

# WORLD POSTCARD DAY

**Picture Postcards: Why is a postcard more than just  
.... a postcard?**

**Barry Stagg**

**1 October 2021**

**[chairman@britishthematic.org.uk](mailto:chairman@britishthematic.org.uk)**

# Short history of the Picture Postcard

- Arguably, the first known printed picture postcard was created in France in 1870 by Léon Besnardeau.
- By the 1889 exposition in Paris postcards were well established.
- In 1894 first picture postcards produced in UK.
- In 1899 the UK standardized the Postcard as 5½ x 3½ inches
- 1902 to 1914 was the Golden Age of Postcards

# What is a Postcard in this context?

- It must have an illustration.
- It must be designed to go through the postal system.
- It may have been used (AND have evidence of going through a postal system).
- It may be unused (AND have evidence that it is designed to go through the postal system e.g. Address lines, stamp box).
- It may be black and white or coloured, with any printing type.
- It may be printed on any material.



Court Card size



Standard size

# Collecting, Displaying and Exhibiting Postcards

Why do people collect postcards?

# Collecting, Displaying and Exhibiting Postcards

Why do people collect postcards?

As many reasons as there are people in this room!

# Collecting, Displaying and Exhibiting Postcards

Why do people collect postcards?

As many reasons as there are people in this room!

Interesting, fun, pride, nostalgia, historical links,  
social aspect, pleasure, challenge, investment, cheap  
souvenir, easy to store, lots of them, community.



# What to collect?





# What to collect?



# What to collect?



ANYTHING!

The list is endless.

# Where do you collect them from?

Postcard fairs

Internet, such as Ebay and Delcampe

Auctions

Car boot sales

Antique dealers

Magazines

# Purchasing Postcard pitfalls

- Many things are labelled Postcards. Many are incorrectly labelled!
- Cards are not Postcards! Photos are not Postcards.
- Always ask to see the reverse of the Postcard. Does it satisfy the Postcard requirements?
- Used gives a good indication of period of use but quality may suffer.
- Modern reprints of old Postcards abound. Are you happy with a copy?
- Many eBay/Delcampe sales are from dealers. Try and find and use their own web sites as a better deal is often forthcoming.

# Storing your postcards

- In an postcard album or stock book.
- Keep them dry and out of the sun.
- Not in a drawer!
- Not in a shoe box!
- Make sure your nearest and dearest know what to do with them if you are no longer able to collect.



# Display or Exhibition

My definition of a display is an informal presentation to a group of people. No rules. No minimum or maximum size for the display.

My definition of an exhibit is an entry in a formal competition where your entry is judged to a standard. The standard is set out by a set of rules.

# Exhibits

The postcards are mounted in vertical frames, usually four rows holding four A4 sheets (or two A3 sheets) each

You will need eight A3 sheets to fill one frame  
(that works out to about 40 postcards a frame)

One frame is the minimum



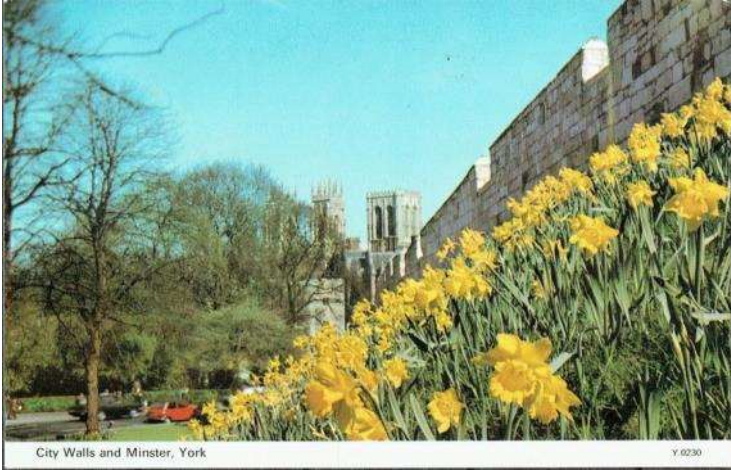
# So why do I collect Postcards?

I love to tell a story

Postcards are a great medium to do that

I display my postcards to societies and I have exhibited them nationally. My postcard exhibit has been abroad, the latest being Wuhan, China, in 2019

# Daffodil stories



Are they indigenous?  
Why were they  
originally found in  
certain places of the  
UK? When did they  
become popular?



# Topographical stories



Views of Cheltenham that  
no longer exist. Why?  
What is there now?



# Parachuting stories



What had the New York fair to do with Parachuting?

What was this lady doing and when?



What is the background to these two 'military' postcards?





# So what is the parachuting story?

There is history, passion, death and joy in the parachuting story. There are heroes and villains. It is a story largely untold.



From early parachutists

To modern day  
military parachutists



# But there is more to the story

Firstly, I can use postcards that support the story but do not show parachutes:



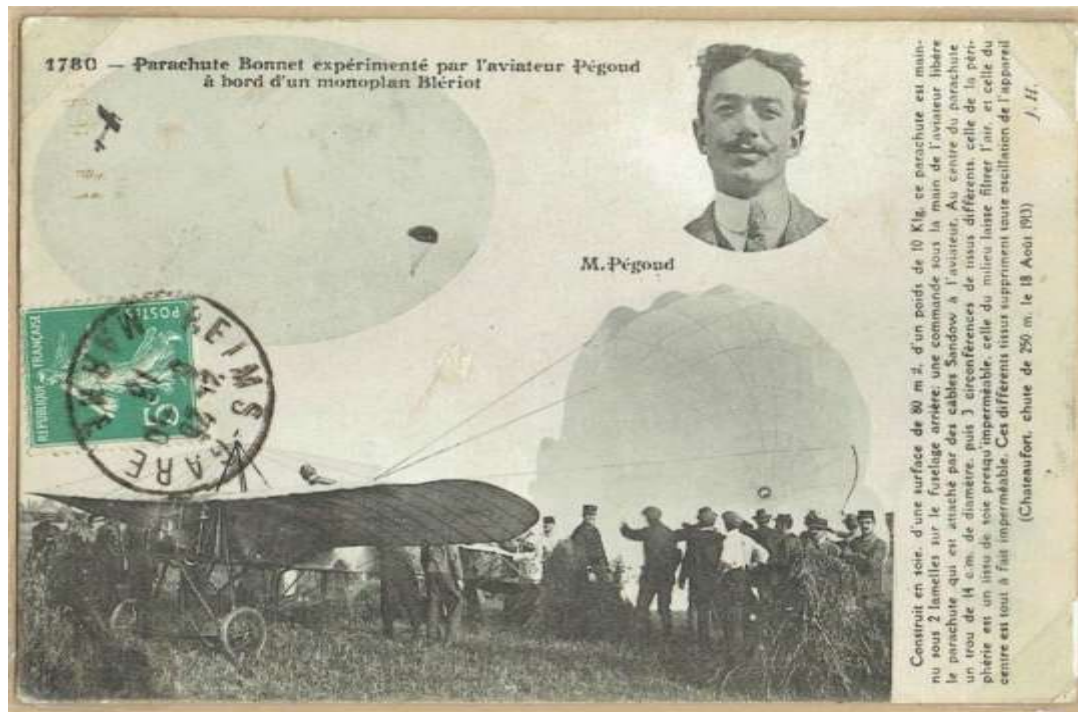
Parachutes were made of silk and this postcard shows part of the silk making process.



A parachutist sitting under the plane waiting for take off.

# But there is more to the story

And secondly, adding some 'technical' information about the postcard can make the display or exhibit more interesting.



1918, J. Hauser of Paris, -, used, Halftone.

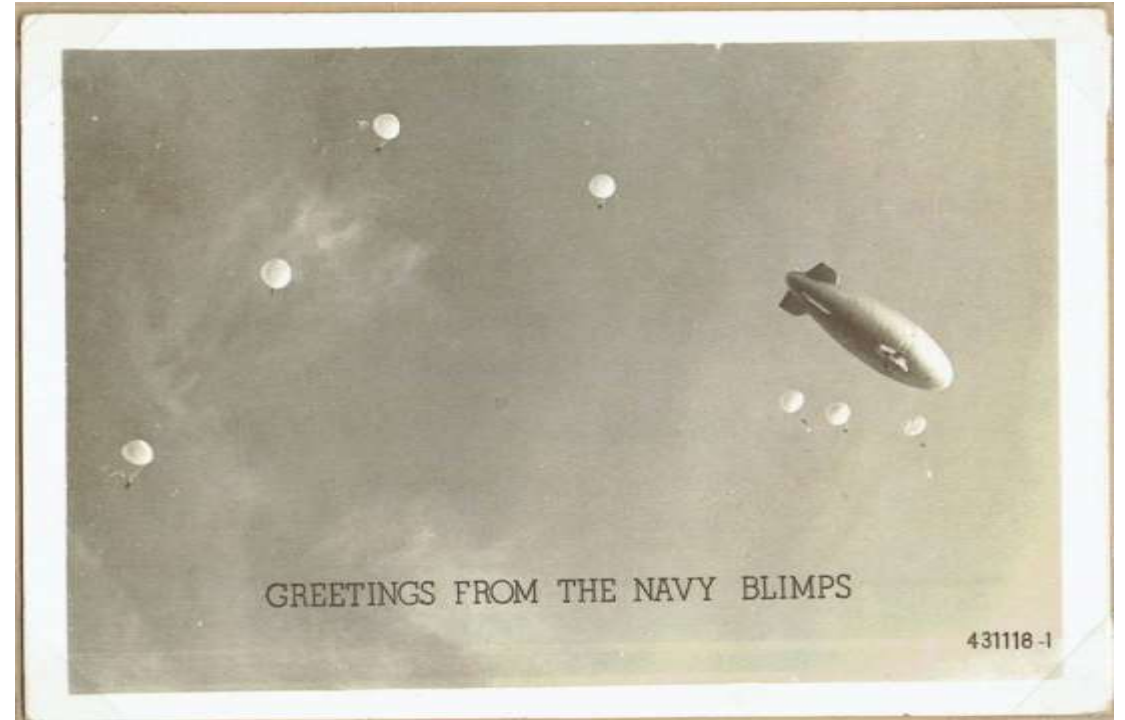
Under each postcard, if known:

- date when it was available
- artist or photographer
- printer
- used or unused
- printing method



# The structure of the story

The story begins with the manufacture of the parachute material and the training of the parachutists but the main story is the life cycle of a parachute.



# The life cycle of a parachute



On the way down  
and on the ground.



On the  
ground,  
on the  
way up.





# An early sheet in the exhibit

## 1.2 The birth of modern parachuting – parachutists entertain the crowds in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century



1904, G. Smith of London, -, used, lithograph and hand tinted.

Alexandra Palace, London was the home for many parachutists at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the summer they would entertain the crowds at the weekend by jumping from balloons.

In the early years after divided backs came into use (1902 in the UK) a few postcard printers still left some space for messages on the front of the postcard.

M. Pegoud was a well-known French parachutist, pilot and entertainer in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He would fly his plane and then jump out. He and his plane would both land safely!



1918, J. Hauser of Paris, -, used, Halftone.



Circa 1910, A.E. Langdon, -, unused, Real Photo (RPPC)

Dolly Shepherd (1886-1983), was a London-based Edwardian parachutist. From 1904 until 1912 she entertained crowds across the country jumping from balloons. She is considered by many to be the 'mother' of British parachuting and her image, in a mural, adorns the wall of Alexandra Palace to this day.

I have only seen one other postcard like this outside of a museum in 30 years of collecting and this one is also signed by Dolly.



Circa 1908, -, -, unused, Real Photo (RPPC)

The gas balloon ready for lift off. Gas or hot air balloons were used by parachutists in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The parachutist, the third from the left, is Dolly Sheppard. Note the parachute lying on the ground.

The French had their female parachutists as well. Note the risers join well above the head of the parachutist, making it impossible to steer. As the postcards says this is a parachute designed by Maurice Blanquier.



1920s, -, -, unused, Halftone .

# A later sheet in the exhibit

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



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

*This young lady is heading for an uncomfortable landing. Carrying a dog, umbrella and suitcase and her hat is falling over her eyes!*



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

*I never had this sort of landing! It certainly looks more attractive than landing on a grass field. This translates as 'Let yourself go, you will not get hurt'*



1938, F.C. Lewin, Salmon UK, used, Half-tone.

*Will they end up landing in the sea or on the sand!?*

*This translates as 'The brave parachutists'.*

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



1961, -, Colourpicture, Unused, Half-tone

*Landing in a water trough cannot be fun!*



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



# Practical Points for Postcard exhibitors

Postcards that show people, activities or transport are more interesting than general views

Try to get activity in your Postcards. Remember the technology 100 years ago found taking such images difficult



Interesting as the view is .....

... this is far more fun!

# Practical Points for Postcard exhibitors

On A4 paper you can only get two postcards

On A3 paper you can get five postcards

Postcards can be mounted first on stiff board to facilitate easy moving. Or they can be mounted using photo corners

# Practical Points for Postcard exhibitors

Give some thought to the colour of the paper.  
White can look harsh with older postcards

Use mounts or a box outline around the postcard

Give some thought to the colour of the mounts or  
outline colour

Try using different fonts for the story compared to  
the technical information



Almost finally ...

Please collect postcards

Please show them to people along with a good story, and

Please exhibit them

Future generations can learn so much from your stories

And finally .....

Collect what you like

Keep the postcards safe

Buyer beware!

Tell a story

Let the postcards tell the story, not the words on the sheet

And this presentation has looked at only one side  
of the postcard.  
There is another side which is equally interesting.  
For another day perhaps!

# References

- Collecting & Exhibiting picture postcards. Seija Laakso. Livonia Print 2012
- A guide book of collectible postcards. D.Bowers and M.Martin. Whitman. 2020
- General information on printing techniques  
[www.metropostcard.com](http://www.metropostcard.com)
- How to Identify Prints by Bamber Gascoigne. 2nd Ed.Thames & Hudson.2004.