

THEMESCENE

December 2025

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Udderly unwell

With Lloyd Hogg



Uncover an unlikely Cold War project

Needles in space?

With Andrew Millington

Chase butterflies

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Design errors on stamps

With John Hayward



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CHAIRMAN

Barry Stagg

I like this time of the year. The summer garden is now being tidied away into the compost bin, and I start putting the garden (and allotment) to bed. But, in between the rain, I stay in the warmth and get the stamps out and start to plan what I should write up this winter. The plan is great, but the implementation of the plan is far from perfect! Where to start? The new material I bought over the summer needs to be mounted, so surely that has some priority, but I have a talk to give to a local club in February, and the presentation is not yet ready (and I have just realised it is only 14 weeks to go)!

As I sit here typing this page for *Themescene* the rain is heavy on my window and I'm glad not to be on the allotment. It seems ages away now but Ardingly was only a few weeks ago and I think the BTA had a very good day. Some good exhibits to look at, with a good number of people looking at them. And thank you to Andrew, Wendy, Anne and Jan for making this event possible.

I was really looking forward to Stampex but a few days beforehand I went down with what I can only call a horrible lurgy, courtesy of my two-year-old grandson! A most unpleasant experience. I heard that the BTA meeting went well, so thank you to all of you who attended.

May I say thank you to several of you who, over the past year, have sent me details of philatelic items that I collect and are for sale. Very kind of you. Perhaps that is a common facet found amongst collectors – we care not only about our collection but care that others don't miss out. I am reminded of an old saying which went something like 'Today we do not own the material we have, we are but the guardians of the material for future generations'.

So, on this wet Tuesday in mid-November, may I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year – and the rain has now stopped but I have been saved from the allotment as it is now pitch-black outside and even I am not mad enough to garden in the dark! Now where are those covers I bought in the summer ... 📖

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Unless you have prepaid for 2026 you will find a renewal slip with this issue of *Themescene*. 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.

UDDERLY UNWELL

Lloyd Hogg

We've all heard or used the idioms "sick as a parrot" and "sick as a dog", but what about "sick as a cow"? Philately tells us a good deal about the history of cattle and disease, such that it makes for an interesting and diverse story. This article looks at some of the ailments that affect our bovine friends, how they are managed and eventually used to help mankind in treating wider communicable diseases across the world.

Let's start with **Cowpox**, which is a mild disease primarily transmitted to humans from cats and rodents. Despite its name it is thought to have originated from horses! So where does the cow come in? Well, cows are susceptible to it, but more importantly Dr. Edward Jenner observed that milkmaids, who contracted cowpox, seemed immune to smallpox. In 1796 he tested his hypothesis by inoculating an eight-year-old boy with cowpox, then exposing him to smallpox, confirming the protective effect. This was one of the most significant events in British medical history and the birth of vaccinations. And so it was that smallpox was conquered. Events are recited in a prestige booklet pane (Fig 1). Interestingly the term "vaccination" is derived from the Latin word for cow, 'vacca', thereby highlighting this fundamental connection.

Whilst **tuberculosis** (commonly known as TB as illustrated in figure 2) is not the most prevalent disease in cattle, it is a very serious and economically significant one that poses a major public health challenge in certain regions, with infection rates high in parts of Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

Cattle acquire TB from other cattle or wildlife (such as badgers) and it can be passed on to humans, posing a high potential risk to cattle farmers, who are advised to take regular health screenings (Figs 3, 4 and 5).

Cattle pass on TB when humans consume unpasteurised milk from infected animals, inhale bacteria from infected animal breath, excretions, or carcasses. Another route is through contact with infected material, particularly if the bacteria enter an unprotected cut or wound on the skin.

In 1864 Frenchman Louis Pasteur invented pasteurisation of milk, which helped eliminate the spread of TB (Fig 6). The research institute he founded, 'Institut Pasteur', has since been instrumental in TB research, most notably by co-developing the BCG vaccine in 1921, the only widely available vaccine against TB. It continues to develop new TB vaccines and diagnostics today (Fig 7).

Some governments are so concerned about the impact of bovine TB that they run advertising campaigns to raise awareness amongst farm workers and, as part of this process, sometimes resort to overprinting stamps with key messages, for example in Yemen during 1965. The stamp in figure 8 was aimed at the agricultural community. In bygone times, treatment of TB was made in 'consumptive homes', and hospitals. (Figs 9 and 10).

A significant number of cattle fall victim to **rabies**, which mostly affects herds in Latin America. From 1970 to 2023 there were around 134,000 confirmed cases in that region. Brazil is a particular rabies 'hotspot' due to its vampire bat colonies (Fig 11). Bats bite cows near caves and watering holes. Rabies can be carried by cattle and passed on to man. Virtually all infections with rabies resulted in death until two French scientists, Louis



Fig 1: GB 1999 prestige booklet pane which provides narrative explaining the importance of cows in the work of Dr. Jenner. Clever that the stamp design translated the markings of a Friesian cow into a silhouette of patient and doctor.



Fig 2: 1841 letter sent from Leamington to Lichfield, bearing a four margin 1d. grey-black plate 8 stamp **lettered TB**, tied by distinctive Leamington Maltese cross.



Fig 3: Badger emerges from its sett to wreak havoc?



Fig 4: Zambian cattle farmer.



Fig 5: Graphic illustrating TB screening process on a semi-postal stamp.

Pasteur and Émile Roux, developed the first rabies vaccination in 1885 (Fig 12). Nine-year-old Joseph Meister (1876–1940), who had been mauled by a rabid dog, was the first human to receive this vaccine.

One of the oldest diseases is ‘**cattle plague**’ or **rinderpest**. In 1756 the French veterinary surgeon Claude Bourgelat (Fig 13) founded the École Nationale Vétérinaire de Lyon and the École Nationale Vétérinaire d'Alfort. They were designed to specifically combat the cattle plague, and its students were credited with helping to cure the disease.

Rinderpest is a highly contagious viral disease which causes a sudden jump in mortality rates posing a significant threat to food security and economies, especially in Africa. It is caused by a morbillivirus related to the human measles, and presents with symptoms like fever, nasal and eye discharge and oral sores. Vets travel hundreds of miles to give vaccinations (Fig 14).

Dr. Beyene is an Ethiopian veterinarian who worked on the long-term immunity and diagnosis of the disease leading to its eradication globally in 2011. Despite his great work, rinderpest does make occasional re-appearances. He is commemorated on a set of four Ethiopian postage stamps issued in 2009 (Fig 15).

Giardiasis is a common intestinal infection in cattle, especially young calves, caused by the protozoan parasite *Giardia duodenalis*. While adult cattle are often asymptomatic carriers, infection in calves can cause significant illness and economic loss due to poor growth and reduced weight gain. The disease is generally caused by overcrowding of cattle herds in unhygienic conditions and can be passed to humans. The Georgian Bay District of Canada (Fig 16) has been associated with high levels of the disease going right back to the late 19th century.

Boophilus microplus is a tick that parasitises a variety of livestock and wild mammal species, especially cattle. It is also known as the Australian cattle tick, southern cattle tick, Cuban tick, Madagascar blue tick and Puerto Rican Texas fever tick, exemplifying that it lives in many parts of the world. Its spread is increasing with climate change and is characterized by anaemia, fever, and potentially multiple organ failure. This results in weight loss and lower milk production in infected cattle, and therefore massive economic losses in countries like Brazil, where 80% of the cattle population is infected. A Cuban stamp shows the 65-day lifecycle of this dreadful parasite (Fig 17).

There are other ticks too which cause blood loss, irritation and damage to udders which make cows unproductive. A stamp from Mozambique incorrectly shows the *Amblyomma theileri* tick against a cow (Fig 18), when in fact it should be the **Amblyomma hebraeum**. To control external parasites like ticks, mites, and lice, farmers use cattle dipping, which involves immersing cows in a vat or spraying them with a liquid pesticide. While traditional “plunge dips” require the animal to swim through a narrow, deep channel, “pour-on” and “spray-on” methods are also used and require careful application based on the animal’s weight to avoid under- or overdosing.

Meanwhile Tsetse flies transmit animal **trypanosomiasis** to cattle, a disease caused by trypanosome parasites, leading to fever, weakness, anaemia, and weight loss. Untreated, it can be fatal, making it a significant obstacle to livestock production and food security in sub-Saharan Africa. Management involves tsetse control via insecticides, traps, and targets, as well as treatments and prevention with trypanocides. The cattle developed at Kitobola in the Republic of Congo (Fig 19) are a type of “trypanotolerant” breed, meaning they have some resistance to trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness).

Anthrax in cattle is a sudden and usually fatal disease caused by the *Bacillus anthracis* bacterium. Cattle typically get the disease by ingesting or inhaling anthrax spores from



Fig 6: First stamp chosen as it incorporates a cow in the design.



Fig 7: Institut Pastuer.



Fig 8: Y.A.R. Overprinted.



Fig 9: World's first charity stamp: 1/- denomination with additional 1/- to charity for consumptive homes.



Fig 10: Slogan cancel urging help to Muskoka Consumptive Hospital on postcard sent from Canada to Scotland. The card was sent during the War tax rate period and should have paid 3 cents for overseas service. The 1 cent deficiency has been doubled in penalty and so 2 cent (2d.) applied.



Fig 11: Dreaded Vampire bat.



Fig 12: Imperforate stamp showing rabies vaccination.



Fig 13: Bourgelat treating a cow.



Fig 14: Travelling veterinary staff administer an injection.

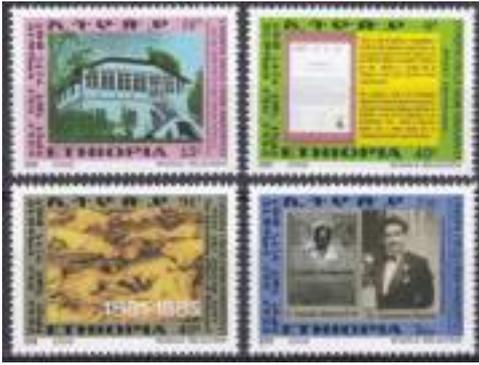


Fig 15: stamps celebrating the eradication of rinderpest in Ethiopia.



Fig 16: 1903 - Montreal to New York. This postal card was commissioned by the post office in conjunction with the Grand Turk Railway System.



Fig 17: Lifecycle of cattle tick.



Fig 18: Wrong type of tick assigned to cattle disease on Mozambique stamp.



Figure 19: Postal card showing photograph of Kitobola cattle in action.



Fig 20: Domestic mail bearing post office vaccination slogan.

infected soil while grazing. The most common symptom is finding the animal dead, but if observed, signs include high fever, trembling, lethargy, and discharges from body openings. The disease can be passed to humans, but there is a preventative cattle vaccine. In the 1930s, the Uruguayan post office used a slogan promoting the vaccine, "Vaccinate your cattle against anthrax with vaccine from the Majend Institute", as shown on a cover from 1938 (Fig 20).

I'm sure that everyone has heard of **Foot and Mouth disease**. This is a very contagious viral infection affecting livestock and involving high temperature followed by blisters, especially in the mouth and on the feet. Other signs include sticky saliva and reluctance to move. It causes severe pain and distress in animals, leading to reduced productivity and permanent lameness. Young animals are particularly vulnerable. Infected beasts are destroyed. Only two stamps have been issued to recognize the disease, one of which is shown in figure 21.

Despite there being no philatelic items relating to **Mad Cow Disease** (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy - BSE), we cannot forget that it has devastating effects. It is a fatal neurological disease in cattle that damages their central nervous system, causing symptoms like incoordination and nervousness. As with Foot and Mouth, cattle are destroyed, and stringent quarantine and cleaning process imposed. This means that cattle are prevented from leaving their home farm or ranch.

To keep cattle free from disease most countries have national and regional quarantine centres (Fig 22) which are approved locations where newly acquired or imported cattle are isolated from the main herd for a set period to monitor them for diseases and prevent the spread of illness to other animals.

Whatever the disease, the trusty veterinary surgeons are at our disposal. Several stamps have been issued, mostly by African countries, that depict vets in action. Not everyone charges a fee because some work on a voluntary basis as part of wider work experience and to gain an understanding of different cattle breeds. Veterinary institutes serve as places of research where new treatment methods and protocols are tested. A veterinary network was established in Africa to operate joined-up services across territorial boundaries (Figs 23 and 24). 📖



Fig 21: Foot and Mouth outbreaks.



Fig 22: Animal quarantine station.



Fig 23: veterinary research on cattle.



Fig24: veterinary networks across Africa.

NEEDLES IN SPACE?

Andrew Millington

A few years ago, intrigue got the better of me and I purchased this souvenir cover from a well-known internet selling site (Fig 1). It concerned copper; but what was Project Westford? I had no idea at the time, but after researching the item I can reveal one of the most unusual and controversial episodes in the history of humankind and space. Conceived at the height of the Cold War, the project united scientific ambition with geopolitical anxiety. Its aim was to create an artificial ionospheric belt around the Earth, made up of millions of tiny copper needles, to serve as a reliable global communications system for the western world in the event of Soviet attacks. Though the cover was cancelled in 1966, seven decades later the underlying message is still pertinent.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, as the United States and the Soviet Union raced to outdo each other in the realm of space, the vulnerability of long-distance communications became a source of concern for the US military. Radio signals, which then formed the backbone of global communications, relied on the Earth's ionosphere to bounce signals over the horizon. However, the ionosphere is volatile, changing with solar activity and geomagnetic storms, and could be disrupted deliberately in times of war. The military had also turned to submarine cables; though this was a technology which had been available for over a century since the first Transatlantic Cable - a seven-strand copper wire - was laid between Heart's Content, Newfoundland and Valencia Island, Eire (Figs 2 and 3).

Fears of Soviet jamming or a nuclear attack that could devastate the ionosphere spurred American researchers to seek alternatives. Laying transoceanic cables for military communications was expensive and slow (and as we now know one's enemies can be rather snappy at cutting them!). Satellites were in their infancy and were not yet thought capable of handling high-speed, high-volume signals. Enter Project Westford - a bold plan to create an artificial reflector in space.

The basic concept behind the project was as ingenious as it was simple: disperse a ring of millions of tiny copper dipole needles into a medium Earth orbit; about 3,500 km above the Earth's surface. Each needle was 1.78 cm long - half the wavelength of an 8 GHz radio signal, the frequency chosen for military communications. Acting collectively the needles would form a ring that could reflect radio signals in much the same way as the natural ionosphere, allowing reliable transcontinental communication regardless of natural or hostile disruptions.

These copper dipoles were precise in their dimensions and coated to resist corrosion and the harsh conditions of space. Ground-based stations would then bounce their communications off this artificial belt of reflectors encircling the planet, sending messages across the globe with little risk of interception or interference.

Starting in 1958 the project was overseen by Walter E. Morrow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Lincoln Laboratory for the U.S. Department of Defence. Known initially as Project Needles, it later became Project Westford after the town in Massachusetts where the parabolic dish used in the experiment was situated. Initial tests failed to disperse the needles as planned. This is where the 1966 souvenir cover (Fig 1) enters the story. It commemorates the *failure* of the 1961 Project Needles experiment. It

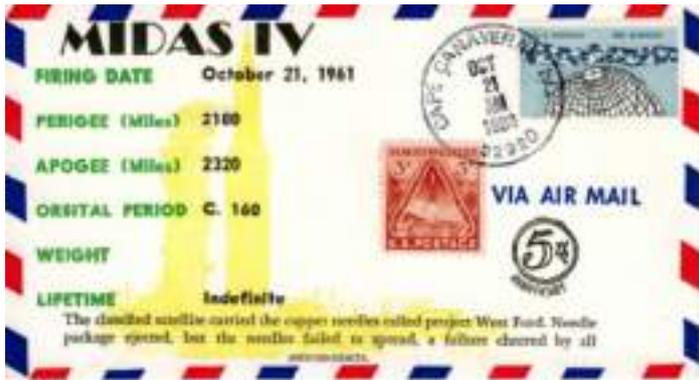


Fig 1: Souvenir cover commemorating the 5th anniversary of the failure of the Project Needles experiment.



Fig 2: Ireland commemorated the first transatlantic cable in 1979 with a stamp showing HMS Agamemnon, the British cable-laying ship.



Fig 3: A 1928 Newfoundland stamp commemorates the transatlantic cable landing at Heart's Content—a small coastal town in southeast Newfoundland.



Fig 4: France 1962, 50 centime stamp depicting the Telstar satellite.



Fig 5: One of the first submarine cables to gain philatelic recognition was the Commonwealth Pacific Cable System (COMPAC) between Australia and Canada which was completed in 1963. It linked to existing the Canada-UK cable. Four countries issued stamps in 1963 to commemorate its opening (all but Fiji using the same design). Strangely Canada did not issue a stamp. The broken cable flaw on the Row 10/4 Australian stamp heralded what has been a headache for cable operators ever since!

appears to me that somebody got hold of a batch of the original launch covers and reused them. If I am correct, they added an additional 3c USA stamp, cancelled it and the original 5c stamp with a Cape Canaveral canceller, applied a circular 5th Anniversary cachet, and printed "*The classified satellite carried the copper needles called project West Ford. Needle package ejected, but the needles failed to spread, a failure cheered by all astronomers*" on the envelope. As the cover has no postal address, I am stumped as to why an additional 3c stamp was needed in addition to the original 5c 'The Sciences' stamp.

Success came on May 9, 1963, when a payload of 480 million copper needles was launched into orbit aboard a United States Air Force rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Once in orbit, a small explosive charge dispersed the needles into a halo-like ring. Early results showed that the needles did indeed form a belt, and experiments demonstrated that radio signals could be successfully reflected via the artificial ionosphere, achieving the project's main technical objective.

This success was immediately mired in international controversy. Astronomers expressed outrage as the artificial belt compromised observations of the night sky, creating what some called "the dirtiest experiment in space". The International Astronomical Union and various governments, including the Soviet Union, protested the deliberate introduction of man-made debris into orbit. The issue was hotly debated at the UN, where US ambassador, Adlai Stevenson, defended the project. Critics also worried about the long-term environmental consequences of what would later become known as "space debris", fearing that the needles might remain in orbit for years, colliding with other satellites or even creating a cascade of orbital collisions. Proponents countered that the needles were so small and light that atmospheric drag would bring them down quickly, and indeed, within a few years, the needles had largely re-entered the atmosphere and burned up. Some dipoles that did not deploy correctly remain in clumps which make up a small amount of the orbital debris tracked by NASA's Orbital Debris Program Office.

The controversy surrounding Project Westford played a key role in shaping international space law. In 1967, the United Nations introduced the Outer Space Treaty, which among other provisions, sought to regulate the placement of objects in orbit and establish that outer space was the "province of all mankind". The lessons of Westford highlighted the need for transparency, environmental responsibility, and international cooperation in the use of near-Earth space. Chad, Sierra Leone and Togo issued stamps to celebrate the 50th anniversary of this treaty in 2017. But as none of these stamps referenced Project Westford, none of the countries has a space programme and because it is highly unlikely people in these countries could have used these stamps I'm leaving you to find illustrations of them on the Internet!

Few projects so perfectly encapsulate the anxieties and ambitions of the early Space Age as Project Westford. Born of Cold War fears, executed with technical brilliance, and concluded with controversy and new laws, the project is a rich case study in the balancing act between progress and precaution. Its legacy endures not in the handful of copper needles that once circled the Earth, but in the lessons it taught about the responsibilities that come with the power to shape our world - and the space beyond it.

It is a cautionary tale about the intersection of military necessity, environmental stewardship, and the global commons. The project demonstrated that, while technological challenges could often be overcome, the broader impacts on science, international relations, and the environment were maybe just as significant.

Continued on page 122

DESIGN ERRORS ON STAMPS

John Hayward

At the BTA members' meeting at the National Exhibition Centre in May your editor asked me if, following my article in March 2025 *Themescene* on the Panama Canal, I would write a further article on design errors on stamps. Indeed, she added it would be great if I could write a series of such articles especially if they had an interesting story. How could I resist such a plaintive plea? I knew there were a considerable number of stamps involved, many with intriguing and sometimes amusing stories, and not just stamps, but other philatelic items. So of course I accepted.

Perhaps I should explain a little of how I got involved with this area of philately before I provide some illustrations of one very famous person who has provided several philatelic design errors. I had always been interested and amused by design errors from my early collecting years but never had the opportunity to collect them until I packed up my thematic motor-cycle collection a few years ago. However, I was greatly impressed by a sixteen page thematic exhibit entitled "Oops" from a twenty year old Danish exhibitor that I judged in Eurothema in 2009. It was the only exhibit I have ever seen on this theme and it had a lasting effect on me, such that one day I would like to collect the theme, which I have over the last three years. Let me also explain that design errors are not printing errors, which are much more common, but errors which have occurred at the design stage where the designer of the stamp has made a mistake in which a feature of the stamp design is wrong, e.g. the name of the person portrayed is wrong, or the person in the portrait is wrong, or perhaps the illustration of something is incorrect.

Now let me start with a few stamps involving the famous explorer Christopher Columbus. St. Kitts Nevis issued a set of definitive stamps in 1903 showing a figure purportedly of Columbus discovering America using a telescope (fig 1). It issued a further set in 1923 of larger stamps with the same picture. Well, Columbus was rediscovering America, as we know the Vikings were there over 400 years beforehand, and the Native Americans for some 30,000 years, but that is not the design error – it's the telescope. In 1492 when this event took place the telescope had not been invented! It was invented by Galileo around 1540-1550. This is a classic schoolboy error of which the designer should have been well aware.

The next stamp is Chile first issue 1853, showing the head of Columbus (fig 2). Yes, we all know Columbus never went anywhere near Chile on his voyages of discovery, but once again that is not the design error on the stamp. In fact I am reminded of an old Kenneth Horne joke from the early 1960s of a supposed interview with Columbus on his return from discovering America. When asked of his feelings on this great event, Columbus replied "well, we all make mistakes". I digress. The design error is the head portrait of Columbus – no contemporaneous portrait of him exists, like many other famous people in history. As if to prove the point take a look at the stamps of Chile in figures 3 to 5 which were issued in 1905, each showing different heads of Columbus and all different from the 1853 stamp! How did each designer get away with it?

Then there is a stamp issued by Newfoundland in 1897 for the 400th Anniversary of the Discovery of Newfoundland by Cabot (fig 6) which has a connection with Columbus. It depicts Cabot's ship *The Matthew*. (Some of you may well have sailed on the very good



Fig 1: Columbus and his telescope (allegedly)



Fig 2: Columbus depicted on Chile 1853 issue



Figs 3 - 5: Columbus depicted in three different appearances on Chile 1905 issue



Fig 6: The Matthew ... or is it?



Fig 7: The Santa Maria

replica of the *Matthew* from Bristol Docks to Avonmouth and back, or watched its stately progress under the iconic Clifton Suspension Bridge on a Sunday, rueing the fact that it has a small motor. And there are some excellent views of this ship on YouTube). The text on the stamp states that it is *The Matthew*. The stamp was printed by the American Banknote Company in New York, and therein lies a clue to the design error. The stamp does not depict the *Matthew* – it's the *Santa Maria*, Columbus' flagship! Take a look at figure 7, the 3 cents stamp from the USA long set issued in 1893 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus discovering America. This depicts the *Santa Maria* and was printed by guess who – the American Banknote Company. What a lazy way to print the stamps of another country, and even worse charging the Newfoundland Post Office for something the printers must have known was not correct! 📖

Needles in space. Continued from page 119

Was it worth the cost and effort for the US government and its military? In the immediate short-term the answer must be yes. But in the medium- to long-term the answer is surely no, because by the late 1960s communication using the Telstar (Fig 4) and Syncom families of satellites was a well-established and environmentally benign way of linking the world and, perhaps more importantly in the context of Project Westford's aims, provided secure communications for the West. Concerns over Soviet threats to submarine cables did nothing to stem what has grown to become a cable spaghetti criss-crossing ocean floors (Fig 5). Fast forward seven decades. We know that communications, whatever the mode of propagation, are vulnerable and less secure than we ever imagined. Yes, Project Westford was on the right track, but the decision makers couldn't have foreseen what the threats to communication would be seven decades later. 📖



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PROMINENT LEPIDOPTERISTS OF THE UK

Vladimir Kachan

Collecting insects, especially butterflies, was fashionable among the wealthy in the late 1600s. Many men had ‘cabinets of curiosities’. For some, the exotic insects took on the status of precious jewels, while for others they were interesting for scientific and medicinal purposes.

Over the past 300 years huge number of the great and the good have been butterfly collectors in the UK. Explorers and scientists of the seventeenth century were brave, competitive and curious, and their desire for knowledge took them far across the planet for months at a time. Between them these men amassed thousands of objects, including plants and butterflies acquired in far-flung parts of the globe. Of course, the rarest and most exotic butterflies have long aroused the most deranged passions and enthusiasts were eager to find new and interesting species of butterflies to add to their collections. The majority of butterfly collectors have amassed a huge amount of knowledge over the years, and most of them were happy to share that knowledge.

In the eighteenth century, trade and exploration flourished as the British Empire expanded and Dru Drury (1725-1804), the London silversmith, naturalist and author, saw the chance to develop an insect collection of unprecedented scope (Fig 1). As well as collecting English insects, he acquired more “exotic” samples by persuading the officers of ships sailing to other continents and other travelers to collect insects on his behalf. Beginning in 1770, Drury kept correspondences with a number of entomologists from all over the world, from India to Jamaica and America. It is through these connections that Drury received much of his collection. His profitable business enabled him to spend significant amounts of money on his hobby and over a thirty year period he built up a famous collection of over 11,000 insect specimens, including amazingly beautiful tropical butterflies (Fig 2). From 1770 to 1787, he published the three-volume *Illustrations of Natural History, Wherein are Exhibited Upwards of 240 Figures of Exotic Insects*, which was later revised and republished under the title *Illustrations of Exotic Entomology* in 1837.

William Kirby (1759 – 1850) was an English entomologist, an original member of the Linnean Society and a Fellow of the Royal Society, as well as a country priest, making him an eminent parson-naturalist (Fig 3). In his lifetime he had significantly contributed to the study of natural history through his entomological research and because of that he is remembered as the Father of Modern Entomology. He helped to found the Entomological Society of London in 1833 and became its Honorary President for life. On that occasion, he presented his own cabinet of insects, collected over more than 40 years, which contained many rare specimens of butterflies. Throughout Kirby's life, he compiled an extensive insect collection (Fig 4). Kirby was concerned with a systemic approach to the classification of insects. He identified genus and species not only by an insect's appearance but also its behaviour. His belief that there is “delight in nature” is alive and well in the field of entomology. But Kirby was much more than a taxonomist. His greatest

achievement was *An Introduction to Entomology, or Elements of the Natural History of Insects* published in four volumes between 1815 and 1826. He wrote that insects “combined and concentrated almost all that is either beautiful and graceful, interesting and alluring, or curious and singular” and then he continued “the butterfly, adorned with every beauty and every grace, borne by radiant wings through the fields of ether, and extracting nectar from every flower, gives us some idea of the blessed inhabitants of happier worlds, of angels, and of the spirits of the just arrived at their state of perfection”.

Henry Walter Bates (1825 - 1892) was a British naturalist and explorer whose demonstration of the operation of natural selection in animal mimicry (the imitation by a species of other life-forms or of inanimate objects) gave firm support to Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. Bates was a naturalist who specialized in the study of insects (Fig 5). A childhood hobby of collecting insects and an appetite for adventure would come to define his career. Bates was 23 years old when he left home, bound for the adventure of a lifetime. With a great passion and interest in nature, he set out in 1848 on an expedition to explore the wildlife of the Amazon River in Brazil. Bates’ fascination with the variety of insect life on the Amazon would keep him in the region for more than eleven years. He was certainly in his element. His paper written in 1864 paints a clear picture of the abundance of butterflies he encountered: “In some places, during the fine season (August to October), they assemble by hundreds, sometimes thirty or forty species together, of the most varied shapes and colours, to sport about in muddy places exposed to the morning sun. Callicore and *Asterope*, with liveries of velvet crimson and black, or sapphire and orange; *Eunica*, with purple hues glancing in the sunlight as they fly; swallow-tailed *Marpesia* of many species; silky-green *Dynamine*; blue, white and black *Baeotus*, tailed like the *Charaxes jasius* of Europe, and many other kinds less conspicuous in colour and form, are all seen together, either settled on the ground or swiftly flying to and fro above it”. During his time in the Amazon he collected everything from botanical specimens to bird skins and snail shells, in addition to beetles, tropical butterflies and moths. Exploring the entire valley of the Amazon, Bates collected about 14,712 different insect species, including a huge number of butterflies, 8,000 of them previously unknown to science or labelled as new species. But he is best known as the ‘father’ of the theory of Batesian mimicry. Years of examining butterflies in the rainforests of Brazil allowed him to notice the way that otherwise vulnerable butterflies were in fact protected from predators, by copying the physical appearance of unpalatable or toxic species which predators had learned to avoid. Bates closely studied *Heliconius* butterflies for his discovery of mimicry. He was puzzled by the way a butterfly could move so slowly without being eaten by birds. He eventually discovered that it was toxic, it had a particular smell to it and birds had learned to avoid its bitter taste (Fig 6). In 1862 Bates published a scientific paper describing his ideas about mimicry. He believed harmless edible species occasionally produced forms with similar colour patterns to unpalatable toxic species. He believed these forms would be less likely to be attacked by predators, and would therefore pass on the same colouration to their offspring. Bates wrote *The Naturalist on the River Amazon* 2 vols. (1863), and many papers on entomology.

Frederick DuCane Godman (1834 – 1919) was an English lepidopterist, entomologist and ornithologist (Fig 7) who inherited a fortune from his father that allowed him to travel the world. Godman was an avid collector of birds and butterflies and brought back a large number of unknown tropical species from his travels. In 1861 he made a trip to Guatemala and Belize via Jamaica; in 1865 he made a trip to the Azores; and then in 1871 he visited the Canary and Madeira Islands. He made many other trips later including a trip to India



Fig 1: Ivory Coast 2012 with portrait of Dru Drury and tropical butterfly



Fig 2: Central Africa 1960 with giant butterfly *Drurya antimachus*



Fig 3: Mali 2012 with William Kirby



Fig 4: Mozambique 2009 miniature sheets dedicated to William Kirby and his butterfly collection

in 1886. Here he purchased a collection of butterflies from Robert Lidderdale, Brigade Surgeon of the Bengal Medical Department. In 1876 Godman with his naturalist friend Salvin decided to work *on a project to document the fauna and flora of Central America*. This monumental work *Biologia Centrali-Americana* (1879–1915) has grown into a 63 volume encyclopaedia on the natural history of Central America. Of these, three volumes are about butterflies, and all of them are illustrated with colour tables depicting exotic species. Godman amassed an extensive butterfly collection, described many new species and published over 120 papers on butterflies (Fig 8). His museum included a collection of butterflies, obtained from Henry Walter Bates, which contained over 100,000 specimens, plus other collections of butterflies from New World that he acquired in the course of his work. Godman was a fellow of the Zoological Society of London; he was elected President of the Royal Entomological Society in 1882; received a gold medal from the Linnean Society in 1918, and was made a trustee of the British Museum. His extensive entomological collection was presented to the British Museum in 1885.

Henry John Elwes (1846 – 1922) was a British botanist, entomologist, author, lepidopterist, collector and traveler (Fig 9). He was amongst the most extensively travelled naturalists of his day and gathered varieties of specimens from every corner of the globe. He joined the Scots Guards in 1865 but resigned his commission in 1869 and lived the life of a travelling naturalist and country gentleman. He visited various parts of the world studying aspects of natural history including ornithology, botany and entomology.

In 1870 he went to the Sikkim Himalaya, crossing the border into then-forbidden Tibet, inspired by reading Joseph Hooker's Himalayan Journals about Indian butterflies. He made many further visits to Asia, as a result of which he collected an extensive collection of tropical butterflies. In the years that followed, Elwes returned to Sikkim numerous times and continued to explore much of Asia, including Nepal, India, China, Japan, Taiwan and Siberia, and in 1886 he was appointed naturalist on the failed Macaulay Mission to Tibet. As well as collecting plants he took a strong interest in butterflies, amassing a huge collection. He published 27 papers on the subject during his lifetime including the descriptions of several new butterfly species. His exploration continued to the New World where he visited the USA, Canada and Mexico, and he would spend the interim years travelling the length and breadth of Europe continually adding to his butterfly collection. In 1902 Elwes presented his collection of 25,000 moths and butterflies to the Natural History Museum in London (Fig 10).

Margaret Fountaine (1862–1940) was a lepidopterist during a period of transition and professionalization in natural history (Fig 11). Even in her youth, Fontaine loved to spend time collecting butterflies. Over her lifetime she collected more than 22,000 butterflies and published extensively. Wealthy and independent, Fountaine toured Europe in her early twenties and then, over the next 50 years, travelled the globe collecting butterflies. She visited almost every corner of the British Empire. Her articles for the journal *The Entomologist* were filled with questions and theorizing over seasonal and geographical influences on various species of butterflies, and also her discoveries of various species' variations. In 1898 she was elected to the Royal Entomological Society of London. Fountaine spent 1902-1903 in South Africa and Rhodesia and produced sketchbooks of previously undocumented eggs, caterpillars and chrysalises of butterflies. Her research from South Africa, published in *Transactions of the Entomological Society*, gave descriptions of life cycles of butterflies, food plants, seasonal timings, number of skins and colour changes of butterflies. This article was the most technical that Fountaine wrote, and her reviewers praised her observational astuteness. In the years building up to war,

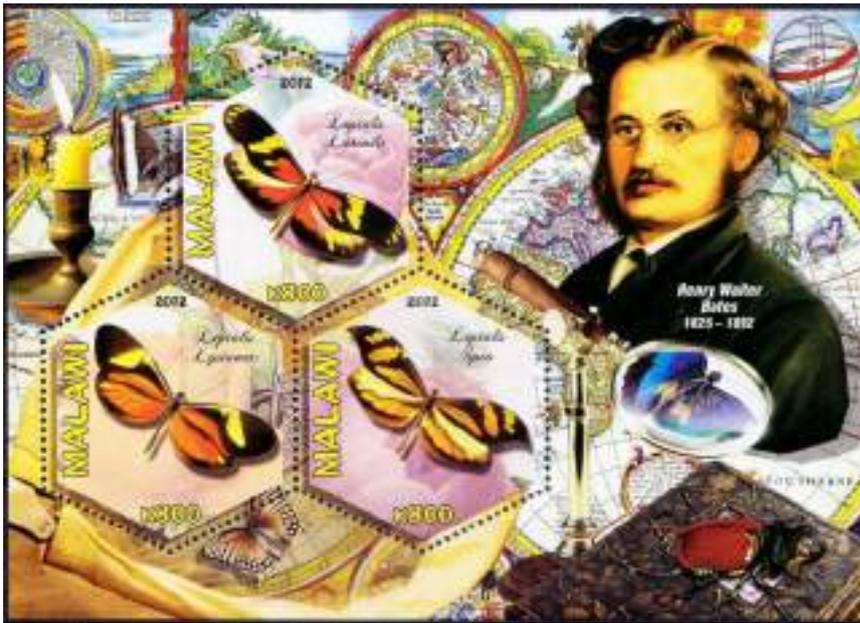


Fig 5: Malawi 2012 with Henry Walter Bates



Fig 6: Nicaragua 1994 showing mimicry: on the left is an edible butterfly Melinaea lilis which looks like an inedible butterfly Heliconius ismenius on the right)

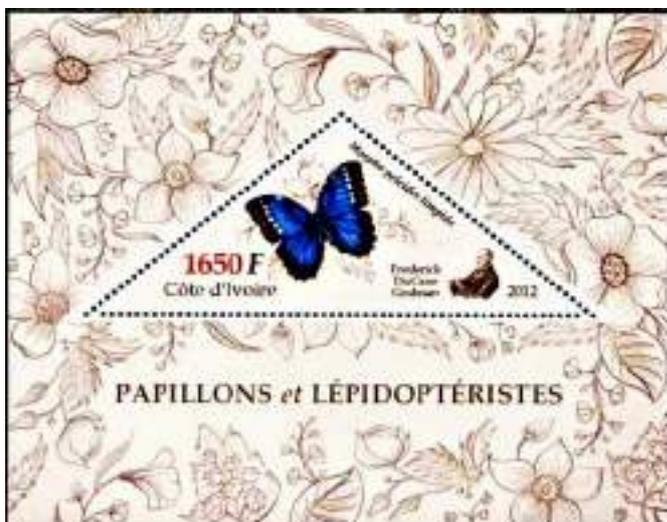


Fig 7: Ivory Coast 2012 with portrait of British lepidopterist Frederick DuCane Godman)



Fig 8: Dominica 1982 with image of the Godman's leaf butterfly



Fig 9: Two miniature sheets of Mozambique 2012 dedicated to Henry John Elwes

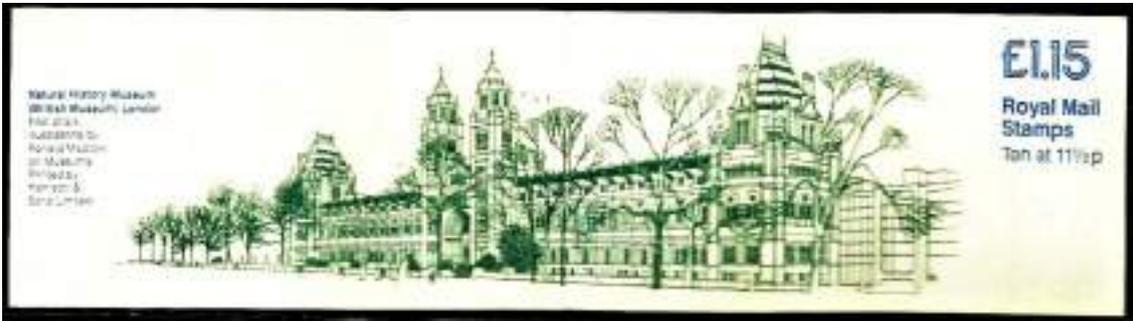
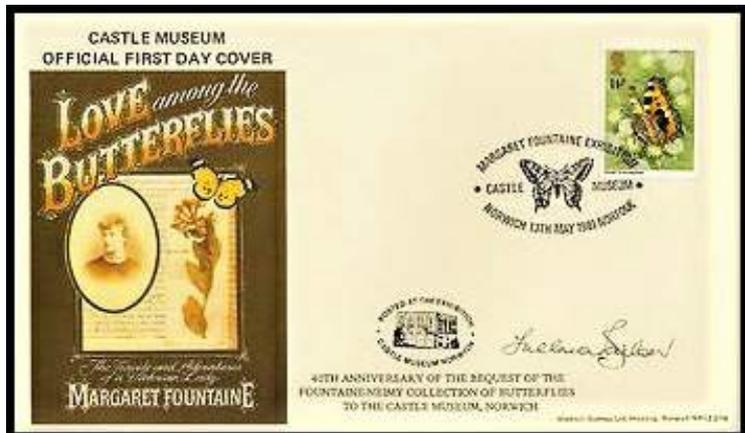


Fig 10: GB booklet 1981 with Natural History Museum in London



Fig 11: Ivory Coast 2012 with portrait of Margaret Fountaine

Fig 12: GB 1981 with special cancel for the Margaret Fountaine Butterfly Exhibition in the Castle Museum at Norwich



Fontaine spent time in India, Ceylon, Nepal and Tibet, and this extensive trip produced watercolours of Asian butterflies rather than the usual reports for *The Entomologist*. In 1917 she travelled to America and published on her collecting in California while volunteering for the Red Cross. Fontaine then continued on to West and East Africa, Indochina, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Brazil, the West Indies and finally Trinidad in search of new species of butterflies. After her death, Fontaine's collection of butterflies was bequeathed to the Castle Museum at Norwich (Fig 12).

Lionel Walter Rothschild, 2nd Lord Rothschild (1868-1937), dedicated his life to the natural sciences. An eccentric character, Walter was fascinated by butterflies and moths, birds and many animals. All his childhood Walter caught and collected insects, special preferences being butterflies (Fig 13). In 1876 Walter Rothschild, an eight year-old boy in a wealthy banking family, started his own natural history museum. As an adult Walter undertook field trips himself and also kept in touch with explorers and other collectors who carried on the hunt in every continent. He was greatly excited by the beauty of butterflies and moths all his life and he went to great pains to search for new species. He went to great lengths to bring together large series of variations, breeding butterflies himself in Britain and hunting down rarities which came on the market. He studied the butterflies in his collection and described and named about half a thousand new species and subspecies. His reputation and knowledge in the scientific community was so great that many newly discovered creatures and plants were subsequently named after him and coined 'Rothschildi'. For example Rothschild's birdwing (*Ornithoptera rothschildi*) is a large birdwing butterfly, endemic to the Arfak Mountains in Western New Guinea (Fig 14). Rothschild financed most of the expeditions to British New Guinea from 1902–1903 and to the Arfak Mountains of Dutch New Guinea from 1909–1910. On his death he bequeathed his set of 2.25 million butterflies and moths to the British Museum.

Butterflies are a beautiful and intrinsic part of our wildlife heritage. No summer's day is complete without the delightful flash of colour and flutter of wings on a gentle breeze. But butterflies are so much more than that – they are highly sensitive indicators of the health of the environment and play a crucial role in the food chain as well as being important pollinators of plants. 📖

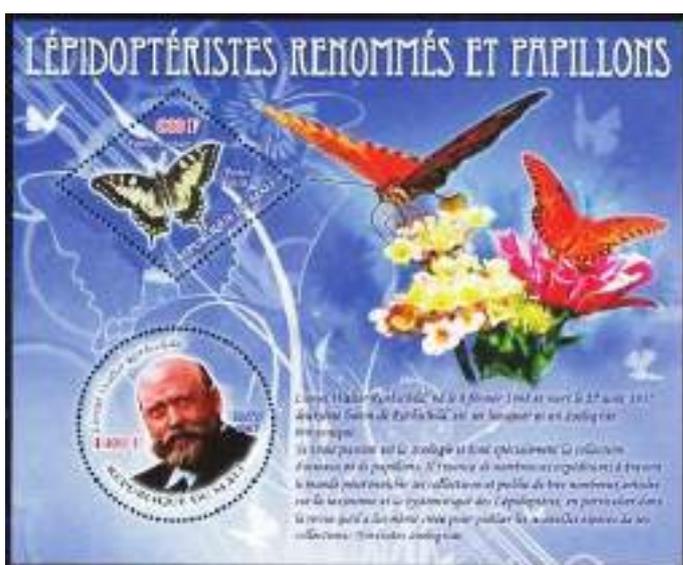


Fig 13: Mali 2010 Walter Rothschild and his butterflies



Fig 14: Vietnam 1991 with image of butterfly *Ornithoptera rothschildi*

THEMESCENE AND THE BEST STAMP SET ... EVER

Chris Yardley

My Dad went into the Royal Air Force during World War Two and as a child I did not see that much of him. I do though remember his delight on one visit home to learn that I was taking an interest in stamp collecting, encouraged by the next-door neighbour. I must have been about five when I was entrusted with the family stamp collection. Loose stamps, in the main, roughly sorted into the correct pages in a world-wide stamp album, with printed images, in a church-bible size, dated in the late 1930's. I was off and running. My only disappointment was Dad looking through the collection five years later and asking where all the good stamps had gone? (Next-door or a poor memory?). For the next seventy years I was a closet collector. Enjoying myself and not sharing the fun. My own two sons had no interest in stamps although for a while I did manage separate accumulations of my swaps, for each of them.

I came out of the closet when I was encouraged to research for a PhD (as a very mature person) at the Australian National University, Science Communication Faculty to look at *The representation of science and scientists on postage stamps*. Stamps as a visual media and a vehicle for official and policy dissemination.

As a member of the Military Historical Society of Australia I have subsequently studied and discussed the messages being sent on stamps from a wide view. I have been able extensively to use the stamp catalogues with which we are familiar, the on-line catalogues of Stampworld, eBay and Delcampe for example.

I have now set myself the task studying "*The best thematic set EVER*". The choice is easy, my best set is that produced for the Republic of the Marshall Islands Postal Services by the Unicover Corporation of Wyoming during 1989-1995 entitled *The One Hundred Epic Events of World War II*. 100 events illustrated at the time of their 50th anniversary through 157 stamp images.

But hesitate a while ... Through the British Thematic Association and editor Wendy Buckle I am aware of the opposition of the Universal Philatelic Union (UPU), and The World Numbering System (WNS) in wishing to protect the stamp collecting fraternity from a glut of stamp issues, they have determined a Code of Practice for Postal Authorities. According to the code, the issuing postal authorities shall not produce postage stamps or philatelic products that are intended to exploit customers. Features that abuse these criteria will be :

- An issue whose theme is a subject totally contrary to the culture of the issuing member country or territory, and which cannot be considered as contributing to "the dissemination of culture or to maintaining peace".

- An issue whose quantity far exceeds the acceptable limit for philatelic issues, where the number of annual issues is unrelated to the actual market capacity, whether for postal prepayment or for stamp collectors of the member country or territory concerned. (Philatelic Code of Ethics for the use of UPU member countries, UPU recommendation C 13/2016).

So I did hesitate for a while. On Wendy Buckle's suggestion I have contacted the Royal Philatelic Society London and the Smithsonian Institute "expert panels" to enquire of them whether the Marshall Islands set / series had created previous published interest. I also sought advice from the National Library of Australia 'Trove' system as to any articles about the series. I also extended the search through the South Australia Library at the suggestion of the National Library. I have not found any written evidence of interest in the issue. Most helpfully the Smithsonian's Chief Philatelist, Daniel Piazza has put me in e-mail contact with Unicover management of the time of issue. I have established a friendly bond with John Clark Helzer, the son of James A. Helzer, who master-minded the production of the series. I learnt of, and have been able to borrow from John, a copy of the 64 page coffee-table book published in 1995 by Unicover (Fig 1). I had guessed such a publication would exist – a few copies of the book are still currently available.

Subsequent to all I have learned I do not consider the set we are looking at breaches the UPU ethics. No one as far as this research goes has questioned the validity or integrity of the set. The Marshall Islands were very much involved in World War II. One might question an American bias in the choice of events and/or personalities, but this is not really apparent apart from a concentration upon General Douglas MacArthur, who was pursuing his own political aspirations before the conflict ended. The issue and individual items from it are catalogued without question and are freely available from reputable stamp dealers worldwide, and/or from Internet dealers such as eBay.

So what makes this set "The best thematic set of postage stamps EVER" in my opinion?

- My own bias towards military history on stamps.
- The series illustrates a world-history significant story told through visually compelling stamp images from beginning to end, and complements the historically exciting narratives (as seen at the 50th anniversary) of the event. I have added a commentary to each image to reflect the 2025 (80 year) perspective.
- Consistently high-quality images with the acknowledgment to the individual artists who created them.
- The integrity of the complete issue, over a seven-year period and being able to judge the significance of the events as seen by the Military Historical Panel who undertook the task of determining what were the epic events of World War II at the 50-year anniversaries of those events and now after 80 years.
- I particularly enjoy what I have called the selvedge commentary of participants in the event – an insight to how / what they felt at the time. It makes the event more alive (Fig 2).
- Gaining an insight into the initiative, disciplined creativity and expertise of James A. Helzer of the Unicover Corporation of Wyoming in creating the infrastructure to sustain his masterpiece.
- The opportunity for me to update how history views the events 80 years after the event from up-to-date analysis.
- There are three stamps issued with an anomaly, which were reprinted to correct a wrong spelling, emphasising the quality controls exercised over the seven years of issue (Fig 3).
- I have been able to present my study to the ACT Branch of the Military Historical Society of Australia to determine their enthusiasm for this study and the continuing interest in the history of the events via a PowerPoint media presentation.

The glossy book in which The Uncover Military Historical Panel discuss their choice of each of the 100 epic events, shows the World War II timeline, and includes a copy of each stamp, maps of the events and the profiles of the editorial team, and profiles of the contributing illustrators. I have determined that commercial vendors have six copies of the book priced from US\$1 to US\$100 – but do not state whether copies of the stamps are available. One vendor seeks offers for a book that does still contain the stamps. I have had a loan of a book and stamps from John Helzer, son of the man who created Uncover who acted as a project manager for the issue.

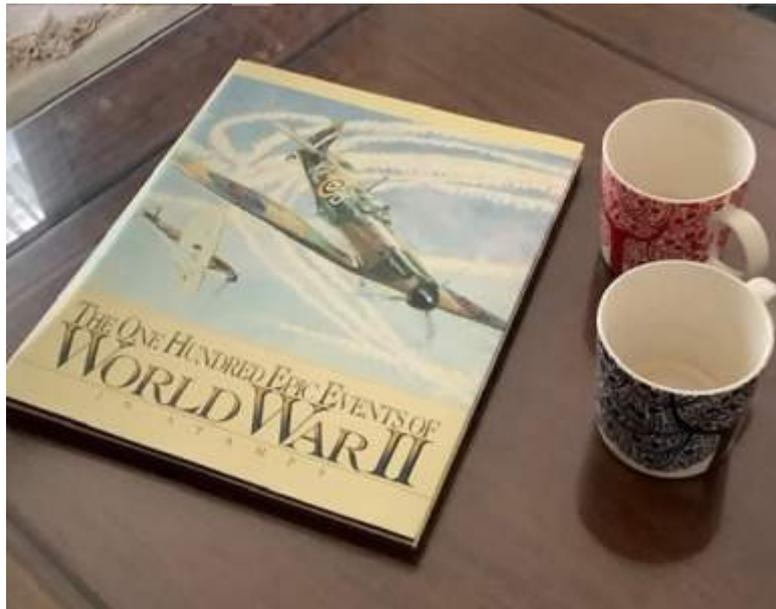


Fig 1: Uncover book accompanying the series

A specialist stamp dealer for Marshall Island stamps, Brookman Stamps of Washington, WA, are able to provide mint sets of the 157 stamps for US\$245 and sets of the 100 sheets, as issued, for US\$2,400. It's a colourful set. My favourite set. 📖



Fig 2 - caption on next page

Fig 2: W23 : Scott 282 : Marshall Islands 1991 : The German Invasion of Russia, 1941.
 Designer : David K Stone.
 Selvedge commentary : “You will regret that you attacked the Soviet Union. You will pay dearly for this yet.” - V G Dekenozov, Soviet Ambassador to Germany.
 The events are commemorated on the 50th anniversary of their occurring and therefore follow a defined timeline.



Fig 3: Marshall Islands 1991: *Japanese Attack Peal Harbour* – error in spelling of Pearl

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- Other Wars of the Twentieth Century- Stories told through postage stamps (2022)* Canberra, Cannava House Publications / Balboa Press. ISBN 978-1-9822-9594-3.
- Tanks on Stamps (2024)* Canberra, Cannava House Publications / Ingram Spark. ISBN 978-0-6486671-4-8.

NEW BOOK

Yardley, Christopher B. *The best set of thematic stamps - ever*. Cannava House, 2025, 232 pp., illus throughout.

Spoiler alert: by reading the previous article you know what the author's conclusion about the best set ever is: Republic of the Marshall Islands "One Hundred Epic Events of World War II", designed and printed by the Uncover Corporation of Cheyenne, Wyoming, on behalf of the Marshall Islands; issued between 1989 and 1995, commemorating the fifty-year anniversaries of particular events in World War II.



Of course not everyone will agree with such a subjective choice; inevitably readers will have their own interests and influences and the author is no different since his passion is military history. Perhaps a better book title might have been "The best set of thematic stamps on military history - ever".

But if you share the author's philatelic interest then this book is for you. It is packed with detailed information. Each stamp, fully illustrated, has one or more pages dedicated to it with a potted history of the events commemorated on that specific stamp. If you are writing up a collection on World War II the book is a gold mine. With the war in the Pacific the Marshall Islands became heavily embroiled in the conflict, making this series of issues very relevant to its history. But its coverage is much wider than that, from the invasion of Poland in 1939 through to the 100th issue, commemorating Victory Over Japan Day in 1945. Every aspect of each

stamp is explored, including information in the selvedge (always a useful source for thematic collectors).

You will also have seen in the previous article the author's justification for considering these legitimate issues, a judgement presumably shared by Stanley Gibbons since they are listed in *Stamps of the World*. This debate is also explored in the book. Stamp Agencies sometimes get a bad (philatelic) press for churning out stamps which will never see the light of day in the issuing countries, and the F.I.P. does not tolerate "abusive, illegal and undesirable issues" but there are clear arguments put forward in this book that these stamps do not fall into that category.

Leaving this debate aside, the book is an extremely detailed analysis of one series of stamps, undertaken after considerable research into the subject. 📖



The stamps that ended the series, SG 594-595, Victory over Japan

BTA MEETING AT STAMPEX

Anyone visiting Stampex these days will know how much smaller it is than even a few years ago. So if you do go, it's nice to have something to help fill your day, and what better than a members' meeting? On 25th October thirteen members and guests met to enjoy a display by Colin Evans on *Railway Art*. The subject was suggested to him by a friend who volunteers on the Watercress Line (a heritage railway in Hampshire) as well as being an artist himself.

Starting with perhaps the most well-known artist to have his paintings feature on stamps, Colin showed images of work by Terence Cuneo, particularly well-known for his paintings of railways, horses and military scenes. His work featured in the GB 1985 Famous Trains set, the Isle of Man 2002 Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II "Queen Elizabeth II on Imperial" and three of the Isle of Man 2004 Steam Trains set.

From there we were led through a wide range of artists: Charles Rycraft, Reg Carter, Mike Turner, Barry Friedland, Eric Bottomley, and Colin's personal favourite Don Breckon, who was influenced by Cuneo. Some frames concentrated on the artist and his range of work, while others looked at specific subject matter such as the Seven Valley, the Isle of Man and Ireland. Stamps, miniature sheets, poster stamps and postcards all featured, making for a very attractive, not to say nostalgic display, which finished with perhaps one of the best known steam engines of all: Thomas The Tank Engine.

Following this four members of the BTA each put up one sheet: Peter Wood showed railway-related items from Ireland; Andrew Millington showed six items illustrating two of the most important copper mines in the world; Grace Davies showed items on the theme of the peace movement; and John Hayward entertained us with some howlers of stamp design. Thanks to everybody for contributing. 📖



Colin and his display



Postcard of a Cuneo painting from 1948



*Stamps based on paintings
by Charles Rycraft*

ZOOMING ALONG

Barry Stagg

Lloyd Hogg. *Talk like a pirate.* 19 September

Twenty-four members and friends of the BTA were entertained and informed about the history of Pirates, also known as Privateers, Conquistadors, Buccaneers and Corsairs. Using a wide range of philatelic material Lloyd Hogg talked about some of the myths about pirates, their history and many of the characters involved.

Perhaps the biggest surprise of the talk was that there is no such thing as ‘Pirate talk’, which was an invention of the 1950s film *Treasure Island*; but history does agree that pirates with earrings and large hats did exist – shown on an appropriate Maxi card. However, buried treasure and walking the plank were inventions of the film studio! And yes, there was a ‘Pirate Code’ that was designed to keep order and prevent conflicts – nicely shown on a St Christopher Nevis Anguilla \$1 stamp. Pirate life was simple: they wanted riches, silver, gold or slaves to sell, they needed to find food, turtles being high on their menu – shown nicely on a Bermuda stamp – and they needed to find rich targets such as packet ships. In between all of this, in their spare time, they gambled and drank alcohol. Although we associate pirates with the Caribbean in the 16th to 18th centuries, they go back much further than that. Vikings are a good example. A nice mini sheet from Gibraltar showed the Mediterranean and many locations that pirates worked from.

Lloyd then turned his attention to some of the characters involved. Going back to Tudor times most of us would know of Sir Francis Drake – shown on a 5d GB stamp and on some lovely proof booklets. The Conquistadors were featured on two Maxi cards. Blackbeard, who terrorised the western world from 1716 to 1718, featured on a St. Christopher Nevis Anguilla stamp with his ship the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* being shown on a stamp from Bahamas, and a Grenada stamp showing Blackbeard in a lovely colour trial. Surprisingly there were two female pirates, Anne Bonny and Mary Read, depicted in a colour trial from Grenada. For many Caribbean pirates ‘home’ was Port Royal, Jamaica, shown on a lovely vignette from Jamaica. One of the great pirate characters was the Frenchman John Bart. A privateer and national hero he is credited with hundreds of captured ships, shown on a sunken die colour proof. Lloyd finished by showing that not all pirates were bad: *The Pirates of Penzance* were shown on a 50p GB stamp book! And *Peter Pan* has featured on a British stamp whilst *Treasure Island* came in the form of some preliminary drawings and a small proof.

A most fascinating presentation by Lloyd with some great philatelic material. If you missed it, then please find the time to watch it when it appears on our website. You will not be disappointed. 

2025:

May we wish all our readers a very happy Christmas



2026:

Now booking:

BTA WEEKEND AT OXFORD
17 19 April 2026

Full details and booking form pages 140 - 142

BTA NEWS



ZOOM SPEAKERS

We are actively seeking members to give zoom talks on their exhibits or collections in 2026, and so Lloyd would be delighted to hear from you with suggestions on sharing your thematic subject(s). No experience needed... just lots of enthusiasm and perhaps an eye for interesting and unusual philatelic items. Please send your details to lloydspencerhogg@gmail.com

NEW MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome Graham U'ren of Lanark and Jean Wang from Toronto, Canada.

And very welcome news is that the Bird Stamp Society has re-affiliated to the BTA. Affiliated clubs and organisations get printed copies of Themescene; and their members get the opportunity to attend all our Zoom meetings, plus of course they will be made very welcome should they wish to attend our meetings and residential weekend. We offer a platform for all topics and subjects, and any aspect of them may be discussed and illustrated with a diverse array of philatelic material or memorabilia.

UPCOMING ZOOM MEETINGS

09 January.	Jean Wang	<i>Covid-19 related philately. Part 1</i>
15 January.	Sue Burn.	<i>Post war civil aviation</i>
05 February.	Yami Kouri	<i>The story of Boston 2026 preparation</i>
27 March.	Jean Wang	<i>Covid-19 related philately. Part 2</i>
14 August.	Chris King.	<i>Trouble with tariffs.</i>
15 September.	Christopher Dahle	<i>The Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i>

For the full 2026 BTA Programme please see our website:

www.britishthematic.org.uk/programme-2026.htm

ASPS CONGRESS 2026

The Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies (ASPS) is holding its annual stamp and postcard fair (Congress) on Friday 10th April and Saturday 11th April 2026, at the Vine Conference Centre, Dunfermline (<https://vineconference.co.uk/visitor-information/>). Hours are: Friday 10 a.m. - 5p.m., and Saturday 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. The hosts this year are members of the Glasgow Caledonian Philatelic Society who will be sharing their displays. Philatelic dealers from across the UK will be attending and there are competitions for collectors at all levels, including the National Exhibition competition and the Alan Watson Competition. Entry forms available from Paula (secyscotphil@gmail.com). This stamp and postcard fair is open to all. See our website <https://www.scottishphilately.co.uk/>.

COMPETITIVE ENTRIES

PICTURE POSTCARDS

Guresh Mehra Poona during the days of British India Large Vermeil

Poona was a colonial military base in India during the time of the British Raj, and the postcards illustrate various aspects of life in the city, from its infrastructure through to the social life of its inhabitants.

James Dickinson Royal Mail postbuses on regional postal area Vermeil
postcards

From 1967 to 2012 the postbus service offered residents of rural communities an alternative to the declining bus and rail services in their areas. Usually running twice a day, passengers and mail would be picked up en route. The exhibit covered the history of the services, the routes and the vehicles used.

Guresh Mehra Banaras: The blend of history, spirituality and Vermeil
culture

Banaras, also known as Varanasi, has a history going back over 3,000 years, and the exhibit highlighted some of its famous sites, particularly temples, ghats, and other spiritual places.

DISPLAY ENTRIES

Fran Adams Seven Schwabians and a forgotten rake

Grace Davies The Peace Rose



This very wide range of subjects provided interesting viewing for the regular trickle of visitors visiting the frames. A single frame - 16 pages - does not give a lot of room to tell a story. Salvatore Piccone's entry "The Prayer 'Ave Maria' sung in the Sardinian language" was the most successful in achieving a story "on a narrow theme and which is suitable due to its limited subject or limited available material to development in one frame" (FIP Guidelines). However it came a narrow second to the overall winner Jan Nyeki with "Polar Bear: from King of Arctic to a symbol of climate change" which showed a stunning range of lovely philatelic material immaculately written up.

Thank you to all those who competed or displayed, we appreciate all the work you put in.

Chairman Barry Stagg presenting the BTA Cup to Jan Nyeki

BTA WEEKEND AT OXFORD

17th - 19th APRIL 2026

Hotel

We look forward to seeing you at our usual venue of voco Oxford Spires Hotel: <https://oxfordspires.vocohotels.com/> The hotel has a gym, swimming pool, spa, sauna and steam room.

We have reserved a number of accessible rooms for guests with additional needs. These rooms feature lowered sinks, visual aids and grab rails, please note there is a small step to access the shower. Please indicate on the booking form if you require one of these rooms. Parking is free during the duration of your stay provided you register your car on arrival. The hotel's location is a pleasant stroll into Oxford, along the Thames towpath which runs behind the hotel.

Programme

We are delighted to welcome three guest speakers:

Friday evening: Les Ashton-Smith, a thematic collector mainly interested in scientists, particular Leonardo da Vinci, who keeps going down collecting rabbit holes when he finds something philatelically interesting! He will present *Philatelic Firsts*, not the SG1's, but a fun journey though the first time different innovative materials, techniques, shapes, oddities and some really bizarre techniques were used on postage stamps. Smells, textures and right up to date with blockchain non fungible tokens.

Saturday: Katrin Raynor, a freelance astronomy writer and Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and the Royal Geographical Society. She is also (as far as your Editor knows) the only BTA speaker to have an asteroid named after her. Katrin will give a talk on *Exploring Astronomy and Space Through Philately*.

Sunday: Ian Shapiro, a collector and dealer in royal and historical items, and consultant to Spink Auctioneers, London. He will be displaying *Royal Household Mail* showing a range of postal history related to the Royal Family, including selected ephemera and historical documents from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II.

In addition there will be four sessions of members' displays (feel free to interpret the subjects as liberally as you like, with all types of material including postcards), and Paula Cant Stamps will be in attendance on the Saturday afternoon with a range of her stock.

Still thinking about it?

If you have been to a previous Weekend you will know how enjoyable the event is. But don't take our word for it. Feedback from the 2024 event included:

"... excellent weekend of events, ably run and most interesting variety of speakers and collections"

"I met some great people in a very friendly atmosphere ... The programme was great and the food and venue excellent"

If you have any queries at all do please contact the Weekend Organiser Anne Stammers on annies1@btopenworld.com. Anne would welcome early booking, as would the hotel, to help planning.

BTA WEEKEND AT OXFORD

Friday 17th to Sunday 19th April 2026

voco Oxford Spires Hotel

PROGRAMME

Friday

p.m.

18.00

19.30

Arrival.

Welcome, with Pimms and soft drinks.

Members' displays (6 sheets, one minute).

Dinner; followed by invited display by Les Ashton-Smith:
Philatelic firsts.

Saturday

09.00

11.00

13.00

Invited display by Katrin Raynor: *Exploring Astronomy and Space Through Philately*

Coffee.

Members' displays: 'By land, sea or air' (12 sheets).

Buffet lunch

Saturday afternoon

Paula Cant Stamps will be present with a selection of stock.

Or:

Free time for sightseeing.

16.00

Members displays: 'Latest Acquisitions' or 'Animal, vegetable or mineral' (12 sheets).

19.00

Pre-dinner drink. Plus raffle.

19.30

Dinner, followed by optional social gathering.

Sunday

09.00

Invited display by Ian Shapiro: *Royal Household Mail.*

Coffee.

11.00

Members displays: 'These are a few of my favourite things' (12 sheets).

Booking form is on the next page. At this stage we are only requesting £25 deposit. The full package covers two nights' dinner, bed and breakfast; pre-dinner drink both evenings; wine with dinner; lunch on the Saturday; teas, coffees and biscuits or pastries between the sessions.

Saturday day delegate covers lunch plus coffee break refreshments x 2.

Sunday day delegate covers coffee break refreshments x 1.

See the booking form for options of extra nights and specific meal options.

BTA WEEKEND BOOKING FORM

I wish to book:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rooms based on two people sharing | £310 per head |
| <input type="checkbox"/> With single room supplement | £365 per head |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra dinner/bed/breakfast Thursday | £107.50 per head;
[plus single room supplement £27.50] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra dinner/bed/breakfast Sunday | £107.50 per head;
[plus single room supplement £27.50] |

Or:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evening meal Friday | £65.00 per head (inc. drinks) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day delegate Saturday | £43.00 per head |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evening meal Saturday | £65.00 per head (inc. drinks) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day delegate Sunday | £15.00 per head |

Deposit

£25.00 per person (non-refundable). Or: Day delegate rate per person

Please tick as appropriate (BACS preferred due to bank charges on every cheque):

I have paid £..... by BACS. Sort code 40-03-29; account number 71157701. Please add your name and '2026 Weekend' in the 'Reference' box.

I enclose a cheque for £..... made out to BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

Please email Peter Wood and inform him when you have paid:

peter.wood95@btinternet.com

Your details

Name.....

Name of partner

Address.....

..... Post code

Telephone number (home) Mobile.....

Email.....

Tick here if you require an Accessible room

Rooms are limited so please send this form (or a copy) plus deposit, as soon as possible, to:

Mrs. A. Stammers, 40 St. Helen's Way, Benson, Wallingford, Oxon, OX10 6SW

Please do NOT book directly with the hotel. [You will be asked when you book out to pay the hotel direct for any extra rooms booked on top of the full Weekend package, but the BTA will make the booking on your behalf].



Just4Kids by Lise Whittle

www.stampactive.co.uk

Beatrix Potter

Do you like animals? What is your favourite animal stamp?

Beatrix Potter is famous for her children's books about animals, especially *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, although she wrote and illustrated many other similar books. Next year it will be 160 years since she was born.

Helen Beatrix Potter was born in 1866 and died in 1943. She was an author and illustrator, and she was a sheep farmer and nature conservationist. She was artistic, interested in animals and nature, and she enjoyed the countryside. When she was young, Beatrix and her brother Bertram kept many small animals as pets, they watched them closely and drew them. They kept mice, rabbits, a hedgehog and some bats, along with collections of butterflies and other insects. Beatrix loved her small animals, often taking them with her on long family holidays. Her first rabbit was Benjamin Bouncer, who enjoyed buttered toast and joined the Potter family on holiday in Scotland where he went for walks on a lead! Benjamin was followed by Peter Piper, who had a talent for performing tricks, and he went everywhere with Beatrix.



Beatrix was inspired by the pets she had when she was a child, and when she grew up and

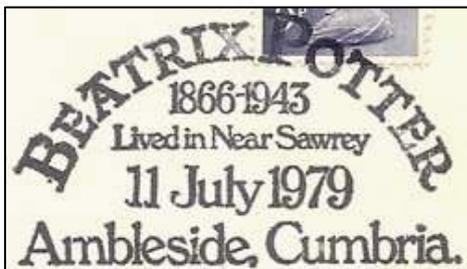
was in her thirties she wrote and illustrated a very popular children's book, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. It became so popular that she began writing and illustrating children's books full-time.

She bought several farms in England where she kept all her animals and bred sheep. When she died, she left all her farms to the National Trust. Her books continue to sell all over the world in many languages (even Latin!) with her stories being retold in songs, films, ballet, and animation, and her life story has been made into a feature film and television film - *and even shown on postage stamps!*



This set of stamps about the life of Beatrix Potter was issued in 2013. Alderney is one of the Channel Islands in the English Channel near France - can you find it on a map? It is part of the Bailiwick of Guernsey, and Guernsey Post issues Alderney postage stamps.

This set of GB stamps based on characters in Beatrix's books was issued in 2016.



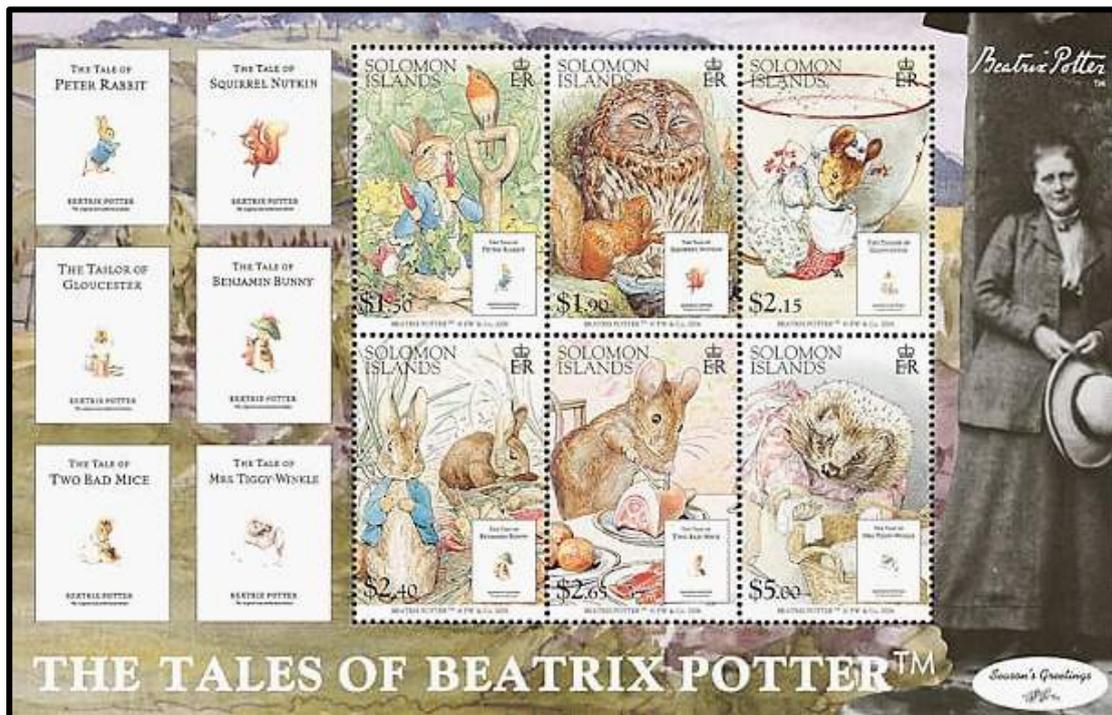
These are some Beatrix Potter postmarks which can be found on letters and covers.

Look out for Beatrix Potter coins!





The Isle of Man is in the Irish Sea between Great Britain and Ireland - can you find it on a map? This miniature sheet of stamps was issued in 2006 to celebrate 140 years since Beatrix Potter was born. It shows a photograph of her, and pages from her books and drawings.



This miniature sheet of stamps from the Solomon Islands - can you find where they are on a map? The sheet shows several of Beatrix's characters and books.

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