

## Archive Information Sheet

# Post Office Uniforms: Key dates



### 1700s

Buttons inscribed with the words 'General Post Office' issued for the Captain and/or the crew of the packet ships.

### 1728

Letter carriers issued with a brass token bearing the King's Arms to identify them as Post Office employees.

### 1784

Mail coach guards issued with a uniform of a scarlet coat with blue lapels and gold braid, a black hat with a gold band.

### 1793

London General Post letter carriers issued with a scarlet coat with blue lapels and cuffs and brass buttons with the wearer's number, and a beaver hat and blue waistcoat.

### 1837

London's 'Two Penny Postmen' issued with a cut-away blue coat with a scarlet collar, a blue vest and a beaver hat.

### 1851

Identifying numbers on uniform buttons replaced by embroidered numbers on coat collars. Letter carriers in the largest provincial towns were now wearing uniforms.

### 1855

London letter carriers issued with trousers for the first time. Previously they had to provide their own. The extension of the uniform to the provinces was gradual and initially 'trouserless'. Waterproof capes were also introduced.

### 1859

The glazed hat was replaced with a hard felt hat.

### 1861

The scarlet uniform was replaced by blue. On each side of the collar the letters 'GPO' (General Post Office) were embroidered in white, above the

postman's number.

### 1862

The single peak shako hat was introduced, covered in a dark blue cloth with red piping, and a straight glazed peak.

### 1868

The military style tunic replaced the frock coat and waistcoat.

### 1870

The Post Office took over telegraph companies and began supplying uniforms to the new grade of boy messenger.

### 1872

Uniforms issued to rural letter carriers (including auxiliaries). The entire delivery force was now uniformed. Good conduct stripes consisting of gold lace bars worn on the left breast introduced for London letter carriers.

### 1882

Good conduct stripes scheme extended to include provincial letter carriers.

### 1894

Postwomen issued with a waterproof cape and skirt.

### 1896

London postmen issued with a double peaked shako which replaced the single peak. A lighter version was authorised for summer wear.

### 1909-10

The winter shako was abolished and the summer shako became standard issue for London and provincial postmen.

### 1910

Committee on Uniforms reduced uniforms to six classes, corresponding to six grades. This ended the distinction between London and the provinces. The tunic-style jacket was replaced by a new design based on a 'civilian' lounge pattern, which had red piping,

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but no red collar or cuffs.

### 1914

Good conduct stripes were abolished, but employees were allowed to continue wearing their existing stripes.

### 1916

Postwomen issued with a blue straw hat, blue serge coat and skirt, waterproof cape, waterproof skirt and boots.

### 1922

Brass buttons on postmen's jackets replaced by black buttons. The letters 'GPO' on the cap were replaced by an oval badge with the postman's number in the middle and a crown on top. The badge also appeared on the jacket.

### 1929

Postwomen's straw hats replaced by a blue felt hat.

### 1932

The shako begins to be phased out and replaced by a 'military style' flat cap.

### 1937

New cap badges with chromium-plated letters and figures were introduced. The jacket badge was withdrawn.

### 1941

Postwomen allowed to wear trousers. Postwomen's hat superseded by a peaked cap.

### 1955

New-style summer uniform introduced of a biscuit-coloured jacket.

### 1956

Double-breasted jackets replace single-breasted ones.

### 1958

New-style badges introduced. Garment badge included the postman's number and the code letters of the parent office. The cap badge featured a post horn and St Edward's crown.

### 1969

Grey adopted for uniform, and extended to postwomen's uniform in 1970.

### 1986

Navy blue uniforms introduced as part of a set of

universal all-weather clothing.

### 1988

The Post Office could supply 46 standard sizes of uniform to its 130,000 postmen and women.

### 1990

Black training shoes issued to postmen and postwomen. Lighter weight trousers, shirts and slacks were also issued for summer wear.

### 1991

Culottes issued after an overwhelming response for their introduction from postwomen. Sleeveless sweaters were also introduced for postmen.

### 1992

Postmen allowed dark coloured shorts in hot weather.

### 1995

High-visibility jackets and waistcoats and shoes with toe protection made available to ensure safe working practice.

### 1996

Storm-proof jackets issued to provide Post Office employees with better protection from the weather.

### 1999

Introduction of sweatshirt and baseball cap to provide a 'relaxed yet smart' uniform.

### Sources

**POST 30:** England and Wales Minutes (1792 - 1920)

**POST 33:** General Minutes (1921 - 1954)

**POST 61:** Staff uniform and Discipline (1766 - 1948)  
*Post Office Green Papers No 27.*

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