

Christmas cards

The Textile Museum has a few examples of old Christmas cards in its collection. As you can see, they had pictures on both sides of the card, not always the same, with fringes around the edges.



The idea of sending Christmas cards began in 1843 when Sir Henry Cole (founder of the Victoria & Albert Museum and a keen supporter of the Penny Post) asked an artist friend J C Horsley to design a card for Cole to send to his friends instead of writing a letter. It took several decades for the idea to become popular. The postal service was developing at the time with the use of trains to carry the mail. Pryce Jones and his Royal Welsh Warehouse also used these trains to distribute his mail-order goods.



Our cards were printed by Raphael Tuck & Sons of London. Their first Christmas greeting card was made in 1871. In 1880 the firm launched a nationwide contest for the best Christmas card design, receiving over five thousand paintings, which gives some idea of the enthusiasm for the idea. In 1893 the company were granted a Royal Warrant which enabled the Tuck cards to have the message 'Art Publishers to Her Majesty the Queen'. Our cards do not have this detail, so it would seem that these cards probably date from the 1870s or 1880s.

Check out the interesting history of Tuck and sons:

<https://tuckdbpostcards.org/history>