

# THE WORLD OF ONLINE PHILATELY

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## The Letter Box Study Group [www.lbsg.org](http://www.lbsg.org)



**The Letter Box Study Group**

[lbsg.org](http://lbsg.org)

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### Who are we?



We are as diverse a collection of individuals as you could find, united only by our shared involvement with the subject that we study.

Among the membership of around 800 are representatives from all walks of life: office workers, builders, electricians, scientists, designers, teachers, doctors, accountants, artists and engineers, as well as Post Office employees. All age groups are found in the membership, from teenagers to the retired. The female membership is just as active as the male and the Group has long benefited from a strong contingent of female Officers.

Whatever your age, sex or occupation, you will receive a warm welcome from the Group and will find like-minded individuals among the membership.

Membership is not limited to the British Isles. As well as the Republic of Ireland and a number of European countries such as France, Belgium and the Netherlands, we have members in far away places including the USA, Hong Kong and Japan.

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The Letter Box Study Group (LBSG) is actively devoted to the study of letter boxes. From modest beginnings over three decades ago, it has grown to become the recognised authority on the subject - all through the efforts of 800+ members worldwide. The main aims of the group are to encourage research, preservation, restoration and awareness of letter boxes and to produce the definitive description and documentation of their types and locations.

There are many reasons why people join: as a spin-off from philately; from a general interest in street furniture or social history; from an interest in Britain's industrial heritage, etc. This interest is fostered through an excellent quarterly magazine -hopefully soon to be in colour - regular provincial and London meetings and an extensive publishing programme ensuring that research findings are preserved and, more importantly, disseminated.

The LBSG website uses Post Office red and black for its colour scheme and what immediately strikes you is the amount of imagery able to be displayed on every page, thanks to automatic changing every few seconds. These pictures are not captioned, so cannot be used to identify a particular type of box, but they provide an instant realisation to site visitors of how Britain has produced many interesting and varied designs down the years, be they pillar, wall or lamp box types.

Each web page has been produced using a template, ensuring commonality across all pages, with three logical toolbars to aid navigation. There is a good use of white space, giving a fresh and distinguished look, rather than the 'cram it all in' appearance so common on many sites.

Under the first toolbar can be found all the details about the LBSG that you could ever wish for, such as who they are, what they do, their aims, membership details (£17 in year one including a starter pack, £12 pa thereafter), an application form and downloadable brochures. It is good to see

that they also have clear contact details, including those for the press and media. In fact, members frequently act as great ambassadors for the group when interviewed and their passion for the subject always coming across so strongly.

The second toolbar is entitled 'Letter Boxes' and it is from here that you will be able to choose from elements such as box types, ciphers, colours, shapes and materials, all of which go towards determining the look and functionality of British boxes. Foreign receptacles are not ignored and a page records details of the group's photo archives, which include many slides and photographs, with examples from most countries now held. There seems to be a growing interest in overseas letter boxes among members, possibly because our own types have been studied so intensely down the years that it is time to branch out beyond these shores.

A page is devoted to miniatures of real boxes where we learn that they date back to early tin can money boxes. Philately and the letter box is not ignored, in fact it was this aspect that encouraged me to join nearly 30 years ago. There are hundreds of relevant items to collect on this postal-related theme, ranging from stamps to booklets, and postal history to cinderellas. Printed literature and a photo gallery of boxes complete this section, while the final toolbar is headed-up 'Links' and provides details of other sites of relevance in the museum, corporate and organisation sectors.

I defy any visitor to this site not to fall under the spell of the beguiling letter box.

(600 words)