

Did You Know?

The Man Who Thought He Was King of Puffinland

Stamps tell an extraordinary historical tale. In this story there was a man who declared himself as king of an island off the coast of England.

The story is from 1925, when a wealthy Englishman, Martin Harman, purchased the tiny 3-mile long island of Lundy off the coast of Devon. Mr. Harman decided since he owned the island he should be the "king" of it. So his next steps were to make coin money and postage stamps for use of the island's inhabitants. The stamps used the image of the puffin which were birds that were on this island as well.

However in 1931 the British government was informed of what Mr. Harman was doing on his island. Great Britain summoned him and charged him with unlawfully coining money.

"Who did you say is sovereign of Lundy?" asked the judge.

"I am!" stated Mr. Harman emphatically. "and as sovereign of Lundy I coined puffins and half-puffins as I have the right to do."

The court took a dim view of His Majesty King Harman's regal pretensions. King Harman suddenly found that he was ex-king, was fined 5 pound and was ordered to relinquish his royal prerogatives.

Lundy continued as part of the British Empire and Mr. Harman returned to being an ordinary subject of the crown. The stamps remained though and became a special item in history. They are the only British stamps ever issued not by the British government, not by a British dominion, commonwealth, colony or possession.

