

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

On 10 September 1973, a new scale of overseas charges came into operation and on 3 October, the small-size Air Letter at the revised charge of 6p was put on sale.

The larger form with nearly a third more writing space was not issued with a 7p stamp until 19 December. The old forms (6½p and 5p) could be used by adding a ½p or 1p adhesive stamp to make up the new rate.

On 29 September 1975, yet another new scale of overseas charges were introduced by the Post Office and the stamp values on the Air Letters changed to 10½p and 11p.

Welsh Air Letters

On 7 August 1973, a special pictorial Welsh Air Letter form showing a woman in traditional Welsh costume and an artist's impression of Snowdonia was launched at a special ceremony in Ruthin, Denbighshire, on the occasion of the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales.

The form was designed by Douglas Halliday, ARCA, head of Graphic Design at Newport College of Art and Design, Monmouthshire, and carries Welsh and English inscriptions.

Douglas Halliday told me that the illustrations on the Air Letter were the result of visits he made to the Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagans, Glamorgan, and Snowdonia.

A second special pictorial Air Letter was issued on 3 July 1974, on the occasion of the 28th International Musical Eisteddfod held at Llangollen. Designed by David Evans of Chepstow, the forms show an impression of a traditional Welsh harp and coracle fishermen in West Wales.

David Evans also designed the third special Air Letter issued on 29 September 1976. It features a rugby scene at the National Stadium in Cardiff, set against a background montage of well-known buildings in the Welsh capital. The other two panels of the form depict Conwy Castle and Pennygarreg Dam in the Elan Valley.

Scottish Air Letters

The first special pictorial, bilingual, Scottish Air Letter form went on sale on 15 May 1974. Designed by Gordon Gunn, the form shows a view of Siloch and Loch Maree, Wester Ross, the Prince Charles Monument at Glenfinnan, Loch Shiel, and the Ring of Brogar, Stenness, Orkney. Descriptions of the scenes, all from colour-wash drawings, are given in both English and Gaelic.

A special form to commemorate the birth of Robert Burns (1759-96) was put on sale on 13 January 1974. Designed by Fraser Haston, the form features a traditional portrait of Burns, the famous Burn's mouse 'Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim-rous beastie' and a scene from the poem 'Tam O'Shanter', showing Tam being chased on his horse by three witches.

The City of Glasgow is featured on the third special form issued on 12 May 1975. Designed by James Smith, MSIA, the drawings show the 13th century Glasgow Cathedral in its modern setting, the Provand's Lordship built about 1471, and reputed to be Glasgow's oldest house, and the bird, tree, fish and bell incorporated in the city's coat of arms.

The Scottish Highlands and Islands were portrayed for a second time on the fourth special form issued on 18 June 1975. Designed by the Studio of Ruari McLean Associates, it features Oban Harbour, the Church of St Clements at Rodel on the Isle of Harris and Kildalton Cross on the Isle of Islay.

The City of Edinburgh was featured on the fifth special form issued on 23 July 1975. Designed by Peter Gauld, FSIA, it depicts Edinburgh Castle with the National Gallery in the foreground. John Knox's house in the High Street and the Scott Monument in Princes Street are also shown on the form.

Traditional Scottish folk scenes are shown on the sixth special form issued on 14 July 1976. One shows the burning of the Viking galley at the Up-Helly-Aa fire festival held each year at Lerwick in the Shetlands to celebrate the passing of the shortest day and the coming of the summer's days of light.

Another depicts Clarsach or harp playing at the National Mod of An Comunn Gaidhealach and the third shows a Standard Bearer on horseback at one of the Riding of the Marches ceremonies. These are held in a number of Scottish Border towns and date back to an early period in Scottish history when the powerful Border landowners of the time each year rode to the four corners of their lands to reassert their claims to them.

All the special Welsh and Scottish Air Letter forms were printed by one of the companies

in the McCorquodale Group and they all incorporate the impressed stamp designed by David Gentleman which shows representations of two VC-10 aircraft in flight and the profile of Her Majesty the Queen by Arnold Machin.

This is the final instalment of the series, much of which has been taken from my book "AEROGRAMMES" published by Picton Publishing (Citadel Works, Bath Road, Chippenham, Wilts) price £3.50.

PETER JENNINGS FRPSL

British Special Stamps

26. Red Cross Centenary Congress, 1963

The Congress which opened in Geneva on 2 September marked the centenary of the establishment of the Red Cross organization, and the Post Office issued three stamps to mark the auspicious occasion, i.e., the Centenary Congress, not the anniversary as such. They were issued on 15 August 1963.

Three bold designs by H. Bartram, a newcomer to stamp design, featured the Red Cross emblem—a red cross on a white field, which is the Swiss flag in reverse (its founder was of



Swiss nationality—Henri Dunant)—in various settings, all with the Wilding portrait of the Queen prominently displayed and all inscribed 'Red Cross Centenary Congress'. The formats were uniformly square or rectangular, the 3d in red and deep lilac; 1s 3d red, blue and grey; and 1s 6d red, blue and bistre. Most member countries of the International Red Cross issued commemorative stamps for its centenary.

The British stamps were photogravure-printed by Harrison and Sons in sheets of 120 stamps (6 × 20) on 'multiple crowns' watermarked paper, ordinary and phosphor-banded. The 3d stamp is known with the red (cross) omitted, ordinary and phosphor, and there other, minor flaws. Quantities sold (phosphor in brackets) were: 3d 157,277,800 (10,349,280); 1s 3d 7,278,120 (929,040); and 1s 6d 6,995,160 (1,038,840).

JAMES WATSON

