

SPECIAL STAMP ISSUE

## Conference of European Postal and Telecommunications (C.E.P.T.)

Date of issue: 19 SEPTEMBER 1960



In 1959, the Conference of European Postal and Telecommunications (CEPT) was established at Montreux, Switzerland, as a permanent organisation to improve postal and telecommunications services. The British Post Office was asked to participate in a competition in 1959, to produce a stamp for 1960, the first anniversary of CEPT. Rules would apply for each of the countries taking part. It had been decided that the working party / committee made up of the six original European member countries would select a 'Europa' stamp each year. As this was the first year of CEPT there was a free choice of design for the stamp: one artist from each member country was asked to take part. The working party would select the winning design, to form the basis of a standard motif to be used for all subsequent 'Europa' stamps from 1960 onwards. The Postmaster General (PMG) considered the rules and declined the invitation to take part. The PMG put forward various reasons: it would be a departure from the policy regarding special stamp issues; it would create problems regarding design (it being the long-standing tradition to include the Monarch's head as the dominant feature of the design on all stamps, and to omit the name of the country); and it might be politically contentious!

The PMG was also doubtful whether it would be possible for the Post Office to collaborate with the 'Europa' theme as a special event every year. The PMG suggested to CEPT that the Post Office would like to be an observer and would be issuing two stamps to mark the first anniversary of the setting up of CEPT. The PMG announced in the House of Commons in October 1959 that the Post Office would be issuing two sets of special stamps in 1960, marking the Tercentenary of Establishment of the General Letter Office and the First Anniversary of CEPT.

On 8 March 1960, H Pickering was sent to Paris as an observer for the PMG as it was felt vitally important to determine what motif would be used on other stamps as it would be integrated into the British design. The other 18 European postal administrations involved had submitted designs for the competition. The voting took place on 9 March with the winning design submitted by Finland. The Finnish artist Pentti Rahikainen had designed a motif of a mail coach wheel with 19 spokes, one spoke for each member of CEPT. The wording across the design read 'EUROPA' in bold letters, with the letter 'O' as the wheel, a simple and clever solution. However, the design had omitted the letters CEPT and had to be modified as quickly as possible.

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## INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

B Coulton of Harrison & Sons, stamp printers, was contacted by G Punnett, Post Office Supplies Department, on 17 March to discuss ideas for the CEPT stamps to be issued on 19 September. Mr Coulton pointed out he had three artists available to work on the design, but was concerned that time was getting short to release the stamps as planned. A photograph of the motif arrived from Finland, requesting that artists incorporate part of the design within their own work, and was sent to Mr Coulton on 30 March. The stamps would be double the definitive size in the values 6d and 1s 6d, and printed in two colours, the first time for a British special issue. Miss E Knight of Postal Services Department requested that artists should try to retain the 19-spoke wheel in their designs, as other countries would be using this motif. The initials CEPT should not be used, but 'Conference of European Postal and Telecommunications Administrations' should be included. The fee to be paid for each of the three artists concerned was 60 guineas. If one of the designs was used the fee for acceptance would be 250 guineas. Mr Coulton's artists submitted five designs, but none was accepted: Harrison & Sons was paid 180 guineas on 8 June 1960.

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## REYNOLDS STONE INVITED

On 5 April, Mr Coulton met Miss Knight and Mr Pickering to discuss problems his artists had come across. He produced various sketches, demonstrating problems with a horizontal format of placing the Queen's head alongside the wheel and word 'Europa'. One artist was concerned that the 'A' of 'Europa' fell under the Queen's portrait and made the design elongated; if the wheel and word were reduced, the wheel spokes would have to be solid and the lettering would lack definition which was the essence of the design.

Mr Coulton did have an artist who could provide good lettering, suggesting that 'Reynolds Stone should be asked to have a try at the design'. It was agreed Stone be invited to prepare designs, working closely with Harrisons' designs, and to use two or more colours as

there was no standard colour for 'Europa', although the Post Office had a preference for the current 6d definitive violet and 1s 6d slate blue.

Reynolds Stone was contacted by Miss Knight on 6 April, very short notice as the intended release date was 19 September. The instructions were outlined in the letter, and a sample of the Finland stamp was enclosed so that the motif could be incorporated in the design. The layout could be vertical or horizontal, the stamps to be double the definitive size, namely 1.51 inches by 0.86 inches excluding gutter and perforations. CEPT had to be spelt out in full but 'postage' and 'revenue' were not necessary. The design should show the denomination in Arabic numerals.

The fee for an accepted design was 250 guineas. Miss Knight pointed out that the design could present problems, so Stone was advised to contact Mr Coulton to discuss the design and colours that might be used.

On 21 April a meeting was held to discuss the design, present being Miss Knight, Mr Harding (Supplies Department), Mr Coulton and Mr Berry (Harrison & Sons) and Reynolds Stone. Mr Stone favoured the simple design of the Finnish stamp. His idea was to leave the wheel and 'Europa' as it stood, and to insert a ribbon above and below like a scroll, containing the English equivalent of CEPT. Mr Stone was willing to undertake this assignment and would send Miss Knight rough sketches by the end of April. The colours were discussed with Mr Coulton, by Miss Knight who wanted to see a colour bromide using the normal 6d and 1s 6d colours to indicate the general appearance. Mr Harding wanted to see the stamps printed on a coated paper: it was agreed to examine the possibilities of using such paper for future stamps.

On 17 May Reynolds Stone submitted his design to Harrisons. Miss Knight contacted him to point out that the design had one or two irregularities in the lettering, and Mr Coulton had undertaken to put these right, hoping that Stone would not object due to the shortness of time. Once the drawing had been modified, Harrisons was to produce colour bromides and an essay.

On 18 May Miss Knight received from Harrisons a bromide that clearly showed two irregularities. One was the lettering and the other the oval surround of the Queen's portrait. As there had been no objections from Stone at Harrisons improving some of the lettering, the company again undertook to correct the irregularities. Once completed, tinted (phosphor) bromides were produced. Miss Knight, on 19 May, was concerned that Coulton had forgotten that this issue was planned to be treated with phosphor, and she requested to see the essays of the design with and without phosphor. It was proposed that the 6d stamp would bear phosphor lines, either two lines running vertically across the middle of

the stamp, or the phosphor lines confined to the end of the stamp. It was important to know which was going to be printed, as it could affect the new letter facing machinery.

Sir Ronald German and Mr Pickering had a meeting on 25 May to discuss the design and accepted colour choices. It was decided to go ahead with the production of essays, 6d in purple and green, and 1s 6d in slate blue and brownish purple, both with the ribbon background in white. Similar essays were requested treated with phosphor.

Both agreed that the letters 'CEPT' be removed and that the design should be shown to the Foreign Office for approval, this being the first Europa stamp from Great Britain. The Foreign Office replied on 10 June and had no objection to the design, but agreed that 'CEPT' was 'superfluous'.

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## COLOUR TRIALS

On 25 May Sir Ronald German and Mr Pickering decided to produce four colour trials to be shown to the Assistant Postmaster General (APMG) and to Sir Gordon Russell for their views. On 30 June twelve essays in two colours were received from Harrisons. Their choice of colours, in each case submitted as both normal and phosphor lined, was:

6d

1<sup>st</sup> choice - purple ground with green wheel and head, lettering with white ground;

2<sup>nd</sup> choice - purple ground with violet wheel and head, lettering with white ground.

1s 6d

1<sup>st</sup> choice - steel blue ground, brownish purple wheel and head, lettering with white ground;

2<sup>nd</sup> choice - steel blue ground, umber wheel and head, lettering with white ground.

It was found that two of the essays had a noticeable flaw through the green wheel, a focal point of the design.

Harrisons, on 5 July, explained that they were having difficulties with two colour printing on the paper that was being needed for phosphor treatment. It was agreed by the Post Office not to disrupt the timetable by continuing with the production of a phosphor stamp. It was hoped Harrisons would resolve the difficulties, since the following year, 1961, it was intended to start issuing phosphor commemorative issues.

Between 5 and 14 July Sir Gordon Russell was shown specimens of the stamp, stating he liked the proposed design.

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## THE QUEEN'S APPROVAL

It was decided by Miss Knight, with the full support of the Council of Industrial Design, to print the stamps based on two of the colour trial essays. The Queen still had to approve the stamps while any delay could render the proposed issue date impossible. In July Harrison's was still awaiting instruction to proceed with proofing of the cylinders as the outline of the Queen's head still had to be sharpened. The Post Office Supplies Department gave the go ahead as time was short to enable all offices to receive the issue by 19 September.

On 29 July the Queen approved the design. The stamps were printed by Harrison's on a chalky-surfaced paper with the multiple crown watermark in the following quantities:  
6d - 141,586 sheets of 120 stamps = 16,990,320 stamps  
1s 6d - 64,021 sheets of 120 stamps = 7,682,520 stamps  
These remained on sale until stocks were exhausted.

This was the first time two colours had been used on a British commemorative stamp printed by photogravure. It was also the first experimental trial for phosphor on a commemorative stamp, though not issued.

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## PRESENTATION CARDS AND GIFT ALBUM

It had become the practice of the Post Office to produce gift cards containing new stamps, with a brief description of the issue, sent to distinguished people as a gift. For this issue Harrison & Sons printed 80 gift cards with envelopes at a cost of £10. These were sent to all 19 European postal administrations as well as the normal dignitaries, and were posted with one of the new stamps on the outside of the envelope, receiving a first day postmark.

An unusual request was made by the French Administration for the British stamps to be used for the first anniversary album. Each member country was asked to contribute its 1960 CEPT stamps free of charge, each album contained one mint block of four and one cancelled block of four of the stamps. The Post Office could not justify refusing the request, so a gift was made of mint and cancelled stamps, each to the value of £300. The Post Office was against cancelling stamps that had not been placed on an envelope, but under these exceptional circumstances this was done, at a cost of four shillings to cancel the stamps. A further £84 was paid for six de luxe and twelve ordinary albums. Upon receipt, the completed six de luxe albums were given as gifts to The Queen, Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Lord Privy Seal, PMG and APMG, while the twelve ordinary albums were given to officials who had been involved with the issue.

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## 1s 6d MISPLACED PERFORATIONS

'A complete sheet of the 1/6d G.B. Europa stamp on which the perforations on three horizontal rows are so badly misplaced that, quite obviously, the sheet should have been scrapped, turned up in a Cheshire Post Office, Stanley A Garnett, of Altrincham, Cheshire, purchased the sheet.'

('Stamp Collecting Weekly', 21 October 1960)

The Post Office was concerned by the press story and organised an investigation to see if other sheets had been sold. The Director of the North Western Region investigated the post office counters that could have sold this sheet. Mr Garnett was known to be a local philatelist, and his closest post office was Sale B0, along with Alderley Edge S0 and Wilmslow B0, which all proved to be negative.

On 8 December 1960 sheets of 1s 6d with this fault were found at Chobham S0 in Surrey: two sheets numbered 028955-56 were found among unsold stock, but it was believed that seven sheets had been sold prior to the investigation. It was thought that E Oatway, a stamp broker, could have bought the faulty stamps, as he was the only person to buy 1s 6d stamps from the same batch.

Three more sheets were found at Lightwater S0 in Surrey. A total of 15 sheets of the 1s 6d were returned to Post Office Supplies Department. The POSD forwarded the sheets to Harrisons to explain how they escaped detection.

The 15 sheets were returned to POSD with the explanation that the examiners had put the faulty stamps on the wrong pile: the company had to prevent such a mistake recurring.

DERRICK PAGE  
12 FEBRUARY 1993

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## REFERENCES

British Post Museum & Archive File  
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'Stamp Collecting Weekly', 21 October 1960