

Armada

19 July 1988



A strip of five first class stamps will be issued on 19 July to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, one of the most decisive battles in the history of Europe. The stamps form a composite design showing the Armada at five points along its course from its arrival off The Lizard to its routing in the North Sea.

The 16th century was a time of overseas exploration and the expansion of trade. Along with this went military aggression and the need to establish control of the seas. Henry VIII had built up the English Navy but after his death it declined and on her succession, his daughter, Elizabeth inherited just 22 ships, many unseaworthy. Under the able administrator Sir John Hawkins, the Navy was reformed with many ships rebuilt as galleons and the morale of the sailors improved by better pay – 10s. a month being the basic pay in the mid-1580s.

King Philip II of Spain was the Catholic champion of Europe. In July 1554 he had married Elizabeth's sister Queen Mary who aimed to restore the Catholic faith in England. Elizabeth had no great wish to engage in a costly war against Spain – far better to support the Dutch in their fight against Philip's forces in the Netherlands and to encourage adventurers such as Francis Drake to plunder Spanish treasure ships. For his part King Philip awaited the death of Elizabeth, expecting that the Catholic Mary,

Queen of Scots would then ascend to the English throne.

Nevertheless plans for an invasion force were drawn up in 1586 and intensified the following year when Catholic princes throughout Europe called on Philip to avenge the execution of Queen Mary.

Drake was not prepared to await the inevitable invasion and sailed for Spain, raiding Cadiz in April, destroying 30 ships. Popularly referred to as the "singeing of the King of Spain's beard", this daring raid made Drake a national hero. This obviously delayed the sailing of the Armada which did not leave Lisbon until 20 May 1588.

The first stamp shows the Armada off The Lizard on 19 July – it was at that time that, according to legend, Drake heard of the arrival of the Armada whilst playing bowls on Plymouth Hoe. He is alleged to have said he had time to finish his game and beat the Spanish as well.

The second stamp features the Armada off Plymouth two days later in its lengthy progress up the Channel towards its destination – joining up with the Duke of Parma off the Netherlands.

On the third stamp is depicted the second major skirmish off the Isle of Wight on 25 July, two days after similar action near Portland Bill.

The Armada anchored off Calais on 27 July and the following day fireships were sent in to



dislodge the enemy. This is shown on the fourth stamp. Whilst few Spanish ships were destroyed, the formation of the Armada was broken and the order was given for the vessels to sail for home. The Spanish ships sailed north, pursued by the English as far as the Firth of Forth where Lord Howard of Effingham, the Lord Admiral, decided they were no longer a threat. The fleeing of the Spanish ships is featured on the final stamp in the se-tenant strip.

The Armada, in disarray, sailed around the north of Scotland and met its worst fate on the Irish coast – some 4,000 lives and 20 ships being lost in storms. Less than half the ships and only a third of the men who sailed from Lisbon ever returned home. The war against Spain went on for the rest of the century, continuing beyond the deaths of King Philip (1598) and Queen Elizabeth (1603), peace finally being signed in 1604.

Happily relations with Spain are now much improved and evidence of this will be seen in June when King Juan Carlos and Queen Sophia travel to Cambridge to receive honorary degrees.

Technical Details

Designed by Graham Evernden, the stamps have been printed in photogravure by Harrison and Sons Limited, each stamp measures 41 x 30mm and is perforated 15 x 14. Production is in sheets of 100 on unwatermarked, phosphor coated paper with PVA Dextrin gum. The colours and cylinder numbers used are as follows: 2A (slate-black) 1B (yellow-orange) 1C (bright carmine) 1D (bright blue) 1E (turquoise-blue) 1F (yellow-green) 1G (gold).

PHQ Cards

PHQ cards (Nos 112 A-E) featuring each of the five stamps will be available from 4 July, price 15p each.

Presentation Pack

The presentation pack (No. 192) will cost £1.12 and was designed by John Gibbs and illustrated by Graham Evernden, with text by Mike Barden. It was printed by Clement & Foster Limited. It includes a potted history of the Armada and illustrations of the major characters involved.

First Day Cover

The first day cover design shows Tudor sailing vessels and sea creatures. It costs 16p. Two

pictorial postmarks will be used for the first day cover service, one from the British Philatelic Bureau featuring fish, and the other from Plymouth showing Drake's statue on the Hoe.

A first day cover service will be provided by the Bureau with the official Royal Mail cover addressed to the destination required with the five stamps cancelled with either postmark. The charges will be £1.34 (inland) and £1.17 (overseas). Application forms, available from the Bureau and main post offices, should be returned not later than 19 July.

Customers requiring only the special pictorial postmarks may obtain them under the reposting facility by sending on the first day of issue a stamped addressed envelope under an outer cover endorsed 'Special First Day of Issue' handstamp to:

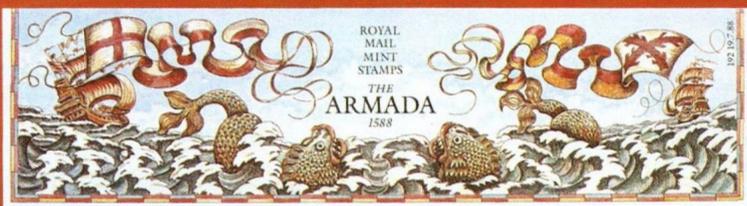
'British Philatelic Bureau' 20 Brandon Street
EDINBURGH EH3 5TT

'Plymouth' Special Postmark Duty
Customer Services Unit
Letters District Office
29 Central Park Avenue
PLYMOUTH PL1 1AA

Collectors of postmarks and first day covers might be interested to know that the permanent Plymouth Philatelic Counter handstamp also features Drake's statue and that a slogan postmark worded 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SPANISH ARMADA PLYMOUTH DEVON ENGLAND 1-28 July 1988 was introduced at Plymouth, St Austell, Bude, Bodmin, Newquay, Redruth, Penzance and Truro on 18 January and will continue until 30 July. Covers for postmarking should be sent to: Special Postmark Duty, LDO, 29 Central Park Avenue, PLYMOUTH PL1 1AA (Plymouth, St Austell & Bude) or Special Postmark Duty, Circuit House, TRURO TR1 1AB (others).

Armada Exhibition

A splendid exhibition on the Armada was opened by the Prince of Wales at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich on 20 April. The exhibition continues until 4 September. It can also be seen at the Ulster Museum in Belfast from 12 October 1988 until 8 January 1989. A ticket for free admission to the exhibition at Greenwich will be included in each presentation pack of the Armada stamps.



Charles, Lord Howard of Effingham, Lord Admiral, commanded the English Navy from his flagship, 'the Royal'. He showed great leadership, even though this was his first naval action.

Sir Francis Drake, Vice Admiral, was in 'the Revenge'. Famed for his daring, he delayed the Armada by discovering thirty ships in Cadiz 1587. Given popular credit for Armada's defeat.

Sir John Hawkins, Navy Treasurer, had never sailed in a foreign adventure, but was knighted upon the return in which he led a squadron from his ship, 'Victory'.

Gran Griffin, beached at East Ho, 'took' 'the Revenge' back to sea and ship later blown up - allegedly by an English agent.

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and favourite of the Queen, commanded the Queen's army. Suffered large force east of London.

1603 Elizabeth I died - James I succeeded. 1604 Peace signed by England and Spain.

The years of conflict:
 1588 First Armada - many ships lost.
 1589 English fleet's commander attacked Haiti.
 1596 Second Armada.
 1597 Third Armada - Spanish ships by storm.
 1598 Philip II died.
 1601 Fourth Armada - defeated in Kinsale.
 1603 Elizabeth I died - James I succeeded.
 1604 Peace signed by England and Spain.



1588 marks the fourth centenary of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, one of the most decisive battles in the history of Europe.

On one side stood champion of Catholicism, Europe and monarch of South America in the East Indies. Opposing him was Elizabeth I of England, queen of a power and effectively Philip's maritime differences was a mutual antipathy stretching back thirty years to when Philip was consort to Mary I, Elizabeth's sister.

Both monarchs, however, had reasons for not going to war against the other. Elizabeth found it less costly - and sometimes even profitable - to wage undeclared war by plundering Spanish treasure ships and by supporting the Dutch against Philip's forces in the Netherlands. Philip's admiral would plunder Mary Queen of Scots to the English throne. Mary's Catholicism suited his purpose but pro-French stance was anomalous. Mary's execution in 1587 changed everything. Mary alive was a reason for not going to war. Mary dead was an overbearing reason to do the opposite, particularly with Catholic princes throughout Europe calling upon Philip to avenge her death. However, it was only when he became convinced that invasion of England that Philip committed himself.

Preparations for an armada, which had been planned since 1586, intensified. All it wanted Sir Francis Drake was not prepared to muster. On 19 April 1587 he called right into Cadiz harbour and left thirty ships smouldering wrecks. His bold action bought time for England - time to build defences and to bring the powerful English fleet into state.

Leaving, La Rochelle, the armada had never set sail. A thousand miles away, the English fleet gathered to meet it. The outcome was decisive in many ways. It rendered England's pre-eminence as a maritime power and marked the zenith of English gunpowder. Above all, it determined that religious unity could not be compromised that religious unity. What it did not decide was the time between England and Spain since more conflicts were to come over the next sixteen years.

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