

National Nature Week

Date of issue: 16 MAY 1963



In June 1961, L J Cheney, Chief Information Officer of the Minister for Science, wrote informally to Mr Blackmore of Nature Conservancy asking for events that might justify a special stamp. One was 'National Nature Week' over the period 18 to 25 May 1963, the main emphasis of which was to conserve wild life and natural habitats. The week would be marked with a large exhibition in London, and smaller exhibits at main town centres in England, Scotland and Wales. Other projects being organised were field visits to nature reserves with lectures and film shows. The week was being organised by the Council for Nature, a voluntary organisation founded by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1958, representing natural history societies with a total of 80,000 members. Mr Blackmore wrote informally to the GPO on 8 February suggesting a stamp, adding that a formal approach could be made if the initial reaction was favourable. The GPO replied on 12 February that it was considering its support, and, if the decision was favourable, would require a formal request from the Council for Nature.

A meeting by the GPO on 7 September 1962 recommended special stamps in 1963 for 'Paris Postal Conference Centenary', 'National Nature Week', 'Lifeboat Conference' and 'Red Cross Centenary'. On 21 September F Langfield, Postal Services Department (PSD), advised Mr Blackmore in confidence that the Post Office had decided to mark National Nature Week with two stamps, 3d and 4½d. On 24 September Mr Blackmore wrote to D Copp, General Secretary of the Council for Nature, advising him to make a formal request, which was done on 26 September. The Post Office replied on 9 October that it would be issuing the stamps on 17 May 1963. In his reply Mr Copp hoped that the designers would understand that the purpose of National Nature Week was to be 'a range of events throughout Britain intended to draw public attention to the country's wild life, the facilities for its study and enjoyment and need for conserving it for future generations'. There was an official symbol that might cause difficulties with the designs. The Post Office decided not to insist on its inclusion, leaving it to artists' discretion.

NUMBER OF COLOURS

A meeting at GPO Headquarters on 7 September 1962 discussed the 1963 programme, planning a timetable for printing and distribution. Also discussed was the multicolour printing. However, on 28 September Mr Harding, of the Supplies Department, expressed concern that the minutes did not mention the reservations on the ability to find a contractor able to produce four or five colour stamps, over eight different denominations in a year. He added that from experience Harrisons found it extremely difficult to produce cylinders with the degree of accuracy required for multicolour work.

In 1961 there had been three special issues of which three values were in three colours, and five in two colours, and there had been problems. The 1962 National Productivity Year issue was delayed through printing one stamp in three colours and two stamps in two colours.

The Supplies Department was worried that printing in four or five colours was rather ambitious and preferred that only one stamp within each issue was in four or five colours, with the rest in two or three colours. Harrisons was confident it could handle the colours proposed for the 1963 programme.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ARTISTS

Mr Hornsey of Postal Services Department (PSD) sent out invitations on 28 September 1962 to six artists suggested by the Council of Industrial Design (CoID): Miss Enid Marx, Michael Goaman, Lynton Lamb, Norman Weaver, M Wilson and Romek Marber. Two, Lynton Lamb and Norman Weaver, refused as they had other commitments.

Two more, P Keely and Robert Sellar, were contacted on 5 October. Three stamp printing companies were also invited: Harrison and Sons, Bradbury Wilkinson and De La Rue.

Enclosed with the instructions were a pamphlet on the Council for Nature, a leaflet and memorandum about National Nature Week, ten photographs of the Queen's head, a template for size, fifteen colour wedges and seven stamps, 2½d, 3d and 4½d definitives, 3d GPO Tercentenary, 3d Universal Postal Union, 2d CEPT and 4d World Scout Jamboree.

The two stamps would be 3d and 4½d, and had to form a set, although the Post Office reserved the right to select one design only from an artist. How the subject was depicted, symbolic or pictorial, was left to the artist, but designs had to include 'NATIONAL NATURE

WEEK' in full. The stamps could be used for postage and revenue purposes, but artists were instructed not to include 'Postage' or 'Revenue'. The value was to appear once in clear Arabic numerals, and the Queen's head was essential.

The drawings had to be 6.04 inches by 3.44 inches, vertical or horizontal. The printed stamp excluding perforations and gutter would be 1.51 inches by 0.86 inches. The stamps would be printed in five colours taken from the fifteen samples supplied, although other colours could be used if wished. However, it was preferred that the background of the 3d design be violet to correspond with the definitive, but if violet would unduly inhibit the design, then red might be used. Similarly for the 4½d the background should be orange brown, again corresponding with the definitive.

The stamps would be printed in photogravure by Harrison & Sons using a white wove paper with multiple crowns watermark.

Designs were needed by 6 November, subsequently extended on 17 October to 12 November, authorised by T Hornsey of the PSD. A brief description should accompany each design. The fee was 60 guineas for each finished drawing with a maximum of 120 guineas to one artist. If the design was selected the artist would receive a further 190 guineas.

SUBMITTED DESIGNS

A total of 28 designs was submitted.

Enid Marx (3d) – Heron

Enid Marx (4½d) – Oak leaf

Michael Goaman (3d) – Riverside

Michael Goaman (4½d) – Woodland

P Keely: two designs, but no descriptions

Robert Sellar (3d) – Swallow-tail

Robert Sellar (4½d) – Butterfly

Robert Sellar (no value) – Swallow-tail

Robert Sellar (no value) – Butterfly

Robert Sellar (3d) – Natural scene

Robert Sellar (4½d) – Natural scene

M Wilson (3d) – Osprey

M Wilson (4½d) – Pine Marten

M Wilson (4½d) – Red Squirrel

Romek Marber (3d) – Roe deer

Romek Marber (4½d) – Golden eagle

W. Brown (of Harrisons) (3d) – Hands protecting the Dartford Warbler

S Scott (of Harrisons) (4½d) – Buttercups and daisies
Bradbury Wilkinson (3d) – Protection of Nature
Bradbury Wilkinson (4½d) – Freedom for animals
De La Rue (3d) – National Nature Week crest
De La Rue (4½d) – Oak leaves and acorns with crest.

On 20 November the PMG's Stamp Advisory Committee discussed these designs, which had been seen by Mr Copp and Mr Lousley from the Council for Nature on 16 November and found 17 of them acceptable. The Committee suggested that the 4½d design by E Marx (but as 3d), the 3d by Marx and the 4½d by Scott of Harrisons be first choice, with the 3d by Goaman and 4½d by Goaman as second choice.

These were sent to Harrisons to produce essays. The Marx 4½d design needed the value altered and the lettering adjusted. Mr Langfield requested 'The bird to be replaced by some species more worthy of conservation than the sparrow, for example a tit or finch', and drawn more prominently. The redrawn design, in new colours, was approved by the Council for Nature, having originally not found this design acceptable. The sparrow was replaced by a greenfinch resulting in a brighter design.

RECEIPT OF ESSAYS

Essays were delivered by Harrisons on 2 January 1963 of the Michael Goaman 3d, E Marx 3d and S Scott 4½d, and on 4 January of the Goaman 4½d.

Scott's 4½d design was now changed to 3d and E Marx 3d changed back to 4½d, but the archives contain no documentation as to who authorised the change and why. On 9 January Harrisons submitted further essays, this time of the Scott design as 3d and Marx design as 4½d.

SUBMISSION TO THE QUEEN

On 14 January 1963 the PMG sent the following designs for the Queen's consideration.

S Scott of Harrisons (3d) – 'Flowers of the field portraying a simple form of nature familiar to children. The bee symbolises the care and industry necessary to preserve the life cycle.'
E Marx (4½d) – 'The design symbolises the Royal Oak and shows a Green-finch in flight. This bird is one of those regarded as worthy of conservation.'

M Goaman (3d) – ‘This design features the flora and fauna which would be found in natural conditions on a riverside walk. The organisms portrayed were - Otter, Kingfisher, Curlew, Char, Swallowtail butterfly, Dragonfly, Flag iris, Bullrushes and Willow

M Goaman (4½d) – ‘This design features the flora and fauna of the woods and fields. The organisms portrayed are: Badger, Fawn, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tit, Woodlark, Brimstone Butterfly, Harvest Mouse, Lords and Ladies (flowers), Wheat, Beech and Hartshorn Fern.’

The Queen was prepared to approve the first design, but found it unexciting. She did not like the colour of the second design nor the fact that in the design her head was surrounded by an oak leaf. She preferred her head as in the fourth design, but would have liked to see her head more on the right so as to be isolated from the ears of wheat in the design. She was prepared to accept the fourth design if altered, along with the first.

The Queen was leaving for Fiji on 31 January, and the DDG wanted to let know that the requested alteration had been done: as time did not permit a colour essay, a black and white photograph was sent for approval, which on 28 January the Queen was pleased to approve.

DESIGNS RE-MODIFIED AND ESSAY NUMBERS

On 24 January the PMG asked Michael Goaman to modify his design, making the Queen’s head more prominent by moving it slightly to the right, away from the ears of wheat, darkening the background around the head and changing the colour of the head from brown to black, tinted with some brown.

On 30 January Mr Langfield, PSD, sent Harrisons Michael Goaman’s modified drawing requesting new essays. Four were received on 11 February, a further one on 12 February with the Queen’s head overprinted with black, and another four on 20 February with the head printed in black. Langfield expressed to Harrisons his disappointment with the appearance of the Queen’s head, a result of the brown background colour printed under the black of the head. However, one of the four essays of 20 February was satisfactory for colour and given the go-ahead for production, although it was pointed out that the Queen’s face on the essay had a score mark which must not appear on issued stamps. On 28 February further essays were received of Scott’s 3d design, and on 18 March still more, of Scott’s 3d and Goaman’s 4½d.

A total of 157,200,000 of the 3d, and 13,620,000 of the 4½d were printed by Harrisons using 250 line screen. The following quantities were sold:

3d - 148,560,000 (ordinary), 8,640,000 (phosphor);

4½d - 12,480,000 (ordinary), 1,140,000 (phosphor).

The stamps were issued on 16 May 1963, and withdrawn on 1 June 1964.

GIFTS OF STAMPS

The practice of the PMG was to send gift cards containing new special stamps to distinguished people. There were 100 cards printed (plus 125 envelopes) each card being 6 inches by 9½ inches when opened. The card was folded in half and included brief details about the stamps. On the cover was the royal crest in red, 'National Nature Week' and 'Postage stamps of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II'.

There were 40 cards sent, to the Queen, Princess Margaret, Sir Winston Churchill, Harold Macmillan, Prime Minister, Sir H Hylton-Foster, The Speaker, ten former PMGs and APGs still in Parliament, Postmasters General of the self-governing countries of the Commonwealth (13), members of the Postmaster General's Advisory Panel of Stamp Design (9), the designers, plus the Duke of Edinburgh, patron to the Council for Nature, and D Copp, General Secretary to the Council for Nature.

PREMATURE RELEASE

Premature release of the stamps is recorded for the following dates and locations:

6 May - Ferryhill, Aberdeen (quantity unknown);

13 May - Stebbing, Dunmow, Essex (60 of the 3d, 14 of the 4½d);

13 May - Aldham, Colchester (2 of the 3d);

15 May - Lower Sydenham (31 of the 3d, 2 of the 4½d);

15 May - Spetisbury, Dorset (4 of the 3d);

15 May - Baker St. Weston-super-Mare (121 of the 3d, 1 of the 4½d);

15 May - Bents Green, Sheffield (1 of the 3d);

15 May - West Hoathly, E. Grinstead (1 of the 3d);

15 May - Ashome, Warwick (1 of the 3d, 2 of the 4½d);

Total - 221 of the 3d, 19 of the 4½d.

Sorting offices around the country reported envelopes and packets with the new stamps: a total of 62 was recorded. All items were treated according to Post Office 'Circular' of 1 May 1963 that stated that if any postal packet bearing any of the new stamps is seen before the date of issue a note be made of the address, the office of origin, and date of posting. The date impression only to be obliterated and the packet sent on to its destination. However, if a packet or parcel bearing any of the new stamps was presented at a post office counter for registration then the sender was to be informed that the item would not be forwarded until the stamps became current.

BBC TELEVISION PUBLICITY

The BBC showed on one of its programmes a sheet of each value, giving details about the stamps and their design, in addition to information about National Nature Week. This prompted some viewers to write to the PMG that on the 3d the honeybee on a buttercup gathering nectar was incorrect. The Post Office replied on 8 April that it had made enquiries with the Council for Nature and its attention had been drawn to a leaflet from the Bee Research Association that lists buttercups as a minor honey plant.

THE ARTISTS

STANLEY D SCOTT had also designed the 1948 Olympic Games 6d when he worked for Waterlow & Sons Ltd, security printers, which closed in 1961. Since then he had worked for Harrison & Sons designing stamps and banknotes for various overseas countries.

MICHAEL GOAMAN had designed the 1961 CEPT 2d, 4d and 10d, the 1961 Post Office Savings Bank 3d and 1s 6d, 1963 Freedom from Hunger 2½d and 1s 3d, and 1953 Coronation 4d. He had also designed over 100 stamps for other.

DERRICK PAGE
19 MARCH 1993

REFERENCES

British Postal Museum and Archive files:

- P613/67 Paris Conference stamp
- P612/67 Special issues for 1963
- P614/67
- (P1895/65)