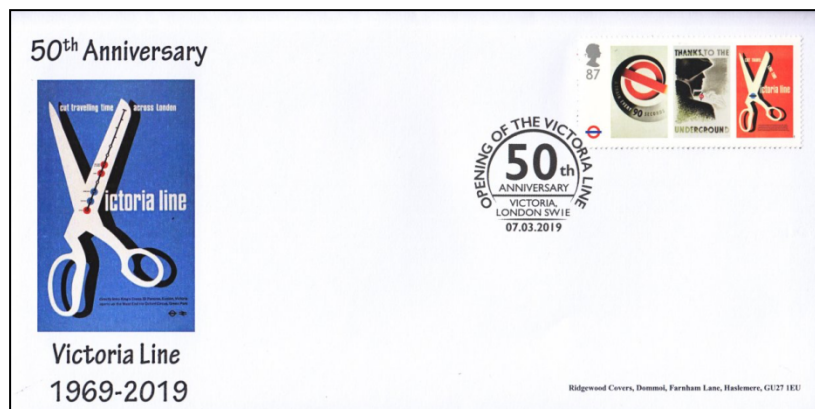


♦ Victoria Line 50th Anniversary

... and now for something completely different!

In 2013 Royal Mail issued a Mini Sheet celebrating Underground Posters Art as part of their 150th Anniversary of the London Underground issue. One of the stamps within the mini sheet (87p) featured a poster of the opening of the Victoria Line in 1969 and this year is the 50th Anniversary of the Victoria Line - hardly possible for those of us who can remember it opening!

Given the existence of this stamp and to mark this event, I have produced a commemorative special-hand stamp cover featuring this stamp, primarily for all the railway enthusiasts who are suffering withdrawal symptoms at the demise of the multitude of railway inspired Smilers sheets from the stables of Benham, Buckingham and Bradbury!! Enjoy....



A limited quantity of only 20 covers were produced as an initial trial to gauge interest in such collectibles, which I know should be popular with thematic collectors. Just click on the above image to link to my eBay shop and purchase directly through eBay. If you don't have an eBay account just e-mail with your requirements. (16/03)

♦ Spiderman and BA100

We at Ridgewood are delighted to announce an innovation in Customised Stamp sheets. With the demise of the Royal Mail Business Customised service in mid-2018 we have been left with a very few STAMPEX sheets remaining before we draw a veil over this chapter of customised stamp sheet collecting. Or so we thought!

The arrival of the 150th Anniversary of St Pancras Customised Stamp Pack last November, a product devised by Heritage Media Ltd. for St. Pancras Station's 150th Anniversary celebrations, got us thinking. What if we could breathe new life in to some of the old

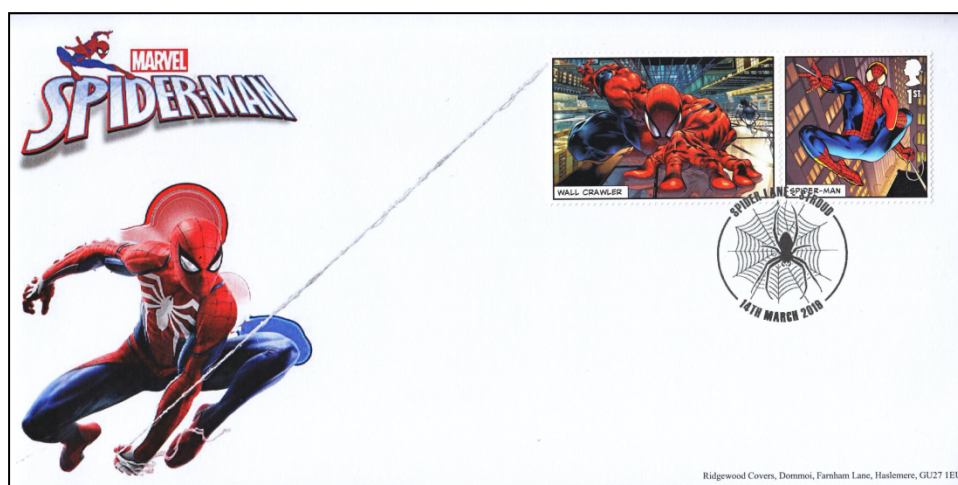
Smilers sheets that exist and perhaps create new collectible items of interest for Smilers collectors?

Our first product along these lines is a souvenir Smilers cover out tomorrow timed to coincide with Royal Mail's Heroes and Defenders issue. We have produced a limited number of Smilers covers (25) bearing a pair of 16 year- old Smilers stamps/labels which, hopefully you will agree, has breathed new life in to the stamps/labels.



Click on the image to buy this cover from our eBay shop (priced £5.95 +pp) or alternatively drop me an e-mail with your requirements. We can supply a complete set of 5 covers with all stamp/label combinations from the sheet for £25 incl. p+p.

Other products are available as you will see in our eBay shop based on Royal Mail's Heroes and Defenders/Marvel issue, and here's just one we thought worked really well.



Finally, we are very pleased to announce the arrival of our BA 100 project! In this the centenary year of British Airways we can only imagine the number and variety of Customised Smilers sheets that may have appeared from the Benham, Bradbury, Buckingham, Westminster stables had Royal Mail not terminated the customised stamp

sheet service last year. And then we remembered our 90th Anniversary sheet issued 10 years ago and we started thinking, what if ...
... and here it is:



We have produced a limited edition of 50 Customised Smilers Packs providing a fitting tribute in the British Airways centenary year, backed up by a uniquely numbered information card outlining the history of this great airline all delivered in a sealed pack and available for purchase immediately from our e-commerce website. Just click on either image above to be transported as if by magic to our e-shop, or alternatively drop me an e-mail with your requirements. (14/03)

• Smilers that failed to Smile # 3

Here is my next installment of some of the Royal Mail Smilers projects that never saw the light of day. This time it's an example of an Adrian Bradbury design that failed to materialize. It was to be the first in a series of sheets by Adrian featuring British Books but in the end Adrian dropped the idea in favour of his History of Britain series. Shame! (12/03)



• Universal Mail Update

To all those interested in Universal Mail UK Strips, my apologies for the long silence since the last update, but it's been quite an uphill battle to nail down details surrounding the latest new issues! That said, there is light at the end of the tunnel based on additional information forthcoming from Universal Mail UK who have been very helpful recently in tracking down this missing information. Whilst not fully complete I have made progress and I feel the time is right to share this with you.

I have updated my catalogue of these issue as at end of February 2019 and am now trying to track down the following:

There was a printing in 05/18 but UMUK didn't have any stocks left of the following:

- 05/18 UK0020 Scotland
- 05/18 UK0041 Sussex
- 05/18 UK0051 Cambridge
- 05/18 UK0057 Animals of Scotland
- 05/18 UK0058 Scottish Icons

- 05/18 UK0062 Inverness
- 05/18 UK0063 Isle of Sky
- 05/18 UK0104 Dorset

Then there are the Bespoke issues UMUK alerted me to but can't supply.

- 05/18 UK0076 Beatles
- 05/18 UK0126 Madame Tussauds
- 05/18 UK0162 Alnwick Castle
- 05/18 UK0167 Dunvegan Castle
- 05/18 UK0168 Tate Museum
- 09/18 UK0030 Historic Scotland Stirling
- 09/18 UK0036 Historic Scotland Central
- 09/18 UK0038 Historic Scotland North
- 09/18 UK0068 Giant's Causeway
- 09/18 UK0070 Roman Baths
- 09/18 UK0072 St Pauls Cathedral
- 09/18 UK0076 Beatles
- 09/18 UK0077 Visit Oxfordshire
- 09/18 UK0123 Titanic
- 09/18 UK0148 House of Commons
- 09/18 UK0153 Tower Bridge Exhibition
- 09/18 UK0162 Alnwick Castle
- ??/?? UK0166 London Icons with £1.50 denomination
- 09/18 UK0167 Dunvegan Castle
- 09/18 UK0168 Tate Museum
- UK0169 - Gap
- UK0170 - Gap
- UK0171 - Gap
- UK0172 - Gap
- UK0173 - Gap
- UK0174 - Gap
- UK0175 - Gap
- UK0176 - Gap
- UK0177 - Gap
- UK0178 - Gap
- UK0179 - Gap
- UK0180 Westminster Abbey
- UK0182 Marble Arch Caves
- UK0183 - Gap
- UK0184 – this code apparently does not exist according to UMUK
- 09/18 UK0185 Green Welly Shop
- 09/18 UK0186 Jane Austen House Museum
- 09/18 UK0187 National Gallery Museum (Monet)
- 09/18 UK0188 Science Museum

- 09/18 UK0189 Body Worlds

When I contacted some of the above Bespoke outlets they could not supply them to me because UMUK had yet to supply them! A conundrum for me in that UMUK would not supply Bespoke strips to me and the Bespoke Outlet could not supply me. I am therefore trying to resolve these gaps and omissions with Universal Mail as I write and I am hopeful that these can be sorted out before the end of the month. Universal Mail have already altered me to further re-prints and new issues in the process of being printed so it would be good to get these put to bed before the latest batch are released. (12/03)

• Smilers that failed to Smile # 2

Continuing my short series of Royal Mail Smilers projects that never saw the light of day, here's one from Bletchley Park Post Office which was floated in 2009 to mark Andrew Strauss benefit year but ran into licensing problems and like some others had to be shelved! (26/02)



• Smilers Programme 2019

Royal Mail have provided further insight to their stamp issuing programme for 2019 at a Trade briefing held recently at Spring Stampex. Most of the following will, by now, be old

news but for those of you who don't spend their life thinking about Royal Mail's next issue, here is a brief summary of what we know today.

- 5 January: Stamp Classics
- 13 February: Leonardo Da Vinci
- 14 March: Marvel Comics (*Smilers sheet announced*)
- 19 March : 2019 Tariff Change Definitive and Regional stamps
- 4 April: Birds of Prey
- 2 May: British Engineering
- 24 May: Queen Victoria Bicentenary
- 29 May : TBC
- 6 June: D-Day
- 9 July: Curious Customs
- 13 Aug: Forests
- 19 Sept: Royal Navy Ships
- October - TBC
- 5 Nov: Christmas
- ?? November - TBC

Whilst there is still secrecy surrounding most issues (notably May, October and November) and images and products descriptions for most of the above are not yet available, I can confirm that there is interest in this list for us Smilers sheet Collectors in 2019 who should pay close attention to issues in March (Marvel Comics), May, November and December (Christmas) and possibly in late November we might even see a Year of the Rat sheet - more later! (26/02)

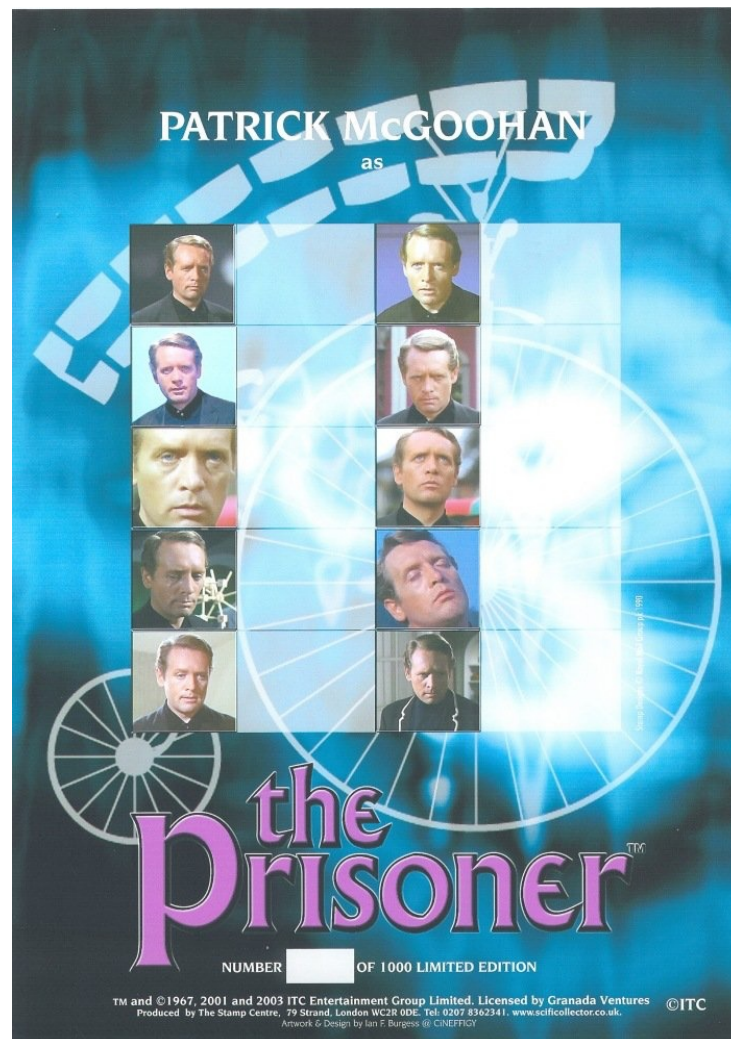
• Smilers that failed to Smile # 1

As you may have guessed by the longevity of this website blog, I just love Smilers and the stories that surround them. I started this website over 10 years ago with help from like minded individuals and we have managed to keep it going through feast and famine. Now that Royal Mail have pulled the plug on Business Customised Sheets and personalised Smilers the news columns seem a bit thin on new stuff to me. In an effort to brighten up the column I am turning to some old stories and hopefully these may stimulate collector interest into this area of stamp collecting.

The stories behind the production of these sheets can be quite interesting and some of these have been captured either in the Smilers catalogue or in this column in the past. But what of the sheets that never made it? Not a huge number failed but nevertheless some have interesting stories and some are just nice to look at and to think of what might have been! I have therefore decided to feature a few designs from time to time for the enjoyment of my blog readers.

Here's a very early design from The Stamp Centre for a sheet based on the 1960's TV series The Prisoner which starred Patrick McGoochan. It ran into licensing problems and in the end

Steven Scott dropped the design in favour of a series of Dr. Who sheets, what a great decision that turned out to be! (21/02)



• Marvel-Less Smilers

As hinted at earlier, Royal Mail have now brought forward their official launch date for the mega Film/TV themed issue planned for March to today and have announced a set of stamps and collectibles (far too long for me to list them all) based on the theme - Marvel Comics. There are stamps, retail booklets, prestige booklets, limited edition prestige booklets, first day covers, presentation packs, framed sheets, more covers but no comics I am reliably informed.

More specifically, RM have confirmed plans to issue a Generic Stamp Sheet on 14th March 2019 comprising 10 stamps and labels although, I have to confess, I am not sure which are the stamps and which are the labels!!



I get it that it is supposed to look like a comic and I guess to that end they have succeeded. However I would have thought that some enterprising individual or other might overprint the labels with the Queen's head and a "1st" value and use them as postage thus halving the cost of a 1st class stamp! I am sure some Royal Mail operatives would have difficulty differentiating the real stamps from the overprinted labels. What an ignominious design this is - Royal Mail have definitely lost the plot and now cannot, it seems, differentiate between stamps of the realm and comic labels! (19/02)

- A Marvelous Start to 2019**

Royal Mail's 2019 stamp programme has been officially announced and an issue scheduled for March is under strict secrecy until its official launch on 21st February 2019. What I know is that it is another mega Film/TV theme based issue with lots of products and variations for the collecting community. Of particular interest to us here at Smilers-Info is the news that there will be at least one 10-stamp generic Smilers sheet featuring these new stamps with additional imagery on the labels and backgrounds. The TV/Film theme has not been announced to the Philatelic Trade but rumors abound with some even claiming to have seen these new stamps at local post offices. However, I am sure we shall all marvel at the designs and collectibles when these are officially announced next week! (16/02)

● The Bear Facts!

A regular to these columns contacted me yesterday with news of an apparent "new find" based on the Paddington Bear generic sheet from 2006 (GS-030).

In an e-mail to me I was asked if I was aware of

" a newly discovered Paddington Bear Sheet which had a printing of 200 Sheets although 190 were used for postage leaving 10 available to Collectors. Every Label is over-printed with the Anniversary and there are additional 'bear paw' footsteps and information."



https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/Paddington-Bear-Stamp-Sheet-BFDC-Stamps-Overprint-/173228528132?nma=true&si=LK03RNftA3ipd8CgRDcLBy8Movg%253D&orig_cvip=true&nordt=true&rt=nc&trksid=p2047675.l2557

My response was concise and to the point -No!v

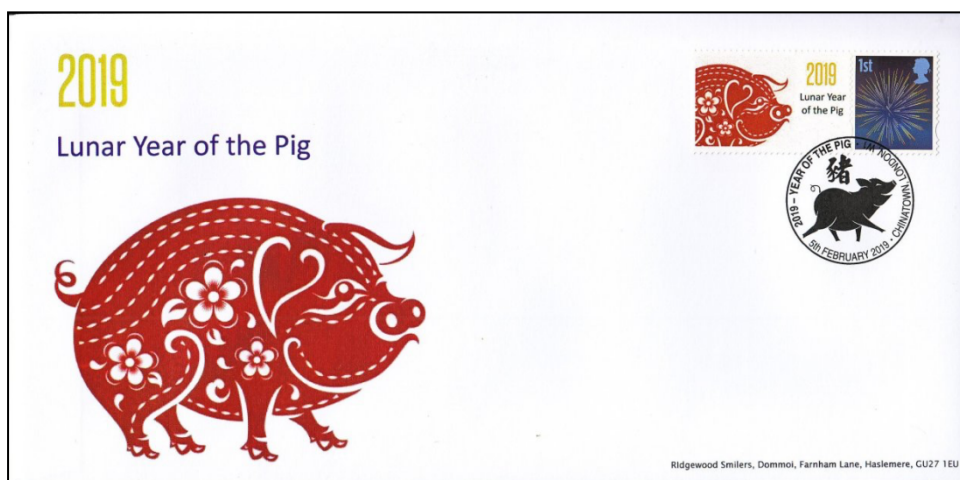
I did provide the contributor with my opinion which I will share with readers (see below). However a little more by way of context was added by another reader earlier today who advised me that these sheets (3 of them) had been sold on eBay for an undisclosed amount but that they had originally been offered by eBay seller **BFDC1947** from Leicester (Rings a bell!) for **£200.00 each!** An amazing mark- up on sheet that originally cost less than £7.00! Click on the image above to see the completed eBay listing and form your own opinion.

In my humble opinion for what it's worth - frankly I don't believe a word of it. Someone is trying to pass on a number of overprinted generic sheets and make some easy money with a questionable story. If 190 sheets were used for postage then you would expect at least

one of the 3800 stamps to turn up on ebay in kiloware! Sorry, but I won't be buying it, listing it and I certainly don't buy the story! I suggest you do the same. Caveat Emptor!! (16/02)

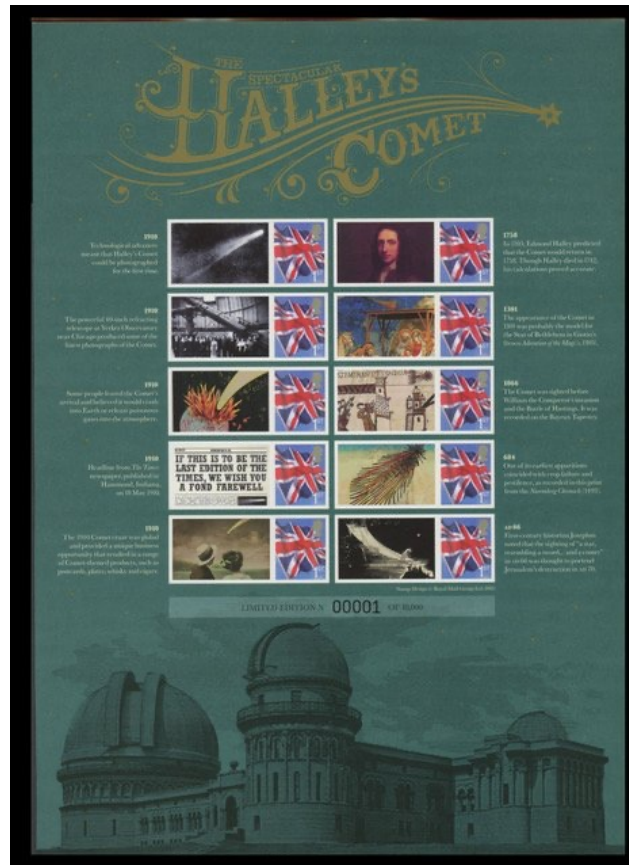
• Happy Chinese New Year

A belated Happy Chinese New Year for yesterday and I hope all my readers have a great year! As reported earlier, I have produced a Themed Smilers sheet and Commemorative Cover and both are now in stock and available for purchase. Both items are in my eBay shop so please take a look at the various selection of themed Smilers sheets and covers on offer, which may differ from my routine stock. Here's the cover I have produced to welcome in the Year of the Pig. (06/02)



• Halley's Comet 00001

Mark Brandon has been in touch to let me know about a rather unique Commemorative Stamp Sheet Pack from Royal Mail. The Halley's Comet Commemorative Stamp Pack was issued in May 2010, just in time for London 2010, and as these were still in their infancy Royal Mail numbered these individually, a practice that has since evaporated in recent years! Mark Brandon has advised that a sheet with Serial Number 00001 is available to purchase from him priced £750.00 and if interested readers are requested to make contact with Mark by e-mailing him at: mark@regalstamps.co.uk (06/02)



• Kettering Stamp & Philatelic Society

RM, an eagle-eyed contributor to this column, spotted a hitherto unseen Smilers item on eBay earlier today and gave me a call to alert me to the find, for which I am very grateful. It has allowed me to share the following rare snippet of Smilers news.

The Kettering Stamp & Philatelic Society celebrate their 20th Anniversary this year and have produced a presentation pack featuring two personalised Smilers stamps.



Kettering Stamp and Philatelic Society (KSPS) is a friendly stamp club attracting members not only from Kettering but also other towns and villages in Northamptonshire.

With a membership of around sixty, we hold lively monthly events which include members' evenings, competitions, auctions and dealers' nights, bring and buy sales, quizzes, speakers, etc.

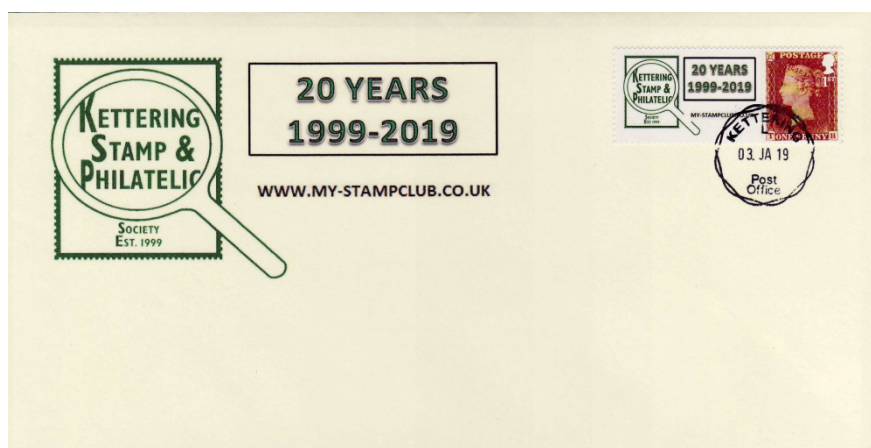
Visitors are most welcome at any meeting to see just what goes on, and whatever the level of interest there is always someone willing to help or advise.

Visit our website at www.my-stampclub.co.uk

Limited 20th Anniversary edition Presentation Pack No. 06 of 20

The club originally planned to do a pack to be given free to all of their members as a thank-you along with a selection of covers and generic sheets to sell, to raise funds for the club. Two sheets of both the Penny Red and Penny Black Smilers stamps were produced initially last year for committee review and approval. However when the Club decided to order a further 30 sheets of each Royal Mail had stopped accepting new orders. As a result they decided to produce 20 Presentation Packs containing one of each stamp and tab, 20 years so 20 packs at £20 each to raise funds for the club.

The club also produced 10 souvenir covers of each design with a local Kettering postmark, although I understand there are very few of these left.



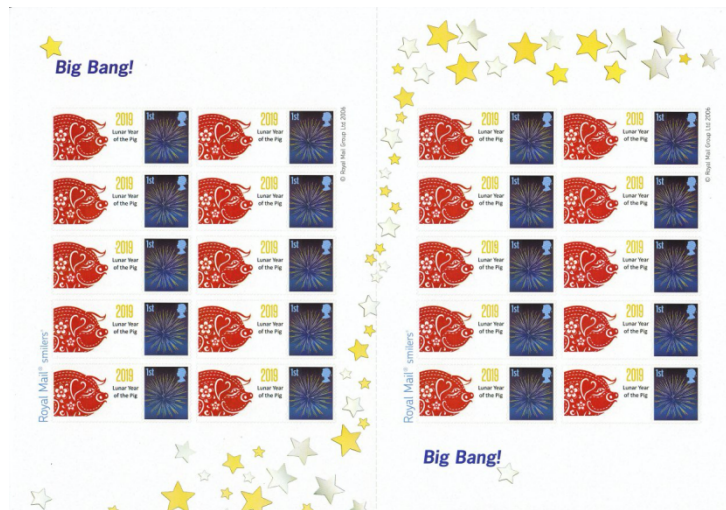
Finally, the club also made available a small quantity of single Smilers stamps sold in plastic bags as follows.



The presentation packs are priced at £20 each, the covers are priced at £3 each and the single stamps are priced at £2.50 all of which are available from the club whilst stocks last. If interested please e-mail James Dickinson in the first instance (click on link) who will confirm pricing and availability. (20/01)

• Lunar New Year - Year of the Pig Themed Smilers Sheet

Following on from the past couple of years I have produced a limited edition themed sheet commemorating the Lunar New Year, Year of the Pig. As with last year I hope to produce a First Day Cover in February using these Smilers stamps/labels but that will be dependant on the availability of a suitable special hand-stamp marking the event, details of which have yet to be announced, more later. For those interested in collecting the sheet here it is!



TS-572

As with the previous item I have a very few sheets available for purchase priced £39.95 each including p+p, and again due to limited availability I am offering these on a first come, first served basis. If interested please send me an e-mail to confirm your interest. (12/01)

• Isle of Pabay Winter 2018 - Themed Smilers Sheet

The Isle of Pabay Themed Smilers sheet for 2018 is out and this year it features an image used for an Isle of Pabay 75p local stamp.





TS-571

With a change in Royal Mail's policy this year increasing the minimum order number of personalised themed sheets to c. 40 we believe, it may well be the last themed sheet from Isle of Pabay folks, let's hope that Royal Mail relax this policy going forward.

The interesting thing about this sheet is that Royal Mail have reverted to stocks of Glorious Scotland with the Rampant Lion stamp rather than the Saltire flag which appeared unannounced a couple of years back. Could it be that Royal Mail stocks are being wound down by Royal Mail and as soon as they have been used up, that will trigger the end of the personalised formats? Only time will tell!

I have a very few sheets available for purchase priced £49.95 each including p+p, as usual due to limited availability I am offering these on a first come, first served basis. If interested please send me an e-mail to confirm your interest. (12/01)