



Halcyon

The Newsletter of the Redditch Philatelic Society – No 16: Spring 2012.

From the Chairman



Spring seems to be here at last and as one of my teachers was fond of saying “... a young man’s fancy turns towards thoughts of oiling his cricket bat”. However, I am not cricketer, so my thoughts have been turning towards thoughts of improving my philatelic collections and, in particular, considering my competition entries. I know competitions are not everyone’s cup of tea, but I do like the thought of turning part of my meagre collection into something which is attractive to look at, interesting to read and which some judges rate as worthy of a gold, silver or (in my case, usually) bronze award. There is currently a debate in the stamp press about whether you must have an expensive or valuable collection in order to succeed in national competitions. The majority of scoring criteria allocate at least 20% of the marks to “rarity”. Unfortunately, many judges will confuse “rarity” with “value” and hence the dissatisfaction often with national competitions. Each competition entrant needs to be very clear in his/her write-up to identify the scarce and possibly unique items and lead the judge to them. The time available to a judge to study one entry is extremely limited (perhaps only 3 minutes), therefore the judge must be led straight to the items you consider are important. You can identify these on your first page or use colour coding to highlight them. Obviously a phrase like “only 2 copies known” gives a judge more information than just describing an item as “very rare”, and “unique” is an almost impossible adjective to justify. Give it a try.

At the end of December we learned the sad news of the death of our secretary, Fred Pritchard. Fred had acted as secretary for the Society, and the Three Counties Federation, for very many years and in his quiet unassuming way could always be relied upon. In particular, he was a real asset to the committee, producing agendas and minutes, compiling Club Championship scores, dealing with correspondence, offering advice and whatever else needed to be done, efficiently and accurately. Always cheerful and with a keen sense of humour, he will be sadly missed by us all.

Alan Godfrey

The President’s Piece

At the recent Annual General Meeting, I was honoured to be elected your Society President - not for the first time, but at least a second and possibly a third! I am sure one of our statistics members will be able to produce a definitive answer to that conundrum.



Firstly I must thank Richard Nicol for his Presidency. I know that even in “retirement” Richard will continue to involve himself in all of the things we get up to. Like Richard, as President I do not intend to sit back and wear a chain (even if we possessed one). I am fully committed to playing as full a part as possible in Society activities.

We have an excellent meeting venue, and a varied annual programme. We host speakers on far ranging subjects who bring along many excellent displays for us to look at. Our bi-monthly meetings are well attended, regularly with over two thirds of the membership being present; and in the last year or so, we have attracted some new members. It is clear that what we are doing, we are doing it right.

The Society’s philosophy has always been based upon ‘doing’ rather than waiting for it to be done, and I would wish that we all continue that theme. It has stood us in good stead for many years and many other Societies envy, and try to emulate, quite a lot of the things we do. We visit other Societies with a format of multiple speakers, and many Societies have now followed this lead. Years ago our annual Auctions stimulated other Societies to also have a go, and our Fairs, admittedly almost impossible to stage nowadays, have always attracted considerably more visitors than comparable events elsewhere.

Such is the outside view of our Society that we can be proud to belong to it. As long as we all continue to ‘do’, we can maintain our hard won place in this wonderful hobby of ours.

I look forward to acting again as your next President and helping to keep the Society going forwards for all of our benefit.

Malcolm Allinson

FRED PRITCHARD**19th September 1934 to 27th December 2011**

Sadly, I have to report that Fred Pritchard, our long-standing Secretary, passed away just after Christmas after a long illness.



I first met Fred when he joined the Philatelic Society in 1977, and in all time that I knew him, he was a most amiable person to have around.

Fred started collecting stamps at an early age because it involved less activity than playing cricket, football or rugby. Pocket money was supplemented by doing various chores at home to help out, whilst his parents ran a busy shop in Ladywood – an unusual combination of a hairdressers and selling fishing tackle. In those days stamp shops were more prolific and Fred keenly bought many packets of stamps from his local shop near to Five Ways in Birmingham.

Of course as he grew older, other interests took over – youth clubs and girls being the two main ones – and then National Service stifled any collecting at all for a while. As with many young collectors, the hobby gets sidelined as family takes a more important role, and this was no different with Fred. Marrying Margaret, setting up a home and starting a family took its toll on the stamp albums, until Fred's younger brother, Alex, suggested they both join a stamp club and he could start collecting again. Alex, must have had an ulterior motive here, because Fred gave him all of his Great Britain stamps to set him going, and then had to find his own area of collecting.

Most people seem to fall into a collecting specialism by accident. Not Fred. His eventual choice of Malta came about after a peculiarly rational process of elimination; it must have been because of Fred's accountancy background. For his National Service, Fred had been posted to Egypt. So he bought a packet of stamps and decided that he would collect a country that he had been to during his time abroad that WASN'T in the packet of stamps. The only country that wasn't represented in that packet of stamps was Malta, visited briefly during a refuelling stop on Fred's return to England after his National Service.

His collection of Malta stamps was complete, or so complete that any missing ones were not to worry about. Some years ago I remember how thrilled he was to buy the first Malta stamp. Fred branched out into the world of postal history as the stamp side of collecting slowed down, accumulating a vast array of postmarks from the island Post Offices including from many places where only very few examples exist. In order to help with more knowledge of his subject, Fred joined the Malta Study Circle in 1982 and this has surely helped him to make his collection into something special.

Over the years Fred entered many Society and Federation competitions and in 2009 achieved a Gold medal with his entry of Early Postmarks of Malta – some items in the display would easily grace a national or international exhibit.

I said earlier that Fred joined the Society in 1977. It did not take long for him to join the Committee and then take on the Secretary's job in 1979; longevity in these roles seems to be normal in our Society, as Fred was still our Secretary when he passed away.

He took a sabbatical from Office in 1991, but that was only to become Hon. Secretary of the Three Counties Federation. He returned to being our Secretary in 1999, the plan being that the Federation was about to wind up and would no longer need a Secretary. Plans being plans, meant that the Federation was not wound up as thought, and so for a couple of years Fred was Secretary to both organisations. For the many years Fred held our Secretary's role, he was honoured recently by the Midland Philatelic Federation with a Certificate of Recognition for his unstinting services to Stamp collecting.

A more personal memory is of recently offering Fred a lift home from a Society meeting, then promptly (and accidentally) leaving him behind. I know that I will never be allowed to forget that.

I asked Fred once what he would be if he didn't collect stamps. His immediate answer was "Rich", clearly demonstrating his fun attitude to our hobby and life. But of course Fred was rich; rich in family and rich in friends, amply demonstrated by so many of us, together with our partners, who attended Fred's funeral at Redditch Crematorium, where even standing room was at a premium.

A laugh and a smile was never far away when in Fred's company and we will all miss that.

Malcolm Allinson



Malta SG1: One halfpenny buff brown

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest edition of *Halcyon*.

We were in the enviable position to have some articles left over from the last Newsletter at Christmas, so it makes a good start to this edition. Sadly, the reserve of articles has dried up, so the next *Halcyon* will be starting from a blank canvas – an excellent opportunity for everyone to contribute.

In visiting a number of Fairs recently I have been struck by the number of people in attendance at them. Whilst some have been large nationally organised events, where “going along” is almost compulsory, there have been some local events, run by local Societies for the local collector. Both types of Fair seem to be holding up well in attendance, despite the financial situation. It is difficult to know whether a good attendance converts into a successful day for Dealers.

Other sources of material are Auctions. Scanning realisations from a number of Sales recently makes me think that prices are still on the increase, so there is clearly someone out there spending all of the money. Recently I made a trip to an Auction house not too far away in order to view a whole collection sale. This resulted in some bids being left with the Auctioneer, but frustratingly, none were successful. No doubt I will see some of the material I was after, being offered to me at a later date!

As is now customary, I would like to thank all of the contributors to this edition of *Halcyon* - **Alan Godfrey, Robin Jarman, Mike Such, Ralph Richardson** and **Bob Harper**. Please keep the articles rolling in.

Malcolm Allinson

NEW COMMITTEE

Following the recent Annual General Meeting, the following members were elected to your Committee:

President: Malcolm Allinson;
 Chairman: Alan Godfrey;
 Secretary: Robin Jarman;
 Treasurer: Chris Jackson;
 Committee Members:
 Bob Harper and Lyel Swingler.

We must remember that we are a ‘doing’ Committee and a ‘doing’ Society, rather than one that just talks about it. So look out for new initiatives and ideas to take the Society forward.

Of course, not being a Committee member doesn't mean the rest of us can sit back and relax. We are all responsible for the Society, and if you have any ideas that might help, even if they are just copying what other Societies already do, please let a Committee member know so that we can put the right amount of consideration into them.

MEETING REPORTS

Thursday 5th January 2012 Annual 9 sheet competitions

We began 2012 with our Annual Society competitions, giving us all the opportunity to display much of the beautiful material that we all have.

Before we started the business of the evening, we were given the sad news that our long standing Secretary, Fred Pritchard, had passed away on 27th December after a long illness. Members stood for a minutes silence to remember Fred, who we all will miss greatly.

The competition entries this year were not as numerous as they could have been; with the Traditional Stamps; Thematics and Social History classes being uncontested. This is to be regretted, as we have gone to great lengths this last year to add to the Society's trophy collection for presenting to winners of the various competition categories. Nevertheless, those entries that we did see were splendid in philatelic content and very informative.

Our judges this year were Clive Jones and Colin Searle from Solihull PS, whose deliberations brought forth what we all considered were fair marks all round.

In the Aerophilately Class, Robin Jarman's entry was **Panagra in Chile** which explored the Pan America Grace Airways route along the western coast of the South American continent. According to the judges, Robin managed to cover a lot of information in just nine sheets. Lyel Swingler showed us **KNILM** (the Dutch acronym for Royal Dutch Indies Airways which I will not attempt in native tongue!!), which traced their airmail route to Indonesia and eventually on to Australasia and competing with Imperial Airways in the process.

The judges noted that both entries dealt with the period when civil aviation was in it's infancy and many of the Companies were really pioneers in setting up long distance air routes all over the globe.

The Open Class gave us two different entries. Alan Godfrey showed **WWII POW Camps of Warwickshire**, containing many magnificent examples of cards and letters to and from German POW's. Richard Nicol showed us some **Seychelles Postal Stationary**, confining the entry to examples of Registered Letters from the Islands. Both entries impressed the judges for the rare material on show.

The Postal History Class proved the most popular with three entries. Ralph Richardson gave us his view of **Free Franking and the Bishops of the Church of England**, displaying examples of letters to and from various ecclesiastical Bishops, (Yes, there were also some Bishop postmarks!) who along with Members of Parliament and other

government officials, enjoyed the privilege of free postage up until 1840. The judges did suggest that this entry would have gained higher marks from being a Social Class entry rather than purely Postal History. Pete Elms' entry was **Birmingham Postal History: Mail Going Abroad** with a variety of material telling the story of Birmingham's export trade. Chris Jackson's entry of **Malvern Undated Circles** was commended by the judges for having almost everything it could have – a strong first sheet giving excellent information; a good balanced layout and some unique material.

At the end of the evening the results were:

Aerophilately

Lyel Swingler: KNILM 79
Robin Jarman: Panagra in Chile 84

Open Class

Alan Godfrey: WWII POW Camps 81
Richard Nicol: Seychelles Postal Stationary 69

Postal History

Pete Elms: Birmingham Postal History 80
Ralph Richardson: Free Franking and the Bishops 75
Chris Jackson: Malvern UDC's 89

Despite only seven entries, members had plenty of opportunity to view and discuss the displays and pick up lots of tips from clearly knowledgeable judges. Let us hope that more members are encouraged to put an entry in next year.

Malcolm Allinson

Thursday 19th January 2012

Visiting Speaker: Terry Hare-Walker Imperial Airways Empire Routes

The first half of Terry's talk took us on the route to Australia and New Zealand. He produced a full 90 sheets on this subject, but explained that he had still more at home. Airlines sprang up in Britain soon after the end of World War One and we saw examples of letters carried on some of these very early flights by the likes of Air Transport and Travel, Handley Page and Daimler Airways using converted bombers to ferry both mail and passengers to the Continent.

Imperial Airways came into being in 1924 as a result of a Government Committee, incorporating the major airlines of the day. Also that year the flyer Alan Cobham (later knighted for his air exploits) was employed to survey the route to India and beyond.

Australia was reached in 1926 and we saw one of the twelve covers carried on one of the Indian stages. These early days were fraught with danger and a lot of uncertainty; navigation was crude in the extreme. We learnt how the route from Cairo to Baghdad was first covered by following a furrow ploughed across the desert by a tractor, as there were no other suitable landmarks to guide the planes.

Special flights were made as far as Australia and the respected Australian aviator Kingsford Smith brought the Christmas mail from that country to England in 1931. A regular service to the Antipodes was started in 1934 with flying boats.



Imperial Airways Short Flying Boat "Canopus" from a 1936 advertising brochure

Crashes seemed to be quite common especially amongst the seaplanes and Terry had examples of all of these where mail had been salvaged. Indeed such was the magnificence of the material on display that it seemed that every important flight was covered.

The second half of a further 90 sheets, was devoted to the expansion of Imperial Airways into Africa and again Alan Cobham had led the way in determining the best routes, beginning in 1925. On the return trip from Cape Town he left at the same time as the Windsor Castle mail liner but beat it comfortably to prove that mail by air was the way forward. December 1931 saw Imperial begin their service to South Africa and improvements in journey time continued as the decade wore on. In 1936 the Khartoum to Kano (in Nigeria) service was inaugurated. There were fewer crashes on the African routes but Terry still produced a number of such covers.



Imperial Airways was replaced by BOAC in 1940 and an era in elegant luxurious travel finished.

Our Chairman Alan Godfrey presented Terry Hare-Walker with a certificate to mark his wonderful display. It had certainly been an excellent evening with another very informative speaker.

Robin Jarman

Thursday 2nd February 2012

"Three sheets or pay 50p"

We were treated to 9 members displays tonight, showing the great variety of collecting interests that members have.

Richard Nicol displayed Seychelles including Queen Victoria overprints from Mauritius. He also gave us some Silver Jubilee and Postal Philatelic Congress material.

Our newest member Mike Gardiner who has spent time in the USA, said that they have produced 1.2 billion to 1.5 billion stamps with issues and plate

numbers etc; There are 15,000 varieties of one stamp alone! Mike believes the "Scotts Catalogue" is the most concise.

Jack Finney displayed his railways Portuguese set and also included railways of Jersey and coinage of Guernsey. Mike Such displayed Military uniforms of Great Britain Army, Navy and Royal Air Force.

Robin Jarman showed some of his Cacti collection in its re-written format stating some of the varieties have up to sixty different names each. David Gillespie displayed Australian King George V showing many shade variations. He had found several shades in addition to the two classified by Stanley Gibbons. Roger Wood showed three shades of the £1 Seahorses, and a perforation which Gibbons says does not exist. He also displayed post cards of a 1d Black plate 10, ten days after the first stamp issued, and a 2d Blue with a Kelso Maltese cross.

David Gillespie gave us a second display, this time of stamps of Montenegro before it became Yugoslavia. He also included postage due stamps.

Paul Veal displayed uniforms of Malta also a selection of postcards sent by an Edwardian lady who lived in Manchester to a boyfriend living in Cambridge between 1912 to 1913. The postscript was written upside down on the post card to prevent being read.

David Gillespie's enthusiasm reached to a third display, showing stamps of Gold Coast of 1938, with variations overlapping, and also the difference between line perforations and cone perforations, where cone perforations have nice sharp clear corners; the line perforations are fuzzy in the corners.

Robin Jarman concluding the evening with a display of Norwegian stamps from 1860 overprinted on Sweden stamps. The "Lion definitive" came into fruition from 1922 and the Nazi occupation of Norway was shown. Robin finished by showing Post Horns from 1872 until present day. You could say "Around the Horn with Robin".

Mike Such

Wednesday 8th February 2012 Annual Dinner

Once again, we met at Archers Restaurant, the College Catering Training facility, for a lovely four course meal and an evening of idle chatter.

With 38 people descending upon the bar all at once, it took a while for everyone to get a drink, but we managed to sit down at the appointed time and all were still at their tables well after the time we should have left. This can only mean that once again everyone enjoyed themselves immensely. All of the different choices of meals were cooked perfectly,

and served extremely well by the students, who were hardly noticeable in their tasks – which is the true test of a restaurant functioning well.

After our meal, we came to the presentation of the Trophies for 2011. The individual winners are reported elsewhere (*see above report on the Annual Competitions Evening. Ed*) with the addition of the Club Championship being won this year by Alan Godfrey. Everyone must be congratulated on their efforts

A fixture in our calendar for many years now, the Annual Dinner is probably our best attended meeting, whilst the College has become THE venue. With their move to opening on Wednesday evenings instead of Thursdays, we now have the opportunity to hold the Dinner AND still have two meetings in the month. On tonight's evidence, we shall be back again next year.

Malcolm Allinson

Thursday 16th February 2012 Two members talks Bob Harper and David Gillespie

The two volunteers for tonight's meeting were David Gillespie and Bob Harper, who both showed us first class displays. The contents were comprehensive, the presentation of the stamps could not have been bettered and the supporting talks were interesting, full of detail and philatelically knowledgeable.

We have had visiting speakers whose material has been no-where near as comprehensive and whose talk was much inferior to what we heard. The Society may hold it's head high when two members can produce so outstanding an evening.

David opened the batting with what was called in politically correct terms Commonwealth A-C. Historically and occasionally through the evening it was "The British Empire", and largely pre-1914. There was a huge amount of material from countries I had heard of, and some I had not. The similarity of the issues country by country did not matter when there were all sorts of shade varieties. It seems that Perkins Bacon, the Empire's printer, rather enjoyed sending out to distant colonies repeat Orders of stamps but in slightly different shades. David appeared to enjoy studying multitudes of stamps in order to make a distinction between black, brownish-black, blackish-brown and sundry other shades. Many of these early Victorian issues were produced in sheets of 110. This made producing and perforating them on machines geared for 240 stamps a major problem. Another reason for sticking to Imperial measurement – though technically 110 was just as Imperial as 240!

Our second speaker was Bob Harper. I think we all knew he collects Barbados because of his regular visits there. Again we had a very large, superbly mounted collection. If our first talk covered much of the world, Bob limited his to the 11 parish Caribbean

island of Barbados. – about the same number of parishes as on Jersey. The first sheet was of photocopies, hardly surprising in view of the enormous cost, rarity, and difficulty in obtaining early material. The presentation was superb – so good it was difficult to see any missing issues.

Despite the size and fullness of these displays, both speakers let us know that they could repeat the exercise, possibly more than once. David informed us that he had British Empire from D - Z in a number of instalments. So, if our Programme Secretary is able to, let us have them again, because they are worth it.

Ralph Richardson

Thursday 1st March 2012 Annual General Meeting and One sheet Display

At this year's Annual General Meeting, we took note that over the last year, the Society had lost three committed and long term members in Bill Grinnell, Norman Wiley and most recently Fred Pritchard. It will be impossible to replace them and all of their contributions to the Society.

After all of the reports were given and accepted, members approved the nominations for your Committee for 2012. Richard Nicol had concluded his two year Presidency and was succeeded by Malcolm Allinson. Our Chairman Alan Godfrey and Treasurer Chris Jackson were re-elected, and Robin Jarman was chosen to succeed the late Fred Pritchard as Secretary. Bob Harper and Lyel Swingler were confirmed to continue as Committee members. In addition to the more formal roles on the Committee, Bob Harper will remain as our Midland Philatelic Federation representative and Lyel will continue as Packet Secretary.

It is a matter of some pride that we try and get through our AGM quickly and efficiently, and over the years successive Chairmen have managed to steer us through the relevant business to the extent that the meeting is concluded well before our normal meeting finish time. To this end we have added to the evening with displays from members. This year, the title was a One Sheet Display and we saw a great variety of subjects displayed. USA, Italy, China, Egypt, Machin Olympics, Cape of Good Hope Triangles were all covered in stamps, and Postal History displays gave us Worcestershire, County Down (including a Mulready), Birmingham, Greystoke Castle, and the Corsini correspondence.

Two airmail displays showed Atlantic First Flights and Chilean Airmails. We were also treated to such diverse themes as Harry Potter, London postcard views and William Shakespeare. I liked the postcard written in semaphore, which our Scout Commissioner took away to get translated!

Malcolm Allinson

Thursday 15th March 2012 Auction Preview

A good array of material kept members occupied for the whole evening as we had the opportunity to view everything before our Auction on Saturday. With our meeting venue now in the same place as our Auction, we took the advantage of a complete dry run in setting the room out and displaying the Lots. Judging from the interest members showed, and the notes being made, we should look forward to a very competitive Sale in two days time.

Malcolm Allinson

Saturday 17th March 2012 Annual Stamp and Postcard Auction

The usual fine weather greeted the early morning start for what most of us could not believe as our 25th Anniversary Auction.

The usual chaos and mayhem took place as we put the all of the tables and chairs out. Fewer tables were available to us this year so some ingenuity was needed to create enough space to display all of the Lots.

There were not as many bidders this year, but that didn't deter them all from some ferocious bidding throughout the day.

Refreshments continued to do well, and despite the physical limitations of the kitchen curtailing the refreshments repertoire, our Ladies did another wonderful job in keeping everyone fed and watered.

Our Auctioneer kept things moving at a brisk pace, (perhaps due to some later competitive encounter with an odd shaped ball being broadcast on television), and we were all complete and packed away by 5:30. Another successful day and a fitting day for the 25th Anniversary Auction.

SOCIETY PROGRAMME:

April to June 2012

Meetings are held at St Luke Memorial Hall, Headless Cross from 7:30pm. The main business of the evening starts at 8:00pm prompt.

April 3 rd (Tue)	Visit to Coventry PS
April 5 th	Quiz Night
April 19 th	Speaker: Richard Gillam – Australian States
May 3 rd	Visit from South Birmingham PS
May 17 th	Three Sheet Competition
June 7 th	Speaker: Les Percy – Czechoslovakia
June 21 st	Chairman's Evening

Please make every effort to come along to meetings and support your Society.

Redditch's Post & Go machine 'gets the bird'

Well, six birds to be exact. The Post & Go stamps issued by the Post Office (Note: Not by Royal Mail) originally had a Machin head until September 2010 when a pictorial version showing British garden birds was released. At this time about 30 Post Office branches had P&G Kiosks. In January 2011 a second set of Bird stamps was issued followed in May 2011 by a third set of six, this time showing water birds.

In March this year (2011) the Post Office announced that it would roll out the bird stamps to all P.O. Branches with P&G Kiosks. I kept my eye on the Redditch Post & Go machine, but there was no change and the staff told me as recently as June 3rd that they had no idea when the change might happen, yet on Monday 6th June it had happened! I bought my set and discovered that by then the water bird stamps were available from 220 machines in 147 P.O. branches.



The stamps are shown to the left and the birds are Great Crested Grebe, Mallard, Greylag Goose, Kingfisher, Moorhen and Mute Swan. The basic strip of labels is printed by Walsall Security Printers by Gravure. Each stamp is self adhesive, has two phosphor bars and kiss die-cut simulated perforations. The black text is printed on demand by the Wincor Nixdorf machine and multiple requests are printed in strips of five – awkward given that the stamps come in sets of six. There are five duties available: 1st class, 1st Large (as illustrated), Europe to 20g, Worldwide to 10g and Worldwide to 20g so if you

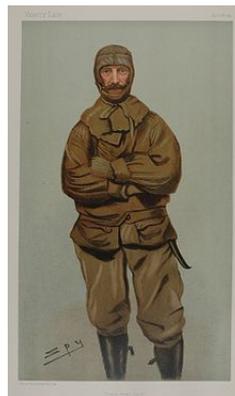
would like every possible variation you would need to buy 30 stamps (if you can't do the calculations, let me tell you – it totals £22.50).

The Post Office will release the fourth set of British Birds stamps in September (2011) and if you are tempted you can still buy the whole series by purchasing presentation packs of Birds I & II from the Philatelic Bureau whilst they are still available.

Bob Harper

Regrettably, this article was held over from the Autumn 2011 edition of Halcyon due to lack of space. Frequency of Post Office new stamp issues from these machines will possibly have superseded some of the information. Perhaps go along to the Post and Go machine yourself and find out.

ALCESTER'S ARCTIC EXPLORER MAJOR FREDERICK GEORGE JACKSON 1860 – 1938



Frederick George Jackson (left, from *Vanity Fair* portrait by Lesley Ward) was born in Alcester, Warwickshire on 6th March 1860. After an education at Denstone College, he left for Australia and spent three years working on a Queensland cattle station, where he learned to handle and break horses, and took a trip into the Australian desert.

His love of travel that had been kindled in Australia, developed two years later with a voyage aboard a whaler across the Atlantic to Greenland. Then he made a preliminary expedition across the Russian tundra to Archangel and then on to Lapland in mid-winter. This experience inspired him to attempt to reach the North Pole from Franz Josef Land, a collection of islands in the north of Russia. After further expeditions to gain experience and test his equipment, he managed to find a patron, Alfred Harmsworth, the owner of the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror*.

In 1894 Jackson set sail for Franz Josef Land as leader of the Jackson-Harmsworth Expedition aboard the *SY Windward*. They set up a base at Cape Flora in the south of the islands and spent two years surveying and mapping the islands. Among those on the expedition were Albert Armitage and Dr Reginald Koeltitz (who both later accompanied Robert Scott on the *Discovery* expedition to the Antarctic in 1901-4) and William Speirs Bruce (who led the Scottish Antarctic Expedition to the Antarctic in 1902-4).



SY Windward.

Meanwhile, another expedition led by Fridtjof Nansen had earlier left Norway in an attempt to reach the North Pole aboard the *Fram*. Nansen intended to drift to the pole with his ship, frozen in the ice. After two years he and one companion, Hjalmar Johannsen, left the ship and set off to cross the ice to reach the pole on foot. They reached 86°14'N, but lack of supplies caused Nansen to decide to turn south towards the islands of Spitzbergen or Franz Josef Land. They crossed five hundred miles of drifting ice before they reached land. They were forced to overwinter in 1895/6 in a hut made of stones and walrus hide, before carrying on their journey south. On 17th June 1896 a figure

was spotted by Armitage four miles from Cape Flora. Jackson hurried across the ice expecting to meet Russian or Norwegian trappers. As he approached he saw a figure in roughly made clothes of fur, with an old felt hat, long beard and covered from head to foot in oil, grease and lamp black. Jackson asked "Aren't you Nansen?" to which Nansen replied he was and Jackson continued: "By Jove, I am devilish glad to see you!" and shook hands again. Johannsen was brought back to the camp and they spent seven weeks recuperating before being taken aboard the *Windward* on 17th August 1896 and taken to Trömsø, where coincidentally the *Fram* had just arrived, having broken free of the ice.



Piece from a cover sent by the Jackson-Harmsworth Expedition from Franz Josef Land showing the extremely scarce vignette of SY *Windward*.

Jackson was recognised with the award of the Norwegian Royal Order of St Olaf in 1899. He went on to serve in the army in South Africa and later in France during the First World War, reaching the rank of major. After the War he joined the Jackson-Eyres-Monsel Expedition and crossed Africa in 1926. He lived his latter years with his second wife aboard a houseboat, the *Afterglow*, on the Thames. He died in 1938 in London and was buried at Easthampstead in Berkshire.

Alan Godfrey

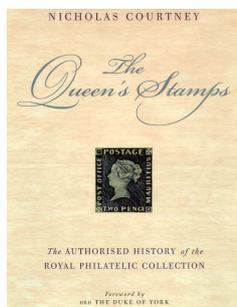
BOOK REVIEW

The Queen's Stamps: The Official History of the Royal Philatelic Collection.

Nicholas Courtney

ISBN 978 0413772282

Publ. Methuen



This book chronicles the story of one of the greatest, perhaps the finest, stamp collections ever formed – The Royal Philatelic Collection; and is a worthy addition to Sir John Wilson's 1952 tome on the same subject, itself a very rare book to possess.

The collection was started by Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh in 1856 as a result of a visit to De la Rue's printing works where he was shown the process of stamp printing. As a souvenir of that visit, the gift of two blocks of forty stamps to the Prince sowed the seeds and it is recorded later that

'some younger members of the Royal Family had started to form collections'. Well who wouldn't if you had also been given some specimens of the Penny Black Royal Reprint!

In order to fund his affluent lifestyle, in 1900 the Prince had to sell his collection, and he did so to his elder brother Edward, The Prince of Wales, who promptly gave it to his son Prince George. It is at this point that the collection takes off. Prince George became King George V and it is to him that the credit is given for building the collection to what it is today. Whilst both King George VI and our current monarch have added to the collection, George V had the enthusiasm, dedication and passion to make the best collection of Great Britain and Empire stamps he could.

Now housed in St James Palace, the Royal Philatelic Collection contains some of the rarest stamps in the world. This book details many of the gems in the collection; many items unique; many items priceless. We are told the complete story in excellent detail in the narrative, and there are copious illustrations, mostly in colour, placed evenly throughout the book to add to it. We are also given some insight into the work of successive Keepers of the Collection.

Notwithstanding the beautiful illustrations, this book is not for the coffee table. It is much more than that, and should grace any philatelic bookcase to be read over and over again. In addition, any non-philatelist with an interest in Royalty will find the story fascinating.

MDA

COLLECTORS PIECES

After many years of being nameless, your newsletter was finally titled *Halcyon* at the end of 2006. For those who have a complete collection of our Newsletter since then, the dates of publication may be useful. They are as follows

1. Autumn 2006 - 11th December
2. Spring 2007 - 30th May
3. Summer 2007 - 12th June
4. Autumn 2007 - 18th September
5. Winter 2007 - 17th December
6. Spring 2008 - 15th April
7. Summer 2008 - 26th August
8. Autumn 2008 - 11th December
9. Spring 2009 - 1st May
10. Summer 2009 - 9th September
11. Autumn 2009 - 14th December
12. Spring 2010 - 12th April
13. Autumn 2010 - 15th December
14. Summer 2011 - 6th June
15. Autumn 2011 - 13th December

In addition, so that we can keep track of them all, they have been retrospectively numbered from the change of name and so this edition is number 16.

DO WE CARE FOR OUR COLLECTIONS?

When collecting stamps we all think about how we store them and we all have different methods to care for our prized collection. The usual reason is that at some point in the future we are likely to want to dispose of some or all of our collections and maybe just get a little money back for them. Even if we consider there is no monetary value in what we have, it is still within our nature to take care of our stamps so that whoever takes them on, the stamps will be in a presentable condition. The best we can hope for is to be custodians during our lifetime, and surely would want future generations to at least have something to be custodians of.

Some of our collections we will have owned for many years, so preventing them from falling apart must be uppermost in our minds. Short of employing a professional conservator – something we average collectors are not in a position to do – the following may be useful to ensure that when the time comes, we are able to hand on our collections to the next generation in good condition for them to enjoy as much as we will have.

Any artefact will degrade over time, even a short time, and paper is one of the most fragile substances to preserve. The majority of our collections whether they be stamps or postal history involve a significant amount of paper so we should all take some note of good preservation practice. The three main factors that will accelerate deterioration are: temperature, humidity and light. Pests and pollution make up the top five. Also, deterioration cannot be reversed, so it is important to ensure that it is kept at bay.

For a collector, there are three main areas of care under our direct influence:

Storage, handling and display.

Next time we will look at these three areas in greater detail and what we can all do to maintain our collections in good order.

Malcolm Allinson



Stamp stockbook with dust protection slipcase.

THE REDISCOVERY OF THE ASCENSION ISLAND PARSLEY FERN



In 1843 on the return journey of Sir James Clark Ross' voyage of exploration to the Antarctic his two ships, HMS Erebus and HMS Terror, visited the island of Ascension in the South Atlantic Ocean.

One of the scientists aboard was Joseph Dalton Hooker (later Sir Joseph Hooker, who would become the director of Kew Gardens).



He discovered a large number of small ferns on the slopes of Green Mountain on Ascension Island, which he drew and described and which he named *Anogramma ascensionis* – the Ascension Island parsley fern (after the parsley-like leaf).

The fern was recorded as seen again several times over the next century, the last occasion was when a British scientist collected a specimen in 1958. It was not seen again and was declared extinct in 2003, probably forced out of its normal habitat by the more aggressive, introduced, maidenhair ferns.



By chance on 27th July 2009 a team of conservationists spotted four minute fern plants on the knife-edge ridge of Green Mountain on Ascension, which they recognised as the lost parsley fern. The scientists decided that relocating the plants was not possible, so they nurtured the tiny plants twice a week until two plants survived long enough to produce spores.



The spores were harvested and, within twenty four hours, were rushed by air to Kew Gardens. Kew was able to rear a large number of sporophytes (young fern plants), which are flourishing well and a further number have been grown on Ascension.

The intention is that in time the ferns will be reintroduced to their former wild habitat on Green Mountain.

Alan Godfrey

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.

19th – 21st April 2012

PHILATEX

Horticultural Halls WESTMINSTER

12th May 2012

MIDLAND PHILATELIC FEDERATION

Spring Convention,

In conjunction with **WORPEX**

WORCESTER

WR2 6AA

9th June 2012

SWINPEX

St. Joseph's College,

Ocotal Way,

SWINDON

SN3 3LR

20th – 21st July 2012

YORK Stamp Show

York Racecourse

If there is an event that you know of that isn't listed here and should be, please let your Editor know so that it can be included next time.

NEW STAMP ISSUES FROM ROYAL MAIL

In April Royal Mail is issuing a set of fourteen special stamps, the second part (M-Z) of an alphabetic odyssey around the British Isles. This is the largest special stamp set ever issued and includes ten first class stamps showing English landmarks, two from Scotland, one from Northern Ireland and one from Wales. Starting with "M" for Manchester Town Hall, the set concludes with "Z" for ZSL (London Zoo). Noticeably, however, none of the locations chosen are in the Midlands (the nearest being the Queen's College in Oxford).

What this set does reveal is Royal Mail's total lack of imagination. The photographs used are attractive, 'chocolate box' images, but otherwise unremarkable and could easily have been taken from any of the numerous sets of stamps over the last thirty years showing views of Britain. Where are the carefully crafted designs by Sylvia Goaman, David Gentleman, Jeffery Matthews et al. or the line engraved stamps of Czeslaw Slania? Photographs

of landscapes do not make good stamps, stamp design demands that type of art in miniature, which requires the skill of a true stamp artist.

Needless to say the services of a good stamp designer do not come cheap, and photographs (and photogravure printing) are a relatively cheap and quick way to turn out stamps. Most of the stamps produced in the 1960's and 1970's were iconic graphic designs and instantly recognisable. Unfortunately, that will not be the case for the stamps of the 2000's and 2010's. So, come on Royal Mail ditch the wallpaper and bring back designs of which we can all be proud.

Alan Godfrey

Alan's views above are not untypical of many stamp collectors I speak with. In addition to the United Kingdom set due out soon, the following is a peek at what "Special Stamps" Royal Mail are planning to issue over the next few months. It seems that they are determined to add even more 'value' to their products by making them available in more and more innovative ways for us collectors to salivate over.

10th April A-Z of the United Kingdom Part 2 M-Z

24th April Pictorial Fast Stamps – Pigs

15th May Design Classics – Great British Fashion

24th May Pictorial Fast Stamp – Union Flag

31st May Her Majesty The Queen,
Diamond Jubilee Set

19th June Charles Dickens

Of course, with scant information currently available on the Royal Mail website (*Mar 2012*), the above details will need careful scrutiny for accuracy.

Views on the proliferation, timing and relevance of past issues have been well aired in many philatelic journals, but your scribe is still perturbed by the practice of issuing some of these stamps on dates that have little or no bearing upon the subject/event anniversary. Fair do's, we had the Golden Jubilee definitives issued on 6th February, but we have then had some more so called Jubilee stamps issued on 27th March. We are to get yet more on 31st May, but nothing issued on the anniversary of the Coronation. (2nd June). Maybe changing the Bank Holiday has thrown South Gyle Crescent into a tizzy.

The Charles Dickens issue on 19th June is even more baffling - celebrating the 200th Anniversary of his birth. 19th June isn't the 7th February. Someone please explain, before I take all my modern stamps and actually use them on letters.

Malcolm Allinson

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.