

British Architecture (Cathedrals)

Date of issue: 28 MAY 1969



The word cathedra is Latin, deriving from the Greek 'Kathedra' meaning chair, and refers to the official chair or throne of a bishop, a professor or teacher, or any person in high authority. A cathedral is the head church of a Diocese, the bishop's church containing the bishop's chair or throne. In some cases, churches that were once bishop's churches have retained the name cathedral, as with St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh.

The six stamps issued on 28 May 1969 were the first in an architecture series that continued in 1970.

On 21 February 1968, at the first meeting of the new Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC), J R Baxter of Overseas and Operations Department, also Secretary to the Committee, advised the members of the more important of the 100 or more suggestions received for stamps in 1969. These included:

Investiture of the Prince of Wales (a stamp issue had already been agreed);

20th anniversary of NATO;

maiden voyage of the 'Queen Elizabeth 2';

centenary of the 'Cutty Sark';

aviation anniversaries, including the flight of Alcock and Brown;

200th anniversary of James Watt's steam pump;

200th anniversary of the Wedgwood factory;

stamps commemorating British poets or musicians;
stamps showing British architecture, cathedrals, stately homes, villages, etc.

The Chairman of the Committee and also Director of Operations and Overseas, George Downes, said that advice on the composition of the annual programme was not part of the Committee's terms of reference, but he would welcome any views on the subject to be discussed at the meeting on 10 April 1968. At that meeting the Committee suggested the following subjects, in addition to that for the Prince of Wales:

- (a) Anniversaries;
- (b) Ships;
- (c) Cathedrals
- (d) Christmas.

It was felt that the Cathedrals series should be confined to English medieval cathedrals which the Committee believed were among the greatest architectural monuments of Europe. It was further suggested that a group of four great cathedrals could be chosen, representing each style, and different regions of England.

SUGGESTION ACCEPTED BY PMG

On 19 June 1968 the Chairman told the SAC that the PMG, John Stonehouse, had accepted the suggestion that there should be series on British Ships and English Cathedrals. The latter would be presented as an on-going theme on British architecture, and would provide opportunities later to include examples from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The PMG had considered featuring modern architecture on the 1969 stamps, but after studying suggestions put forward by the RIBA he concluded that cathedrals would have a greater impact for the first architectural series. On 11 September 1968 the Chairman advised the SAC the 1969 stamp programme followed broadly the Committee's recommendations.

On 17 September 1968 Downes recommended that the Architecture series comprise block of four 5d stamps showing medieval cathedrals, a single stamp (9d) showing St Paul's Cathedral and a single stamp (1s 6d) showing a modern cathedral. The series would thus illustrate English cathedrals through the ages. A block of stamps was suggested as such had previously been popular with collectors. The Private Secretary to the PMG replied in agreement but added that the artists should be free to suggest non-English cathedrals.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

The GPO envisaged a timetable to be as follows:

Instructions to artists – 23 September 1968
Designs to Post Office – 268 October 1968
Designs selected by SAC – 6 November 1968
Chosen designs to printers – 13 November 1968.

ARTISTS INVITED

On 23 September 1968 invitations to submit designs were sent to P Gauld, J Finnie, A and D Gillespie, Harrison and Sons (M C Farrar-Bell), D Gentleman, Bradbury Wilkinson. The invitations sent to Harrison and Sons and Bradbury Wilkinson stipulated that any designs submitted should be collective efforts on the part of the designing staff and not entries from individual designers.

All of the artists invited submitted designs with the exception of Bradbury Wilkinson, regretting that on this occasion the company was not in a position to submit designs but hoped it would be invited in the future.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ARTISTS

Instructions were enclosed with the invitations. The main points were as follows:
'The stamps will be issued in the following format - block of four with 5d values, and two other single stamps, values yet to be decided but artists may show these as 9d and 1/6d.

The designs for the block of four should illustrate English medieval cathedrals. Artists are free to decide which cathedrals to portray, but we should like the cathedrals shown to include examples from different parts of England, if possible, examples of different styles, (Norman, Early English, Decorated, Perpendicular), and York Minster, which is launching a restoration fund in 1969.

The 9d should illustrate St Paul's Cathedral.

The 1s 6d stamp will illustrate a modern cathedral; we ask artists to submit two designs for this stamp each showing a different modern cathedral. Our preferences are (a) Coventry Cathedral, and (b) Liverpool Roman Catholic Cathedral; but if artists feel strongly that another modern cathedral (twentieth century) would make a good stamp they are free to include it.'

The artists were told that the stamps would be printed using photogravure and that this reproduces a number of graduated tones. They were therefore advised that 'care should be taken to use artists' materials that will permit the photographing of each tone in its true value'.

The fee for each completed design was £63, with a maximum of £441 for any one artist. For each design selected for use, an additional fee of £199 10s was to be paid - a total of £262 10s in all for each successful design. Payment would cover any modification to the original designs which were agreed as reasonable.

SURCHARGED CATHEDRAL STAMPS

At a SAC meeting on 11 September 1968 Sir Paul Reilly asked whether it would be possible to issue 'surcharged' cathedral stamps, and use the proceeds to help towards the cost of restoration work, so badly needed in many cases. The Chairman replied that 'surcharged stamps (for charitable and other purposes) raised legal and administrative problems; although the PMG was currently looking into this very matter and the problems would certainly not be resolved before the 1969 cathedral stamps were issued. Cathedral authorities concerned could, however, provide their own first day cover services, which would bring in some revenue.'

ARTWORK RECEIVED

The following designs were received (the numbers were those allocated for ease of reference).

P Gauld (received 11 November 1968) – 5d Durham (1), 5d Lincoln (2), 5d York (3), 5d Canterbury (4), 9d St Paul's (5), 1s 6d Coventry (6), 1s 6d Liverpool (7)

J Finnie (received 11 November 1968) – 5d York (8), 5d St Giles (9), 5d Salisbury (10), 5d Winchester (11), 5d Lincoln (12), 5d Durham (13), 5d St David's (14), 5d Wells (15), Ely (16), 1s 6d Coventry (17), 1s 6d Liverpool (18), 9d St Paul's (19)

A and D Gillespie (received 11 November 1968) – 5d Canterbury (20), 5d Salisbury (21), 5d Gloucester (22), 5d Durham (23), 5d Wells (24), 5d Lincoln (25), 5d York (26), 5d Ely (27), 5d Salisbury (28), 5d Peterborough (29), 5d Ely (30), 5d Canterbury (31), 5d York (32), 9d St Paul's (33), 9d St Paul's (34), 9d St Paul's (35), 1s 6d Coventry (36), 1s 6d Liverpool (37)

Harrison and Sons (M C Farrar-Bell) (received 13 November 1968) – 5d Wells (38), 5d York (39), 5d Lincoln (40), 5d Canterbury (41), 5d St Giles (42), 5d St David's (43), 9d St Paul's (44), 9d St Paul's (45), 1s 6d Liverpool (47), 1s 6d Coventry (48)

David Gentleman – St Paul's (49 and 50), York (51), Ely (52), York (53), Ely (54), Canterbury (55), Lincoln (56), Liverpool (57, 58, 59), Salisbury (60), Canterbury (61), St Paul's (62)

Peter Gauld (received early December 1968) – St Giles (63), Salisbury (64), Wells (65).

Two artists submitted unsolicited: H St John Harrison (Chartered Architect) and John Vickers (John Vickers Studio).

H St John Harrison was an 'amateur' artist who asked permission to submit designs. On 17 September 1968 he wrote to Mr Beaumont at Post Office headquarters enclosing a design of York Minster, and mentioning designs on the same theme sent under separate cover on 27 August 1968. In the letter Harrison writes 'This completes the four medieval designs, and with St Paul's and Coventry the set of six is as you suggested.' This infers that he had corresponded with the GPO and may have received instructions similar to the commissioned artists. His designs were numbered: Canterbury (1A), York (2A), St Paul's (3A), Westminster Abbey (4A), Salisbury (5A), Coventry (6A).

On 3 January 1968 John Vickers (who specialised in photography and photographic effects for advertising) wrote to Beaumont enclosing four pieces of artwork depicting St Paul's, derived from an agency photograph.

DELIBERATIONS OF THE SAC

At its November 1968 meeting the SAC discussed the designs submitted and was pleased with the quality, recommending as first choice, Peter Gauld's designs:

Durham, Lincoln, York and Canterbury for the 5d, St Paul's for the 9d, and Liverpool for the 1s 6d (these were assigned the letters A to F respectively).

In addition the Committee suggested that Gauld produce a further design showing St Giles, Edinburgh as an alternative for one of the four 5d stamps (given the letter G). As second choice it recommended the designs by David Gentleman, assigned H to K for the four 5d stamps, L for the 9d, and M for the 1s 6d. The designs were submitted to the PMG on 2 December 1968. On 5 December the PMG replied agreeing that Peter Gauld's designs were the best. It was the PMG's view that design E (St Paul's) should be adopted for the 9d value and F (Liverpool) for the 1s 6d. For the four 5d stamps he chose B (York), C (Canterbury) and G (St Giles). In addition he asked for Gauld to design a 5d stamp showing Salisbury Cathedral. This would provide a stamp for Scotland, while the three denominations would be represented.

On 6 December 1968 R F York of Harrison and Sons, stamp printer, was informed that Peter Gauld's designs should now be essayed, to be ready by 8 January 1969, the date of the next SAC meeting.

In addition to the Committee's original choice of six designs, an essay was made of St Giles (Edinburgh). Gauld also produced a design showing Wells Cathedral as an alternative 'west country' cathedral to Salisbury. He considered Salisbury, with its tall spire, would not be shown to advantage on a horizontal stamp while a vertical design is impossible in a block of

four where the others are horizontal: nevertheless a Salisbury design was produced. The additional designs were taken to Harrison and Sons by Gauld when he visited the factory on 12 December 1969.

The essays were produced by Harrison and Sons and presented to the SAC on 8 January 1969. After a considerable, and interesting, discussion the Committee opted even more strongly than before in favour of its original choice for the four medieval cathedrals (Durham, Lincoln, York and Canterbury).

The main theme of the argument was:

‘four cathedrals are widely recognised as the four great glories of the country’s medieval architecture;

of architectural merit this choice is probably therefore unassailable to an extent that no other would be;

cathedrals were chosen for reasons other than their excellence an unsatisfactory situation would arise. For example, St Giles was a relatively minor building and had been poorly restored in recent times. There could be no justification for choosing it other than geographical. If designs were chosen on geographical grounds, people could ask why not St Davids in Wales or something in Northern Ireland;

both from the point of view of getting the best stamps and in order to take a convincing line of policy, the four great cathedrals were the Committee’s choice.’

The SAC was uneasy about the caption ‘Christ the King’ on the essay showing Liverpool Cathedral, but felt that some indication should be included to show which of the two Liverpool cathedrals it was. It felt ‘Liverpool R.C.’ could be a possible substitute and that the Archbishop be approached for advice.

The matter of including St Giles Cathedral was, at that time, still a matter of some debate. The PMG’s wish to include St Giles did not rest solely on the desirability of including a Scottish cathedral. He considered that the inclusion of St Giles improved the balance of the series in terms of geography, denominations and style of architecture (if Lincoln were included in the block of four the styles would look extremely similar).

Baxter, Operations and Overseas Department (OOD), was asked by the PMG for his view as to whether St Giles should be included in addition to the six designs recommended by the SAC. Baxter approached Stuart Rose, a member of the SAC, who questioned the argument that the inclusion of St Giles helped to maintain a balance of religious denominations. Stuart Rose reminded Baxter that the Scottish church has no Bishop in its hierarchical structure and therefore has no cathedrals in the Anglican sense of the word. The four cathedrals recommended by the SAC illustrate the four classic periods of architecture, Norman, Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular. In this context St Giles is architecturally the odd man

out. Rose felt that, based on aesthetics, St Giles was the weakest design in the group of four stamps.

On 28 January 1969 Baxter wrote to the PMG that he believed it would be a mistake to have an additional stamp as that year had already seen the Ships series (six stamps), the high value definitives (cost £1 17s 6d) and the Anniversaries issue (five stamps). This contrasted with the normal policy of having three or four stamps per issue with a cost of 3s to 4s a set. He felt a hostile reaction would result if large issues became a regular feature. This had already happened in some other stamp-issuing countries. Baxter asked the PMG to decide as soon as possible as to whether the fourth stamp in the block should be Lincoln Cathedral or St Giles. On 29 January 1969 the PMG wrote saying that St Giles should be included in place of Lincoln. A short while later the PMG asked if the issue could be rearranged to bring Lincoln back into the block of four and have St Giles as an extra 1s 0d stamp. R F York of Harrison and Sons, stamp printer, was asked for his advice. On 17 February Baxter wrote to the PMG giving the following advice from Mr York. 'There was a danger of failure but it was just feasible, but there would certainly be the following repercussions:
scrapping of one cylinder on which work had already started;
dislocation of tight work scheduling, with machines and men idle for at least a week (ie, more costs chargeable to contract);
delay in delivery to Supplies Depot by at least a week for both this issue and the next (Prince of Wales), with extra overtime costs in the Supplies Division, and the danger of failed deliveries.'

Baxter stressed that dealers had already determined the prices for first day covers and circulated these to customers on the basis of the details announced in late 1968. To act in this way would cause collectors and philatelic trade to lose all faith in the credibility of the announcements. He added that the first day cover activities by dealers are an important source of profit that the Post Office had tried to encourage in recent years. The PMG regarded these as compelling reasons for not making a change.

LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL AND RELIGIOUS TENSIONS OF THE TIMES

On 15 January 1969 J Crockatt of North Western Postal Region, having discussed the Liverpool Cathedral stamp with the Head Postmaster of Liverpool and the Director of the North Western Postal Region, wrote to Beaumont giving their views. They felt that if a balance was wanted between Anglican and Roman Catholic there was perhaps a case for excluding Liverpool Roman Catholic Cathedral, but in terms of modern architecture its omission would not be justified. They believed that whatever was done there would be criticism and perhaps the most important consideration could be the colour of any Liverpool stamp and its place in the values in relation to the others. While religion was a sensitive

subject, particularly in Liverpool at that time, they could see no strong case for not going ahead with a Liverpool Roman Catholic Cathedral stamp.

DESIGNS APPROVED BY THE QUEEN

A set of essays of the chosen designs was submitted to the Queen on 10 February 1969: approval was notified the next day.

PAYMENT TO ARTISTS

On 14 February 1969 payments were made to the designers as follows:
Peter Gauld - £1,827;
David Gentleman, Harrison and Sons, D Gillespie and J Finnie - £441 each.

On 4 March 1969 R F York was sent the approved essays that were subject to amendment, and asked to have the negatives and specimens for mid-April for a press preview. The same day approved essays were sent to the Supplies Depot at Hemel Hempstead, to be retained as specimens of the essays before final amendments.

On 26 March the final essays of St Paul's and Liverpool Cathedral stamps, and earlier essays of the other designs, were examined by the SAC. The Committee did not like the colour of the 'autumn trees' foreground on the Durham stamp. A change of colour was suggested but Mr York pointed out that any major colour changes at that stage would affect the rest of the design. It was finally agreed that discussions be held with the artist to reduce the intensity of the orange. At the SAC meeting on 21 May the Chairman reported that the intensity of orange on the Durham stamp had been substantially reduced, and that printing was now complete.

FIRST DAY COVER AND PRESENTATION PACK

On 2 January 1969 Peter Gauld was invited to design a first day envelope and a presentation pack. The instructions included the following.

The envelope

- a) the design on the envelope should be consistent with the style of the stamps. It should not repeat the stamps but should feature the same theme. The legend 'GPO First Day Cover' together with English Architecture is obligatory;
- b) the design will be confined to the left hand side of the envelope.

c) a maximum of three colours may be used for the design.

Presentation Pack

A maximum of three colours may be used. It will bear the Royal Arms, which should preferably be die-stamped in one colour or gold. The same graphic motif should be used for both First Day Cover and Presentation Pack and should be capable of adaptation on three pieces of showcard/poster promotional items for display in Post Offices, so that the issue has a very definite graphic identity of its own.

Fees

The fee will be 50 guineas for each design, 100 guineas in all. Payment will cover any modifications to the original designs that may be agreed as reasonable.

PROBLEMS IN PRODUCTION

On 5 May Supplies Division, Hemel Hempstead, informed Post Office headquarters that one of the 5d Cathedral cylinders had broken and that production of this value would be curtailed whilst a new cylinder was prepared. This meant that distribution of 5d values would have to be cut by 50 per cent in the London Postal Region, Eastern Region, Midlands Region, SW Region, SE Region, and all offices served from Edinburgh.

On 7 May Supplies Division was asked to assure that all the centres, Edinburgh, Durham, Canterbury, York, Liverpool and London (area around St Paul's) would have ample quantities available, and could anything be done to alleviate the problem by diverting some of the Welsh requisitions to these areas. Further it was essential that the Philatelic Bureau, Philatelic Counter at the London Chief Office and the remaining philatelic counters had sufficient stocks to meet demand.

PETER GAULD

Peter Gauld was born at Coalville, Leicestershire. He trained at Leicester College of Art as a painter and graphic designer. Before the war he worked at the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery. From 1951 to 1963 he was Director of Art for the Unilever Information Division. At the time of designing these stamps he was Director of the Curwen Press and had his own practice. He designed the 2½d Post Office Centenary stamp in 1961, the Compac stamp in 1963, the 6d stamp of the 700th anniversary of Parliament issue, the 4d Joseph Lister Centenary (1965), and the 'Angel' Christmas air letter form of Christmas 1968. He also designed the first day envelope for the Cathedrals series.

On 22 May the Head Postmaster Durham wrote to the Operations and Overseas Division (OOD) to say that the spelling of 'Weir' under the heading 'Durham' in the presentation pack was incorrect: the correct spelling is 'Wear'.

On 30 May the Head Postmaster of Guildford rang OOD asking if it was realised that the first day cover was outside the Post Office Preferred (POP) limits. He said he had examined all the commercial covers and the GPO's was the only one to exceed these limits.

There is no record of any response to either of these. There was, however, a Press and Broadcast Notice PB58 released on 27 February 1969 that stated that the PMG had announced that the surcharge for envelopes outside the POP range would not be imposed during 1969.

THE STAMPS

The stamps were issued on 28 May 1969

Each stamp includes an enlarged architectural feature typical of the cathedral.

5d Durham - a typical Norman capital (decorated column or pillar).

5d York Minster (Cathedral of St Peter) - a carved flower decoration, of the Decorated period, on the cathedral circa 1310.

5d St Giles, Edinburgh - an angel playing bagpipes and is a roof boss to be found in the Thistle Chapel.

5d Canterbury - a decoration of the Perpendicular period and is part of the ceiling of the Chapel of Edward the Confessor.

9d St Paul's - part of the Dean's door which was carved by John Thompson.

1s 6d Liverpool Metropolitan - a carving over the entrance and is based on three crosses and three crowns.

The stamps were printed on coated unwatermarked phosphor lined paper, the 5d reel-ed gravure, the 9d and 1s 6d by sheet-fed gravure.

The quantities sold were:

5d - 65,344,176 (72,000,000 supplied)

9d - 11,065,920 (15,800,000 supplied)

1s 6d - 11,414,280 (15,800,000 supplied)

Presentation packs (English) - 119,828

Presentation packs (German) - 7,200.

The stamps were withdrawn on 27 May 1970.

REFERENCES

British Postal Museum & Archive files:

MKD/BS/1783 English Cathedrals - Instructions To Artists

MD/DK/1160 British Architecture - Special issue.

Post 54 SAC Minutes 1968 - 1970

'Philatelic Bulletin', Vol. 6, No. 9, May 1969

Press and Broadcast Notices:

PB194 issued 26 July 1968

PB58 issued 27 February 1969

PB96 issued 10 April 1969

Stanley Gibbons Great Britain Specialised Stamp Catalogue Vol. 3 Queen Elizabeth II Pre-decimal issues_Stanley Gibbons Publications Ltd