

SPECIAL STAMP ISSUE

National Productivity Year

Date of issue: 14 NOVEMBER 1962



The British Employer's Confederation sent a circular to all its members on 15 November 1961, including the stamp printers Harrison & Sons Limited, to notify them that the British Productivity Council (BPC) was proposing a National Productivity Year (NPY) in 1962 to incorporate all industrial organisations, professional institutions and other bodies. Harrisons wrote to Miss Knight at Postal Services Department (PSD) on 7 December 1961 to suggest a set of stamps to mark NPY. The Post Office contacted the Board of Trade to make further enquiries.

On 29 January 1962, the Board of Trade replied expressing delight at the Post Office showing an interest and hoping that it would consider issuing a set of stamps to mark the event. The Duke of Edinburgh had agreed to be patron of NPY, and both the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition supported the project, scheduled to start in the autumn. A symbol had already been designed by the BPC and should a stamp be issued the Board of Trade recommended this be incorporated into the design. On 13 February Miss Knight of PSD proposed to the Postmaster General (PMG) an issue of three values, 3d, 4½d and 1s 3d, in November. The 2½d was also considered because of the demand in November for Christmas posting.

On 15 February the Director of Postal Services pointed out to the Deputy Director General (DDG) that it was not too early to begin preparations for an issue, which was within the guidelines of stamp policy. The DDG was in favour of this issue as the 1961 special issues had produced income in excess of £50,000. By 6 March the decision was confirmed: Harrisons, the stamp printer, was notified with thanks bringing this to the Post Office's notice.

Sir Charles Norris of the BPC was told by Miss Knight on 6 March that three stamps would be issued, to be put these on sale the week beginning 12 November, the date proposed for the inaugural ceremony. The Post Office outlined its requirements regarding the design: the NPY

symbol must be included together with the full wording 'National Productivity Year'. No date would appear, but designs should show the Queen's head.

It was decided that the values and basic colours to be used would be:

2½d red (the minimum inland paper and postcard rate);

3d purple (basic letter rate);

1s 3d green (common air mail rate per ½ oz).

If other colours were added, those that could be used were red, white and blue, all included in the NPY symbol.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ARTISTS

On 14 March the Post Office Supplies Department sent formal invitations to the three stamp printing firms, Harrison and Son, Bradbury Wilkinson, and De La Rue, and to six artists, F Jaques, M Goaman, D Gentleman, K Briggs, P Gauld and J Matthews.

The designs could be symbolic or pictorial but must not include factories, ships, workmen handling tools, etc, as such would stress only one aspect of productivity. They would include the full title 'National Productivity Year' and the 'NPY' symbol; dates must not be included. It would be up to the artist whether to include 'postage and revenue'. The artists' drawings should be 6.04 inches by 3.44 inches exclusive of any mounting. The stamps would be printed by photogravure. Each artist was asked to include a brief description with each design. The artist had to complete the designs by 12 April, delivered to F Langfield at PSD. Each artist sending in a completed design was paid 60 guineas, with a maximum payment of 180 guineas. If the design was selected the artist would receive an additional 190 guineas. With the Post Office anticipating many designs, it expected that the total fees would be over £2,300. All submitted designs became the property of the PMG.

VIEWING THE SUBMITTED DESIGNS

A meeting of the Council of Industrial Design (CoID) on 13 April considered the submitted designs; present were Miss E Knight and F Langfield of the Post Office, W Pryce and Sir Gordon Russell from Harrison & Son Ltd, James Fitton and Stuart Rose of the PMG's Stamp Advisory Panel, and Mrs C Tomrley, CoID secretary.

Submitted were 30 designs from (each artist submitted three designs except David Gentleman who submitted six): Faith Jaques; Michael Goaman; David Gentleman; Kenneth

Briggs; Peter Gauld; Jeffery Matthews; Harrison & Sons; Bradbury Wilkinson; De La Rue. The panel was advised that the issued set would be the work of one artist.

The panel preferred the work of two artists. The reserve choice was Goaman's designs of '2½d Planning and Administration', '3d Production' and '1s 3d Distribution'. The artist described the 2½d as the first stage of productivity, 'showing mounting columns topped by an arrow pointing upwards'. The 3d value showed the 'symbol of wheels and gears chains driving each other', and the 1s 3d 'crates being lifted onto transport for home and export, symbolising all kinds of goods'.

The first choice was three of Gentleman's designs, his descriptions being:

2½d – 'the arrows suggest increasing productivity; the construction on which they appear implies that each individual unit is needed, to play its part in forming the whole';

3d – 'the arrows suggest productivity as an essential element in the continuing prosperity and existence of Britain, which is represented by the map - formed as it is by the juxtaposition of the arrows';

1s 3d – 'the upward soaring arrows suggest increasing prosperity but avoid confusing this idea with particular examples. The individual arrows together form the silhouette of a larger arrowhead - suggesting the power of united action.'

Harrisons pointed out that difficulties with registration would occur on this last (1s 3d) design, while the panel was not happy with the design, so it was agreed the artist would be asked to redesign it. The 3d also required modification to the combination of arrows on the map of Britain showing bars across it. This was created by the contrast of dark violet colour in the background and white colouring of the map. To resolve this it was advised to draw longer arrows.

Gentleman revised the 1s 3d drawing. He also redrew the 3d to show the larger arrows joined to form a third arrowhead, superimposed over the map of Britain. He was concerned about the lettering on all three designs, and suggested it be changed to Berthold Standard. Harrisons agreed that the lettering needed modification before producing colour essays.

Once this modification was completed, Harrisons was asked on 24 April to essay the 1st and 2nd choice designs in the following colours:

David Gentleman designs -

First design: three essays with secondary colour in grey; three essays with secondary colour in the blue as used on the 3d and 1s 3d; lettering and value in white.

Second design: the secondary colour blue; lettering and value in white.

Third design: the centre of the NPY symbol in a combination of the N and P colours; the two shaded arrows are in tones of green. The red and blue to be slightly lighter in tone to show up on the green ground more brightly than in the artwork; lettering and value in white.

Michael Goaman designs -

All three designs: colours as shown, with the Queen's head printed in the same colour as the background in each case.

On 23 May, essays were received from Harrisons, with Gentleman's 2½d design being essayed in both red and blue, and red and green. All the essays were produced with 250 line screen, and printed on coated paper of normal weight. When the essays were examined by F Langfield (PSD) he noticed that some modifications were required before production. Three essays of Gentleman's designs were sent back to Harrisons, received on 14 June with the following notes:

2½d in red and green

The NPY symbol should be coloured as shown on the touched-up essay. The artist's originals should not be used as a colour guide for this particular amendment.

3d

The head is slightly off vertical and a little high in the panel. The Isle of Skye should be separated from the mainland.

1s 3d

The head is slight off vertical. The colour of the head should be strengthened and the modelling of the face improved. The dark line at the junction of N and P should be avoided. The line at the left hand edge where the arrows enter should not run across the white and green arrows.

As the schedule was running four weeks late, Langfield was concerned that Harrisons would not have the modifications ready for the Queen to approve the stamps, so it was decided to advise the Queen of the changes when she viewed the designs.

The three modified essays were not received from Harrisons in time to be viewed by the Queen. The British Postal Museum & Archive files show no date when these essays were received, but the issued stamps show that the modifications were carried out.

THE QUEEN'S APPROVAL

On 7 June, the Queen was shown both sets of designs as the Advisory Committee felt both sets had artistic merit with little to choose between them. However, the Gentleman designs were recommended as first choice, with the Goaman designs as an alternative. The Queen preferred and approved the David Gentleman designs. Harrisons started production on 13 June. A warrant was issued on 2 July to Gentleman for his fees.

GIFT CARDS

The Post Office sent gift cards of the new stamps various distinguished people: The Queen, Princess Margaret, Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister, The Speaker, previous PMGs and APMGs, eight members of the PMG's Advisory Panel on stamp design, the PMG or equivalent Minister of the self governing countries of the Commonwealth, the PMG and APMG, and David Gentleman, Prince Philip, Harry Douglass, Chairman of NPY, Sir Charles Norris, Director of the British Productivity Council and 25 members of the Productivity Council, the Lord Mayor of London who made the principal inaugural speech. These were posted on the first day of issue, 14 November, bearing one of the new stamps on the envelope. POSD supplied 240 stamps of each value for use in gift cards, of which only 67 sets were used in the cards. The stamps used to send these gifts out were 54 of the 3d and 14 of the 1s 3d. An extra 3d cover was sent to Sir Norman Kipping as the original was accidentally thrown away by his secretary.

WATERMARKS

Harrisons contacted the Post Office on 27 June to advise that: 'all the coated 63.5 gsm (grams per square metre) paper (32 tons) were reeled in such a way that when printed, the watermark (multiple crown) would be inverted. This was due to the fact that the effect of the additional trimming process, introduced for the first time this year, was not allowed for when deciding upon the direction of the watermark of paper to be ordered from the mill.' Permission was sought to print on the paper as it was without re-reeling to save time and expense. It was agreed by the Post Office that the 2½d and 3d would be printed with the watermark inverted. A stipulation was made 'that all the 2½d and 3d stamps should be printed in this fashion and that precautions should be taken to ensure that there was no possibility of some of the stamps being printed with the watermark the correct way up'.

The 1s 3d was being printed on 70 gsm coated paper surplus from the previous year's stock on which the watermark was correct. Edge cracks were discovered in the paper after

coating, which could have caused breaks during the gumming process. To avoid this, the edges were trimmed slightly prior to gumming.

SPECIAL POSTMARK

The Post Office suggested to the BPC that it would manufacture slogan dies to be used in stamp cancelling machines in large towns around the country. It was hoped that BPC would bear the cost of manufacture at £1,750 for 350 dies, or only 50 dies to be used at selected offices only at a cost of £350.

The BPC replied that, because of its budget, it could only afford 50 dies. On 18 October the Post Office announced in a 'Press and Broadcast Notice' that from 1 November - 8 December 39 post offices would be using a special slogan 'National Productivity Year November 1962-63': this is known to have been used at London Inland Section (Mount Pleasant), Brighton, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Edinburgh, Bristol and Cardiff post offices. A total of 52 dies were used at the 39 offices.

PHOSPHOR AND SALES

This was the first commemorative set issued with phosphor bands (in addition to the standard non-phosphor version). Stamps required for use with the Post Office new automatic letter facing machines were printed with phosphor lines that could only be seen when the stamp was held at an angle. The phosphor stamps could only be purchased from post offices in Southampton, Liverpool and a part of London SE.

Quantities printed and sold were:

Non-phosphor

2½d – 99,240,000

3d – 182,580,000

1s 3d – 8,832,000

Phosphor

2½d – 7,320,090

3d – 13,320,000

1s 3d – 1,320,000

Total

2½d – 106,560,090

3d – 195,900,000

1s 3d – 10,152,000.

PREMATURE RELEASE

There were several reports of premature release of the stamps. The offices and quantities were officially reported as follows:

Ladywell Road, Lewisham on 15 October: 60 of the 2½d, 350 of the 3d, 22 of the 1s 3d

North Kensington, W10 on 17 October: 54 of the 2½d, 270 of the 3d, 6 of the 1s 3d

Notting Hill, W11 on 8 November: 154 of the 2½d

Woodcote Green, Surrey on 13 November: 23 of the 2½d, 104 of the 3d, 9 of the 1s 3d

70 & 220 Lower Clapton Road, E5 on 12 November: 60 various values

Buckholmside Town, Galashiels on 13 November: 8 of the 3d (even though 8 were reported sold, 10 were found at the sorting office)

Middleton-St-George, Darlington on 13 November: 28 of the 3d

Loxton, Somerset on 13 November: 8 of the 3d.

With so many sold before the correct date, various newspapers publicised the mistake made by the sub post office in Lewisham that sold 350 stamps before issue date. Stamp dealer Stanley Gibbons offered £5 for any of the stamps on an envelope showing a clear pre-release date.

Official known quantities of premature release stamps sold are 331 of the 2½d, 786 of the 3d, and 37 of the 1s 3d, plus a further 60 mixed denominations, breakdown not known.

3d MISSING COLOUR

Friday, 15 March 1963 was the opening of the Stampex exhibition at Central Hall, Westminster, London. Stanley Gibbons exhibited a block of 60 of the 3d stamps on which the second colour (blue) was missing, so that the Queen's head was omitted. The company was selling this error at £85 a stamp. Two Directors of Stanley Gibbons claimed that the vendor had purchased them from a post office among six sheets bought. As the error appeared to be a genuine Stanley Gibbons purchased the stamps. No record was kept of the vendor's name or address or any detail of which post office had sold the stamps.

The PSD on 18 March enquired of Harrisons how this error occurred. Harrisons replied it occurred when the printing cylinders were being adjusted: sheets with a colour missing should have been thrown out at this stage along with any other error or substandard printing. All sheets should have been accounted for and destroyed under supervision.

It was felt the sheet was in fact overlooked at the printers, missed when checking on receipt and sold in good faith. On the other hand at some stage of printing it could have been stolen and replaced with a good sheet of 3d stamps and therefore illegally obtained. As there was no evidence that this had actually happened judgement was left open.

DERRICK PAGE
26 February 1993

REFERENCES

British Postal Museum & Archive file
P140/71