

SPECIAL STAMP HISTORY

20th Anniversary of The United Nations and International Co-operation Year

1965



Following the Second World War, the desire for an international body to aid world peace and security resulted in conferences held among the victorious powers. The outcome, the United Nations Charter, was signed at San Francisco on 26 June 1945 and subsequently ratified on 24 October that year. In 1961, the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, suggested that 1965, the 20th anniversary of the UN, be designated International Co-operation Year (ICY) to emphasise the role of the international community in world development. This idea was passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1963.

A SPECIAL STAMP ISSUE

On 8 April 1964 the Chairman of the Committee for ICY wrote to the Director-General of the Universal Postal Union advising that the United Nations Postal Administration in New York intended to issue stamps to mark ICY. The UPU was requested to ask member states to consider issuing a stamp of the same design as that of the United Nations with only minimal variations. This was to feature the ICY symbol with 'Peace and Progress through Co-operation', and would differ from country to country only in language and denomination. The choice of colour was also left to the postal administrations of those countries that chose to participate.

This request was passed to the British GPO by the UPU in a circular of 1964; however, it was not until the Assistant Postmaster General, Ray Mawby, received an invitation to attend a preliminary planning meeting from George Delf, Secretary of the ICY Preparatory Committee

in the UK, that the matter was pursued extensively. Although unable to attend, Mawby asked the Director of Postal Services to enquire into the possibility of a stamp.

Subsequently, on 28 May, a meeting at the Foreign Office discussed ways in which ICY could be marked in Britain. Apart from the Foreign Office, representatives attended from the UN Information Centre, UN Association, Central Office of Information, the BBC, UN Refugees Office, the ICY Preparatory Committee, and, for the GPO, P P C Jarman. This meeting resolved that the Foreign Office approach the Post Office requesting that a set of stamps be issued to mark ICY on 26 June 1965, and that the issue be on sale until United Nations Day on October 24. It was also agreed to have a slogan postmark used throughout this period.

The official Foreign Office request was received by T P Hornsey of the Postal Services Department on 8 June. No reply was sent until 12 October, although Hornsey did telephone S Falle, who had sent the request, to say that no decision on stamps for 1965 was expected until November, after the General Election. On 10 November the Foreign Office wrote again inquiring whether the UN designed stamp for ICY would be acceptable to the GPO, and if it was not whether it or the UK Executive Committee of ICY could be consulted on the design. D H Beaumont of Postal Services replied that the UN design was not acceptable because of the requirement that all British stamps carry the Monarch's head. However, it might be possible that elements of the design could be incorporated into a UK stamp design. On the matter of consultation, the Post Office regularly consulted the sponsors of commemorative stamps on design, and would be happy to do so in this case. The final choice of designs, however, lay with the Queen who may or may not choose that recommended by the sponsors.

The decision to issue stamps to mark the 20th anniversary of the United Nations was taken at a meeting of the Post Office Board on 25 November. Quite why it was decided to emphasise the anniversary, rather than ICY, is unclear although they were to all intents and purposes the same event: the eventual set clearly marked ICY as well. It is possible that the decision was made because of the difficulty of timing the issue for June rather than later in the year. The Foreign Office was informed of the Board's decision in December, and the official announcement of the stamp programme for 1965, including the UN anniversary, was made in the House of Commons on 1 February 1965.

COMMISSIONING DESIGNS

Invitations to submit designs were sent by D H Beaumont to the following artists on 14 April 1965: Frank Ariss, Peter Gauld, David Caplan, Jeffrey Matthews, Peter Ray, Hans Schleger, and the stamp printing firms of Harrison and Sons and Bradbury Wilkinson. Instruction

briefs accompanied the invitations outlining the requirements from the designs plus details of style, etc.

Two stamps were to be issued, 4d and 1s 3d, each having the Queen's head as a dominant feature. One of the designs must include the International Co-operation Year symbol, while the other design was left to the artist's discretion, although it could include the UN symbol. Both designs had to include one of the two possible inscriptions: '20th Anniversary of the United Nations' or 'United Nations 1945-1965'. Close consultation with both the printers, Harrison and Sons, and the Post Office was encouraged in order to minimise the need for changes to the design at a later date. All designs were to be submitted to D H Beaumont by 10 May.

DESIGNS RECEIVED

The following designs were received on or before 10 May with the exclusion of Hans Schleger who turned down the invitation.

Frank Ariss

- 1 - 4d (vertical): We, the peoples ... (from the UN Charter), world map coloured according to distribution of mankind by colour of skin, neutrality of the UN.
- 2 - 1s 3d (vertical): Clasped hands symbol of ICY in block and linear treatment.

David Caplan

- 3 - 4d (vertical design): Interlocking letters UN, black legend.
- 4 - 4d: Interlocking UN.
- 5 - 4d: Representational globe with longitude/latitude lines, 20th anniversary legend.
- 6 - 4d: Representational globe with coloured squares, UN 1945-1965 legend.
- 7 - 1s 3d - ICY symbol.
- 8 - 1s 3d (vertical): ICY symbol.
- 9 - 4d (vertical): Interlocking UN, white legend.

Peter Gauld

- 10 - 4d: Dove of Peace.
- 11 - 1s 3d: ICY symbol, white Queen's head panel.

J Matthews

- 12 - 4d: UN symbol over figure 20.
- 13 - 1s 3d: ICY symbol over UN
- 12 - 4d: UN symbol over figure 20.
- 13 - 1s 3d: ICY symbol over UN.

Peter Ray

14 - 4d: Representational globe with dove.

15 - 1s 3d: ICY symbol and white dividers.

Bradbury, Wilkinson

16 - 4d: ICY symbol and flame.

17 - 1s 3d: Letters UN and small UN symbol.

Harrison and Sons

18 - 4d: ICY symbol over peoples of the world.

19 - 1s 3d: Letters UN and UN symbol.

20 - 4d: UN symbol, half colour reverse.

21 - 4d: 20 with ICY symbol.

22 - 1s 3d: ICY symbol and legend 'International Co-operation Year'.

SELECTING THE DESIGNS

The Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC), under the chairmanship of Sir Kenneth Clark, met to consider the designs on 27 May. The Committee selected the two designs by Jeffrey Matthews (12 and 13) as its first choice. For its second choice set the Committee selected one of David Caplan's designs featuring interlocking UN letters (no. 4) and design 15 by Peter Ray. This latter was selected to meet the requirement that one of the stamps should feature the ICY symbol.

The artwork for the selected designs was sent to Mr York of Harrison and Sons for essaying on 28 May and the essays returned to D H Beaumont on 15 June. David Caplan's 4d design had been essayed twice in two different colour schemes, the first orange and purple and the second in pink and blue. The 4d essay in mustard brown over blue (Matthews' design 12) was reprinted as the mustard brown had printed poorly, with the revised essay being received the following day.

These essays were shown to James Fitton on behalf of the SAC between 18 and 22 June as it was not possible to convene a full meeting of the Committee. Although he was expected to endorse the Committee's original selection, Fitton selected designs 13 and 4 as his first choice, and 12 and 15 as second choice. This selection meant that neither set was the work of one artist, but comprised individual designs lacking the intended cohesion.

SUBMISSION TO THE QUEEN

Fitton's selection was recommended to the Postmaster General (PMG) by Kenneth Hind of Postal Services for submission to Palace for the Queen's approval. Wedgwood Benn, however, overruled both Fitton and his civil servants and recommended the set selected originally by the SAC, designs 12 and 13. These were forwarded to the Queen on 30 June and approved on 2 July. It had been decided shortly before that the denominations for the stamps should be changed to 3d and 1s 6d. Harrison and Sons were advised on 14 July of the Queen's approval and asked to proceed with stamp production subject to the change of denomination.

ISSUING THE STAMPS

There was no official presentation pack or first day envelope for the stamps which were issued on 25 October 1965. The PMG had 250 special cards produced on which mint stamps were mounted as official gifts. The recipients included the Queen, Princess Margaret, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the House of Commons, former PMGs and Assistant PMGs, PMGs of the Commonwealth, members of the SAC, the designer.

Special philatelic posting boxes for covers to receive a first day of issue handstamp were available at a number of post offices throughout the country, while a slogan postmark, 'International Co-operation Year, 1965' with the ICY symbol, was used at Reading.

The United Nations anniversary stamps were withdrawn on 30 June 1966 having been issued in the following quantities:

Ordinary

3d – 50,598,720

1s 6d – 5,476,800

Phosphor

3d – 4,488,240

1s 6d – 1,018,560.

A D Griffiths
September, 1993

REFERENCES

British Postal Museum & Archive file:
Post 54/72

GPO Press and Broadcast Notices, 1965

Stanley Gibbons Specialised Stamp Catalogue: Great Britain, Queen Elizabeth II Pre-decimal Issues. Vol 3. Stanley Gibbons.

'Collecting British First Day Covers' by N C Porter. A G Bradbury.