

There's Something About Slogans



POST OFFICE EXHIBIT,
GOVERNMENT PAVILION
— WEMBLEY. —

By C. BAKER

WHEN the first issue of STAMP COLLECTING appeared, the pioneer collector of British slogan postmarks had probably been born, but he was certainly not active. Not until about four years later were there any for him to collect, when, in December 1917, BUY NATIONAL WAR BONDS NOW began to appear on our letters.

In 45 years several hundred different slogans have followed the first, two slogan catalogues have been published and there are many collectors. Probably hundreds have become interested as a result of the increasing crop of town publicity pictorial slogans.

So slogan collecting is well established. It is not necessarily a sideline. Though there are some who merely gather slogans "as they come", pop them in an exercise book, and get on with their stamps, many other collectors take slogans seriously—probably coupled with an interest in other British postmarks—and their brand of collecting may not be at all simplified.

Take that well-known philatelic character Joe, who reconstructs sheets of penny reds. He has about 50,000 copies, but sometimes doubts that he will live to finish the job. He should shake hands with Fred, who wants a sample of each slogan from every office that used it. Fred is doing well, too. He's got—well, I don't know how many slogans he has, but it looks like millions.

Most of us would be bored by either penny reds or slogans in such concentrations, in fact we may think Joe and Fred are dotty. But they know what suits them, and at least it will keep them out of mischief for a long time. Let us pass on to something nearer our size.

This could be a study of the cancelling machines which used the slogans. BUY NATIONAL WAR BONDS NOW was fitted to Krag, Columbia and Bee machines, all identifiable. That immediately makes three specimens instead of the one which would satisfy the simple-lifer. BUY NATIONAL WAR BONDS (1918) added one Universal machine to the list. (Recommended reading: "The First Three", by W. G. Stitt Dibden, which deals in detail with the 1917-18 War Bond slogans.)

After the end of the war there were no more slogans until 1922. The first of the BRITISH INDUSTRIES FAIR series appeared then, and it was used only on Hey Dolphin machines. This was the start of a stream of slogans which has never stopped flowing, and has in fact been in spate since the last war.

In 1933 the "machines" enthusiast had his guns spiked, because uniform town dies were introduced for all single-impression machines, and it was no longer possible to tell the work of one type from another. However, the pre-uniformity

period had lasted long enough to provide plenty of material, and if at present you don't know a Krag from a cauliflower, but are interested, an excellent short guide to machines is in "The Slogan Postmarks of Great Britain" (British Postmark Society, 1962).

There are other subjects for specialisation. One is the 1922-25 WEMBLEY slogans, which are varied, and also include a few rarities. POST EARLY FOR CHRISTMAS dates from 1925. Think of all the Christmas cards: what could be commoner? Yet a complete type and year collection is not so easy. The TELEPHONE slogans between 1926 and 1936 are favourites, and the EXHIBITIONS, from 1922 on are many, but not by any means at all plentiful.



BRITISH EMPIRE
EXHIBITION 1924

As there are still not so many slogans that something near completion is impossible, most collections are general, even if some sections have special attention. So how does one improve on the efforts of the bungers into exercise books? The answer is by arrangement and display, and being quality conscious.

Slogans are usually collected as strips, and the way to have these neat and uniform is to cut them with a photographic print trimmer. The standard size is four inches by two; this is not a legal obligation, and sometimes a slight variation looks better. A strip shows all of the postmark and makes minimum bulk. This is true, but there are plenty of die-hards who must have complete covers. Their albums multiply, but one feels they have a point. Who would hesitate if given the choice of FEED THE GUNS on cover or piece? Old slogans are different? But for two months in 1918 this one was commoner than JUNE DAIRY FESTIVAL in 1962.

Whether you collect strips or covers, or both, take the trouble to display them well. A strip may look better on an undermount of black paper, but don't overdo it, or you may seem to have a collection of funeral cards. Minimum writing-up should give dates of use and number of machines if known. After that, please yourself, and add extra material such as exhibition souvenirs and photographs, if you want to.

(Continued on page 83)

LATIN AMERICA

Wants Lists can be completed through our unique WANTS FINDING SERVICE all countries and subjects: Mint/Used; Sets/Singles; Classics/Modern; plus New Issue Services and Approval Books.

H. SINCLAIR - BROWN
52 FENWICK STREET, LIVERPOOL, 2

March 13th, 1964

There's Something About Slogans (continued from page 81)

The matter of quality I have left till last, probably it should have been first. I have seen some otherwise impressive collections in which half the specimens were fugitives from the dustbin. We owe a debt of gratitude to the early collectors, but unfortunately many of them had one idea in common. They cut out the postmark with the least possible bit of waste paper round it. Some just tore it out, some rounded off one end to match the circle containing the town name, some only kept the slogan and nipped off the town die altogether. I have a copy of the ULSTER PAVILION Wembley slogan, quite a rarity, which measures $3\frac{1}{4} \times 1$ in. (a bit less at one end) and has wavy edges. In fact it reminds me of Uncle Henry's Penny Black, which was cut into on five sides. Still, if it had been a Post Office Mauritius, Uncle Henry would have got a good deal more than the 2d. the dealer offered him when the mortgage began to be a burden.

So sometimes we have to take the early ones as we find them, but there is no excuse for collecting modern slogans that are much less than perfect. Finding completely perfect ones is harder than one might think. Cancelling machines seem to churn out impressions like a cod lays eggs, abundantly, hoping some will survive and be a credit to mother.

A recent check on 700 letters revealed that 101 had very good impressions, 148 were fairly good, 135 were poor, and 316 were bad. Eight slogans were involved, and some of the covers were "philatelic".

The colour of our threepenny stamp, wet weather and the postman's thumb, and careless opening, decimate the possible collectable items, of which collectors only see a small percentage anyway. So a superb slogan should be cherished, even on a brown envelope dated yesterday.

I have said nothing yet about values. The slogan catalogues are priced. If you study them, add a pinch of salt. So much depends on condition. There are many scarce and a few rare, not all of these very old. Varieties and errors are sought for, as with stamps. Sometimes a slogan die is put in the machine wrong way up; you would be lucky to get one like that in your mail. Inverted or mixed up town dies are fairly common. Slogans used exceptionally at some town (e.g., POST EARLY IN THE DAY at Weston-super-Mare in 1947) are desirable pieces; so are such as THINK OF THE OLD AT CHRISTMAS used in January. *What* they are worth is a matter of opinion.

The era of the "special" slogan began at Rochdale in 1948. Now there are many each year, used for short periods at one—sometimes a few—post offices. The postmasters get piles of covers to be posted back to collectors. The trade mark is the stamp placed top centre, to leave a clear space for the slogan.* Sensible idea, and at least we get good clear impressions. Or do we? Try it for a few months, and see how many faint, cut short, or otherwise horrible examples arrive. However, this is the only way to be sure of getting certain slogans—or it was the only way: I believe at least one dealer now runs a new issue service. Personally, I send in my covers, then hope for a good not-made-to-order specimen for my collection.

Are first day dates, or last day, worth a premium? Most philatelic covers are one or the other, so statistically any of the in-between dates is probably scarcer. Of course, a first day of the first slogan . . . but strangely enough nobody is quite sure what date that was.

But that's enough about values. At present, all our collections put together would not interest a millionaire looking for a hedge against inflation. Slogans are still for pleasure, and that's good enough for me.