

# Royal Mail News

## Christmas 1994

This year's Christmas issue comprises five stamps showing children acting out the story of the Nativity. The stamps go on sale at post offices and philatelic outlets on 1 November.

The **19p** stamp (inland 2nd class rate) shows a nativity play scene of the Holy Family in the stable at Bethlehem. The **25p** value (inland 1st class and EC basic rate) depicts children in the role of the Three Wise Men, or Magi, who brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for the new-born child. The **30p** value (non-EC European countries) shows a young girl as Mary, with a doll in her arms symbolising the infant Jesus. The **35p** value (overseas postcard rate) portrays children as the shepherds to whom an angel announced the birth of Jesus. The **41p** denomination (airmail letters, basic rate) shows two of the little "angels", who were part of the heavenly host which offered praise to God for the Nativity.

The stamps are the work of Yvonne Gilbert who designed the popular 1984 Christmas issue



(and Christmas stamp book cover) and the 1985 Arthurian Legends set.

This is Britain's 29th issue of Christmas stamps. The first set, comprising 3d and 1s6d stamps, were issued on 1 December 1966 – the designs by children resulted from a competition announced by the Postmaster General, Mr Anthony Wedgwood-Benn. Over the years some 129 Christmas stamps have been issued depicting both religious and secular subjects. The 20½p 1983 Christmas stamp won a prestigious Italian design award.

An article on Christmas stamps in general will be published in next month's *Bulletin*, with a feature on the British issues in December.

### Technical Details

Printers: Harrison & Sons Ltd

Process: Photogravure

Size: 41 x 30mm

Sheets: 100

Perforation: 15 x 14

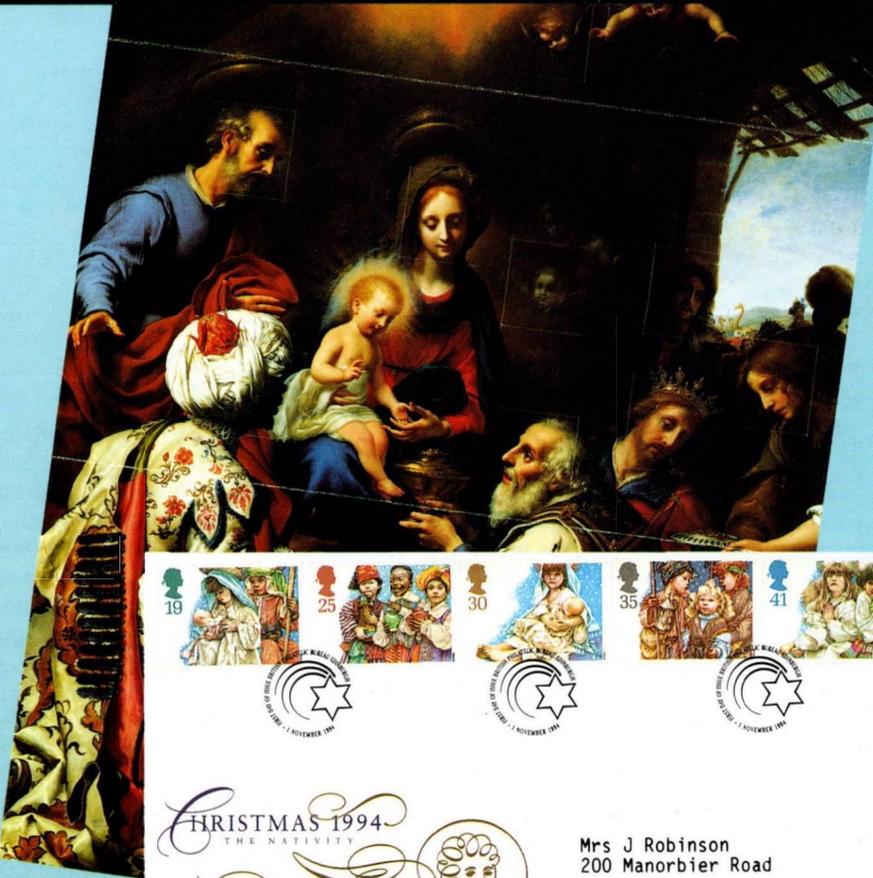
Phosphor: 19p – one phosphor band  
25p-41p phosphor coated paper

Paper: OBA free (OBA=Optical Brightening Agent)

Gum: PVA Dextrin

Presentation Pack: No. 252, price £1.85

Stamp Cards: Nos. 166a-e, price 25p each



CHRISTMAS 1994  
THE NATIVITY

ROYAL MAIL  
FIRST DAY COVER

Mrs J Robinson  
200 Manorbier Road  
ILKESTON  
Derbyshire  
DE7 4AB



### *First Day Facilities*

Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office philatelic outlets around a week before 1 November, price 25p.

The Bureau will provide a first day cover service – collectors may order the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps cancelled with a pictorial “First Day of Issue” postmark of the Bureau or Bethlehem, Llandeilo, Dyfed, 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 1 November.

Collectors may send their own stamped covers on the day of issue, for the Bureau or Bethlehem cancels, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Penarth Road, CARDIFF CF1 1AA (for Bethlehem postmark). 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).

Collectors are reminded that it will be in order to affix just the 19p Christmas stamp to covers to receive all special cancels (“First Day of Issue”, sponsored and philatelic counters), in use on 1 November. The minimum 1st class

rule is suspended on this day as the Christmas set includes a 2nd class rate stamp. It should be noted that this concession applies only to the 19p Christmas stamp; covers bearing other than Christmas stamps must bear at least 1st class postage.

### *Christmas Stamp Books*

Books containing twenty 19p and ten 25p Christmas stamps will be available from post offices, the Bureau, Post Office philatelic outlets and many retailers from 1 November, price £3.80 and £2.50 respectively.

A book of four 60p definitives (covering the worldwide airmail rate), together with festive labels will be issued on 4 October and will be available from the above outlets.

### *Christmas Stamp Pyramids*

The beautiful 1994 Christmas stamps are captured forever in colourful optical glass paperweights – a perfect Christmas gift. These pyramids are available only from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street EDINBURGH EH3 5TT, price £24.95 each. Please order, quoting code for the stamp(s) you want incorporated in the pyramid(s): 19p – PY119, 25p – PY120, 30p – PY121, 35p – PY122, 41p – PY123. Telephone orders/enquiries: 031-550 8989. This set of five Christmas pyramids is available only until 24 December 1994; early ordering advisable.

### *Christmas Aerogramme*

This year’s Christmas aerogramme will be available at post offices, the Bureau and Post Office philatelic outlets from 4 October, price 45p (includes 36p aerogramme postage). The aerogramme was illustrated in last month’s *Bulletin*.

### *Christmas Cards*

This year’s beautiful Christmas stamp designs have been reproduced as Christmas cards. Available in packs of 10, these top quality Christmas cards, together with the charming Christmas stamps, will make Christmas greetings you send extra special. They will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau and selected retailers throughout the country, recommended price £3.99 for a pack of 10 cards with envelopes. Philatelic Bureau customers will be able to order their Christmas cards at a discounted price of £3.75 per pack.

### *Christmas Gift Pack*

An attractively produced Gift Pack, containing a



presentation pack, first day cover (pre-addressed to the British Philatelic Bureau), and set of stamp cards of the 1994 Christmas issue goes on sale on 1 November. The pack, price £6.50, will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau, Post Office philatelic outlets and from self-service display units in selected W H Smith, Martins, and Tesco shops. It will remain on sale at the shops during the Christmas period and from the Bureau and philatelic outlets for one year, unless, of course, sold out earlier.

This is the second gift pack in this format – the first, containing Channel Tunnel products, proved extremely popular with Royal Mail's philatelic customers and was "sold out" at the Bureau within a few weeks. By extending the distribution of the Christmas pack, it is hoped to bring stamps to the attention of a wider audience and so demonstrate the appeal of

stamp presentation packs, first day covers and stamp cards as a reasonably priced, attractive and unusual Christmas gift.

#### *Withdrawal of Christmas Stamps*

Any remaining stocks of the 1994 Christmas stamps, stamp books and aerogramme will be withdrawn from sale at post offices on Christmas Eve. All will remain on sale at the Bureau and Post Office philatelic outlets for one year from date of issue, unless sold out earlier.

The 1993 Christmas stamps (£1.50 set), stamp books (£2.50 and £3.80), presentation pack (£1.85), and stamp cards (£1.25 set) will be withdrawn from sale at the Bureau and Post Office philatelic outlets on 8 November 1994, also the 1993 Collectors' Pack (£12.95) and 1993 Yearbook (£21). The 1993 Christmas aerogramme (45p) will be withdrawn from sale on 4 October.