

THEMESCENE

March 2024

In this issue we:

Reach for the skies

Auguste Piccard. Part 1

With Les Ashton-Smith



Exercise our vocal chords

The philately of Eurovision

With Chris Wheeler



Head for the mountains

Himalayan lakes, part 2

With M. Lokeswara Rao



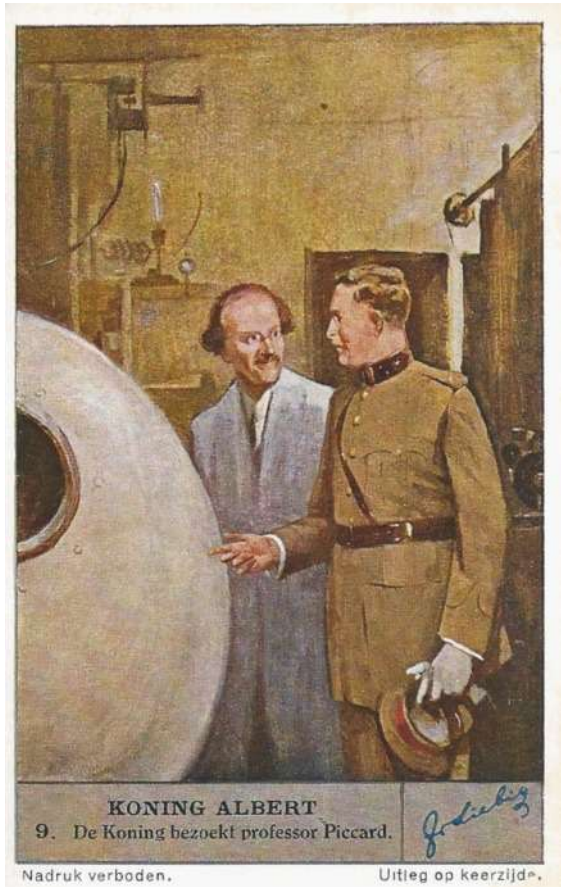
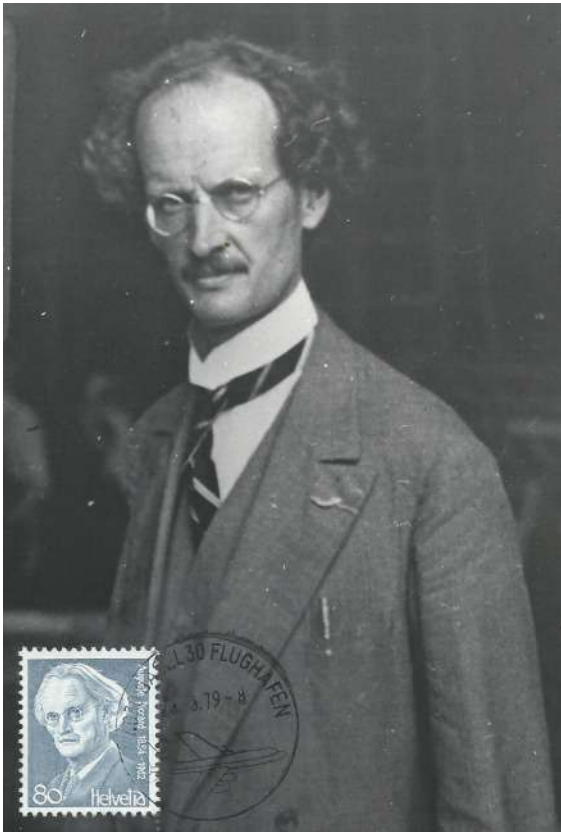
And catch up on Zoom reports

BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

Volume 41, No.1. Whole Number 154

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EDITORIAL

Wendy Buckle

If you live in the UK you no longer have to be a stamp collector, or a close follower of cases of injustice, to know the story of the Post Office scandal. I suspect most UK members of the BTA watched the superb ITV1 drama *Mr. Bates v. The Post Office* (still available on catch-up at time of writing) which finally brought to full public attention the appalling story of sub-postmasters and -mistresses imprisoned, made bankrupt, and in a few awful cases driven to suicide, for crimes they did not commit. And if that sounds bad, for those of you who may not know the story, I should explain that this happened because the Post Office prosecuted them for theft when they knew perfectly well it was faulty software. Bosses of the Post Office received eye-watering bonus payments on top of hefty salaries while this was going on. And now it has been reported that bosses of Fujitsu, who supplied this faulty software and knew there were problems with it, also got seven-figure payments. Meanwhile the sub-postmasters and -mistresses concerned are still awaiting proper compensation. They have been promised it - after the public outcry following the television series the government was in no position to ignore it - but so far it has not been forthcoming. This David and Goliath story does not have a fairytale ending. 'David' - Alan Bates and his colleagues - still await justice, while 'Goliath' - the Post Office and Fujitsu - just make empty statements. There seems no end in sight.

On a more cheerful topic can I just remind you of two BTA events happening shortly: our display to the Royal (page 23) and our residential weekend (pages 24-25) for which it's not too late to book. We would love to see you at one or both of these.

We are pleased to welcome our first new member for 2024: Colin Evans of Canvey Island. We hope you find your membership rewarding. 

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Thank you to all those of you who have renewed your subscription. If you have not yet done so 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. (If you have recently renewed please ignore the reminder).

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

You don't appreciate it until it's gone

I know it is an old cliché, but it is true that many things are not appreciated until they are gone. And this was demonstrated to me very recently when my PC 'died' on me. True, in PC terms, it was getting on a bit (it was eight years old!) but we kept it up to date and like its owner it still functioned okay, but a little slower. A week without a PC was challenging; however, as the weather was fine my garden and allotment got a few early Spring visits. But then the PC was revived by a local repair guy. The good news was that he had saved all my JPG files and Word documents. The thought of having to re-do all those sheet layouts had been giving me sleepless nights – but all was well. The bad news was that he could not retrieve my emails. Thousands went into the ether never to be seen again. Upon reflection, perhaps it was a mixed blessing!

Putting another of my hats on, I see the rise and fall of British stamp clubs. More fall than rise these days. Every year several clubs just close because the number of members of the club have become so few it can't afford room rents or speakers. Worse still, clubs with a healthy twenty or thirty members close because nobody wants to take on the work of running a club. And when it shuts members pop up and say they would have done it - but it is too late. As many of you know I enjoy collecting postcards and this week I am attending a meeting, perhaps the last meeting, of the Cotswold Postcard Club. Membership is down to six or seven, but we are looking at how we can continue to exist and refuse to just close. Perhaps we will become a virtual society or one that meets occasionally in a pub or café. But we will try and fight on.

I don't know if it is me, but I get a sense that the number of stamp fairs are reducing. Not surprising I suppose with the diminishing number of collectors, but sad nonetheless. The demise of the Spring Stampex seems ominous to some. Is the hobby collapsing? Are stamp collectors a thing of the past? Personally, I would say that stamp collecting is changing not collapsing. New but smaller stamp fairs are popping up. Stamp events are becoming more geographically inclusive, such as the move to make the York show a bigger event, or, at the other end of the scale, the start up of a small stamp fair every two months with just a few dealers here in Gloucestershire.

But perhaps we can all do more to support our club, or local events or even national events when they happen close by. If we don't, if we leave it to others, then there is a danger that the hobby will disappear, and we will not realise what we had until it is gone.

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.

AUGUSTE PICCARD AND HIS FAMILY LEGACY, PART 1

Les Ashton-Smith

The Piccard family, synonymous with innovation, exploration, and a commitment to pushing the boundaries of human achievement, has left an indelible mark on the history of science and exploration. At the heart of this remarkable family legacy is Auguste Piccard, a Swiss-Belgian physicist, inventor, and explorer, whose contributions spanned the fields of aeronautics, oceanography, and space exploration. This article aims to delve into the life and achievements of Auguste Piccard, as well as the enduring legacy carried forward by his brother Jean Felix, and descendants, Jacques and Bertrand Piccard, and their contributions to the realms of exploration and innovation.

Auguste Antoine Piccard and his twin brother Jean Felix were born on January 28, 1884, in Basel, Switzerland (Fig 1). Their father Jules was a professor of chemistry in Basel who did research in food chemistry and into the atomic weight of Rubidium. From an early age, Auguste exhibited a profound curiosity about the world and a keen interest in scientific inquiry. Auguste's educational journey laid the foundation for his future accomplishments. He pursued studies in physics at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) and later earned his doctorate in 1920. In 1922 he was appointed to the Free University of Brussels (ULB) where he taught until his retirement. In 1922 his son Jacques was born.

Both of the Piccard brothers trained as balloonists whilst serving in the Swiss Army in 1915. Auguste even competed in the 12th "Gordon Bennett" Cup, the 'Blue Ribbon' of ballooning competitions (Fig 2). However, Auguste's academic pursuits set the stage for a distinguished career in physics and exploration. His early work focused on cosmic rays, and his research laid the groundwork for understanding high-altitude phenomena. This foundation in physics would prove crucial for his later endeavours in aeronautics and exploration.

One of Auguste Piccard's most ground-breaking achievements was in the field of aeronautics. In the early 20th century, when aviation was still in its infancy, Piccard dedicated himself to understanding the principles of flight and pushing the limits of altitude. He designed a pressurised aluminium capsule which could ascend to great heights. With support from his university, he began planning for a high altitude balloon flight. The German authorities initially tried to ban the flight, so Auguste got permission from the Swiss authorities, but then Germany relented, stipulating flight permission providing safety helmets were worn by the pilots. With no specification for the helmet Auguste devised a cushion and wicker basket solution (Fig 3). The baskets did prove useful for storing scientific instruments during the flight and the cushion provided some seating comfort for the crew! The balloon was called the FNRS-1 recognising the funding support from Belgian Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique. On 27 May 1931, Auguste Piccard and Paul Kipfer his assistant took off from Augsburg, Germany, and reached a record altitude of 15,781 m (51,775 ft) (9.8 miles) (Fig 4). During this flight, they became the first human beings to enter the stratosphere, and were able to gather substantial data on the upper atmosphere, as well as taking measurements of cosmic rays. Piccard and Kipfer



Fig 1: Auguste (left) and Jean Piccard



Fig 2: some winners of the Gordon Bennett balloon race



Fig 3: an unusual safety helmet!



Fig 4: FNRS-1



Fig 5: 1944 Chicago 'Century of Progress' exhibition

are widely considered to be the first people to visually observe the curvature of the earth. Auguste Piccard is also acknowledged by NASA as one of the first ever astronauts because he crossed the stratosphere aboard a pressurized capsule. This flight was full of adventure, the capsule initially leaked and had to be plugged with petroleum jelly and cotton waste. The mechanism to rotate the gondola to reduce heat due to the sun's rays failed and so internal temperatures ranged from sub-zero to 40 degrees C. When their experiments were completed and they wanted to descend, a crucial valve failed and they could not start their descent and they only had a limited on-board oxygen supply. They were feared lost and the press had started to declare them dead. They began floating aimlessly over Germany, Austria and Italy but luckily the cooler evening air contracted the balloon and they came down on a glacier near Ober-Gurgul in Austria with one hour's supply of oxygen to spare! The crew were recovered quickly but the empty capsule remained on the glacier until the following year when it was finally recovered. On 18 August 1932, Auguste Piccard launched from Dübendorf, Switzerland. Piccard and a new co-pilot Max Cosyns, made a second record-breaking ascent to 16,201 m (53,153 ft). Auguste ultimately made a total of twenty-seven balloon flights, setting a final altitude record of 23,000 m (75,459 ft). The adventures of Piccard captured the world's attention and particularly so in America. Auguste visited many exhibitions on an American tour from 1932-1933 with a replica of the capsule, and he would launch balloons, some unsuccessfully, from trade fairs across America. There is a souvenir cover from 1933 to celebrate the Chicago exhibition "Century of Progress", the cover illustrates a Piccard stratosphere attempt which unfortunately crashed 20 minutes into the flight but fortunately both pilots were unharmed (Fig 5).

In the mid-1930s Auguste's interests shifted when he realized that a modification of his high-altitude balloon cockpit would allow a descent into the deep ocean. By 1937, he had invented the bathyscaphe. A bathyscaphe is a free-diving self-propelled deep-sea submersible, consisting of a crew cabin similar to a bathysphere, but suspended below a float rather than from a surface cable, as in the classic bathysphere design. The small steel gondola must be built to withstand great external pressure. Construction had begun in the late 1930's, but was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. Resuming work in 1945, he completed the bubble-shaped cockpit that maintained normal air pressure for a person inside the capsule even as the water pressure outside could increase to over 46 MPa (6,700 psi). Above the heavy steel capsule, a large flotation tank was attached and filled with a low density liquid for buoyancy. Liquids are relatively incompressible and can provide buoyancy that does not change as the pressure increases. And so, the huge tank was filled with gasoline, not as a fuel, but as flotation. The incompressibility of the gasoline means the tanks can be lightly built as the pressure equalises inside and out. To make the now floating craft sink, tons of iron were attached to the float with a release mechanism to allow resurfacing. This craft was named FNRS-2 and made a number of unmanned dives in 1948 before being given to the French Navy in 1950. There, it was redesigned, and in 1954, it took a man safely down 4,176 m (13,701 ft). Auguste composed the name bathyscaphe using the Ancient Greek words bathys ("deep") and skaphos ("vessel"/"ship"). Piccard and his son Jacques built a second bathyscaphe and together they dove to a record-breaking depth of 3,150 m (10,335 ft) in 1953.

In addition to his ground breaking stratospheric experiments, Piccard also did research in atomic physics. In 1917 he predicted the existence of a third isotope of Uranium, which he called actinuran. This was finally discovered by Arthur Jeffrey Dempster in 1937 and identified as the isotope uranium-235. On a more sinister level uranium with a high

percentage of this isotope of Uranium is known as “weapons grade” Uranium. The atomic bomb on Hiroshima was 85% Uranium 235. Among other achievements, Piccard also constructed the most accurate seismograph of the day. He died in 1962 in Lausanne, Switzerland.

But what of the rest of the family?

Auguste’s brother Jean Felix, also known as Jean, became a naturalised American. He was a chemist, engineer, professor and also a high-altitude balloonist. He invented clustered high-altitude balloons, and with his wife Jeannette, or Jean, one of the first plastic balloons. Jean's inventions and co-inventions are still used in balloon flight, aircraft and spacecraft today. Jean also developed a frost-free window, that was used on high altitude flight and later by the Navy and Air Force in the B-24 Liberator or B-26 Marauder.

He used blasting caps and TNT for releasing the balloon at launch and for remote release of external ballast from inside the sealed cabin. This was the first use of pyrotechnics for remote-controlled actuating devices in aircraft, an unpopular, but revolutionary idea at the time. Later one of his students Robert R. Gilruth, who became the director of the NASA Manned Spacecraft Centre, approved and used them in spacecraft. Jean died in 1963 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Jean Piccard’s wife, Jeannette Ridlon Piccard (1895–1981) was also an American high-altitude balloonist, and in later life an Episcopal priest. She held the women’s altitude record for nearly three decades, and according to several contemporaneous accounts was regarded as the first woman in space. She was the first licensed female balloon pilot in the U.S.; the first woman to fly to the stratosphere; and co-inventor of the plastic balloon.

In addition, she was one of the first women to be ordained an Episcopal priest in the U.S. From the late 1960s onwards, Piccard returned to her childhood interest in religion. She was ordained a deacon of the Episcopal Church in 1971, and on July 29 1974, became one of the Philadelphia Eleven, the first women to be ordained priests - though the ordinations were regarded as irregular, performed by bishops who had retired or resigned. Piccard was the first of the women to be ordained that day, because at 79 she was the oldest, and because she was fulfilling an ambition she had had since she was 11 years old. When asked by Bishop John Allin, the head of the US church, not to proceed with the ceremony, she is said to have told him, “Sonny, I’m old enough to have changed your nappies.” In September 1976, the church voted to allow women into the priesthood, and Piccard served as a priest in Saint Paul, Minnesota, until she died at the age of 86. One of her granddaughters, Kathryn Piccard, also an Episcopal priest, said of her: “She wanted to expand the idea of what a respectable lady could do. She had the image of the street-wise old lady.”

Jean had a son Donald Louis (Don) Piccard (born in 1926 in Switzerland) who also became a naturalised American and a balloonist. With so much ballooning in the family he probably had little choice. Don Piccard first flew in a balloon in 1933, aged 7, when he was enlisted as “crew” by his mother. He served as a balloon and airship rigger in the U. S. Navy during World War II. He was one of the driving forces behind the hot-air ballooning revival after the war while a student at the University of Minnesota. He made the first post-war free flight in 1947 with a captured Japanese balloon. In 1948, he organized the first balloon club in the United States, the Balloon Club of America. This club, along with the Balloon Flyers of Akron, formed the Balloon Federation of America, today the US national organization for ballooning. He pioneered plastic and Mylar balloons. In 1962, he set a new altitude record for a second-class free flight balloon, climbing to

17,000 feet. On 13 April 1963, he and Ed Yost were the first people to cross the English Channel in a hot air balloon. He also promoted ballooning as a sport and designed balloons to that end, through his company Piccard Balloons (Fig 6).



Fig 6: Balloon flight by Don Piccard

To be concluded in June 2024 Themescene

THE PHILATELY OF EUROVISION

Chris Wheeler

Introduction

Many of the stamp issuing authorities, especially the winners, are passionate about promoting their country's success and privilege of hosting the various Eurovision Contest categories. They have demonstrated this with a wide range of philatelic products over the years, so collecting and displaying these is an excellent thematic topic, particularly when coupled to the philately of the many other contests which this Broadcaster produces.

Background

The Eurovision Song Contest (Fig 1) is just one of many programmes produced by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). The EBU itself evolved from the International Broadcasting Union which had been established in Geneva in 1925. The EBU began its life at the Imperial Hotel in Torquay, with 23 members in February 1950, with headquarters in Geneva and a technical centre in Brussels. It currently has 112 members from 54 countries, all within the Council of Europe.

The EBU (Fig 2) owns and operates the Eurovision and Euroradio telecommunications networks on which major television and radio broadcasts are distributed live to its members. It also operates the daily Eurovision news exchange in which members share breaking news footage. The EBU produces programmes and organizes events in which its members can participate, such as the Eurovision Song Contest (its best known production) and the Eurovision Debates between candidates for President of the European Commission. The EBU also organises the Eurovision Dance Contest, the Junior Eurovision Song Contest, the Eurovision Young Dancers Competition, the Eurovision Chess Competition, the Magic Circus Show, Jeux Sans Frontières and for one year the Eurovision Bird Song Contest, the Eurovision Choir, held in Riga in 2017, and in 1966 the World Cup Final as part of its Sports offerings. The annual Vienna New Year's Concert is another of its major productions (Fig 3). This article will concentrate on the Song Contest, with examples from some of the others.

History of the Eurovision Song Contests

Eurovision is an annual international song competition between EBU members. It was based on the annual Sanremo Music Festival, Italy, now in its 73rd year (Fig 4).

The Sanremo Music Festival, the biggest Italian music event, still takes place each year and is used to decide who will represent Italy at that year's Eurovision Song Contest. Lugano, Switzerland was selected for the first Eurovision Song Contest which took place on 24 May 1956. Seven countries participated, each submitting two songs. Subsequent contests only allow one song per country. This first contest was won by Switzerland. Although one of Eurovision's rules is that the winning country hosts the following year's contest in 1957 the event took place in Frankfurt. This rule was overridden again in 2023. The 2022 host city had been Turin, in Italy, where Ukraine won the competition with their rap group Kalush Orchestra. Due to Russia's invasion of their territory that year, the country coming second (Sam Ryder with *Space*

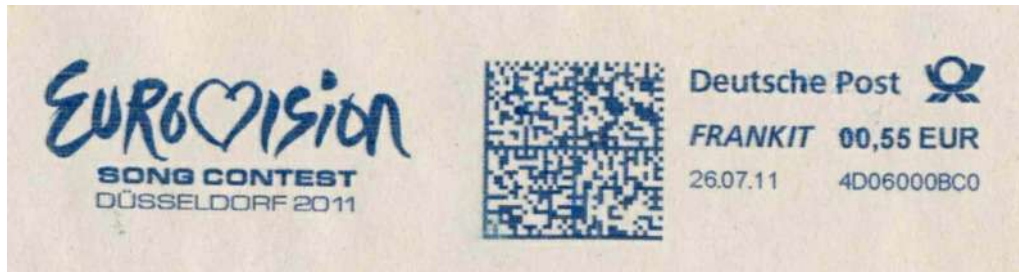


Fig 1: Eurovision 2011



Fig 2: France. Third EBU Congress 1967



Fig 3: Austria 2007



Fig 4: Italy 2020



Fig 5: Australia 2012



Fig 6: Israel 2019



Fig 7: Yugoslavia 1990



Fig 8: Greece 2006

Man, representing the United Kingdom) was selected to host the 2023 event which took place in Liverpool on 13 May, with 37 entrants.

Other basic rules of the contest are that the singing must be live, with a maximum of two singers, and in one of the official languages. Songs could not have been performed prior to the national heat. The song has a 3½ minute time limit. Over the years some relaxation of the original rules has been allowed, such as use of a pre-recorded backing track, and the use of backing singers, dancers and musicians, costumes and whistling! In 1959, the United Kingdom's husband and wife singers Pearl Carr and Teddy Johnson performed *Sing Little Birdie* and used a finger puppet to represent the bird. (They came second). The United Kingdom has won five contests: Sandie Shaw with the song *Puppet on a String* (1967), Lulu with *Boom Bang-a-Bang* (1969 in a four-way tie), Brotherhood of Man with *Save Your Kisses for Me* (1976), Bucks Fizz with *Making Your Mind Up* (1981) and Katrina and the Waves with *Love Shine a Light* (1997). The United Kingdom has come second many times, and the first time it came last was in Riga, Latvia with zero points, with Jemini singing *Cry Baby*. After winning the 1974 contest with the song *Waterloo*, the Swedish pop group ABBA became one of the most commercially successful acts in the history of pop music. Johnny Logan of Ireland is the only performer to have won the contest twice, in 1980 and 1987; he also wrote the winning song in 1992. Several of the best-selling music artists in the world have competed in past contests including Celine Dion, Julio Iglesias, Cliff Richard and Olivia Newton-John, and some of the world's best-selling singles have received their first international performance on the Eurovision stage (Fig 5). Stamps and other philatelic items are plentiful, illustrating many aspects of this annual contest (Figs 6 - 9).

Other Eurovision Contests

1. Junior Eurovision Song Contest

There were sixteen contestants in the Eurovision Junior Song Contest, held in Yerevan, Armenia, in 2022, with 13-year-old Lissandro from France being the winner (Figs 10 - 11).

2. Eurovision Dance Contest

This contest was a ballroom dancing competition organised by the EBU and the International DanceSport Federation. In 2007, it consisted of pairs of dancers from each participating country, each couple performing two 1½ minute routines in which the cultures of the individual countries could be showcased to the rest of Europe. The first dance was a ballroom or Latin dance while the second was a freestyle dance. Professional dance couples were allowed to take part. Finland won the first competition. The BBC was 'host broadcaster' for the first two contests in 2007 (London) and 2008 (Glasgow), the only contests to date. The BBC's presenters were Graham Norton and Claudia Winkleman. From 2008 professional dance pairs were no longer allowed, all entrants had to include one professional and one celebrity dancer. Only one 2 minute dance was performed by each couple. Poland won the competition.

The cancelled third Eurovision Dance Contest was originally planned to be organised in Baku, Azerbaijan. It was planned to increase the number of participating countries as well as inviting a world-famous star to host the contest, listing Jennifer Lopez, Kylie Minogue and Shakira as candidates. An additional extravaganza open-air concert was planned to be held, bringing together ex-participants of the Eurovision, Junior

Eurovision and Eurovision Dance contests on one stage. However, on 28 May 2009, the EBU announced that the contest was being postponed. It has not been held again yet.

3. Eurovision Young Musicians Contest

There have been twenty editions of the Eurovision Young Musicians Contest. Contestants have to be aged between twelve and 21. It is organised by the EBU and broadcast on television throughout Europe, with some countries holding national selections to choose their representatives for the contest.

The first contest took place in Manchester in 1982 and six countries took part. The contest was won by Markus Pawlik from West Germany, who played the piano. Austria is the most successful country in the contest, having won five times: 1988, 1998, 2002, 2004, and 2014, and has hosted the contest a record six times. The last competition took place in Montpellier, France in 2022 and was won by Daniel Matejča, who played the violin for the Czech Republic

4. Magic Circus Show

Though not a contest the Magic Circus Show was an entertainment show organised by the EBU. Children aged between seven and fourteen representing eight countries within the EBU membership area performed a variety of circus acts at the Geneva Christmas Circus. The main show, also accompanied by the Magic Circus Show Orchestra, is recorded in advance and broadcast in the participating countries during the Christmas season.

5. Junior Chess Contest

The Junior Chess Contest was also one of EBU's programmes, however it only lasted three years due to few entries resulting from the lack of finances by member countries to host it. However, Armenia and Azerbaijan were keen promoters of the contest. The only philatelic illustration is from Nagorno-Karabakh, whose stamps are not recognised by the UPU.

6. World Choir Games

The World Choir Games is the largest global choral festival and competition. Organised by the Interkultur Foundation for amateur choirs from all over the world, its motto is "Singing together brings nations together". The EBU is responsible for its European broadcasting. The Games originated from the idea to bring people together through singing in peaceful competition, showing that unity of nations through the arts can be effectively and illustratively demonstrated and challenged. The focus of the Games is on participation above winning, and it aims to inspire people to "experience the strength of interaction, challenging personality and community equally by singing together". The most recent hosts of the Games were Antwerp and Ghent, Belgium in 2021 and Gangneung, South Korea in 2023. Auckland, New Zealand, will be the host in 2024.

7. BirdEurovision Song Contest


This contest only took place once, in 2002. Estonia produced a postal stationery card to mark the occasion. This was done in partnership with Bird Life. The Golden Plover from Iceland was the public vote winner, and the Thrush Nightingale from Estonia was the European judges' winner (Fig 12). 



Fig 9: Norway 2010



Fig 10: Belarus 2010



Fig 11: Armenia 2022



Fig 12: Estonia postal stationery 2002

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HIMALAYAN LAKES. PART 2

M. Lokeswara Rao

Lakes in Nepal Himalayas

Nepal Himalayas, the east-central section and highest part of the Himalayan mountain ranges in south-central Asia, extends some 800 km from the Kali River east to the Tista River. It features several of the world's highest peaks: Everest (8,850 m), Kanchenjunga (8,586 m), Makalu (8,463 m), Dhaulagiri I (8,167 m), Manaslu I (8,163 m), and Annapurna I (8,091 m). These permanently snow-covered mountains overlook huge glaciers that feed fresh water to many Himalayan lakes of Nepal.

Panch Pokhari is a group of five Hindu holy lakes in the Sindhupalchowk District of Nepal. They are a popular destination for Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims during Janai Purnima (Fig 9). Panch Pokhari is one of the main features of the Langtang National Park, located in the Nuwakot, Rasuwa and Sindhupalchok districts of the central Himalayan region, situated at an elevation of about 4,100 m above sea level. This is a famous Hindu pilgrimage site. Panch Pokhari trekking lies to the north of the Kathmandu valley; the chain of peaks called Jugal Himal includes Dorje Lhakpa (6,966 m), Madiya (6,257 m) and Phurbi Chhyachu (6,637 m). This is a remote and unfrequented region, despite being close to Kathmandu.

Fewa (or Phewa) Lake is a freshwater lake in Nepal, formerly called Baidam Tal, located in the south of the Pokhara Valley that includes Pokhara city, parts of Sarangkot and Kaskikot (Fig 10). It is located at an altitude of 742 m and covers an area of about 4.43 sq km. The lake is stream-fed but a dam regulates the water reserves, therefore, the lake is classified as a semi-natural freshwater lake. It is the second largest lake in Nepal; the largest in Gandaki Province after the Rara lake in comparison to Nepal's water bodies. It is the most popular and most visited lake of Nepal.

Mai Pokhari in the Ilam District of Nepal is designated a Ramsar, (or wetland) site (Fig 11). It is a pilgrimage centre for both Hindus and Buddhists. The lake within the wetland which reflects emerald waters has a circumference of about 1 kilometre, and boats are operated. On the periphery of the lake there is the Maipokhari Botanical Garden of horticultural and ecological importance which houses a rock garden, an orchid house, plants collected from many regions of eastern Nepal, and a greenhouse.

Rauta Pokhari is situated in the rural municipality of Udayapur district, about 3,000 metres above sea level (Fig 12). It is located approximately 40 km north of Gaighat district. The oval-shaped pond here is magnificent, with steady forests bordered by large, straight woods. It is an important religious and tourism site. This place also offers a glimpse of scenic beauty of the High Himalayas and the magnificent views of Mount Everest and many more peaks, as well as having religious significance.

Begnas Lake is a freshwater lake in Pokhara Lekhnath Metropolis of Kaski district of Nepal located in the south-east of the Pokhara Valley (Fig 13). The lake is the third largest lake of Nepal and second largest, after Fewa Lake, among the eight lakes in Pokhara Valley. The level of the lake fluctuates seasonally due to rain and utilisation for irrigation. The water level is regulated through a dam constructed in 1988 on the western outlet stream, Khudi Khola.



Fig 10: Fewa Lake

Fig 9: Panch Pokhari.
Nepal 2011

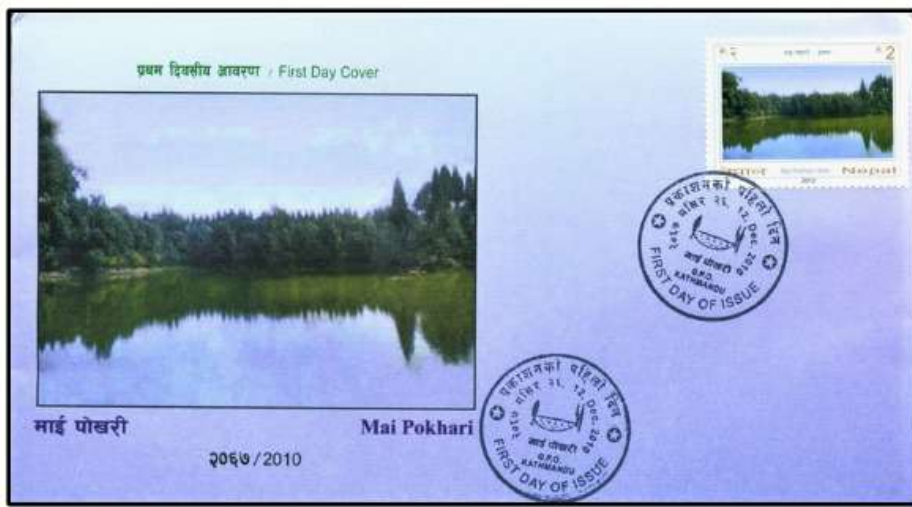


Fig 11: Mai Pokhari. Nepal 2010



Fig 12: Rauta Pokhari



Fig 13: Begnas Lake



Fig 14: Phoksundo Lake



Fig 15: Rara lake



Fig 16: Syarpu Daha

Phoksundo Lake is an alpine fresh water oligotrophic lake in Nepal's Shey Phoksundo National Park, located at an elevation of 3,611.5 m in the Dolpa District and 494 ha in size (Fig 14). Shree Antu Danda (around 2,300 m) lies in the Ilam area in eastern Nepal, directly at the outskirts to Darjeeling/India and south of Kanchenjunga (8,586 m), which is the world's third most elevated mountain.

Rara Lake is the biggest freshwater lake in the Nepalese Himalayas (Fig 15). It is the main feature of Rara National Park, located in the Jumla and Mugu Districts of Karnali Province. In September 2007 it was declared a Ramsar site, covering 1,583 ha including the surrounding wetland. Rara National Park's total area is 106 sq km.

Syarpu Daha lake is located in the Rukum district of western Nepal at an altitude of 1,372 m (Fig 16). The surface area of the lake is about 2.6 sq km and drains to the Bheri River. It is used for high-altitude fish farming. Due to human encroachment and several landslides the area of the land was found to be decreasing. Construction of a ring road around the lake has also degraded the lake.

Tsho Rolpa Lake is one of the biggest glacial lakes in Nepal (Fig 17). The lake, which is located at an altitude of 4,580 m in the Rolwaling Valley, Dolakha District, has grown considerably over the last 50 years due to glacial melting in the Himalayas.

Ghodaghodi Lake is a Ramsar site in western Nepal (Fig 18). Established in August 2003 it covers an area of 2,563 ha in Kailali District at an elevation of 205 m, on the lower slopes of the Siwalik Hills.

Gosaikunda is an alpine freshwater oligotrophic lake in Nepal's Langtang National Park, located at an elevation of 4,380 m in the Rasuwa District, with a surface of 13.8 ha (Fig 19). Together with associated lakes, the Gosaikunda Lake complex comprises 1,030 ha in size and was designated a Ramsar site on 29 September 2007.

Tilicho Lake is located in the Manang district of Nepal, 55 km as the crow flies from the city of Pokhara (Fig 20). It is situated at an altitude of 4,919 m in the Annapurna range of the Himalayas. (An alternative source lists the altitude as being 4,949 m). It is the destination of one of the most popular side hikes of the Annapurna Circuit trek.

Lakes in the China Tibet Himalayas

The Chinese Himalayan region is located in the south of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Mount Qomolangma (known as Mount Everest) in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region is a fresh water source to the lakes of the region.

Rongbuk Lake of the Rongbuk Glacier, is located at the northern slope in the Mount Everest region, Himalaya, at the foot of Mount Qomolangma in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region (Fig 21). The growth speed of the lake has been accelerating since 2000, and this trend of expansion is anticipated to be continued. Rongbuk Lake would be the biggest potential risk of glacial lake outburst flood in the Everest region of Himalaya in the future. The famous glacier is just 300 metres away from the Rongbuk Monastery and lies on the vast area between 5,300 - 6,300 metres above sea level at the foot of Mount Everest. Formed with the western, central and far-eastern Rongbuk Glaciers, this giant glacial dragon stretches for 26 km, covering 1,500 square km, with the glacial tongue measuring 1.4 km in average breadth. As the largest glacier inside Mount Everest State Natural Reserve, the Rongbuk Glacier is the world's most fully developed and best preserved glacial wonder.

Climate Change and Save Himalayan Lakes

A significant threat posed by climate change in the Himalayas is the continual formation of a large number of glacial lakes. The lakes consist of vast quantities of glacial melt water held in place by natural dams of stone and rubble. The enhanced rate at which the snow and ice is melting means that the water accumulating in these lakes is increasing rapidly. And if the natural rubble dams holding back the waters break, a tsunami of water, mud, ice, and stone is swept down the valleys. Such events can have devastating consequences on infrastructure and local communities, washing away roads, bridges, houses, people, livestock and crops.

Several recent studies have shown that the situation could be much worse than originally thought. One study, in particular, found that if CO₂ emissions are not cut drastically, around two-thirds of the Hindu Kush-Himalaya (HKH) region glaciers could disappear. Glaciers in the Himalayas lost billions of tons of ice between 2000 and 2016, double the amount that took place between 1975 and 2000. Rising global temperatures are to blame – the result of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. Air pollutants from unclean energy sources are also contributing. The dirty air then deposits black carbon dust on the ice. This dust means the glaciers absorb more heat and thaw more rapidly. Lithuania released a stamp about pollution of the atmosphere and melting glaciers (Fig 22) while Indonesia released a stamp “melting ice, a hot topic” (Fig 23).

The impacts of melting Himalayan glaciers

There is the danger of increased flooding as more meltwater enters the water system and proglacial glacial lakes form. However, these lakes are often unstable, and when the dams break, they can cause catastrophic glacier lake outburst floods. With more water and a warmer global temperature the risk of extreme weather events increases. In Asia the monsoon helps to support the livelihoods of millions of people, the annual rains are crucial to agriculture and water supplies. As global warming changes monsoon patterns, the risk of flooding during this season increases. Global warming means that snow and glaciers melt earlier in the year (Fig 24), leading to floods in spring. However, by summer, when crops need more water, volumes of water are decreased (Fig 25). As a result, agricultural yields are lower. Further downstream, the volume of water in dams may impact the production of hydroelectricity

In February 2022 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released the second of its three-part report in the 6th assessment cycle, focusing on the impacts of a changing climate on vulnerability. This is particularly important for the Himalayas. The HKH region covers eight countries in Asia. It is a source of ten major river systems that support livelihoods, energy, agriculture and ecosystems for 240 million people in the mountains and hills and 1.65 billion in the plains. The HKH region stores the largest ice mass outside the polar systems, providing freshwater to almost 869 million people in the Indus, Tarim, Ganga, and Brahmaputra river basins. Global warming will continue to induce changes in mountain regions throughout the 21st century. It will have negative consequences for the mountain cryosphere, biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being. For the Himalayas, it means that the glaciers will continue to retreat at a 1.5°C global warming level. This will result in some glaciers being at the risk of extinction. Some regions that rely heavily on glacier melt and snowmelt irrigation will face erratic water supply and increased food insecurity. Damages and losses from water-related hazards such as floods and landslides are projected to increase considerably between a 1.5°C and 2°C global warming level. Both climatic and non-climatic stresses in the Himalayas are adversely



Fig 17: Tsho Rolpa Lake



Fig 18: Ghodaghodi Lake



Fig 19: Gosaikunda lake



Fig 20: Nepal. Tilicho Lake maximum card



Fig 21: Rongbuk Lake
Mount Qomolangma



Fig 22: Melting glaciers. Lithuania 2009
melting glaciers



Fig 23: "Melting ice, a hot topic".
Indonesia 2007



Fig 24: UN 2002 Dried lake and
reservoir. UN 2002



Fig 25: Mountain glacier showing outlines of ongoing decreasing area. Switzerland 2009



Fig 26: “Stop Climate Change” Austria 2021.

affecting the socio-ecology of the region. Glacial decline, encroachment, and degradation of natural water bodies and the disappearance of traditional water systems such as springs are evident. Time is running out, and urgent and coordinated actions are required to save a shared resource such as the Himalayas.

Unplanned urbanisation is causing significant changes in land use and land cover, with reduced recharge areas of springs. Degradation of forests due to diversion for large projects, forest fires and the changing forest regime have also impacted springs and rivers alike. Several rivers have been identified as critically polluted. The key reasons for this crisis are rapid urbanisation and unregulated tourism with no policy on solid waste management.

Different countries have issued stamps to bring awareness and conservation of the Himalayan Lakes (Fig 26). It is the duty of everyone to lead an eco-friendly green life and sustainable consumption to protect the environment from climate change, and strike a balance between conservation and development for protection of Natural Heritage “The mighty Himalayas and Himalayan lakes”. 📖

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ZOOMING ALONG

Mark Humpfrey *Polar Orchids*. 16th November

Many BTA members were looking forward to this presentation and those of us who watched were not disappointed. Mark started his fascinating presentation with some basic details of exactly where the Arctic and Antarctic circles are, and the fact that Antarctica is just too cold to grow orchids. He went on to say that there are seven countries that have a land mass inside the Arctic Circle and orchids grow wild in all of these: Russia, USA, Canada, Sweden, Greenland, Norway and Finland. Mark talked about the philatelic items from each of these countries.

Russia has the largest land mass inside the Arctic Circle, so it came as no surprise to learn that it has the most varied orchids with 35 species. Many of these were shown on prepaid Russian envelopes, and on stamps of other countries such as Mongolia, Isle of Man and Estonia. I liked the *Calypso Bulbosa*, a beautiful pink colour, on a Russian stamp. Mark explained there was a large degree of artistic license with the design of many of the stamps. You could be forgiven for thinking many types of orchids were tall, whereas many, including *Calypso Bulbosa*, are only a few inches high.

Mark showed a lovely set of stamps depicting four wild Orchids that could be found in northern Sweden, again pink was a favourite colour. Not to be outdone, Norway had printed a series of delightful stamp booklets in the 1990s showing lovely pink and yellow orchids. Greenland had taken a slightly different approach and, although it had produced stamps in a booklet showing orchids, images of the harsh scenery dominated the stamps. Canada has issued several stamps showing orchids. Mark showed us a 1970s stamp booklet that depicted the *Cypripedium passerinum* orchid, better known as the Sparrow's Egg Lady's Slipper. A very dainty white flower on a single tallish stem. Mark showed us a lot more Canadian stamps depicting orchids, some of which were part of their definitive issues in 2006. Again, pink colours seem to dominate. but pink was far from an exclusive colour. The USA has produced stamps and labels for the National Wildlife Federation showing four orchids and in 1984 the USA also issued 20c stamps showing orchids when they hosted the World Orchid Congress.

The presentation ended with Mark showing a variety of stamps and postmarks depicting orchids on envelopes from Antarctic bases. Argentina, Falkland Islands, Japan and Belgium all featured and had lovely stamps and orchids in many colours.

Thank you Mark for a lovely, fascinating, and informative presentation.

Julian Bagwell *Christmas*. 12th December

Julian Bagwell presented *Christmas* to 23 BTA members. He started his talk by giving us a short background to the modern Christmas: the fact that it was not until 1871 that Christmas was designated a bank holiday, that Christmas trees for the masses are a Victorian idea and that *A Christmas Carol* by Dickens (published in 1843) helped to put the Christmas holiday on the map. Julian went on to show a variety of philatelic items with a Christmas theme, starting with a facsimile of the first Christmas card sent in 1843, an envelope from 1868 with the words 'A Merry Christmas' on the reverse and an early telegram from 1884 having the message 'Wish Happy Christmas' as the message. Julian showed several other lovely items bearing a Christmas message but the one I loved the most was a card from a Victorian postman wishing the recipient 'Compliments of the season', no doubt hoping for a good Christmas tip in return!

Julian then showed us some of his Christmas postal marks. A wonderful collection, most with a 25 December handstamp in a large variety of fonts and shapes. Often this date stamp was found alongside Bishop Marks, double and single circle marks and a 'Too Late' mark to name but a few. Julian talked about each entire or envelope, the likely route taken, and the rate paid. His knowledge and research efforts were very impressive. I was interested to learn that it took three days for a letter to travel from London to Edinburgh in 1798, a feat not much improved on today! But it was not just GB material with Christmas marks: Julian showed a letter to France with a 25 December 1858 cancel but no stamps as it was still inside the era of pre-paid mail, and an envelope from Sandown IOW to Philadelphia USA with a Dec 25 1876 handstamp and a 2½d stamp. There was so much wonderful material it is impossible to talk about it all.

So, thank you Julian for a lovely presentation of some great Postal History related to Christmas.

Les Ashton-Smith *Marie Curie*. 9th January

There are some people who need little introduction as we know a lot about them, or we think we do. Les Ashton-Smith gave over 30 BTA members and guests a fascinating and enjoyable presentation on Marie Curie and showed me how little I really know about her. Les told us that she was born in 1867, she was a Polish scientist who became a French citizen. She studied in Paris and married Pierre Curie in 1895, working together with him until his death in 1906. In 1898 she coined the phrase 'radioactivity' and by 1898 she had written 32 scientific papers on the topic. Apart from finding two new elements, Polonium and Radium, she had noticed that diseased cells were destroyed faster than healthy ones which led to early cancer treatments. All of this was depicted in a range of stamps from Monaco, France and its colonies, and a lovely mini-sheet from Guinea.

With her husband, Pierre Curie, she was awarded the 1903 Nobel Prize for Physics and she was the sole winner of the 1911 Nobel Prize for Chemistry. She was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, and she is the only woman to have won the award in two different fields. Les showed a variety of stamps that depicted these events. During World War I she fitted 20 vehicles so that they could carry radiology equipment to assist doctors at the Front and over 200 field hospitals. This was shown on a stamp from Djibouti. She died in 1934 from radiation sickness after years of exposure to radioactivity. She was buried twice; first she was interred with her husband at Sceaux where Pierre was buried. Over 60 years later the remains of Pierre and Marie Curie were re-interred in France's national mausoleum, the Pantheon. She became the first woman who earned the right to rest alongside the great men of France. All of this was illustrated by stamps from France, Poland, Norway and many French colonies. Thanks for a most interesting talk, Les.

Gary Cook *The Eiffel Tower*. 15th February.

We all know the Eiffel Tower, that iconic Paris landmark. But how many of us know of its philatelic role when it was first opened in 1889?

The world's very first international exhibition was Prague 1791, with Paris holding its first international exposition in 1855; and in 1889 they held their fourth such event, under the theme "The French Revolution: celebrating a century of the Revolution". The Eiffel Tower was built as the entrance arch to the Exposition, although somewhat alarmingly the original suggestion had been for a 300 metre high guillotine! Gustave Eiffel founded the Societé de la Tour Eiffel in 1889 to finance, build and operate the Eiffel Tower, which opened on 06 May 1889. It had its own post office, in operation from the previous day

until 31 October that year. Two postmarks were used, with lovely examples shown on cover. Postcards, letters and telegram letter cards could be posted from the Tower. An important player in this story was *Le Figaro* newspaper, which had a printing press on the second stage of the Tower. They received a complaint that there was a lack of postcards for sale, or postboxes to post them in. This was quickly rectified, and Leon-Charles Libonis created a lithographic image of the Tower which was used for France's first illustrated postcard (first known use of the card shown) as well as for notepaper and envelopes. Four more designs by Libonis followed. As well as the Libois material, Gary showed a very rare postcard with an image of the Tower designed by Eugene Hanau. Gary presented a detailed study of the cachets used on items posted in the Tower, noting the varieties. One particularly unusual item was balloon post: postcards were sold with a hole punched in a top corner to allow the sender to tie a balloon to the card. Instructions to the finder were printed on the card, requesting that the finder should post it.

Besides the philately, Gary showed some lovely memorabilia of the event, including photographic cards, a medallion, a guidebook and book of photographs. The Tower still attracts visitors and memorabilia, and is today managed by the Soci t  d'exploitation de la Tour Eiffel.

This was a fascinating piece of social history which demonstrates the important role postal services can play in a city's history.



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Showcasing the world of
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Royal Philatelic Society London
by the
British Thematic Association
21st March 2024

As previously advertised, the BTA will be displaying to the RPSL on 21 March. If you can get to London do come along. You do not have to be a member of the Royal to attend, they warmly welcome visitors. (And if you haven't seen their new premises they are worth a visit, plus it's a good opportunity to investigate their magnificent library). Plenty of BTA members will be in attendance to chat, teas and coffees will be available all afternoon, and there will be a free booklet to accompany the displays. What's not to like?

The location - 15 Abchurch Lane, London, EC4N 7BW - is a few minutes walk from Cannon Street, Bank, and Monument Underground stations. [Click here](#) for a map. The display opens at 13.00, drop in any time up to around 17.00.

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BTA WEEKEND, OXFORD, 12 - 14 APRIL

It's not too late to book! We would be delighted to welcome a few more to 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";
- an insight into forgeries and the work of the RPSL Expert Committee.

There will be five speakers, four sessions of members' displays (don't feel constrained by the programme suggestions - bring along what you fancy) and the attendance of Paula Cant Stamps with her stock.

The full package encompasses Friday evening to Sunday morning, but you would be equally welcome as a day visitor, and if you wish to, staying for the evening meal on the Friday or the Saturday.

Our hotel has always been very helpful and will do its utmost to accommodate particular requirements.

The booking form has been published in previous editions of *Themescene*, and can also be downloaded from our website at

www.britishthematic.org.uk/find/upload/files/2024%20Weekend.pdf

If you have any questions at all do please contact our Weekend Organiser [Anne Stammers](#).

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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'.

12.30

Invited short display by Philip Cant on *Thematic ripples.*

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

Saturday afternoon

Paula Cant Stamps will be present with a selection of stock.

Plus:

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).

EUROPHILEX BIRMINGHAM 2025

Jon Aitchison, Chairman of the EuroPhilEx Organising Committee



The next British International Exhibition will be EuroPhilEx Birmingham 2025, a five-day show to be held at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham from 7th-11th May 2025.

This is the country's largest exhibition venue, located close to the centre of England, with excellent train links and Birmingham International Airport on site. For visitors travelling by road, it is close to several motorways and access junctions. The exhibition has FEPA Patronage and FIP Recognition, and is open to all FIP classes except Youth. Applications to exhibit can be submitted [direct](#) now. The deadline for entries is 7th May 2024, exactly one year before the event opens, so please put in your application in good time.

Commissioners have been appointed from more than 30 countries and there will be 2,060 frames for exhibits. There will also be many dealers' stands with seating, as well as plenty more seating in lounges for visitors throughout the show. All visitors will receive a free souvenir sheet and a range of special cancels will be available. There will also be a Court of Honour with special attractions, numerous society meetings, and a literature reading area.

Birmingham is an area with diverse attractions for anyone visiting EuroPhilEx as part of an extended stay. There are vast numbers of restaurants, pubs, bars and clubs for all tastes, at all prices. Close-by entertainments include Cadbury World for chocolate lovers, Legoland Discovery Centre, Alton Towers Resort, the National Sea Life Centre and the Bear Grylls Adventure Park which is located on the NEC site. Those that like history will enjoy Tudor World, Shakespeare country, Warwick Castle, the Black Country Living Museum and filming locations for the popular Peaky Blinders television series. The city has several excellent museums and art galleries, such as Birmingham Science Museum and the Ikon Contemporary Art Gallery.

There are cinemas and theatres for plays and musicals, and it is the home of the Birmingham City Symphony Orchestra and Birmingham Opera Company. The shopping is also amazing with a wide range of malls and specialist locations.

Please put the dates: 7th-11th May 2025 in your diary. EuroPhilEx will be an international exhibition you should not miss. For further information go to the [exhibition website](#).

If you need urgent advice you can also contact the Chairman, Jon Aitchison, at jon@europhilex2025.co.uk. Telephone +44 (0) 1279 870488.

HERE AND THERE

Jørgen Jørgensen (1944-2024)

It is with great sadness that FEPA have announced the passing of Jørgen Jørgensen. He became a member of the Danish Philatelic Society in 1998 and has received great recognition for his work for philately. In 2015, he signed the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists. He specialised in postal history and thematic philately, winning many awards with his exhibit on *Fisheries*. He was an internationally accredited philatelic judge, and in 2014 the BTA were delighted to welcome him as a guest speaker at their meeting at Stampex.

Virtual Stampex 02 - 04 May 2024

Virtual Stampex started during lockdown, and now, with the 'real thing' down to one a year, it will fill the gap where Spring Stampex once was. It will have the familiar Booth Hall, Talks Auditorium, Roundtables and a Collectors Lounge, plus some new features:

- A cross-booth Catalogue allowing visitors to search for (and purchase) stamps, postal history, accessories and publications across all booths;
- A Hall dedicated to Displays, showcasing a wide range of materials to inspire you to further develop your collections in your own way;
- A Hall dedicated to Societies and other prominent philatelic institutions to bring even more of philately together.

The next 'in-person' Stampex will be 23 - 26 October at the Business Design Centre, Islington.



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EXHIBITING PAGE: RECENT EXPERIENCE IN OPEN PHILATELY

Iva Mouritsen

Open Philately is still a relatively new class that is being discovered more and more by both exhibitors and viewers. It is special and attractive for two reasons: first, it allows the inclusion of non-philatelic material and, secondly, it is all about storytelling. Precisely the possibility of combining different types of philatelic and non-philatelic material allows the storytelling to be imaginative, creative, to show thinking outside the box, invention and wit. In this article I want to focus on what I have learned from my experience with storytelling in Open Philately and from some recent points raised between exhibitors and judges.

1. How to tell a good story in Open Philately.

1.1 Plan

Good storytelling starts with a good plan. The plan should be divided into chapters and each chapter should be a logical/chronological continuation of the previous one. There should be no holes and no going back-and-forth in the story. It is important not to turn the plan into a listing of the items or groups of items shown in the exhibit. The best plans tell a story; as in a novel, the 'red thread' develops smoothly from one chapter to the next.

1.2 Development of the story on the pages

After the plan is written, the story summarised in it should be developed further on the individual pages. Each page should have its particular part of the story told in text blocks placed next to each relevant item illustrating an aspect of the story being told in the text. In other words, each item should have its own storyline-text and these texts should be connected to each other in such a way that they can be read continuously like a novel. Ideally, the story should flow like this, not only on individual pages, but also from page to page throughout the whole exhibit. To achieve that, each item should belong to one text, and each text should belong to one or two items. Showing more than one item with a text can be done to show philatelic knowledge or to tell the story better, for example by showing pre-production material together with the issued stamp. However, duplication - in the sense of illustrating the same theme through many different items just to document it - should be avoided.

While looking for a fitting item to illustrate the text, the aim is to find an item illustrating what the text is saying as precisely as possible. This is where Open Philately displays its beauty, attraction and advantage. It gives the unique possibility of including all types of philatelic and non-philatelic material to tell the story as well as possible. There are endless possibilities of material types to draw on so exhibitors should not limit themselves to showing only obvious items including multiple pieces showing the same person or all items being from one location. Using only such obvious items will make the material and the story monotonous. A stamp showing a facial image of a Nobel prize winner does not show where (s)he was

born, where (s)he lived, which interests led him/her to become a scientist, etc. To illustrate such aspects of a story, a combination of pictorial items of, for example, persons involved with other pieces connected not directly to the person but rather to his/her activities (perhaps hunting or horse riding) helps tell the story better, shows creativity and aids thinking outside the box. This makes the exhibit more attractive to viewers, especially to non-hardcore philatelists. That is what Open Philately is about. Inclusion of such material enables the exhibitor to show a wider range of significant philatelic material as well as broader and deeper philatelic and non-philatelic knowledge. In conclusion, using only obvious items can lead to dry and unimaginative story-telling with possibly a lot of holes. Sometimes it is necessary to be creative and show some wit.

2. Some recent points raised between exhibitors and judges.

2.1 Rarity statements

If an exhibit contains very rare material, it is important that exhibitors draw attention to the rarity of the items. This is particularly important in Open Philately exhibits which contain rare material from all over the world. The judges cannot be experts in all different areas represented with material in top-level Open Philately exhibits. It is often seen that exhibitors, in order to point out that an item is rare, simply write 'rare' next to the item. Rarity statements do belong next to the item, but it is very important to not just write that the item is rare, but also to explain what exactly makes it rare. Rarity always needs to be considered together with significance (from how broad a perspective an item is rare).

2.1.1 Rarity and significance

Rarity refers to the number of items existing/recorded. However, if significance is not considered, rarity has no meaning. In postal history almost every letter is unique if enough details of the letter are considered, for instance: "This is the only recorded letter sent on 01/Sep/1947 from village ZZZ to town YYY by Mr. X". This statement is not false and the letter is thus unique. However, that does not make the letter philatelically significant, because there are millions of letters from some village sent on a specific date to a specific person in a specific town. Or let's consider the only recorded registered letter sent from some village in the 19th century. This is a wonderful local rarity. However, there are thousands if not millions of "simple" registered letters from small villages around the world in the 19th Century, so the letter is not significant from a national or international philatelic perspective. On the other hand, a registered printed matter item sent from some village in the 19th Century would be much more broadly significant as items such as this from almost all countries in that period are rare, meaning that the exact location from which it was sent is less significant. Even though more than 100 are recorded today, a Pony Express cover is much more significant to worldwide philately because the mode of postal transportation used by the Pony Express is unique from a worldwide perspective.

2.2 How much non-philatelic material should be used in an Open Philately exhibit?

This question is often discussed between exhibitors, judges, and viewers. First, there is only one firm rule: the philatelic material must make up at least 50% of the material. This does NOT mean that the relation between philatelic and non-philatelic material must be close to 50:50. For instance, 60:40, 70:30 or 80:20 all fulfil the formal requirement.


The subjects developed in Open Philately exhibits vary wildly, so the types of material that can and should be used to tell the story in the best way vary greatly from exhibit to exhibit. Non-philatelic material should be used especially where it fits the story better than anything else,

i.e., where it helps tell the story better than what would be possible with philatelic material. It should not be “forced” into an exhibit just to have another type of non- philatelic item on the page or in the exhibit or just to achieve a particular number.

The types of suitable non-philatelic material that can be used are basically endless and can include, for instance, decrees, regulations, newspaper articles, medals, proofs of medals, coins, collectors’ cards, poster stamps, Cinderellas, phone cards, engravings, photographs, maps, original paintings, or advertisements.

Conclusion

Open Philately gives us a wonderful opportunity to use all available types of philatelic and non-philatelic material to give the best possible rendition of the chosen story. It provides opportunities to have an incredible amount of fun while facing the challenge of finding the best possible material. Give it a try yourself and enjoy!

To give an insight into the way in which I have constructed my pages, I am adding pictures of two sheets from my exhibit on the Danish Royal Ménage à Trois. 

Acknowledgement

First published in FEPA News, January 2024

The full exhibit can be seen online at the [Museum of Philately](#)



The divorce was granted by the court in April 1772, and Caroline Matilda only avoided execution due to her brother's threats of war.



{2} ... only because her brother, King George III of Great Britain, threatened with war ...



{3} ... the Queen narrowly avoided execution.

Anti-Gladstone caricature envelope (front) illustrating the threatening execution of a Queen (Q. Victoria's head is pictured on the 5 d. stamp) on a letter sent 26/May/1887 to India. Rate: Letters GB to India 5d. per 1/2 oz. 01/Feb/1880-31/Dec/1890. Second weight ("2" in pencil) and thus insufficiently prepaid. The Overland Postage Due handstamp of Bombay denoted the sum of 8 annas, 6 pies to be collected from the addressee which was equal to twice the 5d postage plus a 3d fine for a total of 1 shilling 1 pence due.

{4} In the end, the mere threat of the arrival of the powerful British fleet saved Caroline Matilda's life.

Plate proof block of 20 in black for the 1873 De La Rue 3 pence brown-purple (SG 63) representing the immense strength of the British Fleet. Each of the stamps show Britannia (the symbol of British maritime power) in front of a navy frigate².

Ex. Hurlock, Deakin, Besançon.

LARGEST RECORDED MULTIPLE OF ANY BARBADOS BRITANNIA PROOF²

(The second largest recorded multiple of this plate proof is a block of 4)²



BTA PROGRAMME 2024

- 21 March
From 13.00 **BTA display at the Royal Philatelic Society, London**
The BTA 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 Spires Hotel, Abingdon Road, Oxford, OX1 4PS
- 24 April
19.00 for 19.30 **Zoom meeting**
Dr. Jean Alexander
Supermarket philately. Part 1
In the first of a four-part series of presentations Jean will show philatelic items given away to promote other products.
- 08 June
13.00 **Annual General Meeting and guest speaker**
To be held as part of Swinpex 2024.
The Grange Leisure and Community Centre, Stratton St. Margaret, Swindon, SN3 4JY
- 20 July
10.30 **Members' meeting at York Stamp and Coin Fair**
Guest speaker: George Henshilwood
Having fun with numbers
York Racecourse.
- July (date to be confirmed)
19.00 for 19.30 **Zoom meeting**
Steve Gerrard
The Berlin Olympic Games
A display of stamps, miniature sheets, postcards and photographs of the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics and of the 1936 Garmisch-Partenkirchen Winter Olympics.
- 18 September
19.00 for 19.30 **Zoom meeting**
Dr. Jean Alexander
Supermarket philately. Part 2
In the second of a four-part series of presentations Jean will show how Royal Mail promote their own products with special offers.
- 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.

Just4Kids by Lise Whittle

www.stampactive.co.uk

THE 2024 SUMMER OLYMPIC and PARALYMPIC GAMES!

Olympic Games 26 July - 11 August

Paralympic Games 28 August - 8 September 2024

The 2024 Summer Olympics will take place this year in Paris, the capital city of France! The games will be known as 'Paris 2024' but their official name is 'Games of the XXXIII Olympiad' (33rd). The Olympic Games are an international multi-sport event with literally thousands of athletes from more than 200 nations around the world taking part. There will be an opening ceremony in Paris on Friday July 26th where all the athletes will be transported by boats along the River Seine. The games will be held in Paris and 16 other cities in France, as well as in the French overseas island of Tahiti (an island in the South Pacific Ocean - see if you can find it on a map).

Start a new stamp collection finding stamps from France or Tahiti, and any of the sports played - especially your favourite sports!



OLYMPIC GAMES FACTS

The Olympics started in ancient Greece in 776 BC. Only Greek men and boys could take part - and they took part naked to show off their bodies!! The only prize was a laurel wreath!

Far fewer sports were played than today, they included running, long jump, discus throwing, shot put, javelin, pankration (violent boxing/wrestling), chariot and horse





racing competitions. The games ended in 393 AD after a fire burned down the temple of the Greek god Olympian Zeus. These games are now known as the Ancient Olympic Games.



The Modern Olympic Games started in 1894 and were inspired by the ancient Olympic Games. There are now Summer and Winter Olympics, and Paralympics for athletes with disabilities, as well as Youth Olympics. The Olympic Flag shows the Olympic Games symbol - five connected rings representing the five continents of the World taking part. You'll see this symbol on many Olympic Games stamps.

OLYMPIC GAMES

- Aquatics (e.g. swimming, diving)
- Archery
- Athletics
- Badminton
- Basketball
- Boxing
- Breaking (breakdancing)
- Canoeing
- Cycling
- Equestrian (horse riding events)
- Fencing
- Football
- Golf
- Gymnastics
- Handball
- Hockey
- Judo
- Modern Pentathlon
- Rowing
- Rugby Sevens
- Sailing

Have a look in the boxes at the Olympic sports that will be played at the Olympic and Paralympic games. Try and find as many sports stamps as you can for your collection showing any of these sports, especially your favourites.



- Sport climbing
- Surfing
- Table Tennis
- Taekwondo
- Tennis
- Triathlon
- Volleyball
- Water Polo
- Weight Lifting
- Wrestling.

PARALYMPIC GAMES

Archery
Athletics
Blind Football
Badminton
Boccia
Canoe
Goalball
Cycling
Equestrian
Judo
Powerlifting
Rowing
Shooting
Swimming
Table Tennis
Taekwondo
Triathlon
Sitting Volleyball
Wheelchair Basketball
Wheelchair Fencing
Wheelchair Rugby
Wheelchair Tennis



You can download a **FREE** activity book and album called '*Sport on Stamps*' from the **Stamp Active website**;

In the activity book you'll find lots more information about the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and there are spaces for you to collect your stamps.

Where can I get stamps from? Here are a few suggestions;

- Ask the person who looks after you to help you with the following;
- Let family and friends know that you are collecting stamps - they might have some they can share.
- You will receive free stamps if you ask your parent if you can join Kidstamps, a free postal club for young stamp collectors, supported by the Stamp Active Network;
<https://www.stampactive.co.uk/kidstamps-club/>
- Ask your parent to help you look online to find out if you have local stamp dealers, or a local Philatelic Society. Some areas have local Stamp Fairs.
- You may have a local coin or medal shop which also sells stamps.
- Hundreds of dealers advertise online. Bags of stamps and individual stamps can easily be found on Ebay, Etsy etc ask your parent to help you look.
- Main branches of WHSmith sell packets of stamps, albums and many accessories.
- Oxfam sell stamps in some of their shops and online.

Write to us and tell us about your favourite Olympic or Paralympic sport and receive an album and 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](#)



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY: THE BTA IS 40 THIS YEAR

