ALLEGORICAL WOMEN ON POSTAGE STAMPS

By Sandy Robertson.

Allegorical figures are personifications, usually female, representing the area that they are from. The women personified are usually depicted as wearing a long draped dress.

The golden age of female personifications stretched from the French Revolution to the First World War, following the example of allegories that already existed or were resuscitated.

THIS IMAGERY WAS USED ON POSTAGE STAMPS OF MANY COUNTRIES (some of which are shown).

ENGLAND – Britannia.

2nd century Roman Britannia came to be personified as a goddess, armed with a trident and shield and wearing a centurion's helmet.

FRANCE – Marianne.

After the French Revolution she symbolised the nation. Mostly known for wearing the Phrygian cap (the symbol of Liberty).

GERMANY – Germania.

This image rather than that of the ruling monarch made it a unifying feature for the German states.

ITALY – Italia

(Also known as Italia Turrita).

Characterised by the wearing of a mural crown.

IRELAND – Erin.

With the Harp (representing Irish Nationalsim).

RUSSIA – Mother Russia.

A caring mother intrinsically related to village life.

SWITZERLAND – Helvetia.

1862 seated.
1882 standing.
1907 portrait.
1908 seated.

NEW ZEALAND – Zealandia.

The national personification of the country. Britannia is said to be her mother.

SOUTH AFRICA – Hope.

1853 seated.
1864 seated.
1893 standing.