

British Landscapes

1966



At a meeting of the Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC) on 11 August 1965, a list was compiled of subjects 'likely to make good stamps' to add to the stamp programme for the coming year, which then only included stamps to commemorate Robert Burns and the anniversary of Westminster Abbey. This list had nine possible subjects:

The Battle of Hastings;

The Royal Aeronautical Society Centenary;

XIV Congressus Internationalis Ornithologicus/World Conference of the International Council for Bird Protection;

Enterprise Neptune;

John Dalton - Bicentenary;

The Golden Jubilee of Accident Prevention;

The Opening of the Severn Bridge;

The Golden Jubilee of the Royal College of Nursing;

Installation of the Prince of Wales at Caernarvon Castle.

The SAC envisaged presenting the list to the Postmaster General (PMG) from which he could select six, to add to the two already in preparation, giving a total of eight for the year.

However, it is clear that the PMG, Anthony Wedgwood Benn, had his own ideas regarding the stamp programme for 1966. In an internal memorandum dated 21 September 1965, he outlined a projected programme which, although it did incorporate some of the SAC's ideas, 'put rather less emphasis on direct commemoration'. In the memorandum he referred to launching an experiment in pictorial stamps and included in four such pictorial issues. The programme included:

25 January: Robert Burns;

28 February: Westminster Abbey;

4 April: a pictorial issue, possibly a multiple design stamp and possibly showing some regional landscapes. If the landscapes included coastlines the PMG argued that this issue could 'embrace Enterprise Neptune';

1 June: World Cup;

15 July: a pictorial issue possibly showing birds;
12 September: a pictorial issue on British Technology;
14 October: Battle of Hastings;
1 December: a pictorial issue with a Christmas theme.

The PMG also commented that the first pictorial issue, the projected landscape stamps, might be used to meet earlier demands for regional stamps made by Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The 1966 stamp programme was again raised at a meeting of the SAC on 11 November 1965 during which the GPO representative mentioned that one of the pictorial issues projected for 1966 might include an association with Enterprise Neptune, although he maintained that the subjects of the four pictorial issues had not been decided. However, the PMG had made up his own mind, so preparations for the development of pictorial designs based on the theme of British Landscapes began.

SELECTION OF ARTISTS

During December the Council of Industrial Design (CoID) suggested to the GPO six artists who could provide designs for the stamps, namely Leonard Rosoman, William Kempster, Peter Roberson, Lynton Lamb, David Gillespie, with J W Murphy as a 'spare'.

On 22 December 1965, invitations were sent to all except J W Murphy. On the same day the Supplies Department were asked by the Postal Services Department to send formal invitations to the stamp printing firms of Harrison & Sons Ltd and Bradbury Wilkinson Co Ltd: these were not sent until 31 December. On 3 January 1966, Bradbury Wilkinson informed the GPO that it would be unable to submit designs on this occasion due to its current workload.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ARTISTS

Included with the invitations were instructions to help with the preparation of designs for this, the first British pictorial issue. The instructions for the certain other issues of 1966 (Burns and Westminster Abbey) had encouraged artists to prepare non-traditional designs. After the PMG had obtained the approval of the Queen, artists were allowed unprecedented freedom as to size, colour and choice of subject. This freedom extended, again with the approval of the Queen, even to the omission of her from designs.

By November 1965, the Queen had discussed this matter further with the Prime Minister and made it known that she did in fact wish her head to remain on stamps, although she did

agree to the idea that it could in future be represented by silhouette. Consequently, the 'Instructions to Artists' did not offer the opportunity to submit non-traditional designs.

For this pictorial series artists were invited to submit a set, or sets, of four designs depicting landscapes or seascapes of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Each set was to illustrate all four regions and should feature 'typical landscapes or coastal scenery'.

Artists were asked to submit full colour designs on white board to be prepared 'four times linear stamp size', and were told to ensure that the detail in their designs was not so fine that it would be lost when reduced to stamp size. They were told to use no more than three colours and to use white rather than black as a background colour.

It was pointed out that the stamps would be printed in multicolour photogravure by Harrison & Sons so artists were asked to ensure that their materials would permit photography of 'each tone in its true value', and were encouraged to consult with the GPO or Harrisons on all matters of a technical nature.

The denominations for the stamps had not been decided by the time the invitations were sent. So on this occasion artists were told they might use most of the current range of low values with the exception of 3d.

All designs had to 'include the Queen's head as a feature', copies of two sizes of the Wilding portrait being enclosed. At the suggestion of the PMG they were told they could submit profile silhouettes in either black or white as an 'alternative non-traditional version'. It was also stated that adopted designs would feature the names of both the artist and the printer on the stamp below the design.

The fee for each completed design was 60 guineas up to a maximum of 240 guineas for any one artist. For each design adopted a further 190 guineas would be paid. The deadline for submissions was 17 January 1966.

SUBMITTED DESIGNS

A total of 43 designs were submitted, some of which featured a non-traditional profile portrait:

L Lamb - 4 designs (numbered 1 to 4)

W Kempster - 6 (numbered 5 to 10)

P Roberson - 5 (numbered 11 to 15)

L Rosoman - 4 (numbered 16 to 19)

D and A Gillespie - 16 (numbered 20 to 35)
Harrisons - 8 (numbered 36 to 43).

DESIGN SELECTION

The SAC met on 26 January 1966: present were James Fitton (Chair), A GamesProf. R GuyattF H K Henrion, Mrs C G Tomrley (Secretary), P Reilly, plus A A Mead and D H Beaumont of the GPO and R F York and B Coulton of Harrisons.

The GPO admitted that it had made an error with the 'Instructions to Artists' in that no mention had been made that the landscapes were to be identified in words on the designs. It was agreed that Harrisons would add the description in small letters to the selected designs before they were essayed.

The Committee selected as its first choice the four designs by Rosoman, numbered 16, 17, 18 and 19. As second choice were four of the sixteen designs submitted by the husband and wife partnership of David and Ann Gillespie, namely designs numbered 20, 22, 33 and 35. These designs were taken by York of Harrisons for essaying.

The PMG had also seen the submissions: on 26 January he asked, in writing, that four more Gillespie designs be essayed, namely 24, 25, 27 and 30, each with the silhouette portrait that had been adapted by David Gentleman from the head appearing on the current coinage, asking that this be in white within a 'lozenge' of black. There had been mention of a new portrait for some time and the SAC meeting of 26 January had seen submissions by five different artists. Though these had yet to be approved, or even pass through the selection process, the PMG recommended that the Landscape issue be used as an opportunity to experiment with a new head, 'testing out public reaction before committing ourselves finally to the profile to be used'.

David Gentleman was working on an independent commission from the PMG that gave him liberty to submit designs for practically any stamp issue he chose. It seems that some time towards the end of January, after the SAC meeting, Gentleman submitted four Landscape designs depicting regional coastlines. Since only there are only limited references to these in the files it must be assumed they bypassed the usual channels and went directly to the PMG. On 31 January he asked that these designs be prepared as colour essays and that Gentleman's silhouette head of the Queen be used. The PMG also asked that the eight designs chosen by the SAC be essayed with this head, as well as with the Wilding portrait.

Harrisons was now expected to produce 24 essays: the time available was too limited so a delay in the issue date of the stamps was proposed: this was authorised by the PMG on 2 February. The denominations were also decided in early February, namely:

4d - English scene;

6d - Northern Ireland scene;

1s 3d - Welsh scene;

1s 6d - Scottish scene.

It would appear from internal correspondence that in early February the PMG envisaged the Gentleman designs being produced as a block of four stamps. Thus the PMG resisted making any official announcement of the stamps until he had seen the essays and definitely decided upon over-ruling the decision of the SAC. Harrisons were consulted about the possibility of printing the designs in a block of four but confirmed it would be technically impossible using the designs commissioned by the GPO and selected by the SAC. The Director of Postal Services (DPS) wrote to the PMG on 16 February to register the fear that the issue date of 25 April could not be met if details of the issue were not published in the following week's Post Office 'Circular'. The DPS conveyed doubts concerning the size of the Gentleman designs, which were deeper than the normal special stamps: this would mean that, if printed in the usual sheet size of 120, the sheets would be larger than the 'portfolios' used to house them and the DPS spoke of the 'strong possibility of Union complaint'.

In his reply of 17 February the PMG agreed to abandon his plans to produce this particular issue as a block of four. He did, however, register his desire that the issue be 'a real first' and continued to support the Gentleman designs. As a result the Landscape pictorial stamps were announced both in Parliament and through a Press and Broadcast Notice on 23 February.

ESSAYS

The first essays of the stamps were sent from Harrisons on 15 February, showing both the Wilding and silhouette heads as requested. Further essays arrived from Harrisons a week later, on 22 February.

SUBMISSION TO THE PALACE

Between 22 and 25 February 1966 (the exact date is not known) the acting Chairman of the SAC, James Fitton, met the PMG to discuss the submission to the Queen, probably necessitated by the limited time remaining. It appears that Mr Fitton had only recently been

made aware of the Gentleman designs, and he learnt that the PMG proposed they be included with those by Rosoman in the submission to the Palace. Fitton disagreed and the PMG accepted to drop the idea. It was agreed that the designs to be submitted to the Queen would be those selected by the SAC at its meeting on 26 January.

Fitton also expressed dissatisfaction with the profile portrait used on the essays. He felt it was merely a tracing around a coinage head that resulted in 'a white blank which made the portrait insignificant'. The PMG was persuaded to include essays with alternative heads in the submission.

The PMG wrote to the Queen for approval of the designs on 25 February. He pointed out that a series of pictorial, rather than commemorative, stamps was 'an entirely new venture for this country'. He explained that because of this 'it may be appropriate to use a new profile effigy of Her Majesty in the designs'. Accordingly, essays with both the new and the Wilding portrait were enclosed, as follows

- A – Rosoman's designs with Wilding portrait.
- A1 – Rosoman's designs with new silhouette portrait.
- B – the Gillespie designs with Wilding portrait.
- B1 – the Gillespie designs with new silhouette portrait.

The PMG explained that the SAC recommended A1 as its first choice, even though it had chosen the design when it had the Wilding head, and its Chairman did not like it. He also explained that the black oval background to the Queen's head would be removed from the finished stamps, adding that use of the this particular new profile did not prevent the GPO from selecting another for future definitives or special issues.

The Queen was in the Bahamas and not due to return until 7 March; the PMG therefore asked if the Queen's response could be cabled to him. This was done and confirmed in a letter from Buckingham Palace dated 2 March. The Queen approved designs A1 and made no comment regarding the new profile head.

PRODUCTION DETAILS

The approved essays were forwarded to the printer on 3 March 1966.

By early March some doubt arose over the release date of 25 April due to the General Election of that year. The Press Office expressed concern that the limited time available to promote the stamps would have a detrimental effect on the response by the philatelic market. The DPS recommended that the issue date be deferred until 2 May, and this was approved by the PMG on 8 March. This decision was officially announced on 11 March.

The stamps were launched with a press showing and a Press and Broadcast Notice on 6 April. The stamps were described in the press release as 'the first British stamps not linked to some current event or important anniversary'. Mention was made that they featured a new 'cameo' portrait of the Queen developed by David Gentleman. The press release also acknowledged Leonard Rosoman as 'a newcomer to British stamp design'.

The stamps were each printed in three colours:

4d - black, blue and green;

6d - black, blue and green;

1s 3d - black, blue and yellow;

1s 6d - black, blue and orange.

They were printed 120 to a sheet on paper with the multiple Crown watermark. The stamps were also with phosphor bands, and were released on 2 May 1966. The sales figures were:

Ordinary

4d - 80,326,440

6d - 11,531,760

1s 3d - 5,286,000

1s 6d - 5,462,640

Phosphor

4d - 11,283,720

6d - 2,459,280

1s 3d - 1,242,720

1s 6d - 1,204,200.

The 6d phosphor sold out in January 1967, with all the other values being withdrawn from sale on 1 May of that year.

PHILATELIC ARRANGEMENTS

The GPO produced only a first day envelope for this issue and not a presentation pack. The envelope measured 6 inches (165mm) by 4 inches (108mm) and was printed in three colours. The design was by Peter Gauld and showed the four regional emblems of the Rose, the Thistle, the Daffodil and the Hand of Ulster. The envelopes were sold at 6d each.

The Philatelic Bureau operated its usual full first day cover service, inclusive of cover and stamps, for 6s 6d. The file records that the GPO ordered 200,000 envelopes.

Philatelic posting boxes were provided at 82 offices around the UK. The Press and Broadcast Notice advised of special 'one day' handstamps at four offices; one in each of the regions, namely: Harlech, Merioneth; Grantown on Spey, Morayshire; Coleraine, Co. Londonderry; Lewes, Sussex.

GIFT SCHEME

Gifts of a first day cover and a specially prepared gift card were made to various people. The card, printed by Moore & Matthes of London, comprised thick white card, measuring 6 inches (152mm) by 13 7/8 inches (353mm) when flat, but was scored and folded twice. It contained mint copies of all four stamps.

The files record that 150 cards were ordered but only 46 gifts were sent, including the Queen; Princess Margaret; Prime Minister, Harold Wilson; the Speaker of the House of Commons, Horace King; members of the SAC (8); Leonard Rosoman; former PMGs and Assistant PMGs (14); the PMG or equivalent Minister of the self-governing countries of the Commonwealth (19).

PREMATURE RELEASE

The files contain information of many incidents of use of the stamps before the issue date that relate to a Southampton stamp dealer. The company was Rushstamps run by A M Grant from 6 Rushington Avenue, Totton, Southampton.

On 27 April 1966, the Postmaster of Lyndhurst reported that Grant attempted to register a number of items all bearing the Landscape stamps. He had refused but the Postmaster was to learn later that Grant had attempted to register these letters at another office nearby. Grant was successful in registering four items at Cadnam Sub Office but these were intercepted at Southampton.

On 27 April a total of 76 items addressed to Grant were recovered from post boxes in the Lyndhurst district. These were held at Lyndhurst for date stamping and forwarding on 2 May. A further 25 items bearing the stamps and posted before the day of issue were recovered in Southampton at a later date.

A representative of Rushstamps, who gave his name as Mr Apsey, made enquiries of the Southampton Head Office as to why certain items were not 'being delivered promptly'. A number of items bearing the stamps were recovered at the Sorting Office in Bournemouth

on 28 April: these were all addressed to R D Apsey of 79 Ethelbutt Avenue, Bassett Green, Southampton.

There was a possibility these stamps had been released prematurely to Rushstamps by the Philatelic Bureau. When Apsey contacted the Southampton Head Office he claimed to be acting on behalf of a client who had obtained the stamps from the Bureau.

SIMON BATES
23 MARCH 1993.

REFERENCES

British Postal Museum & Archive file:
P 57/72 - Pictorial Special Stamp Issue (Landscapes).