



# PHILATELI-GRAPHICS

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## Two Stamp Artists with a Common Heritage—Joubert and Dulac

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Ferdinand Joubert and Edmund Dulac are often written about together because they shared a common background—both were born in France and emigrated to England, where they achieved success.

Jean Ferdinand Joubert de la Ferté was born in Paris in 1810. As an adult he preferred to be known simply as Joubert. He studied painting and engraving at the École des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts) in Paris, then moved to England in the early 1830s to escape the turmoil of post-Napoleon France. He became a British citizen in 1855.

His engraving skills were noticed by the printing firm of Thomas De La Rue and Co. based on his engravings of the works of several members of the Royal Academy of Arts. Joubert's first effort for them was a portrait of Queen Victoria that was used for a revenue stamp printed by letterpress (also called surface-printing).

Great Britain's Board of Inland Revenue was responsible for postage stamps. In the early 1850s, the Board was looking for a new method of printing postage stamps with values higher than two pence because the embossed issues of 1847-48 had been a failure. Noting the experience of Joubert and De La Rue, the Board chose them to produce by surface-printing a four-penny stamp for sending letters to France (Figure 1).

For this stamp, Joubert perfected the process of engraving the steel die *en épargne* (pronounced ahn ay'-parnyeh). In this method, the parts of the design that are not to be printed are cut away from the die, leaving the design to be printed on the surface. As a result, the quantity of ink deposited on the paper is the same over the whole design. Differences of tone are achieved by varying the thickness of the lines or dots.

*En épargne* engraving is the opposite of recess or



*Fig 1. This postcard from Britain's National Postal Museum shows an undated portrait of Joubert and his Great Britain 4-penny stamp.*

intaglio engraving. In the intaglio process, the engraver cuts away the parts of the design to be printed. During the printing process, the ink fills the cut area and is removed from the uncut regions. When the ink is applied to the paper, the darkness of the color corresponds to the depth of the cut. This process results in the design being slightly raised from the surface of the stamp.

*cont. on pg 31*

## THIS ISSUE

<b>Two Stamp Artists with a Common Heritage—Joubert and Dulac</b> . . . . .	<b>25</b>
<b>GPA News</b> . . . . .	<b>26</b>
<b>GPA Financial Report for 2019</b> . . . . .	<b>26</b>
<b>What a Waste! How Postal Systems Dealt with Paper Shortages - Part 1</b> . . . . .	<b>27–30</b>
<b>2019 P-G New Issues Scott Numbers</b> . . . . .	<b>33</b>
<b>New Issues of Graphic Interest</b> . . . . .	<b>34–36</b>

*cont. from pg 25*

Writing in *British Postage Stamp Design* (1943), printer and philatelist John Easton (1895-1967) said that after cutting away the unprinted areas “some of the [remaining] ridges will be no thicker than a hair, and any defect in them will show up immediately. The work must be perfect.” He added that “the engraving of dies *en épargne* for surface printing is a far more delicate undertaking than intaglio engraving for the recess printer.”

Joubert also introduced De La Rue to the process of acierage, the coating of the printing plate with a thin layer of hardened iron to lengthen its life. The resulting printing process was faster and cheaper than recess printing. Joubert’s portrait of the Queen was used on most British surface-printed stamps during her reign (Figure 2).

Over the next decade, Joubert produced variations of his portrait with different diadems, or in one case a full crown, for use in various British colonies. Joubert also engraved stamps for several other countries including Belgium, Italy, and Malta.

He never became an employee of De La Rue; all his work was done under contract. His work for De La Rue ended in 1866. Besides being an engraver, Joubert was an accomplished photographer. He is known for photographs used on visiting cards, including two of Queen Victoria’s sons, Prince Edward (later King Edward VII) and Prince Alfred. He died in 1884.

Edmund Dulac was born in Toulouse, France in 1882. He became fond of Great Britain, learned English at an early age, and changed his given name from Edmond to the English-style Edmund. He studied at the École des Beaux-Arts, then moved to London in 1904 to start his career. He became a British citizen in 1912.

He became successful as an illustrator of gift and children’s books, often working in watercolor, his favorite medium. He also composed music and designed costumes and sets for the theater. After World War I, when the book market collapsed, he broadened his work to include newspaper caricatures, coins, medals, banknotes,

brochures and playing cards.

In the 1930s he became interested in stamp design, concurrent with the introduction of photogravure. This process worked well with his style of design because it reproduces the artwork photographically, allowing solid colors with varying tones.

Eager to participate in stamp design, he submitted unsolicited designs for the new definitives needed when King George VI took the throne in 1936. Dulac made a plaster model of the king’s head in profile that he used as the basis of his designs.

His designs weren’t selected, but his profile was used. Four low values were issued on May 10, 1937, two days before the Coronation, containing Dulac’s portrait and a frame designed by Eric Gill (Figure 3). Two years later a version of Dulac’s complete design was used on the higher values of the small-sized definitives (Figure 4). It is dignified but looks a bit crowded with the four regional symbols crammed into the corners.

His realistic yet classic profile was used on all photogravure stamps issued during the king’s reign.

He designed many British stamps over a period of 16 years. His design for King George VI’s coronation was the first British stamp to feature the monarch’s consort (Figure 5). His last stamp was one of the four stamps issued for Queen Elizabeth II’s Coronation in 1953 (Figure 6). His stunning hand-drawn full-face portrait of



Fig 3. Great Britain [Sc239]. One of Dulac’s first successes is the portrait of King George VI used in the low value definitives issued for his reign.



Fig 4. Great Britain [Sc246]. This is Dulac’s complete design for the top values of the small definitives.



Fig 2. Great Britain [Sc108]. This large 5-shilling stamp issued in 1884 is one of the many that includes Joubert’s engraved portrait of Queen Victoria.



Fig 5. Left, Great Britain [Sc234]. Dulac’s first accepted stamp design includes both the King and his consort. Fig 6. Right, Great Britain [Sc315]. Dulac’s final design is perhaps his best known; it puts the viewer in the front row of the Queen’s coronation.



Fig 7. Left, New Caledonia [Sc258]. Dulac's design shows the native Kagu bird flitting through palm leaves. Figure 8. Center, Wallis and Futuna [Sc128]. The design for these Pacific Islands shows a Polynesian wood carving. To preserve symmetry, Dulac put the currency indicator to the inside of the numerals on both sides. Figure 9. Left, Somali Coast [Sc230]. Dulac features a locomotive in this design. The curved lettering panels cross the image like railroad tracks.

the queen, in full Coronation dress and holding the orb and scepter, combined with a background of symbols in a heraldic pattern is still impressive today.

Dulac did many designs for the stamps of France and French territories. He was personally asked by General Charles de Gaulle, who was based in London, to design stamps for the French territories that aligned themselves with de Gaulle's Free France (*France Libre*) cause.

Dulac designed stamps for 14 territories plus two common designs used by all of them. Most of his designs tied together native and French motifs (Figures 7-9).

Writing in *European Stamp Design* (1995), David Scott said, "Dulac's approach [is noted for] its technical mastery and integral design. With Dulac's handling of the photogravure process, French stamps were to have a clarity of outline and a depth of color unknown to them before this time."

He adds that the integrity of the designs is a function

of a number of strategies: the choice of appropriate typography; the full integration of typographical elements into the pictorial designs; the use of silhouettes to extend the range of contrast and create a sense of depth; and above all, the setting up of a rhythm particular to each design that creates visual interest and harmonizes the various components.

Dulac also created a design for definitive stamps to be used after Paris was liberated. It featured his interpretation of Marianne, the symbol of liberty and the French Republic, surrounded by the garlands of liberty. Dulac based the portrait on Lea Rixens, the wife of his friend, painter Emile Rixens, and a member of the French Resistance. The similarity of this design, Figure 10, to the Dulac-Gill design in Figure 3 is apparent.

The artistry of Joubert and Dulac is still admired and studied today, a testament to their skills and long-lasting influence in the fields of stamp design and production.

Figure 10. France [Sc2408-09]. The 50th Anniversary of Dulac's Marianne was celebrated with two stamp-on-stamp commemoratives. The reproduction of the original stamp is accurate except that the denomination in the lower corners has been removed.

