



Halcyon

The Newsletter of the Redditch Philatelic Society – Summer 2008. ABPS Society Journal of the Year.

From the Chairman



With the summer we have had (did you miss the 3 days sunshine as I did?) it has been quite good for our hobby. Adverse weather for this time of year has restricted outside

activities such as gardening and left some time for indoor things like stamps and postal history!

The final three months of last season went well with the highlight being the talk by Denis Vandervelde on Disinfected and Quarantine Mail. He showed some superb very rare material and gave an excellent talk. It was a pity he took so long on the first showing that the second part had to be curtailed, especially as I had talked him through the time scale for the meeting earlier in the evening.

Our programme for our next season looks excellent and we must thank Alan for continuing to produce programmes of such quality. I notice that we still need a second speaker for the 'Two Short Talks by Members' on 16th October. Please can someone come forward and offer to do a short talk. We really do not want to have to use a committee member to 'fill in', especially when we know that everyone has enough material for an evening like this. Any subject at all, and you do not have to fill all the boards, two or three boards will do. Please see Alan at our first meeting of the season.

Something else we can all do for the benefit of the club is to talk to friends and acquaintances who we know are interested in philately and encourage them to come along to meetings. There are vast numbers of collectors out there who we never reach and who would most likely enjoy the experience of our Society, if only they would come along and see what it is like. Do try and 'bring a friend' to a future meeting.

Chris Jackson

Chris' plea for speakers here is only to prevent one of us being "taken to one side" during a coffee break at one of our meetings. Please come forward and offer. Everyone has some material that we have never seen before. Ed.

Halcyon wins ABPS competition.

The sharp eyed amongst you will have already spotted the discrete change to the newsletter strapline above. Yes, your Newsletter has won this years' ABPS Society Journal of the Year competition. The good news came through towards the end of last season in a letter from Bill Robertson at ABPS, inviting me to the Annual General Meeting in July to be presented with our certificate. The meeting this year was held at Devonshire Place, so it was that on a lovely summers day I travelled to London for the ceremony and enjoyed not only the meeting but had an excellent day seeing the sights aswell. The antique map and book shops on Charing Cross Road were the winners there but that's another story.

At the meeting the presentations were made by Phil Kenton, the Chairman of the ABPS Council, who was very pleased by the standard of all of this years entries in the various categories. I received a very nice Certificate on behalf of the Society, and also a cheque for £100. I very much enjoyed the afternoon at The Royal, keeping the Redditch flag flying at the top level of our hobby (and would like to go again).



Your Editor at The Royal with Phil Kenton, Chairman of ABPS.

The ABPS competition judges, John Holman, Editor of the British Philatelic Bulletin, and Glenn Morgan, the Librarian of the National Philatelic Society, were impressed by the overall standard, and praised the high quality of the articles, editing and production, together with a good mix of content to appeal to a wide audience.

We entered this competition last year where we were pleased to come third, up against some quality competition. I said at the time that we would have to look to our laurels to improve, as others would be too. Clearly we have done this, and it is mainly due to the ever improving standard of articles and items everyone is sending to me for our newsletter. So congratulations are due also to all contributors.

Of course, things never stand still. My own thoughts during the presentations were "How do we improve on this!" Getting to the top is hard enough, staying there even harder. The answer of course lies in all of our hands, so please keep the articles flowing and let us see if we can retain the title next year.

Malcolm Allinson

Editorial

Thanks this time go to **Chris Jackson, June Edwards, Alan Godfrey, Ralph Richardson and Richard Nicol** for contributions to this edition of *Halcyon*. No doubt with our success in the ABPS Society Journal competition, I can look forward to many more articles from everyone in order that we can retain the title next year.

Notwithstanding our success, the life of the Society goes on. Over the summer months we tend not to meet each other as regularly, but still find time to visit philatelic related venues (Stamp Fairs). I had a very good day out to the York Stamp fair recently in the excellent company of three other members. If you are thinking of similar visits, please don't go alone. For a start you can share fuel costs, and some train companies offer tickets on a 2 for 1 (or similar) basis. It is also surprising what us collectors discuss on such journeys.

Finally, I look forward to seeing you all at our meetings this coming season.

Malcolm Allinson

SOCIETY PROGRAMME:

September to December 2008

Sept 1 st	Mini Auction
Sept 18 th	Visit from Solihull PS
Oct 6 th	Australia: Discovery and Exploration – Roy Summers
Oct 16 th	Two Talks by Members
Nov 3 rd	Member's Displays – Three Sheets
Nov 20 th	New Zealand 1915-1935 – Andrew Dove
Dec 1 st	Single Sheet Competition
Dec 2 nd	Society Visit to Solihull PS
Dec 18 th	The Committee Entertains

Please support your Society and take part in all of these meetings.

MEETING REPORTS

Monday 7th April 2008

**Visiting Speaker: David Williams
Hungary**

A most instructive talk, especially to those of us who did not do European History at school. The first half was about what we know as Hungary whilst the second half was about territories which were in and out of Hungarian possession.. The first half began by showing designs for possible stamps which might have been issued in 1848 if Hungary had got its independence from Austria, but as this did not happen these stamps were never produced.

The first years of stamps are not well represented as there appears to be no one who has got all of the possible ones issued. Postal Stationery envelopes were issued fairly early on and these proved very popular with the residents. Several of the possible issues were never bought by the Hungarian people as they were overprinted or issued by "foreign" countries and it would have been unpatriotic to buy them. When eventually they gained independence they decided to hold a competition for the design of stamps. There were a lot of entries of which we saw several, but they never paid any of the designers for the use of their designs even though they did use one at the time and another some years later, basically they were unable to afford it.

After the First World War they were not allowed to have an air force. They tried to get round this by using planes as a postal service. They soon had lots of "postal" aeroplanes but this was soon stopped by International pressure and the planes were scrapped, so it was a very short lived service. Some time later a Zeppelin service was tried out, but this failed miserably as the weather was so bad that the mail was all dumped at one place and then put through the normal service. Other countries planes were used to provide an airmail service mostly from their native land to and from Hungary.

Hungary allied itself with Germany in WW2, as a safeguard to being overrun, but after the war there was rampant inflation when some exchange rates went into 26 figure conversions. There is a book issued which you need to have to work out values at any given time. Some of the multimillion banknotes issues were shown.

The second half showed us some of the territories on the periphery of the core country. I had never heard of many of them which included Debrecen, Perla, Baranya, Barat Bacska, Temesvar, Borosyno, Western Hungary, Transylvania, Yugoslavia, Croatia and Arad. (I hope the spelling of these is correct) Again these stamps used by these territories, generally overprinted, were not used by true Hungarians, and as most of these areas were about the size of Gloucester, they are hard to get on

cover. They are affectionately known as "Kilroy" issues, i.e. "I was here" stamps.

There were also some postage dues which is another difficult subject as they were not consistent and frequently forged or invented. We saw examples of stamp booklets which were very unpopular so much so that only 4 were issued. A recent attempt was bilingual with Hungarian/English and Hungarian/German. These again are never found used and the booklets sold were only to foreign countries, the natives refusing to buy them. A country with great difficulties for the collector, and therefore fascinating, was the message I took away.

Richard Nicol

Monday 5th May 2008: 3 Sheet Competition.

This year's three sheet competition was themed on the letter 'P'. We had seven entries, which for a bank holiday was very good. A number of countries beginning with letter 'P' were represented, together with some quite imaginative titles. Second place was taken jointly by 'Perfins' and 'Pitcairn Islands' with this year's deserved winner being 'Postage Dues from Norway'. Congratulations to Robin Jarman for a very fine entry. Finally I must add congratulations to everyone who entered, there was a wide variety of material and it was all very interesting to read. It is always a surprise what everyone can dig up from their collections when we have these competitions.

June Edwards

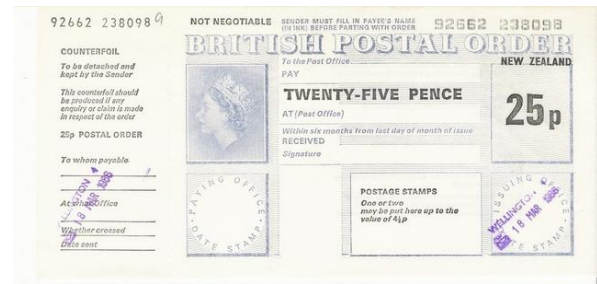
Thursday 15th May 2008

Visit by Stratford upon Avon PS.

Our second society visit this season was from Stratford upon Avon Philatelic Society. Our two visitors took half the evening each and displayed: "Canadian National Railway in Nova Scotia" and "British Postal Stationery Overprinted for use in Other Countries".

Don Barnes started by explaining that his interest in Canadian railways began after he acquired a Canadian almanac dated 1971. The history of Nova Scotia's railways really began with the opening of the Intercolonial Railway in 1872, which ran from Montreal to Halifax, this was joined by other lines to become the Canadian National Railway in 1918. Halifax was a vital destination as it was the only Canadian port not to freeze over in winter. Don showed examples of the postmarks in use at the towns and villages along the main line and branch lines. Many of these examples came from correspondence addressed to Readers Digest. Nova Scotia's British roots were apparent from the place names, which included: Truro, Yarmouth, Inverness and Liverpool, as well as Halifax. Although the rail system today is much reduced in scale, it is still important for moving bulk commodities, especially coal, iron ore and steel.

Don's fascinating display gave us just a "taster" of his Canadian railway collection.



Our second speaker was John Gledhill, who displayed British postal stationery, which had been overprinted for use in other countries. John's display covered eight types of postal stationery with examples of each and in the case of the rarest types, at least a photocopy.

Postcards were overprinted for use in seven different territories in a number of values and sizes. Envelopes were only overprinted for the Levant, but formula registered envelopes were overprinted for eleven territories (as well as the GB Admiralty Official), in different sizes and under different sovereigns. Newspaper wrappers were used in British Bechuanaland, Cyprus, Levant and Morocco Agencies (with business advertising). John also showed a wrapper with a private overprint applied at Meath in Ireland. After 1952 air letters (or aerogrammes) were overprinted for use in the Gulf States, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. Finally, he put up telegraph forms (only three known from Gold Coast), parcel post labels and postal orders (with examples from New Zealand). This was a most unusual display, presented in an interesting and erudite manner by John and much appreciated by all the members present.

Alan Godfrey

Monday 2nd June 2008

Visiting Speaker: Denis Vandervelde Disinfected and Quarantine Mail

We were pleased to welcome Denis Vandervelde with his talk on Disinfected and Quarantine Mail up to 1830, the first third of his International Gold Medal winning collection. The display and talk covered The Plague up to 1804, the Yellow Fever worries of 1804/5 and the Cholera epidemic of 1830.

There were far too many superb items to be able to list them all. However the 1665 London Bill of Mortality showing 2010 plague burials and the 1694 Health Certificate which ships were required to have, written entirely in Italian, were particularly interesting.

There were numerous sheets of letters which had been scorched to disinfect them, also letters with slits to better enable fumigation, this latter system started in Naples in the 1720's and was followed by the French in the 1780's.

The ship quarantine areas were well covered with Livorno and Senlin well represented. Cachets noting that disinfection had been carried out first appeared in Genoa and Livorno.



Denis Vandervelde (centre) with our President Richard Nicol and Chairman Chris Jackson

Denis explained the background to the display with a number of related stories, The Yellow Fever epidemic which killed 23,000 of the 30,000 French soldiers sent to Haiti and the out break of plague at Noya near Bari In Italy which was contained by isolation of the entire town were both well told. The supply of watches to the Ottoman officers was a good example of how trade can be easily affected by a competitor providing a quicker service.

In all an excellent evening with the opportunity to see some superb material and if anyone is further interested in the subject there is a specialist Society. Contact Denis for details.

Chris Jackson

Thursday 19th June 2008: Chairman's Evening.

I was quite looking forward to this evening, so much so that I was taken to the meeting by the Chairman himself - to ensure he had an audience, I think he said. Only upon arrival did I discover that I had volunteered to write up the evening at some time so far in the past that I had forgotten it. Unfortunately I had signed to that effect on the dreaded list and therefore couldn't really get out of it. So with some hastily acquired paper, I settled down to concentrate on what was said.

Chris Jackson never lets us down. He occasionally tells us we have seen an item before, but always produces gems which we haven't. He then tells us how it reached him – via an Auction; E-bay or even simply the Christmas mail.

In the first half of the evening we saw Chris' entry in the ABPS National Competitions recently held at Harrogate. This was awarded a Vermeil; we all thought it should have been a higher accolade. We liked the idea of a judge inspecting "The Penny Posts of Worcestershire" and demanding clearer

postmarks on items which are unique! We also saw some display sheets produced by Chris many years ago and all thought he showed signs of promise.

A Civil War letter from Charlton near Evesham aroused the interest of your correspondent and by the time you read this I hope to have taken Chris to see the effigy tomb of the letter writer.

We were given guide lines as to how to buy or sell a carthorse. We saw a strip map of the London to Aberystwyth road in 1765, via Oxford and Worcester. We were told it would one day grace the walls of the Jackson house but exactly whereabouts remains an issue of dispute.

Finally we saw a Penny Black cover which had been turned and re-used. Not content with just two 1d Blacks, it carried three, and Chris explained why. One of the stamps was lettered MA. A certain MA of our membership was, fortunately for the rest of us, far far away in Northumberland. Had it been otherwise, there were fears for the life of this cover's present owner. We presumed that like the rest of us MA had not yet seen it!

A pleasant interval also had cakes and biscuits, aswell as some marvellous material to look at. The second half of the evening was devoted to a splendid display on Needle makers of the Arrow Valley. This had advertising envelopes, letters, billheads and needle packets. It would presumably be impossible to illustrate the work of every 19th century needle maker, but Chris showed a large number of them including a few we had never heard of before.

The search for items for this display had led Chris into temptation. On a recent visit to Australia (whether to visit family or find more covers was not explained) he found a Milwards poster on the wall of the Australia Postal Museum which just shows how the Needle trade was world wide. He had to content himself with just a picture of it.



The Chairman's Evening was a first class stamp and postal history evening and I'm glad I volunteered to attend and review it.

Ralph Richardson

INDIAN OCEAN - COMOROS ISLANDS

You may have seen the COMOROS Islands in the news recently due to another coup in one of the worlds most unstable countries. They are of course in the Indian Ocean, so I feel I might comment on them. Mayotte was a French possession since 1841. A postal service was created in 1861 and the stamps were on sale till 1879.



The next phase was "The Sultanate". Each island received stamps with its name. Mayotte received them in November 1892, Grande Comore in November 1897 and Mohéli in 1906. Twenty values were issued in Mayotte, nineteen in Anjouan and Grande Comore, sixteen in Mohéli. Comoro was united with Madagascar and Madagascar stamps were used from 1912. Collectors look for the place of cancellation to find Comorian items.

The islands became independent in 1975. The postage stamp stocks were overprinted to strike mentions of the French sovereignty and to add "État comorien" (Comorian State). In 1976 and 1977 the country had issued more stamps than during 1946-1975. Moreover, a little number of these stamps were about a local subject. Thematic philatelists are those targeted with subjects on space exploration, Winter Olympic Games, etc.

This is just a short preview of this area of collecting and in the 2006 Stanley Gibbons Indian Ocean catalogue there is no mention of any such country!!

Richard Nicol

The Australia Postal Museum, Melbourne, Victoria.

Not quite a Society visit, but as two or possibly three of our members have been here, it could almost qualify for inclusion. Following his latest trip to Australia, Chris Jackson gives us his impressions of their Postal Museum.

During the latest of my trips to see my eldest daughter and her family in oz, I managed to get a few hours to take a train from Geelong to Melbourne and find my way to the Post Masters Gallery. Despite the name it is a super Philatelic Museum.

A large airy room housed a permanent display of Australian stamps from 1910 to 1990, a 32 sheet topical display and a huge display on a current stamp issue which was all about the ANZAC issue.

The permanent display consisted of about 80 sheets of stamps plus dies, printing plates, essays, and

unused designs which were displayed in cabinets at a comfortable height for viewing with magnifying glasses situated appropriately for the more detailed items. Along one wall were 200 double sided, pull out frames which contained a complete display of all the Australian stamps issued to date.

The 32 sheet display on Scouting was superb, it would have scored very highly in any competition. Starting with original Baden Powell material from the relief of Mafeking and the first ever scout camp on Brownsea Island it then worked through all aspects of scouting using stamps, postcards and a few non philatelic items.

The Anzac display featured original photographs, letters, postcards, medals and memorials. The Australian and New Zealand forces take the remembrance of their war dead very seriously and the displays reflected the honour in which they are held. (*Anzac Day is 25th April. Ed.*) One wall was taken up with a number of light boxes which showed replicas of stained glass windows from various churches, including one from Malvern! (a suburb of Melbourne). In addition a large flat screen television had a 10 minute video running continuously.



Our Chairman outside the Australian Postal Museum with something akin to a Dalek, but is understood to be a good example of a Post Office Receiving Pillar cast at Bubb & Co Victoria Foundry.

All in all I had a couple of hours enjoying our hobby in a quality environment half way round the world. I shall look at my Australian collection a bit more closely now. For anyone unable to go in person there is lots of interesting information on the website at www.auspost.com.au/gallery

Chris Jackson

Stratford-upon-Avon's "East and West Junction Railway"

By 1860 Stratford-upon-Avon was served by railway links north to Birmingham and south to Gloucester. However, a group of entrepreneurs decided there was a need for an east-west railway to join the Northamptonshire iron ore deposits with the South Wales steel mills. Parliament gave its approval in 1864 for a line to join Stratford with Greens Norton (near Towcester) and the East and West Junction Railway Company (EWJ) was formed.

A section of the Northampton and Banbury Railway opened between Blisworth (connecting with the LNWR) and Towcester in 1866, and this was then extended by the EWJ to Kineton in 1871, finally reaching Stratford on 1st July 1873. Initially the EWJ was forced to use the existing GWR station, but only because their own station was not ready. The new station finally opened in 1875. It was built a mile away from the GWR station in Stratford, which caused problems for passengers transferring to Birmingham. Further along the line, Ettington even had the name of the village changed from Eatington by the lord of the manor, E.P. Shirley, with the opening of the railway station.

Unfortunately, passenger traffic was sparse and initially passenger services were reduced to two a day between Stratford and Blisworth. When this proved uneconomic, passenger services were suspended completely. In June 1879 a new line (the Evesham, Redditch & Stratford-on-Avon Junction Railway) was opened to join Stratford with Broom Junction, and to provide connections with the Midland Railway. However, passenger services between Stratford and Blisworth did not recommence until March 1885. The first train was a Special taking Lord Willoughby de Broke from Kineton to the hunt at Alcester. In 1899 trains were running from Stratford to London Marylebone, connecting the EWJ with the Great Central Railway at Woodford & Hinton. In addition to this, by 1902 Stratford was also connected to London Euston (via Blisworth) by the LNWR and to London Paddington (via Leamington) by the GWR. Still the company struggled financially and changes to the legal requirements for braking systems did not improve things.



1908 Commercial letter sent from Kineton to London by the EWJ

Finally, by a 1908 Act of Parliament the EWJ was amalgamated with the Stratford-upon-Avon,

Towcester and Midland Junction Railway and the Evesham, Redditch and Stratford-on-Avon Junction Railway to form the Stratford-upon-Avon and Midland Junction Railway (SMJ). Two years later the Northampton and Banbury Junction Railway was also absorbed. The SMJ continued until the national railway re-organisation by the 1921 Railways Act and the SMJ became part of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway Company in January 1923.



1908 piece from a letter sent from Stratford on Avon to Simla in India via SMJ

Freight carrying was the most profitable business on the line, especially the iron ore trains which ran from Byfield and Blisworth. At Burton Dassett the station was connected to Hutchings & Co's quarry by an aerial ropeway. However, the fastest goods trains to work the line were the Midland banana specials.

They ran as required whenever a banana boat docked at Avonmouth. The EWJ was used, as the route was twenty five miles shorter than the along the Midland Railway tracks. Around five trains a week (each with 35 vans) used the route via Broom, often at short notice. The crews of the 'banana' were always in a hurry and did not always observe the 10 mph speed limit for exchanging the token, which was a two feet long heavy metal baton (a Webb-Thompson electric staff). This could come down with force when exchanged clumsily.



Earliest issue of 2d EWJ Railway stamp.

In common with other railway companies, the EWJ and SMJ issued railway stamps. The railways first received approval to accept late letters and issued railway letter stamps in February 1891. A fee of 2d carried letters up to 4oz until 14th January 1920, when the rate was increased to 3d, and then increased to 4d after 31st August 1920. Parcel stamps were used after 11th September 1920 until the railway letter service was withdrawn in 1971.

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. Patronage helps ensure these events continue.

17th to 20th September 2008

STAMPEX

Business Design Centre LONDON

30th October to 1st November 2008

PHILATEX

Royal Horticultural Hall, LONDON

16th & 17th January 2009

York STAMPSHOW

The Grandstand, YORK Racecourse

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

HARROGATE: 2nd and 3rd MAY 2008

This years ABPS 8th National Philatelic Exhibition was held in Harrogate at the beginning of the first May Bank Holiday. Thus it was that three intrepid members, Richard Nicol, Chris Jackson and myself, took the plunge and went along for both days. Of course, domestic considerations had to be attended to first, so confirmation of adequate alternative retail premises in the vicinity of the exhibition hall ensured permission to go was granted. Whilst we stayed over for the two days, Alan Godfrey made the journey on the second day to swell our numbers.

We were not disappointed with the Exhibition. A superb venue with excellent lighting enabled us all to dispense with our miner's lamps. Although an irregular shape, the single hall accommodated dealers and exhibits alike with adequate ease. There was plenty of room to circulate even though the attendance was extremely high. Comparable events around the country have in the past made it necessary to squeeze past or around, or trip under and over fellow collectors to either get to Dealers or view the Exhibits. No such problems here. Another plus was that refreshments were plentiful and varied and at prices that were more than acceptable.

Many collectors were clearly of the opinion that this venue should be used more often and I must agree with that. I am sure those widely held views are based on prevailing facilities south of Watford, but we must not be blinded to accepting that only Harrogate has a much better venue than London. There are equally better and suitable places all over the country. It just needs local collectors to stand up and be willing to organise such an event here in the Midlands. Birmingham anyone?

All of the usual mix of dealers were in attendance. Certainly, I did not notice any missing that I normally frequent, and I found a few more who were new to me. This can only be healthy for our hobby, as there is a fine balance between dealers attending

events if they know collectors are also going to go, and collectors not supporting events if they know dealers are not going to attend. Chickens and eggs are the usual culprits.

In the competitions we were represented by Chris Jackson with his one frame entry on The Penny Posts of Worcestershire. This gained a Vermeil medal and was just two marks away from a Large Vermeil. Chris just gets better and better at this competition game - if only judges were to recognise that. Viewing other entries in all of the categories made one wonder if the judges had not given sufficient time to reading them all. There were many eminent people scratching their heads at quite a lot of the results. I know that judges do get a lot of stick from all quarters. Perhaps organisers simply need to give them more time at these events to make a thorough job of it. It is the least that the competitors deserve.

As a complete event I was very impressed with the organisation, the venue and my own acquisitions. Yes, I would certainly go there again for a similar exhibition.

Malcolm Allinson



Our proud Chairman at Harrogate standing by his excellent entry on The Penny Posts of Worcestershire

STAFFORD: 20th and 21st JUNE 2008.

This two day commercial fair also played host on the second day to the Midland Federation Spring Convention and AGM. At least eight members of Redditch Philatelic Society visited the event, which for us turned out to be exactly 60 minutes door to door, and I know that several came away very happy with their purchases.

The fair was in a reasonably large hall with a lot of dealers. However the mix of dealers was poor with many having boxes of album pages for browsing and not a lot else. It would have been much better with a more balanced mix of Stamp, Thematic,

Postal History & Postcard dealers. The room was fairly full but the narrow aisles would have presented a problem if there had been many more people.

The MPF competitions were on display in a separate room. There were 22 entries altogether with 11 clubs represented, which is a very good entry rate (about the same as we got at our last fair!). Perhaps the move to judging photocopies is encouraging more collectors to enter.

As a Society we were unsuccessful. Robin Jarman did best with a second place only half a mark behind the winner in the Aerophilately class. Ralph Richardson was fourth in the Postal History and Alan Godfrey fifth in the Thematics. It might sound like sour grapes but the fact that the judge was from Solihull and Solihull won three classes was commented on by several people from other Societies viewing the entries. Certainly there were some very hard to understand scores and quite why Tony Whitehead's 'Imperial Reply Coupons' were reclassified from the Social class to Thematics where it won the class is a complete mystery.

All in all not a bad fair, it could be improved by being more selective in the types of dealers and a little more space being given to the punters.

Chris Jackson

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The time of year has come again when your Treasurer asks for Subscriptions to be paid. At £5 this represents excellent value for 20 meetings a year. It is always easier to run an organisation with appropriate funds to hand, rather than having to keep reminding members. Please make every effort to pay at the first meeting of the Season, or if you are unable to be there, at the earliest opportunity.

GB STAMP ISSUES

Royal Mail continues its regular output of new stamps with no less than 7 (at the time of writing) Special Stamp issues between now and the end of the year. For those of us who can afford them, or still wish to have a one of each GB collection here is the schedule to December.

July 17th saw an issue commemorating (or should that be celebrating?) "Airshows", timed to coincide with Britain's centenary of aviation. In August we have had the inevitable issue of stamps to celebrate the Olympic Games, but curiously, for an issue to mark the closing of the event (24th Aug) we end up with stamps issued two days early! At least China,

the joint issuing country, did so on the actual closing day.

September 18th brings a little more certainty with an issue themed on RAF Uniforms, to commemorate the change of Royal Flying Corps uniform from khaki to the now familiar blue of the RAF. Later in September (29th) celebrates the 50th Anniversary of (rather patronisingly) "Country" definitives. I thought they were regional stamps when first issued.

October 14th sees an issue entitled Women of Distinction, themed around women's suffrage; The traditional Christmas stamps are issued on 4th November, to catch the last Christmas posting to far flung destinations; and finally just in time for Remembrance Day, the third in the series of Miniature Sheets to commemorate the Armistice 90 years ago is issued on Thursday 6th November. One wonders why this, of all issues, could not be issued on Tuesday 11th November (and with an 11.00am time stamp on any FDC's??). Surely an absolute travesty on the part of Royal Mail. Or perhaps, like me, you never get a post delivery on a Tuesday either!

Whilst the frequency of stamp issues and the number and format of stamps available increases faster than fuel prices, it has to be said that the design of some of these stamps are excellent. Royal Mail should be congratulated in using more photography rather than "artistic renditions" in stamp design. You only have to look at the quality and pleasure to the eye that other countries are able to produce to see which way stamp design has got to go if it is to stand a realistic chance of retaining customers. Issues from earlier this year have caught my eye. I think the Rescue at Sea issue is splendid, the Houses of Lancaster and York issue has used existing contemporary portraits; and the Working Dogs issue portrays all of the keenness of these superb animals.

On the Working Dogs issue, the 78p value shows a local canine called Warwick. I have to own up to a sort of vested interest here. Warwick is a guide dog,



who was trained thanks to the efforts of local people and employers of Warwickshire, recycling old mobile phones and printer cartridges. You too can help this local charity to train even more dogs like Warwick. Anyone who has an old mobile phone or used printer cartridge can help Guide Dogs continue to make a difference.

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 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.