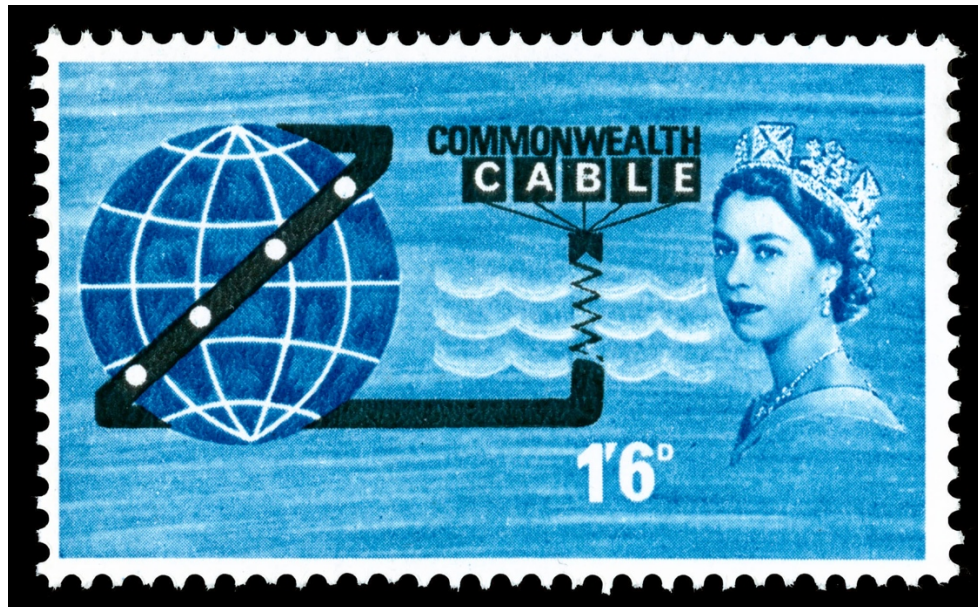


SPECIAL STAMP HISTORY

## Commonwealth Pacific Cable (COMPAC)

Date of issue: 3 DECEMBER 1963



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In July 1958 the Commonwealth Telecommunications Conference was held in London at which Commonwealth governments discussed the possibility of developing a round-the-world cable communications system.

In 1959 the Pacific Cable Conference held in Sydney agreed the Trans-Pacific Cable project to be known as COMPAC, at an estimated cost of £32.9 million, planned to open by the end of 1963 linking Sydney with Vancouver, via Auckland, Suva and Hawaii. In 1961 a cable known as CANTAT linked the United Kingdom with Canada, and was to be joined to COMPAC 'by means of a trans-Canadian micro-wave link between Vancouver and Montreal'. The COMPAC cable was laid across the Pacific Ocean by cable ship containing thousands of miles of coaxial cable, repeaters and equalisers that were submerged into the ocean.

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### SUGGESTION OF A STAMP

In May 1961 the Deputy Controller of the GPO External Telecommunications Executive wrote to the Postal Supplies Division (PSD) about the completion of the Commonwealth round-the-world telephone cable system towards the end of 1963, which was thought would make an ideal subject for a special stamp.

Miss Knight of PSD replied to the Deputy Controller on 16 May that the Post Office was issuing more special issues than previously, and that it would take a year to prepare and design a new stamp. This would be a suitable event to be included as a possibility but the final decision had to come from the Postmaster General (PMG).

The Director General received a letter from the Australian Postmaster General on 22 February 1963 advising that he had been approached by the Overseas Telecommunications Commission (Australia) suggesting a stamp to commemorate the completion of the COMPAC cable in December 1963. The Australian administration wished to know if the UK was considering a stamp as other interested countries had already agreed. On 9 April the Deputy Director General replied that the matter was still under consideration in Britain. Various matters had not been finalised: which other countries had decided to issue a special stamp; the Post Office would not issue stamps during the Christmas period; if a stamp was produced the Post Office needed to know from the other countries what date of issue was being considered, and whether there was to be a common design and if the wording was to be COMPAC.

On 16 April a cable from Australia repeated the question as to whether the UK would issue a stamp, but the reply was that no decision had been made. A similar question was received from New Zealand. At the same time the British Post Office asked if the Canadian Post Office was issuing a stamp, learning that it was not. No country would move until the others did.

In July Australia Post advised that Australia was issuing a 2s 3d COMPAC stamp, the rate being for air mail letters between Australia and the UK, in early December 1963 along with a 5d Christmas stamp.

On being told by Australia of its intention, New Zealand also decided to issue a stamp, an 8d in the same design as used by Australia. Both stamps would be printed by the Note Printing Branch, Reserve Bank of Australia using multicolour photogravure. It was hoped that the British Post Office would issue a stamp to show joint interest in the cable project. The Canadian Post Office had a full stamp programme for 1963/64 and was unlikely to participate.

Mr Hornsey wrote to Mr Carville at the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), Downing Street, SW1 on 14 August, seeking its views, explaining that Australia and New Zealand were issuing stamps and if there was a British issue, the Post Office had to finalise matters by the end of August so that the stamps could be designed and printed in time for issue in January 1964. On 20 August, a reply from CRO strongly recommended Britain should issue a stamp.

On 29 August the DDG was shown the reply and a meeting was planned for 25 September to discuss the timetable to issue a COMPAC stamp on 2 December.

A telegram was sent from Mr Hind, Postal Services Department (PSD), to Melbourne, Australia on 23 September requesting details of its stamp design to assist with the UK design. On 24 September the Director General of Australia Post sent Mr Hind two black and white stamp-size photographs of its approved design, the same being used for New Zealand with the name and denomination changed. It was hoped that no objection would be forthcoming if the Australian design was incorporated in the British design: Ron Page, the Assistant Director General in Melbourne, advised PSD that there was no objection.

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## TIMETABLE

A meeting on 25 September at Post Office Headquarters discussed the stamp, present being K Hind and F Langfield of Postal Services Department, G Punnett of Supplies Department and H Berry of Harrison and Sons.

The following timetable was agreed:

designs from artists had to be received by Thursday, 3 October at Post Office Headquarters; Harrisons to receive designs by Friday, 4 October; Post Office 'Circular' notice for the requisition for stamps at Post Office Counters on Wednesday 16, October; Essays to be with the Post Office from Harrisons by Thursday, 17 October; Essays approved with Palace and returned to Harrisons by Monday, 21 October; Stamps delivered to Supplies Department by Tuesday, 12 November; Last day for application for first day cover service by Friday, 27 November; First day of issue on Monday, 2 December.

There was insufficient time for the usual design competition with selection by the Stamp Advisory Committee so it was agreed to commission Peter Gauld to prepare a design based on that being used by Australia and New Zealand, and Michael Goaman to prepare a thematic design. Harrisons expressed a wish to submit a design by one of its artists, which was agreed.

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## INSTRUCTIONS TO ARTISTS

The artists were advised of several features to include in designs. They could be symbolic or pictorial, horizontal or vertical; had to include the Queen's head and the denomination

1s6d appearing once, or twice if preferred, in clear Arabic numerals no smaller than ½ inch high. The word 'COMPAC' and '2nd December 1963' had to be included. The designs had to be drawn four times linear stamp size, that meant 6.04 inches by 3.44 inches. The artist could use no more than two colours of his choice, which had to be shown as colour patches alongside the artwork. (Enclosed were twelve photographs of the Queen's head.) All finished designs had to be in full colour on good quality white board. If white value figures and lettering were used, they should be on a detachable clear acetate sheet. Colour separations were not required.

Completed artwork was required by 3 October. The fee was 60 guineas for each finished design; if used, an additional 190 guineas would be paid.

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## DESIGNS SUBMITTED

On 4 October 1963 three designs were shown to James Fitton, nominated by the Stamp Advisory Committee to act on its behalf due to shortage of time. He considered designs by Peter Gauld, Michael Goaman, and Christopher Ironside of Harrisons. Gauld's design had merit but was insipid as a drawing, even though based on the Australian design. It was recommended that Goaman's be first choice, Gauld's as reserve choice, with Ironside's design rejected.

Mr Langfield on 4 October sent Harrisons the two preferred designs. Goaman's showed the cable ship with a globe behind, and a cable from the ship across the Pacific Ocean, touching New Zealand and Australia. The word COMPAC was around a part of the globe. The right part was taken up with the Queen's head under which was the date '2 DEC 1963'. The PSD wished this design to proceed with the following, 'Add two dots in the appropriate place on the cable on the globe to represent Hawaii and Fiji.'

Essays were ordered on 4 October in the following colours. The Queen's head was to be in the blue of the background and the date in white; the remainder of the stamp was to be in green. Essays showing green under the blue and green over the blue were requested, along with an essay using another blue as an alternative to green. Harrison noted 'the impracticability of reproducing the Queen's head in two colours'.

Gauld's design featured a symbolic globe with a broad line representing a cable running through symbolic waves. The cable fanned out at the end to show the words 'Commonwealth Cable'. The Queen's head was placed at the right of the stamp: the design did not show the date. The design needed attention to the lettering before an essay could be produced.

Essays were ordered on 4 October in black and brown. The dots that were in the cable crossing the globe were to be in bright orange-brown, but if this could not be done, the dots should be white.

Harrisons rang Mr Gauld and Mr Langfield, PSD, to advise them that, 'the design prepared by Mr Gauld is not in a sufficiently finished stage to enable it to be brought round to a satisfactory standard of quality in the time available'.

C Ironside had designed a stamp showing a cable ship surrounded by an oval with the following wording round the outside 'CANADA COMPAC AUSTRALIA 2 DECEMBER 1962'. Although this had been rejected, Harrisons would have liked to see it accepted as it was an 'attractive practical stamp'.

Essays were returned on 14 October -

Michael Goaman:

with background printed first;

with green on blue;

with blue on green;

with green printed first.

Peter Gauld:

Black and brown

(further essays of the Gauld design arrived on 17 October).

A special request was made by D Beaumont, PSD, to Harrisons on 18 October to produce one of the essays of Gauld's design in a block of four, to be sent to Canberra, Australia for an exhibition from 5 November. This block was produced on a sheet numbered 395, one stamp from the same sheet being retained in PSD, and one other stamp sent to F Langfield for his use, the rest being retained by Harrisons. Langfield contacted Harrisons on 23 October requesting that Gauld's unmodified design be printed in several colour selections: it was stated that the second colour needed to be clearly identifiable to help with registration.

Sent to Harrisons on 23 October was the re-drawn Gauld design that had been photographed, and was to be put before the Queen with colour essays of the unmodified design. Langfield wanted Harrisons to go ahead with production of the printing cylinders for Gauld's re-drawn design in anticipation of the final choice of colour.

On 24 October Harrisons sent Langfield essays of Gauld's design, which he distributed to the Deputy Director General and the Queen, the rest being retained by PSD.

## SUBMISSION TO THE QUEEN

Two designs were submitted to the Queen on 21 October (she would open the trans-Pacific Cable COMPAC on 2 December). The Postmaster General pointed out that one had been used by Australia and New Zealand, but on merit preferred the other as the more attractive design and recommended it as first choice. Detailed explanation of the designs read:

Design by Michael Goaman

The drawing of the ship is based on HMTS 'Monarch', one of the Post Office cable ships, shown laying a cable which spans a facsimile of the globe from Canada, across the Pacific Ocean via Hawaii and Fiji to New Zealand and Australia.

Design by Peter Gauld

This design is based on that which will be used by Australia and New Zealand. It shows an undersea cable spanning a symbolic globe and linking Australia and New Zealand with Canada.

On 22 October, the Queen replied to the Postmaster General, Reginald Bevins, that she preferred Gauld's, in particular the spelling out of the Commonwealth Cable, rather than using its nickname COMPAC, but did not like the chocolate colour. She thought there was merit in having the date '2 Dec 1963' as in Goaman's design.

Sir Edward Ford, on behalf of the Queen, asked whether it was possible to produce a further design based on the Queen's comments. The designs were returned: the Queen looked forward to Gauld's design being re-submitted for final approval.

On 24 October the PMG contacted Harrisons for the date to be incorporated into Gauld's design. Production of the stamp, to be issued 3 December, could not be completed in time as Harrisons would have to prepare new printing cylinders, and produce a variety of colour essays to re-submit to the Queen. As time was too short for colour essays, the PMG decided that a black and white photograph of the revised design be sent for Royal approval and to let the Queen choose a colour, informing Sir Edward Ford of this on 25 October.

On 29 October the Queen viewed the stamp and selected blue. The Queen had been advised that there was some doubt about the inauguration date, and so advised the PMG to omit the date.

On 30 October the PMG informed Harrisons that the design must not show the date, and that the Queen had requested blue. An essay was approved and returned to Harrisons for production to start. Despite the delay, it was hoped to receive the stamps from Harrisons by 12 November.

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## GIFT CARDS

It was customary for the PMG to send a gift of the new special stamp to various dignitaries. On 10 October Brigadier K Holmes asked Stuart Rose to design a gift card similar to those sent previously. It was specified that on the outside front cover appear the Royal coat of arms with 'Postage Stamp of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II issued on 3 December 1963 to mark the opening of the first trans-Pacific telephone cable' and inside 'With the compliments of Her Majesty's Postmaster General the Rt. Hon. Reginald Bevins M.P. General Post Office, London, 3 December 1962'. Text inside also read 'COMPAC, the first trans-pacific telephone cable, is the second stage of a comprehensive Commonwealth telephone network and completes a link between the UK and Australasia via Canada.' There were 200 gift cards required and 300 envelopes to cover spoilage.

A gift card was sent to the Queen, Princess Margaret, Sir Alexander Douglas-Home, Prime Minister, Sir H Hylton-Foster, Speaker of the House of Commons, previous Postmasters General and Assistant Postmasters General still in Parliament, members of the Postmaster General's Advisory Panel on Stamp Design, Postmasters General (or equivalent Ministers) of the self-governing countries of the Commonwealth, Peter Gauld and Stuart Rose.

On this occasion cards were also sent to the following guests who took part in the opening ceremony: Prime Ministers of Australia, New Zealand and Canada; Secretary of State at the Foreign Office; Foreign Minister's of Australia; The Governor and Acting Governor of Fiji; The Lord Mayors of London, Sydney and Wellington; The Directors General of Australia, New Zealand and Canada; Chairman of Cable and Wireless Ltd, London; Chairman of the Overseas Telecommunications Commission (Australia).

All the cards were posted on 3 December and received a 'first day of issue' cancellation.

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## ANNOUNCEMENT TO AUSTRALIA

A press conference in London on 4 November announced details of the design.

Peter Gauld was paid 250 guineas in November.

On 31 October Mr Hind, PSD, informed the Director General F O'Grady in Melbourne that an adaptation of the Australian design had been selected for use. On 11 November the Post Office asked if any payment was required for the use of the design. On 18 November the Director General conveyed the answer from W H Wilcock, General Manager of Note Printing

Branch, that 'We were pleased and flattered ... that the British Post Office is using the design ... For our part it is sufficient to know that the British Post Office appreciated the design enough to use it, and we would not think of raising the question of any payment.'

The PMG sent a gift card and first day cover with a letter of appreciation to the designer on 3 December.

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## QUANTITIES PRINTED AND SOLD

Harrisons printed 9,930,700 stamps in sheets of 120, printed on multiple crowns watermarked paper. The stamps were withdrawn on 1 September 1964.

The quantities sold were

Ordinary: 66,799 sheets (= 8,015,880 stamps)

Phosphor: 6,869 sheets (= 824,280 stamps).

A quantity of the 1s 6d stamp was handstamped CANCELLED and one stuck on each copy 'Philatelic Bulletin' No. 3 (November 1963). Quantities involved are not known, but 1,090,540 stamps are not accounted for and some may have been used for the 'Philatelic Bulletin'. The files at the British Postal Museum & Archive show that no stamps were returned to PSD when the stamp was withdrawn.

Derrick Page  
23 April 1993

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## REFERENCES

British Postal Museum & Archive files: P108/71

Stanley Gibbons Great Britain Specialised Stamp Catalogue Volume 3 Queen Elizabeth II pre-decimal issues.