

FUNGUS-ILLUSTRATED STAMPS FROM GREAT BRITAIN (excluding British Crown dependencies, territories, possessions, etc.)

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This article includes fungus-illustrated postage stamps and postal items issued by Great Britain. Two of these include Royal Mail stamp booklet covers illustrated with fungi, although the stamps within the booklets do not have fungi on them. Another booklet illustrates fungi inside the booklet, but again none of the stamps have fungi on them.

Not included are postage items issued by British Crown dependencies (e.g., Isle of Man and Bailiwicks of Jersey & Guernsey) as well as British possessions and territories, e.g., Gibraltar, Ascension Isl., Tristan da Cunha, St. Helena, Falkland Islands, British Indian Ocean Territory (Diego Garcia), British Virgin Islands, etc. Many have issued lovely sets of mushroom stamps, but they are far too numerous to be covered in this particular article.

Also excluded are fungus-illustrated GB “locals,” another category of postal-like Cinderellas (seals) issued by a number of small Scottish islands, such as Eynhallow, Staffa, Easdale, Bernera, etc., none of which are genuine postage according to the Scott Postage Stamp Catalogues but which are colorful and fun to collect. All of the postal items listed in the table and discussed here are official issues by the British Royal Mail.

This is the most up to date and complete listing of mycophilatelic postal items from Great Britain. In addition to the obvious fungi, my goal has always been to include all obscure fungi in the design of the illustration (MIDs), which are usually overlooked in most mycophilatelic catalogs as well as by collectors because they're not readily seen. Although I've been studying these items for many years, it's possible I may have missed an obscure entry.

Unfortunately, separate international stamp catalogs from around the world have assigned different numbers to postage, so there is no uniformity. Philatelists in Great Britain and most Commonwealth

Nations use the Stanley Gibbons Catalogue of postage stamps, but all catalog numbers in this article are from the Scott Postage Stamp Catalogues.

M = mushrooms or fungi as the main illustration; MID = mushrooms or fungi in the design of the illustration, or in the background or border, but not the primary stamp illustration; AF = Alexander Fleming mentioned; presentation pack = a special packet or folder with the stamp set mounted within, along with additional background information about each stamp and attractive illustrations of the same theme. These are usually available at a cost slightly more than the set of stamps themselves and are collector's items.

Discussion

Four of the stamps listed in different sets in the table below show *Penicillium* spp. on them. Scott 519 shows a Petri plate culture of the fungus used to extract the antibiotic from and is the very first postage stamp ever issued commemorating penicillin, in the year 1967. It is also the first British stamp with a fungus as the main



Great Britain Scott 519. This is the first stamp to commemorate penicillin, in 1967.

Great Britain mycostamps in chronological order

Issue Date MO/DAY/YR	Value	Scott Cat. #	Type	Comments
9/19/1967	1 s	519 (set 518–21)	M	First stamp ever with <i>Penicillium</i> sp. mold shown
10/1968	N/A	BK115	MID	Polypore on booklet cover, with Pied Woodpecker
10/5/1977	9 p	816 (set 816–20)	MID	Two gilled mushrooms on Hedgehog stamp
1/19/1988	34 p	1204 (set 1201–4)	M	<i>Morchella</i> spp.
4/12/1988	N/A	BK532	M	Mushrooms on booklet cover only – recipe cards
3/7/1989	32 p	1250 (set 1248-51)	MID	Stilton blue cheese, with <i>Penicillium</i> mold veins
2/5/1991	1 s	1358 (set 1350–59)	MID	<i>Trametes versicolor</i> with Peacock Butterflies
8/10/1993	N/A	BK 158	M	Beatrix Potter booklet with fungi shown inside
9/14/1993	---	1510–13 (set 1510–14)	MID	Autumn leaves with fungal pathogens on 4/5 stamps:
"	18 p	1510	"	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i> – leaf disease
"	24 p	1511	"	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> – leaf disease
"	28 p	1512	"	<i>Corylus avellana</i> – leaf disease
"	33 p	1513	"	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> – leaf disease
1/20/1998	63 p	1790 (set 1785–90)	M	<i>Boletus satanas</i> . Endangered species stamps
3/2/1999	43 p	1849 (set 1847–50)	M, AF	<i>Penicillium</i> sp. mold. Millennium 1999 set, “The Patients’ Tale”
9/16/2010	58 p	2835 (set 2834–39)	M, AF	<i>Penicillium</i> sp. mold, Medical Breakthroughs

illustration. Coincidentally, the first postage stamps issued from both Great Britain and the United States (Luther, 2014) that have fungi as the main illustration show penicillin mold (*Penicillium* sp.). It's hard to believe that we had to wait until the year 1967 for the first postage stamp devoted to this miraculous fungus to appear, especially in light of the remarkable discoveries leading up to the development of penicillin and knowing how it saved lives for the Allies on an astronomical scale during WWII and continues to save lives to this day around the World.

The cover of booklet BK115 shows a Pied Woodpecker, but has a polypore conk beside it growing on the tree, which is stylized and not identifiable to species.



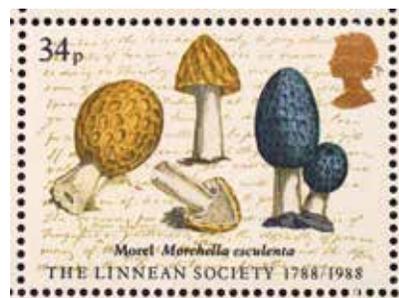
Booklet cover, BK115.

The two mushrooms on Scott 816 are identified as "*Clitocybe nebularis*?" in McKenzie (1997). To me they appear to be a species of either *Clitocybe* or *Tricholoma*.



Scott 816.

Scott 1204 shows five morels and commemorates the 200th anniversary of the British Linnean Society. The stamp is labelled "*Morel Morchella esculenta*," but notice that three different species of morels are actually shown.



Scott 1204.

Scott BK532 booklet cover shows a scene of food in a kitchen, with five stylized edible mushrooms on it. This booklet is titled "Recipe Cards" in the catalogs, and the stamps inside have no fungal illustrations—the mushrooms are only on the booklet cover.



Cover of booklet BK532.

On Scott 1250 (Food and Farming Year) you can clearly see the blue veins of the *Penicillium roqueforti* mold in the cheese that's cut open. Although it's not labeled, this appears to be a (delicious) British Stilton, a popular English variation on Blue Cheese.

Scott 1250, *Penicillium roqueforti* on Stilton cheese.



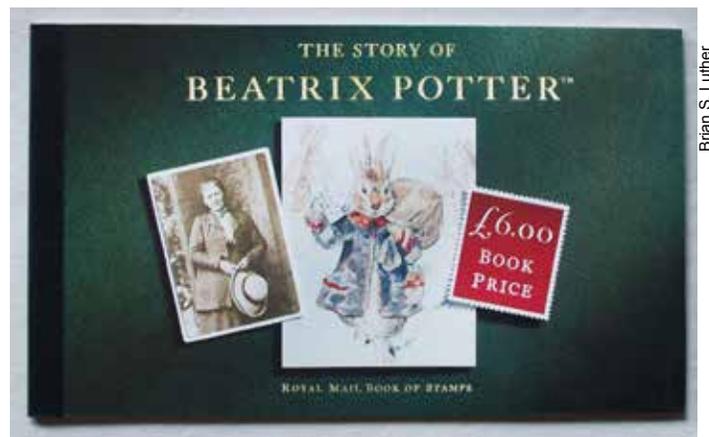
Scott 1358 shows a stump with two Peacock Butterflies and a stylized fungus with zonate pilei growing all around it. According to the 2011 Scott Catalogue the insects are "Peacock Moths," which is incorrect. I count nine basidiocarps on the stump.



Scott 1358, with *Trametes versicolor*

The fungus is identified in McKenzie (1997) as "*Stereum ? sp.*," but it could easily also be *Trametes versicolor* (Turkey Tails). We'll never know for sure, because we can't see the hymenial layer to determine if it's stereoid (with a smooth hymenophore) or poroid.

Booklet BK 158 is titled The Story of Beatrix Potter. This is a Royal Mail book of different postage stamps (none with fungi, but some with her illustrations), but it tells the life story of Beatrix and is chock full of old photos of her, her family, friends, and homes along with non-stop illustrations she did from her numerous books. Inside are two paintings of *Hygrocybe punicea* (not shown here).



Beatrix Potter stamp booklet, BK158. Mushrooms illustrated inside.

For those of you interested, Beatrix Potter was an amateur mycologist, besides being a popular writer and artist, and has many beautiful paintings of native fungi. A number of her originals are held by the Armit Library in Ambleside, Cumbria, England, and are on public display. A couple of different books showing her illustrations of fungi have been published and can easily be found by searching online. Of course there's a wealth of information available on Beatrix Potter, but for two additional articles on her in the PSMS *Spore Prints*, go to No. 332 (May), 1997 & No. 482 (May), 2012, online at www.psms.org

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Scott 1510–14 is a five stamp set entitled The Four Seasons. They show five different plant leaves and four of these have fungal plant pathogens visible on them. McKenzie (1997, p. 21) confidently provides the scientific names for these fungus parasites, in case you're interested.



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Scott 1510–1513.

Scott 1790, the Devil's Bolete (*Boletus satanas*), is one of six British endangered species shown in this set of stamps. The others include a rodent, an orchid, a bird, a snail, and an insect. The Presentation Pack issued by the Royal Mail tells a lot more about all of these endangered organisms and the work that's being done to help them recover. For the bolete there's a beautiful color photo of two buttons in the wild and a chart showing only six known locations left in Britain where it has been found recently. It's mycorrhizal with Beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*) which are only found in southern England and loss of habitat appears to be the main problem.



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Scott 1790.

Scott 1849 is one of a four stamp set issued to commemorate the millennium, titled "The Patients' Tale," showing a *Penicillium* sp. mold growing. The stamp says "Millennium 1999/38, Fleming's penicillin," in part.



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Scott 1849.

Scott 2835 shows a Petri plate with *Penicillium* sp. mold growth and is one of six stamps in the Medical Breakthroughs series. This stamp is titled "Antibiotic properties of penicillin discovered by Sir Alexander Fleming, 1928." The set (2834–39) was also issued in a handsome Presentation Pack which has a photo of Fleming's original Petri plate of the mold, other illustrations, and a paragraph entitled "Antibiotic Properties of Penicillin" which gives a brief historical time line and overview of those who helped develop this life-saving antibiotic.



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Scott 2835.

References

Luther, Brian S. 2014. United States Postage Stamps with Fungi—In Color. Online and in color on the PSMS homepage at www.psms.org (under Education).

McKenzie, Eric H. C. 1997. *Collect Fungi on Stamps*. 2nd ed. Stanley Gibbons Ltd. London and Ringwood. 86 pp.