



The Mullarney Malarkey

The 5th Irish Definitives: A series during a period of transition

PART 2: Enter the Euro, and other issues

A) Schizoid stamps - Interim dual currency issues

Because Ireland had decided to change its currency and adopt the Euro (€), 2001 was inevitably going to be a transitional year. This meant introducing dual currency for a defined period of time before going fully Euro based in order to enable the public to accommodate to the new currency. Other Euro adopting countries of course followed the same pattern, although the time frames for when dual currency stamps were available tended to vary. The Belgium Buzins for example, showed dual currencies from January 2000 until at least mid-2001. Ireland fell into line a little later but for a shorter transitional period with their definitives being issued in June 2001 and then the full new currency stamps being available from January 2002. This six months window was therefore effectively a time of schizophrenic issues bearing two different values.

But I am jumping the gun a bit. The year 2001 had two issues prior to the dual currency set being introduced. And, true to form, they are a little quirky.

There was a booklet in April with another Blackbird and Goldcrest pairing, both at 30p (SB67b) but this time with the panes printed by Questa. Why a different printer I haven't been able to ascertain. There must be a reason, but it was to be their sole contribution to the series. Then at the beginning of June there were two singles, re-issues of the 40p Ringed Plover and 50p Sparrowhawk (same perf, same size) but now on ordinary paper. Just ten days later the dual currency set followed. Weird.

The dual currency stamps from Mid-June 2001 were not only issued during a short time frame, they were also small in number. Just six single stamps, ranging from 30p/38c to £1/€1.25. Table. 1 below lists these issues:-

Table. 1 - Dual Currency issues (11/06/2001)

Values	Species	SG No.
30p/38c	Common Blackbird	1424
32p/41c	European Robin	1425
35p/44c	Atlantic Puffin	1426
40p/51c	Eurasian Wren	1427
45p/57c	Song Thrush	1428
£1/€1.25	Gt White-fronted Goose	1429

They are all printed by ISSP with standard 14x15 perforation and 24.5x27mm sizing, except the high value £1/€1.25 Greater White-fronted Goose, which kept its original size of 27x48.8mm. They were also all on chalk-surfaced paper and with phosphor frames. The design varies barely at all from the original currency issues except the values had to be repositioned from the left to the right hand side and the image and value font reduced in size to accommodate a second value. The Euro value is placed underneath the old currency but in an even smaller font size. Figure 1 below illustrates the arrangement.



Fig. 1 - Examples of the old and dual currency issues
32p and 32p/41c European Robin

The singles were followed by a coil strip in August with another Blackbird/Goldcrest pairing but this time with the dual value of 30p/38c (SG1430/1431). They were printed by SNP Ausprint, perforated 11x11, but sized at 25x30mm. This is the only dual currency coil produced.

B) The Euro Issues

A little bit of currency history is required here.

Despite the name of the currency (“Punt” is Irish Gaelic for “Pound”), Ireland had already ceased to be linked to Sterling and became part of the European Monetary System (EMS) in 1978. At the end of 1998, the exchange rates between the European currency unit - later to become the Euro - and the Irish pound and 10 other EMS currencies were fixed. These countries formed the “Eurozone.” The fixed conversion factor for the Irish pound was €1 = IR£0.79.

The Euro became the currency of the Eurozone - including Ireland - on 1 January 1999. However, it wasn't until 1st January 2002 that Ireland withdrew its old currency and replaced them with Euros. Technically, the Irish Punt ceased to be legal tender from 9th February 2002. The Irish changeover was one of the fastest in the Eurozone. It was out with Punts and pennies and in with Euros and cents.

In postal terms, the Euro rates from 1st January 2002 were a direct conversion from the previous Punt rates, but naturally rounded to the nearest cent. A 30p Blackbird issue became 38 cents; a 32p Robin became 41 cents, and so on.

The dynamics of the new currency introduction

Trying to depict this in tabular form is difficult as the cross-over with the introduction of new values and therefore new issues, plus rises or lowering of existing issues with new values makes for a very messy chart. I've tried it and it looks not dissimilar to a trans-Atlantic airlines map with lines criss-crossing everywhere! You are soon lost in the ocean.

Table. 2 below therefore is intended as a simplified outline of what happened to the existing issues and what new issues were created to fulfil new value requirements.

Table. 2 - Value changes from Punt to Euro

No.	Species	£ Currency		Dual Currency	Std Rates^	€ Currency	
		Orig	Shtlt			Orig	2nd
1	Atlantic Puffin	44p	30p	35p/44c		50c*	60c
2	Barnacle Goose					€ 1	
3	Common Blackbird	30p	30p	30p/38c	N	38c	
4	Common Chaffinch					41c	
5	Common Kestrel					47c	
6	Common Kingfisher	10p	30p			10c	
7	Common Ringed Plover	40p				75c	
8	Common Shelduck	£5				€ 10	
9	Common Wood Pigeon	5p				5c	
10	Corncrake	4p	30p			4c	
11	Eurasian Blue Tit	28p				3c	
12	Eurasian Curlew					57c	
13	Eurasian Jay					60c	
14	Eurasian Magpie	1p	30p			1c	
15	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	50p				95c	
16	Eurasian Wren		30p	40p/51c		36c*	
17	European Robin	32p	30p	32p/41c	E	44c	
18	European Stonechat	35p	30p			7c	
19	Goldcrest	30p	30p		N	38c*	41c*
20	Grey Heron					50c	
21	Gt White fronted Goose	£1		£1/€1.25		€ 2	
22	Northern Gannet	2p	30p			2c	
23	Northern Lapwing	20p	30p			20c	
24	Northern Pintail	£2				€ 5	
25	Oystercatcher					55c	
26	Peregrine Falcon	32p	30p		N	48c	
27	Roseate Tern					51c	
28	Song Thrush		30p	45p/57c	W	57c	65c
29	Western Barn Owl	52p	30p				
30	White Wagtail		30p		N	48c	

* Booklets only.

^ Nearly all the NVI rates were pre-Euro, except an "N" rate coil and booklet in 2003.

Key:

Discontinued issue
New issues

It is clear from the table that with the new currency we have gone from 17 basic values (forget about the one off sheetlet for the moment, which in any case duplicates an existing value) to considerably more values, whilst at the same time losing one of the original species - the 52p Western Barn Owl. From the start of the series, 52p had been the overseas airmail rate, but why a Barn Owl was chosen for this purpose is a mystery. Not the swiftest or most elegant of flyers?

To comprehend the dynamics, its best to examine the sequence of introductions for the new values. The pattern could be likened to a series of waves. One big initial one followed by a series of much smaller ones, including additional values and crucially some postal rate changes. The booklets and coils are ignored for, with the exception of the Goldcrest - which

was never used as a single issue - all the main issues are now covered. The waves can be shown with a series of small tables as follows:-

1st Wave - 1st January 2002

1c	Eurasian Magpie	
2c	Northern Gannet	
3c	Eurasian Blue Tit	
4c	Corncrake	
5c	Common Wood Pigeon	
10c	Common Kingfisher	
20c	Northern Lapwing	
38c	Common Blackbird	
41c	Common Chaffinch	NEW
44c	European Robin	
50c	Grey Heron	NEW
51c	Roseate Tern	NEW
57c	Eurasian Curlew	NEW
€1	Barnacle Goose	NEW
€2	Gt White-fronted Goose	
€5	Northern Pintail	
€10	Common Shelduck	

The Blue Tit is now slotted over from 28p to a low value, but otherwise most of the existing issues are placed at an equivalent position in the new currency scale. Four new species are introduced in the middle range, and a new high value with the Barnacle Goose to take on the one Euro spot. But note the curious use of 50c and 51c. Why the latter value, and why a Roseate Tern, which even in Eire is scarcer than the Common Tern and some of the other Tern species? And was it a conscious decision to make all the large Euro values wildfowl?

On 2nd April 2002 the Song Thrush is released on its own in a "Worldwide" booklet at 57c. This seems very odd, because this value is already in use and available as we have seen with the Curlew as the illustration. We now effectively have two different stamps in circulation with the same value, albeit in different format.

2nd Wave - 17th June 2002

47c	Common Kestrel	NEW
55c	Eurasian Oystercatcher	NEW
60c	Eurasian Jay	NEW

Just over six month later some further values are added and they are all new illustrations. Two of them seem quite logical, but note this curious bunching of values between 38c and 60c. Nine values altogether.

3rd Wave - 6th January 2003

75c	Common Ringed Plover	
95c	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	

Another six months and a year into the new currency and two further higher values are introduced, but this time using species first used with the old currency.

4th Wave - 25th August 2003

7c	European Stonechat	
48c	Peregrine Falcon	

Now eight month on for the fourth wave and yet another value gets used in the middle range with the Peregrine Falcon, although it will be a workhorse and primarily used for coils and booklets. The original Stonechat illustration has another opportunity for use, but it is now lowered from 35p to just 7c.

5th Wave - 5th January 2004

60c	Atlantic Puffin	
65c	Song Thrush	

And then the last changes in the series before these definitives finish altogether later in 2004. The Atlantic Puffin now sees life as a single at 60c and the 57c Song Thrush is increased to 65c. Both are then also used as the values for the final booklets and indeed very last outing in the series. But why is the Puffin suddenly made into 60c almost towards the end of the entire series when the Jay had already been introduced at this value in mid-2002? What happened to the Jay? The Puffin had already been around at 50c since the beginning of 2003 in a booklet and was to remain available in this format as well as a single at this new value. The Jay now seems redundant and yet surely appeared equally suitable for a future booklet at this value.



Fig. 2 - Out with the old and in with the new - from Eurasian Jay to Atlantic Puffin

No Value Indicators

NVI's first appeared in during the dual currency period on the 9th October 2001 in booklet formats. There were three designations - National (N), Europe (E) and World (W), as follows:

N (Booklet value £3) - Blackbird & Goldcrest pairing (SB90)

E (Booklet value £3.20) - European Robin (SB91)

W (Booklet value £4.50) - Song Thrush (SB92)

They were only repeated again during the full Euro period (25th August 2003) as a booklet (SB110/value €4.80) and coil, both with Peregrine Falcon and Pied Wagtail pairings and with the NVI designation "N."

They were originally intended for use during and after the changeover to the Euro, but have appeared from time to time in various formats subsequent to the ending of the series.



Fig. 3 - “E” NVI Booklet (SB91) issued August 2001

The development from dual currency to the real thing presents a series of oddities, some of which is perhaps related to rate changes but the rest less explicable. The odd bits imply that there was some re-thinking of how the existing species could be used and that this necessitated some re-juggling.

The Puffin was a dual currency issue at 44c, but whilst this value was retained after full Euro introduction it was then given to the Robin. The Robin had also been a dual currency issue but at 41c. However, this value was then passed to a completely new issue, the Chaffinch! The Wren meanwhile had a dual value of 51c but for some reason this then went to another new issue, the Roseate Tern, and the Wren was provided with another new value of 36c but only as a booklet.

And then there was more shifting of furniture. The Song Thrush had been given 57c as its Euro part of the dual value, but only retained this in booklet form until being increased in value during the 5th wave for both single and booklet usage. The Greater White fronted goose had had a dual Euro value of €1.25 but at full introduction this became €2. Promotion?



Fig. 4 - A new issue for a new currency - €1 Barnacle Goose

A completely new issue, the Barnacle Goose, was created for the €1. Only the Blackbird and Goldcrest retained their dual value values on full introduction, although the latter - again - only for booklet or coils. In retrospect this all now appears to play out like a game of musical chairs! I am struggling to understand why the Barn Owl - a perfectly good illustration - was abandoned with all these changes and why some of the new ones then seemed to become redundant in a relatively short space of time. Were there popular favourites here?

Postal Rate Changes

Postal rates were relatively stable during the Punt phase of the series, although there had been some up and down adjustments during 1998 (see Part: I article). With the full conversation to the Euro in January 2002, rates changed from the old money and rounded to the nearest Euro equivalent (€1 = IR£0.79). However, An Post announced at the same time that postal rates would also increase from the 2nd April 2002 across a large range of existing rates.

Table.3 provides a few basic rates that impacted on the definitive series:

Table. 3 - Basic Postal Rate Changes - 1st Jan/2nd April 2002

Postal Locations	Weight Range	Original Rate	New rate Priority+	New rate Economy
Eire -Internal (32 counties)	Up to 25gms	0.38c	0.41c	n/a
	25-50gms	0.44c	0.41c	n/a
	50gms(NB)*	0.44c	0.47c	n/a

	50-100gms	0.57c	0.60c	n/a
Britain	Up to 25gms	0.38c	0.41c	n/a
	25-50gms	0.51c	0.41c	n/a
	50gms(NB)	0.51c	0.55c	0.44c
	50-100gms	0.70c	0.76c	0.57c
Europe	Up to 25gms	0.41c	0.44c	n/a
	25-50gms	0.83c	0.83c	0.51c
	50gms(NB)	0.83c	0.83c	0.51c
	50-100gms	€1.21	€1.21	0.70c
Rest of the World	Up to 25gms	0.57c	0.57c	n/a
	25-50gms	0.95c	0.95c	0.51c
	50gms (NB)	0.95c	0.95c	0.51c
	50-100gms	€1.71	€1.71	0.95c

+Not applicable for Eire - one basic rate

* Non-standard business envelopes

There was a further increase in postal rates towards the end of the series and effective from the 5th January 2004. This concerned international rates only (including Britain). A Priority rate basic letter overseas (including Europe) went up to 65c and to Britain increased to 60c. The Economy rate equivalents were 55c and 50c respectively.

The Euro Booklets & Coils

The picture for this last phase of the series cannot possibly be completed without saying something about the series of booklets and coil strips that were produced to cover the new currency. There are a significant number of them, no less than 13 booklets - just over 48% of all the booklets issued during the series - and 6 self-adhesive coil strips, which is 43% of this format for the series. All in a period lasting two and a half years.

If you express this output as an annual rate against the two currency periods, you can see the contrasts as follows:-

a) Pre-Euro (including dual currency) - 5 Years

8 coil issues at 1.6 coils per year

14 booklets at 2.8 booklets per year

b) Euro - 2.5 Years

6 coil issues at 2.4 coils per year

13 booklets at 5.2 booklets per year

Clearly the coil strips and booklets tend to dominate this final section of the series with an increase in use of these formats. Indeed, as I hope to show in a final article, they are at the core of the complexities that lie with these definitives.

For now, let's try to keep things straightforward whilst hinting at where problems lie. First, the coil strips. Table 4 below lists them in chronological order from the beginning of 2002 until the close of the series in 2004. It's remarkable how this shows the changes in values required and then the altered emphasis on species to convey those values.

Table. 4 - Euro currency coil strips

Year	Date	Value	Species	Perf	Size (mm)	Printers	SG No.
2002	01/01	38c	Common Blackbird	11x11	25x30	SNP	1491
		38c	Goldcrest				1492
2002	02/04	41c	Common Chaffinch	11x11	25x30	SNP	1493
		41c	Goldcrest				1494
2002	17/10	41c	Common Chaffinch	11x11	25x30	Enschede	1498
		41c	Goldcrest				1499
2003	25/08	N	Peregrine Falcon	11x11	25x30	ISSP	1495b
		N	Pied Wagtail				1495c
2003	30/09	48c	Peregrine Falcon	11x11	25x30	ISSP	1495d
		48c	Pied Wagtail				1495e
2004	05/01	48c	Peregrine Falcon	11x11	25x30	Enschede	1500
		48c	Pied Wagtail				1501

Note that the same perforation and size is maintained throughout, irrespective of which printer is used. That may be fine when the values and species used are different, but as the table shows with the Chaffinch and Goldcrest pairing, as well as the Peregrine Falcon and Pied Wagtail issues that is not always the case. There are future difficulties here, and those catalogue numbers are not going to help us!

Table 5 below repeats the exercise of the booklet issues. For simplicity, I have removed the edge cutting differentials:-

Table. 5 - Euro Currency Booklets

Year	Date	Value	Species	Perf	Size (mm)	Printers	SG Bkt.
2002	01/01	10c	Common Kingfisher	14x15	20.5x24.5	ISSP	SB95
		38c	Common Blackbird				
2002	02/04	41c	Common Chaffinch	11x11	25x30	SNP	SB97
		41c	Goldcrest				
2002	02/04	44c	Robin	11x11	25x30	SNP	SB98
2002	02/04	57c	Song Thrush	11x11	25x30	SNP	SB99
2002	06/08	41c	Common Chaffinch	14x15	24.5x27	ISSP	SB101
		41c	Goldcrest				
2002	06/08	36c	Wren	14x15	20.5x24.5	ISSP	SB102
		41c	Common Chaffinch				
2003	06/01	50c	Atlantic Puffin	11x11	25x30	ISSP	SB105
2003	25/08	N	Peregrine Falcon	11x11	25x30	ISSP	SB110
		N	Pied Wagtail				
2003	30/09	4c	Corncrake	14x15	20.5x24.5	ISSP	SB112
		48c	Peregrine Falcon				
2003	30/09	48c	Peregrine Falcon	14x15	24.5x27	ISSP	SB113
		48c	Pied Wagtail				
2003	30/09	48c	Peregrine Falcon	11x11	25x30	SNP	SB114
		48c	Pied Wagtail				
2004	05/01*	60c	Atlantic Puffin	11x11	25x30	SNP	SB116
2004	05/01*	65c	Song Thrush	11x11	25x30	SNP	SB117

*SG gives a May date, but Michel and Scharning state it as January, so I have used the latter.

The increases in postal rates seem quite clear here, although why existing species were not just re-valued seems odd. It was done with the Puffin after all.

And there are some interesting combinations here; a Kingfisher and Blackbird and a Chaffinch and Wren? And then there is the Corncrake with a Peregrine Falcon, not to forget the Peregrine with the Wagtail which I have not mentioned before. This gives the impression of something not quite thought through.

But like the coil strips there are some areas of confusion here. The issues in the booklet catalogued SB97 have the same characteristics as the coil of the same date. Ditto the N rate Peregrine Falcon (it even has the same catalogue number) as well as some of the 48c pairings

with the Wagtail. More problems ahead here. But you are going to have to wait for Part three for me to go into them in more detail.

One last point. Whilst the series was replaced by the Flower definitives in September 2004, a Booklet with the 60c Puffin was reprinted and appeared in October. Michel give the date as January, but the Eire Philatelic Association believe it was later. The stamp was unchanged, but the phosphor application is very different, spread over the entire pane although with the frames retained. The phosphor is also a dull yellow, unlike the original January printing. I regard this as the very last issue, but it received no new SG (or Michel) catalogue numbers for stamps, pane or booklet.

Statistical Summaries

Well, there is a nerdy side to all of us, but I won't be offended if you skip this because you don't like statistics. However, looking back over the issues during the two currency periods reveals some fascinating and sometimes quirky facts.

a) Species Occurrence

Table 6 below offers a summary of the occurrences of the species used and the formats in which they could be found:-

Table. 6 - Species Occurrences across formats

Species	No. Issues	No. Values	Formats	Date in use Range
Atlantic Puffin	6	5	Singles, sheetlet, booklets	1997-2004
Barnacle Goose	1	1	Single	2002-2004
Blackbird	25	3	Singles, sheetlet, booklets, coils	1998-2004
Common Chaffinch	7	1	Singles, booklets, coils	2002-2004
Common Kestrel	1	1	Single	2002-2004
Common Kingfisher	5	3	Singles, sheetlet, booklet	1997-2004
Common Ringed Plover	4	2	Singles	1998-2004
Common Shelduck	3	2	Singles	1997-2004
Common Wood Pigeon	6	2	Single, Booklets	1998-2004
Corncrake	7	3	Singles, booklets, sheetlet	1997-2004
Eurasian Blue Tit	3	2	Singles	1997-2004
Eurasian Curlew	1	1	Single	2002-2004
Eurasian Jay	1	1	Single	2002-2004
Eurasian Magpie	5	3	Singles, sheetlet	1997-2004
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	5	2	Singles	1998-2004
Eurasian Wren	3	3	Single, sheetlet, booklet	1999-2004
European Robin	13	4	Singles, sheetlet, booklets, coils	1997-2004
European Stonechat	6	3	Singles, sheetlet	1998-2004
Goldcrest	20	4	Sheetlet, Booklets, coils	1998-2004
Grey Heron	1	1	Single	2002-2004
Gt. White-fronted Goose	4	2	Singles	1997-2004
Northern Gannet	4	3	Singles, sheetlet	1997-2004
Northern Lapwing	3	3	Singles, sheetlet	1997-2004
Northern Pintail	4	2	Singles, mini-sheet	1997-2004
Oystercatcher	1	1	Single	2002-2004
Peregrine Falcon	15	4	Singles, sheetlet, booklets, coils	1997-2004
Roseate Tern	1	1	Single	2002-2004
Song Thrush	12	5	Singles, sheetlet, booklets	1998-2004
Western Barn Owl	2	2	Single, sheetlet	1997-2001
White/Pied Wagtail	8	3	Sheetlet, booklets, coils	1999-2004
Total No. Issues:	177			

Singles format only

Never used in single format

You can see from this table that there were 12 issues (40% of the total) that only saw life as singles, and of these 7 (23.3%) only appeared after the introduction of the Euro. Indeed, after this only 8 (26.6%) new species were issued. The only issue post-Euro introduction that was used other than in a singles format was the Common Chaffinch. This was realised in both coil and booklet form. The majority of the originals were recycled unchanged except with new currency values. On the other hand, there are two issues - the Goldcrest and the Pied Wagtail - that never appeared as singles. These were workhorses as self-adhesives in coils and booklets.

Other than the Goldcrest (20 issues), the chief workhorses for the series were the Blackbird (25), Peregrine Falcon (15), Robin (13) and Song Thrush (12). Altogether, these five species account for over 48% of all the issues.

And let's mention it again, the plight - rather than the flight - of the Barn Owl. A lovely stamp, but seemingly not good enough for the Euro series. In my view, the most under-exploited design of the entire series. What a waste.

b) The Formats

Statistically, the four formats utilised throughout the Irish definitives can be easily summarised with a simple table to save space. See Table. 7 below:-

Table. 7 - Breakdown of Formats

Formats	Number of Issues
Booklets (pieces)*	57
Sheets/Sheetlets (pieces)*	16
Single issues	76
Coil strip issues	28
TOTAL:	177

*Distinct issues within each format

c) Perforations & Sizes

The different perforations and physical sizes employed throughout the series were relatively straightforward and these are conveyed in Table. 8 below:-

Table. 8 - Perforation & sizes across various formats

Format	Perf	Size (mm)	Years Issued	Perf/Size Tally	No. Issues
Booklets	11x11	25x30	2001-2004	x3 Perfs	15
	11x13	24.5x27	2001	x3 sizes	4
	14x15	20.5x24.5	1997-99, 2002-03		21
	14x15	24.5x27	1998-99, 2002-03		17
					Total: 57
Sheets	14x14.25	27x48.5	1997	x2 Perfs	1
	14x15	21x24	1999	x2 sizes	15
					Total: 16
Singles	14x14	24.5x27	1998	x2 Perfs	6
	14x15	24.5x27	1997-2004	x2 sizes	59
	14x15	27x48.5	1997-99, 2001-02		11
					Total: 76
Coil Strips	9x9	25x30	2000	x4 Perfs	2
	9x10	25x30	1997-98,	x1 size	6
	11x11	25x30	2001-2004		14
	11.5x11.5	25x30	1997-98		6
					Total: 28

Total No. Issues: 177

All the essential data is contained in the table, but the main observations arising from the variety of perforations and sizes to be found can be summarised:-

- There are 8 different perforations and 5 different sizes across the series;
- The largest number of perforation variations exist with the coil strips followed by the booklets;
- The booklets have the largest number of size variations;
- Whilst the singles have the greatest number of issues, they used just two perforations and two basic sizes, with the larger size for the highest values;
- The stamps on coils were only of one size, 25x30mm, but have the largest number of different perforations;
- All coils between 2001 and 2004 however, used only one perforations as well as the same size;
- The smallest stamps issued are found only on the sheetlet issued in 1999 and are therefore readily identifiable.

d) The Value Occurrences

Another area that merits study is the distribution of the various issue values coupled with the frequency of their occurrence across the series.

Ignoring the interim dual currency set, which after all only lasted about six months with a handful of issues, analysis of the values issued during two main currency periods throws up some interesting data. The full data set for both currencies can be referenced in Table. 9 below.

Table. 9 - Values Occurrence Distribution

a) Punt Distribution

£	No	%	£	No	%
30p	44	43.1	28p	2	2.0
32p	12	11.8	£1	2	2.0
45p	6	5.9	£5	2	2.0
5p	5	4.9	N	2	2.0
35p	4	3.9	2p	1	1.0
50p	4	3.9	20p	1	1.0
4p	3	2.9	44p	1	1.0
40p	3	2.9	52p	1	1.0
£2	3	2.9	E	1	1.0
1p	2	2.0	W	1	1.0
10p	2	2.0			

Values: 21
Occurrences: 102

b) Euro Distribution

€	No	%	€	No	%
48c	13	48.1	5c	1	1.5
41c	11	40.7	7c	1	1.5
38c	5	18.5	20c	1	1.5
N	4	6.0	36c	1	1.5
4c	3	4.5	47c	1	1.5
60c	3	4.5	51c	1	1.5
1c	2	3.0	55c	1	1.5
2c	2	3.0	75c	1	1.5
10c	2	3.0	95c	1	1.5
44c	2	3.0	£1	1	1.5
50c	2	3.0	€ 2	1	1.5
57c	2	3.0	€ 5	1	1.5
65c	2	3.0	€10	1	1.5
3c	1	1.5			

Values: 27
Occurrences: 67

Let's take the old Punt currency first. Including the standard rates there were 21 values, but, occurring 102 times during a four and a half year period. That gives an average of 4.7 values per year or 22.7 issues per year.

When you then take the Euro currency, a period of just two and a half years, it gave a total of 27 individual values but across 67 occurrences. That's an average of 10.8 values or 26.8 issues per year. In other words, whilst the final period of the series was virtually half as long as that with the old currency and with only six more values, the occurrences were intense and produced issues at more than twice the previous rate. In part this was due to postal rate changes but it also seems that a wider range of values was needed with the newer currency and - perhaps whilst I am speculating - hence the introduction of new illustrations with new values.

And this is emphasised with another differential between the two periods - the number of occurrences of just one or two issues. For the old currency there were twelve of these, that is 57% of all values, but for the Euro period there were twenty one or nearly 78% of all values. The Euro phase saw more issues but mainly with a small number of occurrences.

However, not unexpectedly, both periods had one thing in common though - a concentration of issues around two or three values. With the old currency the commonest value was 30p with 44 separate issues at one time or another. Now okay, this included a sheetlet of 15 separate stamps, but even deducting those from the total does not detract from this being the most issued value regardless of format. It was followed by 32p, but with a much reduced number of issues of just twelve. These two - the 30p Blackbird and 32p Robin - were the workhorse issues for this period of the series.

With the Euro currency there was a greater evenness between the two principal values - thirteen at 48c and eleven at 41c. This time the Peregrine Falcon and Pied Wagtail, both at the same value took the lead but mainly in coil or booklet formats. The Common Chaffinch and Goldcrest took the second place and again with the same formats.

Not a conclusion - just yet!

This series is not easy going. Just thirty different species across a number of different values and currencies, with up to 177 separate issues within a seven and a half year span. But crucially, across a period of considerable transition. Quite a rollercoaster, or to mix metaphors, three dimensional chess, with many challenges for those who are seriously interested in these stamps.

All good fun, and I haven't even finished yet. So bear with me. You'll have to wait for Part Three to see where some of the even more intractable problems with collecting this series lie.