



Halcyon

The Newsletter of the Redditch Philatelic Society – No. 23: Summer 2014.

From the Chairman



Summer holidays are coming to an end and I hope you all enjoyed the excellent weather in July and the average weather in August. I was fortunate to be able to go away in May and visit

Paignton. Since sitting on the beach all week is not my idea of a holiday, I took the opportunity to visit some of the local attractions including Greenway, which was Agatha Christie's family holiday home near Brixham and is now owned by the National Trust. The house is set in the 1950s and contains many of the objects collected by the author and her family. In fact the house is so atmospheric it was used last year as the location for filming an episode of 'Poirot'. However, my eyes were drawn to a number of display cases containing stamp boxes, those small boxes especially popular in Victorian times for storing or carrying round stamps and often decorated with Penny Blacks etc. Agatha and her son-in-law had amassed a huge collection of wooden, silver, Mauchline ware and Tunbridge ware examples. It would make a wonderful side collection for a stamp collector I know!



With the start of September we think about the new philatelic season. Again we have all the regular ingredients: talks, visits to and from other societies, display evenings and competitions. However, one departure from our normal programme is the trial of an afternoon meeting in December. It has been mentioned before that some members find that coming out on dark nights in the winter is difficult and this afternoon meeting may encourage a better turnout than our usual winter meetings. We shall be promoting this meeting to non-members in the area as well. If this is successful, we may include more afternoon meetings next season. Other clubs have adopted this practice: Streetly PS have alternate evening and afternoon meetings, Solihull PS have organised a new stamp and postcard club meeting monthly and the South Midland Stamp Club holds all its meetings in an afternoon. So, do mention this new meeting time to your friends. Bring them along and see if we can fill the hall. This meeting is an open display of "The Nineteenth Century", so most members should have some sheets to bring along.

Alan Godfrey

The President's Piece

The summer break has given us all time to reflect on a very good season. Many good speakers have graced our display boards and shown us material that we simply would not see without being a Society member. Of course this should not be the only reason to join the Society; other offerings in the programme have been equally enjoyable.



Competitions continue to gather ever improving entries. Whilst some may bemoan not winning with a first time entry, it is unlikely that will ever happen anywhere. Practice makes perfect and picking up tips from others with a bit more experience certainly helps. I can remember many years ago when the standard of entries at our competitions was not good. Nowadays that has all changed and even for a display type competition the standard of material, layout and information on the sheets is regularly superb. I do not think there are many other Societies of our size that could match our overall standards.

As a 'service' to the hobby, our Auction continues to fit the bill, with many visitors now expecting the date in their diaries. Surely this must be classed as yet another positive action by us for philately over nearly thirty years.

We have visited a number of neighbouring Societies to entertain them with our usual foursome format. We even travelled to the farthest corners of Nottinghamshire this season – a tight journey for me with work commitments getting in the way a bit.

So what for next season? More of the same - it works so don't mend it. All it requires is for everyone to join in and make it all even better. Do come along to meetings; do enter competitions; do put up a display or two. The Society only runs on its membership and we are all its members to keep it all going.

As I exhorted last time, may I encourage you all to at least come along to meetings. Often it is the meeting that one misses that is (was!!) the most interesting!

Malcolm Allinson

EDITORIAL

I hope that like me you will have managed to take a holiday away this summer. The Mem-Sahib and I chose Norfolk this year as it is quite a few years since we ventured that far east for pleasure. Imagine flicking through a National Trust brochure for Blickling Hall (within walking distance of where we were staying) and finding that they

had an award winning bookshop on site.

Not just any old bookshop or a dusty shelf of recycled paperbacks in a corner, but a stunning refurbished barn full of titles on every subject imaginable – and extremely tidy and well laid out throughout. A visit suddenly became imperative and I invite you all to imagine Jackie's face when she found out about this establishment. Furthermore, imagine too her face when upon visiting said book emporium, I found a Stamp Shop on site too. Christmas had indeed come early.

This isn't an advert for the National Trust or for Blickling Hall, but if you ever find yourself in that area, do go in and at least support the Stamp Shop. Discounts for large purchases..... apparently!!!

An interesting development in our Annual calendar this year is a daytime meeting. Of course, as one of the working few, I will not be able to be there, but it sounds a very good idea especially for the winter months. Do go along and support your Society. You never know, one day both me and also your Chairman might afford to retire and join you!

There has been a lot of attention in the press recently commemorating the start of the First World War one hundred years ago. I was looking at some inflation rates the other day and worked out that posting a letter in 1914 for 1d would cost 84d today. Mathematicians amongst you will easily convert that sum to 7/- in real money, or 35p in new-fangled coins. I suppose the only good thing then is that the weight limit has increased to 60g (or 2.1 ounces).

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

Malcolm Allinson

EVENTS AND REMINDERS

Next year sees yet another International Philatelic Exhibition being staged in this country, just five years on from London 2010. At that time I wrote that London 2010 would "...unlikely to be repeated in this country for at least ten years...." as to have an annual International exhibition somewhere in the world, it would not always follow that we in the UK would have the right to stage one every ten years.

We are therefore very fortunate in being able to visit yet another International Exhibition on these shores in 2015.

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.

CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

The Club championship is hotting up nicely at the halfway stage of the season. The top scores are:

1st Pete Elms	130 points
2nd Lyel Swingler	122 points
3rd Alan Godfrey	120 points

Remember you get points for participating. So coming to meetings, entering competitions, visiting other Societies and writing meeting reports all gain you points; as does getting a top six place in a competition. If the runes are facing in the right direction with an 'R' in the month, it is possible to gain 22 points in a single evening. A prize to whoever can work out how.

SOCIETY PROGRAMME:

Meetings until Christmas 2014 are as follows:

Sept 4 th	Mini Auction.
Sept 18 th	Two Members Displays.
Oct 2 nd	One sheet competition.
Oct 16 th	Speaker: Terry Harrison-St Vincent.
Nov 6 th	Speaker: Les Pearcy-Fungi.
Nov 20 th	Visit from Solihull PS.
Dec 4 th	Speaker: Martyn Parker- Junk Mail.
Dec 9th (Tues)	Members' Displays.
Dec 18 th	Committee Entertains.

Many of you will be saddened to hear that Nigel Davidson of Bay Stamps passed away on 2nd July. Nigel used to live in Colwyn Bay and came to a number of our Fairs as a Dealer until he retired to Scotland. Even in retirement Nigel still traded by post for many years and I know that many members regularly acquired a lot of good material from him. Unfortunately he had a stroke in November last year but never fully recovered. We offer our condolences to his daughter and family for a man who was always generous with his knowledge, and encouraging to everyone.

MDA

MEETING REPORTS

Wednesday 26th March 2014 Society Visit to Birmingham PS

Five members* visited our near neighbours at Birmingham and as usual we were made extremely welcome.

Bob Harper began the evening, and reports:

My display to Birmingham P.S. was on the early stamps and postal History of Lundy, Bristol Channel. I began with a number of postcards all showing the 'Lundy Thimble' cancellation from the days when the island had a GPO presence (1896 to 1926). The event which made Lundy famous was the wrecking of HMS Montagu on the Shutter Rocks – This brand new battleship was only weeks old and had cost over £800,000. The Royal Navy were not well pleased. The many local pleasure steamers arranged trips from North Devon for thousands of visitors, many of whom posted appropriate cards. The Lundy thimble was joined by Instow, Barnstaple or Ilfracombe transit marks. These were followed by Lundy's own stamps: The Bradbury Wilkinson lithographed 1929 issue showing its plate positions then the 1930 higher values including original imperforate proofs (the stamps are all priced in the local currency of Puffins, one Puffin being equivalent to one old penny). The Lundy owner had also produced coins of ½ Puffin and 1 Puffin which I displayed but had been convicted shortly afterwards of breaching the coinage act and the coins had to be withdrawn.

The display then showed the Airmail stamps of ACAS (Atlantic Coasts Air Services) which resemble tram tickets, with a number of covers showing their use followed by the Large Map and Small Map stamps in their various forms including proofs, overprints and, of course, on cover.

I know that I usually limit the amount of envelopes in my collections but Lundy is an exception. Its postal History is much more interesting than your common or garden Penny Black covers and the postal use of the stamps does show that there was a genuine private postal service operating and a genuine need for the stamps.

Pete Elms followed:

I displayed a selection of Errors and Varieties on stamps for two reasons. Firstly this is the type of material I now collect, and secondly it always surprises me to find out how many people never pay attention to the stamps they buy at the Post Office, and so miss out on some serious gems. I started by displaying proof Plates of the Battle of Hastings set, to give a better understanding of the missing colours throughout the set. Next came Rowland Hill from the 1980 Miniature sheet with colour shifts, missing gold, missing rosine and missing phosphor. Finally I showed the Joshua Reynolds missing cinnamon variety which has yet to be catalogued.

The second half began with Robin displaying part of his Chilean Airmail collection, which continues to expand. This time it was those covers connected with the French companies CGA and later Air France. As usual it began with material from the early flights of 1928 and Robin explained that because a new and rather expensive book he had just purchased, he had found a crash cover which he never knew he had. It bore no markings of any sort to indicate that it had been involved in some accident which was presumably of a minor nature. Later he showed a cover which had received a cachet to the effect that it had been delayed because of a crash in which the unfortunate crew died. The display ended with the Air France service being suspended when France was overrun by the Germans.

Finally, Malcolm Allinson showed the story of the Bishop Mark. He began with an example from January 1661. As the earliest known mark is dated 19 April 1661, this took a little explaining! Of course the difference is due to the way a year was denoted in those days – much like our tax year is today, so January 1661 followed December 1661. Malcolm followed with more early examples from the 1660's and then right through to the change of design in 1787. An interesting area was an assembly of very early Scottish (Edinburgh) Bishop Marks, in both red and black. The final two items showed Bishop Marks of New York in the 1760's. At the time New York was officially a branch of the London General Post Office.

The feedback from our hosts was extremely good. Everybody commented how much they enjoyed the evening and they were really impressed with both the quality and quantity of the material on display.

** Peter Baker was our fifth member who whilst not showing a display was very impressed with his first Society visit. Many thanks to those who displayed for providing the above reports.*



Each speaker received a copy of this Certificate of Appreciation from the Birmingham Chairman Alwyn Saunders

Thursday 17th April 2014

Visit from Stroud PS

Tonight we welcomed five members of Stroud to entertain us. The Stroud chairman John Armitage introduced the speakers and their subjects, openly admitting that they were following the format that we had done when we visited them last year. A nice compliment!

First up was Mike Parker with 'Haiti', and he introduced the subject with a short history and some interesting facts.

Christopher Columbus landed 6th Dec 1492 and his portrait can be found on the early stamps of Chile.

The word Buccaneer comes from the Haitian language. In 1791 the slaves revolted and by 1804 the French had been kicked out.

We learned that Thomas Dumas, (Father of the *Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo* author) was Napoleon's General and Mike showed various items relating to him. The Americans occupied the islands from 1915 and in 2010 between 150,000 and 160,000 died in a massive earthquake.

Peter Adams followed with 'Seychelles' which had been discovered by the Portuguese in the 1500's and in 1815 were confirmed as a British Dominion under Mauritius. The first stamps used were those of Mauritius without overprint and so can only be identified by the B64 cancel of Seychelles. These early stamps are very valuable and forgeries of the B64 cancel are common. There were 5 local post offices and in 1890 QV key type stamps were used.

Peter showed a forgery with a certificate of authenticity signed by Robson Lowe, and Peter had examined in detail several examples of a forged postmark which he managed to prove that the canceller was that of Church Rd Portlisle in Sussex. A great piece of detective work.

John Lorraine showed '1d Paid'. A wide variety of covers from pre Uniform postage through 4d Uniform and finally '1d Paid' handstamps, the most local being that of West Bromwich. In some of the handstamps showing the words 'One Penny' the letters N were reversed. John finished with a Mulready, 1d Pink envelope and a 2d blue on cover.

Bob Tungate showed Ethiopia (Abyssinia). Bob explained that originally there were many different tribes and they were organised into a country by Theodoros Menelik. Bob showed a variety of pictures postcards and stamps relating to Menelik. He also showed material of Haile Selassie with Airmail overprints on definitive stamps. Italy invaded in 1935 and Mussolini declared himself Emperor of Ethiopia from 1936. Bob finished with two boards of Italian Municipal Tax Stamps. There were 8,200

places in Italy all producing their own tax stamps which meant that there was a lot for Bob to collect!

Alan thanked our guests for coming, and for an excellent evening's entertainment with a variety of topics some of which had never been seen before at Redditch.

Chris Jackson

Thursday 1st May 2014

Annual 3-sheet Competition

The topic for this year's competition for the Ian Crickmer trophy was the letter "T". The four entries were therefore quite unrelated apart from their titles – Pete Elms chose the history of telegrams; Bob Harper an American aerophilately exhibit; Alan Godfrey a thematics display of Tree ferns; and Chris Jackson showed "Travellers" (temporary hand stamps used of old).

The low turnout and small number of entries was rather disappointing but the show went ahead as usual. Yours truly and Peter Baker were volunteered as judges for the evening, both having never done it before - a bit risky for the competitors. We were given two sets of criteria for judging the different classes and set about totting up "strictly by the book" to the best of our ability. There was no time for reflection or second thoughts.

On this basis we declared Chris Jackson the winner for his "Travellers". This included one of "Broomsgrove" from 1839 and another of Kidderminster in 1848 plus two Worcester examples, one believed to be a sole survivor. We gave Chris 93 as we found virtually nothing to fault. Chris has now won three times in a row – does he keep the trophy? *(No! Ed)*

The runner-up was Pete Elms with 85. There was a Scottish telegram of 1899 and a colourful modern-looking greetings telegram of 1938 plus some Rules and Regulations.

Third was Alan Godfrey's with Tree Ferns, ably illustrated by mint stamps from New Zealand, St Helena and several other tropical habitats.

Outside the top three was Bob Harper's entry – the wartime stamps of "Tydol Flying". They even provided albums for these labels like cigarette card albums. As Bob explained, this was not a formal display but was certainly of interest as a curiosity and caused some fun.

There was some (fairly amicable) discussion on the marking and the difficulty of comparing different classes of entry fairly, something that wouldn't happen at a bigger event. Till next year then!

Paul Veal

Thursday 15th May 2014
Guest Speaker: Ian Shaw
The Two Kings

This was Ian's third visit to the Society, and also some sort of record – all of his visits have been to different venues, and he has found us every time. We are extremely glad of this as his display tonight was of equal splendour to his previous offerings. We saw a complete run through the stamps of the reigns of the "Two Kings", Edward VII and George V.

Ian showed us mostly mint examples – a consideration I had not contemplated before but when you see sheet after sheet and board after board of mint material it is clear that his choice is correct if you want to look at the stamps. Postmarks do not get in the way of the design!

Ian's goal is to collect "one of each" from every issue since 1840 and that what we were seeing is a working collection.

The quantity of material was immense - far too much to write up here every single item; and the quality too was superb. My notes say that the collection is littered with shades through to 10/- and this is no exaggeration. Many of the pages of shades left us all arguing over things like pale, dark, light, bright; and the colours themselves - whether grey-brown, brown-grey, dull- grey, red-brown; the combinations seemed endless.

Amongst the many gems throughout the evening we saw a run of Booklets right from their inception in March 1904. Interestingly, booklets carried a surcharge of ½d so for 2/- of stamps you paid 2/0½d. Complaints led to a reduction of a booklet to just 2/- but the good old Post Office wasn't going to be outdone and only put 1/11½ of stamps in them. However this did give rise to the "spare" stamp becoming advertising space and we saw plenty of examples of booklet panes covering this. We saw pages of De La Rue Plate proofs of 4d, 5d, 10d, 2/6 and 5/- values, absolutely lovely.

Then came the Somerset House printings, paper changes and perf varieties, and we saw many examples of all of these different features

We moved on to George V and Ian showed a half ton essay of the new photogravure stamp. The head was designed by Bertram Mackennal but the King didn't like the three quarter profile. Again we saw examples of Plate proofs, different Dies and many varieties. Clearly Ian has expanded the "one of each" principle to the "one of each of every possible combination that could even have been produced, or even thought of (and a few more for good measure)" principle!

The three quarter profile head on these stamps did not find favour with the public at large either, and was eventually changed to the full profile head.

Ian related the story of one particular cover that he acquired many years ago which was a Registered Insured cover to Nice. The Insurance was for £300. Amazingly fifty years later he stumbled across a second cover in another collection, to the same addressee in Nice, again Registered and Insured but this time for £400, sent on the same date 3rd November 1911. At the time there were restrictions on taking money out of the country and clearly this was a way of taking out amply funds for one's Riviera holiday. (£700 is now about £16,300. *That was some holiday! Ed.*)

Ian explained that by 1914, an increase in colour shades happened due to the lack of consistent ink supplies. Previously we had obtained ink from Germany, but of course this dried up because of the War.

The display included examples of all the values of the 1912- 22 low value issues ½d green, 1d red, 1½d brown, 2d orange and 2½d blue – of course not simply single examples but a very thorough array of shades across all of the values. Again, most of us could hardly detect any differences!

We continued after the break with the higher values of this issue from 8d to 1/-. Again plenty of colour shades were in evidence (allegedly!!!) and we saw shades of the 1/- value that have yet to receive catalogue status. At this point I began to consider that what we were seeing was in fact a fully illustrated physical catalogue of British stamps!



Next came what most people agree is the greatest stamp design that has ever been – the Seahorses. To emphasise this we saw no less than 10

pages of colour varieties of all the four values, together with examples from all of the different printers (Waterlow, De La Rue and Bradbury Wilkinson); a stunning section in its own right, as we can see in the picture above of Ian with a page of 1913 Seahorses.

Ian concluded the evening by showing the 1935 Silver Jubilee issue. Just one design by Barnett Freeman, and four different values, Ian turned into many examples of varieties, control numbers booklet panes, and a complete set of the 2/- (7) and 3/- Booklets (4), and topped the display with a copy of the 2½d Prussian Blue.

Yet again a truly brilliant display of British stamps, and I for one will look forward to the next instalment sometime.

Malcolm Allinson

Thursday 22nd May 2014 Society Visit to Radcliffe PS

Our visit to Radcliffe began with such severe traffic jams around Coventry that our navigator had to resort to serious diversions along streets never before traversed! We had originally allowed what seemed an excessive amount of spare time, which was then used up very quickly at the beginning of our journey. We did eventually arrive in comfortable time however, and our hosts were more than pleased to see us.

Pete Elms began proceedings with another showing of his Errors and Varieties on Queen Elizabeth II stamps. Pete displayed proof Plates of the Battle of Hastings set, and followed up with some of the missing colours on the stamps. Many were not obvious until each was pointed out and then of course they were so glaringly obvious we wondered why we hadn't spotted them in the first place. Again, Pete's comments that we fail to spot these gems struck a chord with our audience.

Chris Jackson completed the first half by showing Redditch Postal History including the earliest recorded postmark of Redditch followed by straight line and circular mileage marks. Maltese crosses, numerals and duplex cancels followed on a variety of stamps. Chris included both Registered and Express items explaining the significance of each and continued with a variety of items sent abroad. Most unusual were the two letters sent to 'The Yacht Gladwyn' at Gibraltar and Constantinople where Chris showed pictures of both the writer and the addressee and explained that the addressee was on honeymoon touring the Mediterranean and the letters were from his sister who was married to the vicar of Inkberrow. Chris finished with a dozen sheets from his fishing tackle manufacturers display which contains a variety of unusual material which was sent to various foreign destinations.

Malcolm Allinson followed after the break, and gave a display of his Line Engraved collection starting with an introduction to the "invention" of stamps, from the ideas of among others Rowland Hill; through the transition in postage rates from mileage based to charge by weight and on to the stamps themselves. To regulate such a collection, Malcolm limits his area to the imperforate stamps lettered MA and we saw what is becoming very close to a complete set of 1d red stamps from each printing Plate. To finish, Malcolm displayed a reconstructed sheet of imperforate 2d Blue stamps – not quite complete but again getting close.

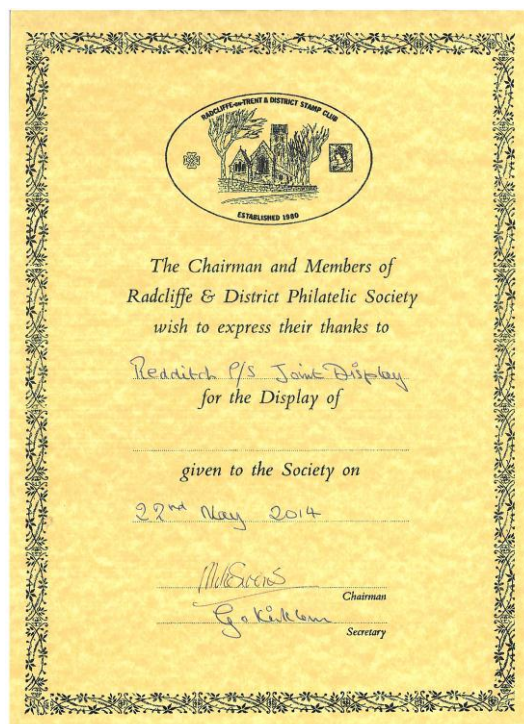
Alan Godfrey concluded the evening with a display of 'Transport - Trams, Buses & Trains'. This commenced with parcel stamps of the Birmingham & Midland Tramways Joint Committee which operated tram services in the Black Country and Birmingham at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. This business

was owned by British Electric Traction, who in 1905 took over a fledgling omnibus company, Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Company, nicknamed 'Midland Red' from the colour of their buses. They shared premises in Bearwood and operated a combined parcel delivery service. As the trams declined, so the bus service flourished and until 1975 Midland Red provided an important service carrying newspapers and parcels by bus from Gloucestershire in the south to Nottinghamshire in the north, from Herefordshire in the west to Leicestershire in the east. Over the years many different styles of 'stamps' were issued with values from 3d to 35p. Alan showed a range of stamps and covers using these stamps, together with photographs and ephemera.

The final part of the display showed stamps and postal history of some of the railway companies that operated in Warwickshire. The East & West Junction Railway opened in 1873 running trains between Stratford upon Avon and Towcester. In 1908 it merged with several other small companies to form the Stratford & Midland Junction Railway, running trains from Broom Junction to Olney in Buckinghamshire. Both companies issued their own stamps for the carriage of letters and later parcels as well. Alan also added parcel stamps issued by the London & North West Railway, the London, Midland & Scottish Railway and the Great Western Railway Company.

Each of us received a Certificate of Appreciation and warm thanks from the Radcliffe members. Apart from traffic delays due to roadworks around Nottingham, we had a quiet, if late, journey home.

Malcolm Allinson



Each speaker received a copy of this Certificate of Appreciation from the members of Radcliffe.

Thursday 19th June 2014 Chairman's Evening

Tonight, Alan Godfrey gave us an interesting tour of the Arctic to cool us down from the hot summer weather. Alan used his fascinating thematic collection on Polar Explorers to illustrate his talk. We began in the late 1400's with Matthew Cabot and other explorers trying to find a route to the Indies via the fabled Northwest Passage. The goal of course, a shorter sea route for trading with India and Eastern Asia.

We moved on to famous names such as Cartier who claimed Newfoundland in 1534; Henry Hudson who founded the Hudson bay Company and Vitus Bering, who explored the north east coast of Asia and of whom the Bering Strait between Russia and America is named.

Captain Cook's Third voyage was also recounted, during which he was the first to fully map the northwest coast of America up to the Bering Strait.

Alan turned his attention to the North Pole and the many attempts to reach it. Berrows, Parry, Ross and Nansen all featured and Alan related that the most likely "first" was the American Frederick Cook. This honour is solely based upon a thorough examination of his somewhat limited records by a committee from Copenhagen University and has been discredited on numerous occasions. Another discredited attempt on the Pole was by Robert Peary another American explorer. Eminent polar historians feel that his log of the journey doesn't add up. He had no-one trained in navigation and he himself was unable to produce observation data or longitudinal position information. His claimed rates of progress have also been questioned, particularly after the one independent navigator who accompanied part of the trip returned to base with the support party. Peary claim to have reached the pole meant that would have needed to travel over 300 km in two days to have achieved the feat. The most charitable explanation is that Peary believed he had reached the Pole, but was deceived in faulty navigation.

The first half concluded with later polar expeditions by air; Amundsen- Ellsworth in 1926 in the airship Norge; and Umberto Nobile's 1928 Polar flight Italia flight in 1928 which resulted in an international rescue effort following the crash of the airship Italia. It was during the rescue attempt that Amundsen was killed when the seaplane he was flying in disappeared.

We then took a good break to view all of the fascinating material that Alan had skilfully arranged and displayed.

The second half fulfilled Alan's promise of being something different and your writer thought that this meant we were going to see material relating to the SOUTH pole.

Incorrect !!! We were treated to a display of Alan's collection of postal memorabilia in the form of model Post Office vans. We began with a selection of postcards of PO vehicles, and moved on to more three dimensional objects. We saw what must be the complete range of models available; most still in their boxes. Minis, Bedford Lorries, Austin vans; Morris vans, Ford Model T's; all in various liveries and designs.

Just as we thought we had seen everything, Alan dived into a big black bag and produced a winter diorama of a postal scene AND more vehicles – this time HGV trucks!

In thanking Alan for a wonderful display of Polar material, our President commented that he was amazed that Alan was able to house such a vast model collection without incurring household penalties. He must be married to a Saint.

Malcolm Allinson

TAKE ANOTHER LOOK

I am sure that most of you will have a page in an album or collection that has not been looked at for several years. May I suggest that it may be worthwhile taking a fresh look at the item as you may find something interesting or even unexpected. You probably wrote up the page at the time you acquired the material but since then your knowledge will have increased and improved so that what you wrote then may be out of date or even somewhat inaccurate. We all hope that our collections get better over time and it is well worth seeking out those items that you have ignored for years as they may be hiding hidden gems.



Some years ago now I acquired a couple of early airmail covers of Chile for my collection and these were written up at the time with the information which I had available then. You will have seen these at the Society meetings on a number of occasions either in a competition or display. Since purchasing a new and expensive book, together with other evidence, I have been having another look at these covers. One still had its original letter, which after a bit of deciphering stated that "...the first airmail

leaves tonight". Was this a first flight cover? Soon after I bought it there were two articles in the philatelic press on Chilean airmails. So I wrote to the author, a well-known expert on the subject, for any information and/or confirmation. The reply was that, whilst being a nice early cover, it was not a first flight.

I quickly realised that this was indeed true but still felt that the cover was rather special, as apart from the other one in my collection I have never seen another. So it remained an enigma until these recent additions to my library. Now I can tell the full story or can I?

The French CGA commenced their airmail service from Buenos Aires to Europe on 1st March 1928 but Chile was not ready to send mail by this route until the second flight (termed AMFRA 2 by aerophilatelists) which left the Argentine capital on Thursday 8th March. However my covers departed Santiago on Tuesday 6th via the Trans-Andean Express (so called) on its summer timetable as there were no aircraft capable of making the flight across the Andes safely. Hence I cannot really call these covers first flight but rather those from the first day of usage of the service.

From Buenos Aires the mail was flown in stages to Natal on the north east coast of Brazil where it probably arrived on 9th March. Then it should have transferred to a seaplane for the flight to the Brazilian island of Fernando de Noronha ready for the sea crossing to Africa. As the seaplanes had not yet arrived the mail went by aviso (ex French Navy vessels) to Porto Praia in the Cape Verde Islands. Here were based further seaplanes to carry the mail to San Luis in Senegal and it seems that on AMFRA 2 the aircraft suffered some kind of accident which delayed the mail as this was incorporated in the following week's journey. Once in Africa it was flown up the west coast to Tangier before crossing into Europe. For reasons which are now unclear it would seem that the seaplanes were never used on the leg to Fernando de Noronha and the route was also changed at some point so the aviso took the mail from Natal direct to Dakar, Senegal.

Whatever happened, the mail eventually arrived in Toulouse on the same flight as the following week's on 30th March and my letter to Finland was received there on 3rd April. So it just goes to show what you can find out with the right sources available and although the book I purchased was much more than I would normally pay, it has proved invaluable on this and other items in my airmail collection, even if it has raised further questions.

Robin Jarman

MEMBERS ACHIEVEMENTS

At this year's Midland Federation Inter-Society Competitions held at Worpex in May, as a Society we again provided the most entries, and those entries gave a very good account of themselves. Robin Jarman won the Aerophilately Class with a Silver medal; Ralph Richardson gained Silver in the Postal History Class; Bob Harper achieved Silver Gilt in the Thematic Class and Robin Jarman also secured Silver Gilt in the Traditional Class. As all of our entries were the individual winners of our Annual competitions in January, please refer back to that report for more details

AND FINALLY.....

Recently rummaging through a box of photographs I came across two that should fire up the memories in many members. The first is a group photo of members taken at our last meeting at the Smallwood Almshouses in June 1993. Is it me or do we still look that young?



Front row: Bob Harper, Barry Smith, Malcolm Allinson, Fred Pritchard, June Edwards, Ralph Richardson and Norman Wiley

Back row: Ian Crickmer, Sarah Elms, Chris Jackson, Pete Elms, Harry Goodwin, Tony Bell, Len Bruton, Fred Sefton, Chris Cole and Bill Grinnell.



The second picture (left) shows the old post box at Sernal near Studley, an original hexagonal Penfold. I took this in late 1994. Whilst working in that area at the time I noticed a Post Office man cleaning the box up and repainting it. This happened over a couple of days, so after he had finished I managed to take a photo of it in all its glory.

Sadly, the box was demolished on 11th March 2001 when a vehicle ran into it.

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.