

The History of the Aerogramme and the Start of Commercial Air Mail — Part Six

Christmas Issues 1965-1975

Great Britain's first pictorial Christmas Air Letter forms were put on sale on 1 November 1965. They cost 10d each including 6d postage, and were popular enough with the public for the Post Office to issue a special Christmas form each year since.

In 1965, Michael Goaman designed the form depicting the Nativity scene and the 6d impressed stamp a stylized snowflake and Star of Bethlehem. The other form was ornamented with a pattern of stylized snowflakes by Richard Negus and Philip Sharland. Their 6d impressed stamp showed a geometrical representation of a snowflake. Both stamps incorporate the Dorothy Wilding portrait of the Queen.

1,000,800 of each type of form were printed by Charles Skipper and East at Basingstoke, using the lithographic process. After printing, the forms were sent to McCorquodale and Company Limited, of Wolverton, in uncut sheets of eight. After cutting, gumming and security counting the forms were handed over to the Post Office Supplies Department.

In 1966, Clive Abbott designed a form depicting a lighthearted representation of Santa Claus in Reindeerland. The form was issued on 1 November 1966, with an impressed 9d stamp designed by Michael and Sylvia Goaman, depicting a Christmas rose, foliage, ribbon and a pine cone. The Dorothy Wilding portrait of the Queen was replaced by the cameo portrait adapted by David Gentleman from the coinage design by the late Mrs Mary Gillick. The form cost 10d.

The 1967 two special forms were issued on 1 November, one with a religious theme designed by Eric Fraser depicting the three wise men offering their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Child Jesus, and the other designed by Clive Abbott showing a partridge in a pear tree, being based on a legend 'On the First Day of Christmas'—the opening line of which appears beside the design. Both forms have the same 9d impressed stamp showing a design of brightly-coloured Christmas candles at varying heights, de-

signed by Michael and Sylvia Goaman.

Two special forms were issued on 1 November 1968. Geoffrey Trenaman designed the form showing a stylized airship containing Father Christmas looking through a telescope for the good children on earth. He also designed the address panel depicting Father Christmas firing a cannon with the words '25 DEC 1968' coming out of the barrel. The other form designed by Peter Gauld, shows an angel in flight.

In 'Nativity Scenes' appearing on the form issued on 29 October 1969 was designed by Fritz Wegner, who also designed the three Christmas stamps issued on 26 November.

The design on the address panel of the form depicts a herald angel over Jesus, Mary and Joseph. For the first time in a pictorial issue the design did not fill the whole panel. In this instance, part of the instruction panel shows the three shepherds and the three kings with their gifts. The impressed 9d stamp, incorporating the profile of the Queen by Arnold Machin, shows the flight into Egypt. Approximately 2,500,000 forms were printed of what to my mind, is one of the best Aerogrammes issued by Great Britain.

The front of the form issued on 28 October 1970 shows the 16th century window, depicting the Nativity, which can be found in Great Malvern Priory Church, Worcestershire. The 15th century window in the church of St Peter and Paul, East Harling, showing the adoration of the shepherds, provided the design on the reverse of the form, designed by Peter Gauld.

The design on the impressed 9d stamp shows an angel also taken from a window in the church of St Peter and Paul. Approximately three million forms were printed using the gravure process, and for the first time the name of the artist and name of the printers appear on the form.

In 1971, Julian Gibb designed the form issued on 13 October. It depicts a design of DOVES based on the calligraphic style of Edward Cocker (1631-1675), a London school-

master and author. The form incorporates the words 'Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year' and the equivalent greetings in four other European languages (French, German, Spanish and Italian) on the wings of the dove. The form cost 6p including 5p postage.

The form issued on 18 October 1972 was designed by Laurence Scarfe and shows various conventional Christmas motifs, including Christmas tree decorations, stars and snowflakes. The design was cut engraved on blocks from which a print was taken. This was then photographed for use by the printers, McCorquodale & Co Ltd.

The form issued on 21 November 1973 showed a motif of Christmas designs which included, doves, stars, Christmas trees and Father Christmases and was designed by Hulme Chadwick and Partners.

Peter Gauld designed the form issued on 27 November 1974 which was illustrated with three Christmas carols—'The Twelve Days of Christmas', front panel, 'While Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night', back panel and 'We three Kings', impressed 6p stamp. The form cost 7p.

The form issued on 26 November 1975 was designed by Marjorie Saynor, tells the Christmas Story in medieval style. The form cost 12p, including 10½p postage.

In 1976, the Post Office are again issuing a special Christmas Air Letter form.

Next time, the final instalment of this short series on THE HISTORY OF THE AEROGramme. PETER JENNINGS FRPSL

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