

THEMESCENE

December 2022

In this issue we:

Revisit our get-together

BTA Residential Weekend



Peer down the microscope

**Microscopes as an aid to the
philatelic collector**

With Owen Green



Continue our specialist look at exhibiting

Thematic exhibiting, part 2

With Rudolf Spieler



And report on Liberec plus the BTA one-frame competitions

BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

Volume 39, No.4. Whole Number 149

www.britishthematic.org.uk

BTA RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND
page 111



*Snapshots from a very
convivial Weekend*



THEMESCENE

Vol. 39, No. 4, Whole Number 149

DECEMBER 2022

THEMESCENE

Journal of the
British Thematic Association
which is a member of the
Association of British
Philatelic Societies
ISSN 0268-2508

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CHAIRMAN

Barry Stagg

I'm sure you have all heard about prophesies of many from the media that Philately is dead, or at least dying a slow death. I must admit that Royal Mail seems to be doing its bit to make it happen, what with the demise of the Philatelic Bulletin, the contraction of the number of handstamp centres and the issuing of stamps for events that seem to have little relationship to UK life and culture. But I must say that I don't agree with the doom-laden soothsayers who believe philately is finished. Yes, it is going through a difficult stage at the moment but the hobby is changing. I am reminded of Churchill's words in 1942: *Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.*" I believe this is where we are today.

Perhaps the days of seeing new commemorative stamps in this country every month is going, arguably gone already. The days of licking stamps before sticking them onto envelopes has been gone for some time now. Self-adhesives now rule. But their life is surely numbered, being overtaken by the modern Post Office sticky backed labels. This may be progress, or not! I guess it depends on your view; however, it is change. And society is always changing and if we don't change with it we will be left behind. The day of the postage stamp may be soon over but perhaps the day of the Post Office sticky backed label is about to dawn! But I was reminded at a recent event that the philatelic world has had 180 years or so of postage stamps. They are not going to disappear overnight.

COVID has much to answer for; however, it has forced one significant change to the philatelic world and supported another. The introduction of Zoom (other platforms are available!) has had a huge impact on the philatelic community. Members who live too far away to travel to meetings, those who are house-bound or those who live busy lives and can't get out of the house can now see some wonderful collections from the comfort of their armchairs. I know it is not everybody's cup-of-tea but so many have embraced that technology it is clearly here to stay. The other interesting change in the philatelic world is the move to afternoon meetings. Again, for those hard at work this is perhaps not a positive move but for many who are still apprehensive of going out, particularly on cold dark nights, afternoon meetings are bringing out club members who rarely venture out. This must be good for the hobby.

So change is upon us whether we like it or not. But if we don't follow this change then the alternative road is certainly a philatelic cul-de-sac. Falling membership followed by closing clubs. Philately is not dead or dying. But it is changing. 

MEMBERSHIP

We offer a warm welcome to new members Sam Castriotta from Massachusetts, Barry Hobbs from Dorset, Jasmine Van Regenmortel from Deurne, Belgium, and James Whitely from Surrey.

Subscriptions for 2023 will shortly become due, and renewal slips are included with this issue. Please see page 136 for details.

BTA RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND

I think a few of us had begun to think this event was never going to happen. First scheduled for 2020 of course it had to be postponed due to Covid; we thought 2021 might be a possibility, but that didn't happen. Finally - finally - we got together at Oxford on a warm and sunny weekend in September to enjoy excellent hospitality, wonderful talks and displays, and perhaps more than anything the entertaining company of like-minded friends new and old. I was delighted by a comment I received from one of our guests "it was the enthusiasm and passion of your members for their subjects that impressed me the most, also their sense of humour and kindness to a stranger". I think that sums up the event nicely.

Bob Hill *Where are the Kit Kats??!*

The first guest speaker of the Weekend was scheduled as an after dinner speaker, so not a time for a serious display. That's not to say it wasn't done properly; like any good exhibit page one showed a Plan, plus References. And to make sure we were not soporific after dinner questions were thrown out to the audience, a correct response eliciting the award of - of course - a Kit Kat.

The history of the Kit Kat apparently bears a strange resemblance to the history of South Africa. The formation of the Orange Free State was mirrored by the issue of the orange-flavoured Kit Kat, and the Boer Trekkers - hefty chaps willing to undertake arduous work - appreciated the Kit Kat Chunky. Wartime shortages meant South Africa issued bantam stamps: existing designs but half-sized, thus saving paper and ink. Kit Kat, happy to help the government in its war effort, issued its own bantams (Figs 1-2). Fortuitously this also helped the fight against childhood obesity. An infamous period in South Africa's history began in 1948 with the introduction of Apartheid, with Kit Kat introducing its White version (Fig 3). In 1961 South Africa held a referendum to decide whether it should become a republic. The Union was clearly divided on this issue; and Kit Kat could not decide whether to issue a special edition commemorating the event. The country was split down the middle, and so were Kit Kat, resulting in a bisect (Fig 4). We live in happier times today, and South Africa is multi-cultural, with a black and white Kit Kat (Fig 5). Meanwhile, back in England in 1995 a trial cancel was introduced for two months (Fig 6). This did not result in any increase in sales and so the idea was never tried in South Africa.

Many aspects of South African history were explored through the chocolate-issuing policy of this one company. While we were entertained by this presentation it soon became apparent that it could not have been put together without genuine philatelic knowledge. It's no wonder Bob showed us a certificate he had been awarded for services to "Philately, Education, Fun & Confectionery".



Imperf top and bottom, sides perf 22



Figs 1 - 2: bantams with rare tête-bêche pair



Fig 3: the White version



Fig 4: bisected over the referendum



Fig 5: multi-cultural at last



Fig 6: trialled in the UK only

Barry Hobbs *Mind your P's and Q's: pills, potions and quack medicines of North America*

Barry gave us a history of medicine in North America from the 1850's to World War I, shown by advertising envelopes whose companies were following the ad man's adage "Advertise or die". At the start of this period medicine was a cottage industry but by World War I companies had grown into conglomerates. Until 1906 there was absolutely no control at all over the ingredients used in the medicines, and even after legislation was brought in - The Pure Food and Drug Act - there were loopholes to be exploited. The result of this were medicines which ranged from the placebo to the downright dangerous, and advertising claims which went from somewhat over-stated to outright lies.

Barry illustrated these claims in around 150 sheets of the most entertaining - if sometimes disgraceful - advertisements. Many sellers adopted the title 'doctor', regardless of a complete lack of qualifications. With no controls over ingredients in the early days there were frightening concoctions. At one end of the scale the best one might hope for were herb-based remedies with no proven worth but which might perhaps have a placebo effect. But at the other end the ingredients could be frightening. One "cure" for the Spanish Flu contained potassium nitrate, today used in fertilizers. Alcohol was a basic ingredient, causing addiction in some patients; but no matter - other medicines were available which claimed to cure addiction. Even worse than that were drugs, including heroin or cocaine (Figs 1 - 2). When Coca-Cola was launched in 1885 as a nerve tonic it contained coca leaves, French wine and cola nut. A year later a non-alcoholic version was introduced, with the addition of sugar syrup and carbonated water, and marketed as a patent medicine which would cure morphine addiction, indigestion, nerve disorders, headaches and impotence. It was not until 1906 that the cocaine alkaloid in the coca leaves were removed from the product (Fig 3).

Some themes emerge in advertising. German companies were considered to be more reliable than American ones. "Red Indians" were in general looked on as enemies but their medicine men were highly respected and often featured. Today's practice of rating a purchase you have made is nothing new: advertisements often featured testimonials from happy customers - allegedly. In fact there was an entire industry of people paid to write them. They may have been needed; some of the claims were not only outrageous but blatantly played on the fears of very sick people (Figs 4 - 5). The sheer volume of advertising meant that newspapers became dependant on them for their income. There was a symbiotic relationship between the advertisers and the Post Office: the suppliers sold their wares primarily through mail order, and the Post Office needed that mail order business for their profits.

Barry finished his display with some associated subjects. Items such as artificial limbs and crutches were needed following the American Civil War. There was a great vogue for electricity and magnetism cures in the late nineteenth century. There were other outlets for advertising including trade cards, almanacs and calendars. And in case this all seems a long way in the past we were reminded of recent echoes: in 1843 Lydia Pinkham began making a home remedy of ground herbs which became known as her vegetable compound. At first shared freely with neighbours, in 1875 the business became a commercial concern marketed as a cure for a wide range of gynaecological disorders. A modified version of her compound is still sold today, and was heralded in the 1968 Scaffold song "Lily the Pink".

The whole presentation was told with humour whilst packed with detailed research, and a wonderful piece of social history.



Figs 1 - 2: Theodore Metcalf's Syrup of Heroin



Fig 3: Dr Pemberton's Coca Cola. Philadelphia Bottling Plant to Birdsboro, Pennsylvania, July 1902



Fig 4 - 5: a 'Permanent Cure for Cancer'

Andrew Millington *Copper: commodity and catalyst*

Copper was first discovered in the Fertile Crescent, modern Turkey / Armenia / Iran; with the first European discoveries in the Balkans. The first recorded trade in copper was from Oman to cities in the Middle East including Ur and Babylon, and later to the Near East and the Mediterranean. Examination of ice cores from Greenland show evidence of smelting dating back 5,000 years (Fig 1), with peaks during the Roman era in Europe and the Song Dynasty (c.1000 - 1200 AD) in China, and then since the Industrial Revolution in Europe in the eighteenth century. The malleability of copper (its ability to be hammered) was discovered early, as was its ductility, a property still used today to meet copper's biggest demand - wire. Alloying was discovered, particularly the alloys of copper and zinc to make brass, and copper and tin to make bronze, thus ushering in the Bronze Age around 3300 BCE. Big finds of tin in modern Malaysia encouraged trade. Brass making meanwhile started in the Indus Valley civilizations (roughly modern Pakistan).

Copper has many uses, an early one being jewellery. Trade in copper was carried out by the Phoenicians, a sea-faring nation who voyaged west and north in Europe. Bells are made of bronze - "bell metal" being a form of bronze with slightly different alloys dependant on the place of manufacture; in Russia for instance silver was added, changing the tone of the bell. Bronze and copper coinage was used in China and later in the Roman Empire, followed by medieval Europe. It was used in the manufacture of weapons, and also in roofing. The Scientific and Industrial Revolutions introduced new uses for copper including sheathing on ships, vats for the sugar industry, wiring for electrical devices, lightening conductors and musical instruments. Production was boosted when, in the nineteenth century, it no longer became necessary to carry out smelting near the source of the copper. With good shipping links Wales became one of the world's major areas for smelting. Copper mines were exploited world-wide (Fig 2), including Burra, South Australia, once the copper mining centre of the world. Some companies are still household names today (Fig 3); while a few places have a completely unexpected history. Kupferberg in Silesia has a long history (Fig 4). Founded as a copper mining town in the fourteenth century ('kupferberg' means copper mountain) it obtained city rights in 1519. By the early nineteenth century it housed a regional mining office. It was in a region of Germany which became part of Poland after the Second World War and renamed Miedzianka, whose coat of arms features mining tools. Immediately post-war it was the site of a Red Army uranium mine which supplied the USSR, working as a secret operation (labelled a paper factory) guarded by military and secret police. The village was abandoned in the 1960s and most of the buildings were destroyed.

This story was just one part of a wide-ranging talk and display, told by an expert who understood his audience. Andrew kept us interested with facts and anecdotes illustrated by a splendid exhibit which a few weeks later went to the Liberec 2022 Stamp Exhibition in the Czech Republic where it won Gold with Felicitations for Knowledge (see page 130). A fitting reward for a fine exhibit. 📖



Fig 1: Oven-type smelter using bellows to blow in air



Fig 2: Kilianstollen Mine on 1985 postal stationery card

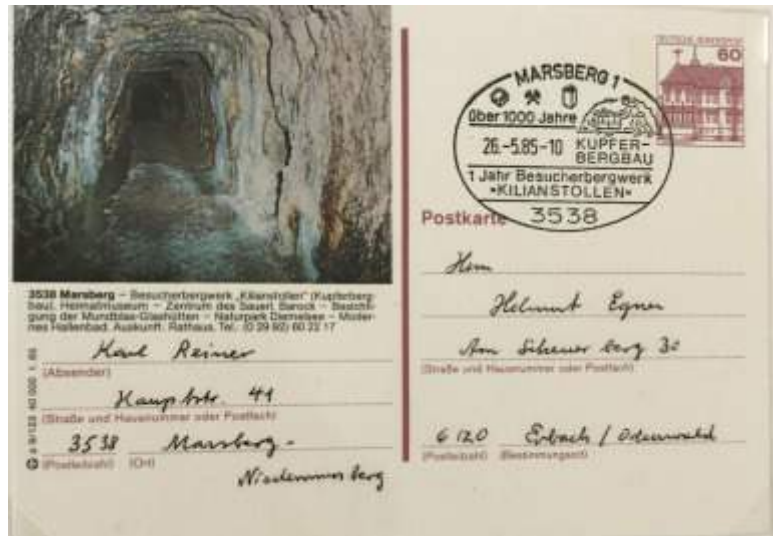


Fig 3: Rio Tinto Mining Company. Minas de Riotinto postmark 2 MAR 37 plus two-line military censor



Fig 4: Kupferberg to Schönau 9.4. [no year]

Attendees' Displays

Over four sessions - 'Six sheets one minute', 'New Acquisitions', 'Letters E - F' and 'Your Choice' - those present provided a huge range of short presentations.

Crawford Alexander

- Cats on stamps, plus a promotion for the 1988 GB Edward Lear stamp - very large and normally residing in their hearth.
- Tourist cards from St. Kilda, usually sent as a result of the pleasure steamers who brought visitors to the Island, including some rare cachets.
- A philatelic alphabet and flying boats.
- Postcards and cachets of Welsh steamers.

Jean Alexander

- Organised thematic collecting started in Glasgow. A look back to 1951 and Captain Durand founding the Glasgow Thematic Society. Captain Philippe Durand FSA was its first president.
- Living in Tetbury, they have a rather famous neighbour. This was the first of several homages to the late Queen Elizabeth and the accession of King Charles.
- Postal stationery of Niagara Falls from the USA and Canada.
- GB 2012 Olympic Games issue, featuring coin covers and pin badges.

Mike Blackman

- Items relating to umbrellas. Over three displays this included pictures of Neville Chamberlain, known as the 'umbrella man' since he always carried one (neatly rolled of course); an 1814 bookplate; items relating to the Berlin Airlift; anthropomorphic images; and parasols used in entertainment, including the poster for 'Singin' in the Rain'.

Wendy Buckle

- Cinderella labels issued for the 1933 Philatelic Congress of Great Britain. Each colour was issued on a different type of stamp paper.
- Adversity envelopes from the American Civil war. The Fourdrinier (paper-making) machine.

Gary Cook

- Material from Paris Expositions including official covers, exhibitor tickets and pictures.
- Items relating to consumption / TB; New Zealand Health stamps.
- The Eiffel Tower. It was built for the 1889 World Fair, after the original proposal for a 300 foot guillotine was rejected! Various cards were shown, issued at the time, some stamped at the Tower with attractive cachets.
- Christmas seals on cover, including the very first, which was issued by Denmark. While early covers carried the seal on the front of the envelope, later regulations insisted they go on the back.

Wayne Cox

- Covers which can be proven to have been posted in post boxes, identified by instructional marks, posted out of course etc. Also mobile post offices and covers damaged while in a post box.
- Experimental advertising carried on the back of stamps. GB was the first country to trial this, followed by New Zealand. A complete NZ reconstructed sheet was one of the items shown.

Dane Garrod

- Queen Elizabeth II covers inward to GB and a variety of fascinating items of social history including letters, photos, and even a pen known to be used by the Queen herself.

Owen Green

- Rising to the challenge of 'Letters E and F', Owen showed pages which he 'Forgot! then 'Found!'.
- Stamps relating to Queen Elizabeth II.
- Coins and covers celebrating the then Prince of Wales, now King Charles III. A display of die cast models of mail delivery vehicles including the Model T Ford, the Morris van and even a Robin Reliant.

Edith Knight

- Embroidered postcards from Spain in the 1950s. Although duplicate designs will be found there are tiny differences due to their being hand-made.
- The life of Florence Farmborough, who wrote a diary entitled 'A Nurse at the Russian Front' recording her experiences in World War I. In 1926 she was appointed as a university lecturer in English at Valencia University. She was an arch-Nationalist who was very pro-Franco.
- Postcards of the British Mediterranean Fleet.

Rodney Knight

- Telephone slogans from the 1930s.
- Stamps of Equatorial Guinea, known until 1968 as Spanish Guinea; including local overprints on the stamps of Fernando Po.
- Airmail covers.

Janet Nelson

- Scratch cards. The Brazilian Olympic Committee issued postal stationery scratch cards to raise money for the 2016 Olympic Games. You won't find these unused - no-one is going to risk not checking whether they've won!
- Education and Books as themes, including dictionaries on stamps.
- Joint stamp issues, including issues by GB and the USA for Eric Carle's book 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'. The USA version does not have the hole made by the caterpillar eating through the stamp.

Nick Nelson

- Bringing us right up to date, correspondence with a friend in Dnipro in Ukraine. Various covers were shown with current stamps, one featuring the famous "Go Away" image (I paraphrase) and its successor: the same image but a new slogan "Done!". Also covers from the disputed areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics.

Charles Oppenheim

- Items relating to patents, inventions and inventors.
- Patents and patent offices, including the US Patent Office and Mulreadies with patent advertisements, one of them unique.
- The life of Thomas Edison, who registered the most number of patents of any individual in history. He developed the telephone in competition with Alexander Graham Bell, who had the more advanced technology. He developed the phonograph but was convinced that its market would be for dictating letters. He invented a sewing machine but got involved in a patent dispute with the Singer Sewing Machine Company. He was even an advocate of electric cars although his ideas failed due to an insufficient number of charging sockets.

Bob Patterson

- A detailed look at the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, explaining the background to the attack, the battle itself and its aftermath.
- Constellations of the Zodiac.

Brian Sole

- Charity cycle ride by ten Isle of Man police officers to New Scotland Yard. Including covers carried on the ride and correspondence.
- Bringing us bang up to date, a display of barcoded Machins. This covered Christmas stamps, GB regionals and even the Transformers stamps as well as the basic definitives, now issued in a wide range of values.
- Ephemera from philatelic exhibitions. The first was held in London in 1890, the second in 1897.
- Jersey stamp issues featuring Queen Elizabeth II, including commemorations of her birthday, coronation and jubilees.

Barry Stagg

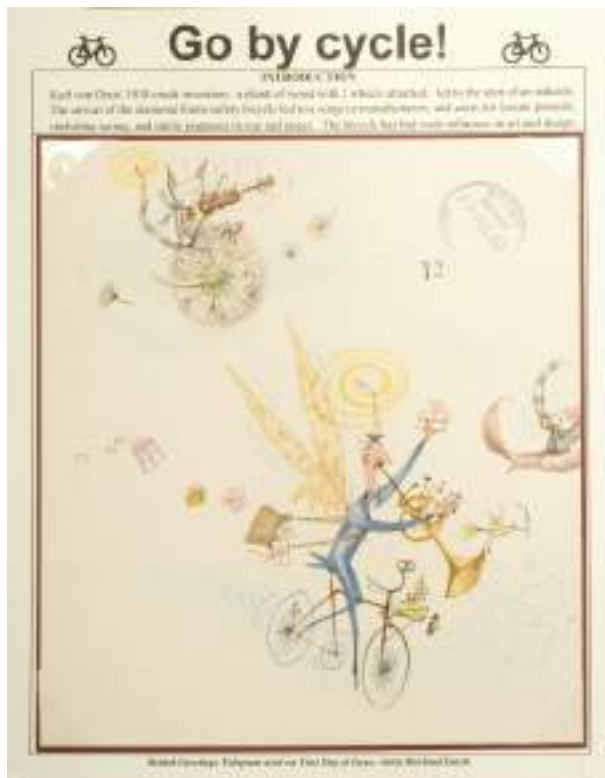
- 'Things I have bought recently'. This includes a Captain Cook stamp signed proof; two postcards of Cheltenham showing schools which were requisitioned for use as hospitals in wartime; and another aspect of the Berlin Airlift.

Anne Stammers

- Postcards of 'the green lungs of London' - its parks and commons, including Ealing Common, Hyde Park and Holland Park.
- A thematic display on 'Diamonds' including the Kimberley and Cullinan Mines of South Africa, the so-called blood diamonds from Sierra Leone, and a pink diamond.

Peter Wood

- 'Used commemoratives and other things'. Stamps, postcards and labels.
- A ten year old Open class entry on the origins of scouting in Ireland, including stamps, covers, labels, banknotes and a brochure.
- A range of material from the 1907 Dublin Exhibition, including postmarks, cinderellas, a programme and a workman's pass.
- Cinderellas from the Dublin Spring Show, including poster stamps, leaflets and an invoice. 📖



On the Saturday afternoon Brian Sole put up a display of his multi award winning exhibit.

From attendees displays



Attendees' displays



MICROSCOPES AS AN AID TO THE PHILATELIC COLLECTOR

Owen Green

The study of stamps and postal materials is considerably enhanced when the area of interest can be both magnified and resolved in greater detail. All collectors have a preferred type of hand lens, jewellers' loupe, or magnifying glass that they are content to use and meets their needs in examining specific material in their collection. The use of a microscope for the examination of stamps and postal material within a collection might appear to be an extravagant, and a somewhat expensive option. However, the benefits of using a binocular stereo-zoom instrument has the additional advantage of reducing eyestrain and may be adapted for imaging with a mobile phone or via a camera to a monitor or lap-top. The results may prove to be revealing for the thematic philatelist.

Microscopy in philately

The use of microscopy in philately can be traced back to the early 20th century and the work of W. H. S. Cheavin, who designed a microscope for examining watermarks, cancellations, overprints and paper types, using either transmitted or reflected light illumination. A superb description of the history of this instrument (Watson's Philatelic Microscope) has been presented by David Walker in a 2013 article available on the *Micscape* website (www.microscopy-uk.org.uk/mag/artfeb13/dw-watson-philatelic.html). I have asked colleagues in both microscopical groups I am a member of - The Royal Microscopical Society and the Quekett Microscopical Club - and no-one has seen or has an example of this instrument. The RPSL Museum does not possess one, but when I enquired they kindly sent me what literature they had on the subject. Is it as rare as the 1856 British Guiana one-cent magenta?

Stereo vision

Throughout our lives we use both of our eyes to focus on an object, obtain perspective of our surroundings and determine the relative position of objects within our field of view. What we might not be aware of (until we make that visit the opticians) is that we have a dominant eye. The use of a stereo-zoom binocular microscope can ease eyestrain for the user - but it can take a bit of getting used to and may require some practice!



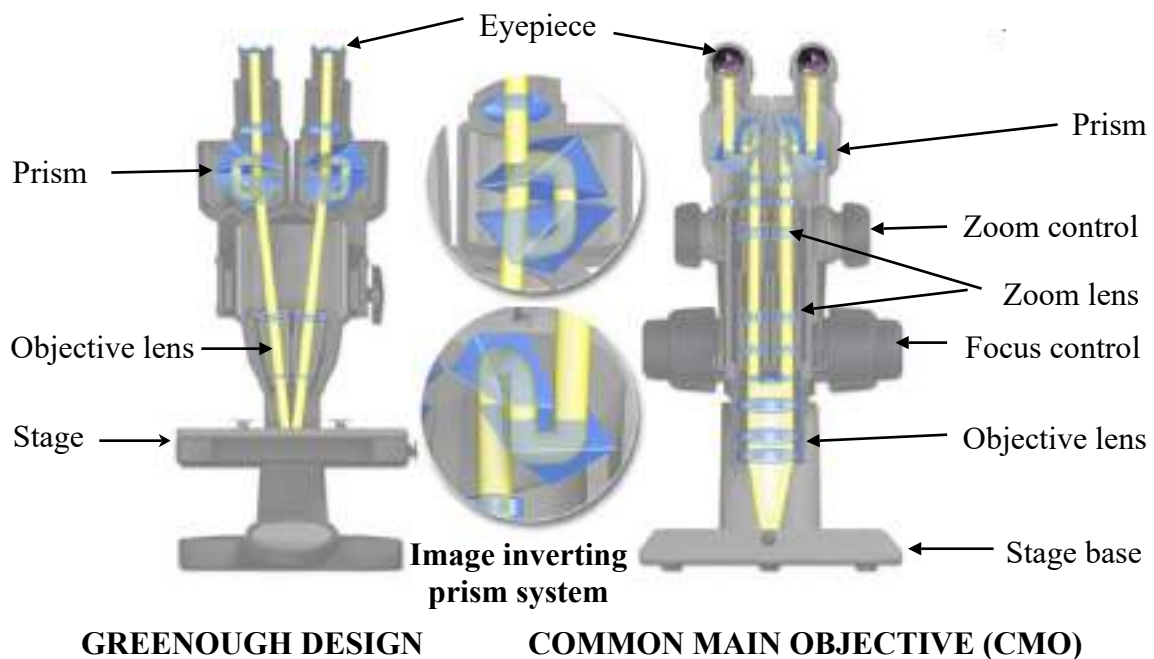
A brief history of the stereo microscope

The use of a lens to magnify an object can be traced back to the Egyptians. However, the introduction of a lens system that can be focussed on an object is a more recent development and is usually attributed to the Dutch draper Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723) who wanted to examine the threads of his cloth at higher magnification. Van Leeuwenhoek went on to produce 25 single-lens microscopes (nine are known to have survived), but his scientific contributions were probably surpassed by his nineteenth century contemporary the British scientist and

polymath Robert Hooke (1635-1703) whose 1665 book *Micrographia* was the first publication to describe and illustrate objects observed through a microscope. Hooke's exquisite engraving of the blue fly appears on the 1989 27p stamp from Great Britain commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Royal Microscopical Society (previous page). This highly detailed seventeenth century image can be considered one of the first published micrographs.

Early microscopes were subject to the optical phenomena known as chromatic aberrations or colour faults such as colour fringes around the edges of objects. Improvements in the manufacturing of the lenses resulted in the development of the achromatic lens: a concave lens and convex lens of two different types of glass with different refractive indices but fitted together. The result was that fine structures could now be seen in sharp focus.

The first genuine stereomicroscope, with each eye able to observe the object, was produced by the monk Chérubin d'Orléans in 1671. However, it was over two hundred years later in 1890, that the biologist and zoologist Horatio S. Greenough introduced a design (below left) that is still in use today, with instruments available from all the main microscope manufacturers. The "Greenough principle" instruments deliver genuine high quality stereoscopic images, and many older examples may have step like (x2, x10, x40) objectives which can be either rotated or switched into place.



Comparison of the Greenough and Common Main Objective stereo-microscope designs. See:

www.microscopyu.com/techniques/stereomicroscopy/introduction-to-stereomicroscopy

An alternative to the Greenough type is also seen in many scientific laboratories. This is the Common Main Objective (CMO) and the lens positions are compared with that of the Greenough (above right). The CMO has a telescope-like zoom, with lenses in a column moving in a vertical motion via the focus control. The final ground-breaking modification, initially introduced in the 1960's, was a stepless magnification changer or zoom control. This innovation can now be found on both Greenough and CMO instruments.

Which type of stereo microscope is best?

Both types (Greenough and CMO) are manufactured by all the leading microscope manufacturers, and although many accessories are available for both types, for philately it is not essential to have a large zoom range, as most of what is examined is flat paper and large working distances (the distance between the object on the stage and the lens) are not required. Of more importance is the lighting (LED is now preferred over quartz-halogen bulbs) used to observe an object, and the background (black/white) plate on the stage. Both should be tested! If you are considering purchasing a second-hand instrument, be sure to check the eyepieces and ensure that they are not badly marked or scratched, and likewise with the objective lens. As for cost, CMO's are usually more expensive, and in general larger instruments. 📖

Editor's note

Attendees at the recent BTA Weekend were lucky to see and handle instruments brought along by Owen specifically to let us examine our stamps. It brings a new dimension to collecting.



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THEMATIC EXHIBITING: POSTAL HISTORY IN THE SUBJECT MATTER

Rudolf Spieler

Part 1 of this series (June *Themescene*) covered traditional philately. Here I will cover postal history in the subject matter of an exhibit. For this I would like to show some examples from my collection on the automobile. However, I am sure that there are also special connections of postal history for many other collecting areas.

Some time ago I found a letter carried by the “Oldsmobile Kalahari Mail” on the internet. If you then clicked on the lot there was also a report on this very rare postal connection. For me the word “Oldsmobile” was of course immediately associated with cars. Most of the information comes from a newspaper article from 1929, but it is no longer possible to determine which newspaper it was.

The only postal service in the Kalahari Desert at that time was a wagon pulled by oxen. It took about six weeks to cover the 460 mile distance. The most difficult task was to supply the animals with water during the trip. Delivering the mail by the Oldsmobile Kalahari Mail on the other hand took only 24 hours. The route first led from Gobabis to Khanzi, from there straight on through the desert to Molopolole and from there on to Johannesburg. As this connection was much faster, it was also very well accepted by the population. Figure 1 shows the route that was travelled marked with dots. On the left one started in Gobabis, then continued to Khanzi and Molepolole. The final destination was Johannesburg.

The photo in figure 2 shows the Oldsmobile car with the inscription “KALAHARI OLDSMOBILE” at an unknown location. Note the police are still riding a camel next to it.

Gobabis was the last railway station before the Kalahari. The incoming mail bag was sealed there with the official seal of the state post office and handed over to the postmaster of Khanzi. A governmental function of this service is therefore undeniable. Both incoming and outgoing mail were postmarked. Mail received a double-circle postmark with a diameter of 30.5mm. The inscription reads “Oldsmobile/ 23 Nov. 1929/ KALAHARI MAIL”. The stamp colour was black and purple. In the literature, five remaining letters of this postal route are known (information from the South African stamp newspaper “The Runners Post”).

Figure 3 shows one of the two known outgoing letters of the “OLDSMOBILE KALAHARI MAIL” franked with the South African “Van Riebeeck’s Schiff” 1d stamp. All stamps are cancelled with the black stamp. Additionally there are two cancellations in violet colour. The note “Per the Kalahari Oldsmobile Greased Lightning Service” is handwritten.

Another very interesting aspect of postal history (and also aerophilately) is the semi-official stamps from Colombia called “Correos Semioficiales” in Spanish, issued by Express companies. The legal background to this kind of service was a general post office law from 1859 which stated in Article 52: “The postal service is not a monopoly of the state or states; companies and persons can offer this service. Stamps may also be offered where this is done by the official State Post Office”. Article 192 of 2 February 1926 then laid the legal basis for private companies. In the years 1920 to 1930 these postal services



*Fig 1:
Route from Gobabis to Molepolole*



Fig 2: Kalahari Oldsmobile



Fig 3: Kalahari outgoing mail



Fig 4: Pamplona, Colombia, to Bucaramanga



Fig 5: front of a letter from Magallanes (Chile) to Buenos Aires



Fig 6: back of the above



Fig 7: Gothenburg private post

had their peak. As a consequence of this law postal services were established by independent states, cities and also private individuals. As a result of the anchoring of the Postal Act these stamps and their covers can also be shown at competitive exhibitions. The book "Private mail carriers of Colombia" by Dieter Bortfeldt is also recommended. It lists all the private mail services known to date. Many bus lines, garages and also baggage services included mail transport in their services. The services were especially popular when the weekly state postal service was already gone, or the mail had to be transported in a great hurry. There were some services that issued their own stamps, some only used special postmarks. These private services were only allowed to use cars or the railway. The airmail service had been sold by contract to SCADTA. Some small services that tried this had to stop the airmail service immediately.

One of these private operators was the "CORREO RAPIDO DEL NORTE DE SANTANDER". This was authorised on 25 November 1920 on the route between Bucaramanga and Cucuta. However, the postal service itself was not started until 1926 and operated until 1931. Three stamps were issued during this period, the tariff was 4 centavos for each 20 grams. The franking of the private stamps was in addition to the state stamps. The air service from Bucaramanga was operated by COSADA, a branch of SCADTA (Colombian-German Airline). The postal service was carried out by cars and donkeys. The first distance from Cucuta was 42 kilometres by car, then 142 kilometres by donkey and then the last 26 kilometres to the airport in Bucaramanga again by car.


Figure 4 shows a letter from Pamplona, Colombia, to Bucaramanga airport and on to New York. On the left the airmail stamp of COSADA/SCADTA, in the middle the private postage stamp of the "CORREO RAPIDO DEL NORTE SANTANDER" (4 centavos for less than 20 grams, black arrow) and on the right the state stamp.

Private postal services were also in use in Argentina. These were mostly used in remote areas where the state postal service no longer delivered the mail. Delivery to the first state post office and delivery from the last state post office to the recipient was done by horses, cars, ships and rail.

The private service "GARCIA HNOS" collected mail items from Chile (Magallanes) and transported them cross-country to Argentina (Buenos Aires). This was done by car, plane and railway. Figures 5 and 6 show the front and back of a letter from Magallanes (Chile) to Buenos Aires (Argentina). The delivery from Magallanes to Rio Galegos (already in Argentina) was shared by taxi from the private postal service "GARCIA HNOS". The four blue stamps on the back prove this. The oval cachet in violet and the circular handstamp in black on the back were also applied by this postal service. Transport from Rio Galegos to Bahia Blanca was by plane and from there to Buenos Aires by rail. The Argentine stamps were postmarked at the first post office in Argentina. The postage is not exactly correct for a letter weighing 230 grams. Basic postage was 0.05 centavos for every 20 grams, resulting in 0.575 centavos for 230 grams. The airmail fee was 0.30 centavos for the first 10 grams. For each additional 5 grams it was 0.15 centavos, resulting in 6.90 pesos for 230 grams. This would be a total of 7.870 pesos, but the letter was franked with 7.85 pesos.

A very interesting private postal service was located in Gothenburg, Sweden. Ivan R.A. Engstrom ran the "ENSKILDA LOKALPOST". The word "Enskilda" means "private". This local post office was in operation from 1926 to 1928. One stamp was issued for 3 ore in red and one for 5 ore in yellow. Gothenburg castle is depicted on each stamp. The cancellation of the stamps is also interesting. It goes over the entire letter and has an

illustration with an advertisement for automobile accessories. Figure 7 shows a card from this private postal service. The cancellation in violet is interesting as it resembles a postmark.

In Austria, shortly after World War II, it was possible to reserve seats in a postal motor coach. In the Postverordnungsblatt 22, para 181 of 11 September 1948 it stated that this was possible with immediate effect. Para 182 stated that the reservation was free of charge or could be subject to a fee. It depended entirely on local conditions. If there was competition with private bus services, the fee was usually not charged. For each seat on a route, two shillings in the form of stamps had to be attached to a ticket. Figure 8 shows an entitlement ticket for a seat on the Reutte to Innsbruck route. At 4pm seat No 9 was reserved for the owner of the entitlement ticket. An excellent cover for a thematic collection on buses. Figure 9 shows an entitlement ticket for a seat on the Vienna to....route. Two seats, Nos 24 and 25 were reserved, but it is not clear from the ticket which destination is involved. "A Z" is marked in red (see arrow) which could be Zwettl. 

Acknowledgement

This series was first published in *Filamobil* Magazine of the Motivgruppe Kraftfahrzeuge (Motorized Vehicle Study Group) no.210 2022.



Fig 8: Entitlement ticket for postal motor coach from Reutte



Fig 9: Entitlement ticket for postal motor coach from Vienna

LIBEREC 2022: A REPORT FROM THE FRAMES AND A WALK OR TWO

Andrew Millington

Would you expect to find an international stamp exhibition between a Laserquest and an Aquapark? Probably not. But in Liberec's Babylon Centre, some 90 km north of Prague, that is exactly what you'd have found between the 13th and 16th October.

With 926 frames and 47 literature exhibits there were of course many exhibitors from eastern Europe. But the news for our community is that collectors from 19 countries entered sixteen thematic, fifteen open and ten picture postcard exhibits. One-frame pictorial exhibits were part of a separate one-frame category and shown in another part of the exhibition hall, which did not make much sense. They are not included in the census above. The thematic entries were awarded more golds than those in the open and picture postcard classes. Three thematic gold-level entries topped the exhibits across all three classes. Rüdiger Fritz's (Germany) *The Lord of the Rings* was not, as I anticipated, about Hobbits but a superb Olympics exhibit – one of three on the Olympic Games, making it easily the most common topic. Yoram Lubianiker's (Israel) *Chess - the Game of War* combined those two themes in an engaging and thought-provoking way. Both pipped my *World of Copper* exhibit by one point - and I thought that myself after looking at them! For full results see www.feapanews.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Liberec2022_Results.pdf/. The exhibition also included a Polar Salon which acknowledged Czech involvement in polar exploration and science; and a court of honour that was impressively guarded by police with serious automatic rifles. It worked, I decided not to abscond with either the Mauritius one penny orange or two penny blue!

We were asked to scan our exhibits and a full synopsis and send them two months beforehand. This enabled the judges to fully evaluate exhibits at leisure. This became obvious when the judges provided feedback at the frames to exhibitors in attendance. I spent about 20 minutes with all three thematic judges, and it was clear to me they had read my exhibit in detail. Alas few dealers attended, my wallet gathered dust; and the Czech Post stand did not sell their Liberec 2022 commemoratives!

Liberec is delightfully situated in the mountains of northern Czechia. Formerly Reichenberg when part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it was also known as the Manchester of Bohemia because of its textile industry. It is a delightful city to walk around, with wonderful villas, a zoo and a botanic garden; and of course, it has an interesting postal history being at the centre of many of Europe's conflicts. All-in-all an enjoyable, interesting and successful exhibition. 📖



Prizes awarded to Andrew for his entry - see page 115.

The elephant is hand-painted, donated by the Fédération des Sociétés Philatéliques du Grand Duché du Luxembourg





Entrance to the Exhibit Hall (and theme park!)




Feedback from the judges

ZOOMING ALONG

If you have ever visited an international stamp fair you will have seen collectors eagerly visiting the stands of stamp issuing authorities to buy a stamp, stick it in their 'passport' and get it franked. You might even have done this yourself. And that's how our speaker Jon Matthias first got an interest in stamp collecting, at Stamp World London 1990. His talk on *Philatelic Passports* really opened his audience's eyes to the interest to be gained by browsing through these philatelic time capsules. From Interfil 76 at Philadelphia to the New York Stamp Show 2016, via Canada, Hong Kong, Germany, France and Monaco, we were treated to a fascinating look at what can be found within these covers. Some collectors were very careful about the whole process, mounting their stamp to get the clearest cancel possible on the page. Others were, frankly, all over the place, and agencies including Crown Agents and IGPC filled their allotted page with a range of disparate countries. A few were exceptional: one from Monacophil 2004 included a miniature sheet signed by three famous stamp engravers including Martin Mörck. A collector at Hong Kong 97 was geographically challenged, mixing up Guernsey and Jersey and putting the Isle of Man in the Channel Islands. Jon himself had much fun at the Stamp Show 2000 in London posing next to a Dalek, which had just appeared on a British stamp.

We all know that stamps can teach geo-politics, something clearly demonstrated here. London 1990 featured the United Nations on the same page as the USSR. Within a year or so the Soviet Empire had collapsed, and the London 2000 passport featured countries recently independent including - topical today - Ukraine.

Jon's enjoyment of collecting today is all down to his dad taking him to London 1990, and this presentation was a lovely memory. 

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BRIAN SOLE TROPHY: PICTURE POSTCARD CLASS

Wayne Cox The postman’s round: a look at the daily work of the British postman, as depicted on vintage postcards 84 points
This was a light-hearted look at ‘a day in the life of’ from donning the uniform through delivering letters and parcels (with the various well-known hazards such as aggressive dogs), then later in the day emptying pillar boxes and collecting the mail for sorting.

David Sumpter Bullfighting: pageantry of a cruel sport 73 points
Bullfighting is still practised primarily in Spain, South West France, and Mexico. Each stage of the event was shown, from the introductory processional march, the roles of the banderilleros, the picadors and of course the matador, through to the kill.

Thanks to all the competitors for the work they put into their entries, which attracted interest from those attending the fair. 📖



The Northern Line



Bullfighting. Mexican postcard from 1918



*Palestinian refugee issue: Registered Akaba to Jerusalem
24 Dec 1947 with slogan "Save Palestine Arab lands"*



Pillar box manufacturer



Illustration from the Reichenbachia, a four-volume publication by Frederick Sander



Mark Humfrey with Fosbery Trophy

BTA NEWS

NATIONAL COMPETITIONS AT AUTUMN STAMPEX 2022

Congratulations to BTA members who entered the various pictorial classes:

- Anne Stammers won Gold (appropriately) for her entry *The Allure of Gold* in the Thematic Philately Class
- John Davies won Large Vermeil for *The 1890 Jubilee Christmas Card* in the Ephemera Class.
- Kenneth Bruce won Large Silver for *Chasing the Wild Goose* in the Thematic Philately Class.

Other BTA members exhibited in other classes. Overall the Thematic Philately Class attracted three entries, Open Philately Class two entries and Picture Postcards four entries.

BTA PROGRAMME 2023

2023 will see a full programme of Zoom talks, plus guest speakers at our AGM and at a meeting held on the Saturday of Stampex. See page 143 for full details.

Already planning ahead:

DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES NEXT BTA RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND

The event will be held at our usual venue of
voco Oxford Spires Hotel
Friday 12th to Sunday 14th April 2024

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Unless you have prepaid for 2023 you will find a renewal slip with this issue of *Themescene*. We would encourage you to pay by PayPal or BACS where possible, as our bank now charges us for every cheque transaction. You have the option of paying the full renewal fee, which entitles you to a print copy of *Themescene*, or paying a reduced fee of £15.00 if you wish to receive the electronic-only version of *Themescene*. The choice of course is entirely yours, but this is a cheaper option, and for overseas members a much cheaper option. Just indicate your choice, either when emailing details of your renewal, or on the renewal form if posting a cheque.

Whichever option you choose, all members have access to the e-version of *Themescene* via the 'Resources' tab on the BTA website. The full text of the magazine is available from 2005 to date. You will need to set up a username and password. Go to the 'Users' tab of the BTA website and click "Request a Password". If you have any problems please email us via the 'Contact' link on the website.

HERE AND THERE

CALL FOR PAPERS

From: Charles Oppenheim, email c.oppenheim@btinternet.com

I'm a member of the Publications Committee of the Royal Philatelic Society, London. The Editor of *The London Philatelist* (RPSL's journal) has stated that the journal needs more articles on thematic and on open philately. I promised I would try to get BTA members writing for the journal. *The London Philatelist* is focussed on new research, so a general thematic article of the type that would appear in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* or similar magazines would not be as welcome as a research-based article. The article would have to provide novel findings, e.g., into a particular topic as reflected in stamps, postmarks, watermarks, etc. One doesn't have to be a member of the Royal to get published in its journal.

The Royal has issued a style Guide at

www.rpsl.org.uk/Portals/0/RPSL/RPSLSTYLEGUIDE_May2020.pdf. Although this is aimed at authors of monographs, it should also be generally followed by authors of articles in *The London Philatelist*; some requirements in the Guide, however, are not necessary in the journal, e.g., the need to create an index. Typical article length for the journal is 3,500 words, plus, of course, appropriate illustrations, but both shorter and longer articles would be welcome.

I would be very happy to comment informally on any draft thematic article written by a BTA member for *The London Philatelist*, but would stress that the ultimate decision on whether to publish the article rests with the Editor of the journal and not with me. 📖

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Since publishing my first website in 1999 I have developed a portfolio of websites covering all aspects of philately and have recently provided a dedicated Thematics section which now contains over 2000 items and is expanding weekly.

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Ian Lasok-Smith (Philatelist)
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BTA ONE PAGE VIRTUAL COMPETITION

We are delighted to announce the third edition of our one-page thematic competition. It is open to non-members as well as members and last year we received more entries than anticipated; so to make the judge's burden manageable we are limiting this year's competition to 100 entries or thereabouts. Entries will be accepted on a first-come first-served basis, and we cannot guarantee accepting multiple entries from one person.

Entries can be submitted to competitions@britishthematic.org.uk between 1st September 2022 and 31st January 2023. An entry form (on page 140 or available at www.britishthematic.org.uk/bta-one-page-virtual-competition.htm) should be submitted with each entry. There is no entry fee.

A previous entry needs to show significant differences to be accepted. Entries will be given Diamond, Ruby, Emerald and Opal grades. Best in class winners will be announced, and all Diamond award exhibits will be judged for Best in Show awards. Entrants can anticipate receiving results and feedback by 31st March 2023.

The Best in Show (BTA member) will receive a full credit for their next year's membership of the BTA. The Best in Show (non-BTA member) will receive one year's electronic membership to the BTA. In addition, all Youth entrants will receive one year's electronic membership of the BTA, and all entrants will receive a pdf of the edition of *Themescene* carrying the competition report.

Rules

1. There will be seven philatelic classes:
 - Thematic Philately – Nature
 - Thematic Philately – Science and Technology
 - Thematic Philately – Culture
 - Open Philately
 - Topical
 - Picture Postcards
 - Youth Philately. Split into:
 - Up to and including age 9
 - Ages 10 – 14
 - Ages 15 – 17
2. All entries require an application form to be completed.
3. The exhibit must tell a story (with the exception of Topical entries). Not a list of stamps or a procession of stamps but material that is linked to tell a story.
4. The exhibit page must have a clear title on it.
5. The entry may be on A4 or A3 size white or pale cream paper.
6. An exhibit (apart from Postcard entries) will be expected to show more than just stamps. Cancellations, air letters, telegrams, stamp booklets and postal stationery are but a few alternatives. Using a variety of material makes the exhibit more interesting and gives the exhibitor a greater range of material to tell the story. The Open Philately

Class gives the opportunity to supplement the philatelic material with a variety of non-philatelic material rather than just postcards. It is expected A3 pages will have a greater range of material than A4 pages.

7. The exhibit must be in English
8. The exhibitor will be expected to demonstrate good presentation, but grammar or spelling will be disregarded; particularly from those for whom English is not their first language.
9. Every item must be shown full size. Scanned reduced images of the reverse of covers etc. are permitted, shown next to the full-size front, with a note that they are being shown at a reduced rate.
10. Awards will be in 4 categories:
 - Diamond: all the elements listed in rules 3 – 10 achieved to a good standard;
 - Ruby: all or most of the required elements, either to a fair standard or with one of the requirements missing;
 - Emerald: some of the elements included, but with perhaps one or two of those elements missing;
 - Opal: an exhibit which failed to meet all or many of the elements.

Adult entries

Title and Introduction	<i>max</i>	10
Presentation		15
The story		40
Quality of material		10
Non-thematic information		15
Variety of material		10
		<i>100</i>

Youth entries

Story	<i>maximum</i>	20
Knowledge of the material used		20
Variety of material (both philatelic and non-philatelic)		20
Presentation		40
		<i>100</i>



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**British Thematic Association
3rd One-Page Competition, 2023
Entry application form**

Name:

.....

Name as you want it to appear on your certificate (*if different from above*):

.....

City and country of residence:

.....

e-mail:

.....

Age, if 17 or under:.....

Please include proof of age as a separate file

Exhibit title:

1st exhibit:

.....

2nd exhibit:

.....

Please note 2nd entries may not be accepted if more than 100 exhibits are received.

How did you hear about this competition?

.....

.....

.....

This form can be cut out or photocopied from the magazine; or downloaded from

<https://www.britishthematic.org.uk/bta-one-page-virtual-competition.htm>

It can be completed electronically *or* printed out, completed by hand, and scanned.

Send exhibit with entry form to competitions@britishthematic.org.uk



Just4Kids by Lise Whittle

Find stamps from any country that show events that happen in the months in the year. Here are a few ideas;

JANUARY



January 1st - New Year's Day
January 22nd - Chinese New Year
(2023 will be the Year of the Rabbit)
January 25th Robert Burns Night



February 14th - Valentine's Day
Feb 21st Shrove Tuesday 'Pancake Day'

FEBRUARY



MARCH



March 1st - St. David's Day,
(patron saint of Wales)
March 17th - St. Patrick's Day,
(patron saint of Ireland)
March 19th - Mothers' Day



APRIL



April 9th - Easter Day
April 25th - St George's Day,
(patron saint of England)



MAY

May 1st - May Day holiday
May 6th - Coronation of King Charles III





JUNE

June 18th - Father's Day

JULY and AUGUST
Summer Holidays!



SEPTEMBER
Autumn starts



OCTOBER

October 31st - Hallowe'en

NOVEMBER



November 5th - Guy Fawkes Night

November 11th - Remembrance

November 14th - the King's 75th birthday

November 30th - St Andrew's Day
(patron saint of Scotland)



DECEMBER

25th December
- Christmas Day!



... and don't forget to add in your own birthday!

Write to us and tell us about your stamps and receive some free stamps (children only) to: Just4Kids, c/o The Editor, Themescene, 87 Victoria Road, Bournemouth BH1 4RS.

Find out more about stamp collecting on the Stamp Active website www.stampactive.co.uk

BTA PROGRAMME 2023

- 12 January
19.00 for 19.30 **Zoom meeting**
Julian Bagwell
Cricket related philatelic material 1830s to 1960s
Features letters from famous cricketers, postcards of touring teams or famous players, items that talk about cricket, and a few advertising covers.
- 09 February
19.00 for 19.30 **Zoom meeting**
Geoff Blackwell
Photography, photographers and postage stamps
Explores the history of photography as depicted in stamps, and considers the claims that photographers have been overlooked by the philatelic community.
- 07 March
19.00 for 19.30 **Zoom meeting**
Michele Bresso
Exploring industrial, wartime and social communication through typewriter philately
Examines the significance of typewriters in history, culture and technology; an invention which changed the way the world communicated when it appeared on the commercial scene in the late 1800s.
- 18 April
19.00 for 19.30 **Zoom meeting**
Les Ashton-Smith
Marie Curie
A look at the life and work of the pioneering physicist and chemist Marie Curie, the first woman to win a Nobel Prize.
- 10 June
14.30 **Annual General Meeting and guest speaker**
Guest speaker: Les Ashton-Smith
- 30 September **Members' meeting at Stampex**
Guest speaker: George Henshilwood
Having fun with numbers
Business Design Centre, Islington
- October **BTA One-Frame Competitions**
At South of England Stamp Fair & Sussex Convention
Ardingly Showground, RH17 6TL.
BTA Table

Please note:

Our Zoom programme will feature a talk every month in 2023 except October. Please check our website under [Events - BTA Zoom Presentations - Upcoming Programme](#) for the latest updates and descriptions of the talks.

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WE WISH ALL OUR READERS A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS

