# Black postboxes in Britain mark history, spark curiosity, and honour Black Britons



Britain's iconic postboxes, traditionally painted red since 1874, are primarily associated with the Royal Mail's storied history. However, the emergence of rare black postboxes has sparked confusion and intrigue among the public. These unusual postal structures contrast starkly with their vibrant red counterparts and have driven many to explore their significance further.

Black postboxes are not a new phenomenon. Historically, such boxes signified that postal service had ceased in that location—often found sealed at decommissioned post offices or in conservation areas. According to various sources, black postboxes typically indicate a lack of active mail collection. A recent Reddit discussion highlighted this ambiguity when a user discovered a black postbox in Llanfydd, Wales. Initially perplexed by its operational status, they found that the box served as a perfect example of how misinformation can flourish in online spaces. "I came across this working postbox at the weekend," the user recounted, unaware that what they found was actually a replica rather than a genuine Royal Mail facility.

Interestingly, not all black postboxes are mere relics. In a noteworthy initiative, four postboxes were painted black in 2020 as part of a celebration for Black History Month. Located in key cities—London, Glasgow, Cardiff, and Belfast—these postboxes honour significant figures from the Black British community, such as the pioneering nurse Mary Seacole and the footballer Walter Tull. Each of these postboxes features a QR code that links to an online gallery, showcasing the contributions of Black Britons celebrated on postage stamps. This initiative was launched by the Royal Mail to highlight the positive impact of diversity within British society and to educate the public on these essential historical figures.

The purpose of these special edition black postboxes seems twofold: to honour distinguished members of the community and to spark conversations around representation in the UK. As prominent figures such as Yinka Shonibare and Sir Lenny Henry are recognised, the initiative underscores the importance of acknowledging a wider spectrum of historical narratives.

Despite misunderstandings, the emergence of these black postboxes—both as relics and as active public commemorations—creates a vibrant dialogue about identity, history, and the evolution of public spaces. While many are unaware of the significance behind black postboxes, the stories they tell are beginning to unfold. This newfound curiosity, largely driven by social media discussions and community engagement, could very well lead to a deeper appreciation of Britain’s diverse historical tapestry.

The black postboxes—an intersection of history, art, and community awareness—represent far more than postal services. They are symbols of cultural recognition and narratives waiting to be explored further, inviting not just a reassessment of their presence, but also of the histories they embody.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/weird-news/people-only-just-realising-what-31720815), [[4]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1341867/black-post-box-why-is-my-postbox-black-history-month-royal-mail)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/weird-news/people-only-just-realising-what-31720815), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/london/2020-09-30/specially-decorated-black-history-month-postboxes-to-honour-black-britons), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/54357779)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-54344961), [[6]](https://news.sky.com/story/black-history-month-postboxes-painted-to-honour-black-britons-12085680)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/54357779), [[7]](https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/royal-mail-special-edition-black-postboxes-black-history-month-2020-lenny-henry-670686)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/weird-news/people-only-just-realising-what-31720815), [[6]](https://news.sky.com/story/black-history-month-postboxes-painted-to-honour-black-britons-12085680)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/weird-news/people-only-just-realising-what-31720815> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/54357779> - This article discusses the Royal Mail's initiative to paint four postboxes black in London, Glasgow, Cardiff, and Belfast to honor Black History Month. Each postbox features a significant figure from the Black British community, such as Mary Seacole, Walter Tull, Yinka Shonibare, and Sir Lenny Henry. The postboxes also include QR codes linking to a list of Black Britons featured on special stamps, aiming to celebrate their contributions to the country.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-54344961> - The BBC News article details the Royal Mail's special edition black postboxes unveiled to mark Black History Month. Located in London, Glasgow, Cardiff, and Belfast, each postbox honors a notable Black Briton, including Mary Seacole, Walter Tull, Yinka Shonibare, and Sir Lenny Henry. The postboxes feature QR codes linking to an online gallery of Black Britons featured on special stamps, celebrating their contributions to British society.
4. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1341867/black-post-box-why-is-my-postbox-black-history-month-royal-mail> - This article from the Daily Express explains the Royal Mail's initiative to paint four postboxes black in London, Glasgow, Cardiff, and Belfast to mark Black History Month. Each postbox features a notable Black Briton, such as Mary Seacole, Walter Tull, Yinka Shonibare, and Sir Lenny Henry. The postboxes include QR codes linking to an online gallery of Black Britons featured on special stamps, celebrating their contributions to British society.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2020-09-30/specially-decorated-black-history-month-postboxes-to-honour-black-britons> - ITV News reports on the Royal Mail's special edition black postboxes unveiled to mark Black History Month. Located in London, Glasgow, Cardiff, and Belfast, each postbox honors a significant figure from the Black British community, including Mary Seacole, Walter Tull, Yinka Shonibare, and Sir Lenny Henry. The postboxes feature QR codes linking to an online gallery of Black Britons featured on special stamps, celebrating their contributions to British society.
6. <https://news.sky.com/story/black-history-month-postboxes-painted-to-honour-black-britons-12085680> - Sky News covers the Royal Mail's initiative to paint four postboxes black in London, Glasgow, Cardiff, and Belfast to honor Black History Month. Each postbox features a notable Black Briton, such as Mary Seacole, Walter Tull, Yinka Shonibare, and Sir Lenny Henry. The postboxes include QR codes linking to an online gallery of Black Britons featured on special stamps, celebrating their contributions to British society.
7. <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/royal-mail-special-edition-black-postboxes-black-history-month-2020-lenny-henry-670686> - iNews reports on the Royal Mail's special edition black postboxes unveiled to mark Black History Month. Located in London, Glasgow, Cardiff, and Belfast, each postbox honors a significant figure from the Black British community, including Mary Seacole, Walter Tull, Yinka Shonibare, and Sir Lenny Henry. The postboxes feature QR codes linking to an online gallery of Black Britons featured on special stamps, celebrating their contributions to British society.