

THEMESCENE

June 2016

In this issue we:

Use deductive techniques

Hard Boiled Queens

With Steven Cross



BRITISH THEMATIC



ASSOCIATION

Go fossil hunting

In Search of Early Life

With Owen Green



Read an epic

Romance of the Three Kingdoms

With Jeff Dugdale



*As well as information about our
AGM and all the usual features*

BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

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HARD BOILED QUEENS, page 40



Lord Peter Wimsey



Ngaio Marsh



Charlie Chan



Perry Mason



Philip Marlowe



Ellery Queen



Robert Mitchum

THEMESCENE

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CONTENTS

REGULAR COLUMNS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Editorial <i>Wendy Buckle</i> | 38 |
| Chairman's Page <i>Barry Stagg</i> | 39 |
| Here and There | 58 |
| Group Members | 60 |
| Exhibiting Page | 64 |
| Handstamp Special | 66 |
| Just4Kids <i>Lise Whittle</i> | 67 |
| Library Listing <i>Ron Backhouse</i> | 69 |
| BTA Programme 2016 | 70 |
| BTA Competitions 2016 | 71 |
| New Issues | OBC |

SPECIAL FEATURES

| | |
|---|----|
| Hard Boiled Queens <i>Steve Cross</i> | 40 |
| In Search of Early Life <i>Owen Green</i> | 44 |
| Romance of Three Kingdoms <i>Jeff Dugdale</i> | 49 |
| BTA AGM papers | 53 |
| BTA Website | 55 |
| BTA List of Speakers | 59 |
| How I Started <i>John Davis</i> | 61 |

ADVERTISERS

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Ian Oliver | 65 |
| Stamp Insurance Services | 57 |

EDITORIAL

Wendy Buckle

I am pleased to start this Editorial by drawing your attention to our new website, which has at last gone 'live' at www.britishthematic.org.uk. It has been a long wait, but worth it for such a professional product. An outline of the site is on page 55. Those of you with Internet access please have a look at it and see what you think. Among other things the article explains how to access the Members' Only area, which gives you five year's worth of the full text of *Themescene*.

And further good news for the readership: as you can see, *Themescene* now has many more colour pages, which I hope will really improve the overall appearance of the magazine, and perhaps more importantly will do justice to the articles. Those of you who take the time and trouble to submit material will at last be able to see it to good effect on the printed page, and as back copies in full colour on our website. Maybe this will inspire you to submit an article? It really is quite flattering to see yourself in print! A browse through any issue of the magazine demonstrates that there is no limit to the subject matter, in fact I actively look for as wide a range of subjects as possible.

Being the June issue we have the paperwork for our Annual General Meeting (page 53). Minutes of the 2015 AGM were published in September 2015 *Themescene*; if you are coming to the AGM it would be helpful to have a look at these beforehand.

The winner of this year's Francesca Rapkin Bowl, awarded to the person voted by the Committee to have written the best article in *Themescene* the previous year, is Grace Davies who won with "Thankful Villages" in the September issue. Congratulations to her. Last year's winner, Steven Cross, will be giving us his display of "Fictional Detectives" following the AGM; for a flavour of the subject see his winning article in *Themescene* June 2104, which has now been followed by an article on 20th century detectives, see page 40.

While most of our members choose not to exhibit competitively, a few do. There is a major international exhibition held every ten years in the USA. This year the location is New York and will be over by the time you get this magazine, so best wishes and good luck to those exhibiting:




Thematic

Wendy Buckle
Lawrence Fisher
Lesley Marley
Margaret Morris (one frame)
Brian Sole
Peter Weir

Open

John Davies

Several BTA members (exhibiting or not) will be attending and September *Themescene* will contain a full report. Whilst there we will be flying the flag for the BTA by attending an "Informal Gathering of Members of Worldwide Thematic Associations" organised by the American Topical Association. Personally I can't wait for the whole experience. 

CHAIRMAN

Barry Stagg

I like new things so I was pleased to see a copy of the Association of British Philatelic Societies (ABPS) *Handbook and Directory* on my door mat a few weeks ago. It is a great reference book and a must for any philatelic club secretary as it lists, amongst other things, over 70 pages of potential club speakers. I was very pleased to see that the number of speakers who give Thematic talks was well over 100! Perhaps you could bring this to the attention of the person in your club who organises next year's talks?

I love going to stamp and postcard fairs as I always find something new, or a new dealer whose boxes I have not rummaged through before. Living in the West Country I get limited opportunity to go to London or the South East; however, we are blessed with some good quality fairs in this part of the world. By the time you read this WORPEX in May will be over but SWINPEX will be just around the corner in June. Both events attract some interesting dealers and are well worth a visit. The postcard fair in July at the motorcycle museum in Birmingham is a particular favourite of mine. Dozens of traders and hundreds and hundreds of buyers so get there early before the good stuff goes! August tends to be a fair-free month for me – some idea called taking a holiday with the family takes precedence! – But September will be the BTA's much anticipated weekend in Oxford. I hope you can come to this event as it is a fun weekend. And last but not least SCOTEX2016 in Perth in October looks very likely. Lots of dealers new to me in a huge venue with lots of items I cannot afford! If you are planning to go to any of these events and you see me please say hello. I enjoy meeting members and hearing about your interests.

The other new event for me this year is our totally revamped web site. More will be said about it in *Themescene* (page 55); however, I would like to thank all those who have had a hand in this venture but particularly Charles who started along this long road a year or two ago. Thanks Charles for your perseverance!



Two of my ambitions nearly came true a few weeks ago. My daughters were on holiday in Washington DC USA and they went to the National Postal Museum. Children showing an interest in philately! There is hope yet for the hobby. And to make it even better they brought back something for me that I thought I would never own (not unless I got the right six numbers on a Saturday night!) – an Inverted Jenny. Unfortunately it was in the form of a fridge magnet but the thought was good! 📖

HARD BOILED QUEENS

Steven Cross is still sleuthing

In 1920 a novel appeared that was to change both the way detectives solved the crimes and the number of people who read such novels for leisure. *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* introduced retired Belgian detective Hercule Poirot by writer Dame Agatha Mary Clarissa Christie. She is best known for the 66 detective novels and 14 short stories, most of which revolve around the investigations of such characters as Poirot, Miss Marple and Tommy and Tuppence. She also wrote the world's longest-running play, *The Mousetrap*.

Christie is the best-selling novelist of all time, the 4 billion copies rank her third, after those of William Shakespeare and the Bible. Christie is the most-translated author, her books have been translated into 103 languages. *And Then There Were None* is one of the best-selling books of all time.

Agatha Christie's reputation as "The Queen of Crime" was built by the large number of classic motifs that she introduced: a murder is committed; there are multiple suspects all concealing secrets, which the detective gradually uncovers over the course of the story, discovering the most shocking twists towards the end. In Christie's hallmark, the detective usually gathers the surviving suspects, explains the course of his or her deductive reasoning, and announces the guilty party.

The Isle of Man issued stamps featuring Agatha in 2003 as one of a set of six writers associated with the Island, and again in 2006 where she is used with seven others to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the National Portrait Gallery.

In 1991 the UK produced a prestige booklet (£6) with a front cover 'Alias Agatha Christie' and panes of several of her books: *Curtain*, *The Man in the Brown Suit*, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (which also included a floor plan of the house). There was also an item on *The Harrogate Hotel Mystery*. Pane 4 was an article about *Murder on the Orient Express*.

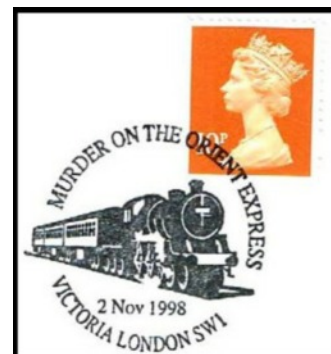
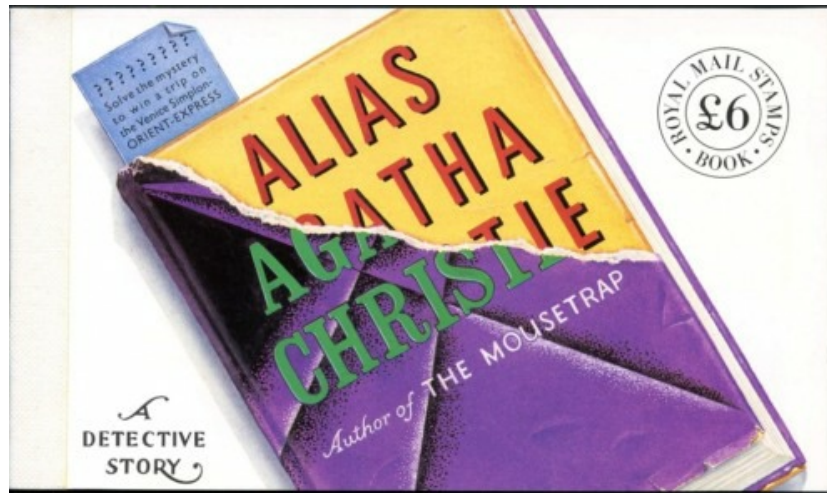
Two of her detectives have been the subject of stamps. Dominica (1996) as part of their *Legendary Sleuths* series and Nicaragua (1972) which describes Poirot as belonging to the system of intuition, using the theoretical approach instead of the scientific for deduction. By 1930 Christie found her creation 'insufferable', a 'detestable, bombastic, tiresome, ego-centric little creep' He died in 1975 (*Curtain*) and was the only fictional character to be given an obituary in the *New York Times*.

The elderly spinster, Miss Marple, based on Christie's grandmother, appears in 12 novels and 20 short stories. Dominica (1996) had Margaret Rutherford's portrayal of Jane Marple as did Guernsey (1996) in 100 years of Cinema.

The Orient Express has been the subject of many philatelic issues. A Cambridge Official from 2003 had a photograph of the 12 suspects, Poirot and the Train Director, and a cancellation of classic British Films. Only 20 of these covers were produced.

Finally Christie also wrote *The Mousetrap* which is a pane in the Prestige Booklet. She also wrote under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott, which is why the Prestige Booklet is sub-titled *Alias Agatha Christie* and has a pane with the words *Queen of Crime* surrounded by 22p and 33p machin definitive (£1.95) stamps.

Dorothy Leigh Sayers (13 June 1893 – 17 December 1957) was a renowned English crime writer, poet, playwright, translator and Christian humanist. She is best known for her mysteries, a series of novels and short stories set between the First and Second World Wars. They feature English aristocrat and amateur sleuth Lord Peter Wimsey, good-looking, sporting a monocle, the perfect aristocratic detective, he was one of the only detectives who found



Agatha Christie, Queen of Crime

time to marry. Wimsey was one of the twelve detectives of the Nicaraguan 1972 publication (*illustrations inside front cover*).

Ngaio Marsh (1899-1982) wrote 32 novels featuring her gentleman detective Inspector Roderick Allen. She appeared on the New Zealand stamp (1989) which was her home and even has her detective on secondment or holiday appear in the country.

In America the Chinese-American detective Charlie Chan appeared with the Honolulu Police, created by Earl Derr Biggers in 1923. In relatively few books, it is his film, television shows and comic books which have contributed most to his renown. He appears on Guernsey (1996), Dominica (1996) and Nicaragua (1972) He was distinguished by his quoting of Confucius and his ever-present "Number One son".

Perry Mason is a fictional character, a defence attorney who was the main character in works of detective fiction written by Erle Stanley Gardner. Perry Mason was featured in more than 80 novels and short stories, most of which had a plot involving his client's murder trial. Typically, Mason was able to establish his client's innocence by implicating another character, who then confessed. Gardner, who was one of the best-selling authors of all time, and was reputed to have had 135 million copies of his books in print in America alone in the year of his death in 1970. Raymond Burr became synonymous with this character and was chosen by Nicaragua for its 50th Anniversary of Interpol series in 1972. In the twenties they were pre-eminent, but across the Atlantic a very different detective began to emerge and take on cases.

By the late 1920s, Al Capone and the Mob were inspiring not only fear, but piquing mainstream curiosity about the American underworld. Popular pulp fiction magazines revolved around justice being served to those who deserved harsh treatment, which was described in explicit detail.

In the 1930s, the private eye genre was adopted wholeheartedly by American writers. The tough, stylish detective fiction of Dashiell Hammett, Jonathan Latimer, Erle Stanley Gardner and others explored the 'mean streets' and corrupt underbelly of the United States. Their style of crime fiction came to be known as 'hardboiled', which encompasses stories with similar attitudes concentrating not on detectives but gangsters, crooks or victims of crimes. Told in stark and sometimes elegant language through the unemotional eyes of new hero-detectives, these stories were an American phenomenon.

Two of these who walked the mean streets were Sam Spade and Ellery Queen. Both were tough guys, antiheroes, who enjoyed the sleazy side of life.

Sam made his debut in *The Maltese Falcon*, and remains the only full length novel in which he is the main protagonist. This enduring character was created by Dashiell Hammett, whose colourful life included testimony before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. He was blacklisted because he refused to cooperate. His TB worsened, he became a hermit and died of lung cancer in 1961. Sam was immortalised by Humphrey Bogart in the 1941 film, and it is this portrayal which appears on the Dominica (1996) stamp of legendary sleuths, the Guernsey (1996) 100 years of Cinema in *The Big Sleep* and Nicaragua (1972). As usual with this set there is a description written on the reverse which states: "With the creation of Sam Spade, Dashiell Hammett founded the 'hard-boiled' school of detective fiction".

Continuing the theme Nicaragua (1972) and San Marino (1979) used Ellery Queen, a character created by two writers jointly (if confusingly) writing under the pseudonym Ellery Queen.

The third hard-boiled detective was Philip Marlowe, a character created by Raymond Chandler. The Nicaraguan stamp has the words "Along with Dashiell Hammett, Raymond

Chandler was the main proponent of the ‘hard-boiled’ school of fictional detectives”. His detective hero was Philip Marlowe, who appeared for the first time in *The Big Sleep* in 1939. In his own words, Chandler tried to create in Marlowe “a man complete and common but exceptional... a man of honour”.

Dominica’s (1996) *Legendary Sleuths* has Robert Mitchum in the role of Chandler and San Marino in its second set of *Fictional Detectives* (2009) has a picture of a trilby hanging on an old fashioned telephone.

Chandler had an exceptional influence on this type of popular fiction, which he began when he lost his job as an oil executive during the Depression, and it was said he was the most lyrical of the major crime writers. He suffered from clinical depression and attempted suicide after the death of his wife. His writing naturally suffered and although he had a respite he died in 1959.

So the emphasis changed from the gentle, almost friendly detective to the hard, down and dirty PI, opening the door to the modern forensic detective noir. First, however, the TV detective would burst onto the scene remaining a constant feature. 📖

Would you like to know more? Steven Cross will be our guest speaker at the BTA AGM on 11th June, details on page 53.



IN SEARCH OF EARLY LIFE ON PLANT EARTH

Owen Green

One of the most intriguing questions posed in Science today is: *when did life first appear on planet Earth?* What might appear as an unambiguous question has generated considerable controversy amongst a diverse array of specialist scientists, including palaeobiologists, geo-microbiologists, geochemists and astrobiologists. Scientists have attempted to address this question through a number of disciplines. Astronomers monitor the sky examining distant stars, determining if the light emitted dims in a periodic cycle that might indicate the transect of a planet across the surface of a sun, thus confirming the presence of a planetary system. Planetary scientists at the SETI Institute (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) are actively assessing the ability of newly discovered planets to support life, calculating if they occur within the ‘goldilocks’ zone, the distance from a star where environmental conditions can sustain life; and use the data obtained to help refine the Drake equation – a well-reasoned guess in establishing the number of habitable planets within the universe.

By contrast, earth scientists are examining ancient terrestrial rocks that occur in Canada, Greenland, Southern Africa and Australia. Principal lines of research include the search for ancient preserved fossil remains, or residual evidence of their existence from the geochemical analyses of the rocks – the so called bio-signatures. Meanwhile planetary scientists can now utilise the considerable data from planetary surface landers such as Curiosity, Sojourner, Spirit, and Opportunity that roamed and are roaming the surface of Mars, attempting to detect water or its presence in the past that may indicate that life may have flourished many millions of years ago. Another group of planetary scientists use remote sensing ‘fly-by’ satellites to map surfaces such as Europa, one of Jupiter’s moons, which appears to have an icy frozen surface covering an ocean of liquid salty water – a potential habitat for supporting life.

Living on the extreme

If a form of life exists on Europa the organisms will probably be from a group known collectively as the ‘extremophiles’. This is the term applied to organisms (usually micro-organisms) that have the ability to survive and thrive in extreme environmental conditions (high pressures, temperatures, acidic, depleted oxygen), and includes the anaerobic bacteria, chemo-bacteria. The organisms’ metabolic systems use unique enzymes (called “extremozymes”) which provide them with the ability to not only survive, but thrive in these hostile environments. Their study is essential to science as they provide us with data on the range of conditions that can support life, and in the discipline of bio-medicine they may provide a source for genetically based medications.

So where do earth scientists study extreme environments on planet Earth? The most common is the hydrothermal vent systems found associated with areas of volcanism and tectonic activity, such as Yellowstone Park in the United States, Iceland and in the Rotorua-Taupo volcanic and hydrothermal region of the North Island of New Zealand. This volcanic region extends into the Bay of Plenty, to the active volcano White Island situated 51km north of the coastal town of Whakatane.



Geyser 'Old Faithful' in Yellowstone National Park, SG 743, SG 1456, SG 4930 (issue specifically for express mail)

Eruption of The Great Geyser on Iceland SG 226-233. Eruption of Mt Hekla in 1947 SG 280-286



White Island. The island, a volcano of rhyolite composition (resulting in a 'sticky' lava), is known as Whakaiaii to the Maoris, was first sighted by Captain James Cook on October 31 1769



New Zealand Pohutu Geyser



New Zealand, 1993, SG 1730-35: Scenic Thermal Wonders issue.



45c Champagne Pool, a 2000 square meter lake where constant thermal activity with water temperatures between 70-75°C has formed the colourful Primrose Terrace; 50c Boiling Mud, in graphite-rich pools reaching temperatures in excess of 115°C; 80c Emerald Pool, a cold water pool that gets its brilliant green and blue from the high concentrations of dissolved silica rich pumice and obsidian; \$1 Hakereteke Falls, spills warm water into a pool very popular with visitors, although the presence of the protozoa Amoeba meningitis makes it unsafe for diving; \$1.50 Warbrick Terraces, situated 1.5kms from Lake Rotamahana, hot springs flowing over the terrace deposit white silica on cooling, streaked with colours caused by minerals and algae; \$1.80 Pohutu Geyser at Whakarewarewa irregularly erupts a water jet 18-40 metres high. It is thought that geysers erupt when an underground column of water is heated beyond boiling point and bursts into steam, violently ejecting the water contained above the 'flash' point. However, variations in atmospheric pressure may also be important, with low atmospheric pressures causing the release of gasses.

Numerous examples of hydrothermal activity such as geysers, sinter terraces, and hydrothermal mud pools are seen on the North Island of mainland New Zealand. The Pohutu geyser at Whakarewarewa, near Rotorua appeared on the \$2 pictorial issued originally in 1967 (SG 862), and reissued 1968 (SG 879) with an amended colour.

The Scenic Thermal Wonders issue of 1993 from New Zealand illustrated the spectacular thermal attractions of the Waiotapu Thermal Reserve, near Rotorua.

The volcanic eruption of Mt Tarawera on the 10th June 1886 killed more than 150 people and destroyed three Maori villages, depositing over two million cubic metres of molten rock and ash and re-shaping Lake Rotomahana. It was thought that the eruption resulted in the destruction of New Zealand's most famous Victorian natural feature: the Pink and White Terraces. Fortunately they had been recorded by artists. The 1988 Heritage issue featured a \$1.30 value illustrating the White Terraces in a painting by the Victorian traveller Charles Barraud (/Blomfield) who spent 26 years recording his impressions of New Zealand's picturesque scenery. The terraces had been visited by thousands of tourists seeking medicinal cures from the mineral enriched spa waters of the pools. Mapping of the lake floor in February 2011 re-discovered the lowest two tiers of the Pink Terraces in-situ at a depth of 60 metres, while part of the White Terraces was re-discovered in June 2011.

The spectacular colours of the fan-shaped staircases of algal enriched silica had been formed over many centuries, and were destroyed in a matter of hours in 1886. The destruction of the Pink and White Terraces provides a cautionary tale to today's geo-microbiologists that extremophile habitats are likely to be transient in nature, and the extremophile 'fossil-record', already difficult to construct, is probably less complete than that for higher organisms. Fortunately, both terraces were depicted on New Zealand definitive stamps commencing in 1898.

Extremophile habitats are not confined to terrestrial volcanic and hydrothermal environments. Within marine environments both black and white smokers are of considerable interest to scientists studying extremophiles. Studies of extremophiles have demonstrated that certain microbes can survive to depths of 4km below the earth's surface, and at altitudes in excess of 10km above the earth's surface. With such a wide habitable zone surrounding the planet, it is often difficult for scientists to analyze rocks that show no chemical signature attributed to a microbial form of life.

Early life on earth

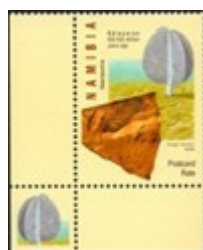
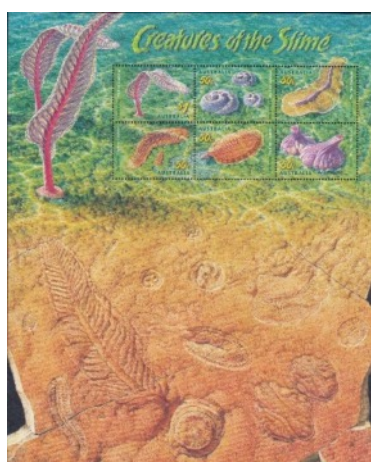
The 'seeding' of life on earth is the subject of scientific debate. Were the 'ingredients' always present on earth, requiring only a 'spark of energy' to kick start the process? Between 4,000 and 4,600 million years ago, planet earth was in a period of time known as the Hadean – named after the ancient Greek god of the underworld, reflecting the "hellish" conditions that existed on Earth at this time. Although the earth was already over 12 billion years old, the crustal surface of the young planet was only beginning to form. The boundary between the Hadean and the Archaean (3,900-4,000 million years ago) was marked by a period of meteorite impact activity known as the 'late heavy bombardment'. The panspermia hypothesis, first proposed by the Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius (1859-1927) in 1908, proposes that life exists throughout the Universe, and that interstellar activity provides a mechanism by which the biomolecules of life were transported to Earth – and is distributed by meteoroids, asteroids, comets and planetoids crashing into or coming close-to, and under the gravitational influence of planets orbiting in the 'goldilocks' zone. On November 12th 2014 the European Space Agency Rosetta mission soft landed its Philae probe on comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, the first time that such an extraordinary feat had been achieved.



New Zealand, 1898: White (4d) and Pink (9d) Terraces, one of the world's earliest pictorial definitive issue, the Terraces were situated at the north-east corner of Lake Rotomahana. 1972 Lake Scenes: the three square mile Lake Rotomahana as seen today; prior to the 1886 eruption it was much smaller.



The Evolution of the Earth, Niuafou'ou (Tonga): 1989, SG 117-130a, re-issued as a mini sheet MS 132 with different values and some new images, to commemorate the 20th Universal Postal Union Congress, Washington. 32s the formation of the Earth's surface during the late 'heavy bombardment'; 32s cross-section of the Earth's crust; 32s cross section of earth during cooling; 45s early marine life during the Cambrian; 42s Cambrian life forms and fossils.



Australia: 2005, (SG 2510-2515): *Creatures of the slime*, a set of six stamps illustrating Ediacaran fossils (50c *Tribrachidium heraldicum*, 50c *Dickinsonia costata*, 50c *Spriggina*, 50c *Kimberella*, 50c *Inaria karli*, \$1 *Charniodiscus*).

Namibia 2008 (SG 1110 - 1113): *Ediacaran fossils of Namibia*: stamps from the corners of sheets with additional illustrations of the fossils at each corner: \$2 *Rangia schneiderhoehni*; \$3.90 *Swartpuntia germsi*; \$18.45 *Pteridinium simplex*, \$22.95 *Ernieetta*.

Once conditions of crustal stability had been established signs of biochemical and molecular activity may be in evidence from as early as 3,500 to 3,600 million years ago. However, supporting evidence from the ‘fossil record’ is not seen for another 500 million years. The microbial mats of laminated organo-sedimentary structures are formed through the process of trapping and binding of particles, and are collectively known as stromatolites. In rocks of Archean age from Africa, North America and Australia stromatolite structures are considerable rock builders.

The Ediacaran – nature's experiments with evolution

Environmental conditions supporting a ‘slow-burning-fuse’ leading to the development of multi-cellular life on Earth existed for the next 2,000 million years. During this time the earth was accumulating free oxygen, and the continental land masses were coalescing and breaking up forming the supercontinents of Nuna and then Rodina. Strange multicelled organisms evolved during the Ediacaran (635-541 million years ago). These soft bodied organisms are only preserved where environmental conditions (no oxygen) and rapid burial coincide. Ediacaran assemblages from Australia and Namibia have been illustrated on stamps.

The Ediacaran assemblages died out around 547.5 million years ago, and as faunal diversification continued into the Cambrian, the first stage of the Phanerozoic Eon, the effects of the ‘Cambrian Explosion’ are preserved in the fossil record. In North Greenland the Sirius Passet lagerstätte (a deposit of exceptionally preserved fossils, often including soft tissues) contains the most complete specimen of an organism whose affinity is thought to be an early mollusc: the ‘slug-like’ *Halkieria evangelista* is part of the halkieriid group of animals with a segmented outer surface of hardened plates.

The fauna of the 505 million year old Cambrian Burgess Shale of British Columbia, Canada, was discovered by Charles Doolittle Walcott (1850-1927) in 1909. Between 1910 and 1924 Walcott and his sons collected over 65,000 specimens. Following his initial descriptions and the importance of the site and his fossils, they were not re-described until the late 1960's when Harry Whittington (1916-2010) the Woodwardian Professor of Geology at Cambridge University re-evaluated the assemblage and theorised about the ‘Cambrian Explosion’, a period in time when it appears that all the major phyla known today first appeared in the geological time scale. The rapid faunal diversity and evolution of organisms appeared over a 70-80 million year period commencing approximately 580 million years ago, with most of the complex organisms recognised today appearing during the first 20 million years. As with the debate on the origins of early life on earth, controversy surrounds the rapid radiation of life: is it real or an artefact of the fossil record?

A ‘global explosion’ of stamps illustrating other Palaeozoic faunas, mainly trilobites can now be found. &



Stamps illustrating Palaeozoic trilobites:

Asaphus: Aland 1996 SG 113. Selenopeltis buchi buch: Czechoslovakia, 1968 SG 1764. Paradoxides davidis: Canada, 1990 SG 1393. Eurypterus remipes, a marine scorpion from the Silurian Period from 432-418 million years ago, Canada 1990 SG 1390.

THE ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS BY LUO GUANZHONG

Jeff Dugdale

Rivaling and exceeding the historical sweep and scope of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, or Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, or Shakespeare's History Plays, or Homer's *Odyssey*, Luo Guanzhong's historical novel written in the fourteenth century but set in the closing years of the Han Dynasty (c 169 AD to c 280 AD) is an astonishing achievement, still widely read in modern China, though little known in the West. *The Romance* has received lavish treatment from The People's Republic of China with 20 stamps and a handful of souvenir sheets all exquisitely designed in a subtle colour palette and issued in five series between 1988 and 1998.

One problem for the Western reader, to my mind, as with great Russian historical novels, is the strangeness of character names, many of which seem similar to the point of confusion and some of whom are known by more than one name. The novel covers feuding between warlords striving to gain power in the three kingdoms of a dying dynasty - Cao Wei, Shu Han and Eastern Wu - over a century, and as a result requires a 'cast' of many hundreds including three or more generations of the same family.

The main protagonists are, in turn, Zhang Jue (aka Zhang Jiano), Dong Zhuo, Cao Cao, Yuan Shao, Lǔ Bu, Liu Biao, Sun Quan, Zhang Zhou, Zhuge Liang (aka Kongming), Sima Zhao and Sima Yi.

I had some of the stamps in my literature albums but could make little sense of them. Then having more recently acquired all of them and painstakingly related them to a potted summary of the novel in Wikipedia I was able to piece together much of the plot, a flavour of which I shall try to present in the next few pages.

First though, can I draw your attention to the exquisite design of these issues: all large stamps, roughly 2.5 by 1.5 inches with the mini-sheets four times again as wide. On page 51 is the second stamp (8 fen value) in the first (1988) series entitled in Gibbons *Stamps of the World 2015* "Battle against Lǔ Bu".

The design is typical, with a large beige field and within that limited and muted colours. Here the fighters and their horses are all slightly caricatured but there is still a tremendous energy in the encircling conflict. The white detail top centre and below centre provides some perspective and bottom right we see part of the banner of one of the warriors. The country name appears top right, though in later series the English "China" can also be seen. However there is no caption to hint at what is going on.

The related story here concerns one of the first great protagonists Dong Zhuo who has taken advantage of the crumbling dynasty to impose a reign of terror on anyone who tries to usurp him. However in the stamp he is killed by his foster son Lǔ Bu in a dispute over the beautiful concubine Diaochan (whose name translates as "sable cicada") seen in another stamp, floating (metaphorically) over her lover's bed in the Fengyi Pavilion. The first series comprises four stamps and a minisheet.

With the Han empire falling apart through anarchy and civil war new characters try to establish themselves, notably Cao Cao who rescues the Emperor Xian from the late Dong Zhuo's followers and then takes on the likes of Lǔ Bu.

In the first stamp of the second (1990) series we see Cao Cao leading a night attack on the city of Wuchao in the Battle of Guandu. Through many such conflicts Cao is able to conquer the Central Plains and most of Northern China, a state which will eventually immortalise his name, Cao Wei.

However he does not have it all his own way as Liu Bei with blood brothers Guan Yu and Zhang Fei swear loyalty to the old order in the famous Oath of The Peach Garden, where they promise to try to put down the Yellow Turban Rebellion which resulted in a hundred years of conflict. However, Liu Bei suffers a series of defeats at the hands of Cao and his followers and has to go on the run, but in the city of Xinye he personally recruits an important new ally in possibly the most important character in the whole epic - Zhuge Liang. In order to do this he visits Zhuge in his own home as detailed in the 20 fen value of the 1990 series.

Cao Cao, now with the title of Chancellor, leads forces south to take on Liu Bei and is defeated twice at Xinye, but he himself then has to go on the run and asks his new ally Zhuge Liang to meet with Sun Quan, a relative of Emperor Xian to make an alliance fit to take on Cao and defeat him totally.

The first stamp in series 3 (1992) shows this meeting in which Zhuge (standing under fans) goads Sun sarcastically and succeeds as Sun puts his senior general Zhou Yu in charge of the new campaign against Cao Cao. (Again note the fine detail of the design with the propitious dragon motifs in the background).

All this leads to the decisive Battle of Chiba, also known as the Battle of Red Cliffs which is shown at sea and on land in the mini-sheet which accompanies the four stamps of series 4 (*see inside back cover*). In the panorama of the battle we see from left the turbulent waves of the sea, ships set on fire and cavalry charges. One stamp in series 3 shows Zhuge under attack in a boat within a phase of the battle.

However the allies, once victorious at the Battle of Red Cliffs, fall out as Sun Quan and Liu Bei wrestle for control of the southern Jin Province and Liu wins a huge chunk of territory.

When Liu refuses to return the land to Sun, Sun plans a trick, enticing Liu to come to Wu to be betrothed to his sister Lady Sun. On Liu's arrival for this prestigious event Sun plans to take him hostage in exchange for the return of Jing, but the plan backfires badly and Liu and his new bride return to Jing as joint monarchs. A stamp in series 4 (1994) - one of the most colourful in the whole group - depicts the wedding.

With these events securing peace for a while Liu reflects on his ownership of a large swathe of China from Yi in the West to Jin in the South, the foundations of the state of Shu Han. After the Hanzhong Campaign Liu Bei declares himself King of Hanzhong. Cao Cao becomes a vassal king with the title King of Wei and Sun Quan is then called Duke of Wu, but there is an uneasy tension. Cao Cao tries further tricks but eventually dies of a brain tumour and his son Cao Pi forces Emperor Xian to abdicate in his favour, but Liu Bei also announces that *he* is Emperor.

Liu Bei leads a huge army to attack Sun Quan but is ambushed at Xiaoting and dies at Baidicheng. On his deathbed, shown in a series 5 stamp, Liu offers Zhuge the throne if his own relative Liu Shan proves weak, but the noble Zhuge opts to support the youthful heir apparent.

Zhuce Liang is now the power behind the throne and takes the Shu forces on campaign in order to restore the Han Dynasty. He is still a brilliant soldier with a penchant for the unexpected, recognised in the final mini-sheet of the group issued in 1998 and entitled "The Stratagem of the Empty City". In this incident while defending the city of Xicheng



Series 1 1988



Series 2 1990



Series 3 1992

with just a few thousand troops, he learned that enemy general Sima Yi was approaching with 200 times as many men as he had. He had all the city gates opened and dressed a few troops as street sweepers. He called for calm and quiet from the citizens and went causally to the ramparts to play on his zither. As the detail of the mini-sheet suggests this approach completely wrong-footed the attacking general who, fearful of some cunning plan to seduce his men into slaughter, withdrew his men. The name of the stratagem has now come to be a metaphor for concealing weakness.

However Zhuge was not immortal, and soon after he died from chronic illness and stress - do you wonder? However he died in harness in yet another campaign which was going nowhere against Sima Yi. A series 5 stamp shows Zhuge's funeral in which his body appears to be propped up on the catafalque.

The end of the three kingdoms constantly at war with each other is now in sight with Zhuge's death, and power eventually falls into the hands of Sima Yi and his sons, Sima Shi and Sima Zhao. After decades of further turmoil Sima Zhao dies and his son Sima Yan establishes the Jin dynasty and become its first emperor, pictured on the last stamp of the whole series, in which we see nobles paying allegiance to him.

The Romance of the Three Kingdoms, a very Tolkienesque title (let's hope *Lord of the Rings* film director Peter Jackson does not find out about it and start all over again!), blends early Chinese history with mythology.

As you can tell, even from this potted version illustrated with a handful of postage stamps, its range is vast and is easily comparable with the titles suggested in the opening paragraph. My experience of it has moved from bewilderment to some small understanding of what the story is about; one of the joys of our hobby which modern research technologies make easy if you have the stamina.

Like a number of other famous historical novels *The Romance* is also well known for its opening axiom which the plot exploits... "It is generally true in this world that anything which has long been divided will come together; and equally, anything which has long been united will surely disintegrate".

The Same Story? Many of the stamps for Tolkien-related plots contain material which could have been completely at home in *The Romance* as with NZ 2014 for *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*.. .

Editor's note:

Taiwan also issued this subject between 2000 and 2010



AGENDA

For the 25th Annual General Meeting of the British Thematic Association to be held on Saturday June 11th 2016 at 2.30 p.m. at Swinpex at St Joseph's Catholic College, Octal Way, Swindon, SN3 3LR

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 24th Annual General Meeting published in *Themescene* September 2015
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's report
5. Treasurer's report and adoption of Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2015
6. Election of Officers

The following Officers have been nominated or are willing to stand for re-election:

| | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Barry Stagg | Chairman |
| Jim Etherington | Vice Chairman |
| Anne Stammers | Secretary |
| Peter Wood | Treasurer |

7. Election of Committee members

The following members have indicated that they are willing to stand for re-election

| | | |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Currently | Peter Denly | Membership Secretary |
| Currently | Wendy Buckle | Editor <i>Themescene</i> |
| Currently | Michael Blackman | Advertising Manager |
| Currently | Gerald Lovell | Displays Organiser |
| Currently | Brian Sole FRPSL | Committee member |
| Currently | Charles Oppenheim | Committee member |
| Currently | Lesley Marley | FIP Representative |
| | *Jon Matthias | Webmaster |

*At present a co-opted member of the committee but willing to stand for committee.

8. Ratification by the membership of appointment of
Ron Backhouse Librarian
Grahame Boutle Examiner
9. Any Other Business

Nominations for Officers and Committee Members and any other motions for discussion should be received by the Secretary by June 4th 2016 or will be taken from the floor

The meeting will be followed by Steven Cross showing his Franscesa Rapkin Bowl 2015 winning display *Fictional Detectives*.

Signed: *M. Anne Stammers* (Hon. Secretary)

Dated: 28th April 2016

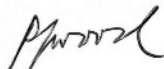
BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

Account for the year ended 31 December 2015

| 2014 | INCOME | 2015 |
|--------------|---|-------------------|
| 3,231 | Subscriptions | 3,693 |
| 277 | Donations | 800 |
| - | Grant from ABPS for website development | 390 |
| 22 | Sales and other income (incl. Themescene binders) | 50 |
| 105 | CD net income | 16 |
| 759 | Weekend | - |
| <u>3</u> | Bank Interest | <u>3</u> |
| <u>4,397</u> | | <u>4,952</u> |
| | EXPENDITURE | |
| 2,140 | "Themescene" - Printing and distribution expenses | 1,800 |
| -200 | less : Advertising Income (net) | <u>-200</u> 1,600 |
| 73 | Meetings (incl. AGM) | 12 |
| 338 | BTA Cup expenses | 259 |
| -45 | less : entry fees | <u>-39</u> 220 |
| 105 | Committee Meeting expenses | 264 |
| 60 | Publicity and Web Site | 89 |
| - | New Website Build | 520 |
| 112 | International - net (Stampex, 2014) | 220 |
| 121 | Insurance | 123 |
| 219 | Affiliations | 211 |
| <u>176</u> | Administration expenses | <u>56</u> |
| <u>3,099</u> | | <u>3,315</u> |
| 759 | to Website reserve (Weekend reserve, 2014) | 670 |
| <u>539</u> | SURPLUS | <u>969</u> |
| <u>4,397</u> | | <u>4,954</u> |
| | BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2015 | |
| | Accumulated fund | |
| 5,422 | Balance at 1.1.2015 | 5,961 |
| 759 | Weekend events reserve (759 - 49 utilised, 2015) | 710 |
| - | Website reserve | 670 |
| <u>539</u> | add: surplus for the year | <u>969</u> |
| <u>6,720</u> | | <u>8,310</u> |
| | Represented by: | |
| 4,890 | Cash at Bank: Deposit Account | 4,890 |
| 2,888 | Current Account | 5,214 |
| 132 | Stock of publications | 132 |
| <u>360</u> | Amounts due and Payments in advance | <u>-</u> |
| 8,270 | | 10,236 |
| -866 | less: Subs received in advance | -1,308 |
| <u>-684</u> | less: Amounts due or Received in advance | <u>-618</u> |
| <u>6,720</u> | | <u>8,310</u> |

Hon. Treasurer, P.J. Wood

Hon. Examiner, G.C. Boutle

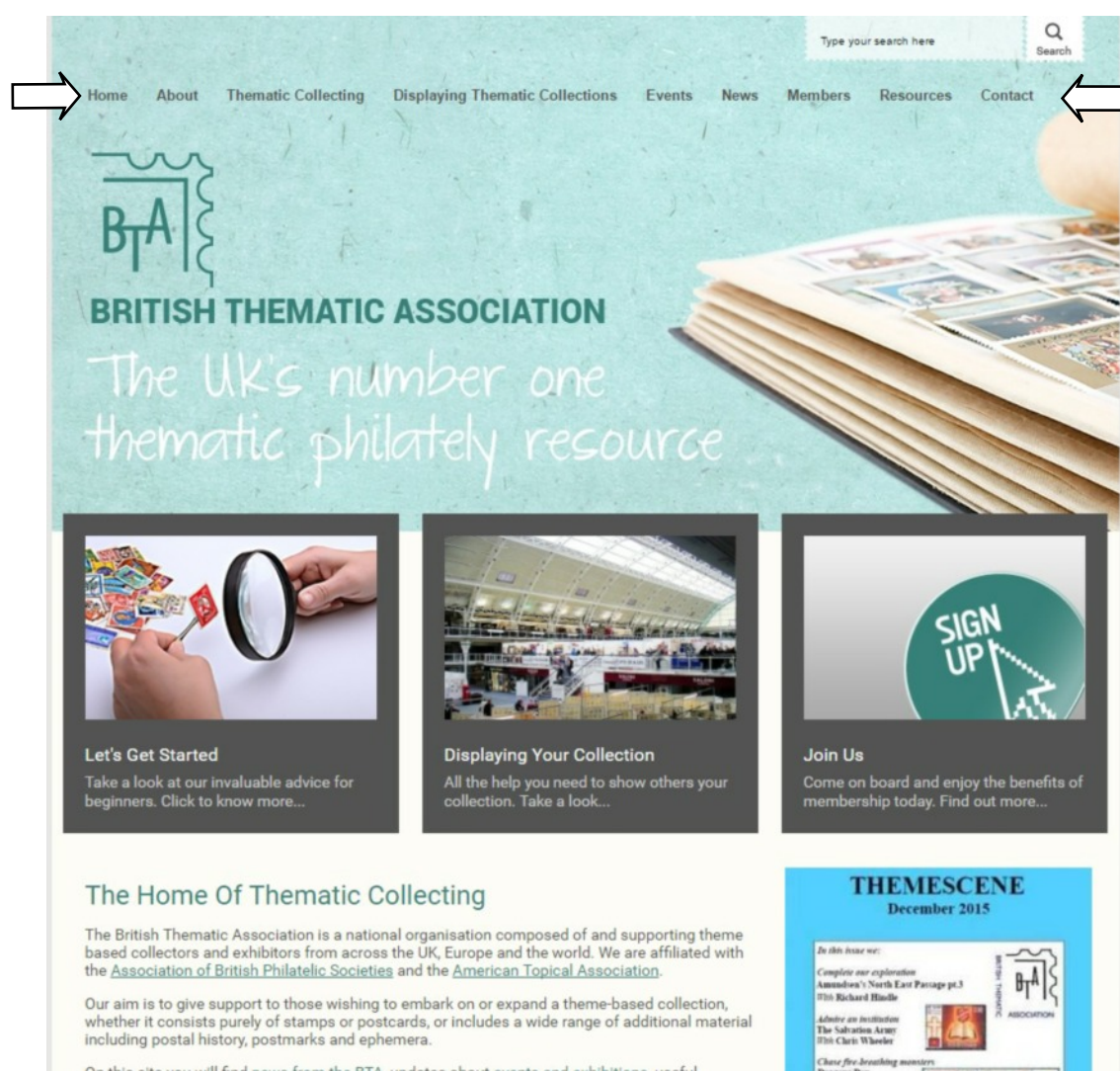



5 May, 2016

BTA WEBSITE

<http://www.britishthematic.org.uk>

The BTA has a new website. Thanks to the hard work of our developer Doive Designs, our webmaster Jon Matthias and Committee members Charles Oppenheim and Jim Etherington, plus the help of a grant from the ABPS Small Grants Committee, we have a facility which will make our web presence much more visible. For the first time it has been professionally designed, and is aimed at both members and non-members. Many people will not want to read this description, but will prefer just to browse and find their own way around, but for those who like a few pointers here is an outline.



Click on any of the headings across the top to find sub-headings with a variety of content:

About. Gives an outline of what our Association is all about and how its members like to collect. “About Us” includes a link to our list of BTA Speakers; if you would like to be included please contact Peter Denly via the ‘Membership Secretary’ link on that page. In due

course you will find a history of the BTA here. This section also gives our Constitution; Committee members - use this to contact any of us by email; and as we expand the "Photo Album" will record our events.

Thematic Collecting. Offers practical advice. "What is Thematic Collecting?" gives both a basic definition and detailed explanation via a journal article by John Hayward. There is also a link to a list of all the myriad types of material one may like to include in 'pictorial' collecting. "Advice for Beginners" should help anybody who is just starting and needs ideas to get going. "Useful Resources" at present contains complete indexes to Themescene. These can also be accessed in other parts of the site.

Displaying Thematic Collections. Many of us do so, whether at Club, Federation, National or even International level. "Showing Your Collection" outlines the differences between the various levels. "Forthcoming Exhibitions" tells the competitor where various events are being held. "Exhibitor Advice and Rules" does not try to reinvent the wheel but provides links to guidance from the organisations tasked with running competitions. "Exhibitor Step by Step Guide" reproduces a seminar on this subject covering everything you need to consider: Presentation; Title and Plan; Developing the Plan; Thematic and Philatelic Knowledge and Condition and Rarity.

Events. "Meetings" will concentrate on reports of meetings held, and "Programme" gives the current year's BTA Programme. "Competitions" here means specifically the BTA competitions: The Fosbery Trophy and BTA Cup. "Exhibitions" is another way to find out when and where regional, national and international events are being held.


News. A very flexible section, including news of things upcoming and items in the press of interest to thematic collectors.

Members. Our webmaster has a list of paid up BTA members. All you need to do is click on "Log in" then "Forgot Your Password?", fill in your email address and click on "Request Password". It is good practice to change the password to something memorable to yourself. Then once you are logged in you can access information restricted to members. This includes the option of commenting on or adding to contents under "Events" and "News".

Resources. Here non-members will find "Themescene Articles": a few selected articles from *Themescene* (included as a taster to encourage people to become a member); "Useful Links" has links to our affiliated societies plus links to other sites of interest to those who collect pictorially; and "Theme Checklists" which outlines how members can use our Library. This section also shows the importance of logging in: once you have done so a new tab "Themescene E-Issues" appears in this section. It contains the complete text of *Themescene* from 2011 to date (in full colour!). In due course it may be possible to extend the run backwards.

Contacts. The final tab, a simple online enquiry form for anyone with a query.

We very much want this site to be a recruiting tool, so subscription rates and an application to join form will be found under "About" and "Members".

The site is still a work in progress. Much needs to be developed, perhaps most pressingly we need to work out how to maximise its benefits for members. Which is where you come in. Please sign up for a password, browse the site and then tell us (via *Themescene*) what you think of it. What could be improved? Are we missing important content? What would you like to see from your website? And what can you contribute? If you have reports and/or photos you would like included please send them in to us. 

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HERE AND THERE

AWARDS FOR THEMATIC COLLECTORS

The **FEPA Medal 2015 for Exceptional Service to Organised Philately** has been awarded posthumously to much missed BTA member Francis Kiddle in memoriam. His services to international philately were recognised with a number of important awards. Francis served as chairman of the Philatelic Literature and later of the Revenue FIP Commission. He was a keen supporter of FEPA initiatives, as UK international representative, as organiser, juror, secretary and president of international juries, up until the recent Europhilex 2015.

There will be four new signatories to the **Roll of Distinguished Philatelists** at the Philatelic Congress in July. These include Jonas Hällström, whose home is in Lidköping in Sweden. His philatelic activities cover all disciplines. He has been awarded Large Gold medals for his thematic exhibit, *The History of the Square-Rigged Sailing Vessels*.

Present collecting interests include War and Army Military Fighting Vehicles. He has been Seminar Chairman and organiser of the Malmö International Philatelic Summits, and was Chairman of the FIP Thematic Philately Commission 2012-2014.

STAMP ACTIVE NETWORK

Stamp Active Network will again be at Autumn Stampex with youth activities and a free children's auction (2pm Saturday). The theme of the event will be "ANIMALS". A new activity book will be available at the Show on this theme called "All Creatures Great and Small". This has been supported by The RPSL Philatelic Fund and Oxford Stamp Society as well as Dealer Patrons.

There is the continuing initiative to "Bring a Child to Stampex" to encourage the next generation of collectors with a free draw if you take a youngster (under 18) to the youth stand during the Show, so start planning your visit now. Prizes include an 1840 Penny Black.

THE ROYAL PHILATELIC SOCIETY LONDON 150TH ANNIVERSARY

In 2019, The Royal Philatelic Society London celebrates its 150th Anniversary. As part of this special occasion, the Society is delighted to be joining its members and friends from around the world at the 'Stockholmia 2019' international philatelic exhibition in Stockholm, Sweden from 29 May to 2 June.

Contact details

Richard Stock, RPSL 150th Anniversary Project Manager, richardestock@aol.com

Jonas Hällström, STOCKHOLMIA 2019 Exhibition Manager, j.hallstrom@telia.com

NATIONALLY ACCREDITED JUDGES FOR THE PICTORIAL CLASSES

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Christine Earle | Thematic Philately, Open Philately, Postcards |
| Colin Hoffman | Postcards |
| Birthe King | Thematic Philately, Open Philately, Postcards |
| Brian Sole | Thematic Philately, Open Philately |
| Alan Watson | Thematic Philately, Open Philately |

BTA LIST OF SPEAKERS

If you wish to book any of the above displays please contact Membership Secretary Peter Denly at peter.denly@uwclub.net. Please ensure you state which display you are interested in and offer a range of dates and times available.

If you would like to be added to this list please notify Peter Denly.

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Dr. J. Alexander | Waterfalls of the World |
| Mr. B. Asquith | Faster Than a Bullet |
| Mrs. W. Buckle | The Write Stuff |
| Mrs. G. Davies | Peace - All Aspects |
| Mrs. G. Davies | Nobel, The Peace Prize and Laureates |
| Mr. J. Davies | 1890 Penny Post Jubilee |
| Mr. J. Davis | A Hundred Different Ways to Deliver Mail |
| Mr. J. Davis | 101 Years of Tin Can (Canoe) Mail of Niuafu'ou |
| Capt. P Denly | Man's Marine Adventure |
| Mr. J. Dugdale | Man in space |
| Mr. J. Dugdale | Opera/Ballet |
| Mr. J. Dugdale | Literature, English etc. |
| Dr. J. Etherington | 1940 - A Desperate Year for Britain |
| Mr. Jim Gray | Golfilately |
| Mr. R. Hindle | Polar Exploration |
| Mrs. M.I. Morris FRPSL | Aspects of Astronomy |
| Mrs. M.I. Morris FRPSL | Time |
| Mr. C. Mount | Pig in the Post |
| Prof. C. Oppenheim | It's Patently Obvious |
| Prof. C. Oppenheim | Chess |
| Mrs. J. Osborne | Medicinal Plants |
| Mrs. J. Osborne | GB Exhibitions (Philatelic and non-philatelic) |
| Mr. I.A. Peel | Capt James Cook – his Early Life and 1st Voyage |
| Mr. I.A. Peel | Capt. James Cook – 2nd and 3rd Voyages |
| Mr. I.A. Peel | Capt. William Bligh – The Man and his Mutinies |
| Mr. B.J. Sole FRPSL | Go by Cycle |
| Mr. B.J. Sole FRPSL | British Greetings Telegrams |
| Mr. B.J. Sole FRPSL | Thematics – How to Display |
| Mr. B. Stagg | Parachuting |
| Mrs A. Stammers | Rocks to Riches |
| Mr. M. Turnbull | Music |
| Mr. M. Turnbull | Aviation |
| Mr. M. Turnbull | World Overprints |
| Mr. L. Yandell | Church Architecture |

GROUP MEMBERS

Alba Stamp Group

Mrs. Elizabeth Nairn, 4 Strenaby Avenue, Burnside, Rutherglen, G73 5DL

Astro Space Stamp Society

Mr. J. Dugdale, Glebe Cottage, Speymouth, Mosstodloch, Fochabers, Moray, IV32 7LE

Web: www.astrospacestampsociety.com

Bicycle Stamp Club

Mr. B. J. Sole, 49 West Carr Lane, Hersham, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, KT12 5ER

Web: <http://bicyclestamps.tripod.com/>

Bird Stamp Society

Mr. A. Statham, Ashlyns Lodge, Chesham Road, Berkhamsted, Herts. HP4 2ST

Email: tony.statham@sky.com

Web: <http://www.birdstampsociety.org>

Captain Cook Society

Mr I. A. Peel, 13 Caudry Close, Thornhill, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, WF12 0LW.

Web: <http://www.captaincooksociety.com/ccsu1.htm>

Concorde Study Circle

Mr B. L. Asquith, Alandale, Radcliffe Gardens, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey,

SM5 4PQ. Web: http://www.concorde-jet.com/e_concorde_study_circle.htm

Glasgow Thematic Society

Mrs M. Mathieson, 17 Hairmyers Park, East Kilbride, Glasgow, G75 8SS.

Guild of St. Gabriel

Rev. Derek West, 35 Wallasey Crescent, Ickenham, Middlesex, UB10 8SA.

Masonic Philatelic Club

Mr. K. J. Elston, 21 Copperbeech Close, Harborne, Birmingham, B32 2HT.

Email: masonicphilatelicclub@yahoo.co.uk

Web: <http://www.masonicphilatelicclub.org.uk/>

Scout and Guide Stamp Club

Mr. T. Simister, 1 Falcon Way, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 8AY

Web: <http://www.sgsc.org.uk/index.shtml>

Ship Stamp Society

Mr. R. E. Robertson, 17 Whitehall Road, Northburn Park, Cramlington,
Northumberland, NE23 3QW

Web: <http://shipstampsociety.com/>

West of England Thematic Society

Mrs. S. Ellam, 101 Dunraven Drive, Derriford, Plymouth, PL6 6AT

Web: <http://www.wessexpf.org.uk/WETS/>

HOW I STARTED

John Davis travelled from GB to Tonga

Through all the changing scenes of my philatelic life . . .

My father was a modest, but keen stamp collector, and encouraged me to collect stamps when I was about eight years old. As I was interested in geography, stamp collecting seemed to be a good way to broaden my geographical knowledge. In common with other children at that time, stamp collecting was all about seeing how many stamps you could accumulate, and constantly counting my stamps kept me occupied.

Initially I collected world-wide, anything and everything, but after a few years, realised the need to restrict my collecting interests, so concentrated on The British Empire, and subsequently just GB. Over the years, I built up a reasonable collection from Queen Victoria through to King George VI, including plate numbers, watermark varieties and control blocks. My Queen Elizabeth II collection was complete with all definitive and commemorative issues including the different watermarks, different types of gum, graphite line and phosphor band varieties, commemorative issues in corner blocks of four, first day covers, PHQ cards and presentation packs etc. I was a closet collector.

It was not until I moved to Abingdon in 1986, and by now middle-aged, that I joined two local philatelic societies, and realised there was more to stamp collecting than keeping one's collection in a cupboard. It took me several more years to accept that my GB collection was becoming an accumulation, and a radical change of direction was necessary. I sold my entire GB collection, without knowing what to collect instead.

I became fascinated with stamps that had been overprinted and/or surcharged and decided that such War Tax Stamps of the British Empire would make an interesting collection. There were only 27 countries that issued such stamps (17 in the West Indies and 10 in other parts of the Empire). Most were cheap or inexpensive, were readily available in blocks, larger multiples, whole panes and sheets, so I decided to specialise in these stamps. Little did I know what I had let myself in for.

Such was my enthusiasm for these stamps that one thing lead to another. Over the next 15 years I built up an extensive collection, and became known as "Mr War Tax". I gave displays to local philatelic societies, and entered local, Federation and National competitions. I decided to research such records that were available in libraries and at the National Archives at Kew, with a view to writing a book. This I did, and in 2009 my 400-page book, *War Tax Stamps of the British Empire First World War - The West Indies*, was published by The Royal Philatelic Society, London. Later that year, I was honoured by being elected a Fellow of the Society.

Unfortunately, it was not practicable or possible to write another book that covered the War Tax stamps of the other ten countries in the British Empire, and as I was limited in how far I could take my War Tax collection I decided it was time to sell, move on, and try something else.

I knew Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II would be celebrating her Diamond Jubilee on 6th February 2012. Highcliffe Castle, just down the road from where I live, holds various artistic displays, events and exhibitions throughout the year. Permission was granted for me to display a Diamond Jubilee Philatelic Exhibition in the Great Hall during the first ten days in February 2012. This period naturally coincided with the actual date of the



Preparing to fire the rocket



Rocket in flight

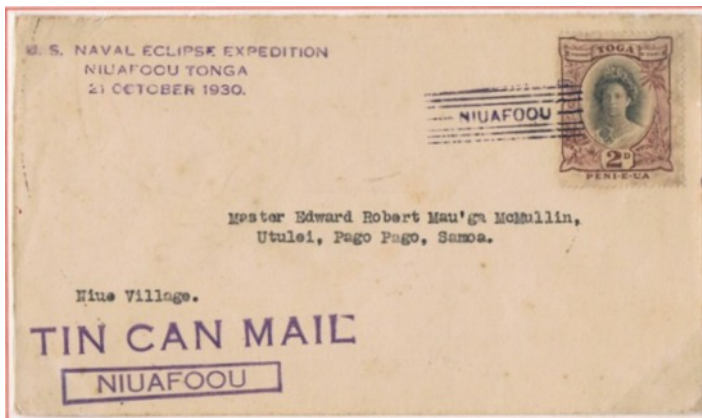


Ship's crew watching rocket's descent



Islanders reading the mail

In 1901 and 1902 attempts were made for ship-to-shore delivery of the mail by rocket. Unfortunately, the rockets frequently blew up in mid-air, landed in the water and sank, landed amongst the bushes and trees and caught fire, or overshot the island and landed in the lake.



In October 1930, there was a total eclipse of the sun which was best viewed from Niuafo'ou. This was photographed by expeditions from the USA and New Zealand. The U.S. Naval Eclipse Expedition was quick to make its own cachet of the Eclipse Expedition. The cachet is dated 21st October 1930, the day before the actual eclipse.



In 1901 Karl Lewis (1865 to 1942), the American photographer and watercolour artist, settled in Japan, married a Japanese woman Sasako Sadako, and learnt the Japanese language. This is one of his hand-painted envelopes, posted from Niuafo'ou to the USA


anniversary, 6th February. For the next two years I assembled and mounted 384 sheets (24 frames of 16) of philatelic material. My exhibition went on display from 1st to 10th February [reported in *Themescene* March 2012]. I was honoured to have received a letter from Her Majesty hoping that my exhibition would be a great success. The letter came in an envelope with a Sandringham House postmark for **6th February 2012**.

In a reduced format, I gave many displays to local philatelic societies, after which it was time again to dispose of the collection and move on. This collection had served its purpose.

Another new collecting interest was needed, but something less serious. Anno Domini was beginning to take effect. I wondered now how many different ways there are, or have been in delivering the mail. It did not take too long to realise there are a lot. So far, with another 400 or so sheets mounted in two years, I am up to about 100! I naturally have to restrict my collection to just a few sheets of each method, and again, display my collection to local philatelic societies.

Arising out of this collection, I became particularly fascinated with the Tin Can Mail of Niuafou'ou (Kingdom of Tonga), which has become my latest passion. I am immersed and absorbed in its history. This has been exhibited at Stampex in the Open Class.

And that brings you up-to-date with the story of my philatelic life.

If any members would be interested in me giving a display on Tin Can Mail, or 100 Ways of Delivering the Mail to their local philatelic society, within (say) 60 miles of Bournemouth, please let me know, email j552davis@btinternet.com. 



An airmail service by Autogyro between the roof of the Philadelphia General Post Office, and the Central Airport, Camden, New Jersey was inaugurated on 6th July 1939

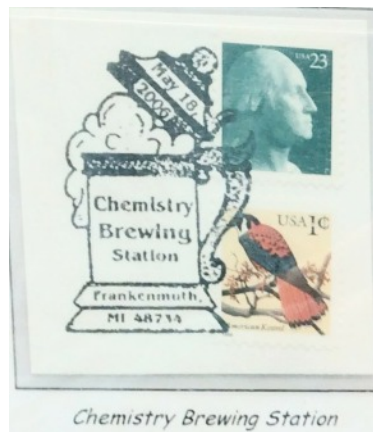
EXHIBITING PAGES: SPRING STAMPEX COMPETITIONS

Spring Stampex offered an opportunity to enter competitions at a National level, and was noticeable for us by the great success of BTA members. In the Postcard class Barry Stagg achieved a Large Vermeil with five frames of *The Development and Life Cycle of a Parachute*. Barry had further success in the Thematic Class, earning Gold with a five frame entry *Parachuting Through the Ages*. Also in this class Jim Etherington excelled with Gold for his eight-frame entry *1940: a Desperate Year for Britain*; while Grace Davies earned a Large Vermeil with her one-frame entry *Alfred Nobel and his Legacy*.

The highlight of the displays at Stampex however had to be the entries for the ‘Seven Nations Challenge’, an event first held in Australia in 2012 then in Sweden in 2014. This year it was hosted by the ABPS in conjunction with the Bund Deutscher Philatelisten. The seven nations comprise Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, United States and the United Kingdom. Each country fielded a team of four showing eight-frame entries of an FIP class, thus giving Stampex visitors a stunning 224 frames of world class material. Five countries chose to include Thematic entries:

Illustrations from Seven Nations Challenge

Cancelled Awahuri 10
Dec 1947
AWA is a Maori word
for a broad river. HURI
means “a bundle of
sticks to turn fish into
the river”



*Original drawing for the
1982 nature protection issue*

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Mark Bottu Belgium | <i>If you want to be my followers</i> | The evolution of Western Monastic life, including a historical look at aspects such as vocation, meditation and serving others. |
| Jørgen Jørgensen Denmark | <i>Fisheries: from food gathering to feeding the world!</i> | Follows the development fishing skills, tackle and boats from the earliest days to modern industry and environmental protection. |
| Damian Läge Germany | <i>Fascinated in feathers: how birds inspire people</i> | A twofold approach: birds in nature and their reliance on the help of man (for instance wildlife sanctuaries); and man's exploitation of birds, for instance as a food source. |
| Bengt-Göran Österdahl Sweden | <i>The history of chemistry</i> | From prehistoric mining, discoveries in chemistry throughout the modern era, to current uses of biochemistry and the problems modern exploitation can cause the environment. |
| Lesley Marley United Kingdom | <i>A whale's tale</i> | From the origins of the family of cetaceans, their natural history, hunting to near extinction and now attempts to protect the species. |

Great news for the United Kingdom: including BTA member Lesley Marley's entry the UK won with 385 points from Denmark with 384. Close!

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HANDSTAMP SPECIAL

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Just4Kids by Lise Whittle

(Adult readers, please photocopy these pages and pass them on to a youngster you know, and perhaps include a few nice stamps to encourage them. When you photocopy, please enlarge each page to A4 size - enlarge to 141% - Thank you.)

OH I DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE!

Are you going away on holiday soon?
Maybe you are going to the seaside with your family?



Here's a cheery seaside song you can sing;
*Oh I do like to be beside the seaside,
Oh I do like to be beside the sea,*



*Oh I do like to stroll along the prom, prom, prom,
Where the brass bands play,*



*tiddely-om-pom-pom
So just let me be
beside the seaside,
I'll be beside myself
with glee*



*And there's lots of girls besides I should like to be
beside,
Beside the seaside, beside the sea.*



Write and tell us about YOUR stamp collection! Write to:
Just4Kids c/o Editor, Themescene, 87 Victoria Road, Bournemouth BH1 4RS
For more stamp fun go to the Stamp Active website
www.stampactive.co.uk

LIBRARY LISTING

The library has some 3900 articles filed in cartons. *Themescene* regularly lists brief details of newly added articles.

All articles are listed on computer under topics, eg Sport, War, Medical, and so on, then sub divided into different categories eg Tennis, Football, World War II: Battles, Nurses: Blood and so on.

If you would like to see the articles we have on your topic the Librarian can easily send you a list by email and you can then let him know which ones you would like to see. The Librarian wants to avoid making photocopies but if the number of pages involved are not excessive he will email scans. This also applies to our overseas members. If it is not practical to email lots of scans he is prepared to post our original articles to UK members on the understanding they will be returned without undue delay. When returning the articles they must be accompanied by postage stamps that can be used, to the value he used to send the articles. Cheques are not wanted. These options allow members to see the articles in colour and make their own copies.

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Board Games

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 3 | Agrawal, S. K. | Board Games in Philately | Indian Thematic Society 12/2013 |
|---|----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|

Brazil

- | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 2 | Lewis, B. | Cristo Redemtor | Stamp Magazine 12/1981 |
|---|-----------|-----------------|------------------------|

Citadels

- | | | | |
|---|------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| 2 | Kallik, P. | Moscow Kremlin | Indian Thematic Society 12/2013 |
|---|------------|----------------|------------------------------------|

Cathedrals

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|--|-----------------------|
| 4 | Agrawal, S. K. | Rose Window; Glory of Gothic Cathedrals | ITS Stamp News 9/2014 |
|---|----------------|--|-----------------------|

Christmas

- | | | | |
|---|-------------|---|------------------------|
| 4 | Hewlett, M. | Posted For delivery On Christmas Day | Stamp Magazine 12/1981 |
|---|-------------|---|------------------------|

Cinema

- | | | | |
|---|------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Keppel, A. | Ten stamps on Films | Stamp & Coin Mart 6/2014 |
|---|------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Cold War

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 7 | Winchester, J. | The great divide (Berlin Wall) | Stamp Magazine 11/2014 |
|---|----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|

BTA PROGRAMME 2016

- June 11th **Annual General Meeting plus guest speaker Steven Cross showing “Fictional Detectives”**
BTA table, thematic sales, and recruitment drive
At: Swinpex, St. Joseph's Roman Catholic College
Ocotal Way, Swindon, SN3 3LR
- September 17th **Joint Meeting with British Postmark Society.**
12.30pm
Please bring along a 10 minute display of material of particular interest to postmark collectors.
Autumn Stampex
Business Design Centre, Islington
National competitions, all major classes
- September 30th - **BTA Residential Weekend**
October 2nd Oxford Spires Four Pillars Hotel, Abingdon Road,
Oxford, OX1 4PS
- October 8th **BTA Competitions:**
Fosbery Trophy. 16 sheets. NO RULES
BTA Cup. 32 sheets, judges to National standards.
BTA Regional Meeting (to be confirmed)
At: South of England Stamp Fair
Ardingly Showground, RH17 6TL
www.sussexphilately.org.uk/South_of_England_Stamp_Fair.php

BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

2016 COMPETITIONS

To be held at The South of England Stamp Fair & Sussex Convention,
Norfolk Pavilion, South of England Centre, Ardingly Showground,
Ardingly, RH17 6TL

SATURDAY 8 OCTOBER 2016 10.00am – 4.30pm

The BTA will be showing entries at this exhibition for the **John Fosbery Thematic Trophy** and the British Thematic Association trophy, or **BTA Cup**.

The **John Fosbery** competition is a fun competition. If you dislike the difficult rules of thematic philately, this is the one for you! You will need to enter **16 standard size sheets**, all portrait orientation, on ANY theme, inside clear protectors. There are NO OTHER RULES and NO ENTRY FEE. You can include photos, cigarette cards etc in addition to stamps, to tell a story. Visitors to the exhibition, not judges, choose their favourite exhibit. The entry with the most votes wins.

Alternatively, you may have received a thematic award at club level and want to take it further, perhaps to Federation or even National level. You should enter the **BTA Cup Competition**. This is judged to National Thematic competition rules it requires **32 sheets** (2 frames), any theme, inside protectors. It is an excellent stepping-stone towards entering a higher-level thematic competition. It is sympathetically judged, with instructive and positive feedback which will help you understand the sometimes tricky rules which apply nationally. The entry fee is **£15**.

Please complete the form on the next page and send it to -

Brian Sole,
49 Westcar Lane,
Hersham,
Walton-on-Thames, KT12 5ER

Telephone: 01932 220677; e-mail: brian.sole@btinternet.com

CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF ENTRY FORMS:

Friday 23rd September 2016. (Entrants will be advised where to send exhibits).

SHEETS REQUIRED

Monday 26th to Thursday 29th September 2016, but no later.

British Thematic Association Competitions 2016 Entry Form

I wish to enter

A. The 16 sheet JOHN FOSBERY TROPHY Competition (please tick)

OR

B. The 32 sheet BTA CUP competition..... (please tick)

NameTel No.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

E-mail address.....

Title of Entry (A or B).....

Re: entry to the JOHN FOSBERY competition -
I have not won a medal in the Thematic Class of a National or International Exhibition.

Re: entry to the JOHN FOSBERY or the BTA CUP competitions -
I/We accept that the material is submitted entirely at my/our own risk and I/we undertake to make my/our own arrangements with regard to the insurance of the entry whilst it is out of my/our possession; this includes all transit risks, temporary housing of the entry and its display at Ardingly Showground. I/we confirm that all information on this form is correct and, if entering the BTA CUP competition, enclose a remittance of £15, payable to the British Thematic Association.

Signed.....Date.....



ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS, page 49



Series 4 1994



Series 5 1998



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