

# Calls to pardon Turing grow as he is given stamp honour

Caroline Davies

The mathematician and second world war codebreaker Alan Turing is to be celebrated on a special stamp as an online petition calls for a posthumous pardon to quash his conviction for gross indecency.

The computer pioneer is one of 10 prominent people chosen for the Royal Mail's Britons of Distinction stamps, to be launched in February, which includes the allied war heroine Odette Hallowes of the Special Operations Executive, composer Frederick Delius, and architect Sir Basil Spence, to mark the golden jubilee of Coventry Cathedral.

Turing worked as part of the team that cracked the Enigma code at Bletchley Park, and went on to help create the world's first modern computer. This year marks the centenary of his birth.

He was convicted of gross indecency in 1952, when homosexual acts were illegal in the UK, and sentenced to chemical castration. He killed himself two years later by taking cyanide. The e-petition says his treatment and death "remains a shame on the UK government and UK history".

In 2009, the then prime minister Gordon Brown issued an unequivocal apology on behalf of the government to Turing, describing his treatment as "horrifying" and "utterly unfair". Brown said the country owed him a huge debt.

Hallowes, who was born in Amiens, France, in April 1912 and married an Englishman in 1931, was awarded the George Cross (the only woman to receive the honour while alive) and the Légion d'honneur for her work in Nazi occupied France. She was imprisoned, tortured and condemned to death in 1943 after being betrayed, but survived Ravensbrück concentration camp and the war. She died in 1995 in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.

The Olympic Games and the Queen's diamond jubilee also feature in the 2012 special stamp programme.

House of Windsor stamps will feature the five monarchs from the start of the 20th century, with the Queen taking pride of place on the final stamp to mark the 60th year of her reign. A special miniature sheet issued on 6 February will bring together six portraits of her taken from stamps, coinage and banknotes.

Giant peaches and a famous chocolate factory will feature in a set of six stamps on 10 January to celebrate the work of Roald Dahl.

The first of several stamp issues to mark the London Games go on sale on 5 January. Other stamp subjects during the year include Charles Dickens, born 200 years ago this year, great British fashion, comics, dinosaurs, space science and classic locomotives of Scotland.



Alan Turing helped crack German codes during the second world war

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