

Hidden dates

A closer look at the issues of 2007 and 2008, by Richard West

FROM THE END OF 2005 Royal Mail has incorporated within most special issues a 'hidden date' identifying the year in which the stamps were issued. Exceptions have been when a design includes a caption stating the year of issue, or when an earlier design (first issued prior to 2005) has been re-used. The date can be found within the design (with litho printed stamps) or on the phosphor bands (with gravure printed stamps). Where a design appears in different forms, ie, sheet stamps, or in miniature sheets, stamp booklets or Smilers sheets, the date is in the same position on each version.

The following checklist indicates where the dates can be found on the stamp issues of 2007 and 2008. The hidden dates continue – see if you can spot them on the 2009 issues.

The Beatles The date appears vertically at the bottom corner of the phosphor band opposite to where the value is on each of the sheet stamps. On the miniature sheet the date reads horizontally at the bottom of the phosphor bands in the centre of the sheet, ie, below the denomination '1st' in each case.



Sea Life On all values in this set the dates can be found in the border below the stamp design, just below the caption on each stamp, reading horizontally.

The Sky at Night The date appears at the bottom of the right-hand phosphor band on each stamp, reading horizontally.



World of Invention The date appears at the bottom of the left-hand phosphor bands, reading vertically.

Abolition of Slavery On the two 1st class values, the date appears near the back of the collar just below the hair of the portraits. On the 50p values the date appears just above the lower part of the back of the collar on the 'Sharp' design, and by the back of the neck below the hair on the 'Clarkson' design. On the 72p values, the date appears just above the collar to the right of the portrait on the 'Hannah More' design, and by the rear of the neck, just below the hair on the 'Sancho' design.



Celebrating England Only a miniature sheet was issued: no date appears on the 1st class stamp that has the same design as the standard definitive. On the other three stamps the date reads vertically within a phosphor band towards the bottom of the stamp. On the 1st class Flag of England, the date is within the left-hand band; on the two 78p stamps the date appears in the right band. ▶



Beside the Seaside On all values, the date is positioned vertically at the bottom of the right-hand phosphor band. The same applies to the 1st class value as issued in stamp booklets in 2008.

Machin 40th anniversary The date appears on the two specially designed stamps only (not on the £1 definitives). On these stamps the phosphor takes the form of a frame, enclosing the 4d Machin or the portrait of Arnold Machin; in other words, the same as the grey frame of the designs. The date reads horizontally in the phosphor, centred just below the 4d Machin or the portrait.

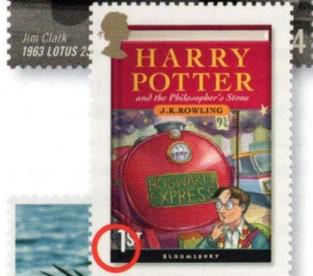
Grand Prix The date appears within the designs as follows: 1st class Vanwall, by the driver's left hand • 1st class BRM, on the lower part of the driver's right sleeve • 54p Tyrrell, on the driver's right arm • 54p Lotus, on the yellow stripe towards the rear of the car • 78p McLaren, on the white of the car, just underneath the red band below the driver's right upper arm • 78p Williams, by the final 'a' of lower 'calma'.

Harry Potter Easier to spot on this issue, as the date appears vertically at the bottom left of each book cover on the sheet stamps, and in the bottom right of each design on the miniature sheet.

Endangered Species: Birds The date is found in the following positions (from left to right). Top row: near the tip of the Eagle's tail • at right-hand end of branch on which Bearded Tit is perched • at bottom right of bird's right wing • below branch on which bird is perched, just below the bird's tail • just below, and at the rear of, the left-hand wing of Marsh Harrier. Bottom row: at back of neck of Avocet • at top of right leg of the Bittern • below leaf of flower on which the Warbler is perched, a little to the left of the tail • on foot of Corncrake • just behind tail of Peregrine.

Army Uniforms The dates appear within the designs, reading from left to right for each of the se-tenant strips. 1st class: near Military Policeman's right elbow; just by the Tank Commander's left hand, by his belt; and by the Observer's left armpit • 78p: by Rifleman's pouch; by the Grenadier's left arm, just below the belt; and just under the Trooper's left thumb.

The Queen's Diamond Wedding The date is found as follows (left to right for each pair): 1st, at the back of the Queen's neck and on the front of Prince Philip's epaulette • 54p, to the left of the date '1980' and on Prince Philip's shirt to the right of his tie • 78p, on Prince Philip's shirt just below his tie and at the back and base of the Queen's neck. On the miniature sheet the date reads vertically at the bottom of the left-hand phosphor band on each stamp.



Christmas On the 'Angel' designs the date appears horizontally at the bottom of a phosphor band: in the case of the 2nd class values it can be found at the bottom of the single band; for all other values, it is at the bottom of the left-hand band. As the 'Madonna and Child' designs are continuing in use, no date was included on these two values.



Lest We Forget The date appears on the 'Poppy' design at the bottom of the left-hand phosphor band, reading vertically.

James Bond On each of the stamps the date is hidden on the third book cover from the left. The positioning is as follows: 1st Casino Royale, by foot of right-hand character • 1st Doctor No, by right-hand foot of James Bond • 54p Goldfinger, beneath the left-hand character's right shoe • 54p Diamonds are Forever, beneath the right-hand character's right foot • 78p For Your Eyes Only, by James Bond's right leg below flag • 78p From Russia With Love, between James Bond's legs.

Working Dogs The dates are found in the following positions: 1st, at left of stamp, at the base of the dog's coat • 46p, by the top of the dog's left front leg • 48p, just under the clip for the dog's lead • 54p, just below the harness on the dog, on the white fur at the top of its leg • 69p, at the top of the dog's right rear leg, on the white fur • 78p, at the top of the dog's harness.



British Monarchs: The Houses of Lancaster and York This is another easy one to find, as the date is in the border of the stamp design, at the bottom left, on the stamps in both normal sheets and in the miniature sheet.

Celebrating Northern Ireland The dates are found as follows (reading from left to right, and from top to bottom): 1st, at the top of the castle wall at right of stamp • 78p, below the table on which is placed a glass of wine • 78p, by the lamp standard at centre of the bridge • 1st, in the sea by the rocks, in the centre of the left-hand edge of the design.

Rescue at Sea 1st, by the wave in the middle of the left-hand edge of the design • 46p, by an upright support on the lifeboat at the centre of the stamp • 48p, near the corner of the stern of the boat • 54p, in the sea at the bottom left of the stamp design • 69p, just below the first orange stripe from the front of the helicopter, above the float • 78p, on top of vertical grille at right of stamp.

Insects The date is found vertically in the lower part of the 1 of 1st on all values. ▶



Cathedrals Dates are in the following positions: 1st, just above the lower part of the screen at the left of the stamp • 48p, by leg of table in the bottom left part of the design • 50p, just to the left of the pulpit • 56p, at the bottom right of the main image, just above the caption panel • 72p, vertically on stonework on the right, about 1cm above the caption panel • 81p, at top of second column from the right of the stamp design.

On the miniature sheet (left to right, top to bottom): 1st, about 1cm below the '1' of 1st • 1st, on the church wall, in the centre of the design • 81p, at base of stonework towards the bottom left of the design • 81p, by plinth of statue at bottom right of design.



Carry On Hammer Films The dates are found as follows: 1st, just above the bottom black panel at right of stamp • 48p, in Christopher Lee's right ear • 50p, just under the 'o' of CLEO • 56p, in the 'x' of CERT X • 72p, to the left of the cauldron at the bottom of the design • 81p, in the '!' of ALL NEW! on the red panel.

Air Displays The date is found reading horizontally at the bottom of the left-hand phosphor band on all values.

Olympic Flag Handover The date will be found within each of the four designs (reading left to right, top to bottom) as follows: just to the right of the National Stadium at base of design • just below the right-hand gondola • by the tower at the centre of the stamp • to the left of the corner tower at the base of the stamp design.

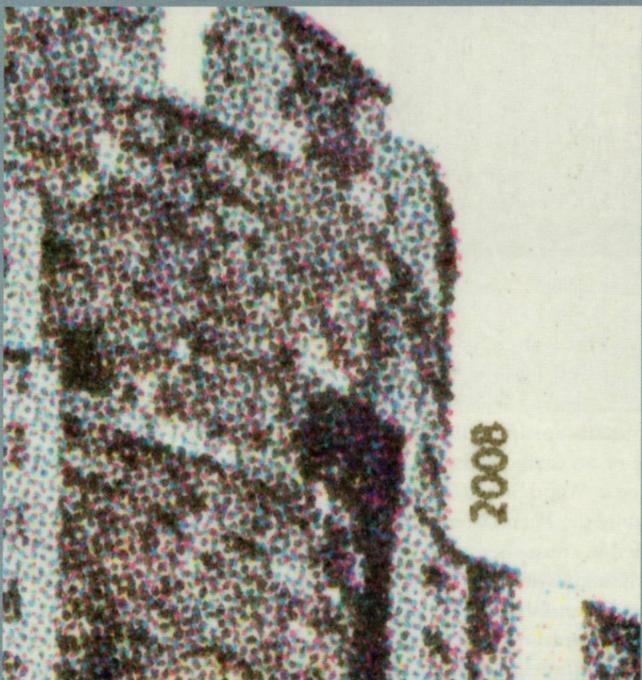
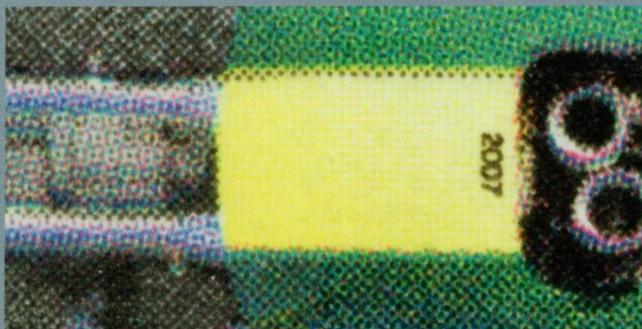
RAF Uniforms The dates are found as follows (reading from left to right for each se-tenant strip): 1st, below uniform at bottom left of stamp design • below the winchman's right thigh • below the fingers of the pilot's left hand • 81p, by belt just below gunner's left armpit • towards end of pointer below plotter's right hand • by pilot's right elbow.

Women of Distinction The date reads vertically at the top of the left-hand phosphor band on all values.

Christmas The date reads horizontally, at the bottom of the single phosphor band on the 2nd class stamps, or at the bottom of the left-hand band on all other values.

Lest We Forget The date is positioned vertically at the bottom of the left-hand phosphor band. In addition, the three Poppy designs of 2006, 2007 and 2008 issued se-tenant in sheets include dates at the bottom of the left-hand phosphor band on all three stamps (even though the date had not appeared on the miniature sheet when issued in 2006) •





Hidden dates on three special stamps of 2007 and three of 2008, from top left: Grand Prix, Sea Life, Handover of the Olympic Flag, the Abolition of Slavery, Rescue at Sea and Working Dogs.