

Great Britain:
Elizabethan Pre-Decimal Civilian Postal Rates
 1952 May 01 to 1971 February 14

Queen Elizabeth ascended to the throne on 1952 February 06. Postal rates remained at the rates in the latter part of George VI's reign until 1952 May 01. This period is a continuation of the George VI rates. Only one example from this period is included in the exhibit to demonstrate that subsequent rates had increased. The first Elizabeth II stamps were issued on 1952 December 05. Decimal currency postal rates were introduced on 1971 February 15. Rate Groups can be defined as periods delimited by a change in rate for one of inland letters, post cards, or printed paper, or for foreign letters. Using this system seven rate periods are defined. The 'P' indicates pre-decimal.

Rate Group	Effective Date
P1	1952 May 01
P2	1956 June 01
P3	1957 October 01
P4	1961 October 01
P5	1965 May 17
P6	1966 October 3
P7	1968 September 16

Other postal rate increases of more limited scope occurred on 1956 January 01 (Inland Registered and Inland Express), 1961 February 01 (Inland Registration increased and Inland Recorded introduced), 1963 April 29 (Inland Registration), and 1963 July 1 (Surface Printed Paper and Overseas Registration).

Three large format (and for the time, high-value) decimal definitives were issued on 1970 June 17, prior to decimalization, after the introduction of 10p and 50p coins to help accustom the public with the new currency. Two mixed decimal and pre-decimal from the pre-decimal period are included. One first day usage of the 1971 February 15 decimal definitive is included to mark the end of the pre-decimal period..

Pre-decimal stamps remained valid for postage until 1972 March 01. One example is shown of usage of a pre-decimal stamp to pay the decimal rate within this period, and, finally, one example of the attempt to use one after this date is shown. Arcane postal regulations are illustrated by a post card with "Printed Paper" printed on it, an over-sized post card to Iceland rated at letter rate, and uprated registered stationery not being credited as postage. Overseas greeting cards could be sent unsealed at printed paper rates, subject to some restrictions on the number of words and text and content of message. Concurrent with the 1957 October 01 rate increase surface mail to the United States was no longer eligible for the British Empire rate. Throughout this period, Hong Kong was in Zone B for air mail, but China was in Zone C, and most mail to the (Southern) Ireland was at the same rate as domestic mail. On 1968 September 16, the distinction amongst inland letters, post cards, and printed paper was replaced by a system of first-class and second-class service.

Uncommon rates shown include an AR form, a cover annotated "Registered and AR", a certificate of posting, extra indemnity registered covers, an express post card, registered express mail, and 27 and 77 times single weight second-class air mail covers to Australia. Uncommon destinations include Aden, Iceland, Trinidad, Guatemala, Peru, Hong Kong, Bougainville, and North Borneo.