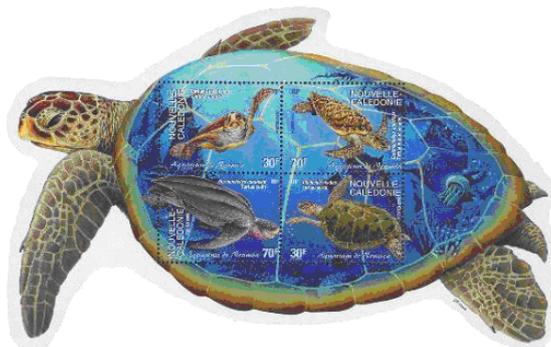


Stamp Production – Novelty Print Techniques

For Royal Mail's *Stamps and Collecting* Website, January 2007



The format and appearance of stamps had scarcely changed until recently. Now, major technological advances permit interactive and fun stamps, but is this what you want? We invite your comments...



From the Penny Black to the early sixties, stamps were mainly rectangular and printed in a single colour. Multi-colour printing was then introduced, coinciding with a greater assortment of themes. This new century has seen some Post Offices develop stamps beyond recognition from merely paying postage to becoming a modern collectable that can uniquely express a nation's culture and history.

A case in question is the new set from Royal Mail depicting *The Beatles*. These designs offer you a great chance to compare traditional water-activated rectangular stamps in the miniature sheet with the innovative self-adhesive shapes used for the counter sheets.

Britain is not alone in producing innovative stamps, as the turtle-shaped sheet of 2002 from New Caledonia illustrates. Further examples exist such as Switzerland's 2000 embroidered stamp and Ireland's recent lenticular stamps for the 2006 Ryder Cup that move when tilted. Other techniques include meteorite dust or wood stuck to stamps, hidden imagery revealed when a decoder is used, and

lots more besides. Such ideas would have been unthinkable even a short time ago and help sustain the fascination and appeal of collecting. But are these the kind of stamp formats that you want to collect?

We would love to hear what you think because we are a business, after all, and must manage expenditure like any other. To be innovative by creating and printing unusual formats such as the *Fun Fruit and Veg*, or stamps with holograms and special reactive inks, as used on the *Nobel Prizes* issue, costs us much more to produce than a conventional stamp does.

Do you think that Royal Mail and its designers are using ground-breaking printing techniques as a gimmick simply because we can, or are we making stamps that truly stimulate and excite you? Perhaps you would prefer these innovations to be restricted to just miniature sheets? Or maybe you even have your own proposal for a technique yet to be seen on a British stamp?

[30 words in teaser and 348 in article] [Compiled by Glenn H Morgan FRPSL, 15 December 2006]