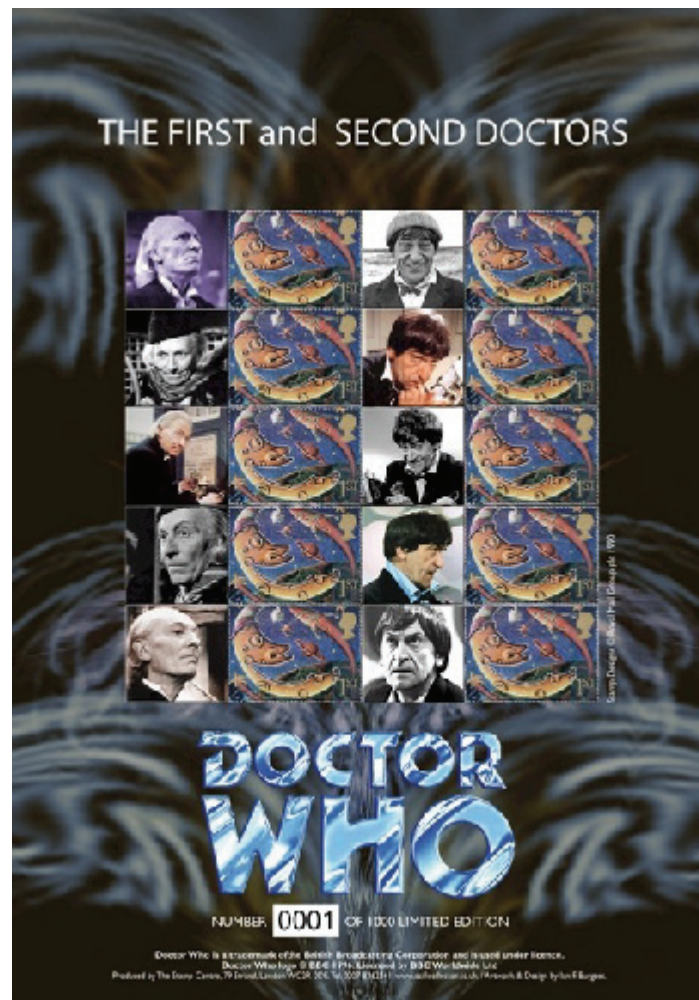


● New Dr. Who Sheet from The Stamp Centre

The eagerly awaited **First and Second Doctors** business sheet from the Stamp Centre completes the lineage of the Dr. Who sheets issued by the Stamp Centre and was definitely worth waiting for! Capturing the feel of the early 60's TV programmes, this sheet has been designed with a predominately black and white theme to compliment the predominately black and white images of the Doctors which works very well we think. From a limited numbered printing of 1000 sheets, the new Dr. Who sheet is available for purchase on-line from The [Sci-Fi](http://www.sci-fi.co.uk) web site. (24/03)



● One Small Step for [a] Man Isle of Man Stamp Sheet from AG Bradbury

Adrian Bradbury has confirmed the design and availability of a new **Isle of Man** customised stamp sheet, due out on 1 May 2009. The sheet features new stamps from Isle of Man Post commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the First Moon Landing by the crew of the Apollo 11 in 1969. Adrian writes:

This is something of a coup. Alan Bean the fourth astronaut to walk on the moon (Apollo 11) is also an accomplished artist. The Isle of Man have been working with him on their stamp issue to be issued in April. I was invited to design a BCS featuring the IoM moon landing stamps.

'I am happy, pleased, delighted, and impressed. It looks perfect. Nice job Adrian. One last comment: Neil Armstrong said that he said "One small step for a man....." I believe him and always try to write it that way in things that I am part of. Whatever you decide is OK with me but I recommend adding the "a." Very very beautiful stamps and custom sheet. Thanks for asking me to be part of your project.'

We think the above anecdote and subsequent inclusion of the "One small step for a man" is a great piece of smilers ephemera and we have to agree with Mr. Bean that this is indeed a truly fantastic new customised stamp sheet and we think Adrian and the Isle of Man Post have done a great job in capturing the spirit of this significant global anniversary. (24/03)



Mary Rose

The Mary Rose BCS sheet announced earlier this year from Buckingham provided a couple of surprises when we were shown the design. "Bucking" recent trends, the new sheet from Buckingham is of the water activated/gummed variety, not generally popular with the commercial sheet producers because of the potential handling problems this can cause. Also the use of the White Ensign smilers stamp was a great choice even if it did not exist at the time of King Henry VIII!



Perhaps the biggest surprise was the juxtaposed positions of stamp and label, believed to be a first for BCS sheets and Royal Mail. Overall a fantastic looking sheet. We understand it is due for issue on 21 April in time for St. George's Day. (16/03).

Update: Well I should have waited for confirmation of this from Buckingham because today in my electronic post box came one of those electronic letters with an updated electronic image thingy attached which had the labels and stamps in the normal positions - hey ho! My thanks to Jules at Buckingham, for providing the updated image. (17/03)

● Smilers for Kids - Release 2

Royal Mail have released design details of the second issue of their **Smilers for Kids** series of generic sheets (20v) and stamp packs (10v), due for issue on **30 April 2009**. They are similar in design to those previously released and feature:

- Wild Cherry
- Big Ears
- Jermey Fisher
- Little Miss Sunshine



Smilers for Kids Generic Sheets and Packs



The four packs will be priced at £7.75 each and the four generic sheets will be priced at £8.50. In case you were wondering, a full set of each plus a first day cover of each will set you back a whopping £130! Keep Smiling, if you can afford to. The good news is that there are at least three other 4 + 4 possible releases on the drawing boards if not already designed. I guess someone is Smiling!! (14/03)

● Attention! Castles of England due 23 April '09

Royal Mail has released details of their second "castles" generic stamp sheet due for issue on 23rd April 2009, St. George's Day and allegedly Shakespeare's birthday. The **Castles of England** sheet features some of England's best known castles which are (from top left to bottom right): Warwick, Oxford, Bolsover, Dover, Framlingham, Carlisle, Windsor, Bamburgh, Kenilworth and Bodiam. The background image is of Windsor Castle. Released after the new Royal Mail tariffs are introduced, the generic sheet will be priced at £8.35.

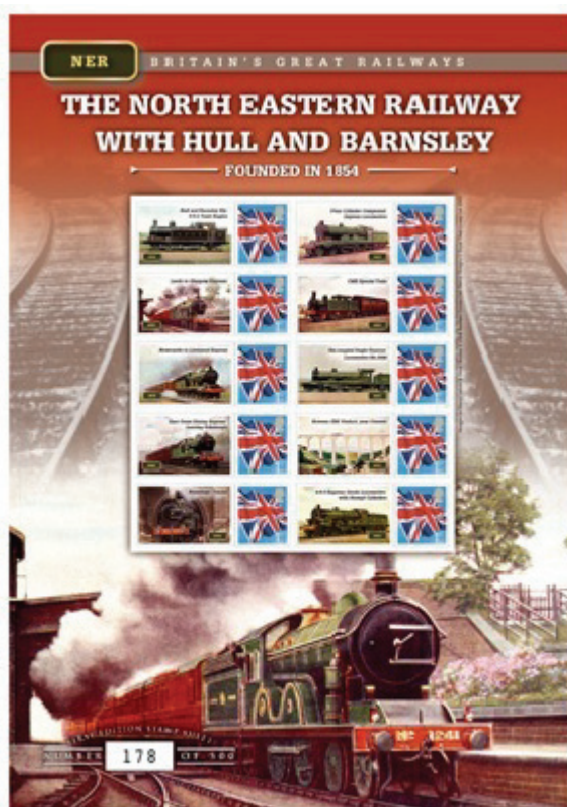
It seems to me in these credit constrained times, with Royal Mail seeking to increase the cost of 1st class postage by a staggering c. 10% this year perhaps the purchase of 1st class stamps in the form of Smilers sheets represents a **first class** investment (pun intended), better than most other forms of savings I can think of!



At the recent Stampex briefing Royal Mail confirmed that they would be making a review of the current range of smilers stamps available for business customised stamp sheets, in line with feedback received from key account holders, not least of which includes [Adrian Bradbury's](#) open letter to Royal Mail which we published here a few months ago. They indicated that they would be looking at new stamps around air transport, road transport, rail transport, sea transport, royalty, remembrance/military and fauna. Interestingly, it would seem that Royal Mail have listened to feedback they received as this sheet features the St. George's Flag stamp from the Celebrating England miniature sheet, a suggested design for Smilers stamps made by Brad in his letter to Royal Mail. Good stuff - another chapter in the smilers story unveiled. (14/03)

● Third "Great Railways" Sheet from Benham

The third **Great Railways** sheet in the series has been announced by Benham, featuring the **North Eastern Railway (NER)**. These sheets are from a very limited edition of 500 and are sure to be popular with thematic collectors and smilers collectors alike. Don't wait too long to buy yours before they disappear. Benham's Stock Code for this sheet is GBS0093. (14/03)



● One small step for man ...

Spotted by a regular contributor to this column is the first sight of Buckingham's **40th Anniversary of First Moon Landing** BCS sheet due in July. Further details under the [New Issues](#) section. (11/03)



● Royal Mail's "Smilers" programme announced

Information was provided by Royal Mail at the STAMPEX Key Accounts briefing which updated the planned 2009 stamp programme and provided much interest for the GB Smilers collector.

As partially confirmed in the Philatelic Bulletin, the forthcoming **Castles of Northern Ireland** will be the first in a series of four Smilers sheets to feature the Castles of the constituent parts of the United Kingdom. Closely following the Castles of Northern Ireland will be a **Castles of England** sheet to be issued to coincide with St. George's Day on 23 April 2009. A **Castles of Scotland** sheet is planned for the 30th November 2009 (St. Andrew's Day) with the final sheet in the series - Castles of Wales, due to follow on 1 March 2010, St. David's Day. Whilst no images of the sheets are available for publication we do have a list of the English castles featured - **Warwick, Oxford, Bolsover, Dover, Framlingham, Carlisle, Windsor, Bamburgh, Kenilworth and Bodiam**. Also of note with this new Smilers sheet is the introduction of a brand new Smilers stamp in the form of the **England Flag** stamp from the Celebrating England Miniature Sheet - but in self-adhesive format. Based on this RM approach we expect to see new Smilers stamps featuring on the Scottish and Welsh Castles sheets, as part of a re-vamp of the Smilers stamps available for BCS sheet producers along the lines proposed by Adrian Bradbury. This is thought to be under active review by RM.

On 21 May 2009 there is to be a new **Retail booklet** featuring two of the Flower Greetings/Smilers stamps, issued for the first time in self-adhesive format, together with 4 x 1st Class Machins. The theme behind this retail booklet is the 50th Anniversary of the National Association of Flower Arranging Societies.

In July Royal Mail will commemorate the **40th Anniversary of the first Moon Landing** with the issue of the first of three commemorative stamp sheets (10v) priced c. £13.50. This will be followed in August by a Stamp Exhibition sheet in the HELLO format commemorating the **Thaipex 2009** event.

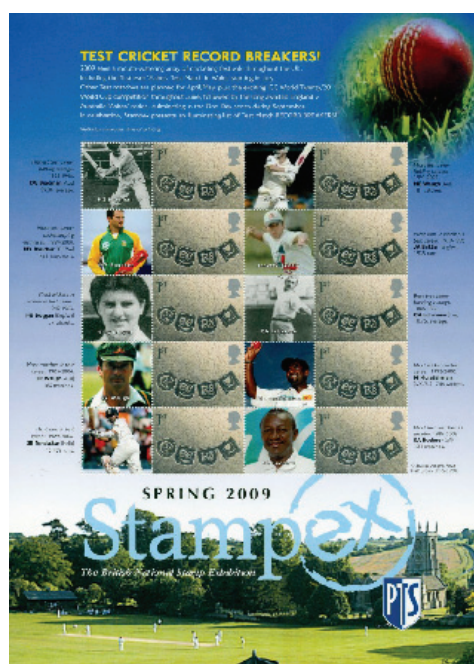
On 18th August we already know about the 20 x 1st Generic Smilers sheet featuring **Royal Mail Wall-Boxes** (perhaps the first of a series featuring Royal Mail "furniture"). In September we can expect the first of two Commemorative sheets, the first believed to be commemorating the **150th Anniversary of Big Ben** and the second due in October commemorating the **800th Anniversary of Cambridge University**. Also in October a second Stamp Expo sheet to commemorate Royal Mail's participation at **Italia '09** (the now ubiquitous 1st class "Hello" x 20 format).

In November we can look forward to the **Christmas Smilers sheet** comprising a mix of 2nd, 1st and 90p letter rate Christmas stamps plus an indeterminate number of customised formats yet to be announced (perhaps!). In December we have a third stamp expo sheet in the form of **MonacoPhil 2009**.

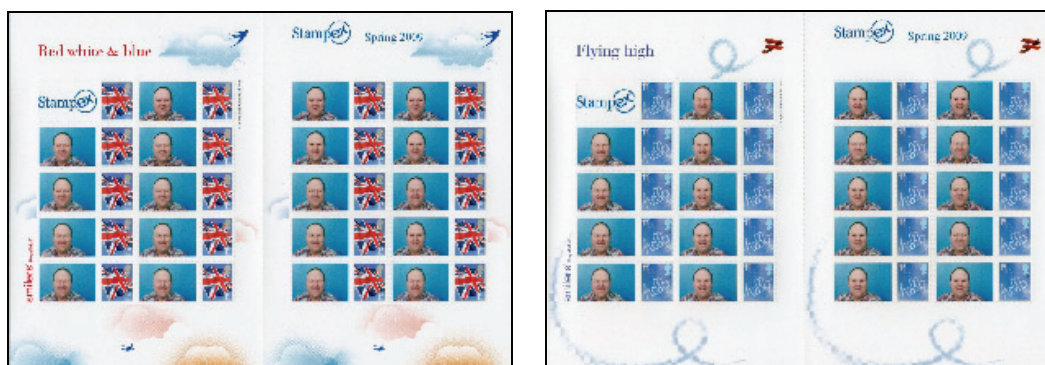
Oh, did I mention there are **four more Smilers for Kids Packs** due out in April '09 plus **four** 20 x 1st class **Smilers for Kids** sheets? No! Now how could that have slipped my mind! Keep Smiling.

● Spring STAMPEX 2009

By the time you read this the biannual STAMPEX event held at the British Design Centre, Islington will have come and gone again. The event held every year in the spring and autumn, is organised by the Philatelic Traders' Society. The Spring STAMPEX event was held between 25th and 28th February and as in the past was commemorated by the issue of a Business Customised Stamp sheet entitled Test Cricket Record Breakers. It supported a distinctively cricketing theme to the show - the main display on the Village Green area was entitled "Going to the Cricket" and was jointly organised by Stamp & Coin Mart and Bletchley Park Post Office, with help from the MCC, the Cricket Philatelic Society, the National Trust, English Cricket Memorabilia and various County Cricket Clubs. The Spring 2009 STAMPEX BCS sheet as issued, differs slightly from that advertised image in that the labels have been changed in places giving the sheet an altogether brighter feel. It has the distinction of being the Smilers double century - the 200th BCS sheet to be issued since 2001.



Also available at the show from an Instant Smilers Booth were a pair of personalised Smilers sheets from Royal Mail, which, as in the previous shows, offered overprinted personalised stamp sheets with a label featuring the STAMPEX logo. I have to say, whilst this service is most appreciated by Smilers collectors, the lack of imagination from Royal Mail in the products being offered is to say the least disappointing.



For the past six STAMPEX events (since September 2006) virtually the same pair of Smilers sheets has been offered, providing little by way of innovation from Royal Mail. What a pity the customised circular Smiler's sheet format - **Green and Pleasant Land (CS-037a)** - could not have been made available. It would have made an ideal choice to compliment the cricketing theme of the show! Hey ho! (27/02)

● Personalised Postage Stamps from UniversalMail

UniversalMail United Kingdom Limited was established following the deregulation of the UK postal industry in 2006. They produce scenic (generic) and personalised postage stamps for use on international postcards and letters sent to any destination worldwide. As such they fall into the general category of customised postage stamps and we have decided to give them a listing category and feature their products in future editions of our definitive catalogue of **Customised Stamp Sheets of Great Britain**.

UniversalMail have focused initially on the London tourist market and have produced ten different strips of five self-adhesive stamps featuring scenes of London and its attractions which are on-sale at a variety of tourist offices, hotels, general retailers and souvenir shops throughout the city. Specifically, these can currently be obtained from The Stamp Centre on the Strand who is ideally placed to handle these products. They were on sale from the Strand Stamp Centre at Stampex and according to the nice folks at the Strand Stamp centre stall business was "encouraging".



The stamps are printed in sheets of 50 stamps (10 strips of 5) and guillotined to form the retail strips comprising 5 x 5cm x 3cm self-adhesive stamps, printed by Joh. Enschede Security Print, Holland and featuring die-cut simulated perforations. Unlike the Smilers format stamps from Royal Mail there is no adjoined label to host the generic or

personalised image. Essentially each stamp comprises two parts - the "stamp" design is a partial Union Flag to the right side of the stamp with the inscription "International Postcard" or "International Letter" and the licence code identifier for UniversalMail "XT 500". The left-hand part of the stamp features the generic (or personalised) image plus the inscription *UniversalMail United Kingdom*. Interestingly, these would appear to be the first British stamps to be issued by a licensed UK postal organisation not to bear the Monarchs' head in profile although I am prepared to be corrected on this point. The reverse of the strip is printed in black on white and provides details of package weights and retail bar-codes etc, see illustration below.



There are currently 10 different strips available all dated October 2008, the month in which the service started in the UK. Nine strips feature International Postcard rate stamps (5 x 56p) and one strip features International Letter rate stamps (5 x 81p). Whilst not valid for postage here in the UK on inland mail, we would be interested to hear from anyone who has managed to use them successfully on inland mail. Further details and images available at our [New Issues](#) section.

Perhaps of most interest to Smilers Collectors is the prospect of seeing commercially produced (personalised) versions of these strips (or perhaps even sheets!) in the future. For a minimum order of 10,000 stamps (2,000 strips) companies (or for that matter individuals) can have stamps displaying their logo or message on the left hand side of these stamps, for use on international mail. If UniversalMail do succeed in obtaining a licence for inland mail, in addition to their existing licence for international mail, we can foresee interest in these issues taking off. Remember, Smilers sheets were not that popular to begin with! It remains to be seen whether the big boys (SG, Machin etc..) will include them in their respective listings, but since these stamps represent a step forward for British postal history - let's hope so! (27/02 updated 11/03)

● New Garden Birds Business Sheet from Benham

Benham have announced details of a new Business Sheet featuring British **Garden Birds** to be issued in March. This is Benham's third sheet announced this year and brings the total of new sheets issued or announced so far this year to a staggering 22 sheets. If the number of Business sheets carries on at this rate throughout 2009 it won't be just the bird fanciers that will be doing the "Twiching" (25/02).



● Four New *Tudor* Themed Business Customised Sheets

Four new Business Sheets have been announced by Benham and Bradbury. A Henry VIII sheet from Benham commemorating the 500th anniversary of the accession of King Henry VIII in 1509 and three from Bradbury, one in a similar theme commemorating the 500th anniversary of the accession of King Henry VIII, one commemorating the 450th anniversary of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth I and a further sheet in the Kings and Queens of England series, this time covering the Tudor period. Further details on the [New Issue](#) pages (20/02)



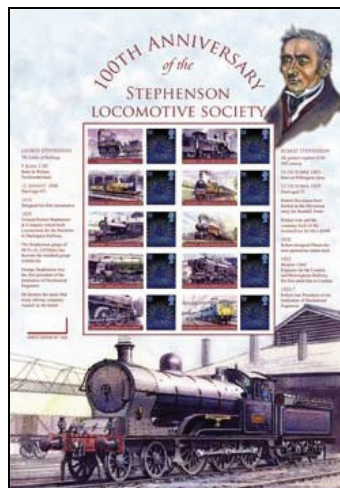
● 20th Anniversary of the death of Salvador Dali

The GB Stamp Centre is offering a striking new overprinted Themed Smilers sheet commemorating the 20th anniversary of the death of Salvador Dali. The sheet is from a numbered limited printing of 32 (GBSS ref A47) and is priced at £85 excl. p+p. (14/02)



● 100th Anniversary of the Stephenson Locomotive Society

As reported last month, Buckingham Covers are planning a new Business Sheet commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Stephenson Locomotive Society. We have now been sent artwork of this sheet and the sheet is available for purchase on-line from [Buckingham Covers](http://BuckinghamCovers.com). There is also a delightful Smilers cover on offer featuring a stamp/label from this sheet. The sheet is from a limited printing of 1909 and is priced at £26.95 excl. p+p. (14/02)



● Castles and Wall-boxes to make you smile!

Royal Mail's February Philatelic Bulletin announced a new **Northern Ireland Smilers Sheet** to be issued on **17 March 2009**, St Patrick's Day featuring the **Castles of Northern Ireland**. This sheet will contain 20 self-adhesive Northern Ireland 1st class definitive stamps with two sets of labels featuring 10 of the Province's castles. The sheet will be printed, as usual, by Cartor of France, in litho and is the first in a new series of Smilers sheets from Royal Mail, presumably all featuring Castles.



Interestingly, the bottom left label of each pane shows **Enniskillen Castle** prominently flying the **Ulster Banner**, a flag flown in some loyalist areas but which has had no official status in Northern Ireland since 1972. Whilst no official confirmation has been received we expect this sheet will replace the current Glorious Northern Ireland Smilers sheet and will also be available with personalised photos in customised format.



Also announced in an updated 2009 stamp programme is a new Smilers sheet to appear on **18 August 2009**, featuring Royal Mail Wall-Mounted Post-Boxes or **Wall-boxes** as they are being referred to. (27/01, updated 07/02)

● The Age of Steam - Pioneers of the Industrial Revolution

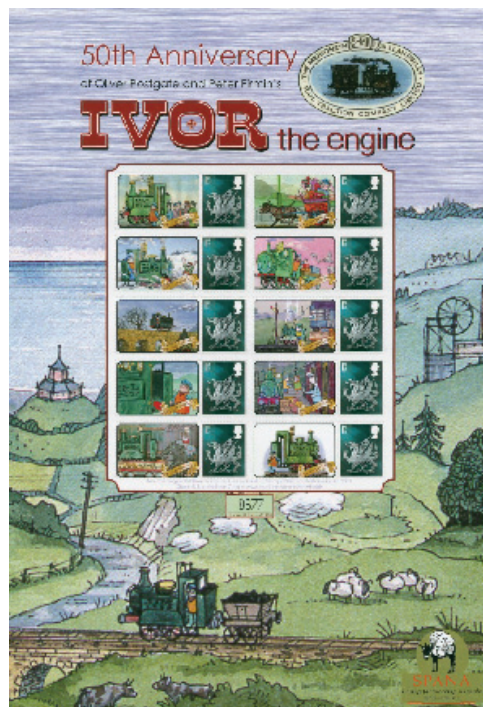
AG Bradbury has unveiled a new Business Sheet with the theme **Pioneers of the Industrial Revolution**. The sheet depicts a montage of Victorian Railway pioneers including Richard Trevithick, George Stephenson and Isambard Kingdom Brunel and their work. 2009 marks the 150th anniversary of locomotive builder and railway engineer Robert Stephenson. Further details from www.bfdc.co.uk. The sheet is from a limited printing of 1200 and is priced at £28.99. (23/01)



● Three New Business Sheets from Buckingham Covers

Tony Buckingham has announced three more Business Customised stamp sheets for 2009 to add to those already announced:

- due next month is a delightful sheet celebrating the 50th anniversary of **Ivor the Engine**;
- due in March is a **Stephenson Locomotive Society** stamp sheet, using artwork from the well known railway artist, John Wigston. no image available yet; and
- due mid-April and timed to coincide with the 500th anniversary of the accession of King Henry VIII is a new stamp sheet featuring the Mary Rose. Apparently one of the first things he did as King was to start building a new ship, **The Mary Rose**. The Mary Rose is the only 16th century warship on display anywhere in the world which can be seen today at Portsmouth's Historic Royal Dockyard. Again, no image available yet. (20/01)



● 'ello 'ello - what have we got 'er then - 90th Anniversary of NARPO

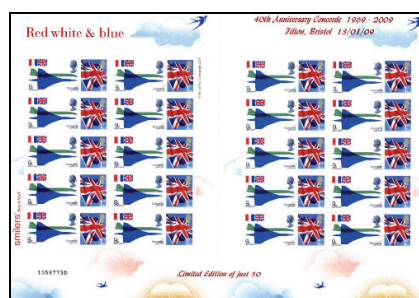
A sheet has been spotted recently on eBay by a keen contributor, *Evelyn Hall*, that seems to have avoided detection by the Smilers-info team and has slipped under our Smilers early warning system! Apparently the sheet was produced by AG Bradbury on behalf of the National Association of Retired Police Officers and was sold exclusively to NARPO members (maximum 3 per member). We have been advised by NARPO that the sheet was offered to its members in November 2008 and was mailed out to members the week before Christmas, making an issue date of around 17th December 2008. It has apparently been sold out according to NARPO but I would not be surprised to see a number of these appearing on eBay over the next few weeks as further interest take hold!



Whilst we continue our "hunt" for supplies of this sheet at reasonable prices, we thought we would share with you what we have found and if anyone manages to track down "a stash" of these sheets please call the missing smilers helpline on Whitehall 1212. (14/01).

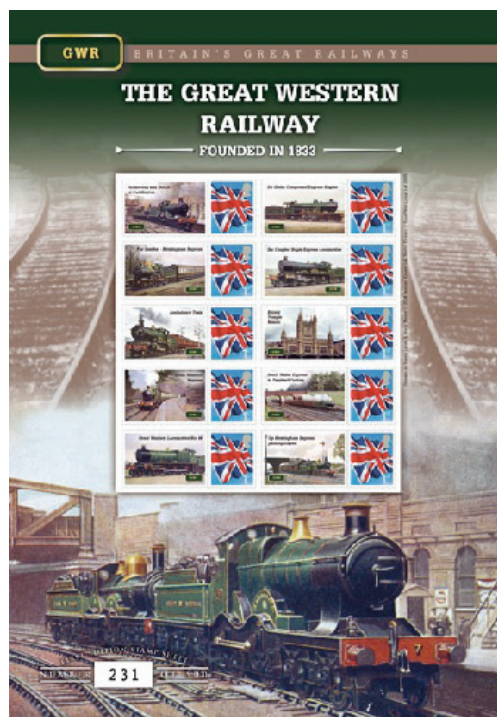
● 40th Anniversary of Concorde Themed sheet from Rushstamps

As reported last month, Rushstamps have now confirmed the availability of their 40th Anniversary of Concorde themed Stamp Sheet which has utilised the GB 1969 Concorde stamp design on the labels. A limited edition of 50 sheets, we think this sheet will not be around for very long given the thematic appeal of Concorde stamps and associated material so our recommendation is "buy this while you can". Priced at £57.50 from Rushstamps. (13/01).



● Second Benham "Great Railways" Business Sheet spotted

A second Benham Business Sheet in the series "Britain's Great Railways" has been spotted in a Benham catalogue although apparently not yet available for purchase via their website. The Benham stock code is GBS0090 and the sheet is priced at £24.95. This is the first new Business sheet to be announced in 2009 and is expected to be available shortly. (13/01).



Keep Smiling!