

## B. Alan (Stamps) Ltd -Definitive Sized Smilers, small format issues varieties

In 2005, B. Alan (Stamps) Limited (James Skinner) produced a limited number of themed smilers sheets in sets of six designs for his regular new issue customers bearing the wording: "**Self-Adhesive Small Format Smilers 1st Issue**" against a blue background. The sheets were unnumbered (no customer reference numbers) (**TYPE 1**)



Type 1

Type 2

Type 3

Type 4 and 5\*

Following this issue a well-known GB stamp album (Lighthouse) featured these stamp/labels in their 2005 supplements which resulted in an increased demand for these stamps/labels to fill the spaces provided. Accordingly B. Alan (Stamps) arranged at the end of 2006 or early 2007 for Royal Mail to re-print these sheets adopting a grey background. A total of 20 sheets of each design were re-printed and these also quickly sold-out. The label wording is identical but this time the sheets were numbered 1277893 in the lower left hand corner. Interestingly, the label design bear the name **SMILERS** which although permitted in 2005 was subsequently banned by ROYAL MAIL in 2006. (**TYPE 2**)

Around March 2007 B. Alan (Stamps) Limited commissioned a third re-print using the same label design but by this time Royal Mail had spotted the offending use of their Trade Mark and declined to fulfill this order. As a result a third set was commissioned with modified label wording "**Self-Adhesive Small Format Smiles 1st Issue**". They were re-printed around March 2007 on the original printing of these sheets (Royal Mail Group plc/non-elliptical perfs) against a grey background with the customer reference number of these sheets 1316274. (**TYPE 3**)

By 2008 Themed Smilers had come to the attention of the British Stamp collecting public helped on perhaps by the issue of the first Smilers Catalogue in February 2007. Two further re-prints of these designs were subsequently ordered by B. Alan (Stamps) Limited not to fulfill ongoing customer demands but to recognise subtle changes to the sheets on which the designs were printed.

The small format smilers were progressively re-printed by Royal Mail as stocks run out of the original printings and in so doing changed their strapline from **Royal Mail Group plc** to **Royal Mail Group Ltd** between July 2009 and December 2010. B. Alan (Stamps) Limited again marked this change with a set of six sheets but changed the label wording to **Self-Adhesive Small Format Pictorials 1st Issue**. They are distinguishable from Type 3 by reference to the labels which had the wording changed and to the strapline change (Royal Mail Group Ltd non-elliptical perfs) against a grey background with the customer reference number of these sheets 2568474. (**TYPE 4**).

Sometime later when elliptical perforations were introduced by Royal Mail on this issue they were again re-printed with the same label designs - **Self-Adhesive Small Format Pictorials 1st Issue** -and strapline **Royal Mail Group Ltd** but with the addition of elliptical perforations. These sheets had the customer reference beginning with a 4 - we have estimated that they were re-printed around first quarter 2011 (**TYPE 5**). Only five different designs exist in this state.

- Red White and Blue - Ref: 4377408 - sm15
- With Love - Ref: 4377408 - sm19
- Flying High - Ref: 4654630 - sm23
- Ready Teddy - Ref: 4377408 - sm27 (note strapline is Royal Mail Group plc with elliptical perfs)
- Sunshine - does not exist with elliptical perforations
- In the Post - Ref: 4377408 - sm29

*\*Type 5 had elliptical perfs*