THEMESCENE

March 2026

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With **Les Ashton-Smith**

BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

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THEMESCENE

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THEMESCENE
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CHAIRMAN

Barry Stagg

As somebody said on the radio the other day, could somebody switch off the weather, count to ten and switch it back on again! I think we all could do with seeing some sun and seeing the back of the rain for a few weeks. But I have to say this enforced absence from the garden has meant more time to write up a few pages of the collection.

This is (usually) the time of year that holds out a lot of promise: of better weather and the hope of finding something good for the collection at one of the 2026 stamp fairs. With Virtual Stampex in early March followed quickly by the (relatively) new fair at Kempton Park on 20/21 March and ASPS at Dunfermline on April 10/11, that gets the year off to a good start. The highlight of the year for me will be the BTA Weekend away at Oxford on 17/19 April. Good speakers, good displays and good friends. Should be fun. Swinpex is a firm favourite of mine in June, and York in mid-July is a must, plus the South of England Stamp Fair at Ardingly Showground in mid-October where the BTA will have its annual one-frame competition. And finally, we have Stampex at the end of the October in London. I hope to get to most of these stamp fairs and look forward to seeing you perhaps at one of them.

I wonder if any member plans to go to the BOSTON 2026 stamp show in May this year? If so, I would be interested to hear from you. I thought it might be an idea to have a report on the show in Themescene from the perspective of a Thematic collector. A photo or two would be good. And thinking about it a bit more, perhaps a report from any of the major shows around the world would be of interest to Themescene readers too. What do you think? 🕮

Note from the Editor: I heartily endorse the request for reports, please email wendybuckle@btinternet.com

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Thank you to those members who have paid their subscription for 2026. If you have not yet done so 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.

If you have recently renewed your membership please ignore any renewal slip.

MARIE CURIE: HER LIFE AND LEGACY. PART 1

Les Ashton-Smith

Marie Curie (Figure 1) was a pioneering Polish/French scientist who discovered two new elements, won international awards and broke through society and gender prejudice. She was born Maria Skłodowska on November 7, 1867, in Warsaw, Poland, taking the name Marie during her later years in France. Her father taught mathematics and physics (both subjects which Marie was to excel in) and was the director of two Warsaw secondary schools. Her mother was a headmistress of a Warsaw boarding school for girls. She was born in a flat behind the school associated with her father's work. She had three sisters - Zofia, Bronislawa and Helena, and one brother - Josef. Marie was born at a time when Poland was ruled by the Russian Tzars, who after many Polish uprisings kept a very oppressive regime in Poland. Money worries caused her mother to start repairing shoes at home, which led to setting up a cobbler's shop in the ground floor of their house. Marie's father lost his job, and to make ends meet Marie's parents set up a small boarding school in their flat, with up to twenty people at meal times and even more students who came on a daily basis. Her sister Sophia died in 1874 from typhus. Various epidemics swept through Poland, often thought to have been brought to Poland by Napoleon's armies (crowded and dirty camps). Her mother died in 1878 from TB when Marie was ten years old. She had a bright and curious mind and excelled at school. But despite being a top student in her secondary school, Marie Curie could not attend the male-only University of Warsaw. She instead continued her education in Warsaw's "Flying or floating university", a set of underground, informal classes held in teacher homes in Polish and in secret. She both studied and taught others in Polish, again against Russian policy. Both Marie and her sister Bronya dreamed of going abroad to earn an official degree, but they lacked the financial resources to pay for more schooling. Undeterred, Marie worked out a deal with her sister: She would work to support Bronya while she was in school, and Bronya would return the favour after she completed her studies. For roughly five years, Marie worked as a tutor and a governess. She used her spare time to study, reading about physics, chemistry and mathematics.

In 1891, Marie Curie finally made her way to Paris and enrolled at the Sorbonne. She changed her name to Marie and studied Physics. She threw herself into her studies, but this dedication had a personal cost: with little money, Curie survived on buttered bread and tea, and her health sometimes suffered because of her poor diet. To cope with the cold she often had to wear every item of clothing she had. Curie completed her master's degree in physics in 1893 and earned another degree in mathematics the following year.

After earning two degrees in science from the Sorbonne, Curie returned to Poland in 1894 hoping to secure a job as a professor at Kraków University. However, she was denied because she was a woman, so she returned to Paris. Pierre was a fellow scientist at the Sorbonne, a romance developed between the brilliant pair, and they became a scientific dynamic duo who were completely devoted to one another, and within a year they were married in 1895 (Figures 2 and 3). They had been introduced by a colleague of Marie's

after she graduated from Sorbonne University; Marie had received a commission to perform a study on different types of steel and their magnetic properties and needed a lab for her work. Pierre offered to share a laboratory, little more than a "leaky shed". At first, Marie and Pierre worked on separate projects. But after Marie discovered radioactivity, Pierre put aside his own work to help her with her research.

Pierre Curie (1859 – 1906) was the son of a doctor, home-taught, with an aptitude for mathematics and geometry. When he was sixteen he earned his Bachelor of Science in mathematics. By the age of eighteen he earned his license, the equivalent of a U.S. Masters degree, in physical sciences from the Faculty of Sciences at the Sorbonne. He did not proceed immediately to a doctorate due to lack of money. Instead, he worked as a laboratory instructor. When Pierre Curie was preparing for his Bachelor of Science degree, he worked in the laboratory. In 1895, he went on to receive his doctorate at the University of Paris. The submission material for his doctorate consisted of his research on magnetism. After obtaining his doctorate, he became professor of physics and in 1900 he became professor in the faculty of sciences. He was in his own right a pioneer in crystallography, magnetism, piezoelectricity, and with Marie of course radioactivity.

Neither Pierre nor Marie wanted a religious service for their marriage and Marie shunned a normal bridal dress in favour of a dark blue outfit which would then serve her for many years as a laboratory coat. Pierre and Marie's honeymoon was a cycling trip to Brittany (Figure 4). Bicycles were all the rage in the 1890's. However, there was one interesting consequence due to the difficulties of cycling in a skirt, so special cycling clothes were designed for women, hence the creation of culottes or "blousey knickers". Women often wore straw boaters like the men.

In 1897, Marie and Pierre welcomed a daughter, Irène. The couple had a second daughter, Ève, in 1904. Together Pierre and Marie formed a formidable scientific team of knowledge, collaboration and determination.

It is important to look at the background to their scientific work. Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen, (27 March 1845 – 10 February 1923) was a German mechanical engineer and physicist, who, on 8 November 1895, produced and detected electromagnetic radiation in a wavelength range now known as X-rays or Röntgen rays, an achievement that earned him the inaugural Nobel Prize in Physics in 1901 (Figure 5). In honour of Röntgen's accomplishments, in 2004 the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) named element 111, roentgenium, a radioactive element with multiple unstable isotopes, after him. The unit of measurement roentgen was also named after him. Antoine Henri Becquerel (15 December 1852 – 25 August 1908) was a French engineer, physicist, Nobel laureate, and the first person to discover evidence of radioactivity. For work in this field he, along with Marie Skłodowska-Curie (Marie Curie) and Pierre Curie received the 1903 Nobel Prize in Physics. The SI unit for radioactivity, the becquerel (Bq), is named after him.

Fascinated with the work of Becquerel and Röntgen, Marie took their work a few very significant steps further. Curie conducted her own experiments on uranium rays and discovered that they remained constant, no matter the condition or form of the uranium. The rays, she theorized, came from the element's atomic structure. This revolutionary idea created the field of atomic physics. Curie herself invented and coined the word "radioactivity" to describe the phenomena. A common source of material for experiments was pitchblende, which is a uranium rich mineral ore. Working with pitchblende, Marie and Pierre discovered a new radioactive element in 1898. They named the element polonium, after Curie's native country of Poland. They also detected the presence of

another radioactive material in the pitchblende and called that Radium. They had both toiled for years, refining and processing literally tonnes of mineral ore, all to extract a single gram of radium, element 88. During 1898 to 1902 they released 32 scientific papers, including one finding that some diseased cells were destroyed faster than healthy ones when exposed to radium, hence creating the first potential treatment for cancer.

In 1903 Marie gained her doctorate and the couple were invited to present at the Royal Institution in London on “Radioactivity”. However, only her husband was allowed to speak! In the same year, along with her husband and Henri Becquerel she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics. Nobel Laureates present an “acceptance” lecture in Stockholm but Marie was not allowed to present so she could only watch Pierre deliver the speech, although it is generally regarded that he acknowledged completely Marie’s contributions in this address (Figure 6).

Tragically, Pierre Curie died in a street accident in Paris on 19 April 1906. Crossing the busy Rue Dauphine in the rain at the Quai de Conti, he slipped and fell under a heavy horse-drawn cart. One of the wheels ran over his head, fracturing his skull and killing him instantly. Statements made by his father and lab assistant at the time imply that Curie’s characteristic absent-minded preoccupation with his thoughts would have contributed to his death. Despite her tremendous grief, she took over his teaching post at the Sorbonne, becoming the institution’s first ever female professor.

She formed the Curie Institute and set up a fully funded dedicated laboratory, the “Curie Pavilion”. A defined measure of radioactive emissions was designated the Curie (Ci), but this has now been largely replaced by the SI-recognised unit the Becquerel (Bq). In 1910, she was denied membership of the French Academy of Sciences for the second time (the French Academy accepted their first women member in 1967!)

In 1911, Curie’s relationship with her husband's former student, Paul Langevin, became public. Curie was derided in the press for breaking up Langevin’s marriage, the negativity in part stemming from rising xenophobia in France. Also in 1911, Curie won her second Nobel Prize, this time in Chemistry, for her discovery of radium and polonium. While she received the prize alone, she shared the honour jointly with her late husband in her acceptance lecture. She was not encouraged to attend because of the public scandal but she insisted on attending and presenting at the ceremony. Only Linus Pauling (Chemistry and Peace) has equalled this double award. Also in 1911 Curie collaborated with other famous scientists, including Albert Einstein and Max Planck, to attend the first Solvay Congress in Physics and discuss the many ground-breaking discoveries in their field.

During World War I, Marie Curie recognised that wounded soldiers were best served if operated upon as soon as possible. She saw a need for field radiological centres near the front lines to assist battlefield surgeons, including to obviate amputations when in fact limbs could be saved. After a quick study of radiology, anatomy, and automotive mechanics she procured X-ray equipment, vehicles and auxiliary generators, and developed mobile radiography units, which came to be popularly known as Petites Curies (”Little Curies”) (Figure 7). She became the director of the Red Cross Radiology Service and set up France’s first military radiology centre, operational by late 1914. Assisted at first by a military doctor and her seventeen-year-old daughter Irène, Curie directed the installation of twenty mobile radiological vehicles and another 200 radiological units at field hospitals in the first year of the war. Later, she began training other women as aides. It is estimated that over a million wounded soldiers were examined and therefore correctly treated with her X-ray units. In 1915, Curie produced hollow needles containing "radium emanation", a colourless, radioactive gas given off by radium, later identified as radon,

Figure 1: Marie Curie

Figure 2: Marie and Pierre Curie

Figure 3: Marie and Pierre

Figure 4: Shared love of cycling

Figure 5: Wilhelm

Figure 6: Nobel prizewinners 1903

Figure 7: Mobile radiography unit in World War

Figure 8: One gram of radium

to be used for sterilizing infected tissue. She provided the radium from her own one-gram supply. Busy with this work, she carried out very little scientific research during that period. In spite of all her humanitarian contributions to the French war effort, Curie never received any formal recognition of it from the French government.

Marie's daughter Irène Joliot-Curie followed in her mother's footsteps, winning the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1935. Joliot-Curie shared the honour with her husband, Frédéric Joliot, for their work on the synthesis of new radioactive elements. In 1937, Ève Curie wrote the first of many biographies devoted to her famous mother, *Madame Curie*, which became a feature film a few years later.

Curie's one gram of radium was very precious to her (Figure 8). She had stayed in Paris at the start of World War I to protect it, and personally escorted it to Bordeaux for safekeeping during the war. It is estimated that the cost of producing it was over 1.3 million USD per gram in today's money! After the war the French government had appropriated her original gram of radium for doctors to undertake cancer research and she could not afford to purchase more. Curie used her celebrity to advance her research. She travelled throughout Europe, meeting and accompanying heads of states. She travelled to the United States twice - in 1921 and in 1929 - to raise funds to buy radium and to establish a radium research institute in Warsaw.

A famous socialite, Marie Meloney, galvanised the American people, particularly women, to raise money to buy radium and invited Marie to tour the USA to collect it. Marie Curie toured the USA, visited the Grand Canyon and went to the Standard Chemical Company, near Pittsburgh, which had isolated some radium for her. Scientists there spent six months on the job, using industrial-scale processes to whittle down 500 tons of ore into a gram of silvery grey powder. Their method required 500 tons of acids and other chemicals, 1,000 tons of coal, and 10,000 tons of water - work that Marie and Pierre had done by hand in the 1890s.

Marie Curie, however, did not like her celebrity status and Einstein remarked "Marie Curie is, of all celebrated beings, the only one whom fame has not corrupted"

Curie's many years working with radioactive materials took a toll on her health. She died on July 4, 1934, of aplastic anaemia - damage to bone marrow - believed to be caused in some part by prolonged exposure to radiation. Both the Curies experienced radium burns, both accidentally and voluntarily, and were exposed to extensive doses of radiation while conducting their research. They experienced radiation sickness. Had Pierre Curie not been killed as he was, it is likely that he would have eventually died of the effects of radiation. Marie was known to carry test tubes of radium around in the pocket of her lab coat. In 1995, Marie and Pierre's remains were interred in the Pantheon in Paris, the final resting place of France's greatest minds. Marie became the first and one of only six women to be laid to rest there. In 2017, the Panthéon hosted an exhibition to honour the 150th birthday of the pioneering scientist. 🕮

Part Two of this article, to be published in June 2026 Themescene, will look in more detail at Marie Curie's children, at the Nobel Prize and at her legacy.

Les Ashton-Smith, author of this article, will be one of our guest speakers at the BTA Weekend in April, see page 31.

WANT TO KNOW THE TIME? JUST LOOK TO THE SKY! PART 1

Lloyd Hogg

The first humans on earth began to tell the time crudely by observing natural phenomena in the sky, and witnessing changes in the sun, moon and stars. We know this because prehistoric cave paintings have been discovered, which according to academics, depict celestial activity.

Without wishing to state the blindingly obvious, ancient peoples saw that sunrise is early in the day, midday arrives in the middle of the day (Figure 1) and sunset falls towards day's end. Many thought that this cycle was the work of sun gods, such as Surya (in India), and Inti (in Latin America) and so built temples to worship them (Figure 2). The temple at Karnack in Egypt is aligned exactly with the point of the solstice (times and dates when the sun reaches its maximum or minimum declination, marked by longest and shortest days). P&O once had a policy of naming its ships after world landmarks, one of which was the 'Karnack' (Figure 3). Remarkably, astronomers have shown that the Sphinx and pyramids in Cairo (Figure 4) are aligned with the heavens and the gigantic stone rings of Stonehenge are also thought to be aligned with the sun at solstice (Figure 5).

In terms of the moon, the Babylonians observed that as the moon moved through its eight lunar phases, its position in the sky changed and so did time periods (Figure 6). The shape of the moon is an easily observable indicator and driver of time too. For example, full moon - known for illuminating the night sky - helps barnacle geese extend their feeding time during darkness. This explains the meaning of a rather strange painting by Utagawa Hiroshige, replicated on a Japanese miniature sheet, which shows geese diving down against the moon (Figure 7). The moon also controls tide times. Its gravity pulls Earth's oceans, creating bulges of water (high tides) on the side facing the Moon (due to gravity) and the opposite side (due to inertia), while the Earth's rotation moves landmasses through these bulges, causing the regular rise and fall of tides. Lunar day (Earth's rotation relative to the Moon) is about 24 hours and 50 minutes, so high tides occur approximately every 12 hours and 25 minutes. But ancient people believed it was in fact the bidding of a lunar goddess such as Artemis.

Stargazing was first used effectively by Greek scholars Hipparchus and Apollonius, who are believed to have invented the astrolabe. Coming from the Greek term "star holder", this early device read the position and altitude of celestial bodies, determining the time that a star rises and sets. But the most famous stargazing was undertaken by the Shepherds and the Three Wise Men, prior to the birth of Jesus. The Star of Bethlehem was not just about direction but also time. In the Bible (Matthew 2:7), King Herod asks the Three Wise Men for the time that the Star first appeared (Figure 8).

People went on to build armorial spheres to replicate the heavens and devise celestial charts. By the 6th century BCE Thales of Miletus had built the first 3-D model (celestial globes) showing the relationship between star configurations and timekeeping. Gradually celestial globes became more decorative and popular, with many of them requiring

Figure 1: Free mail from London to Cork, Ireland carried by the 'Mid Day' mail. During the period there were up to 12 mail collections per day.
Free mail was granted to four different classes: members of Parliament; peers sitting in the House of Lords; office-holders, largely as stipulated by Acts of Parliament; and archbishops and bishops sitting in the House of Lords

Figure 2: Plate proof colour trial showing Surya in Sky Chariot

Figure 3: Cuba to New York via the 'Karnack'. Paid at 10 cents rate from Latin America to the USA

Figure 4: Imperforate plate proof and airletter respectively showing the Great Sphinx and pyramids in the Valley of the Kings, Cairo

production techniques that eventually migrated to clock making. The most famous globe maker - Jost Burgi - eventually became a renowned clockmaker.

Nowadays to tell time by star gazing, first locate the 'Big Dipper' and Pole Star (Polaris) in the sky and overlay an imaginary clock face. By drawing an imaginary straight line from Polaris (at the clock's centre) to the star at the top of the Big Dipper's pan, furthest from its 'handle', time is shown at the point where the line exits the clock face.

The Babylonians divided the sky into twelve equal sections, each containing 30° of celestial longitude, calling it the zodiac; whilst the Egyptians too used twelve segments for the day but added the same for night, giving the 24-hour day, which of course is the time taken for the earth to make one rotation around the sun. The 60-second minute and 60-minute hour is a legacy also inherited from the Babylonians, who used a sexagesimal counting system to divide the daytime. This was based on the human hand, whereby four fingers (excluding the thumb) each have three segments - so twelve segments on one hand, which is then multiplied by the five fingers (including the thumb) on the other hand to give 60.

Babylonian, Roman and Aztec peoples used their observations to create calendars - systems for organizing time into days, weeks, months and years, used to track dates, plan events, and schedule activities. This helped align human schedules with natural cycles (sun, moon) and were once essential for agriculture, religion, and daily life. The naming of calendar months is attributed to the Romans, who either honoured gods (Janus, Mars, Juno), emperors (Julius Caesar, Augustus), festivals (Februa), or numerical positions (September, October, November, December). Figure 9 shows the first Aztec stone calendar.

The earliest proper celestial timekeeping device is the sundial or 'shadow clock', which shows the time of day by the position of the shadow of an object exposed to the sun's rays. The Egyptians told time by building obelisks that threw shadows onto a semi-circle marked into twelve segments at ground level located close to sun temples. Of course, to work effectively sundials need consistent full sun in sunny climates! After the victory of Octavian (later Emperor Augustus) over Cleopatra in 31 BCE, two such giant obelisks (dating to the 15th and 13th centuries BCE) were moved by ship to Rome, where they remain to this day and can be seen at Piazza del Popolo and St. John Lateran.

By the 9th century CE another device, known as a 'noctural' came into use. This determined local time based on the position of a star in the sky relative to the pole star. Since fixed stars make a full revolution around the pole star in 23 hours and 56 minutes the device could be used as an hour hand. This was particularly helpful to mariners and rural people.

Hemispherical sundials consisting of a bowl were introduced in Korea in 1438. But sundials rapidly progressed to a horizontal flat plate, with a dial, and a stick called a gnomon. As the sun moved across the sky, the gnomon's shadow fell on the dial and moved to different hour lines, indicating time. Other formats included use of a glass ball to magnify sunlight, pulpit style which could be set at an angle and folding sundials and folding (pocket) sundials.

Part Two of this article, to be published in June 2026 Themescene, will look at other early methods of telling the time and how the world moved towards the clock that we all recognize today.

Figure 5: Booklet pane advertising Castell's 'Stonehenge' paper - named after the famous monument

Figure 6: Diagram of the eight moon phases and the timing of their appearance

Figure 7: Miniature sheet of geese against new moon (Japan 1949)

Figure 8: Unique De La Rue unadopted essay for Botswana 1968 Christmas issue

Figure 9: One of the most important Mexican stamps of the 20th century (issued 1934) which shows the Aztec calendar

A BRIEF COMMENTARY ON THE TEMPLES OF ABU SIMBEL

Mike Robinson

The Great and Small Temples of Abu Simbel, both cut into sandstone and located on the banks of the River Nile in what was then Nubia, were probably built sometime during the period 1264 BCE and 1244 BCE, in the time of Ramses II, c. 1303 BCE to c. 1213 BCE, a 19th Dynasty Egyptian Pharoah (Figure 1).

The history of Nubia and Egypt is intertwined. The area, south of Egypt, that was known as Nubia and which extended from around the first cataract on the River Nile, close to the present-day city of Aswan, southward to Khartoum and including the surrounding area, is now part in Egypt and part in Northern Sudan.

Unfortunately, over the years the Temples were covered in sand and had almost disappeared before the Swiss explorer Johann Burckhardt found them during 1813 (he had previously found the City of Petra viz. 'the rose-red city half as old as time'). After the Temples had been excavated they were explored by the Egyptologist Giovanni Belzoni.

On a terrace in front of the Great Temple, stand four colossi of Ramses II, one alas decapitated by an earthquake. Small statues of members of his family stand beside his legs/feet. The Temple was dedicated to Amun-Re, the King of the Gods, Re-Harakhti, the Sun God and a deified Ramses II. It is flanked by chapels to Re-Harakhti and Thoth, the God of knowledge, writing, and the moon, although this chapel is now closed. A statute of Re-Harakhti with a sun disk on his head stands above the entrance to the Temple; the façade is topped by a frieze of sacred baboons with paws raised to greet the Sun God (Figures 2-3).

The Sanctuary is reached via two pillared halls.

There are eight pillars in the Great Hall, the first hall, each fronted by statues of Ramses II (Figure 4). The walls are decorated, often with military subjects (Figure 5) and the ceiling above the central aisle shows vultures, representing Nekhbet, the Goddess and Protector of Upper Egypt.

A whole wall is devoted to a pictorial record of the Battle of Kadesh, which took place during 1274 BCE: being a fight between the Egyptians led by Ramses II and the Hittites led by king Muwatalli. The Hittites had been threatening Egypt for several years and Ramses decided to end the threat. No clear winner emerged and had not Ramses performed heroics of valour early in the battle and rallied his forces which were falling into disarray, it could have been lost. The battle was notable for the peace treaty (the first ever) that was signed afterwards

The second, smaller hall, contains four pillars, each decorated with carvings of Ramses and various gods. The walls are decorated with scenes showing Ramses II and Nefertari. The Sanctuary is reached via a vestibule which is flanked by two small chambers which acted as storerooms.

The Sanctuary, containing seated statues of a headless Ptah, a Creator God, Amun-Re, a deified Ramses II and Re-Harakhti (Figure 6) is notable for the so-called, 'sun miracle', when, twice a year, the rising sun aligns perfectly to illuminate the statues in the Sanctuary, while leaving Ptah, who is also known as the God of Darkness, in shadow.

Figure 1: One of the colossi of Ramses II at the Great Temple at Abu Simbel and a miniature of Queen Nefertari, the favourite queen of Ramses II

Figures 2 - 3: Great Temple of Abu Simbel

Figure 4: Statues of Rameses II in the Great Hall

Figure 6: Photograph of The Sanctuary

Figure 5: Rameses II in war chariot

Figure 7: Facade of the Small Temple

Figure 8: Hathor showing her cow face

Figure 9: Nefertari being crowned by Hathor and Isis

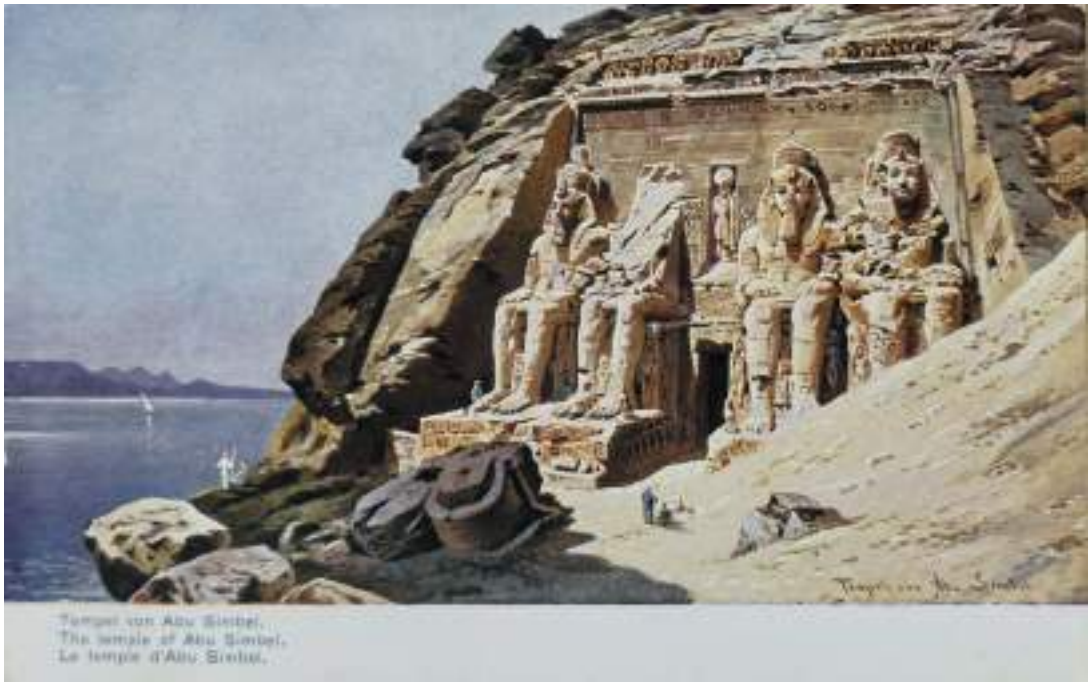


Figure 10: Postcard showing the proximity of the Great Temple to the River Nile before the Aswan High Dam was built: the Small Temple, also cut into sandstone, was nearby

The Small Temple was dedicated to Hathor, goddess of love, beauty and motherhood, sometimes depicted as a cow, and Queen Nefertari. The façade of the Temple is fronted by four statues of Ramses II and two statues of Nefertari. Interestingly, the statues are of equal height: showing the Pharoah and his Queen as being of equal status. Usually, the statue of a Pharoah would be taller than those of a consort (Figure 7).

The Temple contains a pillared hall, vestibule and sanctuary. The pillars (in the pillared hall) show the face of Hathor (Figure 8). Wall decorations include Nefertari being crowned by Hathor and Isis, the great mother goddess, sister and wife of Osiris, mother of Horus and mistress of magic (Figure 9), each holding an ankh in the form of a looped cross, representing life.

In a niche in the Sanctuary there is a statue of Hathor as a cow, with Ramses II under her chin, flanked by two Hathor pillars.

According to Jocelyn Gohary, in a Guide to the Nubian Monuments on Lake Nasser, the style of art in the Small Temple has a different quality to that of the Great Temple; it has altogether a more gentle, feminine aspect, in contrast to the vigour and power of the other. Flowers are frequently shown being offered to the various deities.

Peace and tranquility were shattered when, because of the planned construction of the Aswan High Dam, it was realised that the area to be flooded contained many Nubian monuments of cultural importance, including the Temples of Abu Simbel (Figure 10).

During early 1960, and with a view to rescuing some of these monuments, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) initiated a worldwide appeal. Many countries offered help: some financial, some practical. The doomed area was divided into ‘concessions’ or ‘areas of responsibility’: each to be adopted separately. Each monument would be carefully examined with a view to determining the realistic possibility of moving it, lock, stock and barrel, to a place of safety away from the rising waters, a massive undertaking.

Twenty two countries participated in the campaign: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany (both East and West), Ghana, Hungary, India, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the Soviet Union, the United Arab Republic (now Egypt) and Yugoslavia.

A philatelic project was launched by postal authorities, initially the United Arab Republic (UAR), followed by around fifty more countries, to both raise funds for and publicise the campaign. Some of the stamps issued are shown here.

During the period 1964 to 1968, the Temples of Abu Simbel were dismantled (cut into blocks) and moved inland: great care being taken to reassemble the Temples with an unchanged alignment and maintaining a similar distance between them. At one point it became necessary to erect a protective barrier as the Temples were being dismantled to protect them against the rising water level.

Monuments that were moved in addition to the Temples of Abu Simbel included the Temple of Kalabsha, the Temple of Beit al-Wali, the Temple of Wadi al-Sebua, the Temple of Dakka, the Temple of Amada, the Philae Temple Complex and Trajan’s Kiosk.

A few monuments were sent abroad in recognition of assistance provided by individual countries in completing the project, viz. the Temple of Dabod (now in Madrid), the Temple of Taffa (now in Leiden), the Temple of Al-Lesiya (now in Turin), the Ptolemaic Gateway from Kalabsha (now in Berlin) and the Temple of Dendur (now in New York).

With peace and tranquillity now restored, the Temples of Abu Simbel are once again favoured tourist destinations. 🕮

THE BRITISH AVIATOR AND YACHTSMAN FRANCIS CHICHESTER (LATER KNIGHTED)

David Walker

I was eleven years old in 1967 when Francis Chichester received a tumultuous welcome home at Plymouth after returning from his solo voyage around the world in his Gipsy Moth IV yacht. I vaguely recall watching his arrival on our then black and white TV but not really appreciating at that age his achievement. It is only recently that I have been reading his autobiography and other books devoted to his aviation and yachting adventures during his eventful life and prompted start a thematic collection.

Figure 1. One of the covers purchased fortuitously included some high quality, likely press photos, of his arrival back at Plymouth, showing the boats and plane accompanying his arrival. His yacht is seen left of the lighthouse. Also see Figure 22 and ephemera associated with his completing the voyage Figure 23.

Royal Mail issued a stamp to celebrate his voyage and broke convention by depicting a living commoner (Figure 2). The value of 1s. 9d. was chosen because it was the basic air mail cost at the time for posting a letter to countries such as Australia. Chichester made one stop in Sydney and resumed his journey some weeks later after yacht repairs. His wife Sheila had travelled by sea to meet him and helped with restocking. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II using the same sword with which Elizabeth I knighted Francis Drake.

A number of private presentation packs were also issued (Figures 3-7). A selection of first day covers issued are shown including one signed (Figures. 8-12). Chichester also featured on a GB stamp in their 'Extreme Endeavours' 2003 issue of six stamps (Figure 13). The other five were Amy Johnson, Edmund Hilary with Sherpa Tensing, Freya Stark, Ernest Shackleton and Robert Falcon Scott.

Qatar in their 'Famous Navigators' 1967 issue of six stamps featured Chichester (Figure 14). The other five were Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Sir Francis Drake, Ferdinand Magellan and a Viking ship – esteemed company!

Although the yacht was custom built for the voyage Chichester faced a variety of problems, including its design for ease of single handed sailing, and equipment problems on the voyage. Notably the self-steering gear failed but he managed a workaround. One sponsor was the International Wool Secretariat; the Woolmark logo replaced the traditional clipper figurehead on his yacht. The IWS used him and his vessel as a testbed for custom clothing, boots and wear of a fitted Wilton carpet! Their performance was later

analysed. He returned from Australia with some miniature bales of fine wool to mimic a typical clipper cargo which was later spun into a suit for the Duke of Edinburgh, a keen sailor. Another sponsor was Whitbread and a keg of beer was installed.

For many years the yacht was exhibited next to the clipper ship Cutty Sark (Figure 15). His voyage was inspired by the clipper voyages and followed a similar route into the Roaring Forties, achieving his aim to be faster than their average time. The yacht's deterioration was halted, and after a major renovation in 2005 by the original builders it has repeated his voyage with disadvantaged crew and remains in use.

Palau in 1996 issued an attractive stamp sheet (Figure 16). The stamp depicts his circumnavigation of the world but the uncredited painting on the sheet depicts a much earlier aviation adventure. Chichester left the UK in 1919 aged eighteen with £10 from his rector father and emigrated to New Zealand. After various jobs including gold panning, he became a successful businessman in a number of concerns. Returning to the UK in 1929, a wealthy man, he learnt to fly. Despite admitting to being "hopelessly bad" and building up only limited flight hours he purchased a Gipsy Moth biplane and flew back to Australia in multiple hops.

He converted the biplane into a seaplane by adding borrowed floats in order to be the first to fly East - West across the Tasman Sea from New Zealand to Australia in 1931. This was a daunting challenge, requiring pinpoint navigation to land and refuel on two intermediate islands, Norfolk and Lord Howe Island. The anchored plane capsized in a gale on Lord Howe Island and was rebuilt there with the help of islanders and spares shipped on the regular supply ship to the island. Norfolk Island issued two stamps featuring his biplane in 1974 and 1980 (Figures 17-18). The 50th anniversary of this flight in 1981 prompted an Australian cover (Figure 19) and postcard carried by two pilots recreating the flight in a modern monoplane (Figures 20-21).

Chichester later started a round the world flight in the same plane from Australia but crashed in Japan when he flew into cables. He was seriously injured and spent some time recuperating.

Only ventures related to the stamps are dipped into here; he had a life full of adventures with a number of books published devoted to each (see his Wikipedia entry). His 1964 autobiography also summarises these but predates his round the world voyage in Gipsy Moth IV and written up separately.

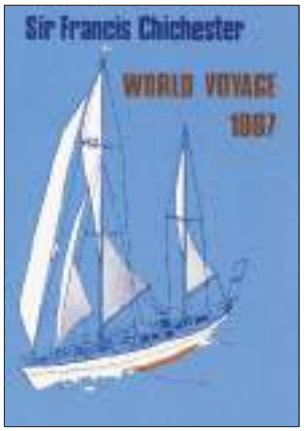
Other achievements include winning the first transatlantic solo yacht race with Gipsy Moth III in 1960. In 1971 he sailed from Guinea-Bissau to Nicaragua in Gipsy Moth V with the aim of covering 4000 miles in twenty days which he missed by just two days. He participated in the 1972 transatlantic solo yacht race but had to drop out because of illness and died of cancer in August 1972. He had previously recovered from lung disease in 1958 with the help of his devoted wife, declining an operation.

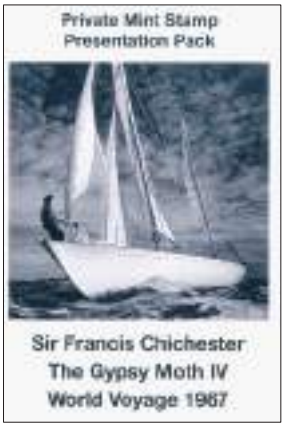
A dustcover flap in his last book eloquently summarises his life:

"There is in Sir Francis Chichester a restless spirit never satisfied with his achievements. Throughout his adventurous life this quiet Englishman has sought to challenge odds that other, younger, stronger men have declared insuperable."

The Romantic Challenge, pub. Cassell & Co., 1971. 🕮

Figure 2: GB 1967





Figures 3 - 5: cropped / reduced size flaps from GB 1967 private presentation packs for stamp in Figure 2.

Figures. 6-7 above, the reduced backs of two GB 1967 private presentation packs. Painting by Peter Macdonagh Wood. Figures. 8-11 below. GB 1967 FDC crops / reductions of artwork.

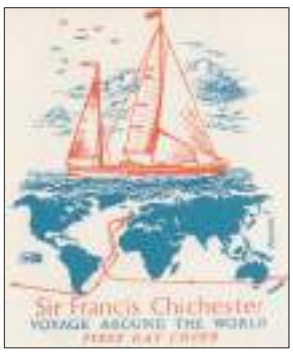


Figure 12: GB 1967 signed FDC.

Figure 13: GB 2003

Figure 14: Qatar 1967

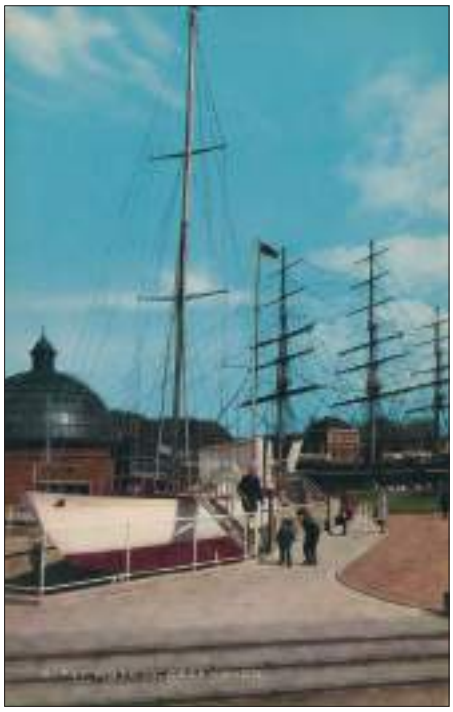


Figure 15: J. Salmon Ltd postcard 1-42-03-07. 'Gipsy Moth IV in Greenwich'

Figure 16: Palau stamp sheet 1996. Sheet painting depicts his East-West flight across the Tasman Sea from New Zealand to Australia in a two island hop. The plane registration number for the UK to Australia flight was G-AAKK. It was later shipped by sea to New Zealand. When converted there to a seaplane for the flight across the Tasman Sea it was reassigned ZK-AKK. So as the stamp sheet painting shows the plane as a seaplane (i.e. with floats) it is depicted with the incorrect registration.

Figure 17: Norfolk Island 1974

Figure 18: Norfolk Island 1980

Figure 19: Australian FDC 1981 with preprinted portrait stamp of Chichester with the Norfolk Island stamp. The postmark shows the two island hop across the Tasman sea (Norfolk Island and Lord Howe Island).

Figures 20 - 21: Postcard celebrating a recreation of Chichester's single engine plane flight by two pilots flying over Norfolk Island 50 years later in 1981. The card is labelled 'Carried on Flight'. The island is ca. 5 x 3 miles.
Card issued by Norfolk Colour Reproductions.

Figure 22: Press photos were also sourced.

Figure 23: Various Chichester ephemera are also available to support a collection. He featured on the cover of Life magazine, June 9th 1967 issue with an extensive full colour article.
The memento upper right was issued by Football Monthly. The middle one was issued by The Times newspaper and available for purchase at the celebration of his achievement held at St. Katherine's Dock (this was the source of the sponsorship notes).

MISTAKES IN PICTURE POSTCARD PUBLISHERS' VIEWS OF COLONIAL INDIA

Sushil Mehra

Picture Postcard publishers could sometimes make mistakes in publishing picture postcards. These were not printing errors as in stamps but rather mistakes due to poor understanding of Indian culture, history and geography by publishers. In philately we use the term errors, but in picture postcard collecting we cannot call them errors but rather 'publisher mistakes'.

Figure 1 is fine example of how card publishers made mistakes as places in British India and French India looked similar. It shows a market outside a temple. It is titled Pondicherry which was the capital of French India. But it is actually a temple market outside Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple, Srirangam near Tiruchinapalli, which was a part of Madras Presidency, British India.

Figure 2 shows a flower seller. This card published by Raphael Tuck & Sons was one of their Oilette Wide Wide World Series 'Life in India' Card No 7500. This is a classic example of how card publishers used to sometimes give wrong information due to their confused understanding of Afro-Asian culture. On the back of the card, the publisher writes, "The Dutt Tribe among the Moors are great vendors of Flowers". This is confusing as the Dutt Tribe indeed sold flowers in East India, and the other cards in this Tuck series very much showed India. But this painting by an unknown painter shows North African Moors and not Indians.

Figure 3 is an example of a wrong description by the publisher. The card says "Un Fakir dresseur des singes" i.e. 'A Fakir who trains monkeys'. Fakirs could beg for alms but were certainly not entertainers with animals. Animal Entertainers were Madaris.

Figure 4 demonstrates a similar misunderstanding about Fakirs. It shows priests performing ritualistic last rites of the dead on the banks of Ganga in Benaras. The reverse description wrongly describes the priest as a Fakir. This is incorrect as a Fakir is one who begs for Alms. A priest performing last rites can never be termed as a Fakir in India.

The reasons picture postcard publishers made these errors were multifold, namely:-

1) The pictures were often drawn / prepared by a different person compared to the copywriter in the publishing house who wrote the text. The communication gap sometimes led to the copywriter have a poor grasp of what exactly was being shown.

2) India had a complex ethno-religious character during the early 20th century which was difficult to grasp for Europeans.

3) Terms to describe people in one religion or region could mean something entirely different in another religion or region.

All of this demonstrates the care which needs to be taken by collectors before accepting the information found on the card. 🕮

Figure 1: Pondicherry. Undivided back. Collotpe, unknown publisher. Card No 350

Figure 2: Récolte des Roses. Coloured halftone. Raphael Tuck & Sons. Oilette Wide Wide World Series 'Life in India' Card No 7500.

Figure 3: "Indes Anglaises: Un Fakir dresseur des singes". Collotype. Unknown publisher. Card No 34. Undivided Back. Used in 1910

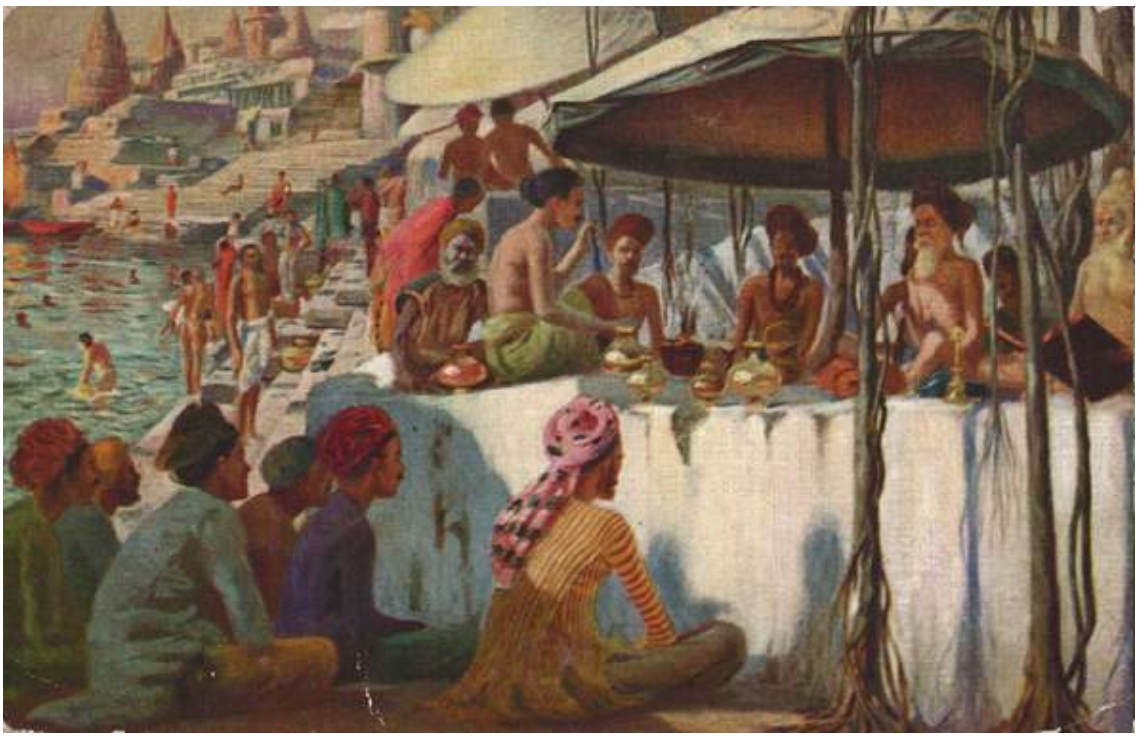


Figure 4: Coloured halftone on textured card stock. Publisher: I. Lapima Imp Edit, Paris. Artist: A. Druet. Card no 106.

A SCOREBOARD OF DESTRUCTION

Chris Yardley

During the research for my book "Other Wars of the 20th Century" (ref 1) I was able to trace the propaganda of North Vietnam and its South Vietnam ally, the Viet Cong. This was a war in which Great Britain was not directly involved and I was struck by the starkness of the sustained reporting of the travails the United States experienced during the conflict.

> "At the heart of the conflict was the desire of North Vietnam, which had defeated the French colonial administration of Vietnam in 1954, to unify the entire country under a single communist regime modelled after those of the Soviet Union and China. The South Vietnamese government, on the other hand, fought to preserve a Vietnam more closely aligned with the West. U.S. military advisers, present in small numbers throughout the 1950s, were introduced on a large scale beginning in 1961, and active combat units were introduced in 1965. By 1969 more than 500,000 U.S. military personnel were stationed in Vietnam. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union and China poured weapons, supplies, and advisers into the North, which in turn provided support, political direction, and regular combat troops for the campaign in the South" (ref 2).

1965:
500 craft

1966:
1,000 craft

1966:
1,500 craft

1967:
"Female soldiers"
2,000 craft

1967 : 2,500 craft

1968 : 3,000 craft

1972:
"American POW"
3,500 craft

1972: 4,000 craft

1973: "Victory over U S Air Force"3,500 craft

North Vietnam stamp issues 1965 – 1973 :
Totals of U S aircraft brought down over North Vietnam.

Perhaps the North Vietnam stamps followed the Early Viet Cong issue shown below :

Viet Cong 1965: Ten U S 'Planes shot down and the 1st anniversary of the death of Nguyễn Văn Trỗi.

Nguyễn Văn Trỗi (1940 – 1964) was a Việt Cộng (National Liberation Front) Patriot. He gained notoriety after being captured by South Vietnamese forces while trying to assassinate United States Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara and future ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. who were visiting South Vietnam in May 1964.

Are these figures exaggerated to be used as propaganda? It would appear not. I quote below from Wikipedia.

"American aircraft losses – a modern assessment:

During the Vietnam War, thousands of U.S. aircraft were lost to antiaircraft artillery (AAA), surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), and fighter interceptors (MiG)s. The great majority of U.S. combat losses in all areas of Southeast Asia were to AAA. The Royal Australian Air Force also flew combat and airlift missions in South Vietnam, as did the Republic of Vietnam. Among fixed-wing aircraft, more F-4 Phantoms were lost than any other type in service with any nation.

The United States lost 578 UAVs (554 over Vietnam and 24 over China).

There were about 11,835 U.S helicopters that served in the Vietnam War. The U.S records showing 5,607 helicopter losses.

In total, the United States military lost in Vietnam almost 10,000 aircraft, helicopters and UAVs (3,744 planes, 5,607 helicopters and 578 UAVs)" (ref 3)

Continued on page 30

BTA PROGRAMME 2026

27 March 19.00 for 19.30	**Zoom meeting** Jean Wang *Covid-19 related philately. Part 2* Machine cancels, pictorial postmarks, postal stationery, pandemic-related postal history.
17 - 19 April	**BTA Weekend at Oxford.**
13 June	**Annual General Meeting** *Guest speaker to be announced* To be held as part of Swinpex 2026 The Grange Leisure and Community Centre, Stratton St. Margaret, Swindon, SN3 4JY
02 July 190,19.30	**Zoom meeting** Estelle Shale Roman military equipment The Roman army existed in the West for over a thousand years and fulfilled a huge range of tasks beyond conquest. This talk will concentrate on the equipment of the early Imperial army. This is the time of the invasion of Britain and the events in the New Testament. The focus will be on what the ordinary legionaries and auxiliaries wore and carried as depicted on philatelic material, some postcards and a little postally related ephemera. Let us admit in advance that historical accuracy has not always been given much emphasis!
14 August 19.00 for 19.30	**Zoom meeting** Chris King *Trouble with Tariffs* A postcard display suggesting that you should beware what you wish for. Joseph Chamberlain's 1903 tariff reform campaign challenged free trade, promoting imperial unity through protective tariffs. Fierce opposition warned of higher food costs and political division. The 1906 Liberal landslide ushered in reform, culminating in the 1911 Parliament Act. Chamberlain's efforts ultimately reshaped Britain's political landscape before World War I, but not as he intended.
15 September 19.00 for 19.30	**Zoom meeting** Christopher Dahle *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: origins, development and ramifications.* Between 1989 and 1993, the UN Philatelic Administration released a series of stamps and labels in blocks of six for each of 30 Articles of the UDHR. The labels show the text of each Article in three languages. The intent is to showcase this series, plus some history and the consequences of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

BTA PROGRAMME 2026

10 October 10.00 - 16.00	BTA One-Frame Competitions *At* South of England Stamp Fair & Sussex Convention Ardingly Showground, RH17 6TL. *To be confirmed*
16 October 19.00 for 19.30	**Zoom meeting** Jean Wang *Blood: a modern medicine. Part 1* Examples of diverse philatelic material to include in a thematic collection about blood.
13 November 19.00 for 19.30	**Zoom meeting** Jean Wang *Blood: a modern medicine. Part 2* Using postal aspects of philatelic material to tell a story in thematics.

BTA NEWS

VISIT TO LANCASTER ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

In December BTA Chairman Barry Stagg visited Lancaster Royal Grammar School to undertake two commitments. First he met the members of their stamp club to congratulate them on their entries in this year's BTA one page virtual competition. With the encouragement of their teacher Andrew Talks they had submitted ten entries. To recognise the hard work that had gone into preparing these Barry was pleased to present the club with a copy of the book *Foundations of Thematic Philately* by Lucinio Perez Heres. He followed this up with a talk to the History Department on the history of parachuting, illustrated with philatelic materials.

Barry, Andrew and presentation

The stamp club and the speaker

ZOOMING ALONG

Barry Stagg and Lloyd Hogg

Les Ashton-Smith. *Albert Einstein.* 11 November

Using some wonderful material, both philatelic and non-philatelic, Les Ashton-Smith entertained 27 members and guests of the BTA for 40 minutes talking about the life and achievements of Albert Einstein.

Born in Ulm (in modern day Germany) in 1879 the young Einstein showed an interest in electricity and magnetic fields. Swedish stamps and a Helvetia cover showed his interest in these topics. Einstein graduated in 1900 and joined the Patent Office shortly afterwards, working there from 1902 until 1909. In 1905 he developed his Theory of Special Relativity, and Les showed several stamps that celebrated this event: from Switzerland, Taiwan, Mexico and Germany, plus many more. By 1914 Einstein was divorced from his first wife, Mileva, and working at Humboldt University; both were shown on stamps. He developed his theory of General Relativity in 1915 and both Italy and Hungary have issued stamps to celebrate this event.

In 1922 Einstein won the Noble Prize for Physics, with stamps from Sweden and Grenada to name but two countries that have celebrated this event. In 1939 Einstein wrote to Franklin Roosevelt expressing his concern that Germany was trying to develop an atomic bomb. This was marked with stamp issues in 2005 and 2007 by Liberia and Guinea respectively. Einstein travelled a lot on his bicycle, and this fact was remembered by stamps issued by Angola and Guinea Bissau depicting Einstein on a bicycle.

Les went on to show many stamps, mini sheets and covers depicting Einstein's legacy, issued after he died in 1955. He showed stamps from USA, Israel, France, Nicaragua, Poland, Turkey, Mexico – this list goes on. Not only did Les deliver a superb philatelic history lesson on Einstein with some interesting and colourful material, but his knowledge of the subject was clear to everybody.

Jean Wang. *Covid-19 related philately. Part 1*. 09 January

A total of 26 BTA members were treated to a wonderful presentation by Jean Wang. It was full of colourful stamps with Covid-related messages, showing the progress of Covid around the world and the measures put in place to combat its spread.

I was amazed to learn that over 100 countries had issued Covid-related stamps, and many had issued a wide variety of other Covid-related philatelic items as well, such as slogan cancels and aerogrammes. The honour of issuing the first Covid stamp was Iran on the 18th March 2020, just seven days after the 'official' start of the Pandemic. The first Covid-19 charity stamp came out from the Swiss with all money going to charities, with the cost of the stamp being paid for by SwissPost.

Many countries tried to depict social distancing on their stamps. French Polynesia had two ladies talking on a park bench, separated by six coconuts! Poland and many other countries issued stamps to support vaccinations, and Indonesia issued a stamp that under UV light showed a representation of the Covid-19 virus. Slogans were used a lot on cancelled mail. Slogans such as 'keep your distance' and 'wash your hands' were popular.

Jean delivered this presentation with great style and clearly a lot of research went into the talk. I would encourage you to watch it if you missed it the first time around. Thank you Jean for a very memorable presentation – and those six coconuts will be a lasting memory.

ZOOMING ALONG

Barry Stagg and Lloyd Hogg

Sue Burn. *Post war civil aviation* 15 January

Seventeen members and guests had the great pleasure of hearing Sue Burn's eloquent talk on aviation after the Second World War. There was some initial turbulence as Sue's internet connection faltered at the hotel where she was staying for the York Stamp Fair, but after a brief intermission things really took off and we were treated to a smooth flight through the development and challenges for aircraft operations after 1945. The story was both fascinating and surprising as Sue explained that the British were keen to ensure communications throughout the Empire, but faced shortage of aircraft, prevalence of red tape from government departments and difficulties in fulfilling some airmail routes. It had not crossed my mind (although it should have done) just how much work was needed to repair the damage caused by the war and reinstate the infrastructure to facilitate a resurgence of commercial aviation. Many other interesting issues were raised like the way in which aerogrammes reduced mail volume; Japan had to use stamps of other countries, due to its protracted surrender; and some other countries mail was carried outside of post office contracts. An impressive range of material was shown, and I think it's fair to say that we were all particularly impressed by certificates, menus, invitation cards and tickets which provided informative context and brought the story to life.

A SCOREBOARD OF DESTRUCTION *continued from page 26*

I am still surprised to realise that the numbers of U S aircraft losses during the Vietnam War have not been inflated to provide false information. There is an apparent gap, however in the update of downed planes during 1968 and 1972. Perhaps the figures were not as good. During this time Nation Building and confirmation of the state of the war was confirmed by more general issues including:

1968 Victorious Winter and Spring Offensive of the 1966-1967 National Liberation Front of South Vietnam FNL

1969 Victories of the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam

1969 Victorious Spring Offensive in 1968 of the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam

1970 The 1st Anniversary of National Liberation Front Provisional Government in South Vietnam

1970 The 10th Anniversary of National Front for Liberation of South Vietnam

1971 Victories of Liberation Army

References

(1) Yardley, c. B. (2022) *Other Wars of the 20th Century – stories told through postage stamps*. Balboa Press. ISBN 978-1-9822-9594-3.

(2) Vietnam War. Britannica https://www.britannica.com/event/Vietnam-War

(3) Wikipedia. List of aircraft losses in the Vietnam War https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_aircraft_losses_of_the_Vietnam_War

(4) Stampworld on-line catalogue. https://www.stampworld.com/en/

BTA WEEKEND AT OXFORD
17th - 19th APRIL 2026

It's not too late to book! This will be our seventh residential weekend, and those who have been before know how successful they have always been. As ever the event will be a mix of top-quality guest speakers and displays by attendees. Our speakers promise a range of material from the historical to the futuristic, possibly even a piece of a meteorite. Details are:
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.

But that's only half the programme. Attendees are warmly invited to bring along pages from their own collections. Suggestions for topics are on the next page, feel free to interpret these as widely as you like. It's all very informal, a chance to share your interests with others. There is no obligation to display, it's your choice, but it is the opportunity to show to like-minded collectors.
Then there will be the chance to search for new items for your collection: on the Saturday afternoon Paula Cant Stamps will be in attendance with a range of her stock.

The whole event is friendly, relaxed … and all about collecting. What's not to like?

Hotel
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, 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.

If you have any queries at all do please contact the Weekend Organiser Anne Stammers on annies1@btopenworld.com.

BTA WEEKEND AT OXFORD

Friday 17th to Sunday 19th April 2026

voco Oxford Spires Hotel

PROGRAMME

Friday	
p.m.	Arrival.
18.00	Welcome, with Pimms and soft drinks. Members' displays (6 sheets, one minute).
19.30	Dinner; followed by invited display by Les Ashton-Smith: *Philatelic firsts.*
Saturday	
09.00	Invited display by Katrin Raynor: *Exploring Astronomy and Space Through Philately* Coffee.
11.00	Members' displays: 'By land, sea or air' (12 sheets).
13.00	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:

[ ] Rooms based on two people sharing	£310 per head
[ ] With single room supplement	£365 per head
[ ] Extra dinner/bed/breakfast Thursday	£107.50 per head; [plus single room supplement £27.50]
[ ] Extra dinner/bed/breakfast Sunday	£107.50 per head; [plus single room supplement £27.50]

Or:

[ ] Evening meal Friday	£65.00 per head (inc. drinks)
[ ] Day delegate Saturday	£43.00 per head
[ ] Evening meal Saturday	£65.00 per head (inc. drinks)
[ ] 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, 0X10 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 - the Website for Young Collectors

20 Years of Just4Kids!

Just4Kids started in Themescene in March 2006. Let's have a look back at some of the pages over the last 20 years.

2006 March Introduction to Kids Page
June Amazing Stamps – Stamp Biscuits
September Arthur's Stamps
December Christmas

2007 March The Golden Oriole
June Perforations
September Poems about Pets
December The Royal Family

2008 March Joking!
June Anyone for Tennis?
September Kenny the Kingfisher
December Christmas

2009 March Collecting A-Z
June Numbers – Are You A Number Cruncher?
September How To Get Free Stamps
December Collecting Postmarks

2010 March Stamp Active CD
June Wild West Weekend – Yee Har!
September Sir Roland Hill
December Christmas Poem

2011 March	Around The World In Sport
June	A & B Sheets
September	The Sound Of Music
December	Competitions – Sesame Street and Birds
2012 March	Planet Stamp Website
June	The Right Royal Family (Queen's Diamond Jubilee)
September	Animal Stamp Collectors / Stamp Active Sports Album
December	Walt Disney & Mickey Mouse
2013 March	Stamp Quiz
June	U R Jo King!
September	Anyone For Tennis (competition entry)
December	Stamp Active & Kidstamps Website
2014 March	British Thematic Association
June	30th Anniversary
September	Edward Lear
December	The Commonwealth Games
	The Stamps in Schools Project
2015 March	Postcards – Are You A Deltiologist???
June	Chess – Make Your Own Chess Set
September	Brilliant Birds
December	Rocketing Into Space
2016 March	Around The World
June	O I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside
September	All Creatures Great And Small
December	– Stamp Album
	Curling – Winter Sport
2017 March	'My Favourite Things' Competition
June	I-Spy My Favourite Tree
September	All Aboard The Trains
December	Under The Sea
2018 March	Our Truly Super Moon
June	'My Favourite Things' Competition
September	What Is StampIT?
December	Christmas Postboxes

2019 March	Feed The Birds – Make A Bird Feeder
June	Incredible Insects
September	Musical Moments
December	‘My Favourite Things’ Competition
2020 March	London 2020
June	Family Quiz
September	Write A Letter In Stamps
December	‘Favourite Things’ Competition
2021 March	Puppy Training Class
June	Sammy The Swallow
September	The Olympic and Paralympic Games
December	*(no article – no space in the magazine)*
2022 March	The Year Of The Tiger
June	Herbie The Hedgehog
September	The Commonwealth Games
December	2022 Birmingham
	Stamp Calendar – Months Of The Year
2023 March	Around The World In 80 Days
June	The Coronation Of King Charles lll
September	What’s The Buzz – All About Bees
December	*(no article)*
2024 March	The 2024 Paris Olympics
June	*(no article – no space in the magazine)*
September	Campfire Singalong
December	Film Quiz
2025 March	‘Brilliant Britain’ Competition
June	Cooking – Cereal Bar Recipe
September	*(no article – no space in magazine)*
December	Beatrix Potter

Tell us about your favourite stamps. *To receive a FREE Stamp Active album and stamps (children only), write to us and tell us about your favourite animals and stamps. Just4Kids,c/o The Editor, Themescene, 87 Victoria Road, Bournemouth BH1 4RS.*

2025 EUROPA STAMPS COMPETITION

The theme for 2025 was National Archaeological Discoveries

Results were obtained from judging by the general public via the EUROPA Stamps website (16,814 votes), votes from issuing postal authorities (48 votes), and votes from the expert jury (13 participants). The points from all three panels were combined to determine the three winning stamps.

Winner

Second

Third

And a selection of the rest:

Full details are available on the Europa website https://europastamps.eu/collection