

China



Mallet, 1683

Paul N Davey

A Display to The Royal Philatelic Society London,

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Philatelic Biography

I began collecting stamps at the age of six when I found my mother's collection on the bookcase. My grandfather worked on the Orient Line boats sailing from Tilbury to Australia and so there was much from countries *en-route*, after my uncle had taken first choice! At the age of thirteen I had taken to hanging around the local stamp shop on Saturdays. I was offered a job to free up space on the customer's side of the counter. My collection rapidly specialised in Australia, New Zealand and line-engraved GB but I reached the typical schoolboy issue of being unable to afford the stamps I needed. However, they were available and the problem was to find the money rather than the stamps. I sold these collections and decided to specialise in China as one could buy many stamps for little money. This is no longer true I should add!

The collection rapidly expanded as there were no local collectors of China so that any material coming into the shop could be purchased very reasonably. A couple of years later I was spotted by the late Lionel Prescott buying Martyrs plate blocks at a fair and he persuaded me to join the China Philatelic Society of London. I also joined the China Stamp Society in the USA and received a complete run of their journal "The China Clipper" as a birthday present. Following a four year degree in chemistry at Oxford, including a year as the University Philatelic Society President, I started working in High Wycombe. Taking on the job of CPSL research librarian meant I had the resources to discover much more about things in my collection. I soon combined the job with that of lending librarian. One source of material added to the collection at this time was from the late Norman

Parfitt who had been a missionary doctor in Szechwan province during the war and had eventually retired to Oxford. When he died a local dealer was given the job of disposing of his collections. I visited and got the job of dealing with the China part on a commission (in stamps) basis. He had bought many of the wartime surcharges in complete sheets from Chengtu post office and I still have these. A few items from this source are shown in the display.

Moving to Ashford in Kent meant I was living very close to the late Bill (China) Lane who served as secretary of the China Philatelic Society of London (CPSL) for forty years. A former special branch officer who had spent time in Venezuela, he was a mine of stories about China philately in the early days. I particularly liked the story of a strip of five unoverprinted red revenues in the back of a mixed China lot at a London auction. Bill couldn't compete with the dealer who bought it and asked if he knew about the red revenues. The dealer replied that he had decided to build a stock as he was often being asked for China and since he had purchased the Commonwealth he was after cheaply earlier in the sale, he thought this would be a good start. Having thanked Bill for the information about the rarity of unoverprinted red revenues, he tore one off and gave it to him.

I wrote two books on Chinese philately, "The Perfans of China", a subject shown in the display and "The Parcel Post Stamps of China". This shows an attraction to the by-ways of Chinese philately.

I added to my role the packet secretary job in the CPSL and "Secretary's perks" of first choice added many more interesting pieces. As China was becoming more difficult to find, I sold my

modern China and decided to concentrate on the period to 1950. This was just before the prices shot through the roof! My collections expanded to include Kent postal history and postage due mail and I spent some time as Kent PHG Secretary and now I edit "The Kent Post". A year as Kent Federation President gave me the opportunity to display to all the clubs in Kent. I eventually gave up the CPSL librarian and packet secretary jobs prior to moving to Switzerland and was kindly elected President.

When our President invited me to give this display, my first thought was how was I going to fill so many frames? After a little thought, the question became what should I leave out? In the 1950s the CPSL planned a comprehensive handbook of Chinese philately. They devised the chapter headings and arrived at over 500 subject areas. The handbook was not progressed further! Of necessity this display shows only a small subset of these topics, concentrating mainly on areas which are less often seen or have not been displayed to the Society in the past. This leaves out the wartime period and post-war inflation which could fill a 1pm display in their own right.

It should be noted that this is a working collection and in places stamps have been added to a sheet. Rewriting will happen eventually!

Frames 1-2. I Chan and Min Hsin Chu

The I-Chan was the official government courier service set up throughout the Empire, probably around 1000 BC. When Marco Polo visited China there were 10,000 postal facilities tasked with delivering letters, orders and goods for the Emperor and the Provincial Mandarins. This included the Mandarins themselves! The government saw no reason to permit businesses use of the system, but unlike in the West, also saw no reason to claim a monopoly. Many Letter companies came into existence from the 14th century and were extensively used by the Chinese. When the Europeans came to China they did not understand or trust the system leading to the formation of foreign offices in the various coastal ports and pressure to create a western style Post Office.

Frames 3-5. The issue of dates

This part of the display shows the different methods of indicating the date in Chinese cancellations. I have seen this misinterpreted many times in displays, auctions and even competitive exhibitions. For reference, the introductory page is reproduced in this booklet on pages 7&8.



Tientsin cancel showing, from right to left in the central section: 32 (year), 8 month, 2nd (day). This rare item refers to 32nd year of Emperor Kwang Hsu, 2nd day of the 8th month. (1906).



9th year with 1917 backstamp. Used for the restoration of Pu Yi to the throne in Peking in early July.

Frames 6-7. Imperial China

The Imperial Chinese Post Office was founded by Sir Robert Hart and launched in 1897. It built upon the Customs Post which had already been operating for 20 years at this point. A few examples of stamps and postal history give a flavour of what can be collected.

Hart's diaries are being transcribed at Queen's University library in Belfast where all his files and those of Piry, his successor are stored. The diaries will hopefully be published later this year. My honorary chair at Queen's should give me access, on my retirement, to study Piry's papers which are largely unexplored.

Sheet 7 of frame 7 came from the late Dick Townsend's collection. Many China collections keep the items on his original leaves!

Dating Chinese Cancellations

In the early Customs Post period Western dates were used. With the formation of the Chinese Post Office the regnal year was used in combination with the lunar day & month. From 1904, lunar years were used (a combination of two characters in a sixty year cycle).

Western	Lunar	Regnal	Republic 民國
1897		23	
1898*		24	
1899		25	
1900*		26	
1901		27	
1902		28	
1903*	(癸卯)	29	
1904	甲辰	30	
1905	乙巳	31	
1906*	丙午	32	
1907	丁未	33	
1908	戊申	34	
1909*	己酉	1 元	
1910	庚戌	2	
1911*	辛亥	3	
1912	壬子		1 元
1913	癸丑		2
1914*	甲寅		3
1915	乙卯		4
1916	丙辰	1 (Jan-March)	5
1917(*)	丁巳	9 (early July)	6
1918	(戊午)		7

With the formation of the Republic the Republican year was used with a special character for first, though the old system lingered on.

Year 年

Years marked * in the table had an additional month added to the lunar calendar after the third. This was called the intercalary or leap month, shown by the character “ren”, 閏. Items in brackets are not recorded in postmarks. The Republican year can appear in Chinese or Western numerals.

Months 月

first month	正月	otherwise use numerals
eleventh month	冬月	
twelfth month	臘月	

Days 日

Simply use numerals as follows:

one	一	seven	七	twenty	二十	廿
two	二	eight	八	twenty-	二十一	
three	三	nine	九	one		
four	四	ten	十	thirty	三十	卅
five	五	eleven	十一			
six	六					

Converting the day & month of a lunar cancellation to the Western equivalent requires a conversion table. In early times the character Chu (初) may be found before the day numeral for days 1-10 of the month.

Note that the first year designation for early 1916 refers to Yuan Shi Kai calling himself Emperor. He was deposed by Sun Yat Sen’s Republican forces.

Frames 8-12. Foreign Post Offices

The majority of the foreign POs in China would make a full display in their own right. First a frame of "combination covers" showing Chinese stamps in combination with those of the foreign Post Offices to take them outside China. China did not join the UPU until 1914, although agreements were made with individual countries. Once the Foreign Office had validated the cover with their own handstamp, it was regarded as accepted into the UPU for further transmission.

During the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion a multi-national force was despatched to Peking. A frame of material from the China Expeditionary Force shows how this Anglo-Indian force stayed in China for nearly twenty years.

Following are examples from the European powers in China; British, French, German and Russian. Omitted are Italian (and the proposed Belgian office for which essays exist), Japanese and American.

In the British section is shown a booklet. Whilst it retains the interleaving, no stamps remain. I have been unable to tell if there was any difference between the two booklets listed in the catalogues apart from the watermark of the stamps.



Finally in this section is a small display of material carried from China by the French mailboat service, Ligne N.



A most unusual item is shown here where an 1897 cover was posted at the French office in Shanghai, paid at the overseas rate, but addressed to Canton. On reverse are markings of Hong Kong and the British P.O. in Canton showing that the French steamer Yangtze off-loaded it at Hong Kong for onward transmission by the British to the Chinese Customs Office.

Frames 13-15. Anti-bandit Controls

Anti-bandit controls are the name given to the two or three character overprints used on, mainly, high value definitive stamps. The story goes that these overprints were prepared at provincial level and used to restrict the use of these stamps to the town named. If any were stolen *en-route* they could be easily identified. This is probably part of the story but a form of currency control, as indeed was the reason for the Provincial overprints, is probably a significant factor. Similar reasoning

applies to similar town level overprints used in the silver currency period in 1949.

The stamps themselves were not supposed to be sold over the counter, but affixed to a mail item by the postal clerk. Inevitably some were sold in this condition.

Block of four 3rd Sun definitives showing the boxed Chungking anti-bandit control. The formation of these handstamps was such that three stamps were overprinted at once.



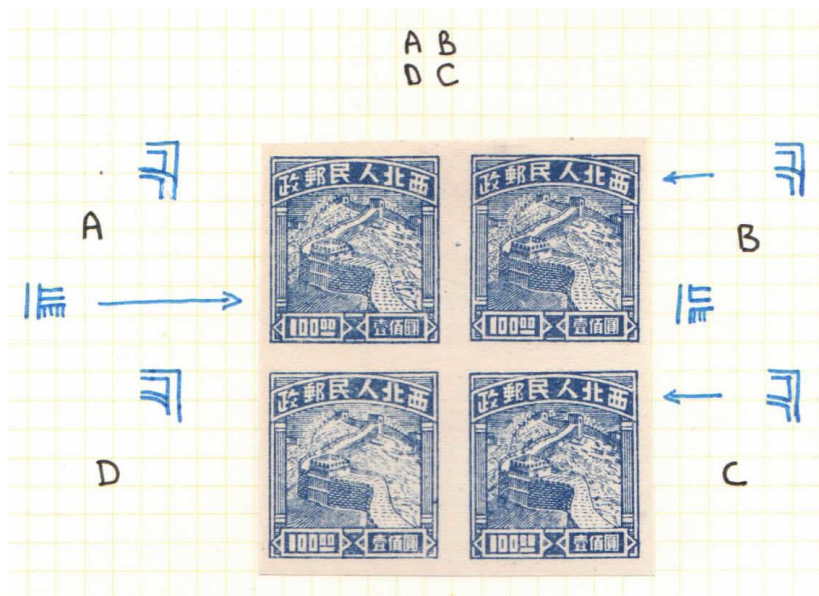
Frames 16-20. Communist Border Areas and Regionals

The first stamps produced by the communists in China are amongst some of the rarest Chinese items. I like the primitive nature of the early productions and the fun that can be had with some of the 1948-49 issues which reached the West in great numbers for packet makers. Many appear in most school-boy world collections, but used examples, on cover, are a much different proposition!

The North-East continued to use regional stamps until 1st July 1951, when the currency was finally unified.

An example is shown here from North West where there are four types of the stamp. The scarcest, type D occurs 4 times in a setting of 160

in only two of the three settings. A block of 4 showing all 4 types is unusual indeed.



Three settings: I 92 A and 68 B
 II 8 A, 85 B, 63 C and 4 D
 III 8 A, 80 B, 68 C and 4 D

Frames 21-26. Perfins

This section starts with firms handstamps used as a security measure. One stamp is shown where a coat of arms appears to have been embossed. This technique is recorded by Adachi on stamps of Japan as a security device. It has proven impossible to get a good image of this embossing to date.

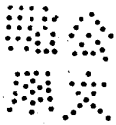
The number of perfin users in China was relatively limited and examples of most are shown. From the Large dragons used by the North China Herald in the 1880s (estimated 19x1ca, 2x3ca and 1x5ca remain in collections – *van Doornen*), to Yee Tsoong Tobacco who continued to use perfins on the early stamps of the People's Republic.



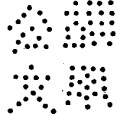
H&S / BC – Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corp., used in Amoy. The only recorded ex-ample on a red revenue.

There was one official perfin user, The Sinkiang Provincial Government. Most issues for Sinkiang are known perforated with the four characters "kung wen t'ieh yung" meaning "for use on official documents".

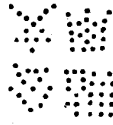
Position of the perfins: (as viewed from the front of the stamp)



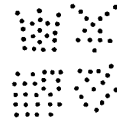
NORMAL



REVERSED



INVERTED



INVERTED/REVERSED

One aspect, still to be explored is, were they prepared centrally and shipped to remote offices ready perfinned? The number found used outside the provincial capital, Tihwa, is too limited to tell.

Frames 27-30. Postage Dues

Covers showing the use of Chinese postage dues are relatively infrequently seen. Post WWII uses in the inflation period are, I venture to suggest, rare. The few examples I have acquired are shown.



Reverse of a cover from London to Shanghai, 27th Aug 1947, prepaid 1/- instead of 1s3d. Marked in the UK 40ctms. In Shanghai \$400,000 was collected!

Frames 31-40. Commemoratives

The commemorative issues produced between 1907 and 1949 are often ignored by specialists. These frames show most of the stamps and some of the varieties and examples used on covers. Some associated ephemera is also shown.

One set which is particularly interesting is a series of ten definitive stamps overprinted to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Republic in 1941. Both the Nationalists and the Japanese occupiers authorised this issue and it is not clear how this actually worked. Supplies could not be transferred from occupied areas across the lines for the day of issue on 10th October and Nationalist post offices were ordered to backdate covers if requested. Commercial covers are difficult

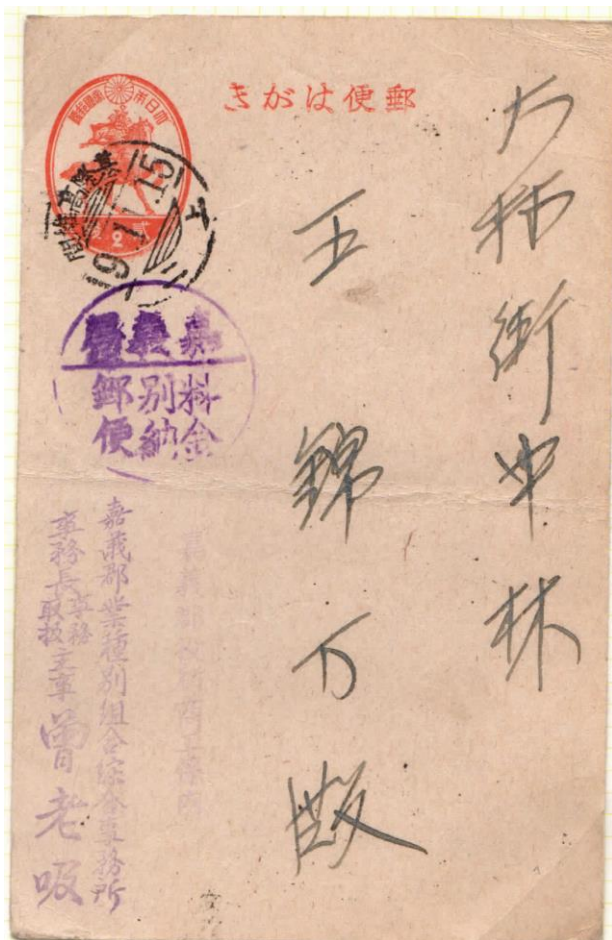
to find, particularly as the issue was withdrawn and invalidated on 31st December. Shown in the display is an example of attempted use in January 1942 with postage due charged. I have never seen another so treated.



1946 commemorative for the National Assembly used 22nd November from Tihwa to Shanghai. Issued in Shanghai on 15th November, this could be a first day cover from Sinkiang.

Frames 41-50. Taiwan

The island of Formosa (Taiwan) became a Japanese province following the Sino-Japanese war. Japanese stamps were used and can only be distinguished as used in Taiwan by the postmark. Examples are shown in the first two frames of this section. Native cancels of the "comb type" have the lines of the comb horizontally in Taiwan.



Japanese card showing the violet "postage paid" chop of Kiai. The cancel reads "Keelung - Kaohsiung Train PO, Up no 2", 15th Nov. 1944.

The majority of this section covers the issues made between 1945 and 1949 when Taiwan was returned to China and had to issue its own stamps due to the different value of the currency. Inflation happened in Taiwan as on the mainland leading to numerous surcharges.

Many overprints come in different spacings and the array of the basic stamps issued on the mainland can be found used for Taiwan issues. When the Nationalists evacuated the mainland and moved to Taiwan,

the currency was changed and new issues made which are not covered here.



Double weight, registered air cover to Canada paid T\$55.30 showing use of the 5 yen and 10 yen stamps.

Frames 51-52. Miscellaneous

The final two frames show postal stationery and items where the “contents” are perhaps the most interesting part of the cover. The first frame shows postal stationery cards of issues 2-5 with water colour paintings on reverse. These were produced as souvenirs for sale to tourists in the first twenty years of the 20th century. Most show typical Chinese scenes, whilst a few are more “Western” in style. Some are used contemporaneously from outside China (including Southport) so they must have been popular at the time. Cards, particularly of the second issue are not infrequently found guillotined off-centre and this suggests they may have been sold in larger sheet format to the illustrators since normal cards are rarely found thus. Also shown on frame 52 are cards produced using cut up stamps to create souvenir items.

Finally items are shown where the message holds an important content of postal historical significance. Firstly an envelope from 1864 showing, on reverse, a mark of the British PO in Shanghai and transit marks of Hong Kong and London. It is from the Rev. Clatchie correspondence to his wife and part of the extensive letter inside reads:

"no 17

Peking 27th June

1864

My ever.....

..... I was roused out of bed to see a large packet of letters in which I was sure that there was one from you, but the packet turned out to be addressed to the American minister. I however found something by this mistake, for on enquiring from Dr Williams after breakfast, I find that an American courier goes off tomorrow at 4.00pm so I have an extra opportunity of writing to you. Dr W has promised to let me know whenever he is sending a messenger with American letters to Tientsing: so I hope I shall have an extra opportunity of writing to you every month. I am afraid you must get your letters very irregularly.....

..... Tho^s M Clatchie"



Reverse of envelope to UK.

No. 17.
Peking, 28th June 1864.
My ever dear, darling Love.
I got such a bitter disappointment this morning. I was roused out of bed to see a large packet of letters, in which I made sure that there was one from you; but the packet turned out to be addressed to the American minister. I however paid something by the mistake, for on enquiring from Dr. Williams after breakfast, I find that an American Courier goes off tomorrow at 4 o'clock p.m. so I have an extra opportunity of writing to you. Dr. W. has promised to let me know whenever he is sending a messenger with American letters to Tientsin: so I hope that I shall have an extra opportunity of writing to you every month. I am afraid you must get your letters very irregularly. I am so cramped up here in this prison house that I find my news sadly deficient in quantity. If you were here, we should take a trip to the hills.

The letter described above.

The final cover, dated 4 July 1940 shows a 50c Hong Kong Martyr stamp of China on a cover addressed to the Times of London. It shows a strike of "Detained in France during the German Occupation" and has "received at the Times, 1945" in manuscript with initials. There are no other postal markings. When I showed this to a meeting of the France & Colonies Society, the perceived wisdom in the room was that the marking had been forged. No mail from the Far East was recorded so treated. Roy Reader kindly sent me a genuine example of the marking on a cover from Switzerland to compare and this together with two others are shown. I filed the cover in my forgeries collection and thought no more of it. Roy obviously thought more about it however and did some more research resulting in a letter from the archivist at

News International, owners of the Times. He identified the handwriting of the sender as David Fraser, the Times China correspondent to 1940. This clearly shows the genuineness of the cover, but more importantly he identified the filing note and initials as being in the hand of Mr Stanley Cohen, Manager of the Pensions Department at the Time from 1934 to 1959. This detail is one no forger would consider and shows that, at least, the cover was undelivered for four years. Copies of the obituaries of both men mentioned are shown. The cover has now been illustrated in a number of publications, but remains the only cover from China with this marking. How the dates work is still quite a mystery.



Detained in France during the German Occupation.

For the China Philatelic Society of London: www.cpsl.org.uk	Studiegroep China Filatelie, (Netherlands): www.chinafilatelie.nl
For the China Stamp Society (USA): www.chinastampsociety.org	Forschungsgemeinschaft China Philatelie (FCP in Germany): www.forge-china.de