

The Chauncy Maples

In this special report, Peter Jennings, FRPSL, FRGS, reveals how Africa's oldest steamship is to be renovated as a floating health clinic on Lake Malawi



The lake steamer Chauncy Maples depicted on Malawi stamps

The *Chauncy Maples*, Africa's oldest steamship, built in Glasgow during 1899 and depicted on three postage stamps issued by Malawi in 1967, 1975 and 1985, is to be renovated as a primary health clinic to serve the people round Lake Malawi who have no access to health services.

Appeal launched

An appeal has been launched to raise the £2 million necessary in finance, parts and supplies. The Malawian Ministry of Health has pledged the first £250,000 for the refit and the Chauncy Maples Malawi Trust, a UK-based registered charity, is helping the Malawian Government to raise the rest.

Thomas Miller, the shipping insurance brokers, is marking its 125th Anniversary, 1885-2010, by sponsoring the renovation of the *Chauncy Maples*. Under the strap line 'The View from ... Malawi', the LloydsList.com published a feature article on 17 June 2010: 'Vessel with a past to give hope for the future.'

Mark Holford, Group Marketing Director of Thomas Miller, the company that manages the UK P&I Club and other mutual insurers, was considering how to mark its 125th anniversary with a difference. Rather than hold a series of parties around the world, the directors were looking for a major project that the firm could sponsor.

Excess Baggage

Mr Holford was listening to the popular BBC Radio Four Radio programme *Excess Baggage* and heard Janie Hampton, director of the Chauncy Maples Malawi Trust, talk about plans for a floating clinic to serve the people of Malawi. His mind was made up.

Janie Hampton, a dynamic writer and broadcaster who has planned health projects for governments in Africa, South America, the Pacific and Asia, told GSM: 'This is a wonderful project and it will save the lives of many people in Malawi for many years ahead.'

As part of my recuperation from a recent serious illness, this correspondent stayed with two long-standing friends at their house overlooking the sea in Aberdovey, Mid-Wales. On a windowsill was a postcard showing a sepia reproduction of the *Chauncy Maples*, Africa's oldest steamship. It was dated April 1905.

A postcard of 1905 showing the Chauncy Maples

Visited Malawi

My hosts, Simon Morgan and his wife Margaret, a retired GP, had visited Malawi during the summers of 2008 and 2009 to work on behalf of the Anglican Church. Mr Morgan spoke enthusiastically about the *Chauncy Maples* and the fascinating story immediately captured my imagination. Simon kindly said that GSM could use one of his pictures of the *Chauncy Maples*.

Simon and Margaret Morgan were among the guests who attended a reception at the London Headquarters of Thomas Miller to officially launch the Chauncy Maples Appeal on 17 June. The article in the LloydsList.com that day concluded with a quote from the firm, 'Thomas Miller was looking for a project that reflected not only our global reach and out maritime heritage, but one that would appeal to our UK clients. The floating clinic represents the spirit of our times.'

One of the Patrons of the Chauncy Maples Malawi Trust is Bishop Donald Arden, the nephew of the engineer who oversaw the building of the *Chauncy Maples*. He was the Archbishop of Central Africa and blessed the ship after her last major refit in 1967.

Simon Morgan told GSM: 'This ship was originally an African mission ship and it would be wonderful if the new health care mission saw it reconnected with its Christian

roots as—like the churches round the lake—it seeks to serve its community and show them God's love.'

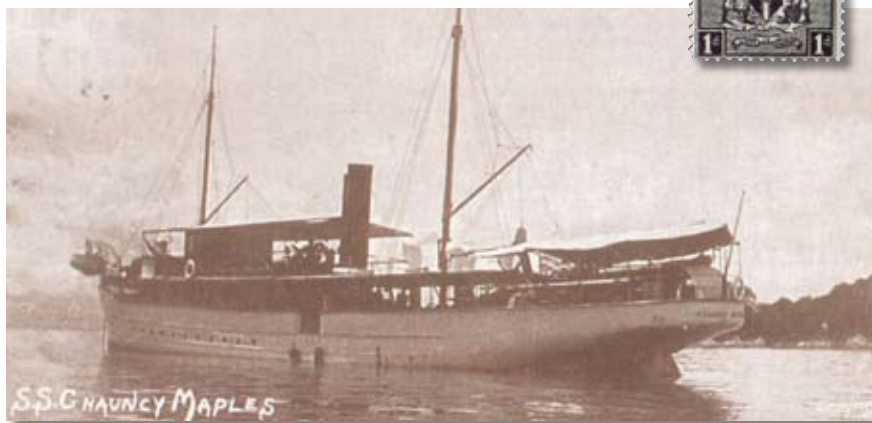
British Central Africa

A note in the Stanley Gibbons Part 1 British Commonwealth stamp catalogue reads: 'British Central Africa—A protectorate under the name Nyassaland Districts was declared on 14 May 1891, the title being changed to the British Central Africa Protectorate on 22 February 1893.

'Such a description had been in use for some time previously and the handwritten notice of 20 July 1891, announcing the introduction of postal services, described the area as British Central Africa.

'Until 1895 the British South Africa Company contributed to the revenues of the protectorate administration which, in return, governed North-eastern Rhodesia. Stamps of the British South Africa Company overprinted B.C.A. for use in British Central Africa, were issued to post offices at Fife, Fort Rosebery, Katwe, Johnston Falls, Rhodesia (later Kalungwisi) and Tanganyika (later Abercorn) in North-eastern Rhodesia from 1893 until 1899.'

The first postage stamps—stamps of the British South Africa Company overprinted—were issued on 20 July 1891. The first British Central Africa stamps were released in 1895. The 11 stamps, 1d. up to £25, (SG 21/31), were designed by Sir Henry Johnson and depicted the Arms of the Protectorate. The stamps were printed in litho by De La Rue.



Nyasaland

The title of the Protectorate was changed again from 6 July 1907.



One of my favourite stamps of Nyasaland is the 6d. Rhodes Centenary Exhibition issued on 30 May 1953 recess printed by Waterlow (SG 171).



I also like the engaging 1953 set depicting HM The Queen. The ½d. shows Lake Nyasa (173). Now renamed Lake Malawi, the lake is the third largest in Africa and ninth largest in the world. The lake is about 350 miles long and 50 miles wide, and makes up 20 per cent of the surface of Malawi.

Independence



Nyasaland attained independence on 5 July 1964 when the country was renamed Malawi. A set of four stamps were issued on 6 July 1964 (211/4). They included Dr Hastings Banda, the Prime Minister. The stamps were designed by Michael Goaman and printed by Harrisons.



Colour wash drawing of the lake steamer *Chauncy Maples* used for the 1s.6d. value

On my return from my visit to mid-Wales, I suggested a feature about the *Chauncy Maples* and the appeal to renovate the ship as a floating health centre to Hugh Jefferies FRPSL, Editor of *GSM*. I concluded my email: 'I am going to suggest that the Malawi postal authority consider issuing a special stamp and miniature sheet.'

Hugh Jefferies replied by email, 'I like the idea of the *Chauncy Maples* article. Two boats with this name have appeared on Malawi stamps in the past, the first time, in 1967, with the name spelled incorrectly.'

British Library

I also sent an email to David Beech FRPSL, Head of the British Library Philatelic Collections, a good friend, to ask if he could find anything special from British Central Africa dated 1899 and perhaps even a letter carried on *Chauncy Maples* that could be use in *GSM*. David Beech replied, 'British Central

Africa: We have nothing like a cover that might have been carried on the ship, but do have the 1898 1d. centre inverted, SG 54b—one of the great rarities of philately. This is in the Mosely Collection and has a Royal Certificate.'

Mr Beech added: 'Another stamp that you might use is the Nyasaland: 1945 2d., 1s. or 10s. values which show a map of Nyasaland and naturally includes the Lake. We have some imperforate colour trials, one or two in close to issued designs, but not quite. We also have some archival material for the 1967 and 1975 issues, but not the 1985 issue.'



Map of Nyasaland imperf colour trial, recess printed by Bradbury Wilkinson

Error on stamp 1967

The *Chauncy Maples* was first shown on the 1s.6d. value in a set of four Lake Malawi Steamers, designed by Mrs H Breggar and issued on 4 January 1967 (277/80). The *Chauncy Maples* was wrongly inscribed 'Chauncey Maples'. An 'e' had for some inexplicable reason been included in 'Chauncy'!

The stamps were printed by Harrison and Sons Limited, Photogravure stamp printers. I am sure readers of *GSM* will enjoy the archive material reproduced here.

The MV *Chauncy Maples II*—with the correct spelling of *Chauncy Maples*—was included on the 15t. in a set of four Ships of Lake Malawi (1st series), designed by R Granger Barrett and issued on 12 March 1975 (486/MS490), printed by John Waddington of Kirkstall Ltd, using the Lithography process.



Picture by Simon Morgan

The handwritten inventory ends with a typed note, 'Received on loan from the Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations the material listed above. Dated 13 July 1977 and signed for the British Library.'

Chauncy Maples II 1985

The MV *Chauncy Maples II* was shown on the 15t. in a set of four, Ships of Lake Malawi (2nd series), designed by L Curtis and issued on 3 June 1985 (728/MS732). The stamps were printed in litho by Cartor Security Printers in France.

The MV *Chauncy Maples II* was not included in the Ships of Lake Malawi set issued on 19 October 1994 (931/MS935).

Bishop Chauncy Maples

Bishop Chauncy Maples (1852–1895) was a remarkable Anglican missionary who was ordained in Oxford. In 1876 he sailed for Zanzibar where he set up clinics and schools for released slaves. Ten years later he founded the Anglican Mission on Likoma Island on Lake Malawi.

After working in Africa for 20 years Chauncy Maples was consecrated the sixth Bishop of Nyasaland, in St Paul's Cathedral in December 1895. On the way to take up his duties, his boat capsized in a storm on Lake Malawi. The crew swam to safety but Maples was hampered by his cassock and drowned. The only thing saved from the wreck was his bag of communion vessels. Chauncy Maples is fondly remembered for his devotion to Africa.

Floating clinic

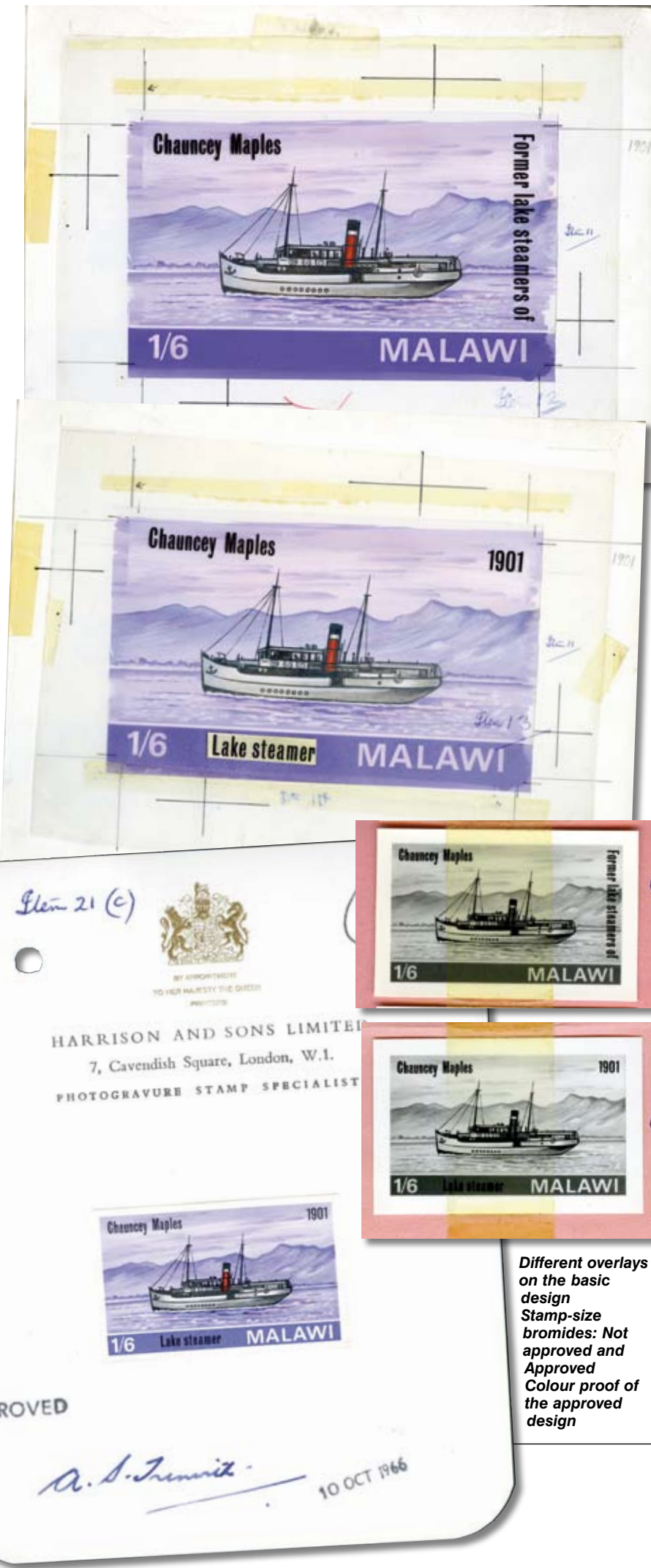
Lake Malawi desperately needs a floating health clinic. More than 50 per cent of Malawi's 13 million people live in poverty, with an income of less than 65 pence per day. There is only one doctor in Malawi for every 52,000 people. The project is being run by the Government of Malawi with support from donors in Malawi and Britain. Malawi in Central Africa is a peaceful country of immense beauty. However, it is one of the ten poorest nations in the world, with high rates of malaria, HIV-AIDS and tuberculosis. Healthy life expectancy at birth is 35 years.

Lake Malawi makes up a fifth of the country. For most of the thousand miles of shoreline there is no road and no access to health services for about four million lake dwellers. When desperate for healthcare, many travel by dug-out canoe, risking the dangerous currents, storms and crocodiles.

The *Chauncy Maples* is now owned by the Malawi Ministry of Health and is 110 years old. She remains afloat, but has not sailed for 20 years. Once renovated to be Lake Malawi's mobile clinic, her monthly rotation up the lake's west coast could serve a different village each day.

The Ministry of Health's on-board nursing team will provide treatment for diseases, such as malaria, dysentery, tuberculosis, measles and HIV/AIDS, to these inaccessible lakeside communities. Other vital improvements will include ante-natal and maternity care, simple operations, dental care, child immunisation, malaria prevention, family-planning and advice on safe sex.

The renovation of the *Chauncy Maples* is being carried out by marine engineers



Different overlays on the basic design
Stamp-size bromides: Not approved and Approved
Colour proof of the approved design

supervised by a South African naval architect. Local apprentices will gain valuable experience. The work is expected to be completed during 2012.

Chauncy Maples III

The Malawian Postal Authority might, if it has not already done so, consider releasing a set of four special stamps and a miniature sheet to commemorate the renovation of the *Chauncy Maples* into a floating health clinic on Lake Malawi.

Raise awareness

A set of two stamps depicting the *Chauncy Maples* and a different aspect of health care might usefully follow for the next few years after that. Postage stamps also have an important role to play in raising the profile of this exciting project and also raise awareness of the people and country of Malawi throughout the world!

History

Briefly, the history of the *Chauncy Maples* is as follows:

1898: £13,000 (about £4m today) was raised by public donations to build a mission ship for Lake Malawi.

1899: The ship, SS *Chauncy Maples* was built in Glasgow with the help of Henry Brunel (son of I K Brunel) and Sir John Barry (designer of Tower Bridge). The ship was disassembled into 3481 parcels, transported to Mozambique, barged up river and then carried on people's heads for 100km—the boiler was dragged by 450 people.

1901: The reassembled *Chauncy Maples* started work as a mission ship (clinic, school and church), which lasted until 1955.

1914: Became a gunboat during the First World War.

1965: Sold to Malawi Railways for use as a commercial ferry—converted from steam to diesel.

1992: Retired to Monkey Bay (southern Lake Malawi), where she remains today.

For further information about the *ChauncyMaples* project please see website: www.chancymaples.org or write to the Chauncy Maples Malawi Trust, 80 Temple Road, Oxford, OX4 2EZ.

The archive material in this article is reproduced by kind permission of the British Library Philatelic Collections. I am extremely grateful to David Beech FRPSL, Head of the Philatelic Collections and also to Paul Skinner, Philatelic Curator, for their help and encouragement with this article and in particular during my recent illness with pneumonia.



Initial essay and issued design
Stamp-size bromide of unissued
design inscribed 'Chancey
Maples'
Original proof of miniature
sheet 'Approved subject to
comments overleaf'

