

STAMP HISTORY

British Explorers

Date of issue: 18 APRIL 1973



The 1973 stamp programme was first discussed by the Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC) on 20 October 1971. The Committee put forward the following recommendations for consideration by the Post Office:

an EEC issue;

Tourist and Wembley anniversary stamps;

General Anniversaries - featuring Livingstone; Wren and Inigo Jones;

British Paintings;

Charity or Thematic issue;

Christmas issue.

The programme was next discussed on 15 February 1972. Some amendments had been made, which the Chairman, E G White, Director of Marketing, explained: instead of a General Anniversaries issue, it was proposed there be another issue in the architecture series, this time featuring Inigo Jones and Wren, and there was to be another Explorers issue. The idea was that, following the Polar Explorers set of 1972, the 1973 set would depict explorers of 'hot' climates. This issue would centre on the centenary of the death of Livingstone.

It was proposed by the Post Office that the stamp programme for 1973 include:

EEC (European Economic Community)

Tourist stamp

British Explorers

Cricket

Charity stamp

British Paintings

British Architecture

Christmas.

ARTWORK RECEIVED

Designs for the Explorers issue were commissioned from Marjorie Saynor, of Saxon Artists Ltd, who designed the Polar Explorers set of 1972, and Jennifer Toombs, a freelance designer. The production files hold no record of any instructions to artists.

Artwork was received by the Post Office from Marjorie Saynor on 20 March 1972 of three designs plus three boards with alternative pencil drawings, and the following day from Jennifer Toombs of three designs plus a board bearing four bromides.

The SAC examined the work on 23 March and preferred that by Saynor, agreeing she be asked to develop her designs, concentrating on Livingstone, Drake, Raleigh and Sturt.

Finished artwork by Saynor was seen by the SAC on 4 May. The designs were approved subject to the following amendments:

to reverse the profile of either Drake or Raleigh in order to make them less similar in appearance;

to obtain a better colour distinction in the background between the pink and mauve, which were very much alike;

to raise the portraits in the space to be the same proportionately as on the Polar Explorer issue;

to aim for greater clarity in the maps in the background.

PAYMENT TO ARTIST

On 18 May D Beaumont, Postal Headquarters, wrote to Jennifer Toombs saying that unfortunately her designs had not been accepted. A payment of £450 was made for her three designs.

FURTHER ARTWORK SUBMITTED

Saynor subsequently submitted further artwork comprising two boards bearing four designs: 3p Livingstone, 5p Drake, 7½p Raleigh, 9p Sturt. These were amendments to three of her original designs numbered plus one extra design. Also submitted were four map sketches and four portrait templates. The artwork was forwarded to the printers on 2 June.

SIR HENRY MORTON STANLEY TO BE INCLUDED

The production files contain a report arguing for the inclusion of Sir Henry Morton Stanley. The undated report, originating from Postal Headquarters but unsigned, states 'Harrisons have just begun work on translating the art work for this issue into print' and was therefore written sometime in June or possibly July 1972. The report suggests that possibly the 'favourable reception of the recent churches issue' was due, in part, to the harmony of its theme, 'each building unmistakably English in style'. This harmony was thought to be missing from the British Explorers set which trended to be split down the middle into Livingstone and Sturt, and Drake and Raleigh. The latter two, it was thought, were 'more closely associated in the public mind with sea warfare than exploration'.

It was suggested that to tighten up the theme the whole issue should celebrate 'one of the greatest feats of exploration to take place on earth, the discovery of the source of the Nile'. An issue devoted to hot climate exploration would provide a counterpoint to the Polar Explorers issue. The portrayal of Drake could be left until 1988 when the Post Office would 'almost certainly want to commemorate the 400th Anniversary of the Defeat of the Spanish Armada'. This report recommended that the Post Office issue five stamps, instead of four, featuring those from a period of exploration in Africa dominated by explorers from Britain; Livingstone, Stanley, Speke, Burton and Sturt, with the stamp depicting Stanley bearing the 7½p value for the American market (7½p being the basic airmail letter rate to America at that time).

At the SAC meeting held on 27 July, the Chairman said that it had been decided to issue a stamp depicting Sir Henry Morton Stanley, owing to his close association with Livingstone. The Committee was told that to omit Stanley would probably cause disappointment especially in Wales, his birth place. After discussion it was agreed to the five stamps, using the four existing designs plus Stanley, with values 9p - Sturt, 7½p - Raleigh, 5p - Drake and 3p - Livingstone and Stanley. The two 3p stamps would have a common background colour. Mr York, who attended the meetings representing the stamp printers Harrison and Sons, proposed that Saynor be asked to amend her designs of Stanley 'to equate with the essays of the other four subjects, which will shortly be available'. It was, however, necessary to obtain approval from the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications for the inclusion of Stanley. Written approval was not given until 8 December, but this in no way impeded the design process.

PAYMENT MADE TO SAXON ARTISTS

On 10 July a payment of £600 was made to Saxon Artists for four completed designs by Marjorie Saynor.

MORE ARTWORK AND FIRST ESSAYS PRODUCED

On 29 August the Post Office received two further designs by Saynor depicting Livingstone and Stanley.

Essays were sent to the Post Office by Harrisons on 6 September of the other three designs. The new artwork was shown to the Committee on 7 September together with the essays.

The essays were approved subject to the following amendments:
the portrait of Drake to be straightened up, the hair colouring lightened and the detail of the collar made more pronounced;
all stamps were to have a dash instead of a dot between the dates;
the line of both beards was to be less clean-cut.

The new designs were also approved and it was agreed that they should be essayed. On 11 October Harrisons forwarded further essays.

ESSAYS TESTED FOR EFFICIENCY OF PHOSPHOR

Once essayed the two new designs were sent to LMS (London Materials Section) for tests by the Post Office Chemist. The Livingstone essay was approved but found to be 'acceptable only if broad (5/8 inch) phosphor bars used' and that 'phosphor coated paper would not be suitable'. The same applied to the Stanley design as it had the same green background while the head and shoulders portrait of Stanley made no difference. It appears all five essays were tested by LMS again as a report dated 20 October was sent to Postal Headquarters.

The report stated that while four of the designs were acceptable for use with either two vertical phosphor bars, 5/8th inch wide, or all-over phosphor, the 9p Charles Sturt design was not acceptable for use with two vertical phosphor bars 5/8th inch wide. A single vertical band extending from the left edge of the design and at least 21 mm wide or, preferably, all-over phosphor would be required with this stamp. The Post Office subsequently decided that the stamps should be produced with all-over phosphor.

At the meeting held on 19 October 1972 essays were shown that incorporated some of the amendments. Stuart Rose, Post Office Design Advisor, explained that Saynor was preparing

additional drawings of the backgrounds, which would be amended later. After discussion the Committee recommended that further amendments should be made to the essays: all stamps should have a dash instead of a dot between the dates; this had been recommended previously but not carried out; Drake could be straightened up still further, and in relation to the other portraits, could also be higher up. The face was thought to be too pale and the rings round the eyes were missing on the second essays; regarding the Raleigh essay, Saynor had not liked the effect of the ruffles on the collar, and they had therefore been left off of the second essays. The Committee felt this had increased the appearance of detachment of the head from the body. It felt that the beard was still too sharp. It was agreed that the solution should be left to Saynor; the essay featuring Sturt was approved; it was felt that Stanley's coat should be darker in order to avoid the appearance of separation from Livingstone. It was also suggested that attention be given to the colour of Stanley's tie.

More essays were received on 28 December.

On 8 January 1973 Harrisons were informed that Saynor had raised the following points about the essays:

Livingstone/Stanley - the African land mass should be identical in tone for each stamp.
Raleigh - the eyes are too protuberant and should be taken back a shade.

Further essays of the 5p Drake and 7½p Raleigh arrived on 31 January 1973.

On 13 February 1973 D Beaumont, Postal Headquarters, wrote to the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), reminding that just over a year previous it had kindly given the Post Office permission to reproduce certain photographs and maps to be used for British Polar Explorers stamps. Beaumont explained that the Post Office was to issue another set of stamps featuring British Explorers in April. Marjorie Saynor was again the designer and had once more taken some of her subjects from portraits and maps in RGS. Beaumont asked for confirmation to the reproduction of the following subjects and for advice on any copyrights involved:

Livingstone - Portrait from a photograph no. B9574. Map adapted from 'South Central Africa' Cassells General Atlas, Countries of the World, 1865.

Stanley - Portrait from a photograph no. B8384. Map as for Livingstone.

Drake - Map adapted from a print taken from an original copy in the map room of RGS of 'Vera Totie Expeditionis Nauticae', drawn by the Francis Drake expedition in 1759.

Raleigh - Map adapted from a print as in Drake above.

Beaumont offered an invitation to view the essays. The RGS took up this invitation and R A Gardiner, Keeper of the Map Room RGS, wrote to Beaumont expressing appreciation.

Gardiner told Beaumont that the feeling in RGS was that the designs were not quite up to the standard of the first series, 'The portraits are too crisp and sharp, while the maps of Africa and Australia lack character, being just vague continental shapes'. Regarding the maps the following advice was given:

The map used for the Livingstone background is certainly not that quoted in your letter; it may well be the map of 'Africa' in the same atlas. The map used for the Drake stamp is the most successful; it can clearly be identified as derived from the 1579 map quoted. The map used for Raleigh is not the same as the Drake map, and has not been identified.

Gardiner made 'a serious comment on the portrait of H M Stanley':

1973 is the centenary of the death of Livingstone, and therefore an appropriate year for the issue of a stamp bearing his portrait; the issue at the same time of a Stanley stamp can only emphasise the link between the two men. When Stanley met Livingstone in 1871 he was thirty years old, yet you have portrayed him as a white-haired old man! It is recorded that his black beard turned white during his journey down the Congo river in 1877. In this respect the portrait is unfortunate.

Beaumont acknowledged the point about the background maps and stated that the Post Office would omit any reference to the RGS in relation to them in publicity handouts. Regarding Stanley, Gardiner was told that the Post Office understood his thoughts, 'but since the designer chose this particular print and the series is devoted wholly to Explorers without any specific incident in mind we have been content to accept the designers concept'.

Beaumont also wrote to the National Portrait Gallery on 13 February 1973. He explained that included were stamps depicting Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh. The designer had taken these two subjects from paintings in the National Portrait Gallery and therefore Beaumont asked about the possibility of any copyright being involved and if so how this might be cleared. The paintings used were:

Sir Francis Drake - painting by unknown artist No. 1627; Hilliard miniature no. 4851; engraving attributed to J Hondius no. 3905 (the designer had used all three to achieve her final portrait).

Sir Walter Raleigh - Hilliard miniature no. 4106.

Dr R Strong, Director of the National Art Gallery, replied that he was delighted to hear that its pictures were being used for the stamps. He said he would be grateful if the Post Office acknowledged in its publicity that they were from miniatures and portraits on view at the Gallery. Wishing the venture every success, Strong reminded Beaumont that when the Post

Office had used its portrait of Queen Elizabeth I in 1968 it had been a 'tremendous boost for the Gallery'.

The portrait of Charles Sturt on the 9p stamp was taken from the painting by J M Crossland in the Art Gallery of South Australia. On 13 February the Post Office sought approval to reproduce the print, given by the Gallery on 6 March with no reproduction fee charged.

ROYAL APPROVAL SOUGHT

During February Sir John Eden, the Minister for Posts and Telecommunications, wrote to the Private Secretary to the Queen enclosing essays of the stamps which were approved by the Queen.

FINAL PAYMENTS

A payment of £900 was made to Saxon Artists on 5 March, for one additional design and five successful designs by Saynor.

A payment of £8 was made in March to the National Portrait Gallery in respect of colour reproduction fees for the four paintings used as reference by Marjorie Saynor.

DELAYS

An internal memo dated 23 March advises that there was to be a delay in supplying post offices with the 3p stamp. Requisitions for the 3p were cut by 50 per cent, except in LPR (London Postal Region) and EPR (Eastern Postal Region) where the requisitions had already been met. The remaining 50 per cent would hopefully be available before the date of issue. The reasons for the delay, all originating at Harrisons, were:

- an overtime ban by the print workers;
- double the expected wastage in production so far;
- the all-over phosphor cylinders had been destroyed when the destruction of the 'Tree' cylinders had been agreed.

THE STAMPS ARE ISSUED

The five stamps were issued on 18 April 1973. The stamps, vertical in format, were slightly larger than double definitive size and were issued 100 to a sheet. They were produced in

photogravure on coated, unwatermarked paper by Harrison and Sons with all-over phosphor. The set included two 3p values printed se-tenant.

Values and colours were:

3p - turquoise, pink, brown, black, and gold

5p - blue, grey, pink, black, orange, gold, and brown

7½p - mauve, pink, dark brown, blue, black, brown, and gold

9p - pink, yellow, brown, black, blue, and gold.

One of the 3p stamps featured a portrait of Dr David Livingstone (1813-1873) superimposed on a map of Africa. Livingstone, a Scot, went to Africa in 1840 in the service of the London Missionary Society. Abhorred by the conditions inflicted on the indigenous peoples by the slave trade, he devoted over 30 years of his life to the welfare of these people. Livingstone saw his primary duty 'to explore and open out the country, teaching as he went but not settling down'. In doing this he discovered Victoria Falls and opened up vast areas of the continent that had been completely unknown.

The other 3p stamp featured a portrait of Sir Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904), again superimposed on a map of Africa. Stanley, a Welshman born in poverty and bought up in a workhouse, was a much-travelled journalist and discovered the source of the Congo. Following rumours of Livingstone's death, Stanley was sent by the 'New York Herald' to substantiate or refute these reports. It was at Ujiji that Stanley found Livingstone, alive but ailing, in one of history's most famous encounters.

The portraits of both Stanley and Livingstone were taken from prints held by the Royal Geographical Society.

The 5p stamp shows Sir Francis Drake (circa 1541-1596) against a global map. Sir Francis was the first Englishman to circumnavigate the world: the journey took two years and ten months. The portrait is based on two miniatures and an engraving held by the National Portrait Gallery in London. One painting is by an unknown artist, the other by Nicholas Hilliard; the engraving is attributed to Jodocus Hondius.

Sir Walter Raleigh (circa 1552-1618) on the 7½p stamp is shown against a global map. Sir Walter is famous for his voyages to the West Indies and North America and was responsible for giving the name Virginia - after the Virgin Queen - to the eastern seaboard of North America. His portrait is taken from another Nicholas Hilliard miniature in the National Portrait Gallery.

Charles Sturt (1795-1869), called the 'Father of Australian Exploration', led expeditions along the previously impenetrable marshes of Macquarie, the Bogan and Castlereagh rivers.

He discovered the Darling River, which he named after the Governor of New South Wales and went on to find the links of the Murrumbidgee River with the Lachlam River, and discovered the Murray, opening up over 2,000 miles of water communications. The portrait was taken from the painting by J M Crossland, held in the South Australian Art Gallery in Adelaide. The portrait was set against a map of Australia.

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

An official first day envelope, designed by John Ward, was available from the Philatelic Bureau and all Head Post Offices. The Bureau also provided covers bearing all five stamps cancelled with a pictorial handstamp, the design of which featured a globe. Covers bearing the stamps posted in philatelic posting boxes received the ordinary first day of issue cancellation.

QUANTITIES SOLD

The quantities sold were:

3p (both designs) – 56,262,800

5p – 8,502,300

7½p – 6,572,700

9p – 5,229,900

Presentation pack – 102,950.

The stamps were withdrawn from sale on 17 April 1974.

REFERENCES

British Postal Museum & Archive files:

- MD/CO/3182
- MD/CO/3183
- MD/CO/3184
- POST 54 SAC Minutes 1970 - 1972

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