



First-Class Post

TO mark the 150th anniversary of public steam railways, the Post Office is issuing a set of four stamps on August 13, in values of 7p, 8p, 10p and 12p. Printed in photogravure, they are horizontal in format and measure 41mm. × 30mm. (1 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. × 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.). They have been designed by Brian Craker and were chosen with the help of the Stamp Advisory Committee.

The brief to the designer laid down that the set of stamps should illustrate the development of British locomotive design from 1825 to the present day. To make the choice of engines interesting and rational the 150 years which the issue commemorates was divided notionally into four and a selection was made of examples new, handsome, successful and technically advanced but typical of the start of the 50-year periods. Stephenson's Stockton & Darlington Railway *Locomotion* was the obvious choice for 1825 and features on the 7p stamp, coloured black, yellow, brown, grey and silver; while the BR High Speed Train is the most modern development from it currently in service and the power-car side of one is shown on the 12p stamp in the proposed production-model cab-end livery of yellow and black, with other printing in grey, red and silver.

Choice of the other two locomotives, for 1875 and 1925, was dictated by their size, colour and general appearance. The dominant colours of *Locomotion* and the HST are ochre and yellow respectively, leaving green, brown, red or blue as possible colours for the remaining two. Two Scottish 4-4-0s were short-listed for the first

period: the North British Railway Drummond "Waverley" class of 1876 and the Glasgow & South Western Stirling design of three years earlier. Contenders in the next group were the GWR "Castle" 4-6-0 (1923); LNER Gresley 4-6-2 (1923); SR "Lord Nelson" 4-6-0 (1926); and LMS "Royal Scot" 4-6-0 (1927). Largely because of the importance and popularity of the class the green "Castle" was chosen, grouped for colour distinction with the brown NBR engine. Thus *Abbotsford* appears on the 8p and *Caerphilly Castle* on the 10p stamp, both of which also incorporate grey, black, orange, red and silver colouring.

The Post Office is to issue a special first-day cover with a range of four pictorial handstamps. Addressed, posted and cancelled these will cost 50p each. Presentation packs containing the set of stamps will be available at 43p each; and a souvenir booklet with them mounted on the front cover, costing 85p, has been produced. Details and application forms for all services offered can be obtained from head post offices or from the Philatelic Bureau, 124 Lothian Road, Edinburgh EH3 9BB.

Stephenson first-day covers

FIRST-DAY covers carrying the four Post Office S&D anniversary stamps, a special Wylam handstamp and postmark, and a picture of George Stephenson's cottage, will be available for 50p from Wylam & District Round Table on August 13. Enquiries should be addressed to Mr. G. Slater, 16 Piper Road, Ovingham, Northumberland.