

EDINBURGH PHILATELIC SOCIETY

(83rd Season)

Newsletter No.99



August 2008

A letter from the President

It is with pleasure that I welcome you all to the new season of the EPS. I am honoured to be your president for 2008/2009 and I look forward to seeing you at our fortnightly meetings.

One major change you will see this season is that Bob Catto will be beside me at the top table, he has taken over as our honorary secretary. I am sure that you all will join me in thanking Jim for the years of hard work and dedication he has given the EPS. I will also take this opportunity to welcome Bob into the role of honorary secretary and thank him for taking on this task. (Thanks also to Irene for taking over as packet secretary.)

I hope that you all will find something of interest in the coming session with a wide variety of topics being covered. Once again, you have the opportunity to participate in member's displays including this year's letter "T" – a pure coincidence in my presidential year.

I am sure that you will agree that philately is both an absorbing and enjoyable pastime. The EPS meetings give us an opportunity to share this enjoyment so I hope to see you at them.

Bill Torrance

Subscriptions

There are three inclusions with this newsletter;

1. A copy of the syllabus for this season
2. A form for your annual subscription
3. A poster advertising the open day

Please return the completed subscription slip to the treasurer and follow the instructions on the back page for the disposal of the poster.

Recent displays

March 11th - A G.B. Miscellany

Alan Roy provided a fascinating and educational display of various aspects of stamps and postal history of Great Britain. The first half of the evening was split into three small sections. First of all we saw Edward VII definitives overprinted for the Levant and Morocco Agencies, illustrating the shade differences between the De La Rue and Somerset House printings. Secondly we saw Queen Victoria to George V stamps used abroad followed by a fine display of Machin blocks, booklet panes and se-tenant coils illustrating differences in phosphor bands, value settings and phosphor bands.

The second half told the story of the General Post in Scotland with items from as early as 1652 on display. Changes in postal rates over the years were clearly explained and beautifully illustrated, as was the “additional halfpenny” wheel tax.

March 25th – Society Visit, Edinburgh Stamp Group

Ken Norris opened the evening with an informative display of Airgraphs; these were used in WWII to reduce the weight and volume of mail being flown from North Africa and India. Some 350 million messages were sent in this way, and we saw examples from all three services. We were shown unused airgraph forms, a short strip of negative film and several examples bearing illustrations, Christmas greetings and even regimental crests.

Next came Jean Osborne’s “Congresses of Great Britain”, a range of souvenir material relating to early philatelic congresses, beginning with Manchester 1909. The display included labels (official and unofficial) and souvenir postcards. There were labels with overprints and even labels with errors.

Bill Black opened the second half with “New Zealand Antarctica”. He began by showing New Zealand stamps overprinted for use by Shackleton’s 1908 expedition and Scott’s 1911 expedition, and continued with more modern issues from “Ross Dependency”. These began in 1957 and continued until 1987 when the Post Office on the Antarctic ice closed. Stamps were issued again in 1994 and since then have depicted wildlife, scenery and explorers.

Finally, David Mekie showed “Treaty Ports”. These were the coastal and river ports in China where foreigners were allowed to trade. David’s display included stamps and postal stationery from Shanghai and other ports such as Amoo, Hankow, Nanking and Wuhu, and was (as usual) meticulously researched and written up. A fine finish to an entertaining evening.

April 8th – Germany P.o.W. Covers

Alan Wishart’s display of German Prisoner of War covers provided us with a fascinating evening. The first half began with mail from British prisoners held in Germany in WWI, including a range of postal stationery with a variety of censor and transit marks, and many black-and-white and colour postcards showing scenes from the camps.

The second half began with mail from German prisoners from camps in the Isle of Man, Hawick, Etaples in France and Biskra in Algeria. Once again, there were many postcards showing prisoners in various situations.

Finally, Alan showed a selection of mail from Russian POWs which had been routed through the Red Cross in Denmark.

April 22nd – AGM & “Swansong”

The first half of the final meeting of the season was dedicated to the business of the Society; reports were given by the Treasurer, the Secretary, the Packet Secretary and the Congress Delegate and the election of Committee members was carried out.

The President had asked Committee members some time before to provide a small selection of pages for his “Swansong” and the Committee rose to the occasion.

Eric Mason showed Ceylon, both stamps and postcards, and John Law had some unusual items from Switzerland. A display of coin covers was given by Bill Torrance and Jim Haggart displayed Scottish Airletters. Pillar boxes on cancellations and cachets was Alex Shepherd’s contribution, and Bob Catto gave us “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly”, not (as you might expect) portraits of the Committee, but modern USA sheetlets and miniature sheets. An entertaining end to the season.

Edinburgh philatelic Society website

Some members may not be aware that we have had a website for several years now. It was set up in 1999 and operated for about two years, and then it collapsed (simply because I was unable to work out how to update it properly) and was revived about four years ago. The original intention was quite simple; I thought that the society would benefit from the publicity provided by the internet.

I did get email enquiries from Canada, Spain and Hong Kong but I do not know whether anyone joined the society or even came along to any of our meetings as a result of browsing the net. I do know that one visiting speaker commented favourably on the cover used to illustrate our logo, so we must have had at least one “hit”!

A few months ago, my daughter embarked upon an Open University course on “Web Design” and offered to try to improve the appearance of our website as a project. As soon as she told me that she would do it free of charge, I realised that this was an offer I couldn’t refuse. The result of her endeavours can be seen at

www.edinphil.freeuk.com

If you looked at the previous incarnation you will notice several changes. The background is a totally different colour and leaves the casual browser in no doubt as to our hobby. There is a map which shows visitors where we can be found; the syllabus is much easier to read, the site as a whole is much easier on the eye and we now have several internal links which will make navigating the site much easier – or so I’m told.

She did keep some of the features of the old site. Our distinctive logo is still in place at the top, and we still use images of the Scottish definitive stamps as “navigation buttons”. I chose these originally because I consider them to be among the most attractive stamps ever produced in the UK.

She provided us with one new feature which I think is superb. You will notice that you can access the latest newsletter on-line. Please be patient when you try this, it is in PDF format (I don’t understand that either) and may take a few seconds to download. This should mean that any images that are used in the newsletter will be much clearer in the future.

Please take the trouble to look at our website. Let me know if there is anything you think we should change or any improvements that we could make. As I explained, my daughter Susan redesigned it free of charge and I am sure you will agree that it is worth every penny. If you have a webpage of your own and would like it redesigned, try contacting Susan by email. Her address is to be found at the bottom of our webpage.

Office Bearers

I was told recently of a philatelic society which unfortunately ceased operating. Not unusual you might say, given the state of our hobby; many societies are finding that their membership is in decline. In this case you would be wrong; this particular society had no shortage of members. It was a nationwide society with some two hundred members from all over Britain and the reason that it collapsed is quite simple; no-one was prepared to take over as secretary / Newsletter editor. It need not have been the secretary; lack of a treasurer or packet secretary would probably have had the same effect.

We have been doubly fortunate over the years. Firstly, we have had no real difficulty finding someone to take over any vacant position at short notice and secondly, those who have occupied these key positions have invariably served us well. Perhaps it is time to find out exactly what we expect these office bearers to do on our behalf. With that in mind, I asked Jim Haggart and Bob Catto to give us an indication of their duties as Secretary and Packet Secretary respectively. The following articles are their replies.

The Secretary's Year.

After the AGM things quieten down although there are always some items which have to be considered in some detail. These include a review of the organisation of the past season to see what improvements, if any, can be made for the coming season. There are generally phone calls, queries and bits and pieces of correspondence to attend to throughout the summer.

Around August details of the forthcoming season's syllabus, which has been approved by the committee and members is sent off to be printed, proofs double checked to ensure all details are included, all names properly spelt and the colour of the syllabus chosen for that season. Certificates to be given to the speakers are printed at this time, for the whole season.

At the start of the season final checks need to be made and a letter sent to the first speaker, as a courtesy, to gently remind him or her of the display. The letter will give the location of the venue, if they haven't displayed before, details of the pass round system, travel arrangements and expenses, although this will have been mentioned beforehand in the original letter of invitation.

On the evening the first duty is to open up the Hall, put out cups, saucers etc. filling and turning on the urn, arranging the tables and chairs and seeing that the microphone and speakers are set up; two or three regular helpers are usually on hand every evening for which the secretary is most grateful. Putting away afterwards and seeing the hall is secured is part of the job.

Welcoming the speaker for the evening is most important, especially if he/she is visiting for the first time. Briefing the President beforehand on the speaker's details allows an easy start to that evening's display. Conversing with the speaker throughout the display, while the sheets are passed round, is essential although this is usually a task undertaken by the President.

Most evenings follow a similar pattern although member's evenings are slightly different when a list of displays is drawn up on the night. These are usually good evenings with a wide range of subjects, styles, presentations and short introductions!

At the turn of the year an application is sent to the Church secretary for the hall booking for the forthcoming season. Also at this time the secretary's attention turns to the next year's syllabus. The incoming president is asked to look at a list of potential displays or suggest a subject or person whom he would like to see. Some Presidents leave this entirely to the secretary who has lists of speakers and their subjects compiled by ASPS.

Once the choices are listed in some sort of priority the secretary then commences a series of telephone calls to the potential speakers giving dates, subjects, the ideal number of sheets expected and details of the pass round system. It is at this stage that mention is made of the lapel microphone and the importance of a short introduction to the subject. (Although on the evening, to the secretary's horror, the introduction seems to go on for ages and members gently nod off)

Once all the displays have been settled it is time to write formally to each speaker setting out what has been agreed, the date and the correct name for the display. The letter has a tear off pro forma to be returned in a prepaid addressed envelope and this confirms the display.

At the committee meeting prior to the AGM the displays are discussed and a rota, of mainly committee members, is drawn up to give the votes of thanks on the appropriate night. The secretary reminds members of this duty prior to the meeting.

On the night of the meeting the agenda for the evening is given to the President. Also on the night the display certificate is quietly handed to the person giving the vote of thanks. Some time ago it was agreed to discontinue taking apologies as they served no useful purpose although records of attendances are kept for each meeting for historical and archival purposes.

Jim Haggart

Role of the Packet Secretary.

Some say it is a difficult job, the hardest job in the Society, a burden rather than a pleasure. However, in the three years I have been EPS Packet Secretary I've enjoyed it. Yes, it is hard work but one meets more of the membership than in any other role in the Society. In fact it has its perks, such as getting out into the countryside surrounding the city when delivering the boxes and spending time chatting to members over a welcome cup of coffee.

With over 70 members taking the packet, there is always something going on. The work starts with:-

- Arrival of new books, which are logged in and assigned a number.
- Books are assigned to a box. A balance of contents and value is paramount.
- Boxes assigned to a group to give each of the eight groups first shot at a new box.
- Check each box on return to PS and prepare for next group.

- After a box has been around all eight groups a full audit takes place and Society commission calculated.
- Break up box into vendors, prepare invoice of sales, package and return to vendors (this is usually carried out on several boxes at the same time).

During the above cycle there are other tasks.

1. **Daily** ~ Record all remittances as Cheque, Cash or Stamps
2. **Weekly** ~ Bank income
3. **Bi-weekly** ~ Prepare 8 boxes for delivery. Deliver.
4. **Quarterly** ~ Statement on Packet Status for Newsletter.
5. **Annually** ~ Prepare statement of Accounts with a Profit/Loss statement for Committee approval prior to AGM. Pay Society treasurer the commission from sales.

Bob Catto

In the introduction to these two articles I pointed out that the Edinburgh Philatelic society has been very fortunate. You will perhaps see how fortunate when I remind you that Jim Haggart was Secretary for some ten years until last April, and he carried out the duties described above efficiently and with unfailing good humour throughout that time.

Bob Catto was Packet secretary for three years until last April, when he took over as Secretary. Irene Catto has now taken on the job of Packet Secretary.

(I asked her recently for a "Packet Secretary's report" for this newsletter and was told, "I haven't done anything; I don't know what I'm doing; a trainee is only as good as the trainer!")

Others have performed these and other duties on our behalf over long periods. David Mekie for example was Packet Secretary, Newsletter Editor and Treasurer for 25 years. (I should point out that, despite appearances to the contrary, he held these posts concurrently, not consecutively.)

This season, we are short of one committee member; if you think you have something to offer, come to the next meeting and ask what is required.

Packet Secretary's Report (Official)

Delivery of boxes started a couple of weeks ago following the holiday break. Having only recently taken on the role of Packet Secretary I can only perform as well as my teacher.

Irene Catto

Visit to the Eric Liddell Centre

We were asked some time ago if we could provide a visiting speaker for the Eric Liddell Centre on Morningside Road. Bob and Irene Catto went along to talk about stamps and stamp collecting to the regulars and clearly made quite an impression, if the following letter is anything to go by.

“Dear Bob and Irene,

I just wanted to send this email before I go today to thank you both for your talk and presentation to the group. The whole group seemed very engaged and I think you could see there were a number of individuals who were particularly inspired by you and the subject, and who I suspect will be revisiting their old collections when they get home tonight!

The fact that you were able to offer both a stand display and individual attention was perfect for our mixed needs and we really do appreciate that you and the society give up your precious time and energy to do such talks, and come and see us.

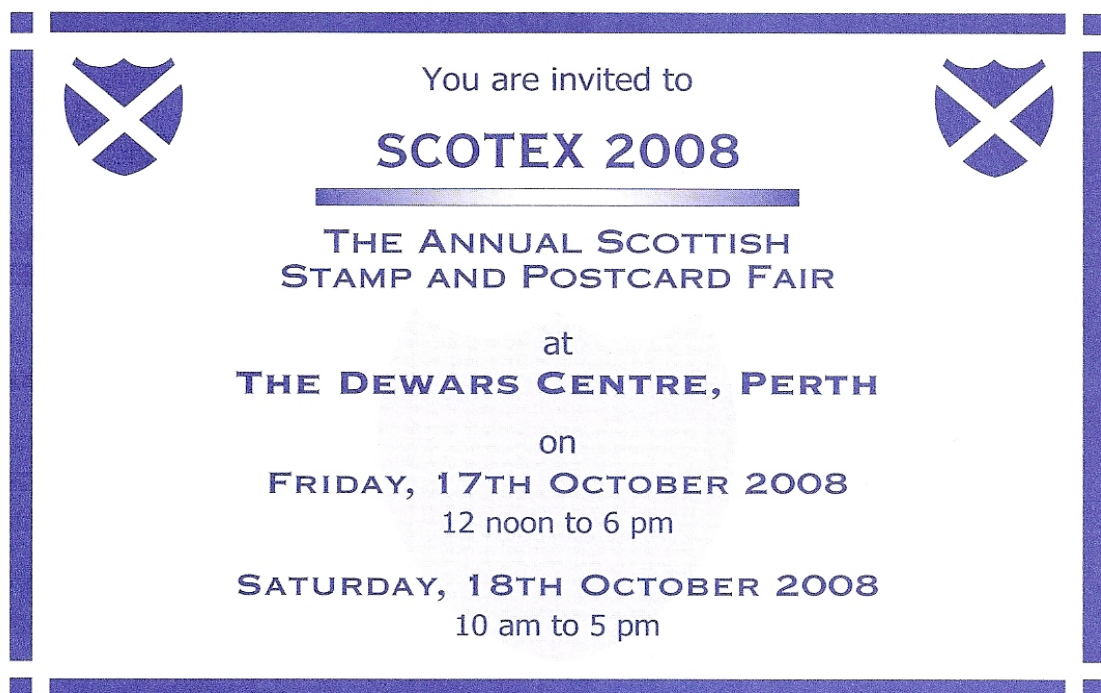
It makes a huge difference to us to have interesting people talking about their work and bringing the place to life.

With all good wishes,

Janet Taubman, Development worker.”

Upcoming events

There are two events to look forward to this autumn. One of them is Scotex 2008, as shown below, the other is our Open Day, Saturday 6th September. More information overleaf.



You are invited to

SCOTEX 2008

**THE ANNUAL SCOTTISH
STAMP AND POSTCARD FAIR**

at

THE DEWARS CENTRE, PERTH

on

FRIDAY, 17TH OCTOBER 2008
12 noon to 6 pm

SATURDAY, 18TH OCTOBER 2008
10 am to 5 pm

EDINBURGH PHILATELIC SOCIETY

OPEN DAY

**In St. John's Hall, bottom of Lothian Road
Saturday 6th September 2008, 2pm – 4.30pm**

An opportunity to renew old philatelic acquaintanceships, meet new people in a relaxed atmosphere and help convert beginners to the hobby. Remember the old adage, "Philatelists start by collecting stamps and end up collecting friends."

**Stamp and Postcard Displays to view
Children's corner, supported by Edinburgh Zoo
Ask the expert
See the latest collecting tools and stationery
Add to your collection
Enjoy a cup of tea and a biscuit**

BRING A FRIEND – BRING A GRANDCHILD

Help us spread the Stamp Collecting gospel

MAKE THE OPEN DAY A SUCCESS

**Included with this Newsletter is a colourful A4 size poster.
Help to advertise our event by getting some appropriate
organisation to display it for a week or two before 6th September.**

**You local Library
Community Education Centre
Local Post Office
(if you still have one)
Health centre
Primary School**

**Extra Posters are available from
Bill Robertson (0131 445 1405) ; or Bob Catto (0131 3320949)**