

## British Rural Architecture

Date of issue: 11 FEBRUARY 1970



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From its first meeting in February 1968 the Postmaster General's reconstituted Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC) was concerned with possible stamps on the theme of British architecture in the widest sense: cathedrals, stately homes, villages, and so on. On 11 February 1969 the SAC discussed the stamp programme for 1970. It was felt that the British architecture series started with Cathedrals in May 1969 was worth pursuing, and might well be a financial success. Tudor buildings, ancient monuments, National Trust properties and stately homes were all considered as subjects; no decision was reached, although it was agreed that the stamps should depict architectural styles throughout the United Kingdom. At the next meeting on 26 March it was decided that for the sake of contrast with the Cathedrals, 'grandiose' buildings should be avoided in favour of either town houses or country cottages.

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### INVITATIONS TO ARTISTS

Designs were requested from five artists, Richard Downer, Peter Gauld, Ronald Maddox, Sheila Robinson and Keith Hensby, the last being a non-professional who had sought permission to contribute designs for a stamp issue. The stamp printers Harrison & Sons and Bradbury Wilkinson were also approached; David Gentleman, who had been involved with 14 previous issues, was commissioned by Harrisons, while Bradbury Wilkinson relied on staff artists. It appears that the requirement from the outset was for a block of four 5d stamps, each depicting one of the four parts of the United Kingdom, plus two single stamps, 9d and 1s 0d, depicting unspecified subjects within the required parameters; descriptive captions should be included as required. Contributors were asked 'to show either single cottages and small houses or groups of buildings in villages or small country towns, the total effect being to illustrate the rich variety of local styles found in the United Kingdom', and full sets if provided should include examples from each of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

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## DESIGNS SUBMITTED TO SAC

The following artists submitted designs in time for the SAC's meeting on 21 May: Richard Downer (11), Peter Gauld (9), Ronald Maddox (9), Sheila Robinson (6), and David Gentleman (6). Keith Hensby also submitted work, although no details or surviving artwork are available; the printers Bradbury Wilkinson produced no fewer than 27 designs, which appear to be the work of at least five different artists. Most of the artwork is in the British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA), although sadly not all.

The designs received were:

### **Downer –**

5d Houses in Culross, Fife  
9d Cottage at Bury Green, Herts  
5d (two of unspecified design)  
1s 0d Timbered houses, Lavenham, Suffolk  
5d Cottage, Northern Ireland  
5d variant of above  
1s 0d Tudor house, Styal, Cheshire  
5d variant of above  
9d Weatherboards, Tenterden, Kent  
1s 0d variant of above

### **Gauld –**

5d Eastern England flint  
5d Eastern England timber  
5d South-east England timber  
5d Southern England tiles  
5d Central England thatch  
1s 6d Central England timber  
5d Western England stone  
5d Ireland stone and thatch  
5d Wales stone and slate

### **Maddox –**

5d Berwich Hall, Moira, Co. Down  
5d Kersey, Suffolk  
9d Churches Mansion, Nantwich, Cheshire  
1s 0d Port Isaac, Cornwall

4 at 5d Top left: Dungeon Ghyll, Westmoreland; top right: Llaniestyn, Caernarvon; bottom left: Crail, Fife; bottom right: Mountains of Mourne  
4 at 5d Timbering East Anglia; Ulster reed thatch; Welsh slate; Fifeshire granite

**Bradbury Wilkinson –**

5d Wales in rough stone  
5d Ireland in stone and thatch  
5d Scotland in stone with crowstepped gables  
5d England in brick and timber  
5d Tile-hung England  
5d Wales slate and granite  
5d Thatch cottage Ireland  
5d Scotland whitewashed cottages  
5d Co Derry, Northern Ireland  
5d Kent England  
5d Somerset  
5d Norfolk  
5d Ireland thatch and stone  
5d Wales slate tile and stone wall  
5d England lath-plaster timber walls  
9d Gloucestershire limestone  
1s 0d Cornwall slate roof, white stone walls  
1s 3d Weather-boarding  
5d Slate and stone Wales  
5d Stone and thatch Ireland  
5d Crowstepped gables Scotland  
5d Cruck construction England  
5d Half-timbered with hanging tiles Surrey  
9d Cotswold stone flint and brick  
9d Wales  
1s 0d (design not specified)

**Robinson –**

Three at 5d, one at 1s 6d (design not specified)  
(No value) Scottish castle  
1s 0d Town house, Aberaeron, Cardigan Bay

**Gentleman –**

5d Welsh slate  
5d Cotswold stone Bibury, Gloucestershire  
5d Fife stonework Houses at Culross, slate and tile at Crail

5d Ulster thatch  
5d Kentish weatherboarding  
(No value) Midlands thatch

After examining the artwork on 21 May, the SAC felt that Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish cottages were fundamentally similar and little could be done to mask the fact; the idea of restyling the issue as 'Vernacular Building' rather than 'Architecture' was briefly entertained. However, one of the chief distinctions lay in the type and texture of the building material used and it was thus important that this should be clearly shown and where necessary described in the caption to each design.

David Gentleman's set was first choice and Sheila Robinson's second; it was recommended that both artists amend their designs as required in the light of the SAC's conclusions. It was also decided that Sheila Robinson's 'Scottish castle' design (actually a Border keep) should be dropped from her set as out of keeping with the desired theme and replaced by the artist with one of an English Tudor timber-framed cottage. Similarly Gentleman's 'Midlands thatch' should be excluded from his set as the least effective of his designs. Mr York of Harrison and Sons, stamp printer, agreed that his firm would begin work on essaying the Robinson and Gentleman artwork. On the recommendation of Anthony Lousada, a member of the SAC and an official of both the Tate Gallery and the Royal College of Art, it was agreed that additional designs should be sought from the artist John Piper before the next meeting; it transpired, however, that Piper could not spare the time, although keen to be considered in the future.

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## FIRST REVISIONS VIEWED

The next meeting on 17 June saw revised artwork by Gentleman and Robinson, plus essays of designs submitted by Robinson and Ronald Maddox. It is not apparent why Maddox's designs were essayed, unless an unrecorded decision had been taken that they should be kept as reserve. The BPMA albums contain 31 stamp-size designs by Maddox in addition to the eight larger pieces of artwork he originally submitted; many of these are sketches rather than finished designs. Gentleman's designs for the 'block of four' were accepted, although he was asked to consider the use of 'sky' rather than a plain white background, and also an alternative to black for the silhouette of the Queen's head. Sheila Robinson's 'Welsh stucco' design, depicting a town house in Aberaeron on Cardigan Bay, was agreed to be of excellent quality and accepted for use as a single stamp, although it was felt that the rest of her set was not of the required standard. Because this design was of a slightly larger size than normal and could not be reduced without impairing it, the SAC decided that the other single stamp should be of similar size. Accordingly David Gentleman was to

produce a new version of his 'Kentish weatherboard' design with the required dimensions and enhanced detail, while Robinson would produce her own variant of the same subject.

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## DESIGNS SEEN BY PMG

On 19 June the proposed date of issue as 11 February 1970 and all designs received to date were submitted to the PMG, John Stonehouse, by G R Downes, the Director of Operations and Overseas and chairman of the SAC, followed on 24 June by the new 'Kentish weatherboard' designs now to hand from Gentleman and Robinson. On 25 June the PMG agreed the SAC's recommendation of Gentleman's block of four; however, he was concerned 'that if we continue to give a very large proportion of our work to Gentleman this could discourage other artists. We might for some future issues consider specifically asking Gentleman not to submit designs for this reason.' With this in mind the PMG favoured 'splitting' the issue by accepting Sheila Robinson's Kentish and Welsh designs for the two single stamps.

Preliminary essays of the four Gentleman designs were made available by York for the next SAC meeting on 29 July; these were captioned 'Ulster thatch', 'Welsh slate', 'Fife stonework' and 'Cotswold stone', and were in both blocks and strips of four. York explained that alterations had still to be made and that approved final essays needed to reach Harrisons by the end of August to meet the issue date of 11 February 1970. The Design Director, Stuart Rose, agreed to speak to Gentleman and discuss the position of lettering, the intensity of blue on the 'Welsh slate' design, and the colouring of the door on the 'Cotswold stone' design.

The SAC met again on 28 August to view new essays of the Robinson and Gentleman designs. Robinson's 'Welsh town house' design now bore the bilingual caption 'Stwco Cymreig Welsh stucco'; Gentleman's were again in blocks and strips of four, and had been re-captioned 'Ulster reed thatch', 'Fifeshire granite' and 'Cotswold limestone', while 'Welsh slate' remained unchanged. Although Gentleman's designs were now found satisfactory, it was felt the overall effect when brought together as a block was too cluttered, and that they might be appreciated more fully when seen as individual stamps. Gentleman took this as an opportunity to revise his designs yet again, and put a fresh set of essays in hand with the printers before leaving for a holiday. Sheila Robinson's 'Kentish weatherboard' design was found generally disappointing, and York was asked to make the following alterations in preparing the final essay:

- change the colour of the roof so as to link the upper and lower parts more effectively;
- accentuate the break between the yellow and white boards;
- strengthen the denomination;
- bring the Queen's head into true.

It was at this meeting it was decided that both artists' 'Welsh' stamps should have bilingual captions, as that on the Robinson design had proved acceptable.

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### **'BLOCK OF FOUR' ABANDONED**

The intention was that the designs now chosen (Welsh slate / Cotswold limestone / Fife granite / Ulster thatch cottages for Gentleman's block of four, Welsh stucco and Kentish weatherboard for Robinson's single stamps) were to be the final selection, regardless of any needed amendments. However, when checking the Ulster thatch design for authenticity with the Northern Ireland authorities, it was reported to be 'quite unrepresentative of any cottage in Northern Ireland; indeed it is more in line with a Donegal cottage, outside the six counties. We could not risk the issue of a stamp featuring a style found only in the Republic.' The immediate response was to re-title the offending essay 'Armagh thatch', a somewhat inadequate solution.

Strips and blocks of the revised Gentleman essays were to hand by mid-September, including further caption changes; in addition to the 'Armagh thatch' amendment, the Scottish subject had been re-titled again as 'Fife harling', and two alternative captions were supplied for Gentleman's Welsh subject - these were 'Caernarvon slate' and the bilingual 'Llechi Cymreig / Welsh slate'. Two Gentleman essays previously unseen also made an appearance at this point, with the possible replacement for the Ulster essay presumably in mind.

Downes produced a minute for the PMG dated 19 September, in which he explained that the heavy stamp programme for 1970, which included the introduction of decimal stamps and was already under strain as far as the rural architecture issue was concerned, had to be adhered to strictly. Gentleman was on holiday in Greece; as an Ulster scene was necessary there was no recourse but to ask Sheila Robinson to redesign the theme according to information supplied by the Ulster Folk Museum. The 'block of four' concept might advantageously be abandoned at the same time in favour of single 5d stamps, as the SAC had already suggested this and it seemed impracticable to ask another artist to produce a design to blend in with Gentleman's style. Downes' recommendations were that Gentleman's 'Welsh slate' and Robinson's 'Kentish weatherboard' be discarded as the weakest designs; Gentleman's 'Fife harling' and 'Cotswold limestone' should be the 5d and 9d values respectively, and Robinson's 'Welsh stucco' and 'Armagh thatch' the 1s 0d and 1s 6d (the latter denomination had not previously been intended in the issue). Each was to be a single stamp, but Robinson's designs were to appear in the larger size she had initiated. Final essays were attached of each stamp except for the new Ulster design, for which Sheila Robinson had only had time to produce 'a very rough cameo' in colour, which was still

in need of amendment; this was based on an actual cottage in the grounds of the Ulster Folk Museum, typical of those in the south-east of the province. Harrisons supplied ten essays of her finished design on 15 October.

The last recorded discussion of the issue by the SAC was at its meeting on 21 October, chaired by Stuart Rose. A general feeling of disappointment was expressed at the new Ulster design; Rose explained that he was working with Sheila Robinson and Harrisons to achieve some improvements. The lilac colouring of the value figure on the 'Welsh stucco' was to be reduced in intensity.

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### **FINAL ESSAYS APPROVED**

J R Baxter of Operations & Overseas submitted essays of the four stamps to the Managing Director (Posts), G H Vieler, on 27 October; the essay of the 'Cotswold limestone' intended for the 9d still bore 5d and Robinson's 'Armagh thatch' design had yet to be finalised. Supporting minutes explained that the intentions were to strengthen the colour of the roof from 'lemon' to 'butterscotch', remove a wall to the right of the cottage to show the value figure more clearly, and to replace the legend 'Armagh thatch' with 'Ulster thatch' in the bottom left hand corner, in the same type used for 'Welsh stucco' (in the event, however, 'Ulster thatch' was to appear in the same type used for Gentleman's captions; no explanation was recorded). The essays were forwarded on 28 October to the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications (John Stonehouse, the former PMG, who changed his title when the Post Office became a public corporation on 1 October). On the same day Harrisons was asked to implement the changes. The Minister forwarded the essays to Buckingham Palace on 31 October; the Queen approved them and agreed the proposed changes, and returned the essays on 3 November. They reached Mr Vieler on 5 November, and a subsequent memorandum records the dispatch of three of the essays to Harrisons by D H Beaumont of Operations & Overseas on 6 November. The date when the final essay of the 'Cotswold limestone' 9d was returned to Harrisons is not recorded.

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### **PRESENTATION PACK AND FDC**

Text was prepared for the presentation pack and first day cover filler cards, and submitted to the Publicity Section of the Philatelic Bureau on 14 October by Miss Norah Page of Operations & Overseas. Designs for both pack and cover had been commissioned from Seamus Wilkinson Ltd, and the production programme was based on these designs being approved and submitted to the printers by 22 October. These were to hand on 21 October, but were not approved by the Director of Design, Stuart Rose. New designs for both items were sought from the artist Jeffrey Matthews, while Ronald Maddox was requested to

supply artwork for the interior of the pack. On 27 October Miss Page wrote to Mr Rose expressing her anxiety at the delay: 'This ... will reduce the period that [first day] covers will be on sale ... We are in competition here with dealers who sell commercially produced FDCs, many of which are at present put on sale well before the official cover, and we consider it important to try to reduce if not eliminate the period in which the public can see only the commercial covers.' Rose replied on 29 October that he had already seen Matthews' designs, and was awaiting results from Maddox; by 6 November, all the required artwork had been approved and submitted to the printers. Maddox's designs for the pack made a striking contrast with the stamps as they included his own treatments of Cotswold stone cottages at Bibury, Gloucestershire, and Welsh stucco houses in Aberaeron; a study of half-timbered houses at Lavenham, Suffolk was also included.

Further problems arose with the printing of the first day envelope; while orders for the FDC inserts and the presentation pack had been placed directly with Moore and Matthes Ltd, there was a requirement that the envelope be put out to tender via HM Stationery Office. The stipulated date for delivery to Supplies Division was 12 December, and the earliest date HMSO could obtain for full sized (7½ inches by 4¼ inches) covers was 11 January. An order with an agreed delivery date of 12 December was finally placed with Dickinson Lowe on 11 November, but only by changing the size specifications to 7.375 inches by 4¼ inches. This was barely acceptable to the Post Office and hardly welcome. The delivery date was met, but the covers proved to have left hand flaps instead of the desired right hand. It was necessary to accept these as it would have taken three weeks to rectify the mistake, and Supplies Division was firm that it could not guarantee full distribution in time if it was not to receive deliveries until the first week of January. Production of the presentation packs also ran into difficulties: Moore and Matthes did not succeed in delivering the full complement of these to Supplies until 9 January 1970, three weeks after the required date. A note by Miss Page blames these problems largely on the Philatelic Bureau's publicity section, unfortunately without specifying why.

The stamps were officially announced in a press release on 6 January 1970, and issued as planned on 11 February. The 5d and 9d were sold in sheets of 120, and the larger (41mm by 31mm, as opposed to 41mm by 24mm) 1s 0d and 1s 6d in sheets of 60, all stamps bearing two phosphor bands. The stamps were withdrawn on 10 February 1971; final sales were 81,581,880 of the 5d, 11,723,160 of the 9d, 10,258,320 of the 1s 0d and 8,969,280 of the 1s 6d. There were 116,983 presentation packs produced at a cost of £15,335, of which 95,981 were sold. A total of 550,000 official first day covers were printed; total 'first day of issue' postings were 734,000. There was no special handstamp connected with the issue, but FDI postmarks for Dunfermline and Edinburgh were associated with the 5d, as were Gloucester with the 9d, Belfast with the 1s 6d and Aberaeron (with the extra wording 'Diwrnod Ymddangosiad Cyntaf') with the 1s 0d. Ordinary cds postmarks also proved appropriate from Auchtermuchty and Culross, both in Fife, with the 5d, for Bibury, Chipping Campden, and



Cirencester with the 9d, and for Holywood, Co. Down with the 1s 6d. Several slogan postmarks were in use on the day of issue but only 'Keep Britain Green 1970 European Conservation Year', used in Belfast, Birkenhead, Derby and inner London, might seem appropriate.

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### SAC's DISSATISFACTION WITH ISSUE

Immediately prior to the issue, an unsigned article in 'Stamp Weekly' of 5 February attacked the SAC for its choice: Is there anyone who thinks the designs for the British Rural Architecture stamps are good except for the artists and the committee who selected them? ... A great many philatelists would argue that some of the 'unadopted' designs are better than those selected (this was a reference to a selection of the unaccepted designs which had already been published in the 'British Philatelic Bulletin'). In a letter of 19 February to Mr Lousada of the SAC, Downes described the article as 'rather intemperate and hollow', and continued 'I have made enquiries and find that the writer of the article is a bit of a lightweight in philatelic circles ... nothing more than a feature-writing journalist with an eye on circulation.' Despite Downes' dismissive attitude, the attack appears to have stung, and came under discussion at the next SAC meeting on 4 March. Lousada recalled that the committee had been less than happy with the designs as finally agreed, and felt that they had not been allotted enough time to achieve a proper result. Downes replied that he was 'personally very concerned' to maintain the principle that there had to be time for any changes recommended by the SAC to be implemented. The committee as a whole came to the conclusion that the aim for the future should be to decide each year's stamp programme two years in advance, rather than a year as was current.

Some indication of the SAC's feeling that they had not been given adequate time to get the best possible results can perhaps be gleaned from the fact that miscellaneous papers of the period include quotes from the transcript of a Canadian television programme praising the stamps, this recondite example being apparently the sole traceable instance of critical enthusiasm for the issue. That the SAC came under considerable pressure to finalise the stamp designs, particularly after this had not been achieved by the end of August as first hoped, is clear from the minutes. The problems arising with presentation pack and FDC production also suggest that the permitted time was inadequate. A visible sign of the haste with which the final essays were brought to completion is in the caption to Sheila Robinson's 'Ulster thatch' stamp: it had been decided to change the lettering to the style used on the 'Welsh stucco' stamp, whereas in the event the original style was retained, although no discussion on this point was recorded.

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## THE ARTISTS

DAVID GENTLEMAN, RDI, was born 11 March 1930 and studied at the Royal College of Art. As well as producing a huge body of work in the form of adopted and unadopted stamp designs for the Post Office between 1962 and 1989, he has also been successful in such diverse fields as murals, watercolours, poster design, book illustration and wood engraving.

SHEILA ROBINSON was born in 1925 and attended the Royal College of Art first as a student, and from 1965 as a teacher. Prior to her British Rural Architecture set she designed the 3d stamp for the 900th anniversary of Westminster Abbey in 1966. She worked as a freelance illustrator and mural and poster artist, and exhibited prints at the Royal Academy and other galleries.

RONALD MADDOX, FCSD, was born 5 October 1930. After National Service in the Air Ministry Design Unit he worked in advertising agencies as a designer and illustrator, eventually rising to art director before going freelance in 1962. From 1966 he contributed many designs for stamps, booklet covers, etc, to the Post Office, his most recent success in this field being the Industrial Archaeology set of 1989. In 1987 he won the Prix de l'Art Philatelique and in 1989 became President of the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour.

JEFFREY MATTHEWS, FCSD, was born 3 April 1928. He became a freelance graphic designer in 1952. Since first submitting designs for the General Letter Office issue of 1960 he has regularly contributed work to the Post Office for philatelic material of all kinds, his successes including the Order of the Thistle set of 1987 and Penny Black 150th anniversary stamp of 1990. He has also produced work for other bodies as diverse as the 'Sunday Times', 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', Royal Mint and HM Stationery Office.

GILES ALLEN  
7 September 1993

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