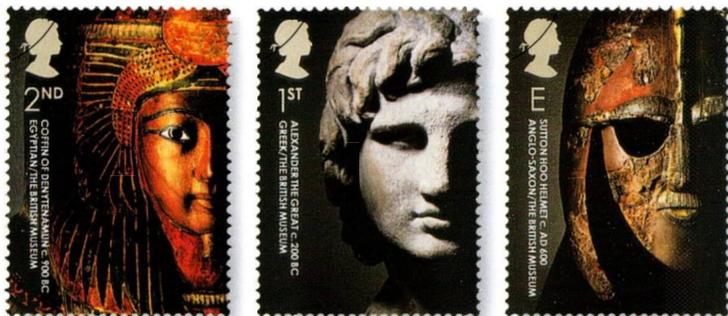


## The British Museum Royal Mail's new issue



### Technical details

**Printer** Walsall Security Printers

**Process** Gravure

**Size** 30 × 41mm

**Sheet size** 50

**Perforation** 14 × 14.5

**Phosphor** 2nd class one band, others two bands. The 42p and 68p have phosphor background at left and band at right

**Gum** PVA

**Gutter pairs** Horizontal

### Cylinders and colours

**All values** W1 brownish grey ● W1 black ● W1 greenish yellow ● W1 magenta ● W1 pale new blue ● W1 phosphor

Other handstamps for 7 October will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from Tallents House (£12.25 UK/ Europe; £24.95 elsewhere). For a sample copy write to: The Editor, British Postmark Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ.

SIX STAMPS marking the 250th anniversary of the founding of the British Museum in London will be available from Post Office branches and philatelic outlets and from Royal Mail Tallents House Edinburgh from 7 October. They feature heads in the Museum's many collections.

2nd class: painted wooden coffin of Denytenamun from Thebes, 690BC (Egyptian). Denytenamun was the incense bearer of the temple of Amun.

1st class: Alexander the Great, 200BC (Greek). Alexander was deified in his own lifetime, and after his death was worshipped as a god in images such as this.

68p (European rate): Sutton Hoo Helmet c600AD (Anglo-Saxon). The Sutton Hoo helmet, excavated from the ship burial in Suffolk, is one of only four Anglo-Saxon helmets found in Britain.

42p: sculpture of Parvati, c1550AD (South Indian). The bronze sculpture of Parvati is an example of what in India is known as an 'utsavamurti' or festival image. The goddess Parvati is the consort of the god Shiva.

47p: mask of Xiuntecuhtli, c1500AD (Mixtec-Aztec). This mask of the Central Mexican Fire God, Xiuhtecuhtli, and similar mosaic masterpieces were fashioned by Mixtec craftsmen for the Aztec Royal Court.

68p: Hoa Hakananai'a, c1000AD (Easter Island). The Easter Island (Rapa Nui) statue Hoa Hakananai'a is unusual in also having designs carved on the back relating to a later birdman cult.

**FIRST DAY FACILITIES** Unstamped Royal Mail FDC envelopes will be available from main Post Office branches and philatelic outlets about a week before 7 October, price 25p. Orders for serviced FDCs with the stamps cancelled by a pictorial first day postmark of Tallents House Edinburgh or London WC1 must reach Tallents House (address below) by the day of issue. Price £3.10 UK, £2.64 overseas.

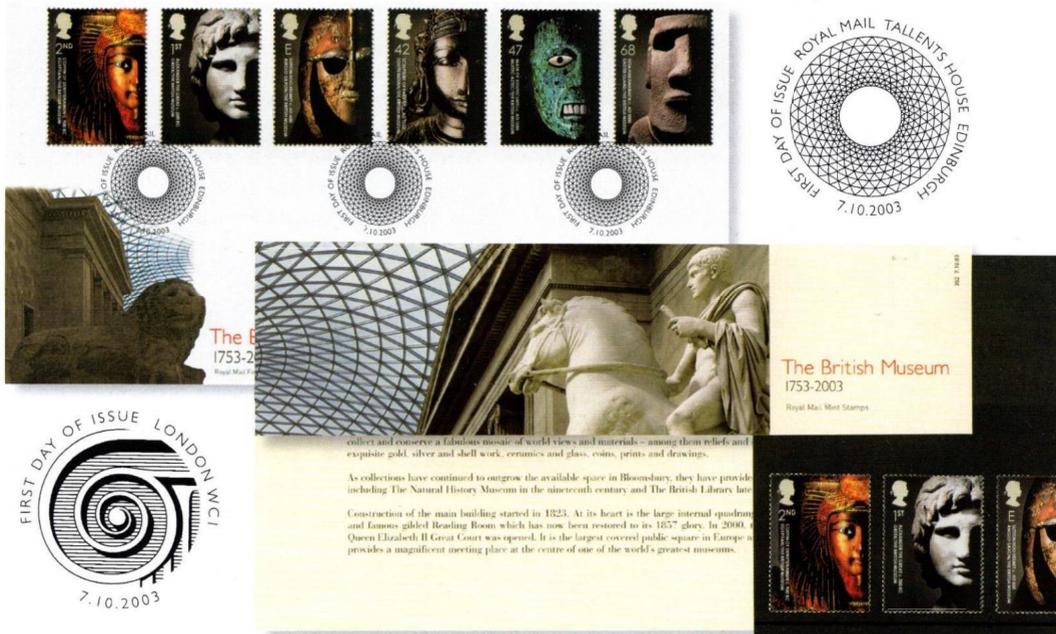
Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB (Tallents House postmark), or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Mount Pleasant, London EC1A 1BB (London WC1 postmark), marking the outer envelope 'FDO321' (Tallents House), or 'FDO322' (London). Covers can be posted or handed in at main Post Office branches for the London postmark.

## celebrates 250 years of a 'universal museum'



The stamps were designed by Rose Design with photography by Graham Montgomery. The Queen's silhouette and value/service indicator are at top left, with captions down the left side of the design.

The presentation pack, below, was designed by HGV Design, with text by Jim Davies and Sir David Attenborough.



**PHILATELIC PRODUCTS** A well-illustrated pack containing the six stamps (price £2.80) and stamp cards (30p each) will be available from Tallents House, main Post Office branches and philatelic outlets.

A British Museum medal cover bearing the six stamps and with a special Museum medal encapsulated will be available from Tallents House from 7 October, price £12.95.

Royal Mail and the British Museum will jointly issue a booklet of large-format postcard reproductions of the new stamps. Each will be A5 size (21 × 14.75cm) with a white border. The six cards are bound in a card cover with an easily detachable adhesive. The postcard book will be on sale at the British Museum, and can be ordered by post from Tallents House in Edinburgh (order code PB372), price £4.99.

The three first day of issue postmarks (two shown above) will be applied in silver.



Postmark for the medal cover.



The British Museum's famous Reading Room, above c1880, was frequented by many of the world's greatest scholars and writers. Its collection was separated from the Museum in the 1970s to form the British Library.

**The British Museum** The presentation pack text is written by Jim Davies and Sir David Attenborough, who was a trustee of the Museum for 21 years. Sir David describes his first visit to the Museum and suggests ways of exploring its treasures: 'Of course, you can cherry-pick, strolling past the exhibition cases, glancing at a sculpture here, a jewel there, a historic clock, or an inscribed clay tablet. Alternatively, and perhaps more rewarding, you can decide to take a single section at a time and devote all your attention to just one sequence of linked galleries. Whichever you choose, one thing is certain – a single visit is not enough.' Among the many fine illustrations in the pack are treasures from the Parthenon and Sutton Hoo, a terracotta portrait bust of Sir Hans Sloane, and the new Queen Elizabeth II Great Court.

The British Museum was founded by Act of Parliament in 1753 as a new kind of institution 'maintained, not only for the Inspection and Entertainment of the learned and the curious, but for the general use and benefit of the Public'. Two and a half centuries later, the Museum continues to make world cultures accessible in the heart of London, and welcomes millions of visitors a year. With tens of thousands of objects displayed in around 100 galleries, its collection is a phenomenal showcase of rare art and antiquities from history's great civilisations.

The core of the original collection was bequeathed by Sir Hans Sloane, a retired doctor and prodigious collector. The Museum became the repository for numerous artefacts acquired during the 18th and 19th centuries – most notably the Rosetta Stone, the Lykian tombs and the Parthenon sculptures, also known as the 'Elgin Marbles'. As collections outgrew the available space in Bloomsbury, they provided the basis for new institutions including the Natural History Museum.

Construction of the main building started in 1823. At its heart is the large internal quadrangle and famous gilded Reading Room which has now been restored to its 1857 glory. In 2000, the Queen Elizabeth II Great Court was opened – the largest covered public square in Europe. Each year the Museum welcomes up to 5 million visitors. The 7 million objects in the collections span two million years of human history.

For many years the British Museum housed the national library which included the Philatelic Collections, the most famous being the collection bequeathed by Thomas Taplin MP in the 1890s. The library part of the Museum was separated to become the British Library in the 1970s and is now housed in its own building near King's Cross Station.

The British Museum is noted for many fine exhibitions – the 'Treasures of Tutankhamun' in 1972 was seen by 1,694,117 visitors, the largest attendance ever at a temporary exhibition in the UK. Currently on show is an exhibition about London Life in 1753, the year the Museum was founded ●



