

Royal Post Time Line

1516: Royal Mail established by Henry VIII under Master of the Posts.
1635: Royal Mail service first made available to the public by Charles I.
1654: Oliver Cromwell grants monopoly over service in England to "Office of Postage".
1657: Fixed postal rates introduced.
1660: General Post Office (GPO) officially established by Charles II.
1661: First use of date stamp. First Postmaster General appointed.
1784: First Mail coach (between Bristol and London).
1793: First uniformed delivery staff. Post Office Investigation Branch formed, the oldest recognized criminal investigations authority in the world.
1830: First mail train (on Liverpool and Manchester Railway).
1838: Post Office Money order system introduced.
1839: Uniform Fourpenny Post introduced.
1840: Uniform Penny Post introduced.
1840: First adhesive stamp (the Penny Black).
1852: First Post Office pillar box erected (in Jersey).
1853: First post boxes erected in mainland Britain.
1857: First wall boxes installed Shrewsbury and Market Drayton
1863: First trial of the London Pneumatic Despatch Company to send mail by underground rail between postal depots.
1870: Post Office begins telegraph service.
1870: Post Office Act banned sending of "indecent or obscene" literature; introduced the ½d rate for postcards; banned the use of cut-outs from postal stationery; introduced the ½d rate for newspapers; provided for the issue of newspaper wrappers.
1880: First use of bicycles to deliver mail.
1881: Postal order introduced.
1883: Parcel post begins.
1894: First picture postcards.
1912: Post Office opens national telephone service.
1919: First international airmail service developed by Royal Engineers (Postal Section) and Royal Air Force.
1927: Opening of the London Post Office Railway
1941: Airgraph service introduced between UK and Egypt. The service was later extended to: Canada (1941), East Africa (1941), Burma (1942), India (1942), South Africa (1942), Australia (1943), New Zealand (1943) Ceylon (1944) and Italy (1944).
1941: Aerogram service introduced.
1968: Two-class postal system introduced. National Giro bank opens.

1969: General Post Office changes from government department to nationalized industry.

Postal History Part 3 — Modern Mail Service: Rowland Hill and Post Office Reform — in January 1837 Rowland Hill published his pamphlet Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability. He had no doubt that the source of trouble lay in the complexity of the charges and the mixture of paid and unpaid letters.

His solution was prepayment - with the charge being low and uniform. He recommended that it be 1d up to one ounce in weight. No mention was made initially of the method of prepayment. Later that month he suggested the use of stamped covers, an idea put forward before by Charles Knight.

An official inquiry into aspects of the Post Office was still continuing and Hill was summoned to give evidence. He outlined his plan and expanded his idea of stamped covers. Then, referring to possible difficulties with people unable to write, he suggested the use of "a bit of paper just large enough to bear the stamp, and covered at the back with a glutinous wash." This suggestion was made in a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a draft of which is now in the Phillips Collection (see <http://postalheritage.org.uk>).

This recommendation was eventually to become the Penny Black, the world's first adhesive postage stamp. When the inquiry reported later in 1837 the commissioners recommended Hill's plan to reduce postal charges. They appended examples of stamped covers printed on John Dickinson's silk-thread security paper.



Penny Black

This recommendation was eventually to become the Penny Black, the world's first adhesive postage stamp. When the inquiry reported later in 1837 the commissioners recommended Hill's plan to reduce postal charges. They appended examples of stamped covers printed on John Dickinson's silk-thread security paper.

Uniform Penny Postage: Wallace published the final report of the parliamentary Select Committee in March 1839 recommending most of Hill's ideas but with a uniform 2d rate. This resulted in a lot of activity and some action was demanded of the Government.

Public pressure meant that Lord Melbourne, the Liberal prime minister, promised a bill in favor of uniform penny postage. This was passed and given the Royal Assent on 15 August 1839.

It enabled the reduction of postage rates to a uniform penny regardless of distance but measured by weight. Free franking would be abolished and prepayment would be in the form of stamped paper, stamped envelopes and labels, though this would not be compulsory.

As result of his efforts, Rowland Hill being appointed to the Treasury to oversee the implementation of his ideas which were deemed an immediate success. He eventually held the title of post-master general. The first stamp ever released was the penny black which went for sale in London on 01 May 1840.

The number of chargeable letters in 1839 had been only about 76 million. By 1850 this volume was just under 350 million pieces and continued to grow dramatically. For the first 10 years the lower postal rates advocated by Hill resulted in huge losses for the British post office but with the increase of letters it soon recovered. Adhesive postage stamps introduced and were gradually introduced throughout the world. By 1901, the year Victoria died, 2.3 billion letters and 419 million postcards were delivered.



Scott 1625-26
1995 Pioneers in Communication Series



1840 Letter Sheet

Lake County Philatelic Society
34390 N TANGUERAY DR
GRAYSLAKE IL 60030-4017
WWW.LCPSHOME.ORG --- 847-548-5094