

● **Christmas Greetings to all our readers!**

We extend our best wishes of the season to all our readers of the Smilers catalogue and this web site.

When the children are running around excited, the Turkey is taking forever to cook and you have just discovered you have forgotten the cream for the Christmas pudding, remember - keep smiling! Merry Christmas to one and all! (22/12)

● **New Smilers announced by AG Bradbury and updates on print numbers**

AG Bradbury have advised us that the print quantities for their previously announced (23/10) sheets for *Valentines Day* and *Kings of England - Normans and Plantagenists* have been revised. 500 of the former and 1500 of the later have now been confirmed by AG Bradbury, see updated images under NEW ISSUES.

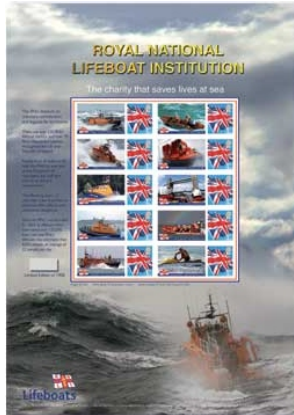
Also announced, the second in an as-predicted series featuring the Kings and Queens of England. is No. 2 in the series - *Kings of England - Lancastrians and Yorkists*, due out in February 2008.

But perhaps the most exciting development is a sheet to be issued by AG Bradbury in co-operation with the Isle of Man Post Office, being their very first stamp sheet in Smilers format! The sheet celebrates the 90th Anniversary of the RAF and is fitting tribute to the boys in blue. Whilst at the time of writing no final decision has been made, the sheet will probably be listed in the catalogue as a Business Customised Stamp sheet and retain the same catalogue numbering format as other GB Business Sheets. With only 500 sheets available this is going to prove popular with both Smilers collectors and Isle of Man collectors - our Christmas tip is order yours early! (22/12)



● **Royal National Lifeboat Institution**

Buckingham covers have released details of a new Business Customised Stamp Sheet scheduled for issue on 13th March 2008. Exact numbers are unknown at present but early ordering is recommended. (14/12).

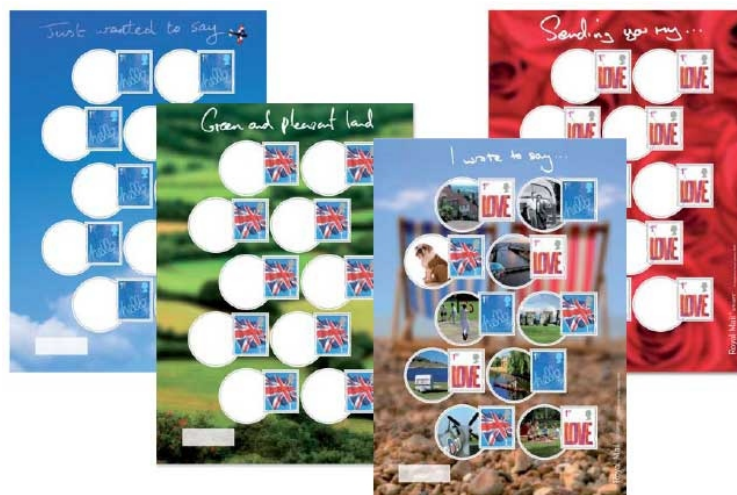


● **Themed Smilers - Listing Policy**

We have noted with interest the growing numbers of Themed Smilers sheets issued since the launch of our Smilers Catalogue in February this year. At that time we had listed 104 sheets issued between 2000 and January 2007. Since then the number has increased dramatically to over 250 sheets. We have also noted an increasing trend by certain individuals and companies to issue low numbers of sheets. We can only assume the purpose of this is to artificial inflate their value through competition for these low print number sheets. Earlier this year we introduced a policy of listing only print runs of greater than 10, below which we felt these were hardly collectable due to their limited availability. Given the growing interest and numbers of collectors we have revised this policy effective 1st January 2008. Only themed sheets available in quantities of 25 or more will be listed in our catalogue as we have assessed that at that level of availability everyone has a fair chance of purchasing a sheet at an affordable price. (07/12).

● **New Format Smilers announced - Due 15 January 2008 (Update)**

Royal Mail have announced the introduction of four new Smilers sheets, available from 15th January 2008. These sheets differ from all previous Smilers sheet designs and are thought to be the world's first to feature circular labels. The following image is the latest available from Royal Mail and shows each of the four half-sheets. We think they look great - well done Royal Mail!



The new Generic Smilers sheet comprises a single sheet of 20 (or is it 10?) stamps and labels featuring the *Union Flag*. *Flying High* and *With Love*, priced at £7.35 per sheet of 20 stamps. According to the publicity material release by Royal Mail it would seem that this is also available in sheetlets of 10, however we remain skeptical about this. The other three sheets feature one of the three stamps featured in the generic sheet x 20 + customised labels and priced at £13.50 for one sheet, £12.50 for two or more sheets. The customised formats are available in sheetlets of 10 (i.e. a half sheet) priced £7.50. This raises an interesting question - If one were to submit two different images (by post or e-mail) and request a sheetlet of each with the request that the two half sheets were not separated (ala 78p Christmas Sheet) would one received a single Smilers sheet with two customised labels! An intriguing prospect! (Updated: 12/12)

● New Elm Park Smilers Sheet

The Elm Park Community has successfully raised funds for a number of worthwhile community projects over the past couple of years by designing and selling customised "Smilers" stamp sheets featuring various aspects of Elm Park life. This year's Christmas sheet is the 4th in a series of customised stamp sheets issued by the Elm Park Shopping Precinct. The latest sheet was Issued on the 30th November 2007 to coincide with the switching-on of the precinct's Christmas lights and the label depicts a Christmas tree chosen from a selection of designs created by the children of Ayloff School, a local primary school. A pupil at that school also designed the publicity poster.



A total of 50 sheets of 20 stamps were printed, 40 of which were torn up into half sheets and sold in the local florists to local townsfolk's. The remaining 10 whole sheets are intended for collectors who seem to prefer to collect whole sheets rather than half sheets. (01/12)

● **A fifth Business Customised sheet announced by Buckingham Covers!**

With four new Business Customised sheets issued, or announced, since the recent Autumn Stampex event, it is perhaps surprising to find that Buckingham Covers have announced yet another Business Customised sheet. Hot on the heels of their QE2, Eurostar, Queen Victoria and Air Singapore offerings (I have almost given up of ever seeing this one!) and due in January 2008, Buckingham Covers have announced a customised sheet to commemorate the formation, in 1923, of the Big Four Railway companies with an 85th Anniversary special!



Stamps with a railway theme always seem to be popular with thematic cover and sheet collectors alike, so it is perhaps less surprising to note that Buckingham's themed offering bears more than a passing resemblance to Benham's recent issue of four railway sheets to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the demise of the same Big Four companies. I apologise for the quality of the scan which is directly taken from Buckingham's Cover Lover publication and probably doesn't do the sheet justice. Like all of Tony's products the sheet represents extremely good value for money, priced at £22.95 each, and is available for order from Buckingham Covers. (25/11)

● **2003 Occasions Phosphor Variety turns up at Harmer's**

This month, in the space of as many weeks, a fourth major Smilers variety has turned up which will be of interest to most Smilers collectors.

We have recently received information from one lucky Smilers collector of a significant find at a recent Harmer's Auction which will, no doubt, send smilers dealers scurrying to their stocks to see if further examples of this error can be found. One eagle-eyed collector noted that Harmer's had included a lot in the July auction described as a *2003 Occasions (Multiple Choice) Post Office Label Sheet with Phosphor applied on the rear*. What it did not say is that the phosphor coating had been omitted from the front. Assuming this sheet was discovered in legitimate Royal Mail stock, and we have no reason to doubt this, at least three other sheets must also exist as Smilers sheets are printed in larger panes of four and then guillotined. Our www.smilers-info.com correspondent has kindly supplied photographs which clearly show the phosphor on the gummed side with the printed side devoid of phosphor when compared to normal sheets. We hope to be able to get better scans in the future but for now - keep smiling and get hunting. (24/11)



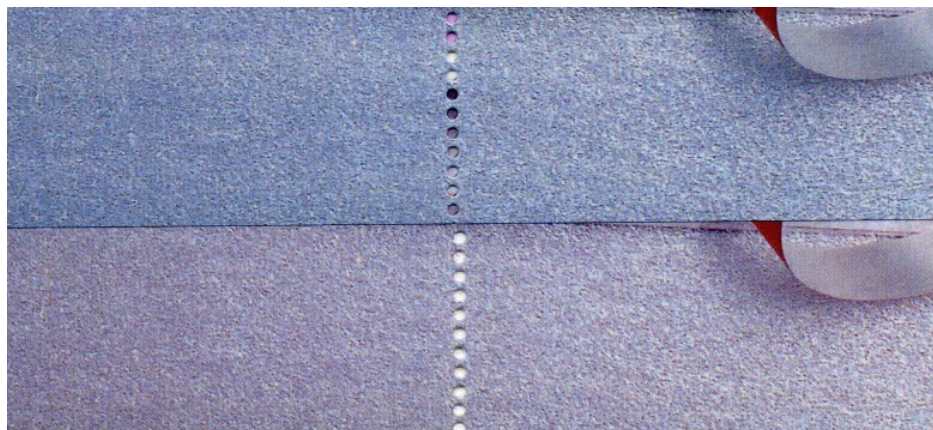
● Spring STAMPEX sheet announced

The Philatelic trader's Society (PTS) have released details of the Spring STAMPEX event to be held in the usual venue between 27th February-1st March 2008, further details from the [STAMPEX](http://www.stampex.co.uk) web site. In keeping with recent tradition the PTS will be selling a souvenir Smilers sheet (£10) with the theme being a *Century of Travel* depicting some of the cars, trains, ships and planes which have contributed to our travel experience over the past 100 years. (24/11)



● 2002 Occasions Shade Variety?

We have received news of yet another possible shade variety in one of the earlier Smilers sheets. Alan Jones reports that he has two sheets of the 2002 Occasions sheet with distinctly differing hues. One far more bluish than the other. Whilst we have yet to see this for ourselves, Alan has been kind enough to pass on a scan of the difference in shades. (22/11)



● 2002 World Cup Phosphor Variety

Ian Lasok-Smith recently sold, on eBay, a phosphor shift variety of the 2002 World Cup Smilers sheet. The quite striking sheet shows all bands about 3-4 mm short at bottom with the overflow clearly visible in the top border by a similar amount. This variety may be a one-off or more widely-spread. We plan to record this variety in a future edition of the catalogue but would be interested in hearing from others who may have seen similar examples. (01/11)



● **Surprising shade variety turns up on 2001 Occasions sheets**

Earlier this year we heard reports about shade varieties turning up on the 2001 Occasions (Hallmarks) Smilers sheets. Having now had a chance to look at both shades we think it may point to a re-printed batch of these sheets. It might be worth looking through dealers stocks as we understand both seem to be in plentiful supply. We will see if we can find out any more information to support this theory. However, we would like to hear from you if you have both shades in your collection, to judge how widespread this variety is.

The original printing appears to be quite pinkish in its overall appearance. By contrast the shade variety looks much darker and less pink. Differences also exist in the intensity of the border printing in silver. In the original printing the lettering is sharp and fine whereas the printing on the darker shade variety is thinner and less fine. (01/11)



● **Christmas Smilers Update**

The Christmas Smilers sheets from Royal Mail (5 different designs) are now available for purchase on-line. Having had a chance to check with Royal Mail we can confirm:

- The Santa and Snowman sheets are, in every respect we understand, identical to last years issue
- If you require a full sheet of the overseas smilers (i.e. two halves intact), the recommendation is to order via e-mail and not to use the on-line order facility

We are hearing reports of inconsistent responses from Royal Mail regarding the customers requests for full sheets (i.e. 20 stamps) of the 78p overseas rate. It is our understanding from senior Royal Mail staff that these should be made available to collectors upon simple request by e-mail to Tallents House. (25/10)

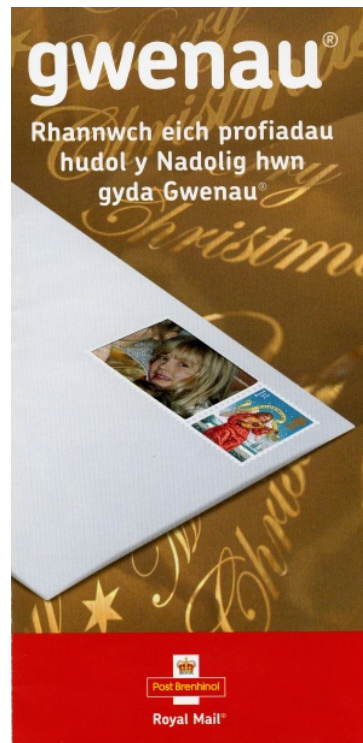
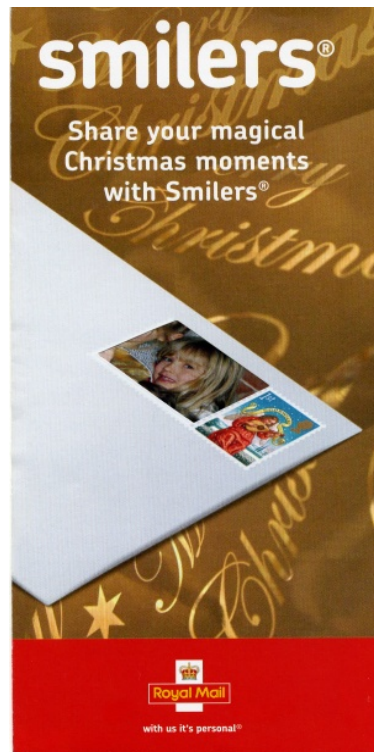
● Two more Business Customised sheets from AG Bradbury

Two more Business Customised Stamp sheets have been "spotted" on AG Bradbury's website, due in January and February 2008. The first is No. 14 in the History of Britain series, celebrating St. Valentine's Day and featuring scenes from Victorian St. Valentines Day cards. The second sheet spotted, No. 15 in the History of Britain series, features what is perhaps the first in a series of Kings and Queens of England since the Norman conquest. (23/10)



● New Smilers Publicity Leaflets

Royal Mail have introduced two new Smiler's publicity leaflets featuring the 2007 Christmas issues, the first in English (RMJ117DL) the second in Welsh (RMJ118DL). Both leaflets provide new codes for all DS size stamps - DS01 now becomes DS01N. We think this refers to the new pricing introduced from 23 October rather than a different stamp/sheet, although there is always the possibility that this refers to re-printed sheets featuring the new Royal Mail identity *Royal Mail Group Limited*. Whilst such a change would indeed keep Smilers collectors busy in the run up to Christmas and help fill Royal Mails Xmas Stockings we think it more likely that the coding is nothing more sinister than providing an indicator on the new charging rate for personalised Smilers sheets. (20/10)



● **New Smilers pricing from 23 October 07!**

Royal Mail have announced new pricing formula for customised Smilers sheets, which will come into force from 23 October 2007. The price of a single 20 x 1st class sheet is being reduced to £13.50 from £14.95 with discounted pricing for 2 or more sheets set at £12.50. They have also introduced a new delivery charge which will be £1.45 per order, previously free. Therefore effectively the price for one sheet remains the same! We think someone in Royal Mail has been taking lessons from Gordon Brown!

We can also now confirm that no further discounts are available for 10 sheets or more, as was the practice prior to these increases. Royal Mail have therefore effectively increased their prices by c. 25% for orders of 50 sheets or more! The phrase "killing the goose that laid the golden egg" comes to mind. If nothing else, Royal Mail are being true to their strap-line! (13/10 - updated 20/10)



.... suggestion for a new smilers to "celebrate" the revised pricing formula

Here is the full picture.

Effective 23 October 2007	1 sheet	2 or more sheets
1st class sheet of 20	£13.50	£12.50
2nd class sheet of 20	£8.50	£8.00
78p overseas sheet of 10	£13.50	£12.50
Effective 15 January 2008	1 sheet	2 or more sheets
1st class sheet of 10	£7.50	£7.50

● Circular Smilers!

Hot on the heels of the first Smilers Booklet and also due for issue on the 15th January 2008, Royal Mail are planning to introduce new Smilers sheets featuring new circular labels! Initial rumours were buzzing about at the recent STAMPEX event and this seems to be confirmed by recent information appearing in the philatelic press. We know little at the moment but as soon as we have more information we will let you know. In the meantime, here is our suggestion for a customised label sheet - Cool Britannia. (13/10)



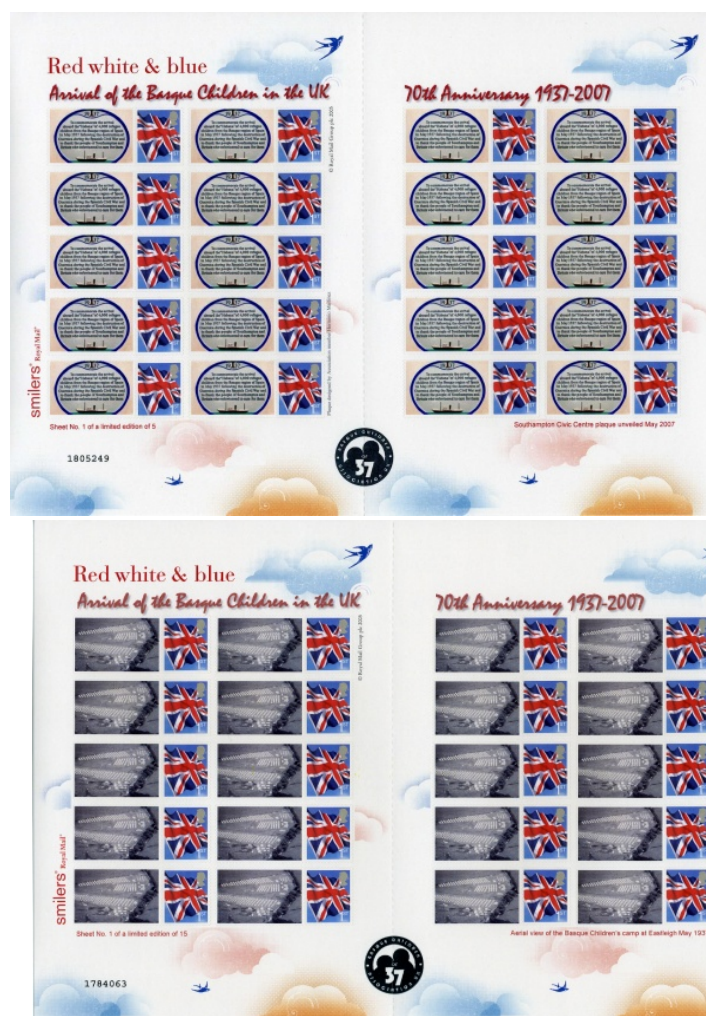
● Now LOVE Smilers in Booklet form!

We can now confirm that a new self-adhesive Smilers booklet is planned by Royal Mail. It will be issued on 15 January 2008, in good time for Valentine's Day, and will feature 4 x Gold Machin Definitives in the right-hand page with a 2-stamp size advert for Smilers on the lower row. On the left-hand page in place of the now customary smilers advert will be two Love stamps with two different Smilers labels. The LOVE stamps will be perforated in Smilers format, i.e. no elliptical perforation. (24/10)



● Arrival of Basque Children in the UK

Two Smilers sheets have been produced recently by Basque Children's Association to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the arrival of the Basque Children in the UK, with all proceeds going to the Association. Both sheets are a departure from previous issues from this source in that they are overprinted with the Basque Children's Association logo and individually numbered.



The first sheet is from a limited edition of only 5 sheets and features an image of a plaque that was unveiled at Southampton earlier this year features . As this sheet comes from a limited printing of only 5 sheets, and in keeping with our policy to list only those sheets with a production of 10 or more, we will not be listing this sheet in the catalogue. The second sheet is from a limited edition of only 15 sheets and features an aerial view of the refugee camp at Eastleigh, in 1937. (13/10)

● 50th Birthday of Test Match Special - Wisden Cricketer Issue

Two Test Match Special 50th Anniversary Smilers sheets were issued in July '07, when 30 pairs of sheets featuring customised Glorious England and Glorious Wales Smilers sheets were produced by Keith Wraight (TS-189, TS-190 refer). These proved popular and quickly sold out. A second issue has now been made, albeit this time without overprinted borders but with the strap line "50 years of Test Match Special" added to the label image.

The sheets were released on October 1st following an advertisement which appeared in the Wisden Cricketer in August 2007, aimed squarely at cricketing enthusiasts. Readers were invited to order the sheets, the proceeds of which were to be donated to the Primary Club. No final details on numbers are available as yet but it is thought that c. 25 pairs exist. Further details in the [Oct '07](#) New Issues page. (10/10)

● Vulcan to the Sky

Bletchley Park Post Office were showing details of their "Vulcan to the Sky" themed customised Smilers sheet at last months STAMPEX event, the issue date for which has yet to be announced. The sheet is being issued in association with, and in support of, the Vulcan to the Sky Trust and will be released following the first flight of the restored Vulcan bomber. A limited edition special hand-stamp cover featuring the Smilers stamp and label will be flown on board the restored Vulcan bomber. The issue is limited to 100 sheets. (13/10)

Post Note: The restored bomber made a successful test flight on the 18th October 2007. The flight which lasted 34 minutes was the culmination of 10 years of hard work by many people. Congratulations to all involved.(20/10)



Keep Smiling!