

Royal Mail News

Perhaps this section should, this month, be headed "Royal Mail Mews", as it previews a set of five stamps depicting Cats which go on sale at post offices, and philatelic outlets on 17 January.

The designs are based on watercolours by Elizabeth Blackadder who knows each cat from her neighbourhood in Edinburgh. The **19p** stamp (inland basic 2nd class rate) depicts a black cat named Sophie; a Siamese called Puskas and a tabby named Tigger are featured on the **25p** value (basic inland 1st class and EC rate).

On the **30p** (basic rate for European, non-EC countries) is a ginger cat called Chloe and a tortoiseshell and Abyssinian named Kikko and Rosie are portrayed on the **35p** denomination (overseas postcard rate).



The subject of the final stamp, **41p** (basic airmail letter rate) is a sleeping, bicoloured cat called Fred.

The special relationship between cats and humans dates back over 50 centuries to the time when Ancient Egyptians tamed the nocturnal wild cat of the African savannahs. The Egyptians came to venerate them as household gods;

millions were mummified and placed in temples. Ancient traders took cats to Italy from where they spread across Europe. By the 10th century they had reached Britain.

Today cats are popular pets and many owners enter their prized animals in shows. The first proper cat show was held at London's Crystal Palace in 1871.

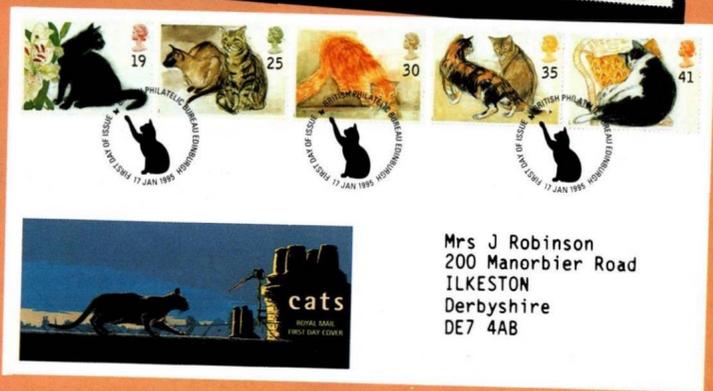
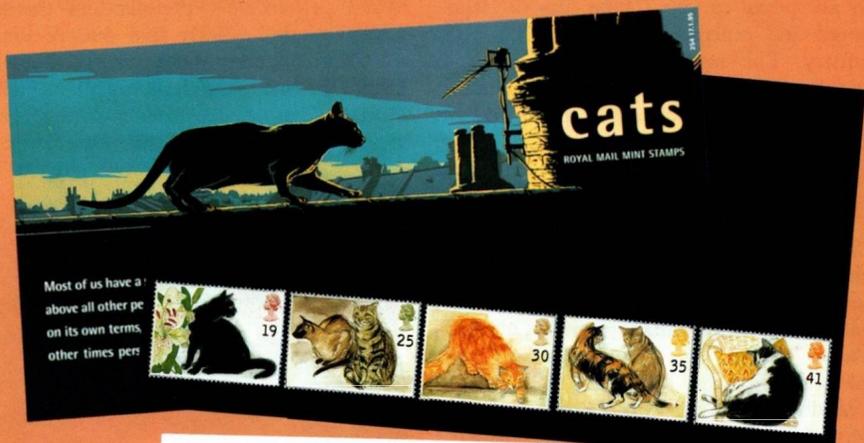
This will be the first set of Royal Mail stamps devoted entirely to cats although these delightful animals have appeared on a number of British stamps in recent years. The Cheshire Cat is shown on the 13p International Year of the Child stamp of 1979 (SG 1094), a cat with an arched back can be seen in the bottom left-hand corner of the 31p British Fairs stamp of 1983 (1230) and a black and white cat sits on a chimney on the 1983 16p Christmas stamp (1232). A beautiful drawing of a Wild Cat, by Ken Lilley, graces the 1986 31p Nature Conservation stamp (1322) and two Cat drawings by Edward Lear are found on the 19p and 32p stamps marking the centenary of his death in 1988 (1405, 1407). A charming kitten features on the 20p value in the 1990 RSPCA set (1479). Cats have been depicted on a number of Greetings stamps. The Cheshire Cat features in the "Smiles" issues (SG 1486, 1553); black cats can be seen on four of the 1992 "Good Luck" stamps (1539, 1541/2/5); and Orlando the Marmalade Cat dominates the eighth stamp of the 1994 issue (1807).

Technical Details

<i>Printers:</i>	The House of Questa Ltd
<i>Process:</i>	Offset-lithography
<i>Size:</i>	41 x 30mm
<i>Sheets:</i>	100
<i>Perforation:</i>	15 x 14
<i>Phosphor:</i>	19p - one phosphor band 25p - two phosphor bands
<i>Paper:</i>	OBA free (OBA = Optical Brightening Agent)
<i>Gum:</i>	PVA
<i>Presentation Pack:</i>	No. 254, price £1.85
<i>Stamp Cards:</i>	Nos. 167a-e, price 25p each

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 17 January, 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 Kitts Green, 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 17 January 1995.

Collectors may send their own stamped covers on the day of issue, for the Bureau or Kitts Green cancels, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, BIRMINGHAM B1 1AA (for Kitts Green postmark). The outer envelope should be endorsed "FD951" (Bureau) or "FD952" (Kitts Green). 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 Cats stamp to covers to receive all special cancels ("First Day of Issue", sponsored and philatelic counters), in use on 17 January. The minimum 1st class rule is suspended on this day as the Cats set includes a 2nd class rate stamp. It should be noted that this concession applies only to the 19p Cats stamp; covers bearing other than Cats stamps must bear at least 1st class postage.

1995 Stamp Programme Changes

The date of issue of the 1995 Greetings stamps will now be 21 March; this supersedes the provisional date of 31 January given in October's Six Month Digest. The Greetings stamp cards will be available from 14 March. The date of issue of the 1995 Christmas stamps has been brought forward to 31 October from 7 November (date given in October's Royal Mail News).

1995 Scottish Aerogrammes

The two 1995 aerogrammes will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Glasgow School of Art, and feature Prehistoric monuments in Scotland. Dates of issue are still to be confirmed, expected to be during March and July.

The 1994 Scottish aerogrammes marking the centenary of the death of Robert Louis Stevenson (22 March) and the bicentenary of the formation of the Gordon Highlanders (19 July) are still available from the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters Ltd philatelic outlets, price 45p each. Scottish aerogrammes were introduced in 1974; 40 have been issued; making an interesting collection featuring Scottish history, culture, heritage, personalities, flora and fauna, and institutions.

Bureau Prize Draw

The British Philatelic Bureau's summer mailing offered customers the chance to win a unique Philatelic Numismatic Cover bearing a gold £2

coin. Over 50,000 entries were received and the draw took place on 21 September. The lucky winner was Mrs E Jones of Aldershot, Hants. The draw was made by Paul Shepherd, a catering assistant at the Philatelic Bureau who in August struck gold at the Commonwealth Games in Victoria, Canada. Paul captured the boxing flyweight gold after beating Kenya's Darcen Karanja by 20 to 9 points in the flyweight final.

The Philatelic Numismatic Cover produced by Royal Mint and Royal Mail to mark the 25th anniversary of the Investiture of the Prince of Wales proved very popular and the Bureau's allocation was quickly sold out. A donation of £20,000 from sales of the covers was made to the Prince's Trust for Wales. Our photograph shows Prince Charles accepting a cheque from Mr Brian Williams, Marketing Director of Royal Mint.



1994 Christmas Stamps

The cylinders and colours used were as follows:
19p P15 (phosphor) 2A (turquoise-green) 2B (greenish yellow) 1C (bright magenta) 1D (new blue) 1E (dull blue) 1F (grey-black)
25p 1A (orange-brown) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (bright magenta) 1D (new blue) 1E (light blue) 1F (bistre) 1G (grey-black)
30p 1A (light brown) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (bright magenta) 1D (blue) 1E (turquoise blue) 1F (new blue) 1G (brownish grey)
35p 1A (deep grey-brown) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (bright magenta) 1D (turquoise blue), 1E (dull violet-blue) 1F (ochre) 1G (brown)
41p 1A (blue) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (bright magenta) 1D (turquoise-blue) 1E (light blue) 1F (grey)