



Halcyon

The Newsletter of the Redditch Philatelic Society – Winter 2007

From the Chairman



Another calendar year is nearly over and I am reflecting upon the early part of our current season. We have seen some good meetings. Eric Lewis's talk was memorable, as was the superb display of postcards shown by Colin Such. The Redditch postcards in particular were looked at

with envy by some members. Members too have put up some excellent displays. It is certainly a lot different from when I first joined the club when few of us were really able to construct a decent layout of our treasures. I know that the standard of our Annual competitions this year will be high and it will be a challenge for the judge to choose the winners.

The sad occasion of the year was the demise of the Three Counties Federation. This was solely due to lack of enough volunteers for any of the posts on the committee. There were only us, and Worcester society, who wished to keep the Federation in existence - however it was not to be.

The highlight of the second half of our programme will be Dennis Vandervelde's renowned talk on Disinfected Mail. It is indeed an honour to have this distinguished philatelist visit us. In addition, I am looking forward to the talk and display on Cacti. Before all of these excellent evenings however, we have our annual dinner when we are going to the College for what will be an excellent meal in good company.

Finally, please spare a thought for the Editor of your newsletter. If he is to get another newsletter out on time, he needs to have lots and lots of informative and entertaining articles to put in it. With the Christmas break approaching there is plenty of time to fill, so you can create that article you were always going to write, about "19th century self adhesives", "Boer War airmails", "Royal Mail in the 22nd Century", or just simply your own experiences in many years of collecting. Maybe you have some ideas for an *opus magna* that could be a series of articles over a number of issues - in which case talk to him. I'm sure he will have plenty

of time to chat about what you wish to write, especially if he hasn't got any articles to edit !!!!

Whatever you may have, please contribute something over the next few weeks. Your Editor does not want to (*and won't !! Ed.*) have to write the whole newsletter all by himself, and he can always help you if you need it.

May I wish you all a Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

Sincerely
Richard.

The President's Piece



Christmas is nearly upon us so I do hope you have all been out and purchased that one and only very special present you each have to buy. (a stamp of course; something that our partners might not all understand!).

Are all your Christmas Day preparations in place or are you, like me, all behind and wondering if you will ever get everything done? We always do of course, so that then leaves plenty of time for you to work upon your entries for the January competitions. If you are this far ahead, then well done and I hope you win.

Looking back, what a great philatelic year we have had at Redditch. The competitions have all been supported better than ever, and the standard just keeps getting higher and higher. The speakers who visit us have all been most interesting and have given us some memorable evenings. Many thanks to everyone involved. We get such a variety of subjects, it is always a pleasure to come to meetings.

Our Christmas Day this year will be spent quietly (*how??? Ed.*) with family so I probably won't have time to look through my albums. So Happy Christmas to you all and best wishes for 2008.

June Edwards

Editorial

With contributions in this edition from **Chris Jackson, June Edwards, Sergio Andrioli, Jack Finney, Alan Godfrey, David Gillespie, Bob Harper, Robin Jarman, Richard Nicol and Peter Elms**, we might think that the Newsletter is well served by plenty of material. Grateful thanks go to everyone above, but the more eagle-eyed will spot that the same person has reported on the last *three* Society meetings. Is this right? Please do not wait to be asked to record our events; stand up above the parapet and be counted, as well as sending in erudite articles.

Finally, may I also wish you all a Happy Christmas and trust that you are all invigorated by the break and perhaps get time to devote to your collections.

Malcolm Allinson

ANNUAL DINNER

Our Annual Dinner this year will be held at Archers Restaurant at the NEW College on 17th January.

The restaurant is used by Hospitality and Catering students as part of their course programme to enable them to gain knowledge and build their skills for the industry. Many of our members have been there individually over the years, particularly when it was located at the Old Library, and have all given it very good reviews. The move to new premises in the main College has not reduced it's quality of either food or service.

Your committee has put a lot of effort into securing a private booking for this Dinner, and I am pleased that we are able to support a local facility. I look forward to as many members as possible joining me for the evening, and I have all of the details if you have still to make your mind up. Please let me know as soon as possible if you wish to come. The last date will be 7th January for confirmation, menu choice and payment (£16 per head).

June Edwards

SOCIETY PROGRAMME:

January to April 2008

Jan 7 th	Annual Thematic and Postal History Competitions.
Jan 17 th	Annual Dinner – Archers Restaurant; NEW College, Redditch.
Jan 31 st	Society visit to Worcester PS
Feb 4 th	Annual General Meeting
Feb 21 st	Visiting Speaker Mr L Percy: <i>Cacti and Succulents</i>
Mar 3 rd	Visiting Speaker Mr A Spencer: <i>Cinderella's Slipper</i>
Mar 13 th	Society Auction Preview
Mar 15 th (Sat)	Annual Society Auction
Apr 7 th	Visiting Speaker Mr D Williams: <i>Hungary</i>

LETTERS COLUMN.

In response to David Seward's letter, a couple of replies have been received. Firstly, David Gillespie writes:

"Like David, I'm no postal history collector. From an early age my main interest has been the stamps themselves. Most of my stamp-collecting life has been in relative isolation, other than a few years around the age of eleven.

My first venture into 'social' collecting was on joining RPS around two years ago. Consequently I have little knowledge of competitions, particularly at regional or national level. I imagine that the format of these has to be, to some extent, mirrored in club competitions.

I, like David, find it difficult to fit seamlessly into the club 9-sheet competition format of 'thematics' or 'postal history' - that is, if I could be confident that I truly understand what they mean!

Collecting stamps depicting space rockets, or washing machines, would seem to be fairly clearly thematic. Early Victorian covers to and from a particular place would, I guess, fit cleanly into the postal history category. but what about stamps with adverts on the back? The adverts may cover Pears Soap, Irish moss, or whatever. Thematics or postal history?

What about, say, early U.S.A.? There are many stories that doubtless could be told regarding the various presidents depicted, or about the 'Columbus' pictorials, or even the Kansas/Nebraska overprints. Thematic, postal history, neither or both?. What about the Washington Heads, with their many variations of print processes, frame sizes, watermarks and perfs? There is probably some interesting information to be presented here, but how to enter this into a competition?

I don't know the answers but must say that I too find the two competition categories rather difficult to fit into. I think David also makes a valid point that without a 'postal history' content, which I take to mean covers or postmarks primarily, there would appear to be seriously restricted possibilities of a competitive competition score. Are there any solutions out there?"

David Gillespie.

Robin Jarman has also put fingers to keyboard with some useful observations:

"I assume that David is referring to the Society's annual Thematic Competition which I remember he entered last January, as did I. It had been some time since I had entered this, as my interests have never really embraced this form of collecting. I thought that, like David, all I needed was some stamps and a story but it now seems that like everything, things have changed. Almost everyone

would now present a competition entry produced on a computer; something virtually unheard of a few years ago. In the same vein thematic competition entries have also moved on to include material other than pure stamps.

Our excellent external judge for the above competition was able to explain this to us and provide a valuable lesson to those of us who might want to enter events at, say, MPF level. Unlike David, I enter for the fun of it and if I occasionally do well, then I am happy. However I have taken note of what was said and will try to comply with this new thinking when I enter again. As I explained earlier, thematic collecting is not really a major interest for me but over the past few months I have been looking out for items which might enhance my next entry. Any bought have been purchased very cheaply and no doubt David could do the same if he wishes to enter another such competition. Unless your entry is very specialised, it need not cost a fortune.

However if I have got all this wrong and David wishes to put in a pure traditional stamp entry, then I would recommend the autumn MPF competition which is for individuals rather than societies. If I can do it, then I am sure anyone can and any help needed can be got from more experienced thematic collectors in the Society than myself, who no doubt would be pleased to offer advice.

Therefore, in conclusion, I hope that he will have another go in the near future."

Robin Jarman

*The dilemma that both Davids' appear to have is **not** having a Society level competitive outlet for their particular collecting area. Is the answer to increase the number of classes that we hold at our annual 9 sheet competitions? Would we get enough entries? I remember some years ago we did have a greater number of classes, but were consistently underwhelmed with entries. Now with an ever increasing turnout for ALL of our competition evenings, perhaps it is time for your Committee to review the situation, and look at increasing the disciplines in line with Federation and National events. Ed.*

Interesting websites.

The latest website to come to our attention is **www.povehclub.org.uk** It is a site committed to Post Office vehicles of all shapes and sizes and is worth a visit if only to reminisce about the Morris Minor and Ford Thames vans that the Post Office used to deliver your local mail in.

www.lbsg.org is the website for the Letter Box Study Group. Devoted to everything to do with the study of Letter Boxes, it is very comprehensive and leads you through various pages of information on an important aspect of the whole postal system.

MEETING REPORTS

Monday 3rd September 2007: Society Mini Auction.

Our season kicked off with the now regular offering of a mini Auction. Designed to "encourage" members to come along after the summer break with the incentive of finding some hidden gem for sale, it also gives the Treasurer a reasonably captive audience for gathering in the new season's subscriptions! (Our Programme Secretary should be congratulated on these machinations).

Nearly all members brought along material to offer, so the first half an hour or so was a bit chaotic in organising lot numbers and description sheets, together with getting the material into a sort of order for displaying. Eventually, everything settled down and members were able to spend time viewing the delights and catching up with others' summer activities.

At last, everyone took their seats. Malcolm Allinson kept proceedings moving as our Auctioneer, ably assisted by Fred Pritchard, Alan Godfrey and a laptop computer, with Bill Grinnell again distributing all of the Lots around the room

Our members took the usual steps to ensure that the various lots were sold, and great delight runs around the room when members buy an item they don't want - an all too frequent occurrence due to strategic bidding by others and encouragement from the rest of the floor!! It has also been known for members to get so excited, as to inadvertently purchase back their own material.

At the end of the Auction there had been many successful purchases, some disappointments, but great enjoyment all round. The Treasurer was especially pleased that 25 members also contributed their subscriptions, a record for the first meeting of the season.

Malcolm Allinson

Thursday 20th September 2007: Members Displays: This is what I collect.

The title for the evening had one wondering if we were going to see collections of typewriters or bicycles! There was no need to worry as all the displays were of philatelic related items. It was also very satisfying that the ratio of members who displayed, 18 out of the 25 members who attended, was the best I have ever seen at our society.

The evening started off with a display by a member who was not even present! Pete Elms had sent along his display of errors on the Hastings Battle of Britain set of stamps. (*Your Editor is suitably chastised to read this, as he was also absent and had NOT sent a display!*) Sergio Andrioli showed pre & post unification stamps of Italy produced by different printers, whilst Fred Pritchard managed to display 40 of the 47

different Post Office Cancellations of Malta together with local issues and colour varieties.

Kelvin Moore took us back to GB with 1d blacks and 2d blues (including a strip of 7), postal history and postcards from the Isle of Man, and postcards of Alvechurch. Jack Finney brought a display of Railway FDC's and Presentation Packs and finished off with Railway tickets from the Redditch to Ashchurch line including one offering a discount of 2/- in the £ on suits in London!

David Seward displayed New Zealand together with the local catalogue and referred everyone to the article he had written on his collecting interests which he hoped would appear in the next newsletter (*It actually got into the last edition. Ed.*) Robin Jarman also referred to *Halcyon* and his article about a Steam Shovel from his display of Chile which included Internal and International Air Mails.

In addition to his USA material, Norman Wiley had brought along an item from the Society visit to the Auctioneers Warwick and Warwick on 1st October 1979! Trevor Rutter brought along a substantial collection of Studley postcards which contained some real gems. Barry Smith's contribution was the worldwide Europa Issues together with GB Booklet panes. I was another to bring local railway tickets including one for a dog, together with Postal History, postcards and needlemakers items.

Bob Harper's display was a detailed study of the positional blocks of the RSPCA 6 Puffin stamp from Lundy, followed by the Trinity House 70th Anniversary and Puffin stamps on parcels. Our other Bob, Bob Allard, displayed 1920 Red Cross issue of Czechoslovakia with surcharge for the Red Cross charity, and errors of the four different types of overprint.

David Gillespie showed himself winning the Junior Philatelic Prize at Bridgewater in 1961 and even put his winning entry on show. He then proceeded to show the development of his collection over the years which he stated to be 'downhill!' Richard Nicol showed some Seychelles FDC's up to Independence, and Alan Godfrey brought the meeting to a close with a miscellany which included Polar explorers, Falklands stamps, POW camps in Warwickshire, Airgraphs and Harry Potter!

An absolutely fascinating evening which clearly showed the breadth of interests within the society and which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone present. We should repeat the evening at some future date.

Chris Jackson

SUBSCRIPTIONS

A gentle reminder from the Treasurer that if you have yet to pay your subscriptions for this year, he is still happy to receive them. Of course, as time goes by he gets less happy if you still haven't paid, so please do your utmost to keep him smiling!

Thursday 18th October 2007: Two members talks and Displays.

Tonight we were treated to two presentations, by members Barry Smith and Bill Grinnell.

The two presenters used quite different approaches to outline their subjects even though both the contents of the presentations were to a certain extent based upon inventions and technological advances.

Barry traced the evolution of the bicycle from its invention by Baron von Drais, patented in Paris in 1818, through its subsequent development and culminating in the popularity of the machines.

Barry also related the fact that at its peak there were something like 16 companies producing bicycles in Redditch alone, a fact that not many local people will be aware of. One of the most important producers was established in Redditch in 1896. This company was of course the Enfield Cycle Company, Barry's "family business". The company subsequently became more well known for the manufacture of motorcycles, continuing until the 1960's when production moved to India.

The presentation covered about 180 years of bicycle history and was illustrated by a number of display cards showing photographs, postcards and covers as well as many stamps on a bicycle theme. These all added very much to the interesting and informative talk.

For the second half of the evening, Bill Grinnell gave us a display on Aircraft, concentrating on the planes of the RAF during World War II, and tracing the development of these machines over that period.

The display consisted mostly of items relating to the Spitfire, but other illustrations included cards, photos and ephemera of the Mosquito, Halifax and Lancaster. All of these aircraft helped Britain gain the upper hand in the air and paved the way for ultimate victory in the conflict.

One item of memorabilia stands out. That is a Menu Card for Christmas Day 1940 from an Officers Mess "somewhere in England", listing oysters as a starter course. One member pointed out that such a luxury would not have been available for the next five years (perhaps longer).

Sergio Andrioli

Monday 5th November 2007: Visiting Speaker: Eric Lewis opens Box 13

Many members have known Eric for a number of years and are invariably surprised with what he displays. Certainly the excellent number of members here tonight were not disappointed in what they saw.

Eric began by explaining why the talk is called Box 13. He was once invited at the last minute (the night before in fact) to stand in for a speaker who had fallen ill. With nothing specific prepared, he decided to take along a box of unsorted items which just happened to be stored in box number 13. Oh, to be so organised as to have numbered boxes of material. It was spotted that tonight Eric had brought more than one box, so perhaps we were going to see boxes 13a, 13b and 13c.

Eric began by displaying some exquisite Chinese postcards with pictures made from individual used postage stamps in the style of a montage. These were so beautiful that they were an art form on their own. We moved on to a section of Illustrated Covers and Cards, with a Twopenny Mulready cover and a newspaper article for the 6 May 1840 (the first day of use for Mulready stationery) which already was criticising the design. History records that these covers were very short lived. Caricatures were soon in circulation and we were shown an original print of one by the famous artist John Leach.

Other items came thick and fast from the box; a "York Rose" showing pictures of that city mounted around a fan like structure; hand painted illustrations on postcards; hand illustrated Airgraph letters and a letter on a medical theme with cartoons commenting on the state of the Health Service inserted in various places in the text. All very beautiful and interesting.

Eric moved on to the Post Office itself and a collection of cartoons from Punch magazine lampooning the GPO on various fronts. We saw examples of the first embossed stamps on cover; Eric's comment being that as the 10d stamp had eight full margins, it was worth considerably more than a normal four margin stamp. Sadly this logic is not reflected in catalogues.

Descriptions of items came under scrutiny next with Stamp Dealers being shown little mercy. A group of items that, quite frankly no-one would give house room to, were displayed alongside the Dealers descriptions of them. "Slight soiling does not detract" described an item that apart from a small area around the stamp, was so dirty everyone decided that gloves were needed to handle it. "Postmark clear of corner letters" described a cover with a very very heavy postmark. Everyone agreed that the corner letters were visible, but no-one could decide what the stamp was. Other descriptions - "hardly noticeable traces of staining", "slight toning clear of the adhesive", "cover has signs of ageing", were all used to describe equally disastrous items.

A selection of Post Office Notices, Advertisements and Parliamentary Bills followed. We were shown the Notice for Post Office opening hours for Whitsun Bank Holiday in 1908. Staff were only required to work from 7.00am to 11.00pm on that

day! An advert from Balfours & Co Ltd. for a proposed Penny Stamp vending machine caused interest if only for the accompanying documentation that placed Redditch in the list of WARWICKSHIRE Post Offices proposed to trial the machine. We also saw a couple of pages from the Stamp Impression book from Pershore Post office for Christmas Day 1913, which caused at least one member of the audience to begin reciting the eight and tenth Commandments.*

The evening was constantly full of surprises and superb material. Each time Eric put his hands into the Box he came out with yet another gem. The range was vast with seemingly nothing omitted; Inn Bills showing costs of meals and livery which clearly showed that a horse costs more to feed than a human; Advertising Cards for many products, all produced in the shape of the product with an address label attached to it by string; Post Office Cachets which were affixed to mail to signify why there was delay or damage or non delivery.

I particularly liked the two letters shown. One was addressed to a Mr Woodward Deceased, the awful error being further compounded by starting the letter "Dear Mr Woodward Deceased". The other letter illustrated the speed of delivery that people expected in Victorian times. It was sent by a farmer to the local Fire Brigade, asking them to come because his hayrick was on fire.

Many wonderful items have been missed from this report, simply due to lack of space. We were treated to an evening of pure enjoyment, together with seeing some fantastic material that one suspects only Eric was collecting years ago. Where else do you see these things? Chris Jackson gave the vote of thanks for what was a unique presentation and an amazing collection, and noted that tonight's talk was very different from other 'Box 13' nights by Eric that some members had been lucky enough to see elsewhere. We should invite Eric again to show us more - from boxes d, e, f and g.

Malcolm Allinson.

Thursday 15th November 2007: Single sheet competition

This year's single sheet competition produced no fewer than 36 entries, a wonderful display of members material and some very different views on everyone's favourites.

The scoring for tonight is as scientific as you can get. Any rules that there might be are ripped up and everyone gets the opportunity to vote for their own personal top ten displays. To make it fair, we are all sworn into not voting for our own entries. I believe it did happen once, but capital punishment has since been abolished.

* *Covet and steal are the subjects of Commandments 8 and 10*

All of the entries scored marks, it being interesting that the one with most first places (10 marks) was not the eventual winner. It is probably better in this competition to present an entry with wide appeal and gain consistent marks, than appeal exceedingly well to some members but not others. The outcome of the results is always awaited eagerly and is nearly always surprising.

With 36 entries tonight it is not possible to describe them all here. Clearly everyone had put great thought and effort into their work as they were all very interesting to read; and on more than one occasion made you think a little more about your own collecting area. Plagiarism - surely the greatest method of improving one's own efforts!

Tonight's winner by just 1 mark was Chris Jackson with an entry on Redditch Railway Station, complete with two picture postcard views, some Railway stamps and tickets for a dog, a bike and a 1st Class Officer. Second was David Gillespie with a thoughtful, if slightly irreverent, look at the European Union and what one can and can't do these days. (I will probably get sent to the Tower for just writing this without a safety net or a Risk Assessment). In third place, just two marks behind, came David Seward with a lovely display of colour changes on stamps of Tanzania. Displayed in blocks these were very effective in showing the subject of the entry. Fred Pritchard was a well deserved fourth with Malta Postage Dues; Fred saying he had been galvanised into his entry after seeing Eric Lewis's talk at the previous meeting and finding he had some similar material. I came next with an entry on the Bishop Mark - rather a small space to do such a subject I have to admit, but everyone seemed to like it. Robin Jarman took sixth place and qualified for the final spot in the points for our club championship with a very colourful entry on Butterflies, stating in the brief talks afterwards that they are all now rare and should be looked after.

Another excellent home grown evening, with a wealth and variety of material second to none. I am always surprised at what everyone is able to bring on these occasions. Perhaps we should have more members display evenings so that we can see even more superb material.

Malcolm Allinson

**Monday 3rd December:
Visiting Speaker: Colin Such
Warwick and Warwick Auctioneers.**

Tonight's display carried a sub heading of "*Thirty Years on the Rostrum*" and consisted of slides of many interesting artefacts that have passed through Colin's hands at the Auctioneers Warwick and Warwick over many years. Colin's connection with this area goes back to his early years living in Astwood Bank.

Colin started "at the beginning" with Rowland Hill, showing an absolutely stunning pair of mint 1d Black stamps. He then moved on to the development of the picture postcard and we were shown examples of many forerunners. Postcards as a specific item of mail began in October 1869 in Austria, coming to this country exactly 12 months later. The idea was that a single card could be posted at a reduced rate, there being space for a message on one side and the address on the other. These were produced by the Post Office monopoly, with the stamp imprinted on the card and were thus the first postal stationery. Clearly a success, over 50 million were printed in 1879 alone. As time went on, pressure from the public and industry forced a change so that in September 1894, the Post Office monopoly was removed. This paved the way for many printers to produce their own cards, adding colourful vignettes onto the "text" side of the card thus reducing the space available for messages. Advertising on these cards became popular and we saw a card from Victoria in Australia advertising both cigarettes and beer. Even then, there was consternation at such adverts, and the cards were quickly withdrawn, but so that they were not wasted, they were cancelled to order and sold on to philatelists.

With ever increasing demand from manufacturers to put more and more pictorial content on their cards, the inevitable move was made in 1902 with the introduction of the split card; the address of the recipient and the message of the sender being on the same side of the card leaving the whole of the other side for a picture or similar pre-printed message.

This change saw a boom in picture postcard collecting. We saw many examples of advertising cards showing colourful drawings of things like ships, famous tourist locations and many other scenes. With the advent of photography, photographic cards then became popular and we saw many early examples from our own town. Having been born and raised in Astwood Bank furnishing Colin's local knowledge, albeit on occasions suitably refreshed by others in the audience, it was inevitable that local material featured quite strongly tonight, and we were very pleased. However, some members began reciting Commandments 8 and 10 again.

Colin pointed out one card in particular which showed a float at Redditch Carnival in 1933, saying his mother was one of the people featured on it. I was intrigued, because I recognised the card and could also identify a relative on it. I suspect others could too.

We saw postcards of newsworthy events - Women's Suffrage was one of the main topics of the day and we saw many cards depicting their plight, plus a series of cards produced at the funeral of Emily Davidson, the lady who threw herself under the King's horse at the 1913 Derby.

The capture of Dr Crippen, railway accidents, a typhoid outbreak in Lincoln, the Hindenburg airship and the Titanic disaster were all topics illustrated, Colin being able to provide an expansive story behind each of the cards. I thought the 2nd class menu card from the Titanic; the connection with the writer of the message on the back and the research into his eventual fate very moving; let alone the card's rarity in being one of the final items of mail from the ship before it sailed from port for the last time. We were told it sold at Auction for £8,902.

We were also amazed at some of the other realisations that items achieved at Auction recently. Clearly, there is a great interest still in picture postcards and not just in Redditch material.

Colin concluded his display by showing us some of the many non philatelic artefacts that had passed through the sale room, again giving us a thoroughly researched background to them all. With Colin's enviable position, those once in a lifetime finds that most of us see "once in a lifetime", seem to come along every day.

The presentation format was superb and the illustrations very clear and in focus, so we could all see the items without having to remove glasses, get out lenses or ask others to describe them. As my optician painfully tells me, I have excellent eyesight for someone twice my age.

Many thanks to Colin for taking the time to visit us and bringing along such splendid material.

Malcolm Allinson

SOCIETY VISITS

So far this season we have visited two Societies and had very enjoyable evenings on both occasions. These evenings are always well supported by members, both as speakers and simply for a good night out, meeting others in our hobby.

Wednesday 24th October 2007: Society visit to Stratford upon Avon PS

For our first visit of the season we were invited to display at our neighbours, Stratford. 10 members made up our party for the evening, four speakers and six supporters. Malcolm Allinson was detailed to carry out the introductions.

Our speakers tonight began with Richard Nicol and a colourful display of Seychelles Covers. The Seychelles is rumoured to be Richards favourite "holiday haunt" but he always maintains that he has never been there. Robin Jarman followed and gave us all a very good display of his ever increasing early stamps of Chile. Robin's talk was delivered with many stories and clearly showed his through enjoyment of the subject.

After the interval Bill Grinnell showed us his new area of collecting - the RAF; a display he gave to our own meeting a few evenings ago. Tonight however he was restricted by the number of boards available, so kept solely to items relating to the Spitfire. Bob Harper gave our final display, showing many new items from "that lump of rock in the Bristol Channel" - Lundy. Bob's research into this subject continues at great speed as does his acquisition of more and more material.

Stratford's display boards were intriguing, being formed of a lightweight lattice. These took some getting used to by our speakers, but it is clear that this design is very suitable when storage space is very limited.

It is always interesting to take part in these visits, as it gives us all the opportunity to see how other members have been developing their collections. It is not always possible to fit in every members displays as part of our domestic calendar, so these visits are as fresh for us as they are for our hosts. Stratford's Chairman, Don Barnes, gave the vote of thanks saying "*Any Philatelic Society which has the privilege of a visit from Redditch will not be disappointed. They will be entertained in a most professional way.*" What else can be said? I thoroughly enjoyed my evening out and would recommend other members to also come along on the next Society visit.

Jack Finney

Monday 12th November 2007: Society visit to Gloucestershire PS

Tonight was a very successful visit to a Society we have been to several times before. Certainly, the Gloucester members always appreciate looking at what we display. For our visit this time we presented our usual four speaker format together with three other supporting members. I took the role of introducing each of our speakers.

Gloucester's display boards were intriguing, being each two rows of four. These are very transportable, but some of our displays had difficulty fitting this format; our own members being used to a 3x3 or 4x4 size.

We began with Malcolm Allinson who showed some of his collection of GB Line Engraved and stunned the audience with many of the items. Robin Jarman followed with his Chilean Airmails, which seem to grow with each showing; certainly there was an appreciable amount of different material than we saw at Stratford just a few weeks ago. There was a slight hitch, when one of the display boards gave way under the quality of Robin's material. A pin had worked loose on one of the easel legs, but it didn't put Robin off his stride.

After the break, where we retired for a well earned beverage in the bar courtesy of our hosts, Chris

Jackson took up the baton and showed some of his postal history of Redditch including much material relating to his lovely collection on needlemakers of the town. It is good to show Worcestershire material to our friends in adjacent counties! Our final speaker for the evening was Alan Godfrey, who gave a very good display of South Polar Explorers, concentrating this evening on Scott and Amundsen.

Again, during viewing, many questions were asked of the speakers which illustrates the appeal that all of our displays generated and also the interest that Gloucester members took in the subjects presented.

Richard Nicol.

CROYDON 2007: The ABPS National Philatelic Exhibition November 23rd and 24th

Following on from last year's event in Torquay, four members again took the plunge and visited Croydon 2007. **Chris Jackson, Alan Godfrey, Robin Jarman and myself** set our alarm clocks for an early start on the Saturday morning; we all having decided that a two day visit could not be justified this time. (Too close to London to allow our partners unfettered access to the big shops!) With a relaxed train journey to London, then an easy Underground across to Victoria, our journey stuttered when our onward train to Croydon pulled out of platform 17 just as we arrived there. Still, only a five minute wait got us onto a quicker train and we arrived before our original "slow" train. A short walk in the fresh air brought us to the Fairfield Halls.

It took us a few moments to find our way to where the exhibition was being held, there being no signs or directions to help us. A layout plan given out at reception would have been useful. The exhibition itself took the usual form with a number of dealers in the main hall and the exhibits in various side rooms. We did liken it to a rabbit warren, particularly when trying to find one of the exhibit rooms; and spreading the whole event over six separate rooms meant survival of the fittest. We were pleased that the refreshments were in a price range that didn't need a mortgage and were sufficiently varied to entice us back to that area more than once during the day.

It was a surprise to see how quiet the event was, we were all expecting there to be more visitors. In talking to a few people who had also been on the first day, they felt that today was better attended. We will have to wait and see what the organisers think. There were not as many dealers as we would expect for a national event, but nevertheless we were all able to find plenty to buy, and did, if "viewing" on the train home was an indication.

The highlight of the day was the exhibits themselves. Although located in various rooms, all with pretty poor lighting, they were all impressive. We each decided upon a favourite: Alan chose the Scott Expedition of 1912 to the South Pole by Trevor Cornford; Robin liked so many of them, his difficult decision landed in favour of the Classic Roumania by J Hackney – complete with early material and multiples of the famous Moldavian bulls. Chris was taken with an unusual entry by Gavin Fryer on "Mail for the Blind" and I chose an entry that wasn't even on display! Bristol Postal History was an exhibit by Brian Purcell that I had earmarked for some attention, but was surprised to find blank boards where it should have been. A bit of sleuthing (*too long a story to relate here, but a good example of knowing people within our hobby beyond our own Society boundaries*) unearthed its location and I spent a while looking at that exhibit behind a dealers stand.

Whilst working our way along the many frames, we came upon an entry, which we all felt had been under-marked. Whilst discussing this amongst ourselves, amazingly the owner of the exhibit made himself known to us and we all had a very pleasant discussion about his entry. Amongst other things, we were able to provide some pointers to him as to where we thought some marks had been lost. A judge also joined us and confirmed our thoughts, but we still felt it deserved a higher mark. This is another superb example of how our wonderful hobby brings people together from all areas. (*This perhaps is why the event is called a Congress. Ed.*) In discussing the many exhibits, we all thought that there was ample scope for our own members to enter in the next national single frame competitions, so look out for a number of Redditch entries at Harrogate in May 2008.

Was it worth going? An emphatic "Yes". We all thoroughly enjoyed what we saw, had a lovely day out and are already looking forward to May next year.

Malcolm Allinson

NEWS FROM ABPS

As our leading body for philately in this country, the Association of British Philatelic Societies is very active in many areas of our wonderful hobby. They now issue an Executive Bulletin to members and member Societies which contains useful information on what is happening far and wide. Here are just a few things from the latest ABPS Bulletin.

At long last, member subscriptions have risen to what most people regard as an appropriate level. In future, member Societies will pay a capita fee of £1 to ABPS. In return, we should all see an improvement in what we get back from the lead body for philately in this country

One subject that ABPS are publicising is the question of frequency of stamp issues in this Country. Are the Post Office issuing too many stamps? It looks as if there will be nearly 20 issues of stamps in 2008. Is this a good thing? Do you have a view either way on this subject? Please feedback and we can perhaps pass on our collective thoughts to ABPS. After all, we do have one of our own members on the Executive Committee.

Whilst we as a Society support our local hospital League of Friends and pass on surplus stamps for Norman to sell for them, there is also on the national scale the Stamp Active network, which works hard to introduce young collectors into our hobby. Whilst not wishing to reduce our support for Norman's activities, if you still have any spare stamps (especially Thematics) please send them to Kidstamps, 46 Moorfield Road, Rothwell, KETTERING NN14 6AT

More from the ABPS next time.

Malcolm Allinson

MPF AUTUMN ASSEMBLY: November 10th 2007

This years Autumn Assembly was hosted by Solihull Philatelic Society at Arden School in Knowle. This was an excellent show in a good venue with easy parking and well organised by members of Solihull PS. It was convenient to get to and I was very pleased to see some fifteen or more Redditch members throughout the day. Certainly this was by far more than any other individual society could muster except our hosts. I also observed our members wallets being dusted off at many of the dealers stands too as there was a goodly mix of them, all offering a variety of material.

The catering at Knowle was to a high standard, not up to Redditch's Gold award standard of course but certainly well presented and good value for money. It was however difficult to keep ones cup on the table as a group of lovely ladies was ready to pounce as soon the liquid was within 2mm of the bottom of the cup!

The event was also host to the Midland Philatelic Federation annual individual competitions in which one of our members reached "First in Class". Chris Jackson's entry in the postal History Class, *Penny Posts in Worcestershire*, was awarded a Silver Gilt with an impressive score of 80 marks, beating off five other very good entries. Unfortunately there were three classes where only one entry was received: Aerophilately, Thematic and Stamps. As a Society we could so easily have obtained two more firsts or second at the very least!

Altogether an enjoyable show. Well done Solihull.

Bob Harper

CHILEAN AIRMAILS: Airlines, Routes and Rates

Part 1 Home Grown Airlines

This is the first part of a series of five articles describing the mainly pre-World War II air mails in, to and from Chile. Unfortunately this subject is not an exact science, as much of the information available, either from official sources or from other collectors, is either missing or contradictory. Therefore the details given in these articles are my own interpretation of events and if anyone is able to provide evidence to the contrary on any point, this would be gratefully received. RHJ

The first serious attempt at establishing an airmail service was launched on 1st January 1921 by an ex-pilot and businessman, Clodomer Figueroa. He obtained permission from the Chilean Post Office to carry mail privately between Santiago and Valparaiso and issued special 5 peso labels for the purpose. These were photographically printed in blocks of, probably, 24 and signed on the reverse by Figueroa. Despite initial success, the service soon fell out of favour with the public and the airline closed.

In 1927 another flyer, Louis Testart, persuaded the Post Office that such a route could be viable and the latter even issued a set of stamps in five values ranging from 40 centavos to 2 pesos, overprinted Correo Aereo and a value, on an unissued set of commemoratives, to be applied to mail carried on the service.



*A Testart cover with the 1 Peso 60 value.
Probably philatelic but rare nonetheless.*

The service began on 3rd or 4th May 1927 (dependent upon which source is believed) and initial success prompted the company to consider the rather risky task of extending the route over the Andes to Mendoza in Argentina. However the airline's only plane crashed before the plan could be put into effect and the whole operation had closed down by 16th March 1928.

Having the success of the American and French airlines in mind the Chilean government decided to start its own airline for the carriage of mail internally

within Chile. This should have been a monopoly but the Americans in particular ignored the order.

Initially the Chilean Air Force was given the task of organising the operation and the planes were employed on routes to the mineral-rich north of the country, starting in March 1929 with an airline named Linea Aeropostal Santiago-Arica. The following year the route south to Puerto Montt was introduced and by 1931 the service was extended to Argentina.



A cover from the military period with LAN internal air mail stamps used as specified.

With this expansion it became clear that it was no longer practical to use Air Force facilities, so in 1932 an airline, Linea Aerea Nacional Chile (LAN) was formed and is still in operation today. It gradually expanded services throughout Chile and with the acquisition of better planes, LAN was able to start a route to the far south, to Magallanes in 1937.

Special stamps were issued to be used on internal airmail letters, where mail was to be carried by air to Santiago and indeed these also had to be applied in conjunction with external airmail, for those letters whose destination was another country. In addition, the surface rate of 15 centavos internally (or from 70 centavos for overseas mail), using ordinary postage stamps, had to be affixed to the envelop. This practice caused problems with local post offices not interpreting orders correctly and the stamps were not always used correctly, making it difficult to work out why particular rates have been applied to some letters.

To be continued.

The remaining parts in this series will look at the influence of airlines from other countries on the progress of air mails to and from Chile.

Robin Jarman

Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen Antarctic Expedition 1818 - 21

Continuing a series of short articles on a Polar Exploration theme.

In 1818 Tsar Alexander I of Russia authorised an expedition to the south polar region in search of the

great southern continent, Terra Australis. Chosen to lead the expedition, with only six weeks notice, was Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen, a graduate of the naval academy at Kronstadt. He was born in 1778 and was 40 when this opportunity arose. He had been fascinated by the expeditions of Captain James Cook and he constantly studied Cook's achievements. He set out to continue Cook's work and sail as far south as possible.



Von Bellingshausen with his ship, Vostok

His ships were a 600 ton corvette named the *Vostok* (which means East) and a slow, ex-transport sloop the 530 ton *Mirnyi* (which means Peaceful). The first port of call was England, where Bellingshausen travelled to London to meet Sir Joseph Banks, who had accompanied Cook 50 years before.

Banks provide books and charts for the expedition.

By the end of 1819 they were in sight of South Georgia and then headed south-east for the South Sandwich group, which they circumnavigated. On 26th January 1820 they crossed the Antarctic Circle (the first since Cook in 1773). Two days later the expedition was within 20 miles of the Antarctic mainland and sighted ice fields (which was probably the mainland). The dispute over whether it was von Bellingshausen who actually sighted the mainland, rather than the British naval captain Edward Bransfield (on 30th January 1820) or the American sealer Nathaniel Palmer (on 17th November 1820) remains to this day.

The weather worsened and they were forced to turn north and arrived in Sydney on 11th April 1820. After four months in the Pacific they again turned south, but bad weather prevented them from reaching Antarctica. They crossed the Antarctic Circle no less than six times, before the weather cleared and they spotted land within the Antarctic Circle, which von Bellingshausen named Peter I Island.

A week later he made a second discovery, which he named Alexander Coast (now Alexander Island). In February they sighted eight English and American sealing ships, where von Bellingshausen met Nathaniel Palmer, captain of the sloop *Hero*. Satisfied with his discoveries the two ships sailed northwards to Rio de Janeiro and then arrived back in Kronstadt on 4th August 1821. The Russians were unimpressed by his circumnavigation of the continent and his discoveries and Russia's interest in the Antarctic did re-awaken until whaling fleets were sent south in 1946.

Alan Godfrey

Philatelic Events for the Diary

The next few national and regional events are listed here. Please add these events to your diaries, and support them by attending where you can.

18th & 19th January 2008

York STAMPSHOW

The Grandstand, YORK Racecourse

21st to 23rd February 2008

PHILATEX

Horticultural Halls, Westminster, LONDON

27th February to 1st March 2008

STAMPEX

British Design Centre, Islington, LONDON

2nd & 3rd May 2008

HARROGATE

8th ABPS National Philatelic Exhibition

10th May 2008

WORPEX

Oldbury Park School WORCESTER

If there is an event that you know of that isn't listed here and should be

MEMBERS PORTRAITS**Ralph Richardson**

I grew up in rural Nottinghamshire and like all boys in the 1940's and 1950's, I collected stamps. I used to receive regular approvals from J Sanders of Southampton. One wonderful day, I was given an old collection by my father's manager: lots of ancient USA I recall, and given me free by a bank manager.

University, married life, buying a house and fuelling a Vespa at 5 shillings at time made buying stamps impossible. I re-started when I came to live in Redditch and found myself earning a fortune of just over £1,000 a year. My enthusiasm was kindled by a Saturday outing to Ross on Wye, which had, and still has, an outdoor market. There was a man selling junk – or collectables as they are now known. A string was anchored at both ends of his stall with various items for sale attached to it. One was part of an envelope which had old writing on it; a date of 1839 and part of a red postmark but no stamp. At 2/- it became my first pre-stamp cover. It has affected my collecting every since. Much research eventually led to my discovering that I had an item of Free mail, signed by Anthony Ashley Cooper, later 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, the greatest social reformer of the 19th century. No longer just a collector, I was a specialist.

So the re-birth of my collecting interest began in about 1965. I collected GB – relatively simple and inexpensive then, with but two or three issues a

year. Fluffy animals and other inconsequential events were not then commemorated by expensive miniature sheets. I also collected Australia, New Zealand, Canada and a bit of USA.

The GB collection has continued to the present day but I sometimes wonder why. Fortunately, between the ghastly PC issues, Royal Mail suddenly produces something superb, so I keep going. The "colonies" I gave up long ago; I now concentrate upon a local postal theme, with declining success, and my collection of Free Franks from 1660 to 1840 (Parliamentary Mail sent free, but autographed by the sender). I have achieved an ambition of collecting an item sent by every Prime Minister from 1815 to about 1880. I am still trying with those before 1815. Spencer Percival, the pride of the lot, seems never to have sent a letter in his life. I am also collecting Free Franks sent during the 4d Post period, but fail to find much. During my searches, I have found the recipient of many free items in 1839 and 1840. Lady Mary Hamilyn Williams of Edwinstford, Carmarthenshire received a pile of them on the last day of free franking. She put them with her collection in an album. I now have but one, and frustratingly, know where the others are. As a result, I have a sizeable file of Edwinstford material and not just philatelic. My most recent acquisition is a print of the house in 1776. My interests extend beyond philately into several branches of local, social and political history, and philately helps bind them all together. It's truly fascinating.

I joined Redditch Philatelic Society when I realized there was more to life than an obsession with education. With schools now seemingly required to be open 24 hours a day, 52 weeks a year - and besotted by SATS, I found a Double Ring Apple postmark surprisingly more interesting. I re-discovered Malcolm Allinson at the Society. He had been a member of my lunch time Stamp Club at the County High School, so I pride myself on having taught him everything, especially the production of competition entries! (*your Editor makes no printable comments at this point. Ed*). In those blissful days, I used to take a bus load of the school stamp club pupils to London, without personal insurance, without any molly or coddle, and still returned to Redditch with the same number of live ones.

To my astonishment, I have won competitions both at Society and at Federation level. I have even recently used a computer to present my entry. This so amazed the judges that I won more than one trophy. I find it takes a very long time to produce an entry, but the satisfaction at the end is exhilarating.

I wish I felt more optimistic about the future of our hobby. Stampex, Philatex and York make me feel astonishingly young. If Royal Mail continues to produce too many costly issues, too many poor designs, too many unnecessary miniature sheets,

then people like me are surely going to give up. I see no sign of a younger generation about to take up stamp collecting – or anything else for that matter, save perhaps cudgels. So, without any thought for the morrow, I continue to enjoy what I collect and to derive benefit and friendship from the Society - and isn't it time for another coach trip, perhaps to Edwinstord, so I can derive even more benefit!

Ralph Richardson

The Battle of Hastings set of 1966.



As I was unable to attend the meeting on 20 September, I asked Bill Grinnell to take my display for me. I thought that a brief description of it might be of interest to fellow members

In October 1966, Great Britain issued The battle of Hastings stamps and there are nine colours used on the se-tenant strip of the six 4d stamps. They are black, olive green, bistre, deep blue, orange, magenta, green, blue and grey. Eight of these colours are known individually to be missing from the strip. Black is the only colour not known to be missing.

Of the eight known missing colours, bistre is the most common – missing from the soldiers and the horses. The loss of blue affects several of the soldiers and missing deep blue affects the horses again. Missing green is

the most difficult to spot as it is used mainly on the smaller characters in the designs. When grey is missing it results in a very noticeable bright magenta horse! As magenta is not used in significant amounts, it's absence is not so pronounced. Missing orange is also a difficult spot for the same reason – it's use is sparse. The loss of olive green affects various horses and other

objects but again needs close examination to reveal the differences.

Collecting single stamps is not the best way to show the faults as the full effect of a missing colour can only be appreciated if the stamps are viewed as a full strip. Despite six stamps, all with different designs being affected, some missing colours are still difficult to spot due to the subtlety with which they have been used.

Like other stamps from the period, the 6d and 1/3 values are known to be missing the gold of the Queens head. Gold can be removed by using solvents and by ironing and these are well known fraudulent methods of trying to deceive collectors. However, careful examination of the stamps with a magnifying glass can usually identify the fake. The use of solvents is detectable and disrupts the phosphor band and ironing affects the embossing.

Peter Elms

and finally...

WHERE WERE YOU LAST NIGHT?

This concerns a chap who is working late one night in the office with his secretary. And as they're just finishing the paperwork, the secretary leans across the desk and says: 'Mr. Masterson(sigh)...' (*because she got out of breath very easily*) ... It's very late, Mr. Masterson, don't you think it's time we were both in bed?' Well, being something of an opportunist, this chap didn't need to stick his finger out of the window to see which way the wind was blowing, so he ends up back at her place and a good time is had by all.

Well, eventually, he looks at his watch and says, 'My God, my wife will kill me.' So he quickly gets dressed and is about to rush off, when the girl says, 'Hang on, there's nothing to worry about. Just stick this stamp hinge on your ear, tell your wife exactly what happened, and you'll be fine.'

So off he goes, gets home, and there is his wife, sitting up in bed, sharpening the kitchen knife on her tongue. She says, 'Where the hell have you been?' So, remembering what he's been told, the chap says, 'Well, dear, I was working late with my beautiful secretary and I'm afraid she invited me back to her flat and one thing led to another, and I ended up being unfaithful to you.'

At which point the wife suddenly notices the stamp hinge on his ear and says, 'You liar, don't give me that - you've been down the club again, swapping stamps.'

Bob Harper

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 Monday or third Thursday of the month (September to June) at St. George's Hall in Redditch; you will be most welcome. Visitors are also welcome to any of our meetings.

Articles and statements made in this Newsletter are by individuals and are not necessarily the views or policies of the Society.