

## European Communities

Date of issue: 3 JANUARY 1973



On 17 September 1971 the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Anthony Royle, approached Christopher Chataway, the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, with the suggestion that a stamp be issued the next year depicting the European Economic Community. Royle was told it was not included in the 1972 programme now far advanced, but it had been suggested that there should be an issue in 1973 to mark Britain's entry into the EEC. On being told this, Royle agreed that 1973 would be the right time, adding 'It would be excellent if the announcement could coincide with our entry into full membership of the new Treaty'. Royle added that John Selwyn Gummer MP had an idea of mounting a nationwide children's competition to design a set of stamps for this occasion and was trying to interest the 'Daily Mirror' in sponsoring it. Although the Post Office considered this idea 'enterprising and initially attractive', it was, however, not thought suitable owing to the 'highly specialised nature of stamp design' with the difficulties being greater still when the subject proposed was 'a concept rather than a person or scene'. He was told that 'to invite the lay public to offer designs involves the hazard that none amongst those submitted in this way may in the end be usable ... we could not in such a public way accept the risk of raising the hopes of young people when we felt that in the end we would almost certainly have to dash them'.

### THE 1973 STAMP PROGRAMME

The 1973 stamp programme was discussed by the Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC) on 20 October 1971. The following subjects were recommended:

an EEC issue - as soon as the House of Commons decision has been made on the Common Market we should commission designs;  
Tourist and Wembley anniversary stamp;  
General Anniversaries - featuring Livingstone, Wren and Inigo Jones;  
British Paintings, probably featuring Reynolds and Raeburn, and possibly also other artists;  
Charity or Thematic issue;  
Christmas issue.

On 23 December 1971 A E F Lane, of the Marketing Department Postal Headquarters, wrote to D M Elliott, of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and who also represented the Ministry at the SAC meetings, regarding the 1973 stamp programme. Lane said that the Post Office was hoping to make a public announcement of the programme and that, as the first issue would be that commemorating entry to the EEC on 1 January 1973, any advice on the best approach would be valued. Lane wondered whether it would be appropriate to announce a firm intention to issue a set of stamps once the Prime Minister had signed the Treaty of Accession on 22 January. Elliot replied that, having consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, he could confirm that once the signing of the Treaty had been carried out it would be acceptable to announce the set of stamps.

The EEC stamp was not discussed by the SAC again until 15 February 1972 when it saw prize-winning designs on the EEC theme from the Student Bursary competition organised by the Royal Society of Arts, as well as designs by Peter Gauld and Philip van Buren. The Committee did not consider any of these designs suitable and recommended that fresh ideas be commissioned. It was therefore agreed that a brief should be prepared and that the bursary award winner should be invited to submit designs, along with other designers.

Invitations were extended to Peter Gauld and Philip Sharland, who both had previous successes in submitting designs, Peter Murdoch, who had been responsible for the graphics of the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico and was a director of Murdoch Design Associates Ltd, and Samuel Thompson, from City of Leicester Polytechnic, who was the Royal Society of Arts competition winner in the stamp design section.

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## **INSTRUCTIONS TO ARTISTS**

A brief was distributed to all four designers:

There will be four stamps, two at 3p and two at 5p each measuring 1.5 inches by 1.07 inches printing area (1.6 inches by 1.17 inches perforation to perforation).

The stamps should stress the economic nature of the Community, but may also take into account the political, cultural and sociological implications. They could reflect the influence of the UK on Europe or vice versa.

The designs should underline the unity of the Community and therefore too much emphasis on the separate countries which comprise the community should be avoided.

The stamps may show four different designs or they may be four colour ways of one design.

The stamps may be portrait or landscape, but the set should not be a mixture of the two formats.

Each of the four stamps must be readily identifiable to avoid confusion between the values.

The designs should be such as to produce a consistent set, both in subject matter and in design style.

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## **ARTWORK RECEIVED**

The following artwork was received by the Post Office and examined by the SAC on 23 March.

P Gauld - Sheet of bromides

P Sharland - Sheet of bromides plus  
one board bearing four envelopes

P Murdoch - Sheet of bromides plus two envelopes and one colour separation

S Thompson - two boards each bearing three designs.

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## **DELIBERATIONS OF THE STAMP ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

After discussion the Committee agreed that Peter Murdoch be asked to develop his designs and that he should give some thought to an alternative to the existing metallic treatment as some doubt existed as to whether this would prove successful. In addition, Committee member Professor Guyatt undertook to obtain alternative ideas on design from students at the Royal College of Art.

A complication had arisen in that three other countries were possibly to join the Community and the Chairman of the SAC, E G White Director of Marketing, indicated that it would be necessary to consult the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) on whether the design should include these.

At its meeting on 4 May the SAC was told that the FCO was happy with Murdoch's idea of the 'jigsaw' design and recommended that the '1 of 10' formula was the one to follow. However, a definite outcome on the number of new member countries would not be known until October and with this in mind the Committee agreed that Murdoch should be asked to produce designs to cover the alternatives of there being eight, nine or ten member countries to represent. It was also agreed that the printers should have the cylinders ready for production to begin as soon as a definite decision was known.

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## PAYMENT TO ARTISTS

Peter Gauld received payment of £250 on 27 March as an agreed fee for the designs commissioned. During May Sharland and Murdoch each received £600 in payment of four commissioned designs at £150 each. £450 was paid to Thompson in July, with 10 per cent of this fee being retained by the City of Leicester Polytechnic.

Murdoch was sent a cheque for a further £600 on 15 December for his successful designs, this despite the fact that the Post Office eventually only used three. The Post Office was somewhat surprised when, on 23 February, it received an invoice from Murdoch for an additional £260. The Post Office felt that the £150 included in the £600 paid in December had accounted for any extra work carried out by Murdoch. However, it honoured this request by making a further payment of £110 on 25 June 1973, which was for first and second revisions of artwork and for unadopted designs, less the previous overpayment of £150.

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## DESIGNS TESTED FOR SUITABILITY OF OVERPRINTING WITH PHOSPHOR

On 4 July London Materials Section (LMS) wrote to Postal Headquarters giving comments on the suitability of the following stamp designs for overprinting with two 5/16 inch wide vertical phosphor bars, one at each side of the stamp:

- 3p – golden yellow ‘Europe’, grey background
- 3p – tan ‘Europe’, grey background
- 3p – apple-green ‘Europe’, grey background
- 5p – mauve ‘Europe’, grey background
- 5p – darker mauve ‘Europe’, grey background
- 5p – eau-de-nil ‘Europe’, grey background
- 5p – turquoise ‘Europe’, grey background
- 5p – turquoise ‘Europe’, brown background
- 5p – white ‘Europe’, pale blue background
- 5p – tan ‘Europe’, acid yellow background.

The first eight were considered acceptable if the backgrounds were lightened. The ninth was considered satisfactory, but not the tenth.

On 20 October tests were carried out on three more essays.

- 3p – red ‘Europe’, lilac background

5p – green ‘Europe’, blue background and 5p – dark blue ‘Europe’, blue background as a se-tenant pair.

All were found acceptable with either two 5/8th inch wide vertical phosphor bars or with phosphor all over.

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### **MORE ARTWORK SEEN BY THE COMMITTEE**

On 20 July the Post Office received two further pieces of artwork from Murdoch that were shown to the SAC on 27 July. The Chairman told the Committee that it had now been decided to issue only three stamps instead of four, in the values of one at 3p and one pair at 5p. The reason cited was the heavy programme for 1973.

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### **FIRST ESSAYS PRODUCED**

Postal Headquarters sent Harrison and Sons, the stamp printers, the artwork on 7 August with the following instructions:

The following colours will apply to the stamps:

3p background - blue lake; jigsaw element:

(i) monastral blue

(ii) emerald green

Although only one stamp was required for this value the alternatives were needed to determine the colour to use.

5p background - violet tint; jigsaw element:

(i) burnt sienna

(ii) fast red

The essays were to be produced with the ‘ten’ section jigsaw make-up only.

It would seem the instructions were amended as when Harrisons sent essays to Postal Headquarters on 6 September 1972 the blue designs bore the 5p value. The essays had the following colours: 3p mauve and brown, and mauve and red; 5p two shades of blue, and blue and green.

These essays were shown to the SAC on 7 September from which it had to choose three. The essays were approved and the colours chosen were red, blue, and green.

On 11 October Harrisons sent further essays, colours unknown, to Postal Headquarters, and on 18 October revised 5p essays in two shades of blue.

At the SAC meeting on 19 October, the Chairman said it had now been established that the title European Communities should be used rather than European Economic Community as on entering Europe Britain joined not one but three communities: the European Economic Community, the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. Essays were shown bearing this new inscription and depicting nine member countries. The Committee approved the essays and agreed that work should proceed. The printers were given the go ahead before Royal approval was obtained regarding design and colour, which the Post Office expected to be a formality. This break with normal procedure was felt necessary to ensure that the stamps were ready in time.

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## **POLITICAL OBJECTIONS RAISED**

A meeting was held between the Post Office and the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications to discuss political objections to the proposed EC stamp that had been raised by the Foreign Office. An exact date of this meeting is unknown but evidence suggests it predates 23 November 1972.

The Foreign Office had seen the design in April, and although it had no objection at the time, circumstances had changed. The Foreign Office now argued that the success of West Germany's Eastern Policy made any reference to the division of Germany undesirable. In its opinion the right hand piece of the jigsaw, which was partially shown, could be taken to represent Germany. The Foreign Secretary had therefore written to the Ministry asking for a change in design but not in the issue date. The Post Office pointed out that this would be extremely difficult to achieve. The date of issue had always been considered undesirable by the Post Office because of the disruption of Christmas, but had accepted it at the request of the Government.

The Post Office argued against a change of design on the grounds that it would mean a completely fresh start with a loss estimated at £30,000. Further to this, with such a tight schedule, normal distribution could not be guaranteed. After much discussion the Post Office agreed to proceed with the existing design, but produce a new design as well, if the Foreign Office persisted in its objections to the existing design. At this stage it was noted that with well over a million sheets printed, no matter how stringent the precautions some with the existing design could be distributed by mistake.

It would seem, however, that further investigations by the Post Office suggested that it was not feasible to change the design in time to enable distribution for the day of issue.

The Post Office was 'not prepared to entertain the risk of failure' and persuaded the Foreign Office to relent. The issued stamp showed 8½ jigsaw pieces.

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### **ROYAL APPROVAL SOUGHT**

Essays of the proposed stamps were submitted to the Queen on 28 November 1972 by Sir John Eden, the Minister of Posts and Telecommunication. Two days later Martin Charteris, Private Secretary to the Queen, replied:

I cannot pretend that The Queen views these designs with much enthusiasm. Indeed, Her Majesty's immediate reaction on looking at the 3p denomination was that ... the design made her think of a swastika and with the red in mind she read 'Communities' as 'Communist'.

The Queen is, nonetheless, prepared to approve the designs but would like the possibility of altering the red of the 3p denomination to be considered.

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### **CHANGE OF COLOUR FOR 3p STAMP**

Despite the fact that most of the 3p stamps had now been printed, the Post Office felt obliged to change the colour. On 1 December Harrisons was instructed to print an amended run of the 3p stamp in yellow-ochre. No other changes in design were required.

All of the red stamps should have been destroyed, although two sheets are retained at the British postal Museum & Archive. There have been reports of examples existing in public hands.

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### **CHANGE IN GUM USED**

Gum Arabic was used on the first sheets of the 3p stamps from Harrisons as they were printed on the same paper as used for the Silver Wedding stamps. On instructions from Supplies Division the remainder of the stamps bore PVA (Polyvinyl Alcohol) gum.

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### **THE STAMPS ARE ISSUED**

The Post Office issued a press release on 5 December announcing the stamps, describing them as a unified design of interlocking 'jigsaw puzzle' pieces expressing the spirit of Britain's close involvement with the other countries making up the European Communities.

Marking Britain's entry into the European Communities the stamps bore 'a design of nine pieces joined in a corporate pattern, one of them with a strong Union Jack motif. The set comprised three stamps, all in vertical format: a 3p design in yellow ochre on a lilac background and two 5p values issued together in horizontal se-tenant pairs throughout the sheet. One of the two 5p stamps was in blue and the other green, but both had the same light blue background. This was designer Peter Murdoch's first stamp design for the Post Office and, describing his work, he had 'endeavoured to capture the spirit of the close involvement of Britain with the other countries that together form the European Communities, with a symbolic representation of this historic event'.

All three stamps were printed in photogravure by Harrison and Sons Ltd, all had phosphor lines and were slightly larger than double definitive size and issued in sheets of 100.

The quantities sold were:

3p (inland first class rate) - 54,812,900

5p (base rate for letters to Europe) - 11,868,500 (this figure represents both colour versions)

A presentation pack was available, of which a total of 105,850 was sold for 18p, containing one each of the mint stamps.

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## FIRST DAY COVER

On 6 October Murdoch was invited to design a first day envelope and presentation pack for the issue.

For the envelope he was offered £20 in respect of rough sketches; if these were approved and accepted a further fee of £43 would be made, making a total of £63. For the presentation pack he was offered £30 in respect of the rough sketches and if approved and accepted a further £54, making a total of £84.

The Philatelic Bureau provided a cover bearing all three stamps cancelled 'Philatelic Bureau, Edinburgh', addressed and posted for an inclusive charge of 24p. Special philatelic posting boxes were provided at 184 post offices throughout Britain for collectors who wished to post their own covers, with any of the new stamps, alone or in combination. Items posted in these boxes were given the standard first-day-of-issue cancellation.

Andy Pendlebury  
March 1995



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## REFERENCES

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- PE 293, issued 31 December 1972.