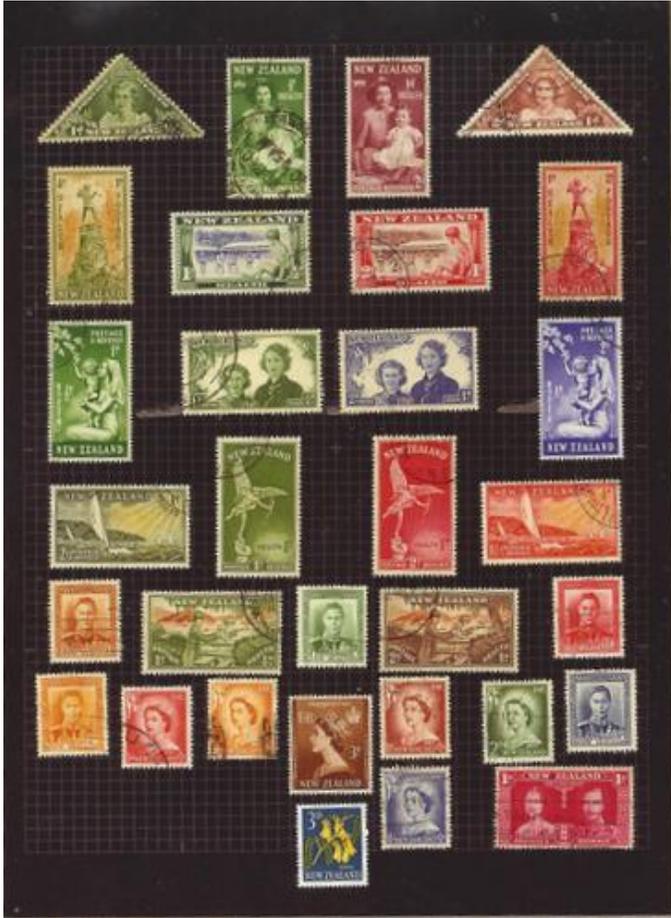


# FARROKH BULSARA – STAMP COLLECTOR

By JOHN LATTER



No? The BNPM displayed the entire collection for almost five years between 1994 and 1999 – the collection proved so popular that the BNPM created a limited edition of four postcards which sold out & today are collected in their own right.

Since then the collection has travelled the world to give interested folks an opportunity to view it – the collection was given **pride of place at Royal Mail's Stand at the 1999 World Philatelic Exhibition in Melbourne, Australia** where it attracted thousands of viewers every day. It is said that it drew greater crowds than those viewing items from the Royal Philatelic Collection in the Court of Honor. Amazing!! I cannot find any indication that it was ever displayed in the USA. To the best of my knowledge it was last on display in England in 2011.

No Farrokh was never a member of CFSC, but if he had been, is it possible that he might have submitted the page shown above for our club's silent auction? If he had done so, how much would you have bid? Would you have been interested in bidding at all? There is not much to recommend the page – there is just a hint of geometric design to the layout but nothing else to commend it. No I would not have been interested in bidding either.

Maybe we would both be wrong – the British National Postal Museum hold this page, and the fifty-four companion pages in an album among their holdings. Why would this be? Would you line up to view this collection?



**FREDDIE MERCURY 1946 - 1991**



So who was Farrokh Bulsara? Have you ever heard of him? Have you ever **heard** him?

The answer will Rock You!

If you remember the closing ceremonies of the 2012 London Olympics, one sequence was a performance of the hit song of the Rock Group 'Queen'.

## **“We Will – We Will Rock You”**

Yes young Farrokh became much better known as Freddie Mercury – lead singer of “Queen” but he didn't see the Olympic performance. He had died in 1991.

### **BACKGROUND**

Farrokh was born in Zanzibar but was mainly educated in India. It was when at an Indian boarding school that he adopted the name Freddie. When he was 17, he, along with his family, and his **beloved stamp collection**, fled to England to escape the violence then gripping Zanzibar. He enrolled at a British college and gained a Diploma in Art and Graphic Design. After graduation young Freddie got involved with a number of rock bands until, in 1970, “Queen” was formed and, as they say, the rest is history.

**WHY? OK!** He was pretty famous but.....what makes his stamp collection so sought after? It certainly is not the value nor the quality of his stamps.

The answer may surprise you. Freddie's family were followers of the ancient Zoroastrian religion; in fact his forebears had moved to Zanzibar to avoid religious persecution in Iran (or Persia as it was back then). When Freddie died, his father, in accordance with Zoroastrian beliefs, burnt most of Freddie's possessions. Somehow the stamp collection was spared the flames – his father opted to auction the collection with the proceeds going to the **Mercury Phoenix Trust** (an AIDS charity).

As far as his fans are concerned the collection is one of the very few things left anywhere in the world that Freddie touched, compiled, and loved. It is a talisman, an icon, if you will, of their idol.

In 1993 Royal Mail purchased the collection for **Three Thousand, Two Hundred and Twenty Pounds + Sales Tax** and passed it onto BNPM for safe keeping. When the BNPM first put the collection on display the fan response was immediate and so strong that the Museum created a series of numbered certificates which read:

***“This is to certify that (name) viewed and touched the Freddie Mercury Stamp Album on (date)”.***

I believe that the **“and touched”** was very important to Freddie's followers. As part of their 1999 millennium issues, Great Britain marked the life of Mercury with a stamp Sc#.1859 – above.

We have our Elvis, Roy Orbison etc. but on a global perspective Mercury is right up there with the greatest of the greats of pop music. Numerous countries, Chad, Ivory Coast, Mali and Micronesia among them, have issued stamp sets honoring Freddie Mercury.

**THE CHALLENGE** -- If you are inclined to create thematic collections, you might be interested in putting together and exhibiting a collection of 'Freddie Stamps'. I for one would be interested in viewing the exhibit.