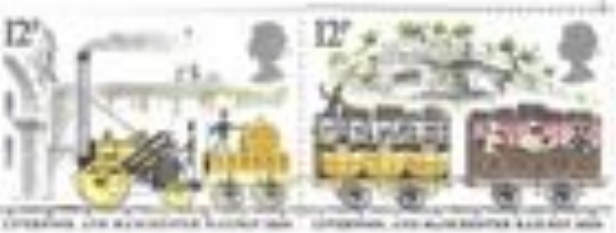
Great Britain Postal History in brief 1516 – 2020

Henry VIII can be credited with starting our postal history with the creation of the position of Master of the Posts 1516, this position was renamed Postmaster General in 1710.
In 1603 James VI transferred the Royal Court to London but to keep his rule over Scotlands Privy Council he had the London to Edinburgh mail route established.
In 1635 Charles 1 made the postal service public for which the recipient was responsible for paying on receipt.

Between 1719 and 1763, Ralph Allen postmaster at Bath, signed a series of contracts with the post office to develop and expand Britain's postal network. He organised mail coaches which were provided by both Wilson & Company of London and Williams & Company of Bath. The early Royal Mail Coaches were similar to ordinary family coaches but with Post Office livery.
The first mail coach ran in 1784, operating between Bristol and London. Delivery staff received uniforms for the first time in 1793, and the Post Office Investigation Branch was established. The first mail train ran in 1830, on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway.



Rowland Hill, an English teacher, inventor, and social reformer, became disillusioned with the postal service, and wrote a paper proposing reforms that resulted in an approach that would go on to change not only the Royal Mail, but also be copied by postal services around world.
Greater changes took place when the Uniform Penny Post was introduced on 10 January 1840 whereby a single rate for delivery anywhere in Great Britain and Ireland was pre-paid by the sender. A few months later, to certify that postage had been paid on a letter, the sender could affix the first adhesive postage stamp, the Penny Black that was available for use from 6 May the same year. Other innovations were the introduction of pre-paid William Mulready designed postal stationery letter sheets and envelopes.

Pillar boxes were introduced in mainland Britain 1853. British pillar boxes traditionally carry the Latin initials of the reigning monarch at the time of their installation.

A national telephone service was opened by the Post Office in 1912. In 1919, the first international airmail service was developed by Royal Engineers (Postal Section) and Royal Air Force. The London Post Office Railway was opened in 1927.

On 1 January 2006, the Royal Mail lost its 350-year monopoly, and the British postal market became fully open to competition. (This was the year I stopped collecting Great Britain Stamps) In 2013 it was announced that the Royal Mail would be floated on the stock market with the Government receiving 700,000 applications for shares. Something Vince Cable was not prepared for as was the announcement of strike action at the proposals set out. You decide for yourself if the now not so Royal Mail has benefited from this act.