

Did you notice?

A column for the curious stroller

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18 Postboxes

Have you ever noticed the variety of postboxes we have in Monkstown, and the variety of inscriptions? Next to the Post Office itself we have the very recognizable P&T, in the old Irish script, for Posts and Telegraphs. In other parts we have postboxes marked VR, standing for Victoria Regina, or Queen Victoria (1837-1901); and ERVII standing for Edwardus Rex VII, King Edward VII (1901-1910). It was the *Royal Mail* of course, as it still is in the UK. The lettering is usually quite elaborate and requires a little patience to decipher. Some of the post boxes are free-standing on pavements and some are wall mounted. We don't have quite the full set in Monkstown: a small number of postboxes which carry the lettering SÉ (Saorstát Éireann) in the old Irish lettering were installed by the Irish Free State after independence. There are none in Monkstown but one can be found on Sandycove Avenue West, on the way down to the harbour and another on Rochestown Avenue opposite the National Rehabilitation Hospital. It was at this time that the red postboxes were painted green!



The postal service we take for granted originated during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837 -1901) with the introduction of the penny stamp in 1840. There had been an earlier postage system dating back to the 17th century using mail coaches, but it was costly and only available to the wealthy. It was the introduction of the penny stamp that led to widespread use of the postal service and the establishment of Post Offices and the location of letter boxes in residential areas. Front doors were also changed to accommodate the insertion of letter boxes for mail delivery. If you look around you will see some elaborate examples.

In the early years of the twentieth century there were multiple deliveries a day, so you could write to a friend, receive a reply and respond in the course of a day! Judging by the number of postboxes I imagine the residents of Monkstown were busy letter writers. It is even

possible that some residents crossed the boundary to Blackrock to drop a letter into the postbox at the junction of Temple Hill with Monkstown Rd after dark! The postbox is surmounted by a gaslamp, now hidden in the hedge, and still showing red paint! It is also the only local postbox bearing the letters GR, for Georgius Rex, George V (1910-1937).

I think you'll agree that the older postboxes are more attractive and more durable than the modern ones!

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