

World Cup Football Competition

1966



The 1966 Football World Cup Finals were staged in England between 12 and 31 July, the first time the event had been held in this country. The first mention of the GPO issuing special stamps to mark the occasion is a letter of 16 April 1964, from the organising authority of the World Cup Finals, the English Football Association. This letter claimed the event was as significant as the Olympic Games, which had been the subject of British stamps, and proposed to open discussion between the Football Association (FA) and the GPO about the possibility of special stamps.

The GPO replied on 23 April acknowledging that the World Cup enjoyed great national and international interest, the strength of which meant that it came within the policy governing the issue of stamps. However, it confirmed that no decisions concerning the programme for 1966 would be made until the spring of 1965. Privately, however, the GPO was much more enthusiastic: an internal memorandum of 21 April referred to the World Cup as a 'dead-cert' for stamps and suggested that preparations start before the end of the year.

On 10 February 1965, the FA wrote again and asked whether discussions on the subject of World Cup stamps might begin. The reply, on 15 February, stated that as there had already been a formal request there was no need for any discussion. The FA wrote again in March and September; this later letter wondered if it was the time for any definite proposals regarding World Cup stamps to be announced. The letter also suggested three denominations of stamps, 4d (Inland letter rate), 6d (European letter rate) and 1s 3d (Air Mail rate).

At the end of September the FA was informed that the World Cup was on the shortlist for special issues in 1966 but that no definite answer was possible until the Postmaster General

(PMG) was ready to announce the entire programme. Then, on 27 October 1965, the PMG (Anthony Wedgwood Benn) announced in Parliament that there would be an issue of stamps to mark the holding of the 1966 World Cup in England.

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS

The FA was naturally delighted and in a letter of 6 November 1965 passed on its hope that 'we shall have a set of stamps which will be a credit both to this country and to football'. The FA suggested the stamps feature 'realistic action scenes' in a number of colours.

The Council of Industrial Design (CoID) was invited to nominate suitable artists, suggesting William Kempster, Terence Carter and Negus Sharland with Hans Schwartz as a reserve. They were considered by the GPO as 'comparative novices' as far as stamp design was concerned and proposed to invite Michael Goaman.

In late 1965 the PMG was talking of a transition to 'new-style special issues', part of which was to replace the Dorothy Wilding portrait then in use on British postage stamps. It was intended that a new profile head would be introduced to the special stamps issued in 1966. A change was the PMG's request that all submitted designs come personally to him.

There was some discussion as to the wording on the stamps. Initially it had been intended to include the words 'World Championship - Jules Rimet Cup' but the PMG felt this would 'clutter' the design and suggested the simple 'World Cup'. The GPO approached the FA for its opinion, who suggested 'World Cup - 1966'.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ARTISTS

On 27 January 1966, the GPO invited N Sharland, W Kempster, M Goaman and T Carter to submit designs: on 28 January Supplies Department also invited the printing firms of Harrison & Sons Ltd and Bradbury Wilkinson & Co Ltd. These firms were instructed that designs were to be submitted as a collective effort from their design departments and not from individual artists.

All were sent a list of instructions which advised that there would be three stamps, 4d, 6d and 1s 3d (the denominations suggested by the FA) for which artists were to prepare full colour designs, in up to five colours, 'four times linear stamp size', on good-quality white card. Designs could be horizontal or vertical but the detail was not to be so fine as to be lost upon reduction to stamp size.

The Queen's head was to be shown in profile in either black or white rather than use the approved Wilding portrait. The artist's profile portrait might be used on the issued stamp, or replaced by an approved profile drawing that had been commissioned separately but was not completed at the time the World Cup designs were commissioned.

Apart from also including 'World Cup 1966' in the designs artists were given a free hand as to the themes. The instructions did, however, mention the FA's preference for forceful action designs and encouraged artists to contact the FA for additional information.

The stamps were to be printed in photogravure by Harrison & Sons at its High Wycombe works. Artists were encouraged to ensure that their materials permitted the photography of each tone in its true value: a shade card was enclosed.

The fee for each completed design was 60 guineas up to a maximum for any one artist of 180 guineas. For each adopted design there was a further payment of 190 guineas. These fees covered any modifications to the original design agreed as reasonable.

SUBMITTED DESIGNS

The deadline for submissions was Monday, 21 February 1966. Designs were received from
W Kempster - 5
N Sharland - 3
T Carter - 3
M Goaman - 3
Bradbury Wilkinson - 11.

On 24 February Harrison & Sons delivered fourteen designs bringing the total to 39. These late submissions included a number by David Gentleman who had been asked by the PMG to work on designs for all issues.

In the British Postal Museum & Archive there is a number of designs by Alan Robinson, then Secretary of Portsmouth Society of Association Referees. He sent these to the FA in January and they were forwarded to the GPO on 21 January. There is every indication that they were retained for inspection by the PMG but they were never considered for adoption.

SELECTION BY STAMP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

On Thursday, 3 March 1966 a meeting of the Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC) viewed the designs. The Chairman was James Fitton and in attendance were

Lady Sempill, Sir John Wilson, Abram Games, F H K Henrion, Mrs C G Tomrley, Miss S R Foott plus A A Mead and D H Beaumont of the GPO, and B Coulton and R F York of Harrisons.

The meeting agreed that only Kempster's designs were of a sufficient standard to progress to colour essays. It was suggested that his design, numbered 4, be redesigned and a net added to the goal-post; similar modifications were also recommended for Kempster's designs numbered 1 and 5, which were also to be produced as colour essays. It was also decided that these designs could be essayed with Kempster's own profile head, and with Dorothy Wilding's portrait as an alternative.

David Gentleman was asked to re-design five of the designs he had submitted through Harrisons, numbers 28, 31, 34, 37 and 39. He had used a small silhouette profile and was asked to incorporate a Wilding portrait of the usual size and to make the features of the football players anonymous. Essays of only four designs were, however, produced.

It was reported that David Caplan had asked if he might be allowed to submit designs and had produced a sheet of rough, stamp-sized sketches: it was decided to extend an invitation to him.

A second meeting of the SAC on Wednesday, 23 March was attended by James Fitton, Mrs C G Tomrley, Prof. R Guyatt, F H K Henrion, R F York and D H Beaumont, and viewed essays of designs by Kempster, Gentleman and Caplan.

None of the designs was considered of outstanding merit. There was particular disappointment that Caplan's designs did not live up to expectation and that David Gentleman had not increased the size of the Queen's head despite being asked to do so: the minutes of the meeting reveal that designs which would been considered first choice were rejected on this point.

The SAC recommended two courses of action. First, it suggested adopting Kempster's design number 1, featuring players in action before a crowd, for all three denominations; the colour of the background behind the Queen's head could be changed. Second, if three different designs were to be used, then the choice was:

Caplan's design showing three players in an action scene, but adapted from a vertical to a horizontal format;

Kempster's design already chosen;

Caplan's designs featuring flags of the sixteen competing nations arranged around a stylised football.

It is not clear the denomination for each design.

The Committee appeared to be against the silhouette 'coinage' head considered as the successor to the Wilding portrait of the Queen. It therefore proposed that essays bearing both heads be submitted to the Queen, until such time as a new portrait was officially approved.

It seems the designs submitted were not considered impressive: a memorandum to the PMG on 24 March stated that the designs submitted were of poor quality and many were technically unsuitable for multicolour printing.

ROYAL APPROVAL

The PMG submitted essays to the Queen on 28 March 1966. In his letter he admitted that the designs submitted had not been outstanding in any artistic sense. Nevertheless he recommended three designs:

Essay A1 - (1s 3d) Caplan's 'flag' design

Essay A2 - (6d) Kempster's horizontal 'action design'.

Essay A3 - (4d) Gentleman's vertical design showing two players in action.

It is not clear from the records when and how one of Gentleman's designs came under consideration after being previously rejected.

All the essays bore the recently-approved silhouette profile head of the Queen, introduced with the Landscapes stamps issued in May 1966.

On 29 March advice was received that the Queen had agreed with the PMG's selection and approved the essays.

THE 'NORTH KOREAN' STAMP

With Royal approval granted, production of the stamps could begin. However, before the GPO instructed Harrisons to prepare printing cylinders it consulted the Foreign Office to check the accuracy of the flags which featured on Caplan's 1s 3d design.

At the time the British Government did not recognise the government of North Korea: the participation of a North Korean team had presented the Foreign Office with understandable difficulties. Though it did not wish the presence of the North Koreans to be seen as a relaxation in the policy of non-recognition, it did not wish to be seen to discriminate against them. Thus it was considered acceptable that the FA, a non-government body, fly the North Korean flag along with those of the other competing nations for the duration of the

competition. The question of this same flag appearing on British stamps was viewed differently.

On 1 April 1966, the Foreign Office wrote to the GPO and asked that 'the offending flag' not appear on the stamp. Its argument was that use of the North Korean flag by the GPO, a Department of the British Government, would be seen as tacit recognition of North Korea.

The PMG wrote to the Palace on 7 April to inform the Queen of the Foreign Office's strong political objections to the design she had already approved. He advised the Queen that the GPO had no alternative but to follow the guidance of the Foreign Office on this matter and offered a substitute design for the 1s 3d denomination, namely Caplan's design of three players jumping for the ball; originally it had been vertical but was now re-designed in a horizontal format. On 8 April a letter from Windsor Castle gave the Queen's approval of the revised set of designs.

PRODUCTION DETAILS

The approved essays were forwarded to Harrison's on 19 April 1966.

The stamps were printed in sheets of 120 on paper with the multiple crown watermark, appearing sideways on the 4d stamp. They were produced both with and without phosphor bands: the 4d had two vertical phosphor bands whereas the other denominations had three. The quantities sold were:

Phosphor

4d – 129,764,160

6d – 17,086,680

1s 3d – 7,026,240

Non-phosphor

4d – 16,397,880

6d – 3,357,480

1s 3d – 1,761,240.

The stamps were withdrawn from sale on 7 August 1967.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The GPO produced an official first day envelope, designed by John Denison-Hunt and depicting a football in the centre of a green background with the words 'World Cup 1966'. It

measured 6½ inches (165mm) by 4 inches (102mm) and cost 6d. The cost of the GPO's first day service (cover, stamps and first-day handstamp) was 5s 0d.

A presentation pack was also produced containing three mint stamps and a folder with artistic, technical and printing details together with information about the designers. The pack, which cost 3s 0d, included information produced in conjunction with the FA. There was no special postmark used nationally for the World Cup, but there were, however, two locally-used slogan postmarks. In Sheffield three dies were produced with 'WORLD CUP CITY', 'SHEFFIELD' and 'CITY OF STEEL'. This was used first from 2 May 1966 until 12 June, and then again between 28 June and 31 July. In Liverpool a postmark with 'LIVERPOOL' above a stylised football and 'WORLD CUP CITY' was used from 30 June until 1 August. Five dies were used, four with automatic letter facing machines.

POSTMASTER GENERAL'S GIFTS

The PMG sent 50 gifts of a first day cover and presentation pack to the Queen, Princess Margaret, the Prime Minister, H Wilson, the Speaker, H King, members of the SAC (8), the three designers, the Secretary of the FA, Denis Howell, Under Secretary of State with responsibility for sport, former PMGs and Assistant PMGs in Parliament (14), PMGs or equivalent of self-governing countries of the Commonwealth.

PRESS RELEASE

The press showing of the stamps took place on Tuesday 26 April at GPO Headquarters, it being announced that these were the first-ever British stamps to feature sport and would be issued on 1 June 1966. Details of first day covers and presentation packs were given, plus information about the special philatelic posting boxes at 78 offices around the country.

The Press and Broadcast Notice included brief biographical details of the artists:

David Gentleman - Born in London 1930. Studied at the Graphic School of the Royal College of Art and currently a graphic designer and painter. He had produced a number of successful stamp designs, his most recent being for the 1965 Commonwealth Arts Festival.

William Kempster - Trained at Wimbledon School of Art and later at the Royal College of Art. Predominantly a painter of murals, then teaching print-making in Bournemouth. This was his first successful stamp design for the GPO,

David Caplan - Born in London in 1910. A freelance designer and photographer, and visiting lecturer in graphic design at two colleges. This was his first successful stamp design for the GPO.

Mention was made that the Queen's head was not the Wilding portrait. As on the Landscapes stamps the GPO had used a cameo portrait adapted by David Gentleman from a coinage design by Mrs M Gillick.

CRITICAL RESPONSE

Much of the press coverage focused on Caplan's discarded design, the 'North Korean' stamp. 'The Guardian' of 27 April observed that though the government might allow the North Koreans to compete on British football grounds, 'we will not, under any circumstances, have their flag on our postage stamps'. The decision to abandon this design was treated with derision in some quarters. 'The Sun' of 27 April described the situation as 'A case of Bumbledom gone mad.' This same article likened the actions of the Foreign Office to those of a 'panic-Stricken goal-keeper' and pondered the embarrassment that would result from a North Korean victory. The criticism was mainly directed at the Foreign Office and not the GPO.

Caplan was interviewed by a number of daily newspapers and was explicit in his criticism of the decision to discard his design. In the 'Daily Sketch' he said of the decision 'It's all so terribly juvenile.' In the 'Daily Mail' he described his 'flag' design as an attempt to 'get away from the obvious trend of featuring footballers', and commented that he disliked the design that had replaced it, even though it was his own. The GPO took the view that Caplan's comments to the press were highly embarrassing, to the extent that a question was asked in Parliament (9 May 1966). At a meeting of the SAC on 11 May it was suggested that, in order to prevent this situation from being repeated, future instructions to artists should indicate that press statements on stamps should only come from official sources.

At the press conference, more than one journalist noted that this particular design was missing from a display of artwork that included a number of other unaccepted designs.

However, some journalists did mention the designs that had been accepted. 'The Sun' acknowledged that all were 'unusually well designed' and singled out Caplan's 1s 3d design as being 'in the pop-art mood of our time'. Another design that attracted attention was Gentleman's 4d, based on action photographs taken by a freelance photographer, Peter Boyce, of two of his friends. 'The Daily Mirror', for example, made much of the fact that the two men, Barrington Smith and David Wridgway, were both non-footballers and had been fuelled during the photography session by light ale and cigarettes.

SIMON BATES
16 FEBRUARY 1993

REFERENCE

British Postal Museum & Archive file:
P29/72 - 1966 World Cup Football