David Gentleman – Stamp Designs for GB and Nauru

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David Gentleman is a renowned English artist, illustrator, designer and author. Born in 1930 from artistic parents, he is a graduate of the Royal College of Art (London) and a London resident. His artistic work centres upon various aspects of life around the city; the English countryside and his travels abroad, particularly France, Italy and India. He specialises in wood engravings; lithographs, watercolour and screen-prints.

Favourite topics include landscapes, architecture and people. He has been an active participant in a number of exhibitions and permanent displays in a variety of museums, mainly in London. Some of his works have also been sold to private collectors and various pieces have been widely published through a number of his books. His skills have been utilised by authors in providing illustrations for their literature.

In philately, his name is more closely associated with the design of British stamps for which there is a very long list. His association with British philately spans a 40-year period from 1962 – 2012.

The Postal Museum (UK) holds an extensive archive of his designs, both adopted and rejected, together with presentation proofs.

Stanley Gibbons Ltd. recently published a series of articles showcasing his works *(refer West, Richard. Gibbons Stamp Monthly Dec 2018 – April 2019).*

A selection of his British stamp designs, many of which we have all no doubt sighted at some point, are illustrated in ***Figure 1.***

Figure 1 – Selected British Stamp Designs by David Gentleman

1962 – National Productivity Year

1969 – First Flight of the Concorde

Quite apart from British stamps, he has also been responsible for a number of issues for Pacific Island nations - notably Nauru and Papua New Guinea.

David Gentleman's work for Nauru spans a relatively short period of 2 years, from 1977 – 79, during which time there were 5 sets of stamps that adopted his designs *(see **Table 1**)*.

These presented the country with a refreshed palette of colours and an elegant simplicity.

Table 1 – Nauruan stamps designed by David Gentleman

Date	Issue	Comment
1977	Opening of Nauru House, Melbourne	Change of country name – 'Nauru'; change of printer to Harrison and Sons Ltd., (previously Format International Security Printers Ltd)., who used multicolour photogravure (previously multicolour lithography). Removal of monetary symbol (low values).
	75th Anniversary of 1st Trans-Pacific Cable; and 20th Anniversary of 1st Artificial Satellite	As above
	Christmas	As above
1978	Opening of Nauru House, Melbourne	Surcharged remainders from the original issue.
1978	Definitives – "Our Island Home"	As for 1977 issues. Also a group of maximum cards issued (15c – 40c and 4c and 5c).
1979	Flight Anniversaries	Multicolour lithography. Format International Security Printers Ltd. No watermark.

Source – Stanley Gibbons Western Pacific Stamp Cat (4th edition) (2017)

Figure 2 – 1978 (May) Opening of Nauru House in Melbourne

The designs for some of these issues (notably the *1978 definitive series)* stemmed from an extended stay by the artist and his family on the island. It is recorded that he 'returned to England full of praise for the attractions of Nauru' *(refer 'Nauru – Our Island Home Stamp Pack No 1)*.

These issues represented a break with the past, involving a change in design, printer and printing technique.

Most notably, the usual *'Republic of Nauru'* was replaced with *'Nauru'.* The country name change was requested by the designer and endorsed by the Nauru Stamp Advisory Panel. With the exception of 1978 - *70th Anniversary of the Boy Scout Movement* and the *10th Anniversary of Independence* issues, this has been subsequently employed as the standard for all subsequent issues.

Harrison and Sons Ltd., printed all the David Gentleman designed issues, using multicolour photogravure.

Perhaps the most controversial of these issues is the ***Surcharged 'Opening of Nauru House, Melbourne'*** values from March 1978 ***(****see* ***Figures 2 & 3).***

Figure 3 - 1978 (May) – Two surcharged values in combination, for airmail letter to England together with registration fee *(reduced scale).*

It was reported that there was an urgent need for low values pending the release of the new definitive issue (due 5/1978).

A decision was made by the then Minister for Finance on the advice of the Philatelic Advisory Panel and the Philatelic Consultant (Mr K.A. Lake) to surcharge the remainders of the Nauru House issue. These remainders were held by the Crown Agents, the Nauru Philatelic Bureau and Australia Post. The stocks were sent to Format International Security Printers Ltd., for surcharging.

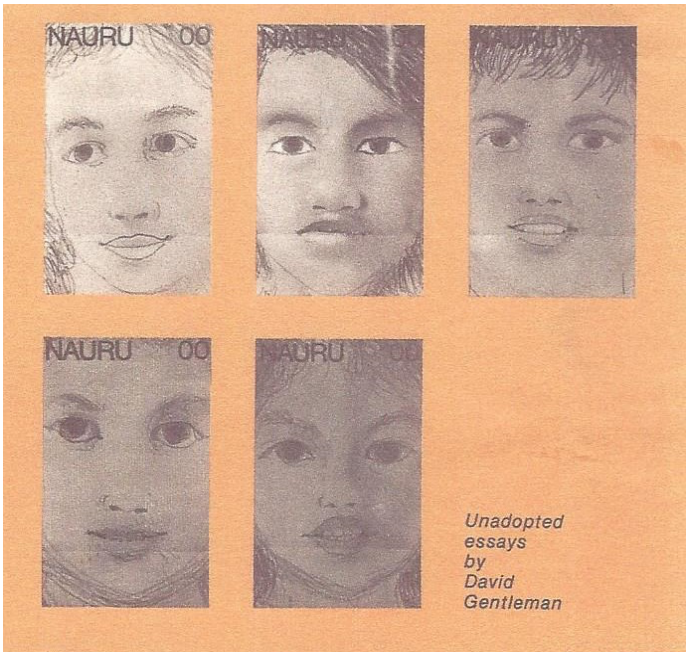
There were no stocks distributed to the philatelic community. This caused collectors considerable anxiety *(Refer Australian Stamp Monthly – 3/1979 and 5/1979).*

Not all his designs were adopted. His proposed designs submitted for the *1979 - 'International Year of the Child'* issue were rejected ***(see Figure 4).***

Figure 4 – 1979 - International Year of the Child

(reduced scale)

Unadopted essays submitted by David Gentleman



International Year of the Child Presentation Pack no 6 (reverse)

Figure 5 – 1979 – International Year of the Child *(issued stamps)*

David Gentleman's designs grace many of the stamps of Great Britain during a 40-year period from 1962 - 2012. His work for Nauru is limited to a 2-year period (1977-79). His designs have depicted various aspects of the island, its islanders, flora and fauna and history. They have been presented with a refreshed palette of colours and more elegant design.

References:

Australian Stamp Monthly *– 3/1979 p105 and 5/1979 p71).*

Campbell-Smith, Duncan - 'Masters of the Post – The Authorised History of the Royal Mail' (2011).

The Postal Museum - *postalmuseum.org/ - search the archive on 'David Gentleman').*

The Artist's Website - *davidgentleman.com*

The Tate - *tate.org.uk*

Suffolk Artists - *Suffolk Artists.co.uk*

Wiki - *Wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Gentleman*

Stanley Gibbons *Western Pacific Stamp Cat (4th edn) (2017).*

West, Richard - *'The Stamp Designs of David Gentleman'- Parts 1 – 5' (Gibbons Stamp Monthly Dec 2018; Jan 2019; Feb 2019; March 2019 and April 2019).*