

THEMESCENE

December 2023

In this issue we:

Peer at a complex organism

Lichens on stamps

With Mike Robinson



BRITISH THEMATIC



ASSOCIATION

Take to the skies

'Moths' pioneered a new air age

With Vladimir Kachan



Enjoy some stunning scenery

Himalayan lakes, part 1

With M. Lokeswara Rao



And take to the seas

A Schoolboy's 'Almost an adventure'

With Chris Yardley

BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

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THEMESCENE

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EDITORIAL

Wendy Buckle

It was very unfortunate that we had to cancel our members' meeting at Stampex in September. I believe ours was not the only meeting affected by the dispute by train workers, but the good news is that our speaker George Henshilwood has kindly agreed to deliver his talk and display at the York Stamp and Coin Fair on 20th July. It's an ill wind: hopefully those living in the north of England will now have a much easier opportunity to attend. We have a full programme lined up for 2024, see page 147. Please do see if you can support at least one of these events, and if you are planning to attend our residential weekend (pages 139, 142-44) our organiser Anne Stammers would be very pleased to receive your booking form. Early liaison with the hotel helps both us and them. As ever, we have a very varied programme, and anyone who has ever attended this event will tell you how relaxed and friendly it is.

While in the process of putting this issue of *Themescene* together I realised my stock of articles is running low, so contacted some people who - perhaps rashly - had at some point offered to write something for the magazine. They kindly all agreed to help out with new articles, for which I'm very grateful. What about all the rest of you who are reading this? Can you come up with something? Long or short I don't mind; subject matter I don't mind; just a Word doc and some illustrations, so I don't have to spend time worrying about filling the pages. If you want to know more just email me at themescene@britishthematic.org.uk Thank you!

I can't quite believe this is our December, and so Christmas, issue. Where does the time go? Probably not helped by my writing this in mid-November, which as far as I'm concerned is nowhere near holiday season (despite the evidence of shops' displays). But you will not receive your copy until December, so can I wish you all a very happy Christmas and fruitful collecting new year. 📖

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Unless you have prepaid for 2024 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 [Members](#) tab of the BTA website and click "Request your Password". If you have any problems please email us via the 'Contact' link on the website.

CHAIRMAN


Barry Stagg

Change might be good for you

It is often said that nobody likes ‘change’ preferring instead the status-quo of stability. Others say that change is a natural event that humans have been doing for thousands of years. Change can be a force for good or bad: changing my favourite chocolate bar by making it smaller, or making my favourite bag of crisps smaller, is in my view a change for the worse, but my wife would disagree on the grounds I would eat less ‘junk food’!

So it was with some trepidation that I approached the recent stamp fair at Ardingly. We have held the BTA competitions there for years, but I had heard that there would be no dealers on the top floor where we were located. What would attract the good people of Ardingly to come upstairs to see us? I thought this would be a disastrous change for us. But I was wrong – again! Yes, there were no dealers upstairs; however, we had something better to attract the visitors – the coffee shop had moved upstairs! Wonderful news. But it got better: next to us the organisers had a small ‘auditorium’ for those giving talks, and again better still, those visitors who could not manage the stairs had to go past our displays to get to and from the lifts! I’ve never seen the display frames so busy!

As some of you know I was involved in an involuntary (and temporary) change about six weeks ago. I fell over on the pavement and had the benefit of a free ride to the local A&E. Nothing broken but I could not walk comfortably for a few weeks. I could not get on to my allotment or garden. I could almost hear the weeds laughing as I sat in my chair. But it did allow me to sort through some of my acquisitions over the years and I found numerous items I had forgotten about. I’m sure there is a lesson in there somewhere, but this small and temporary lifestyle change did bring me some indirect benefits.

When I was at work, I was often told that managers managed change: no change needed then no managers! Not sure I would go along with that. I believe that change in today’s world is inevitable - the trick is to make it a good change not a bad one. I’m always reminded of Darwin’s quote: “It is not the most intellectual of the species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able best to adapt and adjust to the changing environment in which it finds itself”. So I welcome the idea of the BTA trying new ideas, be it a new venue for a talk, or displays to a different group of people. At the risk of over-quoting may I finish with a favourite quote of mine related to change “Life is like a shark – got to keep moving forward or you will perish”. So, let’s see what more we can do to spread the word of thematic collecting – be it at Ardingly, York, Perth or some other venue in the future. 

DO YOU WANT TO TELL OTHERS ABOUT YOUR THEMATIC COLLECTION?

For me, one of the fun activities with thematic collecting is talking to groups or other clubs about my collection. I find most of them are really very interested in thematic collecting and are impressed by the patience, imagination and expertise needed in putting a good collection together. The Association of British Philatelic Societies (ABPS) maintains a list of speakers and their topics so that clubs can find a speaker for their event. The number of thematic collectors on that list is quite small. If you do give talks or want to give a talk then please contact the [ABPS](#) and get yourself on the speaker’s list.

LICHENS ON STAMPS

Mike Robinson

We will all of us have seen lichens, knowingly or unknowingly. A commonly seen lichen here in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, is the distinctive yellow, *Xanthoria parietina*, often seen on trees, walls etc (Fig 1). A less common lichen is the orange, *Xanthoria elegans* (Fig 2). Both feature on stamps included here and both were photographed in South East London.

So, what are lichens? According to the British Lichen Society ‘a lichen is not a single organism; it is a stable symbiotic association between a fungus and alga and/or cyanobacteria. Like all fungi, lichen fungi require carbon as a food source; this is provided by their symbiotic algae and/or cyanobacteria, that are photosynthetic’.

Thankfully, we do not need science degrees etc. or to spend time in the laboratory (I certainly don’t) to enjoy looking for and at lichens!

Lichens may be found growing on a variety of surfaces both natural and artificial, including bricks, concrete, metal, rocks, stone, wood (both on trees and manufactured wooden items such as park benches) etc. and in a wide variety of habitats, including on continental Antarctica, where a range of hills are named after the *Caloplaca* species of lichens.

Lichen types include: [i] crustose lichens viz. crust-forming lichens which are firmly attached to the growing surface, [ii] foliose lichens, being leafy or flattened lichens. It is possible to remove part of the thallus (for examination) with say, a fingernail: unlike a crustose lichen which must be scraped off, and [iii] fruticose lichens, which are shrubby lichens attached to the surface at a single point.

The body of a lichen is called the thallus: the thallus may be comprised of lobes which may differ in appearance in different lichens viz. they may be flat, curved, wide, thin etc.

Reproduction is carried out by a variety of methods including the production of (often disc shaped) apothecia (which we can see clearly on Figure 1) or isidia which have the appearance of coral growths.

But enough of that: so now to some stamps. Several countries, territories etc. have issued stamps featuring lichens.

A set of four stamps was issued by the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT) during October 2021, showing *Buellia frigida*, *Xanthoria mawsonii*, *Umbilicaria decussata* and *Xanthoria elegans* (Fig 3). As mentioned, *Xanthoria elegans* is found in the United Kingdom.

According to the AAT, lichen’ growth rates in the Maritime Antarctic can reach one centimetre or more every hundred years. But in the harsher environment of continental Antarctica, growth is much slower. In the case of *Buellia frigida* in the McMurdo Dry Valleys region, the growth rate may be as little as one centimetre every thousand years (the lifespan of a lichen can cover many thousands of years). Interestingly, lichens grow in most areas of the Antarctic that are capable of supporting plant life.

The British Antarctic Territory (BAT) have also issued stamps featuring lichens. There have been several studies of lichen growth and colonization on Signy Island, the South Orkney Islands, in the maritime Antarctic. During March 1989, the BAT issued a set of



Fig 1: *Xanthoria parietina*



Fig 2: *Xanthoria elegans*



Fig 3: Australian Antarctic Territory *Buellia frigida*, *Xanthoria mawsonii*, *Umbilicaria decussata*, *Xanthoria elegans*



Fig 4: British Antarctic Territory *Xanthoria elegans*, *Usnia aurantiaco-atra*, *Cladonia chlorophaea*, *Umbilicaria antarctica*

four stamps showing *Xanthoria elegans*, *Usnia aurantiaco-atra*, *Cladonia chlorophaea* and *Umbilicaria antarctica* (Fig 4).

To my mind, a particularly attractive set of stamps showing lichens was issued during June 2019 by Belarus, showing *Xanthoria parietina*, *Lobaria pulmonaria* and *Cladonia floerkeana* (Fig 5): all of which are found in the United Kingdom.

During September 2017 Iceland issued two stamps showing *Xanthoria parietina* and *Placopsis gelida* (Fig 6), both of which are found in the United Kingdom.

And finally, Saint-Pierre et Miquelon issued a single stamp during March 1995, showing a lichen, *Cladonia cristatella* and a moss, *Dicranum scoparium* (Fig 7). Although the lichen isn't found in the United Kingdom, the moss is found here.

Stamps featuring lichens have also been issued by Åland, the Principality of Liechtenstein and Terres Australes et Antarctiques Francaises.

If anyone is interested in getting involved in the study of lichens, I know the folks at the [British Lichen Society](#) will be more than happy to offer guidance etc. 📖



Fig 5: Belarus *Xanthoria parietina*, *Lobaria pulmonaria*, *Cladonia floerkeana*



Fig 6: Iceland *Xanthoria parietina*, *Placopsis gelida*



Fig 7: St. Pierre et Miquelon *Cladonia cristatella*, *Dicranum scoparium*

‘MOTHS’ PIONEERED A NEW AIR AGE 100 YEARS AGO, OR HOW THE FAMOUS BRITISH ENTOMOLOGIST GEOFFREY DE HAVILLAND ORGANIZED THE PRODUCTION OF LIGHT AIRCRAFT OF THE MOTH SERIES

Vladimir Kachan

Following the end of World War I the development of passenger air travel and the use of light aircraft for pleasure flying marked the beginning of a desire for people to ‘take to the skies’. Perhaps one of the most famous names in Depression-era planes was Sir Geoffrey de Havilland. De Havilland (1883-1965) was a British-born aviation pioneer and aircraft engineer. He founded the de Havilland Aircraft Company and was the creator of the Moth family of planes (Fig. 1). De Havilland was also a respected amateur entomologist, an interest he held throughout his lifetime, hence naming some of his creations after insects such as Moth, Mosquito or Dragonfly. Geoffrey de Havilland was also an avid lepidopterist. From a very young age, he had a great love of butterflies and moths and collected them in his spare time (Fig. 2).

Geoffrey de Havilland, son of a country parson but inspired from earliest days by things mechanical and things of nature, had designed and built his own airplane in 1909. The success of the second aeroplane resulted in it being bought by the British Army’s Balloon Factory at Farnborough, Hampshire in 1911, and de Havilland was taken on as aircraft designer and pilot. In 1920 Geoffrey set up the de Havilland Aircraft Company at Stag Lane Aerodrome, Edgware. In 1925, de Havilland fathered the Moth, which ushered in the era of general aviation. One needn’t be a lepidopterist to recognize the characteristic shape of fin and rudder on so many DH airplanes, for Sir Geoffrey was also an outstanding naturalist. The logo in moth form on the right side of the fuselage on the Ginea-Bissau stamp reads ‘De Havilland Moth’ (Fig 3).

Geoffrey de Havilland’s intense interest in natural history lead him to choose a name for the aeroplane from his knowledge of entomology, the study of insects. He remembered “A name had to be found, and many ideas were put forward before my enthusiasm for natural history, which remained as strong as ever, led me to seek the solution in entomology. It suddenly struck me that the name ‘Moth’ was just right. It had the right sound, was appropriate, easy to remember and might well lead to a series of Moths, all named after British insects”.

There are over 3,000 species of moth living in Britain. In his long series of biplanes, De Havilland used the names Gypsy Moth, Hawk Moth, Puss Moth, Tiger Moth, Fox Moth, Leopard Moth, Hornet Moth (Fig.5).



Fig 1: Mongolia 1978.
Geoffrey de Havilland



Fig 2: Meter mark of the Swallowtail, a favourite butterfly of de Havilland



Fig 4: Alderney 2012 showing Tiger Moths



Fig 3: Guinea-Bissau 2002.
Aircraft and moth emblem

Fig 5: India postal stationery 1927 with D. H. Moth cancel and emblem.



In 1925 de Havilland had an idea for a new plane that would be attractive, above all, to the 'amateur'. De Havilland called this aeroplane the Moth. Moths fold their wings back along their bodies when at rest, and de Havilland arranged for his DH.60 to do the same, so you could tow it on the road behind a car, and keep it in an ordinary garage. Geoffrey de Havilland wrote:

“Long before the design was started I had visualised the finished aeroplane, and the working drawings quickly began to appear. It was an all-wood biplane with four inter-wing struts in all, instead of the more usual eight. The wings were arranged to fold back along the sides of the fuselage safely and easily, the time for the whole operation being two minutes. The aeroplane could then be housed in a shed of normal garage size, or the tail could be attached to the rear of a car for towing. It had a plywood fuselage with very adequate cockpits for two people, the passenger being in the front, dual control, and, very important, a locker behind the pilot for light luggage and tool kit. The landing gear was simple and could take a bad landing.”

The first Moth "DH.60" performed its initial flight on 22 February 1925 with Captain de Havilland himself at the controls. The model was instantly popular. By June 1928, the de Havilland Aircraft Company claimed to be selling a Moth every day (Fig 5).

In 1927, fitted with a new engine the Moth became the "DH.60G" - though this designation was quickly extended by the more intuitive "Gypsy Moth" (Fig 6). The Gypsy Moth set a number of performance and distance records. It was a great success, being reliable, easy to fly, and cheap and was also known as a seaplane (Fig7). A luxury version, the "DH.60L" was built, featuring a larger luggage compartment, smart two-tone paint job and other fripperies. De Havilland recognized that the Gypsy Moth wasn't rugged enough for rough environments, and so a version with a metal welded steel tube fuselage was designed, this variant of course being named the "Metal Moth", or more officially "DH.60M".

A total of seven Moth designs were manufactured at Stag Lane and later at Hatfield. They included: DH.60 Moth, DH.75 Hawk Moth, DH.80 Puss Moth, DH.82 Tiger Moth, DH.83 Fox Moth, DH.85 Leopard Moth and DH.87 Hornet Moth. Many of these variants were also manufactured under licence in Canada and New Zealand (Fig.8), up until the outbreak of World War II. Almost 10,800 Moths of all types were produced in all.

The Moth was one of the first practical light aircraft designs to be intended for civilian training and recreational use, rather than for military buyers. The Moth was also one of the first light aircraft to be mass produced, and was available to a much wider section of the general public than previous aircraft designs. The most famous of the moths however, is the DH.82 Tiger Moth (Fig 9), a biplane trainer used during World War II in Britain and the aircraft on which all World War II RAF pilots learned to fly.

The achievements of Geoffrey de Havilland will forever be etched in the history of aircraft development, and particularly the industry which flourish and grew in the United Kingdom (Fig 10).


Geoffrey de Havilland was one of the great pioneers of aviation (Fig 12). His work was of value to the whole of the aircraft industry and he was always ready to share his knowledge. Millions of people have either had their first flight, learned to fly or travelled to destinations worldwide in de Havilland aircraft. Sir Geoffrey de Havilland was also an engineer, innovator, naturalist and the father of today's aerospace industry. 



Fig 6: Romania 1964 showing Gypsy Moth



Fig 7: Norfolk Island 1980 showing Float Plane DH.60



Fig 8: New Zealand 2000 showing DH.82A



Fig 9: Commemorative cancel with stylised HD.82 Tiger Moth

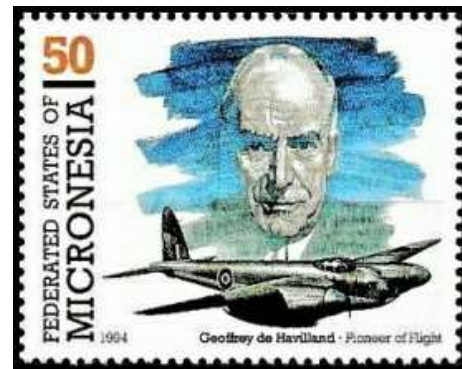


Fig 11: Micronesia 1994 showing de Havilland and Moth light aircraft



Fig 10: GB 1955 meter mark of de Havilland Company

Editor's note

Those wanting to know more about the De Havilland aircraft may be interested in the [De Havilland Aircraft Museum](#) at Shenley, London.

HIMALAYAN LAKES. PART 1

M. Lokeswara Rao

The Himalayas are the highest mountain range in the world, the greatest mountain system in Asia, and the “Water Tower of Asia”. They are considered as the planet’s youngest, tallest, and most populated mountain systems. Over 30 peaks in the Himalayas are over 7,315 m high (Fig. 1). The term ‘Himalaya’ literally means the ‘Abode of Snow’ and is derived from a combination of two Sanskrit words: ‘Hima’ which means ‘snow’ and ‘Alaya’ which means ‘Abode’. The mountains store more than 12,000 cubic kilometres of fresh water and are the source of some of the major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, Ganges, Indus and Yamuna. Many lakes are found in the Himalayan region including the Pangong, Tilicho, Gurudongmar, Shey-Phoksundo, Manasarovar and Tsongmo lakes. The Himalayas have profoundly shaped the cultures of South Asia and Tibet.

The Himalayan Mountains are also referred to as the “Third Pole” as they contain the third-largest deposition of ice and snow on the planet after the Arctic and the Antarctic regions. It is estimated that there are more than 15,000 glaciers in the Himalayas including the Gangotri, Khumbu, Langtang, Yamunotri, and Zemu glaciers. Many Himalayan peaks are sacred in Hinduism and Buddhism; the summits of Kangchenjunga (from the Indian side), Gangkhar Puensum, Machapuchare, Nanda Devi and Kailas in the Tibetan Trans Himalaya are off-limits to climbers.

They form a 2,400 km broad crescent through North-eastern Pakistan, Northern India, Southern Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, China and Bhutan. The range has some of the planet's highest peaks, including the very highest, Mount Everest (8,849 m). Over 100 peaks exceeding 7,200 m in elevation lie in the Himalayas. In 2002, Canada Post released a 48-cent stamp of Mount Everest as part of its “Mountains” issue (Fig 2).

The postage stamp is a true ambassador of human history, culture and civilization, because its form and function give it freedom of movement and the ability to transmit information all over the world. The promotion of philatelic themes like Himalayas deal with the natural beauties and richness of Himalayas lakes. Postal authorities of different countries have issued philatelic items, in which images of the glaciers, peaks and mountains and lakes of the Himalayas are found. They are considered to be part of natural capital and also part of the cultural heritage of the world. Postal authorities issue these philatelic items to propagate conservation and create environmental awareness among the people for protection of the Himalayas Lakes. Young people can come into direct contact with the described philatelic pieces (postal stamps, postcards, first day covers etc), and thus can fully understand the importance of the Himalayas and Himalayan Lakes, its protection and the need to save these lakes from environmental pollution and climate change.

The beauty of the Himalayas is not just limited to white snowy mountains. The Himalayan Lakes are breathtaking and stunning too. Many of these high altitude lakes are freshwater lakes formed by glacial activity. Some of these stunning lakes are only accessible through difficult treks to these regions and that’s one of the reasons they have managed to retain their beauty and charm. These high altitude lakes will take your breath

away not only by their beauty but by their unique features. Some have ever-changing colours, some are the best birding spots and some are rich in biodiversity.

Lakes in Indian Himalayas

India has many lofty Himalayan peaks: the Siwalik ranges (outer Himalayas), Middle Himalayas and Higher Himalayas. Notable among those peaks is Kanchenjunga (8,586m) on the border of Nepal and the state of Sikkim, which is the world's third tallest peak and India's highest point. Other high mountains in India include Nanda Devi (7,817 m), Kamet (7,756 m), and Trishul (7,120 m) in Uttarakhand. The Great Himalayas lie mostly above the line of perpetual snow and thus contain most of the Himalayan glaciers. These peaks are the source of fresh water to Himalayan lakes in India.

Dal Lake. India issued a definitive stamp of Dal Lake in 1967 (fig 3) and a commemorative stamp in 1978. Dal Lake is a Himalayan urban lake, with five basins and a number of channels that are well linked with each other. During the winter season, the temperature sometimes reaches -11°C , freezing the lake. The lake covers an area of 18 square kilometres and is part of a natural wetland which covers 21.1 square kilometres including its floating gardens. The floating gardens, known as "Rad" in Kashmiri, blossom with lotus flowers during July and August. The sparkling quiet waters of Dal Lake, surrounded by snow-capped mountains on its three sides, undoubtedly mark it as one of the most beautiful lakes of India. It is also the second largest lake in the State of Jammu and Kashmir with numerous gardens and orchards all along its shores. Houseboats form an indelible part of the scenery of the Dal Lake, always ready to take tourists on a romantic and peaceful ride and also offer some of the most exotic views of the splendid scenery of the Lake. The shoreline of the lake, about 15.5 km, is encompassed by a boulevard lined with Mughal era gardens, parks, houseboats and hotels. Scenic views of the lake can be witnessed from the shoreline Mughal gardens, such as Shalimar Bagh and Nishat Bagh, built during the reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir, and from houseboats cruising along the lake in the colourful shikaras.

In 2006 India Post released a block of five stamps and postcards of Himalayan Lakes, showing Chandratol, Roop Kund, Sela, Tso Moriri and Tsangu. "Chandratol" (literally meaning the 'Lake of the Moon') is located at an altitude of about 4,300 m and is about seven km away from the Kunzum in the Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh, cradled in the glorious Middle Himalayas in the Spiti Valley on the Samudra Tapu plateau which overlooks the Chandra River. The deep-blue water of the Chandratol Lake is the source of the Chandra River. It is believed that in ancient times the site of the lake was a glacier. Heavenly Chandra Tal is known for its ever-changing colour from dawn to dusk. The Moon Lake is barren but beautiful. The many colours of the lake Roopkund (also known as 'Mystery Lake' or 'Skeleton Lake' is a high altitude glacial lake in Uttarakhand State, India. It lies in the lap of Trishul massif and is famous for hundreds of human skeletons found at the edge of the lake. It is a shallow lake, having a depth of about two metres. The area is uninhabited, located in the Himalayas at an altitude of about 5,029m.

Sela Lake. This beautiful lake is located near the Sela Memorial and the Sela Pass which is a high altitude mountain pass located in Tawang District of Arunachal Pradesh, India. It is at an elevation of about 4,170 m and connects the Buddhist city of Tawang to Tezpur and Guwahati. Sela Lake is one of 101 lakes in and around the Pass, all of which are considered sacred and are revered by Buddhists. This place is snowed under most of the year, but offers excellent and aesthetic views all the year round. Sela Lake (often called

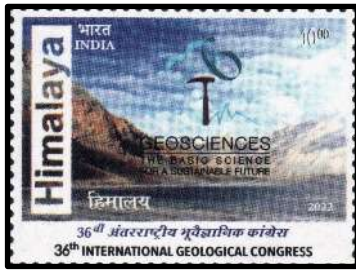


Fig 1: India 2022



Fig 2: United Nations 2002



Fig 3: Dal Lake. India 1967



Fig 4: Himalayan Lakes Chandratal, Roop Kund, Sela, Tso Moriri and Tsangu. India 2006



Fig 5: Chandratal



Roopkund



Sela



Tsomgo



Tso Moriri



Crows Lake

Fig 5 all taken from "Incredible India" India Post postcard set 2015



Gurudongmar



Fig 6: Dudipatsar Lake and Payee Lake. Pakistan 2006

‘Paradise Lake’ because of its natural beauty) is fully or partially frozen during winters. It is the source of some small rivers which flow out from it.

Tsomo Lake, also known as Changu Lake” or Tsangu Lake is a glacial lake in Sikkim located at an altitude of about 3,753 m. The name means ‘Source of water’. It is located about 35 kms from Gangtok on the Gangtok-Nathula highway. It is one of the few extremely high altitude lakes in India. Tso Moriri or Lake Moriri is a lake in the Ladakhi part of the Changthang plateau in Jammu & Kashmir, Northern India. The lake is at an altitude of 4,521 m. It is the largest of the high altitude lakes entirely within Ladakh, India. Based on the ecological diversity of the lake and its surroundings - avifauna, mammals, carnivores, vegetation etc. - Tso Moriri was listed in November 2002 under the Ramsar Wetland Sites under the Ramsar Convention. The land and water reserve here is called the Tso Moriri Wetland Conservation Reserve.

Crow’s Lake, one of the hundreds of high altitude lakes in North Sikkim, is located North-East of the Kanchenjunga Range of the Great Himalayas in India. This picturesque lake, the twin-lake of nearby Eagle’s Lake, presents fine views towards the Gurudongmar route and the mountains that form the border with Tibet. The lake remains frozen in the winter months.

Gurudongmar Lake is one of the highest lakes in the world, located at an altitude of 5,430 m. It lies in the North Sikkim district in Sikkim, India, about 5 km south of the Chinese border. The water of the lake is believed to possess the miraculous power of granting children to childless couples. Interestingly, the myth of Gurudongmar is believed as reverentially by the Hindus as by the local Buddhists. Encircled all around by snow-covered mountains, the sacred lake freezes during the winters except at one spot, which is believed to be specially blessed. There is a temple of the Guru beside the lake. Pilgrims and tourists as well as Army personnel offer prayers at the temple. These lakes are all commemorated in a 2015 set of postcards issued by India Post (Fig 5).

Lakes in Pakistan Himalayas

The Himalayas western ranges occupy the entire northern end of Pakistan. Important peaks are towering peaks as Nanga Parbat (8,126 m) and K2, also called Godwin Austen (8,611m), in Gilgit-Baltistan. These peaks feed fresh water to the Himalayan lakes of Pakistan.

Dudipatsar Lake or Dudipat Lake is one of the most beautiful, stunning and magnificent lakes, encircled by snow clad peaks and lying in the extreme north of the Kaghan Valley of Pakistan (Fig 6). The word “dudi” means white, “pat” means mountains and “sar” means lake. This name has been given to the lake because of the white colour of snow at surrounding peaks. In summer the water of the lake reflects like a mirror and the side valleys, especially the banks of the lake, become lush green. This lake is also called Queen of Lakes due to its beauty. The lake’s water is a greenish blue hue and very cold, at an elevation of 3,800 m. The surrounding mountains, with snow patches in the shady dales, average around 4,800 m in elevation. Their natural habitat is in the Western Himalayan alpine shrub and meadows ecoregion.

Payee Lake is situated in the centre of a meadow in Payee, near Shogran in Kaghan Valley, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It is located at a height of almost 2,895 metres (Fig 6). It is surrounded by Makra Peak, Malika Parbat, Musa ka Musala and the mountains of Kashmir. The lake is accessible via Kiwai passing through Shogran by a jeep track. There is a problem breathing there due to the elevation.

Saiful Muluk Lake is a mountainous lake located at the northern end of the Kaghan Valley, near the town of Naran in the Saiful Muluk National Park (Fig 7). At an elevation of 3,224 m above sea level, the lake is located above the treeline, and is one of the highest lakes in Pakistan. Saiful Muluk was formed by glacial moraines that blocked the water of the stream passing through the valley. The Kaghan Valley was formed in the greater Pleistocene period dating back almost 300,000 years when the area was covered with ice. Rising temperatures and receding glaciers left a large depression where glaciers once stood. Melting water collected into the lake.

Lakes in Bhutan Himalayas

Bhutan has mountains including the Teri gang, Tsenda gang, Jomolhari, Gangeheytag, Jitchudrake and Tse Rin Gang mountains, which are a freshwater source to many glacier lakes. The lakes of Bhutan comprise its glacial lakes and its natural mountain lakes. Bhutan contains some 2,674 glacial lakes. Some of them, such as Thorthormi Lake in Lunana Gewog, are not a single body of water but collections of supraglacial ponds. Most glacial lakes identified as potentially dangerous feed into the Manas River and Puna Tsang (Sankosh) River water systems of north-central Bhutan. As phenomena of nature, all lakes in Bhutan are believed to be inhabited by spirits. A handful of lakes in Bhutan are particularly sacred, most often connected to the lives of Buddhist saints Guru Rimpoche and Pema Lingpa. For example, Mebar Tsho ('Burning Lake'), in the Tang Valley near Bumthang, is heavily associated with Guru Rimpoche, who brought Buddhism to Bhutan and discovered his first terma (hidden teaching) in the lake in 1475. (Fig 8) 📖

To be concluded in March 2024 Themescene



Fig 7: Saiful Muluk Lake stamps from Iran, Pakistan and Turkey



Fig 8: Mebar Tsho, The Burning Lake. Bhutan 2017



RECORDING A SCHOOLBOY'S “ALMOST AN ADVENTURE”

Chris Yardley

As a schoolboy in Tunbridge Wells, in 1956, I joined the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, thinking of the Navy as a possible career. That August, out of the seeming blue, I received ‘Call-up papers’ and a travel warrant to present myself to the Navy at Portsmouth, which I did.

Within half a day I was issued with naval uniforms and a berth on *HMS Ocean*, an aircraft carrier. I was allocated to the starboard watch. I was not alone. There were several lads aged, I’d say aged between 16 and 21. *HMS Ocean* sailed out to sea. Everything happened very quickly. Until ...

Until the ship’s captain, via the tannoy (public address system), summoned all the reservists who had just joined the ship to assemble on the quarter deck - wherever that was. We were disembarked at sea, with all our possessions into ‘whaler (life) boats’.



We were all brand new sailors – what was going on? We were towed back to Portsmouth to *HMS Vanguard*. At the time the battleship was ‘moth-balled’ but obviously used as a training base. We were 200 lads approximately – the next day we started to train as sailors. We were given no information and were denied telephone access and/or postal services. Gradually we learned that *HMS Ocean* (and *HMS Hermes*, I think it was) were on their way to Egypt for what has been named “The Suez Crisis”. The secrecy was in the timing because at that time Australian Prime Minister Menzies was negotiating with the British, French and Egyptian Governments to avert the Egyptian take-over of the Suez Canal. He failed. Britain and France invaded Egypt, without the support of the United States. A short war ensued. The conflict is recorded in a few stamps.

We were released from *HMS Vanguard* about two weeks later – and back to school. Our final inspection before leaving *Vanguard* was by Admiral Townsend, brother of Group Captain Peter Townsend. But the experience was not quite over. We were cajoled into finishing a rum barrel before being ferried to shore. Mother was most surprised to find a sozzled sailor at her door that same day.

I stayed in the Reserve for four years and later served aboard *HMS Zest* (where the picture was taken) and the minesweeper *HMS Bossington*. Terrific training for my later life. 📖



Egypt 1956: French and English troops invade Port Said and Egypt 1957: The evacuation of the French and English troops overprinted with the date "Evacuation 22-12-56 in English and Arabic.

Egypt 1956 : The Nationalisation of the Suez Canal.



Poland 1976 : 20th anniversary of Polish Troops / UN force / Suez conflict.

Egypt 1957 : The re-opening of the Suez Canal.



ZOOMING ALONG

George Henshilwood *A thematic approach to the 50 US States*. 15th August.

This was a fascinating, humorous and thoroughly entertaining zoom presentation on the topic of the 50 US States. George illustrated his talk with a wide range of stamps, postcards, postal stationery cards, covers and other items. Using a State's flower and bird, often on a postcard or stamp, George showed a few philatelic items on or from every state, complete with some facts and figures about the state. In truth the presentation was like a visual history lesson of the USA from the Hawaiian statehood stamp in 1959 to an Alaskan postcard showing the state superimposed upon the continental USA showing how big Alaska is. Every state had been visited by George (I did lose count at around 40!). I particularly liked a New Mexico postcard showing an Old Mission, an advertising cover showing chickens from Idaho, the Mississippi Exposition stamps, the fancy cancels from Arkansas (using a bear as the image for the cancel), the North Carolina Duck stamps and the Massachusetts 1894 Plymouth Rock envelope. Plus many, many more, delivered by George in his very entertaining style. Thanks George.

Members evening. 5th September

Seven BTA members showed an eclectic mixture of thematic topics.

First up was **Andrew Millington** who showed several pages on the topic of Duralumin: an alloy of copper and aluminium. Being lightweight and strong it was used in the manufacturing of Zeppelins and Junkers aircraft in World War II and Andrew showed postal stationery, covers and stamps reflecting this. But its use was not limited, and Duralumin can be found in bicycles, glass frames and machine components from many countries, all nicely presented in various philatelic forms.

Wendy Buckle then presented Gutenberg, the inventor of the movable-type printing press. Printing was invented by the Chinese in the 9th century, but Gutenberg's invention enabled the common man to read and perhaps had the biggest impact on mankind until the advent of the World Wide Web many centuries later. Wendy showed a variety of covers and stamps to tell this story, including the story of the Gutenberg Bible which is his best-known work. It led to financial problems and, consequently, he never printed anything else. But what a legacy! All nicely illustrated.

Mike Robinson then showed several stamps and some covers concerning Napoleon on St Helena. St Helena has been prolific in issuing stamps concerning Napoleon's life on the Island, including his trip to the Island on HMS Northumberland, his quarters at Longwood House, Napoleon's Garden and his first grave. All nicely presented by Mike.

Jean Alexander then showed us an item in her Supermarket Philately collection concerning an image of the late Queen. If you bought a particular brand of coffee, you could get a picture of the late queen. This turned out to be Queen Victoria!

Anne Stammers was next, and she showed stamps, postcards, and other philatelic material regarding Amethyst. She mentioned that the Greeks thought that amethyst guarded against drunkenness (and I'm sure Anne was looking at me when she said that!) and that bishops have an Amethyst ring. Russia was the biggest supplier of amethyst but today Brazil has taken that crown. Anne showed some lovely Swiss, Egyptian and Botswana stamps showing amethysts, and described how the late Queen's coronation dress had Amethysts sown into it.

Peter Wood then showed material in relation to Dr. Barnardo. Born in Ireland in 1845 he wanted to be a medical missionary in China but after working in a 'ragged school' he saw a greater need. Peter showed a nice postcard of Dr. Barnardo and an envelope and wrapper with the Dr. Barnardo Homes logo. Although Peter could not find a stamp depicting Dr. Barnardo he did have matchbook covers and lecture invitation tickets depicting the work of the homes. A varied and interesting presentation on an unusual topic.

And last but by no means least **Jon Matthias** showed a small collection of old stamp albums with such interesting names as 'Stamp Hobby' or 'Gay Venture' that had images of stamps reflecting the country on each page. He noticed how many pages had the stamp shown in the image on the page. Stamps from Malaya, Gold Coast, Sarawak and Bolivia. But the pinnacle of this presentation was a Polish stamp showing the Statue of Liberty. What else could we close these presentations with? Thank you all for your time and effort in putting this evening together, and to Jon and Wendy in making sure it all worked on the night. 📖



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EXHIBITING PAGE

LONDON SPRING EXHIBITION 2024 (28-30 March)

With Stampex no longer hosting competitive exhibitions this role has been taken over by other organisations. A National Exhibition of 146 frames is planned for March 28 - 30 2024, to be held at The Royal Philatelic Society London. This is particularly aimed at those seeking to qualify for forthcoming international competitions.

Entries must be submitted via the [ABPS website](#) where there is a link to the online submission form. Entries are open now and the deadline for receipt of applications is 12 February 2024, but please note that it states that "Early application is advised as only 146 faces will be available. Priority will be given to entrants wishing to qualify for EuroPhilex, Birmingham 2025".

THE NORTHERN NATIONAL EXHIBITION 2024 (19-20 July)

A competitive exhibition will also be held on 19 - 20 July as part of the York Stamp Fair. To enter, use the ABPS website as above.

WRITING A SYNOPSIS

All exhibitors know that you are encouraged to submit a synopsis of your exhibit when you apply to an exhibition. Writing this can be daunting for first-time exhibitors, and FEPA (Federation of European Philatelic Associations) has published a very useful "how to" article" which is published on the following pages.

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WRITING A SYNOPSIS

Costas Chazapis (FEPA Director) and Giancarlo Morolli (FEPA Vice-President) have been discussing why exhibitors should produce a synopsis of their exhibits for the jury and what it should contain. This article summarises their conclusions.

(COSTAS): A BEGINNER'S GUIDE...

For the past few years, philatelic exhibition organisers have asked prospective exhibitors to submit a synopsis in addition to the introductory page along with their exhibit entry form. A well-written synopsis is meant to assist jurors in the exhibit's evaluation. The problem is that a lot of exhibitors understand "synopsis" as another word for the introductory page. Others are aware of the distinction but choose not to submit one because they either find it too boring or complicated to set it up or fail to recognise how critical it is for their exhibit's evaluation. The following lines are meant to be a beginner's guide to synopsis writing. The idea is to persuade the exhibitors that setting up a few paragraphs is (a) easy because they are writing about a theme they have mastered and (b) beneficial because they promote their exhibit to the jurors before the evaluation stage.

What is a synopsis?

A synopsis is a piece of text related to the exhibit, written by the exhibitor and distributed to the jurors well before the exhibition. It is a unique opportunity for exhibitors to "talk" to the jurors before evaluation. What is not a synopsis? It is not the exhibit's introductory page and it is not meant for visitors.

A unique opportunity? Is it a good idea to pass or make the most of it? At international exhibitions, less than 20% of the exhibitors submit a synopsis. With a simple synopsis, exhibitors have an advantage over the ones who neglect to submit any synopsis. With an elaborate synopsis, exhibitors may achieve the maximum promotion of their exhibits.

What should be included in a synopsis? Where evaluation criteria are mentioned, they are to be interpreted according to the definitions of the class the exhibit belongs to.

- (a) The exhibit's concept (main idea). Try to write a more comprehensive description than that of the introductory page, which is usually brief. Emphasise the most significant aspects without getting lost in the details. Convince the jurors of the exhibit's "Importance".
- (b) The treatment (scenario). Explain to the jurors why you have organised the narrative in this particular sequence of sections and subsections and not otherwise. Aim for maximum points in "Treatment". If there is any apparent lack of balance in certain sections, it must be explained here.
- (c) Exhibit's scope. Make sure you justify the margins you have set up for your exhibit, i.e. the starting and finishing points, whether they are thematic, chronological, of some historical or social logical interpretation etc. If there are any grey areas, make sure you mention what you have included or left out and explain why.
- (d) Personal research. Specify the research you have carried out, the difficulties you have faced, your findings, publications etc. Stay focused on the postal and philatelic elements (bibliography, archives, evidence, material etc.). If you do not have much to say, it is preferable to remain silent than to veer into non-philatelic and irrelevant references.
- (e) Availability of material. The jurors must understand why or in which section(s) of the exhibit the material is not generally available (assuming, of course, that this is the case).

Example: The postal cards in question are generally available either unused or cancelled for philatelic purposes; very few properly used examples have survived to date.

(f) Rarities or highlights. A discreet listing of rarities is necessary. The length of the list depends on the importance of the exhibit; small-sized photos may be included. Example: Parcel post form (p. 38) is unique according to XXX's monograph.

(g) Completeness. How does "Completeness" apply to the whole or certain sections of the exhibit? **Example 1: Out of 30 different Europe-Africa air routes of the period 1933-1936, 27 are presented here. Example 2: Literature mentions six types of perforation, five are presented here; the sixth type last appeared at an auction in the late 1980s.**

(h) Exhibit history. Mention the addition of new and significant material since it was last exhibited, the rearrangement of some sections and subsections, the exhibit's expansion to eight frames etc. **Example: The exhibit was last presented at "Finlandia 2017" (Large Vermeil, 86 p.). Since then, several significant items have been added to the exhibit, mainly to strengthen sections 2 and 5 and create a new section 7.**

(i) Anything else? Of course! Point out anything that you feel is useful to add to your synopsis. For example, in the case of a narrow theme exhibit, the synopsis is the exhibitor's best opportunity to substantiate to the jurors the rationale for the chosen number of frames.

Which points should you pay attention to in the synopsis?

(a) Two headers are necessary at the top of the text: (i) "SYNOPSIS" and (ii) the exact exhibit title. An endnote with the exhibition's name and a date stamp will also be helpful for future reference.

(b) Write with modesty, emphasising subtly the points you need to bring forward.

(c) The text must be sharp and brief with short paragraphs marked with individual headers that stand out. Some jurors prefer to print before they read, so make sure your fonts are not too small.

(d) It is generally accepted that a two-page synopsis is about right.

(e) The jurors are aware that in most cases the exhibitors know their subject better. Do you think that your synopsis is showing this?

(f) The jurors must read a lot of synopses, while the time available is not infinite. Make sure they will not waste their time by reading your synopsis.

Final checklist: Is this the best synopsis you could put together?
Is this the best promotion for your exhibit?

... AND A TEAM LEADER'S FEEDBACK: (GIANCARLO)

Many years ago, while judging in front of the frames, I faced an exhibitor who wanted to talk to the jury team that evaluated his exhibit. He tried to convince me that, after his remarks, we would have been in a better position to assess the exhibit. Of course, such a request was rejected; however, he got an appointment with the team after the awards were published. More recently, the synopsis was introduced for the joint benefit of exhibitors and jurors; still, it is not exploited much.

At the recent IBRA 2023 the team I led was in charge of 33 thematic exhibits, but only 11 exhibitors presented a synopsis. Better than the average 20% quoted above, but still a signal that most exhibitors have not understood the potential of this tool. I am afraid that

some of those who submitted such a paper did not take much advantage of it, and in a couple of cases, it did not help the exhibitor as it confirmed the negative remarks we made at the frames. All synopses were made available to the jurors, together with the introductory pages, on 12 March, namely more than ten weeks before the start of the judging activities. It was useful to have both the Plan and the Synopsis in English when the exhibit was in another language. That helped as all jurors cannot be assumed to understand English, and French, and German, and Spanish.

Most exhibitors structured the content of the Synopsis according to the evaluation criteria and used pertinent terms as in the Guidelines of the relevant class. The driving idea should be to give jurors facts (rather than words) explaining why the exhibit should deserve high appreciation for the specific criterion considered. Some exhibitors, rather than presenting their case, just repeated sentences from the guidelines, remaining at a generic, impersonal level where they were supposed to address the peculiarities of their exhibit. It is irrelevant writing that the exhibit fully implements the concepts of the guidelines, presents items from XYZ postal administrations, informs that all major types of philatelic items are included, or that specialised philatelic societies were contacted.

My specific remarks are:

- 1 . Provide a logical explanation of the treatment highlighting the rationale of the flow of the exhibit, focusing on choices, reasons and effects. Not a plain resumé of the plan. It should also draw attention to deviations from more traditional approaches for such themes and include some remarks about innovation showing the individual work of the exhibitor in this respect.
2. Describe challenges afforded and how they have been resolved, e.g., to move from 5 to 8 frames in a "modern" theme, as the first items directly related to the exhibit were released at best since the end of the Second World War. Or the use of some items which are peculiar to this theme.
3. Draw attention to philatelic studies explaining the reason for choosing a specific thematic point for a given material type. Often so-called philatelic studies are just a juxtaposition of similar items with no real study behind them.
4. Make sure that the items listed as rarity are recognized as rare by the overall philatelic world rather than just by the auctioneers' prices. This is a critical area for most exhibits, as they fail to reach absolutely high standard rarity levels. Presenting expensive modern items as top rarities because they are unique (e.g., artist's sketches) or using inappropriate terms, especially when proofs and essays are involved. The key reference should be the utilisation of an item in the actual design and production steps rather than in personal preparation, public relations and marketing.
5. The evolution of the exhibit may also be a major topic of the synopsis, describing the most significant actions taken by the exhibitor that resulted in a higher score, rather than giving the plain breakdown of marks.

Acknowledgement

First published in *FEPA News 43, July 2023 page 44.*

BTA ONE FRAME COMPETITIONS

Our competitions were held, as always, as part of the The South of England Stamp and Postcard Fair & Sussex Convention, organised by the Association of Sussex Philatelic Societies. We are always looked after well at this event, with plenty of space, and enough frames to mount all our competition entries plus five frames of display material advertising the BTA.

The number of entries was slightly down this year, but the quality was very fine indeed, giving passing viewers a glimpse of just what can be achieved in the pictorial classes.



*Chairman Barry Stagg
and two of the winners:
Wayne Cox (left) and
Jan Nyeki*





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THEMATIC PHILATELY

Jan Nyeki Tell me please, why Sudan was the last one? 88

The last male white northern rhino, called Sudan, died on 18th March 2018 in Oi Pejeta conservatory in Kenya. At that time he had almost a celebratory status: tourists, stamps from Kenya, and even his own Tinder account. But his full story, told through a conversation between a grandmother and her granddaughter, is one of attempts at conservation, and ultimately, extinction.

OPEN PHILATELY

Jim Etherington British wartime evacuations 79

In 1938, with war looming, the Government Evacuation Scheme was developed, designed to protect people, particularly children, from the risks associated with aerial bombing. Named ‘Operation Piper’ evacuations of children, pregnant women and disabled people started on 1st September 1939, with over 1.5 million evacuated in just two days. This exhibit showed a range of material associated with the Scheme.

Andrew Millington Fighting fungi in the foliage 79

Plants are at war every day with fungal spores. At best fungi cause unsightly plants, but more seriously they reduce crop yields and can even kill plants. Copper compounds are widely used to treat these diseases, and this display looked at the use of copper for seed dressing, then at the discovery of Bordeaux Mixture and its application to a wide range of crops.

PICTURE POSTCARDS

Jim Etherington Postcards from the BEF, 1939 - 1940 74

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was the contingent of the British Army sent to France at the outbreak of war in 1939. Postcards were a graphic way of telling its history, and the exhibit showed some fascinating examples including some lovely examples of ‘silks’.

Lawrence Fisher A brief glance into the Jewish stereotype 83

The term anti-Semitism was first coined in 1879. It means ‘Jew hatred’ but this is a hatred that goes back thousands of years. It is a perception that Jews are alien and disloyal, conspiring to harm humanity, and thus Jews are sometimes blamed when things go wrong. This reprehensible attitude has led to stereotypes being adopted, some of them shown here in this sobering postcard exhibit.

CHAMPIONSHIP CLASS

Wayne Cox The postman’s round 93

The postman (known as a letter carrier until 1883) has been a familiar site in Britain’s towns and villages for centuries. This exhibit took a light-hearted look at the daily tasks of the postman out on the street, doing his rounds, carrying out deliveries and collections, encountering the public and attempting to avoid hazards and distractions, all of which were depicted on these cards.

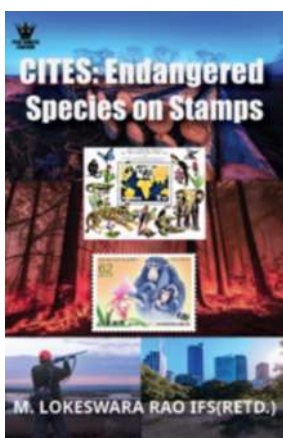
BTA NEWS

BTA 40TH ANNIVERSARY 2024

Previous issues of *Themescene* have advertised the upcoming BTA display at the Royal Philatelic Society London. To celebrate our 40th anniversary the Royal has kindly invited the BTA to provide a '1p.m. Display' on 21st March 2024, and we will be showing 54 frames of material from fifteen members, plus the best of our previous One-Page competition entries.

Meetings are open to all, whether or not you are a member of the Royal. So please come along and enjoy some top quality Thematic, Open and Postcard displays.

CITES: ENDANGERED SPECIES ON STAMPS



A new book has been published by BTA member M. Lokeswara Rao. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement established to regulate and monitor the trade of wild animals and plants to ensure their conservation and sustainable use. It is a global agreement aimed at protecting biodiversity and preventing overexploitation of species due to international trade. The book gives details about CITES endangered species and total of 421 philatelic materials were used in the book.

For enquiries about the book contact the author M.Lokeswara Rao IFS (Retd), M: 9436215175, Email: madirajul@gmail.com



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BTA WEEKEND 2024

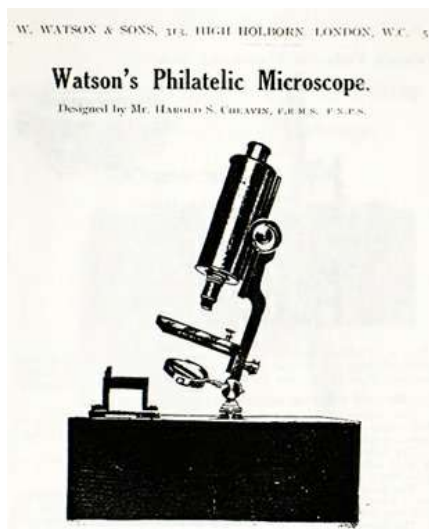
If you haven't yet done so, now is the time to book your place at our ever-popular event. We have a very full programme, including:

- an array of post boxes on display - real ones to complement a talk;
 - a 19th century philatelic oddity, the "Watson Philatelic Microscope" - see below;
 - an insight into forgeries and the work of the RPSL Expert Committee.
- Plus speakers and members' displays and the attendance of Paula Cant Stamps with her stock. Put the date in your diary and help our Secretary and Weekend Organiser by sending your form in now. Full details are on pages 142-144

WILLIAM HAROLD SQUIER CHEAVIN (1885-1968) AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WATSON PHILATELIC MICROSCOPE

Owen Green and Chris Kennedy

William Harold Squier Cheavin (1885-1968) was initially an amateur microscopist who, at the age of 19 was first elected to the Quekett Microscopical Club in 1904 and to the Royal Microscopical Society in 1909. However his professional career, possibly interrupted by the First World War, was in the field of Medicine, and in the 1920s he was



at the Middlesex Medical College in Berners Street in London. He lists his interests as Photomicrography, Radiological Micrography (X-Rays) and Electron Microscopy, and, as a FRPSL, philately.

In 1912 Cheavin combined his interests in microscopy and philately by describing a "Philatelic Microscope" a modified instrument based on a design by the then leading British firm of Watson & Sons Ltd. of High Holborn, London. Its use was described in a series of papers published in the *London Philatelist* in 1912 and 1913. It is uncertain how many were produced, but the authors know of no surviving examples. The Weekend display will attempt to recreate the images the Philatelic Microscope would have produced, using contemporary items and perhaps suggest why this particular instrument failed to be a commercial success.

HERE AND THERE

LAUNCH OF NEW ONLINE JOURNAL

The Walker Library of the Middle Tennessee State University has launched a new, free online philatelic journal targeted at collectors who are interested in Open Philately. Its website explains:

“*OpenPhilately* is a new journal that aims to make quality philatelic research available to all. [It] takes a broad view of philately and postal history and welcomes submissions about, but not limited to: postal and stamp history and iconography, commercial aspects, political aspects, postal administration, postcard history and iconography, printing techniques and materials, material preservation, and conservation”.



The first issue (July 2023) includes articles by two BTA members. Full contents are:

Go Forth by Lawrence Fisher, on 17th century maritime mail;
Topical Stamps in the Classroom by Dr. Michele M. Bresso; a pedagogical technique on using postage stamps in the higher education classroom;
Stamps of the Island Games by Richard Sun (“Richard Philatelist”), on the sporting competition of the Island Games;
Perils of a Modern Collector by Todd Gantzer, on the struggle and barriers encountered in the field stalwart, the stamp club.
The journal is available [here](#).

2024 EUROPEAN YOUTH SPORT PHILATELY CHALLENGE

A new, free initiative to attract young collectors has been announced.

From 1st May 2023 to 1st June 2024, the French Philatelic Federation (Fédération Française des Associations Philatéliques, FFAP), in partnership with Adphile, are the organisers of the “2024 European Youth Sport Philately Challenge”, a European Youth Competition.



This competition is open to young people aged 8 to 21, members of European philatelic societies, affiliated to the FEPA member federations. The national federations will present a maximum of 3 collections, representing their country. The classes will include Thematic, Open and

Maximaphily.

The event will take place as part of Paris-Philex 2024, on the occasion of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games and has been granted FEPA Recognition.

Deadline for entry forms: 15 February 2024

Full details can be found in the Regulations:

https://fepanews.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FFAP_youth_2024_regulations.pdf

Entry form:

https://fepanews.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FFAP_youth_2024_entryform.pdf

BOOK REVIEW

Stamps in love: the secret language of stamps on pre-WWI postcards
Nordisk Filateli. Special issue no. 11

Using the post to court someone has a long history, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world. Towards the end of the 18th century guides were published to help writers of valentine cards to compose suitable poetic messages. It has been reported that no less than 60,000 Valentine messages were distributed by the GPO in England in 1835 despite the high postal rates at the time. The 1840 postal reforms with cheap penny postage led to a large increase in their use so that in 1841 the British Post Office handled 400,000 such cards. After 1840 it was possible to mail cards with amorous greetings completely anonymously, which made them even more attractive to less confident letter writers.

Starting around 1890 picture postcards became enormously popular. Sending and collecting these cards soon developed into a cheap and popular activity. In this context the Swedish philatelist and deltiologist Per Gustafson has made a special study of the romantic “Language of Stamps”, something which attracted many followers during the pre-World War I picture postcard craze. The results form the basis of a five-frame exhibit.

The Language of Stamps was mainly used in connection with correspondence of a romantic nature, usually using postcards which were cheaper to mail than sealed letters. The way in which the stamp was affixed to the postcard often contained a “secret” message. Both the angle of the stamp and its position on the card gave the recipient an idea of the writer’s intent. There was more than one version of the Language of Stamps. To make it work the writer first needed to mail a postcard explaining the finer details. It seems this card was usually sent under cover so that other people would not understand the secret messages.

Mr. Gustafson is a serious and knowledgeable deltiologist (a fancy term for postcard collector). He has noted the names of the publishers when known and whether the backs are divided or not, as this gives a clue to when the cards were printed. His publication gives a detailed review of the many varieties of postcards explaining the Language of Stamps. He has not only studied the significance of how the stamps were affixed, but also the choice of stamps used to illustrate these postcard guides. He shows a number of (mostly Swedish) postcards where the senders have obviously used the Language of Stamps to express their sentiments of eternal love or in the hope of arranging a date.

Mr. Gustafson also shows other secret languages used on picture postcards mainly based on a selection of illustrations. His view is that these languages were probably not very useful. The subject, the wealth of interesting illustrations and the accompanying brief comments will attract all with an interest in older cultural history. My wife perused the Stamps in Love booklet with great interest; she was particularly impressed by the many attractive illustrations.

Only 500 copies of the booklet have been printed. This “hook” is a must for anyone with an interest in picture postcards.

First published in *FEPA News* 43, July 2023 page 73

If you prefer not to buy this, the five-frame exhibit is available in full for free as a pdf on the Internet at <https://media.netex.se/2022/10/StampsInLoveNorrphil.pdf>. It is well worth viewing.

BTA FUN WITH PHILATELY WEEKEND

Friday 12th to Sunday 14th April 2024

voco Oxford Spires Hotel

Abingdon Road, Oxford, OX1 4PS

<https://oxfordspires.vocohotels.com>



COST

Full Delegate

Will include:

2 nights dinner, bed and breakfast; pre-dinner drink both evenings; some wine with dinner; teas, coffees and biscuits or pastries between the sessions.

Two people sharing: £282 per person

With single room supplement £327 per person

There are also a number of other options, including an extra night on the Thursday or Sunday, a day (or half day) delegate rate, and options for meals for those not booking the full package. Please see the booking page for full choices.

TRAVEL

By car: the hotel is easily reached from the A40/A34 to the north, or the M4/A34 to the south. There will be free parking for hotel users.

By train: only a short taxi ride from Oxford Station.

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

The City of Oxford is easily reached either by bus from the end of the hotel drive, or in good weather only a short stroll along the Thames tow-path.

Oxford - 'City of Dreaming Spires' - needs no introduction. But if you want some ideas see the web site <https://www.experienceoxfordshire.org/>

If you are coming by car there are many places which are a short drive away.

BTA FUN WITH PHILATELY WEEKEND

Friday 12th to Sunday 14th April 2024

voco Oxford Spires Hotel

PROGRAMME

Friday

p.m.

18.00

Arrival.

Welcome, with Pimms and soft drinks.

Members' displays (6 sheets, one minute).

19.30

Dinner; followed by invited display by James Podger:
Africa and Islands.

Saturday

09.00

Invited display by Wayne Cox: *Small but perfectly formed: the British lamp letter box.*

Coffee.

11.00

Members' displays: 'One-page story' or 'The most difficult item I ever found'.

Lunch not provided. Hotel has lounge and bar, or spend some time in Oxford.

Saturday afternoon

Owen Green and Chris Kennedy will demonstrate one or more stereo-zoom microscopes and re-create a version of the *Watson Philatelic Microscope* described by Harold Cheavin in 1913.

Or:

Free time for sightseeing.

16.00

Members displays: 'Latest Acquisitions' or 'The colour blue' (12 sheets).

19.00

Pre-dinner drink. Plus raffle.

19.30

Dinner, followed by optional social gathering at the bar.

Sunday

09.00

Invited display by Paul Leonard: *Exploring forgeries in your collection.*

Coffee.

11.00

Members displays: 'Non-philatelic items which enhance your collection' (12 sheets).

BTA WEEKEND BOOKING FORM

I wish to book:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Rooms based on two people sharing | £282 per head |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | With single room supplement | £327 per head |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Extra dinner/bed/breakfast Thursday | £105 per head;
[plus single room supplement £20] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Extra dinner/bed/breakfast Sunday | £105 per head;
[plus single room supplement £20] |

Or:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Evening meal Friday | £48.00 per head (inc. drinks) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Day delegate Saturday | £20.00 per head |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Evening meal Saturday | £48.00 per head (inc. drinks) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Day delegate Sunday | £10.00 per head |

Deposit

£25.00 per person (non-refundable). Or: Day delegate rate per person

Please tick as appropriate (BACS preferred):

I have paid £..... by BACS. Sort code 40-03-29; account number 71157701. Please add your name and '2024 Weekend' in the 'Reference' box.

I enclose a cheque for £..... made out to BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION
Please email Peter Wood and inform him when you have paid.

Your details

Name.....

Name of partner

Address.....

..... Post code

Telephone number (home) Mobile.....

Email.....

Acknowledgement of booking will be sent by email where possible.

Rooms are limited so please send this form (or a photocopy) plus deposit, as soon as possible, to:

Mrs. A. Stammers, 40 St. Helen's Way, Benson, Wallingford, Oxon, OX10 6SW

Please do NOT book directly with the hotel. [You will be asked when you book out to pay the hotel direct for any extra rooms booked on top of the full Weekend package, but the BTA will make the booking on your behalf].



NATIONAL YOUTH STAMP COMPETITIONS 2024

Stamp Active, the voluntary organisation which promotes stamp collecting for young people in the UK, has announced details of its 2024 competitions. The following information is taken from their web pages.

“OUR NATURAL WORLD & ENVIRONMENT” One page competition

Stamp Active Network are pleased to announce this year’s competition, based on the philately of the natural world and the environment which could include animals, birds, nature, conservation and much more . . . the possibilities are endless.

Young people up to the age of 18 (on 1st September 2024) are eligible to enter.

Entries should be submitted by 31st August 2024.

Entries will usually be displayed in the Youth Zone as part of STAMPEX.

Stamps, covers and other philatelic items can be used. For this competition only, it is acceptable to use images of stamps that are not your personal property. The page must have a title, and either captions or a short write up that tells the story. The entries can be either hand-written or prepared using a computer.

A scan of the page should be sent to stampactive@btinternet.com by 31st August 2024. When sending your scan, please include your age as at 1st September 2024 and your full postal address (so that we know where to send any prize).

There will be four age groups – Up to 7; 8-10; 11-14; 15-18: – with prizes being awarded (for First, Second, Third) in each age group.

Winners will receive vouchers or philatelic gifts to the value of £25 (1st), £20 (2nd) and £15 (3rd). The best overall entry will receive a voucher for an additional £25.

The entries will be judged on knowledge of the subject, originality and presentation.

Only one entry per person is allowed. UK entrants only.

If you are unable to scan your entry, it can be posted to: Stamp Active Network, 3 Longfellow Road, Banbury, OX16 9LB. Entries will only be returned if you send a stamp-addressed envelope, correctly stamped. The entrant’s full name and address (home or school) should be on the back of the page, also their age on 1st September 2024). Entries should be on good quality paper (A4) or a similar size album page.

Winners will be announced in the philatelic press and on the [Stamp Active Website](#).

THE STAMP ACTIVE COMPETITION 4 - 24 pages

This competition, sponsored by the Great Britain Philatelic Society, was introduced in 1998 in the national competitions to encourage new entrants. The equivalent of an “Open” class, it allows a minimum of four pages (rather than sixteen for the British Youth Stamp Championships) but can then be increased to up to 24 pages. It is judged on presentation and originality (not FIP rules). Medals are awarded in the same way as other competitions for every entry. There is a prize of a £50 voucher for the winner in each class (minimum of three entries) to be used for philatelic items. Additional Special prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the judges. This is a great way for young collectors to start their journey in stamp competitions. The best overall entry receives an additional £50.

Entry forms for this competition should be submitted by 31st May 2024 and the completed exhibit received by 30th June 2024. The winning entries will be displayed at the York Stamp Fair on 19th and 20th July as part of the national stamp competitions. Links to the entry form and the rules will be found on the [Stamp Active](#) web page.

BRITISH YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS

Entries can now be prepared for this competition.

Exhibits that achieve a Large Silver Medal in this competition will be eligible for entering competitions at international level.

The British Youth Stamp Championships, sponsored by the Great Britain Philatelic Society, are organised by Stamp Active Network as part of the National Competitions. The Championships are open to all young collectors up to the age of 21 normally resident in the United Kingdom.

The best overall entry receives a prize of a £100 voucher to be used for philatelic items and each age group winner receives £25 (minimum of three entries).

Special prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the judges.

Entry forms for this competition should be submitted by 31st May 2024 and the completed exhibit received by 30th June 2024. All the entries will be displayed at the York Stamp Fair on 19th and 20th July as part of the national stamp competitions.

International Youth Qualification Levels

For exhibits in the Youth Class at FEPA or FIP International Exhibitions, the qualification for Age Group A (10 to 15 years) is a national 70 points, and for Age Groups B (16 to 18 years) and C (19 to 21 years), a national 75 points. A Youth exhibit having obtained a FIP Large Vermeil or higher award with an entry of five frames in Age Group C shall qualify to exhibit in the senior class. 📖



Winner 2023 "Our living world"



A guide to competing is available on the Stamp Active web page under 'Fun & Games'

BTA PROGRAMME 2024

- 09 January
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.
- 15 February
19.00 for 19.30 **Zoom meeting**
Gary Cook
The Eiffel Tower
The Eiffel Tower was the major attraction at the 1889 Paris World Exposition. It became a major tourist attraction and generated an emerging demand for souvenirs especially for illustrated postcards. This presentation shows the way the Eiffel Tower Company provided postcards for tourists to record their visit and tell friends and relatives.
- 21 March
From 13.00 **BTA display at the Royal Philatelic Society, London**
The British Thematic Association showcases the world of pictorial Collecting
54 frames of thematic, open and postcards displays, ranging from one to five frames, will be on display. You do not have to be a member of the Royal to attend this event.
15 Abchurch Lane, London EC4N 7BW
- 12 - 14 April **Fun With Philately Weekend**
The BTA biennial residential weekend.
Voco Oxford Spire Hotel, Abingdon Road, Oxford, OX1 4PS
- June **Annual General Meeting and guest speaker**
To be held as part of Swinpex 2024.
Details to be confirmed.
- 20 July **Members' meeting at York Stamp and Coin Fair**
Guest speaker: George Henshilwood
Having fun with numbers
York Racecourse.
- 12 October **BTA One-Frame Competitions**
At South of England Stamp Fair & Sussex Convention
Ardingly Showground, RH17 6TL.

Please note:

Our Zoom programme will feature a talk most months of the year. 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

CAROL STREET
LONDON, NW1
**Season's
Greetings**
2ND NOVEMBER 2023

