

SPECIAL STAMP HISTORY

Post Office Savings Bank Centenary

Date of issue: 28 AUGUST 1961



The idea to commemorate the Centenary of the Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) came from the Post Office Savings Department, and informal discussions took place with the Director of Postal Services (DPS) during June/July 1959. Though the initial response of the DPS was favourable, no detailed planning was undertaken at this stage. In February 1960 a Centenary Steering Committee was set up by the Savings Department: a minute of 24 February was sent to the Postmaster General (PMG) outlining a number of planned celebrations, among them an issue of stamps.

At the time feeling within the Post Office was that such an issue was unusual. The DPS made this point in a letter of March 1960 to Mr Smart, the Director of the Savings Department, pointing out that such special stamps would be a slightly new departure (having) hitherto marked 'postal' anniversaries rather than 'Post Office' ones. He added that this would not however present any problem.

In May Miss Knight of the Postal Services Department (PSD) met the Steering Committee to discuss the initial details. It had commissioned the design of a symbol for the centenary and Smart proposed be incorporated in a stamp design. Miss Knight responded that 'artists much preferred to have a free hand' in the design, although she did add that the symbol might be used in the design of a special slogan postmark.

Public confirmation of the GPO's intentions came on 27 July in answer to a Parliamentary question put by A E Hunter, Labour MP for Feltham, to the PMG, Reginald Bevins.

Discussions within PSD continued during the late summer of 1960. Two ranges of denominations were proposed. Aware that the bulk of philatelic profit from special issues came from sales of higher denominations, and bearing in mind the hope of Mr Smart that

the stamps reach people overseas, an issue of four stamps, 3d, 6d, 1s 3d and 1s 6d, was suggested. However, the Director General favoured producing just two stamps, 3d and 1s 6d. As for an issue date, 16 September 1961 (the actual date of the centenary) was felt appropriate by the PSD and the Savings Department. However, the GPO then decided on a second issue for 1961, to commemorate the second anniversary of CEPT, which also fell in September; thus PSD proposed issuing the Savings Bank stamps on 31 July 1961.

A meeting on 10 November of Miss E A Knight and F J Langfield of PSD, E H P Farrow and H J Harding of the Supplies Department, and B T Coulton and R F York of the stamp printers Harrison & Sons discussed programming the 1961 special issues, plus the quantities to be produced and the problems of colour printing. Miss Knight stated that there were tentative commitments to a two-stamp set for the POSB centenary and another for the CEPT anniversary, both sets to be in two colours; it was felt 'most undesirable' that the two appear in the same month. A timetable to issue the POSB stamps on 31 July had been drawn up with Harrisons' advice - this proposed the issue of invitations to artists on 7 December; submission of designs by 19 January 1961; design selection by 30 January; completion of modifications by 20 February; supply of approved designs to Harrisons by 6 March; return of essays by 27 March; return of approved essays to Harrisons by 10 April; printing to start from 8 May; deliveries completed by 3 July; stamps issued on 31 July. Supplies agreed that this was practicable.

Harrisons advised that by midsummer 1961 it would be able to produce 'any quantity we might put forward', and that 'there was no practical limit to the number of different designs that they could handle'; it was only necessary that the issues be 'sensibly spaced'. Production could be of up to five colours on existing plant; if more colours per stamp were wanted the firm would need 18 months' notice to install new machinery. The point was made that it was very desirable for artists to be familiar with photogravure, and this should be made especially clear to the Council of Industrial Design (CoID) when seeking names of suitable artists.

Further discussion between PSD and the Savings Department followed, and by 23 November it was agreed to fix the issue date at 28 August 1961, so that it did not fall in the same calendar month as the planned CEPT issue. F J Langfield advised in a memorandum of 14 December that no other dates in the timetable would be changed.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ARTISTS

The CoID was invited to nominate artists: it replied with a total of eight names, six 'definite' and two 'spare' should any be unavailable. Previous successful artists nominated were Enid Marx, Michael Goaman and Abram Games, with Pat Keely as a 'spare'; other previous

invitees and 'new blood' were Jeffery Matthews, Robert Sellar and Peter Gauld, plus Alan Breese as a 'spare'. PSD wrote to all eight artists on 8 December inviting them to submit designs. The four main stamp-printing firms were also sent invitations, on 12 December. It was now stipulated that the issue would include four values - 2½d, 3d, 1s 3d and 1s 6d.

'Instructions to Artists' were included, advising that:

the selection of a theme (or themes) relating to the centenary was left to the choice of artists;

the design might be symbolic or pictorial;

the value itself should be drawn on a detachable tab to permit flexibility in associating a design with a particular value;

the stamps might be designed with the long edge either horizontal or vertical;

each stamp would be printed in two basic colours.

Also included as aids to the artists were photographs of the first Savings Bank book, a copy of the 1861 Savings Bank Act, lecture notes on the Savings Department, specimen postage stamps and approved photographs of the Queen's head. The artists were advised that the stamps were to be double the normal size printed by photogravure, designs should incorporate the Queen's head and that only completed drawings in full-colour were to be submitted. Rough sketches would be accepted only as illustrations of alternative colour-schemes and would not be paid for. A maximum of two designs was to be submitted by each artist.

Particular attention was paid to colour; the stamps were to be printed in two basic colours. The four denominations were each assigned a dominant colour, namely 2½d red, 3d violet, 1s 3d green and 1s 6d blue. The choice of secondary colour was left to the discretion of each artist: to help a selection of sixteen colour charts or 'wedges' was enclosed.

The fee for each design was 60 guineas. An additional sum of 190 guineas was payable if designs were used. The artists were reminded that upon submission all designs became the property of the PMG. The deadline was the first post on 19 December.

The artists were invited to discuss 'themes, colours or technicalities of printing' with representatives of the PSD and Harrisons on the afternoon of 19 December. These included Miss Knight, who had received a letter from the Savings Department on 5 December listing 'sub-themes' connected with the Savings Bank including 'Thrift', 'Service' and 'Security'. A member of Savings Department staff was also available to answer questions and artists had the opportunity to visit the Savings Bank building.

SUBMITTED DESIGNS

All artists, with the exception of Abram Games, confirmed their intention to submit designs. Games, whose work was accepted for both the 1948 Olympic Games and the 1951 Festival of Britain issues, wrote a brief letter to Miss Knight dated 9 December, in which he regretted that both conditions and fees were not acceptable. This did not come as a surprise to the PSD, as Miss Knight later wrote that Games' refusal had been expected (which raises the question as to why he was approached at all). There were 21 designs submitted by the appointed date, each of the following submitting two designs, except De La Rue which submitted just one: Enid Marx, Michael Goaman, Pat Keely, Jeffery Matthews, Robert Sellar, Peter Gauld, Alan Breese, Harrisons, Bradbury Wilkinson, Waterlow & Sons and De La Rue.

The British Postal Museum & Archive collection includes two additional designs that do not appear in the production files, nor are there any references within the files to the designs in question. The first design is horizontal and features weighing scales alongside the Queen's head, having a 3d denomination and the wording 'Post Office Savings Bank' and 'Postage and Revenue' together with '1961' and '1861': the caption attributes it to Harrison and Sons. The second design is again horizontal, of 2½d denomination, and features the Queen's head flanked by two coins, one featuring the head of Queen Victoria to the left and one with the head of Queen Elizabeth II to the right. Above the left coin is a stylised Crown and below it the date '1861'; above the right coin is the denomination, below it the date '1961': this design is anonymous. One or both may have originated from Harrisons but were excluded as artists were permitted a maximum of two designs. The only other clue is that whereas all other unsuccessful artists received payment of 120 guineas (at 60 guineas per design) Pat Keely received 180 guineas. The explanation may simply be that these were unsolicited designs.

THE THRIFT PLANT

Of the designs submitted no fewer than ten featured the Thrift plant: it is not known whether this featured in any of the briefing material. Robert Sellar stated that his use of the Thrift plant was inspired by the reverse of the King George VI 3d coin, but it seems over-coincidental that seven other artists should find inspiration from the identical source. The design by D M Friday of Bradbury Wilkinson featured the Wren, inspired by the reverse side of the farthing coin, although this did not appear in any other design.

A note by Miss Knight dated 16 January 1961 indicates that the values had again been changed, to 2½d, 3d and 1s 6d. The CEPT and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Conference issue dates (18 and 25 September respectively) and number of values were also fixed, although the actual denominations had not been finalised.

DESIGN SELECTION

The first meeting to discuss the designs was on 23 January, attended by the DPS, three members of PSD, Mr Smart, and a representative of Harrisons. The suitability of some of the symbols used was raised. It was requested that all designs include 'Post Office Savings Bank' and either 'centenary' or the dates '1861-1961', a requirement which had not appeared in the 'Instructions to Artists'.

Another meeting on 25 January enabled the Stamp Advisory Panel to examine the designs and select the most suitable before a meeting of the full Stamp Advisory Panel with the Assistant Postmaster General, the Deputy Director General (DDG), members of the panel and various representatives of PSD. Due to illness only Sir Gordon Russell, J Fitton and Miss C G Tomrley were able to attend - representatives of the GPO and printers were present as advisors. The Panel rejected all but six designs, selecting two for each of the three denominations, as follows:

2½d – by Pat Keeley and Peter Gauld;

3d – both by Michael Goaman;

1s 6d – by staff artists at Harrisons and Waterlow & Sons.

A number of minor modifications were recommended.

The APMG, Miss Mervyn Pike MP, was shown the designs, and briefed on the decisions of the Advisory Panel, on 26 January. She did not agree with two of the designs selected, favouring one that featured the Wren. As a result changes to the original designs were recommended:

Pat Keeley design - the date 1961 to be added, the thrift to be separated from the Queen's head (suggested as alternative for 2½d and general reserve by APMG);

Peter Gauld design - the approved photograph of Queen's head to be used (suggested for 2½d denomination by APMG);

Michael Goaman's first design - the home safe to be removed and lettering added (suggested for 1s 6d by APMG);

Michael Goaman's second design - lettering to be added - nut tree to be redesigned to allow this and thrift below Queen's head to be removed (suggested for 3d by APMG);

Harrisons' staff artist design - 'Postage Revenue' to be deleted.

PSD decided that the issue should be printed on the heavier 70 gsm chalk-coated paper as used for the 1960 CEPT stamps. Supplies had on 15 December asked that they be told of the decision on this by the end of January at latest, so that the correct paper could be obtained for essay production in early March, and Mr Langfield of PSD duly notified the fact on 26 January. On 30 January H J Harding of Supplies was advised that PSD also wanted the 1961

CEPT and CPA stamps to be printed on the heavier paper. It was noted that while one ton of ordinary paper would normally produce 100,000 sheets of 'good' stamps, the same weight of chalk-coated paper would provide only an estimated 72,375 sheets. It was felt that 1,420,000 sheets of 120 stamps would meet all requirements for the POSB stamps; in the event 1,650,000 sheets were ordered, but only 1,222,000 ultimately delivered.

The Stamp Advisory Panel met on 2 March: present were the APMG, W A Wolverson (DDG), K Hind, Miss E A Knight and F J Langfield of PSD, Sir Gordon Russell (Chairman of the Stamp Advisory Panel), Lady Sempill, Sir Kenneth Clark, J Fitton and Miss C G Tomrley.

The designs submitted for the consideration of the committee included the revised versions of the designs recommended by the Stamp Advisory Panel. The following selection was made:

2½d – P. Gauld design – referred to as design 11;

3d – M. Goaman (amended second design) – referred to as design 4A;

1s 6d – M. Goaman (amended first design) – referred to as design 3A.

In addition, Peter Gauld's second design (referred to as design 12) was chosen as an alternative for the 1s 6d value even though this had previously been rejected. It was felt that modification to the Crown would be needed should the design be selected.

PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT

On 3 March Harrisons was asked to produce colour essays of designs 3A, 4A and 11 in both 200 and 250 line screens. On 6 March Peter Gauld's revised alternative 1s 6d design 12 was forwarded to Harrisons with the same request. The essays were produced in a range of colour schemes and delivered on 18 April, as follows:

2½d – Gauld design 11: black on red (200 screen), black on red (250 screen), red on black (200 screen).

3d – Goaman design 4A: purple and brown (both 250 and 200 screen).

1s 6d – Goaman design 3A: blue and red (200 and 250 screen), blue and brown (200 screen), purple and brown (200 screen).

1s 6d – Gauld design 12: blue and red (200 screen).

The shades used were those of the definitives, the brown being of the 2d except on certain essays of the 3d and 1s 6d where it was admixed with 'permanent violet'.

A meeting on 18 April examined the essays: present were Miss Knight and F J Langfield of PSD and S G Hutton of the Supplies Department, plus B T Coulton and R F York of Harrisons. A number of minor recommendations were made.

Peter Gauld's 2½d (design no. 11):

remove the dark piece of the Queen's dress at the bottom of the loop;
remove the dark spot on the Queen's nostril on the 250 line screen essay;
production copies should be printed with the red ink over the black;
care would be needed with registration, particularly to avoid red running into the diadem.

Michael Goaman's 3d (design no. 4A):

the lettering should be produced in white, ie, with the tone taken out;
the shading behind the value tab should be replaced by a solid background.

Michael Goaman's 1s 6d (design no. 3A):

the background to the red head should be lightened;
the modelling of the red head should be sharpened;
the colour in the thrift blossom, especially the two outer blooms, should be strengthened.

Peter Gauld's 1s 6d (reserve design no. 12):

the crown was not drawn symmetrically and would need modification;
the tone of the blue border was not balanced all round and would need correction;
the modelling of the Queen's head was not satisfactory and would need improvement.

It was decided that additional essays were needed.

Goaman 3d (design 4A, Tree and squirrel):

trees, leaves, etc in red-brown as original;
background in violet, with the head in brown with permanent violet, violet or black;
background in steel blue with head in brown with permanent violet or black.

Goaman 1/6d (design 3A, Thrift plant):

Background in violet, Thrift blossom in red and head in brown with permanent violet.

It was agreed that the reserve design 12 would be submitted to the Queen as an alternative; the faults would be pointed out and only corrected if the design was used. Harrisons suggested that essays be produced of design 4A as a 1s 6d, since it was difficult to print in two colours and could be better controlled in a shorter run. The meeting agreed and also that essays should be produced of design 3A as 3d. All the new essays were to be in 250 line screen, and Harrisons would provide the new value artworks.

Subsequently Miss E A Knight reiterated: 'We should like to see all the essays in the colours as shown, even if the colour combinations turn out to be not too happy. We are prepared to wait until Friday, 28th April for these further essays but only on the clear understanding that there is no risk of failure to meet the issue date of 28th August.' (The production process was already three weeks behind schedule at this point.)

The first new essays, all in the 3d denomination and showing design No. 4A in steel blue and red, violet and brown and steel blue and violet, were delivered on 20 April. One essay of each colour combination was returned to Harrisons on 21 April with the following comments by Miss Knight:

This seems quite satisfactory in the 3d denomination in violet, red brown tree etc, and violet head. We would like to see less tone and sharper modelling on the Queen's head ... Mr Goaman feels the print could be improved with slightly less tone on the right hand branches of the tree and on the branches to the right of the portrait; the tone on the leaves, nuts and squirrel is satisfactory. He also thinks there should be less tone on the left hand side of the pile of nuts.

Miss Knight added there was now no need to persue printing the Thrift design 3A in violet. However, revised essays of the 3d design 4A were now needed, plus essays of the 1s 6d design 3A in steel blue and red. Meanwhile 'we should be interested to see the other essays asked for in my letter of 19th April but these are not required so urgently'.

The remaining essays were delivered to PSD on 28 April. The colour combinations were as follows.

Design no. 3A by Goaman:

Purple and Carmine; Purple and Orange/Red; Purple and Yellow/Orange; Purple and Scarlet; Purple and Red; Purple, Umber and Red; Purple, Brown and Red; Purple and Brown; Purple, Plum and Maroon – as 3d;
Blue and Red; Blue and Scarlet; Blue and Brown – as 1s 6d.

Design no. 4A by Goaman

Blue and Brown; Blue, Black and Brown – as 1s 6d;
Purple and Brown; Purple, Black and Brown – as 3d.

A meeting on 28 April was attended by Miss Knight and F J Langfield of PSD, S G Hutton of Supplies and R F York of Harrisons. Mr York showed a sheet of essays printed in a variety of colours. The choice went to Goaman's design 4A in purple and brown and 3A in blue and red, plus Gauld's design 11 as seen in red-on-black on 18 April. On 3 May Miss Knight asked Harrisons to start preparation of stamps in 250-line screen as follows:

2½d value - Peter Gauld's 'hour glass' design (no. 11)

Colours to be red on black. The spot in the Queen's nostril to be lightened. The dark part of her dress at the bottom of the photograph to be removed.

3d value - Michael Goaman's 'nut tree' design (no. 4A)

Colours to be purple and brown. The nuts in the group at the bottom right hand corner to have slightly more tone.

1s 6d value, Michael Goaman's 'thrift' design (no. 3A).

Colours to be blue and red..

ROYAL APPROVAL

Miss Knight explained to Harrisons that essays had been submitted for the Queen's approval, and as soon as received, the printing instructions would be confirmed. In fact the PMG the designs were submitted to the Queen the following day, including Gauld's reserve design for the 1s 6d. Unfortunately, as the Queen was in Italy, it was not until 11 May that her approval was received, agreeing with the preferences presented. However, the Queen was puzzled as to the significance of some of the designs, and the PMG was asked if, in future, short explanations could accompany designs.

On 15 May PSD authorised Harrisons to proceed: quantities should satisfy a sales period of 4 weeks plus 6 months' postal sales by London Postal Region (mainly philatelic demands at the London Chief Office). It was hoped to avoid repeating the experience with the two 1960 special issues, which were still on sale five months after issue.

Harrisons was asked to supply 150,000 sheets of 2½d, 1,230,000 of 3d, and 60,000 of 1s 6d (including 15 per cent for wastage). On 23 June it was confirmed that 100,000 sheets of 2½d, 820,000 3d and 60,000 1/6d were to be delivered by 17 July; the balance to be delivered by 14 August, earlier if possible to avoid overlap with the CEPT and CPA stamps. On 28 June a GPO 'Circular' advised Postmasters/Sub-Postmasters to place orders for initial requisitions, based on two weeks' demand at the expected sales rate for early September; Supplies added a small quantity 'to meet any supplementaries'.

COMMENTS ON PROOFS

On 28 June imperforate proof sheets of the 2½d were received from Harrisons, and following examination a list of comments was compiled.

Subject to these being corrected the stamps were approved for printing; Mr Hutton of Supplies also noted that the etch of the Queen's head varied from stamp to stamp, on some appearing flat and lifeless. Also that the petals of the thrift flowers on many of the stamps were weak and require strengthening and he asked that particular attention be paid to register in that it wandered quite noticeably on the right hand side of the proof sheets.

Imperforate proof sheets of the 1s 6d were approved on 6 July, again subject to flaws being noted, in particular white patches on Queen's chin, the blue ink smudged easily, a line of darker blue on vertical edges, while the blue round lettering was more dense in the rest of the background.

Mr Hutton's comments on the 3d were not forwarded to the printers until 11 July as there were many flaws requiring attention. The general comments were that there appeared to be a nick out of the top of the Maltese cross of the tiara on every stamp, the heads are flat, on the sheet with 'dots' after the cylinder numbers the background around the head is light and speckled with white spots except down right hand vertical edge, whereas on sheets with 'no dots' after the cylinder numbers the density of the background tails off towards the right hand vertical edge. The shading under the chin was badly printed on many stamps, there were fine vertical hairline down the left hand edge of the 'dot' sheet while the register varied across the sheet. Mr Hutton drew particular attention to the 'brown cross' and 'brown blob' (respectively row 13 stamp 4 and row 15 stamp 1 of the 'no dot' sheet) and the 'white spur' (row 8 stamp 4 of the 'dot' sheet).

PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY PROBLEMS

Following correction of the flaws the issue went into production. The stamps were printed in sheets of 120 on chalk-surfaced paper, and the watermark was the multiple Crown, upright on the 3d and 1s 6d denominations but sideways on the 2½d. Two printing presses were used: the 'Timson' was a single pane reel-fed machine and used for all three denominations, whereas the 'Thrissell' was double pane reel-fed, and was used only to produce the 2½d and 3d values. The two machines produced markedly different colour-tones:

	Timson	Thrissell
2½d	Deeply shaded portrait (lighter black)	Lighter portrait (brownish black)
3d	Clear portrait but lacked contrast highlights	Dull portrait which defined shadows

A quantity of the 3d 'Timson' was produced with the right-hand margin perforated through, the result of a relatively small number of sheets being perforated on a sideways sheet-fed machine, to expedite deliveries.

Deliveries of 1s 6d stamps to Supplies began on 14 July, 3d on 21 July, and 2½d on 24 July. By 21 July an order for an additional 40,000 sheets of 2½d stamps had been placed; following the receipt of Postmasters' requisitions, the stocks required to meet initial demand being recalculated on 26 July as 130,000 sheets of 2½d, 820,000 of 3d, and 41,000 of 1s 6d. However, the quantities delivered by Harrisons up to that point were reported as 15,000 sheets of 2½d, 123,000 of 3d and 46,990 of 1s 6d (deliveries of the 1s 6d were noted as complete by 20 July).

As the date of 17 July for completing delivery of initial supplies had passed, Supplies felt anxious as to whether the order could be fulfilled in the time available. On 26 July Mr Farrow of Supplies was told by R F York of Harrisons that initial supplies of the 2½d should be complete by about 2 August; 'the best Mr York could offer' on the 3d was completion of initial supplies by 18 August at latest, possibly by 14 August if the introduction of a double-day shift from 31 July went according to plan. The main cause of the delay was the Queen's objection to the word 'Europa' on the CEPT essays submitted at the end of June; a delay of about two weeks had followed while new essays were prepared, which had to be on the Thrissell as it was the only machine with three-colour capacity. The 3d cylinders that were on the Thrissell had been removed to allow the extra CEPT work to be performed; the situation was that the Thrissell machine was now being used for production of the CEPT 2d stamps. Meanwhile the POSB 3d stamps were being printed on a two-colour rotary press (Timpson) with only half the production capacity of the Thrissell.

In a Supplies Department internal memorandum, Mr Farrow felt that the delivery dates were 'not good enough'; on 28 July B T Coulton of Harrisons told H J Harding of Supplies that it was not realistic to offer any date for the 3d earlier than 18 August, although he hoped to improve on it by a few days.

PRESS CONFERENCE

On 16 August a Press Conference was called to announce the three issues of stamps to be put on sale. This was chaired by the APMG: a number of questions and answers had been prepared for the APMG in advance. Why the GPO was issuing so many stamps in 1961: 'it just so happened that there were the three important events in 1961'. A further question noted that the GPO appeared more adventurous in its stamp design and was producing many more special stamps, and asked if this indicated that the GPO was making a serious attempt at earning money from philately. The answer was that the GPO was of course a

'commercial undertaking" and therefore 'not averse' to making money, though philately was not as rich a source of funds as was imagined by some. One of the APMG's comments was widely reported in the press: as far as issues of commemorative stamps were concerned 'We are trying to be as adventuresome as possible.'

TOTAL STAMPS ISSUED

The requisition for the 3d was cut on 22 August after 612,000 sheets had been delivered: the original total of 820,000 sheets was not fulfilled until 1 September, after the issue date. A total of 953,000 'good' sheets were eventually supplied out of the total 1,230,000 'ordered, a wastage rate of 22.5 per cent. On the other hand, the initial supplies of 130,000 sheets of 2½d were completed by 17 August; 150,000 more sheets were ordered in August and September, of which 19,000 were delivered by 11 September and 57,000 subsequently. Altogether 206,000 'good' sheets of 2½d were delivered out of a total 340,000 ordered, a wastage rate of 39.4 per cent. Finally, 46,990 sheets of 1s 6d were delivered by 20 July; a reprint of 20,000 sheets was ordered in September, of which 16,000 'good' sheets were delivered, so that in total 80,000 sheets were ordered and 62,990 delivered, a wastage rate of 21.2 per cent. These high rates of waste were later blamed by Supplies on Harrison's newness to the technical aspects of printing multi-colour British stamps, cylinder problems, and difficulties in adapting the Thrissell machine for the POSB stamps.

The actual number of stamps sold was effectively the total of those issued, as the issue sold practically to exhaustion. General availability of the 3d ceased from 10 October, although philatelic demands were met for a few more weeks; the 2½d appears to have been sold out by 6 November; the 1s 6d however was still available in mid-February 1962. In round figures the sales were 24.72 million of the 2½d, 114.36 million of the 3d and 7.56 million of the 1s 6d.

DISTRIBUTION DIFFICULTIES

Supplies attempted to carry out as full a distribution to Postmasters as possible. Normal work was suspended altogether while checking and distribution of the POSB stamps was carried out; this was an emergency measure, but one that Mr Farrow had warned might become necessary in a memorandum of 26 July. A 'substantial quantity' of half-sheets of 3d were sent out, from sheets with a fault on one half only which would normally have been destroyed in their entirety. Nevertheless reports in the first weeks of September suggested the release had not gone smoothly. A Jacobs, General Secretary of the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, wrote to PSD on 13 September of a recent incident in Norfolk. This related to a Sub-postmaster receiving only a limited stock of the special stamps prior to

the issue date. Not only was this stock exhausted after only two hours, but requisitions for further supplies were not met by 11 September. In response PSD admitted that supplies of the stamps had been 'a little tight to begin with' and attributed this to printing difficulties, pointing out that only one complaint had been received. However, by 20 September a number of further complaints had been made to him. It seemed that, in a number of areas around the country, initial supplies of the stamps had been insufficient, that further supplies had not been forthcoming and that 'a great deal of public complaint' was being generated. PSD had to admit that it had underestimated the severity of the shortage of POSB stamps; it is on record that the 2½d and 1s 6d stamps were effectively out of stock between 8 to 22 September and 8 to 29 September respectively. Small reserves were, however, kept back during this period to meet philatelic requirements. Despite frequent failures to supply ordinary counters, Miss E A Knight was able to tell Mr Jacobs in a letter of 16 February 1962 that, for the three 1961 special issues, 'the demands of both collectors and dealers were fully satisfied'.

Extensive enquiries were conducted by PSD over the next few months. Questionnaires were sent to Regional Directors in October asking how initial quantities of stamps were calculated and what action was taken when supplies were exhausted, while representatives of PSD visited Harrisons on 18 October to discover the nature of its difficulties. The percentage of defective stamps from Harrisons also came in for attention. S G Hutton wrote to the company on 9 November enclosing samples of flawed sheets of all three 1961 issues returned by postmasters, adding 'I gather from the philatelic press that similarly defective stamps have been sold over the counter and now command a good price in the philatelic world.' R F York replied on 21 November that 'There is no doubt in my mind that the majority of these sheets were in fact rejected at the time of examination but owing to the extreme urgency of your requirements at the time somehow or other these sheets got back into the good. When dealing with multi-coloured stamps we have a proportion of our examination staff who are specially trained to deal with this kind of work, unfortunately when rather large supplies are needed it is not possible to keep this proportion of our staff exclusively on this type of work.'

The report finally published on 8 February 1962 was described as an 'inquest' into the problems of 'short and late' supply that had generally affected the special issues in 1961. This came to the unavoidable conclusion that the principal cause of delay was the poor performance of Harrisons. The company had explained that during the production of the POSB stamps it experienced a shortage of skilled labour due to the summer holidays. The report also concluded that many Postmasters had underestimated their initial orders. It also observed that the schedule for producing three special issues in such close proximity left no 'breathing space' for reprints, and that issues should as far as possible be more widely separated in future. The opinion expressed in the report was that the failure of Harrisons to meet the delivery deadlines was a unique combination of events and would not

be repeated given the previous good record. The report also noted that the problems of the special issues had caused a severe shortfall in ordinary production at the very time when stocks were normally being built up for Christmas. Supplies had only been able to cope with the exceptionally heavy seasonal demand that then followed 'due to a magnificent effort on the part of Harrisons'.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

A slogan postmark was produced as part of the celebrations of the Savings Bank centenary. Although the idea had featured since the earliest discussions of the Centenary Steering Committee it was not until 8 February 1961 that a formal announcement was made in Parliament by the PMG.

The Engineering Department was contacted on 22 February to design a postmark. It obtained from the Steering Committee the special centenary symbol, excluded from the stamp design process but suggested for incorporation into a postmark design. This symbol featured a key, topped with a Crown, inside an oval flanked by the dates '1861' and '1961', with the initials 'P' and 'O' above and 'S' and 'B' below. This design was adapted by the Engineering Department for the postmark.

Five possible designs were produced in the early part of May, which Miss Knight showed to the Director of the Savings Department, one of which he approved. He recommended that the lettering be changed to 'Century' and that the details of the Crown be adjusted. The body of the key was also re-drawn much thicker.

There were 352 dies manufactured which guaranteed national coverage. The slogan was not used on the day of the issue of the stamps: it was introduced on 16 September, the actual date of the centenary of the Savings Bank, and remained in use until 25 October. It was however, suspended from use on 18 and 25 September, when the CEPT and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference stamps were respectively issued.

No official first day cover service was provided. As to a first day cover service the GPO was unenthusiastic; it had experimented with first day covers in 1957 but 'did not find there was any widespread demand for a service of this kind'. A first day cover was produced jointly by the British Philatelic Association and the Philatelic Traders' Society, featuring the Savings Bank Building.

POST OFFICE GIFT CARDS

The GPO presented its customary gift cards to selected dignitaries, the card containing a complete set of mint stamps. The cards were printed in black on glossy white card with the royal arms embossed in gold. Opened out the card measured 360mm by 150mm; it came folded twice measuring 120mm by 150mm.

The design was entrusted to Stuart Rose of Samson Clark & Co Ltd for a fee of 10 guineas. The front shows the Royal Arms in gold and beneath 'Postage Stamps of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II issued on 28th August 1961 to mark the centenary of the establishment of the first Post Office Savings Bank.'

One stamp of each value was affixed to the middle page whilst the third page showed the centenary symbol and gave brief information about the Savings Bank. On the reverse of this page appeared:

'General Post Office London

With the compliments of Her Majesty's Postmaster General The Rt. Hon. Reginald Bevins MP.
28th August 1961'

While it was originally estimated that 75 would be needed, only 41 were distributed. The usual recipients of such cards included the Queen; Princess Margaret; Sir Winston Churchill; the Prime Minister; the Speaker of the Commons; the Lord Mayor of London; the PMG and APMG; ex-PMGs still in parliament (10); the Stamp Advisory Panel (7); Commonwealth PMGs or equivalent (10). In addition the following, due to their connections with the Savings Bank and/or its centenary, were also sent this gift-card, namely the Queen Mother; Princess Marina; Lord Mackintosh; Mr Archer; Professor Lloyd-Dobbs; Sir K Stewart.

PREMATURE SALE OF STAMPS

An incident of the stamps being sold prior to the issue date was reported by the Head Postmaster of Chorley, Lancashire, on 21 August. The stamps had been delivered to Chorley minus the special notice SB 2826 P, which warned against early issue, and unfortunately one temporary member of staff sold a number of the stamps before the error was noted. The number sold were 16 of the 2½d, 242 of the 3d and two of the 1s 6d.

A watch was kept on items posted in the Chorley area and any items bearing the stamps were hand stamped separately from the actual stamp, which had to be obliterated. By the evening of 22 August approximately 20 items had been recovered; as of 1 September all but 9 of the 2½d, 42 of the 3d and two of the 1s 6d had been accounted for.

The editor of 'Gibbons Stamp Monthly' informed the GPO of an envelope posted on 18 August at Burnley & Nelson. It was not clear at that time whether there had been a second premature release in the North Western Region or the stamps at Chorley were in fact released well before the reported date.

Approximately 30 of the 3d were sold on 25 August at the Tupton sub-office in Chesterfield.

Two letters were recovered at King's Lynn Sorting Office on Sunday, 27 August, the evening before the stamps were put on sale. They were part of the day's town/rural collections and the place of posting was therefore unknown. The items were addressed to Eastern Traffic Area Office, Sussex House, Hobson Street, Cambridge, and W Cory & Sons, Estuary Road, Kings Lynn. The first is recorded as being cancelled with triangular markings and forwarded to Cambridge that same evening. The second item can be seen in the production files.

DISPOSAL OF ESSAYS

In November 1962 certain of the essays were retained for record purposes, some went to the Royal collection, and the remainder were destroyed by the Accountant General's Department.

THE DESIGNERS

PETER GAULD FSIA was born in Coalville, Leicestershire, in 1925 and studied painting and graphic design at Leicester School of Art. In 1951 he became Art Editor of Unilever's Information Division and as such was involved in every aspect of the company's publicity - magazines, booklets, company reports, packaging, advertising, exhibitions and illustration. During 1963-65 he was Art Director of the Curwen Press, subsequently concentrating fully on his freelance design practice. Apart from the POSB 2½d, his successful designs for the Post Office include the 1963 COMPAC stamp, the Lister Centenary 4d of 1965, the 1969 Cathedrals set, 1980 British Conductors, and Christmas air letters in 1968 and 1977.

MICHAEL GOAMAN MSIA was born in 1922. After wartime naval service he attended Reading University Art School and the Central School of Arts and Crafts. In 1950 he married a former fellow-student Sylvia Priestley, with whom he went into a freelance design partnership specialising particularly in stamp design. Between 1953 and the end of the 1960s, working either singly or more usually in collaboration with his wife, Goaman designed 17 stamps issued by the GPO and at least 100 by other postal administrations, mainly in the Commonwealth. In 1960 he received the International Philatelic Art Society's medal for a set of Fiji definitives. Apart from the POSB stamps his successes included the 1953 Coronation

4d, 1967 'Gypsy Moth' 1s 9d, and 1969 Concorde 4d, and the complete sets for 1961 CEPT, 1963 Freedom From Hunger, and 1964 Botanical Congress.

SIMON BATES
14 DECEMBER 1992

REFERENCES

Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue Great Britain, Vol. 3 - Queen Elizabeth II Pre-Decimal Issues, Stanley Gibbons Publications Ltd

British Postal Museum & Archive files

- Post 52/480 (PO Savings Bank Centenary, special issue)
- Post 52/482 (CPA issue & 1961 special stamps inquest Feb 1962)
- P1163/64 (Special Issue: Centenary of Post Office Savings Bank 1961).