

**Photography and Philately**  
**150 years, again: and some other anniversaries!!**  
**Geoff Blackwell ARPS**

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In 1989 there were numerous celebrations marking the sesquicentenary of the introduction of photography to the public. More specifically, there were celebrations of the announcements of Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre's process to the Académie des Sciences by François Arago and of William Henry Fox Talbot's photogenic drawings to the Royal Institution.<sup>1</sup> Some of the celebrations took the form of an issue of commemorative postage stamps. Subsequently, the Royal Photographic Society celebrated 150 years of life in 2003.

Now in 2019 we witness one of our sister Royal Societies celebrating its own 150th anniversary as the Royal Philatelic Society London initiates and supports a wide range of celebratory events. It is this anniversary that has prompted the author to revisit the celebration of photography in stamp issues, and to reflect on some other anniversary issues. The question is, why should that concern us? The answer is simple. The links between photography and philately can be traced back to the earliest days as philately and photography emerged into the public domain more or less simultaneously. While photography was announced by both Daguerre and Talbot in 1839, the legislation formally approving the issue of the first adhesive postage stamps in Great Britain also dates to that year. Furthermore, occurrences in 1840 established both as features of everyday life. That was the year that the first photographic studio opened in London, and in May 1840 the iconic *penny black*, the first adhesive postage stamp, was issued. The connection was almost immediate. Recent evidence comes in the form of a letter discovered in an auction lot for sale in the autumn of 2018. The author was alerted to the sale of the papers from the estate of Arthur Swaine Taylor (1806–1880) by Dr Michael Pritchard. The letter described below was examined by the author at the offices of the auctioneers in Bury St Edmunds.<sup>2</sup> Thus we now know that some time in May 1840, Taylor wrote to Sir Rowland Hill (1795–1879), the postal reformer, enclosing some images of postage stamps made by Talbot's photogenic-drawing process. Although we cannot date his letter or trace the original images, the evidence lies in the letter, which does exist, in which Hill replies to Taylor, 'I have seen the very curious imitations of the small Postage Stamps which you have produced by the photogenic art.'

Since that time, numerous countries have issued stamps in celebration of photography. Some marked the occasion by issuing stamps in 1989, exactly 150 years from the key announcements. In other instances, the celebration has been of the arrival of photography in the particular country, or the success of individual photographers. In Francophile countries the focus has frequently been on Nicéphore Niépce.<sup>3</sup> Several countries included what is generally accepted as the first photograph, the image made by Niépce at his farmhouse near Chalon sur Saône. The Republic of Mali, on the other hand, issued a stamp in 1983 marking 150 years



*Republic of Mali,  
1983*

since the death of Niépce. A somewhat paradoxical situation arises in the stamps of Bermuda. In 1989 a set of six stamps were issued marking the 150th anniversary of photography. In notes accompanying the issue, the authorities explain that although the photographs used were ‘not 150 years old, but date from the 1860’s, they represent some of the earliest known photographs’.

Then, while supplying such details as the exact size of the stamp, down to the last hundredth of a millimetre (30.56 x 38.00 mm) the photographers are not identified. The designer, A D Theobald, is acknowledged, as is Tom Butterfield for ‘supplying information’, but the only account of the origins of the images is a credit to The International Museum of Photography, New York, for providing photographic material.<sup>4</sup> It does seem ironic that none of the photographers are named. The answer may be that even the Museum does not know the identities, but if so, it prompts the obvious question as to why anonymous images should have been used for this particularly significant anniversary.



*Bermuda, 1989, one of  
six anonymous images!*

Turkey, Russia, Finland and Sweden all issued stamps to mark the occasion but they all chose modern or stylised designs that celebrated the event without using old images. All communicate the message effectively by including some form of anonymous ‘old camera’ with bellows and tripod!

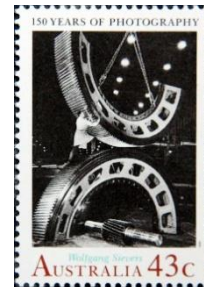


Turkey, 1989

Australia is one of the countries that chose to celebrate the arrival of photography in the country. It was in 1841 that Captain Augustin Lucas (1804–1854) demonstrated the daguerreotype process by making an image of Bridge Street, Sydney.<sup>5</sup> Four stamps were produced in 1991 using images by Wolfgang Sievers (1913–2007), Harold Cazneaux (1878–1953), Olive Cotton (1911–2003) and Max Dupain (1911–1992).



Australia, 1991  
(Harold Cazneaux)

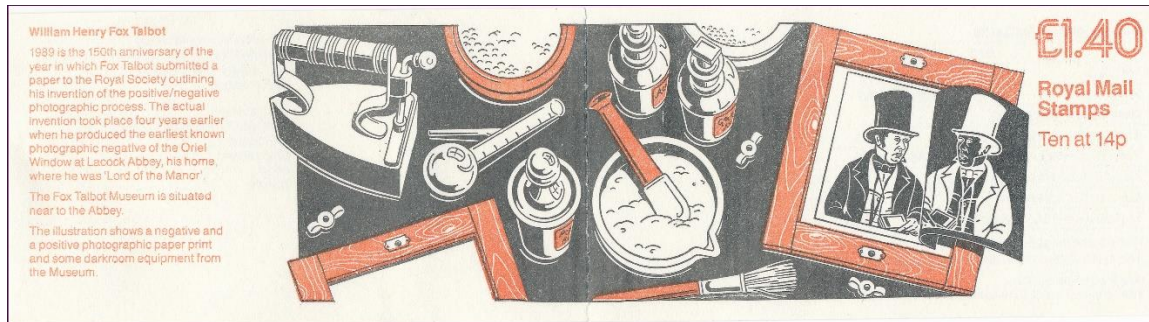


Australia, 1991  
(Wolfgang Sievers)

This paper is not, and does not seek to be, a catalogue of the postage stamps of all nations that were issued in celebration of the photographic sesquicentenary. That might be boring and would most probably be incomplete! One significant but deliberate omission is any reference to the stamps of Canada. It is hoped that given the significance of the work of Karsh, the use of his images on stamps both in Canada and elsewhere (including the famous Churchill portrait adopted for stamps in Great Britain), and the large number of stamps issued by Canada in celebration of photography, it would be sensible to address the topic of Canadian stamps and photography exclusively.<sup>6</sup>

What cannot be overlooked is the omission from the stamps of Great Britain of any significant acknowledgement of Talbot and his work. While his story was told briefly on the covers of two stamps booklets, no commemorative stamps were issued. In 1999, as part of one of the many Millennium issues, a stamp was produced showing one of the early ‘*photographic experiments*’ attributed to *Henry Fox-Talbot* and this, for some, is a poor memorial for the man

who gave us the positive/negative system of photography which survived in principle until the introduction of digital photography in the latter part of the 20th century.



Fox Talbot stamp booklet

From a philatelic perspective perhaps the most interesting anniversary in 2019 is the bicentenary of the birth of Queen Victoria, which prompts some discussion of early issues of stamps based on photographs. As far as Great Britain was concerned, photography was ignored in the design of stamps until the turn of the century. Although the photogravure process was not used for stamp production until 1911 when the new stamps were needed with the accession of King George V, photography was used in the preparation of earlier stamps. In describing in 1904 the sequence of events in the design of the stamps for King Edward VII, the then Prince of Wales explains that this involved an original sketch by Emil Fuchs.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, a separate border was prepared by Messrs De La Rue, under Fuchs' instructions. Photographs were taken of both the sketch and the border and 'the two prints so obtained were placed together, and a fresh photographic impression taken of the whole'.<sup>8</sup> It is clear that at this early date photography was used to aid the designers and visualise the finished design, though the photography was only incidental.

But we need to return to the beginning! The 'penny black' was based on the design of the Wyon Medal, issued to celebrate the visit of Queen Victoria to the City of London in the year of her coronation.<sup>9</sup> In subsequent issues the work of the engraver Joubert dominated.<sup>10</sup> He provided a series of engravings referred to as the Diadem designs, which were used for stamps for Great Britain and a number of Commonwealth countries, some of which remained in use for many years. For example, 'The handsome British Honduras design of 1866, with Diadem VII, lasted for 25 years.'<sup>11</sup> However, the Victorian designers did not ignore the new science of photography, and the stamps of Newfoundland are of particular interest. When, in 1870, it was decided to illustrate a new issue with the portrait of the Queen, it was W & D Downey's portrait from 1860 that was adopted.



*Queen Victoria cdv by W & D Downey, 1860*



*Newfoundland, 1870*

Looking at more recent usage of the early photographs, John Winchester's informative work reminds us that retouching photographs was an early art.<sup>12</sup> He points out that the portrait of Queen Victoria illustrated on the stamp issued in 2011, referencing her Diamond Jubilee, was in fact the Golden Jubilee photograph by Alexander Bassano (1829–1913). Although he is correct in this comment and suggests that 'The giveaway might have been that Victoria's hair still appeared quite dark, at 68 years old. A decade later it was more silvery, as befits a 78-year-old,' a look at some other contemporary portraits suggest that hair colour could easily be manipulated. Was using the earlier portrait actually an error, as suggested, or simply a design choice that flattered the Queen? In any case, these two portraits, both dated 1897, from the Royal Collection, tell their own story.



*Walery's portrait 1897 (dark hair)  
RCIN 2105762*



*Hughes and Mullins's portrait  
1897 (white hair)  
RCIN 2105778*

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851), Dominique Françoise Jean Arago (1786-1853), William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877)

<sup>2</sup> The author is grateful to Ed Crichton of Messrs Lacy Scott and King LLP for facilitating the viewing.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Nicéphore Niépce (1765-1833)

<sup>4</sup> This information is provided by means of a printed insert issued with the official First Day Cover dated 11 May 1989.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/artsets/51b88k> (Accessed 12th May 2019)

<sup>6</sup> Yousuf Karsh (1908-2002) (Karsh of Ottawa).

<sup>7</sup> Emil Fuchs, *MVO*, (1866-1929)

<sup>8</sup> HRH The Prince of Wales, *Notes on the Postal Issues of the United Kingdom during the Present Reign*, a paper read at a meeting of the Philatelic Society, London, held on 4 March 1904. (This paper was recently reproduced in a handbook accompanying an exhibition at The Royal Philatelic Society, *150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration: Her Majesty The Queen's and Past Presidents' Collection*, London 11 April 2019. It was included in comments on items from the collection of Her Majesty The Queen, by Ian P Grieg FRPSL, FRPSV.)

<sup>9</sup> D N Muir, *Postal Reform and the Penny Black: A New Appreciation* (London: The National Postal Museum, 1990), p. 150.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Ferdinand Joubert de la Ferté (1810–1884)

<sup>11</sup> John Easton, *British Postage Stamps Design* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1943), p. 88.

<sup>12</sup> J Winchester, 'Wrong Jubilee', in *Stamp Magazine*, May 2019, and 'The Queen's Head: Portraits of Queen Victoria', in *Stamp Magazine*, June 2019.