

Halcyon

The Newsletter of the Redditch Philatelic Society – No. 24: Autumn 2014.

From the Chairman



Philately strikes me as being an amazing hobby as it incorporates so many completely different disciplines: postal history, aerophilately, traditional stamp collecting and thematic.

Most of us started out as schoolboy (or schoolgirl) collectors attempting to gather as many stamps from all over the world as possible. Once we realised that collecting every stamp was going to be impossible, we looked at 'specialising'. Deciding on what sort of material to concentrate is a process which depends as much as anything on chance. Were you influenced by talking to another collector ("You can't go wrong with GB stamps!"), or did you choose a country with which you had links (A cousin in New Zealand?), or perhaps you chose a theme which interested you (Birdwatching, football or transport?)?

While the majority of collectors go for collecting the stamps of a single country or group of countries, thematic collecting (or topical collecting as the Americans call it) is still growing in popularity. Thematic collecting gives the philatelist the opportunity to be creative and develop the collection in a chosen direction. There are catalogues on some themes, but the more esoteric the theme the less published information there will be, although the ATA (American Topical Association) do issue checklists on a range of topics.

How do you go about building a thematic collection? Dealers who specialise in thematics can be very helpful with advice, but once you have raided their stocks, it becomes more difficult. Keeping an eye on the new issue sections in the various stamp magazines is a great way to keep up to date, as is the internet.

Recently we had a visit from Les Pearcy, who showed us some of his collection of fungi on stamps. His thematic collection included mushrooms and toadstools, not only from the mainstream countries, but also 'Cinderella' material, which might be frowned upon by an orthodox collector. However, this adds interest and colour as well as the chance to add varieties of fungi not appearing on other stamps. Thematic collecting provides the opportunity to combine stamps, postal history,

postal stationery, maximum cards, first day covers, proofs, postmarks and booklets in an interesting way, and tell a story that everyone can understand. Perhaps over the winter you might consider adding a theme to your collection?

Alan Godfrey

The President's Piece

A shorter 'Piece' this time to allow our Chairman full rein on "his" subject.

Where has the first half of this season gone? I think I turned around and missed it; but I do know that I didn't miss some very good Guest Speakers, either as themselves or as part of a Society visit.



Alan is quite rightly still enthusing about Les Pearcy's visit in November.....

It is quite natural to end up not being able to attend every single Society meeting. There is much teeth gnashing when I find alternative diary entries stop me from coming along, and it is usually a very good meeting that gets missed too! Perhaps we should all just have one diary – ignore work commitments and make Stamp Collecting (and everything to do with this wonderful hobby) our priority.

Please remember that the first meeting after Christmas will be our Annual competitions – all nine sheets. You can only win if you enter, so please don't use the "I never win" excuse; put an entry in and surprise yourself. Of course there is also the rest of the Season to contemplate (*listed elsewhere Ed.*)

Entries for our Auction in March have now closed and I am looking forward to seeing yet another quality Catalogue towards the beginning of February.

With all of these future events, I fear that Alan's exhortation to "add a theme to your collection" this winter might fall at the first hurdle in Tysoe Towers.

Do have a happy and peaceful Christmas wherever you may be and please remember to come to meetings in the New Year.

Malcolm Allinson

EDITORIAL

OK, so your Editor is depicted this time (*left*), showing part of his "enlarged" collection of early Line Engraved to another Society a few weeks ago.

Just as well it is "enlarged" really, because the old eyesight can only take a few minutes at a time these days looking at the real things and the lighting has to be right too. What this does mean of course is longer and longer periods need to be spent in the "stamp room", and also longer and longer lists of "other jobs to be done" at some later date. Clearly balancing home commitments with one's hobby takes a lot of skill to make sure the balance tips the right way!

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Last time I mentioned the existence of a bookshop at Blickling Hall. This time I have moved north and highlight a super establishment in Alnwick (Northumberland). It is situated in the old railway station there and fills most of the old offices, waiting rooms and platforms. Having been there before a couple of times, I planned the foray quite well and armed myself with my lengthy list of publications – including many philatelic ones – hoping to add even more weight to the home bookshelves. Whilst I found quite a few I wanted, I did have to sit down in shock at some of the prices. So from my wants list of over 250 titles, I managed to buy just three; two of which were not on the original list at all. I suppose there is always that next Stamp Fair. Ho hum!

As is now customary, I would like to thank all of the contributors to this edition of *Halcyon* – **Bob Harper, Alan Godfrey, Chris Jackson, Robin Jarman, Pete & Joanna Elms, David Gillespie and Ralph Richardson**

Malcolm Allinson

Thematic websites

"From the Chairman" this time referred to a number of websites useful for Thematic collectors. Alan has kindly divulged them and they are:

<http://americantopicalassn.org/home.shtml>

<http://www.brit-thematic-assoc.com/>

<http://www.stamphelp.com/NEWS%20PAGES/THE%20MATIC%20STAMP%20COLLECTING%20NEWS.htm>

I am looking forward to lots of Thematic entries in our forthcoming Annual competitions now.

Malcolm Allinson

SOCIETY PROGRAMME:

The remainder of this Season's programme is reproduced here. Do come along to meetings. Disappointment cannot be reversed!

Jan 1 st	No Meeting
Jan 15 th	Annual Society Competitions (9 sheets)
Feb 5 th	Guest Speaker: John Walker - The Confederate States of America
Feb 19 th	Annual General Meeting.
Feb 26 th (Thurs)	Annual Dinner at Archers Restaurant
Mar 5 th	Members Show and Tell
Mar 19 th	Auction Preview (Members Only)
Mar 21 st (Sat)	Annual Society Auction.
Apr 2 nd	Bring 3 sheets or pay 50p
Apr 16 th	Guest Speaker: John Baron - Banking – The Financial World Tonight
May 7 th	Three Sheet Competition- "Letters E & F"
May 21 st	Visit from Wombourne PS
June 4 th	Guest Speaker: Richard Farman - The Chester Road through Staffordshire
June 18 th	President's Evening

IN ADDITION PLEASE PUT SATURDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2015 IN YOUR DIARY. IT IS OUR OWN STAMP FAIR AT ST. BENEDICTS SCHOOL ALCESTER

Other Philatelic Events for the Diary

The next few regional and national events are listed together here*. Please add these events to your diaries, and support them by attending where you can. Only patronage helps ensure these events continue.

16th – 17th January 2015

York Stamp Fair
York Racecourse YO23 1EX

17th – 21st February 2015

STAMPEX
BDC Islington LONDON N1 0QH

25th April 2015

MPF Spring Convention
Hosted by Banbury P.S. at Blessed George Napier School, BANBURY OX16 9DG

13th – 16th May 2015

LONDON 2015 Europhilex
BDC Islington LONDON N1 0QH

* Details may change. Please check with event organiser for confirmation.

In addition to the above list, we must not lose sight of **LONDON 2015 EUROPHILEX** will be held between 13th and 16th May. A long way off? Perhaps, but I am sure we all have things in our diaries already that are way beyond then. The closing date for entering the competitions has passed but with all eight International disciplines being competed, the Show promises to have plenty of top class exhibits to keep us occupied. Follow developments on www.london2015.net The event will be at the usual Stampex venue, and will have many top class national and international Dealers present with stock for every collecting habit. Watch out too for the various commemorative items for the 175th Anniversary of the Penny Black – yet another variety of Machin perhaps.

GB STAMPS FOR 2015



The above are the 2014 Christmas stamps already in circulation, but for those of you interested in GB stamps or thematics, the GB stamp issues for 2015 are listed here.

6 January:	Alice in Wonderland
20 January:	Smilers Mini Sheet and booklet
18 February:	Post and Go stamps: Working Sail
19 February:	Inventive Britons
5 March:	Bridges
1 April:	Comedy Greats
6 May:	175 th Anniversary of Penny Black Miniature Sheet
13 May	Post and Go: Heraldic Beasts
14 May:	First World War: 1915
2 June:	Magna Carta
18 June:	The Battle of Waterloo
16 July:	The Battle of Britain
18 August:	Bees
16 September	Post and Go: Sea Travel
18 September:	Rugby World Cup
6 October:	TBC
3 November:	Christmas
16 November	Post and Go: Winter Fur and Feathers

As yet Royal Mail's website remains silent on any details whatsoever, but at 18 separate issues, it will certainly be a case of saving hard to acquire the lot.

Your Editor has deliberately NOT costed the purchase of all of these issues, due to him possessing a wallet with a delicate disposition.

MEETING REPORTS

Thursday 4th September 2014 Mini Auction

If felt like we had not stopped meeting in June as this new season seems to have come around very quickly. It was great to have a good attendance at our first meeting. Plenty of banter and genuine pleasure at meeting up again after the Summer break.

The mini auction is a time for members to have a bit of fun selling unwanted material. It is always nice to see a mixture of different lots. The members present seemed very happy with the assortment of postcards, free fronts, GB mint and foreign material. A bit of fun was had with David Gillespie buying the free fronts..... Have we finally converted him to the ways of postal history?

I think I speak for us all when I say that I would like to thank Bob Harper for bringing his home grown bags of runner beans to sell for club funds. A pound a bag was very reasonable although the measuring system was somewhat haphazard.

In the words of the famous multi rich shop "Every Little Helps".

Peter Elms

Saturday 6th September 2014 Society Visit to The Midlands (GB) Postal History Society

The Society had been invited to give displays to the Midlands Postal History Society meeting held in Bromsgrove this afternoon. Chris Jackson, Alan Godfrey and Malcolm Allinson all displayed and were supported by Pete Elms and Robin Jarman. The afternoon was made all the more easier as everyone of the above is also a member of the MPH.



First up was Chris Jackson with his Needle Makers of Redditch. This was one of the finest displays of material I have seen. There was a mixture of material from early postal history, post cards, advertising cards and needle packets made by a variety of local companies. Chris was talking about the variety of makers in Redditch, for example, John James, Millwards, Avery, Shrimptons and many more. He was explaining how he managed to acquire very choice pieces such as one of his advertising rings. Towards the end of his talk, Chris laid out Avery needle containers. There was a pyramid for gramophone needles, plus various other Avery needle holders. There was even a needle case that looked like a miniature changing screen used by ladies of old for changing behind.

Second up was Alan Godfrey who gave a display of Stratford on Avon material showing the early Post Offices in that area. Alan was showing material that I had not previously seen



and was quite surprised at the way some of the covers looked as they were very old and yet still decipherable. With all his different types of post marks from Stratford, he also put up several sheets of the Shakespeare charity stamps that were sold by the church for funds. Alan was obviously very knowledgeable about his material and it was most informative to listen to him.



Our third and final display came from Malcolm Allinson who showed his Penny Blacks. Malcolm started his talk by describing the Post Office Act of 1839 which had a direct impact on the introduction of the Uniform Post advocated by Rowland Hill. William Wyon had engraved a medal to celebrate

the young Queen Victoria's visit to the Guildhall in 1837. It was this medal that was used as the basis for the design of the Penny Black. Malcolm showed an example of this medal in silver and he told us that he also has an example in bronze. We were left in the dark about the example in gold !

Malcolm told us that he had wanted to collect examples of all the Penny Black plates with MA corner letters on them. This would have made a very short display so he expanded the theme to collecting examples from the 'M' row of each Plate. From the Penny Blacks, Malcolm went on to talk about and show us Twopenny Blues. He collects these in the same way as the Penny Blacks so we again saw examples from the 'M' row and a number of faults and errors.

Further expansion into 1d Red stamps confined the theme to just examples with 'MA' corner letters as there are 177 Plates to collect. Finally we saw an almost reconstructed sheet of 2d Blues. To complete the display Malcolm put out various books that gave a very good insight into the history of the Penny Blacks.

Pete Elms

Thursday 18th September 2014 Two members Displays

A truly home grown evening tonight, as the speakers have also furnished their written commentaries. Your Editor is extremely pleased at this innovation !!

Bob Harper began with a display of **Aviation**, and writes:

I had recently acquired a small collection of pages containing a display called "From Myth to Mach Two – The story of Sopwith and Hawker". I advised the members that although this was not my work, it was well worth displaying before I integrated it into my aviation collection. It began with details of T.O.M. (Tom) Sopwith, designer of the 'Tabloid' which, in seaplane configuration, won the 1914 Schneider Trophy and followed through with all of the types which had been used on a stamp or cover.

All the famous Sopwith designs such as the 'Pup', 'Dolphin' and the 'Camel' were included. The display moved on to the liquidation of the Sopwith Company in 1921. The directors feared that H.M. Government might ask for tax on the companies' war time profits. Shortly afterwards however a new company was formed by the former Sopwith test pilot, one Harry Hawker, an Australian living in the UK, together with Sopwith and others. The new company, Hawker engineering took over the Sopwith companies facilities and became very successful with bi-plane fighters such as the 'Hind' & the 'Hart'. Sadly Hawker died in an air crash in 1921. The Hawker company's chief designer Sidney Camm joined them in 1923 and the display showed his most famous designs such as the 'Hurricane', the 'Hunter' and the 'Hawk'. In 1935 they purchased the Aviation interests of J. Siddeley plus A.V. Roe and Gloster Aircraft but did not change the company name to Hawker Siddeley until much later. As the display was relatively short I added a few pages from the 'Concorde' section of my collection, illustrating the history of this iconic aircraft with many of the numerous stamps showing Concorde from around the World.

Bob Harper

After the refreshment break Pete Elms continued with **BIRMINGHAM INDUSTRIES** and writes:

Back in the 19th century, Birmingham became an industrial power house known as the City of a Thousand Trades. I put up a display of pages from advertising pamphlets to show examples of just some of the diversity to be found there at that time. Some of the names of businesses based there include: W & T Avery, weighing scales; Zachariah Parkes, steel mills for grinding; Joseph Gillot, steel pens; Joseph Sheldon, steel spectacle cases and silver pen cases; William Burton and Co., augers, braces and bits, compasses; G M Horton and Co., goldsmiths and silversmiths; William Horton and Co. (related to G M Horton), needle makers who had factories in Birmingham and Redditch; Robert Foster and Co., travelling trunks and hat and bonnet boxes.

I also put up a display of bill heads showing some of the manufacturers of fishing tackle and fish hooks based in Redditch. The names included: Martin James, Albert Smith, S Alcock and Co., William Bartleet, Congress Needle Co., William Adams, Millwards, George Moore, Henry Wilkes, R Turner, A E Rudge and Alfred Booker.

To demonstrate the extraordinary exporting distances achieved by these intrepid manufacturers of the industrial revolution, I put up a selection of postal history sheets showing the countries exported to by these Birmingham manufacturers. For the purposes of this report, I will just give the date and name of the countries: Canada, 1853 and 1871; France, 1859; Algeria, 1864 and 1865; Turkey, 1865; USA, 1870; Germany, 1876; Egypt, 1892; Finland, 1892; and just into the 20th century Palestine in 1905.

To finish off my talk I decided to mention a couple of new acquisitions to my collection. Firstly a row of 1966 Battle of Hastings stamps with an exceptional colour shift of grey on all the stamps and secondly, a copy of a Mulready envelope. A Mulready envelope is an imitation that is printed in violet. This one was posted early in the morning of 1st August 1911 from Birmingham and arrived at lunchtime on the same day in Burton-on-Trent.

I have included below a picture of the page of example fishing flies tied to fish hooks by outworkers in Redditch for various manufacturers.

Pete Elms



A selection of Pete's flies with fabulous names Butcher Zulu, Whickham's Fancy and others.

Thursday 2nd October 2014 Single sheet competition

The usual format for this event remained in place for this year. In case anyone is not aware of how it works, each member can enter three different one sheet displays with only the best to count. Each person present votes for his or her Top Ten but with no voting allowed for your own entries. The scores are then added up and the entry with the most points wins. If only all competitions were that simple!

There was a wide choice of scoring from the members as to the order in which they placed the entries but a clear winner emerged in Chris Jackson's Postcards to a Redditch soldier of the First World War, which was a most appropriate

subject in this Centenary Year of the start of WW1. As if to display the diversity of entries Alan Godfrey's Railway Labels were voted into second place. There was a tie for third between Ralph Richardson's Penny Lilacs and Pete Elms' GB Gutter Pair error.

It was a bad day for the aerophilatelic members who occupied the last three places with Lyel Swingler being the best with his Auster flown mail. After refreshments those members who had entered were asked to tell us a little bit about their displays, which is always an entertaining part of the proceedings. Those present enjoyed an excellent night and I look forward to even more entries next year.

Robin Jarman

Thursday 16th October 2014 Guest Speaker: Terry Harrison St. Vincent

Terry started his talk with a map of the island and explained that it was approximately one fifth of the size of the Isle of Wight and was originally known at St Vincents.

The pre stamp rate of 2/2d to get a letter to the UK was prohibitive. Consequently it was cheaper to send mail by the captain of a passing ship. Terry showed examples of both routes with the first handstamp of the island which was a fleuron. An entire sent in 1817 via Gravesend had a 1/2d charge and an 1842 entire via Portsmouth was charged 4/-.

In 1861 Perkins Bacon printed the first stamps for the Island, Terry showed a Proof, a Die Proof and Plate proofs of the 1d, 4d and 1/- values. (**Plate proof example: left**). The stamps have a multiplicity of perforations due to the use of two machines which were both refurbished and had the pins reset during the perforation process.

In 1881 St Vincent joined the U.P.U. and so had to introduce a ½d value. It was ordered in pink but was delivered in orange. Subsequently Perkins Bacon lost the contract due to accounting errors and the work passed to De la Rue. Terry showed a series of De la Rue proofs from Perkins Bacon plates.

When the postal authority ran out of a particular value they overprinted unpopular values. When they needed more 2½d stamps they overprinted the 1d values. When the 1d value eventually ran out due to use as 2½d they struck out the original overprint and overprinted 1d on top!

In 1898 a 5/- value was issued which had a total of 5 different printings, all of which Terry showed. At this



time they ran out of the 2½d value again so this time they overprinted the 4d. Terry finished the first half of his talk with a display of Postal Stationery.

After the break Terry showed a comprehensive display of the QV key plates which were introduced in 1899. This was followed by the 1907 issue which moved away from Monarchs heads to Coats of Arms with the motto "Pax ex Justitia".

The 1935 Windsor Castle set was shown on a cover from Barclays Bank to the UK. It said that they were willing to do some covers for the addressee so long as they sent money in advance. A practice which Terry assured the audience was against Barclays Bank policy!

A number of censored covers included one coming to St Vincent from Canada. The Silver Wedding omnibus issue should have had a £1 stamp in black but when the package arrived it did not contain any £1 values. The only known copies are in the Royal collection. It was later reprinted in mauve.

In the 1950's St Vincent moved away from the pictorial designs used by many of the Colonies and produced a very unusual 50c stamp which included the "Pax ex Justitia" motto.

(Right: St Vincent 1955 50c red-brown, Watermark Multi Script CA, perf 14, SG 198.)



Finally Terry explained that there were some 60 Post Offices on St Vincent which was a lot considering the island is only 11 miles by 8 miles. He then showed pictures of some 16 sub offices matched to items bearing the appropriate cancellation.



Terry Harrison pointing out some unusual items from his display.

In his Thank You speech the Chairman commented on the fact that it was the first time the Society had had a speaker on St Vincent and complimented Terry on the mix of postal history and stamps that made a truly comprehensive display and thoroughly enjoyable evening for us.

Chris Jackson

Thursday 6th November 2014

Guest Speaker - Les Pearcy

Fungi

Les Pearcy's third visit to Redditch gave us an insight into the strange world of fungi. Your editor did ask: Why does he collect this material? Because he's a FUN GUY! (*I have to accept blame for this joke. My repertoire simply mushrooms. Ed.*)

Les explained that there were five kingdoms of living organisms: plants, animals, protists, bacteria and fungi. Fungi include not only the mushrooms and toadstools that we are all familiar with, but also moulds, yeasts, plant rusts, mildews, athletes' foot, thrush, penicillin and many more.

Not all these are represented on stamps, (fortunately for two of the above) but Les showed us quite a number. He explained that the mushrooms and toadstools above ground were only the fruiting bodies of the fungus and that a fungus' mycelium (thread-like filaments) spread huge distances underground.



The largest living organism in the world is thought to be a honey fungus colony (*Armillaria ostoyae*) in Oregon, USA which spans 8.9 square kilometres. Les displayed toadstools from all over the world, but explained as the spores are so light and are carried great distances by the wind; the same varieties of fungi appear all over the world. Les said he started out displaying by species, but soon realised it was better to organise his display by country. Although, we recognised most of the countries with fungi on stamps, at least one was completely new: the 'People's Republic of Tongo' which seems to be a prolific issuer of 'stamps' with a fungi theme. These bogus 'stamps' are highly attractive, issued in miniature sheets and apparently come from Romania.

The most alluring fungi are Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), the red and white toadstools that appear in fairy stories. Unlike many of the brightly coloured fungi, they are only mildly poisonous, but they are hallucinogenic. Indeed, the Lapps feed these to their reindeer and then drink their urine to dilute the effect of the drug.

Les showed us several examples of deadly toadstools on stamps which closely resembled edible species. Those to avoid included Death Cap (*Amanita phalloides*), Destroying Angel (*Amanita virosa*), Panther Cap (*Amanita pantherina*) and the Devil's Bolete (*Boletus satanus*), which closely resembles the delicious Porcini (*Boletus edulis*). Finally, we saw the Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*), which manages to combine a strange phallic shape with a truly foul smell, but when young can be eaten!



Les Pearcy showing a page from his Fungi display.

Les's talk was extremely interesting and his anecdotes added to the fascinating fungi stamps on display.

Alan Godfrey

Thursday 20th November 2014 Society Visit from Solihull PS

Tonight we received a visit by three members of Solihull PS beginning with John Barker who took the floor with a fine display of postal stationery. 1869 saw the first postcard, issued in Austria. 1872 saw the first 'two-part' postcard, the second (joined) portion being for the reply. Both parts carried integral, printed stamps. The first British attempt followed during the 1870's, not surprisingly attended by a plethora of complicated regulations. That decade also saw a UPU resolution that all member states should accept 'double' i.e. reply-paid cards. All of the above were plain cards for written messages, not the pictorial cards that we have since become used to.

The double cards led to a number of complications in use, not least being that many staff felt that they should be cancelling both stamps on the 'outward' journey.

A wide number of uses were subsequently developed for this type of card, including, in Switzerland, rural post offices submitting meter reading returns, also firms canvassing orders. In Lithuania they were used by the Ministry of Agriculture for collecting information on pests, e.g. rabbits. Finally reply-paid letter cards were shown, comprising a letter inside a letter, as used in Holland and Newfoundland.

Laurence Kimpton next presented a display consisting of some stamps (admirable) but many envelopes. His specialist subject was Clipperton Island, which as we all knew (!!) is off the coast of South America. It is, we were told, 1100km southwest of Acapulco, Mexico. It is the only coral atoll in the Eastern Pacific, and is claimed by three countries, at present being French. The English pirate John Clipperton discovered it in 1704, but it is thought that he never set foot on it. In 1711 a French expedition set foot, and it is therefore claimed (by France) to have been discovered by them.



A native bird of Clipperton Island: The Masked Booby

A complex subsequent history included being the base for an American Phosphate Company; being invaded by Mexico; and also a USA flag being planted. During the US period stamps were issued for postage to San Francisco; these were subsequently copied. Whilst in Mexican occupancy an Australian Company was invited to mine guano, and Mexican stamps and postal stationery were used, overprinted. The Mexican occupation came to an end when a revolution took place in Mexico, and the new 'owners' forgot to supply the Clipperton Garrison!

In 1900 it was agreed that the Pope could mediate regarding the three countries claiming ownership, but he declined to become involved. King Victor Emmanuel of Italy assumed that responsibility, and took 30 years to decide (in favour of France).

Stamps and covers were displayed relating to various subsequent events, including Trans-Pacific flights, for example by Catalina flying boats, and US wartime occupation. There was also a 1966 CIA presence watching Russian trawlers, when some operatives prepared local stamps. These were suppressed by managers, but some 'escaped'.

Laurence's last four sheets were of 1999 internal Northern Australian mail runs, one of which he had travelled on. Covers were shown, addressed to himself in the UK.

The third and final speaker was Clive Jones with a fine collection of Travelling Post Office (TPO) covers from Scotland which became the destination of



perhaps the majority of TPO's. These were first sanctioned by an 1838 Act of Parliament. However none reached Scotland for a further ten years since there were no railways! The first of

these was a Caledonian Railway office travelling north from Carlisle. A cover was shown with the first cancellation, one of only four known. It took a further four years for a service to reach Aberdeen.

A range of covers were shown including experimental cancels, special registered handstamps, miss-sort marks and late fee covers.

Most of the above were from the West Coast main line, the East Coast being relatively late into the act. Clive finished with a special cancel from a 1938 TPO centenary replica coach.

Our Chairman offered our thanks for showing us some magnificent material and gave each of our visitors a sought-after Redditch P.S. Certificate of Appreciation.

David Gillespie

Following this very informative evening members may wish to have a look at some related websites.

The Postal Stationery Society has a website at
<http://www.postalstationery.org.uk>

For more information about Clipperton Island:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clipperton_Island

The TPO and Seapost Society can be found at
<http://www.tpo-seapost.org.uk/tpo2/home.html>

Tuesday 2nd December 2014 Society Visit to Solihull PS

SEMI-POSTAL STAMPS.

Semi-postal is a definition more widely used in the USA; we would perhaps describe them as charity stamps i.e. stamps with a charity surcharge over and above the postal face value. The display comprised the early (mint) semi-posts of France, from the first issue in 1917 through to 1950, with those of Romania, whose first issue (1906) predated that of France by 11 years.

Charities supported were many and varied, from France's 'sinking fund' (definition; provision against future liabilities) through to Romania's Anti-Bolshevism Crusade.

David Gillespie

Robin Jarman began the second half of the evening with part of his Chilean airmail collection. Despite asking, unfortunately no one could decipher the writing on his 1910 postcard which seemed to be some sort of invitation to a flying meeting. Moving on to the first semi-official airmail service in 1927, Robin explained that even with its high sounding name it only flew between Santiago and Valparaiso.

In 1929 the Chilean authorities set up their own airline run by the military from Santiago to Arica in the mineral rich north. This became LAN, an airline still operating today, in 1932 and was run on a commercial basis. Robin showed a first flight

postcard from the original military line of 5th March 1929.

The remainder of his display covered the formation of Pan American Grace Airways, a subsidiary of Pan Am, from July 1929 to the end of World War II. He explained the difficulties of the early days, in particular the barrier of the Andes in the connection to Argentina. A crash cover of 1938 illustrated this as the mail was not recovered for almost three years due to the remoteness of the site. He concluded with covers addressed to Europe during the War which had to pass through the Pan Am system as this was the only route left. He admitted that he had much to learn on this aspect.

Robin Jarman

Thursday 4th December 2014

Guest Speaker: Martin Parker.

Junk Mail and the 1937 Coronation.

Having checked the title of tonight's meeting before I left home, I thought it was just one subject – however unlikely, as being a one year old, I do not remember junk mail in 1937. Of course had there been such items, I am sure the Queen would have stopped it.

The evening turned out to be two separate displays, divide by refreshments. In Part One we saw the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, all British Empire, all over the world and no junk mail to be seen. 58 countries issued Coronation stamps in 1937; some hurriedly substituting TWO members of the Royal Family for the One originally expected. There were 202 stamps and we saw them mint and used; in blocks and on covers. Rather surprisingly, this was the first issue of stamps to commemorate a Coronation (but there had only been two possible beforehand). Every third sheet of the display was an article about life in 1937; all perfectly clear to me but maybe new to others. The 12 sided threepenny bit was issued in that year – and now we are shortly to see a £1 coin of similar geometry. The 999 Emergency Phone number also came in 1937, so if my pocket money had been stolen my parents could have phoned the Police - if only they had had a telephone! We all enjoyed this well presented and clearly described display on a single theme.

Martyn's opening remark for Part Two was that the subject was PPI. Now I have been driven mad by telephone calls from all over the world recommending I claim compensation for PPI. (*perhaps Ralph's parents had the right idea!!! Ed.*) Surely we were not to have a talk about it too? Rest Assured, PPI had nothing to do with any miss-selling but all to do with Printed Postal Impressions. PPI are the stamp like impressions used for Junk Mail. There seemed to be hundreds, maybe thousands of them, dating back to 1937 (!!) and Readers Digest. The real introductory date turns out to have been 1966. PPI were supposedly designed to resemble stamps in order to fool the recipient into

opening the package rather than throwing it away. I suspect most of us have seen these designs and taken no real notice of them. They did not really resemble stamps, except for perhaps their position on an envelope. I don't know if I was alone in thinking that PPI was not the most interesting thing I had seen that week, but our speaker had an incredibly full display and showed his great knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject - a subject novel to most of us. For anyone thinking of starting a PPI collection, there are now only six designs available and then with just three options – 1, 2 or M. Your collection could be complete in minutes.

Martin Parker came a very long way from Stroud to entertain us and he did so extremely well with two completely different displays.

Ralph Richardson

Tuesday 9th December 2014

**Afternoon Meeting. Members Displays;
“The Nineteenth Century”**

Following requests from members, the Committee decided to organise an afternoon meeting in deference to those members who do not wish to come out on dark winter nights. A fair gathering of members attended the initial meeting and presented displays on “The Nineteenth Century”. First up was Pete Elms with a letter from 1801 and some surprising Russian Royal Family connections. He was followed by Lyel Swingler who showed us early Dutch correspondence and Bob Harper completed the first third with his Barbados.

After a break for a cup of tea, Robin Jarman regaled us with his threatened Posthorns of Norway. Ralph Richardson gave his usual precise display of 19th Century GB and Sergio Andrioli showed us two small stockbooks he had just received, covering German states and the Belgian Congo. Another break allowed members to look at the above displays and then Chris Jackson displayed some postcards of Redditch, including Beoley and a selection of undated circle postmarks of the local area. Robin Jarman finished with a quick look at the early Columbus stamps of Chile.

An excellent and varied selection of displays, which again demonstrated the breadth of collecting knowledge there is in the Society.

Robin Jarman

A postscript to the last issue of Halcyon.

As is usually the way, as soon as you commit yourself to print further information arrives. Those of you who read my article in the last issue may remember that I was unsure of the details of why a delay to the mail had occurred in Porto Praia in the Cape Verde Islands. Whilst searching the internet for an unrelated topic, I came across a website detailing aircraft crashes and sure enough there was one for the correct place and date, namely Porto

Praia on 26th March 1928. What happened I have yet to establish but the craft involved was a CAMS 53 registered F-AIMS seaplane. There were no fatalities so presumably the crash was not too serious as the mail was not damaged either.



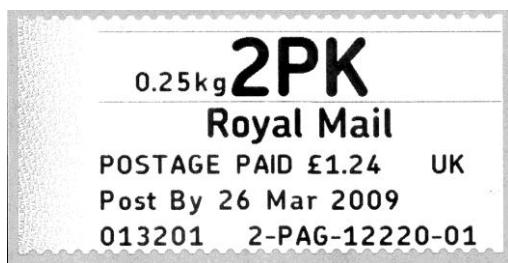
This shows another reason to keep looking as the answer will be out there somewhere.

Robin Jarman

OPEN VALUE POST & GO STAMPS
Modern Postal History at its best.

On 28th February 2014 Royal Mail began rolling out new NCR Post & Go machines. These will eventually replace all of the Wincor-Nixdorf machines in Post Offices throughout the UK. I am unsure how many Wincor-Nixdorf machines are out there but I believe it to be about 225. What I do know is that some 700 NCR machines are planned because they allow the customer to obtain many of the services which are presently only available over the counter.

Let us look briefly at the genesis of the system. If we ignore the FRAMA label trials of 30 years ago, it was in 2008 when the first ‘Faststamps’ were introduced beginning with The Galleries Post Office in Bristol. There had been trials of both IBM and Fujitsu machines alongside the Wincor’s which won the contract. The Wincor Nixdorf’s could produce, in addition to the stamps, PAG Labels for other services and below I show two from my collection, produced by me at Birmingham Pinfold St. P.O. in 2009. (PAG = Post & Go – see labels below).



It will be noted that, unlike the Faststamps, they have a 'Post By' date restriction.

The Wincor-Nixdorf's were in use for the last six years and in addition Royal Mail used a handful of Hytech Postalvision machines which were mobile and were able to produce bulk printings for philatelic purposes. They will remain in use and regularly visit exhibitions such as STAMPEX, and at travelling or 'Pop-Up Post Offices'. All of these machines lacked the ability to provide *inter-alia*, Signed for and Special Delivery services, so – enter NCR. The new machines come in two's and can dispense on three reels so both 1st and 2nd Class stamps are produced plus special issues. The first operational 'Kiosk' was at Harpenden, Herts. and started operation on 28th February 2014. Redditch had a new 'Kiosk' this Summer.

The new 'Open Value' Faststamp. This one is from Harpenden, Herts. 1LG = 1st Class Large, C4 is the VAT code and then the cost and item weight are shown.

There is no 'Post By' restriction so collectors regard them as stamps rather than labels. VAT codes do not appear on the Faststamps issued by NCR machines as part of a 'Collectors strip'.

At this moment in time there are 50 different combinations of Open Value Faststamps (including the seven Parcelforce versions) – Deep pockets are needed for any completists within our ranks. The base labels are the standard Walsall Security Printers issue however the spindles on NCR machines are larger and Walsall have unbundled the rolls already produced and have rewound them to fit! The NCR's will continue to issue the familiar FastStamps if you press 'Buy Stamps' on their new colourful graphical screen but weigh your item and follow the instructions and.... Who knows what you might get?

Bob Harper

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN'S LOST EXPEDITION



The recent discovery by the Canadian government of the remains of the ship *HMS Erebus* on the sea bed off the coast of King William Island in Canada has finally explained the mysterious fate of one of the two ships of Franklin's 1845 expedition.

Sir John Franklin was an experienced explorer, having led expeditions in 1819 to the Coppermouth River in Canada, and in 1825 to chart the coastline from the mouth of the McKenzie River westward and to meet up with Frederick William Beechey, who was sailing eastward

from the Pacific. He later spent seven years as Governor of Van Dieman's Land (now Tasmania), where his humane ideals and attempts to reform the penal colony were disliked by local civil servants. He was removed from office in 1843 and returned to London with his wife, Jane.

By 1845 only a small stretch of the Canadian Arctic remained unexplored and the British government decided to send a well-equipped expedition to chart and follow the Northwest Passage, the route which



led from the Atlantic Ocean through to the Pacific Ocean. Sir John Barrow offered command of the expedition to James Clark Ross, who turned it down. An invitation to lead the expedition was then extended to Franklin, who despite his age (59 years) was persuaded by his wife to accept. The two ships provided to the expedition were *HMS Erebus*, commanded by Captain James Fitz James, and *HMS Terror*, commanded by Captain Francis Crozier. Both ships had previously sailed in Antarctic waters (under Sir James Clark Ross in 1841-4). The ships set sail on 19th May 1845, reaching Baffin Bay on 26th July 1845, the last time any of them were seen by Europeans.



Over the next 150 years explorers and scientists pieced together the story of the loss of the ships and the fate of the 129 crew.

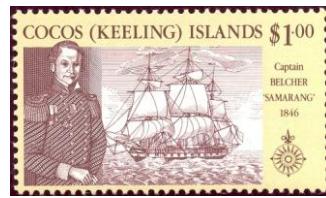
members. Franklin and his men overwintered in 1845-6 on Beechey Island, where three crew members had died and were buried. In September 1846 the two ships were trapped in the ice off King William Island and never sailed again. The crew wintered for two years on King William Island and in a note dated 25th April 1848, left by Fitz James and Crozier, the remaining crew planned to begin walking the next day to Back River on the Canadian mainland. This note (discovered by the crew of the yacht *Fox* in 1859) also stated that Franklin himself had died on 11th June 1847. Nine officers and fifteen men had already died; many more would die on the island and another thirty or forty on the northern coast of the mainland.

After two years and with no word from the Expedition, Lady Franklin urged the Admiralty to launch a search party. As the ships carried supplies for three years, the Admiralty delayed for another year before launching the search. Three expeditions were despatched: Captain Henry Kellett to the Pacific Ocean; John Rae and Sir John Richardson to trek overland from the mouth of the McKenzie River; and Sir James Clark Ross (with *HMS Investigator* and *HMS Enterprise*) approaching from the east. His ships were trapped over the winter and the crew hit by sickness. Despite this they surveyed the shore of Peel Sound (without realising this was the actual route followed by Franklin). All three expeditions failed to find any trace of Franklin's ships. As a result of the public outcry and the efforts of Lady Franklin in 1850 the Admiralty offered a £20,000 reward for anyone finding and assisting the expedition.

In 1850 the British Government sent eight ships to the Arctic to continue the search, the Hudson Bay sent two expeditions (including the aging Sir John Ross aboard the *Felix*) and an American businessman, Henry Grinnell, also sent an expedition with the help of the US Navy to join the

search. The first discovery of remains was made by *HMS Resolute* and *HMS Assistance*, who found signs of Franklin's first winter camp. Then William Penny, with the brigs *Sophia* and *Lady Franklin*, found the graves of three crew members of Franklin's expedition who had died in 1846.

The Admiralty sent its last and largest search expedition in 1852, comprising five ships under Sir Edward Belcher. Not only was concern for Franklin growing, but two of the ships in the 1850 search: *HMS Investigator* (under Commander Robert McClure) and *HMS Enterprise* (under Captain Richard Collinson) were also unaccounted for.



Belcher rescued McClure, whose extensive sledging exploration had convinced him he had found the route of the Northwest Passage. The Admiralty agreed and awarded him and his men a £10,000 prize. Belcher's expedition was a failure, he abandoned four of his five ships, for which he was court-martialled (although he was exonerated). Another US expedition, again funded by Henry Grinnell, led by Elisha Kent Kane in 1853 also ended in failure.

On 31st March 1854 the Admiralty declared Franklin and his men were presumed dead. The same year John Rae set off again on his third overland expedition. He encountered Inuit who told him of a large group of men who had perished from starvation several years earlier near the mouth of a large river (he worked out that this was Back River). The Inuit reinforced their reports by producing a number of articles, which Rae acquired from them and identified as coming from Franklin's expedition. He and his men received £10,000 from the Admiralty for this information

In England, Lady Franklin maintained her determination to continue the search, spending her fortune, as well as receiving public sympathy and financial assistance. In 1857 she fitted out the steam yacht *Fox* and persuaded Captain Francis Leopold McClintock to lead one final attempt to find her husband. In 1859 McClintock and his men searched King William Island and found the cairn containing the note written by Crozier and Fitz James in 1848, the only documentary evidence of the fate of the expedition. McClintock also found a ship's boat containing two skeletons. Lady Franklin at last had the solace of knowing when and where her husband had died. For his efforts McClintock received a knighthood and Parliament voted £5,000 to the officers and men of the *Fox*.

Later expeditions discovered further artefacts and skeletal remains, which showed evidence of lead poisoning and cannibalism, but the discovery of *HMS Erebus* in 2014 is the first major find in almost one hundred and fifty years.

Alan Godfrey

R.U. BEING TAKEN FOR A RIDE?

Did you get a Gibbons 2014 price list through the post just recently?

Well, I did, and made the obligatory quick search through it to see if there was anything to interest me. As it turned out, there was - 'Foreign Stamp Catalogue Part 4, Benelux', at a '40% reduced price'. OK, it's a 2010 edition but still newer than any other catalogue that I possess. Anyway, that's not my reason for writing, the following is.....

My eye was next caught by the list of Windsor Popular Albums. These of course are pre-printed

albums for the stamps of Great Britain. There are seven albums in the set.

Now I'm reasonably OK at mathematics but one of the mental blockages I've always had is whether to add '1' when dealing with timespans. An example of what I mean by this is that the number of years included in an album covering the years 2004- 2009 is not simply subtracting one from the other, 9 minus 4 being 5. You then add one, making it six years.

Well once I'd sorted out what any schoolboy would do without even thinking, I decided to look at the period in years, covered in each of the seven albums. Bear in mind that they're all of similar thickness, and each contains spaces for a broadly the same number of stamps.

Well looking at Volume One, this covered the period 1840- 1952, i.e. a span of 113 years. There was then a huge jump in Volume Two, which covered just 19 years. It's too boring to list all subsequent volumes, and is sufficient to say that the final volume to date, Volume Seven, covers the period 2010- 2012, just 3 years!

My simple mathematics tells me that this is roughly a 38-fold increase in the rate of stamp issuing between Volume 1 and Volume 7! This at a time when the post office is trying to persuade us not to use stamps at all, but move to these print-on-demand label things, which undoubtedly have a shorter name; I just don't happen to know what it is, possibly 'PODLs'?

So leaving aside the thorny issue of Machin Definitives, and the question of just how many of these over recent years have been necessary for genuine postal purposes, we come to the commemoratives. Now the first four 'proper' commemorative sets issued in this country were British Empire Exhibition (1924), Postal Union Congress (1929), George V Silver Jubilee (1935) and George VI Coronation (1937). All pretty important events. One commemorative set every two years or so.

Now to look at 2003, which happens to be the last year covered by my newest (simplified) catalogue. Sixteen sets in the one year, including 'Pub Signs'- OK, important in my world, but deserving of a set of five stamps?, 'Self-adhesive Fruit and Vegetables'- presumably the stamps, not the F & V's, 'Occasions Greetings Stamps' (?), 'Fiftieth Anniversary of Wilding Definitives', 'Classic Transport Toys' (!!)

I feel too depressed, that our hobby has sunk so far, to want to continue. Who is being taken for an expensive ride?

David Gillespie

Halcyon is produced for members of the Redditch Philatelic Society and anyone else with an interest in stamp collecting. If you are not a member of the Society and are interested in joining, please come along to one of our meetings, on the first and third Thursday of the month (September to June) at St. Luke's Memorial Hall, Headless Cross, Redditch B97 4JX. Visitors are also welcome to any of our meetings.

You are welcome to visit our website www.redditch-philatelic.org.uk for our programme, news and other Society activities. Articles and statements made in this Newsletter are by individuals and are not necessarily the views or policies of the Society.

NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

We are quite proud that some of our members enter and do extremely well in national competitions. The next national competitions will be held at London 2015 from 13th to 16th May next year. Unfortunately the entry date has closed, but the event will be running exhibition seminars throughout the week. If you are disappointed about missing the London 2015 deadline, another exhibiting opportunity has come to your Editors attention. York Stamp Show is running a pilot exhibition in July 2015 with a view to it becoming a permanent feature at future shows. An entry pack will soon be available on the ABPS website.

MDA

MEMBERS ACHIEVEMENTS

This year's Midland Philatelic Federation Autumn Convention at Knowle gave members their annual opportunity to enter the Individual 16 sheet competitions, and of course then have their work assessed at a higher level of Judging.

Robin Jarman entered the Aerophilately class with his "Compagnie Aeropostale in Chile (CGA)", and gained a Silver award (79 marks) for his efforts. Many congratulations Robin; only just beaten by Streetley's Brian Hyner with "Flight of the Dornier".

Rather inexplicably no other Redditch member entered - in any Class. I would like to think this will be rectified next year!!!

Malcolm Allinson

AND FINALLY.....



Even far from home there is always an opportunity to see something new. Recently in the far north east of England, about 5 minutes from North Britain(!!!) we spotted a post-box (left) with what looks to us a new type of EIIR crown and cypher. Rather than being cast as part of the box this is a brushed aluminium plate with the insignia parts created by fretwork (below).



Cheap? Yes; if the cypher ever has to be changed it's just a small matter of prising the plate off and glueing (?) another one on. Effective? Not really for these correspondents who sometimes despair at modernity, and prefer a lot of the old £sd ways of doing things.

Lila Moray and Roy Alliam