

British Anniversaries

Date of issue: 29 MAY 1968



There is no recorded evidence of a single decision to issue a series of stamps celebrating British anniversaries in 1968. Every year the GPO received many suggestions for the stamp programme, from the public and organisations celebrating anniversaries. Discussions would ensue within the Operations and Overseas Department (OOD) at Postal Headquarters, London EC1. The recommendations of the OOD would be submitted to the Postmaster General (PMG), who would then decide the make-up of the annual stamp programme. During this process the PMG might add or remove subjects as he saw fit. Of the many suggestions for stamp designs received each year by the Post Office, anniversaries are the most numerous. It is therefore likely that the idea to celebrate several anniversaries within one issue arose from the desire to satisfy as many requests as possible.

On 19 December 1964 P M Simpson, a member of the public, wrote to the PMG, Anthony Wedgwood Benn. Mr Simpson was responding to a newspaper report in which the PMG had invited the public to offer suggestions for future commemorative stamps. Benn had said that general anniversaries, not just Royal or postal, were to feature in future. Mr Simpson put forward 13 suggestions including the 50th anniversary of the Royal Air Force. In September 1966 another member of the public, Mr Dowell, wrote to the new PMG, Edward Short, with the same suggestion, referring to the anniversary as falling on 1 April 1967. This led the Post Office to seek advice on the actual date: the Assistant Keeper of the RAF Museum, Mr Bruce, informed the Post Office that it actually fell on 1 April 1968. Mr Dowell was politely informed of this and was also told that the subject was to be included in the list from which the PMG would make his choice for the 1968 stamp programme.

During September 1966 the PMG received a letter from Victor Feather, Assistant General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress. Mr Feather asked for consideration to be given to the issue of a stamp to celebrate the Centenary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in 1968. The PMG replied that he was happy to add this to the list of subjects from which the choice was to be made for the 1968 stamp programme.

STAMP PROGRAMME FOR 1968 ANNOUNCED

On 27 July 1967 the PMG announced in Parliament that there would be four special stamp issues in 1968. He said that there was to be one series to mark three anniversaries, the centenary of the Trades Union Congress, the 50th anniversary of Votes for Women, and the bi-centenary of Captain Cook's first voyage of discovery. The other three issues were to be British Bridges, British Paintings and a Christmas set. The Post Office issued a press release that same day (Press and Broadcast Notice PB191) relating the PMG's announcement. On 20 November 1967 the PMG announced in Parliament further details of the programme. He had decided to include a 1s stamp in the anniversaries series to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Royal Air Force. The three other stamps were as previously advised, the centenary of the Trades Union Congress (4d), the 50th anniversary of Votes for Women (9d), and the 200th anniversary of Captain Cook's first voyage of discovery (1s 9d). Details of the announcement, which included the values and dates of the rest of the programme, were given in a press release (PB319) issued by the Post Office the same day.

ARTISTS INVITED

After becoming PMG in 1966, Edward Short disbanded the Stamp Advisory Committee, which was dominated by the Council of Industrial Design (CoID), to form a new committee whereby the Post Office would have more control over the process of design and production of stamps. This was seen as especially important as a change of status to public corporation was imminent. The old committee was finally disbanded in February 1967 but it was not until 12 months later that the new committee met for the first time. G R Downes, Director, Postal Operations and Overseas Department of the Post Office, was appointed Chairman. To ensure that many points of view were represented the new committee was more broadly based and of its ten members included representatives of the Royal College of Art, experts in graphic design, industrial design and typography, a prominent philatelist, a philatelic journalist, a Labour Member of Parliament, a Conservative MP and a housewife. The previous committee had advised the Post Office on artists who should be invited to submit designs: until the new committee became active the Post Office relied on artists who had already proved themselves and had become 'regulars'. So the Post Office invited David Gentleman, M C Farrar Bell and Clive Abbott on 3 October 1967 to submit designs for the anniversary series. The stamp printing firms Harrison and Sons and Bradbury Wilkinson were also invited, with the added stipulation that any designs submitted should be collective efforts on the part of their design staff and not from individual designers.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ARTISTS

Instructions to artists accompanied the invitations, compiled as an aid to design preparation and as such gave details of essential features and suggestions of themes to be portrayed.

The artists were told that a set of four designs was required, although alternative designs for use in one set or more than one set of designs could be submitted. The designs were to be drawn four times linear stamp size with the essential feature of Queen's head. The following suggestions were put forward; they were not obligatory and artists could, if they wished, portray other themes.

Centenary of TUC

Sculpture by Bernard Meadows depicting 'Spirit of Trade Unionism' at entrance of Congress House (TUC HQ)

The memorial sculpture by Sir Jacob Epstein, also at Congress House
A symbolic figure of a 'young worker'.

Votes for Women

The Status of Women Committee had suggested a theme showing a shadowy background of the House of Commons with a pictorial representation of two women, one in 1918 dress, the other in 1968 dress, dropping their votes in a ballot box.

Essential features for this design were the words 'Votes for Women' and '1918-1968'.

50th anniversary of the founding of the RAF

A pictorial theme was preferred for this event

200th anniversary of Captain Cook's first voyage of discovery

Among the suggestions offered were his ship, 'Endeavour', and his chronometer (an instrument used for determining longitude at sea).

The artists were advised that the stamps were to be printed by Harrison and Sons using the photogravure process and therefore not more than five colours were to be used. Black was not to be used as a background; a white background was acceptable. The background colours used were to be no deeper than mid-tone.

The submission deadline was 4 December 1967 with all designs becoming the property of the PMG upon submission.

The fee for each completed design was 60 guineas with a maximum of 240 guineas for any one artist. For each design selected for use, a further 190 guineas was paid - a total of 250

guineas in all for each successful design. Of the artists invited Bradbury Wilkinson was the only one to decline the offer. The company cited pressure of work in its Design Department. The other printing firm invited, Harrison and Sons, commissioned Jeffery Matthews to submit work on its behalf.

A number of unsolicited designs were also received for this issue.

ARTWORK RECEIVED

Designs were received from (the numbers were allocated to help identification):

M C Farrar-Bell (received on 4 December 1967):

TUC – designs 1 and 2

Votes for Women – designs 3 and 4

RAF – designs 5 and 6

Captain Cook – designs 7 and 8.

Clive Abbott (received on 4 December 1967):

TUC – designs 9 and 10

Votes for Women – designs 11 and 12

RAF – designs 13 and 15

Captain Cook – designs 14 and 16.

Harrison and Sons (Jeffery Matthews) (received on 5 December 1967):

TUC (4d) – design 17

Votes for Women (9d) – design 18

RAF (1s 0d) – design 19

Captain Cook (1s 9d) – designs 20.

David Gentleman (received on 6 December 1967):

TUC – designs 21, 22, 23

Votes for Women – designs 24, 25

RAF – design 26

Captain Cook – design 27.

Stewart Black (received on 6 December 1967):

TUC – designs 28 and 29.

Margaret Calvert (received on 6 March 1968):

TUC (six stamp-size roughs featuring date of TUC anniversary) – designs 30.

Designs not solicited

Nicholas Exelby (received 7 November 1967):

Captain Cook – design 1A

Votes for Women – designs 2A and 3A

TUC – design 3AX.

J E Carruthers (Ministry of Defence) (received 22 November 1967):

RAF (4d) – design 4A.

William Hardman (Middlesbrough Evening Gazette) (received 30 January 1967):

Votes for Women – design 6A

Captain Cook – designs 7A, 8A, 9A, 10A.

Richard Daynes:

RAF – design 11A

Captain Cook – design 12A

Votes for Women – design 13A.

Peter Atwell (received 7 December 1967):

Votes for Women – designs 14A and 15A

Captain Cook – designs 16A and 17A

TUC – design 18A

RAF – design 19A.

N Franklin (Newark Air Museum):

RAF – designs 21A and 22A.

SUBMISSION TO THE PMG

On 12 December G R Downes, Director Operations and Overseas, submitted to the PMG all the artists' drawings. There had been insufficient time to follow the normal practice of photographing the designs to stamp size. Downes told the PMG that the Ministry of Defence (Air) and the TUC had seen the designs relevant to their specific anniversaries. The first choice of the RAF had been number 15 with the suggestion that the Union Jack and RAF roundel (as in design 5) should be included, with the roundel on the plane wing in black and white. Its second choice was 13 as it stood but with the roundel in the same colour as 15. The TUC had expressed a preference for the design by David Gentleman showing three faces of young trade unionists in the letters 'TUC': the design could, however, be slightly improved. It was thought that the face on the left hand side should clearly be a woman and should face inwards. It was also thought that the colours could be brighter.

Downes then told the PMG of his own choice, namely
TUC - design 21 (David Gentleman)
Votes for Women - design 11 (Clive Abbott)
RAF - design 15 (Clive Abbott)
Captain Cook - design 14 (Clive Abbott).

The next day the PMG made his choice for essaying. He had decided that for the TUC stamp both of Gentleman's 'photographic' designs were to be essayed, namely 21 and 22. In the case of 22, Gentleman and Mr York of Harrison and Sons were to be asked if they could make the title 'Trades Union Congress 1868' stand out more without making it too strong a feature. The PMG was not entirely enthusiastic about any of the TUC designs and felt that the ideal design was one that emphasised the early struggles of the TUC but was at the same time forward looking; the difficulty lay, however, in determining exactly how this should be done. The Votes for Women design 11 by Clive Abbott was to be essayed. For the RAF stamp design 13 was to be essayed although Abbott was to be asked whether a little more colour could be brought in without spoiling the effect. For the Captain Cook stamp the designs to be essayed were 14 by Clive Abbott and 27 by David Gentleman.

As suggested by the PMG, Gentleman tackled the task of producing further designs for the TUC stamp and by the beginning of January had come up with two more. The two designs were submitted to the PMG by OOD with no recommendations, labelled as A and B. Design A was similar to one already being essayed in that the initials TUC applied to both although the background figures were different. The new design represented marching figures going forward, symbolically, towards a common goal, thus representing the aims of Congress. Design B was based on a painting at TUC headquarters.

On 1 January, Gentleman wrote to Harrison and Sons enclosing the original artwork as submitted to the Post Office for his two TUC anniversary stamp essays (21 and 22), together with new separations for one of them. Design 21 featured large letters 'TUC' and was now in brighter colours as requested by the Post Office. Each letter was now to be printed in a single colour only: green T, olive U and blue C, not in black and a colour as in the artwork. Gentleman explained that the small type, numerals and Queen's head were to be in black with the borders as a grey tint of black as on the artwork.

For design 22 of a single worker the Post Office had asked Gentleman to make the caption stand out more powerfully. To this end Gentleman requested that this design be essayed in two versions (A) and (B):

(A) as the design but in black over a solid red printing with the Queen's head in white and the denomination and title in red.

(B) a version in which the photograph was printed in red, with title, denomination, and Queen's head overprinted in black.

To facilitate this, Gentleman prepared entirely new separations to be used for both versions.

On 7 February 1968 Harrisons forwarded to Don Beaumont, Postal Services Department (PSD), a number of essays.

On 8 February the PMG discussed the matter of the TUC stamp with J R Baxter, OOD. The PMG believed that Stewart Black's idea of showing the TUC statue by Bernard Meadows could make an excellent stamp. The PMG then made the following two suggestions: (a) use a photograph of the statue rather than a drawing. The photograph should not have the building in the background but should show the statue stark against a plain (white?) background. Bernard Meadows may have photographs suitable for this purpose, taken before the statue was erected its present site. (b) the form of the statue appears to suit a vertical rather than horizontal stamp (as in the Union Jack version, but without the Union Jack).

On 15 and 20 February the Post Office Supplies Department, Hemel Hempstead, forwarded essays to OOD having received them direct from Harrisons.

DELIBERATIONS OF THE STAMP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The recently reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC) held its inaugural meeting on 21 February 1968. The broad terms of reference were to advise the PMG on artists to be invited to submit designs, instructions to artists and give advice on the designs to be submitted for the Queen's approval. The committee was advisory in the sense that responsibility for final decisions on stamp design remained with the PMG. For the anniversary series, the initial stages had already occurred so the SAC's role was to examine the essays and offer advice on any amendments thought necessary and also make recommendations as to which designs should be submitted for approval.

Having considered the three essays for the TUC stamp and also the sculpture by Professor Meadows, the Committee recommended the designs showing a working man, and of those the one in deeper tones was preferred. The sculpture was regarded as unsuitable for stamp design for two reasons, in that the sculpture would be almost incomprehensible when reduced to stamp size, and outside the context of its Congress House site, the sculpture's message would be lost. The Committee recommended that for the Votes for Women stamp, the lettering be reduced in size in order to give more prominence to the figure. With regards

the Captain Cook stamp a preference was made for the design with the ship and signature. Slight amendments were recommended in that the Queen's head should be coffee coloured to match the ship and that the form of the lettering 'First Voyage of Discovery 1768 – 1968' be reconsidered.

The PMG later agreed that 'period' lettering be used on the Captain Cook stamp. Stuart Rose, design advisor for the Post Office, was consulted and subsequently discussed the matter with Clive Abbott. As a result Rose and Abbott concluded that 18th century characters were not generally that different from modern lettering and pre-18th century characters were felt to be inappropriate. As such they recommended that there should be no change in the lettering as the use of present day lettering for the title gave greater emphasis to the 18th century elements in the design, the ship and Captain Cook's signature. On 14 March J R Baxter wrote to the PMG relating the recommendations. The PMG, however, was not content to leave the lettering as it was and asked that an attempt be made at 18th century lettering. He suggested that US stamps be looked at for any successful examples. Four days later Baxter submitted to the PMG two examples of 18th century lettering produced by Abbott. Both were regarded as historically correct. They were marked A and B for reference. The PMG was far from pleased and could not believe that either were 18th century, but of the two preferred that marked B. The PMG felt that a greater effort should have been made to get it right.

At the second SAC meeting, held on 10 April 1968 the Chairman explained the changes made to the 9d and 1s 9d stamps as a result of the recommendations made at the first meeting. The lettering on the 9d Votes for Women stamp was now more compact and in grey. The Queen's head was also now in grey and in silhouette. These had the desired effect of giving greater prominence to Mrs Pankhurst's figure. The style of the lettering on the Captain Cook stamp was now more in keeping with the period and the Queen's head was shown in brown. Changes had also been made to the RAF stamp in that the Queen's head was now in grey, to match the fighter planes in the top left hand corner. The Committee agreed that these changes had improved the appearance of the stamps. The Chairman went on to explain that there had been great difficulty in choosing a TUC stamp. The Committee had favoured a design that was representative solely of manual work although the Post Office had thought this design was unlikely to please the TUC. The TUC had welcomed the idea of a stamp based on Professor Meadows' sculpture. The sculptor was far from overjoyed at this prospect as he felt this early example of his work was far removed from what he had since produced and he felt it was unsuitable for a stamp. The Committee was told that the 'sculpture' design and a third design with the lettering 'TUC' had been submitted to the new PMG, Roy Mason, with a recommendation in favour of the latter.

On 21 March Beaumont wrote to Mr York of Harrisons enclosing the lettering for the Cook stamp as agreed by the PMG. Beaumont added that Clive Abbott wished to discuss the lettering with Mr York before the cylinder preparation began.

ESSAYS

On 25 March PSD received from Harrisons further essays.

In the accompanying letter Mr York wrote that he could not believe that the essays were good enough as they stood and suggested that if the statue design was still retained as essayed Harrisons be given permission to retouch the statue to make it more suitable for reproduction. He went on to say that the smallness of the Queen's head seemed unnecessary.

On 29 March Beaumont forwarded certain essays to Harrisons with a note that merely stated that they were to be handed to Mr York but gave no reason.

On 4, 11 and 16 April PSD received more essays from Harrisons.

On 6 April Harrisons wrote to PSD detailing the colours and machines used for the 9d, 1/-, and 1s 9d stamps. The details were as follows:

9d – Votes for Women – 3 colours: Grey, Violet, and Black. Sheet fed flat bed machine.

1s 0d – RAF – 5 colours: Brown, Blue, Grey, Red and Black. Sheet fed rotary machine.

1s 9d – Captain Cook – 2 colours: Brown and Black. Sheet fed flat bed machine.

DATE OF ISSUE

On 24 April 1967 Victor Feather, Assistant General Secretary of the TUC, wrote to Edward Short as PMG, explaining that the TUC's own plans for commemorating the centenary were now taking shape. The first Congress was on 2 to 6 June 1868. It was therefore the intention of the TUC to begin the centenary celebrations with a ceremony on Saturday, 1 June 1968. It was to be in the building in Manchester where the original meeting took place. The PMG felt that the wishes of the TUC should be accommodated wherever possible and so he later decided that the Anniversaries series be issued on 1 June 1968. This decision did not meet with universal elation as the date fell on the Saturday prior to the Spring Bank Holiday. OOD envisaged operational difficulties in that many post offices were closed on a Saturday afternoon, placing additional pressure on the counter staff in the morning. Further to this the Philatelic Bureau and London Chief Office Philatelic Counter (KEB) were

normally closed on a Saturday afternoon. It was also thought likely to be unpopular with the public who might wish to go away for a long weekend.

On 27 November 1967 London Postal Region (LPR) wrote to Don Beaumont (PSD) giving details of hours of business for philatelic offices on Saturdays. LPR made it quite clear that an issue date of 1 June would result in considerable operational difficulties and that there would also be complaints from the public and staff associations. In fact, the Union of Postal Workers (UPW) said that it wanted a change of date and would see Victor Feather if necessary. The RAF Association wrote to Postal Headquarters saying that 1 June would be a very awkward day for members of the Association wishing to purchase first day covers. This matter was not resolved immediately and on 7 February 1968 G R Downes, D00, wrote to J R Baxter, OOD, saying he would discuss the matter himself with Victor Feather. Baxter suggested that if the issue date was changed they could offer the TUC special facilities on 1 June at Manchester and that a special TUC commemorative cover could be produced for use with a special handstamp.

On 19 February the TUC (in the person of Victor Feather) agreed to a change of issue date: in discussion with both the PMG and D00 it was changed to 29 May. Mr Feather was promised that the Post Office would make every effort to create a philatelic event of the TUC Manchester celebrations on 1 June despite the fact that it would no longer be a 'first day of issue'.

On 28 February 1968 the Post Office issued a press release (Press and Broadcast Notice PB45A) announcing that the stamps would now be issued on Wednesday, 29 May and not 1 June as previously advised as the original date posed operational and staffing difficulties. It was also noted that the Post Office had received a number of requests from philatelists to change the date of issue.

THE QUEEN'S APPROVAL

On 12 March 1968 Edward Short wrote the Private Secretary to the Queen, explaining that the Post Office was to issue special 4d, 9d, 1s 0d and 1s 9d stamps on 29 May commemorating notable British anniversaries and essays were enclosed for the Queen's consideration. Designs for only three of the anniversaries had thus far been essayed; the essay of the TUC design was to be submitted at a later date. There were a number of slight modifications that the PMG wished to make, subject to the Queen's approval, before the stamps were issued. These modifications were as follows.

In the 'Votes for Women' design the legend was to be made slightly more compact and in a grey tone. This, together with some strengthening of the tone of Mrs Pankhurst's figure,

was to give the figure greater emphasis. The Queen's profile, which was to be the same size as it appears on the other two stamps, but in silhouette, was also to be a grey colour.

The tone of the aeroplane colours on the RAF stamp were to be strengthened with the Queen's profile in grey, to match the three fighters in the top left hand corner, and the names 'Abbott Harrison' to be in grey print at the bottom left.

On the 'Captain Cook' stamp, the Queen's profile was to appear in the same brown shade as the vessel and the names 'Abbott Harrison' were to be moved to the left hand vertical gutter.

The next day the PMG learnt that the Queen approved the designs subject to the modification and that further to this she was very much in favour that the legend on the 'Votes for Women' design was to be more compact as she thought the very large lettering on the submitted design to be rather ugly and that it could well be both smaller and a less emphatic colour.

On 10 April the newly appointed PMG Roy Mason wrote to Buckingham Palace enclosing an essay of the 4d stamp designed by David Gentleman marking the centenary of the Trades Union Congress. The Queen's approval was given the next day.

On 22 April, the approved 'essays' were sent to Harrisons and Sons. These were not essays in the strict sense as they were taken from the cylinders. In order to avoid delay amendments had been carried in from the original essays to the final cylinders. They did, however, serve for record purposes.

On 11 April 1968 J R Baxter, Operations and Overseas Department (OOD), wrote to Mr Feather explaining that although every effort had been made to get a satisfactory stamp based on the Bernard Meadows' statue the exercise had failed. The PMG had therefore agreed to revert to an earlier design, namely that based on the lettering 'TUC' with photographs of people in the background. Baxter went on to remind Mr Feather that this design had already been deemed acceptable from a TUC point of view. Mr Feather was advised that a press preview of the stamp designs was to be held on 17 April at Postal Headquarters, London and that he was invited to attend.

POST OFFICE HELPS CELEBRATE TUC CENTENARY

Clive Abbott designed a cover for use by the TUC on 1 June. The design, in shades of grey, featured a workers rally outside Congress House. The legend in white read 'TUC 1868 – 1968'

and 'GPO COMMEMORATIVE COVER'. The TUC, on 11 April, telephoned OOD and asked that 1,000 covers be reserved.

On 29 May 1968 the Post Office released Press and Broadcast Notice PB140 entitled 'Opening Saturday: An 1868 Post Office'. It had been decided that a replica of an 1868 post office, staffed by clerks and a postman in period costume, was to open at Belle Vue, Manchester on Saturday, 1 June.

The hours of business for the one day it was open was 1pm to 6pm with the only counter services provided being for the sale of anniversary stamps, presentation packs and commemorative covers. Covers posted in an 1868 pillar box outside the post office received a special TUC centenary handstamp.

Special commemorative TUC covers for use on that Saturday were sold at the Manchester Head Post Office, priced 6d. A special philatelic post box was provided on 1 June, items posted receiving the special cancellation.

PAYMENT TO ARTISTS

The following payments were made to the artists by the Post Office in May 1968.

Harrison and Sons - £252

S Black - £126

M C Farrar-Bell - £276 5s

D Gentleman - £603 15s

C Abbott - £981 15s

M Calvert - £63.

QUANTITIES SOLD

The quantities sold were:

4d - 97,757,920

9d - 9,135,240

1s 0d - 9,872,160

1s 9d - 6,217,440

Presentation pack - 67,639.

The stamps were withdrawn on 28 May 1969.

PRESENTATION PACK

On 28 December 1967, Clive Abbott was invited to submit designs for a presentation pack. It seems no other artists were invited. The instructions were extremely brief and merely confirmed a verbal instruction. Abbott was given a specimen as a guide to dimensions and make up and told that a maximum of three colours could be used. The pack would bear the Royal Arms printed in one colour, red or blue. He was told to insert the price of the pack, 4s 10d, on the bottom left or right of rear panel. The pack was to be printed by lithography. The fee was 50 guineas for the design and covered any modifications to the original that was agreed as reasonable. As with stamp designs, the presentation pack design became the property of the PMG. Although he was not given an exact deadline, Abbott was told to forward the completed designs as quickly as possible. On 29 April 1968 Beaumont wrote to the stamp printers, Harrison and Sons Ltd, to confirm that the Post Office would be issuing the presentation pack. Harrisons, already in possession of the artwork and other details, was informed that 200,00 were required with delivery of the first 100,000 by 6 May followed by the remainder not later than 10 May.

FIRST DAY COVERS

On 5 October 1967 Beaumont (PSD) wrote to Johns (OOD) saying 'this is the first time we have gone for a mixed grill on the same date'. He suggested it would be impracticable to issue four distinct first day covers and that the options were:
issue a composite FDC (a quartered design), or
leave it to the 'trade' and refrain from an official issue.

Beaumont felt that the second option was out of the question and therefore suggested the first. Of the two suggestions Johns agreed on the first, but was not convinced that a composite design would be successful as the subjects were so mixed and thought it should be left to the artist to think of an idea.

The following designs were submitted on or about the same date as the stamp designs except for the TUC cover designed after the date of issue was changed.

The FDC designs submitted were as follows:

M C Farrar-Bell - One design featuring an upturned Union Jack and the legend 'British Anniversaries 1968 GPO 1st Day Cover'. The second design again featured an upturned Union Jack and legend with a bi-plane, Captain Cook's ship, a ballot box and three workers, to represent the four anniversaries.

Clive Abbott - One design featuring the legend 'TUC Centenary GPO First Day Cover', another the legend 'TUC 1868-1968 GPO Commemorative Cover' and a third the legend '1768, 1868, 1918, 1968 British Anniversaries GPO First Day Cover'.

David Gentleman - Featuring the legend 'Cook: TUC: Votes for Women: RAF: Anniversaries in 1968 GPO First Day Cover' together with the large numerals '50, 50, 100, 200'.

M Calvert - Featuring a view of TUC HQ including the statue in the foreground together with the legend 'GPO First Day Cover TUC 1868 1968'.

The accepted design was by Clive Abbott and featured the legend '1768, 1868, 1918, 1968 British Anniversaries GPO First Day Cover'.

The Philatelic Bureau offered a full first day cover service at an inclusive charge of 6s 10d. The service for customers' own envelopes was offered at an inclusive charge of 4s 10d. The cancellation for both was 'GPO Philatelic Bureau, Edinburgh 1'. The Bureau also provided a service for covers bearing one of the stamps only. In an effort to avoid unduly complex administrative and accounting arrangements orders were not accepted for covers bearing two or three of the stamps.

Covers bearing a single stamp could be cancelled with the Philatelic Bureau handstamp, or one from Manchester (4d), Aldeburgh, Suffolk (9d), Hendon, London NW4 (1s 0d) or Whitby, Yorkshire (1s 9d). The cost was 3s 0d above face value for the full service, or 1s 0d above face if customers sent in their own envelopes.

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE AT WHITBY

The Post Office decided to provide a special first day of issue handstamp at Whitby head post office owing to the strong connections Captain Cook had with this Yorkshire port. Providing a service for philatelists on the first day of issue was still a relatively new experience for the Post Office. By the time the post office opened on 29 May, the queue stretched for over two hundred yards. The counter staff, increased in number for the day, were constantly active and it was not unusual to sell a full sheet of 120 stamps to one customer. Not only did the post office have to cope with the customers present, but many had taken advantage of the Philatelic Bureau's first day cover services. By midday over 8,000 ordered covers had been received at Whitby from the Bureau for cancellation and posting. Such was the demand for special covers at Whitby that by 11am the stocks were depleted and collectors had a two hour wait until further supplies arrived. Stocks of covers soon ran out again and customers resorted to sending postcards featuring Captain Cook (stamp cards had not yet been introduced) bearing the 1s 9d stamp. The philatelic posting box in the post office was opened at 9am and, after being cleared every quarter of an hour,

closed at 5.30pm. It was estimated that 20,000 first day covers had been posted. The special handstamp used on the covers featured an anchor and three roses.

A special slogan was also used in the automatic cancelling machine. The postmark was designed by Susan Leach, a pupil of Whitby Grammar School, and was used on all outgoing correspondence at Whitby for a period after the day of issue.

Andy Pendlebury
May 1994

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- PB319 issued 20 November 1967
- PB45A issued 20 February 1968
- PB123 issued 16 May 1968
- PB140 issued 29 May 1968.