

## **The History of Discworld Postage Stamps, by a man who was there.**

As with everything we produce, in the beginning was the word, and these Postage Stamps are no different.

Stamps have always fascinated me, I have never really collected them as such, but I have always liked looking at them. They seem to have such an air of authority about them, in the same way that real money used to have, when a ten shilling note could spell a night of solid drinking, and you only saw a fiver on pay day. Money with style and real gravity, serious bits of paper that had to be housed in wallets the size of a wardrobe.

Stamps were like that, but with the added mystery of 'foreign'. Stamps with the heads of kings, queens, dictators, presidents, with strange devices and flags, and all in the sort of colour you didn't get every day.

Of course all you ever saw in stamp books were fuzzy black images at the top of the page, it was in the cellophane packet that you got with it that had the real thing. Stamps that had presided over letters of introduction, letters of love, letters of pain, letters of plenty, and of course letters of intent both good and bad.

You've only to read "Going Postal" to realize the degree of collaboration. As Terry was writing the book, so I was suggesting ideas and producing drawings. Some of the images were suggested by Terry and others resulted from deep and meaningful consultations over a pint or two.

We consulted print historians, philatelists, stamp dealers and museums to get the design and production right.

From my rough sketches and layouts Colin Edwards; who knows the print game inside out, and is a bit of a lad with a Mac, knew a man who could wield a mean quill called Alan Batley.

They could do all the things I couldn't and between us we created the stamps you see today,

It was thanks to the rather splendid Bath Postal Museum I a lineal perforator, it is incredibly ancient, but with our help they have got it working again.

The majority of the stamps have been produced in the traditional manner, on old fashioned gummed paper, by a very old and respected company who normally print stamps for entire countries rather than a small outfit in Somerset.

### **The Half Penny Post Office Red.**

The original drawing was produced for a scale model of the Post Office. This included a floor plan as well as information on the loading bays and great courtyard. When a Half Penny Red was suggested Terry specified the post office. It was only when it had been drawn up that he thought a fifth floor might need to be added, so adjustments were



made, and the Ankh-Morpork Post Office is now a small piece of art, imitating fiction.

#### The Penny Patrician Black.

It was the first stamp I created after that fateful meeting with Terry in November 2003 when we all thought it would be such fun to 'do' some stamps. I had the profile of the Patrician on file, as played by that well known thespian Mr Stephen Briggs.

It was the matter of a moment to drop it on to a picture of a 'penny black' and it certainly showed promise. I e-mailed it to Terry who was delighted, and so it all started.

Of course there is absolutely no truth in the rumour the Mr Briggs in any way resorts to hair colouring save when he is treading the boards as an actor. However, when it is put to 'one' that it would be a 'jolly lark' to have just a few of the Patrician Penny's with the hand of time, restored to his tonsureal splendour, then who am I to gainsay it. And thus it was done.

#### The Ankh Two Penny Purple.

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This was probably the easiest stamp to design in principal, but a right bummer to get to look 'right'. It works visually because it contains classic elements of stamp design, a foliate border rich in detail and a coat of arms that when examined closely is so far off the wall as to be pure heraldry.

#### The Five and Ten Penny Morporkia's

I had constructed the figure of Morporkia from a brief from Terry some time ago. She first saw the light of day on a song sheet of all things, that had the Ankh-Morpork National Anthem that Terry had written. When I dropped her; gently I must add, on a stamp Terry came up with the lovely idea of her holding a dinning fork rather than a trident. He also stated a preference for a 'coal scuttle' helmet. Now when I got Alan Batley to engrave her I suppose I should have pointed out that 'coal scuttle' in this context should be a form of military helmet. Being a Norfolk boy with a keen sence of humour, he put on her noble head a coal (keep the home fires burning) type scuttle. Terry liked it, and thus, forever it is.

#### The Fifty Pence Cabbage Green.

This stamp was being written in the book as I was putting it together, and when I showed the rough drawings to Terry I knew it was a winner.

There has been a plethora of cabbages of late, and it would be safe to say they seem to have propagated in almost every crevice of Discworld art, literature, and science. It was not surprising therefore that we just had to have at least one stamp that rejoices in this fact.



Once I had constructed a suitable frame I then added a small-engraved vignette that Shelia Watkins had produced for the Almanak, and lo and behold, after the magic touch of Colin Edwards, a really perfect truly Discworldian stamp.

Bugger me it was so good that Waterstone's chose it as their exclusive for their first day cover.

#### The \$1 Tower of Art.

If there is one stamp that sums up just what Discworld Stamps are all about it is the \$1 Tower of Art.

It is probably the most unusual stamp that has been produced to date; Terry Pratchett himself sketched its design out when the idea of Discworld Postage Stamps was first being discussed.

The concept was worked up by Bernard Pearson before being given to Alan Batley; the artist engraver, who gave the design the superb look you see now.

If you have good eyesight you can see the falling man and the splash as he hits the river Ankh. The view of the Unseen University in the background is as accurate a depiction you can get, without being there, and of course from the sketch on the back of an envelope came the words in the book, and thus a small piece of gummed paper that is the essence of Discworld.

#### The \$5 Brass Bridge Blue Triangle.

All right, we admit it, this stamp bears more than just a passing reference to the other blue triangle stamp which is worth a packet of cash. Apart from the colour, venue, and value, Alan had a clear hand. Clever little sod, it needs a good glass to see all the work that has gone into this. Wanted something very special to be 'our' blue triangle, and bless him, he did it.