

Collecting the Victorians

1. Sixty Years of Stamps



The celebrations marking the death centenary of Sir Rowland Hill, pioneer of 'Uniform Penny Postage', during the past year have attracted many newcomers to the stamp collecting hobby, and the fact that, in 1980, the world's first postage stamps, Penny Black and Twopence Blue, have their own 140th anniversary will turn many a collector's thoughts to those superficially dull, but consistently dignified, stamp issues of Queen Victoria's reign. Some of them are not so dull or unattractive as they may at first appear. Most of them have gradually increased in value, and will continue to rise, while some of the scarce ones are rather expensive, even prohibitive in price, but it is still possible to build up a good collection of Victorians, over a long term, at moderate cost.

This can be accomplished in two ways, (1) by aiming to form a simple, representative collection of all Victorian issues – the *Gibbons' Catalogue* records approximately 200 basic stamps, or (2) by being really selective and confining interest to separate studies of any of the following groups:

The Penny Reds 1841-1879

The Embossed Issues 1847-1854

The Surface-Printed Issues 1855-1883

The First High Values 1867-1883

Britain's Smallest Stamp ($\frac{1}{2}$ d.)

and the First $\frac{1}{2}$ d. 1870

The Penny Lilac 1881 and the First

'Postage & Revenue' Issues 1887-1892

The 'Jubilee' Stamps 1887-1892

Start your representative collection with one or two decent Penny Blacks and Twopence Blues – the nicest postmarked ones you can find within your price limit – and include the *second 2d.* blue imperforate with 'white lines added' to the design, issued in 1841. Follow with the Penny Reds, first the imperf types which replaced the 1d. black, then the comparatively common perforated stamps with letters in all four corners – still easy to obtain and popular because of the different plate-numbers which appear in the side frames of the stamps. There are also some perforated 2d. blue stamps of this period. The three embossed stamps – 6d., 10d. and 1s. – of 1847-54 have become connoisseur items and fetch connoisseur prices, but it would be nice to have one or two nicely used examples on a

representative album page.

In 1855, Britain started issuing the surface-printed (actually typographed or letterpress-printed) stamps which, printed by De La Rue, continued throughout the Queen's reign and beyond. The same young portrait of the Queen was used throughout, at her insistence, but monotony is relieved by the many different frame designs of the stamps and their various colours. The famous Penny Lilacs were issued in 1881, first Die I with 14 dots in each corner (which had a short life), then Die II with 16 dots. Some undeniably dull lilac and green stamps were issued in 1883-84, and they were followed by the most colourful issues of Victoria's reign, the so-called 'Jubilee' stamps of 1887-1892. In my next article I will survey the Penny Reds as a specialist group.

JAMES WATSON

Forthcoming Events

The Woking and District Philatelic Society

The Society will be holding its second Annual Fair and Exhibition – Wopex 79 – at Christchurch Hall, Woking, Surrey on Saturday 15 December 1979 from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m.

There will be displays by members, a Post Office sales counter and dealers' stands. Refreshments will also be available.

Admission by programme (obtainable at the door) price 20p.

Withdrawal of Obsolete Stamp Values

The range of low value definitive has been reviewed and it has been decided that the 6p, 7p and $7\frac{1}{2}$ p definitives and 7p and $7\frac{1}{2}$ p Country definitive values are no longer required. These values were therefore withdrawn from general sale as the close of business on 28 November 1979.