

# EDINBURGH PHILATELIC SOCIETY

## (84th Season)

**Newsletter No.102**



**September 2009**

### **A letter from the President**

I am delighted to have been invited to be President of the Edinburgh Philatelic Society for the coming season. This is the second time that I have been honoured in this way; from my point of view, this is very flattering, from yours it may seem like Dr Johnson's "triumph of hope over experience".

When I was first invited to join the committee about fourteen years ago, I did not initially realise that this was a first step to becoming President. It came as a shock to the system when it suddenly dawned on me that I would be expected to provide a "Presidential display" – enough material to fill an evening – and a "President's Swansong" – enough material to entertain after the AGM.

The first problem did not prove too difficult to overcome; I simply had to expand my thematic collection and improve it until it was fit to be seen by others. The second gave me many hours of thinking, as I did not have a second collection of any merit that I could fall back on. As I was returning from Glasgow one night I had what I thought was a brilliant idea; I decided to choose one event from each year of the twentieth century and find material to illustrate it. As it happened, the display seemed to go down well and there was much positive feedback.

Which brings me to the present. My problems are not quite so difficult as they were; we are all continually modifying, adding to and generally improving our collections, so my main collection is "fit to be seen". I have decided to change my offering for the "swansong", so there is still some work to be done there. However, to quote Dr Johnson once again, "When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully".

Fortunately for all concerned, Bob Catto has arranged a varied programme of displays to fill the evenings between my own offerings. Thanks to him, there is much to look forward to this year!

Richard Squires.

## Recent displays

### **February 24<sup>th</sup> – Norway**

Dr Brian Dow's display covered a range of Norwegian stamps from early "Posthorn" issues to modern stamps featuring the Norwegian Royal Family. On the way, we saw how definitive stamps use traditional themes; the lion rampant, flora and fauna and scenic views have all featured.

In the second half of the evening, he showed cancellations on covers and cards; these included censored covers and German occupation covers. We also saw items from Norwegian explorations, including some of Amundsen's journeys.

### **March 10<sup>th</sup> – Minerals, Gems and Ores**

Ken Gibb treated us to a philatelically illustrated lesson on mineralogy and gemmology in a superb thematic evening. He began by introducing us to some of the characteristics and sources of minerals and showed many illustrations of minerals and gems from around the globe. Gold and gold mining were well represented with examples from South Africa, New Guinea, Finland and the United States.

He concentrated on the social and economic side of minerals for the second half of his display. We saw examples of buildings built of marble and some of the different minerals used in paints and dyes throughout the ages. Some of the more unusual issues celebrating minerals were also seen, including the 2002 Gibraltar set incorporating some of "the rock" itself.

### **March 24<sup>th</sup> – Society visit: Alba Stamp Group**

Society visits always provide a fascinating evening and this one was no exception. The evening began with a display of "Boys Brigade" on stamps and postcards, given by Graham Mill. The stamps came from many countries, including Nigeria, St Kitts and St Vincent. Some of the postcards showed the way that the BB uniform has changed over the years; we also saw letters written by a boy in the 1<sup>st</sup> Glasgow Company at camp in Tignabruich in 1905.

John Potter showed a selection of postcards and cancellations from "Scottish Castles", many of which have long been uninhabited. Despite only displaying A to C, there were rather a lot of them, many of them largely unknown to many of those present, including myself!

Mike Turnbull's display of "Scottish Music" began with concert halls; Edinburgh's Usher Hall and Glasgow's Theatre Royal among those being featured. He also showed commemorative cancellations from the Mod, the Edinburgh Festival and the Tattoo. Some of the composers who have arranged Scottish songs, such as Verdi and Mendelssohn were also featured.

The last display of the evening was provided by Ken Norris who gave us "Scottish Place Names Abroad". He began with cancellations from Scotland, Ontario, and went on to provide examples from Perth in Australia and Kansas, Elgins in the USA and Canada, Glasgows in Illinois and Virginia, and many others.

## **Snippets**

### **Subscription increase**

Members present at the AGM last April voted to increase the annual subscription to £6. This sum should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, Alex Shepherd, at the address on the enclosed form.

### **Packet news**

Irene Catto, the packet secretary, has restarted the packet in the opposite direction after a short summer break. You should be seeing a packet quite soon. Please remember to pass it on as soon as you reasonably can.

### **Internet shopping**

Occasionally, someone emails me via the website with information about a new service or online shop for philatelists. I will pass information on to members if it seems genuine. Recently, Roger Barton of "Warcovers" contacted me in this way. If you have any interest in military philately, his website may be of some use to you. It can be found at

[www.warcovers.com](http://www.warcovers.com)

### **Electronic Newsletter**

Some time ago, I invited members to let me know if they would be happy to receive an electronic version of the newsletter instead of the usual paper copy delivered by the postman. Since I only had two replies, I have decided that, at least for the time being, I shall continue to use the services of the Royal Mail. Many thanks to those who replied. I would like to point out that the newsletter is copied onto the website, so if you have difficulty making out details of photographs and diagrams, a clearer image can be found online.

### **Death of a member**

Sadly, Harry Westwood, one of our members, died in June after an operation.

We extend our sympathy to his family.

## Macmerry Primary School Stamp Club

I received this charming letter from the Headteacher of Macmerry PS who visited our open day last year with a view to starting a stamp club for her pupils.

Collecting stamps has taken on a whole new meaning for our pupils. We have "collected" used stamps for Save the Children (SCF) for years. Now, after a session of "Stamp Club", I am forever seeing pupils on their hands and knees, grubbing through this box for goodies. The pupils themselves decided that as these stamps had been given to a charity, they would give a donation to that charity for any stamps they want out of the box. Thus SCF and my little collectors both benefit! We had four meetings in the Christmas term, to see how the idea would go. I'd bought some of these packet mixtures, to start them off. In the Spring Term, the pupils asked if the club could start again. We were greatly helped by a much more experienced stamp collector, the uncle of Mrs Craig - she is the Head Teacher of Knox Academy in Haddington, 5 miles away from us. Her uncle gives her masses of doubles - mostly British - which she has now passed on to Macmerry PS. We go through these doubles, take what we want, and give the rest to our SCF box. This has been a tremendous help.

At the end of the Spring term, some of the Club went - by arrangement - to the Stamp Shop, where we received a warm and very helpful welcome. We were given tips about the care of stamps and how to "stick them in", and the children were mesmerised by a completely different idea of "shop". (An interesting aside is that the counter in that shop came from Macmerry Village Co-op - when it closed down many years ago.) Despite my having warned the owner that our pupils would be unlikely to spend more than £1 if we were lucky, a lot more than that was spent on the day - reflecting the children's interest. I have noticed that some of the pupils are becoming more aware of stamps-in-the-news, so, for example, they are telling me that they have ordered a First Day Cover before I have heard about it myself. Relations of the pupils have dug out their collections (which they had as children) and lent them to us to admire at a meeting. It has helped the children become more observant - e.g. the difference between the French blue stamps of last year and of this year. Some of the younger pupils have become very interested - through raking through the SCF box, so we have had to lower the age group of the club - originally only P6 and P7. We had a visitor who came and showed her father's collection of First Day Covers. We had had two Stamp Competitions in the school, where the (small number of) entries were displayed for all to see, and the prizes awarded in front of the whole school.

On our first day back this session, I was asked if the Stamp Club was going to start again. We normally meet on Mondays - 3.20 - 4 p.m. If there are any keen stamp collectors near Macmerry who would be willing to come and speak/show stamps/inspire them - please get in touch with the school - 01875 610 234, or by using the email for me or the school. My problem is that being the HT means that I often get caught up with parents or meetings at the end of the day. Also, although I saved stamps as a child, I don't really know too much about philately.

Fiona Beveridge

## Royal Mail Stamp issuing policy

As you no doubt remember, an article in a recent newsletter described the unsuccessful efforts of Scottish philatelists to persuade the Royal Mail to think again about the issue of a stamp featuring Robert Burns. Earlier this year, Ian Johnstone, a member of EPS, contacted Royal Mail on a similar theme. His letter was published in the Evening News and is reproduced here.

“Being keen on philately, I eagerly searched through the Stamp Guide issued by Royal Mail for the forthcoming special issues due in 2009. I was amazed to find no mention of any sporting achievements in 2008 which have been little short of outstanding for our nation.

Team GB - Beijing Olympics resulting in record total of medals won with 4th place in the overall medal table, beating such 'sporting giants' as Australia and Germany.

Manchester United - Euro Champions League winners and now World Club Champions.

Wales Rugby Union - Grand Slam winners of Six Nations Trophy.

Lewis Hamilton - Formula 1 World Champion at such a young age.

Joe Calzaghe - World Boxing Champion, remaining undefeated in all his professional bouts.

Padraig Harrington (OK he was born in Dublin) - but Open Golf Champion in 2 consecutive years and US PGA champion for 2008.

Andy Murray - ranked 4th in the world after reaching the US Open tennis final.

There are no doubt many more, I have not mentioned as above. I say 'Shame on you Royal Mail' for this indifference. I realise it takes time for the prints to be set up and produced but it took no time at all for the 2005 Ashes victory to be celebrated in the same year by issuing stamps of the England cricket team! Could there be a little bias being shown here?

I have no argument with most of the issues due for 2009 but after such a great year for our sporting heroes (especially at the Olympics), could the issues of Plants and Mythical Creatures not have been delayed till 2010? I see there is to be an issue due next October of eminent Britons. Can I suggest, this be almost totally dedicated to the sporting heroes of 2008? If not, I suppose I will have to buy stamps from places like St Vincent, Jamaica or even Australia who celebrate world sporting achievements much better than our Royal Mail.

Hope these comments are taken seriously.....Ian Johnstone / Edinburgh.”

The email elicited the following response from the Royal Mail:-

“Thank you for your email.

As the stamp programme is prepared years in advance, it has not been possible to incorporate your suggestions into this years programme.

The volume of issues this year did not allow the space for a "fast track"

set even though we do of course admire the achievements of our sportsmen and women in 2008”

Iain wrote again asking if an England win in the (then forthcoming) Ashes series would be recognized as it was in 2005 and was assured that there are no plans for an issue to commemorate an England win this time.

The line about the stamp programme being organized years in advance is interesting. It took only three weeks to design prepare and issue the “World Champions” ms to recognize England’s Rugby World Cup win in 2003, and the same time to produce the “Ashes Victory” ms in 2005. It can be done if the will is there.

### **Congress 2009**

The Edinburgh Philatelic Society would like to congratulate members of the Edinburgh Stamp Group and the Lothian Postcard Club on their splendid displays at Congress in Perth last April.

Special congratulations go to Robin Sherman who was awarded second place in the inaugural Scottish Postcard competition.

Those members who were unable to attend Congress this year will have the opportunity to see some of the Lothian Postcard Club’s displays at our meeting on February 23<sup>rd</sup> in the coming season.

Congratulations are also due to Jim Haggart, our former long serving secretary, who was given the ASPS Award of Merit for his services to Scottish philately. Jim served as secretary from 1998 to 2008 and was for most of these seasons instrumental in putting together an attractive and varied syllabus. The Society has used his draughtsmanship and his design skills on several occasions and he has long been a popular host for committee meetings. He is still the Archivist of the Society, a post he has held for many years.

### **Members’ evenings**

Every season our syllabus has one or more “Members’ evenings”. On such occasions, members are invited to bring some of their own material along to form a display.

There are no hard and fast rules for these evenings, members bring as much or as little as they like (up to about 15 sheets), on any subject or from any collecting sphere. We are likely to see a few pages from a one-country collection, some postal history and perhaps a display of postcards on such an evening.

For members who have never displayed any of their material before, these evenings offer a chance to “dip a toe in the water”. Many years ago, I took along 10 sheets to a thematic evening; the first time I had ever displayed any of my collection.

It has been known for a member to ask someone else to take a short display to the meeting if they are unable to attend themselves, so attendance is not necessary!

These meetings are always entertaining, if only because of the variety of material on display. There is always something to learn; a new way of presenting material, perhaps, or a stamp issue or variety that you had not previously seen. The most challenging of these evenings is the one entitled “Letter \_\_\_”; the challenge seems to be to bring what you want to display and give it a title which somehow incorporates the required letter.

Come along to this evening and marvel at the linguistic gymnastics performed by some contributors.

### **Tamper proof stamps**

You will no doubt have seen the “tamper proof” stamps issued in February by the Royal Mail.



These stamps have some interesting features, not all of them new:-

- They are self adhesive
- The oblong pieces cut into the stamp are intended to remain on the paper if an attempt is made to remove the stamp, so that unfranked stamps cannot be reused. In fact, it is possible to remove them intact, so the expensive technology seems to have been wasted. Perhaps it would have been wiser to have invested the money in better franking machinery.
- They have “Royal Mail” printed in microtext in a wave pattern as part of the design.

It is worth taking a closer look at this part of the stamp as it may tell you the origin of the stamp – that is, the type of booklet that it came from. The place to look is the top left hand corner of the stamp, in the triangle formed by the stamp edges and the top of the crown.

The diagram below will give some idea – a better copy is available from Robert Murray’s stamp shop.



**MSIL**  
This variety comes from booklets of six small 1<sup>st</sup> class stamps.

Other letter changes come from other sources, as this table shows.

MTIL	MCIL	MBIL	MFOY	YBLM
Booklets of twelve. Small 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> .	Custom booklets. Small 1 <sup>st</sup> only.	Business sheets. Small 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> .	Booklets of four large. 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> .	Business sheets large. 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> .

There may be others too. Please let me know if you know of any.

**SCOTEX 2009**  
Stamps, Postal History and Postcards  
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at the  
**DEWARS CENTRE**  
**PERTH**  
**ADMISSION FREE**

**FRIDAY 16<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2009 11.00am – 6.00pm**  
**SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2009 10.00am – 5.00pm**  
Organised by the SPTA  
Enquiries Alan Wishart Tel 01698 356337