



News Release

Public Relations Department

130 Old Street
LONDON
EC1V 9PQ

Fax 071 320 7437
Telephone 071 320 7443

The Letters Business of The Post Office

BH 6/2

January 25, 1991

NEW ROYAL MAIL STAMPS TURN THE SPOTLIGHT ON PIONEERS IN SCIENCE

Bright ideas which revolutionised modern-day life are set to enrich Britain's postbag - thanks to a new set of stamps unveiled by the Royal Mail today.

Pioneering discoveries in science - spanning electricity, computers, radar and the jet engine - are spotlighted on the four special stamps, which go on sale on March 5.

Two of the stamps mark the bicentenaries of the births of Michael Faraday, the "father of electricity", and Charles Babbage, the pioneer of computer science. The other two celebrate the 50th anniversaries of the first flight of Sir Frank Whittle's jet engine and the development of radar by Robert Watson Watt during the Second World War.

Said Mr Keith Fisher, General Manager of Royal Mail Stamps: "These stamps reflect some of the great scientific and engineering achievements which have spurred Britain's technological growth and added new dimensions to our lives.

"The Royal Mail is delighted to recognise, through this set of stamps, the wealth of invention that has played such a vital role in the nation's progress."

The two 22p stamps in the set show profiles of Faraday and Babbage with representations of their inventions, illustrating their ability to create entirely new concepts that had far-reaching impact on scientific developments.

Faraday, the son of a poor blacksmith, left school at 13 and became an apprentice bookbinder. His vital asset was an active imagination which, coupled with a fascination for electricity and chemistry, led him to discover the principle of both the electric motor and electric generator.

In contrast, Babbage was a Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University, noted for his work on the theory of logarithms and for his calculating machine - regarded as the forerunner of the modern computer.

Both Babbage and Faraday did not confine themselves only to their particular stream of science - they also took an active interest in the development of the postal system.

The invention of the Penny Post by Sir Rowland Hill in 1840 was aided by both men. Babbage was among those to petition Parliament in support of Hill's plan, while Faraday helped to create an indelible cancelling ink.

Robert Watson Watt's invention of radar - a crucial element in the defence of Britain during the Second World War - is shown on the 31p stamp. Later developments in radar brought an unexpected spin-off - the discovery of the cavity magnetron led to the microwave oven.

The 37p stamp portrays a jet fighter over eastern England, scene of the first flight of Whittle's jet engine in 1941. His design, on which he began work in 1929, led to the jet engine used in aviation today.

A presentation pack, containing the four stamps and illustrated background material, will include a free ticket for a child accompanied by a paying adult for a visit to London's Science Museum.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

STAMPS

The stamps are printed in photogravure by Harrison & Sons Limited in sheets of 100. They are vertical in format and measure approximately 30mm x 41mm with a 14 x 15 perforation. The paper is unwatermarked, phosphor-coated and the gum is PVA Dextrin.

CYLINDER NUMBERS AND COLOURS

This information will be supplied later.

FIRST DAY COVERS

Special first day covers designed by Giant will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH, EH3 5TT and at most post offices, price 19p each or in bulk from the Bureau at £37.50 for 250 or £130 per thousand.

The usual first day of issue facilities will be available at offices with philatelic posting boxes. There will also be pictorial first day of issue postmarks available, one from the British Philatelic Bureau and one from London South West. These are illustrated below:



The Bureau will also provide its usual first day cover service. Covers addressed to the correct postal address of the destination required and bearing all four stamps will be cancelled 'British Philatelic Bureau' or 'London SW' and despatched for £1.63 (inland) and £1.42 (overseas).

Application forms for these services are available from the British Philatelic Bureau and at main post offices and should be returned not later than March 5, 1991.

For customers who wish to pay through Girobank, the Bureau's Girobank account number is 1100009.

Customers requiring only the special pictorial handstamps may obtain them under the re-posting 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 the British Philatelic Bureau or London South West Special Handstamp Centre, 53 Nine Elms Lane, LONDON, SW8 5BB.

PRESENTATION PACKS

Designed by Giant, the packs will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau and at most post offices from March 5, 1991, price £1.50 each.

STAMP CARDS

Four new stamp cards (nos. 133A, B, C, D), each featuring one of the new stamps, will also be on sale, price 19p each, from the British Philatelic Bureau and at most post offices from February 18, 1991.

SOUVENIR COVERS

Souvenir covers designed by Giant will be available at 19p each from all philatelic counters from March 6, 1991.