

All aboard! Thomas the Tank Engine and his friends head for an important milestone

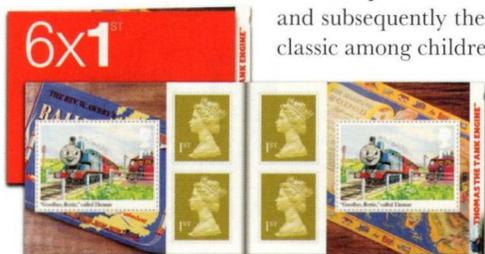
Issued on 14 June, new Thomas the Tank Engine stamps will celebrate the centenary of the birth of the series' creator, Reverend Wilbert Awdry.

The Hampshire-based clergyman was a long-time railway enthusiast like his father before him and it was the illness of Wilbert's son Christopher that was the spur to his creating the character of Thomas the Tank Engine – and subsequently the whole family of characterful trains set to become a classic among children's stories.

In the autumn of 1942, his two-year-old son had measles and was bored and confined to his bed. So Rev Awdry created a wondrous world to keep him entertained and, in 1945, the first part of *The Three Railway Engines* adventures was published. Between 1945 and 1972 Rev Awdry wrote 26 volumes of the Railway Series, comprising 105 stories. Before he

retired they had sold in their millions all over the world. In 1982 Christopher, now a father himself, heard the story of an ill-fated train rescue and decided to write a story for his two-year-old son, Richard. He carried on writing, producing three stories which he showed to his father. The Rev Awdry then put his son in touch with his original editor and it wasn't long before the Thomas series took off once more – this time with the exceptionally popular animated TV series that first aired in 1984. The first 28 stories were read by Ringo Starr, whose laconic voice lent a special appeal.

Richard Awdry went on to write 15 books set on the fictional island of Sodor



Above: illustrated stamp book with six first-class stamps – four Machins and two stamps showing Thomas and Bertie the Bus.

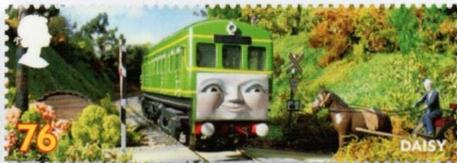
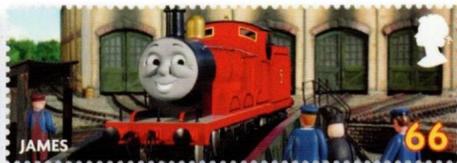
Below: First Day Cover and the two pictorial postmarks of Box, Corsham, Wiltshire, where Rev Awdry lived as a boy



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THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE™
Royal Mail First Day Cover Royal Mail Talents House 21 South Gyle Crescent Edinburgh EH12 9PB

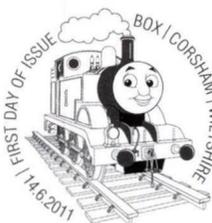


and Thomas's gentle yet adventurous world went on to capture the hearts of another generation through books, television, toys and special events.

Thomas the Tank Engine is a ten-stamp issue, comprising the six long-format landscape stamps shown above and four more included in a miniature sheet (see page 272). The individual stamps celebrate the images from the TV series, with six characters selected from the locomotives created by Rev Awdry, after researching the imagery from the shows. A long format was selected as being particularly suited to the railway engines, and additional props and details, including some of the human characters in the stories, were added to the selvedge.

For the miniature sheet original illustrations from *The Railway Series* books were chosen and the Presentation Pack contains the stamps and the miniature sheet in a separate carrier. On the illustrated insert card, Christopher Awdry writes about his father's work and how it grew to be an international publishing and TV phenomenon.

The First Day Cover is available with either ▶



Above: the stamps feature Thomas 1st class; James, 66p; Percy 68p; Daisy 76p; Toby £1; and Gordon £1.10

Thomas the Tank Engine Prices

Set of stamps	£4.66
Miniature Sheet	£2.90
Presentation Pack	£8.10
Stamp Book	£2.76
Stamp Cards (11 in set)	£4.95
First Day Envelope	30p
First Day Cover (stamps)	£6.07
First Day Cover (minisheet)	£3.96
Medal Cover	£14.95

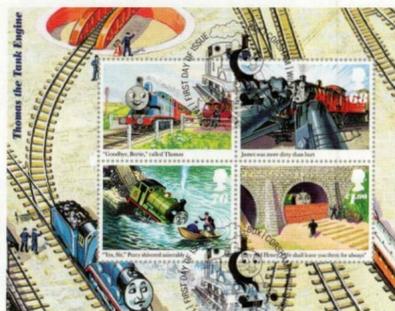
Thomas the Tank Engine Stamp Specifications

Number of stamps	Six
Design	Elmwood
Stamp format	Landscape
Stamp size	60mm x 21mm
Printer	Cartor Security Printing, Meaucé, France
Print process	Lithography
Number per sheet	24/48
Perforations	14.5 x 14.5
Phosphor	All over
Gum	PVA

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Right and below right: the FDC and minisheet, showing Thomas racing Bertie the Bus, 1st class; James has a crash, 68p; Percy ends up in the sea, 76p; Henry walled up in a tunnel, £1

Below: the medal cover with artist's impression of the medal design. (Medal not available at time of going to press.)



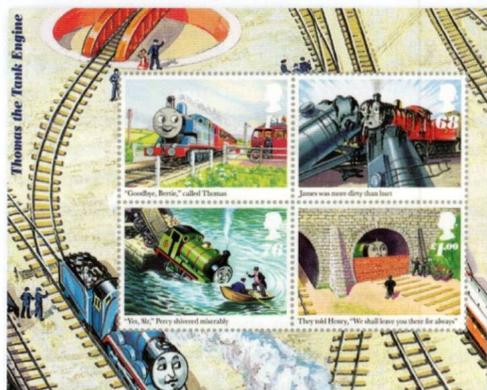
THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE™

Royal Mail First Day Cover Royal Mail Talents House 21 South Gyle Crescent Edinburgh EH12 9RF

Thomas the Tank Engine

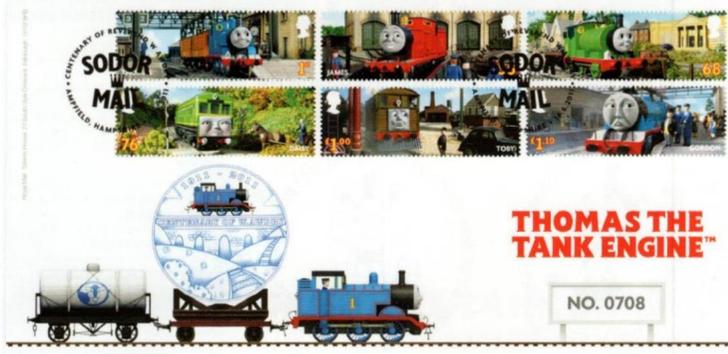
Miniature Sheet Specifications

Number of stamps	Four
Design	Elmwood
Stamp format	Landscape
Size of sheet	115mm x 89mm
Stamp size	41mm x 30mm
Printer	Cartor Security Printing, Meaucé, France
Print process	Lithography
Perforations	14.5 x 14
Phosphor	All over
Gum	PVA



An anniversary edition of *Thomas the Tank Engine – The Complete Collection* is available from Tallents House, price £24.99. The collection includes 26 of the classic books in one volume, with a foreword from the author

the stamps or the miniature sheet. The medal cover, produced in association with the Royal Mint, will feature the six sheet stamps and a specially cast medal featuring Thomas the Tank Engine, released at a later date in early August. A total of 11 stamp cards will be available, showing enlarged versions of the Thomas the Tank Engine stamps and miniature sheet •



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