

Technical details**Printers** Joh Enschedé

Stamps

Process Photogravure**Size** 35 x 37mm**Sheets** 100**Perforation** 14 x 14.5**Phosphor** One band 20p ●
two bands others**Paper** OBA (Optical Brightening Agent) free**Gum** PVA**post offices**

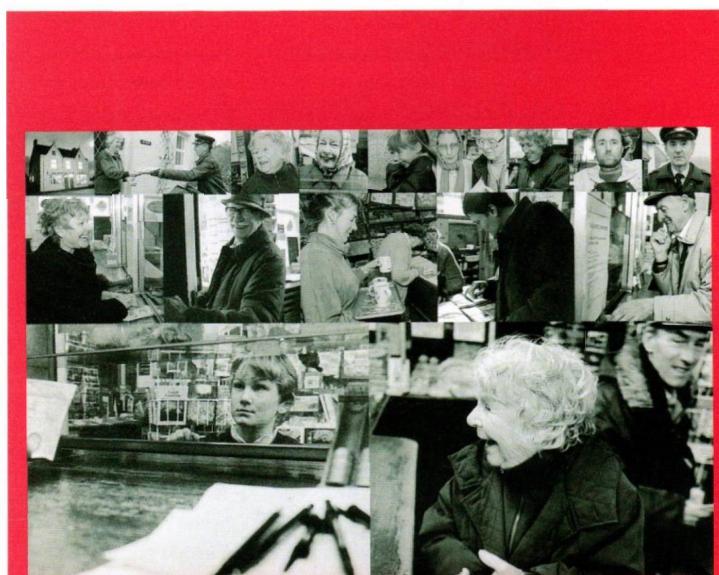
Royal Mail First Day Cover



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**Presentation pack and stamp cards**

A presentation pack (price £1.85) and **stamp cards** (25p each) will be available from the Bureau, Post Office Counters philatelic outlets, and main post offices. The pack, written by Martin Jackson, tells the story of Britain's most southerly post office at The Lizard.



The village brass band played as local builder Richard Tiddy had the foundation stone laid. Lizard post office opened for business exactly a century ago, and for all but the last nine of that 100 years it was run by three succeeding generations of his family. When his son Richard Henry Tiddy became the inaugural sub-postmaster, mail came by ten-penny pony and rider. The pony, a gelding called 'Davy' after Davy Weller, rather chose the route to London than the country's first omnibus service in 1933. But for delivery, it was back to foot.

An telephone exchange installed in 1932 brought new 24-hour day representation, particularly when bad weather watch was in force along the coast and the wires trembled through the night with reports on shifting movements. But the sea stricken trade too – in summer the Lizard's population would double at tourist season. There were few, though, who could be a greater fan of the sea than Richard Henry Tiddy, whose grandfather, who took over from his father in 1937, was literally born at sea, and started just about everything else villagers and seaside growths of the early 1900s right need. A thick room

Royal Mail news New Post Offices stamps

• Definitives update • New NPM postcards •

Philatelic Numismatic Cover

Post Offices Stamps featuring four post offices go on sale at post offices and philatelic outlets on 12 August 1997. The issue, commemorating the centenary of the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, features offices in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

The **20p** stamp (inland 2nd class basic rate) features the office at Haroldswick on the island of Unst in the Shetlands, north of the Scottish mainland. The office is the most northerly post office in the British Isles. A receiving house for mail is recorded at Haroldswick as far back as 1827, the current office has operated from its present location since the early 1930s. The office has been run by the Gray family for the past 26 years, serving about 120 houses in the area and a RAF camp with approximately 200 personnel.

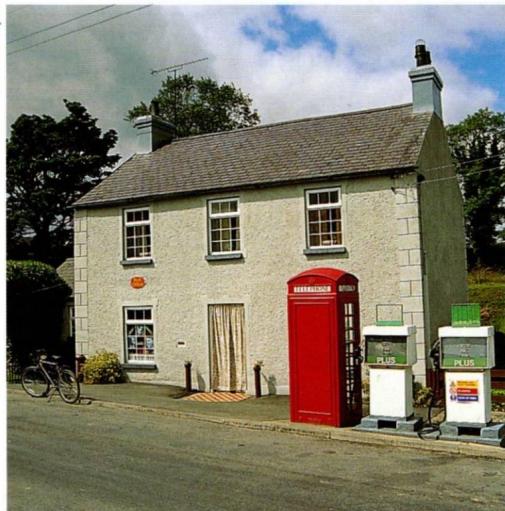
A special handstamp testifying to the office's most northerly position was introduced in 1972 and is still applied to mail at the Scotland & Northern Ireland Special Handstamp Centre in Glasgow (see below). A special Haroldswick handstamp was also used in July 1978 on the issue of the Horses stamps, one of which featured a Shetland pony.

The **26p** denomination (inland 1st class and EU basic rates) depicts the office at Painswick in Gloucestershire. It is located in Westhaven House, New Street – reputed to be the oldest building in England to house a post office; it dates from the early 15th century. The timber-framed frontage is the only surviving example of its type in the village. The interior of the property contains hand-moulded ceilings, a stone Tudor fireplace and, in the shop area, an ancient stone staircase and large inglenook fireplace with a bread oven. Visitors are welcome to look at the inglenook fireplace and winding stone staircase at the back of the shop and browse at a variety of gifts, souvenirs, maps and local guidebooks. Westhaven House became a post office on 8 May 1933.

Affixed to the outside of the building is a replica of a firemark which, in the 19th century, indicated that the building was insured against fire by the Norwich Union Fire Insurance Society. The replica firemark, and a model of Painswick PO, were shown in the *Bulletin* in February and November 1990.



The designer The stamps are the work of Devon-based Terrence Millington, his first stamps for Royal Mail.



The Post Office at Tassagh in Northern Ireland.

is a listed building and the external appearance is very similar to how it would have looked at the turn of the century: a typical post office or shop of the period.

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SUB-POSTMASTERS A century ago hardly any sub-postmasters received any rent allowance, despite having to provide all the fittings, fuel, and stationery required for their work, the cost of putting up telegraph wires, even the letterbox outside their offices! There were no allowances for working Sundays, Good Friday or Christmas Day, nor annual holidays or sickness relief. The average sub-postmaster earned about two pence an hour (about £1 at present rates). The founder and first President of the Federation was Joseph Ranns (1856-1910) who, after six years as sub-postmaster at Upper Kirkgate Town Sub Office in Wakefield, decided to fight for changes in the system. He believed that his appointment as a sub-postmaster would be 'a direct road to success in commercial life', a worthwhile adjunct to his business as a stationer. He soon found that the working expenses of the office were decidedly more than the income from all sources. Ranns represented the town sub-postmasters before the Tweedmouth Commission on Post Office Establishments in 1896, two other sub-postmasters, from Kent and Scotland, aired the grievances on behalf of the country offices. The committee's report brought disappointment to sub-postmasters, offering no increase in pay or provision for annual leave at public expense. The new National Association of Sub Postmasters, formed at a meeting in Wakefield on Easter Monday 1897, branded the report as 'unjust'. Their dissatisfaction led to an inquiry, led by the Postmaster General and the Secretary to the Treasury, which in March 1898 ruled that provincial sub-postmasters should be paid for work on Sundays and public holidays, get increased allowance for providing accommodation for postmen, annual leave, and the cost of removing tele-

The office at Beddgelert, near Caernarfon in north Wales features on the **43p** stamp (basic airmail letter rate). This office scooped the coveted national award for the UK's Best Post Office in 1995, having previously been voted the Best Post Office in Wales. The sub-postmistress and her husband personally deliver newspapers and groceries to pensioners who are ill and also arrange collection of their pension books so their customers do not have to go without their money. Beddgelert is one of Wales's most famous villages – noted for its picturesque nature, and the legend of Gelert – the pet hound of Prince Llewellyn.

The **63p** value (airmail letters, second weight step) features the office at Ballyroney, near Newry, Northern Ireland, housed in a beautiful example of neo-classical architecture. It

graph poles if they needed to move to a bigger office. In 1899 the 915 head post offices were supplemented by some 19,718 sub-offices, run by 14,292 men and 5,426 women; by 1912 over one-third of the sub-postmasters had joined the Federation. Today it is the longest-established body representing staff in the Post Office and the only organisation recognised by the PO to negotiate on behalf of sub-postmasters. The Federation has over 100 branches covering the whole of the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

SUB-POST OFFICES Post Office Counters Ltd are rightly proud of over 19,000 sub-post offices throughout the country – from the most northerly in Haroldswick, to the most southerly on The Lizard, Cornwall, to the most easterly at North Lowestoft, Suffolk and the most westerly at Garrison, near Enniskillen in Northern Ireland. Offices are sited on remote islands, in country villages, and amongst the back-streets of our industrial cities and towns. Some are in unusual premises, such as an old church (Belstone, near Okehampton, Devon), a pub (Thurcaston, Leicestershire) and even a shipping container (Llanelli Hill near Abergavenny, South Wales). All provide a much appreciated local service.

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 12 August, price 25p.

Orders for the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps, cancelled with a pictorial 'first day of issue' postmark of the Bureau or Wakefield, price £2.20 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £1.88 overseas (no VAT), must be received at the Bureau by 12 August. Alternatively, collectors may send stamped covers, on the day of issue, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Forth Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1AA (Wakefield postmark). The outer envelope should be marked 'FD9713' (Bureau), or 'FD9714' (Wakefield).

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for collectors to post covers to receive local (mostly non-pictorial) 'first day of issue' handstamps. Sponsored special handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from the Bureau (£10 UK/Europe; £21.75 rest of the world).

Mention was made above of the special handstamp introduced at Haroldswick in 1972. Several variations have been used over the years, the present one introduced from 2 December 1993. Covers to receive this handstamp should be sent to: Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, 57 Queen Street, Glasgow G1 3AZ, requesting handstamp no 3154. This is illustrated, with other permanent philatelic postmarks, in each issue of the *British Postmark Bulletin*.

Collectors may submit covers bearing just the 20p stamp for all first day, philatelic and sponsored handstamps in use on 12 August, the 1st class rule for special handstamps being waived for the day •



The 1996 Cartoons greetings stamps were recently commended in the Design Week Awards Direct Mail Category. The stamps, it was said, 'made the judges laugh themselves into giving a commendation' •