

THEMESCENE

September 2013

In this issue we:

Consider the planetary system

Copernicus

With Jeff Dugdale



Investigate the arts and Crafts Movement

William Morris

With Paul Horton



Study a Specialist Service

Mail for the Blind

With Keith Lloyd

Expand thematics

Thematic Postal History, part 2

With John Hayward



As well as visits to Midpex and Essen

BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

Volume 28, No.3. Whole Number 104

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THEMESCENE

Vol.28, No.3, Whole Number 104

SEPTEMBER 2011

THEMESCENE

Journal of the
British Thematic Association
which is a member of the
Association of British
Philatelic Societies

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Editor:

Wendy Buckle
87 Victoria Road
Bournemouth
BH1 4RS

Advertising Manager:

Mike Blackman
45 Kenwood Drive
Beckenham
Kent, BR3 6QY

Printer:

K.D.S.
Elder House,
Chattisham
Ipswich
Suffolk IP8 3QE

Distributed by:

K.D.S. Printers

Website:

www.brit-thematic-assoc.com

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YOUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Patron: **Brian Sole FRPSL**

3 Stockfield Road, Claygate, Esher, Surrey KT10 0QG Tel: 01372 467652
Fax: 01372 469755 email: brian.sole@btinternet.com

President: **John Hayward**

18 Waverley Drive, Camberley, Surrey GU15 2DL
Tel: 01276 29246 email: ssasman@btinternet.com

Chairman: *Vacancy*

Vice Chairman: **Wendy Buckle**

87 Victoria Road, Springbourne, Bournemouth BH1 4RS
Tel: 01202 302273 Email: wendybuckle@btinternet.com

Secretary: **Anne Stammers**

40 St. Helen's Way, Benson, Wallingford OX10 6SW
email: annies1@btinternet.com

Membership Secretary: **Peter Denly**

9 Oaklands Park, Bishops Stortford, Herts, CM23 2BY
email: peter.denly@uwclub.net

Treasurer: **Peter Wood**

21 Loftus Road, London, W12 7EH. email: peter.wood95@btinternet.com

Publicity Officer: **Simon Moorcroft**

2 Ramparts Court, Bakers Lane, Braiswick, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5BJ
Tel: 01206 855260 email: simon.moorcroft6@btinternet.com

Editor: **Wendy Buckle** (see Vice Chairman)

Advertising Manager: **Mike Blackman**

45 Kenwood Drive, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 6QY.
Tel: 020 8658 0637 email: mblackmanwpi@tiscali.co.uk

Displays Organiser: **John Hayward** (see President)

Back issues: **Richard Wheeler** (see Chairman)

Committee members:

James Etherington, 17, Berkeley Row, Lewes, Sussex, email: jespeth@hotmail.com

Gerald Lovell, Keston Ridge, 76, West End, Silverstone, Northants,
NN12 8UY. email: fdc.Silverstone@tesco.net

Charles Oppenheim, 9 Norbury Close, Market Harborough,
Leicestershire, LE16 9BH. Email: c.oppenheim@btinternet.com

Barry Stagg, 1 Naunton Way, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL53 7BQ
Tel: 01242 519245 email: bastagg@btinternet.com

Brian Sole (see Patron)

OTHER APPOINTMENTS

Librarian: **Ron Backhouse** 10 Hoe Lane, Ware, Herts, SG12 9NU. Tel: 01920 484974

Web Master: **James Wigmore** email: jameswigmore@talktalk.net

EDITORIAL

Wendy Buckle

In this issue we have rather more emphasis than normal on meetings and exhibitions. As far as possible I like to balance the content between thematic articles and reports of meetings, but this time the meetings have taken over. Can't be helped - I wouldn't want to omit any relevant reports, so next time I hope to redress the balance.

Our Membership Secretary Peter Denly is still collecting names of those willing to give philatelic displays (page 85). If you are interested in having your name (but no contact details) available on the BTA web page please contact Peter. We hope this list will grow into a really useful resource for local programme secretaries, who might be inspired to include more Thematic evenings in their auctions.

I was delighted to see the award-winning thematic collection of Committee member Jim Etherington featured in August *Stamp Magazine*. It's a shame the Editor chose to describe it as "Britain in 1940: the darkest hour as a postal history theme". We keep trying to push the message: thematics has the opportunity to be so much more than stamps. This is an approach borne out by John Hayward's series of articles on "Thematic Postal History" (page 96), which I'm sure will give some of our members that lightbulb moment when they think "Of course! Why didn't I think of that!". Such thoughts certainly occurred to me during the recent thematic seminar ran by John and Jim (page 108). However I suspect even they may be challenged by the question posed in the first contribution to this issue's Letters page (page 87). So guys, and all of you reading this, get your thinking caps on and send your responses to the writer. I've been delighted by the number of letters published in this issue and the previous one: *Themescene* is your magazine, the chance for you to say what you think about the BTA, about thematics, or to raise any questions or observations. Please do make use of this.

Themescene has a regular column by Lise Whittle for our younger readers (page 115). She works very hard to promote stamp collecting locally. I think most of us are delighted when we see youngsters enjoying the hobby, and this month we can see the results of a great project on *The Sound of Music*. Thanks to everyone who sent in stamps, I think you'll agree it is an impressive outcome. And dependant on available space I always try and include the activities of Stamp Active in *Themescene*. However it's not only that age group that are worth reaching out to. We all bemoan the fact that "the membership is getting older" in regard to the clubs and associations to which we belong, so why not target that group? Regular contributor Barry Floyd did just that, writing an article for *Mature Times* on "Collecting postage stamps". The article did appear on their web page, but appears to have been taken down, but I was pleased to see other articles on stamps in the "Collecting" section.

I'm delighted to welcome another regular contributor to *Themescene*: Barry Stagg. Barry has just joined the Committee (AGM report page 100) and kindly offered to write a regular column on philatelic web pages. This is something I've long thought needs doing, but never managed it myself, so thanks Barry.

I can never quite decide how I feel about September. It's often a lovely month weather-wise, Keats' "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness", but it means autumn is on its way. And closely following autumn has to come winter, which I hate. However the silver lining in all this is the chance to get back to serious collecting and catch up on all that writing-up which has been piling up. So I wish you a happy collecting season ahead. ☺

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

John Hayward

I must say that the two large philatelic gatherings during this summer – Swinpex and Midpex - were each very enjoyable events. Both were well attended and efficiently organised. The BTA held its AGM at Swinpex, and we had a reasonable attendance. As a result of the AGM I would like to welcome Barry Stagg on board the BTA Committee. The AGM was followed as is our custom with a display by the winner of the BTA Cup Competition in the previous year, and here we were treated to a fine display by our Editor, Wendy Buckle. We are still lacking a Chairman as a result of the AGM though, and this really is a post that needs filling as quickly as possible. It has been vacant for nearly three months. I am sure Wendy can manage for the time being as Vice Chairman, but this is an important job – is there a member out there who can step into the role? It entails chairing two Committee Meetings a year in London plus the AGM, and fulfilling the day to day role of representing the BTA and keeping its wheels turning. Please have a word with me about what the posts' requirements are if you are at all interested.

Those BTA Committee members who went to Midpex were very keen to see how the organisers had fared at their new venue in the light of the awful shambles two years ago (the reason why the BTA did not take a stand this year or hold a meeting at Midpex). Well, I think all of us were suitably impressed with the improvements made by the organisers. Indeed, chatting to non-BTA collectors and dealers at the event I got the firm impression that everything was so much better – better parking, more space for dealers and societies, better catering – a huge improvement all round. (See page 106 for a full report). I feel sure the BTA Committee will recommend the BTA takes a stand at the next Midpex in 2013. My only criticism was that there was only one meeting room available, so only three societies could hold a meeting during the day. The BTA will have to think about that, but congratulations to the Midpex organisers for listening to and acting upon the chorus of complaints from 2009.

The thematic exhibiting seminar run by the BTA at the Royal in London in June was very well received by those attending (see page 108). As a result I hope we can look forward to seeing more and improved entries in future in the BTA Cup and especially at Stampex in the thematic class. Indeed, Spring Stampex 2012 is majoring on the pictorial classes which include thematics, so now is the chance to put what you have learned into practice. Applications can be obtained from the ABPS website www.abps.org.uk

Members should further note that at Spring Stampex 2012 there will also be a Thematic Philately Seminar presented by Wolf Hess, a very well known international exhibitor and judge, as well as seminars for Open Philately and the Postcard Class (see details on page 111). In view of the international standing of those making the presentations it will be well worth attending, not just for the thematic presentation, but also the postcard and open class presentations.

Another event well worth attending next month is the West of England Thematic Society (WETS) meeting on 29th October 2011 at the Dartmoor Lodge Hotel, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7JW, which will also incorporate Thematix 2011. I am sure WETS will welcome any of our members even if they do not belong to WETS. The event is open from 10 am to 4.30 pm and includes the WETS thematic competition with specialist thematic stamp dealers in attendance. The event has free parking and free admission. ☐

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S PAGE

Peter Denly

Ordinary members	183
Family members	17
Junior members	1
Society members	14
Overseas members	19
Overseas Society members	2
Honorary members	4

Total number of members 240
(At 1st August 2011)

New Members joining since the June 2011 issue

Mrs L. Charnley	Taunton
Mr. D. Radford	Woodhall Spa

Deaths advised since the June 2011 issue

None

You will probably notice an increase in the Ordinary Members over and above the number of new members recruited, as five members re-joined after the last issue went to press. Nonetheless we are delighted to welcome to the BTA the two new members listed above.

At this time last year we were able to report an exceptional recruitment of 11 new members, many of whom were enrolled through London 2010 at Islington. In a normal year the summer is a quiet time for philately with many societies closing for the months of July and August, so with the longer evenings approaching interests will turn back to stamps and hopefully it will see a boost to our recruitment. On the other hand both Swinpex and Midpex hold their events in the summer months and having attended both I feel the organizers must have been well satisfied with the number of collectors who turned out in support of their well organized events.

We now have sixteen members on the register of speakers who would welcome an invitation to visit a local society. (Please note that the BTA website, which lists the subjects, has been updated; see the "Displays" page). Should your Programme Secretary wish to include a thematic item for your next season, a call to the BTA Membership Secretary can provide all the details needed.

I would also remind members, that when making changes to addresses whether postal or email, please be sure to inform the Membership Secretary, which will ensure your copy of Themescene is delivered correctly. ☐

PUBLICITY OFFICER'S PAGE

Simon Moorcroft

I am finishing off this page having just returned from Amsterdam and Leiden where I spent a very pleasant week. They are both beautiful cities and well worth visiting. With additional time this summer I have been able to sit down and catch up on my collection, revisiting and rewriting sections which have remained untouched for over five years or longer in some cases. It is only when one compares previous, earlier work with the most recent output that one really appreciates how much progress one has made over time, even though on some days it doesn't feel that way at all!

I must confess that the majority of my Churchill collection has been written up at very short notice and usually in a rush, due to me trying to do it very close to deadlines for either displays or exhibition hand-ins. I have, in the past, found it hard to sit down and conceive pages when deadlines have not been looming. However, over the last year I have found that this has changed. I have thought through in detail new sections that I want to introduce and amendments I wish to make to existing chapters. Peter Denly has always told me that one must first of all work out the material one requires and then go out and find it. Until recently that never happened and I wrote my collection around what I had available. Now with no deadlines for any displays or competitions looming I have been able to afford to do as Peter advised and I must admit it is far better and far more enjoyable. As no doubt he would say, listen to ones elders!

The AGM at Swinpex was, overall, a success, as was the show itself, although it was sad to see Richard Wheeler stand down as Chairman. I have enjoyed working with him and believe that the BTA owes him a great debt for the way he steered the Association, particularly in the period following his election four years ago.



The BTA thematic workshop held at the Royal in June was in my opinion one of the best philatelic workshops I have ever attended. Superbly orchestrated and delivered by John Hayward, assisted by Jim Etherington, it was able to clarify so many matters in my own mind, particularly regarding the material which is and is not acceptable in competitions. It has subsequently enabled me to bring a greater degree of sophistication to my selection of philatelic material.

Such occasions, with the educational and social value which they provide, demonstrate the real value of membership of the BTA. It is a unique organisation in the UK in terms of the thematic expertise which it can lay claim to. It can be a real source of help to collectors and exhibitors alike, as it has been to me. All of us should therefore do our utmost to encourage other thematic philatelists to join and become active in the Association.

May I wish you all the best for the new season. ☺

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The views expressed in these letters may not necessarily be those of the Editorial Board.

HELP NEEDED

From: Norman Hudson

There is often healthy discussion in *Themescene* about exhibiting thematic displays in competitions. The advice is always clear that if you choose to go down this route you must abide by the rules relating to thematic exhibiting. That's the easy part. In terms of thematics at least, understanding the rules and knowing where you will gain or lose marks from the judges is altogether more of a challenge.

For quite a while now I have thought that I would love to accept that challenge. Submitting an entry in a national competition would be a welcome opportunity for me to share my collecting interests. I have exhibited with some success (to Gold Medal level) in the postal history classe, which I mention only to show that I'm not a complete novice at 'this exhibiting lark'. My problem with thematics, which I'm hoping that readers of *Themescene* can help me to resolve, is that I don't really know how to plan and develop a thematic exhibit on my chosen subject. Let me confess at this point, so we can talk specifics, that my chosen subject is "Palm Trees". I love palm trees and have several in the garden. On holidays they say "exotic places" to me, and when I see them in the evening with their trunks wrapped in fairy-lights, I'm sad that I live in cold, grey England. But, anyway, let's not digress ...

My basic question is how do I put together a thematic display showing palm trees? Please don't tell me that I need to show philatelic material (see, I'm avoiding the use of the word "stamps" alone) illustrating the uses to which palms have been put and some of the products derived from them. This, after all, is the very heart of my problem. I love stamps (and meter-marks and covers etc – let's take it as read that I know about the spread of philatelic material) showing palm trees. Even though part of my BA degree (a long time ago) was in geography and I know that palm oil is important for the production of margarine, I am not at all interested in showing (nor spending good money in purchasing) stamps showing ersatz butter products. I'm prepared to show you the odd palm-thatched cottage roof or two or an oil palm processing plant in Gabon, but the thought of depicting 101 different products you can make with coconut milk just leads me to say "forget it!"

So, dear reader, help me! How do I plan and develop my "palm trees" display for thematic competitions? I have a 'clever' title in mind but I won't tell you lest someone half-inches it. I know enough about the subject to display the palm trees by botanical families and species, from *Aceolorraphe* to *Zombia* (will you ever know if I've made up those names if I don't exhibit?) but I suspect that's more of a "no-no" than a "yes-yes" in thematic exhibiting. I would hate to incur the judges' wrath and garner only minimal points because I've not included a stamp showing a can of Carnation milk (something I mention for comedy effect only, though I'm sure there must be a palm-product in there somewhere!).

Answers on a postcard, please... or by e-mail to jntropics@hotmail.com



GERMAN OCCUPATION OF THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

From: Jim Floyd

While preparing a lot for a postal auction based on the subject of Neil Pearce's article in June *Themescene* I discovered some information relevant to the article.

The local artists of the war time issues found ingenious ways of incorporating pro-British features into their designs, unbeknown to the German authorities, in some attempt to maintain patriotic morale amongst those Islanders 'in the know'. Major Rybot, who designed the first Jersey 'Shield' stamps, managed to secrete tiny little 'A's into the four corners of the ½d & 1d, which supposedly stood for 'Ad Avernum Adolfe Atrox' (or 'To Hell you Atrocious Adolf!'). And E.W. Vaudin who designed the Guernsey 'Shield' issue omitted the usual sprigs from the three lions, hence aligning the shield more closely to the personal arms of the reigning English monarch. For the Jersey 'Views' issue of 1943 Edmund Blampied managed to hide 'GR' (KGVI initials) into the border designs around the numeral '3' of the 3d value, (and are there other disguised 'GR's in some of the other values?) ... all secret yet cunning, rebellious (and probably very brave!) ways of insulting the enemy.

THANK YOU

From: Lise Whittle

A Thousand Thank You's from all the pupils at Alloway Primary School Stamp Club for the fabulous response from *Themescene* readers to their request for 'Sound of Music' stamps. Special thanks to Jeff Dugdale, Barbara McTaggart, Brian Sole, D. Hogarth, Wendy Buckle, David Rossall, Dave Armitage, and everyone else who sent stamps - the children had great fun sorting through and selecting from the stamps you sent. Thanks for taking the time - we hope you enjoyed the challenge too - your support is greatly appreciated. The children managed to finish sixteen pages just in time to display at the school show. You can see some of their sheets on the 'Just4Kids' pages of this magazine.

Once again, it proves what helpful people stamp collectors are, and how we like to share our hobby with others.

MAJOR MILESTONES IN MANNED SPACEFLIGHT

From: Jeff Dugdale

Correction: in my article in June *Themescene* there is an error of fact. I was writing two or three similar articles at the same time and knew I had made such an error but could not remember where - now I know!

Re page p 52 the American entrepreneur who has been in space twice is not Greg Olsen but Charles Simonyi, who did it in April 2007 and March 2009

OVERSIZE PAGES

From: Alan Sabey

In Vol. 28 No.1 of *Themescene* Barry Stagg was talking about printers for sheets wider than A4.

I have an Epson Stylus Photo 830 which accommodates the standard stamp album page. I would like to take this opportunity to mention that I do not like to see entries / displays on A4 pages. It just looks wrong when mounted on frames meant for stamp album pages.

COPERNICUS

Jeff Dugdale looks at a revolutionary astronomer

If England's favourite son is William Shakespeare, Scotland's Robert Burns, and Russia's Alexander Pushkin, then Poland's is Mikołaj Kopernik, known to the world as Nicolaus Copernicus, the man who openly challenged the thinking about the way our universe was regarded which had been taken as read for many, many centuries. Copernicus' heroic status in his homeland is evidenced by the large number of stamps issued to commemorate him by Poland.

Copernicus was quite the Renaissance Man with interests in mathematics, medicine, geography, economics, jurisprudence, military affairs, diplomacy, religious affairs, art and languages including classical Greek and Latin, so his remarks on astronomy were far from being his only achievements.

However, it is wrong to say that he alone was responsible for challenging the accepted view of how the universe was seen when he began to publish his view on the flaws in the geocentric system. The idea that everything in the universe circled the Earth was rooted in Holy Scriptures and therefore the view of the Catholic Church. It is usually referred to as the Ptolemaic Theory after the Roman astronomer and astrologer Claudius Ptolemaeus (90—168 A.D.) whose *Almagest* was revered well into the early Middle Ages as a presentation of how things were in the sky.

In the 5th, 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. great men of learning like Philolaos of Tarente, Heraclides of Pontus and Aristarchos of Samos respectively, had promulgated heliocentric theories contradicting Aristotle, but Ptolemaeus's geocentric theory had taken over as the accepted wisdom and had been adopted by the Catholic Church as a true representation of how things were for almost fifteen centuries thereafter. However, after the Dark Ages, as science began to flourish once more in the 16th century it was Copernicus who published polemical tracts about the geocentric theory.

Copernicus' family is said to have come from Lower Silesia in South West Poland, hence his name meaning "one who works with copper". (See 1972 cancel from Koperniki Post Office), but he had been born in 1473 in the Polish town of Toruń, which lies on the River Vistula in northern Poland. The house in which Copernicus was born appears on Poland 2069,



and Wojciech Brudzewski encouraged him to think critically about geocentric theory.

his maternal uncle Bishop Lucas Watzenrode took his education in hand and within ten years led him to study classical philosophy, medicine, maths, trigonometry and astronomy at the "Jagiellonian" University of Cracow, one of the oldest universities in Europe and so called after a dynasty of Polish monarchs. Here mathematics professors such as John of Glogów



Until it was destroyed by the Nazis in 1944, a statue of Copernicus, possibly the university's greatest alumni, stood in its courtyard and appears on a number of stamps. The statue has since been reconstructed and relocated in Cracow.

In 1495, as young scholars with a patron did at the time, Copernicus went abroad to further his education, studying church law at the oldest university in the world, the University of Bologna in northern Italy. Here his mathematics, astronomy and astrology mentor Domenico Maria Novara may well have sown further seeds of doubt about the geocentric system in his young student's mind: he made his first celestial observations under Novara's guidance in 1497 and later referenced these in his *magnum opus*. In the same year his uncle and patron Watzenrode became the Bishop of Warmia. Unusually, as his nephew was studying in Italy and such clerics are supposed to live and work within a diocesan campus, Copernicus was made canon



at Frombork Cathedral. Since he was permitted to remain in Italy this form of tolerant patronage looks closer to nepotism, especially as when Copernicus was recalled to Frombork in 1501 he was almost immediately allowed to move back to Italy, this time to study medicine at the University of Padua, and two years later he graduated in church law in Ferrara. This extended spell in Italy is referenced on three 1970 stamps (Poland 1995-7).

So in 1503 Copernicus returned home as a graduate physician working in Lidzbark Warmiński (then known as Heilsberg) at the Bishop of Warmia's Castle, where as secretary to his uncle and patron Bishop Watzenrode he practised his skills in diplomacy, ecclesiastical administration and teaching. Significantly it was here, we understand, that he wrote early parts of his *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, (*On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*) finally to be published as one text by John Petreius of Nuremburg in 1543, the year of his death.

However Copernicus' first significant text was *The Commentariolus* (c.1510) which was not published widely but circulated amongst friends for comment. It was a short, easily readable text clearly laying out his heliocentric theories, which he would later expand on in *De revolutionibus*. In his *Commentariolus* he states explicitly that all planetary orbits are of the Sun and that "the centre of the Universe is close to the Sun".



This reference to elliptical (not perfectly circular) planetary orbits was his way of trying to explain our differing seasons, which of course is now known to be because of the Earth's tilted axis. He continued however to hold to the idea that all the stars in the sky were a fixed distance in the firmament, like a giant ceiling in relation to the Earth, and that perceived movements of celestial objects are in fact optical illusions caused by the movement of our planet.

In 1510 he moved the short distance from Heilsberg into Frombork town (aka Frauenburg) where he was to spend a large part of the rest of his life. However for five years from 1516 he lived at Olsztyn Castle working as a senior ecclesiastical and civil administrator and from time to time more or less as a hobby - and certainly not in a professional role - making astronomical observations. When it was attacked by Teutonic forces in 1519 he directed the defence of the besieged town.

Copernicus's lasting achievement whilst living at Frombork was to complete the various parts of his *De revolutionibus*. This was a six-part work, written in episodes between 1514 and 1530, building on his assertions in *Commentariolus* and containing many diagrams and tables presenting the mathematics behind his claims. The final three parts relate to the movement of our Earth and of the then known six planets.

Whilst Galileo, referencing Copernicus' heliocentrism, made "heretical" statements seventy years later, causing great controversy within the Catholic Church and bringing him censure and extended periods of house arrest, Copernicus' assertion that the Earth was not, as Holy Scripture said, the centre of all things, was nothing like as controversial. This may have been down to the fact that Galileo was making his claims in Italy, on the Vatican's doorstep as it were, in outrageous ways, whilst Copernicus, many hundreds of miles away in Poland, although a Catholic priest, had published his ideas in a quieter style.



The sixth series of stamps issued by Poland to commemorate the 500th anniversary of his birth in 1973 presents us with five different portraits showing him from youth to mature adult so we do have a good idea of what he looked like. The 1z.50 value of this set shows him as he was whilst a student at Cracow University. Very recently however through the wonders of modern science we have evidence of his appearance in the years before his death.

As we know Copernicus was buried in Frombork Cathedral and at the start of the nineteenth century the Scientific Society of

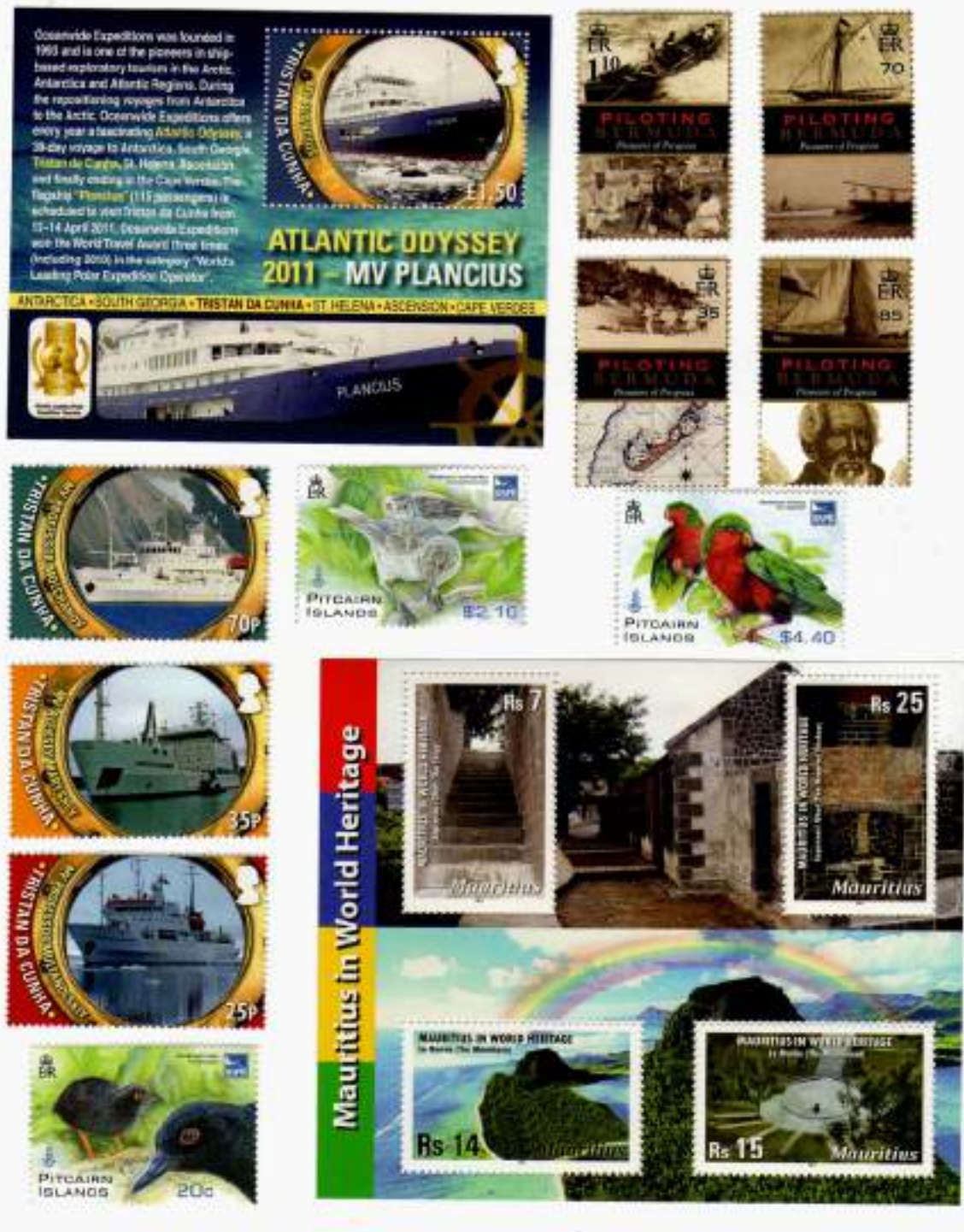
Warsaw examined what was believed to be his tomb, without much success. Two hundred years later Professor George Gasowski of the Pultusk Institute of Anthropology found human remains including a skull in the Cathedral crypt, and because two of Copernicus' hairs were known to be in a book in a museum in Uppsala, Sweden, DNA analysis was used to determine that the remains at Frombork were indeed from Copernicus' grave. The book with Copernicus' DNA had been taken when many national Polish treasures were robbed by Swedish forces in the 17th century. Using well known techniques, forensic anthropologists



were able to reconstruct the great man's face, complete with broken nose, as the extract shown here from a Polish newspaper demonstrates. Comparison with the 2z.70 stamp shown in the set above, showing a portrait by Zinck Nor of Copernicus as a middle aged man suggests that the reconstruction is a good one. ☑

NEW ISSUES

The stamps below are reproduced with the kind assistance of Harry Allan,
P O Box 5, Poole, Dorset, BH12 9GF



WILLIAM MORRIS

Paul Horton looks at the life of the artist, craftsman, printer and social reformer

William Morris was born 24 March 1834 at Elm House, Clay Hill, Walthamstow, which at that time was a village on the edge of Epping Forest, east of London. The eldest son of a wine importer, he attended Marlborough College in 1848 but was taken away after the public school riots of 1851 and had a private tutor until he entered Exeter College Oxford in 1853. It was here he met Edward Burne-Jones with whom he formed a lifelong friendship. Here he also met his future wife Jane Burden, and encountered Dante Gabriel Rossetti. His parents intended him to enter the clergy, but he renounced the Church and read Literature and the Classics. At Oxford he began his appreciation of calligraphy and romantic poetry, spending many hours in the Bodleian Library studying mediaeval manuscripts. He founded the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* devoted to romantic tales and social articles. Upon coming down with a pass degree he studied architecture, being articled to G. E. Street.



Morris started the company of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (generally known as The Firm) in 1861 at Red House, Bexley, Kent, the house designed for Morris and his new wife by Philip Webb, to produce stained glass, jewelry, embroidery and woven fabrics. This was also the year that his first child, Jane Alice (Jenny) was born, but by 1865 when The Firm moved back to London stained glass emerged as the principal business.

In 1871 Rossetti and Morris became joint tenants of the Manor House at Kelmscott in Oxfordshire, for which Morris designed the decorations. It was from here he published his first book of poems *The Earthly Paradise*. He was dissatisfied with the first proofs from The Chiswick Press, and having attended a lecture by Emery Walker on the subject of printing and book design, Morris decided to set up his own print shop at Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall, Hammersmith (now headquarters of the William Morris Society www.morrissociety.org/Kelmscott_House.html).

He started with a second-hand Albion press rescued from a printer's storeroom, and employed three compositors: William Bowden and his son and daughter. Morris gave consideration to the paper, the form of type, spacing of letters, words, and lines, and their position on a facing pair of pages. The paper had to be handmade, wholly free from linen, and not too strong. The ink had to be dense black, and unable to find what he wanted in England he turned to Jaenrcke of Germany. Morris studied contemporary typefaces and found them disagreeable, so he designed Golden (originally called Jenson Morris as it was based on the roman typeface of Nicholas Jenson) named after the Caxton translation of *The Golden Legend*. This was followed by the great primer font Troy and the smaller pica version which he called Chaucer. The punches were cut by Edward Prince, punchcutter of Islington, and cast by the Fen Street Foundry of Sir Charles Reed & Son.

The narrative poem *The Earthly Paradise*, published in 1868, earned Morris great popularity and later consideration as Poet Laureate to succeed Tennyson, an honour which he declined. The Kelmscott Press was responsible for 18,000 copies of 53 different printed works comprising 66 volumes. Many of these were of his own writings. The Press was finally wound up, after completing all work in hand, in March 1898, two years after the death of its founder.

Soon after taking the Kelmscott Press Morris departed on the first of his two tours of Iceland. The Sagas had a deep, abiding effect on him, and he translated many of the stories of Icelandic heroes of the past, aided by an Icelandic scholar.

Between 1866 and 1867 The Firm carried out redecoration of rooms at St. James's Palace, and the Green Dining Room in what is now the Victoria and Albert Museum. Morris & Co. moved to Merton Abbey, near Wimbledon, Surrey, in 1881; and on part of the seven acre site William de Morgan, the celebrated potter, founded a studio. It was at Merton that The Firm began to register a series of textile patterns including those named after tributaries of the River Thames: Windrush, Evenlode, Kennet and Medway. Unfortunately Morris's technique, employing high-warp looms, meant he was unable to reduce the price of his goods to bring them within the reach of the proletariat.



In 1883 Morris joined the Social Democratic Federation and funded their newspaper *Justice* and many of their activities. He was a champion of the causes of the working man and went on to form the Socialist League, a breakaway group. He was instrumental in encouraging the unemployed to demonstrate. He fell foul of the police when he refused to desist but as a “gentleman” the magistrate only fined him one shilling, while the rest of the demonstrators were each fined £20, which Morris also paid.

Morris in the Midlands

Although Morris never visited Wightwick Manor, three miles west of Wolverhampton, many aspects of his work can be seen there: wallpaper, embroidery, textiles, carpets and tiles. The National Trust are holding an exhibition of Morris's work at the Manor until the end of the year (see

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-vh/w-visits/w-events/w-events-find_event.htm?c=1)

Reference

Thompson, Paul (1991) *The Works of William Morris*

Article jointly published with “Philateli-Graphics”

MAIL FOR THE BLIND

Keith Lloyd examines an unusual piece of postal history

Many countries allow certain material for the blind to be sent through the post at reduced rates or free of charge. Little seems to have been published about this in the philatelic literature until the recent book by Gavin Fryer [1], which looks at the history of the concessions, depicts many covers and includes rate tables for various countries.

A few months ago, some Chinese covers were offered on the Delcampe auction site (www.delcampe.net) one of which is illustrated here. The covers, sent by a Mr Wang in Shanghai, are undoubtedly philatelic: most were sent to poste restante addresses in Taiwan and were subsequently returned to the sender.



The cover bears two indications that it is mail for the blind:

(1) A label depicting a person with a white stick and the back of an envelope.

(2) A two-line bilingual (Chinese/French) handstamp in red. The four characters romanise as "Mangren duwu" and translate as "Blind person's reading matter".

A revolution in China late in 1911 saw the end of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China. The ROC introduced a new calendar in which 1912 was year 1. When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the ROC calendar was abandoned in favour of the Common Era (CE) calendar, but the ROC calendar continued in use in Taiwan.

The cover's journey can be traced from the four datestamps on it:

(1) 2007.05.04 Shanghai, Sichuan Road Bridge

(2) 7.5.07 Taipei [Taibei]

(3) 96.5.8 Taitung [Taidong], Tatung [Datong] Road
[ROC year 96 = 2007 CE]

(4) 2007.05.18 Shanghai, Guangzhong Road [backstamp]

Fryer gives rates for articles for the blind for the Republic of China, including Taiwan. The information is taken from Sieh and Blackburn [2], which he consistently misrenders as Sich and Blackburn. I have no information on PRC rates for mail for the blind, but the 50 fen charged on the cover is certainly much less than the ordinary postage rate. I do not know recent rates, but in 1999 the ordinary charge would have been ¥1.50 (letter to Taiwan) + ¥3.00 (registration) + ¥0.50 (10g air supplement) = ¥5.00.

References

[1] Fryer, Gavin *Blindman's mail* author, Addlestone, 2010.

[2] Sieh, Ping-wen and Blackburn, J. Lewis *Postage rates of China* Directorate General of Posts, Taiwan, 1981. ☐

THEMATIC POSTAL HISTORY

Part two of John Hayward's series offering ideas for enhancing your collection

In this article I will move on to thematic postal history and the means by which a letter was transported. If you collect a theme which has anything to do with transport, be it by land, sea, air or even space, there is a huge amount of postal history material out there which can enhance your thematic collection and in turn complement the many stamps you have accumulated on your theme. The means by which mail has been transported over the centuries is almost endless – by people, by animals, by ship, by train, by bicycle, by balloon, by motorised vehicles, by aeroplane, by airship, and by rocket are the main categories and these can be divided into numerous further categories. In many instances the particular means of transport will be apparent from the postal markings on the letter, but this may not always be the case. So let me in this article give some examples of the very many different items of postal history which you can collect that involve a theme based on transport of some kind.

The vast majority of mail right up to the present day would have been transported at some stage of its journey by human hand so I feel I do not need to illustrate such basic transport with an example. However, if you collect postal services you may well wish to have examples in your collection of the walking postman's involvement from the 18th century onwards and especially of mail that may have experienced any onerous, difficult or dangerous journey that would have been undertaken on foot – adverse weather, mountainous terrain, wartime conditions etc. Such items add spice to one's collection. For centuries the horse was the fastest means of transporting mail overland and then the coach and horse appeared in the 18th and 19th centuries, only to be overtaken by the railways from the 1840s onwards. So mail from pre 1840 is almost certain to have been carried by horse at some stage. Look at the letter in figure 1 dated 28 June 1799 from Sommers Town, London, to Alnwick, Northumberland. That is quite some distance to travel by road in those days. It would have been carried by coach and horses and the addressee charged 9d on delivery, being the penny post fee not paid and 8d fee for delivery over 150 miles.



Fig 1



Fig 2

With the coming of the railways in the mid 19th century the carriage of mail was greatly speeded up, especially to the Far East if much of the sea voyage could be eliminated. The letter in figure 2 illustrates this. It was sent from Hanover in 1858 to Hong Kong and would normally have travelled by ship through the North Sea, down round Gibraltar and on to Egypt.

Instead it travelled by rail from Hanover on 1 April 1858 to Trieste, hence the “Overland Mail via Triest” manuscript notation, where it arrived on 4 April. Thence by ship to Alexandria, Egypt, where it arrived on 16 April to travel overland to Suez. The final journey was by ship from Suez to Hong Kong where it arrived on 21 May 1858. This is a superb item in itself with several other postal markings on the front and reverse which would delight any postal historian let alone a thematic collector of trains, ships or postal services.

If you collect travelling or mobile post offices there is some fine material on cover out there to enhance your collection. Figures 3 and 4 show the front and back of a letter sent on 20 September 1947 aboard a steamer on the White Nile river to Tanganyika. This is evidenced by the registered label of the travelling post office on board the steamer and handstamps on the front and back. It travelled to Khartoum by steamer and then by airmail to Kenya before continuing its journey overland. Collectors of ships, the river Nile and even camels would covet this letter!



Fig 3

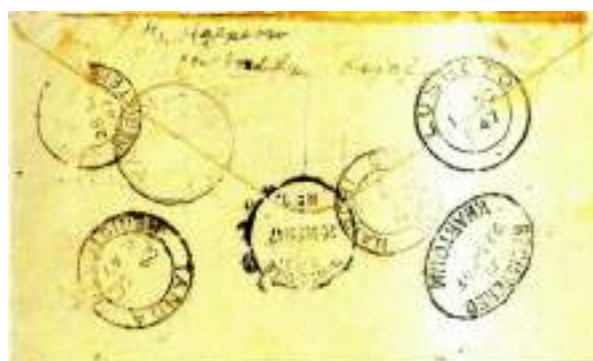


Fig 4

More trains and shipping are involved in the carriage of the letter in figures 5 and 6 (front and back). I am particularly fond of this item as I bought it 25 years ago for £2 from a dealer’s junk box! It is an American special delivery item intended to speed up the delivery to catch the addressee before she left New York on a liner. It failed gloriously! Despite being sent two days in advance by rail from Indiana - note the railway post office handstamps (“RPO”) on the front and back – delivery to the dockside was too late as the ship had sailed, hence the post office cachets on the front and back. But that is not the end of the story. The address was deleted and a forwarding address in France added in manuscript. The letter then crossed the

Atlantic in another ship and was received in Levallois on 11 February 1936.



Fig 5



Fig 6

Figure 7 shows a cover that also travelled by rail and ship with a Russian express delivery stamp affixed that did little to speed its delivery. It was sent from Kharkov, USSR, on 29 March 1936 to Haiphong then in Indo-China. Kharkov is about halfway between the Black Sea and Moscow, so it would have travelled by rail first to Moscow and then by the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok although there are no postal markings on the letter to confirm this. The rest of its journey would have been by ship to Haiphong where it arrived on 11 May 1936 (evidenced by a backstamp) a journey of 43 days altogether. Not exactly express delivery, but a nice postal history thematic item.



Fig 7



Fig 8

Let me finish this article with a couple of covers involving the transport of mail by road vehicles. Figure 8 illustrates delivery in Holland by mail van in 1930. The letter is clearly damaged and the clue to this is the cachet in Dutch which translates as “damaged by fire in mail van between Arnhem and Emmerich”. A nice item for a collector on the theme of fire as well as postal transport.

Figure 9 is a letter carried by either car or motor-cycle by the courier service of the West German police – confirmed by the “Durch Polizeikurier” cachet. This is a very suitable item for collectors of police. This particular service was operated by the police in West Germany from 1945 to 1964 between police bureaux, local authorities and Government offices. In my next article I will illustrate more of the carriage of mail by road vehicles, move on to airmail and some of the more unusual means of the carriage of mail. ☐





Tony Bray
International Stamp Dealers

71 Bradford Road
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West Yorkshire
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BTA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On Saturday 11th July, a large number of BTA members travelled to Swinpex, held at a superb new community education college on the outskirts of Swindon. Over fifty dealers were in attendance, a surprisingly high number for a show in the provinces, and a large number of visitors passed through the doors throughout the day, many having travelled from far afield. The BTA Committee had decided that, following the appalling organisation at Midpex 2009 and the failure to be able to provide proper meeting facilities at this year's Midpex, the AGM would be held at Swinpex. It is fair to say that it was a very good decision. Richard Wheeler, Chairman, opened the meeting with his report on the Association's activities for the previous year.

This being Richard's last report and meeting as Chairman, due to his decision to stand down after a period of four years, Brian Sole, Patron, paid tribute, on behalf of the members, to Richard's hard work and dedication and wished him well for the future. Following this the other formal business proceeded in an orderly manner.

Minutes of the 20^h Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 11 June 2011 at Swinpex, at St Joseph's Roman Catholic College, Ocotal Way, Swindon SN3 3LR



Before the meeting commenced our President, John Hayward presented the Franceska Rapkin Memorial Bowl to Richard Wheeler for 'Best Article in Themescene' during the year 2010 for his article 'The Progress of Puppets' and congratulated him on this achievement.

Present: The Chairman, and 15 other members.

Apologies: Edward Quinton, Graham Boutle, Charles Oppenheim, Peter Greening, Ursula Golding

The Chairman, Richard Wheeler, welcomed everyone to the 20th Annual General Meeting particularly those who had not attended an AGM before and also to any guests attending.

Minutes of the 19th Annual General Meeting held on 12th June 2010

These had been published in *Themescene* September 2010 and were circulated at this meeting. Barry Stagg proposed and Michael Blackman seconded that the Minutes be accepted as a true record – passed unanimously.

Matters arising: There were no matters arising.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman's report covered the period from the last AGM held at Swinpex on 12 June 2010, whereas the Treasurer's report will cover the calendar year 2010. This year the Friends of Thematica, under the direction of Brian Sole, are holding the BTA Cup Competition at Midpex and at the present time there are five entries.

Peter Denly, our Membership Secretary, reports another drop of 23 in the membership since this time last year. Currently there are 233 paid up members and age and ill health continue to take their toll. It is a very time consuming job in maintaining the records and answering queries and his efforts are much appreciated. He attended the West of England Thematic Society as a guest speaker in April and did the BTA proud.

The Committee does a lot to spread the word of collecting Thematics and to this end seminars have been organised out of London. As previously reported in *Themescene*, last August the President and the Chairman arrived for a thematic workshop at Portishead near Bristol but no-one turned up! As usual however our President has been very busy spreading the word. His efforts on behalf of the BTA are much appreciated and the Chairman thanked him for his help over the past year. He has been a great support in more ways than one!

During the year the Chairman had found that, at times, he had not been able to participate in some events due to health problems and this has made him decide not to stand again as Chairman. He was very grateful for the help of our Secretary Anne Stammers, who as usual has been a tour de force, arranged meetings and been a considerable help to Richard during the past year. Another reason why Richard wants to take a back seat is that he is becoming more reliant on his wife to drive him to the main railway station, an hour from his home and to return later to pick him up, not always convenient as she has her own interests and dates can clash.

Peter Wood, our Treasurer maintains a careful watch over our finances and does not have an easy job balancing the books when costs are rising at an alarming rate.

What can one say about Wendy Buckle, editor of *Themescene* which is universally praised? She does so much for the BTA and is always ready to help. As the Vice Chairman she also fronted the presence of the BTA at the National Exhibition at Sheffield in May whilst John, our President and the Chairman were in Essen. Richard expressed his grateful thanks.

Mike Blackman, our Advertising Manager continues to seek new advertisers for the magazine with limited success, but perseveres for which he has our thanks. If you have any leads please contact him.

Simon Moorcroft, who is our Publicity Officer has had limited time to spend during the past year as he is studying Law at University and exams come first – we all wish him success.

Our affiliation with the American Topical Association is as strong as ever. James Etherington is now the BTA representative. Please contact him for lists of topics. The ATA would be grateful for help in updating lists and gratefully receive new ones.

Other members of the Committee, Brian Sole, Gerald Lovell and Charles Oppenheim are also thanked for their contribution and help in the running of the BTA.

The website www.brit-thematic-assoc.com continues to be a credit to the BTA and is regularly maintained with a host of news and information. Our thanks go to the Web Master Jim Wigmore.

We now have one of the largest archives of material and books in the control of our Librarian Ron Backhouse and the Chairman thanked him for handling this essential service for our members.

Although Thematix is not being staged at the Harlequins Rugby Ground this year, it is going to the West Country to the Dartmoor Lodge Hotel, Ashburton on October 29. The WETS annual competition is also being held there, likewise the presence of the Wessex Federation. In the past year we have had a presence in International and National Competitions and here the Chairman listed all those that had been successful [list available via the Editor on request]. The Chairman congratulated all our members that had participated in these competitions particularly Lesley Marley and Peter Suhadolc, both European Champions. A wide range of topics is covered in the collections of those taking part.

The Chairman gave his best wishes for the future of the BTA and reiterated the need to encourage new members and to give guidance to youngsters in a hobby which can provide a lifetime of interest.

The Chairman was thanked for his report, which was unanimously accepted.

Treasurer's Report for the year ended 31 December 2010.

As shown by the Income and Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31 December 2010 we had a deficit of £119 which compares to the 2009 deficit of £736.

The net cost of BTA activities at the 2010 international was £309. We were helped by generous donations, assistance in table-sharing costs from ALBA and the Bicycle Stamp Club and commission from sales of the *Slania* book which could be ordered from our table.

Income

The increase in subscription is now reflected, and would have covered our costs in respect of *Themescene*, meetings and administration. However, the 2010 exhibition meant that, as so often, there was a "one-off" event taking us into a deficit position. In the future Committees may have to determine that they have external funds in place, probably donations, before committing to such events. Advertising held up after the big fall last year and as always we are very grateful for the support we receive.

Costs

There was an increase in *Themescene* costs of £260, but the Treasurer pointed out that this is shown inclusive of postage. Not being a Eurothema year meant there were no International Activity costs.

There were reductions in publicity costs and Administrative expenses while other costs were relatively unchanged.

ATA

While not significant in our overall accounts it was explained that in fact we show an ATA net cost where income should be appearing! During the year we became aware that amounts were owing to the ATA relating to list sales for the past two to three years. This was resolved with them in an amicable manner and agreement made that in future the BTA Treasurer will make a single PAYPAL remittance each year. We have therefore overstated our ATA income in the past two year's accounts.

Forecast

It has now become clear that membership renewals have fallen significantly for 2011 and so my forecast is for a 2011 deficit in the order of £300.

John Hayward said that donations of material in the last 4-5 months had picked up and sales should increase to £100+ as there were some nice items donated that will go to Auction.

John Hayward proposed, and Wendy Buckle seconded, that the Treasurer's report be accepted – *agreed unanimously*.

Peter Wood gave his personal thanks to Graham Boutle for acting as 'examiner' and he has agreed to carry on.

Election of Officers

Treasurer and Secretary - Peter Wood and Anne Stammers were both willing to stand again – Peter Denly proposed and Wendy Buckle seconded that they be re-elected – *agreed*.

The position of Chairman remains vacant – Wendy Buckle was willing to be Chairman only if someone else took over as Editor of *Themescene*.

Election of Committee Members

The following members of the Committee were willing to stand again –

Brian Sole, John Hayward, Michael Blackman, Gerald Lovell, Jim Etherington, Charles Oppenheim.

Francis Kiddle proposed and Peter Weir seconded that the Committee be re-elected 'en-bloc' – *agreed*.

Barry Stagg, proposed by Anne Stammers and seconded by Wendy Buckle, as a member of the Committee, *carried unanimously*.

Ratification of Librarian and Examiner

Ron Backhouse, librarian and Graham Boutle, examiner – it was proposed by John Hayward and seconded by Brian Sole that these positions be ratified – *carried unanimously*.

Any Other Business

a) Sales Table - Richard Wheeler reported that the Sales Table has made a big contribution to the BTA funds and hopes that all the members will continue to support it, with contributions or by purchases.

b) Speakers - Peter Denly now had a list of 15 members willing to give displays. This was a good way of 'spreading the word' about the BTA and he thanked everyone who had put their name forward.

c) Publicity - Simon Moorcroft tries to include publicity in magazine articles but if anyone has any new ideas please let him know

d) Thank you - Brian Sole congratulated the Chairman on the short AGM and thanked the Committee for their work, Anne Stammers, Wendy Buckle and John Hayward, Jim Etherington who was now doing the ATA, Gerald Lovell, Simon Moorcroft who looks after the publicity and Peter Denly who manfully soldiers on looking after the membership, Peter Wood who has the unfortunate job of looking after the money and to Barry Stagg for joining the Committee. If anyone has ideas for increasing our funds or doing things differently please get in touch with a member of the committee.

Simon Moorhead proposed a vote of thanks to Richard Wheeler for being a very good Chairman and this was seconded by Brian Sole.

WORTH THE PAPER IT'S WRITTEN ON

Simon Moorhouse reports on the AGM display

Upon the completion of the AGM, Wendy Buckle was invited to present her display on the story of the invention, development and uses of paper. The display began with forerunners: how man began with cave paintings and carvings, assisted later with metal implements and how this developed into using parchment and vellum, the latter being still regarded and used today due its fine quality and hard wearing characteristics. Tree bark was used, particularly the bark of the cork tree, and Wendy showed a 1912 stamped cover sent from Sweden to the United States – the item was made of birch bark and had writing carved into it. In far eastern countries palm leaves were popular for writing on.



The next section was the introduction of paper, beginning with the story of its invention, credited to a wealthy Chinese courtier, T'sai Lun. His



process involved pulverising silk rags. This breakthrough meant that China, for many years, held a monopoly over paper production. The Silk Road was responsible for the first transmissions of the information from AD700, ensuring that news of it spread through Arabia, Africa and Spain. It was not until the 1490's that sufficient knowledge

was gathered in Britain to begin manufacturing.

Wendy went on to describe the sorts of early papers which were produced. The finest paper manufactured at that time in the West, and indeed remains the finest available today was linen based. Handmade paper is produced in sheets, using a mould, thus creating the



difference between laid and wove paper. Here watermarks were mentioned as these are made by the mould. Wendy explained that there was no historical proof to say definitively why such markings were developed and used, but identification and security are the most likely reasons. The material in this section included a cover from a village in the United States called Paper Mill Village; a half-sheet of a 1949 North

Vietnam issue made of straw based paper and unsurprisingly, of poor quality; and pineapple watermarked stamps from Jamaica, reflecting the natural environment of that country.

Primitive production techniques were eventually superseded by the mechanised paper mill, thus enabling mass production to begin. It was at this point that wood became the primary base material used in manufacture. The patent for the first continuous paper making machine was issued in 1799 and the design improved in Britain by the Fourdrinier brothers. A machine was built at Frogmore, Hertfordshire in 1803 and another in 1804. The basic design and concept of the Fourdrinier machine remains central to paper making machinery even today. Despite this apparent rapid and significant development, a huge amount of paper was and still is produced in very local contexts, often using innovative, if not primitive, manufacturing

processes: an illustrative example was a 1933 sheetlet from Tibet, made from very thin native paper.

Wendy then moved on to the uses of paper, in itself a vast topic. The first example highlighted was the use of Romanov stamps for currency (small denominations for small transactions) required due to shortages of metal caused by the Russian Revolution. While originally ordinary stamps were used for this, subsequent printings of the 10k, 15k and 20k stamps were done on stouter card to ensure they were more hardwearing. The exhibit also contained some lovely newspaper items, with some interesting wrappers.

One of the pre-requisites for letters, postage stamps and stationary and thus the whole hobby of philately is paper. Indeed paper remains, despite developments, crucial to communication, and thus economic and social systems across the globe. She showed examples of how philatelic, paper-based, developments have tried to aid communications. This section gave



rise to an interesting sub-section, namely campaigns concerned with paper itself. Shown were notices and adverts printed on philatelic material urging people to re-use, donate paper or economise on usage in order to conserve supplies; with some particularly interesting examples from World War II and a practical example from Russia in 1917 where a notice announcing the dissolution of the Duma was printed on the reverse of a sheet of Romanov currency stamps.

In addition, the concern over wastage, environmental damage and resource depletion has led to a surge in recycling and examples of campaigns encouraging this and less usage of non-biodegradable materials were shown.

The final section looked to the future. Like any product, service or commodity the future is always uncertain. The development of computers and electronic communication has undoubtedly changed and developed the role of paper. The latest developments in technology, such as handheld devices, with all the innovative software packages which come as standard, have led some to speculate on the demise of paper.

The last item was a beautifully illustrated envelope off-set by a quote from an 18th century author (unknown): “rags make paper, paper makes money, money makes banks, banks make loans, loans make beggars, beggars make rags”. Apt words given the events since 2008!



MIDPEX AND FRIENDS OF THEMATICA

Warwickshire Exhibition Centre, 2 July 2011

Midpex was held this year in a new and vastly improved venue. Access was very easy, being only a few miles off the M40 (and plenty of parking), or the alternative of rail with a free shuttle bus service from Leamington Station. The layout was ideal, with dealers, specialist societies and Friends of Thematica all on one floor. It was also very spacious, and many people commented on the ease and comfort of getting round. Catering was provided on a mezzanine floor overlooking the event, with snacks and full meals offered right through until closing time. Another 'plus' on a hot day was the ventilation which ensured a pleasant, cool temperature all day. 43 specialist societies had tables, including Alba Study Group, Bird Stamp Society and Railway Philatelic Group. There were 59 dealers, including a few from overseas. It was well worth spending the whole day at the event.

Scottish members of the Alba Stamp Group. Alba have been supporting Midpex since it started in 1995



Friends of Thematica held their annual competitions at Midpex. The BTA Cup, judged by Brian Sole and Richard West, had five entries, with the clear winner (large vermeil) being Mark Humfrey with “From Mexican Flower to Worldwide Flavour”, a fascinating look at the origins, history, cultivation, supply and uses of vanilla. It is a member of the orchid family, originally grown in Mexico and later cultivated by the Aztecs. The Spanish, recognizing its flavour and sweetening properties, brought the plant to Europe.

Other entries were:

Barry Stagg “Archery Through the Ages” (silver). Covered materials, methods, and equipment needed, its uses in hunting and warfare, and archery as a sport.

Geoff Hood “Signs of Life” (silver). Described how signs and symbols are used to inform, advise, guide, direct and cajole us throughout our lives, from cradle to grave.

Peter Miller “Iron Walls: the rise and fall of the battleship” (silver). Recounted the history of iron battleships from the earliest days, through the Dreadnoughts, development during the twentieth century, through to their end.

Malcolm Hawkins ““Visit New Zealand” (Hors Concours). A tourist’s view of the country through its airmails.

The John Fosbery Thematic Trophy had seven entries, and was awarded by popular vote on the day to James Dickinson for “Jesuit Powder, its discovery, use and development: the story of quinine”. Why ‘Jesuit Powder’? Because Pope Urban VIII actively encouraged quests for new scientific knowledge, and travellers from Jesuit missions abroad brought new cures to Rome. The runner-up was Helen Eastgate with “Sewing Machines”



James Dickinson being presented with the Fosbery Trophy by Brian Sole

Other Fosbery entries were:

Trevor Fray On the Square [Freemasonry]

Peter Kirk Giraffes

Reg Lyon Christmas Seals of the United States

Reg Lyon Aspects of Welsh Philately

Mike Thompson Archery

The Healey & Wise Salver for the Inter-Federation Competition was contested between two federations only: Surrey and Sussex which each contributed three entries. Winners were The Association of Sussex Philatelic Societies with:

Jim Etherington “A Failed Expedition: The BEF in France” (large vermeil)

Grace Davies “Symbols of Peace: The Dove and the Olive Branch” (vermeil)

Angela Reilly “Olympic Champions” (silver)

The Barclays Cup Competition was also held, with a gratifyingly large number of entries in the younger categories. Group A (up to 8 years, 4 sheets) had 19 entries; Group B, (ages nine to twelve years, 8 sheets) had 29 entries; while Group C (ages 13 – 18, 16 sheets) had two entries. Judges were looking for originality in the entry.

Next Year, Friends of Thematica has been invited to hold its competitions at the Congress of The Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies to be held at Perth on 13th to 14th April 2012. More details will be available from Brian Sole (see page 82). ☰

THEMATIC EXHIBITING SEMINAR

18th June 2011

Wendy Buckle learns a lot and resolves to try harder

John Hayward, assisted by Jim Etherington, both of them international exhibitors, ran an all-day seminar held at the 'Royal' which aimed to encourage as many people as possible to enter competitions, and in particular:

- ◆ to increase the number of entries to the BTA Cup
- ◆ to increase the number of thematic entries at Stampex
- ◆ to encourage more people to compete at Eurothema
- ◆ to improve the national level currently being attained.

It was made clear at the outset that while the seminar would cover information for any entry from 16 to 64 sheets, it would concentrate on 16 - 32 sheets (1 - 2 frames), making the day accessible to all of the twelve attendees who ranged in experience from beginners to national level exhibitors.

It was a busy day! John covered a lot of ground, looking at all aspects of exhibiting:

- ◆ Presentation - some do's and don'ts
- ◆ Title & Plan - limiting the extent of the exhibit and how to arrange the plan
- ◆ Developing the Plan - telling the story and maintaining the thread
- ◆ Treatment - thematic and philatelic knowledge.

It was also a very positive day. All the points were made with reference to some displays on show, not to criticise but to make positive suggestions. Helpful tips far outweighed the lists of "don'ts" (though there were some).

It must be said that either you enjoy the discipline of competing, or you don't, and the BTA is there for all thematic collectors, not just the competitive ones. But for those of us who do want to enter competitions the day was enjoyable as well as helpful. I had the chance to meet a few BTA members who until now I've only known via email, and one of the nice aspects of

the day was the social side of members getting together.

John is preparing a very detailed guide, based on the seminar, which will be on the BTA website in due course.

Thanks to both John and Jim for all the hard work which went into the day. ☺



EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP FOR THEMATIC PHILATELY

John Hayward had a fine time in Essen

The 5th European Championship for Thematic Philately was held at Essen, Germany, from 5th to 7th May 2011. The BTA was well represented at this major event with Patron Brian Sole acting as a judge, Peter Suhadolc competing in the Champions Class and four members competing in the Championship itself. The weather was fine and sunny throughout the three days, and seemed to be welcoming us all back to Essen to the event's traditional venue after last year in Paris. I was able to join Lesley Marley, Richard Wheeler and Peter Weir as fellow exhibitors, along with my wife and David and Jane Griffiths from the UK. and I can say how thoroughly we all enjoyed ourselves.



The layout of the exhibition was as usual in two parts, the dealers and the exhibits all on the same floor of the large Essen Messe building, entry to which was free. It was pretty full on every day. It took me two whole days to get round the 60 thematic exhibits in between conversations and discussions with old continental friends and fellow exhibitors. I soon realised the standard was extremely high and what a diversity there was to look at, not just in the material on display, but in the layout of each exhibit. There were plenty of ideas to note and adopt next time round. The

competition was split into eight main thematic categories, and of course mine being the Transport category I made a beeline for this first to find two more motor-cycle exhibits, two bicycle exhibits and one on motor-cars. These gave me some more items to hunt for which I had not seen before. The two bicycle exhibits were outstanding as was the exhibit on the motor-car, all much better than mine I had to confess. Visits to the other categories found a superb exhibit on the American Indians and the Evolution of Western Monastic Life. The American Indians exhibit showed how to take a one country based theme and include philatelic items from all over the world within it. It had some marvellous postmarks of places named after or for American Indian tribes. There was a lovely modern exhibit on Owls by our old friend Koenraad Bracke from Belgium – very colourful and with many large items. The exhibit on the Holocaust which I had seen in Vienna and Rome previously was there. It is so evocative, but I felt this time round it had not been improved on and when we eventually got the marks this proved to be the case.

Overall I was struck by the number of items included in the exhibits from the pre stamp period, that is before 1840. One cover was from 1772! Several exhibits included a Mulready cover which, as many of you know, has a variety of themes depicted and also some themes that exhibitors must have spent some time contemplating to fit in with their exhibit. On the other hand there were also caricatures of the Mulready in several exhibits and whilst these

are fine satirical records of those times, their inclusion puzzled me as they are entirely private and nothing to do with official postal stationery.

After an excellent buffet on the second night at the event hotel the results of the competition were eagerly awaited, and we were not disappointed by them. To start with, the first three in each category were announced, and whilst Richard, Peter and myself did not attain these dizzy heights, the UK managed to win the Animals and Plants category with Lesley Marley taking gold (91 points) with her *Whale's Tale*. We Brits greeted this announcement with gusto. It meant that Lesley went forward to the final voting for the European Thematic Champion (Eurovision style voting) where she came 5th overall which is a terrific achievement. The winner was Jari Majander from Finland with his bicycle exhibit, *Wheels of Chance*, (96 points), a superb exhibit. Second was Wolf Hess (Germany) with *American Indians* 95 points. Then the results were handed out for us also-rans and the Brits did rather well. Richard Wheeler and John Hayward both gained large vermeil medals with 85 and 86 points respectively for *Masks, Myths, Mimes and the Evolution of Puppets* and *The Iron Steed*. Peter Weir was awarded a vermeil medal (82 points) for his *Liquid of Life*. On the last morning the judges provided their critique of the exhibits for those exhibitors present. This was well received, as the criticism was constructive on how to improve one's exhibit. Then it was off to the dealers for a final spending spree, a flying visit to the Villa Hugel, Alfred Krupp's house, for some culture, and then collecting one's exhibit and back to the UK. A great exhibition and next year's event cannot come soon enough. ☰

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HERE AND THERE

SPRING STAMPEX 2012 SEMINARS

At Spring Stampex 22/25 February 2012 the theme for the exhibits will be "The Pictorial Classes". This will involve Thematic Philately, the Postcard Class and Open Philately (including Open and Social Classes). Application forms for these classes will be obtainable from the ABPS website www.abps.org.uk/Exhibiting/index.xalter

In addition three seminars will be held at the exhibition:

- Thematic Philately to be led by Wolf Hess RDP, an FIP Thematic Judge and exhibitor, who has formed gold medal exhibits in the thematic class as well as other classes. This includes large gold medals and Grande Prix Thematique for his exhibit "Fight Against Tuberculosis" at Hafnia 2001 and at the European Championship 2006 in the Thematic Class.
- Open Philately to be led by Birthe King and Christine Earle. Each is a gold medal winner in this discipline in the UK and overseas. Birthe is a National Judge in Denmark and the UK and a Nordia Grand Prix winner. Christine is an International Judge and received a prize at Nordia 2011 for the best introductory page.
- Postcard Class to be led by Seija-Riitta Laasko. She is a qualified postcard judge in Finland and for Nordia exhibitions. Her publications include *A handbook of collecting and exhibiting picture postcards* and *Paris 1900: Postcards from the Belle Epoque* to be published in English this autumn.

The precise dates and times of these seminars will be published on the BTA website, in *Themescene*, and on the ABPS website when they are known.

SOUTH-WEST SCOTLAND CONGRESS

On Saturday 1st October, Ayrshire Philatelic Society will be hosting the 49th Annual Congress and Exhibition of the South-West Scotland Philatelic Societies, at Prestwick Community Centre, Caerlaverock Road, Prestwick, KA9 2LD Scotland. 10.00am - 4.00pm. Free entry, plenty of free parking, refreshments available.

WEST OF ENGLAND THEMATIC SOCIETY

Thematic Stamp Day held in conjunction with the Wessex Federation
29th October 2011 10a.m.- 4.30p.m
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The John Hilsdon Thematic Competition and the Wessex Federation
competition entries will be on display

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Hotel:	Dartmoor Lodge Hotel	(01364 652232)	www.dartmoorlodge.co.uk

WEB SITES FOR THEMATIC COLLECTORS

The first of a regular column by Barry Stagg

Like many people these days I get a lot of my information off the web. News, weather forecasts, stamp auctions etc etc. For instance as I write this article I'm tracking my son flying to Alaska ... But that's another story! Although I'm sure many of the BTA members are very adept at using the web there are so many sites to look at I thought that web experts and beginners alike would like a series of articles on philatelic-related web sites that would be of interest to thematic collectors. I will not go into any technical web details but I hope I can find at least a few sites that you have not used before!

I'm going to assume that you are familiar with the eBay and Delcampe sites. I use both a lot for research as well as buying and selling and if you use them with care they are a great source of material. I shall also assume that you are aware that most auction houses these days put their material on line. Sadly, not all of them have a search engine within their web site so it can be a bit tedious to look for items of interest but if you have never looked at an auction site before try www.sandafayre.com or www.healeyandwise.co.uk.



Are you familiar with WOPA? The World Online Philatelic Agency – similar to the old Crown Agents for those old enough to remember! You can find it at www.wopa-stamps.com and to quote from its own home page 'WOPA is the only site worldwide where collectors can purchase stamps and collectibles from a choice of countries in one website, with one payment and pay FACE VALUE.' At the last count they sell modern mint

stamps from 16 countries including GB and they have a very good thematic search engine. Worthy of a look!

Also worth a look is the list of ten thematic sites in the August edition of *Stamp Monthly*. Art, Lighthouses, Space etc. And it was good to see that the BTA web site was mentioned as well.



I spend a lot of time researching or tracking down items on the web. If you think a dealers web site is only good for buying then think again! Many dealers have sites that you can search through and some have Thematic or Topical sections that can yield a lot of good philatelic information e.g. catalogue numbers. As an example try <http://www.poppe-stamps.com>

Do you know that there is a web site that lists all (well most) European Philatelic Agencies and their contact details? You can find it at www.djmcadam.com/philatelic-agencies.html. The site is not dated so I don't know how old the information is; however, if you can't find that modern Latvian stamp then this is the site just for you!



The Smithsonian in America has a large postal section so let me mention the Smithsonian National Postal Museum at <http://postalmuseum.si.edu>. If there is a philatelic heaven then this must be close to it! It has a tremendous range (all?) of USA material with a great search engine (for instance did you know that the Museum has 174 USA stamps and covers that are just related to birds)? It lists not only the stamp and the Scott catalogue number but gives all the technical detail as well. A great help

when you come to writing up your collection - assuming you have some American material.

And finally, no mention of philatelic web sites would be complete without mention of the British Postal Museum & Archive site. It's just been upgraded so take a look <http://postalheritage.org.uk>. Next time I'll talk about Facebook and its contribution to thematic collecting. Now, where is my son?



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HANDSTAMP SPECIAL

Handstamps reprinted on these pages first appeared in the "British Postmark Bulletin".

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JUST4KIDS

By Lise Whittle

(Adult members - please photocopy these pages and pass them on to a youngster you know, and perhaps include some stamps to help them.

When you photocopy this, please enlarge each page to A4 size (enlarge to 141%).

Thank you

A huge 'thankyou' from the pupils of Alloway Primary School Stamp Club to all the kind *Themescene* readers who sent stamps for their *Sound Of Music* stamp project. The pupils only had a few sessions to get their 16 pages of sheets ready in time for the show, and were VERY grateful for all your help!

Here's what Stamp Club member Kimberley wrote about it:

"Our Primary School is putting on a production of the musical 'The Sound of Music'. 'The Sound of Music' was produced in 1965, and it's based on the true story of the Von Trapp Family Singers. The main character is Maria, a young nun in a convent in Austria, who loves going to the hills to sing. The Mother Abbess is in charge of the Abbey and she decides to send Maria to be a governess for the children of the widowed Captain Von Trapp. The children soon come to love Maria and she teaches them lots of songs to sing. After a while, Maria falls in love with the Captain, and eventually they get married. They return home from their honeymoon shortly after the Nazis have marched into Austria. Captain Von Trapp is told he must rejoin the Austrian army, but it is now under Nazi control. Before this happens, the family say they must take part in a music festival where they sing, and during the festival they manage to escape, and run away across the hills to freedom in Switzerland.

We like singing the songs so much that we have decided to use stamps to illustrate some of the songs from the musical and make our own 'Sound of Music'. We really enjoyed doing it, and if you want, you can sing the songs while you look at our work!"
Look out for their completed project at national stamp shows! Just a few of their sheets are shown on the following pages.

To contact us, send in a letter or jokes, or to get your free Young Stamp Collector's CD, send your name and address to; Just4Kids, c/o The Editor, Themescene, 87 Victoria Road, Bournemouth. BH1 4RS



by Lee MCF, Dylan MCF and Alex P

CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN
sung by Mother Abbess

Climb ev'ry mountain
Search high and low
Follow ev'ry by-way
Every path you know

Climb ev'ry mountain
Ford ev'ry stream
Follow ev'ry rainbow
'Till you find your dream

A dream that will need
All the love you can give
Everyday of your life
For as long as you live.

Climb ev'ry mountain
Ford ev'ry stream
Follow ev'ry rainbow
'Till you find your dream



Climb ev'ry mountain



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By Kimberly McG

A FEW OF MY FAVOURITE THINGS
sung by Maria

Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens
Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens
Brown paper packages tied up with strings
These are a few of my favorite things

Cream colored ponies and crisp apple strudels
Door bells and sleigh bells and schnitzel with noodles
Wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings
These are a few of my favorite things

Girls in white dresses with blue satin sashes
Snowflakes that stay on my nose and eyelashes
Silver white wiskers that melt into Springs
These are a few of my favorite things

When the dog bites
When the bee stings
When I'm feeling sad
I simply remember my favourite things
And then I don't feel so bad.



Raindrops...



...on Roses



Whiskers on kittens



Bright copper kettles



Brown paper packages
Tied up with string



By Lucy P and Euan M

**HOW DO YOU SOLVE
A PROBLEM LIKE MARIA?**
*sung by the Nuns
and Mother Abbess*

She climbs a tree
And scrapes her knee
Her dress has got a tear.
She waltzes on her way to mess
And whistles on the stair.
And underneath her wimple
She has curlers in her hair!
I ever hear her singing in the abbey.
She's always late for chapel,
But her penitence is real.
She's always late for everything,
Except for every meal.
I hate to have to say it
But I very firmly feel
Maria's not an asset to the abbey!
(MARGARETTA:) I'd like to say a word in her behalf.
Maria makes me laugh!
How do you solve a problem like Maria?
How do you catch a cloud and pin it down?
How do you find a word that means Maria?
A fibberti gibbet!
A willo' the wisp!
A clown!
Mary a thing you know you'd like to tell her,
Mary a thing she ought to understand.
But how do you make her stay
And listen to all you say,
How do you keep a wave upon the sand?
Oh, how do you solve a problem like Maria?
How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?
When I'm with her I'm confused,
Out of focus and bemused,
And I never know exactly where I am.
Unpredictable as weather,
She's as flighty as a feather,
(MARGARETTA:) She's a darling.



She climbs a tree



She waltzes



And underneath her wimple

Singing...



...in the abbey



Her penitence is real

every meal



Late for chapel

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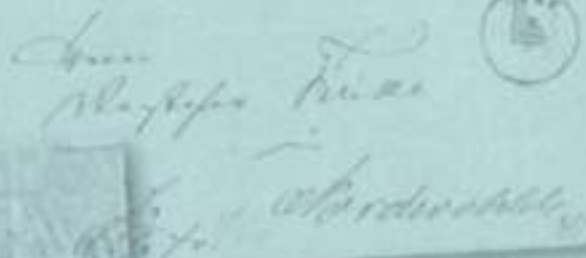
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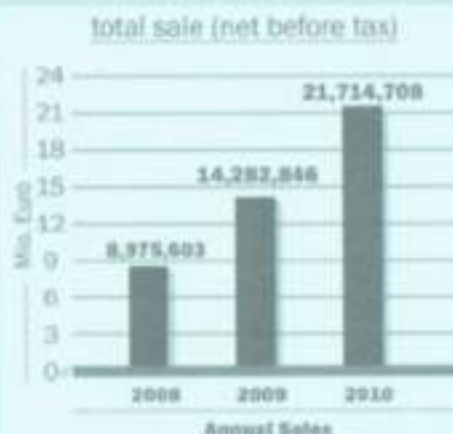


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