

2004 Stamp Issues Review

John Moody dips into a selection of postal authority issues

December traditionally sees the publication of various annual new issue compilations. Most postal authorities now produce yearbooks, packs, booklets and folders displaying its issues for the year. Some cover every stamp, including booklets and definitives, and some just concentrate on their commemorative issues. Each postal authority, however, tackles its publishing venture in a different manner and a fascinating and attractive addition to the philatelic library some of these books make.

Space precludes a review of every yearbook, folder or list published but this representative sample is sure to whet the philatelic appetite.

Our thanks are extended to the Monaco, Irish, Finnish, New Zealand, Romanian, South African, Singapore and United Nations postal authorities for providing samples of their 2004 issues and news of their 2005 schedule.

The total issues of new stamps in 2003 fell from the record of 2002 but indications are that the 2004 figure will have increased once again, perhaps not a good thing for the hobby?



Varied stamp issues from Monaco

Although Monaco is a small country, its 2004 stamp issue was quite large with nearly 40 new stamps. The wide range of subjects covered reflects the varied interests of the Monegasque people and the international role this country plays in many fields.

One of the few monarchies left in Europe, Monaco's stamps are evidence of the influence the Grimaldi family has in the Principality, with several issues dedicated to the life and works of the late Princess Grace.

A special miniature sheet issued on 4 October pays tribute to her life, and issues on 29 January also feature her life, interests and memorials. They include the 20th anniversary of the Princess Grace Gardens, a statue of Her Highness by Du Barry, the 40th anniversary of the Princess Grace Foundation and the 20th anniversary of the Irish Library.

The 50th anniversary of the founding of the Grimaldi Order issued on 3 May is another link to the Royal Family and a splendid set issued on 28 May traces the history of the Principality during the reign of the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, France at that time absorbed Monaco into its domains, splitting the Royal family, some of whom fought with Napoleon and some of whom went into exile.

Even the issue of 14 April commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Monaco Grand Prix has a royal connection with a picture of Prince Louis II on the stamp as he helped found the race, together with Antony Noghès



The history and folklore of Monaco is reflected in a four-stamp set tracing the life of St Dévôte, and a single stamp celebrating the centenary of the founding of the town of Beausolril, both issued on 5 January.

A rather saucy holiday poster and a beach scene showing a frontier post were Monaco's contribution to the 2004 Europa 'Holiday' series on 3 May.

Other issues, showing the country's ability to stage international events: include, 28th International Circus Festival, 37th International Flower Exhibition and Contest, International Dog Exhibition, 20th Spring Arts Festival, Television Festival, Centenary of FIFA, UPU Congress and the Monte Carlo Magic Stars Congress, a world meeting of magicians..

Other issues during 2004 commemorated the Monte-Carlo Beach Hotel, Marco Polo, 300th anniversary of the publication of *One Thousand and One Nights*, the UPU Congress, the centenary of the Cathedral Choir School, wildlife, cancer treatment, the centenary of the awarding of the Nobel Prize to Frédéric Mistral, Paris Stamp Show, centenary of the first production of the Russian Ballet in Monte Carlo and the International School of Monaco.

All in all a good year of stamp issues which show an increase of seven over 2003 according to figures published by the Universal Postal Union World Numbering System.



**MONACO ADVERTISEMENT
FULL PAGE**

Ireland celebrates 2004

An Post's annual bi-lingual yearbook, published in Irish and English, comprises a complete set of all the special and commemorative stamps issued during the year. It is pleasing that the 2004 edition also includes miniature sheets.

The 2004 edition, designed by Ger Garland, features 21 individual issues profusely illustrated and described by Peiglin Doyle over 48 pages.

The 2004 Year Book comes in two forms: a limited edition of 2500 copies at €55 (£38.50) and a luxury leather-bound edition in a limited printing of just 150 copies at €160 (£112) each.

An alternative method of obtaining the year's issues is to purchase the 'Year Collection' at €30 (£21). This folder gives a pen-picture of each issue with the stamps adjacent.

During 2004 An Post made 23 separate issues of stamps which amounted to 55 individual stamps including the start of an attractive 'Flowers' definitive series and a continuation of its popular 'Birds' definitives.

Among the commemoratives, the 90th anniversary of the Shackleton Antarctic expedition gained critical acclaim for the set's black and white images of the 1914-1917 expedition and January's issue of Greetings/Chinese New Year of the Monkey stamps on the theme of 'love' caused amusement with its images of cartoon monkeys, hippos, pandas and koala bears.

Other issues of note were a well produced series of paintings from the National Gallery and the centenary of the founding of the game of Camógaiochta, an Irish version of women's hockey or shinty.



THE IRISH STAMP YEAR BOOK 2004 Complete Prestige Collection



SÁRSHAOHTAIR Ó GHAILEARAI NAISIUNTA NA HEIREANN

The National Gallery of Ireland opened in 1864 with just 130 paintings on display. As the Gallery celebrates its 150th anniversary, there are now more than 7,500 paintings and oil sketches in the collection, many by the great artists of Western Europe, together with excursions by Irish masters. Sculpture, drawings, watercolours, prints, furniture and objects start number over 8,500.

The National Gallery was set up by Act of Parliament on 10 August 1854. It followed on from the 1853 Dublin Industrial Exhibition, organised by railway developer William Dargan, where, at his insistence, there had been an art section. Afterwards, a public subscription was taken up to finance Dargan's generosity. The money helped build a museum on the lawn of Lansdowne House, which opened to the public in 1864.

Many of the directors of the National Gallery were great art collectors in their own right. Its core was due to the efforts of three, George Murray, Henry Doyle and Walter Armstrong, each, between them, served from 1862 to 1914. Many gifts and bequests have enhanced the collection, including those from the Milford family, Hugh Lane (presented a donation in 1914-15), Alfred Chester Beatty and Sir Alfred and Lady Balfour, George Bernard Shaw, the playwright, donated a third of his estate and future royalties in 1960, which has given the Gallery a fund with which it has been able to buy new works and assist its development.

The collection spans from the 14th to 21st centuries. All major artistic periods and styles are represented, including the Renaissance, Baroque, Neo-Classicism and Impressionism.

The Italian School is particularly strong and second most numerous. It includes religious works by Fra Angelico, Mantegna and Titian. Baroque painters include the Flemish Rubens; Claude Lorraine and Poussin from the French School and Dutch 17th century masters, especially Rembrandt, Vermeer and Hobbema.

The quality of Dutch paintings was exceeded in the last century, with the Ball Gilt, which added masterpieces by Vermeer, Meiss, Huisdell and Rubens.

There are a number of religious paintings by Spanish masters, with an El Greco, a Velazquez, allegories by Murillo and Zurbarán and four paintings by Goya.

The British collection is strong in portraits from the 18th century, many of Irish sitters.

The Impressionists are represented by Monet, Sisley and Gauguin, and the early 20th century by Picasso, Gris, van Dongen and Nolde.

The finest sculpture is a locally acquired Canova statue. Most of the pieces are Irish dorsal busts, while William Dargan himself is commemorated by a bronze in the gallery forecourt.

There is an unrivalled collection of Irish art from the 17th century onwards. It includes portraits by Hamilton, Barry, Laury and O'Connell, a wide range of landscapes from the 18th and 19th centuries, by painters such as Roberts, O'Connell and Horne the Younger, with subject paintings by Danby, Osborne, Moylan and Leach.

The work of Jack B. Yeats, Ireland's most acclaimed 20th century artist, is particularly well represented. Modernist painters, such as Máire Jellott, Noraí McGuinness, Mary Bevington, Ewan How and Clive Hervey, are included Irish art up to the 1980s is represented by Colin Middleton, Gerard Dillon, Patrick Collins, Harry Kerrett, Daniel O'Neill, John Luke and Louis le Brocq.

Director Henry Doyle started the National Historical and Portrait Gallery in 1896 with some 50 paintings and works on paper. The collection has grown continuously, especially in 1957 and 1988 when the Gallery secured important prizes from the Chalcott Smith sales in London. The Portrait Gallery was taken down in 1976, but continued to grow. In 2003, the National Portrait Gallery re-opened in the Dargan Wing and shows portraits of Irish masters from the 16th century to the present day. There are portraits of painter Lord Edward Fitzgerald and his wife, Penelope, 19th-century Constable Markiewicz, painted by her husband, Lady Luke, who featured on the Irish bank note politician Noel Breen, Ireland's first female politician, broadcaster Gay Byrne and sportswoman Ronnie Bellamy.

The re-opening was celebrated by the unveiling of a portrait of Dargan, commissioned from Louis le Brocq, by whom there is a legacy room at Lansdowne, in the Millennium Wing.

A collection of sketches and designs from An Túr Cloí stained glass studio, set up in 1803 by artist Sarah Purser, and from the studio of Máire Jellott are of particular interest. There are also some of an extensive collection of drawings and watercolours, whose topographical views of Ireland by Anglo-Irish Master drawings can equally be found. A very charming part of the recent collection (available by appointment) is the Diego Print Room, a range of pencil-like illustrations by Irish, British and Continental painters.

**IRELAND ADVERTISEMENT
FULL PAGE**

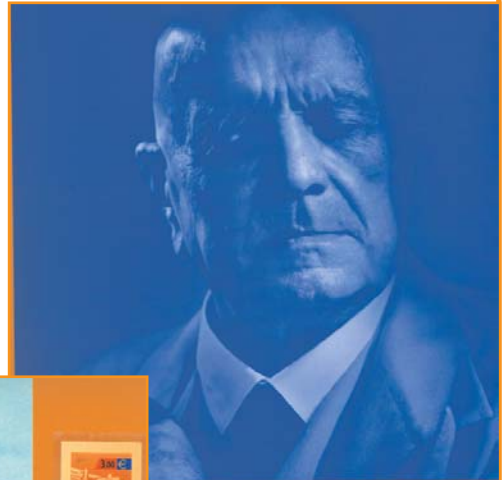
The voice of Finland's heart

In his introduction to Finland Post's annual stamp yearbook, Director Markku Penttinen says, 'Listen to the voice of Finland's heart. Enjoy the stamp year 2004'.

The 106-page hard-bound book contains all the Finnish stamps issued in 2004 including booklet stamps, miniature sheets, definitives and coils. It is with the coils that that the story of the stamp year starts and also which gives the book its cover picture, both featuring the country's national composer, Jean Sibelius.

The artistic theme is continued with the second issue, a miniature sheet honouring the poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg, and then we get to the first individual stamp of the year; a €3 definitives featuring the lion and sword emblem of Finland. The introductory pages for this single issue, illustrated here, show the high standard set by the author Mariita Hämäläinen, interesting text in four languages, Finnish, English, Swedish and German, colourful designs and photographs.

The stamps are mounted throughout in hingeless, clear mounts and cover a wide range of subjects from holidays in Finland, Nordic myths, flowers, animals, archeology, rights of children, the popular Moomin characters, Christmas,



MERKKIVUOSI
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2004

personal stamps to kisses and kissing! As Mr Penttinen said, read the book and you too will be able to 'listen to the voice of Finland's heart'.

The Stamp Yearbook 2004 is priced at €45 (£31.50) and is available from the Philatelic Centre, PO Box Fin-00011 Posti, Finland.

New Zealand's journey from Middle Earth to the stamp album

New Zealand Post's stamp yearbook is simply called *The New Zealand Collection*, and this simple cover title is juxtaposed with a quite stunning photograph of a young lady in a futuristic suit of armour—'what's that all about you may ask'—read on!

The hard-backed book comes in two editions, with stamp illustrations and with stamps and is priced at NZ\$89 (£33.60) with stamps and \$40 (£15.10) without.

The publicity brochure for the book says, '2004 was a year for honouring so many things that make New Zealand the country that it is—our entrepreneurial spirit, our sporting excellence, our creative ingenuity, our free-spirited lifestyle and of course the stunning landscapes and tourism experiences that continue to attract more and more people to our shores.' After reading it, I cannot disagree with a word.

2004 was noticeable for two innovations in New Zealand stamp design: the Post Office introduced its first scratch and smell stamp, appropriately garden flowers, and 'moving image' stamps of Olympic games gold medal winners, both of which are included in the book.

Each stamp issue is accompanied by informative text and drawings (the high standard of the artwork is illustrated by the drawing of the Magnolia Vulcan which illustrates the Garden Flowers set) or photographs laid out in an eye-catching manner; and I particularly liked the photographs and mini-write-ups on each stamp designer involved with this year's issues. Our review copy of *The New Zealand Collection* is the non-stamp version and extends to 64 pages. The stamp issues cover Zoo Animals, Rugby Football, 150 Years of Parliament, Historic Farm Machinery, Garden Flowers, Olympic Games, Children's Health, Tourism, Christmas, and Extreme Sports.

One of my favourites is a set dedicated to Middle Earth. For those not in the know, that is where J R R Tolkien's famous *Lord of the Rings* is set and New Zealand is where this mythical land was created for the film version of the book. The set of four *se-tenant* pairs of stamps show landscape scenes from the films and the actual landscape. My other favourite is the set showing 'Wearable Art', fantastic costumes, impractical to wear but works of art, and that is where the young lady in the suit of armour comes in.



**NEW ZEALAND ADVERTISEMENT
HALF PAGE**

Romania looks to next year

Romania Post has not issued a stamp yearbook for 2004 but instead has produced a leaflet listing all its issues for 2005 which shows that 70 individual stamps will be issued during the year. The list will be particularly useful to thematic collectors.



The first issue in 2005 will comprise four stamps marking various anniversaries of famous Romanians, namely the composer George Enescu, aviation pioneer G V Bibescu (pictured), sociologist and philosopher Dimitrie Gusti and General Gheorghe Magheru. The leaflet does not give specific release dates or denominations for these or any of the other stamps to be issued in 2005.

The second issue is a similar anniversaries set but this time features six famous 'foreigners': Hans Christian Anderson, Greta Garbo, Henry Fonda, Christian Dior, Jules Verne and Albert Einstein.

The last batch of issues in the first quarter of the year will comprise a single stamp to mark the centenary of Rotary International, four stamps dedicated to wine, four more featuring Romanian scouting and a single stamp marking Romania's 50th anniversary of membership of

the United Nations.

The United Nations is also the theme of a two-stamp set due for issue in the spring, on this occasion celebrating two unnamed anniversaries. A miniature sheet of four dinosaur stamps follows and then the Easter festival is commemorated by a single stamp. The issuing period ends with four stamps featuring 'Exotic Fish'.

The summer period will be very busy with a Europa set of two featuring the 2005 theme of cookery, followed by a set of four tracing the history of motorcycling and four more honouring the work of Jules Verne. Next come six stamps dedicated to Romanian gymnastics and to end, a three-stamp set commemorating Aichi 2005, the Japanese World Stamp Exhibition.

The end of the year issues are no less prolific, starting with a set of six stamps featuring hunting dogs and a set of four to honour Romanian Postage Stamp Day. The 60th anniversary of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) will be celebrated with a single stamp and contemporary art and artists in Romania will be highlighted with a set of six.

The last two issues of the year will feature a set of four dedicated to pigeon breeding and a single stamp for Christmas.

The 2005 total of 70 stamps is less than the 72 stamps issued in 2004 and shows a consistent fall from the high of 84 in 2003, a positive move in most collectors' eyes. A small sample selection of the 2004 stamps is shown here.



ROMANIA ADVERTISEMENT HALF PAGE

Singapore stamps 2004



The 2004 Collection of Singapore Stamps is a quality, hardcover album containing all the stamp issues of Singapore, colourful pictures and detailed write-ups. Each chapter of the album illustrates individual stamp issues.

At the start of the year, Singapore celebrated the arrival of the New Year with the Chinese New Year Monkey, followed by designs emanating from the galleries of two of Singapore's renowned artists, tracing the development of Singapore skylines from the past to the present.

The country celebrated its 39th birthday, participated in the 28th Olympic Games and, in conjunction of the World Stamp Championship 2004, marked Singapore's 150 years of stamps.

Additionally, the stamp issues took a step closer to nature with a view of the wondrous wildlife of Chek Jawa.

Between its covers are 61 mint stamps and four miniature sheets with a total face value of S\$46.13 (£14.85), but if you purchase this collection before 31 December 2004 you will enjoy a discounted price of S\$54.90 (£17.66). The normal retail price will be S\$60.90 (£19.60) from 1 January 2005 onwards.

**SINGAPORE ADVERTISEMENT
QUARTER PAGE**

United Nations

All three of the United Nations' stamp issuing offices, New York, Geneva and Vienna, released their annual Collection Folders on 23 November 2004.

Each folder is printed throughout in colour and provides background information on each issue in English, French and German. Profiles of the stamp designers and artists are also included.

Unlike similar publications from other stamp issuing authorities, the stamp mounts come separately and the collector has to position these before mounting the stamps. There are, however, two exceptions to the rule and an innovation, which I have not personally seen in a yearbook. The Geneva and Vienna folders also come in a version with stamps affixed and cancelled.

Although these are 2004 collections, none of the three contain the UN's 'Endangered Species' set of stamps which have been mounted in separate albums.

Another omission is the New York issue of 'personalised' stamps, but I can understand that.

Although most of the United Nations stamp are issued as sets from all three offices at the same time, there are occasions when individual offices issue individual stamps and as a consequence each of the folders is priced separately. The UN version is US\$9.67 (approximately £5), the Geneva version is US\$15.96 (£8.30) and the Vienna version is US\$16.58 (£8.64).



A typical UN stamp issue, in this case Human Rights (Education Decade 1995-2004). The New York stamps are top left and top centre, the Geneva stamps are top right and bottom right and the Vienna stamps are bottom centre and bottom left

Two versions from South Africa

South Africa Post is another postal authority which this year is offering their annual issue collection in mint and cancelled form. The year pack is priced at R31 (£27.75) for either version and is available from the Philatelic Services, Private Bag X505, Pretoria 0001, South Africa.

The year saw South Africa make ten issues of stamps which resulted in 56 new stamps for the album, 12 of which were contained in two miniature sheets and a souvenir sheet.

The first issue of 2004 marked the Chinese New Year of the Monkey and South Africa produced probably the most charming of the many issues from around the world dedicated to this subject—two young monkeys at play.

A more sombre note was struck for issue number two—'Drive Alive', a five-stamp set warning of the dangers of speed.

The first ten years of freedom from apartheid was celebrated on 27 April with another five-stamp set and the positive side of colonial rule was marked on 1 May with six stamps which celebrated local dishes, furniture, the development of the Afrikaans language, architecture, the development of the sugar cane industry and mine work.

The voluntary services were honoured by a set of ten stamps; environmentalists, care of the elderly, education, medical and ambulance services, surf life savers, animal welfare, care of orphans fire fighting, community gardens, and aid for the blind.

One of the most attractive sets of the year came in the form of a ten-stamp souvenir sheet celebrating the ecology of Table Mountain. The stamps feature a Cape Sunbird, Dark Opal Butterfly, King Protea flower, Cape Rock Hyrax, Cuckoo Wasp, Table Mountain Ghost Frog, Table Mountain Cockroach, *Stavria dodii* flower, Spotted Skeepsteker Snake and *Duvalia immaculata* flowers. The set was also accompanied



by a set of pre-stamped postcards which pictured the various forms of ecology found on the mountain. The imprinted stamps were all the same and give a distant view of Table Mountain from the sea.

The Christmas stamps were issued early, on 1 October; one shows a Greek icon of the Virgin Mary and the baby Christ painted on wood. This is taken from the 14th century original icon found at the monastery of Mount Athos in Greece. The other a Byzantine egg tempera picture of Christ, also from the 14th century and now housed in the National Museum in Belgrade.

An attractive hologram foil miniature sheet celebrating World Post Day and 75 years of South African airmail post was issued on 9 October. The hologram stamp shows a 'flying' dove and this is set against a sheet background of a DH60 Gipsy Moth aircraft.

Salt is celebrated on a five-stamp set issue on 11 November—no not the stuff we put on food, but the South African large telescope! The last issue of the year occurred on 23 November, honouring the South African Police Force which celebrates its tenth anniversary in 2005. The ten stamps illustrate the various duties of the service.



UN ADVERTISEMENT
HALF PAGE

**SOUTH AFRICA ADVERTISEMENT
FULL PAGE**