



Halcyon

The Newsletter of the Redditch Philatelic Society – No. 25: Spring 2015.

From the Chairman



Coming shortly is a very special exhibition: LONDON 2015 EUROPHILEX. Not only is this the biggest show in Europe this year, but it is the first to be held in the UK under the patronage of the European Philatelic Federation (FEPA).

So what, you may ask? Well, the scope of the items being exhibited is much wider than is usually shown at national exhibitions: 1500 frames of competition entries; "Philatelic Events that Changed the World" a special display of 20 frames showing unique, historic covers and documents; a 40 frame display by the Confederate Stamp Alliance of America; the printing press used by Jean de Sperati, and the re-discovered printing plate used to print the first stamps of Mauritius: the "Post Office" stamps.

If you still have time left, there are around 150 dealers and postal administrations encouraging you to add to your collection. Then there are talks and seminars from Royal Mail, FEPA and Stanley Gibbons.

The show also celebrates the 175th anniversary of the introduction of the first postage stamp, along with the 150th anniversary of Stanley Gibbons' first catalogue, and the 125th anniversary of the first London international stamp exhibition. Needless to say a number of philatelic souvenirs are being offered to visitors, which include a special, overprinted "175th Anniversary of the Penny Black" miniature sheet presentation pack. This is a limited edition of 7,500, with an allocation issued each day. There is no doubt these will be eagerly snapped up by collectors and will become a modern rarity.

So, have I whetted your appetite? If so, do go along to the exhibition at the British Design Centre, Islington, London from Wednesday 13th May to Saturday 16th May, doors open at 10.00am. This will be an opportunity that will not be repeated, so I look forward to seeing you there!

Alan Godfrey



The President's Piece

Philately in general seems to be going through a bit of a slow down at the moment. Whilst stamp material itself continues to command high prices, and Fair and exhibitions abound, membership of Philatelic Societies appears to be declining in many areas.



At Redditch we too have recently seen a reduction in membership, sadly through members passing away rather than simply not renewing their subscriptions. We are also seeing a decline in attendance at meetings, which has been more noticeable lately when we have had guest speakers.

Perhaps "attendance" is the wrong word; conjuring up thoughts of school registers and punishment if you don't turn up. On the contrary, like all hobbies, stamp collecting is totally voluntary, as is coming along to meetings. If meetings are not attracting members then maybe something needs to change there. Do let me know if you have any thoughts on how we as a Society can make meetings so attractive that we get to the happy situation of all of our members coming along to every meeting.

Pie in the sky you might think, but the Society is **the** collective for the members, and it is up to members to have a good say in what the Society does, particularly for meeting content and format.

Whilst other activities sometimes overtake a meeting night (see my own problems written about in the last newsletter), as collectors we benefit immensely by meeting one another regularly if only to exchange the latest stamp gossip and sell our latest Machin definitives. Do come along to the next meeting if you can. I am sure you will miss something if not.

Looking at the remainder of this Season's programme has informed me that I am displaying at the President's evening on 18th June. Oh dear, I had better begin to get something together. Looking forward to seeing you there for what will be a surprise..... for all of us!

Malcolm Allinson

JACK FINNEY

As you will all know by now Jack Finney passed away in February after a short illness. As well as being a fellow Studley philatelist, he was a good friend to me.

Having met him around the village in some of his various church and village capacities, it was not until he moved up to the Sales Block at "The Austin" that I really got to know him better. He had worked at the Company for a goodly number of years and because he did not drive, he relied on lifts or the coach to get to and from the factory. The Sales Office used to work on Friday afternoons whereas the rest of the Works left at lunch time and as such Jack was without a lift. That is when I started to bring him back to Studley and it was on one of these trips that stamp collecting was mentioned.

This in turn led Jack to becoming a member of the Redditch Philatelic Society and I could rely on an interesting trip to and from the meetings, as Jack had some very forthright views on many subjects. Very often we would discuss the speaker, if there had been one and Jack was always impressed at the collections he saw, even if he was less impressed with the way some material was presented!

Jack's own collecting habits included the Channel Islands and trains amongst others but we were not often privileged to see this at the Society because, I think, of his own modesty. He enjoyed all aspects of the Society's activities through his social nature but his real enjoyment came if the Society went on a visit to another Society. He was not one of the speakers but loved to be a spectator, where again he could meet and talk to other philatelists.

Certainly my trips to and from Society meetings have been much quieter since his passing but very much more boring. Jack was one of the Society's characters and I for one will miss him greatly.

Robin Jarman

SOCIETY PROGRAMME:

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

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

EDITORIAL

It has recently struck me that it seems to be getting more and more difficult encouraging members to do a Write Up of our meetings for publishing in the pages of this Newsletter. Sometimes I even get asked why a particular meeting report is missing. Of course there are occasions when my filing system hides some important missives, but generally, the answer is "Because no-one has written anything."

If this strikes a chord, do please have a look through back copies of *Halcyon*, and count the amount of text that your Editor "fills in" to make up a regular 12 sides of Newsletter. Then consider whether you too could ease your Editor's aching typing finger and send in an article or meeting report. 600 words should be enough to fill a page – fewer if a photo is included; 300 words will do a column nicely. Do have a go, please volunteer rather than be asked. As always the future of the newsletter depends upon the members not the Editor.

I have recently "come out". A momentous decision you may think, so let me explain. I have been contemplating it for a while and eventually took the plunge and made it public that **I had started a completely new collection** (what did you think I was talking about?) I did of course first get permission (sort of) from the Chief Executive at Tysoe Towers.

For my Bishop Mark album, it is getting increasingly difficult to find the more unusual items that would add a touch of interest to the assembly, so I have branched out and become a "County collector". Now in our Society, we have a number of postal history collectors already covering the local counties, so I thought it better to steer away from any competition and potential "scenes" at future meetings or Auctions. To do the task properly too, I felt that I needed to have an affinity with the County of my choice and sufficient knowledge of, and interest in it and its history, to make the collecting more enjoyable. Thus I have chosen Cumberland – sadly no longer around since 1974 but at least it has a wealth and variety of collecting opportunities; and little or no competition from other members???

Your Editor will therefore continue in his impecunious state for many more years, but partly making up for it by learning all about single rings, double rings, mileages removed, undated circles, TPO marks, Ship Letters and many more facets of postal history that have previously been mysteries talked about by others in hushed tones.

Of course, any collecting advice is most welcome, especially where I can find some good quality psychiatry!!

Malcolm Allinson

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.

13th – 16th May 2015

LONDON 2015 Europhilex

BDC Islington

LONDON N1 0QH

<http://www.london2015.net>

23rd May 2015

Federation of South Wales Philatelic Societies Convention

Port Talbot SA13 1PJ

13th June 2015

SWINPEX

St Joseph's Catholic School

Swindon SN3 3LR

19th – 20th June 2015

Stafford Stamp Fair

Stafford Racecourse ST18 0BD

4th July 2015 MIDPEX

Warwickshire Exhibition Centre

CV31 1XN

17th – 18th July 2015

York Stamp Fair

York Racecourse YO23 1EX

16th – 19th September 2015

STAMPEX

BDC Islington LONDON N1 0QH

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

As is now customary, I would like to thank all of the contributors to this edition of *Halcyon* – **Alan Godfrey, Robin Jarman, Paul Veal and David Gillespie.**

MEMBER'S ACHIEVEMENTS

The results from this year's MPF Inter Society completion have just come in. Our entries came from the winners of our own Annual competitions in January (see right).

Robin Jarman gained a second in the Aero Class (Silver Gilt) and a well-deserved win in the Thematic class (Silver)

Lyel Swingler was second in the Traditional Class (Silver) and Ralph Richardson was third in the Postal History Class (Silver)

Many congratulations to everyone.

MEETING REPORTS

Thursday 15th January 2015

Annual Nine sheet Competitions

The results of the evening were:

Thematic Class

Robin Jarman

Butterflies of the Midlands

84 marks.

Class Winner

Alan Godfrey

Mosses and Lichens 71 marks

Aerophilately Class

Robin Jarman

Chile and the Zeppelins

90 marks.

Class Winner

Lyel Swingler

Suriname Airmails 1929- 1939 74 marks

Traditional Stamps Class

Bob Allard

1920 Red Cross Issue

68 marks

Lyel Swingler

Postage Stamps of Curacao

84 marks.

Class winner

Pete Elms

Errors and Varieties

79 marks

Postal History Class

Alan Godfrey

Skeleton Postmarks of Warwickshire 1900-1940

77 marks

Bob Allard

British Solomon Islands Postal Agency Markings

66 marks

Ralph Richardson

Free Franking - Items sent by Prime Ministers.

83 marks.

Class Winner

Many congratulations to all of the winners and thanks to everyone for entering. Perhaps tonight will also have whetted the appetite in others for competitive philately, so I hope to see many more entries in the course of forthcoming competitions.

Malcolm Allinson

PLEASE PUT IN YOUR DIARY

**SATURDAY 17TH OCTOBER
2015**

**IT IS OUR OWN STAMP FAIR AT
ST. BENEDICTS SCHOOL ALCESTER.**

Thursday 5th February 2015
Guest Speaker: John Walker
The Confederated State of America



The first flag of the Confederacy

The Confederate States of the USA seceded from the Union, precipitating the American Civil War, 2015 being the 150th anniversary of the end of that war. The war lasted 4½ years, during which time more Americans were killed (650,000) than the combined total of all subsequent wars. New warfare techniques employed included Submarines and mining under enemy lines. The main reason for the secession and the war was the issue of slavery.

South Carolina was the first to secede, on December 20th 1860, and by May 1861 11 states had left. They were subsequently joined by Kentucky (a divided State) and Missouri in November and December. The seceded states were initially permitted to use US stamps. There was a short period when some states had left 'The United States' but had not yet formed the Confederate States. John showed covers from this period.

Many of the Native Americans supported the Confederation, a cover postmarked 'CN' (Cherokee Nation) was shown, as was a West Virginia cover from the period when West had seceded but Virginia hadn't.

A further cover, from England, was 'returned to England', without reason, mail not being permitted to pass. This was one of only ten examples known. US stamps became unavailable, so some local Postmasters had to produce their own stamps. Samuel Perry of Madison, Florida was one of these, six examples are known, five of these off cover. An example was shown, with a manuscript cancel. Examples are so rare because most locals were illiterate.

In the first half of John's presentation, a formidable collection, 87 pages of covers were shown together with 3 (three) pages of stamps! Each cover came with a comprehensive and very well researched story- John is clearly a very serious student of this period of American history. Around 150 towns issued their own stamps or handstamps, only one copy being known of 40 or 50 of these. John had several examples. A further feature of this period was the use of alternatives during paper shortages. Envelopes were often used twice. Crude wooden handstamps were stamped on to paper squares and used as adhesive stamps, examples of both were shown.



A Confederate representative was sent to England to procure supplies of stamps from De La Rue. These were sent on the ship 'Bermuda', which was intercepted and the stamps confiscated by the North. Eventually supplies got through, and then plates and paper were sent. Again, examples were shown. 'General Use' Confederate States stamps were then produced, totalling fourteen. Most of these were shown by John, many on cover.

Finally for the first half, an example of a Harrison, Virginia stamp was shown, which had been perforated by the Postmaster's wife on her sewing machine!

Tea and biscuits were consumed with a minimum of disorder, and when the second-half display was laid out, it was immediately noted that although stamps WERE on display, ALL were on cover.

Period mail was shown from New Orleans, which with a population of 130,000 was by far the largest city in the confederacy. Situated strategically at the mouth of the Mississippi, it was the first to fall to the Union. Letters signed by General Robert E Lee (one of seventeen known), and by Confederacy President Jefferson Davis, were shown. Cross-border mailings occurred with stamps of both sides on the letter, again we saw examples.

The majority of the second-half covers shown were so-called 'Patriotic Covers', with renditions of the Confederate flag on the envelope.



Examples shown included one of only two known which reached England. The flags showed varied in the numbers of stars, as states seceded. The rarest of these was nine stars, as only a short time elapsed before the tenth state seceded. Twenty are known.

Finally the rarest of John's collection - a 'Lincoln Cover', a caricature of Lincoln hanging upside down - only twelve examples are known.



John was thanked profusely and sent on his way with that rarest of documents.....an RPS certificate.

David Gillespie

Thursday 26th February 2015 **Society Annual Dinner**

This year's Dinner was fully subscribed with 40 Members and guests sitting down to an excellent 5 course meal presented by the students of Archers Restaurant. As is usual for this restaurant we had numerous choices for each course, and this year the individual sirloin steaks proved extremely popular for main courses.

Malcolm Allinson

Thursday 2nd April 2015 **Members: Bring 3 sheets or pay 50p.**

As usual at these sorts of events there was a wide variety of material on display. The evening began with Lyel Swingler showing 3 sheets out of a collection of 40 postal stationery items, which he had recently purchased, connected with his Netherlands interests. Bob Harper followed with more pages from his aeroplane files, including some very advanced aircraft from Avro Canada, which as so often happens fell foul of Government meddling.

David "The Stamp" Gillespie gave us 8 sheets of Bahawalpur, a rather complicated Indian/Pakistani state. He did offer to provide us with another 260 sheets of stamps but this was politely declined. Mike Such displayed New Zealand stamps of Edward VII and George V, whilst the first half of the evening finished with Chris Jackson (shock/horror) showing us not postal history but stamps. These were of the high values of India featuring Queen Victoria, George V and George VI. David Gillespie was most appreciative!

After the break your author showed airmail material from LATI and Panagra/ PanAm, all to or from Chile of course. Roger Wood brought along the GB Queen Victoria 5 shilling rose of 1867 and the lovely PUC £1. He finished with a halfpenny plate reconstruction. Alan Godfrey displayed details of the Mobile Post Office which visits the village of Wilmcote in Warwickshire and Pete Elms gave us covers with multiple cancellations as the Post Office tried to deliver the letter concerned to the correct address.

Finally Chris Jackson produced some local ephemera and maps including a Carey of the whole country from around the end of the eighteenth century and Alan Godfrey brought the night to an end with some modern covers with unusual and rare cancellations.

Everyone seemed to enjoy the evening and even those who did not display paid their 50 pences.

Robin Jarman



Thursday 16th April 2015 **Guest Speaker: John Baron** **"The Financial World Tonight"**

We had a distinguished speaker tonight; John Baron is the chairman of the ABPS. John explained that he adopted banking as a collection theme after the chairman of the Thatcham and District Philatelic Society died suddenly in 2001 and John, as new chairman, was expected to present some unusual material. It was a natural choice as John was a banker, joining the TSB in 1960.

John started with a riddle, as yet unsolved – the Bank of England at one time adorned its blue envelopes with the letters A or B or C or D and a star to the left of the stamp position. No one knows why, but did it mean the content related to Accounts or Powers of Attorney, Bonds, Consoles or Debentures? The presence of a few other letters and numbers complicate this mystery.

John proceeded to highlight much of the material on display, old bank notes, old covers to and occasionally from banks, explaining that there were over 500 English or British banks in the nineteenth century, many of short duration. One example was a widow who set up a bank in the back of her shop in Sheffield but went bust in six months; the impressively named Northumberland and Durham Bank was one of many others that went the same way. The displays then reflected Scottish banking, the impressive architecture of the Edinburgh Saving Bank, a postcard of a design for a £100 note for the Bank of Scotland, the only known cheque with a Star of David cancellation, the sad end of the East Lothian Bank – their chief clerk, a William Borthwick, ran off with £30,000 leaving the shareholders to repay £66,000 of debt, "and then for something completely different" – attractive design drawings of new banks in the Seychelles and Swaziland.

After the break John presented a miscellany of material connected to State Lotteries - old and recent, starting with examples of the first modern national lottery tickets from November 1994 and a test example from May six months earlier. But there have been many other lotteries, state and otherwise, state lotteries in Britain dating from 1566 to 1826.

The first one, drawn in 1569, had rather vague objectives but was used for naval development. One private lottery had the Grand Hotel in Hull as the prize. The material included many lottery tickets, posters, Irish Sweepstake tickets linked to the Derby and the Grand National, a 1964 lottery ticket used as a stamp, a cheque from Camelot for £1 after an investigation as to whether the ticket was valid or not, "posters" by Woolworths about the millions donated to good causes as a result of tickets bought in its stores, a news item about the wireless operator on the Dublin/Liverpool ferry being fined £25 for importing illegal lottery material in 1932.

This was an unusual display and a very informative talk and my summary has addressed rather than captured the variety of the material. For instance some of the postmarks prompted interest and conjecture.

Paul Veal

WHAT'S BEHIND THE COVER?

Over a period of almost five years a series of exquisitely produced watercolour drawings of insects, wildlife and flowers most with their common and Latin names were posted at regular weekly intervals between 1888 and 1893, addressed to: "F H Sheppee care of the Reverend W C Constable MA, Uppingham". Most were sent from Chester le Street (although some were sent from Newcastle-on-Tyne or Bristol). There is no indication of the identity of the artist, although this was presumably a member of the household.

The recipient of the letters was Francis Henry Sheppee, who was born on 30th November 1874, the son of Lt Col Francis Faulkner Sheppee of Picktree House Chester le Street. He attended Uppingham School, where his housemaster was Rev W C Constable, and was chosen for the shooting team in 1891-3. After school in 1893 he went to Pembroke College, Cambridge. Francis had one younger brother and two younger sisters and had been brought up with them, his mother and father, a governess and six servants in a large house in Chester le Street. His family had moved to Birtley House, Durham by 1891 and by 1901 to Holly Spring, Bracknell, Berkshire. His father was a keen orchid enthusiast and employed a gardener, Mr W C Swanborough, who was also an accomplished orchid grower. After Lt Col Sheppee's death in 1913, his widow donated the collection of orchids to the Royal Horticultural Society.

Francis Henry Sheppee's father, Francis Faulkner Sheppee, was born in Poona in India and served in the Indian Army for many years before returning to England. He had interests in local collieries, the Birtley Iron Works and was chairman of the Exchange Telegraph Company as well as being a JP for County Durham. In 1907 he founded the Sheppee Motor Company in York. The company produced mostly steam powered commercial vehicles, but in 1912 produced two steam-powered passenger vehicles with 25bhp engines and flash boilers. From an early age the young F H Sheppee had been involved with the business, as a boy often riding in the company's vehicles. Following in his father's footsteps, Francis Jnr joined the family firm.

After petrol engines replaced steam engines, Francis Henry Sheppee developed the 'Sheppee Cykelaid' in 1920, a petrol engine that could be used to motorise bicycles, and which was produced until 1926. By that time the company was involved with vacuum cleaners and washing machines, but by 1938 it also produced machines for the glass container industry, which it has carried on to the present day. He took out several patents and was elected to the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. Francis Henry Sheppee died at his home in Bracknell on 5th August 1960.

After his death, the family having sold the house, it was used by the Meteorological Office as a hostel for staff before it was demolished.



The design on the cover (above) shows the common stonewort (*Chara vulgaris*) which is a green macroscopic algae found in fresh water in Britain. The insect illustrated, *Coniopteryx psociformis*, is a type of lacewing known as the dustywing fly, no more than 5mm long and found on trees or bushes. This cover was posted in Newcastle upon Tyne with the vertical oval duplex "545" numeral cancellation of Newcastle upon Tyne on 17th September 1890.

So who painted the more than 200 covers so beautifully? Perhaps Francis Snr., the orchid enthusiast, or perhaps the children's governess? It is quite likely we will never know.

Alan Godfrey

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.