

JEREMY DICKINSON  
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# PHILATELICAL WILL GET THE BUS EVERYWHERE



Top philatelist RICHARD WEST tells the story of Royal Mail's first-ever issue of a complete set of postage stamps with images of British double-deckers — for which we've organised a special first day cover exclusively for *BUSES* readers

On 15 May, Royal Mail issues its first ever bus stamps. In addition to being produced in normal sized sheets, the five First Class stamps will be available in a miniature sheet, which is also being issued on the same day. To commemorate this unique double, *Buses* has commissioned Buckingham Covers, part of the Internetstamps group, to publish a luxury first day cover. A special pictorial postmark will be available on the launch day.

A limited edition of 500 first day covers and 500 miniature sheets will be produced — each individually numbered and certified. Covers cost £7.95 each or the matching pairs for £15 post-free. Money-back guarantee if not delighted.

A small number will be autographed by *On the Buses* star Reg Varney and will cost £12.95 or the matching pair £25.

There is also a presentation pack available containing the strip of stamps (the text for which has been written by *Classic Bus* editor Gavin Booth), and stamp cards — postcard-sized reproductions of the stamp designs.

With so few covers produced, Internetstamps recommends an early order as many have already been sold. You can phone your order with a credit card on 01303 850688 or fax 01303 850687. Please quote *Buses* magazine offer. Or post the order form (or photocopied form if you wish to keep the magazine intact) to: Internetstamps Ltd, Church House, 136 Sandgate Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2BY.

Please allow 30 days from 15 May for delivery, particularly with the Reg Varney autographed covers.

All orders will be acknowledged.

## From concept to Consignia

Royal Mail set itself four objectives for the bus stamps, which commemorate the UITP public transport exhibition and conference at London's Earls Court on 21-25 May. Those were that the buses shown should still exist, in use or preserved. They should represent a wide geographical spread of the UK, a cross-section of British bus manufacturers and a good range of liveries.

Royal Mail considered design concepts from three artists before opting for the work of a fourth. Jeremy Dickinson, long obsessed by buses and toys, offered a three-dimensional depiction of each bus and a line-up, as if the buses were in a garage. George Cavener selected four or five manufacturers, and was asked to photograph a bus from each in the environment in which it was built. Thus a Bristol Lodekka would be photographed by the Clifton Suspension Bridge; an ECW-bodied bus in the vicinity of Lowestoft. Debbie Cook had previously submitted some stamp ideas featuring buses.

The Stamp Advisory Committee, representing interests from stamp collectors to politicians and which vets all stamp designs, admired the painterly quality of Jeremy Cavener's work, but went instead for Michael English, noted for his 1960s pop posters and the hyper-realism he achieves with his airbrush.

Armed with the results of a readers' poll carried out by *Classic Bus* to determine the 16 most significant buses of the 20th century, he visited transport museums and other sites, photographing the buses before

preparing his artwork. So intricate are his paintings that each took about three weeks to complete. Throughout, he has received immense co-operation from the owners of the vehicles (some, having been photographed, were in the event not used).

As with all British stamps, each design has been approved by The Queen.

The printing of the stamps needs equal care. With such superbly executed, highly detailed artwork, it was essential that this high level of detail should be evident on the stamps. This was achieved using lithography, entrusted to Surrey-based security stamp printer The House of Questa.



Top: The first day cover available exclusively to *Buses* readers

Above&Top of page: The line-up was first developed by Jeremy Dickinson, then painted by Michael English. In the process, the Southdown 'Queen Mary' was replaced by a newer version, Newcastle's Atlantean by a newer

Go North East Metrobus, Scotland's Tayside Ailsa by a Glasgow TD1, the North West's Merseyside Metrobus by a Manchester Mancunian and the London Trident by Routemaster RMB.

**BUSES**

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