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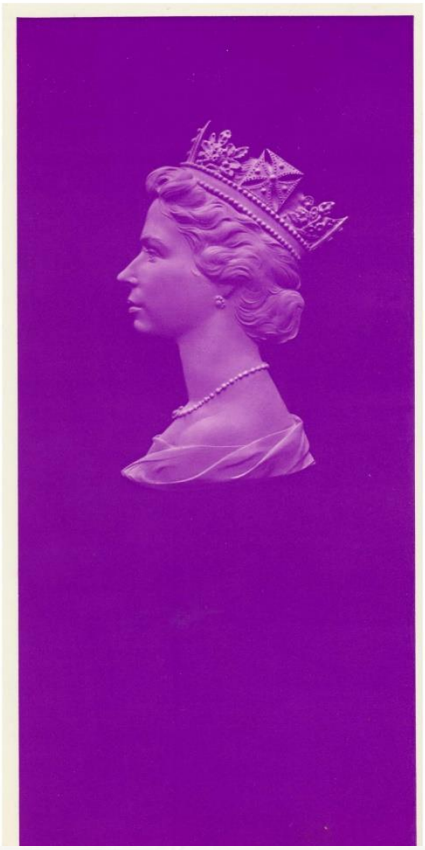
QEII Machin Head on Trinidad & Tobago Stamps

by Edward Barrow

Only a few stamp designs have become iconic. The Penny Black would surely be considered one, and in our time the Machin profile of Queen Elizabeth II, used on British definitive stamps since 1967, would be a contender. The design is named after the artist Arnold Machin who made the original plaster cast. It is not surprising to learn that he once worked at Wedgwood, the pottery firm famous for its cameo reliefs, as the profile has a similar form. Machin based his work on John Hedgecoe photos and during the design process the Queen herself played an active part in shaping the final outcome.



Figure 1: GB First Class Stamp showing the photo on which the Machin Cast was based.



The visit of
Her Majesty The Queen
and
His Royal Highness
Prince Philip
The Duke of Edinburgh

Harrison & Sons Limited
High Wycombe Tuesday 30th May 1972

Traditionally the portrait of the Sovereign has appeared on all British postage stamps since the publication of the Penny Black in 1840.

This 'keep-sake' illustrates some of the ways in which the portrait has been used on recent issues. On definitive stamps it has always filled the dominant place in the design and even the early special issues of previous reigns have tended to emphasise the monarch's effigy.

The first stamps of the current reign bore a reproduction of a photographic portrait by Dorothy Wilding. The gradated tones which the photograph provided were eminently suitable for printing by photogravure, particularly as it was then only practicable to print in monochrome.

Stylistically however this portrait had an inhibiting effect on the design of special issues, for the size at which it could be reproduced adequately often made it the predominant element and so tended to encourage an heraldic style of design. The representational nature of the photograph made it difficult for a satisfactory association with other figurative elements in a design to be achieved.

In 1966 Arnold Machin RA, the sculptor, was commissioned by the Post Office to make a new portrait of The Queen for use on a new issue of definitive stamps. He had already been working on a bas-relief portrait for the decimal coinage and he therefore took those studies as the basis for his portrait for the stamps.

By taking the profile pose for his portrait Arnold Machin invested his design with all the classical dignity and simplicity of the early stamps and produced a result unequalled in previous definitive issues. The profile head was also more readily adaptable to a silhouette and so enabled it to be integrated more satisfactorily with other elements in the design of special issues. It could also be reproduced at a smaller size without loss of recognition. By using the head either as a flat colour silhouette or in its toned variety the designer now has greater flexibility in choosing the most suitable version for a particular design, than was possible with the three-quarter view photograph.



Photograph by Dorothy Wilding taken in 1952



Bas-relief by Arnold Machin made in 1966



The Machin head in a modified silhouette in half-tone on David Gentleman's ship issue 1969



The modified Machin silhouette die-stamped in gold on Fritz Wegner's Christmas issue 1969



The modified silhouette in flat colour on Rosalind Dease's Tutankhamun stamp 1972



The definitive Machin silhouette hot-press foil blocked in aluminium



Photograph by Cecil Beaton taken in 1968



Painting by Annigoni made in 1954

Figure 2: Booklet Issued for the Royal Visit to Harrisons Printing Works in 1972.

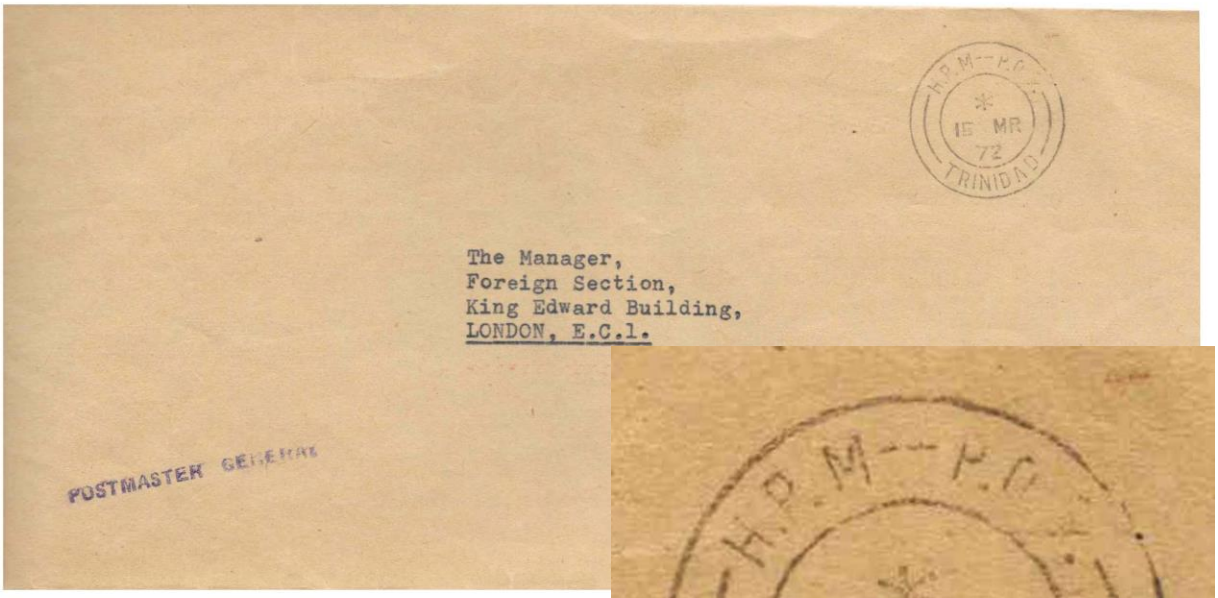
Since its introduction it is reckoned to have been printed in over 130 different colours and on over 220 billion stamps. It is often overlooked that it also appeared in silhouette on Trinidad & Tobago's 1969 definitive series. The queen was the head of state until 1976 when the country became a republic, so it is not unusual that her portrait would feature on definitive stamps of that age.

On our stamps the profile is reduced to monochrome silhouette in metal foil. The process by which it was applied is called the "Hot Press Method". In this a heated die is used to press the foil onto the surface of the paper, this bonds the foil to the paper in the shape of the die. The printers, Harrisons, must have been proud of the process as they featured an example of a Trinidad & Tobago 1c in their commemorative pamphlet for a Royal Visit by the Queen to their printing works in 1972.

Collectors familiar with the issue will know that the process was not flawless, sometimes this printing stage was missed resulting in "Missing Head Errors", and sometimes due to a printing glitch the head may be set too high or too low. Well we can add a new flavour which I am calling the "Bimetallic Head Variety", it has both silver and gold foils making up the head design. I suspect it was caused by a foil remnant from a different print run that escaped cleaning and inspection. To be honest I am surprised there are not more of these out there, perhaps there are but they have gone un-noticed.



Figure 3: Bimetallic Head Variety (top), close-up of head (right)



Bruce Walker sent in 2 queries. The first is this unrecorded cancel, H.P.M. P.O.S. –can anyone shed any light on its purpose and meaning?



The second is this picture of a post office, can anyone identify it? Judging by the van in the background it looks like it's from the early 1980's.

Please send replies to the editor at e.barrow1@gmail.com

New Release

TTPost released a new series of stamps titled East Indian Influence – Celebrating 175 Years. It consisted of five stamps $1.00, $6.50. $7.50, $8.50 & $9.00 as well as a miniature sheet with three $10 values. The FDC was sold at $60.00 each, the Souvenir Sheet at $30.00 each and the Presentation Pack at $150.00 each. Yes these are the correct prices -there are no typographical errors!

The official release date was 1st July 2020. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, TTPost had to be innovative and come up with a new format for the release. In a first for the company the release was streamed live on-line. From reports this seems to have been a success. The designs feature paintings by local artist Hayden Geeawan, more details on the issue in upcoming Bulletins.

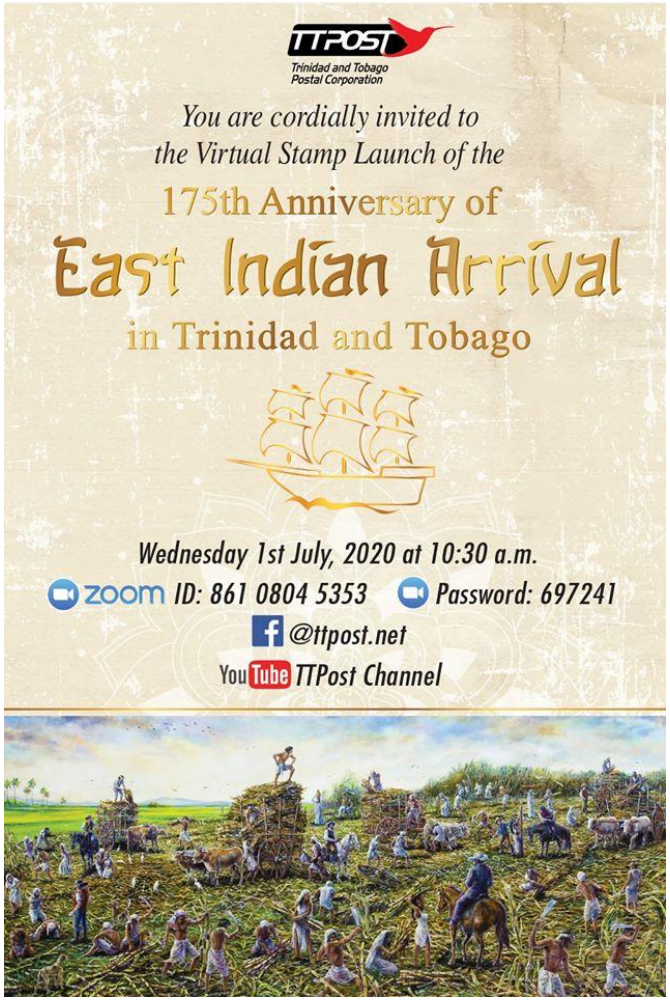


Figure 4 ; Flyer Announcing the Launch

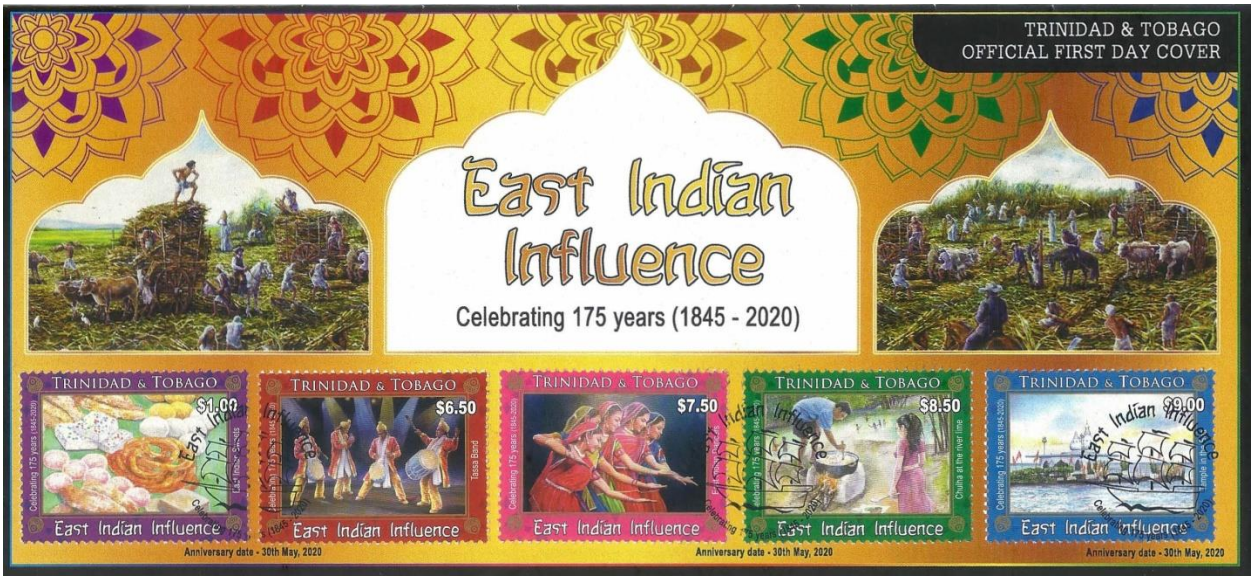


Figure 5 : First Day Cover with the Five Stamps



Figure 6: Miniature Sheet with Three $10 Values