination of the forms as a whole at the final stage. This time this system applied from the outset.

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## SALES OF SPECIAL ISSUE

Production and distribution of the stamps was achieved without undue incident and the full set went on sale from 3 June to the end of October as scheduled. The stamps, double the definitive size, were printed on sheets of 120 on paper with the new Tudor Crown watermark, which remained in use for only two years. Sales figures as finally reported on 14 May 1954 were as follows:

	<b>2½d</b>	<b>4d</b>	<b>1s 3d</b>	<b>1s 6d</b>
Total printed	442,332,600	23,347,100	10,134,700	8,273,400
Unsold	27,298,600	3,530,200	2,121,900	2,286,200
Total sales	415,034,000	19,816,900	8,012,800	5,987,200
Percentage unsold	6.2 per cent	15.1 per cent	20.9 per cent	27.6 per cent

The philatelic element of sales was estimated as approximately £300,000.

The sales period of the special air letter was extended until 31 January 1954; an identical air letter, minus the Coronation emblem and the date on the stamp, became the new permanent issue on 1 January. Harrisons confirmed in a memorandum of 22 January that they had stamped a total of 29,249,000 air letter forms for McCorquodales; the total of finished forms delivered to the GPO was recorded at about the end of July as 27,488,500, the shortfall of 1,760,500 (about 6 per cent) presumably being waste. It appears that all forms delivered were issued to offices, none remaining within the Supplies Department. A total of 1,500,946 unsold Coronation air letters were noted on 29 July 1954 as having been returned by head postmasters, indicating that final sales figures were 25,987,554.

The above figures do not include sales of overprinted stamps by overseas postal agencies or to dealers through the Accountant General's Department. These were issued for Tangier and the Persian Gulf, but not for Tetuan (Spanish Morocco) since the Spanish government was currently in the difficult position of not holding enough sterling to remit the appropriate amounts. The Foreign Office had urged that overprints be available in the Gulf because of the trend towards oil nationalisation in the area - it was important to fly the flag where British interests were at risk. Tangier overprints simply bore the name of the agency, whereas in the Gulf, Bahrain and Kuwait overprints also bore the value in local currency: on this occasion 2½d, 4d, 1s 3d and 1s 6d stamps were respectively overprinted '2½ annas', '4 annas', '12 annas' and '1 rupee'. Other agencies in the Gulf came under the general heading 'British Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia', at this time consisting of Muscat, Dubai and Doha (Qatar), and sold stamps overprinted with the local values only. The Coronation air letters were also available, at Kuwait, Bahrain and Muscat only, with an overprint of 6 annas. A report of overprint sales from the final returns dated 14 May 1954 gives a breakdown in considerable detail. This is summarised as follows:

	<b>2½d</b>	<b>4d</b>	<b>1s 3d</b>	<b>1s 6d</b>	<b>Air letter</b>
Total ordered	3,240,000	3,240,000	1,920,000	1,920,000	36,500
Waste, etc	157,562	169,972	72,972	118,512	2,889
Sales - dealers	641,962	604,733	596,495	596,560	23,948
Sales - agencies *	193,924	152,772	88,904	105,140	9,000

Unsold	2,246,552	2,312,523	1,161,629	1,099,788	663
Percentage unsold **	72.9 per cent	75.3 per cent	62.9 per cent	61.0 per cent	2.0 per cent

\* 50% of sales by the Tangier agency and 10 per cent by the Gulf agencies were estimated as being direct to dealers, in addition to those sold via the AGD.

\*\* returns from agencies plus Supplies stock balance as percentage of total ordered less waste (departmental & manufacturers'), specimens, PRD reserve, etc.

## OVERPRINTS FOR TANGIER AND PERSIAN GULF

Tangier	2½d	4d	1s 3d	1s 6d	Air letter
Total ordered	840,000	840,000	480,000	480,000	n/a
Waste, etc	55,823	28,473	24,893	6,403	"
Sales - dealers	195,437	164,097	157,505	157,566	"
Sales - agencies	35,460	21,900	21,360	17,130	"
Unsold	553,280	625,530	276,242	298,901	"
Bahrain *	2½d	4d	1s 3d	1s 6d	Air letter
Total ordered	840,000	840,000	480,000	480,000	12,500
Waste, etc	32,393	66,523	13,823	64,813	963
Sales - dealers	146,313	144,393	143,786	143,803	3,350
Sales - agencies	39,064	38,352	28,784	39,530	8,072
Unsold	622,230	590,732	293,607	231,854	115
Kuwait **	2½d	4d	1s 3d	1s 6d	Air letter
Total ordered	840,000	840,000	480,000	480,000	12,500
Waste, etc	35,123	48,003	8,493	38,303	963
Sales - dealers	149,583	147,595	147,069	147,063	3,550
Sales - agencies	89,520	71,760	25,320	29,880	7,987
Unsold	565,774	572,642	299,118	264,754	-
BPAEA ***	2½d	4d	1s 3d	1s 6d	Air letter
Total ordered	720,000	720,000	480,000	480,000	11,500
Waste, etc	34,223	26,973	25,763	8,993	963
Sales - dealers	150,629	148,648	148,135	148,128	2,100
Sales - agencies	29,880	20,760	13,440	18,600	7,889
Unsold	505,268	523,619	292,662	304,279	548

\* including Awali and Muharraq.

\*\* including Ahmadi.

\*\*\* British Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia, ie, Muscat, Dubai, and Doha (Qatar); returns refer only to Muscat and Dubai, although Doha had had an agency since 18 May 1950.

Premature issues of the stamps and air letter were relatively few, consisting of just over 400 of the 2½d and insignificant numbers of the rest. Most of these could be attributed to a mistaken belief that Monday, 1 June was the day of issue, although the Head Postmaster of Banff in Scotland reported delivering a parcel posted at an unknown London office bearing three of the 4d issue datestamped 20 May.

The slogan postmark 'Long Live the Queen', for which 921 dies were issued and used in possibly every single-impression stamp cancelling machine with the object of covering the entire country, was in use from 3 to 30 June, although its latest reported use was at Alloa in Scotland on 26 August. No special handstamps were in use on the day of issue, but various of the ordinary circular datestamp impressions from such localities as Queen's Head, Queensborough, Queen Camel, Queensferry and Queensbury are known on first day covers. 'First day' cds impressions for Windsor, Windsor Castle, Sandringham and Buckingham Palace have also been known, plus Arundel, the seat of the Duke of Norfolk, who in his role as Earl Marshal was responsible for overseeing the Coronation arrangements. Press reports record that many purchasers were able to obtain TPO cancellations on first day covers by posting them on the mail trains leaving London in the small hours of the morning of 3 June; this was achieved by buying the special stamps from the capital's two all-night postal counters, the London Chief Office and Leicester Square, where they went on sale at one minute past midnight. The 'Bath Chronicle and Herald' reported 'brisk business' at the Bath and West Show, where a large number of covers were posted to secure the special cancellation at the event's mobile post office.

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## PRESS COMMENT ON THE STAMPS

The immediate press reaction to the issue was mixed. Writing on 2 June after the press preview, the 'Manchester Guardian' reported of the 1s 3d, 'The face is not entirely a happy piece of work - the Queen's mouth is too big - but the rest of the design is quite pleasant and ... has a direct and obvious bearing on the Coronation itself, which is more than can be said of the 4d stamp.' The 'Daily Mail' correspondent on the same date commented tersely on the Dulac portrait, 'I find it very poor.' 'The Times' welcomed Farrar-Bell's 1s 6d, praising it as the most simple and direct design of the series, its purpose being obvious and its lack of 'fussiness' giving it clean, modern lines. Other stories reported that the 1s 6d was praised by collectors for bearing the Coronation date ('Daily Herald', 2 June) but that ordinary purchasers were disappointed by it as 'too colourless' ('Manchester Evening Chronicle', 3 June).

Following the first day of issue press reports showed that public demand was steady rather than spectacular. Other stories indicated that while a high standard of legibility was generally being achieved in the cancellation of the stamps, there was still the occasional glaring exception to the rule. There was little comment on the 1s 3d and 1s 6d values considering that neither denomination had previously been issued (the definitives would not appear until November). On 12 June 'Stamp Collecting' praised Dulac's 1s 3d design as embodying the spirit and tradition of the Coronation and found Fuller's 2½d 'pleasing and well-balanced', but criticised Goaman's 4d for its shortage of overt Coronation significance. On Farrar-Bell's 1s 6d however, the article rhapsodised: 'Here, surely, is a stamp full of dignity, practical in its execution, clean and modern in its conception and incorporating the date of the Coronation.' After the announcement that the stamps were to be withdrawn, the 'Kent Messenger' wrote on 16 October: 'It seems a pity that such attractively designed and important-looking issues should no longer be seen ... they helped considerably to brighten the rather dull English stamp collection.'

In the printing trade publication 'Penrose Annual' for 1954, reprinted in 'Stamp Collecting' on 18 June that year, Misha Black, OBE, FSIA, contributed a full-length review of the Coronation issue, which he found 'clearly the most satisfactory produced in Great Britain this side of 1900, with the possible exception only of Eric Gill's 1938 issue'. He commented on the Dulac 1s 3d that 'it is a design of great skill, the distillation of a lifetime's experience'. Fuller's 2½d and Goaman's 4d were praised as 'scholarly, pleasing and competent', but Farrar-Bell's 1s 6d was 'a disappointment ... the rigid, unimaginative framed formality of the design accentuates its sobriety'. The 'Penrose Annual' also contained photogravure reprints of the stamp issue in black, on ungummed perforated paper, specially produced by Harrisons and inscribed 'Reproduction only - no postal or philatelic value' on the reverse.

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## SOUVENIR PACK AND COVER PROPOSALS

At an early stage of proceedings the GPO's Coronation Committee had planned a large scale exhibition to coincide with the event. In October 1952 T Daish, the Director of the Home Counties Region, suggested the sale at the exhibition of 'a card or folder containing a specimen of each of the new stamps'. The committee found the idea attractive, it being noted that 500 albums each containing 19 of the current stamps had recently been prepared as souvenirs for an ITU conference, but it was thought such items would lack sufficient philatelic interest to sell in worthwhile numbers. However, the idea of a commemorative stamped envelope was raised and taken up. The Royal Mint agreed to produce a 2½d version of the 6d air letter 'stamp' they were updating, and McCorquodales offered to print 250,000 'A' size envelopes. The original idea was to commission a special design in November at the same time as those for the air letter and slogan postmark: it was envisaged the envelopes would be sold only at the exhibition, to be posted in a special box

to receive a commemorative handstamp. However, it was soon apparent that Treasury support for the project was not forthcoming, and plans for the exhibition were abandoned in December. The idea was mooted that the special envelopes might still be produced in time for the Coronation Year National Stamp Exhibition (10 to 17 January 1953). This was abandoned when it was decided the GPO should not participate in a basically commercial occasion, organised by the Philatelic Traders' Society, although a special handstamp was provided.

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## OTHER COMMEMORATIVE ITEMS AND EXHIBITIONS

Several other philatelic events took place during Coronation Year, organised by such bodies as The Royal Philatelic Society London and the Post Office Arts Club of Great Britain: these were essentially private displays to which the GPO made no official contribution. An exception, however, was 'The Queens of England on Postage Stamps', held in its showrooms between 26 May and 5 June by the dealer Robson Lowe Ltd, for which the GPO loaned a selection of its Dorothy Wilding portraits and the first 'airgraph', sent by the Queen Mother to Field Marshal Auchinleck in 1941. The Coronation year was also marked by a special greetings telegram form designed by Lynton Lamb, available from 26 May to 29 November. The Post Office Savings Bank commemorated the event in several ways: a 'Loyal Greetings' poster was issued simultaneously with the Coronation postage stamps, and specially designed National Savings gift tokens and savings stamps were issued on 2 March. The latter, with portraits of Princess Anne (6d) and Prince Charles (2s 6d), became the permanent issue, although this was not the original intention.

Edmund Dulac died on 25 May 1953, only days before his 1s 3d design was issued. Several of those who had known him as a stamp designer sent their comments: Lord Listowel [PMG, 1945-47] wrote to Earl de la Warr, 'I'm glad you included a Dulac, as it must have given the old man great satisfaction'. Mrs C G Tomrley felt that 'Dulac's stamp has got the solemn, ritual quality of the occasion in an almost uncanny way'. Sir Kenneth Clark said that he was 'particularly pleased with the full-face one-and-threepenny, and glad to think that Dulac's last public commission should have turned out so well'. Sir Francis Meynell commented, 'I like that stamp much the best, with the 4d a reasonable second, the 2½d placed, and the 1/6d nowhere ... I have already heard much praise for the 1/3d'. Lady Sempill remained a dissenting voice; although the stamps had turned out better than she had feared, 'I definitely don't like Dulac's, and I think the colour makes it worse because it isn't really suited to that design'. Possibly the most eloquent tribute came from a fellow stamp designer, Enid Marx, writing in the August 1953 issue of 'Gibbons Stamp Monthly': 'After seeing the Coronation, Edmund Dulac's lovely design seems more than ever to have caught that poignant fairy-tale quality in a very moving way and to have expressed something we all felt. How sad that Dulac should have died before his stamp was issued.'

The last word goes to Dulac's widow in her letter thanking the PMG for his condolences on her husband's death: 'I am sure you know already how very much he enjoyed his work for the Post Office and how happy he was in all his contacts with yourself and the Post Office staff . Yours very sincerely, Helen Beauclerk Dulac.' (Reply to Earl de la Warr, 4 June 1953.)

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## THE ARTISTS

At the time of the Coronation issue M C FARRAR-BELL was a freelance typographer-designer aged 31. He was educated at Harrow and had previously painted inn signs and designed a voucher for the Lord Mayor of London's National Thanksgivings Fund in 1950. He was best known as a designer of stained glass and was a liveryman of the Glaziers Company. He was currently doing restoration work in Bath Abbey and had recently completed the Great West Window in Exeter Cathedral, where an exhibition of his drawings was held in the nave during 17 to 24 June 1953. As well as the Coronation 1s 6d he designed the 2½d to 4½d range of definitives issued from December 1952 onwards. He was subsequently active in stamp design and produced the Salvation Army Centenary 3d of 1965 as well as stamps for a number of other countries.

EDGAR G FULLER was born in 1898 and served in the Royal Marines during the 1914-18 war. He completed studies at Brighton School of Art in general design, illuminating and lettering, silverwork and etching. From 1923 he was employed by the College of Arms as a heraldic artist. Shortly before the Coronation his designs had been accepted for the reverse sides of the new 6d, 2s, 2s 6d, and 5s coinage. He had no prior experience of stamp design.

MICHAEL GOAMAN was born in 1922. He attended Reading University Art School and the Central School of Arts and Crafts. In 1950 he married a fellow student, Sylvia Priestley, with whom he formed a freelance graphic design partnership. Prior to the Coronation issue neither of the Goamans had ever designed a postage stamp. Subsequently their issued designs ran well into three figures, these being mainly for the Commonwealth but included several British issues. In 1960 Goaman won the International Philatelic Art Society's medal for his Fijian definitives of the previous year.

EDMUND DULAC was born in Toulouse, France on 22 October 1882 and made his career as an artist from 1904 onwards. He worked in Britain from 1907 and was naturalised in 1912. He was most prominent as an illustrator of books but included caricature, poster art, interior decoration, and theatrical design among his activities. His first adhesive stamp designs were for Red Cross charity labels in the 1914-18 war. His postage stamp work for the GPO began with the 1937 Coronation stamp, included the George VI cameo used throughout the King's reign, and culminated in the 1s to 1s 6d 'Wilding' definitives. His other

accomplishments included flamenco dancing and the making and playing of bamboo nose-flutes. He died on 25 May 1953.

STUART ROSE was born on 2 October 1911 and was a choral scholar at Magdalen College School before attending the Central School of Arts and Crafts. Prior to the war he worked in advertising as a design assistant; from 1946 he became a freelance typographer, graphic designer and print consultant for such bodies as the Cement and Concrete Association and the Federation of British Industries. During 1947-53 he was art editor of 'Design', the CoID's house magazine. In 1962 he was appointed Typographical Adviser to the Postmaster General, and, from 1968 until 1976, Design Adviser to the Post Office. His personal contributions to GPO design included postage stamps, telephone directory covers, gift cards, and stationery. In 1974 he was awarded the CBE and the Phillips Gold Medal for stamp design. He died on 10 September 1993.

GILES ALLEN  
28 October 1994

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