

World of Topicals: Inventions on Stamps

by John F. Dunn

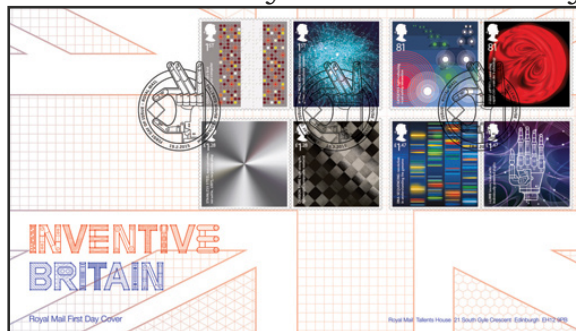
(In our May 29, 2015 Mekeel's & STAMPS Online edition we featured a 2015 "Inventive Britain" issue from British Royal Mail. Inspired by that article, I decided to use that issue as a base upon which I could expand on the subject here in Stamp News Online. JFD.)



The United Kingdom has a long and rich history as an inventive nation, and back on February 19, 2015 British Royal Mail created what itself was an inventive issue, on the theme "Inventive Britain".

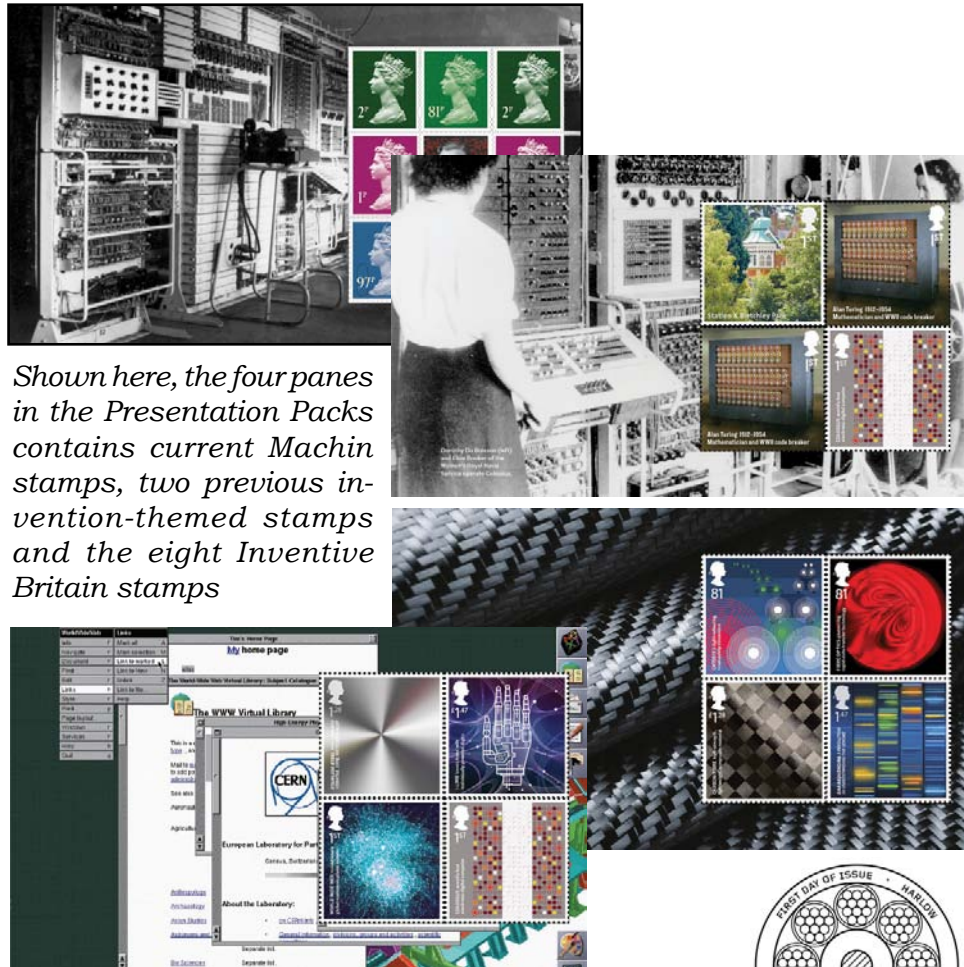
The issue featured these eight key inventions of the past century in a range of disciplines and applications: Colossus, World Wide Web, Catseyes, Fibre Optics, Stainless Steel, Carbon Fibre, DNA Sequencing, i-limb.

The First Day Cover cachet comprises a graphic representation of the Union Flag in the background, playing up the flag's red, white and blue color-ways. For consistency with the Presentation Pack design, the title typography comprises a CAD-style graphic treatment, with aspects of the inventions forming part of the letters' construction.



If you enjoy this article, and are not already a subscriber, for \$12 a year you can enjoy 60+ pages a month. To subscribe, email subs@stampnewsnow.com

Also produced as part of this set was an Inventive Britain Prestige Stamp Book that started with the origins of stainless steel and concluded with the creation of the i-limb. In this book, writer Eugene Byrne described the background to all eight inventions and how each was developed and reached its potential. An informative timeline, relevant to each invention, also runs throughout the book.



Shown here, the four panes in the Presentation Packs contains current Machin stamps, two previous invention-themed stamps and the eight Inventive Britain stamps

Even the First Day postmarks reflect the inventive nature of the creators of this issue. The Tallents House postmark features a line drawing of the i-limb holding a postage stamp. The Edinburgh location ties neatly in with the fact that the i-limb was developed in Edinburgh; although no reference is made to

it, the stamp being held also reminds us that the world's first postage stamp—the Penny Black—originated in Great Britain.

The alternative handstamp references Harlow, home to the laboratories where fibre optics were invented, and features a cross section of a fibre-optic cable.

From the Beginning

Inspired by the Inventive Britain issue, I decided to go back in time and present historic inventions that have changed our lives, working from a list at Wikipedia,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_historic_inventions

where the first listing was 2.6 million years ago, Stone tools, in Ethiopia. (Shown here, Aland 100, part of a long running series on ancient Aland.)



Next we come to Pottery, in China,

16,000 years ago. For that subject, I found a stamp that was one of eight early inventions in a PRC two-part series of four stamps each. Left to right, top row first, the inventions are Sc. 225 Pottery Vessels Neolithic 2000 BC; 226 Stone clime, Shang Dynasty c 1200 BC; 227 Bronze basin



Middle Chou dynasty 816 BC; 228 Lacquered box and wine cup Warring States period, 403-221 BC; 198 Compass

3rd century BC; 199 Seismoscope later Han Dynasty; 200 Drum cart to measure distance, Chin Dynasty; and Sc. 201 Armillary sphere, Ming Dynasty.

This 1999 Haiti souvenir sheet, Sc. 918a, for the 125th Anniversary of the Universal Postal Union pictures Great Inventions of China, left to right: movable type; paper; cannon, gunpowder and fireworks; and compass.



Getting back into approximate chronological order we have the invention of writing circa 7000 years ago. For this one, we have a Venda stamp issue and from an auction, a Sumerian clay tablet, circa 2032 B.C. with cuneiform text on the front, written at the city of Umma. The front translates to “2494 servant girl work days wages for the flour mill from Ur-Nintu” and the back reads “Copy of the Table of Lukalla. The year the boat of Enki was caulked.” This piece is from the Journey of Ingenuity collection that traces communications from this tablet to the modern day—and which can be found in an article on Stamp News Now, at

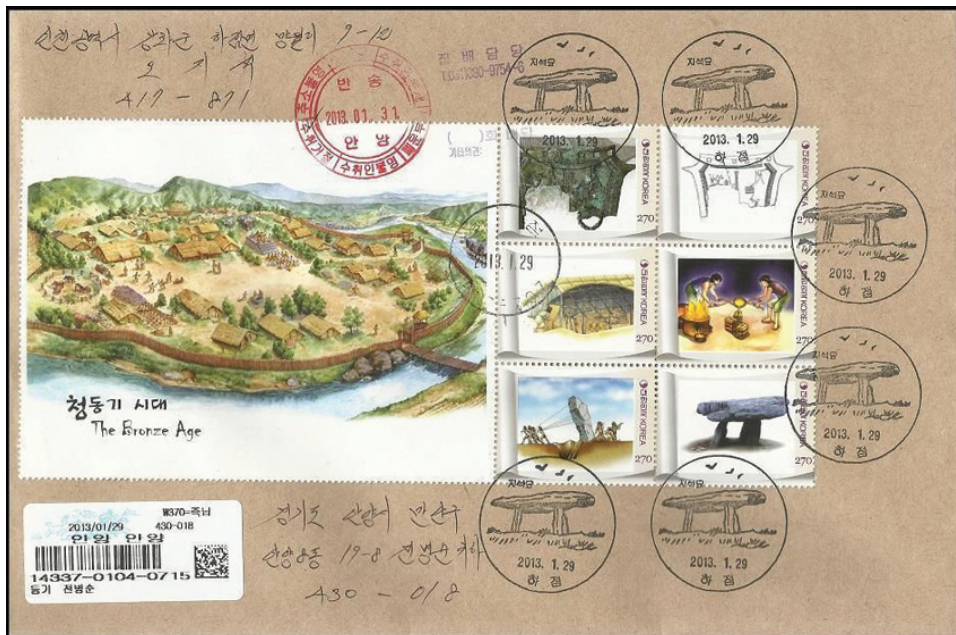


<http://www.stampnewsnow.com/ArticlesMekeelsStamps.html>

Next we have, The Wheel, circa 3500 BC, in Mesopotamia and the Caucasus. In a Venda 1992 set we see, Sc. 245, left to right, top row first: Plow, Egypt 1259 BC, Wheel, Mesopotamia 3200 BC (according to Venda), Brickmaking, Egypt, 3000 BC, and Sailing Ship, Egypt 1600 BC. [Wikipedia states 3200 BC for the invention of the sailing ship.]



For the Bronze Age, circa 3000 BC, I located this cover with a set of stamps from South Korea, cancelled January 29, 2013, but I could not find it in Scott, so I am guessing that it pictures various developments in that era, and the center right stamp pictures the making of bronze. [Reminder, for a closer look at these stamps, please use your pdf magnifier tool.]



Also circa 3000 BC we have the invention of Papyrus, in Egypt, the use of which is seen here on Egypt Sc. 1017, picturing a children's animal story.



The invention of the Catapult is attributed to 421 BC, in Ancient Greece. The 2012 Moldova stamp above, Sc. 753, is part of a set of

four “Medieval Military” scenes, so the catapult seen here would be more advanced version of the original device. I could not find a stamp image, but Wikipedia provides us with this image of a circa 100 AD catapult used by Roman soldiers—a device much smaller than the medieval version.

Another invention attributed to China is the umbrella, pictured here on Micronesia Sc. 365k, part of its Millennium series; however it is dated here 4th Century AD, whereas Wikipedia dates the invention of the collapsible umbrella at 21 AD.



In the modern period the significant inventions become too many to completely cover here; so we begin with what is regarded as one of the most important inventions of the modern period.

The invention of printing, through the use of round seals for rolling an impression into clay tablets goes back to early Mesopotamian civilization before 3000 BC, but



Johannes Gutenberg is credited with the invention of movable type and the use of a printing press in 1439 to usher in the Printing Revolution. One of the many stamps honoring him is a 2000 stamp (Sc. 2068) to celebrate the 600th anniversary of his birth.

An earlier stamp, issued for a much later invention, is this 1972 stamp, Sc. 1088, to commemorate the 175th anniversary of the invention of the lithographic printing process.



And while we are on the subject of printing, this seems to be as good a time as any to recognize the invention of small pieces of paper to prepay postage—the British Penny Black, which was introduced in Great Britain in 1840 as part of Rowland Hill's postal reforms. We show here Rowland Hill on Great Britain Sc. 1626,



a strip of four from a larger part sheet showing a portion of the instructions for use of the stamps, and the surprisingly small and simple Jacob Perkins' press that printed the Penny Black.



At this point, we will turn to a sampling of Inventions sets issued by various nations.



France, in a 1955 set, Sc. 757-62, honors Philippe Lebon (illuminating gas); Barthelemy Thimonnier (sewing machine); Nicolas Appert (canned foods); Dr. E. H. Claire Deville (aluminum); Pierre Martin (steel making); and Bernigaud de Chardonnet (rayon).

In a 1959 set, Sc. 949-954, Czechoslovakia honored these inventors in the fields of telegraphy and radio:



Nikola Tesla (Serbian developer of alternating current), Alexander Popov (Russian, radio), Edouard Branly (French, involved in development of wireless telegraphy, Guglielmo Marconi (Italian, radio), Heinrich Hertz (German, who proved the existence of electromagnetic waves) and Edwin Howard Armstrong (American, whose many discoveries and inventions revolutionized electronic communications).

The Czech set recognizing both Popov and Marconi as the inventor of the radio raises another interesting point. Needless to say, at times there are competing claims for an invention. During the Cold War, the USSR was famous



(infamous?) for claiming inventions as their own. For example, we see here Russia Sc. 990, identifying A. S. Popov as the inventor of the radio—which is usually attributed to Guglielmo Marconi, seen here on a German stamp that was part of a multi-



nation omnibus issue. The one point of agreement is that the radio was invented in 1895, as the Russian stamp marked its 50th anniversary and the Marconi omnibus, issued in 1995, marked the centennial.



This Sao Tome & Principe issue is not listed in Scott as it is believed that it was never issued. For our purposes, however, it records: Samuel Morse (Morse code); Blaise Pascal (mechanical calculator); Nicolas Cugnot (automobile); Emile Berliner (gramophone); Rudolf Diesel (Diesel engine); and Ivan Kulibin (elevator). *This raises the question: who invented the irrelevant postage stamp, issued by nations (or private parties masquerading as nations) with no connection to the subject on the stamp?*



In 1955 Belgium issued a semi-postal set to honor Belgians Ernest Solvay (who developed the ammonia-soda process for the manufacturing of soda ash from brine as a source of sodium chloride and from limestone as a source of calcium carbonate), Jean-Jacques Dony (who invented a procedure for the industrial production of totally pure zinc), Egide Walschaerts (inventor of the Walschaerts valve gear for use in steam locomotives), Leo Baekeland (inventor of Velox photographic paper in 1893 and Bakelite in 1907, the latter being an inexpensive, nonflammable, versatile plastic that marked the beginning of the modern plastics industry), Jean-Etienne Lenoir (who did not invent, but developed the first commercially successful internal combustion engine), and Emile Fourcault and Emile Gobbe (who invented a process for manufacturing flat glass).

This 1979 Brazil souvenir sheet, Sc. 1650, recognizes the invention of Braille, a reading system used by the blind. It is named after Frenchman Louis Braille, who lost his eyesight due to a childhood accident, and in 1824, at the age of 15, developed his code for the French alphabet. Codes now exist in most languages.





The United States has issued numerous postage stamps to honor some of the many inventors and inventions made by Americans. This 1940 five-stamp set of Inventors, part of the Famous Americans series, honors Eli Whitney (cotton gin), Samuel F. B. Morse (telegraph, Morse code), Cyrus Hall McCormick (McCormick reaper), Elias Howe (sewing machine), and Alexander Graham Bell (telephone). Each had other inventions to his credit, but these were the main ones for which they are remembered.

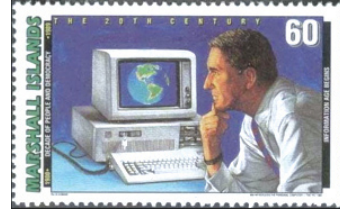
The sixth stamp, not part of the 1940 set was for Thomas Alva Edison, who was recognized previously in the 1929 commemorative for “Edison’s Electric Light’s Golden Jubilee”. He was added to the Famous Americans series in 1947, but as with other post-1940 honorees, his stamp is not treated as part of the Sc. 859-893 Famous Americans set.



Also worth recognizing, is Benjamin Franklin. In addition to being an author, printer, political theorist, politician, postmaster, scientist, civic activist, statesman, and diplomat, as an inventor, he is known for the lightning rod (on Scott 973), bifocals, and the Franklin stove, among other inventions.



Concluding our look at Inventions on stamps, we see this Marshall Islands 2000 Millennium issue, Sc. 726d, with the theme “Information Age Begins”. The stamp is part of the 1980s decade, and attributes the development of the personal computer to the introduction of the IBM 5150 in 1981. PCs existed before then, but this event popularized the concept.



What is of further interest is how quickly the inventions come and go these days. Since the introduction of this PC, indeed since this stamp was issued in 2000, the world has seen the PC surpassed by smart phones, tablets, wearable computers and, most recently, the watch. (I am content with the imac PCs on which we produce these articles, but much of the world has gone on to more mobile forms.)

With all of these inventions, still another development—invention, if you will—was the Patent Office. In 1999 Austria recognized the centenary of its Patent Office on this issue, Sc. 1781. (With Patents, we now have the proliferation of patent infringement lawsuits, but to my knowledge no one has issued a stamp in their honor.)

Another Inventions issue of interest is this promotional label for the 1911 Helmaushalle First Switzerland Expo of Inventions of Small Industries. Inventions not only serve a worldwide community, they also create new industries and jobs within local communities, thus the concept of supporting small companies and industries in their quest for new inventions.



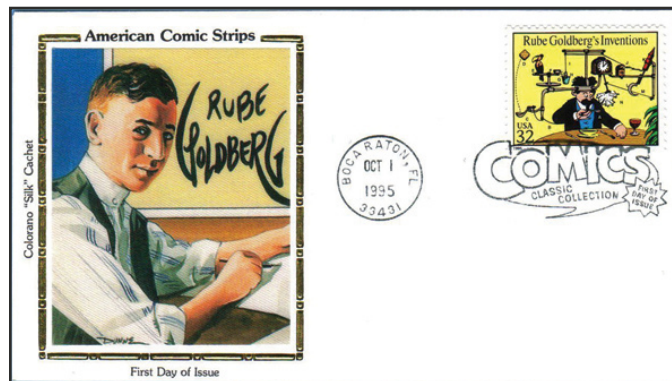


In these next two issues we see relatively recent examples of countries promoting and encouraging their inventions, inventors and the companies marketing these products.

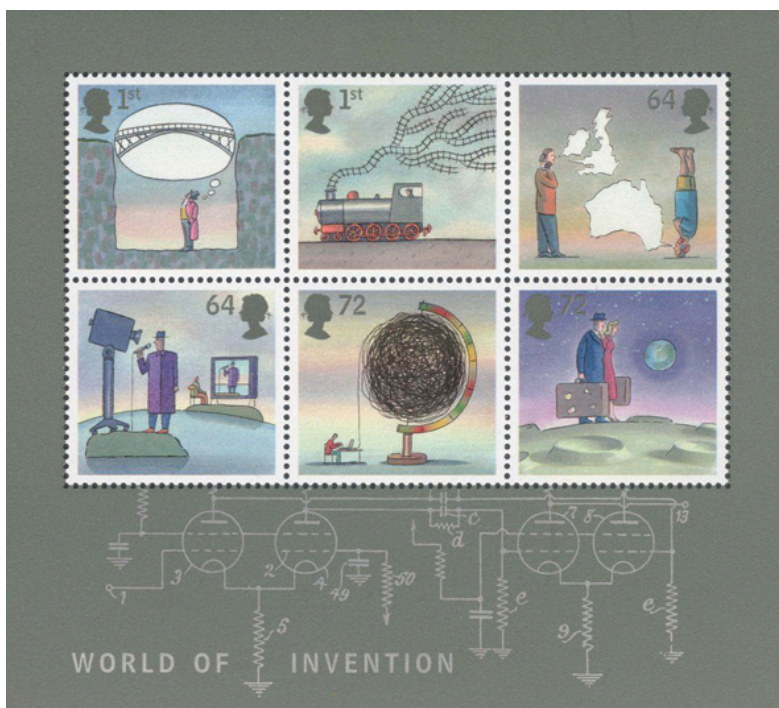
In this 2009 issue, Sc. 3034-3038, Australia highlights the Esky insulated wine case; Hills hoist (it's a rotatable clothes line frame that also can serve as a child's toy); Speedos and zinc oxide cream sunscreen; the Ute utility vehicle and B&D Roller Door garage door; and the Victa rotary lawnmower.

New Zealand employs a Clever Kiwis theme to show off the Gallagher electric fence, spreadable butter, mountain buggy, Hamilton jet boat and tranquilizer gun (Sc. 2145-2149).



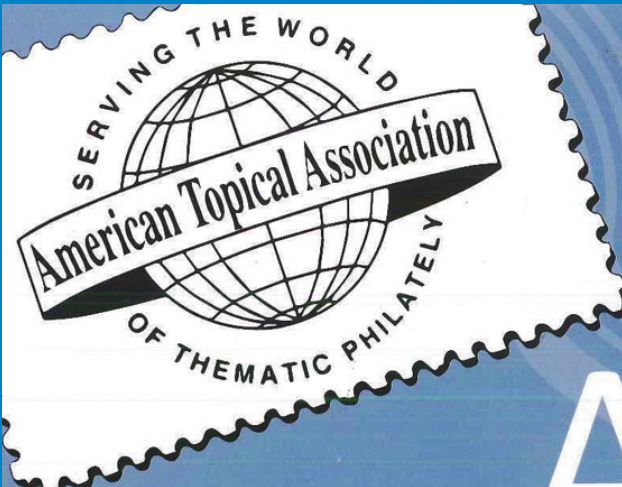


A whimsical portrayal comes from the 1995 U.S. Classic Comic Strips issue, featuring Rube Goldberg's Inventions (Sc. 3000f), seen here on a Colorano first day cover.



Coming back to where we started, we have a Great Britain 2007 “World of Inventions” souvenir sheet illustrating a man conceiving of a bridge; a locomotive and tracks; people using phones (between the UK and Australia, in the northern and southern hemispheres); a reporter in front of a TV camera in the foreground with a man watching him on a television in the background; a man with a computer connected to the world wide web; and a couple arriving on the moon, with the earth in the background.

This article was brought to you in part by the leading society for Topical Stamp Collectors. To join or learn more about the ATA, please go to www.americantopicalassn.org or email: americantopical@msn.com



ATA


MAKING STAMP COLLECTING FUN

AMERICAN TOPICAL ASSOCIATION

**TOPICAL STAMP COLLECTING
SINCE 1949 AND
BOLDLY TO THE FUTURE**

MEMBERSHIP OFFERS YOU:

- *Topical Time*: all-color 96-page journal. Bi-monthly electronic & print editions.
- Connection with ~2800 members, including ~500 international members. Find others who share your passion.
- Items at nominal cost to enrich your collecting:
 - ~1100 Checklists.
 - Handbooks, DVDs, Membership Directory.
 - Searchable digital archive of all 382 issues of *Topical Time*.
- Two free handbooks when you join the ATA!
Details on website.



www.americantopicalassn.org
PO Box 8 • CARTERVILLE, IL 62918-0008 • USA
618.985.5100 • americantopical@msn.com

