

THEMESCENE

June 2026

In this issue we:

Revisit our very successful Weekend

Finish the story of a remarkable family

Marie Curie: her life and legacy

With Les Ashton-Smith



Tell the time with (old) gadgets

Want to know the time? Part 2

With Lloyd Hogg



Review some military history

Tanks on stamps

With Chris Yardley



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THEMEScene

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EDITORIAL

Wendy Buckle

The 2026 BTA Residential Weekend has come and gone, and I know from comments and feedback received just how much everyone enjoyed it. No surprises there, it was the seventh such event, held every two years since 2012 (barring 2020, cancelled because of covid), and it always receives very positive endorsement from attendees. “First-timers” never retain that label, they have all returned to the event. The report of the event on page 39 will give you some flavour of the programme, but I suspect what most people remember is the social side, a chance to relax with like-minded individuals in a convivial setting.

But the calendar moves on, and our next event is nearly here. Our annual general meeting will be held on 13th June at our usual venue as part of Swinpex. Agenda and annual accounts are on pages 59-60. Regular attendees will know the formal part of the meeting is not a protracted affair (I think 25 minutes is about average!), and will be followed by a talk and display by guest speaker Barbara Borlase-Hendry on *Mining in Cornwall*.

Another regular event is our award each year of the Franceska Rapkin memorial bowl



(a rather lovely rose bowl) to the person voted by the committee as having written the best article in *Themescene* the previous year. This year it has been won by Charles Oppenheim for his article *Thomas Edison: a life of invention*. Congratulations to Charles. For those who do not recognise the name, Franceska Rapkin (1936 - 2001) was a founder member and first chairperson of the BTA back in 1984. Her thematic collection on “The 1936 Olympic Games” won international gold medals. The memorial bowl remembers her drive and commitment to promote thematics in the UK.

Sadly we lost another founder member of the BTA in February: Brian Sole. His death was reported just too late for March *Themescene*, so his obituary is published here, page 62. Brian too was utterly committed to thematic collecting and exhibiting; many of us will have enjoyed “Go by Cycle!” and benefited from his help and guidance when competing at any level.

These were two people who flew the flag internationally for thematic philately in the UK. And now it's our turn. Our annual one-frame competitions will be held as usual at the South of England Stamp Fair at Ardingly. Full details are on page 68. Scans can be submitted instead of original pages if you so choose, and if you'd like to show but not be assessed we are happy to accept display-only entries. Give it a go!

Finally, welcome to new member Cassie Perusse from Nova Scotia, Canada. Enjoy your membership!

BTA WEEKEND 2026

This is always a very enjoyable event. The hotel is welcoming, the food good, and the displays varied and interesting. But then you'd expect a report on the event to be very positive, so here are the words of a few attendees: "I enjoyed the weekend very much. Great displays and a very engaging group of collectors". "Thank you so much for a brilliant time at the BTA weekend. I loved it!". "I learnt so much over the time that I was there and I really enjoyed how friendly, welcoming and chatty everyone was".

Three guest speakers were welcomed:

Les Ashton-Smith *Philatelic Firsts*

This was not, as might have been expected from the title, a display of SG 1 stamps. Instead it was a display of the first examples of stamps made of anything but paper. Some are famous in the philatelic world, others not, but all were quirky and fun.

The very first postal authority to dream up this novel approach was Hungary in 1955, with an aluminium foil stamp commemorating the country's aluminium industry. And that is the key to many of these issues: whilst aimed at collectors their materials were chosen carefully to underpin the subject of the issue.

While the materials were many and various a number of themes emerged. Foil has proved popular in various guises. Tonga is well-known for its self-adhesive foil stamps on gilt paper. Various countries have used gold, silver, copper, platinum or tin foil, with in one case the additional of tiny rubies.

Gold foil was also used by Bhutan in 1966, starting a tradition of non-paper stamps including laminated prismatic plastic, rose-scented, and in 1973 a record which could be played. These are now very collectable, as can be seen by the prices charged on online stores.

Other minerals include grit (from the Rock of Gibraltar); clay (from the tennis court used by the Russian Davis Cup tennis team when they won that championship); volcanic ash (Iceland, from that unpronounceable volcano Eyjafjallajökull which caused major problems to flights in 2010). Glass crystal (not a mineral) featured in an Austrian miniature sheet commemorating the Swarovski Glass Art Exhibition.

3D stamps go back to Italy 1956, the first anniversary of admission to the United Nations (special glasses were required). In 1988 Austria issued a stamp with a hologram, and GB finally got in on the act with its 'Weather' issue of 2001 using photochromatic ink. Austria again led the field when in 2008 it issued a 'moving image' stamp for that year's UEFA football championship. The stamp has 48 images which allow a three-second 'movie' to be seen when viewed from certain angles. Indeed Austria now seems to have taken over the mantle from Bhutan when it comes to quirky stamp issues.

Fabrics started in Poland in 1958 with a lovely miniature sheet on silk for 400 years of Polish Post. There are also stamps with rayon, flock (derived from silk), embroidery, lace, dirndl and cross-stitch. Alderney issued a strip of six stamps on cotton featuring a section of the Bayeux Tapestry.

Then there were flavoured stamps, scented stamps, and even a transparent stamp (Finland 2008). This very entertaining display was also a demonstration of the research needed to identify and acquire such an extraordinarily wide range of issues.

Katrin Raynor *Exploring Astronomy and Space Through Philately*

If anyone is qualified to give a talk on astronomy it's Katrin. An astronomy writer and a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, she even has an asteroid named after her. Delivering her talk by PowerPoint enabled Katrin to show how the details of stamp designs underpin the story.

The world's first and second astronomy stamps were issued by Brazil in 1887 and 1890, both showing the Southern Cross, which also features on its national flag. From an issue by Italy in 1930 the topic spread, with the UK issuing the first of its space-themed stamps, this one for Jodrell Bank, in 1966.

A challenge for collectors is 'how to tell your story', weaving together the various strands to make a logical whole. Katrin outlined one method as proposed by Margaret Morris:

- Observers: chronologically from ancient studies from Egypt, the Middle East and China.
- Observables: the solar system with its planets, comets and asteroids.
- Observations: how constellations were named, the development of scientific instruments.
- Observatories: the first stamp to show one being Central Lithuania 1921.
- Explorers: a theme added by Katrin; humans of course, but also animals.

Katrin's talk was packed with scientific information and stories of discovery, but I suspect the one we will all remember is the story of Apollo 15. The three astronauts arranged with a dealer to carry around 400 covers with them, which were duly cancelled and, not surprisingly, sold well. However the astronauts had not got prior permission from NASA to do this, and although they repaid the money they made, they never flew as astronauts again. Perhaps the other abiding memory will be the items on display as well as stamps and covers; personally I never expected to have the opportunity to handle a piece from a meteorite, but there it was on show.

Ian Shapiro *Royal Household Mail*

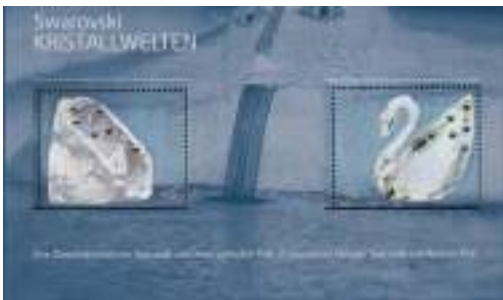
If you want to grab the attention of your audience start with something rare and eye-catching. Ian certainly managed this, with the first row of his display showing original documents from Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth I. While they each contained the monarch's signature, these were in fact wooden handstamps, created to allow authorized officials to sign documents on their behalf. (This doesn't make them less rare!). The most elaborate signature of the three was that of Elizabeth I - a real statement of authority.

As the title of the talk says, it was about royal household mail, so the really detailed study began with Queen Victoria, who ruled during the period of postal reform and a huge expansion in the number of letters sent. She set a precedent for future monarchs by signing her envelopes 'The Queen' or 'The Q', always in the bottom left-hand corner. Examples of these were shown, but sadly there is no known cover bearing a penny black with her signature. Much mail was generated from Buckingham Palace, but other postmark locations were also shown including Sandringham and Balmoral. One particularly unusual cover was a TPO on a Portsmouth to London train bearing sorting carriage marks on mail which had been sent from Osborne House in the Isle of Wight. The death of the Queen generated much correspondence, including invitations to her funeral, a perfect illustration of the range of this display, which showed both postal items and memorabilia.

The Royal Household official postmark of Edward VII was only in use for a few years. His successor George V had - according to Ian - the best handwriting of all our monarchs! Two letters written by George V were shown. The Court postmaster always travelled with



Les Ashton-Smith and (below) miniature sheet with embedded Swarovski crystal



Katrin Raynor, her asteroid and meteorite specimen



Ian Shapiro and display page

the King, so postmarks exist from various locations, including his official visit to Dublin in 1911. One unique item shown was a registered cover from the Royal Yacht.

Much fascinating material was shown, finishing with something decidedly different: parcel labels and tags. There had been regular shooting parties on the various royal estates, and of course the game had to be distributed. Distribution lists were shown, together with parcel tags itemising the number of each type of bird included, to be sent by rail or road. An unusual ending to a fascinating display which we were privileged to enjoy.

Our invited speakers were only part of the programme. Attendees were invited to participate in up to four sessions of members' displays: 'Latest acquisitions', 'Six sheets in one minute', 'By land, sea and air', 'Animal, vegetable or mineral' and 'These are a few of my favourite things', resulting in many and various topics shown.

Les Ashton-Smith

- The 'trials and tribulations' of Alexander von Humboldt. Various things have been named after him, including a planetarium, a penguin, a sailing ship and a mine.
- A 1950s cruise ship *The Leonardo da Vinci*. Items included postcards and a cover signed by the captain. She was scuttled in 1978 after a major fire.

Geoff Blackwell

- The 150th anniversary of photography, celebrated by stamp issues in many countries in 1989, but only in a GB booklet featuring William Fox Talbot.
- Stamp designs based on identified photographs, featuring various modes of transport.
- Stamps using photographic images of wildlife in Canada.

Pauline Boddy

- Some of Pauline's recent acquisitions including coffee house covers.

Wendy Buckle

- Various different materials used for written records, including a letter on thin copper, metal postcards, postcards made of wood, cork bark, birch bark and leather.

Wayne Cox

- Anthony Trollope, who introduced the pillar box to Great Britain, having seen them in the Channel Islands.
- Postcards produced by Richard Blake, covering transport by horse, by water, by rail and by air. Also a lovely model of a royal mail lorry, issued in a limited edition.
- Cast iron Victorian wall boxes, and how their designs developed, and Wayne's favourite letterbox: a Victorian issue with a fluted top.

Bev Davies

- The Allied occupation of Germany 1947 - 1950.
- The Leipzig Messe [Fair] which has been held in spring and autumn since the twelfth century. Stamps featuring the event started in 1947.
- Stamps, miniature sheets, cinderellas and ephemera relating to RMS *Titanic*. This White Star liner was intended to focus on luxury rather than speed, projecting glamour and comfort.
- A recently purchased written up collection about Winston Churchill.
- Concorde, featuring FDCs, airletters and promotional ephemera.



From attendees' displays

Malcolm Gascoyne

- Postcards from Sarawak by Lim Poh Chiang.
- Britain's first trunk line, the London and Birmingham Railway, built in 1838. It later became part of the London & North Western Railway, which issued a series of postcards showing the line.
- Early coffee houses. Coffee was originally imported by British merchants from Aleppo. Coffee houses were at first places to chat, which over time attracted groups with similar interests, and eventually became the destination for mail.
- Rentens hand-coloured postcards of Sarawak. Twelve views were issued, but are difficult to find.

Erene Grieve

- In what Erere described as "Philately by stealth" she showed articles she has written for *WES: Journal of the Writing Equipment Society*, on the culture of writing, illustrated by philatelic materials.
- Illustrated advertising envelopes featuring hotels, giving their history and with some accompanying postcards.
- A selection of delightful stamp boxes made from silver, wood, tortoiseshell and papier-mâché.
- "Written Word: the tools and the trade" an exhibit about writing materials.

John Hayward

- Slogan cancels which can be used thematically (USA examples are very gaudy); personalised stamps and some models of motor cycles: his thematic collection has been sold, but these are a reminder of it.

Edith Knight

- Spanish stamps featuring trains, many with very attractive designs.
- The Handley Page biplane the H.P.42, including the *Heracles*.

Rodney Knight

- GB World War II postal slogans: "Save Waste Paper Metals Bones Rags", "Grow More Food", "Dig for Victory", "Help to Win on the Kitchen Front", "Post Early in the Day".
- Airmail covers from a variety of countries.

Paul Leonard

- The infamous forger Jean de Sperati, real name Giovanni Desperati, who always claimed to be an artist, not a forger. There are known to be over 800 stamps forged by Sperati, whose printing press is now at the Royal Philatelic Society London.

Andrew Millington

- "Over the Sea to Swansea": the transport of copper for smelting. Ships came from all over the world, illustrated by covers, postcards and bills of lading.
- Copper minerals including azurite, cuprite, malachite and those found under the water table.

Janet Nelson

- A 2024 set from Brazil featuring pioneering women.
- Commercial aerogrammes issued by Brazil's postal authority. Greetings aerogrammes included those for Mothers and Fathers Days, Valentine Day, birthdays and the birth of a child.
- Hedgehogs, of which there are seventeen species. It is the symbol of Ross-On-Wye which holds an annual Hedgehog Fair.
- Stamp designs from Brazil from 2009 (a personalised sheet featuring a Hereford bull); 2010 Brazilia; 2011 Christmas.

Nick Nelson

- A perhaps tongue-in-cheek suggestion for new thematic topics to collect, including age-inappropriate material, the most obscure things to commemorate, fraudulent stamps subsequently genuinely used, and really embarrassing stamps, e.g. "Stranger Things".

Bob Paterson

- The moon: its phases, its surface, eclipses, and literary quotations about it.
- The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 1941, narrated as it happened on the day, showing the ships and aircraft involved.
- Fictional accounts of moon exploration including Cyrano de Bergerac, H G Wells and Jules Verne.

Barry Stagg

- Memories from Barry's time in the Merchant Navy.
- Delightful hand-painted postcards of the village of Pegli, now part of Genoa, which featured beautiful gardens. The cards were posted to England by Barry's great-uncle while serving in World War I.

Anne Stammers

- Precious stones including amethyst and opal. Australian opal mines are located in areas of such extreme heat that people there live underground.

Peter Weir

- Pages on transportation from his exhibit "A Wounded Soldier's Journey Home". Stretcher bearers carried the wounded from the battle ground to a first aid station and from there to the Field Ambulance Unit; the final destination being the hospital.
- Animals in warfare, including dogs used to find wounded soldiers on the battlefield, and horses fitted with gas masks, both from World War I.

Peter Wood

- Postmarks, cinderellas and other items from the 1902 Cork International Exhibition, one of many which took its inspiration from the Great Exhibition of 1851.
- Ships associated with Ireland, including a prestamp cover carried on the *Hibernia*.
- Irish agriculture and industry.
- Guinness, featured on a PPI cover, stamps, bottle labels and beer mats. A charming Rowland Emmett cartoon of 'The Philatelist' which featured in an advertisement for Guinness, and a cheque for £753,000,000.00 (genuine) written by Peter whilst employed in a bank.

MARIE CURIE: HER LIFE AND LEGACY. PART 2

Les Ashton-Smith

Marie Curie's children

Irène Joliot-Curie (12 September 1897-17 March 1956) was a French chemist, physicist, and a politician (Figure 1). She was one of the first three women to be a member of a French government, becoming Undersecretary for Scientific Research under the Popular Front in 1936. Both children of the Joliot-Curies, Hélène and Pierre, are also prominent scientists.

In 1945, she was one of the six commissioners of the new French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) created by Charles de Gaulle and the Provisional Government of the French Republic.

Jointly with her husband Frédéric Joliot-Curie (Figure 2), Irène was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1935 for their discovery of artificial radioactivity, making them the second ever married couple (after her parents) to win the Nobel Prize.

She died in Paris on 17 March 1956 from an acute leukemia linked to her exposure to polonium and X-rays.

Her husband Frédéric warned of German scientists working on nuclear weapons and smuggled their science papers to the UK. Joliot-Curie was mentioned in Albert Einstein's 1939 letter to President Roosevelt as one of the leading scientists on the course to nuclear chain reactions. He was a member of the French Resistance. He was also the recipient of the first Stalin Peace Prize, given in 1951 for his work as president of the World Peace Council. Largely sponsored by the Soviet Union, and hence often "protected" by them, this bias prevented worldwide acceptance of its good intention and policies.

Ève Curie Labouisse

Marie's second daughter Ève Curie Labouisse (6 December 1904-22 October 2007) was a French and American writer, journalist and pianist. She worked as a journalist and authored her mother's biography *Madame Curie* and a book of war reportage *Journey Among Warriors*. Ève Curie served as a volunteer in the women's medical corps of the Free French during the Italian Campaign, where she was promoted to the rank of lieutenant in the French 1st Armoured Division. In August 1944 she took part in landing with her troops in Provence in southern France. She was decorated with the Croix de Guerre for her services.

From the 1960s she committed herself to work for UNICEF, providing help to children and mothers in developing countries. In July 2005, Ève Curie Labouisse was promoted for her work in UNICEF to the rank of 'Officier de la Légion d'Honneur' of the Republic of France – the country's highest decoration. Ève was the only member of her family who did not choose a career as a scientist and did not win a Nobel Prize, although her husband, Henry Richardson Labouisse, Jr., did collect the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965 as head of and on behalf of UNICEF, completing the Curie family legacy of connection to multiple Nobel Prizes.



Figure 1: Irène Joliot-Curie



Figure 2: Frédéric Joliot-Curie

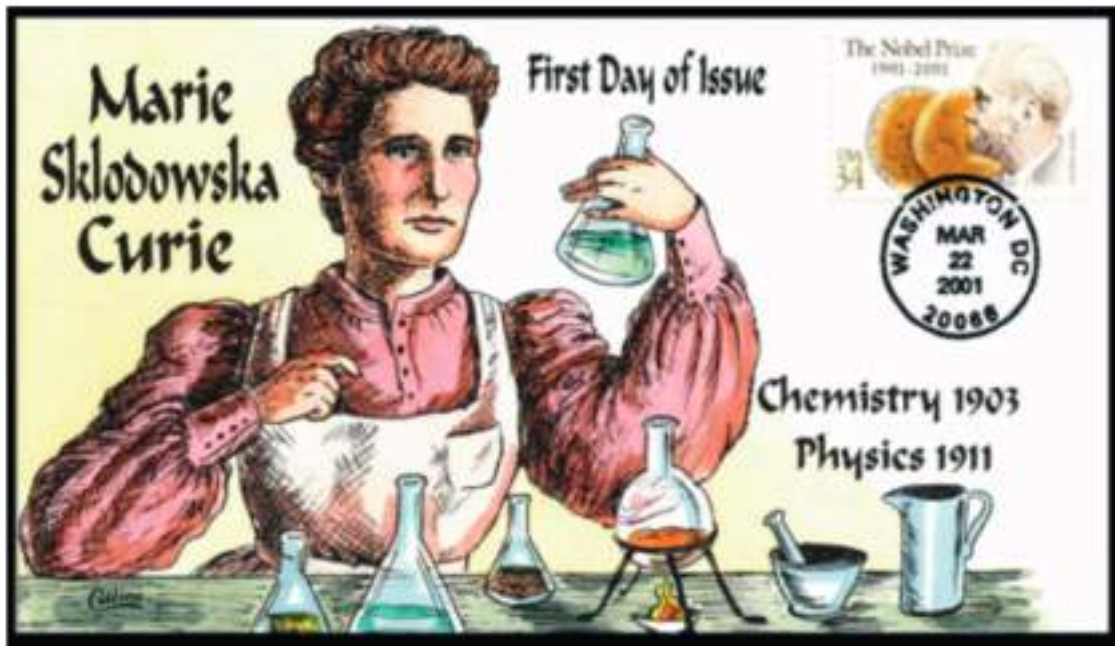


Figure 3: Nobel prize-winner

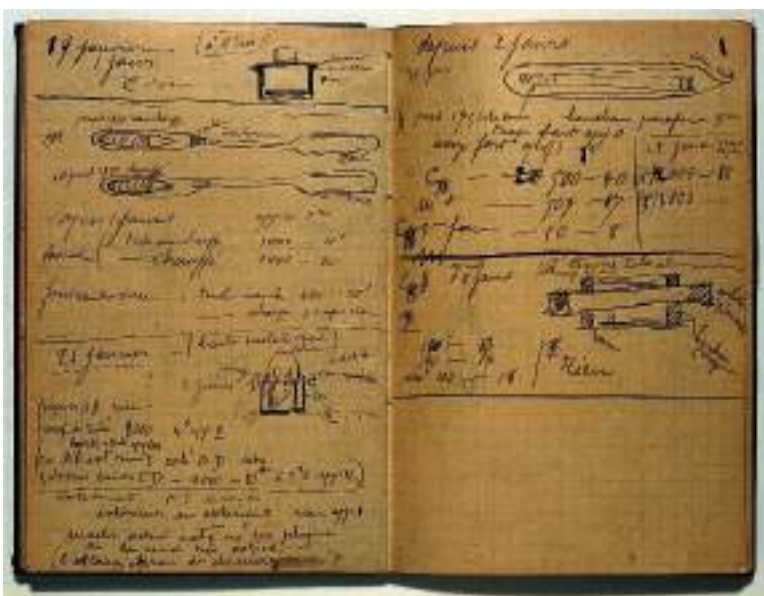


Figure 4: Marie Curie's notebook. Handle with care!

The Nobel Prize

The Nobel Prize comprises five separate prizes that, according to Alfred Nobel's will of 1895, are awarded to "those who, during the preceding year, have conferred the greatest benefit to Mankind". Alfred Nobel was a Swedish chemist, engineer and industrialist most famously known for the invention of dynamite. He died in 1896. In his will, he bequeathed all of his "remaining realisable assets" to be used to establish five prizes. Nobel Prizes were first awarded in 1901. They are awarded in the fields of Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature, and Peace (Nobel characterized the Peace Prize as "to the person who has done the most or best to advance fellowship among nations, the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and the establishment and promotion of peace congresses"). In 1968, Sveriges Riksbank (Sweden's central bank) funded the establishment of the Prize in Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel, also to be administered by the Nobel Foundation. Nobel Prizes are widely regarded as the most prestigious awards available in their respective fields. The prize ceremonies take place annually. Each recipient (known as a "laureate") receives a gold medal, a diploma, and a monetary award. In 2025, the Nobel Prize monetary award is 11 million SEK (~£885,00). A prize may not be shared among more than three individuals, although the Nobel Peace Prize can be awarded to organizations of more than three people. Although Nobel Prizes are not awarded posthumously, if a person is awarded a prize and dies before receiving it, the prize is still presented.

The prizes have been awarded 603 times to 962 people and 25 organizations. Four individuals have received more than one Nobel Prize (Curie, Physics and Chemistry, Bardeen, Physics twice, Pauling, Chemistry and Peace, and Sanger, Chemistry twice). The Curie family legacy of multiple Nobel awards (Figure 3):

- Marie was the first woman to win;
- They were the first married couple to win;
- Marie was the first person to win two Nobels and in different sciences;
- Her daughter and son-in-law were the second married couple to win after Marie and Pierre;
- Her other daughter's husband collected a Nobel for UNICEF.

Marie Curie's Legacy (1):

- She changed the world of physics;
- She found two new elements;
- She found a new treatment to attack cancer;
- She was a breaker of societal barriers, overcoming barriers against women in her native and adopted country;
- She led a frugal and moderate lifestyle.

Marie Curie's Legacy (2):

Curium was named after Marie Curie. It is a transuranic radioactive chemical element with the symbol Cm and atomic number 96. Curium was first intentionally produced and identified in July 1944 in the USA. The discovery was kept secret and only released to the public in November 1947. Most curium is produced by bombarding uranium or plutonium with neutrons in nuclear reactors – one tonne of spent nuclear fuel contains about 20 grams of curium.

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions are the European Union's reference programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training. They contribute to excellent research,

boosting jobs, growth and investment by equipping researchers with new knowledge and skills. This fosters research cooperation across borders, sectors and disciplines.

Three radioactive minerals are named after her. Curite is a lead uranium oxide mineral with a type location in the Congo. Sklodowskite is a uranium mineral named after Marie Curie's maiden name. Cuprosklodowskite is a secondary uranium mineral formed by alteration of earlier uranium minerals.

Marie Curie's Legacy (3):

Several educational and research institutions and medical centres bear the Curie name, including the Curie Institutes in France and Poland, and the Pierre & Marie Curie University (UPMC). Institut Curie is one of the leading medical, biological and biophysical research centres in the world. It is a private non-profit foundation operating a research centre on biophysics, cell biology and oncology and a hospital specializing in treatment of cancer. It is located in Paris. Pierre and Marie Curie University, also known as Paris 6, was a public research university in Paris from 1971 to 2017. UPMC merged with Paris-Sorbonne University into a new combined Sorbonne University. It was ranked as the best university in France in medicine and health sciences by the Times Higher Education in 2018.

A statue of Marie Curie was erected in 1935 in Poland and faces the Radium Institute in Warsaw.

Marie Curie's Legacy (4):

She made copious notes throughout her life on her work and family and her children, including all their expenditure, recipes, bicycle repairs, doodles and fancies (Figure 4). Most of her notebooks, and other items such as furniture and equipment, are so radioactive they are stored today in lead lined boxes in France and can only be viewed by scholars who sign a waiver of liability, and wear high levels of protective clothing, as they were so contaminated with radium, and they will be for many years to come. Radium, after all, has a half life of 1,600 years!

Marie Curie's Legacy (5):

The charity "Marie Curie Cancer Care" origins are linked to the Marie Curie Hospital, at 2 Fitzjohn's Avenue, Hampstead. This pioneering hospital, opened in 1930 by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, specialised in the "radiological treatment of women suffering from cancer and allied diseases". It was staffed by medical women, and cared for 700 patients a year in 39 beds, with facilities for radium and x-ray therapy, and modern pathological and research laboratories.

November 7th, Marie Curie's birthday, was the first cancer awareness day, in honour of her contribution and efforts in the battle against cancer. However, in 2000 "World Cancer Day" was chosen and recognised by the UN as the 4th February (Figure 5). Daffodil Day was initiated by the Canadian Cancer Society in 1957. There is a now daffodil day in many countries in the world; unsurprisingly it is usually held in March (Figure 6). The Marie Curie Cancer Care charity had their first daffodil appeal – with live daffodils – in Scotland in 1986. The appeal continued to grow throughout the 1990s, and incorporated the daffodil into their logo, where it remains today.

Marie Curie and stamps: A “philatelic” time line:

- 1931 Norwegian Radium Foundation Hospital charity stamp
- 1935 First Marie Curie Stamp from Turkey
- 1938 40th anniversary of the discovery of Radium,
also the creation of International Anti-Cancer Fund
- 1959 10th Anniversary of World Peace Council
- 1967 100th Anniversary of Marie’s birth
- 1974 40th Anniversary of Marie’s death
- 1984 150th Anniversary of Pierre’s birth and 50th Anniversary of Marie’s death
- 1981 75th Anniversary of Pierre’s death
- 1986 80th Anniversary of Pierre’s death.
- 2011 International Year of Chemistry
- 2017 150th Anniversary of Marie’s birth.

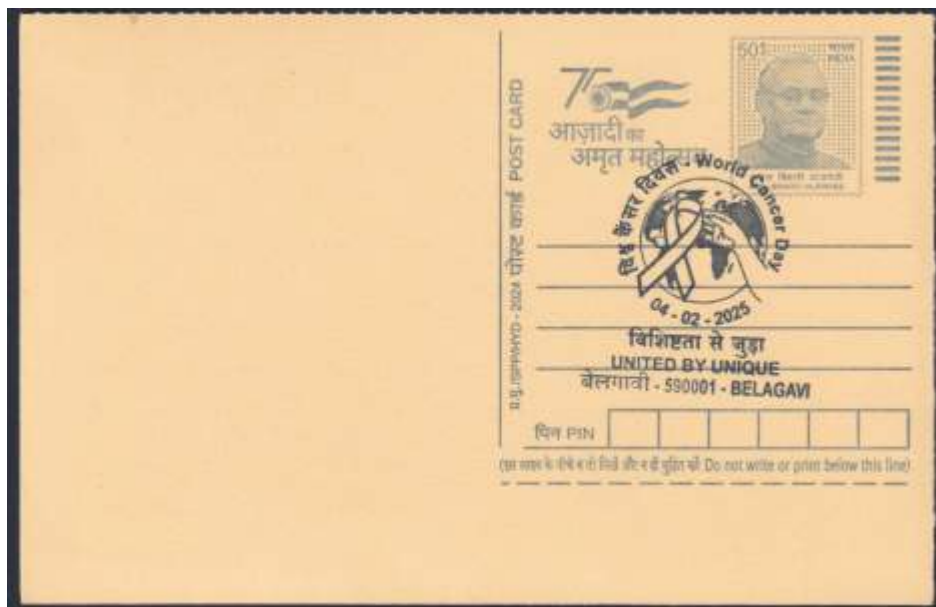


Figure 5: World Cancer Day



Figure 6: Daffodil Day

WANT TO KNOW THE TIME? PART 2: GET A GADGET!

Lloyd Hogg

These days we think of timekeeping gadgets as electrical, digital, and even atomic, but back at the dawn of civilization and into the medieval period, gadgets were more likely to involve ‘flowing’ materials, flame, and sound! The first mechanical time keeping device was the clepsydra. It was invented by the Egyptians and allowed water to slowly drip from an upper container into a lower one. Markings on the inside of the lower vessel showed the passage of time as the water level increased, but the flow rate could slow down as the water level dropped, requiring refills and adjustments. The clepsydra remained unchanged until the third century BCE when Archimedes developed a complex hydraulic water clock, often described as an early alarm clock, featuring automated mechanisms like floats, siphons, and weights to regulate time and even play music (Figures 1 and 2). In 132 CE Zhang Heng invented the first water-powered *astronomical* time device in which water dripped from one collection pan to another, driving gears that advanced an armillary sphere fitted with a gauge. But it never ‘took off’ due to the problems encountered with using water - freezing conditions, erratic flow rates, or spillage that damaged the apparatus (Figure 3).

When the Egyptians invented glassblowing, they used it to produce the hourglass which comprises two glass bulbs connected by a narrow neck, allowing regulated flow of a substance (historically sand) from the upper bulb to the lower one due to gravity, and having a wood, alabaster, or metal casing. It was quite revolutionary because it offered portability, resilience, certainty, and simplicity. The first recorded image of an hourglass appeared in Lorenzetti’s “Allegory of Good Government” (1338) showing Temperance bearing an hourglass - now shown at Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, Italy (Figure 4).

Ancient navigators were amongst the first and most prolific users of hourglasses as they were not easily affected by swaying or change in temperatures on board ship. Most notably Ferdinand Magellan had eighteen hourglasses on his ships during his voyage to circumnavigate the globe. Christopher Columbus was also renowned for their use, primarily to help track time for sailor’s duty changes. The usual four-hour watch was divided into eight glasses, every half of which had to be turned, at which point the ship’s bell sounded (Figure 5).

Down the ages, the hourglass has become symbolic, being primarily associated with ‘Father Time’. Freemasons use the hourglass as an emblem of human life, representing the continuous passing of time and serving as a reminder that life is finite. In India, the holding of an hourglass in the palm of your hand represents the remainder of life (Figure 6). But hourglasses have shortcomings - they were fragile due to being made of glass and required regular manual turning. Today we probably just use them for boiling eggs!

From Roman times the flame became an important means of telling time. Candles were lit, and the burn time gave an estimate of the elapsed time. Originally made with tallow, later beeswax was favoured due to its longer burn time. Beeswax candles burn at around one hour per inch of diameter. This knowledge allowed monks to regularly monitor candles and thence ring bells from bell towers to share the time. Of course, the association between monasteries and bell towers (campaniles) has always been a strong one and



Figure 1: Archimedes Balloon Monte cover. 'Archimedes' Balloon Monte (flight 31) departed Gare d'Orléans, Paris at 12:45am on 21 November 1870 arriving that day. The balloon covered 400 km and was piloted by Jules Buffet with passengers Gaston de Saint-Valéry and Albert de Jaudas. It landed in Castelré in the Netherlands. Balloons landed randomly according to the wind, and having crossed enemy lines, the mail was picked up by the French post office and sent to Marseille.

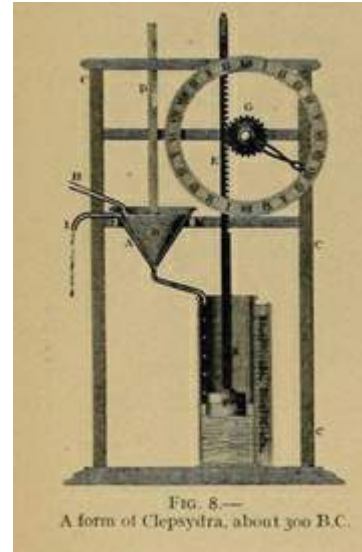


Figure 2: Diagram of early clepsydra.



Figure 3: Domestic first-class letter. Intercepted by the Post Office and marked water damaged.



Figure 4: Temperance bearing an hourglass

Figure 5: 1902 surface mail from Chile to Germany. 5 cents postage plus 10c registration.

Bearing two Columbus stamps and endorsed 'Via Magellans' (Magellan Straits) which was named after the great explorer.



especially important in rural communities (Figure 7). Time is also recorded as being measured by burning things against a time scale. Geishas used incense stick clocks, called senko-dokei, to time their services, with payments based on how many sticks burned, with a single stick's burn time of around 30 mins.

In 996 CE Pope Sylvester II expressed frustration at the way in which the crude gadgets and techniques, discussed in this article, failed to provide accurate, reliable, and continuous means of timekeeping (Figure. 8). This drove him to invent what we now call the clock; its name being derived from the Latin 'clocca' which means 'bell'. 📖

Part 3 of this article, to be published in September 2026 Themescene, will consider the first appearance and iterations of the clock and how it fitted into the socio-economic framework.



Figure 6: Indian Posts telegram to Pakistan.



Figure 8: Maximum card published by Les Maximaphiles Francais showing Pope Sylvester II - a most formidable and ingenious man!



Figure 7: 1862 postmarked Bell tower 'A' at Badajoz and sent to Trujillo. Only reported example.

TANKS ON STAMPS

Chris Yardley

I have previously compiled and annotated the postage stamp images from the two world wars and other wars of the twentieth century (1). I have also used the data to write for *Sabretach* the journal of the Military Historical Society of Australia (MHSA) and on a regular basis for *Le Grogard*, the monthly newsletter of the MHSA ACT Branch and *Themescene*.

My interest is in being able to illustrate most military history stories through postage stamp images. History changes through time and changes are reflected on the event images that might be reinvestigated at any time.

I have been looking at ‘points of inflection’ to test my thesis. I have had a detailed search for ‘tanks on stamps’. The postal authorities who have used tank images on more than 630 stamps are geographically located :

Europe	14
North America	6
South America	3
Africa	30
Asia	18
Oceania	13

What looks like an anomaly is the number of African countries. There are 84 countries in Africa and many of these use Postal Agents to administer their postal system. These agents issue beyond the needs or capabilities of the countries to whom they provide a service but they are a valuable potential revenue source to many small nations. Selling postage stamps to collectors is a legitimate business. The products, also sold as souvenirs, are colourful and attractive.

The tank was first introduced by Great Britain on the Western Front in Europe during the First World War which had become bogged down in a stalemate based upon trench warfare. The tank potentially afforded a way out of the stalemate.

The 650 tank images recognise the tank in different conflicts. These include:

	No. images
World War I	54
World War II in general	341
World War II :	
D-Day and The Battle for France	63
The Battle of Kursk	59
The Battle of Moscow	29
The Battle of the Bulge	23
The Battle of Stalingrad	8
The Battle of Berlin	5
Other battles	52

Examples include:



Guyana 2014: Tanks of the First World War

Images on the left-hand sheet show two French models: a Saint-Chamond and a Schneider C41F. The two British models are the Mark IV and a Medium Marc C. The Medium Mark C Hornet was a British tank developed during the First World War, but produced too late to see any fighting.

The right-hand miniature sheet shows images of a French Renault FT and a German A7V.



Russia 2010: Tanks - The 65th Anniversary of World War II Victory

The tanks featured are:

- (1) The BT-7M; The BT-7 was the last of the BT series of Soviet cavalry tanks that were produced in large numbers between 1935 and 1940. The BT-7's successor was the famous T-34 medium tank, introduced in 1940, which replaced all of the Soviet fast tanks, infantry tanks, and medium tanks then in service. It was designed by the Kharkiv Morozov Machine Building Design Bureau (KMDB), a Ukrainian state-owned tank design bureau
- (2) The T-70 is a light tank used by the Red Army during World War II, replacing both the T-60 scout tank for reconnaissance. The T-70 was designed by Nicholas Astrov's design team at Factory No. 38 in Kirov.
- (3) The Germans also noted that the T-34 was very slow to find and engage targets, while their own tanks could typically get off three rounds for every one fired by the T-34. Due to low anti-tank performance, the T-34 was upgraded to the T-34-85 model. This model, with its 85 mm (3.35 in) ZiS gun, provided greatly increased firepower compared to the previous T-34's 76.2mm gun.
- (4) The IS-2 heavy tank. First deliveries were made in October 1943, and the tanks went immediately into service. Production ended in January 1944. Its designation was simplified to IS-1 after the introduction of the IS-122, later renamed as IS-2 for security purposes.



São Tomé 2019: World War II - 75th Anniversary of Normandy Landings

The four armoured vehicles in the first sheet are designated (1) a Semi-lagarta M3, (2) a Daimler Dingo, (3) a Crusader, and (4) an M8 Greyhound. The second sheet shows a Ford GPA with the Daimler Dingo as the main image used as background.



Ivory Coast 2013: 70th anniversary of the Battle of Kursk

The two personalities shown within the stamp images are Eric von Manstein and Gueorgiu Joukov with their respective main tanks, the Panzerkampfwagen V Panther and Russian KV-1.



Togo 2016: The 75th anniversary of the Battle of Moscow

A German Panzer IV tank is shown in position 3 of sheet one, and also in sheet two confronting a Russian T-34/76.



Solomon Islands 2014: The 70th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge



The tank images used in the first sheet of Solomon Islands are (1) the German Panther, (2) an US Light tank , (3) The M7 Priest - The 105 mm Howitzer Motor Carriage M7 was an American self-propelled gun vehicle produced during World War II. It was given the official service name 105 mm Self Propelled Gun, but nick-named ‘Priest’ by the British Army due to the pulpit-like machine gun ring, and following on from the Bishop and the contemporary Deacon self-propelled guns. The second sheet shows an M4 Sherman.



Niger 2017: The 75th anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad

Personalities are Yakov Pavlov and Friedrich Paulus, (shown within both miniature sheets) is Vasile Chuikov. The tanks are labelled as a T-34/76 and a Panzerkampfwagen III.



Marshall Islands 1995: History of the Second World War - Capture of Berlin by Soviet Troops, 1945
Portrait shows Marshal Georgy Zhukov.



Sierra Leone 2015: The 40th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

Within sheet two the tank looks like the M8 Patten.



Ukraine 2022: Ukrainian Tractor Towing Destroyed Russian Tank
Perhaps one of the most famous images of recent times.

And a pictorial history from Great Britain showing the development of their tank family.



Great Britain 2021: British Army vehicles. Eight vehicles are shown

- (1) The Mark IV was a British tank of the First World War. Introduced in 1917.
- (2) The Infantry Tank Mark II, best known as the Matilda, is a British infantry tank of the Second World War. It was the only British tank to serve from the start of the war to its end.
- (3) Officially designated as ‘Tank, Infantry, Mk.IV, A.22’, the Churchill entered service with the British Armoured Forces in 1941.
- (4) The Centurion was the primary British Army main battle tank of the post-World War II period. Introduced in 1945, it is widely considered to be one of the most successful post-war tank designs, remaining in production into the 1960s, and seeing combat into the 1980s.
- (5) The FV101 Scorpion is a British armoured reconnaissance vehicle, and also a light tank. It was the lead vehicle and the fire support type in the Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked), CVR(T), family of seven armoured vehicles.
- (6) The FV4201 Chieftain was the main battle tank (MBT) of the United Kingdom from the 1960s into 1990s.
- (7) The FV4034 Challenger 2 (MoD designation “CR2”) is a third generation British main battle tank (MBT) in service with the armies of the United Kingdom, Oman, and Ukraine.
- (8) The Ajax, formerly known as the Scout SV (Specialist Vehicle), is a group of armoured fighting vehicles being developed by General Dynamics UK for the British Army.

A miniature sheet was issued in conjunction with the British Army Vehicles. The images do not conform to the definition of a tank. But for completeness they are listed here : (1) Coyote tactical support vehicle, (2) Army Wildcat helicopter, (3) Trojan Armoured vehicle of the Royal Engineers and (4) the Foxhound Light protected patrol vehicle.

What next? My Canberra based colleague, former naval architect Tim Lyon has done an exhaustive study of military aircraft and has stated his disappointment on the number of mistakes made in the representations published. I might anticipate that my study will show a similar problem and I look forward to comment from the experts who might see this *Themescene* selection and or the published book when it is available. Will I look at aircraft – I think not. But a study of submarines on stamps has a potential. 📖

References. Yardley, Christopher B: -

A Great War Study – The Centenary commemorative postage stamps 2014-2018, 2019. Cannava House Publications / Ingram-Spark. ISBN 978-0-6486-6710-0.

The Second World War – representing world conflict on postage stamps. 2019.Cannava House Pubs / Balboa Press. Volume One ISBN 978-1-9822-9297-3. Volume Two ISBN 9781-9822-9299-7.

Other Wars of the Twentieth Century- Stories told through postage stamps, Cannava House Publications / Balboa Press. ISBN 978-1-9822-9594-3.

BTA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AGENDA

For the 33rd Annual General Meeting of the British Thematic Association, to be held on
Saturday **June 13th 2026 at 11.30 a.m.** at Swinpex at Grange Leisure &
Community Centre, Stratton St. Margaret, Swindon, SN3 4JY

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the 32nd Annual General Meeting published in Themescene Sept. 2025
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's report
5. Treasurer's report and adoption of Accounts for the year ended 31st Dec. 2025.

6. Election of Officers

The following Officers have been nominated or are willing to stand for re-election:

Barry Stagg	Chairman
Anne Stammers	Secretary
Peter Wood	Treasurer

7. Election of Committee members

The following members have indicated that they are willing to stand for re-election:

Currently	Wendy Buckle	Editor Themescene
Currently	Michael Blackman	Advertising Manager
Currently	Barry Stagg	FIP Representative
Currently	Jon Matthias	Webmaster; Press/Publicity Officer
Currently	Owen Green	Membership Secretary; ATA Liaison Officer
Currently	Andrew Millington	Competition Organiser
Currently	Wayne Cox	

NB. There is a Committee Vacancy for a Zoom Meeting Organiser, please let the Chairman or Secretary know, prior to or at the meeting, if you are interested in this position.

8. Ratification by the membership of appointment of
Brian Turner Examiner

9. Any Other Business

Nominations for Officers and Committee Members and any other motions for discussion should be received by the Secretary (annies1@btopenworld.com) by June 2nd 2026.

Following the AGM there will be a display by Barbara Borlase-Hendry on *Mining in Cornwall*.

Signed: **M. Anne Stammers** (Hon. Secretary)

Dated: 10th May 2026

ZOOMING ALONG

Lloyd Hogg and Barry Stagg

Yamil Kouri *The Story of Boston 2026 Preparation* 27 February

We were delighted to welcome Yamil H. Kouri Jr. the President of the World Expo Stamp Show - Boston 2026 - to talk about the size, scale, and importance of the event in this year's international philatelic calendar. Yamil said that the first international stamp show in America was held back in 1913 and that the current one is likely to be the biggest and best in the world. The statistics are quite mind boggling, with 70 philatelic societies in attendance, 110 dealers, 260 meetings scheduled, and 19 postal administrations booked. It was really interesting to hear that the venue is regarded as the most impressive conference centre in the world, especially given its close proximity to Logan International airport. It was clear what a tremendous amount of work and planning had been undertaken in arranging the event, and everything is in place to ensure a successful and enjoyable time for collectors of all ages and backgrounds. The organising team are geared up to spend a full week, prior to the opening ceremony, getting things ship-shape and ready to greet participants from around the world. We wish them well!

Jean Wang *Covid-19 related philately Part 2* 27 March

BTA members were treated to a fascinating presentation by Jean Wang. Unlike the first part of her Covid presentation which was centred around stamps, in part 2 Jean showed Slogans, Pictorial Postmarks, Postal Stationery and Postal History to show the impact of Covid.

The Slogan cancels were split into two basic groups: public health messages and support and solidarity. Such messages as 'stay HOME and stay SAFE'. Jean showed a large variety of slogan cancels from Germany, Singapore Australia to name but a few. I rather liked the Canadian 'Thanks health care workers'. The Pictorial Postmarks were interesting. Many countries used them and my favourite was from Slovenia which showed an image of the Covid virus wearing a mask! Although the Philippines had an appropriate image with the wording of 'Spread Christmas not the virus!'.

Postal stationery was extensively used by many countries urging people to keep safe and connected. Often given away, for example Ireland gave a postcard to every address in the country so that they could connect with friends or relatives. Again, Jean showed a large variety of material from many countries including the USA, Jersey, Romania and Canada. Arguably the most impressive part of the presentation was the Postal History section. With mail around the world being severely delayed or even suspended because of Covid, it meant there was a huge variety of mail that had been marked accordingly. 'Return to sender' was a typical marking as was 'service suspended'. In Thailand mail was kept in the Post Office to quarantine it and mail was appropriately marked. Mail was also disinfected (Beijing) and mail routes were disrupted, all with appropriate markings on the mail.

This was an amazing collection and a fascinating and entertaining presentation of a difficult time for many.

NB: Every BTA Zoom talk to date is available on the BTA website under 'Events'. You will need to log in the site to view the 2026 talks.

OBITUARY:

FREDERICK BRIAN JOHN SOLE, 1938 - 2026

Throughout his philatelic career Brian (as he was always known) was involved in supporting philately in general and thematic philately in particular. His general interests ranged from being Secretary of Kingston Upon Thames Philatelic Society and President of the Federation of Surrey Philatelic Societies; regular attendance at the Philatelic Congress of Great Britain, and where he was awarded the Congress Medal in 2002; through to attending overseas Internationals, including Genova '92 where he was UK Commissioner and PhilaNippon (Japan) in 2001 and 2002. He was an elected Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society of London and for several years was on its "Meet and Greet" team in its previous premises.



Many thematic collectors choose a subject in which they have an existing interest, and Brian was no exception. In the 1970s he started collecting material on cycling, having been a keen cyclist in earlier days, and soon became a high-level exhibitor. His expertise in thematic philately was demonstrated by his superb exhibit "Go by Cycle!" which was awarded a Gold medal at Singapore in 2002. Perhaps not surprisingly he was President of the Bicycle Stamp Club from 2002 to 2016. He displayed his exhibit all over the country and shared his expertise in exhibiting through talks and workshops, where his encouragement and enthusiasm inspired many just starting out on the path to exhibiting. His knowledge led to being a qualified judge in both Thematic Philately and Open Philately in the UK and in Thematic Philately at FEPA events in Europe. His desire to promote understanding of thematic

philately led him (jointly with the late Francesca Rapkin) to translate into English - from the original Dutch - a major book *Handbook of Thematic Philately* by Pim van den Bold, published in 1994.

One of his biggest commitments was to the British Thematic Association (BTA), serving as Secretary from its foundation in 1984 to 1995, at which point he took on the Chairmanship for four years and then became President in 2003. While President he oversaw a display by the BTA at the RPSL (2005) which featured 28 displays including his own. When the BTA again displayed to the Royal in 2024 Brian's display featured. Finally retiring from the Committee in 2008, he took on the role of Patron.

He worked tirelessly for the Association in all this time. He regularly staffed BTA tables at regional and national events, and was for many years the organiser of the BTA's involvement in Thematica, held annually in London, where he organised the Inter-Federation Thematic Competition and the two BTA competitions, as well as organising the BTA stand at the event. When Thematica was in danger of closing due to lack of financial support Brian organised "Friends of Thematica" a fundraising group to keep the event going. He was regularly a member of the British team at Eurothema, a biennial

thematic event held in different European countries; and in 2008 was one of the organisers, and the UK judge, at Eurothema when the BTA staged the event in London.

His interests did not end there. His career in banking led to involvement with the Insurance and Banking Philatelic Society. He had a fine collection of Guernsey from World War II onwards. He enjoyed postcard collecting, and in 2021 won a Gold medal at Autumn Stampex in the Picture Postcard Class with "Cycle Past". He maintained his displaying programming, showing "Go by Cycle" to the National Philatelic Society in 2023. And only two years ago he published a book "A reminder of the British Greetings Telegram Service" a detailed catalogue of every issue.

Brian will be remembered for his hard work, his enthusiasm, someone whose great diplomatic skills could settle numerous contentious situations and questions, but perhaps more than anything for the kindness and interest he showed to every person who ever approached him about philately.

In memory of Brian here is a short piece he wrote in 2018 about his favourite subject:

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE RECOMMENDED A CYCLE RIDE

"When the spirits are low, when the day appears dark, when work becomes monotonous, when hope hardly seems worth having, just mount a bicycle, go out for a spin down the road, without thought on anything but the ride you are taking."
Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) Sherlock Holmes' creator.

Sherlock Holmes demonstrated his knowledge of bicycle tyres in "The Return of Sherlock Holmes" and "The Adventure of the Priory School" in issue No 158 Feb 1904 of the *Strand Magazine*.

The ten year old son of the Duke of Holderness escapes overnight from the Priory School and is kidnapped. On the same night the German master Heidegger disappears, taking his bicycle with him. Holmes and Dr Watson find a pathway in the middle of which "clearly marked in the sodden soil was the track of a bicycle". Watson cheers but Holmes says, "A bicycle definitely but not the bicycle. I am familiar with forty-two impressions left by tyres. This, as you perceive, is a Dunlop, with a patch upon the outer cover. Heidegger's tyres were Palmers's, leaving longitudinal stripes, Aveling, the mathematical master, was sure of that. Therefore it is not Heidegger's track."



EXHIBITING PAGE: FUTURE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS WITH PICTORIAL CLASSES

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP FOR THEMATIC PHILATELY 15 - 17 APRIL 2027

The European Championship for Thematic Philately (ECTP) will be held as part of the exhibition marking the 75th anniversary of Schweizer Motivsammler-Verein in Bulle, Switzerland. The event is being organised by the Federation of Swiss Philatelic Societies and hosted by the Swiss Motif Collectors' Association in cooperation with the Club Philatélique de Bulle. The ECTP aims to give Europe's best thematic exhibits the opportunity to compete in a single exhibition. The purpose of such a competition is to maintain and further develop international standards in thematic philately. At the same time, the ECTP is intended to offer an opportunity to introduce new exhibits to international level. For this reason, great importance is attached to recommendations by the jury, discussions between the exhibitors present, and a seminar and training programme. The ECTP is recognised by the FEPA, the umbrella organisation of all national philatelic federations in Europe, as the official European Championship for Thematic Philately, and was held for the first time in 2006. The FEPA is granting specialized patronage to the 2027 event.

There are nine classes: seven thematic, and for the first time a class for Open Philately (with a thematic focus) and Picture Postcards (with a thematic focus). There is also a one-frame thematic class.

The special time frame of the exhibition (Thursday to Saturday) allows for a FEPA seminar for thematic judges to be held after the ECTP. This seminar will begin on Saturday afternoon (17 April 2027) and end on Sunday afternoon (18 April 2027). The seminar part on Saturday afternoon is open to all interested ECTP exhibitors.

Full details will be found at www.thema-briefmarken.ch/ectp_bulle_2027/

Any member of the British Thematic Association (because it is affiliated to the ABPS) is entitled to enter. Application forms must be sent to the national delegate of the FIP Commission for Thematic Philately by 15 November 2026. Our Chairman Barry Stagg is the UK delegate.

BIRDPEX 28 - 30 August 2026

If your collecting interest is ornithology then book a holiday in La Louvière, Belgium! The 10th anniversary edition of BIRDPEX will take place again in Belgium, a country which has issued the longest-running definitive bird series in the world. BIRDPEX is a specialised exhibition dedicated to all kinds of exhibits with the theme "birds", primarily thematic philately, but other bird exhibits can also be shown (open philately, maximaphily, traditional philately, postal history, picture postcards, etc.). It is a national exhibition with international participation, also open to first-time exhibitors.

Full details can be found at <https://birdpex.com/>

EXHIBITING PAGE *continued*

SLOVPEX 30 June - 4 July 2027

This will be held at the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava, located in the centre of the city on the bank of the Danube.

Classes will include Thematic Philately, Open Philately and Picture Postcards. Applications must be received by 31 July 2026.

Full details can be found at <https://www.slovphilex2027.sk/en/home/>

PRAGA 22 - 26 March 2028

This will be held at the Industrial Palace building at the Prague Exhibition Grounds. It is being held to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the establishment of a regular postal service between Prague and Vienna; the 110th anniversary of the foundation of Czechoslovakia and the first Czechoslovak stamps; and the 35th anniversary of the establishment of the Czech Republic.

Classes will include Thematic Philately, Open Philately and Picture Postcards. There will also be a One-frame Narrow Theme Exhibit covering these classes. Applications should be received by 31 July 2027.

Full details can be found at <https://praga2028.cz/en/>

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From: Estelle Shale

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

I was today rereading the September 2025 Themescene and the Chairman's comments on the performance of AI. For my sins, before retirement I taught managerial applications of advanced technologies including AI to MBA students so I have some technical competence in the area. However, the reason I am emailing is that, at the end of last year, I was undertaking some thematic research on a fairly difficult topic - the emergence of indigenous theatre in Kenya. This is not a subject that is easy to embrace in South Wales and I was thus reduced to the internet (because of its international reach), and despite my professional misgivings embraced the use of AI to try to sift through the diverse and fragmentary information yielded by conventional searches. The results were beyond awful. It was a classic case of AI inventing convincing but spurious information about real people and places. Due to prior knowledge of AI's faults, I challenged the AI-led findings and it absolutely contradicted itself, labelling its previous pronouncements as entirely false. Eventually, I answered my questions the hard way after hours of conventional research and searching.

I fear that less sceptical collectors may be seriously misled, especially since AI generated summaries now usually appear first when using conventional internet search engines.

Editor's note: An article on using AI effectively for thematic research (it can be done!) is being planned for a future issue of Themescene.

BTA PROGRAMME 2026

- 13 June **Annual General Meeting**
Plus guest speaker Barbara Borlase-Hendry
Mining in Cornwall
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.
- 10 October
10.00 - 16.00 BTA One-Frame Competitions
At South of England Stamp Fair & Sussex Convention
Ardingly Showground, RH17 6TL.
See page 68 for full details

BTA PROGRAMME 2026

- 16 October **Zoom meeting**
19.00 for 19.30 Jean Wang
Blood: a modern medicine. Part 1
Examples of diverse philatelic material to include in a thematic collection about blood.
- 13 November **Zoom meeting**
19.00 for 19.30 Jean Wang
Blood: a modern medicine. Part 2
Using postal aspects of philatelic material to tell a story in thematic philately.

HERE AND THERE

UPU STAMP IDENTIFICATION APP

The Universal Postal Union now has an app version of its WADP Numbering System (WNS) database. This lists issues from nearly 200 UPU member countries and territories. It is expanding its information to include printing techniques, artists, engravers and issue quantities.

As the only global stamp database based entirely on official data submitted by issuers themselves, the WNS plays a crucial role in protecting collectors and the global multi-billion-dollar philately market from counterfeiting.

Both the web version and the app are a good source for searching for modern material by theme.

The web version is www.wnsstamps.post/ Or search the app store on your phone for “WNS stamps”.

COMPETITION: PHILATELY FORWARD

Do you fancy winning €1,000 to spend on your collection? FEPA (The Federation of European Philatelic Federations) has launched an open initiative to gather the best ideas for bringing new collectors into philately. What could inspire someone to start collecting stamps today? Whether you are a collector, exhibitor, society member, federation representative - or simply someone with a passion for stamps - FEPA want to hear your ideas. The best idea will be awarded a prize of €1,000 to build or expand a stamp collection. The deadline for participation is 31 October, and the winner will be announced in November. An online application form is on the FEPA website:

<https://fepanews.com/forward/>

BTA ONE FRAME COMPETITIONS 2026

@South of England Stamp & Postcard Fair, 10th October

It's time to prepare your exhibits for our annual competitions.

Our Classes:

- Thematic Philately (the winner receives the BTA Cup)
- Open Philately (the winner receives the John Fosbery Trophy)
- Picture Postcards (the winner receives the Brian Sole Trophy)
- Entries for these classes are subject to the National Rules and Regulations for the relevant class.
- Championship Class for previous winners in any class (Rules and Regulations are on the BTA website)

Additional rules for all classes

- Every exhibit must have an Introductory Page as the first sheet and all pages should be numbered at the foot of the page. Entries which are not scans must be in protectors.
- Scanned entries should be 300-400 dpi jpg format
- Previous winners of the Thematic, Open and Picture Postcard classes cannot enter the same exhibit in the same class in future competitions unless it has been altered significantly.

AWARDS. The Minimum points required to achieve LARGE GOLD level is 90.

For Gold level is	85	For Silver level is	65
For Large Vermeil level is	80	For Silver Bronze level is	60
For Vermeil level is	75	For Bronze level is	55
For Large Silver level is	70	For Certificate of Participation below	55

Judging will be carried out by Federation and/or National-level qualified judges.

More information about this year's show can be found at:

https://www.sussexphilately.org.uk/2026_South_of_England_Stamp_Fair.php

To enter:

Please send a 'notification of entry' e-mail to competitions@britishthematic.org.uk with the following information:

- Your name
- Title of entry or entries
- Class or classes you wish to enter, and
- How you intend to pay your entry fee(s) – see next page.

You may submit more than one entry.

Entry fees

£10 per competitive entry
£5 per display entry.

If you are sending original material to exhibit we advise your exhibits are insured as the BTA bears no liability for your material.
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Payment can be made by:

BACS to British Thematic Association, Sort Code 40-03-29, Account 71157701 from a UK bank account;

Or Cash at the Show; *Or* PayPal if you live overseas.

Deadlines

1. 'Notification of entry' e-mail by 25th September.
2. Scanned entries should be submitted to competitions@britishthematic.org.uk by 1st October.
3. Original entries that cannot be delivered to the South of England Stamp and Postcard Fair should be posted to Andrew Millington, Flat 4, 87 Shurdington Rd., Cheltenham, GL53 0J; to arrive by 1st October.
4. Original entries which can be taken to the South of England Stamp and Postcard Fair should be delivered to the competition organiser by 10.00 am, 10th October.

MARKING Thematic Philately – BTA Cup

Treatment	Title and Plan	15	
	Development	15	
	Innovation	<u>5</u>	35
Knowledge, Study & Research	Thematic	15	
	Philatelic	<u>15</u>	30
Condition and Rarity	Condition	10	
	Rarity	<u>20</u>	30
Presentation		<u>5</u>	
TOTAL		<u>100</u>	

MARKING Open Philately – John Fosbery Trophy

Treatment	Title & Plan	10	
	Treatment	<u>20</u>	30
Knowledge and Research	Philatelic	20	
	Non-philatelic	<u>15</u>	35
Material	Condition	10	
	Rarity	<u>20</u>	30
Presentation		<u>5</u>	
TOTAL		<u>100</u>	

MARKING Picture Postcard Class - Brian Sole Trophy

Idea, Plan and Treatment of the Topic	Idea and Plan	10	
	Treatment	<u>20</u>	30
Knowledge and Research		35	
Condition and Rarity	Condition	10	
	Rarity	<u>20</u>	30
Presentation		<u>5</u>	
TOTAL		<u>100</u>	

Just4Kids by Lise Whittle

(Adult readers, please photocopy these pages in colour and pass them on to a youngster you know.)

Happy 100th Birthday to Sir David Attenborough!

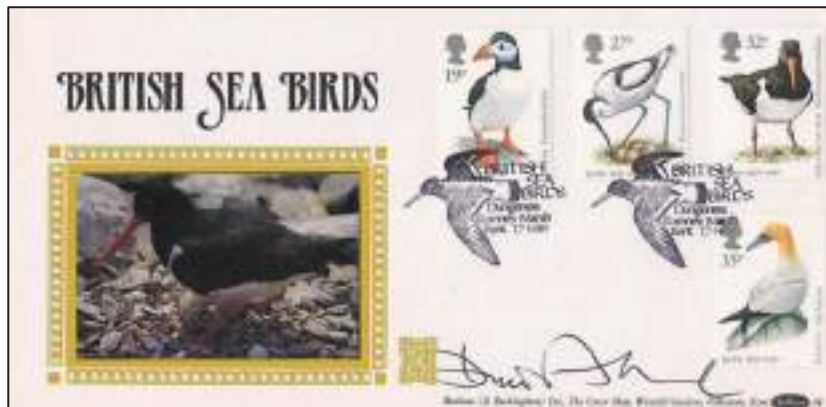
Sir David Attenborough recently celebrated his 100th birthday with a special event at the Royal Albert Hall in London, where he was thanked for his wonderful wildlife documentaries and nature programmes.

David Attenborough was born on 8 May 1926 in London (the same year as Queen Elizabeth II). His father was the Principal of a University College in Leicester, and that is where he grew up. When he was 11, he made a deal selling newts to the University for three pence each! (He found the newts in a nearby pond.)



1982 Leicester University First Day Cover signed by Sir David Attenborough

When he was 21 he spent 2 years serving in the Royal Navy, based in Wales and the Firth of Forth, where he was fascinated by the sea life and wildlife around him.



After leaving the Royal Navy, he applied for a job at the BBC as a radio talk producer, but he was rejected! He didn't even own a TV at that time! Finally he got his first job in television, and his first programme was about a rediscovered prehistoric fish called a coelacanth.



Two stamps showing the rediscovered prehistoric coelacanth

Sir David doesn't count himself as an animal 'lover', but he says he has always been fascinated by them. There is only one animal he doesn't like - rats!





*Various First Day Covers
signed by Sir David
Attenborough*

In 1985 he received a knighthood, granting him the title of Sir David Attenborough.

Here are some more facts about Sir David Attenborough:

- ◇ He is thought to be one of the most well-travelled people on the planet - for the 'Life of Birds' documentary, he travelled an amazing 256,000 miles - that's like travelling around the world 10 times!
- ◇ Sir David doesn't own a car as he's never passed his driving test!
- ◇ He prefers receiving letters by post rather than receiving emails.
- ◇ He has more than 50 animals and plants named after him.
- ◇ He also has a UK polar research ship named after him, the Royal Research Ship 'RRS Sir David Attenborough'.



Tell us about your favourite nature stamps and stories. 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.

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