

General Anniversaries

Date of issue: 1 APRIL 1970



At a meeting of the Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC) on 11 February 1969, G R Downes, Chairman of the Committee and Director of Operations & Overseas, expressed his anxiety that the 1970 stamp programme should be agreed by the Postmaster General (PMG), John Stonehouse, at an early stage. The Secretary of the SAC, J R Baxter, explained that special stamps fell into three basic categories: those marking special events, those commemorating anniversaries, and general themes. Under the heading of anniversaries, a large number of suggestions had as usual been received; Baxter proposed, to general agreement, that anniversaries should be confined to 50 years or multiples of 50 to reduce the number for consideration.

Among the most outstanding suggestions remaining, two could be combined to constitute a 'literary' anniversaries issue; there should also be a 'general' issue of anniversary stamps, for which there were several leading contenders. These were as follows: the 350th anniversary of the voyage of the 'Mayflower'; the 150th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale; the centenary of the 1870 Education Act; and the 650th anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath proclaiming Scottish independence. The centenary of the British Red Cross was also a possibility, though the International Red Cross had been commemorated in 1963. At the next meeting of the SAC on 26 March it was reported that the PMG was favourably disposed toward commemorating Florence Nightingale, the 'Mayflower', and the Declaration of Arbroath. However, he felt that the 1870 Education Act gave little scope for attractive design, a view with which the Committee agreed. The choice of designs remained open, and little activity was recorded until the next meeting two months later.

CoID'S ADVICE ON DESIGNERS

The Council of Industrial Design (CoID) was apprised of the likely subjects and responded on 12 May with a list of twelve designers; this comprised three names under each of the headings Mayflower, Florence Nightingale, Freedom for Scotland and Red Cross. If the CoID's advice had been followed the result would have been four stamps each by a different

designer, as had often been the case in the past, but the GPO's policy was now to restrict itself to one or two artists for each issue. Appropriately all three artists chosen by the Cold for Freedom for Scotland were either Scottish or based in Scotland. It is not known whether this was the Cold's initiative or prompted by the GPO, but one of these, Albert Brebner, was the only name from the Cold's list actually used, although it had included such contributors to stamp design past and future as David Gentleman, Rosalind Dease and Sally Stiff.

The SAC met on 21 May; Downes said that the PMG was about to make his final choice. The Declaration of Arbroath and Mayflower were 'virtual certainties', while Florence Nightingale and the Red Cross were 'high probabilities'. The Committee member Brian Batsford, a Conservative MP and publisher, suggested that Florence Nightingale and the Red Cross might usefully be combined within a single stamp 'in view of their mutual involvement with nursing'. A month later, on 25 June, Downes sent a minute to Viscount Hall, Chairman designate of the new Post Office Corporation due to come into being on 1 October, containing the recommendations of the SAC for the issue. On 30 June this was followed up by the PMG's own preferences.

THEMES SUGGESTED BY PMG

These included Mayflower, Arbroath and Nightingale; the idea of combining the latter with the British Red Cross was felt impracticable, while a separate Red Cross stamp had been ruled out in view of the 1963 issue. The PMG also favoured the inclusion of the 25th anniversary of the United Nations and the 75th anniversary of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), both outside the '50 years or multiple' rule welcomed by the SAC. A stamp for the 20th anniversary of the United Nations had been issued only five years earlier, but pressures for a 25th anniversary stamp were being exerted both by the Foreign Office and by the possibility that 'most other countries' might be contemplating such an issue. As for the ICA, the PMG considered that a stamp for its anniversary might usefully emphasise the importance of aid to underdeveloped countries.

The PMG also listed three other suggestions that had come to his attention since Downes' minute of 25 June, these being the 25th anniversaries of the Burma Star Association and Locust Research Centre and the 150th anniversary of the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS). Nothing more was to be heard of the first two; the last proposal, however, was sponsored by Edward Short, the previous PMG and current Secretary of State for Education and Science.

FIRST RESPONSE FROM ARTISTS

A formal invitation to artists was drafted, but not issued due to unspecified 'internal difficulties'. However, it appears that the following had been informally contacted and notified their acceptance by the end of June: Albert Brebner, Clive Abbott, Grafton Arts Ltd, and Saxon Artists Ltd. A similar invitation seems to have gone to the stamp printing firms, a positive response being received from Harrison & Sons Ltd. Albert Brebner visited Postal Headquarters on 1 July to discuss design requirements, and the other artists would have been urged to do likewise on or about the same date. The instructions were not extensive except that groups of figures should be depicted throughout the set in the interests of stylistic consistency, and that pictorial rather than symbolic representations should be aimed at. At the SAC meeting on 29 July, there were 30 designs shown; a complete listing of these, plus those received later or on unknown dates, follows below. These are numbered to help identification.

Brebner (received 24 July 1969) –

5d Arbroath (1), 9d Mayflower (2), 5d Nightingale (3), 5d United Nations (4), 5d Arbroath (5), 5d Mayflower (6), 5d Nightingale (7), 5d United Nations (8)

Wegner (Saxon Artists) (received 25 July 1969) –

5d Arbroath (9), 9d Nightingale (10), 1s 6d Mayflower (11)

Saynor (Saxon Artists) (received on or after 25 July 1969) –

9d United Nations (12), 1s 0d ICA (21), 1s 9d RAS (22)

Black (Harrison and Sons) (received on or after 28 July 1969) –

4d Arbroath (13), 9d United Nations (14), 1s 0d Nightingale (15), 1s 6d Mayflower (16), ICA (31), RAS (32)

Abbott (received 28 July 1969) –

5d Nightingale (17), 5d Mayflower (18), 1s 0d Arbroath (19), 1s 0d ICA (20), RAS (33), United Nations (35)

Laban (Grafton Arts) (received on or after 28 July 1969) –

5d Nightingale (23), 9d Arbroath (24), 1s 0d ICA (25), 1s 6d Mayflower (26), RAS (34)

Brebner (received 28 July 1969) –

9d RAS (27 and 28), 9d ICA (29 and 30)

NOTES ON DESIGNS

Designs 1, 5, 9, 13, 19 and 24 - Robert the Bruce with the Abbot of Arbroath and Scots barons. The Declaration of Arbroath on 6 April 1320 was in the form of a letter to Pope John XXII answering his excommunication of Bruce at the behest of Edward II of England, and stated Scotland's determination to maintain her independence of English rule. On design 9 the abbot is shown with a quill pen but historical accounts say the declaration was not signed - the Scots barons simply affixed their personal seals. Design 13 is based on a manuscript of 1453, the 'earliest record of costume of the Scottish barons', and shows the Abbey ruins. Design 24 used sources including 'A Source Book of Scottish History' [Nelson], 'Costume Cavalcade' [Methuen] and 'Costume' [Weise Stuttgart].

Design nos. 3, 7, 10, 15, 17 and 23 - Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) was a pioneer of nursing administration whose reform of military hospitals in the Crimea saved thousands of soldiers' lives. The portrait in design 15 is based on the bust in the National Portrait Gallery. The portrait on design 17 is based on an engraving of the 1856 statuette by Mrs Hilary Bonham Carter in the British Museum print room and the soldiers taken from the 'Illustrated London News' of 24 February 1855. The oil lamp depicted is more historically probable than the better known 'cross between an oilcan and Aladdin's lamp' held by a statue of unknown date in St Thomas's Hospital. For design 23 the sources included 'Cassell's History of England', the Crimean War Memorial in the Florence Nightingale Hospital, and, for uniforms, the Parker Gallery.

Design nos. 2, 6, 11, 16, 18 and 26 - design 11 depicts the 'Mayflower', with 'Pilgrim Fathers' and their families in Puritan costume embarking at Southampton in 1620 for voyage to North America. design 16 is based on a print showing the vessel in Plymouth harbour. In design 18, on which the original date is incorrectly shown as 1670, the costume details are from '5 Centuries of American Costume' by R Turner-Wilcox, the US Information Service 'Outline of American History', and 'Costume Cavalcade' [Methuen]. Design 26 was based on an illustrated article in the magazine 'National Geographic'.

Design nos. 4, 8, 12, 14 and 35 - Design 4 uses the official symbol of the United Nations and design 8 a symbolic dove of peace. Design 12 depicts various unnamed statesmen formally establishing the UN on 25 October 1945. Design 14 shows the first three Secretaries of the UN from left to right: U Thant, Dag Hammarskjold, and Trygve Lie.

Design nos. 20, 21, 25, 29, 30 and 31 - The International Co-operative Alliance was an agreement championed by Britain and signed in August 1895 by four leading British, Russian, French and German statesmen of the day. Its aims were 'to promote a non-profitmaking system of production and trade, organised in the interests of the whole community, based on voluntary and mutual self-help'. Design 20 shows the international

symbol of the Co-operative movement and a portrait of the ICA's first president, Earl Grey, 1895-1917, based on a photograph. In design 21 the 1895 agreement is shown being signed by (from left to right) Earl Grey of Britain, Charles Robert of France, Professor Victor Böhmert of Germany and M. de Keussler of Russia. Design 31 depicts various racial types with the initials of the ICA in its four official languages - AIC in French, IGB in German, MKA in Russian, and ICA in English. Design 25 was a preliminary sketch only, based on information supplied by the ICA publications editor, Doctor J H Ollman.

Design nos. 22, 27, 28, 32, 33 and 34 - the Royal Astronomical Society was founded on 20 January 1820 as the Astronomical Society of London and renamed on 7 March 1831. It was the first learned society devoted to collecting and publishing the results of research in a single scientific field. Design 22 shows, left to right: Sir William Herschel, 1738-1822, first President of the society; Francis Baily, 1774-1844; Sir John Frederick William Herschel, 1792-1871, Sir William's son. Sir William and Baily each hold papers relating to their chief discoveries, which were respectively Uranus ('the Georgian planet') and 'Baily's moon beads', visible in an eclipse. Herschel's telescope is shown as per the RAS logo on designs 22, 32 and 33. Design 33 is based on a portrait of Herschel by J Russell, RA, shown holding a diagram of Uranus and its two moons.

Clive Abbott's design 35 remained unfinished; the Post Office first advised him to stop work on it once other designs had been selected, and later requested the artwork as part of the terms of payment. Of the designs listed, original artwork for 4, 8-18, 20-22, 26, 29 or 30 and 31-33 is held in the British Postal Museum & Archive.

UNO, the International Co-operative Alliance and the Royal Astronomical Society were added to the anniversaries for inclusion in the set at the end of June, when artists had already had an opportunity to develop their ideas on Arbroath, 'Mayflower' and Nightingale. For this reason only a few designs were submitted commemorating the United Nations, and only rough sketches on the themes of the ICA and RAS were available for the July meeting.

DESIGNS CHOSEN

The choice of the SAC on 29 July fell unanimously on the three finished designs by Fritz Wegner, and on pencilled sketches for RAS and ICA designs by Marjorie Saynor, both of Saxon Artists. It was felt ideal that all the stamps in the set should be designed within one studio, as this would ensure uniformity of style even though different artists were involved. The SAC was sufficiently confident in its decision as to dispense with the normal alternative selection, and also to abandon the United Nations as a theme despite the earlier pressures for its inclusion.

At its 28 August meeting the SAC was able to view finished artwork for the RAS and ICA designs seen previously and to confirm its selection of Marjorie Saynor's designs. The sole proviso was that Stuart Rose (Director of Design) and Miss Saynor were to discuss whether the balance of her RAS design could be improved by relocating the telescope downwards and to the right; in the event this particular problem was shelved, and ultimately solved by a realignment of the value tab and Queen's head on all five stamps. There was a gap of two months before the next meeting on 21 October; prior to this Harrisons supplied various essays.

In fact there was no postage rate to which the 1s 0d value related.

FIRST ESSAYS VIEWED

On 21 October the SAC viewed the first essays; this was apparently the first occasion on which all five designs had been seen as a set, and satisfaction was expressed with the results. It was decided that only the following alterations were required:
further detail to the tablecloth and clothing on the 1s 0d stamp;
the order in which countries were named on the scroll on the 1s 0d stamp to be investigated;
the caption and value on the 9d stamp to be changed from black to very light blue;
the value figures on all stamps to be centred below the Queen's head with a constant space beneath.

Two additional designs were also examined, which had been submitted directly by the ICA on the invitation of G H Vieler, the Managing Director (Posts) in the Post Office's new corporate structure. The meeting found them neither comparable in quality nor harmonious in style with the chosen designs, and declined to recommend their use.

APPROVAL BY THE QUEEN

On 28 October Vieler submitted the approved essays, together with the proposed modifications and the two designs received from the ICA, to the Minister of Posts & Telecommunications, John Stonehouse. The Minister agreed that the ICA's designs should be rejected. The essays plus a notification of the intended changes were sent to the Queen on 31 October for approval: this was sent the following day.

Instructions for the alterations were sent to R F York of Harrisons and Sons, the stamp printers, by D Beaumont of the Operations & Overseas Department, on the same day as Vieler's letter to John Stonehouse, urgency dictating that a gamble be taken that the Queen

would approve the designs. Two days later on 30 October there followed precise instructions for design changes and supporting comments from Stuart Rose, plus the return of the accepted essays. Once the Queen's approval was confirmed another set was returned for Harrisons to begin final work, and acknowledged on 6 November.

On 18 November payment of 1,310 guineas (£1,375.50) was made to Saxon Artists Ltd, calculated on the basis of the six designs by Wegner and Saynor at 60 guineas each, plus 190 guineas for each of the five designs accepted. Payment to Albert Brebner, Clive Abbott, Harrisons and Grafton Arts Ltd had already been made at the end of September based on 60 guineas for each piece of artwork received (maximum 6; minimum 5).

FINAL DESIGN CHANGES

A last design change was put in hand during November; on 21 October the SAC had recommended a check of the order in which countries were listed on the scroll on the ICA design. The first essay had shown the heading 'ICA' and then 'France, Russia, Germany, Great Britain' reading down. The problem was that while French, Russian, German and English were the official languages of the ICA, a total of 14 countries were signatories. Beaumont's letter to Harrisons on 28 October had not touched on the question of changes to the scroll; however, subsequent to the receipt of the Queen's approval, it was decided that the scroll should instead show the initials of the Alliance in its official languages, namely ICA, AIC, IGB, and MKA in English, French, German and Russian respectively, with the signatures of the founding statesmen represented at its foot. This idea had first been used in a design submitted by Harrison's artist Stewart Black during August. The date on which the Queen approved this alteration is not recorded, but a minute of 26 November records that it had also been agreed by the ICA and that work was now in hand, the sole remaining question being whether the initials on the scroll should have full stops between the letters. (The decision that no stops should be used was apparently taken by the designer, Marjorie Saynor.) On 2 December Downes was able to inform the SAC that all essays had been finally amended as necessary, although Harrisons did not supply copies of the finalised ICA 1s 0d essays until 6 January 1970.

SALES AND POSTMARKS

The stamps were printed by Harrisons in photogravure, in sheets of 120 with two phosphor bands and the Queen's head embossed in gold, and in standard size (41mm by 24mm). On 17 February 1970 the issue was announced in a press release, and was on sale from 1 April until 31 March 1971. Sales were: 71,259,000 of the 5d; 10,590,120 of the 9d; 10,287,840 of the 1s 0d; 11,388,960 of the 1s 6d; 6,120,600 of the 1s 9d. Production costs were later recorded as

£14,500 for 'development' (essays, proofs, plates, cylinders, etc) and £26,722 for printing. There were 120,564 presentation packs produced at a cost of £16,263, of which 95,739 were sold. An official first day cover was designed by Keith Murgatroyd; total 'first day of issue' postings were reported as 1,036,000.

A large number of special handstamps connected with the issue were in use on the first day, as follows: British Anniversary Stamps, Canterbury; Florence Nightingale Hospital, NW1; National Florence Nightingale Memorial Centre Birthday Exhibition, SE1; London Co-op Golden Year 1920-70, E15; World HQ International Cooperative Alliance, W1; Mayflower '70, Scrooby, Doncaster; Sir William Herschel, 1st President Royal Astronomical Society, Slough. Three Forces Post Offices also used special handstamps on 1 April, BFPS 1121 and 1205 commemorating Florence Nightingale and BFPS 1206 using the connection to commemorate the Crimean War. The Post Office provided its own first day handstamping services as normal, plus a special provision of philatelic post box facilities at Boston, Lincs and Billericay, Essex, to mark local connections with the 'Mayflower'.

SPECIAL MAYFLOWER COMMEMORATIONS

Further special handstamps and slogan postmarks later in the year commemorated Scotland's declaration of independence (6 April, Arbroath - the actual 650th anniversary) and the birth of Florence Nightingale (three different uses in May and June). The greatest response, however, was to the anniversary of the 'Mayflower', thanks largely to the efforts of Mayflower '70, a Plymouth-based organisation sponsored by the leaders of the three main political parties under the patronage of the Duke of Edinburgh. A series of local postmarks between March and October celebrated the 'Mayflower' pilgrims' protracted leave-taking in 1620 via Doncaster, Grimsby, Boston, Southampton, Dartmouth and Plymouth; these were most prominent at Plymouth and Southampton from 2 May to 30 September. Between these dates the slogan 'Mayflower 1620-1970' was used on official Post Office covers specially produced to commemorate the anniversary (not to be confused with first day covers). These special covers were on sale from mid-April to the end of September in Plymouth, Southampton and 18 other offices, as well as the Philatelic Bureau in Edinburgh, and were intended for use with the 'Mayflower' stamp. By the time they were withdrawn on 30 September, 56,273 covers had been processed at Plymouth and 5,307 at Southampton: of these 11 per cent were returned to overseas addresses and 89 per cent inland. It could not be confirmed, however, that all covers were the official Post Office issue, nor that the 'Mayflower' stamp was used in every case. From 4 May a special exhibition of stamps and artwork was on view at Plymouth head post office, and a philatelic wallchart on which was mounted the 1s 6d stamp to commemorate the 'Mayflower' anniversary was put on sale by the Philatelic Bureau after 30 September.

SAC OPPOSES SIMILAR ISSUES

Even before the day of issue an SAC member, Anthony Lousada, had voiced the Committee's opinion when he urged on 9 March 1970 that further 'general anniversaries' issues should be avoided, as their selection gravitated too much toward 'minor sectional interests'. The last such issue was in 1972; at about the time that it was being planned in September 1970, an SAC paper suggested that a 'rag-bag of ... little known anniversaries have a habit of creeping in' to such issues. Henceforward the Post Office would seek to focus on particular individual anniversaries.

THE ARTISTS

FRITZ WEGNER, MSIA, was born in Vienna in 1924 and came to England in 1938. He was first a student and later a visiting lecturer and teacher of illustration at St Martin's School of Art. He worked primarily as a freelance illustrator of magazines, periodicals, and books for both children and adults. He first worked for the Post Office on a successful design for a greetings telegram in 1956; between 1969 and 1984 he was again successful in producing designs for no fewer than ten stamp issues. He was also responsible for the 1969 Christmas air letter.

MARJORIE SAYNOR studied at the Regional College of Art in Hull and won a scholarship to attend the Royal College of Art in 1953. From 1957 she became a freelance illustrator and poster designer, in addition to teaching part-time at art schools in the Medway and Maidstone area. Throughout the 1970s she worked consistently on stamp design, her most recent success being the Maritime Heritage issue of 1984. She also worked in other areas of Post Office design such as her successful air letter of Christmas 1975.

GILES ALLEN
24 September 1993

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