

= British Library Philatelic Collections =

The British Library Philatelic Collections is the national philatelic collection of the United Kingdom with over 8 million items from around the world . It was established in 1891 as part of the British Museum Library , later to become the British Library , with the collection of Thomas Tapling . In addition to bequests and continuing donations , the library received consistent deposits by the Crown Agency and has become a primary research collection for British Empire and international history . The collections contain a wide range of artefacts in addition to postage stamps , from newspaper stamps to a press used to print the first British postage stamps .

= = History = =

The first notable philatelic donation was in 1890 by Hubert Haes of two albums of postage stamps collected by himself and Walter Van Noorden . It was donated with the request that the British Museum library (now the British Library) would create a philatelic collection .

The following year the Collections were established with the bequest of the Tapling Collection . The probate value of the Tapling Collection was set at £ 12 @, @ 000 but on arrival Richard Garnett (Assistant Keeper of Printed Books) estimated their value at more than £ 50 @, @ 000 and described the bequest as the most valuable gift since the Grenville Library in 1847 .

In 1900 the Crown Agents for the Colonies sent three albums of postage stamps made on their order for colonial governments and then sent specimens of all future stamps commissioned .

In 1913 , the Crawford Library was received which forms the cornerstone of the British Library 's philatelic literature collection , containing about 4500 works . The Crawford Library was donated by the Earl of Crawford in his Will and was the foremost collection of philatelic books in the world at the time .

In 1944 Mrs A. Cunningham donated her father 's collection (Edward Mosley) of African stamps and in 1949 Mrs. Clement Williams donated her late brother 's collection (H. L 'Estrange Ewen) of railway letter stamps , valued at £ 10 @, @ 000 . After being offered in 1942 but delayed due to the Collections being in secure war storage , in 1951 it was announced that Mrs Augustine Fitzgerald had donated an extensive air mail collection . The Mosley and Fitzgerald collections were valued at the time at £ 30 @, @ 000 .

The Department of Printed Books had been in charge of the Philatelic Collections by default rather than design . In 1936 there was an unsuccessful proposal to move the Collections to the Department of Prints and Drawings and in 1946 there was a further proposal for the Department of Coins and Medals to take charge . No decision could be agreed and Printed Books continued to manage the Collections until they were passed to the newly formed British Library in 1973 .

= = Curators = =

From 1948 , H.R. Holmes had been the curator but in the late 1950s had wished to relinquish the post . A replacement curator was not easily found and the care of the Collections was managed on a part @-@ time basis . A security crisis in 1959 developed after it was discovered that the contents of one of the frames in the Tapling Collection was missing . In 1961 James A. Mackay was recruited as a research assistant to take care of the Collections . In 1971 the police arrested Mackay (promoted to Assistant Keeper in 1965) and charged him with stealing items from the British Museum Philatelic Collections on loan from the Crown Agents . The stolen progressive proofs (test prints of stamp designs) should have been returned to the Crown Agents for destruction and were valued at £ 7 @, @ 600 . Mackay had exchanged the proofs for Winston Churchill stamps worth £ 400 . He was fined £ 1 @, @ 000 and dismissed from the Museum . As a result of the thefts , security was improved by recruiting Bob Schoolley @-@ West , one of the investigating police officers . The Crown Agents withdrew their agreement for lending new stamps for display in the King 's Library .

David Beech joined the British Library as a philatelic curator in 1983 and was appointed Head of the

Philatelic Collections in 1991 . Beech is a former President of The Royal Philatelic Society London and joint founder of the International Philatelic Libraries Association .

= = Description = =

The material is organized in 50 collections and archives which have been acquired by donation , bequest , or transfer from Government Departments . The Collections include postage and revenue stamps , postal stationery , essays , proofs , covers and entries , " cinderella stamp " material , specimen issues , airmails , some postal history materials and official and private posts for almost all countries and periods . Philately is interpreted in its widest sense and the more unusual artefacts include original unused artwork , horse licences and the pilot 's licence of Captain John Alcock .

A permanent exhibit of items from the Collections is on display in the British Library entrance area upper ground floor , which may be the best gallery of diverse classic stamps and philatelic material in the world . Approximately 80 @, @ 000 items on 6 @, @ 000 sheets may be viewed in 1 @, @ 000 display frames ; 2 @, @ 400 sheets are from the Tapling Collection . Other material , which covers the whole world , is available to students and researchers by appointment .

The British Library Philatelic Department Photograph Collection is a collection of photographs of philatelic material not in the Library 's collections . Mostly composed of material donated by philatelic auctioneers , the collection is an important resource for researchers .

As well as these collections , the library actively acquires literature on the subject . This makes the British Library one of the world 's leading philatelic research centres .

= = = Principal collections = = =

= = Selected notable items = =

The Collections include a unique proof sheet of 26 Revenue 1765 Newspaper and Pamphlet one penny impressions showing the registration certificate . These were issued to apply the Stamp Act of 1765 intended to raise taxes to fund the defence of the American Colonies from the French . The tax applied to legal documents , licences , newspapers , pamphlets and almanacs in the American Colonies , Quebec , Nova Scotia , Newfoundland , Florida , the Bahamas and the West Indian Islands . The taxes resulted in public protest and rioting . The tax was abandoned after a few months due to its unpopularity but the political damage contributed to the War of Independence in 1775 .

The largest object in the British Library is the Perkins D cylinder press developed by Jacob Perkins and patented in 1819 . This press was one of several used to print the first postage stamps of Great Britain and Ireland which were issued in 1840 . The press was used for printing many early stamps for British Colonial territories from 1853 including for Cape of Good Hope , Ceylon , Mauritius , St Helena , Trinidad , Western Australia , Ionian Islands , New Brunswick , New South Wales , New Zealand and Victoria .

The £ 1 stamp issued in Jamaica (1956 ? 58) in the reign of King George VI shows Tobacco Growing and Cigar Making . The first stamp for Queen Elizabeth II was to be in the same design (chocolate and violet) but was abandoned after printing . There are only seven examples in existence .

The cover of the British Library pocket guide Treasures in Focus - Stamps features the 1913 King George V seahorse master dye proof , part of the Harrison Collection . The engraver , J.A.C. Harrison , took proofs during the creation of the die of which this image is one . The engraving was used on the high value stamps 2 / 6 , 5 / - , 10 / - and £ 1 .

The Collections feature these rarities which demonstrate international scope :

Gold Coast : 1883 (May) 1d on 4d magenta , unique

India : 1854 4 annas blue and pale red , error head inverted , two used on a cover , unique .

Mauritius 1847 1d red used on cover and 2d blue , the " Post Office " issue 1d. orange @-@ red ,

used on cover . The first British Colonial postage stamps were issued in Mauritius in 1847 .

New South Wales : 1850 1d and 3d essays of the Sydney View issue . The first stamps of New South Wales , being 1d , 2d and 3d values , were issued in 1850 .

Spain : 1851 2 reales , error of colour , one of three known .

St Helena : 1961 Tristan Relief Fund 5c . + 6d . , 7 ½ c . + 9d . , and 10c . + 1 / - , used on a postcard . Only the Colonial Office in London could authorize new stamps , a fact clearly unknown to the Governor , and the issue was withdrawn . These are among the rarest of modern stamps as only 434 sets were sold .

Switzerland : Zurich : 1843 4 rappen , the unique unsevered horizontal strip of five .

Uruguay : 1858 120 centavos blue and 180 centavos green , in tête @-@ bêche pairs , two of five known .

Western Australia : 1854 @-@ 55 4d blue , error frame inverted .