

1995 Christmas Stamps

This year's Christmas issue comprises five stamps showing robins – a bird traditionally associated with the festive season. The stamps go on sale at post offices, and philatelic outlets on 30 October. Please note this revised date; the stamps were earlier announced for issue on 7 November, then 31 October.

The **19p** stamp (inland 2nd class basic rate) shows a robin sheltering in the aperture of a posting box. The **25p** value (inland 1st class and EU basic rate) depicts a robin sitting on iron railings, with holly in the background. On the



30p denomination (Europe, non-EU countries rate), a robin is featured on a doorstep with milkbottles (note the Christmas bottle tops), whilst the **41p** stamp (basic airmail rate) shows a robin sitting on a road sign. Finally the **60p** stamp (airmail second weight step) depicts a robin on a doorknob, in front of a seasonal decoration.

As one of the most popular British birds it is perhaps surprising that the robin has appeared on so few British stamps. It made its debut on one of the four Birds stamps of August 1966 (SG 698) and features on the 31p value of the 1983



Earlier robin stamps

Christmas set (1235). A tiny robin sits on the hat of the snowman on Michael Foreman's 1987 34p Christmas stamp (1379). Robins feature on the 1977, 1992 and 1993 Christmas aerogrammes as well as this year's issue, and on the front covers of 30p stamp books dated October and December 1971 (SG DQ60/1).

The 1995 Christmas stamps are the work of Ken Lilly who designed the 1986 Nature Conservation stamps. These were voted the most popular stamps of the year by readers in our first *Bulletin* Favourite Stamps Poll. It remains to be seen if Mr Lilly's Christmas stamps are amongst the most liked of 1995.

This is Britain's 30th issue of Christmas stamps. The first set, comprising 3d and 1s6d stamps, was issued on 1 December 1966, using designs from a children's competition. Over 130 Christmas stamps have since been issued – see James Mackay's article "British Christmas Stamps" in the December 1994 issue of this magazine.

Christmas Robins

Royal Mail Airm Stamps
CHRISTMAS 1995



THE POTTING SHED
R10 KETTLE END

Dear Tommy Wren,



This letter comes to you with Christmas greetings wishing you much joy and a Happy New Year, as you creep, shy and mouse-like, among the branches of your hedgerow home.

I wonder if you know why it is that we robins appear on so many cards at Christmas? Partly perhaps it is because people think of us as friendly birds, bright and cheerful in the winter cold. Christmas, of course, is a time for good cheer and kindness.

But I think the real reason, Tommy, why so many Christmas cards bear pictures of robins is this.

Long, long ago, when postmen first began to deliver letters to people's homes, each wore a uniform with a coat of a brilliant shade of red. The same red that I wear upon my breast. "Good morning to you, Robin postman," folk would say as they came to their front doors to collect their letters. So when it became the fashion to send greetings through the post at Christmas time, who else but us redbreasts were the best choice to appear on the cards?



Perched upon railings or upon snow-laden branches we were, perhaps with a sprig of holly or of mistletoe in our beaks, sometimes carrying a letter doing what we...



CHRISTMAS ROBINS Royal Mail First Day Cover

Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbier Road
ILKESTON
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB

Printers: Harrison & Sons Ltd
Process: Photogravure
Size: 41 x 30mm
Sheets: 100
Perforation: 15 x 14
Phosphor: 19p – one phosphor band
25p–60p two phosphor bands
Paper: OBA free (OBA = Optical
Brightening Agent)
Gum: PVA Dextrin

First Day Facilities

Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets around a week before 30 October, 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

£2.47 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £2.11 to overseas addresses (no VAT). Orders for first day covers must be received at the Bureau by 30 October 1995.

Collectors may send their own stamped covers on the day of issue, for these 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 “FD9521” (Bureau), or “FD9522” (Bethlehem).

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for collectors who wish to post covers to receive local (mostly 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 30 October. The minimum 1st class rate is suspended on this day as this set includes a 2nd class rate stamp. It should be noted that this concession applies only to the 19p Christmas stamp; otherwise 1st class postage is required.

Serviced First Day Cover

Fully serviced first day covers, bearing the Bethlehem pictorial first day postmark, will be available from many W H Smith shops, offered while stocks last.

Presentation Pack and Stamp Cards

A presentation pack (price £2.10) will be available from the Bureau, Post Office Counters philatelic outlets, main post offices, and most W H Smith shops. Stamp cards (25p each) will be available from the Bureau, POC philatelic outlets, and main post offices. The pack has been written by Dick King-Smith, one of Britain’s most popular and prolific children’s authors.

Christmas Stamp Books

Books containing twenty 19p, ten 25p and four 60p Christmas stamps will be available from post offices, the Bureau, philatelic outlets, and many retailers from 30 October, price £3.80, £2.50, and £2.40 respectively. The front covers reproduce



the design of the relevant stamps, 19p, 25p, or 60p.

Christmas Stamp Pyramids

These attractive robin stamps are captured forever in colourful optical glass pyramid-shaped paperweights – a perfect Christmas gift. The pyramids are available from the British Philatelic Bureau, price £24.95 each. Please quote which value stamp you require in the pyramid – 19p, 25p, 30p, 41p, or 60p.

Christmas Aerogramme

This year's Christmas aerogramme will be available from post offices, the Bureau, and philatelic outlets from 3 October. Price 45p (includes 36p aerogramme postage). It was illustrated in last month's magazine.

Christmas Gift Pack

An attractively produced Gift Pack containing a presentation pack, first day cover and set of stamp cards will be available from 30 October. This is the fifth such pack, following 1994 Channel Tunnel, 1994 Christmas, 1995 Cats, and 1995 National Trust. The pack, price £6.50, will be available from the Bureau, philatelic outlets, and selected W H Smith shops. It makes a reasonably-priced Christmas gift, especially for a young collector.

Withdrawal of Christmas Stamps

Any remaining stocks of the 1995 Christmas stamps, stamp books and aerogramme will be withdrawn from sale at post offices on 23 December. All will remain on sale at the Bureau and philatelic outlets for one year from the date of issue, unless sold out earlier.

The 1994 Christmas stamps (£1.50 set), stamp books (£2.50 and £3.80), presentation pack (£2.25), and stamp cards (£1.25 set) will be withdrawn from sale at the Bureau and philatelic outlets on 31 October 1995, also the 1994 *Yearpack* (£15.95) and *Special Stamps Yearbook* (£22.50 standard version, £75 leather bound). The 1994 Christmas aerogramme (45p) will be withdrawn from sale on 3 October.

1995 Royal Mail Yearbook

Volume 12 of the Royal Mail *Special Stamps Yearbook* will go on sale on 30 October; the handsomely produced book contains background information about the development and production of all the special issues of 1995. The book is hardbound with a matching slipcase and

includes sets of the following stamps: Cats; Springtime; National Trust; Peace & Freedom; Science Fiction; Shakespeare's Globe; Communications; Rugby League Centenary; and Christmas. The book will be available from the Bureau, philatelic outlets, and main post offices, price £22.50 (standard), £75 (leather bound).

1995 Yearpack

The 1995 *Yearpack* will be available from 30 October, price £15.95. The pack contains all special and greetings stamps mounted on a quality display board with a colourful and informative brochure giving details of the stamp subjects. Available from the Bureau, philatelic outlets, and main post offices.



NPM Postcards

The National Postal Museum will issue four new postcards having a Christmas theme on 30 October. These will be available to callers at the Museum shop (25p each), or by post from the