

Christmas, 1987: It's Magic

17 November 1987



This year's Christmas stamps will be issued on 17 November. The five stamps were designed by Michael Foreman and reflect the magical view of Christmas as seen through the eyes of young children, a secular aspect rather than religious. Designs are also in a child-like style. Issued on the same day are the usual Christmas aerogramme and a special Christmas pack detailed later and the Collector's Pack of the year's special issues together with the 1987 Yearbook.



Following on from this in sequence is the **26p** stamp which shows a child in bed dreaming of the arrival of Santa Claus. In the child's dream Santa rides across the star-lit night sky pulled by two reindeer. At the foot of the bed hangs a stocking already filled. (The 26p value replaces the 22p stamp and represents the overseas postcard rate.)



The **13p** stamp shows a child opening a box of Christmas decorations at the foot of a Christmas tree, a custom introduced and made popular in the 19th century by Prince Albert.



On the **18p** stamp a child is looking out of the window on Christmas Eve anticipating the arrival of Santa Claus. Snow lies on the ground and a star is shining brightly in the sky.



On the **31p** stamp a child is reading a book, surrounded by toys which seem to have come alive. An elephant and teddy bear peer over the child's shoulder, reading the engrossing story.

Finally, on the **34p** stamp a snowman has come alive and looks in through the window at a child playing a musical instrument.

The Christmas aerogramme and the Christmas Pack have also been designed by Michael



Foreman in the same style as the stamps and based on the same themes of snowmen, toys and Santa Claus.

Technical Details

Designed by Michael Foreman, the stamps have been printed in photogravure by Harrison and Sons Limited. In format they are horizontal, 41 x 30mm, perf. 15 x 14, printed on unwatermarked, phosphor-coated paper, except for the 13p value which has one printed phosphor bar. Printing is in sheets of 100 on PVA Dextrin gum.

PHQ Cards

PHQ cards (Nos 106 A-E) featuring each of the five stamps will be available from 3 November, price 15p each.

Presentation Pack

The presentation pack will cost £1.44 and was designed by Carroll, Dempsey & Thirkell Limited. The text, by Neil Mattingley, takes the form of a Christmas story printed on the open pages of a book (entitled "It's Magic"). Photography for the pack was by Andy Seymour with lettering by George Hoye and book binding by Claire Gouldstone.

First Day Cover

The first day cover shows the book design as on the flap of the first day cover. It was designed by Carroll, Dempsey & Thirkell Limited. It costs 16p. Two pictorial postmarks will be used for the first day cover service, one from the British Philatelic Bureau featuring the snowman as on the stamps and associated items and the other from Bethlehem (Llandeilo) featuring a church and a star.

A first day cover service will be provided by the Bureau with the official Royal Mail cover addressed to the destination required with the five stamps cancelled with either postmark. The charges will be £1.71 (inland) and £1.49 (overseas). Application forms, available from the Bureau and at Head Post Offices should be returned not later than 17 November.

Customers requiring only the special pictorial postmarks may obtain them under the reposting facility by sending on the first day of issue a stamped addressed envelope under an outer cover endorsed 'Special First Day of Issue Handstamp' to:

'British Philatelic Bureau' 20 Brandon Street,
EDINBURGH EH3 5TT

'Llandeilo' Special Postmark Duty,
District Head Post Office
15 Wind Street,
SWANSEA SA7 7AA

Christmas Stamp Pack

Following the successful introduction last year of a Christmas Stamp Pack, one will go on sale this year on 17 November. It will contain 36 x 13p Christmas stamps and will cost £4.60, a saving of 8p. Michael Foreman also designed the pack taking the themes of snowman, Santa Claus and toys from the stamps.

Printed by Harrison & Sons Limited in photogravure, the stamps will be produced in sheetlet form (ie bordered by a selvage) of 3 x 12 stamps, separated midway by a horizontal gutter, thus producing two panes of 18 stamps.

The sheetlets were printed on Jumelle, four sheetlets comprising one cylinder revolution. Each sheetlet will bear one set of "Traffic Lights", but cylinder numbers will not be shown. Sheet numbers will appear on every second sheetlet. The 13p stamps will have a single central phosphor bar and will be back-printed with a star design.

The packs which are printed by The House of Questa were specially designed with a Christmas tree cut-out, which allows the stamps to be seen, and are sealed within a polypropylene sachet.

The Christmas Packs will be available from most post offices, all philatelic counters and by post from the British Philatelic Bureau.



...and amongst the trees. As it came down to land the sledge became a sledge, skidding to a stop over the snow.

To a roar of applause from toy lions and tigers the familiar red face and white beard of Father Christmas appeared.

'Now you'll see what's what,' said the elephant. 'The Casparynny 999's just a lot of noise. Most of us toys and story-book characters know children who won't be having much of a Christmas. What happens next is that we give Father Christmas their names.'

As they watched, the monkey from the child's storybook went up to the sledge.

'He never forgets a name,' said the elephant.

'Tell me,' said the child, 'do you advise Father Christmas on which present to best?'

'Not exactly,' replied the elephant, smiling at the idea that anyone could tell Father Christmas what to do. 'Though I like to see children getting books. You see, because a story usually has several characters, it's a little like giving children several presents.'

After a lot more talking, the Casparynny came to an end. The sledge lifted off towards the stars and everyone said farewell.

'Why couldn't I have my stocking present?' asked the child.

'Would you care for a bun, Mr Elephant?' asked the child, rather politely.

'No thanks. It's time to get back in the story.'

The child yawned, sleepily...

Next morning was Christmas. The child told the father and mother what had happened.

Father said, 'Dreaming is more real than real life sometimes.'

Mother was too busy to listen.

The child looked at the snowman outside. 'Wasn't he facing the other way last night?'

'Yes,' said the mother. 'Great joke. How long did it take you and your father to move him round? The next thing you'll be doing is taking him for a walk to Long Acre Fields.'

The child smiled. 'Christmas is magic.'

T H E R N D



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Christmas Aerogramme

As in previous years there will also be a special Christmas aerogramme issued on 17 November, the same day as the Christmas stamps. Costing 30p (and bearing a 26p imprinted stamp) it was also designed by Michael Foreman. The stamp design and illustrated panel reflect the special stamps theme of a child's view of Christmas. The stamp itself has a child gazing at Santa Claus riding across the sky similarly drawn to that on the 26p stamp. The same theme of Santa is shown on the panel with children sledding in the snow and the church from the 18p stamp in the distance.

Printing is in offset lithography by McCordale Envelopes Limited.

