

THE JERSEY POST OFFICE ON ITS OWN STAMPING GROUND

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In November 1979 at the Wembley Conference Centre, London, the annual British Philatelic Exhibition was staged and in common with recent years the States of Jersey Department of Postal Administration was in attendance offering collectors current stamp issues, literature, and answering customer enquiries.

Visitors were also offered a fascinating glimpse into the everyday running of the Jersey Post Office. This took the form of a non-stop audio-visual slide show alongside the stand.

For six minutes we were actually in Jersey. However, as far as the exhibition sales staff were concerned I think that it would be fair to say that by the Saturday evening they had had enough of the tape to last a lifetime!

I was one of the large body of stewards at the exhibition and made sure that I was armed with a tape recorder the next day to record the commentary. The transcript that follows is based entirely on that commentary. However, it has obviously been necessary to amend some sentences in order to compensate for the lack of slide show.

"All over Jersey people are posting letters. In boxes picturesque, boxes new and boxes not so new. We have 165 posting boxes, around four per square mile. No country in the world has more and wherever they post before long it's time for collection and the familiar red and yellow vans.



One of the Jersey Post Office fleet - a Morris 7cwt 50 cubic foot van based on the Morris Marina car.

The aim is for a letter to arrive in the morning with time for a reply to be written, posted and on its way the same day to the United Kingdom or anywhere else.

Some have a history, like this one commemorating the centenary of the very first post box, not only in Jersey but in Britain.



The Jersey Europa stamp issue of 1979, still in great demand, showed old and new together. No, it doesn't take a hundred years from posting to collection !



Or this one only a few years younger and still in use in St Helier.



**Flowers ordered by holiday makers
for posting to friends at home
accounted for 80,000 items last year.
Flowers such as these in our
Spring Flowers issue of 1974.**



The vans collect in country corners, and sunswept bays alike, many of which are inspiration for Jersey's popular stamps, such as Corbière lighthouse.

The island has twenty-six Post Offices. That's one for every 1 ¼ square miles - as high a ratio as the world's best and far better than most. Incidentally, the sub-Post Office of Samares is the most southerly in Britain.

The main Post Office stands in Broad Street, St Helier. The building was modernised throughout in 1971, and two years after the Jersey Postal Administration became independent. Now it is air-conditioned, bright and busy - both in front of the counter and behind - with a Bureau-de-Change, and, framed by the granite arches along one side, a philatelic display and sales salon for the ever growing number of Jersey stamp devotees.



Main Post Office



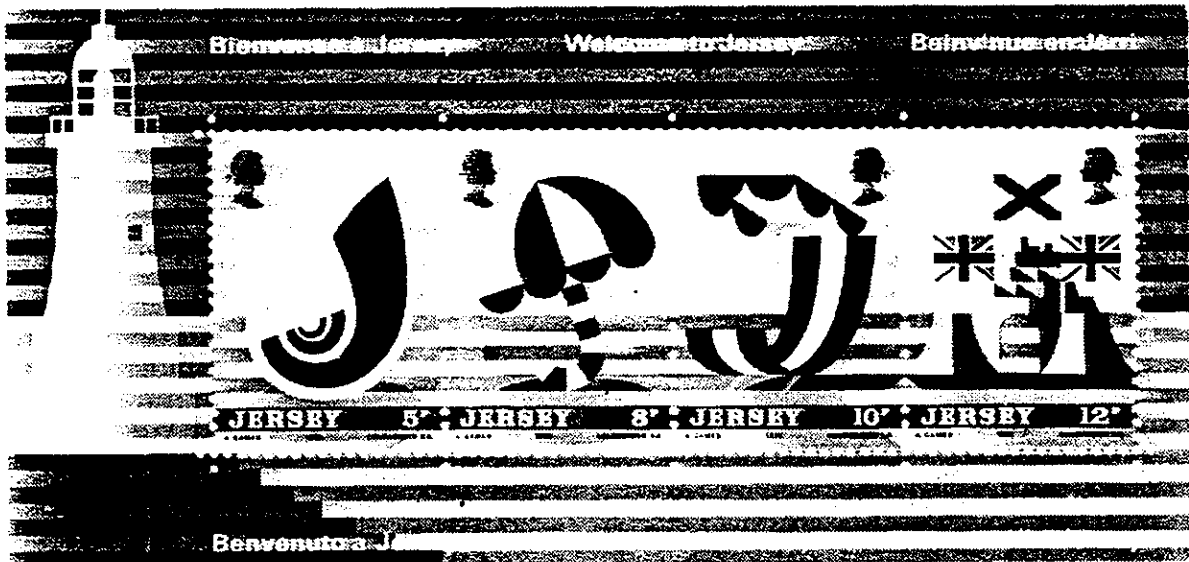
Philatelic sales salon

However, the real home of Jersey stamps is at Postal Headquarters, Mont Millais, where they are conceived, planned, sometimes designed, and the millions of pounds worth of stock are stored.

In the Philatelic Bureau from letters or from the computer records of the requirements of our regular customers the orders are extracted, checked, (quite a business with over 42,000 collectors on our own records alone), and made up.



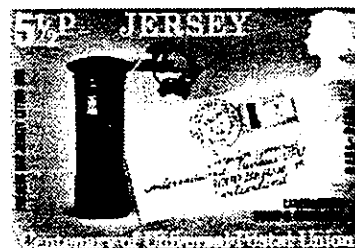
Stamps, presentation packs, albums, postal stationery and booklets and First Day Covers cancelled especially for the day of issue and then counted out in their thousands for despatch. They carry such stamps as the prize winning 1971 'English Fleet in the Channel' of Jersey's Peter Monamy, or the modernistic but equally famous Tourism souvenir sheet of 1975.



Behind the scenes at Postal Headquarters are the supervisors, accounts and personnel people and the staff on telegrams, by telephone and teleprinter.

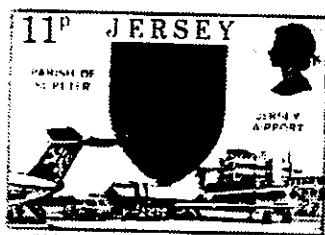
Yet the biggest job of all for nearly two hundred of the Department's 270 members is handling the twenty million letters and cards and the thousands of parcels posted each year to the United Kingdom and overseas bearing Jersey stamps.

Like this one of 1974 for the centenary of the Universal Postal Union which makes the international rules and conventions.



In come the final collections. Deadline for the United Kingdom and overseas 3.15 p.m. at Broad Street and 3.30 p.m. at Mont Millais, and onto the facing table. Packets to the top conveyor for hand cancelling at one end; postcards and letters, long and short, local and outward, to the lower belt for machine cancelling at the other at the rate of 500 items a minute.

Then, the outward sort for nearly two-hundred areas, including overseas. Bagging up the bundles of letters, cards and packets, weighing, checking and labelling. Then it is out to the waiting vans and away to Jersey's busy international airport.



When the pressures are off for some there is a canteen break, for others a few running repairs or a bit of routine van cleaning. The fifty vans are all looked after by the Department's mechanics. With nearly half-a-million miles covered every year there is always routine maintenance and sometimes repairs to be done. Post Office drivers have a fine record for careful driving and win many safe driving awards, but there is always that other idiot!

Not today, though, the servicing is done, the tests are okay and first thing in the morning, soon after six most likely, the inward mail will be checked-in. Letter bags from the airport, parcels, later, in their containers. Customs officers make their checks and then it is inward sorting. Batch-by-batch of letters and packets ready for delivery.

Some of the local mail was dealt with the night before, but here is the big sorting job of the day from 6.30 a.m. or so until 8.00 a.m. or 9.00 a.m., depending on aircraft arrival and weather conditions at the airport.

Traditions are the same as they always were, but today there are eighty-six delivery rounds. That's one for every 870 people and it is hard to beat anywhere in the world.

Out go the skips and baskets to load the vans, together with the laden pouches for the cycle men on walks and another delivery is underway. The shadows are long as they move off on four wheels or two, or a pair of early morning feet. On a wet day there will be no long shadows and a few long faces, but it's the job.

Not too bad a countryside to be delivering in, really. The shops, the houses, the pubs and picturesque farms, the zoo. There is always something to take the interest.

There is more than enough of Jersey's history, people and their customs to keep our modest four stamp issues or so per year going, and getting more popular all the time.

Well, we've gone full circle from collection to delivery, outward and inward mail. There's a lot left out, but we hope you've a little better idea of the Jersey Post Office on its own stamping ground.

If not why not read it through again?

Acknowledgement

My thanks are due to Mr M.D. Orbell, Director of the States of Jersey Department of Postal Administration, for allowing the audio-visual commentary to reach a wider audience.