

Jeffery Matthews, designer Part 1: Royal

Mail stamp issues 1965-81, by Glenn Morgan

Last autumn, the British Postal Museum & Archive October lecture provided a fascinating insight into the world of stamp design when renowned graphic designer Jeffery Matthews MBE addressed an audience of enthusiasts. This expanded report is based on his lecture and also serves as a tribute to Jeffery, who next month celebrates his 80th birthday.



TO BEGIN his lecture, Jeffery spent some time relating some of the stories behind his commissions for the Post Office, which had started with submissions in 1959. In 1965 his first accepted stamp designs appeared – the 20th anniversary of the United Nations issue. This began a lifetime's association with Royal Mail which has continued to this day. There can be few collectors of British stamps who are unfamiliar with his work and those seeking a further insight into his career may wish to consult my article published in the October 2005 *Bulletin*.

Jeffery explained that he had worked not only for Royal Mail, but had also designed the logos for the Inland Revenue and the Forestry Commission, produced a masthead for the *Sunday Times*, created the Millennium coin design for the Royal Mint and had undertaken many other projects, some of which involved calligraphy and heraldry, which are two of his favourite graphic treatments.

The lecture then focused on his stamp design work and all commissions were discussed and illustrated in chronological order, which is how I will treat the remainder of this report.

20th Anniversary of the UN
Jeffery's first issue for Royal Mail.

British Bridges Just prior to submitting his designs Jeffery became concerned that the bridges might no longer be in service, so he telephoned the AA, who sent out patrolmen on bikes to check: fortunately they all were all still standing!

Postage Dues These designs exploit the tonal ranges which can be achieved with gravure printing.

20th Anniversary of the United Nations 1965 The apparently unsteady edges to both designs were intentionally done that way to assist the printer, who was still coming to terms with obtaining perfect registration of colours at that time. The large '20' and 'UN' were hand-drawn.

British Bridges 1968 Three designers had been commissioned to produce artworks for this issue. Unusually, Jeffery had two of his designs accepted (the 4d and 1s9d values) and the other two designers had one each, producing a set that was less cohesive than would have been the case had one designer produced all four stamps.

'To Pay' labels (Postage Dues) 1971 This set allowed Jeffery to exploit the tonal range possible with photogravure printing. The designs were created in monochrome, with the colour for each stamp added at the printing stage. The artwork was somewhat unconventional in that he cut the numerals out of masking film, stuck them onto white artboard, sprayed the tonal gradations, and finally peeled away the mask to reveal the white numerals. ▶



Regional definitives Details show the heraldic devices on the 1971 issues (top row) and on the lithographic stamps of 1980. These later issues were printed using artwork drawn for earlier presentation packs, as described on the opposite page.

Regional definitives 1971 The Regional stamps used heraldic devices that required repositioning and resizing of the Machin head. This was the first time Jeffery had used heraldry in stamp designs, creating white-painted devices on a mid-grey ground. This ongoing series proved complex, and this article is not the place to produce a catalogue of all the variations, but the four basic evolutionary stages are recorded in the table shown below. (Note that some changes cross-over, as new printings were often released as-and-when needed.)

Stage	Font	Year	Printer and process	Heraldry source	Head source
1	Perpetua	1971	Harrison, photogravure	Matthews original	Original Machin
2	Perpetua	c1980	Waddington/Questa, litho	Presentation pack	Unknown
3	Matthews	c1983	Questa, litho	Presentation pack	Rory Matthews
4	Matthews	1984	Questa, litho	Matthews revised	Rory Matthews



Royal Silver Wedding Anniversary 1972 Stamp-size sketches of these stamps had been produced, which were liked by the Post Office, who subsequently approached Her Majesty for permission to hold a photography session at the palace. Jeffery managed to convince The Queen to pose with and without a tiara. Seeing the finished photographs, he favoured the more informal approach, but the best image had included the tiara. When Her Majesty visited Harrison to see the stamps being printed, she queried why her hair looked as it did on the glass negative. Jeffery explained that the tiara had to be painted out, in order to utilise the best portrait. The Queen smiled and said: 'Oh well, one cannot win them all'.

High value definitives re-design There was a desire by the Post Office to move away from the Castles high value stamps, and Jeffery was commissioned to produce at least 50 single and bicoloured colour trials for larger-sized Machin head stamps. The bicoloured stamps were selected as they offered greater security against counterfeiting.

25th Anniversary of the Coronation 1978 The Queen's head at top right of each stamp was intentionally produced larger than normal and a younger looking image was chosen to highlight how Her Majesty had acceded to the throne at such a young age. As these designs had dark coloured backgrounds, the white outer margins were made bigger than normal to ensure that there would be a strong phosphor reading by the automated sorting equipment.

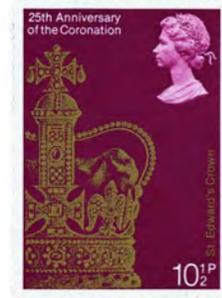
British Architecture 1978 and Rowland Hill 1979 (miniature sheets) Around 1977 Jeffery had designed the logo for the London 1980 stamp exhibition, and was subsequently briefed about the three miniature sheets that were to be issued in the lead-up to the show.

He produced the sheet margins for these two issues, and the 1980 London Landmarks miniature sheet, using a Letraset rub-down moiré effect, but he was not responsible for designing the actual stamps contained within the sheets.

Enschedeé 8p definitive 1979 Jeffery was involved with a project that saw security printer Joh Enschedé of The Netherlands being invited to produce a test run of the 8p definitive stamp. He went over to Haarlem to set things up and to offer his considerable know-how in the field of stamp design and production.

The project had occurred because of Royal Mail's concerns about continuity of stamp supply if the British printing industry was to withdraw its labour force en-masse. Despite there never being any need to invoke such contingency arrangements, this printer was later to become a regular producer of stamps for Britain, a relationship that continues.

Country stamps by lithography 1980 In 1980, Royal Mail added Waddington and the House of Questa to its roster of stamp printers, both of whom utilised lithographic instead of gravure printing. When both of these printers came to print their first Regional stamp issues, they appear to have created their own stamp artwork. Back in 1976, the Harrison-printed revised tariff Regionals had appeared in presentation packs, for which Jeffery had created black-and-white drawings of the heraldry. These had been drawn to a different scale, and with a different degree of fineness than would have been used for stamp production. Despite this, the printers amazingly took the presentation pack artwork and reproduced it on the original printings of their litho stamps. This happened before Jeffery had been able to redraw the heraldry for this different printing process. The source of the Machin head used is also uncertain. ▶





London International Stamp Show stamps & miniature sheet 1980

Jeffery was advised that this issue could be engraved and printed by intaglio instead of the more usual photogravure. Concerned that the Stamp Advisory Committee might not fully appreciate how the stamp might look by this process, he drew the artwork as if it was an engraving.

A London commercial engraver, Geoffrey Holt, did an exact facsimile of his rough without adding any interpretation. Unfortunately, the rendition of The Queen's head proved to be a disappointment to Jeffery, because the engraver had also slavishly copied what had only been intended to be a rough rendition of the head for the SAC. Jeffery was planning to redraw the head, but a shortage of time prevented this.

80th Birthday of The Queen Mother 1980 This issue depicted Her Majesty wearing a hat, a string of pearls and a broad smile – the three things that most people would associate with this popular old lady. The lettering surrounding the photograph was hand-drawn.

Christmas Decorations 1980 Jeffery received a specific brief for this issue, which was to produce a secular design. This did not prevent him including Christian elements, as close examination of each stamp will reveal.

New definitive stamps, early 1980s There was a growing desire in some quarters for a new definitive series, to update the look of the stamps and Her Majesty. The Post Office was prepared to consider everything from a totally new portrait and different formats, through to adaptations of the existing Machin head. A brief was issued to Jeffery, and others, and many printing trials were produced. One idea was to change the Machin head by cutting away the shoulders of Her Majesty and, as a courtesy to Mr Machin he was consulted over this work-in-progress. Suffice to say that he most definitely did not find favour with any of the proposed ideas.

In the end, none of the work was deemed an improvement to the existing design and the project was dropped. However, Jeffery's idea of turning the format to create a horizontal stamp did eventually lead in 1993 to the creation of the first Machin self-adhesive stamp in 1st class booklets.

Royal Wedding, Charles and Diana 1981 This is Jeffery's least favourite pair of stamps that he has been involved with. Roughs were produced using two separate photographs of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer, which had worked fine, but then Lord Snowdon was commissioned to produce an image exclusively for these stamps. Unfortunately, only one photograph was ever made available, which included them both standing together, giving Jeffery no opportunity to construct a suitable composition.

Incidentally, all the time that roughs were being prepared for this issue, the name of Prince Charles's future wife was unknown, so she was referred to as 'the lady of his choice' until the Spencer name was made public. ►



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Thematica 2002



Conceptual ideas, created by Jeffery Matthews for the presentation of the Machin portrait on British definitives, reproduced courtesy of Heritage Services, Consignia.
The horizontal format was adopted for Britain's first self-adhesive stamps.

Souvenir sheet printed by Walsall Security Printers Ltd. in a limited edition of 5,000

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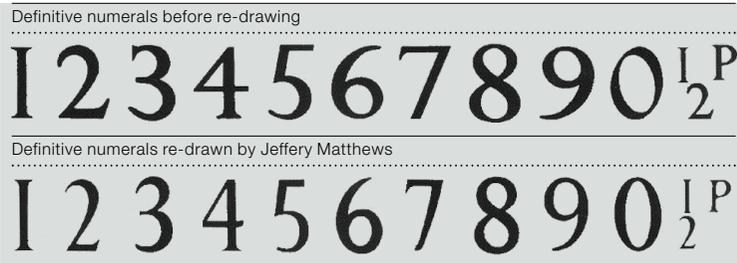
Facsimile Machin head 1981 Royal Mail needed to standardise the artwork given to each printer, so Barry Robinson made requests of Harrison in 1981 to have the origination material for the Machin head, but was eventually told that it no longer existed.

Jeffery advised Barry that the image would have to be recreated, but there was no record of how the original Machin bust of Her Majesty had been photographed. The special lighting that had been used could not be replicated due to the complexities of the multiple angled lights, and so an alternative solution was needed. He suggested that an artist could recreate the image in tone so as to be an exact facsimile, claiming that no-one would ever spot that it was not a photograph.

In May 1982 Jeffery's son Rory, a consummate draftsman in his own right, set about drawing the facsimile Machin head in pencil. This image had the desired photographic quality to it and, as Jeffery had predicted, no-one was aware that the head had been hand-drawn until it was made known in 2002. This facsimile head was also understood to have been used on postal stationery.

The Rory Matthews facsimile head stayed in use until work started on the 150th Anniversary of the Penny Black series, when Barry again mentioned to Harrison that he needed a definitive head image and a chap went off and came back with a negative! Barry made haste to photographically copy this image and supplied it to each printer for their use on all reprinted Machin stamps henceforth.

Illustration from *Connoisseur Catalogue of Machin Stamps*, courtesy of James Skinner.



Definitive numerals 1981 The 'Matthews Palette' is discussed next month, but collectors should perhaps also be referring to the 'Matthews Typeface'. The existing typeface, 'Perpetua', was designed by Eric Gill in the early 20th century, based on the designs of classical Roman lettering and Arabic numerals. Jeffery gradually redesigned each of the numerals (except the 9, which is simply an upside down 6), together with the £ symbol, making subtle changes along the way until we have those used to this day.

The zero in particular was in need of change, as it was very wide and perfectly round, resembling a letter 'O', and difficulty was being experienced in having to fit into the available stamp space values such as '20 1/2 p'. The 10p stamp was the first to use the new narrower zero. At a later time Jeffery also designed the service indicators '1st', '2nd' and 'E' used on the NV1 stamps. His involvement with this process ceased just prior to the introduction of the new country definitive range • *Continued next month.*

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