

SPECIAL STAMP HISTORY

## Philympia 1970

Date of issue: 18 SEPTEMBER 1970



Prior to the Second World War international stamp exhibitions had been held in Britain on at least five occasions (London in 1890, 1897, 1906 and 1923, and Manchester in 1899) after which there was no such further event until that of 1950. Since then it has become traditional for the UK to host an international stamp exhibition every ten years. The part played by the GPO in the 1950 exhibition was fairly modest, although there was one imaginative touch in the shape of an opening day fashion parade of historic postmen's uniforms (thus enabling 'Post Office Magazine' to publish a photograph of former King Carol of Romania chatting urbanely with an 1855 Letter Carrier in its July 1950 edition). Participation in the 1960 Exhibition was more elaborate, but still fell short of what had been hoped for; despite an impassioned plea by Sir John Wilson, Chairman of the organising committee and former President of the Royal Philatelic Society London (RPSL) and the willingness of the GPO to collaborate, financial support was withheld by the Treasury. Twenty years earlier Sir John had been one of the prime movers behind the major events planned for the Penny Post centenary, which had been negated by the onset of war after lengthy preparations during which he had secured the GPO's agreement to put on a major philatelic display in tandem with that of the RPSL.

When the RPSL established a steering committee in the following year to begin plans for the 1970 event, it was with the avowed intent of making it 'the greatest philatelic show of all time'. By the beginning of 1967 an executive committee had been informally appointed representing the three main sponsoring organisations, RPSL, the British Philatelic Association and the Philatelic Traders' Society. This last, as its name indicated, represented the commercial stamp dealers, while the RPSL only had collectors as its members and BPA mainly represented the collecting fraternity. The committee was chaired by R A G Lee, a distinguished member of the RPSL, who had been Chairman of the steering committee

established in 1961. On 24 January Lee had a brief meeting with John Wall, Deputy Chairman of the GPO, and the Deputy Director General (Posts), A Wolstencroft, at which they discussed the GPO's contribution to the 1970 exhibition. Lee followed this first approach with a letter on 20 April suggesting that the nature and extent of this contribution be made the responsibility of a special sub-committee, on which the GPO would be represented. Wolstencroft agreed to this on 27 April, and the sub-committee subsequently met for the first time on 11 August. On this and most later occasions the GPO was generally represented by J R Baxter of the Postal Services Department, and two others representing the marketing and public relations departments. The representatives of Phillympia 1970, as the exhibition was first referred to in the wake of this initial meeting, were normally also three in number: Lee, A L Michael (on behalf of the BPA) and A Cyril Andrews (for the PTS). Both Andrews and Michael were connected with the philatelic dealers and publishers Stanley Gibbons Ltd.

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## FIRST STAMP PROPOSALS

The idea of special cancellations as part of the GPO's contribution was first mentioned in a memorandum to Baxter from Mr Petherick of the Publicity Department on 26 August. The idea of a special stamp did not arise until 13 September in a note to Baxter from C E Sharwood of OOD (the Operations & Overseas Department, as Postal Services were renamed about this time). Sharwood suggested that the GPO should 'offer for sale some attractive souvenirs in the form of stamp packs or covers. If we could include a special stamp or stamps for the occasion with an exclusive exhibition postmark this would be even better.' It should be noted at this point that Andrews, on behalf of the PTS, had written to the Postmaster General (PMG) as early as 13 July 1965, independently urging the potential of the 1970 Exhibition as an opportunity for both valuable image-building and the profits of a special stamp issue. Andrews wrote in the wake of that year's international stamp exhibition in Vienna, which was reported to have achieved record-breaking attendances of over 200,000 (this was later revised to a still-impressive 150,000). Unfortunately his suggestion brought no recorded response at the time.

However, in a memorandum to G R Downes, the DOO (Director of Operations & Overseas) on 2 October, Baxter demonstrated he was not unaware of the revenue-earning potentialities of a special stamp issue:

If we were to issue a special stamp ... we could no doubt cover our costs at, or connected with, the exhibition ... [The question of costs was important because] we have not previously paid anything for the space we have used at philatelic exhibitions ... this 'no payment' line is I think becoming increasingly untenable as we now go in for philately on a frankly money-making basis.

By 25 October Baxter was able to assure Lee and his fellow organisers that, both as regards special stamps and in all other respects, the GPO wished to participate in Philympia impressively and on a large scale.

The stamp question was not raised again until late March 1968, when Lee spoke to the D00 at a Stampex luncheon, urging that FDC cancellations and stamp sales on the day of issue should be confined to the Philympia site, as had been the case with the British Empire Exhibition stamps at Wembley in 1924. Downes' immediate response was that it was 'highly likely' that this could be arranged. On 23 July Lee called on Baxter with the further suggestion that the sale of stamps for the first five days of issue should be confined to Philympia. Other suggestions put forward by Lee were that slogan postmarks and special stamp books should be used to publicise the exhibition; that each day of Philympia should have its own coloured handstamp; and finally that miniature sheets of special stamps should be sold. Baxter circulated these proposals in a memorandum on 15 August, with the result that most of them were to a greater or lesser extent already accepted by the time of the next meetings of the Philympia sub-committee on 17 December 1968 and 12 February 1969. The exception was the miniature sheet proposal, which C E Sharwood characterised in a note of 7 October as a gimmick liable to cheapen the GPO's philatelic service for the sake of attractive but short-term financial rewards, a view that does not seem to have met with any opposition.

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### **SPECIAL POSTMARKS AND STAMP BOOKS DISCUSSED**

Coloured handstamps were found acceptable in principle, with the cautious proviso that the technical problems of poor impressions, and 'feathering' or smudging, to which coloured inks were known to be prone, could be overcome. (A tricolour handstamp had been used at the 5th Wiltshire Philatelic Convention at Chippenham, Wilts on 22 May 1965 - this was the first and last instance prior to the Philympia handstamps.) As for the special stamp books proposed, it was established that a stamp book in the current range with a commemorative cover would satisfy the Philympia organisers, rather than 'something more grandiose, eg, special stamps in a special cover, for sale only at Philympia'. There seems to have been some anxiety on the GPO's part that it might be manoeuvred into providing slogan postmarks and stamp books for publicity purposes at its own expense; however it was agreed that the slogan postmarks would be financially sponsored by 'Philympia 1970' in the ordinary way and that the costs of the stamp book would be met by the sale of advertising space to exhibitors.

It was also during the summer of 1968 that the organisers turned to Stuart Rose of the Design Research Unit (a commercial design firm) in search of an exhibition logo. This was on the recommendation of P Shrikes of the GPO Publicity Department, who was aware of

Rose's long-term services to the GPO as a designer, and since 1962 as typographical adviser to the PMG. The logo was in use by November, a 'PL' monogram with a family resemblance to the National Giro symbol, which Rose had also designed.

At the beginning of 1969 the availability of the special stamps was still undecided, namely whether or not the issue should be confined to Philypia on the first day, and if so, for how long thereafter. On 9 January the organisers were told at the sub-committee meeting that the PMG was due to consider the 1970 stamp programme, and an announcement that the special stamps would be issued simultaneously at Philypia and other post offices on the first Monday after the start of the exhibition, that is on 21 September 1970, might be expected by the summer. On 8 March the Postmaster General (PMG), John Stonehouse, announced plans for the special Philypia issue at a Stampex banquet; these and the rest of the 1970 programme were confirmed in an answer to a parliamentary question on 27 March. By mid-May Baxter felt that the first day of issue should coincide with the opening of the exhibition, to gain the full benefit of publicity and also 'because many philatelists intend to obtain a cancellation for each day of the exhibition and this will help sales. We therefore have little alternative to the Friday date [18 September] if we are to satisfy Philypia's needs.' This was put to the DDO, Downes, in a submission dated 15 May; it was admitted that Fridays were particularly busy and used for balancing by counter staff, and thus highly unsuitable as a day of issue, but in the exceptional circumstances the Friday date should be used and the staff side warned in advance as an act of courtesy, with an explanation of the reasons.

Meanwhile Lee was still hopeful that early stamp sales could be restricted to Philypia (although he was now resigned to the Philatelic Bureau's requirement to supply stamps by mail order from the first day onward) and telephoned Baxter at the end of May asking for a definite statement of the GPO's position. Baxter replied on 4 June that the stamps would 'almost certainly' be issued on the first day of the exhibition, but 'in the normal way through all our normal outlets, as well as selling them at Philypia'. This was explained as due to 'reasons of overall and long-term marketing policy'; what these amounted to was that the GPO did not wish to be seen to disadvantage not only the Philatelic Bureau's mail order customers, but also the collector who did not deal directly with the Bureau and would not necessarily have the opportunity to visit Philypia in person. This was no doubt appreciated by Lee, who accepted Baxter's response in good grace. It seems that no public announcement of the issue date was made until June of the following year, although the values were given as 5d, 9d and 1s 6d in a simultaneous parliamentary answer and press release on 25 July 1969. At about this time the organisers began their own publicity campaign to bring the exhibition into public awareness; their work in this and other respects was facilitated by the keen personal support of Harold Wilson, the Labour Prime Minister from October 1964 to June 1970.

## THEMES FOR SPECIAL STAMPS DISCUSSED

The Philypia sub-committee did not really concern itself with the question of special stamps after February 1969, as from then onwards this came under the attention of the GPO's Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC), of which R A G Lee and J R Baxter were members, and the D00, Downes, was Chairman. At the SAC meeting of 11 February, Downes announced that Philypia offered a chance for a set on the general theme of postal history, to offset anticipated criticisms of the Post Office Technology set due later in 1969 as focusing too much on the modern. It had already been agreed the previous autumn that the GPO's exhibit at Philypia should be based around postal history and particularly the Penny Black. On 26 March Baxter, as Secretary, asked SAC members for their thoughts on particular themes, and indicated it would be appropriate for these to include philatelic history. These were forthcoming on 21 May when Kenneth F Chapman, a distinguished figure in the philatelic world, suggested that each stamp should include a reproduction of a period stamp. Alternatively, classic stamps such as the green Edward VII £1 might be shown overlapped by modern examples (there were numerous overseas precedents for 'stamp on stamp' designs, and several such designs had been submitted for the Centenary series of 1940). Sir Paul Reilly, Chairman of the Council of Industrial Design, thought that the set should include only one stamp of this nature and that the two remaining should show modern aspects of philately. He recommended that one of Jock Kinneir's unaccepted designs for the Post Office Technology series, on which a modern 5d overlapped a Penny Black and 17th century franking marks, should be considered for the 'historical' stamp. Downes summed up by proposing that Kinneir should be asked for two further designs on a similar theme and a wider range of concepts sought from any other artists approached.

The SAC did not return to the special stamps for Philypia until its meeting of 29 July. Instructions to artists had still not been finalised, and Downes was still welcoming ideas on themes that artists might be asked to develop; it was important in view of the occasion that the set should be a particularly good one. The GPO's Design Director, Stuart Rose, suggested 'the continuing effect of operational demands on stamp design' as an appropriate theme. Lee spoke on behalf of himself and his fellow Philypia organisers, who had met on 13 June to explore several ideas and found themselves drawn to those reported back from the SAC meeting of 21 May. He proposed a set depicting the Penny Black, the 4d carmine (the first stamp printed by letterpress) and one of the first embossed stamps, preferably the 10d brown although possibly the 6d or 1s 0d. He recommended that each design should also include a London landmark such as Big Ben, St Paul's, or the Post Office Tower. Another option was for 'stamp on stamp' treatments showing developments in philatelic design up to the present day. (In the first half of July Lee, Baxter, and the artist David Gentleman had a working lunch, which may well have assisted in crystallising Lee's ideas.) Chapman commented that a set with such an appeal to thematic collectors as Lee's

first suggestion would probably generate philatelic sales 50 per cent above normal. In conclusion Downes noted that the philatelic viewpoint was of special importance in the present case and this would be indicated in the briefings supplied to artists.

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## **FIRST VIEWING OF ARTWORK**

The production files for the Philympia stamp issue have not been traced, and details of instructions to artists, artwork received, subsequent dealings with artists, and records of essays supplied by the printers Harrison & Sons Ltd, are thus either meagre or absent. However, the SAC was able to study a large number of submitted artwork at its 21 October meeting (by which time the GPO was now the Post Office Corporation). While no list of this was recorded, it has been possible to identify it in large part from the material in the British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) albums, of which a list follows:

### **Andrew Restall –**

5d, 9d, 1s 6d: Definitive with inscription ‘Philympia 1970’  
5d: Victoria’s postage stamp profile in silhouette  
9d: Overlapping silhouettes of sovereigns Victoria to QEII  
1s 6d: Postage stamp profiles of sovereigns Victoria to QEII.

### **A Ball –**

5d, 9d, 1s 6d: Queen’s head within late Victorian/Edwardian decorative surround on each, lower half on background of franking marks, etc, suggesting postal history.

### **Harrison and Sons Ltd –**

5d: William Wyon’s City of London medal 1837 and Penny Black  
9d: QEII and Victoria embossed stationery heads  
1s 6d: Current 1d definitive and Arnold Machin plaster relief.

### **Bradbury Wilkinson –**

5d: Victoria’s head as Wyon medal  
9d: Heath engraving of Victoria’s head as Penny Black  
1s 6d: Victoria - George VI stamps in geometric arrangement  
5d: Wyon medal head (part)  
9d: Penny Black head engraved by Heath (part)  
1s 6d: Postage stamps from Penny Black to QEII Wilding head.

### **K Muratroyd –**

5d: Penny Black under magnifying glass  
9d: First surface printed stamp and magnifying glass

1s 6d: First photogravure stamp and magnifying glass.

**Jock Kinneir –**

5d: Queen's head in laurel wreath; first use of perforation

9d: Head as above; first cancellation mark (Maltese cross)

1s 6d: Head as above; phosphor bands and electronic sorting.

**David Gentleman –**

5d: William Wyon and 1837 medal profile of Victoria

5d: Charles Heath (engraver) and Penny Black head (part)

5d: Wyon and Penny Black head (part)

1s 6d: Wyon and Corbould drawing of Wyon medal head

1s 6d: Heath head/Corbould's drawing (left) and earlier sketch (right)

5d\*: Victoria's head, Penny Black engraving by Heath

9d\*: Victoria's head as on surface printed stamps

1s 6d\*: Victoria's head as on embossed stamps

5d: Victoria's head as on Wyon medal

9d: Victoria's head - Corbould drawing of Wyon medal head

9d: Corbould's earlier profile sketch, used as base by Wyon

1s 6d: Victoria's head, Penny Black engraving by Heath.

(\* This set was in two stamp-sized versions in different colours, which were later essayed for the 13 January SAC meeting.)

The most suitable design was considered to be Jock Kinneir's preliminary 'tripartite' idea for a series showing three overlapping stamps on each design (this is not listed above as there is no artwork in the BPMA albums, although there is a set of the ensuing essays). It was recommended that Kinneir be asked for finished designs, which could be readily distinguishable from each other by such techniques as shading and embossing. By the time of the next meeting on 2 December Harrison's was already in the process of essaying designs based on Kinneir's ideas; however, Harrison's Works Director, R F York, reported that the printer was hampered in producing essays of required quality by the lack of original artwork for those parts of the design reproducing earlier stamps. The Committee thought that the printer should nevertheless continue to prepare essays. David Gentleman's designs incorporating earlier stamps were looked at afresh, and it was felt their interest to philatelists would be enhanced if Gentleman revised the designs to show the early stamps in their entirety; Stuart Rose promised to raise this with the artist.

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## NEW DESIGNS BY DAVID GENTLEMAN SELECTED

At the meeting on 13 January 1970 Downes asked the SAC to decide on three issues: the essay of Kinneir's 'tripartite' design, essays of Gentleman's original designs reproducing versions of the Queen's head from early Victorian stamps, and Gentleman's new designs reproducing stamps in full (see later). Gentleman had prepared several sets with the words 'Great Britain' or 'United Kingdom' replacing the Queen's head, and Downes explained why these could not be considered. The Committee chose one of Gentleman's sets of three new designs, opting for a version with lettering at top and bottom. It was agreed that the stamps should be larger than the normal special issue size and that the Queen's head should not be in black. In addition it was suggested that Kinneir's 'tripartite' design featuring the Victorian 4d carmine might be issued as a part of the series, with silver lettering throughout if agreeable to the artist and the perforations shown clearly. The following essays seen on 13 January are in the BPMA.

### **Kinneir essays:**

1840 1d black overlapped by 1855 4d carmine and current QEII 5d, twice definitive size, with '1968' in gold and 'Philympia 1970' in silver on '5d' portion of design;  
as above, but with '1968' in silver and 'Philympia 1970' in gold;  
as above, all lettering in silver;  
as above, all lettering in gold.

### **Gentleman essays:**

5d, Victoria's head as Heath engraving of 1840 Penny Black;  
9d, 1855 surface printed head on green background;  
as above, but on pinkish-brown background;  
1s 6d, 1847 embossed head.

As indicated above, Gentleman also submitted three new designs on 13 January of which the BPMA has 20 sets comprising different variations. The basic sets reproduce the Penny Black in full on the 5d value, the 1/- green of 1847 (the first embossed stamp) on the 9d, and the 4d carmine of 1855 (the first surface printed stamp) on the 1s 6d. The main variations are in the positioning of the text (values, the 'Philympia 70' title, and the descriptive captions). Fourteen sets are in the  $1:\sqrt{2}$  proportions Gentleman used for the Prince of Wales' Investiture issue in 1969, four in a narrower or longer format (about 1:1.7) and one narrower still (about 1:2). Five sets have 'United Kingdom' in place of Queen Elizabeth's head, and two 'Great Britain'. In two sets the 1s 6d value depicts not the 4d carmine but the surface printed 5/- (one shows the 'plate 1' version of 1867 without a caption, and the other the 1882 'plate 4' wrongly captioned as the 4d). Other variations include borders, coloured backgrounds, and the underlining of text. For the most part each combination appears in both a large sized and a stamp-sized set, although not every large



size design is shown in a stamp-size equivalent, and vice versa. The set chosen by the SAC was one of only two to include historically informative captions rather than the more popular names of the original stamps, e.g., '1840 first engraved issue' rather than 'Penny Black 1840'.

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## FINAL ADJUSTMENTS TO CHOSEN DESIGNS

It was at this time (as Baxter recorded in a memorandum of 21 January) that Lee suggested that the corner letters in any depiction of the Penny Black should be 'P' and 'L', standing for 'Philympia' and 'London'. This proposal was accepted; previously Gentleman's version of the Penny Black had 'V', 'R', 'S' and 'E' in the corners (for 'Victoria Regina' and 'Stamp Exhibition'). Only a limited number of Penny Blacks for exclusive use by government offices, and mostly scrapped when this scheme was abandoned, had letters in all four corners, those in the top corners being 'V' and 'R'. In the course of essaying Gentleman's designs incorporating this last change, the reproduction of the 1/- green was fractionally reduced from actual size and the two others slightly enlarged, to achieve a balance of size throughout the set. Die proofs held by the BPMA were used to obtain clear reproductions of the Victorian originals; Gentleman had photographed actual stamps at the design stage, but found that the available specimens were too dirty or indistinct for essaying. On 4 March essays of the Gentleman designs were available alongside the Kinneir essays, and it was decided to proceed with the former. The sizes of the Victorian stamps were still not quite harmonised, and the following adjustments were needed, as well as other refinements of reproduction:

1d Black - To be slightly reduced in size; background tinted to sharpen and enhance true reproduction;

1/- Green - To be embossed; slight tonal change of green for truer reproduction'

4d Carmine - To be slightly reduced and shown on blue-tinted paper with perforations.

Essays exist of the 5d with the Penny Black with 'P' and 'L' in the lower corners, and of the 1s 6d with the 4d stamp reproduced in mauve or carmine.

The SAC felt that the Kinneir essay had to be excluded despite its merits, as it was accepted that the Post Office did not wish an extra stamp or extra value to be added to the Philympia set, and Kinneir's design would not fit in successfully alongside Gentleman's work.

However, it was thought that Kinneir's essay had been beautifully executed, and excellently reproduced by Harrisons; it should be held over and considered for future use, and a letter sent to the artist expressing the SAC's appreciation. Another possible factor in the decision to proceed with Gentleman's exclusively Victorian set is that all the original stamps had been 'demonetised' since 1 July 1915 and did not have postal value; there was some

apprehension that the public might confuse the values depicted with those actually borne by the special issue, which was taken seriously enough for the Solicitor's Department to be consulted on the legal position.

On 16 March essays of the chosen Gentleman set were submitted to Stonehouse, now Minister of Posts & Telecommunications, with a note of the intended amendments. The MPT forwarded these to the Queen on 25 March for approval, which was given in her absence by the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret the following day. The Post Office was advised on 2 April. Final essays were ready for the SAC meeting of 6 May. Downes pointed out that the Queen's head was not after all to be embossed on the reproduction of the 1/- green in view of the artist's objections. Other amendments previously suggested would be incorporated in the production run; the Committee agreed this. It should be noted that both the final essays and the issued stamps were in the narrower 1:1.7 proportions, although the designs as accepted had been in the 1: $\sqrt{2}$  format.

An edition of 900,000 special stamp books with a cover designed by Peter Gauld went on sale from 1 April through the Philatelic Bureau and philatelic counters. These contained twelve 5d definitives and advertising by Philymphia standholders. The exhibition organisers hoped for a second book, but could only sell half the advertising space required. A further 100,000 books were kept in reserve by Supplies for sale at Philymphia (although 4,000 were later diverted to the Philatelic Bureau).

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## COLOURED HANDSTAMPS AND MAXIMUM CARDS

On 29 April it was finally decided to proceed with production of the tri-coloured handstamps. Designs for the impressions had been requested from Lee the previous September, but there had been considerable delay in providing these as for a long time there was no certainty that suitable coloured inks would be available. Finally, after specimens from Harrisons, Roneo Neopost, National Cash Registers and several smaller firms had been rejected, the firm of Henry C Stephens Ltd, the producers of the black ink ordinarily used for postmarking, came up with samples of usable ink in a range of colours. On 20 February Lee produced a set of eight of his own designs, one for each day of the exhibition (Friday and Saturday, 18 and 19 September, and Monday to Saturday, 21 to 26 September; Philymphia was closed on Sunday, 20 September). These required only minor modification: a rather nondescript aircraft on the 'Airmail Day' handstamp (19 September) was replaced by a vintage biplane; the 'Tudor' crown for 'Post Office Day' (21 September) was replaced by a 'St Edward's' crown, in line with the change to the watermark made in 1955 at the Queen's request; the UN crest for 'United Nations Day' (22 September) required correction, as did an over-angular 'Maltese cross' cancellation for 'Great Britain Day' (24 September), while an erect lion for 'Commonwealth Day' (23 September) replaced a more

dormant beast intended to be reminiscent of the 1924 British Empire Exhibition symbol featured on Britain's first commemorative stamps. Lee's sketches were developed into finished artwork by the design consultants, Gregory F Whiteley Ltd, at a cost of £97 12s 6d, and the manufacture of the handstamps was undertaken by H Savage Ltd of Clerkenwell. Following various production problems, including the destruction of Stephens Inks' laboratories by fire, supplies of the inks and handstamps were only available in the week before the start of the exhibition. Total costs came to over £3,000, of which Philympia had only agreed to pay the first £700, this sum having been felt adequate to cover all eventualities. The Post Office had to refuse a request that the 'United Nations Day' handstamp be made available for first day of issue cancellation of the stamp issued by the United Nations to mark its 25th anniversary.

On 1 June an approach was made to the Post Office by Cameo Stamps Ltd, the principal producers of 'maximum' cards, asking for the acceptance of these items to be regularised in time for the start of the exhibition. These were cards to which the stamp was affixed on the same side as the illustration; in recent years the illustration had often been a reproduction of the stamp design occupying most of one side (with the objective that the actual stamp should then be cancelled alongside its illustration) with the address on the reverse. With regard to maximum cards the Post Office, unlike other postal administrations (mainly France, elsewhere in Europe, and the US), maintained its right to refuse any item with the stamp elsewhere than the top right hand corner on the same side as the address, as an 'embarrassing' packet; limited bulk postings of these items by dealers had been accepted on one or two occasions since 1968, solely on an exceptional ad hoc basis and usually causing friction with staff union representatives. However, Cameo Stamps' request received serious attention and was the subject of considerable debate within OOD, where it was both welcomed as a growth area for philatelic sales and mistrusted as a dangerous precedent for allowing irregular and confusing items into the mail stream. It was pointed out that several of the foreign administrations cited for their more liberal attitude to maximum cards had a policy of cancelling them on the spot and handing them back to discourage their being posted. This, of course, smacked of 'cancellation on demand', a philatelic practice the Post Office held in anathema. Nevertheless, an agreement was reached in August that maximum cards could be posted in philatelic boxes or handed over the counter at offices offering 'first day of issue' handstamping facilities, and collected later from poste restante; alternatively they could be handed in with a self-addressed envelope for return posting. No ordinary first day of issue handstamping was to be carried out at Philympia, but maximum cards handed in via either the special posting boxes or the Post Office counter on site would exceptionally be permitted the same facility with the tri-coloured handstamps on each day of the exhibition. Philympia and its special stamp issue marked the first official philatelic service for maximum cards.

## STAMPS ISSUED TO PUBLIC

On 18 September the MPT officially opened the exhibition at the Empire Hall, Olympia, and on the same day the stamps were issued in sheets of 120 on chalk-coated unwatermarked paper, each bearing two phosphor bands and measuring 41mm by 27mm in a vertical format. The issue was in the following colours: 5d grey-black, brownish bistre, black and dull purple; 9d light drab, bluish-green, stone, black and dull purple; 1s 6d light drab, carmine, black and dull purple. Total sales figures when the issue was finally withdrawn a year later were: 72,211,000 of the 5d, 16,330,000 of the 9d, 15,203,830 of the 1s 6d. A presentation pack was also produced at a cost of £18,119, of which 111,707 were sold. Total costs of producing the stamp issue (exclusive of artists' fees) were later recorded as £5,700 for development of proofs, essays, plates and cylinders plus £17,272 for printing.

In addition to the official Post Office envelope designed by Healey Mills Associates, three official Philypia commemorative covers were on sale from June to the end of the exhibition, bearing different illustrations as follows: a lithographed aerial view of Parliament and County Hall in full colour, a die-stamped view of the Empire Hall with national flags encircling a globe, and a two-colour reproduction of the exhibition logo printed by thermography. There were approximately 824,000 postings of first day covers, official and otherwise; 424,000 items were posted at Philypia, including 1,100 registered letters and 44 parcels. All items placed in seven philatelic posting boxes on site received one of the tri-colour handstamps, two ordinary boxes being provided for material on which only a standard machine cancellation was needed. The special handstamps each included the official logo, the day's theme, and the date, as summarised below (the colours are given in the order – logo, day, date):

18 September – Philypia Day – red, black, magenta  
19 September – Airmail Day – turquoise, black, red  
21 September – Post Office Day – red, turquoise, black  
22 September – United Nations Day – turquoise, magenta, black  
23 September – Commonwealth Day – magenta, black, turquoise  
24 September – Great Britain Day – black, red, turquoise  
25 September – Day of the Americas – turquoise, red, black  
26 September – Europa Day – magenta, turquoise, black.

It was estimated that 75 per cent of Philypia postings on the first day (about 180,000) bore a full set of the stamp issue, plus 50 per cent on the second day (about 30,000) and 10 per cent during the rest of the exhibition (averaging 2,000 daily), making an overall total in excess of 220,000 items with a complete set of three stamps posted at Philypia alone; the figures for all handstampings at Philypia, excluding the first day's total, were reported as 177,000. It appears that Philypia accounted for 20 to 25 per cent of all first day covers

proper, as opposed to gross first day postings; there are indications that a large number of first day covers were not properly processed because of posting in the wrong boxes.

A count was made of maximum cards as an element of 'first day' business, although this excluded Philympia postings as Post Office staff at the exhibition were considered to be already under undue pressure. Totals elsewhere came to some 3,000 items; the best indications are that the number posted at Philympia was roughly equal to this. This fell well short of claims made previously by Cameo Stamps (such as sales of 30,000 sets of the earlier British Paintings series) and in fact sales of maximum cards would decline with succeeding stamp issues throughout 1971. It was to become increasingly apparent that demand for the maximum card 'first day' posting facility was very limited, and local offices called with increasing frequency for its abandonment.

Outside Philympia the normal 'first day of issue' special handstamping facilities were provided, while a slogan postmark to publicise the event was in use at district offices in the EC, WC and SW1 areas of London from 1 to 14 June and again from 18 August to 24 September. Day of issue cancellations with the ordinary circular datestamp 'Olympia W14' were also sought by collectors. Other special handstamps in use on 18 September were on the Britten Norman Islander special covers for their 'First Flight' from Bembridge, Isle of Wight to Calne, Wilts and back, which could be cancelled at either end and also commemorated the first day of Philympia. The 25th anniversary of 23 Base Workshop REME was marked with a special handstamp by BFPS 1136.

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## REACTIONS TO 'PHILYMPIA' - THE STAMPS AND THE EXHIBITION

The special stamps were generally well received. However, the exhibition was not quite the success that had been hoped, with 61,485 visitors rather than the anticipated 100,000. The coloured handstamps did not come up to expectations; it was subsequently reported that 'in spite of every effort, the coloured postmarks were not as good as those printed in black and they did not appear to be well received by philatelists'. Both Stephens Inks and H Savage, the handstamp manufacturers, complained that they had been prevented by the inadequate time from producing fully satisfactory results. There were also deficiencies in organisation that had serious consequences: a security lapse on the night of 26/27 September led to the disappearance of 140 Machin head definitive colour trials from the Post Office stand. These included twelve in decimal values (1p, 1½p, 2p, 2½p, 3p, 3½p, 4p, 5p, 6p, two 7½p and 9p) and the remainder pre-decimal (1 of 2d, 2 of 3d, 2 of 4d, 1 of 5d, 2 of 6d, 3 of 7d, 4 of 8d, 6 of 9d, 1 of 10d, 42 of 1s 0d, 26 of 1s 6d and 1 of 1s 9d). The decimals were reportedly 'marked' but not so the rest, which were in a variety of unused colours.

Finally, a report by W H Line, the Head Postmaster of Paddington, had much to say about the lack of 'clear, simple and precise instructions' on what might or might not be cancelled and the confusion this caused to his staff manning the Post Office counter at Philypia. 'Exhibitions of this sort are attended by children and visitors from overseas who cannot or do not read instructions on posting boxes' and also a 'Mecca for people wishing to post all sorts of irregular items ... philatelists, postmark collectors, etc, will try to obtain postmarks on almost anything'. He listed some 'irregular items': covers with mutilated stamps or postage due labels, circular 12 inch wide reproductions of half-crown coins prepaid for airmail to the US, papier mâché plates stamped at letter rate, maximum cards in 'all sorts of ad hoc variations', and 'many other oddities too numerous to mention'. It was not lost on Line that Philypia was an extremely prestigious in event, and that the philatelic services required of his staff were of an appropriately high order. It appears that providing these services to the expected level of quality was an exceedingly time-consuming operation.

The Post Office responded positively and with varying degrees of success to the numerous demands made on them, philatelic and otherwise, during the approach to Philypia 1970 and the event itself. Naturally it would have been hard to follow any course other than a full show of co-operation in the proceedings, as the organisers had stated in a memorandum of 17 December 1968, 'in an emotional, though not in a literal sense, the GPO will be host'. There seem to have been periods when representatives of the Post Office felt less privileged to share this burden than Lee and his colleagues had presumably hoped they might be.

GILES ALLEN  
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