



# SIPA

## Bulletin

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### EDITORIAL

#### Too many issues.

Stamp collecting or philately, enjoyed by millions of people around the world as the king of hobbies of today was once called the hobby of the Kings. Yes, there were many Kings and Monarchs regularly collecting and enjoying the hobby. We were told that King George V, King Farookh of Egypt, Prince Rainer of Monaco, President Roosevelt of U.S. et. al were avid collectors.

Now it seems that India Post authorities are interested and inclined to make the hobby of philately again the hobby of Kings. What else we can think and say with respect to the alarming number of commemorative stamps and other philatelic material planned to be issued during this year 2009. New products are innovatively brought to fleece the collectors.

The value of whole year items which costed three to four hundred rupees a few years ago, is going to and will cost more than rupees one thousand this year. There may be hundreds of collectors who can afford to spend that much now. But what about the young students who are getting into the hobby to - day and trying to become members of the collecting fraternity of tomorrow? Will they be able to get one of all issued stamps with all the connected material without missing anything and with continuity at a cost of about two to three hundred rupees per month during November and December?, when issues will be crowded and there will be issues on every alternate day; when the young boys and girls pester to double or triple their monthly pocket money, their parents will start thinking twice and thrice about yielding to their wards request. Of course, definitely some parents will yell on their children, "forget the stamps and get into your studies," and push them out of the hobby. As the expenditure on the hobby goes on increasing, definitely one day will come when the strength of the collecting community will start dwindling. It is nothing but "killing the golden goose."

Hence it is high time, that the authorities concerned come down from their imaginary world and building castles of "boost in the revenue" and reach the realm of reality and plan for a controlled issue policy of standardized number like 48 issues per year.

4 issues per month one issue (25%) on personality  
4 sets of 4 stamps on culture, heritage, nature etc.  
4 miniature sheets, Jan 26, Aug 15, Oct 2, Nov 14, etc.

with an yearly budget of less than rupees 500/-which will keep the hobby enjoyable and keep the collectors happily growing.

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#### Do you know?

1. "Baby" - the name collectors gave to the early issues (1896- 1900) of King Alfonso XIII (3 years) of Spain and her colonies.
2. "Bulls eyes" - Nickname given to the first issues of Brazil which came in 1843.
3. "Map backs" - Stamps of Latvia (Lativija) issued in 18 Dec 1918 were printed on the backs of German ordnance survey war maps

#### Monthly Second Sunday Meetings

With President  
Mr. G. Balakrishna Das on the chair,  
21 members attended the meeting on  
13.06.2009.  
Patron Mr. G. Madan Mohan Das  
Spoke on "World Exhibitions"

## STAMP NEWS

### LIFELINE EXPRESS

12.05.09

500

0.4mill

The Lifeline Express, in partnership with Indian Railways, is the world's first hospital on rails. The Lifeline Express, one of the projects of Impact India Foundation comprises two operation theatres, post - operative recovery rooms, laboratory, X-ray facilities, an auditorium for workshops equipped with a TV and LCD projection facilities including a CCTV set - up connected to cameras in the main operation theatre, generators and other ancillary requirements. The coach with the second operation theatre can be detached from the rake and used as a stand-alone operation theatre. This feature is of prime importance for use in disaster management.



The main function of the Lifeline Express is to provide medical and surgical treatment to the disabled in rural and tribal areas.

Each Lifeline Express train project lasts for about 4 weeks in one location, but the work starts many weeks before the train arrives. Using Government's health machinery, the message of free surgeries is conveyed to an average of one million people. Volunteers from villages are used to spread the message. State-run primary health centers screen around 25,000 people and select patients eligible for surgeries. Nearly 6,000 people are diagnosed on the train.

Between the two operation theatres there are five operating tables, where surgeries of a similar type are conducted simultaneously.

The innovativeness of the Lifeline Express project lies in the fact that "Impact India Foundation" has taken advantage of 75,000 kms of railway track.

The train has completed 93 five - week, sponsored projects having medically served 4,50,000 persons in the remote, rural interiors of India where medical facilities are scarce. All given totally free of cost with the 'donated' service of 75,000 surgeons and medical personnel from all over India and abroad, together with a large number of volunteers from India and abroad. The number of surgeries conducted are approximately 70,000.

By making available quality surgical facilities of the Life line Express to the poorest of the poor in the country' it raises the image of medical services for the rural poor.

Theme : Health, Medicine, Trains.

## THE MADRAS REGIMENT

28.05.09

500

0.4 mill

After the siege of Fort St George at Madras by the French in 1758, the East India Company organized their sepoy levies into companies and subsequently to 25 battalions by 1826. In a significant historic event Madras Native Infantry spearheaded the storming of the Seringapatnam fort in 1799. On 23 September 1803 the Madras Native Infantry, defeated the Peshawa Army during the Second Mahratta war in the Battle of Assaye. In recognition of their services, an insignia of an Assaye Elephant was awarded to the Madras Native Infantry which later replaced the crown in the crest adopted by the Regiment.



During the First World War, Madras Regiment was increased to 88 Infantry battalions. These were deployed in Mesopotamia, Iraq, Persia, East Africa and also within the sub-continent in the North West frontier. 1 MADRAS and 4 MADRAS saw action in Burma (1942-45) and Indonesia (1945 - 46). The first Mysore Infantry (now 18 MADRAS) was involved in intense action against the Japanese in Malaya. First Travancore 9 (now 9 MADRAS) moved to Hong Kong as Part of the occupation forces and 2<sup>nd</sup> Travancore (now 16 MADRAS) was deployed in the Middle East as part of the Persia and Iraq Force. The Madras Regimental centre was re-raised as the Recruits Training Centre of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Madras Regiment on 19 July 1942 at Madukarai near Coimbatore and Colours were presented on 23 Septemebr 1942 i.e. on the 139<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Battle of Assaye. The Training Centre was moved to the Wellington (Shrinagesh Barracks) in February 1947 by late General Sir Archebald the Governor of Madras.

1, 2, and 4 MADRAS were actively engaged in the 1947 Jammu and Kashmir Operations and earned Battle Honour of Tithwal and Punch. In 1951, State forces of Travancore, Cochin and Mysore were integrated with the Regiment and were designated as 9 MADRAS, 16 MADRAS, 17 MADRAS and 18 MADRAS. On 25 April 1962, 4 MADRAS sailed overseas as part of the Indian contingent on the United Nations Peace Keeping Mission in Congo. 2 MADRAS and 26 MADRAS were later deployed in Lebanon (2002) and Congo (2007). Battalions of the Regiment saw intense action in the Indo-Pak conflict 1965 and 4 MADRAS (WLI) and 1 MADRAS were conferred with Battle Honour of Maharajke and Kalidhar. In 1971 war 6<sup>th</sup> and 16 MADRAS was awarded Battle Honour of Basantar while 26 MADRAS was awarded Battle Honour Siramani in East Pakistan. Five battalions of the Regiment, have held the fort at the World's Highest Battlefield at Siachen glacier. During 'OP PAWAN' eight battalions of the Regiment were deployed in Sri Lanka. The Regiment has been conferred with 44 Battle Honours and 10 Theatre Honours till date.

Theme : Army, Armed forces, National security, UN forces.

## REV. J. J. M. NICHOLS ROY

12.06.09

500

0.4mill

Rev. James Joy Mohan Nichols Roy was born at Mawsyiarwait Shella confederacy on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1884. Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy studied at Lba High School but his studies were disrupted because of a devastating earthquake in 1887. Later Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy completed his entrance examination from Shillong Government High School in 1889. Afterwards, he went to Kolkata for higher studies and successfully accomplished his B.A. degree in 1904.



Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy became a Member of the Assam Legislative Council between 1921 and 1946 and was again elected to Assam Legislative Assembly in 1946.

The Assam legislative Assembly elected Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy as one of the ten members to represent Assam in the Constituent Assembly from 1946 to 1949.

When India was marching towards independence, the political future of the North Eastern Region particularly the hill area became a question mark. On the one hand, some of the British bureaucrats, with help from interested locals, sought to turn North Eastern Region into a Protectorate, a virtual Crown Colony, on the other, many of the leaders in India did not care to understand the special nature of the region and the people, and sought to steamroll a solution that would flatten out all tribal identities and extinguish cultural singularities.

Both viewpoints were extreme, portending danger for the stability of the region. Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy, a visionary par excellence, was enlightened enough to see the political reality, and with his skill for persuasion convinced his people that their best interest lay in being part of the Indian Union. With passionate conviction he also prevailed upon the constitution makers in the constituent Assembly to give a special status to the tribal people if the country's larger interest was to be served. The result was conferring status of autonomous district councils to the North Eastern Region.

His leadership and wisdom, and his closeness to national leaders particularly Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, gave his people a feeling of security and identification with the national movement.

Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy's stand for the cause of tribal identity was forthright and courageous. Although he was a Khasi tribal, his cause was for the greater good of all the tribals in the region and of the entire nation.

Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy passed away on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1959.

Theme: Leaders, Social service, Reformers, Tribals.

## SACRED HEART CHURCH

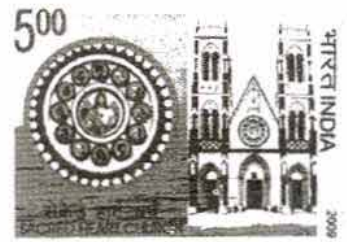
19.06.09

500

0.4mill

Sacred Heart Church is a milestone in the history of French rule. French missionaries dreamt to establish Sacred Heart's devotion in India especially in Puducherry.

During this time Rt. Rev. Gandy the Archbishop of Puducherry, seeing the spread of devotion to the sacred Heart of Jesus throughout the world, offered Puducherry to the patronage of Sacred Heart of Jesus on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1895.



Rev. Fr. Telesfore Welter, the priest of Nellithope had prepared the building plan and the parish priest of Cathedral Rev. Fr. Fourcaud commenced the construction of the new Church in 1902 at the southern side of the Puducherry town. The first mass and the blessing of the Church was held on 17<sup>th</sup> December, 1907. The new Parish surrounding the Church got established in 1908.

This 100 years old historical Church is 50 meters long, 48 meters wide and 18 meters high with Latin rite cross shape in aerial view is in Gothic Style. 24 main columns hold the structure in which we see the biblical word on entrance written in Latin "I have consecrated this word that my name may be there forever" which reveals the presence of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and mother Mary carved in rose windows, twin spires and huge exterior. Walls adorned with Terracotta motifs are a typical South Indian style occupying space with stunning stained glass paintings. Inside the Church one can see glass pictures of 28 saints. A striking figure of art is the statue of Madonna placed at the right side of the high altar. Another notable feature of the Church is the special use of colour. The colours stand out with a brilliant mix of deep red, dark green and white. There are stained glass panels that depict the entire life of Jesus Christ.

This 100 years old Church has been led by twenty Parish Priests. The Grotto for Our Lady of Lourdes, Parish Hall, Adoration Chapel and the new parish community hall were some of the developments of the Church in the last 50 years.

After the arrival of present Parish Priest Rev. Fr. A. Thomas the Church has been fully renovated and illuminated in and out.

Theme: Churches, Christianity, Puducherry.

## RAMPUR RAZA LIBRARY

10.06.09

4 x 500

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Rampur Raza Library was established formally by Government of India on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1975 by an Act of Parliament as an institution of national importance. Before that it was a state library under the patronage of Nawab Raza Ali Khan (1930 - 66)



The library has a collection of about 50,000 printed books in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi, both in Arabic and Devnagari Scripts and Pushto. It has 15,000 manuscripts in these languages besides 205 miniature paintings on the Palm-Leaf popularly called 'Bhoj Patra'.

Maulana Shibli Numani, a noted Urdu and Persian literary critic who visited the library on 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1914 wrote of its collection 'I have consulted this library several times.

There is no better collection than this in India. Percy Brown, the famous author of 'Indian Paintings under the Mughals' considered it a unique library because of its more than hundred illustrated manuscripts.

Among the Arabic collections, the Holy Quran shines as a pole star in this great store-house of knowledge. We have here the Holy Book, the oldest piece of handwork in the field of Arabic calligraphy, belonging to the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD written on parchment in early Sufi script attributed to Hazrat Ali. The library possesses also a copy of Quran calligraphed by the master calligraphist of the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD 'Yaqut-ul-Musta' Simi of Baghdad. Another precious masterpiece of Arabic manuscript by the same calligraphist is 'Diwan-al-Hadira' dated 1221. It was once a part of the royal library of Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapore. Another great asset of the library is 'Sharhul Kafia of Razi'. It bears marginal notes by Sadullah Khan, the Prime Minister of Shahjehan. The manuscript also contains a note by emperor Shahjehan in his own handwriting and bears the seal and signatures of Aurangzeb.

The Persian collection includes rare books on medicine, philosophy and miniature paintings. The notable titles are 'Zakhira-Khwarism-Shahi' by Zainuddin Ibrahim Gurgani of the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD. The manuscript of 'Diwan-e-Hafiz' another asset of the library has attracted attention of Sufis and scholars, the world over.

The Dance of the Dervesh is at the heart of Sufi traditions and there are several paintings pertaining to the Dervishes in the states of 'Haal'(Ecstasy).

### Ramayana of Valmiki

It is a unique illustration translated into Persian by Sumer Chand and illustrated during the reign of Farruck Siyar, a later Mughal, dated 1715 AD. The great Hindu epic Ramayana written in Grantha script is another highlight of the library.

### Urdu Collection

Although smaller in number as compared to Arabic and Persian, the Urdu collection of the library possesses the Diwan of Shah Hatim, Kulliyar-e-Mir, Jurrat, Diwan-i-Soz and indeed the manuscript of Diwan-e-Ghailb with corrections in the poet's own handwriting. There are also two rare copies of the first short story in Urdu, 'Rani Ketki Ki kahani'.

### Hindi and Sanskrit

The greatest beauty of the Rampur collection lies in its Hindi and Sanskrit manuscripts. Special mention must be made of Prabodh Chandrika, a work on Hindi grammar. It was written by Baijnath Chauhan and scribed by Girdhari Lal Mishra. There is also a commentary on Jyothish Ratnamala written by Shripat Bhatta. The original complete version of "madhumati" of Malik Manjan is also preserved besides 'Padmavat' of Maik Mohammad Jaisi with Persian translation.

### Turkish Collection

Turkish language influenced Indian languages considerably. The word 'Urdu' is of Turkish origin meaning 'Lashkar' (Camp). Babur's 'Tozak' is the highlight of the library. Similarly, the Holy Quran is there in the library in Pushto! The works of the great Pushto writer Khushal Khan Khatak are there. So are the works of the Sufi poet Rahman Baba.

The library has also a unique collection of art objects and rare astronomical instruments. A noteworthy feature of the library collection is that it includes manuscripts belonging to the libraries of Halb, Mecca, Medina, Egypt, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Theme : Knowledge, Literature, Heritage, Languages, Library

## INDIAN OIL: 50 Golden Years in the Service of the Nation

30.06.09

500

0.4mill

Half-a-century ago, one event took place that went on to impact the destiny of the world's largest democracy. Established in a two-room tenement as an oil marketing entity on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1959, Indian Oil Company Ltd. was renamed Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. in the year 1964

following the merger of a refining entity, Indian Refineries Ltd. (established in August 1958), with it.

From a fledgling company with a net worth of just Rs.45.18 crore and sales of 1.38 million tonnes valued at Rs. 78 crore in the year 1965, Indian Oil has since grown to a sales turnover of Rs.2845,337 crore for 2008-09, with the distinction of being India's largest commercial enterprise. It is currently the highest-ranked Indian company in the prestigious Fortune 'Global 500' (ranked 116) listing of the world's largest corporates.



The Indian Oil group of companies accounts for nearly half of the country's petroleum products market share, 34% national refining capacity and 71% downstream sector pipelines capacity in India. The group owns and operates 10 of India's 20 refineries with a combined capacity of 60.2 million tonnes per annum (MMTPA). Projects under execution are set to enhance the capacity to 80 MMTPA by the year 2011-12.

Indian Oil's 10,000-km Cross-country network of crude oil and product pipelines is the largest in the country.

As the national oil company in the downstream sector, Indian Oil touches the lives of millions across the length and breadth of the country everyday, traversing a diversity of cultures, terrains arid climates. Its network of about 35,000 sales points includes over 18,000 petrol & diesel stations.

Indian Oil's clean and convenient Indane cooking gas reaches the doorsteps of over 53 million households in nearly 2,700 markets. Its aviation fuelling service commands over 62% market share, catering to the Indian Air Force, domestic and international flag carriers and private airlines.

Set up in 1972, Indian Oil's R&D centre has blossomed into a world-class institution. Besides pioneering work in lubricants formulation, refinery processes, pipelines and alternative fuels, the Centre is also the nodal agency of the Indian hydrocarbon sector for ushering in Hydrogen fuel economy in the country. It has over 120 active patents to its credit, including several international ones.

For Indian Oil, its 34,000-strong team striving to meet the energy demands of the nation is its most valuable asset. Indian Oil People have always been in the forefront in adapting to the changing environment and enhancing the organisation's capabilities in providing innovative and value-added offering to the customers. Indian Institute of Petroleum Management (IIPM) is engaged in nurturing talent, upgrading skills, and creating a bank of knowledge managers through international-level programmes. Many of its senior managers have served in key positions in the oil & gas sector, leaving a mark of professionalism and expertise.

Theme: Petroleum, Energy, Industry, Fuels, Pollution.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE CAPE TRIANGULAR?

R J Maddocks

The origin of one of the world's best loved stamp designs has long been the subject of conjecture and debate. R J Maddocks offers some thoughts on one of the theories.

In 'Letters', GSM January 1995 Dr Christopher Earland raised the question as to whether Charles Bell, the Government Surveyor-General and Engineer at the Cape of Good Hope, based his design for the centre of the colony's first stamps, the emblematic lady 'Hope', on a sculpture which was positioned on the roof of the Cape Town printers, Saul Solomon. Dr. Earland's lead in this respect stemmed from an entry in the Southern African Dictionary of National Biography by Eric Rosenthal (1966).

Mr. Rosenthal was a well known author of numerous books on South Africa and he even ventured in to postal history and co-authored with Eliezer Blum, a philatelist, the following two works:



- (1) The Cape of Good Hope Triangular stamp and its History (Cape Town 1957)
- (2) Runner and Mailcoach postal History and Stamps of Southern Africa (Cape Town 1969).

In the first of these studies Rosenthal wrote:

'Bell had not confirmed his artistic powers to making drawings of domestic scenes or the places he had explored. He was definitely interested in decorative art. Still surviving is a silver epergne or cup standing 23 inches high ... Included in the motifs for decoration ... is the figure of the goddess Minerva .... A goddess not dissimilar, and believed to have been derived from an ancient Roman coin, was reproduced in rough on the sketch Charles Bell forwarded to the Lieutenant Governor as his suggestion for the new issue of Cape stamps.'

### Confusing the Issue

Then, to confuse the issue in the same study when he later discussed the 'Woodblock' printings of 1861, he had inserted this caption under a photograph of Saul Solomon's printing works: 'Where the Cape Wood blocks

well printed - Saul Solomon and co's old printing works at Cape Town in Long market Street. Note the symbolic figures by Anton Anreith on the parapet - Very like those on the stamps. Photo taken about 1860'. I will revert to those figures shortly.

Rosenthal in his National Biography (1966) is categorical that Bell's design was inspired by the figures on Solomon's building yet in his second postal works Runner and Mailcoach of 1969 he merely mentions the Cape Triangular as featuring 'the emblematical figure of Hope in a reclining attitude.' There is no mention as to where Bell drew his inspiration from.

Reverting to the figures on Solomon's roof: shown here are photographs (Fig 2) of the two seated ladies which appeared in a very short article written in Afrikaans by Prof D Bax in African News and Notes (December 1959) concerning the sculptor Anton Anreith. Prof Bax ventured that they represented 'Trade and Agriculture'. The building on which they were positioned was demolished around or before 1900 but a more detailed description of the sculptures is found in the Cape Monthly Magazine Vol VII of December 1873. In an article 'Old Familiar Faces and places', W L Sammons wrote:

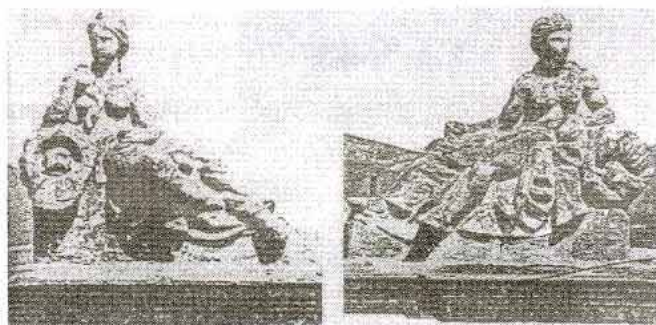


Fig 2 The figures on Solomon's roof, perhaps representing 'Trade' (left) and 'Agriculture'

'On a light sunny day when the atmosphere is clear there may be seen to great advantage and in perfect design and effect two damsels of equal size and similar age and comparison sitting much at their ease, one at each corner, east and west on the high roof of Mr Saul Solomon's printing establishment at the opening at Green-market Square, next door to the old Thatched House Tavern that is old no more the thatch being superseded by slates and small panels by plate glass.

'The figures have been tenderly dealt with, have every advantage of paint and attention and are admirably preserved. But for all these (to dull eyes without glasses) it is difficult to say whether these spinsters have chosen for their ottoman or couch either bales of "Demy" or "Royal" for home consumption below or bundles of gigantic cigars or rolls of Havana's for the next door'.

#### Another red herring?

As one might discern from the photographs, neither sculpture includes the anchor, the emblem of the Cape Colony, and neither can be said to bear real comparison with the figure of Hope in Bell's design. Can it be imagined that Bell would have cricked his neck to draw

inspiration from these lofty ladies? far easier perhaps to muse with some licence that he may just have taken a British penny coin (then Cape currency) from his pocket and studied the seated Britannia thereon. Another red herring to be trailed with that of Rosenthal?

In none of the various publications on the work of Anton Anreith (1754 - 1822) can any indication be found that the ladies atop of Solomon's building were representative of Hope or were inspirational else where in this capacity.

It might be of interest to add a note on the origin of the Lady of Good Hope. During the Renaissance, Hope was usually symbolized by a maiden with an anchor. At the Cape this symbol first appeared on the seal of the Dutch Cape Church, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century featuring a lady, standing with an anchor and a dove and a biblical text (in translation) 'And hope market not ashamed' (Romans 5.5). During Dutch rule silversmiths also used the lady as a mark of origin and gradually she became the symbol of the people of the Cape. For this reason the artist, Charles Bell, put her on his famous triangular Cape postage stamp in 1853. The foregoing is taken from an entry by C Pama in the Standard Encyclopedia of Southern Africa (1972).

The 'Wood blocks', engraved by C J Roberts in dire haste for local use by Saul Solomon and Co to produce the emergency stamp issue, can be seen displayed in the South African Cultural Museum, Cape Town. The blocks were last used on 26 November 1940 when reprints in colour were taken to illustrate the 'Wood block' issue in the Museum's own collection. All have, however, a white deface line running through the Centre of each stereo.

(Courtesy : Gibbons stamp monthly, 1996)

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## WETLAND BIRDS OF BRITISH ISLES ON STAMPS

P. J. LANSPEARY

The Severn Wildfowl Trust was founded at Slimbridge by Sir Peter Scott in 1946. This was the start of what has become the National Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust with eight centers in the British Isles. The four domain objects of the Trust are conservation, education, recreation and research.

Wetlands include lakes, rivers, tidal marshes, estuaries and meadows that regularly flood in winter. They are amongst the most important areas for birds in Britain and support millions of swans, geese, ducks and waders.

In winter huge concentrations of birds migrate to this country from their breeding grounds in Greenland and all around the Arctic Circle. The warm waters of the Gulf Stream give Britain mild winters compared with those in central Europe. Some of the British wintering grounds are of international importance.

As well as a refuge for winter visitors, wetlands are home to resident birds and a breeding ground for those that spend the winters in southern lands such as Africa and fly north in spring.

This article marks the occasion of the Great Britain issue of five stamps to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

The portraits are by Charles Tunnicliffe, 1901-1979, acknowledged as one of our greatest bird artists. He was renowned for his unique collection of measured drawings of birds enabling him to produce accurate portraits. From 1947 until his death he lived in a house overlooking the Cefni estuary with its wildfowl and waders and he specialized in painting such birds.

Wetlands birds are represented on stamps. There are too many to deal with comprehensively in an article of this scope so a representative selection is commented on.

### Bewick's Swan

These small swans start arriving in the British Isles in November from breeding grounds in Scandinavia and Russia. Favorite wintering places are Slimbridge and the flooded water meadow of the Great Ouse, known as the Ouse Washes.



There are two stamp appearances - Great Britain 1988, 31p (SG 1382) and Isle of Man 1991, 26p (493). On both these portraits the black and yellow beak, a most distinguishing feature can be clearly seen.

The portrait on the Great Britain stamps is by Edward Lear who, although better known as a writer of nonsense verse, was a fine bird artist.

The background to the bird is a note by William Yarrel, the 19<sup>th</sup> century ornithologist, who first suggested that Bewick's Swan was a separate species. He named it in 1829 after Thomas Bewick, the famous woodcut artist, who was credited with producing the first portrait of the swan.

### Whooper swan

Whooper Swans breed in the far north and migrate south to spend winters in southern and central Eurasia. Most of the Whoopers seen in Britain breed in Iceland. They are not usually seen in southern England except in bad winters.



Their favourite haunts in winter are estuaries, marshes, wide rivers and lakes away from human habitation.

At first glance a Whooper could be mistaken for a Mute Swan as they are about the same size. But the bills are quite different making identification easy. In place of the black knob and orange duck shaped bill of the Mute Swan that of the Whooper is a black and yellow triangle.

As its name suggests, the Whooper is a noisy bird. The main call is a loud, double noted bugle call and there is also a loud single alarm call. In flight they call frequently and a large flock can produce one of nature's unforgettable sounds.

In 1956 Northern Countries Day was marked by separate issues of stamps from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The design, featuring five Whoopers in flight, is the same for all the stamps and must be one of the most beautiful and stylish bird issues of all time.

Although quite a lifelike portrait, the bird in the foreground of Albania 1975, 35q, has no yellow on the bill.

The yellow bill colouring is clear on Japan 1992, 62y., a good picture of a whooper standing in water and on the Isle of Man 1991, 26p which shows a bird just taking off from water.

### Barnacle Goose

The Scottish island of Islay is the wintering ground for some 20,000 Barnacle Geese, about 35 per cent of the world population. After leaving their breeding sites in Greenland and Spitzerbergen many of them settle on Loch Gruinart on Islay. This is one of the reserves managed by the Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds which has been at the forefront of efforts to conserve internationally important wetlands in the British Isles.



Of the eight stamp appearances those of the most attractive are Estonia 1995, 1k.70 (251) and a British Island local from the Summer Isles, a 15p value issued in 1980.

The Estonia stamp, depicting three birds with one grazing, is one of a pair issued to publicise a wetlands reserve at Matsalu.

The Summer Isles portrait, showing three birds in flight, is by Robert Gillmor, one of Britain's leading bird artists. Small numbers of Barnacles over-winter in the Summer Isles off the north-west coast of Scotland.

On both stamp portraits the creamy white face and forehead offset by a black cap and neck are prominent.

The name of these geese was derived from the very old belief held in Ireland that they were born from barnacles growing on the seashore. Early devout Roman Catholics used to eat them on Fridays and during Lent because they claimed they were really fish!

## Greenland white - fronted goose

Some winter wildfowl visitors can be numbered in six figures but the Greenland white-fronted Goose is one of the rarest geese in the world.

One of five geographical races, it breeds only in Greenland and winters exclusively in the British Isles.

They usually start arriving in late September in southern Ireland where many of their winter havens are. They are darker than the other members of the family with a white patch around an orange coloured beak, orange legs and dark barred breast.



There is only one stamp appearance, Ireland 1979, 11P (444). The colouring of the portrait is true to life except for the beak of both birds which are nearer yellow rather than the pinkish orange shade they should be.

At around 25,000 numbers of Greenland White fronts are stable at present but the maintenance of their winter grazing sites is essential if numbers are not to decline to dangerously low levels.

## European Wigeon

A few Wigeon breed in Scotland but this duck is mainly a winter visitor to Britain and one that comes in vast numbers - a figure of over one million has been estimated for some years.

The male Wigeon is one of our most colourful ducks with a chestnut coloured head and neck, yellow crown, pink breast and grey back and flanks, separated by a conspicuous line of white feathers along the edges of the wings. These bold colours make the drakes easy to identify in the field. The females are a comparatively drab brown with darker markings.



The European Wigeon has been featured on the stamps of 13 countries. Reasonably lifelike pictures can be seen on Cambodia 1993, 250r. (1323), a good portrait of a drake - Hungary 1988, 4fo. (3853), drake and female - Iceland (1990), 21k (741), two drakes and a female which is too brown - Yemen Republic (1990) 20f (7), a good picture of a drake flying in. This Yemen set is entitled 'Ducks wintering in South Arabia', an indication of the distance some of these ducks travel from their breeding grounds in northern Europe.

## Garganey

These small ducks are summer visitors in small

numbers to Britain where they favour shallow water areas such as fens, marshes and small ponds. They breed in England, Wales, and southern Europe and Africa and they have been recorded as far south as Indonesia and Australia.

Drakes can be readily identified by a white stripe from the eye to the nape of the neck. Their general colouring is a mixture of blues and greys with a prominent black throat and crown. The females are brown above with light borders to the feathers and white below with brown spots.



They are well represented on stamps both from countries where they spend the winters and summers. Malawi is one of their wintering areas and a nice portrait of a drake can be seen on a lk. issued from there in 1975 (483).

Monaco 1991, 4f, shows birds rising from water providing a good picture of these ducks in flight (2031). This is one of an issue made to mark a world symposium on bird migration.

Another good portrait is Netherlands 1994, 90.c + 80c. which depicts a drake in breeding plumage (1718). In the back-ground is a small silhouette which shows the Garganey's characteristic shape at a distance.

Although not a realistic portrait, Mauritania 1963 If. postage due (D180) is an interesting example of an engraved, bird stamp, made even more unusual by the triangular format.

## Muscovy Duck

The Muscovy Duck has a long history as a domesticated bird. They first appeared in Europe about the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century having been brought from South America by the Spanish. They are now found in private collections and zoos throughout the world.

In the wild they are confined to central and south America from Mexico south-wards. Domestic birds tend to become coarse and clumsy but in the wild they are elegant.

The head, crest, neck and under parts are brownish black. The upper parts are a spectacular glossy black with metallic green and purple iridescence. The wing coverts and auxiliaries are a contrast in pure white. The females are coloured the same as the males but are much smaller. Males in the wild have a patch of bare skin from the back of the eye to the bill which is surrounded by small pink, soft wart-like growths.





Domesticated birds often lose all trace of their ancestral colouring and are found in a variety of combinations of black or dark blue and white. The Great Britain 19p shows a domesticated type which is about half white and half black. Domestic birds are larger than the wild and the males are goose sized.

Wild birds can be seen on Belize 1978, 50c. and Mexico 1984, 12p. while Ghana 1993, 150c. shows a domestic bird.

In 1979 North Korea brought out a set illustrating birds in the Central Zoo and the 5c. shows a pair of Muscovites which portrays the big difference in the size of the male and female.

## Waders

Apart from swans, geese and ducks the main beneficiaries of Britain's wetlands are the group of birds known generally as waders whose favourite haunts are estuaries.

Fed by rivers and linked with the tidal movements of the sea, both of which carry large quantities of mineral and food material, estuaries make rich feeding grounds for birds. Invertebrates such as filter feeding shellfish and worms flourish and support huge populations of fish and birds.

## Oystercatcher

With their black and white plumage, bright orange bills and red legs, Oystercatchers are conspicuous amongst other wading birds. They are common residents found all over the British Isles.

Their long bills enable them to delve into mud for mussels, crabs and limpets. These are prised open by inserting the closed bill into a slit and forcing the sides apart by opening the bill.

Oystercatchers have been featured on stamps from 24 countries to date. Several portraits show them feeding, a good example being Netherlands 1961, 6c. + 4c. (908).

For the centenary of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in 1989 Great Britain brought out a set of four bird stamps which included the Oystercatcher on the 32p. (1421). This is a poor design-the bird is much too large for the stamp's frame and there is no background to indicate that it would most likely be seen near the coast.



A much more realistic and artistic picture can be seen on Iceland 1987, 70k. Two birds are shown standing on rocks looking at the sea just below them (699). One could imagine that they are waiting for the tide to go out and uncover their feeding grounds.

## Ruddy Turnstone

This is another distinctive wader with a chestnut, black and white plumage and orange legs. The sexes are similar and in flight they appear as black and white birds. They are common winter visitors to Britain where they frequent rocky coasts and estuaries. Although they breed in the far north, many non-breeding birds stay in the wintering areas and so may be seen at any time of year.



They obtain much of their food by probing under seaweed and stones which they flick aside with a quick movement of the head, hence their name.

Not surprisingly with its attractive colouring it is a popular stamp subject with fifteen appearances to date.

Turnstones are great travelers and their southwards winter movements take them as far as Australia and New Zealand. A good portrait can be seen on a 1987 stamp from the Pacific islands of Wallis and Futuna (523).

A strip of five stamps making a composite picture of a stony seashore was released by Guernsey in 1991. An attractive scene of Turnstones feeding takes up three of the values (531/3).

One of the best portraits is on a E1 local stamp issued in 1989 by Easedale Island and shows a bird in the act of turning over a stone.

Easedale Island lies off the coast of Scotland, some eight miles south of Oban. This E 1 stamp is one of a set produced for Easedale at double the British rate. Half the cost goes towards the expense of getting the mail from Easedale to the mainland.

## Red necked phalarope

These small waders breed all around the Arctic Circle and spend the winters in such diverse areas as Arizona and Arabia. They also breed in Iceland, Scotland and Ireland. In summer they frequent freshwater marshes and pools and spend lengthy periods at sea.



Unusually females are more brightly coloured than males and the rusty patch around the neck is prominent on the females only during the breeding season.

They feed while swimming and spin around to stir up small insect larvae and crustaceans which can then be easily seen and snapped up. In the picture on a 19K.

Icelandic stamp of 1989 the artist has indicated the spinning action by circular ripples (726) Nagaland is a province in India on the Burma border which has issued some stamps not officially recognized as genuine postal items. A set of birds brought out in 1973 included a Red necked Phalarope on a 35c. value. The portrait was taken from a 19<sup>th</sup> century print by an unknown artist as could be guessed from the still and formal pose of the bird.

## Northern Lapwing

In Britain the Lapwing is a familiar resident breeding bird, passage migrant and winter visitor. Favorite haunts are poor quality pasture, moorland and salt marshes.

The sexes are similar with olive green back, iridescent dark green wings, white under parts, black breast band and long black plumes on the head. The plumage changes colour with the light and frequently takes on a marked green hue, giving rise to the bird's common name of Green Plover.



There is a great difference in the appearance of standing birds and those flying. At rest they have a pointed shape but the wings are rounded when opened and give birds in flight a non-angular appearance.

There are over 20 stamps featuring the Lapwing and several show the difference between standing and flying birds, e.g. France 1960, 20c. (1510) and Turkey 1992, 500l. (3148.)

In 1989 the Vatican issued a first set of bird stamps. There are of great artistic interest having been taken from the plates in a Natural History of Birds by Eleazer Albin published in three volumes between 1731 and 1738. This was an early attempt to provide a complete record of British birds. The 1500l. value shows a Lapwing and the old-fashioned nature of the portrait is plain to see (934).



## Black-Tailed Godwit and Bar-Tailed Godwit.

The name Godwit comes from the Old English meaning a good creature which is a reference to their good eating properties which were once highly valued.

When on the ground they are difficult to tell apart but as soon as they take to the air identification becomes easy as the Black-tailed Godwit has pronounced white wing bar.

Both are winter visitors in fair numbers and the

Black-tail is a casual breeder in eastern England. In summer the males of both species assume a chestnut brown appearance, richer and more extensive on the Bar-tail.

Like all waders food is obtained from soft ground by probing with long beaks, slightly upturned in the case of the Bar-tail.



The excellent series of bird stamps from Iceland includes a fine portrait of a Black-tail on a 1988, 5K. (720).

A Bar-tail can be seen on Marshall Islands 1988, 44c. (144). This is presumably the sub-species that migrates through the Pacific as far as Australia and New Zealand. A male in breeding colours is pictured but in the Marshall Islands only birds in the grey and white non-breeding plumage would be seen.



Another Pacific island, Tuvalu brought out in 1988 a set of bird stamps featuring heads only the 45c. shows the same sub-species of a Bar-tail which is in winter dress (510).

Netherlands 1984, 70c. +30c. Shows a Black-tail adult with chick and a bird in flight on which the white wing bands can be seen. (1438).

## Bittern.

The Bittern of Europe and Asia is a member of the heron family that lives exclusively in reed beds. With such a specialized habitat its existence is in jeopardy as more and more wetlands are drained and reedbeds destroyed.



In Britain its last strongholds are the reed marshes along the east coast of England from Norfolk down to Kent and the RSPB reserve at Leighton Moss in Lancashire.

They are secretive birds, with plumage enabling them to merge into a background of brown reeds. Seldom seen, they are best known from the booming sounds they make in the breeding season with which they advertise their presence to rivals and mates. In suitable conditions their booms may be heard from as far away as two miles.

Nests are built deep in dense reed beds of old reed stems and hedges lined with finer material. They are normally built on firm ground and the normal clutch is four to six olive - brown eggs with fine speckling.

The bird on Afghanistan 1989, 10a. is shown in the position held when it is booming with the head thrust forward and raised.

East Germany 1959, 10pf. portrays a bird creeping in typical fashion through reeds. There are twelve species of bittern and all have similar life styles. One common habit is to freeze and point the bill vertically upwards in line with the surrounding reeds. This is a form of concealment behavior and the left hand bird on the Great Britain 35p is drawn in this frozen position.

## Ruff

These waders are rare breeders in Britain, passage migrants and winter visitors in fair numbers when they frequent mainly inland marshes.

By any avian standards Ruffs are unusual. The male is around one foot long while the female, called a Reeve, is only nine inches long.

Out of the breeding season both sexes are ordinary looking waders with typical long legs and beaks. Both sexes have heavily marked areas on the black and wings caused by light coloured edges to their dark brown feathers.



In the breeding season the males develop elaborate plumes around the head. These collars or ruffs, after which the bird is named, vary in colour and no less than 38 different types have been recorded, including black, brown, buff, white, black and white barred and speckled mixture of colours with a purple sheen.



Before mating takes place the males display and fight to stake out territories. After mating the males continue to display while the females take on nest building, incubating and raising the young.

All the eight stamp designs include ruffs in breeding plumage with collars of various colours. Speckled white, brown and orange spotted ruffs respectively and on the actual stamp a male in non- breeding costume (MS914).

Germany 1991, 60pf. shows a male with orange brown ruff and a female in the background (2390).

## Dispelling the ignorance

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust is involved in a range of practical conservation activities. An important part of these is education to help dispel the ignorance that still exists about the importance of birds to the environment.

An example of ignorance is provided by the Bewick's Swans at Silm Bridge where it has been found that a third of those examined are carrying lead shot in their bodies. This means that they have been illegally shot but have lived to tell the tale. Who knows how many have not survived? Much work remains to be done.

The stamps issued to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Trust will play a small part in the educative process. (Courtesy: Gibbon's stamp monthly, 1996)

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## Know this country

### SPAIN - ESPANOLA

Richard Tarrant

The poet and author Robert Graves recounted the story of an English tourist who had returned from Spain and told friends that she had been to Mallorca. When asked where it was she replied that she had no idea because she had flown there.

That story is an example of how many people, quite wrongly, view Spain as little more than a holiday resort. This was perhaps not surprising a few years ago, when Spain was isolated politically and rather inward-



looking, but since the death of General Franco in 1975 Spain has undergone great political and social change, as evidenced by its joining the EEC in 1986, the same year it also became a member of NATO.

Spain occupies 85 per cent of the Iberian peninsula. It is separated from the rest of Europe to the north by the Pyrenees, while at its most southerly point it is only eight miles from North Africa.

Spain is, in fact, the second largest country in Western Europe (France being the largest) and has been described geographically as resembling a great castle

rising from the sea, having as it does a large central plateau. It is a mountainous country, second only to Switzerland in Western Europe in this respect.

It is perhaps time to look at what Spain can offer to the stamp collector, an exercise that is best achieved if a little is known of its turbulent background.

## History



Spain is unique in that its history is unlike that of the rest of Europe. There is evidence of the existence of Neanderthal man in Spain some half million years ago; subsequently Spain was inhabited in pre - Roman times by Iberians, Basques, Celts and Celtiberians. The Greeks and Phoenicians established colonies on the coast from the seventh century BC. Carthage dominated from the fifth century BC until the whole of Spain was absorbed into the Roman Empire for some 500 years.



The Visigoths set up a kingdom in Spain at the beginning of the fifth century AD, until they in turn were routed in the eighth century by the Moors. The Moors ruled most of the country until Christian resistance led eventually to the reconquest of Spain, which was finally unified in 1492, the year Columbus embarked on his voyage of discovery. The wealth that flowed from the opening up of the New world led to Spain becoming the most powerful country in Europe.

The period from the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century become one of debt and decline for Spain but was a golden age for art and literature. Artists of that era included El Greco, Velazquez, Murillo, Ribera and Zurbaran, while Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote was published in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

France occupied Spain in 1808 but was expelled in 1814 with help from the British. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century conflicts between monarchists and liberals led to a succession of revolts and civil wars, and to the establishment of a republic in 1873-74. Spain lost its American colonies during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its defeat in the Spanish-American war finally brought to an end Spain's

history as an international power.

In 1931 monarchy collapsed in Spain and a republic was established. A period of uncertain political direction culminated in a right - wing revolt which led to the Spanish Civil War in 1936. When the war ended in 1939, over a millions Spaniards had died and General Franco was in power.

At the end of the Second World War, during which it had professed neutrality, Spain was the only fascist country left in Europe. It went through a period of isolation from which it began to emerge in 1955 on joining the United Nations.

The great tourism boom in Spain began in the 1950s and Spanish industry was revitalized by the wealth tourism produced. Juan Carlos was proclaimed King of Spain on Franco's death in 1975 and Spain became a parliamentary democracy.

## The stamps

Spain issued first stamps on January 1, 1850, a basic set of five portraying Queen Isabella II, very much in the style of Penny Black of 1840. The stamps were printed by the Government Printing Works in Madrid, which has printed most Spanish stamps since; this makes it the longest established stamp printer in the world.



1928 issue for the Rome Catacombs Restoration Fund (top row).

1930 death centenary of Goya (middle row and far left).

Anti-TB issue (left).

Spain can offer a world first with its issue of Official stamps in 1854. The stamps depict the arms of Castille and Leon and are notable for their face values being expressed not in currency but in terms of weight. Values are expressed in onzas (ounces) and Libra (pounds), denoting the maximum weight for which they would prepay postage.

The early Spanish issues are interesting both historically and philatelically. As the postal authorities experienced considerable difficulties with forgeries they issued fresh sets of stamps every year from 1850-79. With very few exceptions stamps bore the portrait of Queen Isabella II until 1868, in which year she was deposed. Philatelically, these stamps are fairly straightforward,

several issues actually bearing the year of issue as part of the design. Shades and paper types are the main features that add interest.

The 1870 issue bore a portrait of Liberty, while the 1872 series included portraits of King Amadeo, who abdicated the following year. Interestingly, between 1872 and 1876 three quite tiny stamps, amongst the smallest stamps ever, were issued.

In 1873 and 1874, stamps were issued during the term of the first Republic showing allegorical figures of peace and Justice. In the latter year Spain became the first country to issue war tax stamps, with the aim of collecting funds to conduct the Carlist and Cuban wars.



The reign of King Alfonso XII saw the issue of four different sets bearing his portrait, plus further war tax stamps. On his death in 1885 he was succeeded by his daughter Mercedes but only until Alfonso's posthumous son was born on May 17, 1886. No stamps were issued bearing Mercedes' portrait and the first stamps for King Alfonso XIII came out in 1889, stamps universally known as the 'Baby' type.

A collection, then of the definitive stamps of Spain will reflect well the history of the country in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Because of historical changes and problems with forgers, Spain issued a great number of stamps in that period, over 300, and while many of the earlier issues are now expensive it is possible to collect a representative selection without too much outlay.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century began with a further set of portraits of King Alfonso XIII, this time in his teens. The set is known as the 'Curly-Heads'.

In 1905 came Spain's first commemorative stamps, a set of ten celebrating the tercentenary of the publication of *Dib Quixote* with each stamp depicting a scene from the book. It was not until 1916 that an issue of stamps gave an inkling of the golden era of Spanish stamp production that was to come. In that year two sets of official stamps were issued, four in each set, without face values, one set for use by members of the Chamber of Deputies, the National Library, a portrait and a statue of Cervantes. They were printed by the recess process by Bradbury Wilkinson and are quite superb.

Waterlow and Sons produced another excellent set in the 1926 Red Cross issue depicting members of the Royal Family and aircraft, a long set of 24 stamps that included airmail stamps and an express letter stamp.

In 1928 came one of the finest sets of stamps ever issued, again printed by Waterlow by the recess process: a set of 32 stamps each printed in two colours, to raise funds for the restoration of the Rome catacombs. Each stamp contained portraits of both Pope Pius XI and king Alfonso XIII.

Attractive sets for the Seville and Barcelona Exhibitions and the 11<sup>th</sup> International Railway Congress were issued in 1929 and 1930 before Waterlow excelled themselves once more with a set of 31 stamps commemorating the death centenary of the painter Goya. The set included postage and airmail stamps and an express letter stamp. The postage stamps bore a portrait of Goya but the three high values depicted his painting, *The Naked Maja*, allegedly a portrait of the Duchess of Alba and Berwick. Stamps with such a painting would turn few heads today, but mail bearing any of the stamps was barred in several countries and in the USA there were some prosecutions of dealers who displayed the offending stamps in their shop windows! The airmail stamps all related to flight by showing fantasy etchings by Goya, a most novel approach.

Just three months after the Goya issue, came a Columbus set of 35 stamps, again printed by Waterlow, which included the *Santa Maria*, Scenes of the departure of Columbus in 1492 and his subsequent arrival in America, portraits of Columbus and the Pinzon brothers and the monastery of La Rabida. Eleven days later a set of 26 stamps was issued to mark the Spanish - American Exhibition.

A total of 124 stamps was issued by Spain in 1930. This was undoubtedly frowned on by contemporary philatelists and expensive for the collector at the time, but it has left us with some magnificent examples of the art of stamp production.

The period of the Second Republic (1931-36) saw many of the stamps of Alfonso XIII overprinted 'REPUVLICA' or 'Republica /Espanola;', a long definitive set of rather indifferent portraits and several commemorative sets, most notably long sets for the third Pan-American Postal Union Congress and for the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Montserrat Monastery.

The Civil War (1936-39) saw concurrent issues of stamps by the Republicans and the Nationalists. Such issues can make a distinctive and interesting collection in their own right.

The Franco era was marked by several definitive sets bearing his portrait and subsequent to Franco, that of King Juan Carlos, but Spanish stamps since 1939 can best be understood by examining the series that have been issued. Much of Spain's prodigious output (and there have now been over 3,000 stamps issued, compared with about half that number for Great Britain) has comprised the issues of annual series. That pattern began with the Anti-TB stamp issued each year from 1937 until 1951, easily identifiable by the Red Cross on each one.

A notable series was that begun in October 1944 to celebrate Stamp Day. Each issue was usually linked with an area unrelated to stamps, for example Cervantes' 400<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary in 1947, but the 1950 series celebrated the centenary of Spanish stamps. From 1958 most Stamp Day sets were linked with Spanish artists and comprised stamps showing paintings, each one with a gold frame in imitation of a picture frame. Produced by the photogravure process, these are splendid examples of paintings on stamps and would form the nucleus of a specialist collection of art stamps.



Other long running series have concentrated on monasteries, the arms of provincial capitals, explorers and colonizers of America, castles, World Stamp Day, provincial costumes, Spanish flora and fauna, military uniforms and Spanish celebrities, but the prize for length must go to the tourism series which is still going strong. An excellent series begun in 1986 relates to the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus.

Finally, mention must be made of a single set issued in 1960 to commemorate bullfighting. Whatever one's feelings are about it there is no doubt that bull fighting has been responsible for great art, whether in paintings, literature or music. The set did justice to that tradition with finely engraved stamps.

In many ways Spain is an ideal country for the stamp collector. All Spanish stamps are quality productions with virtually every stamp relating to the country itself. It has resisted the issue of thematic stamps to boost sales to collectors. They are inexpensive and freely available so a near complete collection of post-war stamps can be made without breaking the bank. A very good showing of pre-war issues can be assembled at reasonable cost, too. Spain also has its share of scarce, expensive stamps for those with more money to spend.

Why not give Spanish stamps a try? If you do you will learn a little of Spain's uniquely interesting history, and you may even learn where Mallorca is!  
(Courtesy : Stamp Magazine, U.K, 1992.)

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The World's first adhesive stamp was an upright rectangle. The first circular stamp came from British Guyana in 1850. The first triangulars were issued by the Cape of Good hope in 1852.

## ALMOST GREEK BUT NOT QUITE

Ralph walker

On July 27, 1978, India released a set of four stamps showing art works in four different museums of India. The 100 P stamp shows the obverse (front) and reverse of a gold coin in the National Museum in New Delhi. The obverse of the coin depicts the greatest Kushan king Kanishka, holding an elephant goad over an altar in his right hand and a spear in his left. He wears the short robe and a peaked helmet of the nomads from which he descended and his face is disproportionately large, almost to the point of a caricature. On the reverse is the god Shiva with four arms holding a vase, a drum, a trident, and an antelope with horns (some say it's a goat).



For topical collectors interested in numismatics and religion, the stamp is important; but the Kushans can be read about in any history of ancient India and there are articles on Shiva in most encyclopedias. This article is concerned with the interests of the smaller but growing number of topical collectors interested in languages and scripts, and for others who may be interested in some angles which the press releases and magazine stories don't mention.

To begin with, one must know who the Kushans or Kushanas were. They were horse nomads roaming the steppes above China and known to the Chinese and the Yueh chi until another group of horse nomads, the Hiung-Nu or Huns, pushed them toward the west. They eventually wound up in what is now Afghanistan some time in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. There they proceeded, rather methodically, to conquer the remnants of the Indo-Greeks, descendants of the Sakas, another group of horse nomads from central Asia who had beaten the Kushans to Bactria and Northern India.

The Indo-Greeks had held this land for nearly 300 years and it enjoyed a highly civilized but hybrid Greek and Indian culture. The Kushans, who may have been Aryans, like the Greeks, Persians, and Indians, or may have been Turks, adopted the culture, including the Greek alphabet and the Greek language, as the language of greatest prestige in the world west of China. In fact, the king believed by many scholars now to be the first Kushan conqueror of Northern India, the one who supplanted the Sakas, named himself on his numerous coins simply Soter Megas, Greek for "Great Savior" and his name is not known to this day.

By the time the Kushans spread their net over the top of India, the Greek language used in the area had been greatly corrupted. A kind of pidgin Greek was spoken in the Greek pockets, and misspellings and wrong endings are

common in the Greek inscriptions of the period which have survived. The language lingered for a while on coins, but by Kanishka's time only the letters were used, not the words.

Unfortunately, the writing of history was not a strong element in the Indo-Greek-Kushan culture, known as the Gandharan culture in its later stages, and dates are so uncertain that a conference of scholars from all over the world was held in London in the 1960's simply to establish a date for Kanishka. They didn't agree. 125 A. D., give or take 50 years, will do. The Indians consider Kanishka, a strong promoter of Buddhism, one of their greatest kings.

The usual transcription is "Shao Nano Shao kaneshki koshano". However, if as is suspected the "o" was pronounced like "u", it would be Shau kaneshki kushanu. If, as the Afghan scholar A.Habibi contends, the peculiar small omicron (o) is often used as a word divider, the inscription would be Sha-Nan-Sha kaneshki koshan. Compare the first part with the present-day Persian Shah-n-Shah. In any case, Sha or Shao or Shah is "king of kings" Kanishka the Kushan.

The variations from normal Greek script are quite prominent. (P) is a letter which the Kushans apparently invented for their SH sound. It was long thought to be a form of the Greek she (p), which explains why older books is a variant form of eta(H).

The use of the Iranian word Sha for "king" probably shows that this was the word used in court circles. The Indo-Greek kings and Kanishka's Saka and Kushan predecessors had used bilingual inscriptions on their coins, Greek and Prakrit, a form of Sanskrit. The Greek inscriptions including the Greek word for "king" Basilleus, while the Prakritones generally used the Indian words Maharaja, "Great King" and Raja,- inscriptions the Kushans used one of their own words, Yavuga, which meant "Chief" or "ruler."

To the right of Lord Shiva, on the reverse of the coin the stamp, is the legend okpo, which could have been pronounced Veshu or Vesha and means Shiva. Kanishka and his Kushan successors, who were very tolerant of all forms of religion, represented many deities, Greek, Iranian, and Indian, on their coins. The representations of the king worshipping at the fire altars probably indicates that they honoured all the deities. some Kushan engravers confused (h) for (k), k, and the word for Shiva came out as Okpo, Oksho.

As is the way with empires, the Kushan Empire weakened. Its anarchic remains were swamped in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. by another wave of horse nomads, more barbaric and ferocious than the Kushans had ever been. Compared with the bloody oppression of these Hephthalites, or white Huns, the rule of the tolerant Kushans over Northern India and Bactria seemed like a golden age. Ironically, the newcomers were also of Yue-Chi stock, kinsmen of the Kushans. (Courtesy : Topical time, 1996)

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