

SPECIAL STAMP HISTORY

British Empire and Commonwealth Games

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The first proposal to mark the Sixth British Empire and Commonwealth Games, held at Cardiff in July 1958, appears in a letter dated 4 November 1955 from the Director for Wales and Border Counties to Post Office Headquarters in London. The Director was passing on the suggestion that the Games be celebrated by stamps. In February the following year a Parliamentary Question was put forward by the MP for Cardiff, David Llewellyn. The Postmaster General (PMG) rejected an issue on the grounds that it would break the GPO policy of strictly limiting commemorative issues, a policy that he felt had the support of the philatelic community.

Despite this rejection, discussion within the GPO continued, as did external pressure with a formal application from the organising body of the Games made in March. In early March 1956 the Deputy Director General circulated a memorandum advocating special issues of stamps every two years or so, 'selecting for the purpose current events of outstanding national or international importance'. By the end of May the PMG had reversed his earlier rejection of the idea, so that when David Llewellyn MP repeated his earlier question it was announced to the House of Commons on 13 June that a set of three stamps would be issued to mark the Sixth British Empire and Commonwealth Games in 1958.

A meeting at Headquarters in September 1956 established a proposed start date for the beginning of the New Year, but nothing actually happened until the beginning of August 1957 when the Council of Industrial Design (CoID) was invited to nominate artists. Five names were put forward and invited by letter on 23 August 1957. They were Miss E Marx, Miss M Adshead, P Keely, J Brinkley and R Stone. On 26 August the four main stamp printing firms of De La Rue, Waterlows, Harrison & Sons and Bradbury Wilkinson were also invited to submit designs.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ARTISTS

Instructions to artists were provided, including the following points:

the selection of a theme or themes symbolic of the Games is left to the choice of the artists, but the Welsh Dragon, or some other symbol which would indicate the association of the Games with Wales, should be included;

the printed surface of the stamps to be issued will be 1.51 inches across by 0.86 inches down (twice the size of the normal stamp);

the design must also contain the value in clear arabic numerals. The value itself should be drawn on a detachable tab to permit flexibility in associating a design with a particular value;

when submitting their drawings artists should include a brief description of the symbols which have been included to enable the designs to be considered not only for their artistic merit but also for the aptness of the theme.

Artists were advised that the stamps would be printed using the photogravure process and sent examples of stamps so printed, together with copies of an approved photograph of the Queen's head to be used on the completed stamp. The submission deadline was 7 October, all designs becoming the property of the PMG upon submission. For each submitted design 20 guineas would be paid, with a further 20 guineas if the design was brought to completion and a final 160 guineas should the design be selected.

ARTWORK RECEIVED

There were 32 designs received by the allotted date and a further three, those by Pat Keely, on 9 October. Further details are as follows:

Miss Enid Marx	2 designs
Miss Mary Adshead	2 designs
Pat Keely	3 designs
John Brinkley	3 designs
Reynolds Stone	3 designs
De La Rue	7 designs
Waterlows	3 designs
Harrisons	10 designs
Bradbury Wilkinson	2 designs.

CONSIDERATION BY STAMP ADVISORY PANEL

These designs were submitted in rough form - as originals and stamp-sized photographs - for the consideration of the Stamp Advisory Panel at a meeting on 24 October. This Panel was headed by the Assistant Postmaster General (APMG) and comprised various GPO officers and nominees and members of the CoID; H A Berry and B T Coulton attended on behalf of Harrisons and representatives of the British Empire Games Committee were also present. Notes of the meeting reveal there was some confusion as to the proper title of the Games. The APMG asked precisely what wording should be included and it was explained that the full title 'Sixth British Empire and Commonwealth Games' should be used, but if '1958' appeared elsewhere then the 'Sixth' could be omitted. All bar eight of the designs were rejected, those remaining being:

- no. 8 - R Stone (Welsh Dragon);
- no. 17 - De La Rue;
- no. 18 - Waterlows;
- no. 23 - Harrisons;
- no. 29 - Harrisons (flag showing Queen's head, Welsh Dragon and Games emblem);
- no. 33 - Keely;
- no. 34 - Keely (Welsh Dragon holding wreath of Bay Leaves'
- no. 35 - Keely (Queen's head inside endless chain, crest of Cardiff inside a wreath of Bay Leaves).

The Panel produced a list of suggested modifications; some were modifications of design but changes to the wording were advised on over half of the selected designs.

On 1 November De La Rue was asked by E Carr, the Assistant Controller of Supplies, to advise the artist of design no. 17, of vertical format, that the top part of the drawing should be redesigned to eliminate the words 'Postage' and 'Revenue' and to make the Queen's head slightly more dominant. Subsequently the firm was asked to have the design redrawn in horizontal format, as laid down in the instructions to artists.

Waterlows was asked on 1 November to inform their artist that the background of no. 18 should be redesigned to have more life in it so that the design stands out effectively and the present rather flat effect is avoided. The base on which the dragon is standing should be changed from a 'wreath' to a 'mount'. It is understood that this would entail altering the bar-like appearance of the base to a slightly rounded base (an explanatory sketch was attached).

Finally on 4 November Harrisons was asked for the following changes to design no. 29: the Panel would like to see the dragon 'fined down'; a possible alternative design of dragon is enclosed which the artist may care to use as a guide when completing his drawing. The

wording should be amplified to show 'British Empire and Commonwealth Games' ('Sixth' need not be included 'as part of the title if '1958' is retained in the design). Harrisons had already been asked on 1 November for a completed version of its other short-listed design, no. 23, although without modifications.

All three firms were asked to prepare detachable value tabs so that designs could be judged in each of the denominations 3d, 6d and 1s 3d, and to return drawings by 28 November.

Harrisons returned both its designs plus stamp size bromides on 27 November after 'improving' the Welsh Dragon and amplifying the lettering on each. De La Rue did not reply however until 13 December, supplying two versions of design 17, one with flags flying towards the Queen and one with them flying away; eleven 'photoprints' of each design were also enclosed. Both designs, plus the original 'vertical' version, were shown to the next meeting of the Advisory Panel. (It was subsequently noted that no stamp of vertical design had yet been produced as a special issue other than the 1948 Silver Wedding £1 in a different format.)

The artist Pat Keely was also asked for changes to his designs nos 34 and 35. No. 34 had originally featured the Southern Cross and Pole Star to 'symbolise the wide Dominion of the Empire'; the artist was asked to transfer the stars onto a transparency to allow the design to be seen both with and without them. In the event Keely responded by removing the stars completely. Keely was also asked to consider substituting the crest of Cardiff on his design no. 35 with another. Prior to the second Panel meeting therefore, Keely produced two additional variations of his design, one (35A) bearing a Leek and the other (35B) bearing two Lions, the Arms of the Prince of Wales.

The Panel held its next meeting on 17 December. Altogether, including variations produced as a result of the modifications, a total of twelve designs were submitted. All but four were eliminated, one design being chosen for each of the 3d and 1s 3d denominations plus a choice from two for the 6d:

8A - R Stone (3d)

29 - Harrisons (6d)

34 - P Keely (1s 3d)

35B - P Keely (6d).

Pat Keely's design 35B was accepted despite some discussion as to whether the lions were recognisable as characteristically Welsh. The Panel felt that changes were needed to design 29 by Harrisons. B T Coulton, present representing the firm, agreed that its artist, W H Brown, should provide a new drawing of the dragon: the beast should be drawn in silhouette, the shine removed from its body, its tail strengthened and ears corrected. Sir George Bellew of the College of Arms would be asked for his comments on the modified

dragon before the design was finalised. All four designs had meanwhile been returned to the artists for various minor modifications.

PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT

On 3 January 1958 Miss E A Knight of the Postal Services Department (PSD) asked Supplies to arrange with Harrisons for the supply of essays of each of the four designs in violet, purple and green, as soon as the modified artwork was to hand. W H Brown's revision of no. 29 had already been received, and despatched to Supplies earlier that day, with the comment that the 'ES' in 'GAMES' still needed bringing to the same strength as the remainder of the word. Brown's design was returned to Harrisons on 10 January, but his revised drawing of the dragon was done as a separate exercise, and was still not available as late as 16 January. However, it had been received and forwarded to Sir George Bellew by 21 January, and Sir George's approval from the heraldic point of view was confirmed on 31 January. The new version of the dragon was incorporated into Brown's design.

Reynolds Stone and Pat Keely had already returned their finished drawings to Harrisons, whose preliminary bromides of these were received in Supplies on 17 January. Mr Carr of Supplies made the following comments:

Drawing 34

'VI TH' to be reduced in accordance with previous instructions. All the lettering to be placed slightly lower on the design.

Drawing 35B

Miss Knight (of PSD) was to be in touch with Pat Keely for his agreement to the alteration. She felt that he deliberately left the ribbon cut off at the bottom and he should be given an opportunity of commenting.

Design 8A

About 1mm to be taken off the bottom of the design and added to the top.

In subsequent discussion it emerged that designs 8A, 34 and 35B had not been drawn to the correct proportions, and had to be modified by the addition of thin black strips at the top and bottom of each design. In addition, the wreath at the top and the bow at the bottom of design 35B were completed, apparently for the same reason.

Colour essays of the four selected designs were produced and delivered to the GPO on 6 March. Five essays were produced of each colour (violet, purple and green) for all denominations, as follows:

no. 8A (3d, Stone)

no. 29 (6d, Brown)
no. 34 (1s 3d, Keely)
no. 35B (6d, Keely)

Miss E A Knight summarised immediate reaction to the essays by PSD in a memorandum of the same date (6 March):

design 29, Brown - The definition of the Queen's head is poor and should be improved;
design 34, Keely - The modelling on the Queen's face is patchy. The 'remnant of background to the cut-out photograph of the Queen's head by the bottom left should be eliminated. The shading of the scales by the left-hand side of the face should be more evenly graduated;
design 8A, Stone - The angle at which the end of the dragon's tail emerges from behind the ribbon seems wrong in relation to the root of the tail;
design 35B, Keely - The dark mark by the left-hand side of the Queen's mouth should be removed.

The choice of 8A, 29 and 34 for the 3d, 6d and 1s 3d respectively was confirmed, and that 35B should be a reserve choice for the 6d. It was also resolved that Sir Francis Meynell of the CoID be shown the essays as they stood with the explanation that some defects were already noted for correction, both for his general opinion and for his particular views on the angle of the dragon's tail on 8A.

Over the next two weeks the list of recommended modifications was expanded; at a meeting between Miss E A Knight, E H Farrow of Supplies, and Berry and Coulton of Harrison's on 20 March, it was decided that fresh essays were required, incorporating the following changes.

Design 8A (Reynolds Stone) 3d:

improve definition of Queen's face and lighten the oval background to the portrait, so that the head is in sharper relief;
improve the angle of the dragon's tail to correspond with the original drawing.

Design 29 (Brown) 6d:

improve definition of Queen's head generally;
lighten background to right immediately behind Queen's head to correspond with the original drawing, so that the head is in sharper relief.

Design 34 (Pat Keely - dragon) 1s 3d.

remove the dark marks by Queen's corsage to left of necklet;
improve modelling on Queen's face;

lighten head so that it stands out more prominently, rather like the contrast apparent on the bromide.

Design 35B (Pat Keely - lions) reserve for 6d:
improve definition of Queen's face;
improve contrast between head and background.

It was agreed at the meeting that improved essays should reach PSD no later than 14 April, and the Queen's approval secured if possible by 28 April. Harrisons to complete deliveries of printed stamps to Supplies by 20 June, as the issue date was fixed for 18 July. All stamps should be printed on paper with the St Edward's Crown / E2R watermark (this was stipulated because the new 'multiple crowns' watermark omitting the 'E2R' was to be introduced on the new regional stamps in August and become general thereafter).

Essays, in violet, purple and green, were delivered on 15 April.

FINAL ESSAYS APPROVED

The new essays met with approval upon delivery and specimens were duly forwarded to the Queen; designs 8A, 29, and 34 were submitted as first choice for the 3d, 6d and 1s 3d values, and design 35B as reserve for any denomination. The Queen's reply came from Windsor Castle on 24 April, expressing her agreement with the three first choices.

On 29 April L Carnie of Supplies wrote to Harrisons enclosing essays of the 3d, 6d and 1s 3d, asking for 336 million 3d (2.8 million sheets of 120), 30 million 6d (250,000 sheets) and 12 million 1/3d (100,000 sheets) as quickly as possible. At least half the stipulated quantities should reach Supplies by 27 June at latest, the balance to follow as soon as possible. Proof sheets should be submitted for approval before bulk printing began.

No major problems arose in production except that, after the first 80,000 sheets of 6d had been printed, it was noticed that the two middle marginal arrows had been omitted from the cylinder - this meant that the 6d sheets produced up to that point had either the left or right hand marginal arrow missing. On 16 June Mr Carr of Supplies decided that 'such a minor error does not warrant the destruction of such a large quantity of stamps'; however, sheets with the right hand arrow missing should not be issued to head postmasters until after all 'good' sheets had been distributed, and sheets with the left hand arrow missing last of all. According to the Stanley Gibbons Specialised Catalogue, the marginal arrows on further printings of the 6d 'were inserted by hand engraving and appear quite rough'.

PRESS DETAILS

The GPO issued a press release on 3 July announcing the stamps would be issued on 18 July, adding:

The 3d Stamp (violet), designed by Reynolds Stone, shows a large Welsh Dragon linked to a portrait of the Queen by a ribbon bearing the words 'With British Empire & Commonwealth Games'.

The 6d stamp (purple), designed by W H Brown (Harrisons), shows a flag bearing the Queen's portrait and the British Empire and Commonwealth Games emblem surmounted by the Welsh Dragon.

The 1s 3d stamps (green), designed by Pat Keely, shows the Welsh Dragon holding a wreath of bay leaves as a background to the Queen's portrait.

STAMPS PRINTED AND ISSUED

The total quantities of sheets printed and issued fell somewhat short of those requisitioned at the end of April, by nearly 5% in the case of the 3d and 6d and nearly 18% in the case of the 1s 3d - however, this fell within the limits of normal wastage. Actual production details were as follows:

Values	Number of sheets	Number of stamps
3d	2,670,000	320,400,000
6d	238,299	28,595,880
1s 3d	82,250	9,870,000
Total	2,990,549	358,865,880

The final deliveries to post offices were made in October; surplus stocks in some Wales and Border Counties offices were redistributed to offices in England. All stocks were exhausted by February 1959.

The stamps were not overprinted for use by British Post Offices in the Persian Gulf. The question of issuing the stamps in book form was raised briefly but internal memos show that this idea was swiftly dismissed as being impractical.

Special presentation cards were produced, and sent with mint copies of each stamp to members of the Royal Family, various PMGs and APMGs still in Parliament, Members of the Stamp Advisory Panel and the PMG, or equivalent, of each self-governing country within the Commonwealth. The records show that a total of 34 were issued.

Two special postmarks were used to celebrate the Games. Stamp cancelling machines at larger sorting offices around the country used postmarks bearing the legend 'VIth British Empire & Commonwealth Games. Wales 18-26 July 1958', in use from early July until 17 July. From 18 July an additional special cancellation was available only at Cardiff, Llanberis (site of the rowing events) and at the specially constructed post office in the Games Village near Barry. For this Universal Postal Frankers machines were used, the postmark showing the Games' symbol of the Crown enclosed by the endless chain, alongside the legend 'VIth British Empire & Commonwealth Games'. This postmark was only used for the duration of the Games.

On 5 August 1958 a note on the disposal of the essays indicated that some had gone to the Royal collection, while for record purposes Supplies retained others: the remainder were destroyed.

COMPARISONS OF COSTS

In March 1959 an attempt was made to cost the Empire Games issue, although even at this date the results were somewhat provisional, the findings were: Harrisons' costs totalled around £12,000, development and cylinder work accounting for about a quarter of this; payments of artists' fees totalled £1,134; paper cost just under £3,000; administrative costs in Supplies and at Headquarters brought the grand total to some £19,000. This was a very similar result to that of the Scout Jamboree issue of 1957.

Another exercise was undertaken, to assess the consequences of adding a 1s 6d value to special issues. It was found in October 1959 that 80,000 sheets of special 1s 6d would incur costs from Harrisons of about £600, paper would cost an estimated £74, and that Supplies Department costs would round up total expense to about £1,000. However, no subsequent special issue included more than three values until 1964.

DESIGNERS OF THE STAMPS

REYNOLDS STONE, CBE, RDI, FRSA, an indirect descendant of Sir Joshua Reynolds, was born on 13 March 1909. He was educated at Eton and Magdalen College, Cambridge, and studied printing at the Cambridge University Press. He practised cutting and drawing for a short time in Eric Gill's workshop and spent two years with Barnicott & Pearce (the Wessex Press, Taunton). He then became a freelance designer specialising in wood-engraved calligraphy, lettering and book decoration, prior to wartime service in the RAF. He received many commissions from such bodies as the National Trust, Arts Council, HM Stationery Office, the Victoria & Albert Museum and Eton College. His work for the GPO apart from the Empire

Games issue included the 1946 Victory 3d, the 1958 Welsh 'regionals', the 1960 Europa and 1963 Paris Conference Centenary sets, and the General Letter Office Tercentenary 3d of 1960. His other work included banknotes and Sir Winston Churchill's Memorial in Westminster Abbey. He died on 23 June 1979.

PATRICK COKAYNE KEELY, FSIA was a member of the Alliance Graphique Internationale and a governor of Camberwell School of Arts & Crafts. His commissions were mainly executed for governments, corporations and the public services, including the Dutch government, the Ministry of Labour, the War Office, the Admiralty, British South American Airways and United Steel. His work had been exhibited internationally by host nations including Sweden, the USA, Holland, Hungary, Germany, France, Finland, Belgium, Austria and Australia.

WILLIAM HENRY BROWN was born in 1928 and attended Camberwell School of Arts & Crafts. At the time of the Empire Games issue he had been employed in Harrisons' Design Department for almost nine years. He specialised in postage stamp work and several of his designs had been used overseas in the Crown Colonies and elsewhere. He was the designer of the Scout Jamboree 1s 3d issued in 1957.

Simon Bates
3 November 1992

REFERENCES

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