

The Lord of the Rings

Ten 1st class stamps mark the 50th anniversary of the publication of the first two books in J R R Tolkien's great work: on sale on 26 February



JOHN RONALD REUEL TOLKIEN is undoubtedly one of the most influential fantasy writers in the whole of literary history. His interest in Anglo-Saxon England, combined with his love of Norse mythology, led him to create a comparable mythology for England. He initiated his mythical world in *The Hobbit* (1937), then further refined and expanded his ideas in *The Lord of the Rings*, now one of the most famous books in the world. The first two parts, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers*, were published in 1954; *The Return of the King* followed a year later.

Interest in 'Middle Earth' led to Tolkien (above) becoming a cult figure in the 1960s. *The West Gate of Moria*, by Alan Lee, depicts a scene from *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

The Lord of the Rings stamps, by HGV Design, are printed in a se-tenant block of 10. The images, by J R R Tolkien, are reproduced by permission of the J R R Tolkien Estate and The Bodleian Library, Oxford. We are pleased to be able to show these rarely reproduced drawings on the stamps.



Technical details

Printer Walsall

Process Lithography

Stamp size 35 x 37mm

Sheets 30 and 60

Perforation 14.5

Phosphor Two bands

Gum PVA

Gutter pairs Vertical

Plate numbers and colours

W1 cream ● W1 gold ● W1 black ● W1 yellow ● W1 magenta ● W1 cyan (blue) ● W1 phosphor

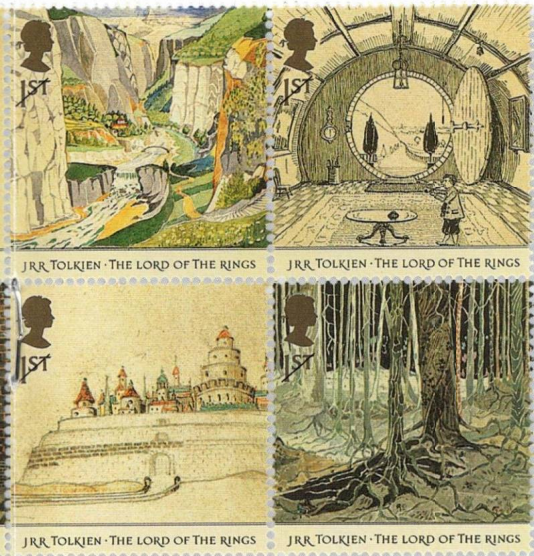
This is the first set of Royal Mail stamps devoted to J R R Tolkien, although *The Hobbit* featured on the 20p stamp of the 1998 Magical Worlds (Children's Literature) set, and a prestige book was issued in 1992 to mark the centenary of his birth.

The stamps will be issued to Post Office branches in sheets of 30. Sheets of 60, with gutter margin, will be supplied to Royal Mail Tallents House and Post Office philatelic outlets.

Tolkien graduated from Oxford University and was appointed Professor of Anglo Saxon in 1924, and later Merton Professor of English. In 1918-20 he worked on the editorial staff of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and wrote most of his works whilst living in Oxford. The city is, therefore, most appropriate as the location for the alternative first day of issue postmark.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail FDC envelopes will be available from main Post Office branches and philatelic outlets about a week before 26 February, price 25p. Orders for FDCs with stamps cancelled by a pictorial first day postmark of Tallents House Edinburgh or Oxford must reach Tallents House by the date of issue. Price £3.71 UK or £3.16 overseas.

Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB, or for the Oxford handstamp to any of Royal Mail's six Special Handstamp Centres, marking the outer envelope 'FD0405' or 'FD0406'. Covers can be posted or handed in at main Post Office branches for the Oxford postmark. Details of sponsored handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from Tallents House. For a sample copy write to: The Editor, British Postmark Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ ●



Top row, left to right: 1) map from *The Lord of the Rings*, redrawn by Christopher Tolkien; 2) The Forest of Lothlórien in Spring; 3) Dust-jacket for *The Fellowship of the Ring*; 4) Rivendell; 5) The Hall at Bag End (residence of Bilbo Baggins).

Bottom row: 6) Orthanc; 7) Doors of Durin; 8) Barad-dûr; 9) Minas Tirith; 10) Fangorn Forest.

The images all relate to places and characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, although some are more commonly associated with *The Hobbit*.



A well-illustrated pack (below, price £3.30) and stamp cards (30p each) will be available from main Post Office branches and philatelic outlets. The pack was written by Christina Scull and Wayne Hammond. Some readers may recall Ms Scull's article on Tolkien in the October 1992 *Bulletin*.

