

The Irish Gerl Definitives - £.s.d. Issues

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The exhibit sets out the initial Gerl Definitive Issues of 1968 to 1970 prior to the introduction of decimal currency in 1971. This was one of the most important changes in Irish definitive postage stamps as the previous designs had been in place since the formation of the then Irish Free State in 1922. Although, initially known as the Second Permanent Series or Early Irish Art, the term “*The Gerl Definitives*” after the German designer Heinrich Gerl was adopted by the exhibitor in my initial articles in the 1970s and this was adopted by the major catalogue editors in subsequent years (as was my term “*The Architecture Definitives*” for the subsequent series). This term was the title of a catalogue co-written by me and published in 1978.¹ This term was also used in my subsequent writings in my yearly articles for Irish Philately since 1970s to date.²

The introductory page and a number of other pages incorporate photographs of a number of original essays which were exhibited by the then Department of Posts & Telegraphs in the late 1970's. No original artwork for any of the Irish definitives has ever been released by the Irish Post Office and these photographs which were taken with official permission are the only known images in private hands of some of the unadopted designs. The Post Office never published any of the original illustrations and the Philart Productions maximum cards on the second page are the only images which reproduce the source images. All issues – sheet, coils and booklet were photogravure printed at the Revenue Stamping Branch, Dublin Castle on “e” watermarked paper. All printing cylinders were manufactured in Britain by Chambon.

The various sheet markings are shown on the following pages. Initially all values were printed on Samuel Jones paper with gum arabic (GA). The initial four values were released on 14 October 1968 followed by a second group of four values on 24 February 1969. This set included a 1s 9d value of which a specimen example is shown – only 2 specimen sets have been seen by the exhibitor in 40 years. On the same page, I display **the only known unissued 1s 5d value in private hands**. The whole printing of this value except a few archive copies was destroyed as just prior to the issue, the airmail rate was increased by 4d to 1s 9d with effect from 1 February 1969.

The third group of four values issued on 31 March 1969 saw a switch to original coated Paper with GA supplied by Harrison & Sons. The paper is thicker and the gum is vellum toned and somewhat less shiny than the Samuel Jones paper. Postage usage to various destinations is then shown as is the cylinder change on the 5d value. All postal rates were researched by the exhibitor to original Post Office literature³. The final four values were released on 9 June 1969 and the pages include usage of the little used ½d value which was withdrawn from sale at end July 1969 when the ½d coin was demonetised. Postage stamps were also used to uprate postal orders as shown.

A different Grover perforator not usually used for postage stamps was used on part of the printing of the 6d value as shown This is not known on any other stamp in the Gerl series and was first discovered by the exhibitor.

The gum on the original coated paper supplied by Harrisons was changed to poly vinyl alcohol (PVA) in 1970 and eight values as shown appeared on this paper. The gum is shiny as compared to GA. One complete sheet of the 2d value with PVA gum has been recorded to date and a block of four from this sole known sheet is shown.

¹ “The Gerl Definitives” by Eddie Fitzgerald and Brian Warren. Published by Ian Whyte, 1978

² That Was The Year That Was by Brian Warren (since 1977). Published by Irish Philatelic Circle yearly since 1974 and in combined two volume set 1972 to 2020 (1972 & 1973 added). Copy in APS Library.

³ Irish Postal Rates – 1839 to 2014 by Joachim Schaaf and Brian Warren. Published by Forschungs-und Arbeitsgemeinschaft Irland, 2014 – Bi-lingual).

I later confirmed in writing with the Revenue Stamping Branch that 13,000 sheets were printed but they were unable to state how many were distributed to post offices.

The stamps were also used to collect Customs Charges and a block of the 5sh value with a Customs cancel is shown.

The exhibit then shows the three coil values (1d, 2d and 3d) which were dispensed from machines installed outside major post offices. These coils of 960 stamps replaced coils from the previous series in August 1970 and thus had a limited life given they were withdrawn on 14 February 1971 on the change-over to decimal currency. However, from my experience at the time only a proportion of the machines (at least in the Dublin area) dispensed the new stamps. The sheets were produced from specially printed sheets of 240 stamps with no gutter and were perforated 14 x 14³/₄ and were all printed on paper with PVA gum. All leaders and end papers are shown.

Surprisingly some 30 years later, in 1998, one complete roll of 480 stamps (instead of 960) of both the 2d and 3d values was discovered. These rolls were made from normal sheets with vertical coil joins every 12th stamp. Thus only 40 strips with join of each value exist and all bear the guarantee mark of the German dealer H-BOWEN BPP who purchased and broke-up the two rolls. These had the normal sheet perforation of 15 x 15 and were on Harrison paper with GA. The leader date was September 1970. No similar roll of the 1d value is known.

Finally, the one and only booklet/booklet pane is shown. It exists with either GA or PVA gum. Booklets were made from specially printed sheets containing 264 stamps which were set out in four columns with eleven panes in each column. An illustration showing the sheet format is included. The gutter margins became the binding margins. As panes in columns A and C were inverted in relation to the other two columns the watermark appears sideways with the head of e" facing wither left of right on issued panes. This sheet format was proved when I arranged for a number of uncut Gerl definitive booklet sheets to be exhibited at Stampa (the Irish National Stamp Exhibition) in the late 1970s.

A couple of unadopted designs including one only recently exhibited in 2022 conclude the display.

Since last entering this exhibit at show in 2022, the display has been extended from 3 to 5 frames and now includes further postal usages including use in conjunction with postal stationery (lettercard/envelope/registered envelope) and use on TPOs. Further photographs of unadopted designs. Examples of use with the previous series is now shown and also use after the changeover to decimalisation – the stamps were valid till end December 1971. The original brochure and press release distributed at the launch of the designs in 1968 is also shown.