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THEMESCENE

Journal of the
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EDITORIAL

Wendy Buckle

Reading this you will find another very full issue, and I have been squeezed for space, particularly in reporting BTA news. So a quick mention here for Jim Wigmore who has been working hard on our web pages. There is a slight change to the page design, and more information has been added, including a 'What is Thematics?' link, plus the 'Displays' page has some additional links. More enhancements are on the way, so do keep checking it out. And of course by the time you read this it will have the results of Eurothema (not known as we go to press). A mention too for Chairman Richard Wheeler who next year will be giving a display of puppetry (I think thematics, but who knows what else) for children who compete in stamp competitions in such large numbers in Scotland. BTA members in Scotland, including the Glasgow Thematic Society and the Alba Society will be invited. More details to follow.

Congratulations are due to BTA members who continue to shine in competition. On page 152 we have the full results from Stampex. Particular congratulations go to Simon Moorcroft, our Publicity Officer, who won the Strand Trophy. And hot off the press comes the results of Italia 2009, where Ron Backhouse and John Hayward gained a Large Vermeil, and Jim Etherington a Gold (page 149). Congratulations too to Lise Whittle, our Just4 Kids contributor, who was recently awarded the Stamp Active Network Bill Hart Award. See page 152 for the full story.

As ever we are grateful to our advertisers for their support. Please mention *Themescene* if you respond to any of them. (Please note the Gibbons special offer to BTA members is time-limited).

Enclosed with this issue is the BTA programme for 2010. If it's looking like next year is going to be busy, you can start to get organised with the December issue of *Stamp & Coin Mart*, which will include a free 2010 Collector's Wall Planner. The A2, double-sided planner will be printed in full-colour, and will feature notable stamp fairs and events, including all the BTA meetings and workshops. And if you are wondering why the cover of this issue has reverted to monochrome it's because we will be having a full colour cover for the March 2010 edition instead, with London 2010 in mind. If you do nothing else BTA-wise next year, do get to our "Festival of Stamps" meeting, see page 148.

I do hope you enjoy the variety of articles in this issue. We welcome one new contributor, Richard Hindle, and welcome back old friends. I intend next year's articles to be as wide-ranging as possible; I've already got science, art and literature lined up, but I'm always very happy to accept new material, so keep them coming.

After a glorious autumn (and living near the New Forest I've been able to see it at its best) it's now November; at last winter has set in and, like the rest of the Committee, I'm writing this page knowing you will read it next month. So can I join my colleagues in wishing you a very happy Christmas, a prosperous new year, and happy thematic hunting.



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

John Hayward

Along with this edition of *Themescene* you will find the programme card for 2010, and it promises to be an interesting year for thematic collectors. We start with Jonas Hallstrom's display at the Royal on 28th January - this is a must for all you ship collectors. The Friends of Thematica are taking the Fosbery Trophy, Federation and children's competitions to Perth for those of you in Scotland. We are running another Thematic Workshop in April, this time in the Midlands at Solihull. The international exhibition, London 2010, will be in May and we are holding a members' meeting there on 12 May. Our AGM and the BTA Cup competition will be held this year at Swinpex on 12th June and there is likely to be another Thematic Workshop in October in South Wales – watch out for an announcement in *Themescene* as the date and venue had not been settled at the time of writing. I would urge all members though to try and attend as many of these events as possible (details elsewhere in this issue) as they promise to be most enjoyable.

London 2010 draws ever closer and promises to be quite an event. It has a long line of successful international exhibitions held in London to live up to. If you want to see the Thematic Class exhibits, then they will be on display during the second half of the exhibition from 12 to 15 May 2010. The UK has 7 exhibitors in this Class and 2 exhibitors in the Youth Class with thematic exhibits. We wish them every success. The BTA is running a table throughout the exhibition, so make a point of calling there and more importantly please consider assisting with manning the table for an hour or two as we need volunteers for this task. Let our Secretary know if you can help.

Over the last 15 years the BTA has been selling the *Handbook of Thematic Philately* by W.E.J. van den Bold at a generous discount to its members, and sorry to say the last copy was disposed of in August 2009. There are unfortunately no more copies of this English version available, so those of you who have got one should ensure you hang on to it although a copy is available from the BTA Library. It is still most useful and informative. The original book in Dutch dates from 1990 and is now a little out of date in some areas as things have moved on in the thematic world. Six or seven years ago the French published a very similar handbook which is also very useful, but this is entirely in French. It is nonetheless available from the BTA Library. It is probably time someone else sat down and wrote another thematic handbook – if only I had the time!

Speaking of time, it just flies by these days with the Workshop I ran at Handforth in September, displays at Pinner and Enfield societies in October, a trip to Italia 2009, organising the BTA's exhibits for Eurothema in Denmark, getting the BTA programme for 2010 agreed, following up action from the last BTA Committee meeting and the other commitments I have in relation to London 2010. I feel at the age of 71 and having done the BTA Displays Organiser's job for a number of years I would like someone to take over the organisational side of this post in the near future. That thought rests for the moment with my fellow Committee members, but if there are any takers from the membership generally why don't you have a word with me to see what the job entails?

Finally, enjoy your collecting and may I wish all BTA members a very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.



CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

Richard Wheeler

Collect stamps and see the world – well not quite but these last few weeks I seem to be coming more familiar with the hazards of rail, air travel and Eurostar. As reported in the September issue, I duly displayed at Bishop's Stortford for Peter Denly. Everything went to plan on the day of arrival with great hospitality and hotel accommodation plus a superb venue. The problem was to return home as there was a rail strike on the Eastern region. Fortunately the London Underground was running and Peter drove me to Epping which got me to Paddington for my train back to Devon.

In the middle of August I set out for the F.I.P seminar on Postal History and Thematic Philately in Malmö, Sweden. Having got up at the crack of dawn followed by an hour's drive to the rail station to catch the London train, there was a signal failure ten minutes from Paddington Station. We were marooned for an hour and a half extra. On arrival every train for Heathrow was signed 'trains delayed'. I went to the enquiry office and was told one was running in two minutes from Platform 5. I raced to it and was the last passenger on board and told that people had been standing on the platform for over an hour. Even this train stopped for 15 minutes and I made the check-in for my flight to Copenhagen by five minutes. From then on it was plain sailing with flight and onward train to Malmö across the magnificent Oresund Bridge that connects Denmark with Sweden. The organisation on arrival and for the rest of the stay was superbly organised by Jonas Hallstrom, and the hospitality provided by the International Auction House Postiljonen was very much appreciated. Margaret Morris and Lesley Marley were also part of the British representatives. (And see page 143).

Autumn Stampex returned with a range of competitions displayed on the Village Green and at the rear of the first floor. Congratulations to Brian Sole, John Leathes, Barry Stagg, Rolf Scharning, Grace Davies and Simon Moorcroft on their awards in differing classes (see page 152). I also exhibited. On the Saturday morning a presentation was given by Francis Kiddle covering the title and introduction to an exhibit.

On the following Monday, it was back on the trail again – but this time the drive to the station was held up by an enormous fair packing up and travelling on the North Devon Link Road. Fortunately we had set off early and took a diversion onto an old route and just made our train. Eurostar was on time but when we arrived in Lilles there was a two hour wait for the next train to Charleville-Mezieres in the Ardenne region of France for the International Festival of Puppets which is held every three years. As part of the supporting exhibitions, one held in the Town Hall was for Puppets in Philatelic Art. I had been asked to display my exhibit after exhibiting in Vienna last year. It took me over two hours to view the other frames which had been sent by many countries.

One appointment that I had to make in July was to see a consultant from my local hospital as I have been having knee trouble and now will have a knee replacement in the first week of December. As I had to avoid being in hospital in September, the op was delayed and it means that I can now go back on the road, rail and air to visit Roskilde in Denmark for Eurothema and support our entrants in the competition. I note that Northern Europe's largest stamp exhibition, Stamp Forum, is being held at the same time.

The months ahead look to be just as hectic with that visit hopefully from the man in the red coat! May I take this opportunity to wish all our Members Health, Wealth (for those little gems you can't resist) and Happiness for Christmas and the New Year.



MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S PAGE

Peter Denly

Ordinary members	217
Family members	17
Junior members	3
Society members	16
Overseas members	18
Overseas Society members	1
Honorary members	4
Total number of members (at 1 st November 2009)	276

New Members joining since the September 2009 issue

Mr. S. Carter	Colnbrook, Berks.
Mr. M. Little	Benllech, Anglesey
Mr. T. Putranto	Semarang, Indonesia
Mr. C. Seekings	Little Downham, Ely

Deaths advised since the September 2009 issue

None

It seems that 2009 was one of those super-fast years that vanishes before you know it! It is difficult to realise that it is subscription time again - so, included in this issue of *Themescene* is the form to return with your payment for 2010-2011. Please either note carefully from the form or refer back to the September issue for the change to the subscription rate that applies to you.

In the last few years we have had several new members whose collecting interests were outside the list that we have digitised for saving on our database, and it is also noticeable that some members have taken on new subjects and/or dropped others. It is time that we brought our records up-to-date and you will find a box on the back of the subscription renewal form in which to record the four digit code for your theme. For this purpose we have provided a list of themes with their respective codes which we would ask you to use when completing the boxes.

Several members have enquired as to whether it would be possible to pay subscriptions by electronic transfers. There are difficulties with this, mainly in keeping a check on the payments made. We are aware that some societies are using Paypal to collect subscriptions, but of course there is a charge involved for the service. Currently, we are looking into the implications of using such systems in the hope that subscription payments and our record keeping becomes simpler.

With this in mind it is important that members keep us informed of their current email address and any changes that occur in the future. Please complete the section for your email address on the renewal form, but if not in possession of email please kindly say so.

We have had quite a good response to our request for speakers who are willing to represent the Association with their thematic collection, but more on the list would be welcome (download a form from our web page at <http://www.brit-thematic-assoc.com/displays.htm>).



PUBLICITY OFFICER'S PAGE

Simon Moorcroft

No doubt by the time you read this, you will all be looking forward to Christmas and be well advanced with your plans for celebrations. Indeed, some of you may be in this position already as I am writing this at the start of November. This is certainly not the situation in my case!

The workshop, held on 12th September at Handforth in Cheshire, was extremely successful. Many thanks are due to those who were able to go along and support the event. I know that many found the day informative and useful. These workshops should be attended by as many members as possible as they are very helpful for any thematic collector, new or experienced. Again, as ever, appreciation is due to John Hayward for all the work and effort he put in to make the day successful. Without his and all your other Committee members' hard work and commitment the BTA would be a very dull, sad organisation.

By the time you read this the results for Eurothema will have been released (please see the website where the results should be uploaded). I can only wish the team well, given that the results are not known as I sit and write this Page. I should say that I do have a vested interest in the team doing well as I am lucky enough to form part of it again this time.

Planning is well in hand for a number of events for the coming year, not least our meeting at London 2010 in May. The exhibition should be fantastic and I urge all of you to visit the show at least once as it will be something that should not be missed. The BTA meeting will be held on Wednesday 12th May in the Business Design Centre meeting room. Michel Abram will once again be coming to speak, so we are guaranteed a good show. Put this date in your diary. In addition, the website will be carrying details of the meeting as well as any updates or new information. Please also look out for requests to assist the manning of the BTA table during the exhibition.

Finally, I just wanted to share with you my thoughts on the hobby to which we all belong. Having just started a law course at university, which is quite challenging, I have been reminded of the importance of philately for relaxation purposes. Having to read the number of books, pamphlets and articles I currently am, although very enjoyable, can become repetitive and at times one can suffer from what I believe is now called "information overload". In short, one needs a distraction.

Although my philatelic collections have always provided this, I am finding them increasingly valuable at the current time. I don't believe my case to be an isolated one as many people use the hobby as a distraction. However, as any philatelist holding numerous roles in the organisational side of philately or who is preparing a large competition entry will tell you, philately can all too often become over-bearing. Then you have to find a distraction for philately!

May I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

CONTACTING MEMBERS

From: Margaret Armstrong, by email

I think that *Thamescene* readers might enjoy reading the following letter:-

I collect stamps on the subject of flowers and I joined the BTA two years ago as I was particularly keen to contact other collectors who share the same interest. I hoped to find someone to swap stamps with as well as being able to exchange ideas on our special subject. I duly contacted Peter Denly who sent me a number of contacts.

From then I received a lot of help in arranging my stock from Mr. Ted Adnams in Dereham, Norfolk and Mr. Harry Bratherton in Sliverdale, Lancashire. Harry and I have been corresponding regularly ever since swapping stamps and information, and we managed to meet up in person for a day this summer at his home.

Harry and I, along with our long suffering non-philatelic spouses, had a lovely time looking at Harry's collection and a slide show that Harry had made up and had shown at several stamp groups in his area. Harry and I discussed some common problems and shared some ideas on improving our collections.

Harry and Dorothy had made John and I a lovely Lancashire hotpot, and huge baked apples for lunch. Then we had a tour of their garden, acquired some plants, and had a short trip to the seashore at Morecambe Bay. The weather was very sunny and warm which added to our super visit.

Many thanks to the BTA for making the connections.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Armstrong.

YEE HAR!

Fourteen girls from 2nd and 3rd Alloway Brownies, plus two Brown Owls and two Snowy Owls, recently travelled in their 'Wagons' to the Girl Guide Activity Centre in Alloway for their Pack Holiday 'Wild West' Weekend! They had loads of fun learning all about the Wild West, and making rattle snake brooches, native American dream catchers, decorating camp fire mugs for hot chocolate, making shoe box saddle bags, sewing neckerchiefs, mounting Wild West stamps for a competition, learning line dancing, finding pieces of string to make the biggest lasso ever (and lassoing some of the leaders!), singing round the campfire, helping do the cooking, washing up and tidying, and staying up most of the nights chatting!!!

Thank you to all you kind readers and collectors who went to the trouble of sorting and sending Wild West themed stamps to me. The Brownies had fun sorting and mounting the stamps for the Junior Group competition, and there were enough stamps left for them each to take a small bag of stamps home. Hopefully you will get to see the result of their effort when the competition entries are displayed at various venues across the country next year.

Thanks again for your valued support.

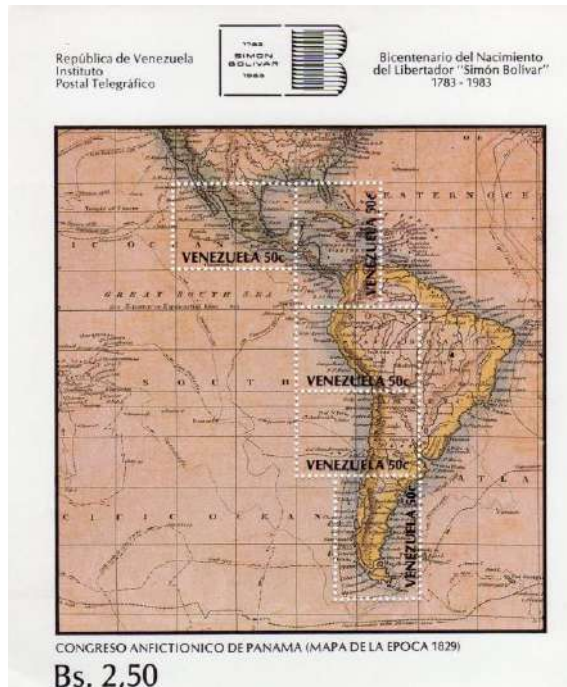
Lise Whittle.

ROBERT FITZROY - DARWIN'S CHAUFFEUR!

Richard Hindle explores the life of Robert Fitzroy, remembered for so much more than just being Captain of the Beagle

Barry Floyd has written about Charles Darwin and his achievements, but his article did not cover the reasons for the voyage, why Darwin became a member of the expedition and the great achievements of Robert Fitzroy, Captain of the Beagle. This article attempts to fill in that background.

WHY THE EXPEDITION WAS NECESSARY



In 1824, The British Foreign Secretary, George Canning, saw a potential new market for British goods. This was the South American continent. The Napoleonic Wars had weakened the Spanish and Portuguese grip in South America and consequently there had been many rebellions culminating in several rebel regimes taking power.

To prevent the United States becoming the sole protector of South America, Canning recognised the new governments of Mexico, Colombia and Buenos Aires. These embryo countries needed both international recognition and money. Great Britain could also create wealth by purchasing raw materials which it didn't have, and make them into finished goods, which the South American nations needed. A fleet of over 250 merchant ships were already trading with South America and needed protection.

Various navigators had sailed through the Straits of Magellan, but it was a slow and cautious passage. Routes were known, but in these difficult waters it was easy to be blown off course and not know if you were sailing up a dead end. Apart from the Spanish and Portuguese, who kept this information to themselves, no one really knew how easy or dangerous it would be to sail in these waters. Therefore it was necessary to carry out both hydrographical and terrestrial surveys to enable shipping to sail safely to their destinations.

TIERRA DEL FUEGO

Tierra del Fuego is an archipelago of islands at the southern tip of South America. The weather is so bad that the native population, now extinct, didn't wear clothes. All they had was a fur or sealskin cape to protect them from the worst of the weather. The reason for this is quite simple; there is never enough good weather get clothes dry! The weather can change from a beautiful calm sunny day to a snowstorm within a matter of minutes.

The natives' diet comprised raw fish, seals and shellfish. They moved around the coast looking for food, only going ashore at night or when the weather was unsuitable for their canoes. The

men hunted or scavenged for food, the women being charged with keeping their “candles” alight on board the canoe so that when they landed they could light a fire at night, hence the name of the country, Tierra del Fuego – The Land of Fire.

The Drake Passage and Le Maire Channel are in the latitudes known as the Furious Fifties, the only place on earth that the wind can circumnavigate the world unchecked by land. The seas can be so rough that a 300-foot (90m) ship can be swallowed and sunk by a single wave. No wonder the “Cape Horners” were a revered breed of seamen!



The Straits of Magellan also suffer from what are locally known as “Williwaws”. This is a body of cold, dense air, which is pushed up one side of an island by the wind. When this cold air reaches the top, it flows down the other side much like an avalanche. Because these winds cannot be seen, unsuspecting captains moored their ships parallel with the lee shore. The force of a Williwaw has been known to severely damage and sometimes sink a ship. So sheltering in the lee of an island from a storm can still have its problems!

Today, any ship that sends out a distress call cannot expect to receive any help, as the rescue vessel would be putting itself at the same risk of foundering.

ROBERT FITZROY



Born in 1805, the year Nelson defeated the French and Spanish navies at Trafalgar, he was born into relative wealth, being the grandson of the third Duke of Grafton and the fourth great-grandson of Charles II. He joined the Royal Naval College, Portsmouth at the age of 12 and was the first cadet to pass the exam with a score of 100%.

Fitzroy’s first introduction to the *Beagle* was in 1827, on the first surveying expedition to Tierra del Fuego under the command of Pringle Stokes, who became so depressed with the persistent bad weather and loneliness of command, he committed suicide, leaving Fitzroy to bring the ship back to the fleet.



The other ship accompanying the *Beagle* was the *Adventure*, under the command of Philip Parker King, who completed Matthew Flinders’ survey of the coast of Australia.

The *Beagle* was originally a Cherokee Class brigantine, with two masts, commonly referred to as “coffin boxes” as 26 of the 100 built sank. However, before setting out again, the *Beagle* was converted into a barque by adding a mizzenmast, raising the deck by 18 inches (450mm) and removing four of the ten guns, which gave it more storage space. Fitzroy became Flag Officer to Admiral Sir John Otway, and was personally promoted by the Admiral, leap-frogging John Sullivan, who became his second-in-command on the *Beagle*.

With this new command, Fitzroy did not want to become another Pringle Stokes, so he suggested that a non-naval person should accompany the voyage as a scientist. He could collect examples of the flora and fauna and so add to the knowledge of the region being surveyed. His ulterior motive was to have a companion; someone he could talk to on an equal footing, thus removing the problem of not being able to discuss problems with junior officers, which would be construed as a sign of weakness. He always had a sense of pride about what he did, trying to strive for excellence in each task he undertook and caring for those under his command.

On the second voyage he compiled over 80 maps with accompanying sketches of the land, to help others determine their position. It is quite ironic that on the second voyage, he walked on a riverbed in Argentina, contemplating how many millennia it had taken for the water to smooth the pebbles. He later married a devout Christian whose beliefs changed his perspective on the age of the world. His narrative of the voyage was a collaboration with Darwin, and even though he bitterly opposed Darwin's theories, they still visited each other when time allowed.

In 1843, he was appointed Governor of New Zealand; he encountered many problems, one of which was a lack of money from the British Government. He overcame this by introducing his own monetary system, whereby the immigrant farmers had the ability to buy and sell goods. His downfall, which led to his recall to England, was because he upset the immigrants, who wanted lands occupied by the Maoris. In the tribunal he arranged to settle the dispute he declared that the Maoris had as much right to the land as the immigrants.

In 1854 he joined the Board of Trade as head of the meteorological section, and was the first person to be ordered by Sir Francis Beaufort, of Beaufort wind-scale fame, to take wind observations. Fitzroy worked on several types of barometer including what is now termed the Fitzroy barometer. He built a type of barometer which contained a variety of liquids in a sealed tube, which by observing the amount of precipitation and the clarity of the liquid or lack thereof, was able to predict the impending weather.



Like most things which stir a government into action, it was a disaster that set the wheels in motion. Fitzroy had promoted the idea of issuing storm warnings in a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS). Prince Albert was President and arranged two meetings at Buckingham Palace. In October 1859 the *Royal Charter*, a new iron-built ship

was wrecked off the coast of Anglesey with few survivors.

Weather forecasting is not an exact science in the British Isles, which is why it is a frequent topic of conversation. However, predicting the weather depends upon the collection and interpretation of the following data:

- Barometric pressure and whether it is steady, rising or falling.
- Speed and direction of the wind.
- Visibility at sea.

On 1st September 1860, trials were started from 13 stations monitored by telegraph operators, so there would be no delay in transmitting the data, which had to be submitted at 9:00 a.m. By exchanging data with his French counterparts, he added data from six cities in France.

Fitzroy and his colleagues had barely an hour to process the information and produce the results, issuing them to Lloyds of London, *The Times* newspaper and ports around the country. He also devised a visual telegraph system for ports using barrels and cones, still used today, to indicate the impending weather conditions. This was much to the annoyance of the shipyards, who made a lot of money repairing storm-damaged ships, but the beneficiaries were the

insurance companies and grateful people who had not lost their lives. The storm warnings eventually became the daily weather forecast.

The thing he really feared, his reason for taking Darwin on the voyage, eventually caught up with him and he committed suicide in 1865.

However his legacy is not forgotten. There were two shipping or weather areas called Finisterre, one Spanish, one British. The European Commission declared that there could only be one Finisterre area. Britain argued that since we instigated the shipping forecast, why should we change the name? The Spanish were equally adamant, so in a flash of inspiration, we decided to change the name to Fitzroy as a mark of respect to the man who made travelling by ship so much safer.



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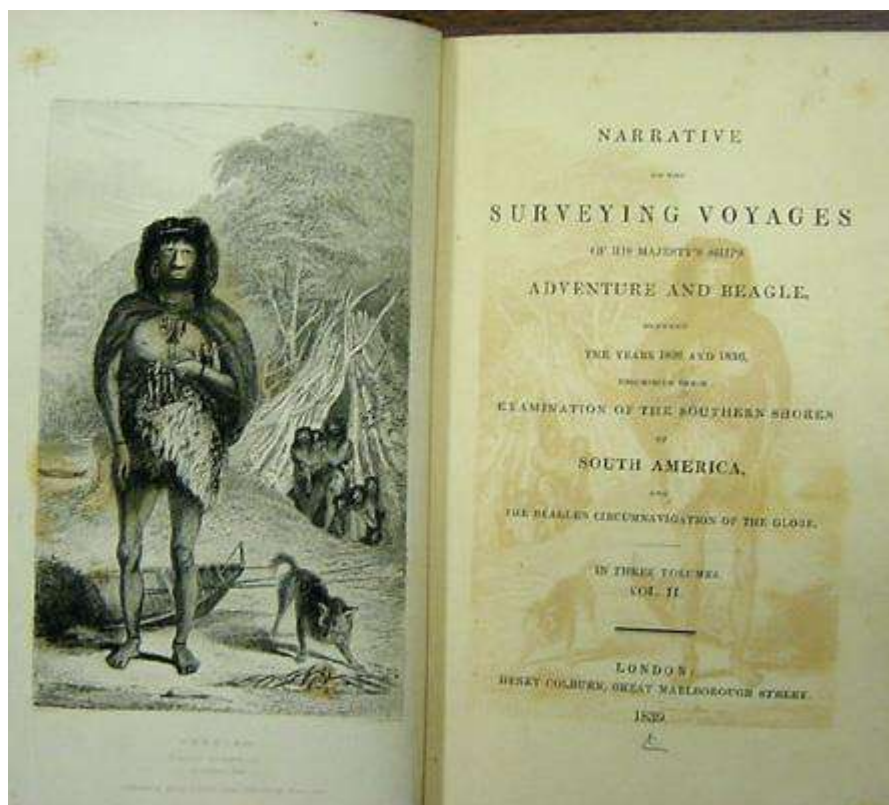
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PUCCINI OPERA

Jeff Dugdale outlines some unlikely plots, and the life of their creator

Well into the evening of 25th April 1926, the famous Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini, directing the premiere at La Scala in Milan of the newly reconstructed version of the final full length masterpiece *Turandot*, by his close friend Giacomo Puccini, raised his hand to stop his orchestra playing, turned to the audience and



said something along the lines of “There is no more, for here the Maestro laid down his pen” and brought proceedings to a close for the stunned full house which included almost every living Italian celebrity. Puccini had left this opera with a libretto by Adami and Simoni unfinished when he died at the end of November 1924, but his younger contemporary Franco Alfano had attempted to produce a conclusion using material left by Puccini. This was clearly not to the satisfaction of Toscanini and in due

course he revised Alfano’s work to produce a slightly shorter ending. It is this version which we usually hear in modern recordings and performances.

Born into a very musical family in Lucca, Tuscany in 1858, Puccini was inspired by a performance of Verdi’s 1871 Egyptian-themed opera *Aida*, which was being staged in Pisa a near twenty mile walk from his home. Then when he was 21 he enrolled in the Conservatory



of Milan to study musical composition with amongst others Amilcare Ponchielli, then already famous for his operas *I Promessi Sposi* (1856) and *La Gioconda* (1876). Within two years Puccini was ready to try an opera himself and entered a competition sponsored by a music publisher for a short piece which he called *Le Villi*, possibly inspired by Adolphe Adam’s 1841 Opera *Giselle*, whose second act is devoted to

the sinister actions of a troupe of Wilis, broken hearted phantom girls who have been cast off by former lovers. Although Puccini’s opera did not win a prize it was thought good enough to be produced and saw its first staging at the end of May 1884

Compared with Rossini and Verdi for example, Puccini was not a prolific composer, producing only half a dozen full length works at intervals of around three years, commencing in 1893 when he was 35 years old with *Manon Lescaut* which was to become his first major theatrical success. However, three years later he composed one of the four operas for which he is rightly famous: *La Bohème*.

La Bohème



Opening on a garret scene in Paris, where impecunious men of Art are doing little more than existing, this opera tells the story of the love affair between the poet Rodolfo and Mimi, the frail and ailing seamstress from upstairs who knocks on his door asking for a light for her candle. When it appears she has lost her key they both search for it in the gloom and when Rodolfo locates it he pretends to continue to search and finds her hand instead, leading into his famous aria “Che gelida manina” (“Your tiny hand is frozen”). The

love affair develops and fades over the next two Acts until we return to the garret some months later for the final Act, to learn that the affair has ended but Rodolfo still longs for Mimi. He learns that she is very ill and wishes to return to his arms for comfort. The other characters show great altruism in spending their meagre funds to buy medicine and a muff for the dying girl but it is all too late and she expires quietly at the end of the opera. (Incidentally, when the news of Puccini's death from cancer was broken in late November 1924 that evening's performance of *La Bohème* in New York was abandoned).



Tosca



Produced in Rome for the first time in 1900, this opera also tells the story of a tragic love affair but ends with the suicide of the eponymous heroine. As the opera opens the painter Cavaradossi paints in the church oblivious of the escaped political prisoner

Angelotti seeking sanctuary. The artist is using as a model a beautiful but anonymous woman whom he has seen regularly in church. Floria Tosca, who is a famous singer, and the painter, collaborate to conceal the prisoner's whereabouts, but she is jealous of the woman in his painting suspecting he admires her more.



Angelotti reveals that this woman is his sister who is helping him to escape by leaving women's clothing in the church for his disguise. Cavaradossi, who has similar political sympathies, offers to conceal him in his villa but all too soon the police, led by the wicked Scarpia are on the case. The police chief who lusts for Tosca convinces her that Cavaradossi is being unfaithful to her, suspecting that the trail will lead him to Angelotti.

Scarpia tortures Cavaradossi for information about the escaped man, and on hearing his cries Tosca tells the police chief all he needs to know, only to learn that Scarpia has not kept his word but has ordered the execution of her lover, which he rescinds only when Tosca agrees to offer him herself. Scarpia then pretends to order the execution to be faked. However Tosca distrusts him totally and stabs him to death after he has written a letter of safe conduct for them both.

Next morning Tosca presents these papers to the prison guards and advises her lover on how "to die" but is horrified when the execution is actually carried out. In despair, with her lover dead and Scarpia's murder discovered she throws herself from the battlements.

Madama Butterfly



Opening at La Scala Milan in 1904, *Madama Butterfly* is the third tragic opera in a row from Puccini which ends with the heroine's death, as in *Tosca*, by her own hand.

Japanese maiden Cio-Cio-San incurs opprobrium from her family and friends when she enters into a form of marriage with American sailor Lieutenant Pinkerton, who has adopted a "girl in every port" approach to this marriage. After the wedding, the girl is soon abandoned by Pinkerton whom she continues to long for. Her memorable aria "Un Bel di" ("One fine day...I dream he'll return") opens Act Two which is set three years

after her marriage.

Cio-Cio-San is all but penniless by this stage and has refused all other approaches of marriage believing that the American will return to make good, and indeed Pinkerton does so but with his real American wife (Kate) on his arm. When she realises the full truth of the situation, that not only does he not really love her but wants to take away their child to be brought up in his new family back home, she commits ritual suicide, dying at his feet.

With success now ensured as the foremost living composer of grand opera of the time, Puccini indulged in something of a playboy image, living and working in his purpose-built lakeside villa near Viareggio, hunting, indulging his wealth on fast cars - and being embroiled in a major row with his wife over an alleged affair with one of their servants who then killed herself because of the disgrace. Her family successfully sued the Puccinis for damages.

However, in 1910 he completed *La fanciulla del West* (*The Girl of the Golden West*) from a libretto by David Belasco whose book had inspired *Madama Butterfly*. Set in a mining camp in the Sierra Madre Mountains of California, this opera was the first one ever to première at the New York Metropolitan Opera House and starred Enrico Caruso as the bandit Dick Johnson.

Some seven years later Puccini completed another three act opera *La Rondine* (*The Swallow*) which opened at the Grand Theatre in Monte Carlo, then internationally famous for its opera and ballet productions. This opera differs from most of the Puccini canon in being largely in the style of a light-hearted Viennese operetta, but as with *Turandot*, Puccini did not complete the work to his satisfaction and different forms of the book and score exist.

Puccini's second three full-length operas, commencing with *La fanciulla del West*, differ from his first three in that at their dénouement darkness does not totally overwhelm light, so while Mimi, Cio-Cio-San and Tosca all die in the closing moments of *La Bohème*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Tosca*, happy couples in love - in the form of Minnie and Dick Johnson, Magda and Ruggero (for most, though not all of *La Rondine*) and, as we shall see below, Calaf and The Princess - are the order of the day in them. In fact the first two acts of *La Rondine* have something of the flavour and frivolity of Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, with disguises employed and confusion rife at a bourgeois social event, though depending on which version you select there are degrees of unhappiness in the ending, more reminiscent of the final crisis of Verdi's *La Traviata*.

In the following year, Puccini produced three short operas which are often performed together as *Il Trittico* comprising, *Il tabarro* (*The Cloak*), *Suor Angelica* (*Sister Angelica*) and the darkly ironic tale of *Gianni Schicchi*, best known of the pieces mainly because of the devotional aria "O mio babbino caro" - "Oh my beloved papa". These première together at the New York Met in December 1918.

Turandot



As mentioned above this was Puccini's final opera, left unfinished on his death and not première until April 1926, when La Scala housed its first staging.

As the opera opens we learn that Princess Turandot of Peking, China, will marry any high born man who successfully answers three of her riddles, on pain of death for failure. In fact one candidate who has failed the test is about to be executed in public. Amongst the waiting crowd is Calaf, who despite the Princess's rejection of claims for mercy, is captivated by her cold beauty and offers himself as the next suitor.

When Calaf answers the three riddles successfully The Princess begs her father not to force her into the marriage, and on learning of her reluctance and her statement that she can never love



him Calaf asks her to solve a riddle or he will die. The question: What is my name?

The start of Act Three brings one of the most famous of Puccini arias in the shape of the Princess's command which Calaf repeats in "Nessun dorma" ("None shall sleep ... until the riddle is solved"). When all else fails to bring news of Calaf's identity, the slave girl Li, who knows him well, is tortured to reveal his name but is determined not to, and The Princess Turandot asks what is the power that holds Li together under such duress. Li kills herself before the secret can be torn out of her. When Calaf and Turandot are left alone together they declare their love for one another and The Princess declares she now knows the stranger's name - it was "Love"!



NEW ISSUES

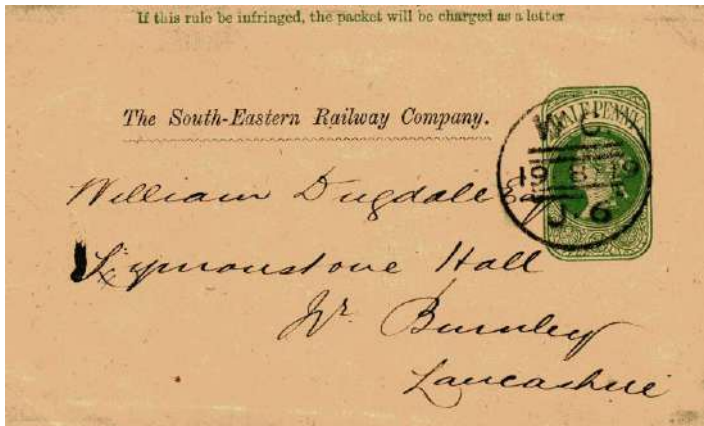
The stamps below are reproduced with the kind assistance of the CASCO Philatelic Services

BRITAIN'S RAILWAY EVOLUTION.PT 3

Jim Wigmore reaches his final destination

MEN OF VISION

The spread of railway lines around the country were driven by men of great drive and vision who, unhindered by trade unions, health & safety regulations and all the restrictive regulations of today, went forward through thick and thin with a single purpose: to complete the task whatever the cost in misery or



human life. One such man was Edward Watkin (later Sir Edward Watkin) who

had a dream of running trains from the industrial heartland of Manchester to the expanding markets of Continental Europe.

This was not as impossible as it sounded as he proposed to build a Channel Tunnel, and become not only Chairman of the South Eastern Railway connecting Dover with London, but also Chairman of the Metropolitan Railway, then extending its suburban line north-westwards from London through Rickmansworth.

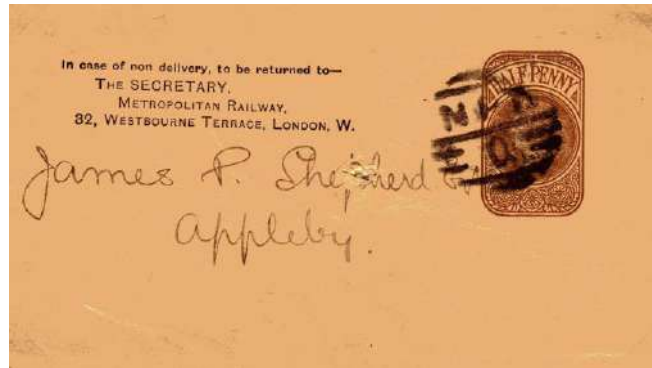
Watkin had become General Manager of the Manchester Sheffield and Lincoln Railway in 1854 and its Chairman in 1864. He was a man of great foresight, and ambition who worked for years trying to achieve his dream, haggling with other companies to provide the links between the MS&L lines and London. As the proposed working arrangements were always to Watkin's advantage the other railway companies would have none of them, so he was driven to constructing his own rail link southwards from Sheffield to link with the Metropolitan. The



line opened in 1899; two years earlier the directors changed the name of the company to the Great Central Railway. It was the last to arrive in London and the first main line to be lost. It is still fondly remembered, and special hand stamps were produced for the 75th anniversary. Sir Edward Watkin retired through ill health during 1895 so did not see the completion of his dream. Indeed it was to be in excess of 100 years before his vision was to be finally realised with a rail link capable of transporting goods between this country and mainland Europe. The route of the Great Central Railway is once

again being looked at as a freight route. The original line with its gentle gradients and shallow curves are now realised as being ideal - but will it ever be re-built? Sir Edward Watkin also had one other dream. Having visited Paris and seen the Eiffel Tower, he felt a similar attraction should be built in London. An architectural competition was run to obtain suitable designs. Many designs were submitted but none of the proposals impressed the judges. When Gustave Eiffel would not accept the commission, the contract was reluctantly given to Sir

Benjamin Baker, designer of the Forth Bridge. The foundations were laid in 1892 with building commencing in 1893. The first stage of what was to become known as “Watkin’s Folly” was surrounded by pleasure gardens; featuring sports grounds, pagodas, bandstands and a lake, and opened to the public in 1895. It was served by the Metropolitan railway that had opened a smart new station close by. The public stayed away, and facing building difficulties the project was abandoned. The site was to be better known in later years as the Wembley Exhibition, with Wembley Stadium being built over the site of “Watkins Folly”. By the time the Channel Tunnel was completed and the stamps below issued to commemorate the opening, Sir Edward Watkin had been long forgotten. It has to be said, however, that Watkin’s dreams showed remarkable vision and the man deserves better than being simply forgotten about.



The Directors of the Metropolitan Railway were also men of vision. In the early 1900’s they looked out of the windows of their trains at the fields and farms alongside the line and thought “it would be a good idea to buy all this land, build houses upon it and sell the idea of working in London and coming home to a country lifestyle”. They did just that and marketed the idea to the public under the banner of “Metroland”. Some years later John Betjamen picked up on this name and produced a poem. His words could be linked to a philatelic display of related material.

*Child of the First War, Forgotten by the Second,
We called you METROLAND. We laid our schemes
Lured by the lush brochure, down byways beckoned,
To build at last the cottage of our dreams,
City clerk turned countryman again,
And linked to the Metropolis by train.*



*Early electric punctual and prompt,
Off to those cuttings in the Hampstead Hills,
St Johns Wood, Marlborough Road,
No longer stations and the trains rush through.*



*Over the points by electric traction,
Out of the chimney pots into the openness,
Til we come to the suburbs.*

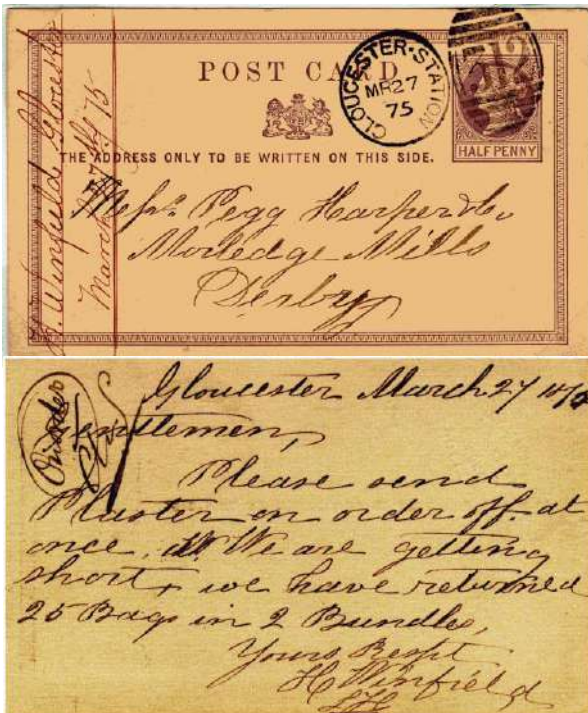
.....
*Beyond Neasden there was an unimportant hamlet,
Where for many years the Metropolitan did not stop,
Wembley.....*

There are of course many other men of drive and vision, such as George Hudson the so-called “Railway King” of York, whose antics were eventually to lead him into penury and total disgrace. These stories could give lots of scope to the thematic collector.

RAILWAY STATIONS

When looking at the evolution of our railways, one of the places we should not overlook is the Railway Station. There is lots of scope, from the large junction station to the small rural halt or the stations that have along with many railway lines disappeared. In the heyday of the railways and in many cases still today, they were either significant users of the postal system or were also acting as Post Offices and carriers for the Royal Mail. Most of the railway companies offered a railway letter and parcel service in competition to the post office.

Right is shown a cover from a letter sent by the Somerset Central Railway and cancelled at Glastonbury on 9th July 1853; a date almost a year prior to the railway’s actual opening. Glastonbury Station was the railway headquarters prior to its amalgamation with the Dorset Central Railway when it became the Somerset & Dorset Railway. Glastonbury Station is long gone, as is the S & D.



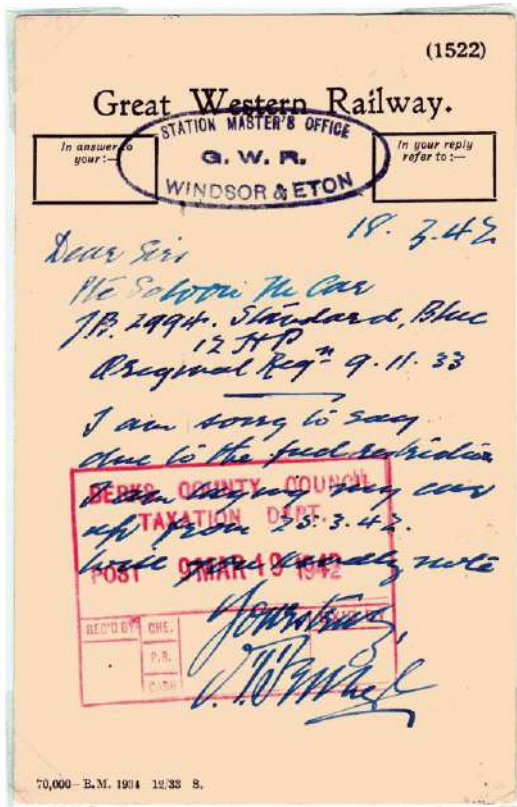
The postcard left from March 1875 is an order being placed with a supplier of plaster. It was posted at Gloucester Railway Station and carries a fine duplex cancel. The content requests supply of plaster and states that 25 bags have been returned.

Today we would simply go to our local builders’ merchants and return with the goods. How many people these days return bags?



The Headquarters of the Great Northern Railway was at Kings Cross Station in London. The letter on the previous page dated 19th Jan 1872 was an inter railway letter from the Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway. Both companies were at the time in dispute regarding the carriage of coal to London. Neither company exists any longer: the GNR was absorbed into the LNER at Grouping and the MS & L became the Great Central and was also absorbed into the LNER at Grouping.

The other cover to the GNR at Kings Cross in 1857 (right) is a mourning cover and it carries the wax seal of Edward Dutton Cook who, although at the time was working for a railway company, was to become Drama Critic for Pall Mall Gazette from 1867 to 1873.



It is possible to find examples of railway station communication using the mail services prior to the introduction of the telephone as a main means of communication. The card left is a typical example, with the Station Master at Windsor & Eton writing to the local authority.

With many railway stations having been in existence for very long periods of time a number of commemorative covers and cancels have been produced. A significant story could be built around the country's railway stations and their place in the communities they served.

The railway letter stamps issued at the various companies railway stations for the carriage of mail by train could and do form quite a significant collecting interest.

The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, featured on the stamps shown right, is another railway that disappeared at Grouping and became part of the LMS. It is also possible to find railway newspaper wrappers with railway letter stamps.

All go to add to the story of the importance of the railway not only as a carrier of people and goods but also as an integral part of the community that it served, and as such a part of our country's railway evolution and heritage.



MAIL BY RAIL

Any mention of mail by rail inevitably brings to mind the words of W. H. Auden's poem "Night Mail". A few of the words are produced inset left. The word format reflects the noise of the wheels striking the rail joints (*removed on today's railways*). However mail first travelled by rail as early as 1830. The relationship between the railways and the Post Office has not always been a happy one, with the Post Office consistently claiming they are being overcharged.

The Post Office decided it could make use of many of the horse drawn mail coaches displaced by the railways to carry parcels, the picture below shows an example. Mail so moved was marked COACH – ROAD BORNE, see the example below.

*This is the night mail crossing the border,
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,
Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,
The shop at the corner and the girl next door.*

*Pulling up Beatock, a steady climb:
The gradient's against her, but she's on time.*

*Past cotton-grass and Moorland boulder,
Snorting noisily as she passes*



Note the parcel was actually posted at a railway station and was removed by the Post Office to be transported by a slower means. The railway companies were quite unmoved by this Post Office posturing knowing full well they had the upper hand. In more recent times history is starting to repeat itself. In 2003 Royal Mail cancelled its contract with the railway, favouring total movement of mail by either air or road. They were starting to return mail to rail by 2004 and regular movements of mail have been scheduled since 2008. Rail is still king over road, being quicker and requiring less staff.



*This is the night mail crossing the border,
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,
Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,
The shop at the corner and the girl next door.*

W H Auden

Special carriages initially defined as sorting tenders were developed for the collection, carriage and sorting of mail on the move. Later known as Travelling Post Offices (TPO's) each had its own hand stamps to cancel mail, denoting the TPO and direction of travel.

The postcard left shows the inside of a TPO carriage and the sorting process by hand of mail being picked up and dropped off during the journey.

The entire letter shown on the next page was carried on the Manchester TPO from London in 1871 and carries on the rear the cancel of the TPO or Sorting Tender as it was then known.



The TPO had a facility to post letters up to the time of departure. Letters posted into the TPO were required to have a Late

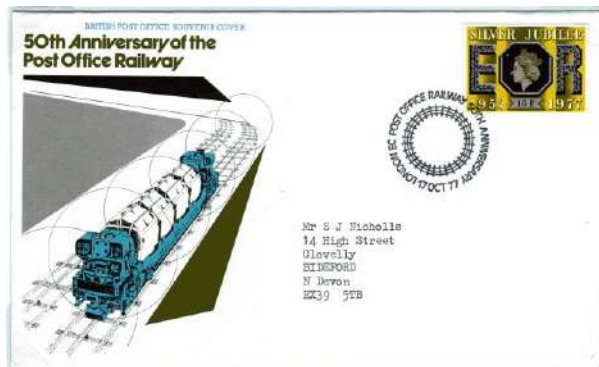
Fee payment, in the form of an additional postage stamp. Examples posted without the fee being paid were marked and postage due was supposed to be collected from the recipient. An example is shown left.

The TPO was able to collect and drop off



mail not only at its various stops, but also on the move using line side apparatus and a catch net on the side of the

TPO. Only one example has been found to date of this equipment on a stamp.



As early as 1863 the Post Office started to experiment with an underground pneumatic railway system. It was not a success and it was not until 1927 when the Post Office Railway was opened between the Main Railway Terminals and Mount Pleasant that mail was successfully moved by underground railway in London. In 1977 the Post Office produced a commemorative cover featuring the railway. The Post Office changed the name of this system to Mail Rail in 1987 (the

60th Anniversary); the system is still in place but no longer used, all mail movements in London are now by road.

Mail by rail may not be as visible as it once was at our main line railway terminals, but if you know where and when to look you can still see the trains travelling between the various mail hubs.

Mail by Rail is a wide subject for both the postal historian and the thematic collector. The return of mail to rail is unlikely to see the return of TPO's and the cancellation of mail on the move, a sad thing from a philatelic viewpoint.

There is lots of scope for the thematic collector to build a truly fascinating story about the railways' role in the post offices day to day task of delivering the mail, and how that mail is moved around the country by means faster than a horse drawn Mail Coach.



JOINT SEMINAR ON POSTAL HISTORY AND THEMATIC PHILATELY

Malmö, Sweden, 21st – 23rd August 2009

Richard Wheeler and others attended this seminar and were provided with a full report. If you would like the whole report (in pdf format) please email the Editor. This is just an extract.

Section 5. Where does international competitive Thematic Philately stand today?

5.1 Prof. Dr. Damian Läge: The regulations and their purpose

The current criteria of evaluation

- It is very important to exhibit appropriate material only: all kind of philatelic material in its postal aspects according to illustration, purpose of issue (i.e. private material should not be included in a thematic exhibit)
- Successful exhibits trigger evaluation! Successful means what other collectors/exhibitors appreciate of what they see on the frames. Other influences on evaluation come from integrating national traditions and the approach of the leading judges.
- “The state of the play” or the best successful treatment in thematic exhibits is a narrative approach (“story”)

Evaluating Philatelic Knowledge

- Philatelic knowledge criterion has been reduced from max 25 points in earlier regulations to present (year 2000 regulations) max 15 points, but in addition Development has max 15 points and Innovation max 5 points in the Treatment criterion
- Judging criteria:
 - o Presence of the widest possible range of postal-philatelic material and its balanced use
 - o Checking for errors and mistakes
 - o Presence of philatelic studies and related skilful use of important philatelic material
- Judging philatelic knowledge could be done according to a “level system”:
 - o Step 1: evaluate the range of present postal-philatelic material and set a level accordingly
 - o Step 2: deduct one or more points when you detect errors and mistakes
 - o Step 3: add points for skilful use of important material and sound philatelic studies
- There are 3 types of “Philatelic studies”:
 - o Several pages elaborate a thematically important aspect by the detailed study of the philatelic varieties
 - o One page concentrates on a detailed study of the important varieties for an identical thematic detail
 - o Two or more items of an identical thematic detail are shown to underline personal knowledge or philatelic importance of the items

Challenges when judging thematic exhibits

1. Non-postal elements of philatelic items:
 - o No importance for thematic philately

- o They have to be ignored when judging rarity
- o Some examples:
 - Additional private prints on postal stationary
 - FDC illustrations
 - Fiscal stamps
 - Illustrated patriotic covers (in USA)
 - Astro-philatelic items
- o Borderline items:
 - Acceptable only if they form the only means to document thematic details,
 - No philatelic importance and should give no points for rarity, but they can give points for thematic knowledge
- 2. Rarity of unimportant material - Philatelic “core material”:
 - o Degree of general philatelic importance can vary significantly.
 - o Examples of proofs and essays:
 - World status: essays and proofs for the most classic stamps
 - Lesser importance: preliminary drawings of accepted designs, presentation issues, colour proofs for philatelists, modern colour separations
 - No importance: preliminary drawings of rejected designs, modern specimen stamps, photographic archive material
 - o Examples of fancy cancellation from USA:
 - World status: the 19th century fancy killers on cover
 - Lesser importance: 1927-34 first class covers
 - No importance: 1935-50 cachets, additionally to date stamp
 - o Conclusion: the items from lesser and no importance categories do not substantially improve the philatelic quality of an exhibit
- 3. Condition:
 - o Needs to take availability (rarity) into account!
 - o “Scale” of the maximum of 10 points:
 - Max 5 points:
 - common and modern material in good quality
 - Max 8 points:
 - common and modern material in excellent quality plus
 - all common and scarce items in their best condition
 - Max 10 points:
 - Top rarities are in good condition well above average (9 points)
 - All top rarities are in their best condition (10 points)
- 4. Plan (efficient vs. elaborate):
 - o Consistency between plan and title
 - o Presence of the plan page
 - o Adequacy of the plan page (= efficient for understanding the structure)
 - o Coverage of all major aspects necessary to develop the theme
 - o Correct, logical and balanced structure (guidelines: the degree to which a “story” is told instead of a list of aspects appears)
- 5. Thematic knowledge:
 - o Examples for documenting Thematic Knowledge:
 - New thematic finding for chosen subject
 - Thematic details in text and material
 - o Aspects for judging Thematic knowledge:

- For 12 of maximum 15 points:
 - Appropriateness, conciseness and correctness of thematic text
 - Correct thematic use of the material
 - o For additional points:
 - Presence of new thematic findings for theme
 - Use of material that has thematic qualification which is not immediately obvious and needs to be discovered by the exhibitor
6. Development:
- o Title & Plan, and Development are components of the main criterion named Treatment
 - o Examples for documenting Development:
 - Order and positioning of the items on the page
 - Synthesis of page content by pages titles
 - “Surprising” material (which does not belong to the subject, but thematically fits into the story on the page)
 - o Aspects for judging Development:
 - For 12 of maximum 15 points:
 - Correct assembly and positioning of the items in conformity with the plan
 - Connection between the items and the thematic text
 - Elaboration of all aspects of the plan
 - For additional points:
 - Depth, shown through connections, cross references, ramifications, causes and effects
 - Balance, by giving to each thematic point the importance corresponding to its significance within the theme
7. How to judge Innovation?
- o Innovation is demonstrated by a personal elaboration of the theme, that transforms an exhibit from a sequence of classified items into an “original” story - something new that makes sense!
 - o “Scale” of the maximum of 5 points:
 - 5 points: introduction of new themes:
 - A new theme, by itself, is not sufficient, when not sustained by an innovative plan and development
 - 4 points: new approaches for known themes:
 - E.g. historical approach, that widens the scope for analysis
 - 3 points: new aspects of an established or known theme:
 - New chapters, paragraphs
 - 2 points: application of material:
 - To support new thematic facts
8. Consistency in scoring:
- o Evaluation of thematic exhibits requires capabilities on 3 different levels:
 - Level 1: Knowledge and understanding of evaluation criteria
 - Level 2: broad thematic and philatelic knowledge
 - Level 3: consistent allotment of points according to criteria requires an agreement about proper scales
 - o “Starting level” at 80%:
 - Average of thematic exhibits at FIP exhibitions (80.5 points)
 - Proposal: 80% = absence of errors, but nothing special

5.2 Discussion on Thematic Philately

Why are there not more multiples in thematics like in traditional philately?

- Multiples should not fill space. Better with single stamps than multiples.
- Do not have repetition. Repetition was banned in earlier days, but could be accepted if of special philatelic value.

Could revenues be included in Thematics?

- Only postal material should be included
- Revenues are in the borderline material and are allowed to be included, but they should not be judged for rarity
- Revenues could be used for thematic but not philatelic knowledge

“Chequebook collecting” in TH

- Mr. Läge: there is always a temptation to include rare items that do not fit the theme. Jurors recognize known items but not the unknown. Chequebook items are always known rare items. The collectors should be informed to look for unknown rare items, which also give points for knowledge. Themes in Thematics are chosen from interest, not from philatelic knowledge. The collector must know which items that exist.
- Mr. Hess: “Rome was not built in one day!” It takes a long time to build an exhibit. You should wait for the items that fit the theme, and you should collect areas that fit your chequebook.
- Mr. Kimmel: 50 years ago only rarity was valid. Each collector should know what exists and wait for the right item

How is imagination considered in TH?

- New research should be especially rewarded!

Section 9 Dr. Med. Wolff Hess: Judging Thematic Philately

9.2 Thematic Philately

1st “Rule”

- Title and plan:
 - A meaningful plan, easy to understand, properly structured and raising interest to the observer is the best possibility to apprehend straight off content and the scope of the theme chosen
 - A well chosen title and a structured plan will also give key to the exhibitor to work out his theme systematically without gaps or unnecessary repetitions
 - Title and plan make sense only if they correspond. Innovating approaches concerning the text and the material are desirable
- Treatment and development (work out):
 - Facts and contexts generally contain careful investigations. Latter bring the main aspects of the theme in depth, originally and in logical follow-up, accompanied by the best possible choice of philatelic material

2nd "Rule"

- Knowledge and research:
 - Thematic knowledge is demonstrated by transforming the chosen concept into a detailed plan + workout and the choice of the most suitable material full in correspondence of the FIP rules (of postal origin, authorized or tacitly agreed by the Posts)
 - Philatelic knowledge is shown by a conclusive choice of the material incorporated in the exhibit

3rd "Rule"

- Condition and rarity:
 - Versatility, importance and rare philatelic material fascinates even the experienced observer
 - The good condition of the items shown is able to intensify the interest in the exhibit

4th "Rule"

- Presentation:
 - An attractive presentation supports additional sympathy from any observer
- *Challenges of today:*
- Philatelic knowledge!!!
 - Consistency and conciseness of the plan
 - Conciseness of thematic knowledge
 - The consistency of the "Red thread"!!! [This is a Z pattern in the way a presentation is made on an exhibit. It is reading your story from left to right in each row across the page and telling your story properly].
- Tell your "story" properly!!



Damien, Lesley and Richard

BTA NEWS

THEMATIC DISPLAY AT THE ROYAL, 28 JANUARY 2010

Members are reminded that on 28th January 2010 Jonas Hallstrom from Sweden will be presenting his acclaimed thematic exhibit, *The History of Square-Rigged Sailing Vessels*, at the Royal Philatelic Society London (RPSL), 41 Devonshire Place, London W1G 6JY. You may recall his double-paged exhibit, and his new concept of a thematic exhibit, which the BTA was given permission by the *London Philatelist* to publish in *Themescene* June 2007 pages 51/55, "How to Deal with 'Concept' in a Thematic Collection". The display commences at 1pm and Jonas will give a presentation at 5pm. Members of the BTA who are Fellows or Members of the RPSL will no doubt welcome this opportunity to see this outstanding thematic display. BTA members who are not Members of the RPSL may attend the display as guests of Members of the RPSL, but because of the security arrangements will need to inform John Hayward beforehand of their attendance to gain admittance.

MEMBERS MEETING AT LONDON 2010, 12 MAY 2010

Meeting Room, Exhibition Hall, Business Design Centre, Islington, London N1.

On the afternoon of Wednesday 12th May 2010 the BTA will be holding a members' meeting at the above venue from 2pm to 5.45pm during the international philatelic exhibition, London 2010. The meeting will commence with displays by members, so please bring along up to 12 sheets on any thematic subject you like, to display and talk about for no more than 2 minutes. After the members' displays we will have a display on the horse by our guest speaker, Michel Abram. Michel is very well known to us as a former President of the French Thematic Association whose thematic collection on the horse is outstanding. He speaks very good English and his display is one of the best, as anyone who saw it at Basildon in 2004 will attest. So do make a note in your diaries now and come to the meeting. You do not have to display if you do not wish to. The meeting is free and on a day when the Thematic Class exhibits will be available in the frames for viewing.

The BTA will also be running a table at London 2010 along with the Alba Stamp Group, the Bird Stamp Society and the Bicycle Stamps Club for the whole duration of the exhibition from Saturday 8th May to Saturday 15th May 2010. Volunteers are needed to help man the table during this period. So, if you can spare one or two hours on any day please let the BTA Secretary, Anne Stammers, know.

THEMATIC WORKSHOP, 24 APRIL 2010

Arden School, Station Road, Knowle, Solihull B03 0PT.

The BTA is running a Thematic Workshop at the Midland Philatelic Federation's Spring Convention at the above venue on the morning of Saturday 24th April 2010. The workshop will include advice on starting and building a thematic collection and examples of the full range of thematic material available. The Workshop is free and open to the public as well as BTA members.

Members are encouraged to attend this event which will concentrate on the fun side of thematic collecting, especially emphasising the "please yourself" approach and will not cover the more formal side of thematic exhibiting.

BTA MEMBERS DO WELL IN ROME

John Hayward admires pigeons, parrots, and the British entrants at Italia 2009

A trip to Rome towards the end of October to visit the International Philatelic Exhibition, Italia 2009, was a rewarding if frenetic experience. A three day trip to Rome is obviously not long enough to fully savour both the delights of this great city and an international stamp exhibition. The venue for the Exhibition was quite superb although well out of the city centre. There was plenty of room for the exhibits and it was very comfortable strolling round them. My overall impression of the Thematic Class was that there seemed to be more exhibits than usual and some were of a very high standard. They gave a lot of food for thought especially about how to improve presentation. The exhibit on Pigeons which won a large gold medal was especially good, as was the exhibit on Parrots. It is almost unbelievable how much material can be found on both these themes. What was surprising though was the apparently recent trend towards double pages was almost non-existent – there were only four double pages in the whole Class.

There were three UK entrants in the Thematic Class and they all did well. Jim Etherington repeated his gold medal success at Essen earlier in the year with another gold for his *1940 - A Desperate Year for Britain*, for which he was again awarded a special prize for Treatment and 90 points. Ron Backhouse with *Anyone for Tennis* and John Hayward with *The Iron Steed* both achieved large vermeil medals for the first time with 85 and 86 points respectively. There seemed to be less dealers than normal and even fewer with thematic stocks. The Philatelic Bureaux were busy, especially the Italian Post Office where the queues lasted all day and when you eventually got to the front of them it took an age to buy just three stamps! A visit to the Italian National Thematic Society's stand renewed some old acquaintances and provided an opportunity to make some bids for their Thematic Auction.

Rome itself was quite splendid with glorious warm weather and thousands of tourists everywhere. It took only 15 minutes in the queue to get into St. Peters and five minutes longer to enter the Coliseum, both free for the over 65s. They were extremely impressive, but the Sistine Chapel reached after labyrinthine queues was a little disappointing. At night the main buildings and ruins were floodlit creating a very attractive scene. All in all it was a whirlwind but worthwhile trip.



OUT AND ABOUT WITH THE BTA

MOTOR-CYCLES & SUGAR AT PINNER

In October 2009 John Hayward and David Hunter gave a display on behalf of the BTA to some 30 members of the Pinner Philatelic Society. John's display from his thematic collection of motor-cycles was all about the fun side of thematic collecting and what is available philatelically on any given theme - a much shortened version of what he has been presenting at the thematic workshops currently being run by the BTA. He was able to show a whole range of material from stamps, miniature sheets, local posts, cinderellas, postmarks, cachets, metermarks, postal stationery, booklets, perfins, telegrammes, artists drawings, airgraphs and postcards to private advertising envelopes and much more besides.

David's display covered the story of sugar from its origins and how it spread throughout the world to its concentration in the West Indies and the inevitable and iniquitous Slave Trade. The bi-products were not forgotten, with rum and tequila. Diabetes and its treatment were also included as were bees, maple syrup and of course sweets. The display contained a great range of philatelic material with some rare correspondence from Slave Trade days and a superb 100 year old stamp booklet from Madagascar showing sugar cane.

SUCCESSFUL THEMATIC WORKSHOP AT HANDFORTH

The BTA ran a Thematic Workshop in conjunction with the North Western Philatelic Federation (NWPF) at Handforth, Cheshire, on 12th September 2009. This whole day event was attended by 25 people. It was designed to show the fun side of thematic collecting and the pleasure that can be had by doing your own thing – collect what you like!

The day began with individual thematic displays of 9 - 12 pages by each of the attendees. This produced a wide variety of subjects and an equally wide variety of material that was much enjoyed by all those present. Several of the collectors asked questions about their displays or wanted advice on the direction their collection should take and these were fielded by John Hayward.

After coffee the guest speaker, Margaret Morris, gave a display with her usual Scottish humour entitled "Doing Time" which was all about "Time", from calendars, days of the week, months and years, dates, longitude, clocks and timepieces etc. She showed a vast array of thematic material that had taken many years to seek out and put together. There were some fine rare items on display especially letters from the pre 1840 stamp period.

After a buffet lunch John Hayward spent the afternoon on the Thematic Workshop. From his thematic motor-cycle collection he was able to show almost the whole range of philatelic material that is available for collection. He stressed that what you collect is a matter for your own choice – there are no rules as to what you can and cannot collect; but adding something other than stamps creates just that added bit of interest to a collection. He gave advice on starting a thematic collection, how to form a checklist and how to keep up with new issues. For most of the philatelic material available he was able to suggest where it could be obtained.

John showed stamps, miniature sheets, sheetlets, machine labels, stamps on cover, local and strike posts, cinderellas, bogus issues, handstamps, cancellations, cachets, perfins, metermarks, postal stationery of all kinds, booklets, airgraphs, telegrammes, artists' proofs and drawings, postcards, private advertising envelopes etc. He advised where a good number of these could be obtained and what literature existed about them, including in the BTA Library. A great deal of discussion was generated by his display with many questions being asked. The most

common questions were whether certain items were allowable in a thematic exhibit or not, and although John provided advice on this he emphasised that the main purpose of the Workshop was about the fun of collecting and not about the rules of exhibiting.

It was obvious from the questions asked, and discussion generated, which went on well after the formal proceedings had ended, that all present had thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The NWPF felt this was one of the best days they have had in many a long year. Our thanks are due to the NWPF and to Alan Randall Jones in particular for organising the accommodation for the day and the excellent refreshments and buffet lunch.



DO YOU KNOW SOMEBODY
INTERESTED IN THEMATIC COLLECTING?
WOULD THEY LIKE TO JOIN A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO KNOW ABOUT
THEMATIC COLLECTING? IF SO, WHY NOT TELL THEM ABOUT THE...
BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION?

Half page advertisement For Thames Themes

HERE AND THERE

STAMPEX 2009

Results from the national competitions at Autumn Stampex were:

Thematic Class

Richard Wheeler	Masks, mimes and the evolution of puppets	Large vermeil
Goran Moden	St. Paul – brought Christ to the world	Large vermeil
David Cox	Bird migration	Vermeil
Ulf Stenquist	The power of gold	Vermeil
Barry Stagg	Remember that the last half-inch hurts the most	Silver-bronze

BTA members entering other classes were:

Traditional		
Brian Sole	Pricing in proportion	Vermeil
Postal history		
John Leathes	Truchbootbrief Nach Bremen	Large vermeil
One frame		
Peter Wood	The road to freedom	Vermeil
Grace Davies	Story of the Peace rose	Silver
Rolf Scharning	International Philatelic Exhibition Vienna 1933	Silver
Barry Stagg	British army post offices: postmarks from a forgotten war	Silver
Junior. Age 18-21		
Simon Moorcroft	Blood, toil, tears and sweat	Silver. Winner and Strand Trophy recipient

SOUTH WEST OF SCOTLAND PHILATELIC CONGRESS

The organisers of this year's South West of Scotland Philatelic Congress, the Largs and District Stamp Club, were pleased to welcome John Baron, the chairman of the ABPS Executive, to Queen Margaret's Academy, Ayr, on Saturday 3rd October. Not only did John perform the opening ceremony, but he also presented the Bill Hart Award to Lise Whittle. This award is given annually by the Stamp Active Network to an adult who has made outstanding contributions to the promotion of Youth Philately in the UK. Lise started a stamp club at Doonfoot Primary School nine years ago and has been active in encouraging young collectors ever since. It was very fitting that the presentation was done locally and that her friends and children from the school could be present.

To make the most of John's trip north of the border, he was also persuaded to present awards and certificates from Midpex to those children who have moved on from Doonfoot in the summer and who are now at Belmont Academy.

Examples from the children's competition entries were on display and were much admired. South West Congress also organises a children's one page competition, with entries this year from Doonfoot and Annbank Primary schools and Belmont Academy. The winner is chosen by those attending Congress and the clear winner this year was Lynne Mitchell of Doonfoot with her entry 'A Helping Paw'



John and Lise



Half page advertisement for Stamp Insurance Services

GROUP NEWS

ALBA STAMP GROUP



Members Ronnie McMillan and Stanley Brown have produced a cover to mark the bicentenary of the Scottish Bible Society. A Scottish St. Andrew stamp has been used and cancelled with an Edinburgh CDS on 4 August, the actual date of the bicentenary. Remittances are payable to "Scottish Bible Society". Covers are £2.00 each, post paid, and can be obtained from S. Brown, 14 Buchan Drive, Perth, PH1 1NQ.

[Apologies from the Editor for the late publication of this]

GUILD OF ST. GABRIEL

Programme for 2010 to date



16th January

20th February

20th March

17th April

19th June

Letter 'R' – all members

Secular manuscripts – Peter Greening

Plus Bring & Buy

National AGM + Competitions

Great Britain – Ray Pottle

My favourite city – all members

COUNTDOWN TO LONDON 2010



8th – 15th MAY 2010

Over 140 dealers
2,400 competitive frames

12th May at 1400
BTA meeting and guest speaker Michel Abram

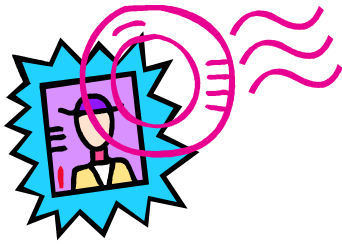
Watch the website for latest news

<http://www.london2010.org.uk/international-stamp-exhibition>

One-eighth page advertisement for Thematic-Club International

HANDSTAMP SPECIAL

*The Handstamps reprinted on these pages first appeared in the "British Postmark Bulletin".
For a free sample copy, write to: The Editor, Postmark Bulletin, Royal Mail, 35 – 50
Rathbone Place, London, W1T 1HQ*



Just4Kids

(Adults, please photocopy these pages and pass them on to a youngster you know)



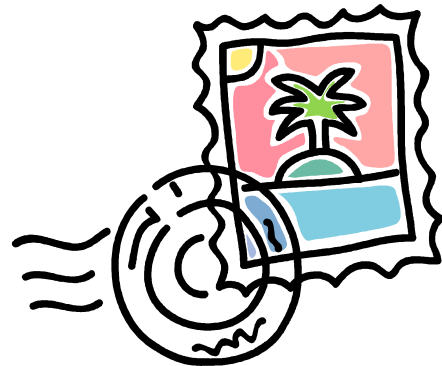
COLLECTING POSTMARKS

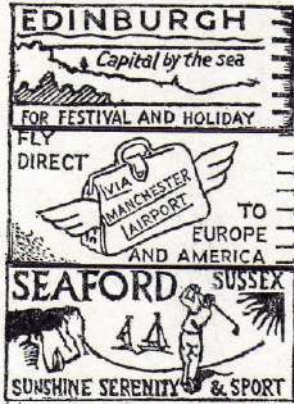
Postmarks make an interesting and unusual collection. You can often find striking and uncommon postmarks on envelopes. Ask your family and friends to save the wrappings from the mail they receive. There is often a small round postmark, showing the time, date, town and country where the letter or packet was posted from. Some of the envelopes will also be stamped with a picture and a slogan, which make an advertisement for the town they were sent from. These are fun to collect.



For instance, Bristol has the outline of a big ship and the slogan SHIP THRO' BRISTOL. Brighton is a popular South Coast holiday centre, and a postmark showed a beach umbrella and a sailing yacht, with the slogan IN EUROPE'S TOP TEN RESORTS – BRIGHTON AND HOVE. Even the 'i' in Brighton is dotted by a blazing sun, just to show that it really is a bright and sunny place.

Read the next page and then try the quiz, and win a prize!!!





Collecting these postmarks can be very exciting. When you find one, simply cut it out and fasten it to a sheet of paper by a stamp-hinge. Then underneath neatly write the name of the town. If you don't know it, you should easily be able to find out from the round postmark. Then carefully cut out the piece of paper leaving a border around it. See if you can get a giant sized map of Great Britain or the World, and then with the help of an atlas, stick your postmarks on the map in the exact spot of the town where they came from. It will be fun and look attractive, and you will find out where lots of towns are.



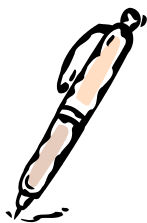
QUIZ!! HAVE A GO!!

Look at the postmark pictures and slogans on these two pages and try this quiz.

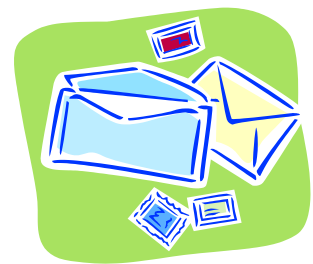


1. Where would you go to watch horse racing?
2. Which town advertises 'Sunshine, Serenity and Sport'?
3. Where could you find out about Roman history?
4. Which island would you visit to see motorbike racing?
5. Which capital city is famous for its festival?
6. Which airport could you fly from to get to Europe and America?

*Send your answers or letters, jokes, poems and drawings to;
Just4Kids, c/o The Editor, Themescene,
87 Victoria Road, Bournemouth, BH1
4RS.*



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LIBRARY LISTING

Please send the librarian a stamped and self addressed envelope when requesting a list of articles on the topic(s) of your choice. *N.B.* Copies cost 10p each plus adequate return postage. The Librarian recommends you phone him asking how best to proceed and say if you prefer to make your own copies.

Books

Dodson, L. A Philatelic Tour of the American Civil War. ATA Handbook no.155
345 grams.

Journal articles

		Aircraft	
Farrar, W.	2	America's big bombers	<i>Topical Times 2/2008</i>
		Christmas	
Kitts, P.	1	Christkindl	<i>ThemNews 2/2008</i>
		Computers	
Dobrescu, D.	2	Mechanical calculators	<i>Topical Times 2/2008</i>
Vegter, W.	2	Hollerith's punch cards	<i>Topical Times 2/2008</i>
		Animals: extinct or mythical	
Houser, J.	2	Cryptids on stamps (Loch Ness Monster to the dodo)	<i>Topical Times 2/2008</i>
		Dance	
Liebenberg, C.	1	50 th anniv. of volkspele in South Africa	<i>ThemNews 2/2008</i>
		Explorers	
Whittle, C.	1	Missionary in Africa: David Livingstone	<i>ThemNews 2/2008</i>
		Frogs	
Antinori, M.	2	Postal frogs	<i>Topical Times 2/2008</i>
		Marine life	
Warnock, G.	2	Endangered species: sea turtle	<i>ThemNews 2/2008</i>
		Polar regions	
Hillger, D. & Toth, G.	3	International Polar Years	<i>Topical Times 2/2008</i>
		Missiles	
Beenen, J.	7	Missiles launched from ships (incl. submarines)	<i>Orbit 10/2008</i>
		Religion	
Whittle, C.	1	Missionary in Africa: David Livingstone	<i>ThemNews 2/2008</i>
Whittle, C.	3	Trees of the Bible	<i>ThemNews 2/2008</i>
		Satellites	
Duncan, H.	2	ESA Satellites: A Short Guide	<i>Orbit 1/2008</i>
Hillger, D. & Toth, G.	14	Un-manned Satellites on Postage Stamps	<i>Orbit 1/2006 to 1/2008</i>
		Spaceflight	
Beenen, J.	5	Animals in space part 2 (and check list)	<i>Orbit 10/2008</i>
Beenen, J.	14	From Atom to Nuclear Powered Spacecraft pts 1 & 2	<i>Orbit 2007 & 2008</i>
		Trees	
Whittle, C.	3	Trees of the Bible	<i>ThemNews 2/2008</i>

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**Full page advertisement for
Stanley Gibbons (attached pdf)**