

Bulletin stamps poll Glenn H Morgan FRPSL announces your favourite stamps and *Bulletin* authors of 2004, and prize draw results

IN DECEMBER you were invited to vote for your favourite set of special stamps of 2004, also your favourite individual stamp and *Bulletin* author. This was the 19th annual stamp poll and, as in previous years, a good response was received from almost 1,200 readers in all parts of the world. A number of respondents added comments and opinions to their voting form, and a selection of these is featured towards the end of this report.

It would be interesting to see how different the results would have been if a similar number of non-collectors were approached for their views on the years' stamp design. Do philatelists have a different eye for minuscule art to the rest of the population or is good – and bad – design seen by all in the same way?

.....
Favourite set As always, points were allocated for each vote for the set; three points for first choice, two points for second, and one point for third. This enabled us to get a clear picture of the relative popularity of each issue. The voting was as shown opposite.

The Woodland Animals set was the winner, with Classic Locomotives and Ocean Liners in second and third places.

For interest, past winners were: 1987 Flowers; 1988 Linnean Society, 1989 Birds; 1990 Queen Mother; 1991 Maps; 1992 Wintertime; 1993 Autumn; 1994 Age of Steam; 1995 Christmas; 1996 Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust; 1997 The Great Tudor (Henry VIII); 1998 Lighthouses; 1999 Scientists' Tale; 2000 Tree and Leaf; 2001 Weather; 2002 London Bridges; and 2003 Extreme Endeavours.

.....
Favourite stamps The Woodland Animals stamp showing a red squirrel was your favourite individual stamp, with the Woodland Animals Pine Martin design just a few votes behind in second place. The Ocean Liners *RMS Queen Mary 2* design narrowly beat the Classic Locomotives *GWR Manor Class* design into third place. Almost 100 readers chose not to vote for their favourite individual stamp.

50 of the 75 individual stamp designs attracted 10 or less votes each (including six stamps with zero points) and 65 out of the 75 under 20 votes each. When the single stamps are put back into their sets, four of

the 12 stamp issues attracted under 20 votes for the entire set. These were Northern Ireland (10 votes); Entente Cordiale (14); Lord of the Rings (17) and Occasions (19). The runaway winner, however, was Woodland Animals with 495 votes – almost three times the number of votes when compared to its nearest rival. Ocean Liners (167 votes) and Classic Locomotives (152) came second and third in popularity.

For the record, the previous favourite individual stamps were: 1996 Wildfowl and Wetlands 19p; 1997 The Great Tudor (Henry VIII) 26p; 1998 Endangered Species 20p; 1999 Scientists' Tale 64p; 2000 Above and Beyond 19p; 2001 Flags – Union Jack; 2002 London Bridges 1st Class; and 2003 Coronation 1st (Cecil Beaton's Coronation portrait of the Queen).

.....
Favourite *Bulletin* authors This was the ninth year that a poll was conducted. Douglas Myall was again your favourite author, beating his nearest rival by 121 votes. There were some kind words expressed about Douglas, including: "As a Machin enthusiast, his articles are always interesting" and "Mr Myall is always interesting and topical – he encourages me, too!". Dorothy Martin, James Mackay and Ron Negus came second, third and fourth.

Two readers chose our Editor as being most worthy of the title 'favourite author'. It is easy to forget the amount of work that John puts in to get each issue of the *Bulletin* to print, so, despite being ineligible for the competition, I would like to give him an honourable mention here.

152 readers failed to complete this section of the form, several considering all the authors to be their favourite, others declaring that they had no particular favourite. One reader summed-up his opinion by stating, "All articles are so interesting and well written that it is too difficult to choose!".

.....
Draw winners All the voting forms went into two draws. The four winners of £50 each in the FAVOURITE STAMPS draw were Mrs C Whitaker (Yarm, Cleveland), Mr J W Miller (Rainham, Essex), H Duplay Lucien (St Etienne, France) and Mr D A W King (Swaythling, Southampton). The winners of £50 each in the FAVOURITE BULLETIN AUTHOR draw were Delia Pardin (Turin, Italy) and Mr G Durrant (Eye, Suffolk).

.....

Favourite stamps and sets.

FAVOURITE STAMPS

The number following each stamp description (headed 'Stamp' below) is as shown in December's *Bulletin*

<u>Set / value</u>	<u>Stamp</u>	<u>Votes</u>
Woodland Animals 1st	59	186
Woodland Animals 1st	54	179
Ocean Liners 1st	30	68
Locomotives 42p	4	66
Woodland Animals 1st	58	43
Ocean Liners 42p	32	38
Locomotives E	3	33
Ocean Liners 47p	33	31
Woodland Animals 1st	63	28
Locomotives 68p	6	21
Christmas 1st	71	20
RHS 47p	40	19
Ocean Liners E	31	18
Wales 2nd	42	18
Woodland Animals 1st	56	18
RSA 1st	48	17
Crimean War 1st	65	17
Locomotives 28p	2	16
RHS 1st	37	15
Woodland Animals 1st	60	15
Entente Cordiale 57p	29	13
Christmas 2nd	70	13
Woodland Animals 1st	62	12
Wales 68p	47	11
Locomotives 20p	1	10
Ocean Liners 68p	35	8
Crimean War 68p	68	8
RHS E	38	7
Christmas £1.12	75	7
Occasions 1st	10	6
RHS 42p	39	6
RHS 68p	41	6
Woodland Animals 1st	55	6
Locomotives 47p	5	5
Occasions 1st	9	5
RHS 2nd	36	5
Occasions 1st	7	4
Lord of the Rings 1st	12	4
Lord of the Rings 1st	15	4
N. Ireland 1st	23	4
Ocean Liners 57p	34	4
RSA 40p	49	4
Woodland Animals 1st	57	4
Woodland Animals 1st	61	4
Crimean War 2nd	64	4
Lord of the Rings 1st	13	3

N. Ireland 2nd	22	3
Wales 1st	43	3
RSA 43p	50	3
RSA 68p	53	3
Crimean War 57p	67	3
Occasions 1st	8	2
Occasions 1st	11	2
Lord of the Rings 1st	16	2
Lord of the Rings 1st	21	2
N. Ireland 47p	26	2
Wales 47p	46	2
RSA 47p	51	2
Christmas 68p	74	2
Lord of the Rings 1st	18	1
Lord of the Rings 1st	20	1
N. Ireland E	24	1
Entente Cordiale 28p	28	1
Wales 40p	44	1
Wales 43p	45	1
RSA 57p	52	1
Crimean War 48p	66	1
Christmas 40p	72	1
Christmas 57p	73	1
Lord of the Rings 1st	14	0
Lord of the Rings 1st	17	0
Lord of the Rings 1st	19	0
N. Ireland 42p	25	0
N. Ireland 68p	27	0
Crimean War £1.12	69	0

FAVOURITE SETS

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Votes</u>	<u>% of Vote</u>
Woodland Animals	1896	28
Classic Locomotives	1436	21
Ocean Liners	1338	20
RHS	625	9
Crimean War	488	7
Christmas	391	6
Lord of the Rings	216	3
Wales	145	2
RSA	104	1.5
Occasions	78	1
N. Ireland	70	1
Entente Cordiale	36	0.5

.....
Your views A number of you added comments to your voting form.

Starting with general adverse comments, these related to the lack of second class values (6 were 2nd, 34 1st) – despite newspapers apparently stating that up to 70% of all mail posted is second class. Also, the cost of collecting “an over-ambitious issuing policy” was proving “far too

expensive” for some with a few choosing not to continue into 2005. One elderly reader wrote that “after 70 years of collecting I’m oh so near to packing-up in disgust”. Let’s hope that he reconsiders. “Staff look as if I have spoilt their day when asked for anything as mundane as stamps” is hopefully not a typical reaction from Royal Mail staff on the front line.

Several readers complained that “the special stamps need to be available more than just on the issue day” and that they “disappear before the general public is aware of them”. Others commented that it was “yet another year of very second rate stamps”. Harsh! The increasing addition of “extras” was, perhaps surprisingly, only commented on by one reader, who wrote, “every issue has either a M/S, Prestige Book or Smilers sheet, or a combination”.

The Occasions (“atrocious”) and Lord of the Rings set resulted in few votes or comments. Several readers remarked on the number of designs in 2004 that were “too dark”, “uninspiring” “out of focus”, “drab” or in “unrealistic” colours (especially the ongoing British Journey series and RHS issues). One reader went so far as to say, “I feel that the British Journey series is so dark and dreary that people would be put off visiting our lovely countryside”. One collectors concluded, “words at the miniature scale are NOT a good idea”, so the RSA issue did not score very well possibly because of this.

The Ocean Liners and Woodland Animals received no anti-comments. The Classic Locomotives 20p design “should have been 2nd class, as it had a limited life-span before a postal rate rise” according to one reader. Another wrote that the “Railway miniature sheet was a joke, as it was too big to fit onto the M/S postcard”.

Voters appear not to have understood the Entente Cordiale (or DIScordiale, as one reader put it). The 28p value (depicting *lace 1*) scored just one point, while the 57p value (showing *Coccinelle*) received 13 of your votes.) One reader has already come up with his design ideas to celebrate the 200th anniversary in 2104 – “they should show Britannia and Marianne linking arms against a backdrop of the Union Flag and the French Tricolour”. One for the Stamp Advisory Committee’s diary, I think!

The Crimean War issue was reproduced in monochrome, as the designs were taken from contemporary black and white photographs commissioned by Queen Victoria. Several readers thought that they

should have been reproduced in colour - although Auguste and Louis Lumiere did not invent colour photography until 1907!

The decision to produce yet another secular Christmas issue was cause for concern to several voters and views such as “Rubbish”, “Thumbs down for make believe Christmas stamps. Surely this was an opportunity for depicting what CHRISTmas is about” and “Christmas is not just about children.” were typical. “To call these Christmas stamps is a great travesty – nothing to do with Christ-mas at all. Don’t give me the line – [followers of] other religions would be offended – they in their countries show their festivals!” was perhaps the strongest viewpoint.

However, it is not all doom and gloom, as there were many favourable comments about the designs and the overall special stamps programme. “The stamps of 2004 were, in general, a big improvement on the 2003 stamps”, “the best year in ages”, “It is extremely difficult to make my decisions with so many excellent stamps”, “I have noticed a big improvement in the past couple of years” and “I expect that this years votes will be all over the board – there are so many great stamps” were some of the kindest general observations. One reader noted that “at last, most issues have a caption that adequately describes the subject matter – without them they mean very little and are just pictures”.

Clearly, if transport and wildlife themes are featured, then the stamps will be well received by many voters and especially so by one Guildford reader who wrote “as I have an active interest in railways and ocean liners and wildlife, last year was a truly Vintage one!”. “The woodland animals are absolutely superb. The degree of difficulty in obtaining such portraits is what makes it the best set” was typical.

The Occasions “showed great wit and formed a pleasing, coherent set” and the Christmas designs were “much improved over previous years”. The Crimean War issue resulted in one reader commenting that “I grew to love the Crimean set as I used the stamps – those eyes from the past seemed to say so much about the suffering”. Another wrote, “this set was a great honour to the men of the Crimean war. I was very pleased with this set”. There was only one comment made about the Lord of the Rings set and that was “I am pleased that the LOTR set stuck to the original book, rather than the Hollywood-type sets from New Zealand”.

All of the above comments – pro and anti – are perfectly valid, of course. For many years, I have been involved in print and production and know that when it comes to design matters everyone has a view! The special

stamps programme continues to live up to its one-time strapline of “stamps stimulate”. Long may this prove to be the case.

.....
Special thanks to all who returned the voting form, particularly those overseas readers who responded from Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, BFPOs, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong SAR, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Luxembourg, Macao, Malaysia, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan and USA.

(2,160 words)