

Two Mysteries About The 1957 Definitive Issue

By André Dufresne RNCP



1957 Definitive Stamp Set

1st February 1957 First day covers

The 1957 Lundy definitive issue has always been my favourite stamp issue for its sobriety, quality of execution and choice of colours. Early on (I started collecting Lundy stamps in 1967), I wanted a first day cover. We all know that the official first day of issue was 11th February 1957 but I remember reading, back in the 1970's or early 80's, that because the stamps were already on Lundy and the planned first day of issue was 1st February some Lundy collectors/islanders had arranged for FDC's to be postmarked on 1st February. I cannot now recall where I read this but this information set me off on a pursuit that lasted decades, until I found one 1st February FDC about 10 years ago.

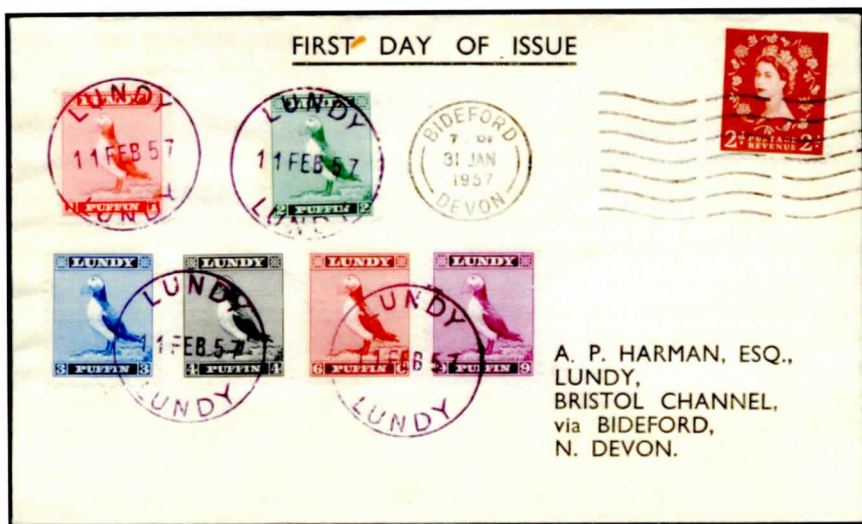
While doing research to write this article I went back to my collection of the *Puffin Journal* of the Lundy Specialists Society, the *Lundy Collectors Club Philatelic Quarterly*, the *Lundy Collectors News*, *The New Puffin Journal*, the *Illustrated Lundy News* and the newsletter of the British Private Post Study Group, to no avail. Then I thought that I might have seen this information in an auction if such a cover had been offered for sale, so I went over all my Lundy stamp auction catalogues (maybe 40 or 50 of them?), and I was unable to find a 1st February FDC.

The official narrative about this issue can be found in Felix W. Gade's *My Life on Lundy* where he wrote on pages 519-520:

"Sea communications having been re-established Mr. Harman went ahead with preparations for the overdue issue of definitive stamps to supersede the Erik Bloodaxe Millenary stamps. He had always considered the three stamps issued on 1st November 1939 as the most dignified and beautiful of all the Lundy stamps and everybody was in agreement with him."

"Accordingly, Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. Ltd. were approached and undertook to produce six stamps, all of the same design, by Christmas, 1956. The date of issue was to have been 1st January 1957, but difficulty in getting a cancelling date stamp prepared in time, obliged the issue to be postponed until 1st February 1957." (Mr. Gade then describes the values, colours and quantities printed and goes on):

"One thousand first day of issue covers were posted at Bideford, addressed to Mr. A.P. Harman on Lundy. They were to have been brought to Lundy on 1st February 1957, but a prolonged spell of extremely rough weather prevented the Lundy Gannet from putting to sea until 11th February which is therefore the virtual first day of issue, and that is the date on which full sets of the stamps, with which the covers were stamped on arrival, are dated."



Mr. Gade told the same story on page 13 of his Postal History of Lundy. Some commercial mail that came in on 11th February 1957 also received a "FIRST DAY OF ISSUE" cachet.



In a letter addressed to James H. Barney Esq on 4th January 1957, Mr. Gade confirmed "This is to notify you that Lundy will issue six values of definitive ordinary mail stamps on 1st February 1957." (Fig 1). In his letter he also confirms a printing of 150,000 copies of the 1 puffin value.

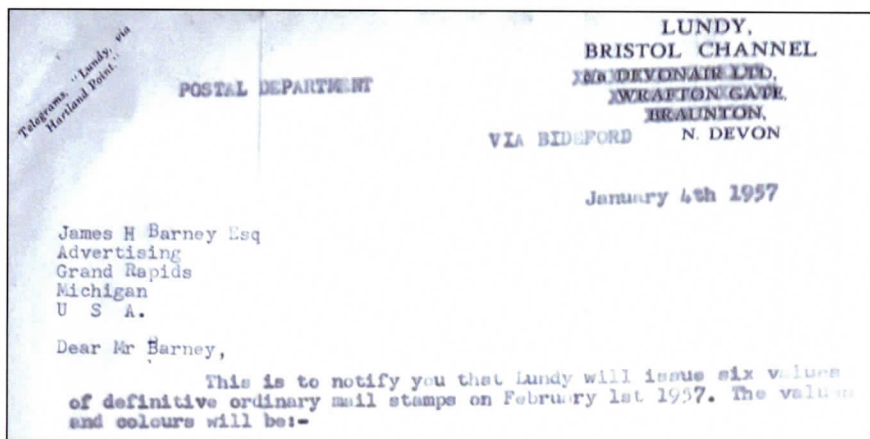


Fig 1

Imperforate proofs were prepared and submitted by Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. Ltd. on 23rd April 1956 (Fig 2) and the final colours were approved on the same day (see note reading "See approved card of proofs dated 23/4/56 for colours." (signed) R. R. Brice. There is a discrepancy in the dates because the next set of imperforate proofs in the approved colours is dated 25/6/56 and bears a note reading "To be used as working copy" (Fig 3).



Fig 2



Fig 3

Editor's Note. The initials in the bottom left corner are W.F.T. Mr. Tipper was working for MCH in the 1930s. Diana Keast described him as MCH's 'office boy'!

So, we know for sure that the final approval was given on 25th June 1956 and that the stamps had reached Lundy by January 1957 when Mr. Gade wrote his letter to James H. Barney.

What I find most interesting is that Lundy Islanders and those close to Mr. Harman or to Mr. Gade as well as regular clients prepared first day covers in view of the planned 1st February day of issue and several were processed while waiting for the Lundy Gannet to arrive with the mail. Because of the weather the boat did not bring the mail until 11th February which became the virtual first day of issue, but first day covers cancelled on 1st February had been prepared in good faith (fig. 4).

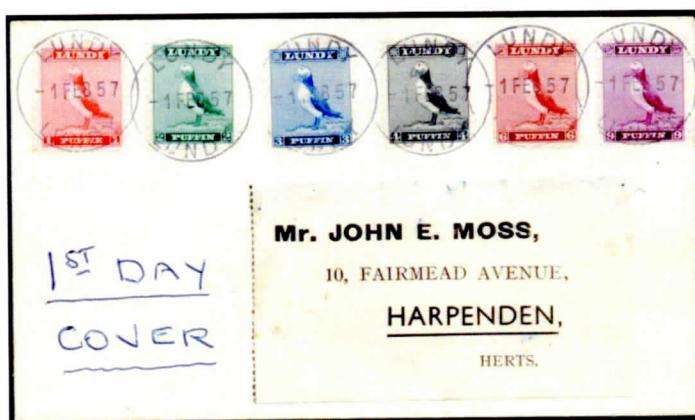


Fig 4

Mine bears Lundy stamps only, it is addressed to the well-known Lundy philatelist John E. Moss and there is a pencilled note on the back saying "Received 13-2-1957 Island cut off for over 3 weeks by gales storms". This implies that Moss was not on the island on February 1st and that his FDC's (I saw at least one other addressed to him) were prepared and sent to him under separate cover by Mr. Gade.

Since I found my copy, I saw at least two more so they are around but they are not common. So here is a case where we have two different first day of issue dates, the planned, advertised date of 1st February and the official date of 11th February, both types of FDCs apparently cancelled by Mr. Gade himself. But to me the first mystery that remains to be solved is: where in the world did I read about the 1st February First Day Covers in the first place? Can any reader help?

1962 Second printing of the 1957 1p definitive revisited

While doing my research I came upon an interesting bit of information about the 1957 definitives. I certainly read it when I received it in 1990/91 but I had forgotten about it until now. In 1990 Negev Holyland Stamps Ltd. (Michael Bale) published their "List of Lundy material available" which included the following item:

1957, 1p value, corner block of 4 of 1st printing + 1962 printing, guaranteed ex Printers Archives – pair blocks \$204.00

One year later the same firm ran its 3rd postal bid sale on 7th August 1991 which included the following lot:

Lot 349: Rare 1p value, two corner blocks four in very different shades of red, one block each from the original 1957 & later 1962 printing, ex Printers Archives sheets \$225.00

Now if there was indeed a second printing of the 1p value in 1962, how can we reconcile this with what Mr. Gade wrote in *My Life on Lundy* on page 527:

"The stock of 1 puffin stamps of the definitive 1957 issue having become exhausted, it was decided to revert to the use of the 1 puffin definitive stamp of 1929 of which a considerable stock remained, and this stamp was brought into use again on 1st August 1962. The issue of a completely new definitive series was discussed during 1963, but no decision was reached that year and eventually it was decided that 30,000 of the 3 puffin 1957 stamp should be surcharged 1 puffin, but this quantity was reduced to 18,000. The overprinting was done by the Gazette Printing Service of Bideford, Devon, England. (Note: the date of issue of the surcharge was 3rd April 1965). At the time the decision was made to have the 3 puffin stamp surcharged 1 puffin, a new definitive issue was envisaged in 1965, so that the surcharged stamps were merely to fill in a gap until the new definitive issue appeared, but the appeal to all of an issue in honour of Sir Winston Churchill, K.G., resulted in the abandonment of the plan to have a new definitive issue, and so, by 1st August 1965, all the 18,000 surcharged 1 puffin over 3 puffin stamps had been used, and, once again, it was necessary to revert to the use of the 1 puffin 1929 stamps." Of course, if the 1957 1p stamp had been reprinted in 1962, it would seem logical that the 1929 1p definitive would not have been pressed into service in August, 1962 and again in August 1965, and the 3p stamp would not have been surcharged 1p in April 1965. Furthermore, the Europa 1961 1p and Europa 1962 1p stamps were still plentiful so technically there was no need to reprint the 1 puffin definitive unless something unexpected happened.

The description of lot 349 in Negev Holyland's postal bid sale states that the two printings are in "very different shades of red" but I don't remember seeing this stamp in mint condition in a different shade of red. The stamps offered by Negev Holyland Stamps Ltd. in 1990 and 1991 prove beyond doubt that Roger Cichorz's hypothesis in the Spring, 2022 issue (no. 74) of *The New Puffin Journal*, where he surmised that there could have been a second printing of the 1957 1p stamp linked to the massive posting of an estimated 100,000 Pentothal advertising postcards between 2nd April and 28th April 1962. Here is what Roger wrote:

"Evidence exists from the Bradbury, Wilkinson archives that the 1957 1p definitive stamp (No. 142) used on the Lundy postcards was reprinted in February 1962, about two months before and in anticipation of the start of the Pentothal card mailshot, and the stamps produced from this second printing are apparently almost undistinguishable from the 1957 initial printing and do not warrant a separate catalogue listing. Whether or not this printing is included in the 150,000 printing totals cited for this stamp is uncertain."

However, in my opinion, it seems likely that it is because an initial quantity of 150,000 in 1957 would have been excessive compared to the quantities produced for each of the other stamps in the set. This second printing was apparently done to meet the demands of the Lundy Pentothal mailshot as still-available quantities of the 1p stamps from the initial printing were insufficient.

Regardless of how many of the original and reprinted 1p stamps were used for the Lundy Pentothal advertising postcards, one can conclude this massive mailing was responsible for exhausting almost all available 1p definitives, leaving less than desirable quantities on hand for Lundy's normal postal use in ensuing years. Consequently, this lack of 1p definitives after April 1962 likely necessitated Lundy's surcharged 1p provisional issues of 1965 and 1969. With so many of these 1p definitive stamps postally used by 1963, is it any wonder that, despite its 150,000-print quantity, mint examples of No. 142 catalogue at a high premium over the other denominations of this set despite the others' lesser print quantities?

On page 83 of the 6th edition of his *Stamps and Postal History of Lundy*, Jon Aitchison writes: "Bradbury Wilkinson file sheets exist including two for the 1p value. The first is dated 26/6/56 but the other is endorsed 8/2/62 which indicates that it was reprinted."

This date coincides with the mailing of the Pentothal cards which used a huge number of stamps and required this reprint as well as using up residual stocks of the original printing. The first printing was in a deeper red and the second was lighter and less intense but the difference is not significant enough to merit separate listings". Roger's article and Jon's note leave one question unanswered: they state that both printings are indistinguishable but Michael Bale did write that both printings are "in very different shades of red". I compared the 1p stamps on my Pentothal cards to my 1p stamps used on my FDC's and pre-1962 commercial covers and postcards and in my eyes, the red colour of the 1p stamps on my pre-1962 covers look a little brighter shade of red whereas on the Pentothal cards it looks a little duller, slightly darker shade of red. It could be a figment of my imagination because I don't know whether the 1p stamps used on my Pentothal postcards are from the first or second printing. Could it be that at least one proof sheet was produced by Bradbury Wilkinson in the rejected shade of reddish orange shown in Fig 2, which would have been what Michael Bale was referring to as a "very different shade of red"? Michael did state that his copies were from a sheet coming from the printer's archives. Is it the same sheet referred to by Jon in his catalogue?

Roger's study of the Pentothal cards does answer another question, which is: why did Mr. Gade not mention this second printing in his two books? The answer, as Roger wrote, is that "Apparently, the cards were all cancelled at a Bristol business facility and never stepped on Lundy soil as there is no evidence the type Nb canceller was ever used on Lundy". Roger further adds: "It is clear, however, that a campaign of this magnitude required the approval, help, and collusion of the Lundy authorities, for which they probably received a fee..." In short, discussions probably took place between Albion P. Harman and the Pentothal representatives and because the cards were not mailed from Lundy, Mr. Gade was possibly not informed of the mailing campaign nor of the second printing, which is why he makes no mention of either in his books. If the whole second printing was supplied to Pentothal, then there is very little chance that mint copies have survived so any mint 1p stamp in collector's hands would be from the 1st printing, except those originating from the one sheet broken down and sold by Michael Bale. To sum it up, the second mystery is: if, as it seems, there was a second printing in 1962 of the 1957 1p definitive stamp, did mint copies survive and can mint copies of the reprint be distinguished from the first printing? Can the purchaser of Michael Bale's 1990/91 lots shed some light? Would a London-area member of the LCC care to search the Harman archive at the British Library for possible correspondence between Mr. Harman and Pentothal and between Mr. Harman and Bradbury Wilkinson that would confirm the quantity of 1p stamps printed in 1962?