

Greetings Stamps

6 February 1989

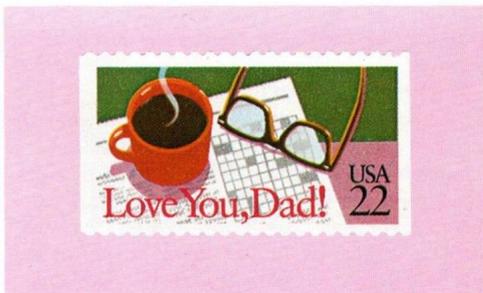


On Tuesday 6 February the second issue of Royal Mail Greetings Stamps will be made. There will be ten first class stamps with ten different designs and a set of twelve labels, all contained in a pack to be sold at £2. The packs will be sold from post offices and from selected high street shops.

David Dale, Manager Definitive Stamps, Royal Mail Stamps explains the background to this issue:

The basic idea of the Greetings Stamps is that they complement the card or letter inside the envelope. In these busy times we manage to send as many "social" letters through the post as in Victorian times. However whilst our great-grandparents wrote long letters, the modern trend is to send postcards and greetings cards. This represents an important part of postal traffic and it is in the Royal Mail's interest to encourage this use of the postal system. There is also a cost saving in selling ten stamps at a time which helps to offset the more expensive packaging costs.

The design brief for the stamps was that they should appeal to a wide variety of customers and avoid the limitations that can arise from having a specific message. If a stamp carries a direct message such as "Get Well Soon", or, in the case of one US stamp "Love You Dad", then there may not be many opportunities to use it and customers may feel unhappy about using up the stamps for other purposes. This was even the case with the Cupid design in the first Royal



Mail issue. Customers in market research sessions felt unhappy about the inclusion of two cupids in a book of ten stamps because they felt the stamps could only be used on Valentine's Day.

The design solution to this difficult brief is a set of smiles. They are along the top row, from left to right: a Teddy Bear, Dennis the Menace, Punch, the Cheshire Cat, and the Man in the Moon. Along the bottom row, from left to right, are the Laughing Policeman, a Clown, the Mona Lisa, The Queen of Hearts and Stan Laurel. Especially when combined with the labels (illustrated) these designs can convey a wide variety of messages. It is especially important that they are appropriate to use with personal letters and not merely with greetings cards.

The production method for the 1989 issue involved folding a single pane of stamps plus labels into a book which was not too far removed from the old style folded books of



definitive stamps. There were a few problems with that approach, notably the quality of the perforations which were quite poor and there were also size limitations. The 1990 issue dispenses with the "stamp book" approach in favour of a "stamp pack". This allows the stamps and labels to be printed separately and it gives the customer a means of keeping the stamps safe over several months — another problem with the book format was that the long strip tended to fall to pieces after one or two stamps and labels had been used.

The pack has been designed to fit into the product range of standard stamp books and it is essentially red with a yellow side band. However it could not be mistaken for a standard book because the large smile cut out of the cover reveals the stamps inside. The pack will fit into the top of the red vending units supplied to sub post offices and Royal Mail Retailers.

Technical Details

The stamps and labels are designed by Michael Peters and Partners Limited and printed by Harrison & Sons Limited by photogravure on a continuous reel on the Jumelle press.

The stamps are horizontal in format, size 41 x 30mm, perforation 15 x 14. The stamp pane consists of ten stamps, each with a different design, printed in two rows of five horizontally with selvedge on all sides. In a number of the stamps the design crosses into the selvedge. The labels are printed in offset litho, three across and four deep.

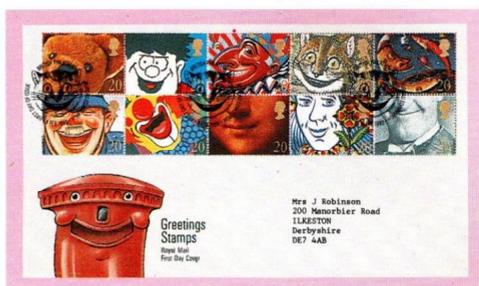
The stamps are printed on non-phosphor paper overprinted with two phosphor bars, PVA dextrin gum. There will be no printers' marks in the margin. The overall size of the unfolded pane including margin is 223 x 80mm; without margin 203 x 60mm. The unfolded labels measure 132 x 80mm. The overall size of the finished packs is 137 x 85mm.

First Day Covers

Special first day covers designed by Michael Peters and Partners will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau, philatelic counters and most post offices, price 18p each or in bulk from the Bureau at £35 for 250 or £120 per 1,000.

The usual first day cover facilities will be available at offices with philatelic posting boxes. There will also be pictorial "First Day of Issue" handstamps available, one for the British Philatelic Bureau and one for Giggleswick, North Yorkshire.

The Bureau will also provide its usual first



day cover service. Covers addressed to the correct postal address of the destination required and bearing all ten stamps will be cancelled "British Philatelic Bureau" or "Giggleswick, North Yorkshire" as requested and despatched. Application forms, available from the Bureau, should be returned by 6 February.

Customers wishing to post their own covers under the reposting facility should send, on the day of issue, a stamped addressed envelope under an outer cover endorsed "Special Handstamp Greetings" to:

British Philatelic Bureau 20 Brandon Street
EDINBURGH EH3 5TT

Giggleswick Special Handstamp Duty
Newcastle upon Tyne LDO
Royal Mail House
Forth Street
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE1 1AA

Whilst the block of ten stamps will fit onto the Royal Mail first day cover, the pane of stamps with its margin will not. Since in some cases the design of the stamps extends into the margin, some collectors may wish to obtain the entire pane on cover. In such cases they should take care to obtain their own envelopes by 6 February.

The stamps will only be available in sealed packs which can be opened by tearing through a perforated strip.

