

Decimal Day in the U.K.
February 15, 1971

Background – Currency

Pounds, Shilling, Pence - £sd (a.k.a Sterling or Pre-decimal)

- Base 12
- 12 pence = 1 shilling
- 20 shillings = 1 pound
- or
- 240 pence = 1 pound
- Adopted in Britain in the 8th Century

£ = Pound
/ = Shilling
d = Pence

Decimal

- Base 10
- 100 pence = 1 pound
- First English speaking county with decimal currency?
 - USA - Coinage Act of 1792
 - China using decimal currency for 2000 years

£sd in Use – A Straightforward Calculation



1/ 2d = 2oz (second step) Surface UPU

3/ _____ = International Registration

4/ 2d

£sd in Use – A More Complicated Calculation



$$\left. \begin{array}{r} 1/ 6d \\ 5d \\ 5d \\ 4d \\ 4d \\ \hline \end{array} \right\} 24d = 2/$$

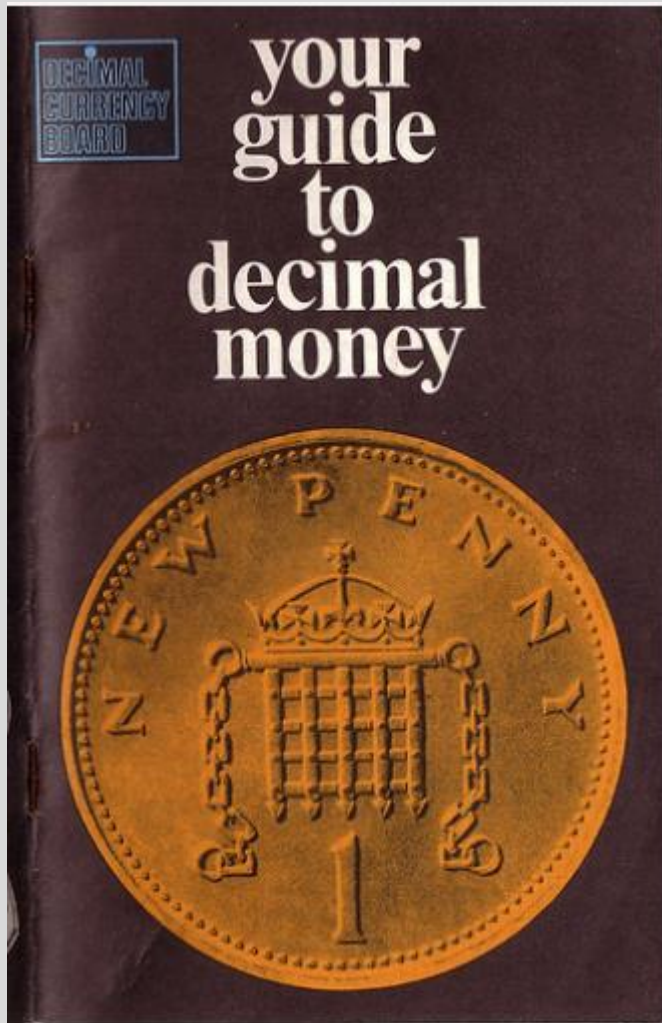
Total = 3/ = 1oz (second step) International Airmail
– Zone B

£sd is like converting US change into Quarters so 79 cents would be expressed as 3 quarters and four cents

The Plan for Decimalization

- Advocacy for a decimal currency began in the U.K in the 1820's
 - 1961 - Government Committee of the Inquiry of Decimal Currency
 - 1966 - Committee's proposed changes adopted by the Government
 - 1969 - Parliament passed the Decimal Currency Act
- Transition activities:
 - 1968 – In the new decimal currency, pence would be “p” instead of “d”
 - 1968 – New 5p and 10p coins issued
 - 1970 – Prices listed first in £sd then decimal currency
 - 1971 – Banks closed February 10 -15 to clear checks and convert accounts
 - 1971 – February 15 Decimal Day!

Transition to Decimal Day



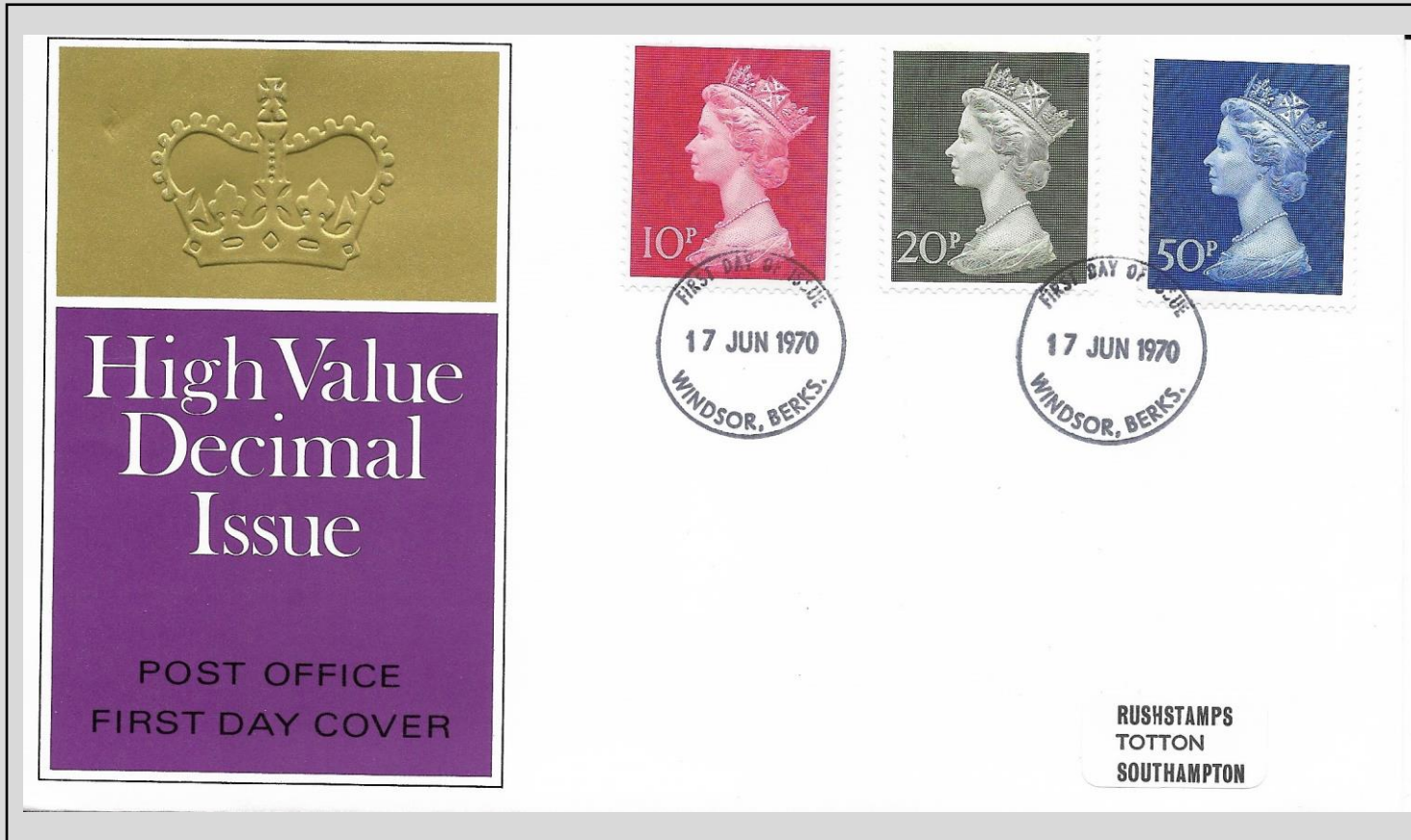
Shoppers' table

DECIMAL CURRENCY BOARD

This table will help you to check decimal prices against previous £sd prices, but there is no need to learn it by heart. Remember, shops will charge either £p prices or £sd prices, but not both. You cannot use this table to choose whether you pay the £sd or the £p price.

Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p
		2/-	10	4/-	20	6/-	30	8/-	40
1	½	2/1	10½	4/1	20½	6/1	30½	8/1	40½
2	1	2/2	11	4/2	21	6/2	31	8/2	41
3	1	2/3	11	4/3	21	6/3	31	8/3	41
4	1½	2/4	11½	4/4	21½	6/4	31½	8/4	41½
5	2	2/5	12	4/5	22	6/5	32	8/5	42
		2/6	12½	4/6	22½	6/6	32½	8/6	42½
6	2½	2/7	13	4/7	23	6/7	33	8/7	43
7	3	2/8	13½	4/8	23½	6/8	33½	8/8	43½
8	3½	2/9	14	4/9	24	6/9	34	8/9	44
9	4	2/10	14	4/10	24	6/10	34	8/10	44
10	4	2/11	14½	4/11	24½	6/11	34½	8/11	44½
11	4½								
		3/-	15	5/-	25	7/-	35	9/-	45
1/1	5½	3/1	15½	5/1	25½	7/1	35½	9/1	45½
1/2	6	3/2	16	5/2	26	7/2	36	9/2	46
1/3	6	3/3	16	5/3	26	7/3	36	9/3	46
1/4	6½	3/4	16½	5/4	26½	7/4	36½	9/4	46½
1/5	7	3/5	17	5/5	27	7/5	37	9/5	47
		3/6	17½	5/6	27½	7/6	37½	9/6	47½
1/6	7½	3/7	18	5/7	28	7/7	38	9/7	48
1/7	8	3/8	18½	5/8	28½	7/8	38½	9/8	48½
1/8	8½	3/9	19	5/9	29	7/9	39	9/9	49
1/9	9	3/10	19	5/10	29	7/10	39	9/10	49
1/10	9	3/11	19½	5/11	29½	7/11	39½	9/11	49½
1/11	9½								

Transition To Decimal Day



On June 17, 1970 three high value definitive stamps were issued in the new decimal currency.

The denominations were chosen because they were exact conversions from £sd to decimal.

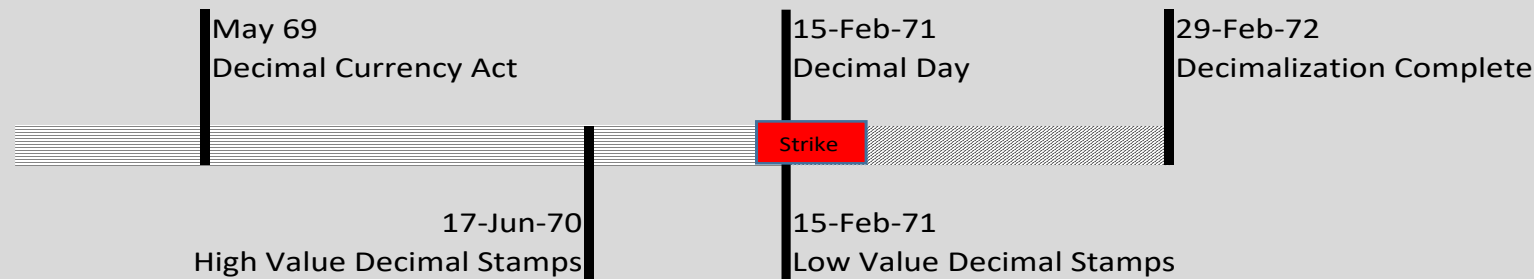
10p = 2/
20p = 4/
50p = 10/

10/ in 1970 is worth £7.60 in 2019

Due to the high face value these stamps were typically used on packages and for additional services.

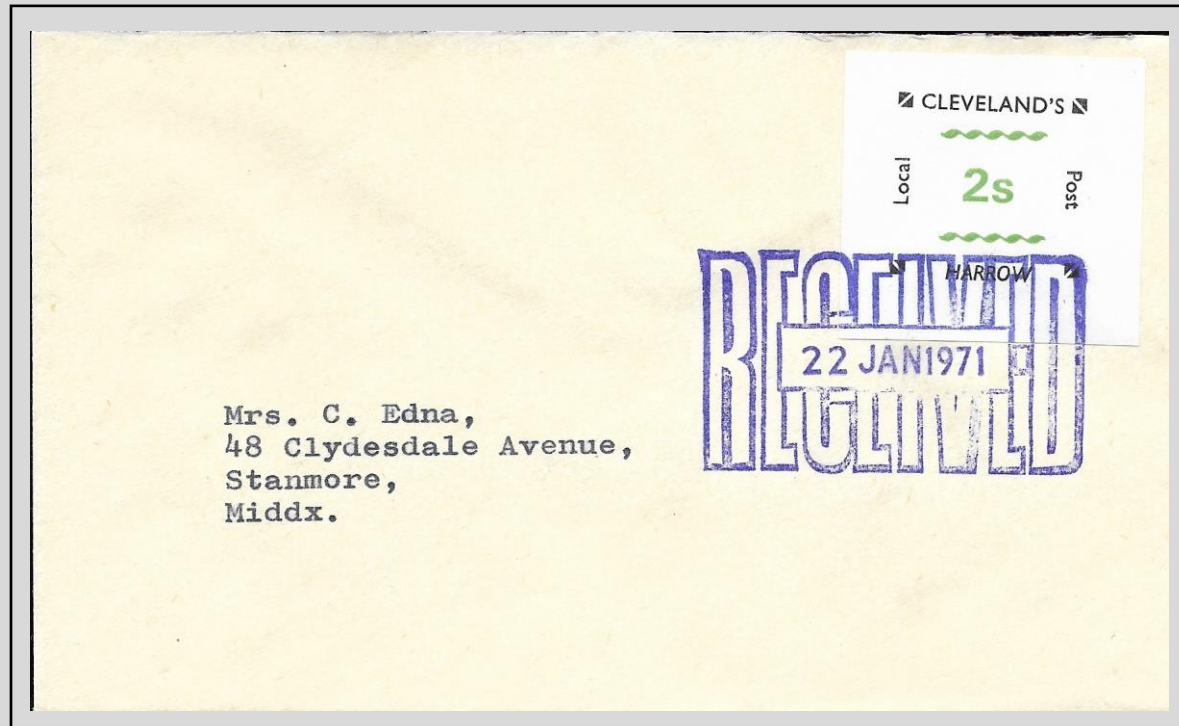
Postal Strike

- Postal workers went on strike on January 20, 1971
- The strike ended on Sunday March 7, 1971 with service resuming the next day



- To pressure the strikers, the Government suspended its monopoly on mail delivery resulting in several hundred private carriers

Strike Mail



Typical example of private carrier mail; in this case the carrier was Cleveland's Harrow and Edgware Post.

Note the rate of 2/ or 24d, the normal first class rate was only 5d.

Strike Mail – Philatelic?



The private carrier, Public Mail, produced the “stamps” on this cover.

Public Mail transported mail by plane, helicopter and in the case of items sent to Boulogne, France via Hovercraft.

This cover entered the French postal system on February 9, 1971, the splashdown date for Apollo 14.

Strike Mail - Malawi S.A.D.S.



Special Airmail Delivery Service (S.A.D.S.) was created by the Malawi Post Office, reportedly on February 8.

Under S.A.D.S. mail was transported from Malawi to the Malawi Buying and Trade Agents in London and then delivered to the addressee by a private carrier.

S.A.D.S. users had to apply regular Malawian stamp(s) and an additional 30t overprinted stamp which covered the cost of the delivery in London.



Decimal Day 2/15/1971
Malawi
Republic of Ireland

Malawi Decimal Currency
100 tambalas = 1 Kwacha

Chichewa language:
Tambala is "Rooster"
Kwacha is "It has dawned"

Transition - Post Decimal Day

Beginning February 15

- Decimal prices listed first, £sd listed second
- Banks begin withdrawing old £sd coins
- Pence denominated stamps noted as “p” instead of “d”
- £sd denominated stamps now converted to decimal currency

New Low Value Decimal Stamps - FDC?



First Day covers serviced after strike is settled

New values include five fractional values to true up value between £sd and decimal currencies

↑
Post strike FDCs bear a “delayed” handstamp

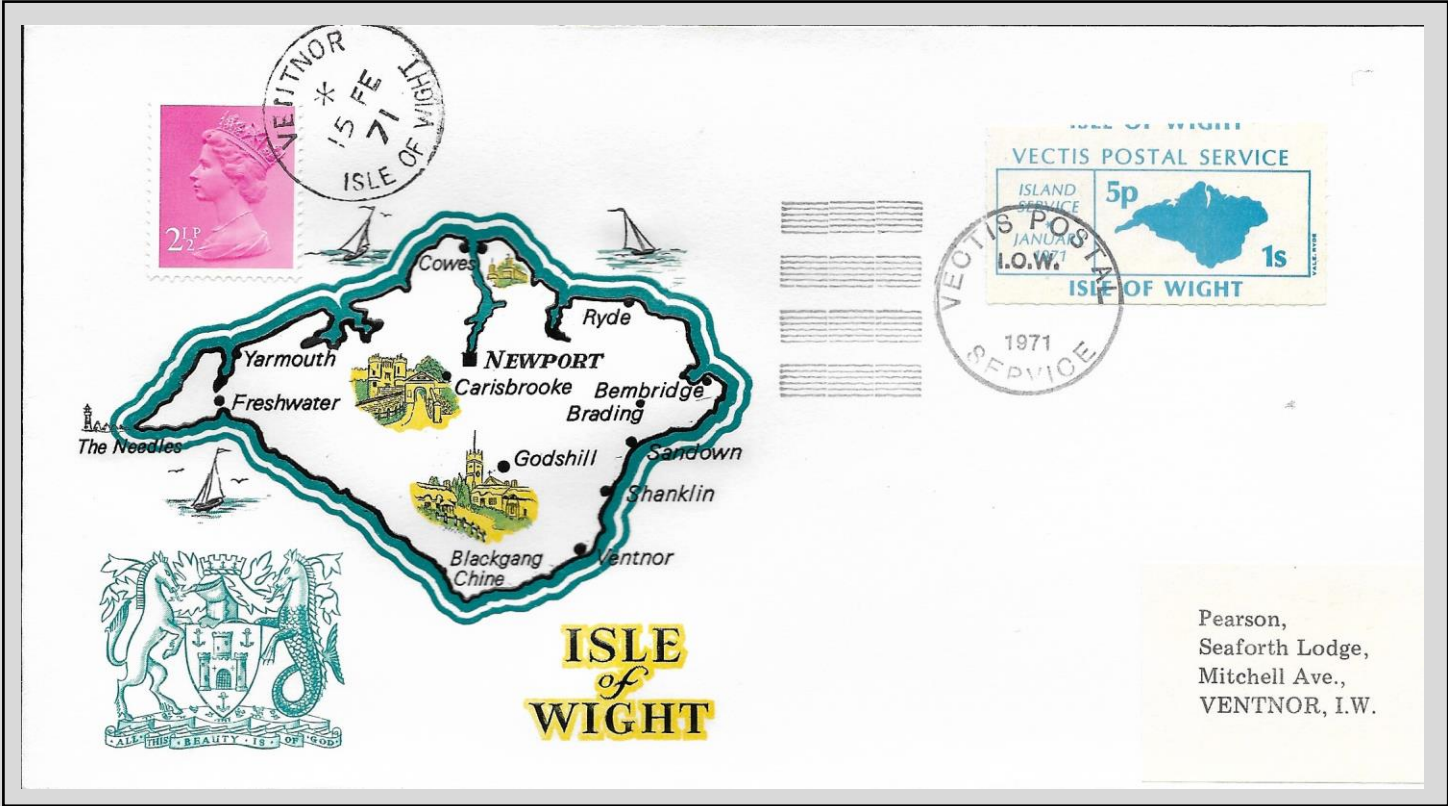
New Low Value Decimal Stamps - FDC??



British military post offices were not affected by the strike. Therefore, the new decimal stamps were available at these locations on the intended first issue date of February 15.



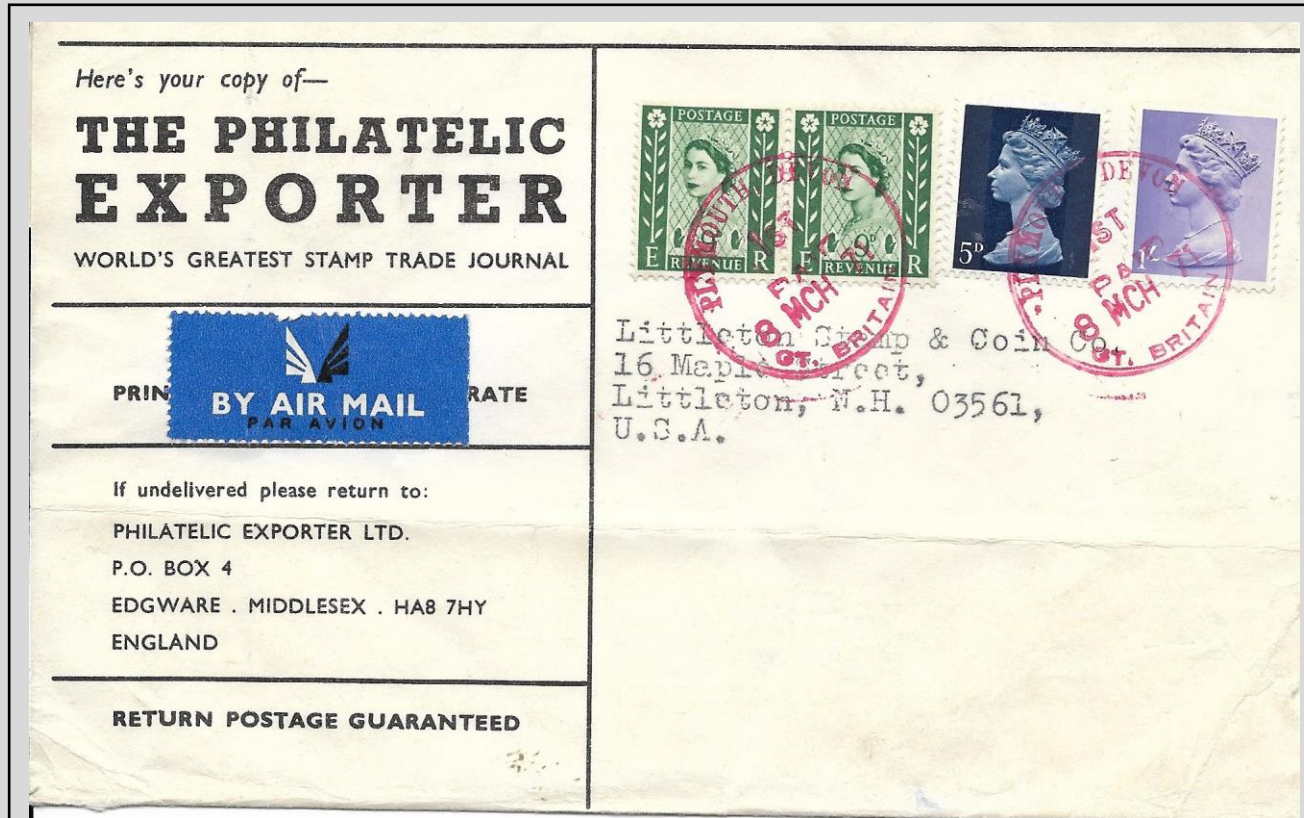
New Low Value Decimal Stamps – FDC???



Post offices in small shops were not unionized so they remained open during the strike. Such locations were provided with the new decimal stamps on February 15.

This cover bears a 2 ½p decimal stamp postmarked February 15, 1971. Due to the strike it was delivered by a private mail carrier.

Transition – Post Decimal Day



Postal strike is settled on Sunday March 7

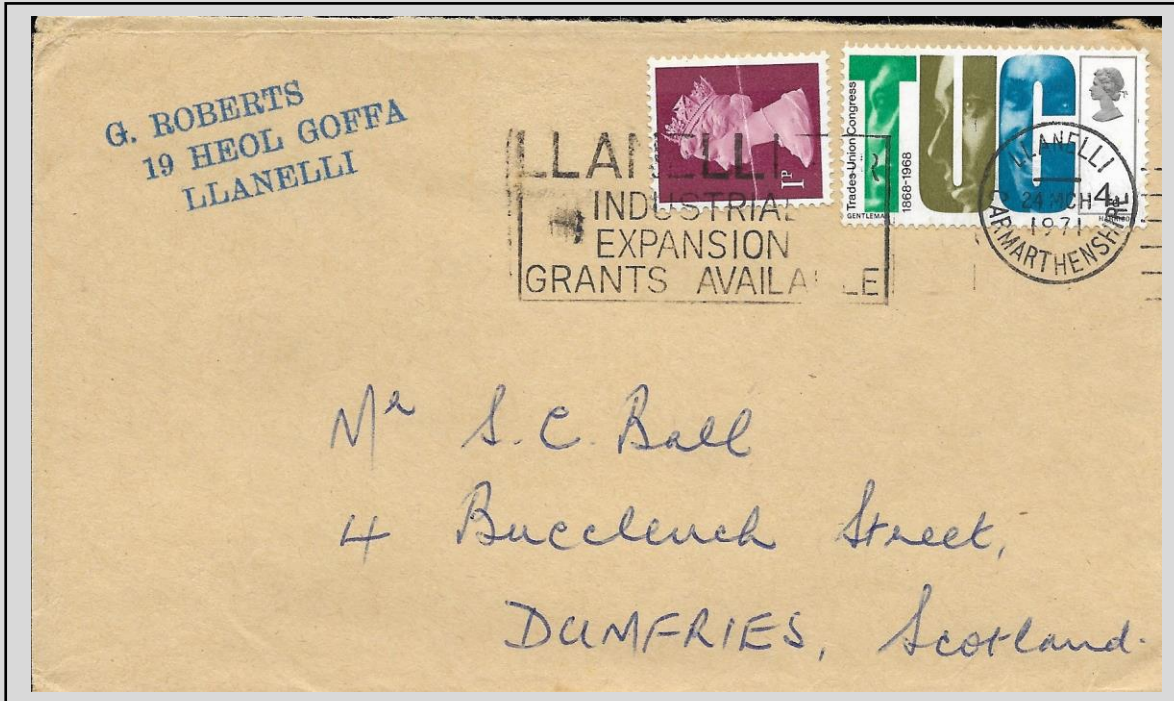
Postal service is resumed on Monday March 8

Sent on March 8, postage is paid by £sd denominated stamps which must be converted to decimal currency.

£sd	Decimal
5d	= 2p
9d	= 4p
9d	= 4p
<u>1/</u>	= 5p
35d	= 15p

15p = 1oz (second step) International Airmail - Zone B

Transition – Post Decimal Day



After February 15, £sd denominated stamps had to be converted to decimal currency when used on mail.

Example of 4oz (first step) Inland Second Class rate

£sd	Decimal
4d	= 1 ½p
	= <u>1p</u>
	= 2 ½p

Second class mail was intended to be delivered the second working day after posting.

Transition – Post Decimal Day



Example of 1oz (second step) International Airmail - Zone B

£sd Decimal

9d = 4p

9d = 4p

= 7 ½p

= 15 ½p Overpays rate by ½p

Demonetization – Last Day of £sd



February 29, 1972 was the final day £sd stamps could be used. **After that all £sd denominated stamps were invalid for postage.**

First class & Recorded Delivery

£sd

½d

½d

½d

1½d

2d

3d

4d

7d

8d

27d or 2/3d = 11p

7p = 8oz (third step) Inland First Class

4p = Recorded Delivery

11p

Likely an overpay for philatelic mail

After Demonetization



After February 29, 1972 all pre-decimal stamps were invalid for postage.

Postal patrons attempted to use the demonetized stamps but were usually unsuccessful.

This cover was posted in 1975 with two 4d stamps, therefore, the post office identified this cover as not bearing any postage.

The cover was marked due 11p as that was double the first step Second Class mail rate of 5 ½p.

References

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Malawi Map
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