

Ireland's First Airmail Stamps

Vox Hiberniae 1948 - 1971

Aim

This exhibit shows the development and use of the first stamps that Ireland produced for airmail postage. The display includes artwork, essays, specimens, varieties, errors, perforations and usages of the denominations paying for the various postage rates across continents, for over two decades that the Vox Hiberniae Airmail Stamps were in use.

Importance

In 1946 the Irish Government decided to issue 'air post stamps', heralding Ireland's first and only set of stamps specifically designed as airmails.

These stamps were created to serve Ireland's rapidly expanding passenger and international airmail services, securing its place in the new world following World War II.

Denominations and Designs

There were seven values in the Vox Hiberniae Airmail series. 1d., 3d., 6d. and 1/- denominations were initially specified. Further values followed; 8d., 1/3d., and 1/5d.

The designs for the airmail stamps feature the angel Victor in flight, carrying a 'Vox Hiberniae' (Voice of Ireland) banner over four famous early Christian sites in Ireland, one from each of the four provinces.

Exhibit Structure

The exhibit structure follows the denomination values:

1. Introduction	Frame	1
2. 1d. Rock of Cashel	Frame	1
3. 3d. Lough Derg	Frame	2
4. 6d. Croagh Patrick	Frames	2 & 3
5. 8d. Lough Derg	Frame	3
6. 1/- Glendalough	Frame	3 & 4
7. 1/3d. Rock of Cashel	Frame	4 & 5
8. 1/5d. Rock of Cashel	Frame	5
9. Conclusion	Frame	5

The stamp values used the IR £: s: d punt currency. The Irish word for penny is 'pingin', hence the lower value stamps bear denominations of 1p., 3p., 6p., and 8p. for 1d., 3d. 6d., and 8d.

Items of interest are in **bold text** and items of the greatest importance are highlighted in *dark red ink italics or background*.



'Vox Hiberniae' meaning **'Voice of Ireland'** Airmail Stamps
from the four provinces of Ireland to the four corners of the globe.

Sources

Government of Ireland, Department of Posts and Telegraphs, printing of Air Mail Stamps and Questions of Method of Printing Future Stamp Issues, Summary of Memorandum of 29.10.1947

Hamilton-Bowen R, Hibernian Handbook and Catalogue of the Postage Stamps of Ireland, 2020

Harmon B, Irish Philately, Journal of the Irish Philatelic Circle, Issue No: 2 August Vol 2025 Vox Hiberniae Airmail Stamps of Ireland Pt 1.

Mullen J, 'A Concise Study of the Irish Airmail Stamps 1948 to 1965.

Ireland's First Airmail Stamps, Vox Hiberniae 1948 – 1971 Synopsis by Brian Harmon

Aim: This exhibit shows an in-depth philatelic study of the first stamps that Ireland produced for airmail postage.

Scope: The display includes artwork, essays, specimens, varieties, errors, perforations and usages of the denominations paying for the various postage rates across continents, for over two decades that the Vox Hiberniae Airmail Stamps were in use.

Purpose & Subject History: The Anglo-Irish Treaty confirmed the partition of Ireland as established in the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. Ireland only became independent of Britain in 1922, then known as the 'Irish Free State'. In 1937 a new Constitution re-established the state as Ireland (or Éire in Irish). In 1949, Ireland left the British Commonwealth and was formally declared a republic.

During these times, Ireland sought its own identity, and one of the ways a country displays its identity, is through its stamps. Ireland's long history is intertwined with Christianity. The designs for the airmail stamps feature the angel Victor in flight, carrying a 'Vox Hiberniae' (Voice of Ireland) banner over four famous early Christian sites in Ireland, one from each of the four provinces. Angel Victor was the guardian angel and the divine messenger who appeared to St. Patrick in visions to guide his mission, encourage him during his enslavement, and ultimately urge him to return to Ireland as a missionary.

Importance: In 1946 the Irish Government decided to issue 'air post stamps', heralding Ireland's first and only set of stamps specifically designed for airmails. These stamps were created to serve Ireland's rapidly expanding passenger and international airmail services, securing its place in the new world following World War II.

Treatment: There were seven values in the Vox Hiberniae series. 1d., 3d., 6d. and 1/- denominations were initially specified. Further values followed; 8d., 1/3d., and 1/5d. The exhibit presents the stamps in denomination order.

Exhibit highlights, Items of Greater Importance and Interest: There are several interesting items in this exhibit and items of greater rarity are highlighted with dark red text or with a dark red background.

Interesting Items and Rarities:

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| 1. Original pencil, ink and water colour artwork - the only 6d. original concept known | Frame 1 P.3 & 4 |
| 2. Stamp blocks signed by the designer, Richard J King | Frame 1 P.4 |
| 3. Full set of specimen overprints - Only two sets in private hands. | Frame 1 P.6 |
| 4. 1d. Photo Essay signed by Prime Minister - only known privately owned example | Frame 1 P.7 |
| 5. Minister for P. 7 T. letter on Department letterhead accompanying Item 4. above | Frame 1 P.7 |
| 6. 1d. Specimen block of four with margin notes - only known privately owned example | Frame 1 P.8 |
| 7. 1d. Variety – '1on 1d'. | Frame 1 P.8 |
| 8. 3d. Process Camera Photo Negative Plate - only known example | Frame 2 P.17 |
| 9. 3d. Specimen block of four with margin notes - only known privately owned example | Frame 2 P.17 |
| 10. 3d. Variety – 'Extra boat' in block and on cover. | Frame 2 P.19 |
| 11. 3d. Variety – 'Major Re-entry' in block and on cover. | Frame 2 P.20 |
| 12. 3d. on cover with scarcely used customs seal at that time. | Frame 2 P.21 |
| 13. 6d. Photo Essay and ex. Minister for P. 7 T. signature - only known private example | Frame 2 P.29 |
| 14. Member of Parliament (Teachta Dála T.D), ex Minister for P. 7 T. letter with Item 13. | Frame 2 P.29 |
| 15. 6d. Variety – 'Extra Pebble' | Frame 2 P.30 |
| 16. 8d. Uncatalogued Perforation Type 3 | Frame 3 P.37 |
| 17. 8d. Variety – 'Stigmata' in block and on cover. | Frame 3 P.38 |
| 18. 8d. on Great Britain Air letter – a rare combination. | Frame 3 P.40 |
| 19. 1/- Photo Essay signed by Prime Minister - only known privately owned example | Frame 3 P.45 |
| 20. 1/- Specimen block of four with margin notes - only known private example | Frame 3 P.46 |
| 21. 1/- Variety – 'Dropped Accent'. | Frame 3 P.47 |
| 22. 1/- Variety – 'Box in Throat. | Frame 3 P.47 |
| 23. 1/- used on Irish Diplomatic Services envelope - only example seen in forty years. | Frame 4 P.52 |
| 24. 1/3d. Errors including 'colourless thread' and 'fold'. | Frame 4 P.57 |
| 25. 1/3d. Variety 'Extra Feather' in block, used, and on cover – only two known on cover. | Frame 4 P.58 |
| 26. 1/3d. Variety 'Inverted 'Θ' Watermark' singles mint and used - Only one sheet known. | Frame 4 P.59 |

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| 27. 1/3d. Variety 'Burning Bush' used and on cover - only one known on cover. | Frame 4 P.59 |
| 28. 1/3d. on USA reply envelope – a rare combination. | Frame 4 P.63 |
| 29. 1/3d. Special rates to mail to the Irish Defence Forces serving with the U.N | Frame 5 P.68 |
| 30. 1/5d. Variety 'Missing Re-touch'. | Frame 5 P.71 |
| 31. 1/5d. Variety 'Cracked Wall'. | Frame 5 P.72 |
| 32. 1/5d. Variety 'Re-touch Cloud'. | Frame 5 P.72 |
| 33. The end of the Vox Hiberniae airmail stamps | Frame 5 P.79 & 80 |

Changes since 2025:

- A. The exhibit has been reduced from an eight frame to a five frame display, condensing the quality of the material and enhancing the flow of the narrative contained.
- B. The New display has been divided into new denomination chapters and presented in denomination order.
- C. Chapter layout has been included in exhibit structure in the introduction page.
- D. Chapter headings and subheadings added throughout.
- E. Eleven new international destinations have been added.
- F. Display rewritten to provide additional philatelic information, including new information from The Government of Ireland, Department of Posts and Telegraphs, printing of Air Mail Stamps and Questions of Method of Printing Future Stamp Issues, Summary of Memorandum of 29.10.1947.
- G. 8.d Uncatalogued Perforation Type 3 discovered.
- H. 1/- used on Irish Diplomatic Services envelope added.
- I. 1/3d. Special rates to mail to the Irish Defence Forces serving with the U.N added
- J. 1/5d. varieties added
- K. References have been updated to now include 'Harmon B, Irish Philately, Journal of the Irish Philatelic Circle, Issue No: 2 August Vol 2025 Vox Hiberniae Airmail Stamps of Ireland Pt 1'.



Rarity Item 1.



Rarity Item 4.



Rarity Item 8.



Rarity Item 13.



Rarity Item 20.