

# INTRODUCTION TO THE MACHIN ISSUES OF GREAT BRITAIN



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# WHAT ARE MACHINS?

The first Machin stamp



MH6





# WHY ARE THE MACHINS OF GB OF IMPORTANCE?

- The longest, continuously issued design in postal history
  - 53 years and counting
- # of varieties? Over 2,575 (The “Machin Nut”); Over 8500 (Deegam)
- 148 issues with different denominations specified:
  - 21 different denominations in the old LSD: pounds, shillings, & pence (d)
  - 127 different denominations after decimalisation
  - Does not include non-denominated stamps or the "country" issues
- In 2008, estimated about 200 billion Machin stamps had been printed
  - Believed to be the most for any single design on a stamp
- They are beautiful stamps with 1000s of subtle varieties & some errors



# WHO IS “MACHIN?”

Arnold Machin, O.B.E., R.A. (1911-1999)



- Born in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire
- Started work at 14 as an apprentice at Minton Pottery
- Learned to sculpt at Derby School of Art, won a scholarship for further study at the Royal College of Art in London
- Imprisoned during World War II as a conscientious objector
- In 1964, chosen to design the image of QE II for the forthcoming decimal coinage (introduced in 1968 but full transition not until 1971)
- In 1966, the Queen approved a similar design for use on GB's definitive issues of stamps

Before I was asked to design the new definitive issue, I had not been very interested in stamps, but now I begin to look at them more critically.

*Arnold Machin*



# ARNOLD MACHIN'S DESIGN

- Background: the famous Penny Black began with a medal designed by Wm. Wyon
- Arnold Machin began his design in 1965 and it was intended for the new decimal coinage
- Machin's designs were based upon photographs by Lord Snowdon, husband of Princess Margaret
- In November 1965, one of five artists chosen to submit designs for new definitive stamps
- In the early designs, the Queen is wearing a tiara
- The Stamp Advisory Committee preferred the queen with a diadem (crown)
- The diadem added is the same one that Queen Victoria is wearing on the Penny Blacks
- From all of this input, Machin produced a bas-relief cast of his proposed design
- The Queen must approve the design of any stamps containing her image
- The Queen requested the addition of a corsage and then approved the final design



I think that it is generally accepted, at least by connoisseurs, that the Penny Black is probably the finest stamp ever designed and I decided to create the same kind of effect – that is, a light image on a dark background.

*Arnold Machin*





# THE EVOLUTION OF THE MACHIN DESIGN

This slide, which provided a pictorial evolution of the Machin design from the Penny Black to the final version, approved by the Queen, has been removed upon the advice of the Royal Mail who permitted the use of the material for the live presentation but does not approve its being available for public view on a website.





When I first began to design for the stamp I tended to use rather elaborate frames surrounding the portrait, but gradually, by eliminating and eliminating, reached very much simpler statements.

*Arnold Machin*



# MACHIN VARIETIES

- “Packaging”
- Colours
- Printing methods and Printers
- Phosphor usage
- Security enhancements
  - Perforations
  - Die cut slits
  - Iridescent Backgrounds
- FDCs, Covers, Postnotes, & Air-Letter sheets
- Country issues (a.k.a. regional issues)



# MACHIN VARIETIES – “PACKAGING”

- Individual stamps, strips, blocks, gutter pairs & blocks, sheets
- Miniature sheets
- Booklets: ordinary and “prestige”
- Presentation Packs
- Boxes



# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS

Individual Stamps in Varying Denominations, Colours, Sizes, Shapes, & Gum Varieties







# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS

## Other Varieties



?? for mail within the EU

C3

Not shown:

- Special Delivery (2)



# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS - STRIPS



In *Scott's Catalogue*, to find the listing, look under the highest denominated stamp in the strip





# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS - BLOCKS

Block of four



“Traffic Signal”  
block of two

Block of four

Gutter block  
of four





# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – MINIATURE SHEETS



Listed in Scott's as MH279a

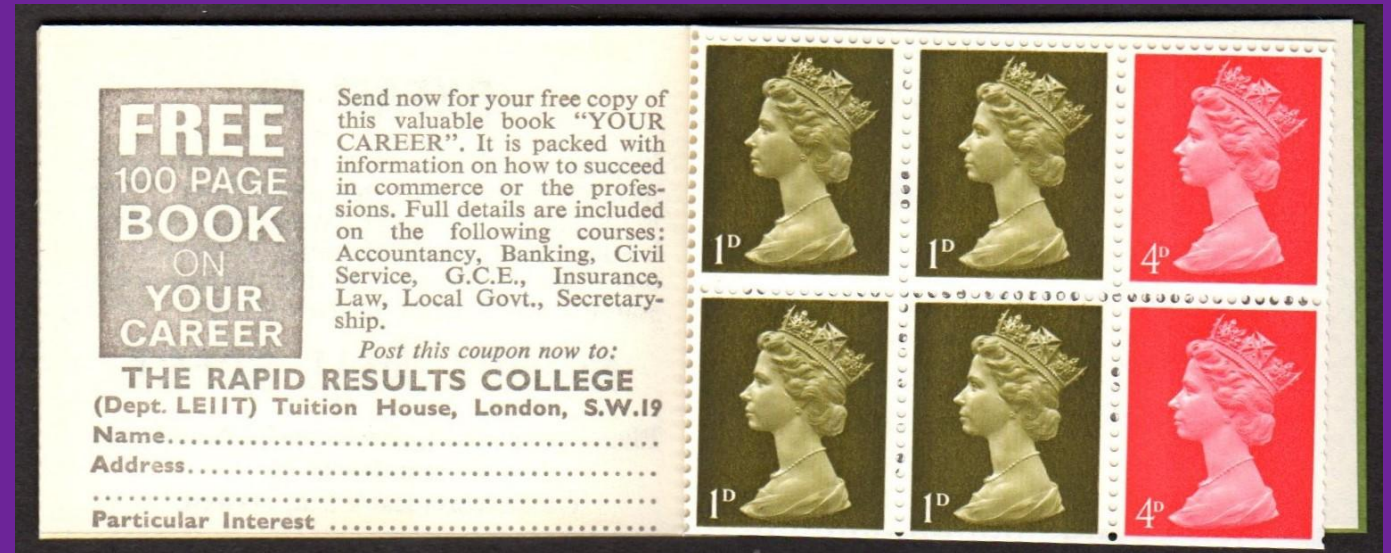
Listed in Scott's as GB #1942, rather than in the Machin listings.

Listing in Scott's as MH456



# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – BOOKLETS

Example of an LSD or Pre-decimal Booklet





# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – BOOKLETS

## EXAMPLES OF EARLY DECIMAL BOOKLETS

Earliest versions still retained stitching and advertising

Later versions – no stitching and no advertising

Progressed to larger booklets with a single stamps value









# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – BOOKLETS

## EXAMPLE OF A SERIES OF THEMATIC BOOKLETS

Artwork by Norman Battershill

#1 - Oast Houses



#2 – N. Ireland Farmhouses

#3 – Yorkshire Farm Buildings

#4 – Wales Farm Buildings

#5 – Scotland Farm Buildings

#6 – Sussex Farm Buildings



# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – BOOKLETS

## EXAMPLE OF AN UNUSUAL BOOKLET

Can you spot the very unusual feature of this booklet?

No, it is not the dancing horse or the Oriental lady with thigh-high boots.



MH80e





# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – BOOKLETS

## EXAMPLE OF AN UNUSUAL BOOKLET

A second unusual feature of the Christmas booklet



MH80e





# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – BOOKLETS

EXAMPLES OF MORE RECENT DESIGNS





# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – BOOKLETS

YOU CAN'T ALWAYS JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER!



Printed by  
Harrisons & Sons, Ltd.

Normal perforations.



Printed by Walsall  
Security Printers, Ltd.

Elliptical perforations



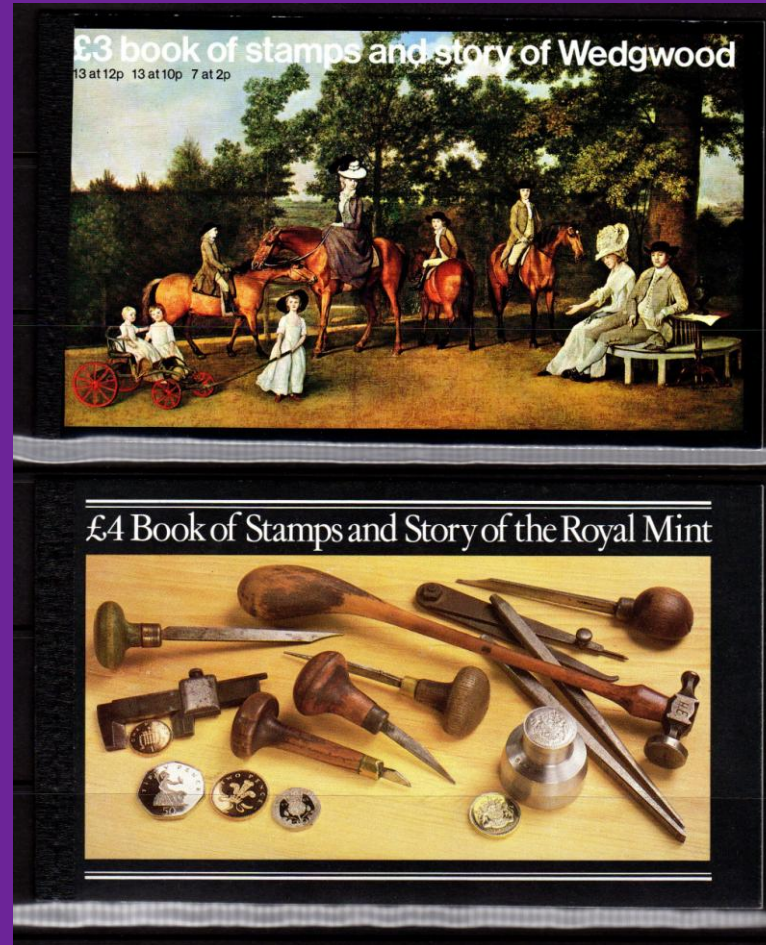




# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – BOOKLETS

## PRESTIGE BOOKLETS – A VERY BRIEF INTRO

Two early examples of  
“Prestige Booklets



BK145

1980

BK 147

1983



# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – BOOKLETS

## PRESTIGE BOOKLETS – COMMENTS

- Earlier ones contained many Machins
- Later ones associated with other commemorative stamps
- Up to February 2019, eighty (80) prestige booklets issued
- BK182 (2007) commemorated the Machin
- US has issued a few prestige-type booklets, e.g.
  - ❑ U. S. Navy Submarines
  - ❑ Lewis and Clark
  - ❑ Old Glory



# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – BOOKLETS

## THE MACHIN PRESTIGE BOOKLET



BK182 - issued on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first Machin, 5 June 2007  
The embossed cover captures the bas-relief of Machin's sculpture



Arnold Machin at the Harrison Printers as he examines the first sheets of stamps coming off of the press. The stamps depict Machin (2471a) & the first Machin, the 4d on 1<sup>st</sup> class (2471b) stamp.





# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS – BOOKLETS

## PRESENTATION PACKS

Pack Number 96  
Stamps issued 3 January 2013



Pack Number 112  
Stamps issued 17 March 2020



# “PACKAGING” FOR MACHINS - BOXES



Purchased at the GPO in  
Amersham, Buckinghamshire  
circa 1975-1977

Dispensed via mechanical  
vending machines built into  
the exterior wall of the GPO





# GB MACHINS – COLOURS



- A myriad of colours
- These are just for the stamps up to 19 ½ p
- 7p & 17 p, each in 4 different colours



# GB MACHINS – PRINTING METHODS

- Photogravure
  - Intaglio
  - Typography
  - Lithography
  - Electro-Mechanical Engraving (EME Gravure)
  - Embossing
- 
- Differences can be detected on the stamps



# GB MACHINS – PRINTERS

- Harrisons & Sons
- House of Questa
- Waddington
- Enschede
- Cartor
- International Security Printers
- ...



# GB MACHINS – PRINTER DIFFERENCES



MH32

MH33



In the ½, the down-stroke of the 2 is narrower towards the bottom in MH33



# GB MACHINS – PHOSPHOR

- Used to speed the processing of mail
- Found on many but not all Machins
- No phosphor, single band, double band
- Phosphor-coated paper (PCP) – covers the entire stamp
- Error of omission exist – some are very valuable
- Typically easy to detect in normal daylight by tilting the stamp
- Phosphor varieties not listed in Scotts but are mentioned





# GB MACHINS – PHOSPHOR



Double bands

MH39 under normal lighting

Single band



Double bands

MH39 under UV lighting

Single band



# GB MACHINS – SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS

## PERFORATIONS



Standard Perforations

- Elliptical:
  - Harder to forge
  - Makes removal for reuse more difficult
- Introduced in 1993
- Now standard on all UK definitive issues



Elliptical (UK terminology)  
Syncopated (US terminology)





# GB MACHINS – SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS

## DIE CUT SLITS



- Interior perforations
  - Harder to forge
  - Makes removal for reuse more difficult
- Introduced in 2009
- Now standard on definitive issues



# GB MACHINS – SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS

Do you see the differences in the background?







# GB MACHINS – SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS

## IRIDESCENT BACKGROUNDS

Plain background



Iridescent background





# GB MACHINS – SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS

## IRIDESCENT BACKGROUNDS - CODES

Codes in Use (as of 2019)

- MnnL – date code where the nn equals the last two digits in 20nn
- MAIL (no code) – from counter sheets
- ROYBL – from business sheets
- MCIL – from “custom” booklets, including special stamps
- MFIL – from a booklet of four
- MPIL – from “prestige” booklets
- MRIL – from coil rolls
- MSIL – from a booklet of six
- MTIL – from a booklet of twelve







# GB MACHINS – OTHER COLLECTIBLES

## COVERS





# GB MACHINS – OTHER COLLECTIBLES

## FIRST DAY COVERS





# GB MACHINS – OTHER COLLECTIBLES

## POSTNOTES (LETTER SHEETS)

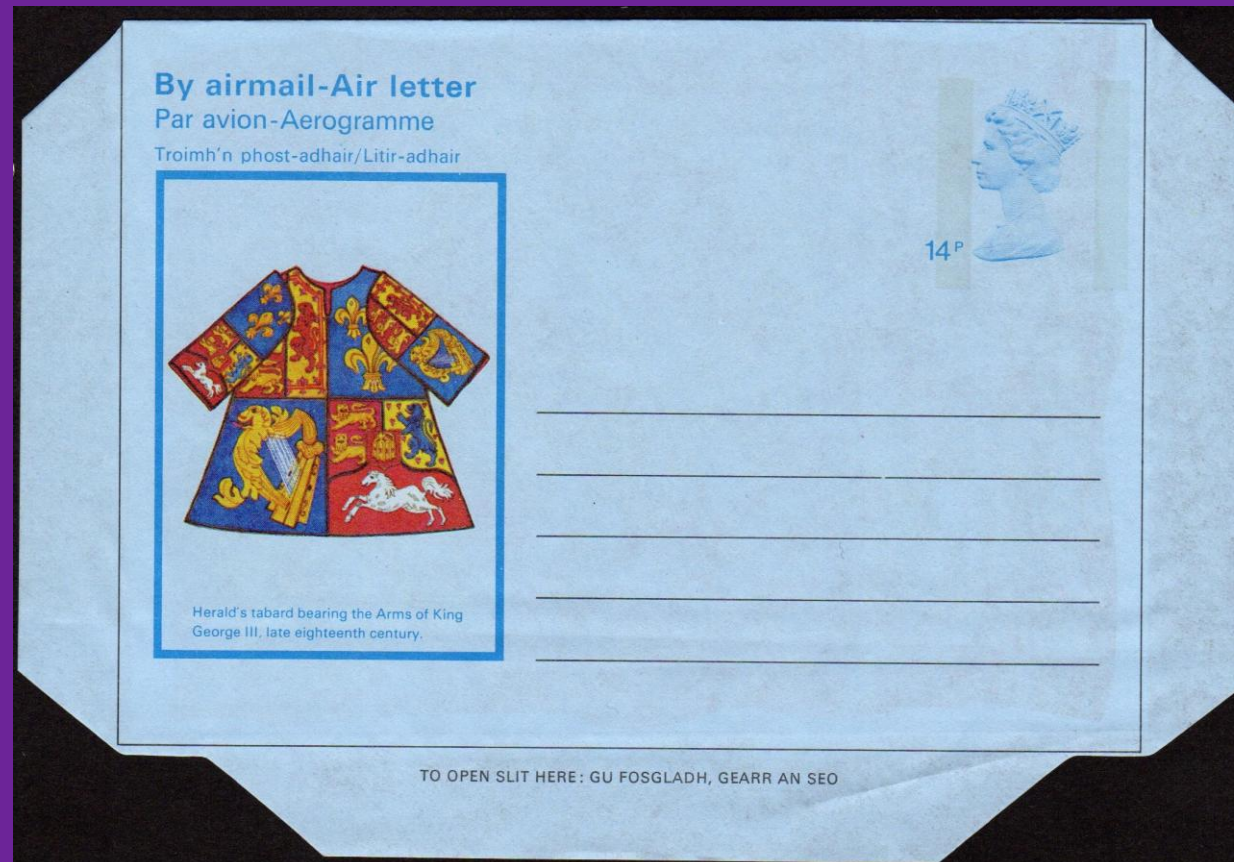




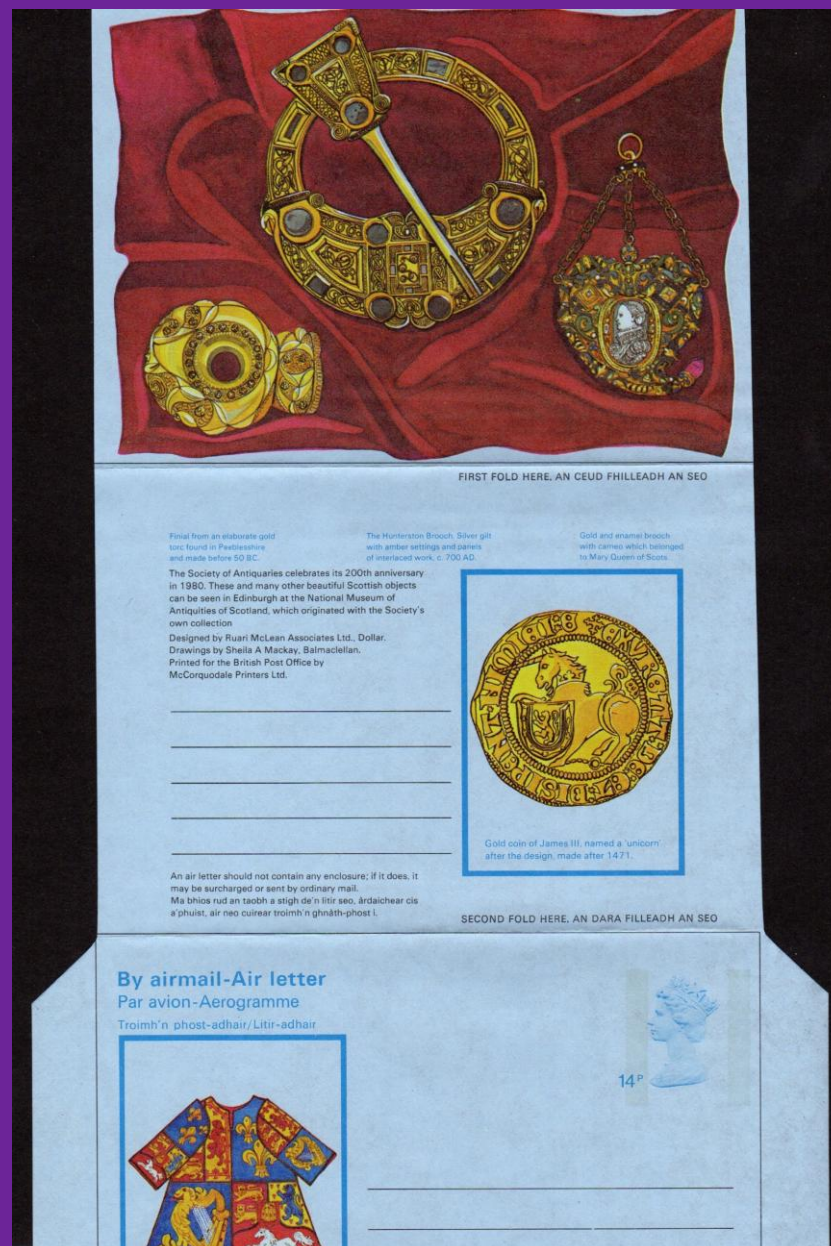


# GB MACHINS – OTHER COLLECTIBLES

## AIR LETTERS









# GB MACHINS – "COUNTRY" ISSUES

Great Britain



Northern Ireland

Scotland

Wales (& Monmouthshire)

- The GB issues sold nationwide.
- Country issues only sold in the areas indicated and by Royal Mail Philatelic Services in Edinburgh, Scotland.
- Country issues valid for use nationwide.
- The last listing in *Scott's Catalogue* for country issues of Machins was in 2000.
- Suggests that country issues of Machins are no longer being produced.

# GB MACHINS – REFERENCES

## PLACES TO START



- *Scott's Catalogue* (2020 edition)
  - MH prefix to the numbers, separate section found after Wales & Monmouthshire
  - About 8 pages, including the Machin “Regional Issues” (N. Ireland, Wales, Scotland)
  - Does not include phosphor varieties & others but does list booklets (BK)
- *Stanley Gibbons, Great Britain, Vol. 4, Queen Elizabeth II Decimal Definitive Issues* (2 volumes)
  - Most recent edition in 2010
  - Volume I (2008 edition) – over 600 pages
  - Includes phosphor varieties, plate flaws, booklet varieties, etc., etc.
- *Deegam Machin Handbook* – popularly known as the Machin Encyclopaedia
- Many Internet sites: e.g., *Great Britain Machins* by The “Machin Nut” <https://adminware.ca/machin.htm>





# MACHINS – HONG KONG





A large, dense collection of colorful postage stamps from the United Kingdom, featuring the profile of Queen Elizabeth II, scattered on a dark background. The stamps are of various denominations, including 1p, 2p, 3p, 4p, 5p, 6p, 7p, 8p, 9p, 10p, 12p, 14p, 15p, 16p, 17p, 20p, 22p, 25p, 30p, 32p, 35p, 37p, 40p, 43p, 46p, 47p, 50p, 51p, 53p, 56p, 60p, 72p, £1, £1.50, £1.60, £2, £3, £4, £5, and £6. The stamps are arranged in a chaotic, overlapping manner, creating a vibrant mosaic of colors and patterns. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a book cover or a display board. The stamps are of various colors, including red, green, blue, yellow, orange, pink, purple, and black. Some stamps are cancelled with a postmark, while others are not. The overall composition is a dense, colorful collage of British postage stamps.

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