

SPECIAL STAMP HISTORY

150th Anniversary of Public Railways

Date of issue: 13 AUGUST 1975



The birth of passenger-carrying public rail travel is commonly traced back to the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway on 27 September 1825. The line was first promoted in 1818 by Durham colliery owners and a Darlington businessman, Edward Pease, as an economic means of transporting coal to the port of Stockton-on-Tees. In 1821 the engineer George Stephenson, given charge of the project, persuaded his employers that steam rather than horse traction should be used, and designed the locomotive engine 'Active' (subsequently renamed 'Locomotion') at a cost of £500. At its opening the line ran from Brusselton near Bishop Auckland via Darlington to Stockton, over 38 miles of single track with passing places; Brusselton has since been absorbed into the town of Shildon.

Stephenson drove the train, achieving speeds of up to 15-16 mph, although its average speed was later calculated at about 8 mph. 'Locomotion' hauled a 90-ton load consisting of twelve wagons of coal, 22 wagons with seated passengers, and, in a special passenger vehicle called 'Experiment' and described as 'an elegant covered coach', the Directors of the Railway accompanied by other notables. At a conservative estimate some 500 passengers rode the train that day. 'Locomotion' was eventually withdrawn from service after blowing up; later, however, it was rebuilt and by 1975 – 150 years after its historic journey – was housed at Bank Top station in Darlington as an object of civic pride. The original working version is often referred to as 'Locomotion No. 1'.

ORIGINS OF THE ISSUE

The earliest recorded proposal for a stamp to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the railways dates back to March 1971, when British Rail made an exploratory approach to the Post Office's Public Relations Department (PRD). On 17 March Philip Paul, Deputy Director of Public Relations for the Postal Business, sent a minute on the subject to G R Downes, Director of Operations and Overseas, and also Chairman of the Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC). Downes replied next day that it was too early to anticipate the 1975 programme, but

that the idea was ‘a strong starter ... Philatelists will want to see locomotives on the stamps, but we will await an approach by the Railways.’ Later that year Andrew Goldstein of the National Postal Museum (NPM) informally asked Downes ‘why, in view of the thematic attraction of railways and the wealth of British history in this field, we did not issue a series on locomotives’. In a letter to A C Rigo de Righi, Curator of the NPM, on 12 November, Downes explained that an important railway anniversary fell due in 1975 and the current intention was ‘to hold our fire until then and make that the occasion for a brilliant set on railways’.

Between these two approaches to Downes during 1971, the results of the first Royal Society of Arts Stamp Design Bursary competition had been judged, by a panel substantially drawn from members of the SAC. The winning entries, on the theme of Industrial Archaeology, were published in the June edition of the ‘British Philatelic Bulletin’ and provoked a quick public response; in a letter dated 18 June P A Kilgallen praised the excellence of the designs and suggested similar sets on locomotives and railway architecture – ‘the possibilities are endless’. He cited ‘the appalling fact that we, the inventors of the steam locomotive, have never portrayed a railway engine on our stamps’. In another letter on 5 August, Paul Gubbins specifically mentioned the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway on 27 September 1825 as the first occasion of passenger-carrying rail travel anywhere in the world; he hoped that the Post Office would mark the 150th anniversary with a stamp to remedy its previous neglect in this area.

PUBLIC INTEREST IN RAILWAYS

It was true that British stamps had, almost uniquely, never featured railway locomotives (in early 1974 the editor of a German magazine, ‘Der Eisenbahner-Philatelist’, estimated that some 3,000 stamps on railway themes had been issued to date throughout the world, some by countries with no railways of their own; he also claimed for good measure that 9 per cent of collectors were railway-oriented). It was true of British stamps that technological themes generally had been ignored until official pressure and public interest had brought about a change within recent years. As recently as July 1969 a letter-writer had declared in the ‘British Philatelic Bulletin’ that ‘only subjects with some claim to beauty should figure on our stamps, which, of course, would rule out such things as aeroplanes, railway engines and other engineering devices’, although this remark had drawn some angry rejoinders. In the year following the earliest proposals of a issue on railways, it became evident that there was growing public interest in the topic; a letter in the June 1972 ‘British Philatelic Bulletin’ pointed out that this was the jubilee year of the UIC (the International Union of Railways) which the Post Office had failed to commemorate while foreign administrations were doing so, and asked for other readers’ comments. A selection of these were published in the August number, and showed a general consensus that both railway enthusiasts and

philatelists would welcome an issue. Suggested subjects included: 'Locomotion' and the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway; 'Rocket', designed by George Stephenson's son and partner Robert, and the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, 1830; 'Evening Star', British Rail's last steam locomotive, built in 1960; other late-generation steam locomotives such as LNER's 'Flying Scotsman' and 'Mallard', or the LMS 'Royal Scot'; the current generation of diesel-electric and electric locomotives; the electrification of the main line from Euston to Glasgow via Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent, Manchester and Liverpool, due for completion by the end of 1973.

'BOYS OF ALL AGES'

Many similar appeals and suggestions were received from the public between June 1972 and March 1974, showing clearly how a railways issue had captured a section of the public imagination:

The field for striking designs is almost limitless ... the 'Flying Scotsman' against a background of the Forth Bridge ... in museums for all to see the 'Rocket', 'Sans Pareil' and 'Puffing Billy', an almost infinite variety of brightly coloured signals, gleaming rails converging as they snake away into the distance ...

[A C Deverell, 18 September 1972]

... Such a series could provide designers and artists with a subject of interest to boys of all ages and nationalities ...

[Mr G Middleton, 11 November 1972.]

Interest was again aroused in 1973, being the 25th anniversary of British Rail and the 50th anniversary of the introduction of LNER's 'Flying Scotsman' types and GWR's Castle Class; meanwhile 1975 remained at the forefront due to the Stockton and Darlington Railway anniversary, the scheduled introduction into service of the High Speed Train (HST) and the promised opening of the new National Railway Museum at York. It was also in 1973 that volunteers from some 30 North Eastern educational and engineering organisations began work on 'a full-scale, steaming replica' of 'Locomotion' exhibited for the first time in July 1975.

APPROACHES BY BRITISH RAIL

Local plans to commemorate the Stockton and Darlington Railway were already in hand by April 1972, and were brought to the attention of the Stamp Division of Postal Marketing; later in the year Eric Merrill, Controller of Public Relations and Publicity for the British Railways Board, had discussions with PRD from which emerged the tentative suggestion of

a set of four stamps, whose scope would hopefully extend beyond the confines of locomotives 'ancient and modern'. In August Merrill sent Mr Paul of PRD a list of suggested subjects including: (1) George Stephenson's 'Rocket'; (2) 'Locomotion', 1825; (3) GNR's 'No. 1', 1870; (4) 'Mallard', 1938; (5) the HST; (6) electric locomotives; (7) Euston Station; (8) a freight train with cement tanks. Asked to supply some illustrations for initial reference, he forwarded several photographs on 8 September with remarks as follows:

As far as the APT (Advanced Passenger Train) is concerned, only the photograph of the model is really representative of what it will look like when it goes into service.

The HST, as you will see, is photographed only in an uncompleted state and there is, at the moment, no completed version available.

The electric locomotive, now called the AL6, is to be replaced by the AL7 fairly soon: this will look sleeker.

I will have some photographs taken as soon as possible of Euston. We have no decent photographs but could offer better ones if we took aerial views.

I enclose a photograph of a cement train but we could produce some other such wagons if you think fit.

On 20 September Paul passed the matter to E G White, the Director of Marketing, now Chairman of the SAC in succession to G Downes. Stuart Rose, the Post Office Design Adviser, commented on 3 October: 'Certainly this seems a feasible subject and one which could make a good stamp.'

White represented the Post Office on the 150th Railway Anniversary Planning Group set up by British Rail, which held its first meeting on 21 February 1973. It was noted that the suggestion of a commemorative stamp had been put to the Post Office but that its 1975 programme could not be decided before May 1974. In discussion it was agreed that commemorations of the anniversary in whatever form 'should not be predominantly nostalgic ... BR would wish to show that the Railway in this country has kept pace with scientific and industrial development'. The aim should be 'a forward-looking approach but based on a historical background'. On 12 September 1973 White sent regional directors a standard request for comments and suggestions on the 1975 programme as it currently stood; among those issues that already had very strong claims was listed 'Railways', to be centred around the Stockton and Darlington anniversary – 'we have not done trains before, and the indications are that this should be popular and profitable'.

SUGGESTIONS FROM PO REGIONS

This produced a considerable response; Trevor Carpenter of the Scottish Postal Board was the first to reply on 21 September with the hope that at least one stamp in the set would have a Scottish connotation, suggesting either the 'Flying Scotsman' as part of a 'famous

trains' series or engines such as those exhibited in the Glasgow Museum of Transport if 'old locomotives' was the theme. On 3 October the North Eastern marketing manager, R V King, suggested that the issue might possibly be linked with the opening of the new Railway Museum (a point already made by Mr Merrill the previous December). Ken Gowen of the South Western Postal Region replied on 15 October pointing out that Richard Trevithick and Isambard Kingdom Brunel, two of the leading figures in railway history, both had strong regional connections, while the HST was scheduled to be inaugurated on the Paddington-Bristol-South Wales line. In view of the marketing potentialities in the South West arising from these factors, he urged that the issue should not be too closely restricted to the Stockton and Darlington anniversary. On 16 October A Heaton of the North Western Postal Board pointed out that 1975 was also the 150th anniversary of the start of construction on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway.

Only Northern Ireland and the Eastern Postal Region ignored the proposal; of the other regions, London, South West and North West were at pains to point out that they had advocated issues on railway themes in previous years. The most detailed response came from Wales and the Marches Postal Board, which suggested no less than eight possible treatments of the subject, originating from head offices, BR Western Region, the Post Office Users' Council for Wales and Monmouthshire, the National Trust and the Welsh School of Architecture. Its first choice was the Swansea and Mumbles Railway (1806-1960) which was ingeniously argued to have predated Stockton and Darlington as the world's first passenger-carrying rail service by 18 years (the service, inaugurated on 25 March 1807, was horse-drawn like all 'railways' of the period, rather than steam-powered). Its second suggestion was any or all of the eight narrow-gauge railways operating in various parts of Wales; other proposals included Chirk railway viaduct, oil tanker and quarry locomotives old and new, and Trevithick, the Cornish steam-engine pioneer who had put many of his inventions to use in south Wales.

White indicated to the SAC, when the 1975 programme was first considered on 27 September, that the Post Office was already almost inescapably committed to a railways issue, and this was accepted at the following meeting on 25 October. By this time the Stockton and Darlington anniversary had received more suggestions from the public (22) than any other subject under consideration; its proposers included three local Labour MPs - William Rodgers (Stockton-on-Tees), Edward Fletcher (Darlington) and James Boyden (Bishop Auckland) - one Conservative MP (Dennis Walters, Westbury) and Lord Wakefield, a former Conservative MP for the railway engineering town of Swindon.

ISSUE AGREED BY BOARD

In a submission of 17 January 1974 to A Currall, the Managing Director (Posts) (MDP), White proposed that the Stockton and Darlington anniversary should be an opportunity to tackle 'railways' as a general subject which the Post Office had not previously approached. Currall put the 1975 programme before the Post Office Management Board at its meeting of 18 February, arguing that the Stockton and Darlington Railway 'was the first public steam railway in the world, and as such aptly symbolises the way in which this form of transport was invented and developed by the British'. The 'excellent opportunities for designers' and 'strong appeal for thematic collectors and the public' were cited, it being pointed out that much work on publicising the anniversary was already being undertaken by British Rail in collaboration with such bodies as tourist boards and railway preservation societies.

Earlier emphasis on the Stockton and Darlington's pioneer role as a passenger carrier was altered once research showed that the real innovation in 1825 was as a steam-powered railway for public use – there were prior examples of both passenger-carrying rail services drawn by 'animal traction' and steam-powered rail traction for private freight haulage, both included in the October 1973 report from Wales and the Marches. Another reason for the change of emphasis was that, although passengers were certainly carried by steam at the Stockton and Darlington's inauguration, its regular passenger services were horse-drawn until 1833. The Liverpool and Manchester, opened in 1830, was the first railway wholly reliant on steam locomotion and the first purposely built to provide a passenger service.

The Board finally agreed the proposed 1975 programme at its meeting of 4 March, the provisional issue date of the railways stamps being changed from September 1975 to July (the actual anniversary date of 27 September had to be ruled out as this was a Saturday in 1975). In May the issue date was again revised to August 1975 on advice from British Rail that no important commemorative events were planned for July, whereas a large number were scheduled to take place in the North East during the following month; the date was finally agreed as 13 August 1975 by the SAC meeting of 12 September 1974. The programme had in the meantime been submitted to Sir Frank Wood, senior civil servant at the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, on 29 March, and broadly approved on 2 August by Anthony Wedgwood Benn, who as Secretary of State for Industry in the new Labour government was now the minister responsible for the Post Office.

FIRST RAILWAY DESIGNS PRODUCED

On 8 February 1974 the stamp printers Bradbury Wilkinson (producers of the engraved high values) submitted four designs for a set centred on the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Stockton and Darlington; two featured the APT-E, the current experimental version of

the Advanced Passenger Train, plus 'Locomotion' and 'Rocket'. These had not been solicited but were accepted with the promise of submission to the SAC 'at an appropriate time', although there is no record of this being done. The results of the latest RSA Stamp Design Bursary Competition also came to hand in February; as hitherto, this was aimed largely at art colleges with the object of attracting the interest of young designers into this particular field, and judged by a panel drawn from the SAC. On this occasion it had been decided that it would be particularly useful to set '150th Anniversary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway' as the competition theme; the jury consisted of Sir Paul Reilly of the Design Council, the stamp designer David Gentleman, Stuart Rose and D W Barker of Postal Marketing, and R F York of the stamp printers Harrison and Sons, all either members or regularly present at meetings of the SAC. Out of 73 entries from some 30 colleges the winners (with judges' comments and awards) were as follows:

1st

Stephen Moore (19) Southend College of Technology, £200

'His engineering-type drawings in full colour stood out among the other entries, showing a good understanding of the technical problems of producing stamps.'

Joint 2nd

John Hopkins (21) Epsom School of Art & Design, £100

'Used the bleach-out photograph technique to produce a good visual effect.'

Anthony Thomas (19) North East Essex Technical College & School of Art, £100

'Praised for his use of a metallic stamp to emphasise the newness of the modern train.'

3rd

Nicholas Ryde (20) Amersham College of Further Education & Art, commended

'Interesting stamps which expressed the feeling of the old railways.'

A selection of the winners' designs were published later in the August 1974 'British Philatelic Bulletin' showing subject matter ranging from 'Locomotion' to the APT via the 1882 Gladstone Class and 1935 Pullman Class locomotives. On 27 February the SAC saw the designs and agreed that Moore's were outstanding, although their appeal to stamp collectors was questioned; it was decided that they should be developed for possible use in the 1975 railways issue. On 19 March White suggested to Eric Merrill of British Rail that he might wish to consult with the RSA and Stuart Rose over possible use of the prize-winning designs for his own purposes.

INSTRUCTIONS TO BRIAN CRAKER

The following day, 20 March, Rose discussed the railways issue with another designer, Brian Craker of Saxon Artists Ltd, who had not previously worked in the stamp design field; Craker was formally commissioned on 25 March to submit designs for four stamps. Details of the instructions were:

the stamps would measure 1.5 inches by 1.07 inches in the printing area and 1.6 inches by 1.17 inches between perforations.

they might be either landscape or portrait in format throughout, but not a mixture of both. drawings should be prepared in four times printed stamp size, ie, 6 inches by 4.29 inches.

designs should be consistent in both subject matter and style.

the overall or dominant colour of each stamp should be different to avoid confusion between values.

the Queen's head (in half-tone or silhouette), values and captions should if possible be done on separate overlay sheets.

Similar instructions were presumably given to Moore. Payment was to be the standard £150 per completed design up to £600 maximum, plus £150 for each design actually used, these sums covering 'any reasonable modification' to original designs. Craker was also sent a list of suggested subjects submitted on 4 February by Dennis Andrews, an ardent railways enthusiast in the MDP's Office:

Modern series -

APT under chain conveyor

BR class 87 electric loco

BR class 45 diesel

Euston or Birmingham New Street station

Steam era series -

LNER A4 'Mallard'

LMSR Claughton Class with TPO

GWR County Class

BR Britannia or 9F Class 54-58

Late 19th century -

St Pancras station

Pullman car

GWR 'City of Truro'

Stirling Single GNR 'No. 1'.

Andrews also listed subjects he thought his fellow enthusiasts would rather not see treated on stamps - these included hovertrains, 'preserved' railways, gas turbine locomotives, and early diesels.

On 27 March Stuart Rose supplied Stephen Moore with some photographs for reference and recommended him to various contacts in British Rail to assist with designs of the APT and HST; his understanding was that British Rail would prefer to see the latter. There was, however, a difference of opinion between the 'publicity' and 'design' factions within British Rail on the attractions of the APT; this was evidenced the same day when James S Cousins, British Rail's Director of Industrial Design, wrote to Rose with recommendations: the APT plus 'Locomotion', 'Rocket' and 'Mallard'. He suggested that 'Mallard' might be associated with the National Railway Museum where it would be housed, and that the APT might be paired on a stamp with the HST, which would enter service earlier and already held the world speed record for diesel-electric locomotion at 143mph, 'Mallard' having won the steam equivalent (125mph) in 1938. He felt that the APT and HST were positive achievements that should be jointly recorded. In reply Rose stated that he doubted whether both trains could successfully be placed on one stamp, and that he preferred to wait and see which made the better subject.

Brian Craker twice submitted designs in various stages of progress, on the 8 and 22 April; on 17 May his choice of subjects was confirmed as 'Caerphilly Castle' of the GWR Castle Class (1923), a North British Railway engine of 1876 designed by Dugald Drummond, 'Locomotion', and the APT-P (a working prototype planned to succeed the experimental model APT-E in 1975). Craker provided a description of the process by which he arrived at his choice of subjects.

To restrict the choice of subject matter and also to make the selection more interesting and rational, I suggest dividing the 150 years into three 50-year periods to give the four dates 1825, 1875, 1925, 1975. This will give a nice indication of locomotive development at 50 year intervals ... Choice can be further restricted by confining the subjects to express passenger engines, for obvious reasons of glamour, speed etc. This means a 4-4-0 type for 1875, and either a 4-6-0 or a 4-6-2 type for 1925 (preferable a 4-6-0 for reason of length, a 4-6-2 being longer and therefore more difficult to fit onto the stamp) ... Choice is automatically restricted further by colour consideration:

1825 'Locomotion' - dominant colour yellow ochre (woodwork).

1975 APT - dominant colour blue.

1875/1925 - this leaves green or brown (discounting uninspiring liveries like black, grey, etc).

Obviously, choice is finally restricted by appearance - the engines chosen must be handsome (in the eyes of railway enthusiasts, at least) ... [Thus] we need two express

passenger engines - one being new, typical and successful in 1875 or thereabouts, the other being new, typical and successful in 1925 or thereabouts. One being green, one being brown ... Having eliminated those which are unsuitable for the reasons listed, we are left with the following possibilities:

1875

Stirling 4-4-0 1873. Glasgow & South Western Railway. Green.

Drummond 4-4-0 1876. North British Railway. Brown.

1925

Castle 4-6-0 1923. GWR. Green.

Gresley 4-6-2 1923. LNER. Green.

Nelson 4-6-0 1926. SR. Green.

'Royal Scot' 4-6-0 1927. LMS. Brown.

Choice between the two 1875 engines can only be on colour preference as both engines were handsome, successful and technically advanced in their time, and both Stirling and Drummond were great locomotive designers ... For 1925 we again have engines which were equally handsome, successful and technically advanced, with noteworthy designers. The choice is firstly between the three green engines, and is an easy one because the Castle has so much in its favour. Exchange trials took place in 1924/25 between GWR, LNER and LMS in which a Castle competed with engines from the other two companies, the result of which proved the superiority of the Castle design, and subsequently influenced the designers of the other companies and locomotive design in general ... This leaves the 'Royal Scot' which gives us the two possible combinations of:

either

1875 Drummond. Brown.

1925 Castle. Green.

or

1875 Stirling. Green.

1925 'Royal Scot'. Brown.

Because of the importance of the Castle, and because there are more Great Western 'nuts' than any other variety, I think we should use the first alternative.

Craker decided on 'side plan' rather than 'three dimensional' drawings of his subjects.

DESIGNS SEEN BY SAC

On 20 May Stephen Moore updated Stuart Rose on the progress of his designs; Craker submitted 'finished roughs' on 3 June, and Moore the next day. Both sets were seen by the SAC on 5 June; the Chairman, E G White, thought that Craker's more conventional designs would be more readily acceptable to railway enthusiasts, while Rose preferred the designs by Moore. It was agreed that both sets of designs needed further development and that work should continue.

Craker supplied the following comments concerning the captions on his designs seen by the SAC:

Stamp (1) – I've left 'opening' in because the line is quite a bit short without it, even if we spell out 'and'. Needless to say, it should be Stephenson!

(The header caption was 'Stevenson's Locomotion' and the main caption '1825 Stockton & Darlington opening'.)

Stamp (2) – I think we should have Waverley Class at the top rather than just an engine name, which would simply be the name of a town or place and therefore not immediately understandable. The situation here is rather more difficult than with stamp (3) where the meaning of Caerfilly [sic] Castle is obvious because of the reference to Castle Class. Another good reason for having Waverley Class is that only 12 engines were built for a particular purpose over a short period of time, so the whole class was of equal importance, whereas 171 Castles were built over a long period with various modifications over the years – Caerfilly Castle being the pioneer engine.

(The captions were (2) header: 'Waverley Class', main: '1876 North British Railway Drummond 4-4-0'; (3) header: 'Caerfilly Castle', main: '1923 Great Western Railway Castle Class 4-6-0'.)

Stamp (4) – ...The BR hand-out reads: 'Information from APT-E (Experimental) will be used in designing two prototypes, APT-Ps, due to carry passengers in 1975.' So I think we can safely say Prototype APT-P at the top which gives us a line of just the right length.

Merrill of British Rail was asked for his opinion of Brian Craker's chosen subjects, and replied on 8 July:

We are in complete agreement with you about the suggestions concerning the stamps for 1825, 1875, and 1925 ... but I am a little bit unhappy about the APT for the fourth. The APT will certainly not be running until the 1980s ... It would be better to feature the High Speed Train which is indeed very much like the APT in appearance

though the dominant colour is grey or, if you do particularly want to have the blue, then you may consider one of our modern electric locomotives.

FINISHED ARTWORK RECEIVED

Brian Craker's completed designs were received the following day; the engine of the Waverley Class depicted was 'Abbotsford', which Stuart Rose reported in a note of 6 November had caused Craker great difficulty establishing accurate measurements, but was eventually 'able to piece together some relevant dimensions he found in a cut-out model sheet'. Elsewhere Craker complained that as correct and detailed elevated drawings for reference had simply not proved available, he could not be 100 per cent certain of his own accuracy – the details that had caused particular problems were 'the rather complicated plumbing etc under the cab, the couplings between engine and tender, and the underframe details on the tender, particularly the brake gear'.

In the light of Merrill's letter, Rose decided that a new design depicting the HST Mk II was also required; this does not seem to have been ready until the end of September, when Craker's new drawing came to hand showing the engine in its standard livery of black and yellow. Stephen Moore was asked on 27 September if he could let Rose have his completed designs by 22 October; both sets were seen by the SAC on 24 October. Rose told the meeting that it had not been possible to progress Stephen Moore's designs successfully, and Brian Craker's final artwork was duly approved, with a recommendation that the Queen's head be essayed in toned colours. However, Craker and Rose discussed this on 29 October and decided that the Queen's head would be kept in grey silhouette and raised about 0.75mm to align with the header caption. Other decisions passed on to York of Harrisons the following day were: that the rule at the top of the stamps was to be kept in grey; that some orange outlining was to be added to the black bands on 'Caerphilly Castle' to try the effect; and that the values and captions were if possible to be in intaglio. In the course of essaying, however, the grey line at the top of each design was moved to its foot between the locomotive and main caption to be in the dominant colour of each engine, except on the black-and-yellow HST design where a blue line was used; plans to use intaglio were eventually discarded. A minimal amount of orange outlining is discernible on 'Caerphilly Castle'.

On 30 October Rose informed Stephen Moore that 'much as your designs were liked it was felt that they would not have the same appeal as the more representational illustrations'. Unfortunately there is no indication of what Moore's completed designs were like other than the Bursary-winning set published in 'British Philatelic Bulletin', except that they were apparently not 'conventional drawings in colour of locomotives of four periods' as were Craker's. Moore was paid £150 on 30 October for his work on the designs.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ISSUE

After the October SAC meeting Stuart Rose returned a set of unsolicited designs which an art student, Michael Swinchatt, had submitted some months earlier; it is not certain whether these were seen by the SAC and nothing is recorded about them except that they were less 'conventional' than Craker's designs and did not show complete locomotives. However, Rose seems to have found them quite attractive and took the trouble to advise Swinchatt that some of his colours would have caused operational problems as they were too dark to allow satisfactory signals from the phosphor coating. On 17 December William Fenton, an experienced locomotive artist, whose work on posters, booklets and illustrated museum catalogues for London Transport and British Rail was already known to Rose, offered to contribute a set of stamp designs for the Stockton and Darlington anniversary, and was told that these had already been chosen.

It was about this time that the Darlington branch of the organisers of the 150th anniversary celebrations wrote to White suggesting the issue of the stamps in miniature sheet form. The reply, from D C Lunn of Postal Marketing on 17 January 1975, was: 'We feel that philatelic items should only reflect those arrangements which are operationally necessary to the circulation and despatch of the mails. In this way we safeguard our stamp issues as valid postal items.'

ESSAYS SUPPLIED BY PRINTERS

Harrisons supplied preliminary essays of Craker's designs on 15 January 1975:
4½p Stephenson's Locomotion/1825 Stockton and Darlington Railway
5½p Waverley Class/1876 North British Railway Drummond
8p Caerphilly Castle/1923 Great Western Railway Castle Class
10p High-Speed Train/1975 British Rail Inter-City Service HST.

These were approved by the SAC at its meeting the following day; notes prepared on 21 January indicated that the following improvements were required:

(Locomotion) Strengthen blacks; lighten value to ochre; caption low on right, to be straightened up; darken rails as on HST.

(Drummond) Yellow line on right of cab and front wheels; black in wheels not on rails; red line slipped to right; darken rails as on HST.

(Caerphilly) Green to be darker/bluer; strengthen blacks on wheels; details on dome; more black on top of chimney; reduce highlights on boiler; darken rails as on HST.

(HST) Clean up BR logo.

(General) Check use of correct head, and essay head in silver; essay top rule in same colour as value numeral; provide new settings for 7p and 12p values; captions and values to be printed recess.

It had now been decided that the values would be changed from 4½p, 5½p, 8p, 10p to 7p, 8p, 10p, 12p in line with the tariff increase scheduled for March; hence the requirement for new 7p and 12p value figures, which were supplied on 5 February. On 14 February essays were submitted to London Materials Section, the Post Office chemists, to be tested for phosphor response, and were reported as acceptable on 19 February. Finished essays in the new values were supplied by Harrisons on 5 March.

STAMPS APPROVED AND ISSUED

On 14 March essays were submitted to the Department of Industry, and by the DoI to the Queen on 25 March; the essays were returned to the Post Office with the Queen's approval on 27 March. Essays were sent to Harrisons for work on production to begin on 4 April. The intention was still that the captions and values should be recess-printed, with all four captions in black, both the 7p and 8p values in brown, and the 10p and 12p values in green and blue respectively; on 23 May, however, the decision was taken to print the issue entirely in photogravure. Although it had been planned to exploit the facility of Harrison's 'Jumelle' machine to print simultaneously in photogravure and recess, while producing the 'Sailing' stamps the vagaries of the dual process meant that the project was abandoned indefinitely while the defects of the system were resolved (the process was not used successfully until the 'Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting' stamp two years later).

No major problems were reported in production, although it was reported on 12 June that Supplies was receiving deliveries of the 8p stamps, and many were blemished and some imperforate; meanwhile Harrisons was about to complete printing of the 7p and start on the remaining values. The stamps were issued on 13 August 1975, coincidentally with the opening of the National Postal Museum's 'Railways for the Post' exhibition which ran for three months and featured essays and artwork for the issue.

Each stamp measured 41mm across by 30mm down and was printed on all-over phosphor-coated unwatermarked paper, in sheets of 100. Sales were reported as 47,160,000 of the 7p, 9,900,000 of the 8p, 10,530,000 of the 10p and 8,690,000 of the 12p by the time the issue was finally withdrawn after one year. The colours were: (7p) red-brown, greenish-yellow, grey, grey-black, silver; (8p) orange-yellow, brown, vermilion, grey, grey-black, silver; (10p) yellow-orange, emerald-green, vermilion, grey, grey-black, silver; (12p) blue, pale lemon, vermilion, grey, grey-black, silver.

The stamps were generally agreed to make an attractive set, but at least one critic thought it over-selective in scope, arguing that ‘Mallard’ and the new electric locomotives were a major omission that could have been prestigiously featured on 50p and £1 values. However, it was the Post Office’s experience that collectors did not respond well to high-value special issues, and British Rail had asked that the values of the series be kept as low as possible to help sales.

It was decided to accompany the issue with a special souvenir pack with the stamps in a raised plastic wallet on the front cover, in addition to the ordinary presentation pack; the railway historian G Freeman Allen received a commission to carry out picture research and provide text and picture captions for £125, while David Harris was commissioned to design the pack and Brian Craker was paid £350 to provide a ‘centrefold’ of two colour illustrations. Allen’s researches produced a shortlist of 50 photographs and other illustrations covering the entire history of railways in Britain to date. Of these 17 were eventually used, plus five from other sources, not including the two colour drawings specially commissioned from Craker: these depicted the Great Eastern’s 4-4-0 ‘Claud Hamilton’ of 1900 and the LMS 4-6-2 ‘Duchess of Montrose’ of 1938.

ISSUE OF SOUVENIR PACK

The decision to issue the souvenir pack, not finally confirmed until 20 February 1975, was only taken with some reluctance after an intensive costing exercise, as the previous sales record of these items gave little grounds for confidence:

Pack	Total printed	Sales *	Price
Belgica	80,000	20,672	60p
Royal Silver Wedding	140,000	65,425	40p
County Cricket	80,000	28,576	60p
Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference	80,000	17,920	60p
Churchill Centenary	50,000	40,630	50p

* These figures are taken from the Stanley Gibbons Specialised Catalogue, and differ in varying degrees from those shown in the costings report mentioned; either set of results, however, shows sales over these five issues averaging only 40 to 45 per cent of totals printed.

In view of these figures, particularly the relation between sales and prices, the decision to order 75,000 souvenir packs for sale at 85p each is hard to explain; in fact 79,300 were produced including the normal allowance for wastage. In the event the souvenir packs sold well in places but overall far fewer than had been hoped, and it is doubtful whether sales

reached the figure of 50,000 given in the most conservative estimates of demand (no record of the final sales total has been traced). A typical reaction was that while the contents of the pack were attractive and interesting, they did not justify its high price. The packs were printed in litho by Moore & Matthes Ltd at a cost of £10,717.50, while the plastic 'stamp carriers' cost an additional £1,865.55 from Impact Packaging Ltd; the designer, David Harris, asked for £709.83 for his work, including all overheads and out-of-pocket expenses.

FIRST DAY COVERS AND HANDSTAMPS

G Freeman Allen also supplied the text for the official first day envelope filler card and ordinary presentation pack, for a total fee of £50; John V Ward was commissioned on 24 January to design the first day envelope and filler card for £75 and the presentation pack for £115. On 5 March Ward was also asked to design the four official 'first day of issue' postmarks for £25 each, details of the instructions being:

any shape of handstamp is acceptable provided it can be inscribed within maximum rectangular measurements of 1.3125 inches by 2.25 inches (33mm by 57mm).

the maximum diameter of a circular handstamp is 1.3125 inches (33mm).

the minimum height of lettering is 0.09375 inches (2.5mm) on the finished handstamp.

the design should be free from detail. Fine lines tend to break down quickly and small spaces become clogged. Large solid areas are liable to smudge while large open areas may pick up unwanted ink.

artwork 4 times actual size is recommended.

In addition to the Philatelic Bureau handstamp, official 'first day' handstamps of separate design were also needed, at the instigation of the North Eastern Regional Marketing Manager in February, for Shildon, Darlington and Stockton, hence the total requirement of four. This did not pass without protest from the Philatelic Bureau, partly due to the policy of restricting the number of official handstamps to avoid overtaxing the standing order customers, but also because it feared the distraction of potential customers from the Bureau's regular services.

On 16 April there were ordered 588,000 first day envelopes and filler cards, plus 150,000 ordinary presentation packs; subsequent orders brought the total of envelopes required to 623,000. The decision to abandon recess-printing at the end of May meant a complete reprint of the filler cards, at a cost of £1,525; correction slips for insertion in the presentation and souvenir packs were produced for a total £240.50 including the costs of extra work in the Supplies Department. Serious problems arose, however, with the litho printing of the envelopes by Taylowe Ltd, described in a memorandum of 6 August by Sylvia

McIlwraith of Marketing as 'gross carelessness on the printers' part in allowing sub-standard covers amounting to about 50% of our order to be sent out ... This duty alone spent over 2 weeks doing nothing else but trying to salvage the FDC operation for the Railway issue.' The printers' errors included proof marks, pinch and groove marks, and bad folding, both lateral and vertical. Even after an emergency reprinting of some 215,000 envelopes was carried out, many head office requisitions fell short and others were supplied with only 2 to 3 days to spare before the issue date, causing considerable complaint. A typical regional report reiterated established Post Office wisdom on this point: 'It is essential to have adequate supplies of all stamps, packs and covers on the day of issue as subsequently interest disappears and the stock has to be returned unsold.'

The ordinary presentation packs, printed by Moore & Matthes, were generally reported as selling extremely well; 47,500 sets of four PHQ postcards reproducing the stamps were also printed and issued.

OTHER POSTMARKS

In addition to the Philatelic Bureau's first day handstamp there were also official handstamps at Shildon, Darlington and Stockton. A report from the North Eastern Postal Board at the year's end indicated that first day postings at Shildon and Stockton combined totalled 51,229 and at Darlington 128,049; to these should be added 13,029 postings on 13 August for a special handstamp for a railway festival at Wylam, Northumberland – Stephenson's birthplace. Other railway anniversaries celebrated by special handstamps on 13 August were, 'Return to Steam 10th Anniversary' at Buckfastleigh, Devon; 'Torbay Steam Railway 25th Anniversary' at Paignton, Devon; '70th Anniversary Longmoor Military Railway' by the Royal Engineers, BFPS 1396. Two other special handstamps available on the day, albeit devoid of railway connotations, were 'Royal Shakespeare Theatre Centenary' at Stratford-upon-Avon (27 June - 26 August) and 'The Story of a Cathedral Exhibition' at Canterbury (24 July - 23 October).

Ordinary 'First day of Issue' cancellations were appropriate from Bournemouth (Big Four Railway Museum), Brighton (Bluebell Railway), and Swindon (British Rail Works), plus Llanfair Light Railway with the standard Welshpool circular datestamp (cnds). 'First day' cancellations from Crewe, Derby, Paddington and York were also applicable, as were ordinary 'cnds' for 13 August from Wylam, Northumberland (Stephenson connection), Caerphilly, Mid Glamorgan (because of the 10p stamp) and any Travelling Post Office but particularly the North Eastern TPO cancel. Finally three appropriate slogan postmarks available on the day of issue were 'Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway Centenary Year' at Carlisle (28 April - 28 September); '150th S & D Railway Anniversary' at Darlington (two dies, 19 May - 24 August); 'Shildon Co. Durham S & D Railway Jubilee'" at Bishop Auckland (two 'SW

County Durham' town dies, 28 July - 23 August). (Only those cancellations available on the day of issue are listed.)

Brian Craker later contributed designs for the 1981 Fishing issue, although these were not used.

Giles Allen
28 October 1996

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