

This month The Editor previews this issue

SHOWN BELOW are the 1998 Christmas stamps to be issued on 2 November; please note the issue on a Monday instead of the usual Tuesday for special stamps. The stamps, also the aerogramme and aircard (on sale from 6 October) feature angels. We also preview the special label booklet to be issued on Saturday 14 November to mark the 50th birthday of HRH The Prince of Wales.

Douglas Myall has been particularly busy recently – not only providing his ever-popular update for specialist collectors of new stamp books, but reporting on new printing machinery at The House of Questa. Enclosed with this *Bulletin* is an exclusive souvenir sheet printed by Questa in gravure. This reproduces some unadopted designs for recent special stamps, and will, I am sure, be of considerable interest to many readers. Our thanks to Questa for making these sheets available.

There are two exhibitions in London this month – Autumn Stampex (Business Design Centre, 30 September-4 October), and Stanley Gibbons Collect 98 exhibition (Olympia, 23-25 October) – and international exhibitions open in Johannesburg and Milan on 20 and 23 October respectively. If you visit any of these exhibitions, I hope you will enjoy the displays, meet old friends and find some good items to add to your collection. JOHN HOLMAN, EDITOR •

Royal Mail news Christmas • New priority services • Prince of Wales label • Aircards

Technical details

Printers De La Rue Security Print

Process Gravure

Size 41 × 30mm

Sheets 100

Perforation 15 × 14

Phosphor One band 20p • two bands others

Gum PVA

Cylinders and colours The ink cylinders used are the same for each value: 1A (gold) • 1B (greenish yellow) • 1C (magenta) • 1D (new blue) • 1E (grey-black).

The phosphor numbers are: 20p P73 • 26p P73 • 30p P73 • 43 and 63p P75

Christmas 1998 The 33rd set of British Christmas stamps goes on sale at post offices and philatelic outlets on 2 November. The stamps all feature angels, very much part of the Christmas story.

The 20p and 26p stamps (basic inland 2nd and 1st class letter rates) show Adoring and Praying Angels. The 30p (European basic letter rate) features an Angel playing a pipe. The 43p and 63p stamps (airmail basic letter rates) depict an Angel playing a lute and an Angel in prayer. Readers will note that the 2nd and 1st class rate stamps revert to valued stamps, 20p and 26p, after the non-value indicator issues of recent years. Overall the cost of the set is 1p less than in 1996 and 1997 as the European rate stamp is now 30p. Previously the inland 1st class stamp also covered letters to EU countries, 31p was the basic rate for non-EU countries.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail FDC envelopes will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets about a week before 2 November, price 25p. Orders for FDCs with the stamps cancelled by pictorial 'first day of issue' postmark of the Bureau or Bethlehem, Llandeilo, must reach the Bureau by 2 November. Price £2.56 UK (including VAT) or £2.18 overseas (no VAT).

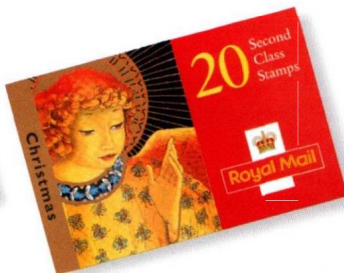


CHRISTMAS 1998

Angels

Royal Mail Mint Stamps

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Christmas stamp books containing twenty 20p and ten 26p Christmas stamps will be available from post offices, the Bureau, philatelic outlets and many retailers from 2 November, price £4 and £2.60 respectively. Left, proofs of the two covers. Books containing Christmas stamps were introduced in 1984.



CHRISTMAS 1998

Angels

Royal Mail Mint Stamps



Presentation pack and stamp cards A well-illustrated pack (price £2.15) and stamp cards (25p each) will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets. The pack includes an angel which can be cut out and assembled to make an attractive Christmas decoration.

The stamps are the work of Irene von Treskow who was born in Berlin in 1940. She has produced poster designs for the National Theatre, Covent Garden Opera and Bonn Opera, as well as book jacket illustrations. Irene designed the Tennyson set of 1992, and the forthcoming 1998 Christmas aerogramme and aircard (see p41).



For the first time, De La Rue have used ink-jet printers to add the secure stock order (warrant) and sheet numbers, and printing date in the sheet margins.

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, Penarth Road, Cardiff CF1 1AA (Bethlehem postmark), marking the outer envelope 'FD9817' (Bureau), or 'FD9818' (Bethlehem). Collectors can post or hand in covers at main post offices for local (mostly non-pictorial) first day handstamps. Sponsored handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from the Bureau (£10 UK/Europe; £21.75 elsewhere). Covers may be posted bearing just the 20p Christmas stamp for any philatelic postmark in use on 2 November; the normal 1st class rate is waived.

Speed prestige book Further to the information published in last month's *Bulletin*, collectors should note that all the definitive and country stamps in the *Breaking Barriers* prestige book (13 October) are perforation gauge 14 (sheet stamps per 15 x 14). The four 20p Speed stamps in the first pane are per 14.5 x 13.5 (15 x 14 sheet stamp issued 29 September). Sharp-eyed collectors will also note that the 20p Speed stamps in the book do not have the copyright date at bottom right.

Correction The re-posting address for the Chislehurst first day of issue handstamp is: South East Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Wexham Road, Slough SL1 1AA, not the London Handstamp Centre quoted here in September. We regret any confusion caused.

WITHDRAWAL OF CHRISTMAS STAMPS Any remaining stocks of 1998 Christmas stamps, stamp books, aerogramme and aircard will be withdrawn from sale at post offices on 24 December. All will remain on sale at the Bureau and philatelic outlets for one year from the date of issue, unless sold out earlier. The 1997 Christmas aerogramme (45p) will be withdrawn on 6 October, and the stamps (£1.83 set), stamp books (20 x 2nd class, 10 x 1st class), presentation pack (£2.20) and stamp cards (£1.25 set) on 26 October 1998.

CHRISTMAS STAMPS Britain's first Christmas stamps, featuring childrens' paintings, were issued in 1966. Including the 1998 set, some 149 Christmas stamps have been issued. To this total can be added phosphor versions of the 1966 issue and underprints on 13p values (1984, 1986, 1987) and 12p value (1985) from books or packs.

The 1998 stamps are not the first to feature angels – the Herald Angel was shown on Fritz Wegner's 4d Christmas stamp in 1969. Angels have also featured on Christmas stamps of 1970, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1976, 1979, 1981, 1994, and 1996.

Two sets have been devoted entirely to angels – montage designs by Sally Stiff in 1972, and woodcut-style designs by Richard Downer in 1975. The 1981 set featured childrens' paintings; the 18p stamp depicting a flying angel by six year old Lucinda Blackmore. The 41p stamp of the 1994 set, by Yvonne Gilbert, featured two children dressed as angels for their Christmas play.

The 1995 Christmas stamps, depicting robins, were the most popular set of that year with *Bulletin* readers. The 1996 and 1997 sets came fourth in their respective years. The 1997 1st class stamp was the second most popular individual stamp of the year.



CHRISTMAS AEROGRAMME AND AIRCARD The 1998 Christmas aerogramme will be issued on 6 October, price 45p. Designed by Irene von Treskow it features Christmas angels which have been shown on a number of the Christmas aerogrammes since they were first issued in 1965, a year ahead of the Christmas stamps. Also being issued on 6 October is the first Christmas Aircard – see section on aircards below ●

Prince of Wales label booklet and cover The sixth of Royal Mail's pictorial label booklets will be available from the Bureau, philatelic outlets and selected post offices from 14 November. The book is being issued to mark the 50th birthday of HRH The Prince of Wales. The £1.04 book, printed by Walsall, contains a pane of four 1st class stamps and adjoining label reproducing Prince Charles's painting of the mountain Ben Arkle previously illustrated on the 25p stamp of 1994 marking the 25th anniversary of his investiture as Prince of Wales. Ben Arkle, 2580 feet, is located in the Reay Forest, noted for its deer, about eight miles to the east of the coastal village of Scourie in north west Scotland. When the Prince painted this scene in October 1991, the mountains were swathed in mist for part of the time so he had to work from memory. Ben Arkle, or simply Arkle as it is referred to locally, is composed of Cambrian quartzite and has bandings of white scree.

The pane of stamps and label will also be available as a separate, unfolding item, available only from the British Philatelic Bureau in Edinburgh, price £1.04.

As the stamps in the pane are not new, the book/pane will not be accorded first day treatment and no Royal Mail first day cover or first day of issue postmarks will be available. Details of any sponsored handstamps for 14 November will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* ●

New definitive packs New presentation packs (Nos 41 and 42) containing the current low value definitives (1p-£1 and 1st and 2nd NV1 stamps), and the current Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales country stamps will be available from the Bureau and philatelic outlets from 20 October, price £5.50 and £4.75 respectively ●



TO COMMEMORATE THE 50TH BIRTHDAY
OF HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

Philatelic Numismatic Cover

Royal Mail and the Royal Mint will be producing a PNC bearing the pane cancelled with a pictorial postmark for Tetbury (post-town for the Prince's home, Highgrove House) and the £5 coin honouring the work of The Prince's Trust. The PNC costs £15.95 and early ordering is advised. A similar cover produced in 1994 for the 25th anniversary of the investiture proved very popular and quickly sold out.