

**Theyre Lee-Elliott**  
**Graphic Designer and Artist, 1903-1988**

Glenn H Morgan FRPSL

I have always had an interest in the stylised artwork of the 1930s-era and no-one captured that style for me more than graphic artist Theyre Lee-Elliott, especially his GPO work that incorporated letter boxes.

Unfortunately, it has proved very difficult to obtain a biography about this man, but I will be actively pursuing this in a more vigorous manner shortly.

His best remembered creation is probably that of the Imperial Airways "Speedbird" logo design. This was used by Imperial between 1932-1939 and later continued in use through to 1973 by successor BOAC. The design still looks modern today despite being almost three-quarters of a century old and could so easily have just been submitted by a design agency to an airline undergoing a current rebranding exercise.

He published at least one book, entitled *Paintings of the Ballet\**, a subject that he first painted in 1936. This had an introduction by Arnold Haskell and included a selection of his drawings and paintings, recapturing the mood and magical spirit of the original performances, apparently delighting all lovers of the ballet.

I am aware of just the few items illustrated on the following pages that were created for the General Post Office of the 1930s, but other gems may well lie hidden in the archives of the British Postal Museum & Archive in London. Unfortunately, their search engine reveals nothing of relevance.

The opportunity has been taken to also show here other works by him that I have traced through searches on the internet. However, specifically excluded are his more "normal" designs that were not stylised in his own unique way.

He tended to ensure that his name was incorporated into his designs, either as "LEE-ELLIOT" or simply abbreviated to "L-E". The Manchester 'Postal District' labels must surely be his work, although they do not bear any signature to prove this.

\* Published by Collins, London, 1947. Hardcover with approximately 120 unnumbered pages.)

***Note:***

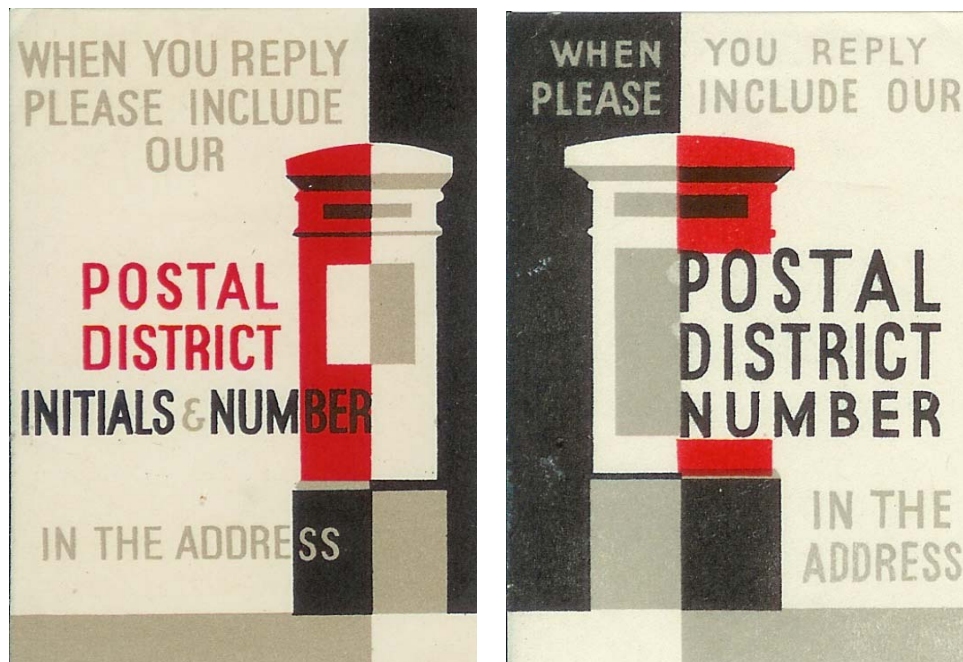
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## WORK FOR THE GENERAL POST OFFICE



June 1937 Air Mail notice.

A Lee-Elliott design. Post office notice for South African Air Mail. Faults but scarce. Sold by Candlish McCleery for £25 in 2008.



Postal District labels used in the Manchester area.

Design was resurrected in 2008 for the menu screen of the *Addressing the Nation* DVD, produced jointly by BPMA/BFI.



Airmail Postbox leaflet, mid-1930s.

WORK FOR (the original) BRITISH AIRWAYS



Travel brochure, Summer Time Table 1938. Signed "Lee-Elliott".

**AS THE CROW FLIES—ONLY FASTER!**



LEE-ELLIOTT

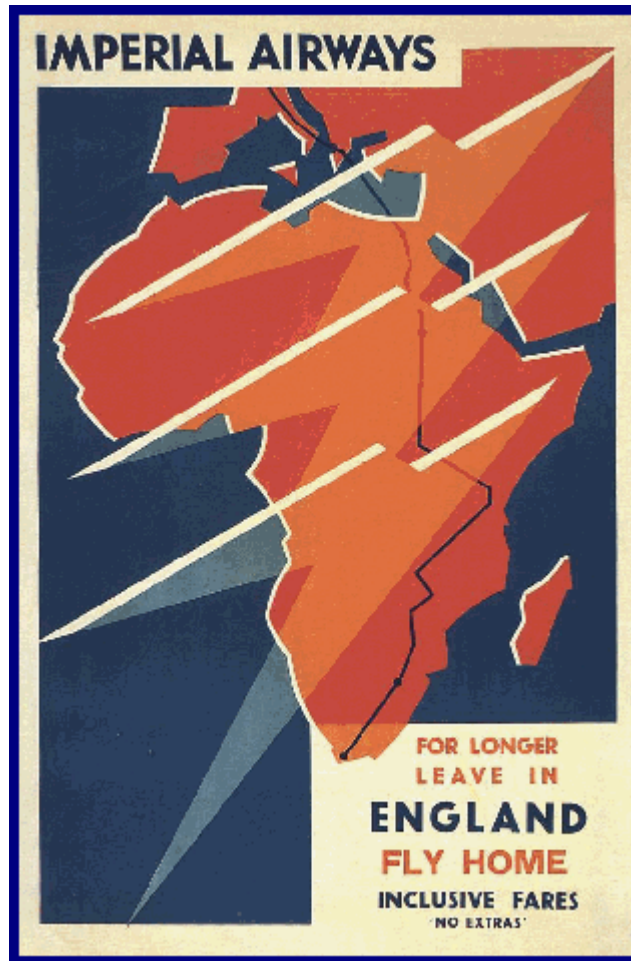
**BRITISH  
AIRWAYS**

**PARIS & SCANDINAVIA**

SEE YOUR TRAVEL AGENT

Travel poster, 1938. Signed "Lee-Elliott".

## WORK FOR IMPERIAL AIRWAYS



Circa 1935

This poster is by the Speedbird's inventor, Theyre Lee-Elliott.

The repeated Speedbird symbol illustrates the airlines presence in the airways above Africa.  
The whole poster seems to be in 'typical' African colours.

The message behind the poster is an attempt to attract regular clients, compared to the occasional flyer or VIP.



Poster stamp, circa 1935. Signed "L-E".



Luggage label, circa 1933. Signed "L-E".



Imperial Airways luggage label, circa 1936. Signed "L- E".



Imperial Airways travel brochure "Switzerland by Lunch Time in Perfect Comfort," 1936. Signed "Lee-Elliott"





Imperial Airways brochure "Facts About Air Travel," 1933. Signed "Lee-Elliott"

## WORK FOR LONDON TRANSPORT



© london transport museum collection  
Four times more light, by Theyre Lee-Elliott, 1935  
Medium: Collage Dimensions: Width: 350mm, Height: 565mm Reference number: 1989/30

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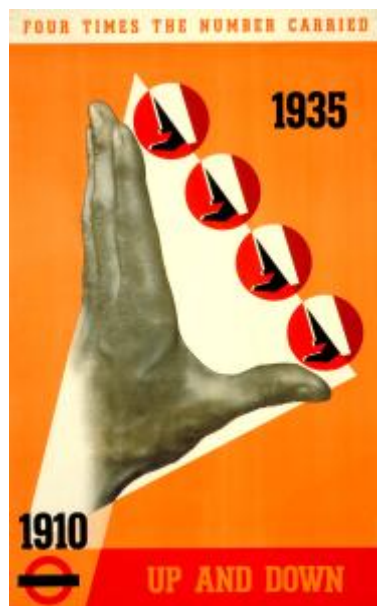
© Transport for London  
The empire's airway exhibition, by Theyre Lee-Elliott, 1936  
Published by London Transport, 1936 Printed by Waterlow & Sons Ltd, Format: Double royal Dimensions: Width: 635mm, Height: 1016mm Reference number: 1983/4/4490



© Transport for London

Four times the light per seat, by Theyre Lee-Elliott, 1936

Published by London Transport, 1936 Printed by Curwen Press, Format: Double royal  
Dimensions: Width: 635mm, Height: 1016mm Reference number: 1983/4/4389



© Transport for London

Four times the number carried, by Theyre Lee-Elliott, 1936

Published by London Transport, 1936 Printed by Curwen Press, Format: Double royal  
Dimensions: Width: 635mm, Height: 1016mm Reference number: 1983/4/4377



© Transport for London

Trooping the Colour, by Theyre Lee-Elliott, 1952

Published by London Transport, 1952 Printed by Waterlow & Sons Ltd, 1952 Format: Panel poster Dimensions: Width: 320mm, Height: 268mm Reference number: 1983/4/11222

## WORK FOR SOUTHERN RAILWAYS



A design for a poster for Southern Railway, with two stylised horses, probably c. 1935 gouache, signed 'Lee-Elliott' upper left 70 x 46 cm (27 1/2 x 18 in) Note: This stock poster was designed to promote Southern Railway's services to race meetings, the details of which would be printed in the blank central field. Auction estimate of £400-600 (2008)