

The Coronavirus pandemic has caused many of us to learn new ways of communicating, these include WhatsApp, Facebook, Skype, MS Teams and Zoom to name a few, However, one older form of communication has been a life saver to many of us. That is the humble post box and our postal staff who have continued to collect from our streets and deliver to our houses throughout the pandemic.

When Roland Hill introduced the Penny Post in 1840 it opened the post to everybody. At that time to post a letter you would have to take it to the Post Office. This would have been the case with Coulsdon's first Post Office Cherry Tree Cottage in Coulsdon Road in 1851. The alternative in larger towns was to look out for the Bellman who walked through the town ringing his bell collecting letters from the public. As the volume of letters increased there had to be a better way.

At that time the later novelist Antony Trollope worked for the Post Office as Surveyor's clerk and his duties took him across the channel to Belgium and France where he saw roadside letter boxes. He proposed these were adopted in Britain and in 1852 the first cast iron boxes were installed in Jersey and then Guernsey.

The boxes in the Channel Isles were red, but when they were rolled out across Britain in 1859 the Post Office decided they should be green (as they are today in Ireland). However, after complaints that they were not obvious enough in 1874 they decided that they would be returned to Red as they are today. Other colours were later used Blue for airmail and of course there are a number of Gold ones in the towns where the 2012 Olympic Gold medallist come from (*our nearest being Wallington*).

As it is Royal Mail all post boxes have a Royal Crown and contain the initials and Cypher of the reigning monarch at the time of installation. The exception being in Scotland where Elizabeth II is Elizabeth I and in the 1950s boxes with ER II were destroyed by nationalists. After this Scottish post boxes just bear a Scottish Crown.

### **Post Boxes in Coulsdon.**

As the development of Coulsdon took place in three main eras the majority of post boxes will have one of the following three Monarch's initials and Cyphers.



George V from  
1910-1936



George VI from  
1936 -1952



Elizabeth II from  
1952 -today



However, there are some unusual Post boxes that can be seen around Coulsdon. At Stoats Nest parade there is a more modern type K box and in Coulsdon Town centre and at the Post Office there are larger and double post boxes. In Ullswater Crescent there is a post box for prepaid franked business letters and packages.



Our oldest post box is in Woodcote Grove Road. This probably dates from around 1887. From the reign of Queen Victoria 1837 – 1901

While in the Brighton Road near Stoats Nest Road and on the corner of Gidd Hill there are two rare 1936 post boxes Edward VIII, abdicated. after eleven months.

In Deepfield Way there is a box dating from Edward VII 1901-1910. As this was only placed there in the 1980s. It must have been recycled.

Coulsdon's newest post box on Cane Hill Drive. Elizabeth II from 1952 – today.



Coulsdon's first Post Office at Cherry Tree Cottage Coulsdon Road. Coulsdon Post Office today at Lion Green Road



If you would like to know more about post boxes and postal services and ride on the post office railway the London Postal Museum is well worth a visit [www.postalmuseum.org](http://www.postalmuseum.org)  
[www.postalmuseum.org/discover/collections/letter-boxes](http://www.postalmuseum.org/discover/collections/letter-boxes)

