

Christmas

Royal Mail's annual festive issue



Technical details

Printer De La Rue

Process Gravure

Stamp size 32 x 30mm

Sheets 50

Perforation 14.5 x 14 die cut

Phosphor One band 2nd, two bands others. The date 2005 appears 'reversed out' of the phosphor at the bottom left of each stamp.

Gum Self-adhesive, no matrix

Gutter pairs Vertical

Miniature sheet size 115 x 105mm

Miniature sheet perforation 14.5 x 14

Cylinders and colours

All values D1 silver ● D1 magenta ● D1 yellow ● D1 cyan (blue) ● D1 black ● D1 phosphor

ROYAL MAIL has issued Christmas stamps annually since 1966. This year's Christmas stamps – the 40th issue – go on sale at Post Office branches, Tallents House and Post Office philatelic outlets on 1 November. As for the past four years, they are printed on self-adhesive paper, the stamps having die-cut perforations, and can be removed from sheets by rouletting which surrounds the 'perforations'. There will also be a miniature sheet containing the same stamps but in conventional gummed format. They were designed by Irene von Treskow and feature the Madonna and Child as seen through the eyes of different cultures, including those of Haiti (2nd class) India (68p), North American Indian (60p) and Australian Aborigine (£1.12) as well as the more familiar European interpretations (1st and 42p).

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail FDC envelopes will be available from main Post Office branches and philatelic outlets about a week before 1 November, price 25p. Orders for FDCs with the stamps or miniature sheet cancelled by a pictorial first day postmark of Tallents House Edinburgh or Bethlehem must reach Tallents House by the date of issue. Price £4.33 UK or £3.69 overseas. Please state if stamps or miniature sheet are required.

Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Penarth Road, Cardiff CF11 8TA (Bethlehem postmark), marking the outer envelope 'FD0525' or 'FD0526'. Covers can be posted or handed in at main Post Office branches for the Bethlehem postmark. Details of sponsored handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from Tallents House. For a sample copy write to: The Editor, *British Postmark Bulletin*, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ.



STAMP BOOKS Two Christmas self-adhesive stamp books (folded sheetlets) will be available from 1 November: 12 × 1st class stamps (£3.60) and 24 × 2nd class stamps (£5.04). The books have been printed by De La Rue.

CHRISTMAS SMILERS There will be one Christmas Smilers sheet, with 10 1st class and 10 2nd class Winter Robins Christmas stamps, price £5.60. It will be printed in litho by Cartor, with self-adhesive stamps. The stamps in sheets and books are printed in gravure. Smilers are available from Royal Mail Tallents House and Post Office philatelic outlets. A Smilers sheets album is available from Tallents House, price £16.50 (order code PA665).

CHRISTMAS AIRLETTERS There will be no new airletters (aerogrammes) this year; those issued in 2004 will be reissued at Post Office branches on 1 November. The bilingual version will be available only from Post Office branches in Wales, Tallents House and Post Office philatelic outlets. Price 52p each. The design features Father Christmas trudging through the snow with a sack of presents. The airletter was designed by Raymond Briggs and printed by Mail Solutions Limited. It bears the usual 'stamp' comprising the Machin head of The Queen and 'Great Britain Postage Paid' indicator. The airletter does not qualify for 'First Day of Issue' postmarking ●

A well-illustrated presentation pack (above, price £3.85) and stamp cards (not shown, 30p each) will be available from main Post Offices and philatelic outlets. There will be seven stamp cards: one for each of the stamps, and one for the miniature sheet.

The miniature sheet (top, on cover) contains one of each stamp. These stamps are conventionally gummed, not self-adhesive.

Yearbook and Yearpack The 2005 Yearbook and Yearpack, containing all the year's special stamps, will go on sale on 1 November when the Christmas stamps are issued. Both will remain on sale until the end of 2007 ●

Prices Yearbook: £39.95 standard; £75 deluxe leather-bound. Yearpack: £34.95.