A Letter from the Secretary

The principle purpose of this newsletter is to remind members that it is our Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, 19th April and to circulate, in advance, copies of the Society’s general accounts and packet accounts for the year ended 2016.

The AGM, which takes place at our usual venue at St Mark’s Church Hall, Castle Terrace at 7pm, is important for three reasons; the first is financial as we discuss income and expenditure, the second is to recruit new committee members and the third is for you to voice your opinions, whatever they be. One member, Mike Sharp, has already spoken with me about a better way to manage our opening up procedure ahead of our bi-monthly meetings. As the AGM marks a full year since we move to St Marks, it would be great to get feedback on the hall from as many of you as possible.

Members should also take note that your committee plans to put Bill Torrance forward at the AGM for approval to take over the running of the Packet. It would be nice for you pop along on the 19th to meet Bill, especially if you do not know him. Your committee has organized a social to follow the meeting so expect a fun evening.

We have seen some fabulous displays this season – not only from visitors but also a lot of our own members. Every display, from a couple of sheets to 20 or more, on members’ nights is greatly appreciated.

A number of members have also been out to other societies displaying material, fostering links and raising our Society’s profile. We sent a team to Glasgow, our chairman has been to Newcastle, I went to Aberdeen and I can think of at least three other members who have made visits. These trips are critical in attracting return visitors to enhance our annual syllabus and are great fun. Please let me know if you are willing to participate next season.

I look forward to seeing you at our AGM. Until then, I wish you happy stamping.

Bob Catto
November 24th – GB Kings George V and IV: Stephen Weir

The display was a preview of a presentation Stephen was to give at the Royal Philatelic Society, beginning with the Wembley commemoratives of 1924, mint, used, in blocks and on cover. He showed varieties, perforation types and displayed interesting cancellations before giving the 1925 Wembley stamps similar treatment. Next up was 1929’s Postal Union Congress, including a used example of the £1 value and mint and used sets of the four lower values. These included watermark varieties, control markings, booklet panes, covers and constant varieties such as “broken wreath” and the “Q for O in union”. The evening’s first half closed with a very detailed look at the 1935 Silver Jubilee issue including overprinted sets from Tangier and Morocco Agencies. The second half had a similar format, beginning with the 1937 Coronation issue. Again, Stephen had mint and used stamps, first day covers, postcards cancelled earlier than official issue and lots of varieties, including the “colon flaw” and “extra decoration”. This was followed by reviews of the 1940 Postage Stamp Centenary issue, the 1946 Victory issue, the 1948 Olympic Games issue and the 1949 UPU issue, all seen as mint and used stamps, covers, and displaying an amazing list of varieties. Finally, although 1947’s Royal Wedding did not warrant a stamp, we saw two commemorative covers with special postmarks.

December 8th – New Acquisitions or 10 Sheets

**Michael Johnston** brought British East Africa beginning with overprinted India stamps from 1895-96, 1896-1901 definitive stamps and Uganda 1898-1902 issues plus postal history highlighting correspondence from 19th century missionaries. **Peter Brand** had a mixture of French postal and social history items, including a bill to the French Government from the Russian forces occupying France after Waterloo, WW1 naval correspondence, Napoleonic era civil mail and a Royal post cover from 1775. **Richard Squires** brought 10 sheets depicting incidents from the 1960s, including Marilyn Monroe’s death, England’s World Cup win and the 1969 moon landing. **Jim Haggart** showed maps on stamps, focussing on errors such as a 1976 Cricket World Cup issue showing an extra Caribbean island, a Seychelles stamp showing its capital in the wrong place and a Guernsey stamp inscribed with the incorrect latitude. **Robin Sherman’s** new acquisitions began with a letter posted on Christmas Day from Christmas Island and a selection of Falkland Islands covers relating to “Operation Tabarin”, an Admiralty inspired move to establish permanent naval bases in the South Atlantic. **David Mekie** displayed Netherlands Indies Postagent; letters to and from the Dutch colony routed through Penang and Singapore. Among the examples shown were a postcard from Kuala Lumpur to Medan and covers routed through Penang between Sumatra and India, Holland and France plus covers routed through Singapore between Java, Germany, Portugal and Scotland. **John Law’s** contribution brought us two unlikely bedfellows – British Commonwealth and Greenland. He had classic stamps from St Lucia, Gambia and Falkland Islands alongside modern issues from Greenland, many with thematic subjects. **Bob Catto** displayed Stampex sheets. He has been attending
the show for many years and bought the souvenir sheets each visit, starting in 2006 and covering a range of subjects from working horses to space exploration. **Dougie Donnelly** had French stamp booklets, miniature sheets and sheet-lets with a range of subjects from sporting achievements to the French Revolution. **Tom Wilkie** chose Switzerland, beginning with 1962 charity stamps and continuing with Pro Juventute booklets plus issues from some of the many international organisations based in the country. **Mike Humphries** displayed stamps from the Allied occupation of Germany 1945-47 including issues for the British, French, Russian and American zones. **Bill Torrance** brought model postal vehicles rather than stamps, about forty in all, ranging from Victorian horse drawn carriages to modern articulated lorries.

**January 12th – Letter “C”**

**Evelyn Marshall** gave us castles, the British high values issued from 1955 to 2005, on covers beginning with the 1955 set, seen as 4-blocks, and continuing with 1988, 1992 and 1997 issues before concluding with a 2005 miniature sheet featuring the four 1955 stamps with decimal values. **Michael Johnston** had Elizabethan issues of the Eastern Caribbean, beginning with Leeward Islands followed by Antigua, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Montserrat and ending with St Kitts-Nevis. **John Law** contributed the Large and Small Queens of Canada, a comprehensive display of the various issues and printings. **Rod Combe** brought Cook Islands stamps, concentrating on those used during the New Zealand postal administration, and including Nuie and Aitutaki issues. **Mike Sharp** was the second member to show Canada, bringing a broad range of stamps from the Colony of Canada, no fewer than three different “beavers” and an entire from 1852, and then issues from the Dominion of Canada. **Peter Brand** displayed French “Cinderellas” and charity labels starting with examples depicting the Paris fair, labels from the Beauvais fête de Jeanne Hachette and seven labels from the Grande Semaine de Tours. **Tom Wilkie** chose stamps depicting Columbus issued in 1992 by a large range of countries, including Austria, Bulgaria and Monaco and a number of first day covers. **Alex Shepherd’s** theme was “connected with Scotland” taking in stamps, postcards, commemorative postal history and a first flight cover from now defunct Caledonian Airways. **Mike Humphries** provided a “concoction of colourful creations” including a US sheet featuring Charlie Chaplin, British PHQ cards depicting Comedians, stamps showing Enrico Caruso and Captain Cook, postal history from Clayton, Indiana and Austrian charity covers bearing costume stamps. **Jim Haggart** provided maps on stamps showing countries such as Singapore, Tristan da Cunha, Tuvalu and India plus regions including US and German states. He also had map shaped stamps from Norfolk Island and Sierra Leone. **David Mekie** displayed Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean, which used the stamps of Straits Settlements from 1901 to 1942. The display included a 1958 Australian set overprinted “Christmas Island”, mint and used. **Bob Catto** finished the evening with “Comets and comets” made up of 10 sheets of astronomy and 10 sheets of the namesake aircraft, the world’s first commercial jet airliner.

**January 26th – Stones on Stamps: Ken Gibb**

Ken introduced his display by outlining the two principle ways of classifying minerals – by crystal structure and by chemical composition – before circulating his first sheets focusing on
“native” elements such as copper, silver, gold and sulphur with Spanish stamps depicting sulphides and a postcard showing pyrites. Then came stamps showing “organic” stones including pearls from Tanzania and amber from Spain. Next came a study of the classification of crystals through stamps from a very wide range of nations from New Zealand to Russia plus postcards produced by the Natural History Museum in London. Minerals important to industry are termed “strategic” and Ken illustrated these with stamps from Zambia, Mozambique and Ghana while various metal ores were shown on stamps from Botswana, China and Peru. Precious and semi-precious stones were well represented too with citrine and amethyst seen on Rhodesian stamps, opal on an Australian holographic stamp and garnets on a 1992 Canadian cover. There was a brief section showing mineralogists on stamps and covers before the first half ended with some examples of mineral related postal history and a couple of stamp booklets, including one from Britain with an illustration of a Cornish tin mine. The second half took a different approach; each sheet had stamps and a cover illustrating some aspect of minerals, crystals, mining or gemstones, arranged in alphabetical order of the issuing authorities. In all, no fewer than 66 issuing authorities from Afars & Issas to Zimbabwe were represented. Finally, we saw a maxi-card showing the 60-tonne Hoba meteorite from South West Africa and two more showing graphite mining in Greenland.

February 9th – Ceylon: Ian Smith

This display was chronological and comprehensive, beginning with 1857-64 issues in a range of shades and on various papers. The first half ran through all of the various issues from Queen Victoria to King Edward series from 1903 and 1908 concluding with a section focusing on telegraph stamps, mostly used halves but some complete specimen examples, followed by a small selection of postal history including a pre-stamp entire, a registered cover from Colombo to London and an 1871 cover to Colombo with boxed “deficient postage” cachet. The second half began with King George V 1912-25 issues up to a 100 Rupee value, fiscally used, again in a variety of shades and with various watermarks. We saw war stamp overprints followed by 1920s issues in both die I and die II formats, the George V pictorial definitive stamps plus the Silver Jubilee commemoratives, including several of the better-known varieties, before a run of George VI issues. The evening concluded with a short themed display focusing on tea and a selection of censor covers from Ceylon to a variety of destinations, including one that had crossed the Atlantic Ocean twice before delivery.

Scotex 2016

Organised by Scottish Philatelic Trade Association, Scotex will be held at Dewar Centre, Glover Street, Perth on October 14th and 15th. Opening hours will be 10am to 6pm on Friday and 10am to 4pm on Saturday.

A Caribbean Conundrum

Report: John Law

When I came to prepare material for my display of West Indies at the end of February – which will be the subject of a report in your next newsletter – I had to decide which of my 200 or more sheets to leave out to get down to a quantity that would be
comfortable for one of our evenings. I could miss out all the modern stuff – but I don’t have much post 1970 material. And, leaving out the early issues would have been a great pity. So, it had to be a selection of places. But where to chose?

The next point was: were all the colonies I have long thought of as West Indian actually qualified under that name? For example, what about Bermuda or Bahamas? Bermuda is about a thousand miles from the next nearest bit of the West Indies and even Bahamas is well outside the Caribbean Sea, just off Florida’s coast. What about British Honduras, a sliver of land on the mainland of Central America sandwiched between Mexico and Guatemala? It’s also well away from the rest of West Indies. British Guiana, geographically speaking, is obviously in South America.

Perhaps, I should say I’ve always thought of the West Indies as “British” – but, again, a check on the map reveals several other European countries had fingers in the pie. Cuba was never British and it is by far the largest island in the Caribbean. Haiti is the next largest and is also non-British. Let’s start, then, at the other end – with colonies that have a clear and positive claim to be considered British West Indian.

In 1951, fourteen of these colonies joined in a semi-omnibus issue of stamps to mark the inauguration of the University College of the British West Indies. Yet, just seven years later in 1958, only 10 colonies took part in another semi-omnibus issue to mark the Caribbean or West Indies Federation. So, it seems a strict definition is somewhat elusive to nail down.

There are two geographical groups of islands that must surely qualify for inclusion without question – the Leeward Islands and the Windward Islands. Like pearls on a necklace, these nations include Antigua, Montserrat, Dominica, Saint Kitts, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, Grenada, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, and British Virgin Islands. They all made issues in both those omnibus series. To these places, I then added Cayman Islands and Jamaica, which seem to qualify without much argument, and Turks & Caicos to bring up about 160 sheets.

It just goes to show how useful it can be to be invited to give a display. It prods us to re-check lifelong assumptions. Maybe it’s true, what they used to tell us as school kids, that stamp collecting really is educational and broadens the mind.

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<th>Dates for the Diary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, 7th May – Bass Rock Postcard and Stamp Fair, Kinross Church Centre, High Street, Kinross</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, 6th June – Robert Murray Stamp Auction, Stewart’s Melville Club Pavilion, Ferry Road, Edinburgh</td>
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<td>Saturday, 18th June – Bass Rock Postcard and Stamp Fair, St Andrew Blackadder Church Hall, High Street, North Berwick</td>
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A Dose of Postal Blues
Report: Bob Catto

Over the years, I have moaned about the number of second-class Blue stamps we receive on members’ payment letters. I always felt that, as we are stamp collectors, we should use a variety of more collectable stamps on our mail. If this happened, the Packet Secretary could make up books with these stamps and raise money for our society. Can you imagine the faces if we sent a book of only 2nd class Blues round?

The illustration above is of items from postage I received in the first few days of 2016 and is a much better selection than the norm. You may not be aware that modern definitive issues have an iridescent etching “Royal Mail” in a wavy line across the stamp. The two 2nd class stamps above are, I can assure you, different. Top left is from a 2015 Business Sheet while middle left is an older stamp, issued before security checks were added and purchased for as little as 19p – a good investment when compared to the current postal rate of 54p.

The 1st class Red is also an oldie as it is pre-security tagged series and could have been bought for 26p while the 1st class Lavender was only available for a short period, issued to mark the Queen becoming Britain’s longest reigning monarch. It was available in a miniature sheet and a self-adhesive book of six, selling at 63p a stamp.

The Christmas Snowman is a 2006 issue with an initial selling price of 32p while the other Christmas stamp is the 2015 issue costing 54p. Last Christmas, I posted my cards with 1st class stamps from my spare booklets, which had cost me 19p a stamp.

Finally, it is easy to see the odd postmark out. It is very different to the other five and is the only cancellation not made in Edinburgh.

An Appeal from your Editor

This is your newsletter so please help me make it as informative as possible. I am always looking for interesting material for inclusion in future issues. I would be delighted to receive articles and/or photographs with captions on any subject related to philately or Society members. You can give me your copy at any of our fortnightly Tuesday meetings or by email to edinphil@msn.com.