

Royal Mail News

Age of Steam Stamps

Five stamps commemorating Britain's steam railways go on sale at post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau, Collections, Post Shops Plus and Philatelic Counters on 18 January 1994.

The stamps feature scenes on some of our best-loved lines. The **19p** stamp (inland 2nd class basic rate) shows Class 5 4-6-0 No. 44957 and class B1 4-6-0 No. 61342 approaching Bridge of Orchy on one of Britain's most scenic lines – the West Highland. This was built by the North British Railway to reach the west coast of Scotland at Mallaig. The stamps shows the two locomotives working in tandem on a Glasgow-bound train in July 1961.



The **25p** stamp (inland 1st class and EC basic rate) features Class A1 4-6-2 No. 60149, "Amadis", at Kings Cross in February 1961. This locomotive was named after the race horse that won the 1909 Doncaster Cup.

Class 4 2-6-0 No. 43000 on the turntable at Blyth North shed in October 1966 is the subject of the **30p** value covering the basic rate for letters to non-EC European countries. A place of Stygian gloom for some, but heaven for others, the steam locomotive shed was an industrial building with a character all its own.

The **35p** denomination, for overseas postcards, depicts Class 4 2-6-4T locomotive No. 42455 bringing an early morning train from Islam into Wigan Central station. Local trains are as important as the express services. In the industrial north-west, birthplace of many early railways and of the industry they served, the network of suburban services was complex.

The top value, **41p** for the basic airmail letter rate, features Castle class 4-6-0 No. 7002, "Devizes Castle" hauling a Paddington service across the Worcester and Birmingham Canal in Worcester. One of the many achievements of the railway has been its contribution to architecture and the landscape.

All the photographs featured on these stamps are by Colin T Gifford. Mr Gifford has encapsulated the closing years of Britain's Age of Steam. After studying fine art for five years, he spent some time in advertising before moving to a publisher specialising in transport. He is now a freelance photographer and author. Railways have always fascinated him, especially their relationship with landscape and topography. Two of his books, *Decline of Steam* and *Each a Glimpse*, are classics; Mr Gifford is regarded by many as the father of progressive railway photography.

Britain's Age of Steam

The "Age of Steam" in Britain lasted for 143 years, from the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway on 27 September 1825 to the running of the last scheduled steam-hauled passenger train on British Rail on 4 August 1968. During these years, society saw changes on a scale never before experienced by a nation.

The steam railway took over from canals as the main carrier of freight traffic and from the stage coach as the fastest conveyance for passenger travel. It reigned supreme for all inland transport, serving the nation under six sovereigns, and providing extensive employment opportunities for four generations.



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THE AGE OF STEAM

ROYAL MAIL MINT STAMPS



Class 4-4-0 No. 1 of October 1911. This is the VC North British class of 1904. It was the first locomotive class to be built in Britain. It was the first to be built in Britain. It was the first to be built in Britain.

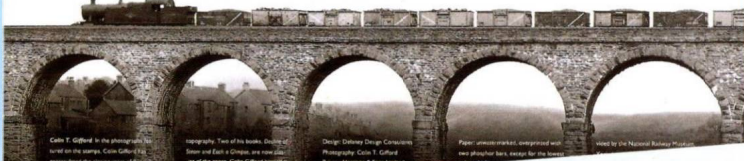


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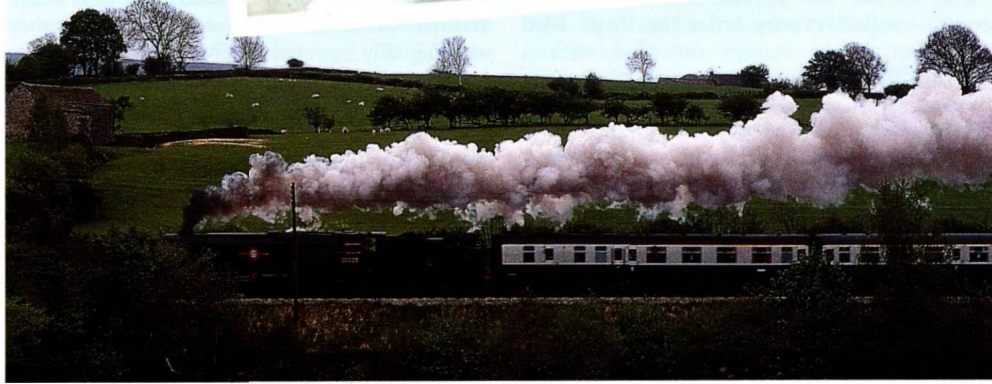
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Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbie Road
ILKESTON
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB



One hundred and fifty years ago the construction of railways in the United Kingdom experienced an extraordinary upsurge, known as the "Railway Mania". In the five years from 1844, no less than 564 acts of Parliament were passed for the construction of nearly 10,000 miles of railway. Fortunes and reputations were made and lost as railways were financed and promoted, often with fierce rivalry. Employment in railway construction and operation rose dramatically, and the foundations of Britain's railway network were laid. At its zenith in 1913 the railway was one of the largest industries in the country, employing hundreds of thousands.

Among the most notable of the railway anniversaries that fall in 1994 are those of the Midland and North British Railways, both founded 150 years ago, and the West Highland line, opened 100 years ago.

Technical Details

Printers: Harrison & Sons Ltd

Process: Photogravure

Size: 35 x 35 mm

Sheets: 100

Perforation: 14

Phosphor: One band 19p; phosphor coated paper plus two bands 25p-41p (bands with fluor).

Paper: OBA free (OBA=Optical Brightening Agent).

Gum: PVA Dextrin

Presentation Pack: No. 244, price £1.85

Stamp Cards: Nos 158 a-e, price 25p each

First Day Facilities

Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, and philatelic outlets around a week before 18 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 to the Bureau or York, price £2.18 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £1.86 to overseas addresses (no VAT). Orders must be received by 18 January.

Collectors may send stamped covers, on the day of issue, for the Bureau or York cancels, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Forth Street, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE1 1AA. The outer envelope should be endorsed "Pictorial First Day of Issue postmark". First Day Posting Boxes will be

provided at most main post offices; covers posted therein will receive 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* – 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 advised that it will be in order to affix just the 19p Age of Steam stamp to covers to receive all special cancels ("First Day of Issue", sponsored, and philatelic counter) in use on 18 January. The minimum 1st class rate rule is suspended on this day as this set includes a 2nd class rate stamp. It should be noted that this concession applies only to the 19p Age of Steam stamp; covers bearing other than Age of Steam stamps must bear at least 24p postage.

New To Pay Labels

As announced last month a new set of To Pay labels will be available from 15 February. These can be obtained by collectors from the British Philatelic Bureau, Collections, Post Shops Plus and Philatelic Counters. The values will be: 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p, 20p, 25p, £1, £1.20 and £5. These new labels have been produced using a combination of traditional photogravure printing and the latest techniques in CAD (computer aided design).

From a black and white transparency of the original artwork of the St Edward Crown, the first step was the production of a photo-embossed zinc plate. From this a raised impression was made on sandgrain textured paper. The paper was next lit, using low, oblique-angled photographic lights to emphasise the three-dimensional quality of the embossing, and an image made on 35mm black and white transparency film. In this form, the transparency was digitally scanned to give a high-resolution computer-readable image and the different colours, intensities, highlights and shadows added or adjusted electronically. The typography was produced as a separate film overlay and was reversed out of the coloured ground by the printer.

Design by Sedley Place. Original photography by David Burton. Electronic imaging by Tapestry. Printed by The House of Questa.

A presentation pack (No. 32) containing one of each of the new labels will be available, price £8.20. No first day of issue facilities will be