

THEMESCENE

March 2025

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Continue watching the outdoors

Weather features and philately, part 2

With Lloyd Hogg



Switch on a light

Thomas Edison: a life of invention

With Charles Oppenheim



Trace some early French history

The Cross of Lorraine

With Estelle Shale



*Discover an unlikely story
about the Panama Canal*

A stamp that changed the world

With John Hayward

And look ahead to May

EuroPhilEx

BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

Volume 42, No.1. Whole Number 158

www.britishthematic.org.uk

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THEMESCENE

Vol. 42, No. 1 Whole Number 158

MARCH 2025

THEMESCENE

Journal of the
British Thematic Association
which is a member of the
Association of British
Philatelic Societies
ISSN 0268-2508

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EDITORIAL

Wendy Buckle

We are going to be busy over the next few months! The next major event on the BTA horizon is our meeting at EuroPhilEx on 9th May (pages 21-23). We are lucky in this country to have a major International event every five years, attracting dealers and exhibitors from all over the world. If you are planning to be at Birmingham, please come along to our meeting, and even better, come along and bring a few sheets to show. There is no better way of meeting colleagues within the BTA and perhaps finding collecting interests in common (and at the very least you get two hours to sit down and take the weight off your feet after walking round all those dealers' stands!). The room will seat 40 people - it would be wonderful if we could fill it. And for some members of the BTA, EuroPhilEx will be a chance to put their competitive exhibiting skills to the test. At the time of writing the list of exhibitors has not been published, but to all those of you who are taking part may I wish you the best of results. If you are not a competitor do at least try and get round to view those entries whose subjects interest you. You will learn something new, and maybe pick up the odd idea for developing your own collection.

The following month will be our AGM, held as usual at SWINPEX, which is organised by Swindon Philatelic Society. Please put 14th June in your diary if possible. It's a chance to raise any questions or issues with your Committee. It will be followed by a talk and display by our Chairman on Daffodils.

The BTA one-page virtual competition has just closed, and the judges are busy marking over 70 entries. We were delighted to have such a good response. A full report will appear in the next issue of *Themescene*.

We are very pleased to welcome two new members to the BTA: David Dean of Ontario and Beth Junor Dunn of Cupar. Welcome to them both. 

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Thank you to all those members who have paid their subscription for 2025. If you have not yet done so you will find a renewal slip with this issue of *Themescene*. (Please ignore it if you have paid in the last few weeks). We would encourage you to pay by PayPal or BACS where possible, as our bank now charges us for every cheque transaction. You have the option of paying the full renewal fee, which entitles you to a print copy of *Themescene*, or paying a reduced fee of £15.00 if you wish to receive the electronic-only version of *Themescene*. The choice of course is entirely yours, but this is a cheaper option, and for overseas members a much cheaper option. Just indicate your choice, either when emailing details of your renewal, or on the renewal form if posting a cheque.

Whichever option you choose, all members have access to the e-version of *Themescene* via the 'Resources' tab on the BTA website. The full text of the magazine is available from 2005 to date. You will need to set up a username and password. Go to the 'Members' tab of the BTA website and click "Request your Password". If you have any problems please email us via the 'Contact' link on the website.

CHAIRMAN

Barry Stagg

Precious Time

If I understood Einstein correctly, he said the faster you go the slower time goes. I'm sure that is a gross simplification of what he said but it did get me thinking about a few things. Over the past few months I have been running so fast between a variety of tasks that time should be going backwards! At the risk of mixing my metaphors I have been trying to keep several balls in the air at the same time, with varying degrees of success. It was just this wet and miserable February morning that another ball hit the ground when I realised I had yet to pay my BTA subscription! Time goes so quickly I am genuinely confused as to how I found the time to go to work, let alone help to bring up three children. And last week I yet again heard of another colleague who had died but left no instructions on what to do with his collection. So that's something else to sort out. If only he had found the time to do so his family would have been spared the long and difficult task of sorting it out. So sad in so many ways.

There are so many philatelic things I would like to do, but I find it difficult to decide what comes first. Do I finish writing up my collection or should I write up the new material I bought? Should I publish my work, or should I wait until I have more information? I finish up thinking more about the problem than solving it. And the clock continues its relentless ticking! I do plan to attend the major stamp show at Birmingham NEC in mid-May. I know that many dealers will be there, no doubt selling material I can only dream about. But there will be plenty of stands in my price range – I hope. But there will be some wonderful exhibits, thematic or otherwise, to see and admire. I hope you will come and see the BTA on Friday 9th May when we will be having a meeting at the show in the afternoon (see page 23).



I had hoped to attend the Annual Conference of the Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies in Dunfermline in early April (see page 20). I take any opportunity to visit Scotland, but it clashes with the National Daffodil show in Birmingham. Choices, yet more choices! And the clock continues its relentless ticking!

Clearly, I need to move quicker and get more done! I ran a little faster this week and managed to get to our stamp club meeting to hear the Chairman's presentation (well done Andrew. It was interesting and fun). But I totally forgot a Zoom meeting I had wanted to watch. I don't have a solution to my problem other than keep running. And, with a bit of luck I'll see you all in Birmingham in a few months' time. 📖

WEATHER FEATURES AND PHILATELY. PART 2

Lloyd Hogg

Having covered invisible weather features in the previous instalment of the article, we now move to the visible features. One of the first to come to mind is probably clouds. These develop when moist air cools to the point at which water droplets condense, either by them rising to a higher altitude or by moving over a cooler surface. Water vapour in the air condenses around small particles such as pollen or dust. The shape of clouds, their altitude and stage of development helps forecast the weather. In 1803 Luke Howard proposed a ten-cloud classification, with Latin names based on cloud description and altitude, and this formed the basis for the International Cloud Atlas. The chief culprit for another visible feature (rain) is a cloud known as Cumulonimbus.

Rain falls from the sky because clouds become saturated with water droplets which condense and become too heavy to stay suspended. Higher humidity means greater amounts of water vapour, and so more rain. Rainfall is generally associated with low atmospheric pressure readings. In the Bible, Leviticus 26:4 “I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit”. The Israel Post Office has issued a tabbed stamp to show the quotation. But in arid areas the lack of rain means Zulu Rain Makers (Isanusi) are employed to perform rituals allowing them to control weather. Botswana has obliged with a stamp illustrating this theme too. When it does rain, meteorologists use ‘Class-A’ evaporation pans to capture rainwater and so keep track of weather elements like temperature, humidity, and wind (Fig 9).

This is achieved because evaporation is greatest on hot, windy, dry times and reduced when clouds block the sun and air is cool, calm and humid. Measurements enable farmers to decide how much water is needed for crops. Meteorologist Robert Genty advocated encouraging rainfall by ‘seeding’ clouds using airplanes, loaded with silver iodide, potassium iodide, dry ice (solid carbon dioxide), liquid propane or salt. This process has proven successful. Rainfall is measured by a rain gauge, invented in 1441 by Prince Munjong of Korea. There are standard rain gauges (often equipped with wind shields) and tipping-bucket gauges, whereby rain alternately fills one of two buckets that tip and empty when full. The number of tips, recorded on a graph, indicates the rainfall level. Of course, rain is no respecter of Uncle Sam’s mail. A cover with an unusual auxiliary marking, ‘Damaged by Rain - Postage OK’ appears in figure 10.

During or immediately after rainfall a rainbow can occur and is observed in the opposite side of the sky from the sun. A rainbow is a luminous arc with colours of the visible light spectrum (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet). Formed by refraction, total reflection and dispersion of light, it is only visible when sunlight is shining through air containing raindrops. Colours come from light being split into individual wavelengths, giving a spectrum from shorter violet to longer red wavelengths. In the Bible (Genesis 9:14 ... ‘the bow is seen in the clouds’), but rainbows were not seriously studied until the 1600s. René Descartes said rainbows have a red arc on the outside, violet on the inside and pretty colours in between. Isaac Newton perceived five colours but added two because the number seven had mystical significance! Joseph Von Fraunhofer discovered dark



Fig 9: Romania 1984 postal stationery showing Stevenson screens and Class-A evaporation pans



Fig 11: GB 1840 Rainbow colour trial



Fig 10: USA undated letter with postage missing due to rain - so marked by the US post office cachet



Fig 12: KUT 1935 'Hialeah' forgery, created by a mysterious 'Mr. Canoura' and named after its discovery in the town of Hialeah, Florida.



Fig 13: Switzerland 1953. Snowploughs in action

absorption lines in the sun's spectrum and used them to attribute wavelengths to spectrum colours. For example, blue colour has wavelengths on the spectrum 435 to 500 nanometers, depending on its shade, as with indigo. After introduction of the world's first postage stamp, the 'Penny Black', it was found that cancellations could easily be removed. A trial (the 'Rainbow Trial') was ordered to find alternative colours that would be more robust. The Rainbow Trial (Fig 11) was pulled from the first trial plate impressions, printed without corner letter and with the top right corner of the plate plugged with wax to void the resulting proofs. Double rainbows form when sunlight is reflected twice within raindrops, some reaching the observers' eye at red and others at violet. Other phenomena include the well-known 'halo effect' (a bright white ring of light around the sun that forms as sunlight refracts off ice crystals).

A solid form of rain is snow. It is made up of millions of snowflakes/crystals, which require moisture accompanied by a low temperature (at or below zero degrees centigrade, but not below minus 10°C). Johannes Kepler was the first person to write a scientific treatise on snow crystals and Charles Tellier studied them during his pioneering work on refrigeration, proving that they always have six points. They are translucent, come in many shapes and sizes - up to 15 inches across, absorb sound and take one hour to fall from cloud to ground. In Japan, Nakaya Ukichiro created a snowflake classification system. The humble snowflake has featured widely in philately, including on the world's first transparent stamp issued by Finland in 2008. Dahomey issued a stamp which incorrectly showed a snowflake with eight points instead of the correct six points, although being in Africa the country rarely sees snow!

There are different types of snow - seasonal snow refers to that which accumulates during or lasts for only one season, whilst perennial snow persists on the ground year after year. Some mountains (like Kilimanjaro in Kenya) are snowcapped all year round whilst others (such as Mount Fuji in Japan) are not. Snow on Mount Kilimanjaro is shown on a 15c KUT stamp of 1935, which was famously forged by Mr. Canoura of Hialeah in Florida. A block of four is shown in figure 12.

Strong winds can create large deposits of snow via 'drifting', as in the painting 'Snowdrift near Neuthal' by Jean-Frederic Schnyder, which appears on a Swiss stamp. Drifts are defined as being above six foot in height. They can be prevented by placing a windbreak perpendicular to the prevailing winter winds. Snow depth is measured using a handheld metal scale or a sensor. The latter uses an ultrasonic transducer which transmits pulses and listens for the returning echoes from the surface. Heavy snowfall and drifting snow create innumerable problems, especially for those travelling. Roads can be made impassable and snow ploughs (Fig 13) are needed to clear snow and keep roads open wherever possible. Specialist vehicles allow people to navigate the snowy terrain.

Meanwhile houses can be damaged and postal services disrupted, especially along passes and in mountainous regions. Avalanches are also a potential hazard when snow is deep but has areas of weakness. Philately provides a rich source of items in terms of the Winter Relief schemes operated by several countries in Europe. A postal card issued under the German Reich shows a collection tin that was used nationally for donations to winter relief funds (Fig 14). The fund was repugnant in being denied to people who were known to be prostitutes, homosexuals, 'idle' unemployed workers, or Jewish.

For propaganda, Kim Jong II of North Korea is depicted on a miniature sheet withstanding a snow blizzard. His citizens are usually depicted in philately by working hard through the snow, with eagerness and happiness (Fig 15).



Fig 14: Germany (Third Reich) postal stationery card showing soldier, worker and Winter Relief collection tin



Fig 15: North Korea 2012 postal stationery card proof



Fig 16: USA 1898 \$1 bi-colour essay showing cattle in a storm. Plus issued stamp




Fig 17: USSR 1984 showing ice-breaker. Crazy perforation shift

It is not only human life that can be endangered by snow, but also animals if they are kept outdoors for long periods of time. Whilst cattle generally tolerate below zero temperatures, this is not always the case as demonstrated by the severe snowstorm of 2013 in South Dakota, USA. There, some 20,000 cattle were lost due to freezing conditions and mighty snow drifts - they either froze, starved, or slipped and became injured. The plight of cattle in a snowstorm was highlighted in the painting 'The Vanguard' by Scottish painter John A. McWhirter (1878), as used for the design of a US \$1 stamp which was issued in 1898. A bi-color, die sunk essay is shown in figure 16. Originally intended as a bi-colour issue, this was ultimately rejected due to demands on the Bureau of Engraving and Printing's need to print revenue stamps to fund the Spanish-American War of 1898. The issued stamp is regarded by many, through philatelic polls, as America's most beautiful stamp.

What about frost? This is formed when the water vapour in the air contacts solid surfaces that are already below freezing point. Ice crystals form and continue to grow as more vapour is frozen. Meanwhile ice is a solid form of water which has reached around 0°C meaning that the water molecules start to move slowly and thereby become solid matter. Ice is most apparent as 'icicles' (hanging, tapering pieces dripping water) or as sheets - for example across lakes and ponds. When large pieces of ice break away from glaciers they are classed as icebergs. One of the main reasons for this breaking away (or 'calving') is a change in temperature which is unusual for the latitudes. Calving is also caused by natural breakage due to weight or the melting of glaciers due to climate change. An iceberg is thought to have caused the sinking of *SS Titanic* on her maiden voyage. Nowadays there are ice compression tests which determine the risk from ice crushing the hulls of ships. The level of ice in polar regions makes maritime navigation difficult and hazardous. Ships can become trapped in ice (as with the Russian *SS Chelyuskin* in 1934). Ice breaker ships help disperse ice packs (Fig 17).

Fog is low-lying cloud usually resembling stratus. It forms when water vapour (water in gaseous form) condenses and hangs in the air, and is strongly influenced by nearby bodies of water, topography, and wind conditions. The town of Niebla in Spain was named after fog as it is very common there due to its proximity to the Rio Tinto River and the Atlantic Ocean. In Spanish 'Niebla' means, 'The Fog'. An 1859 cover postmarked from Niebla appears in figure 18.

Human activities such as shipping, travel and warfare can be affected by fog. Fog lights are standard on motor vehicles, horns warn ships and lighthouses assist them with safe passage. The Crimean War (1853 - 1856) was characterized by freezing temperatures and foggy conditions. We know from weather maps reconstructed by academics that the Battle of Inkerman (5 November 1854) was fought entirely under dense fog. This affords us the opportunity of showing an 1855 Crimean War cover with full philatelic and meteorological explanation (Fig 19).

Both fog and mist have achieved a mystical or even menacing status and, over the years, have been the subject of several movies, literary works, and paintings, many of which have been depicted in philately. Mist is regarded as a lighter form of fog which allows greater visibility (of up to one kilometre) and is associated with interaction of air masses/clouds of different temperatures. In Columbia County, Oregon, lies the settlement of Mist. Formerly called Riverside, it was renamed in 1888 for its atmospheric conditions within the Nehalem Valley, in particular the preponderance of mist (Fig 20). 

To be continued in June 2025 Themescene



Fig 18: Spain 17 July 1859 Niebla to Seville. 4 cuartos domestic rate for ½ ounce from 1 November 1854

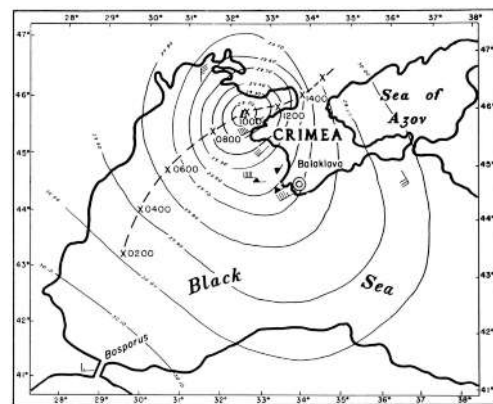


Fig 19: GB 23 July 1855. 3d. soldiers' concession rate letter sent from Crimea (Constantinople) to England. Unusual grey blue OxO 'Star between cyphers' cancellation applied on arrival. The 1d stamps are on blued paper. Appearing alongside is a weather map constructed from historical meteorological data, showing low pressure (tight isobars), from academic work by S. Lindgren and J. Neumann.



Fig 20: USA 19 March 1907. Mist, Oregon to Keasey, Oregon. Post Office at Mist - established in 1888 and closed in 1975

THOMAS EDISON: A LIFE OF INVENTION

Charles Oppenheim

Thomas Edison (1847 – 1931) was arguably the world's greatest inventor. By the time of his death, he had amassed nearly 1,100 patents, and was aggressive in suing for infringement - sometimes using his reputation and great financial resources to abuse threats of infringement. Figure 1 is a postcard of a portrait of him kept in Fort Myers, Florida, his winter home for many years. Edison was born in Milan, Ohio, a grain-shipping port. In 1947, the USA issued a 3 cent stamp with plate number 23559 for the centenary of his birth (Fig 2). The FDC is postmarked Milan, Ohio.

In 1862 he saved a small boy from being struck by a runaway train. The boy's father was so grateful that he trained Edison as a telegraph operator. In 1866, Edison moved to Kentucky, where he was employed by Western Union. He worked night shifts, which gave him time to read and do experiments. His time in Kentucky appears again later in this article.

His first patent, granted in 1869, was for an electric vote recorder. Edison moved to New York City shortly thereafter. Edison then developed a telegraphic system, which could send two messages simultaneously in 1874.

Edison's major innovation was the establishment of an industrial research lab in 1876. It was built in Menlo Park in New Jersey with funds from the sale of an invention, his quadruplex telegraph, to Western Union. This was his first big financial success, and Menlo Park became the first place in the world created with the purpose of producing technological innovations. Edison obtained many patents from research there, although usually it was his employees who carried out the research and development – but always under his direction. The Menlo Park model has been adopted by numerous companies since.

Let's look at some of Edison's key inventions. The first of these is the phonograph (Figs 3-5). This was the first device to record and reproduce sounds. Edison was one of several people who developed such devices. Although his machine worked well, he got the target audience wrong, failing to see its potential in music and entertainment, rather seeing it as a way of recording messages, dictating to secretaries or to be used for reading books aloud – all much smaller markets. Figure 6 is a 1903 Ceylon postcard uprated with a 2c and a 3c adhesive with a 5 February Orange, New Jersey receiver mark addressed to Edison at his home there. The card describes the forthcoming Ceylon tour of the Chicago Polyphone, a new attachment to the Edison phonograph. Edison's competitor, Victor Talking Machines, offered a much greater range of music and songs than Edison. Edison gave up his phonograph business in 1929, but for a while retailers such as Eclipse Musical (Fig 7) sold both Edison and Victor machines. Incidentally, "His Master's Voice" was originally the name of a British record label created in 1901 and based on the title of an 1898 painting by Francis Barraud which depicted a Jack Russell listening to a cylinder phonograph, and was the trade mark of the HMV Company in the UK. The painting was also used as a trade mark and logo by Victor Talking Machine Company in the USA.



Fig 1: Portrait of Edison



Fig 2: USA 1947 with plate number, plus FDC



Figs 3 - 5: The phonograph



Fig 6: 1903 uprated Ceylon postcard addressed to Edison



Fig 7: Eclipse Musical Co.



Fig 8: USA 1929

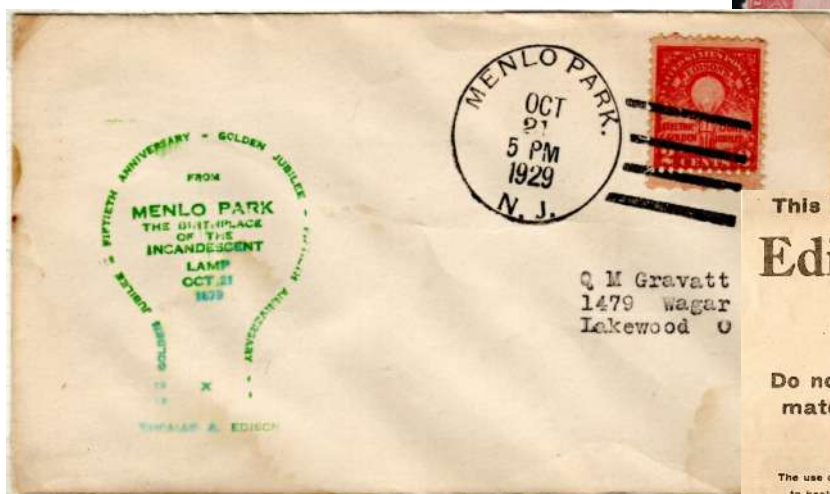


Fig 9: Menlo Park FDC with light bulb cachet

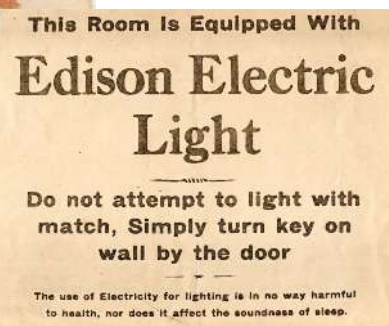


Fig 10: Correct use!



Figs 11 - 12: Electric light bulb



Fig 13: Edison and Swan



Fig 14: Schenectady



Fig 15: Electric car pioneer

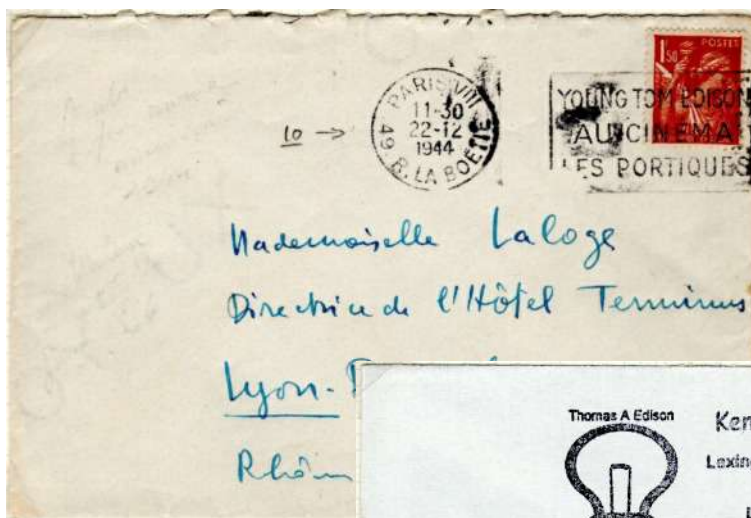


Fig 16: Young Tom Edison

Fig 17: Links to Kentucky

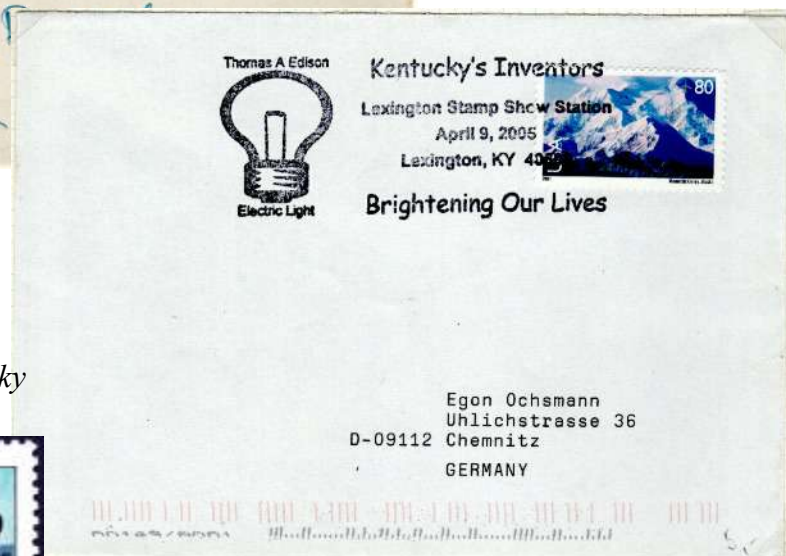


Fig 18: Edson Arantes do Nascimento, better known as Pele


Let us now look at his second great invention – the electric light bulb. In 1878, Edison began working on electrical illumination, something he hoped could compete with gas and oil-based lighting. He began by tackling the problem of creating a long-lasting incandescent lamp, something that would be needed for indoor use. In 1840, Warren de la Rue (yes, a son of the founder of the De La Rue company that philatelists know and love) developed an efficient light bulb using a coiled platinum filament but the high cost of platinum kept the bulb from becoming successful. Another early inventor of such lights was Joseph Swan – his name will reappear shortly..

These early bulbs had a short life and required a consistent electric current to operate which made them difficult to apply on a large scale commercially. In November 1879, Edison filed for a U.S. patent for a strip of carbon filament coiled and connected to contact wires. The carbon was best created from bamboo and would last over 1,200 hours. Crucially, he tied this to the development of a system of electricity generation and distribution. Incidentally, the streets around Menlo Park were the first in the world to have electric street lighting. Figure 8 shows US stamps issued in 1929 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Edison's successful light bulb, whilst Figure 9 has a FDC of the stamp postmarked Menlo Park and with a green cachet shaped as an electric light bulb. Figure 10 offers guidance for new users on how to use electric light bulbs, with a warning not to use matches to try to switch them on!

In 1878, Edison formed the Edison Electric Light Company with several financiers, including J. P. Morgan and members of the Vanderbilt family. He famously said: “We will make electricity so cheap that only the rich will burn candles”.

Figures 11 and 14 show the invention by Joseph Swan of a patented competitor to Edison's light bulb, taken from the 2021 Royal Mail “Industrial Revolutions” Prestige Booklet of stamps. Figure 12 is a Jersey stamp celebrating Edison's light bulb. Figure 13, from the 2021 Royal Mail Prestige Booklet shows how Edison and Swan avoided expensive patent litigation by working together to create a jointly owned company which promoted its products under the horribly named Ediswan trade mark. Figure 14 notes that Menlo Park wasn't the only research centre Edison set up – he also created one at Schenectady, New York in 1886.

Let me finish off with a few things you probably never knew about Edison. As Figure 15 shows, he was a pioneer in the development of electric cars; he built some, patented some developments for them and was still researching them at his death. The man was genuinely way ahead of his time in this regard. Also, did you know films have been made about his life? Figure 16 shows a French 1944 postmark promoting the 1940 highly fictionalised Micky Rooney film “Young Tom Edison”. As Figure 17 shows, Kentucky is keen to promote its link to Edison despite the fact that he only lived in that state for one year as a teenager and never developed any inventions whilst he lived there. Finally, Figure 18 shows that Pele – yes THE Pele - was named Edson by his parents because they admired Edison so much.

Edison had interesting political and social views. He supported votes for women at a time when this was not popular in the USA, refused to design or develop military weapons, was a vegetarian because he was opposed to the killing of animals, and advocated monetary reform in the USA. All in all, a fascinating individual! 

THE CROSS OF LORRAINE, ITS EARLY ORIGINS AND MEANING

Estelle Shale

The journey of the so-called Cross of Lorraine (Fig 1) within France from Anjou to Lorraine as a result of the complex interwoven ruling families of Europe is reasonably well known. René II's mother and father both hailed from Lorraine, but he became Seneschal of Anjou having been raised there from the time of his grandfather René I Duke of Anjou's reign. He became Seneschal in 1473 and within about a year he also became Duke of Lorraine. René II adopted this cross as an heraldic symbol, invoking the notion of Divine sanction, during his struggles for land and power against the Duke of Burgundy (who used St. Andrew's cross similarly) at the end of the 15th century. René II emerged victorious erecting a two-barred cross as a monument on the battlefield of Nancy (Fig 2). Although the double-barred cross we are familiar with was still, apparently, known as the Cross of Anjou in the 16th century, these events probably started the adoption, in first heraldry, and later more generally, of the name we are more familiar with today. This symbol of French, specifically Lorraine, resistance was subsequently invoked and adopted by the Free French movement in World War II (Fig 3).

The cross's essentially religious nature means that it has had widespread use as a symbol, particularly in the eastern Christian churches where it has had currency since the 10th century at least, and is generally known nowadays as the Patriarchal cross (Fig 4). It has also been adopted for humanitarian purposes. Philatelists may be most familiar with it as a symbol of the battle against tuberculosis (Fig 5), its use being promulgated, not too surprisingly, by a French doctor in the early 20th century.

But how did it get to Anjou and what is the connection to the Eastern Churches?

The earlier history

Understanding the role and genesis of this symbol in Western Europe before the 13th century depends upon the research of historians and mediaevalists. It is known that at some point in the 12th - 13th century a reliquary (Fig 6) was kept by the Dukes of Anjou that was believed to contain a piece of the cross on which Christ died, by tradition found by St Helena c. 326 in Jerusalem (Fig 7). The container was embellished with a two-barred cross, common in the Eastern Churches at that time but rare in the west. It is now speculated that the reliquary had a Byzantine origin on the basis of this. This gives one plausible reason for the adoption of this symbol in Anjou.

However, the link can be traced further back to the 12th century more definitely via Hungary. The Dukes of Anjou, René I in particular, placed some emphasis on their descent from the powerful Árpád dynasty of the Magyars, leading to claims to the Kingdom of Hungary, this latter being finally completely dismissed in the late 15th century. The two-barred cross became a prominent symbol of the King of Hungary in the 12th century and its adoption there is an interesting story. The throne of Hungary was, like many seats of power at this time, the subject of familial feuding and strife. In 1162 Béla, the teenaged younger brother of King Stephen III of Hungary, was sent to live in Constantinople as part of a treaty between Hungary and the Byzantine Empire. During the next ten years Béla became heir apparent to the empire and was favoured with betrothal to the Emperor's

daughter. This future was promptly dismantled when the Emperor had a son, but Stephen died shortly thereafter and Béla returned to Hungary to claim that throne instead as Béla III (Fig 8).

Béla III does not appear to have been embittered by his imperial experiences as evidenced by the strong Byzantine characteristics of coins minted in his realm. Of particular interest here is the denar of 1190 showing the Patriarchal cross in an escutcheon (Fig 9). Béla must have been exposed to this dominant symbol of eastern Christianity during his sojourn in the empire.

Although by the time of Béla III's reign the Christian faith dominated, a century before, paganism had still been sufficiently powerful in Hungary for representatives to petition the king at that time to execute the Christian priests inveighing against their traditional practices. This backfired spectacularly, leading to a purge of the pagans instead! Nonetheless, people, including or perhaps especially the aristocracy, remained deeply wedded to the notion of the kindred groups of pagan times. They wished to be differentiated from the newcomers or foreigners who were known as 'advena' no matter how rich or powerful these were. Indeed, there is evidence that having descent from local pagan kindreds remained an important mark of distinction as late as the end of the 13th century. A contemporary development of the issuing of the aforementioned denar bearing the Patriarchal cross, was the growing importance of a coat of arms as a symbol both of noble kindred and Christian chivalry.

By adopting the Patriarchal cross (especially on a shield) (Fig 10), Béla III was ticking multiple checkboxes on the list of desirable characteristics for a mediaeval Hungarian king. The cross was a powerful Christian symbol with the shield recalling military prowess, skill at arms being part of the panoply of the chivalrous knight. However, this particular symbol had deeper, older roots in Hungary. Hungarian runes (or Old Hungarian script) were officially replaced by the Latin alphabet on the accession of Stephen I to the throne of Hungary in the year 1000 (Fig 11). However, there is evidence for their use as language until (and possibly beyond) the 13th century and they remained part of the Hungarian indigenous art lexicon until modern times, never dying out completely. One such rune is Egy (†) representing a 'gy' sound. In Hungarian 'egy' also means 'one' – try it in Google Translate (other free translation software is available – all the usual caveats). It can also mean 'The One' i.e. God – try 'Egy az Isten' (Fig 12) for example in your app and you will get 'God is One' as the translation. This is the motto of many Hungarian Unitarians to this day. So, adopting the Patriarchal cross also had deep connections to the pagan Hungary of old and a doubly divine interpretation. A tour de force of PR!

Even further back?

If we want to look any more deeply into the runes themselves, and (†) in particular, then we are in the realms of palaeography. There are competing theories for the precursors, but a consensus is that the immediate antecedent was the Old Turkic script (Fig 13). Digging deeper into the mists of time, the two dominant strands of thought presently are either to go into the realm of ancient Asiatic languages (Fig 14) or to look to the logo-syllabic scripts of the Mediterranean islands and Linear A/B i.e. to look at an ultimate origin in Minoan hieroglyphs. This research is ongoing.



*Fig 1: 30th anniversary
Association of the Free
French*



Fig 2: Battle of Nancy



*Fig 3: Free French adoption
of Cross of Lorraine*



*Fig 4: Patriarchal
cross*



*Fig 5:
tuberculosis
emblem*



Fig 6: reliquary



*Fig 7: St. Helena holding
the True Cross*



*Fig 8: Béla III of
Hungary*



Fig 9: dinar of 1190

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Fig 10: Patriarchal cross within a shield - stamp and watermark



Fig 11: St. Stephen, first King of Hungary



Fig 12: Egy az Isten



Fig 13: translation of Turkic rune inscriptions



Fig 14: Phoenician alphabet

A STAMP THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

John Hayward

After the Frenchman, Ferdinand de Lesseps, successfully built and opened the Suez Canal in the second half of the 19th century, trade representatives and the USA Government gave increasing consideration to building a similar canal for ocean-going vessels across the narrow part of Central America, to shorten the sea journey considerably from the West to the East coast of the USA and vice-versa, and thus avoid the long trip round Cape Horn. By the end of the 19th century there were two influential groups lobbying for such a canal either through the isthmus of Panama or further North via Nicaragua. The former route was considerably shorter but would involve much more extensive excavation, whereas the latter route would involve using large expanses of inland water and much less land excavation.




Then out of the blue at the beginning of the 20th century came a godsend for the Panama isthmus lobbyists when Nicaragua issued a set of ten definitive stamps depicting Momotombo Volcano by the side of a lake through which the proposed canal would pass (SG 137-149). The lobbyists could not believe their luck. They organised a mass mailing from Nicaragua using the Volcano stamps to every USA Senator and Member of the House of Representatives, drawing their attention to the danger the volcano would entail to the proposed canal route through Nicaragua. The result could not have been more conclusive – the US Government voted overwhelmingly to fund building the canal through the Panama isthmus, and of course the rest is history. When the Panama Canal was opened world trade was changed forever.

So if you collect the Panama Canal, or volcanoes, then one of the Nicaraguan stamps should be in your collection. More importantly, and this reminds me of my judging days, this stamp is a “must” in any competitive thematic exhibit of the Panama Canal, either on the front page or very early in the exhibit; and also somewhere in any exhibit of Volcanoes. I would not however expect to see the stamp on cover in any exhibit as it looks as if the US Government representatives or their families did not keep them. I have only seen one such cover at auction in the last 50 years and its price was prohibitive due to its rarity. 📖

ASSOCIATION OF SCOTTISH PHILATELIC SOCIETIES' CONGRESS 2025

In April 2025, the Glasgow Thematic Society will be host to the annual Scottish National ASPS (Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies) Congress to be held on Friday 4 and Saturday 5 April at The Vine Conference Centre, 131 Garvock Hill, Dunfermline, Fife, KY11 4JU.

This event attracts dealers and visitors from across the UK and helps promote philatelic collecting in all its forms. The theme for Congress in 2025 is the centenary of John Logie Baird, the Scot who produced the first working images on what came to be known as 'television' in 1925 - a creation that has had global impact. As host society, the Glasgow Thematic Society will be producing a souvenir cover to mark the centenary and providing over 40 framed exhibits on various themes. There will be the usual attractions - the Tom Reilly display, the Alan Watson (open) competition, junior displays, other society displays, and exhibits for other high level competitions. Many of the usual philatelic dealers will be present and a dinner will be held on Friday evening, with good food and the usual highly entertaining after-dinner speech. The 2025 Congress is the first to be held in Dunfermline, proud city, ancient capital of Scotland and the birthplace of Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish-American industrialist and philanthropist. The Glasgow Thematic Society hopes to help make this a highly memorable event.

As the host, the Glasgow Thematic Society is producing a souvenir cover, with a card insert, celebrating 100 years since the first successful transmission of television pictures by John Logie Baird. Souvenir covers will be postmarked 4 April 2025 and cancelled Dunfermline. The front of the cover has an illustration of Baird's 'televisor' machine and the image subject of a ventriloquist's puppet head, affectionately named by Baird as 'Stooky Bill'. The cover will contain an illustrated insert card with information about the inventor. The illustrations and a special handstamp, approved by Royal Mail, have been designed by Andrew Black (Caledonian Philatelic Society). Covers can be purchased at Congress on 04 and 05 April at The Vine Centre in Dunfermline, or ordered from Mr Brian Dow, 84 St Lukes Way, Carluke, ML8 5TE (Email: briandow@live.co.uk). Options will include a basic illustrated cover (£1), cover with hand stamp (£3), and cover posted in the UK (£4)/overseas (£5). 



EUROPHILEX

7 - 11 MAY 2025

National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham

At the time of writing 67 companies have trade stands booked. In addition there will be stands for the Royal Philatelic Society London together with the Global Philatelic Network, a youth zone organised by the Stamp Active Network, a seating area sponsored by the Great Britain Philatelic Society, and a reading area sponsored by the International Association of Philatelic Journalists.

At least 30 societies will be holding meetings during the exhibition, some with thematic interest: The Exhibition Study Group (Friday 11.00), Perfin Society (Thursday 11.00) and the Revenue Society (Saturday 10.00). Plus ourselves! (See page 23)

Several events will be taking place during EuroPhilEx 2025:

Thursday 08 May

A reception by the Royal Philatelic Society London from 7pm at the Arden Hotel. Admission is free and all are welcome.

The Four Societies' Dinner, also at the Arden Hotel, at 8pm. An open invitation is extended to members of the Royal Philatelic Society London, The Collectors Club of New York, Le Club de Monte Carlo, and the European Academy, and their guests.

Friday 09 May

The Roll of Distinguished Philatelists signing ceremony will be held at The Council House, Victoria Square, Central Birmingham, B1 1BB, followed by a free drinks reception. One of this year's recipients will be Birthe King, well known for her work in promoting Open Philately. She served on the FIP working group set up in 2010 to examine the new class, and has promoted the class through presentations and magazine articles in Europe, America and Asia. Her own major Open Class exhibit *Denmark: Conscience, Conflict and Camps 1932-1949* received large gold medals at Melbourne 2013 and London 2015 international exhibitions. This collection has also been featured as an Edition d'Or, published by Heinrich Köhler. The exhibit *The Re-Unification of Southern Jutland with Denmark 1864-1920* was awarded a gold medal at the Prague 2019 international. She has also been involved with picture postcards: as a Director of FEPA from 2013 to 2019, Birthe promoted the FEPA Regulations for Picture Postcards, which were adopted as an experimental class in 2018.

Saturday 10 May

The Philatelic Congress of Great Britain will be held in the NEC Concourse Suite 20 from 11am to 5pm. This will include presentations by the new signatories to the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists, plus a presentation by the recipient of the Congress Medal for 2025. A further presentation - The Kay Goodman Lecture - will ask the question 'So is context philately expending with collectors?' There is no charge to attend the Congress and all are welcome.

The EuroPhilEx exhibition Palmares dinner and prize giving will be held at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham.

Sunday, 11 May

The European Federation of Philatelic Societies (FEPA) Congress, starting at 10.30am, will be held in NEC Concourse Suite 20; attendance only by delegates and observers.

A Cavendish Philatelic Auction will be held in Concourse Suite 19 at 1pm, with viewing on Sunday morning and on their EuroPhilEx stand all week.

The highlight of the event for many visitors will be the Court of Honour. This will feature material from some of the world's finest collections, of which the star attraction will be the unique British Guiana 1c black on magenta of 1856, which is kindly being shown courtesy of Stanley Gibbons Ltd. Other outstanding exhibits will be:

James Grimwood-Taylor, Bill Hedley, Jon Aitchison and others	Early writing, starting from 5,000 year-old cuneiform tablets
Bill Hedley	The Merchants of Venice, Trade and Administration in the Golden Age of La Serenissima covering the 14th to 17th centuries
Howard Hughes	The Maltese Cross markings of Great Britain
Joseph Hackney	Classic France and Classic Romania, including the Moldavian Bull's Heads.
Paul Wijnants	Stampless Maritime Overweight Mail in pre-GPU times (1838-1876)
Hany Salam	Early Egyptian Maritime Postal History.
Chris Harman	Classic British Empire – Perkins, Bacon issues: the Chalon head design.
Geoffrey Lewis	Mail routes in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans, plus the routes between the oceans. This will show the development of worldwide shipping routes from the early 1700s to the mid-1870s.



British Guiana 1 cent black on magenta



Chalon Head

BTA NEWS

BTA MEETING AT EUROPHILEX

On Friday 9th May the BTA will be holding a meeting at this major international show:

Venue: Room 4, Hall 9, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham.

Time: 13.00 - 15.00

Programme:

Welcome and Introduction

Mini-displays "Four sheets in one minute"

Guest speaker Peter Cockburn FRPSL *Postcards of British North Borneo*

Please bring along a mini-display, and also spread the word that non-members will be made very welcome.

DONATION FROM THE GUILD OF ST. GABRIEL

Very sadly the Guild of St. Gabriel, dedicated to religion on stamps, and one of our affiliated societies, has had to close. They have very generously donated their remaining funds to the BTA, for which we are most grateful. The Committee are considering how best to use this bequest.

BTA MEMBER SUCCESS AT CHICAGOPEX 2024

BTA member M. Lokeswara Rao won the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors Jean Benninghoff Encouragement Award for his single-frame entry *Buddhist Dances*.



The poster for EuroPhilex Birmingham 2025 is framed in blue with a decorative border. It features the FEPA logo (a magnifying glass over the letters 'E' and 'F') in the top left and a circular stamp logo with 'FIP' and a globe in the top right. The main title 'EuroPhilex Birmingham 2025' is in large blue letters. Below it, the text 'Britain's next major international stamp exhibition' is in smaller blue letters. The dates 'Wed 7 – Sun 11 May 2025' and the venue 'Hall 9 of the NEC Birmingham B40 1NT' are in red. A yellow banner reads 'FREE SOUVENIR SHEETS FOR ALL'. A list of events for each day is provided: Thursday (Society Showcase Day, RPSL Reception), Friday (Roll of Distinguished Philatelists Ceremony), Saturday (Philatelic Congress of Great Britain), and Sunday (FEPA Congress, Cavendish Auction). Opening hours are '10am - 6pm Wed to Sat' and '10am - 4pm Sun'. A note states 'Full Programme Online'. Admission prices are '£10 admission on first day from 11am' and 'Early bird (10am-11am) £20'. A large yellow starburst graphic contains the text '2,000 exhibit frames from 40+ countries', '60+ dealers and trade stands', and '30+ society meetings'. A QR code is located in the bottom right. At the bottom, there is a circular stamp that says 'EUROPHILEX 7-11 MAY BIRMINGHAM' and a large '(2025)' in a stylized font. The website 'www.europhilex2025.co.uk' and the telephone number 'Tel +44 (0) 1279 870488' are at the very bottom.

EuroPhilex
Birmingham 2025
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Wed 7 – Sun 11 May 2025 **Hall 9 of the NEC Birmingham B40 1NT**
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RPSL Reception
Fri: Roll of Distinguished
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Sat: Philatelic Congress of
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Sun: FEPA Congress
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HERE AND THERE

FORENSIC PHILATELY SEMINAR AT EUROPHILEX, 9th May, 11.00

Those who attended the BTA Weekend in April last year will have enjoyed Paul Leonard's talk *Exploring forgeries in your collection*. If you missed it, or would like to know more, Paul will be delivering a FEPA seminar entitled *Assisting Expert Committees through the use of Forensic Philately*, exploring aspects of the history of expertising and his research work.

Genuine or fraudulently manipulated? If an item is likely to have a high value, what reassurance can be given? The formation of an Expertising Committee in 1894 by instruction of the Philatelic Society of London Council (later the RPSL) aimed to provide such reassurance. Fundamentally, the committee members and helpers have access to reference material and extensive knowledge of the subject matter such as rates and routes that may often involve comparison with previously submitted items. Fraudulent manipulation such as the removal or addition of postmarks & overprints is a common challenge. Overpainting, regumming, repairing and fabrication of postal history are some of the topics on which submitters wish to ascertain a consensus. This may involve external consultants before the item is debated and a certificate issued as 'Genuine', 'Genuine with caveats' or 'Bad'.

Helping the Expertising Committee there is a range of equipment which may help with analysis of spectra and measurement.

FREE DOWNLOAD: POSTAL MARKINGS ON COVER

The Auxiliary Markings Club and the Philatelic Specialists Society of Canada have published an open source anthology of articles on the subject of auxiliary marking and labels

Considering auxiliary markings, edited by Gregg Redner, FRPSC, FRPSL is a collection of wide-ranging articles, international in scope, on aspects of postal markings. It includes an article by Jean Wang *Use of auxiliary markings to tell a story in thematic exhibiting* which gives a range of ideas for incorporating thematic elements of postal history into a thematic collection.

There is a link to the download on the home page of the Auxiliary Markings Club:
<https://www.postal-markings.org/newsletter.html>

FEPA NEWS

The latest edition of FEPA News, the journal of the Federation of European Philatelic Associations, is now available online as a free download from the FEPA website:

<https://fepanews.com/>

It includes an article by our Chairman Barry Staggs *Competition for One Sheet Exhibits* which outlines the thinking behind our virtual competition.

RESEARCHING THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

A thematic-related blog was posted recently on the British Library website. A site more usually concerned with books, manuscripts and archives, this particular blog is all about researching hippos for an "alphabetic hippo encyclopaedia" looking at hippos in art, literature, coins, banknotes and stamps.

Pursuing hippos through the stamp collections can be found at

<https://blogs.bl.uk/living-knowledge/2025/01/pursuing-hippos-through-the-stamp-collections.html>

EXHIBITING PAGE: NOTES ON FIP GUIDELINES FOR PICTURE POSTCARD EXHIBITS

Dr. Witold Mikołajczyk

I made my debut in the Picture Postcard Class at the EFIRO 2024 World Philatelic Exhibition in Bucharest with the exhibit “Bojanowo Commune. Sentimental postcards”. Based on this experience, I wanted to share my comments on the presentation of material in the exhibits.

A postcard is not only the interesting view on its obverse, but also its reverse. In the case of the obverse, studying a postcard involves determining the graphic technique in which it was made. This area is probably the most difficult. It is necessary to have knowledge of the graphic techniques themselves and also the appropriate instrumentation, allowing a close-up of parts of the postcard, to “try” to determine the technique used to produce it. The reverse, on the other hand, identifies the publisher of the postcard, the year of issue, the print run and the registration number of the postcard in question. In the case of photographic postcards, it is information about the author of the photograph itself and the manufacturer of the photographic paper used to issue it.

This entire area, as far as equipment and literature allow, was used by the authors for the descriptions of the postcards presented in the exhibit at EFIRO 2024. The FIP Guidelines for Judging Picture Postcard Exhibits are at:

www.f-i-p.ch/wp-content/uploads/FIP-PP-Guidelines-2018.pdf

The Description

I would like to draw your attention to the description as an element of an exhibit. In the case of my exhibit, descriptions were based on Polish and German literature on philocartography, studies in art, graphics and printing, as well as state archives, official records and address books in search of information on postcard publishers. For every collector of postcards, the rarity of the postcard including the (printing) technique, the author of the print, the print run and the publisher are important. In the case of the publisher it is extremely difficult to obtain additional information such as whether this particular publisher had a printing house or printing plant, if he was a trade entrepreneur or only ran a shop, if he published books or magazines or if he was a photographer or maybe a public institution. Did he specialise in postcard publishing or was he just an occasional postcard publisher? What was a quantitative estimate? In what languages and what types of postcards did he publish?

The organisers of an exhibition of illustrated postcards, held in 1922 at the Brussels Book Museum, divided them into the following categories:

1) news, i.e. advertisements and announcements	13) official, i.e. issued by the government
2) charity postcards	14) political
3) commemorative postcards	15) portraits of famous people
4) flowers and fruit	16) propaganda
5) war postcards	17) miscellaneous
6) humorous postcards	18) sporting
7) illustrations of books and journals	19) theatrical and musical
8) events of the day	20) uniform
9) art (salons, museums)	21) with views
10) flirtatious and romantic	22) pornographic
11) fashions	23) with animals
12) national, i.e. heraldry, folk costumes	

Later, there were various attempts to build a classification of illustrated postcards. Most classifications more or less did not go beyond this “Brussels classification”.

Whole bunches of postcard collectors look through address books in search of publisher information. Most of the address books, if they still exist, are available in libraries or archives. Many websites and online portals provide all possible information about publisher or edition which allows collectors to fill information gaps about their collection. Just take a look at “The Postcard Album” website (1).

When we are looking at paintings in a museum, we are interested in all details related to the techniques used as well as information about the painter. The same is true with the postcards.

In my exhibit I provide the following expanded publisher information:

Key: font style, size and colour indicates different information:

Storyline/Narration: *Regular italic font in brown colour*

Description of the postcard: **Semibold**

Technical info: *Regular font in blue colour, history of postcard*

Obverse (the front side) = **O.**

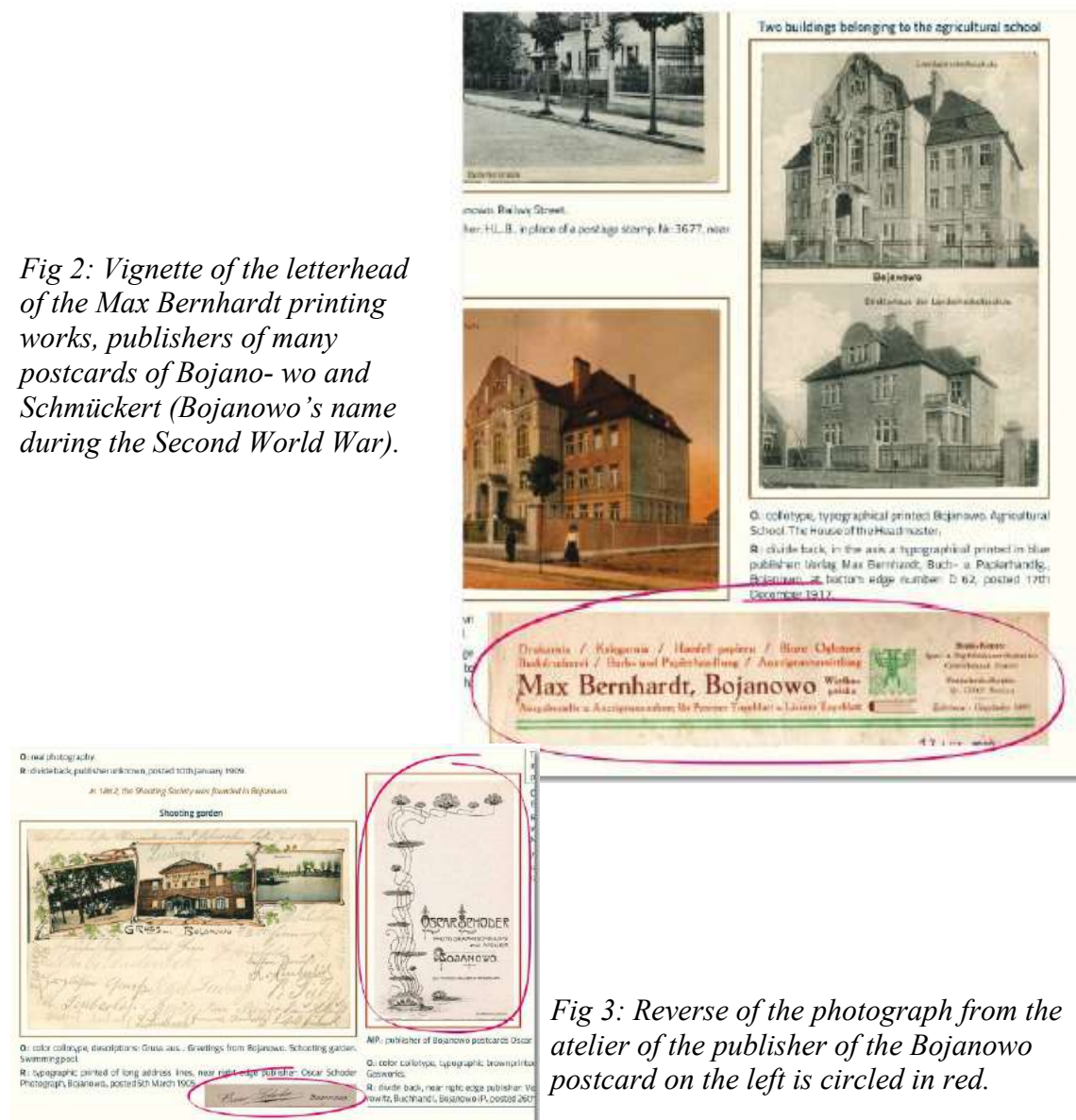
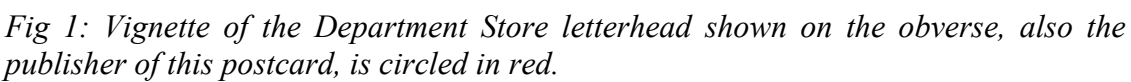
Reverse (the reverse side) = **R.**

Additional publisher information = **AIP.**

Rare postcards are show by a red frame (only example seen by exhibitor in over 20 years of looking)



Where I have been able to find other material that allows a more in-depth identification or description, I have included the logos of the publishers, the headquarters of the publishers, vignettes of their letterheads or advertisements. Figures 1 - 5 show some examples which I have included on the exhibit cards.



2. Bojanowo Centre

Above the entrance is painted text: „Königl.priv. Loewen - Apotheke“ whose expansion means: *Königliches Privileg Loewen-Apotheke*. This inscription emphasis granted the continuation of the operation in accordance with the pharmacy's privilege.

A privilege was granted to open pharmacies. In Bojanowo, the first privilege for the establishment of a pharmacy under the name of The City pharmacy was issued on 27th April 1717. The second privilege for a pharmacy under the name of The Court pharmacy was issued on 13th January, 1742. For nearly 200 years, 18 pharmacies worked successively in Bojanowo. Walibad Lam bought the pharmacy for 160,000 mk in 1908 from Filip Loewenbach. In 1922, Zygmunt Gregorowicz became the next owner of the pharmacy. The pharmacy was named 'Under the Lion.'



North Frontage

Pharmacy



O: real photography.

R: divide back, publisher unknown, posted 27th June 1915.

Fig 4: Stamp on the reverse of the postcard showing the pharmacy is shown in red.

Garden Restaurant Curt Dehnel, Tarchalin



Garden-Restaurant Curt Dehnel, Tarchalin

O: duotone collotype, typographical print: Garden - Restaurant Curt Dehnel, Tarchalin.

R: divide back, in the axis a typographical imprint in publisher: Verlag Paul Franz, Photograph, Bojanowo, posted 14th July 1913.



Reverse of a postcard of Poznań sent from Poznań to Bojanowo on 18 August 1918. The correspondence contains information that the daughter of Curt Dehnel, owner of a restaurant in Tarchalin, died at the age of 36. The funeral is to take place in Bojanowo.



A fragment of a combination of Art Nouveau frame ornament and a classic still life drawing

Garden-Restaurant Curt Dehnel, Tarchalin

Fig 5: Dashed in red is an excerpt from the message on the reverse of a postcard from Poznań which contains information about the death of restaurateur Dehnel's daughter.

I'm including a piece of correspondence on one of the pages of the exhibit, relating to the people whose objects are depicted on figure 5.

The information presented here is an asset - in my case I 'acquired' the originals – that enriches the content of the exhibit's narrative. Such additions also document the knowledge and personal research of the author of the exhibit. In my opinion this enhances the exhibit's visual impression as this information has a direct reference to the postcards in it. I am curious to hear the opinions of philatelists who undertake exhibit building in the postcard class on the issues raised above, and can be contacted at witold.mikolajczyk@gmail.com.

Reference

(1) The Postcard Album. www.tpa-project.info/. Covers German postcards in depth, including printers' histories, logos and trademarks, plus a wide range of articles.

Acknowledgement

First published in *FEPA News* no.45 July 2024



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Zooming Along

Barry Stagg

Wendy Buckle. *John Dickinson and his silk-thread paper.* 6th December

Members and friends were treated to a lovely presentation. By using a variety of material, including some fascinating ephemera, postcards, photographs and stamps, Wendy showed the rise and ultimate demise of John Dickinson, arguably the foremost paper maker in this country. Born in 1782, by 1809 John had an experimental paper making machine. He bought mills for the next few decades to expand his business, using the network of canals to transport the finished paper product to his customers.

Seeing a good business opportunity in 1837 with the advent of the Post Office Reform proposals he patented paper made with a silk thread embedded into it (his patent did say silk or cotton, and analysis of the thread showed it to be cotton). Wendy showed us essays submitted to the Treasury Competition of a 1d envelope and 2d letter sheet. In 1840 Dickinson won the contract to supply silk-thread paper for the Mulready envelopes, and later for the 1d pink and 2d blue postal stationery. A number of examples were shown.

John Dickinson died in 1869 but his company continued to supply paper to businesses around the world well into the 20th century. Eventually in 1931 they merged with Millington & Son, their main competitor, and took over production of Basildon Bond notepaper, a brand leader for many years.

Philatelically, Dickinson (the company) took part in the Downey Head trials in 1912 and supplied the paper for the Newfoundland stamps between 1932 to 1938, and Wendy showed examples of both. Dickinson's finest hour was undoubtedly World War II. With a change of focus to Government business, 80% of their output produced 'Active Service' envelopes and other products to support the war effort, such as the forms and envelopes used for the Airgraph service, with Wendy showing us examples of much of this output. After the war they produced Registered envelopes for many countries and Airletter paper and Airletter forms, again with Wendy showing some lovely examples. In 1966 Dickinson merged with E. S. & A. Robinson to form the Dickinson Robinson Group, and a mill, Frogmore Mill (now a museum) is the only remaining physical memory of an important part of Dickinson's business.

Jean Alexander. *Supermarket Philately, part 3.* 14th January

Supermarket Philately Part 3 took yet another aspect of Jean's wonderful collection.. For 40 minutes she told us about, and showed examples of, philatelic marketing events in the 1990s which included gifts of chocolate, cake, postcards and Bengy Bear! Many of these events were Royal Mail initiatives, but some supermarkets, Readers Digest and W. H. Smith also got a mention, to name but a few. The general plan was that you sent stamps to an address and got something in return such as cake or chocolate, and in some examples a scratchcard with the chance of winning further prizes. Disney featured on a few offers with scratchcard prizes of key rings, caps and T-shirts and Sainsbury gave stamp booklets as prizes. Arguably Bengy the Bear and his friend Harry the Hedgehog stole the show. For just four first class stamps you received these in return. What a deal. And more importantly, why did I not see these offers at the time! All beautifully shown and explained by Jean.

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

BTA PROGRAMME 2025

- 4 April
19.00 for 19.30 **Zoom meeting**
Dr. Jean Alexander
Supermarket philately. Part 4
In the final part of her series of presentations Jean will explain how Royal Mail aimed to sell products in a Supermarket Style, such as Format Packs.
- 7 - 11 May **EuroPhilEx**
Hall 9, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham.
Including: Court of Honour featuring the 1856 1 cent British Guyana, plus eight other world-class exhibits; specialist society meetings throughout the five days (30 confirmed so far including BTA); plus 67 dealers confirmed at time of going to press, including Royal Mail stand and a free souvenir sheet each day.

FRIDAY 9th MAY BTA MEETING AT EUROPHILEX

Venue: Room 4, Hall 9
Time: 13.00 - 15.00

Programme:

Welcome and Introduction

Mini-displays "Four sheets in one minute"

Guest speaker Peter Cockburn FRPSL *Postcards of British North Borneo*

Please bring along a mini-display, and also spread the word that non-members will be made very welcome.

14 June
11.30 - 13.00
Studio Room

Annual General Meeting
Guest speaker: Barry Stagg *Daffodils*
To be held as part of Swinpex 2024.
The Grange Leisure and Community
Centre, Stratton St. Margaret, Swindon,
SN3 4JY

BTA PROGRAMME 2025 continued

- | | |
|---|---|
| 20 June
19.00 for 19.30 | Zoom meeting
Wendy Buckle
<i>A history of writing materials: animal, vegetable and mineral</i>
Codified writing systems began around 6,000 years ago. Before the invention of paper, cultures used whatever raw materials were plentiful in their area, and this presentation will look at the surprisingly wide range of materials which have been used. |
| 19 September
19.00 for 19.30 | Zoom meeting
Lloyd Hogg
<i>Talk like a pirate</i>
Ahoy me hearties. Shiver me timbers that Lloyd should be giving this talk to all you lubbers. He shall be taking yarr through 'is booty in the exhibit. Avast, or e'll have you down Davy Jones's Locker! It won't be scuttlebutt either, but rather a fun but seriously philatelic journey. Fair winds to you all. |
| 25 October
12.30 | BTA meeting at Stampex
<i>Full details to follow</i>
Business Design Centre, London |
| October
10.00 - 16.00 | BTA One-Frame Competitions
<i>At South of England Stamp Fair & Sussex Convention</i>
Ardingly Showground, RH17 6TL. |
| November
19.00 for 19.30
Date TBC | Zoom meeting
Les Ashton-Smith
<i>Albert Einstein</i> |

Advance Notice of 2026 event:
BTA Weekend at Oxford Spires Hotel
17 - 19 April 2026
With guest speakers on:
Philatelic firsts
Astronomy
Royalty

Just4Kids by Lise Whittle

www.stampactive.co.uk

'BRILLIANT BRITAIN' STAMP COMPETITION!

www.stampactive.co.uk/competitions-2/competitions/



Have a go at Stamp Active's one-page children's competition. This year's competition is called 'Brilliant Britain' which could include any aspects of history, geography or nature or people and much more... the possibilities are endless.



Choose some stamps that go together as a theme, or that tell a story, with captions or a short write-up. You can use stamps, covers and other philatelic items if you want. The stamps don't all have to be British stamps, so long as they fit in with your British theme.

You might choose stamps about

- Your favourite British sports - *maybe describe a game or match*
- British animals - *such as pets, birds, farm animals, wild animals, or just one type of animal*
- British countryside - *maybe describe what you see on a country walk*
- People *eg Kings and Queens, authors, or inventors*



- **Places you go to or would like to go to** eg castles
- **Flowers** - maybe choose flowers for an imaginary garden, or wild flowers, or flowers you would choose for a British bouquet
- **Food** - your favourite meals or an imaginary menu
- **Christmas** - what you do at Christmas, a Christmas story
- **Transport** - maybe show stamps of a real or imaginary trip
- **Time of year** eg Spring, Summer, Autumn or Winter, or the whole year



Lay your stamps in a neat layout and write something beneath each stamp. Then choose a catchy title and write it at the top.

The possibilities are endless! Have a go!

For full details and rules of the 'Brilliant Britain' competition, see the Stamp Active Network website, click on the 'Competitions' tab

www.stampactive.co.uk

(There are details of other competitions too – 'The Stamp Active Competition', and the 'British Youth Championships').

RULES FOR THE 'BRILLIANT BRITAIN' COMPETITION

Young people up to the age of 18 (on 1st September 2025) are eligible to enter. UK Only.

Entries should be submitted by 30th September 2025.

Winning entries will usually be displayed in the Youth Zone as part of the national competitions.

Stamps, covers and other philatelic items can be used. For this competition only, it is acceptable to use images of stamps that are not your personal property. The page must have a title, and either captions or a short write up that tells the story. The entries can be either hand-written or prepared using a computer.

There will be four age groups: Up to 7; 8-10; 11-14; 15-18: – with prizes being awarded (*for First, Second, Third*) in each age group.

Winners will receive vouchers or philatelic gifts to the value of £25 (1st), £20 (2nd) and £15 (3rd).

The best overall entry will receive a voucher for an additional £25.

The entries will be judged on knowledge of the subject, originality and presentation.

Only one entry per person is allowed. UK entrants only.

Winners will be announced in the philatelic press and on the Stamp Active Website www.stampactive.co.uk

A scan of the page should be sent to stampactive@btinternet.com by 30th September 2025. When sending your scan, please include your age as at 1st September 2025 and your full postal address (so that we know where to send any prize). If you are unable to scan your entry, it can be posted to: Stamp Active Network, 3 Longfellow Road, Banbury, OX16 9LB. Entries will only be returned if you send a stamp-addressed envelope, correctly stamped. The entrant's full name and address (home or school) should be on the back of the page, also their age on 1st September 2025. Entries should be on good quality paper (A4) or a similar size album page.

Stamp Active will be at Europhilex from 7th to 11th May at the NEC near Birmingham with lots to see and do and plenty of free gifts for young visitors, so please come along to Stand 1 and say hello and receive a free goodie bag and much more. Happy Collecting!

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