

# Royal Mail News

## Pictorial Postcards 1894-1994

To mark the centenary of pictorial postcards in the UK, Royal Mail will issue five special stamps on 12 April 1994. They will be available at all post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau, Collections, Post Shop Plus and Philatelic Counters. The designs are based on the saucy seaside postcards of Donald McGill (1875-1962).

The **19p** stamp (2nd class inland basic rate) shows a bather with Blackpool Tower in the background. Somehow defying gravity as she teeters on one leg, with a crab firmly clamped to the big toe of her raised foot, our polka dotted bather is seen with the Blackpool Tower in the background. The Tower celebrates its centenary this year.

countries) features "wish you were here!" the sun shines while gulls wheel overhead and our day tripper lounges back in a sagging deck chair happily penning the traditional seaside greeting to his friends back home. What could be more appropriate for this stamp issue celebrating the last hundred years of the pictorial postcards in the United Kingdom?

Punch and Judy are shown on the **35p** stamp (Worldwide postcard rate). Once a common sight at every seaside resort, this stamp depicts the traditional Punch and Judy theme, here given a twist by the unusual seating arrangement favoured by the children. In the background are other reminders of our formerly favoured holiday preferences – a pleasure pier and a donkey, also buckling under the weight of its unconcerned rider.

The top value, **41p** (basic airmail letter rate), portrays Tower Bridge in London. The simpler pleasures of a bygone era are remembered in this stamp, with bars of chocolate tumbling from the penny crane. The smile on the player's face will not be disturbed even when one bar is carried off in the jaws of a terrier-like mongrel.



The **25p** value (1st class inland & EC basic rate) depicts "Where's my little lad?" based on the inimitable style of the undisputed master of the comic seaside postcard, Donald McGill, this design depicts a red-nosed holiday maker peering along the beach for his lad, Willie, who sits happily out of sight eating an ice-cream in the shade of his father's enormous stomach.

The **30p** stamp (Europe rate, non-EC

A reminder of home for Londoners can be seen in the depiction of Tower Bridge, which this year, too, is celebrating its centenary.

The postcard was introduced in Austria in 1869. By 1891 the card had conquered Europe and America, and by 1889 cards linked to specific locations were popular. In 1910 more than 100 million were sold in the UK and in the 1930s every seaside town had its array of cards.



POST *Valentine's* CARD  
 ROYAL MAIL MINT STAMPS  
 FOR ADDRESS ONLY

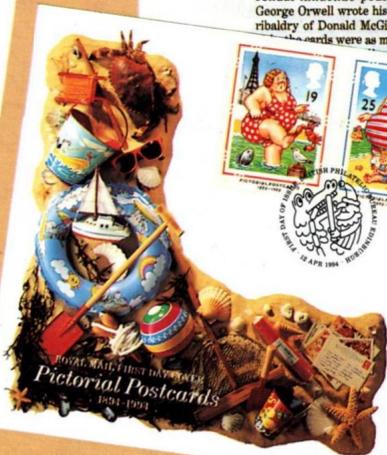
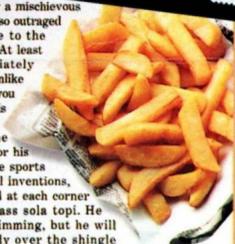
Pictorial Postcards  
 1894 - 1994

Mrs J Robinson  
 200 Manorbier Road



**The comic sea**  
 twentieth century's reaction to the prudish  
 hypocrisies of the Victorians, who insisted that,  
 as Thackeray wearily observed, humanity ended  
 at the waist. The comic card revolution can be  
 traced to four main factors: Rowland Hill's intro-  
 duction of the penny post, Anthony Trollope's  
 invention of the pillar-box, Forster's Education  
 Act of 1870 and the railway companies' intro-  
 duction of the cheap-day excursion. The contribu-  
 tions of Hill, Trollope and Forster are obvious enough,  
 but it was the railway that made possible the day's outing to the seaside  
 - there and back again in a single  
 day, all for the cost of a few  
 shillings. Once by the sea a man,  
 or a woman, was free to indulge  
 in all sorts of what H G Wells  
 described as the jolly coarse-  
 ness of life without harassment  
 by chaperones or detection by  
 snooters. Down there, scattered  
 among the paraphernalia of  
 this great burst for the sea, lay the  
 comic postcard. The comic card  
 pervaded all areas of national life,  
 from the saloon bar to the kitchen, from  
 bedroom to boardroom, from schoolyard  
 to railway station. But of all the settings, it was  
 the seaside that offered the, largely anonymous,  
 Turners and Whistlers of the postcard genre  
 their happiest hunting ground, for it was at the  
 seaside that one took one's clothes off. The  
 floodgates were breached and a tidal wave of  
 sexual innuendo poured in. By the time  
 George Orwell wrote his definitive essay on the  
 ribaldry of Donald McGill's fat ladies and saucy  
 cardinals were as much a part of the holiday  
 as the sun, sea and sand, as the  
 twinkles and donkey

lady in the  
 Blackpool for a break, never  
 the local crabs might play a mischievous  
 hand, inspiring a reaction so outraged  
 that even the fish come to the  
 surface to enjoy the fun. At least  
 the victim is appropriately  
 dressed for the occasion, unlike  
 the man writing his 'wish you  
 were here' messages to his  
 friends back home. With  
 dogged British grit, he  
 remains clothed except for his  
 bare feet. On his head he sports  
 one of the great sartorial inventions,  
 the handkerchief knotted at each corner  
 to form the working-class sola topi. He  
 has no intentions of swimming, but he will  
 paddle, hopping gingerly over the shingle  
 before returning to his digs for a deliciously  
 indigestible high tea. Does our holiday-  
 maker experience the occasional pang of home-  
 sickness? The card artists have thought of that,  
 too. The fat man trying his luck at the penny  
 crane has a mock-up of Tower Bridge before his  
 eyes, just to remind him of the druglery  
 awaiting him at home in London. Such thoughts  
 play no part in the life of the terrier, however,  
 which is seen in the act of absconding with a bar  
 of chocolate. In defiance of all the predictions  
 of the social historians, Punch and Judy  
 remains popular with the children so sophisti-  
 cated in the art of improvisation that the  
 back of a fat lady is adapted as a comfortable  
 perch. But the most famous joke of all is the one  
 about a fat man whose bulging stomach  
 precedes him so outrageously that his  
 little boy is lost to sight. Naturally the  
 boy is called Willie, otherwise what  
 The



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Today a huge postcard industry produces cards featuring paintings, portraits, views etc, but the quintessential example of this delightful art form remains the classic comic seaside postcard.

Stamped postcards were first issued in Austria, and by the British Post Office in October 1870. Until September 1894 the public were permitted only to send the Post Office cards. Once private cards were allowed, it was just a few months before pictorial cards made their debut. Amongst the earliest cards were those produced by George Stewart & Co of 92



George Street, Edinburgh before the end of 1894.

The comic seaside postcard is the 20th century's reaction to the prudish hypocrisies of the Victorians, who insisted that, as Thackeray wearily observed, humanity ended at the waist. The comic card revolution can be traced to four main factors: Rowland Hill's introduction of the Penny Post, Anthony Trollope's invention of the pillar-box, Forster's Education Act of 1870 and the railway companies' introduction of the cheap-day excursion.

Donald McGill, the doyen of the saucy postcard was born Fraser Gould in Blackheath and studied naval architecture before turning to cartoons. His first comic design was for a sick relative in 1904, his first comic card followed in 1905. It is estimated he produced no fewer than 10,000 designs, one card alone selling in excess of 2 million copies.

George Orwell wrote a famous *Horizon* essay (1941) on the ribaldry of McGill's cards showing fat ladies and saucy girls; such cards were as much a part of the holiday experience as whelks, winkles and donkey rides. The cards were supposed to be undeniably vulgar designed to tickle the risibilities of schoolboys and shopgirls, factory hands and office clerks. They were based on the smutty joke and the *double entendre*. They obey certain ground rules that have remained unaltered over the years.

McGill, Britain's most prolific postcard designer, is also noted for his drawings having pungent social and political comment during the Second World War, cards of military humour and patriotic designs.

The stamps were designed by Mike Dempsey of Carroll, Dempsey & Thirkell, with illustrations by Bill Dare.

#### Technical Details

Printer:	The House of Questa Ltd
Process:	Offset-lithography
Size:	30 x 41mm
Sheets:	100
Perforation:	14 x 15
Phosphor:	19p one band; 25-41p 2 bands (all with flour)
Paper:	OBA free (OBA = Optional Brightening Agent)
Gum:	PVA
Presentation Pack:	No. 246, price £1.85
Stamp Cards:	Nos 160a-e, price 25p each

### First Day Facilities

Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the Bureau, Collections, and Philatelic Counters around a week before 12 April, price 25p.

The Bureau will provide a first day cover service – collectors may order the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps cancelled with pictorial “First Day of Issue” postmark of the Bureau or Blackpool, price £2.18 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £1.86 to overseas addresses (no VAT). Orders for first day covers must be received at the Bureau by 12 April.

Collectors may send their own stamped covers, on the day of issue, for the Bureau or Blackpool cancels to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Forth Street, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE NE1 1AA (Blackpool cancel). The outer envelope should be endorsed “Pictorial First Day of Issue postmark”.

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for collectors who wish to post covers to receive the standard, non-pictorial “First Day of Issue” handstamps.

Details of other special handstamps, sponsored by Royal Mail, stamp dealers and others, will be found in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – the Royal Mail’s magazine for postmark collectors. It is available on subscription from the British Philatelic Bureau: £10 UK and Europe, £21.75 Rest of World (Airmail).

### 1995 Special Stamp Programme

The Post Office Board has approved the Special Stamp Programme for 1995:

Cats

Spring (Four Seasons)

National Trust (Centenary)

CEP: Peace and Freedom

Communications (Sir Rowland Hill and Marconi)

Shakespeare/Globe Theatre

Science Fiction (Centenary and World Cup)

Christmas

Details of dates of issue and values will be announced later this year.

### Royal Mail introduces Commemorative Labels

Commemorative labels are nearly as old as the postage stamp, privately produced labels commemorating Queen Victoria’s visit to

Scotland were printed in 1846. Many such labels were produced in 1897 to mark her diamond jubilee and over the years numerous attractive labels have been issued and are popular with some collectors even though they have no postal validity and are not listed in the standard catalogues.

Royal Mail are introducing commemorative labels in “window books”. The first, to mark the 300th anniversary of the Bank of England, will be in a book of four 1st class stamps to be issued on 27 July. The label will be attached to the four stamps, making a pane of the same overall size as a pane of 10 stamps. This commemorative label can be affixed to envelopes but has no postal validity on its own.

Royal Mail and the Bank of England are producing a “Philatelic Numismatic cover” which will bear the pane of stamps plus and label and a £2 coin issued by Royal Mint to mark the Bank’s tercentenary. Details will be published in a later Bulletin.

Further commemorative labels are being planned – details will be announced in due course.



### Special Stamp Yearbook draw

A special draw was arranged to mark the publication of the 10th edition of Royal Mail’s *Special Stamp Yearbook*. The draw took place at the British Philatelic Bureau in Edinburgh on 20 December and the lucky winner was Mrs Jane Guillem of Surrey who receives all nine previous yearbooks (1984-92), catalogued in Stanley Gibbons 1993 *Collect British Stamps* at £474! Our picture shows Julie Dunwiddie, Royal Mail’s Manager Direct & Overseas Sale, who drew Mrs Guillem’s winning entry, with Keith MacDonald, the Bureau’s Marketing Manager.