

Everybody loves a theme

Theme collecting: Story telling with stamps?

Barry Stagg
2 October 2021
chairman@britishthematic.org.uk

Why am I a Theme based collector?

Few of us have just one philatelic collection or type of collection

Collecting or exhibiting of one philatelic Class e.g. Traditional, is NOT mutually exclusive of collecting another e.g. Thematic

There are challenges to all forms of collecting and exhibiting

There is no hierarchy of collection or exhibiting classes.

Why am I a Theme based collector (2)?

- I could mention the challenge of searching for and finding new material
- or learning new things about my subject
- or improving my philatelic knowledge
- or meeting fellow philatelists
 - But all this comes down to

HAVING

FUN

What is Theme collecting?

The collection of philatelic items on a particular subject that are all related to, or are associated with, that subject.

What Philatelic items can I collect?

The quick answer is you can collect ANY Philatelic items you want!

And there are lots of them.

For instance:

Stamps, proofs, other pre-issue material, cancels, air letters, Airgraphs, V-Mail, booklets, postcards, postal stationery, telegrams.

What subject can I collect?

You can collect ANY subject:

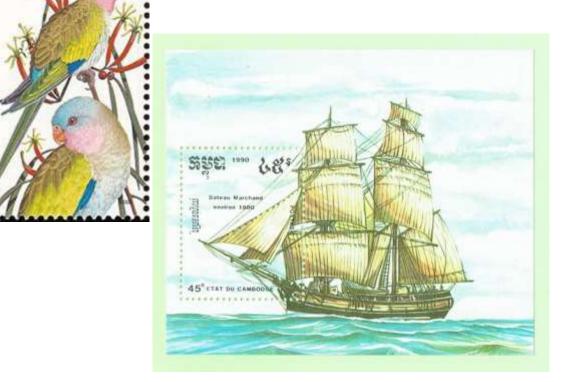
For instance:



Parrots

What subject can I collect (2)?





or: Cats or Ships

What subject can I collect (3)?

ANY topic!



What subject should I collect?

Many of the best Theme collections are put together by people with a connection to their chosen subject.

Theme collections can take years to put together so they need to be interesting to the collector.

What does 'related to or associated with' mean?

As an example if you take the subject of parachutes, any philatelic item that depicts a parachute is <u>related</u> to the subject

A philatelic item that depicts something that is connected to the subject of parachuting is <u>associated</u> with the subject e.g. aircraft that are typically used for parachuting

Where can I find Theme based material?

The easy and quick answer is anywhere!

Look at other exhibits, and not just Theme or even Philatelic based ones

eBay and Delcampe and other web based auction houses

Auction catalogues or Philatelic books

BTA or Colnect website

Development of your Theme

Research into your Theme will throw up new connections

Associated items are as important as related ones

Read widely

So what is the link between Theme collecting and Topical, Thematic or Open Philately collecting?

Simply put:

Theme minus associated material = **Topical**

Theme plus a story = **Thematic**

Theme plus a story plus non-philatelic material = **Open Philately**

BUT

So what is the link between Theme collecting and Topical, **Thematic** or Open Philately collecting (2)?

The above terms only matter if you wish to exhibit

If you collect or give displays to groups then you can call your collection whatever you want!

So what is the link between Theme collecting and Topical, Thematic or Open Philately collecting (3)?

I should make it clear I do NOT see this as a sequence.

I do not expect collectors to start with Topical and 'work-their-way-up' to Open Philately. All three disciplines stand on their own.

Some examples of Theme collecting



HENRI DUNANT

However, he was not altogether inactive. During the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71, he was a welcome visitor to the wounded who had been taken to Paris.

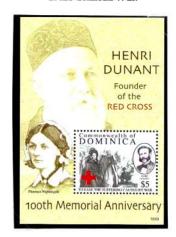
He also, at this time, founded 'The Common Relief Society' and 'The Common Alliance for Order and Civilization.'



He moved to various places between 1874 and 1886 – Rome, Stuttgart, Corfu, Basel – and, in 1887 – London

In 1887 he lived for a short time in London.
There, he met Florence Nightingale
as he had heard of her care of wounded soldiers
at the Crimean War.





He then disappeared into obscurity. He lived in a small town in the Swiss Alps – Heiden.

There he met Wilhelm Sondrigger, schoolteacher, who realised that the lovable 'patriarch' with the long white beard, living in the Pensioners' Hospice, was the long lost founder of the Red Cross.



Some examples of Theme collecting (2)

Energy and the Environment

Hydro and wave energy are forms of renewable energy that use the power of moving water to generate electricity. Watermills - duting back to circa 280-220 BC - convert water power into energy and were often used for irrigation and for operating mechanical devices and machinery (e.g. for grinding, saving, powering looms, etc.), it was only in the 19th century that hydropower began to be used to produce electricity.







in 2018, hydroelectric power stations provided approximately 2.2% of the UR's total energy generating capacity (and 4.2% of renewable energy capacity). Several locations in Scotland provide hydro energy including the Cruachan Dam (Argyll), the Glendoe Hydro Station (Fort Augustus) and the Sloy Hydro Electric scheme (Loch Lomond).

















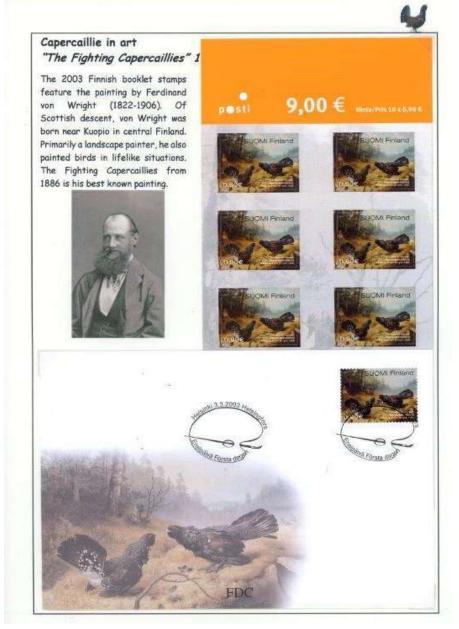
A cover dated the 8th November 1963 bearing the penguin cachet for the Vice Regal Visit and a complete set of the 1957 stamps.



This cover is uddressed to W.F. Ponder the Architect responsible for the design, prefubrication and erection of Scott Base. The cover has been sent to him during the visit of the New Zealand Governor General Sir Bernard Fergusson to Scott Base and has been signed by the Governor General himself.

On this day the 8th November 1963 the Governor Generals flight carried out a fly-over to drop supplies to an expedition in the area of Mount Gorton which due to bad weather was running short of Rations.

Some examples of Theme collecting (3)



BISHOPBRIGGS

A Village that became a Town

The street name changes for the main road going through the town has changed several times from Cawder Road to Cadder Road and finally to Kirkintilloch Road.





Can I collect Postcards on a Theme?

Of course you can!

The next collection only uses postcards in its story

An example of a postcard collection on a Theme

2.1 Ready to go - The worst part of parachuting is waiting to go



1940s, -, Friko Bildverlag Osterode/Harz, unused, Unknown.



1943, -, MWM, used, Linen.

Taking a hostess with you might be one way to calm the nerves before you jump from the aircraft.



In February 1914 Jean
Ors parachuted from a
Deperdussin aircraft and
landed safely. See how
the parachute is packed
under the aircraft and
the parachutist sits in a
cradle between the
wheels.



1930s, -, Paul Mehlhorn Mannheim, unused, Real Photo (RPPC)

Jumping from aircraft (and from my research this looks like a Bristol Bulldog) instead of balloons became the norm from the 1920s. The neatness of the parachute suggests they are about to get ready and take off.



Circa 1914, -, -, unused, Halftone.



1970/80s, M. Lebleaux, Promodis France, unused, Halftone.

The parachutists are in position ready to jump. See the orange static line attaching their parachute to the overhead wire via a short piece of cord. As they fall away from the aircraft the parachute will be pulled out and the connecting cord will be broken leaving the parachute free to descend.

The story

No subject is discrete

Whatever you collect sits within a wider context

The story can be fictional

Know what the scope of your collection is

The story (2) - the basics

Like all good stories it must have a beginning, middle and end

It must have a structure

The story (3) - the basics

Stories can be done on 1-page, 1-frame or more

Some stories do not fit 1-frame

Some stories do not fit 5-frames

So make sure the story fits the frame

Exhibiting Theme Collections

In the UK there are three relevant classes:

- Thematic
- Open Philately, and
- Postcards

For details of the rules for each class please see the FIP website at: https://www.f-i-p.ch/regulations/

Theme Exhibiting - judging

Judging will always be done to a set standard

Judges are human!

Thematic Exhibiting – some key points

Read the rules

The story is the key element

The story will need a <u>title</u>

The exhibit should use a wide variety of philatelic items

- from as many countries as possible
- in as many eras as possible

Thematic Exhibiting (2) – some key points

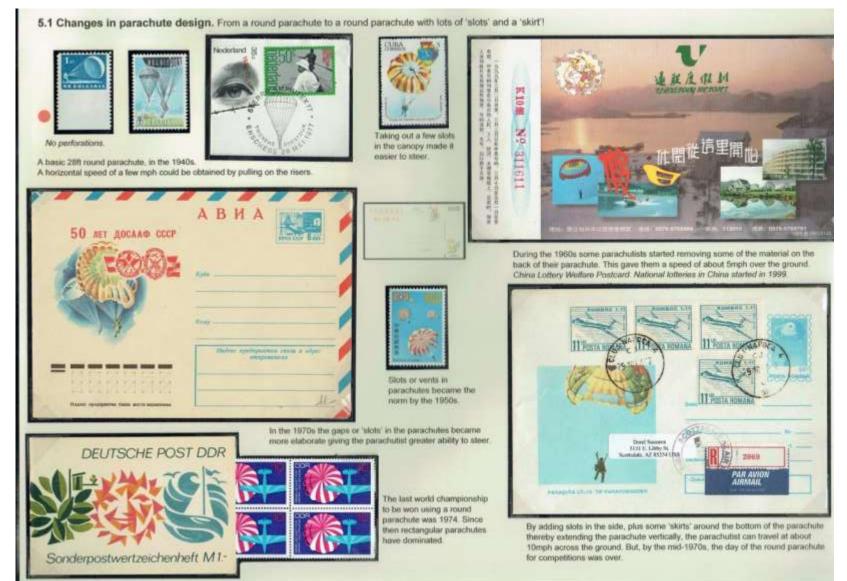
The Scope of the exhibit will need to be well defined

The exhibit will need a <u>Plan</u> showing its structure

The exhibit will need to be well Presented

Try and incorporate early material if possible

A page from a Thematic exhibit



Open Philatelic Exhibiting – some key points

All of the above-mentioned Thematic points

A good mixture of non-philatelic items that support the story

Where possible some 'technical' information on the non-philatelic items

The non-philatelic items to be no more than 50% of the exhibit

A page from an Open Philately 1-frame exhibit



Postcard Exhibiting – some key points

All of the above-mentioned Thematic points (apart from a wide range of philatelic material!)

A3 sheets give more design opportunities than A4

Give some technical information about the postcard e.g. artist/photographer, printer or method of printing

A page from a Postcard exhibit

3.0 A gentle ride to the ground - Not everybody has an easy landing.



1946, Phyllis Cooper, Millar & Lang, Used, Key Drawing using chromolithograph.



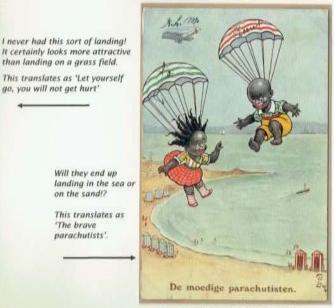
Circa 1950s, -, -, used, Key Drawing using chromolithograph.



go, you will not get hurt'

on the sand!?

'The brave parachutists'.



1938, F.C. Lewin, Salmon UK, used, Halftone.

I can still hear my instructor shouting 'keep your legs together' and 'keep your arms



This young lady is

landing. Carrying a

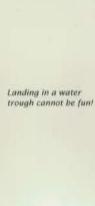
dog, umbrella and

suitcase and her hat is falling over her

heading for an

uncomfortable

1961, -, Colourpicture, Unused, Halftone





1958, -, u/n but Belgium, used, Key Drawing using chromolithograph.

In Conclusion

This has been a quick jog through Theme based collecting

It is a huge topic that many have written books about

I hope you have found this summary useful

And don't forget:

HAVE

FUN

References

Handbook of Thematic Philately. WEJ van den Bold. 1994

Topical Adventures. Congrove, Hamman and Miller. 2020

https://www.britishthematic.org.uk

https://colnect.com/en

Fédération Internationale de Philatélie definition of Thematic philately

Thematic philately is collecting stamps and other philatelic items that illustrate a theme: birds, soccer, history, art, way of life, trees, etc. The term "theme" has a dynamic meaning implying the personal elaboration by the collector, who develops a full story around it.

(http://www.fipthematicphilately.org/)