

Dummy Stamps

Issue 1

"An Infrequent Look at the World of British Dummy Stamp Material"

Summer 2006

Welcome to DS1

It had long been my intention to produce a newsletter that related to British dummy philatelic material, therefore enabling documentation of new finds and an expansion of our knowledge about older items.

I was finally galvanised into action by the appearance of the U S Stamp Society's publication *Dummy News and Views* (download at www.usstamps.org/dssg.html). This fine online publication fully covers American dummy stamps and was a great source of inspiration to me.

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Why describe them as Dummy Stamps?

It is difficult to choose a word that clearly describes these items - 'experimental', 'trial', 'promotional', 'testing' - all are too specific as to intended purpose of use and so my choice of terminology and definition is:

"Dummy stamps: Items that have the general appearance of being real, but which lack the capacity to function in the postal system."

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Waddington Tender Labels

A successful attempt in proving to Royal Mail that they were capable of printing British stamps

Renowned for their posters and commercial print, Waddington's was also soon to gain a fine reputation for printing stamps following the first stamp issue fully produced by them, which was printed in 1967 for St. Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla.

Waddington's had previously supplied many artwork designs for Format International Security Printers and also acted as sub-contractors to them and De La Rue before starting to produce stamps in their entirety.

Whenever Royal Mail wants to add a new printer to its roster, it is normal for the company to supply samples of its work, for what better recommendation can there be than finely printed stamps already in use?

As part of its 1980 British tender process, in addition to supplying issued stamps Waddington's also designed and produced a series of dummy stamps printed by offset litho in at least the four process colours of Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black (CMYK) in perforated and gummed sheets of 25 for Royal Mail's consideration.

These labels comprise designs depicting an oil tanker, camels, the GPO* Tower in London and a lanner falcon, valued at 25x, 25x, 65x and 38x respectively. They were for the fictitious country of 'Crescent'.

*By 1980, the 'G.P.O. Tower' wording on the label had long been obsolete as a term for this telecoms building.



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...Why Dummy Stamps? *Continued from page 1*

It could be argued by some that essays and proofs should be included within the scope of this newsletter, as they cannot be used in the postal service either, but these have traditionally been excluded and therefore they will not be appearing within these pages.

What are Dummy Stamps used for?

Dummy stamps can be used for a variety of purposes by Royal Mail, its printers or its business customers. Collectors may choose to include or exclude certain of the categories recorded below. As an example, I collect all types of this material but particularly focus on booklets and coil dummies.

~ **Testing new or modified equipment**, such as vending machines, printing presses or sorting machinery.

~ **Assessment of revised or new formats**, like when the so-called Swedish folded style of booklet was introduced, or when self-adhesive stamps appeared.

~ **Perfecting production methods** as might be required when a new type of product has been introduced by Royal Mail.

~ **Training of postal engineers and other staff**, usually at special internal training centres, but sometimes at the local Post Office.

~ **Prevention of theft at retailers' point of sale**, as in the case of stamp booklets when they became available at shops and not just at Post Offices.

~ **Promotion by security printers or sponsors** that would help them to secure further business or increase their sales.

So, now that we have defined our subject matter and recorded the scope of this newsletter, I hope that you will enjoy reading the rest of this publication and that you may be inspired enough to want to add this type of material to your own collection.

The world of dummy stamps opens up many different opportunities to collect unusual objects and I welcome your feedback and reports – especially if you have been lucky enough to have discovered material that you have never seen recorded anywhere else before.

I may be contacted privately via the Guest Book that is located at www.stampprinters.info/SPI_GuestBook.htm 📧

Dummy DLR Self-Adhesive Stamp Book

New discovery of previously unknown dummy stamp book made by Dutchman

Recently, a new dummy stamp book was illustrated in *Filatelie*, a Dutch magazine, as part of an article by Rein C Bakhuizen van den Brink on his visit to Dunstable to see Dutch stamps being printed for TPG Post (now TNT Post).

The book is a self-adhesive product and it is unclear whether it was produced at the High Wycombe, Byfleet or Dunstable factories – all of which have successively produced stamps for Royal Mail following DLRs acquisition of Harrison's and then Questa. The press used is also unclear and it has not been possible to get any information from the printer as to when or where it was produced. 📧

Thanks to Rein for supplying black and white low-res PDFs of this book. The frame line on the labels is in DLR dark green, everything else is black. There are two notches on edge of cover, not seen here.



Talking of Books

For some time it had been unclear whether manufacturers of stamp vending machines still used dummy stamp books. Recently I had the opportunity of asking a current Royal Mail machine supplier who confirmed that they are now supplied with normally packaged 1st and 2nd class issued stamp books. It would appear that this has been the case from the first post-trial books of ten onwards.

Apparently, the books do not appear to be defaced in any way – either by pen, rubber stamp or pre-printed bars or wording. These days it is probably cheaper to allow a relatively few packets of stamp books to be used in this way, rather than going to the expense of designing, producing and stock-managing unique dummy equivalents. (It always used to be that live stamps were deemed to be accountable paper, i.e. they had a value greater than the unprinted paper used, and so needed to be returned to Stores.)

It now seems unlikely that our album pages will see many new dummy self-adhesive books. However, policies change and so details of any finds would be welcomed, please. 📧

DLR Experimental Stamp

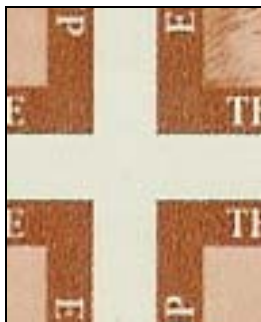
British stamp dealer Rushstamps (www.rushstamps.co.uk) recently offered a type of dummy stamp in its *Rush Express* listing number 57 that I had not seen advertised before.

It was marketed as: '1940s EXPERIMENTAL STAMP. Printed by Thomas De La Rue, showing a dog. Imperforate in orange-brown. Only one sheet of 50 recently found in a London dealers stock.'



Copies were reasonably priced at just £6.50 for single copies, £12.50 for pairs and £20 for blocks of four.

It appears to have been printed by the photogravure, process based on the mottled effect in the solid that is so reminiscent of the gravure stamps once produced by the Swiss postage stamp printer Helio Courvoisier SA (which is now a part of the Walsall stable of printers, of course.



It has yet to be ascertained whether this item was produced as long ago as the 1940s, as claimed by Rushstamps. I have certainly not read that De La Rue was experimenting with photogravure stamp printing equipment during that era. If any reader can add further information to this story, then it would be much appreciated if you would make contact. ☒

...Waddington's

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The initial Royal Mail contract that they secured was for the 4p and 20p Machin definitive stamps issued in 1980.

Waddington's ceased all stamp production upon their acquisition of the House of Questa in 1984, being unable to justify two companies in the same group producing postage stamps, while at the same time recognizing Questa's meticulous excellence in this field of security printing.

I could end the story at this point, but include two other labels that I am aware of. The first is the same as one of the labels produced at the time of the Royal Mail tender, but the face value of 65x has been replaced by the Waddington logo design and the 'country' name of 'Crescent' has been replaced by 'WADDINGTON'. What version came first?



The second label depicts Kirkstall Abbey and was prepared for (presumably) Waddington's attendance at the Rio Philatelic Congress of 1979.



Are there any other labels or interesting items from this printer that I have not listed? Reports are welcomed. ☒

Questa, SuperLitho and Micro-Printing

Getting added quality from offset lithography

There was a fascinating article entitled *A few Observations on Micro-printing* by Robert Bostock in the April 2006 issue of *The Bookmark* (published by the Modern British Philatelic Circle), which reminded me that I have a set of three trial labels produced by Questa as part of the run-up to first using its SuperLitho process on British commemorative stamps in 1998 (Endangered Species).

The labels each illustrate a Chinese dragon, are worded 'HONG KONG, CHINA' implying a post-1997 production date, and the words TEST SAMPLE on a belt at bottom right, with Chinese text. The use of the yellow graded colour at far left and a solid blue background was designed to stretch the capabilities of the press used.



Each label was accompanied by an unprinted definitive-sized blank stamp bearing a hand-written description of the accompanying test sample, namely:

- 'Normal litho 250-300 dots psi',
- 'SuperLitho 800-900 dots psi' (not illustrated below as it is the same as c) but without micro-printing),
- 'SuperLitho ...CHINAHONGKONG... in belt on either side of TEST SAMPLE'.



Normal litho with typical white spotty appearance, rosette pattern and a general loss of detail



SuperLitho with micro-printing giving a superior image quality and greater detail, including micro-printing



Normal Litho



Superlitho

It is hoped that by illustrating labels printed by normal litho and SuperLitho with micro-printing (each scanned at 1200 dpi), readers will be able to see the quality and capabilities of this under-utilised process. 📄

This Questa feature was first published in The Bookmark and is reproduced here in modified form by kind permission of its editor, Graham Eyre.

Sign-off

Well, that is all from me for this first issue of *Dummy Stamps*. I hope that you will have found something of interest in at least one of the short articles contained here.

Unfortunately, business, family and other commitments to the hobby mean that I will not be in a position to guarantee that I can rigidly stick to a publishing programme, so I suggest that you go to www.stampprinters.info/dummystamps.htm where PDF files of this and all futures issues of *Dummy Stamps* will be available to download and print-off.