



Showcasing the world of
pictorial collecting:

a display given to the
Royal Philatelic Society London

by the
British Thematic Association

21st March 2024

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Welcome by Barry Stagg FRPSL

Chairman, British Thematic Association

The British Thematic Association is the largest philatelic society in the UK dedicated to the collection of philatelic items joined by a common theme. With over 120 members in the UK and a further 18 around the world, we are a very active, vibrant and forward-looking group, collecting a huge range of topics: from aircraft to x-rays, from space to insects.

We were founded in 1984 and, as this year is our 40th Anniversary, we thought it fitting to have this display at the Royal Philatelic Society London, showcasing the best of thematic collecting.

Apart from our award-winning quarterly magazine *Themescene* and our excellent and wide-ranging website (www.britishthematic.org.uk), we have annual competitions held currently at The South of England Stamp Fair; meetings at Stampex, York or Perth; and a biennial weekend meeting in Oxford. Since the start of COVID, we have had regular monthly Zoom presentations (33 so far). Further we have started a biennial virtual one-page competition that has attracted entries from across the world.

Most thematic collectors have non-philatelic 3D items in their collection and some of these are displayed here, from rocks to precious stones, from books to umbrellas. We believe it adds interest to the collection and are happy to show some of them today.

Some of our members exhibit their displays at National and International philatelic shows with a great deal of success. All three Pictorial classes have been entered: Thematic Philately, Open Philately and Picture Postcards, and some of these exhibits are on show here today.

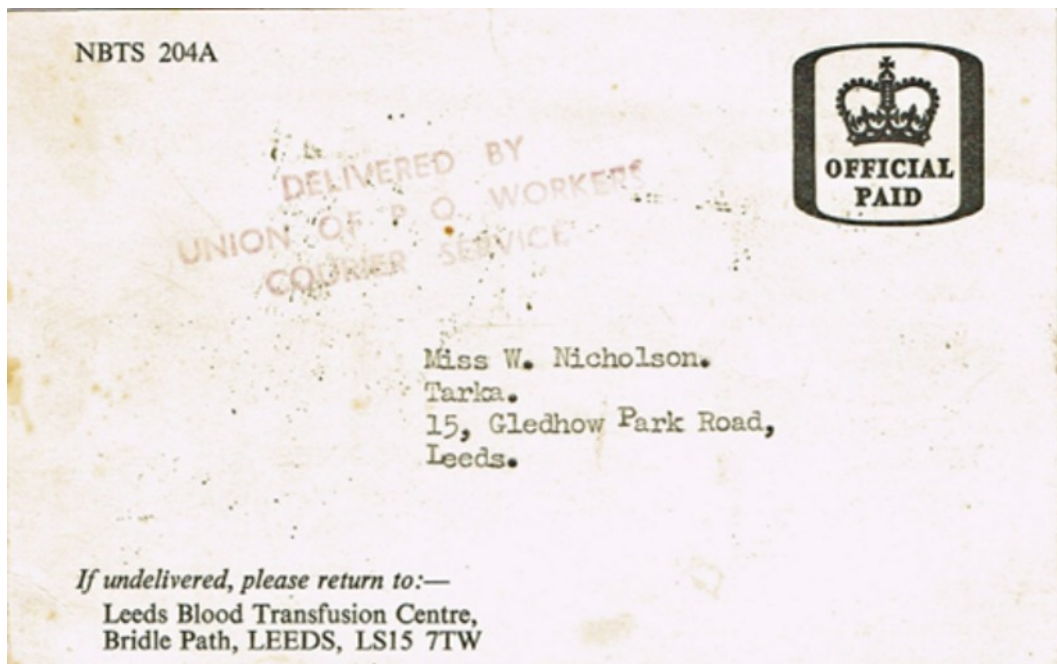
I hope you all enjoy seeing these displays and the variety of material on show. They represent the very best of the BTA. We are very pleased to show you these displays and thank the Royal Philatelic Society London for the opportunity to do so.



BTA Residential Weekend at Oxford, September 2022

**Liquid of Life:
blood, from ancient myths to a modern medicine**

Throughout the ages people believed that blood contained mysterious and magical properties and was the elixir for the cure of most maladies. This display is a study of blood and the blood circulatory system, from ancient myths to the development of the modern day science of haematology. Included are diseases of the circulatory system, heart and blood, leading to the establishment of blood transfusion as a modern effective treatment of some these diseases, the importance of blood donors, their recruitment with the aid of the postal services, the act of donating and finally receiving the 'Liquid of Life' itself.



1970s official paid blood donor appointment card, voluntarily delivered by the Union of Post Office Workers during the 1971 postal strike.

The Life Cycle of a Parachute

This exhibit is part of a significant collection of postcards that depict parachuting or elements concerned with parachuting, such as the materials used or the training necessary to successfully parachute. Collected over 40 years and exhibited internationally in Scandinavia and China (where it achieved a Large Vermeil) it remains the only known collection and exhibit of parachutes on postcards.

This three-frame exhibit shows the life cycle of a parachute: from its dormant state, often found in a backpack or hanging limp from a balloon, its struggle at birth to fully inflate, the gentle floating to the ground showing off its perfectly round or, in modern times, rectangular, often multi-coloured shape and, finally, coming to rest on the ground, collapsing, its job done. Apart from telling its story the exhibit gives some information about each postcard: its age, printer/artist, printing technique and whether it has a divided back. Like most dangerous sports parachuting has a 'dark humour' and this is well reflected in many of the cards; further, some postcards would be considered 'risky' in contemporary times whilst others would be labelled as 'inappropriate' or 'sexist' today.

The humour and the depiction of the female parachutist varies from country to country with the USA cards depicting a modest line while Italian and French cards depict the elegance of the parachutists; whereas the British humour is almost entirely of the 'seaside' variety. As Bamforth, the prolific postcard producer, put it 'my postcards may be rude, but they are not obscene'.

Postcard collecting and exhibiting shows the various technical, cultural and political changes over the past 100 years. Bringing postcards into mainstream philately allows philately to be part of history and therefore of greater interest to the population as a whole. The British Thematic Association is proud to be part of this development.



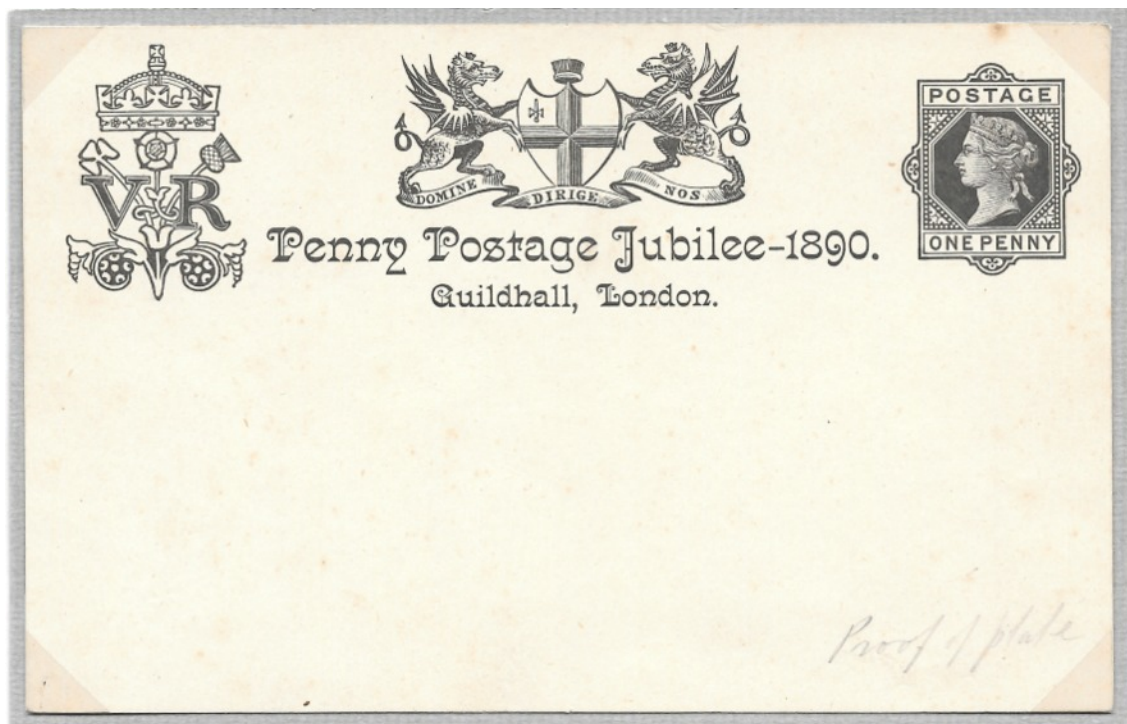
My favourite postcard. A little risky for the USA market in the 1940s – but quite funny!

The Guildhall Letter Card

A major exhibition was held at the Guildhall by the City Corporation of London in association with the Post Office in 1890, fifty years after the introduction of the world's first adhesive postage stamp. It was held over three days in May 1890 and brought together a vast array of displays and allowed the general public to see postal services in operation. It was a Royal event, attended by the Prince of Wales, and was undertaken, not only to celebrate fifty years of Uniform Penny Postage, but to raise money for the Rowland Hill Benevolent Fund. The Exhibition led to the issue of Great Britain's first commemorative postal stationery "The Guildhall Letter Card". This was created for sale solely at the Exhibition. It was sold for charitable purposes, priced at 6d each, although the postal rate was only 1d. 10,000 were printed by De La Rue but these sold out on the opening night within three hours. A further 1,500 were printed during the course of the Exhibition.

The exhibit gives the background to the Exhibition itself and shows examples of the cards including a rare proof in black (of which only two are recorded) and a complete pack (only one known) as well as postal uses. In addition, some were overprinted as appreciation cards and signed by the Committee.

The book about the celebrations, "A Jubilee Reminiscence", is available to purchase from the RPSL website.



Proof in Black of the Guildhall Letter Card

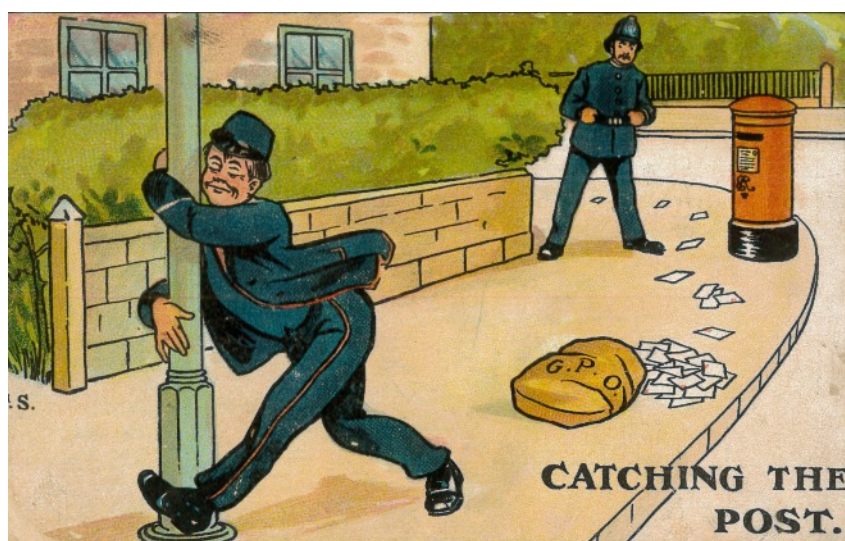
The Postman's Round

The postman has been a familiar sight in Britain for centuries. This display, which was an entry in the British Thematic Association annual one-frame postcard competition, takes a light-hearted look (with a 'tongue-in-cheek' narrative) at the daily tasks of the postman out on the street. The display uses only vintage postcards from the 'Golden Age' through to the late 1930s, a period when postal workers were resplendent in blue uniforms with red piping. Technical information, where known, appears below each postcard: year of issue, publisher, reference number, artist, printing process and postally used or unused.

The introductory page looks at the evolution of the blue postman's uniform from 1861, when it was first introduced, to 1932, when the military-style double-peaked shako was replaced by a peaked cap. The first uniform for women, which appeared during the First World War in 1915, is also featured; it comprised a blue skirt, coat and straw hat.

Next, we look at a typical day in the life of a postman. After putting on the uniform (don't forget your trousers!) and leaving the house, it's time to collect the post for deliveries and get on with the morning duties. Once out on the streets, it's easy to get delayed (beware of dogs who are intent on ripping your trousers to shreds!), but the letters and cards must be delivered (even if you have to walk miles to deliver them). Parcel deliveries create their own problems, but at least you can take great delight in knocking loudly on people's front doors, waking them up early in the morning! Why should you be the only one having to get up early?

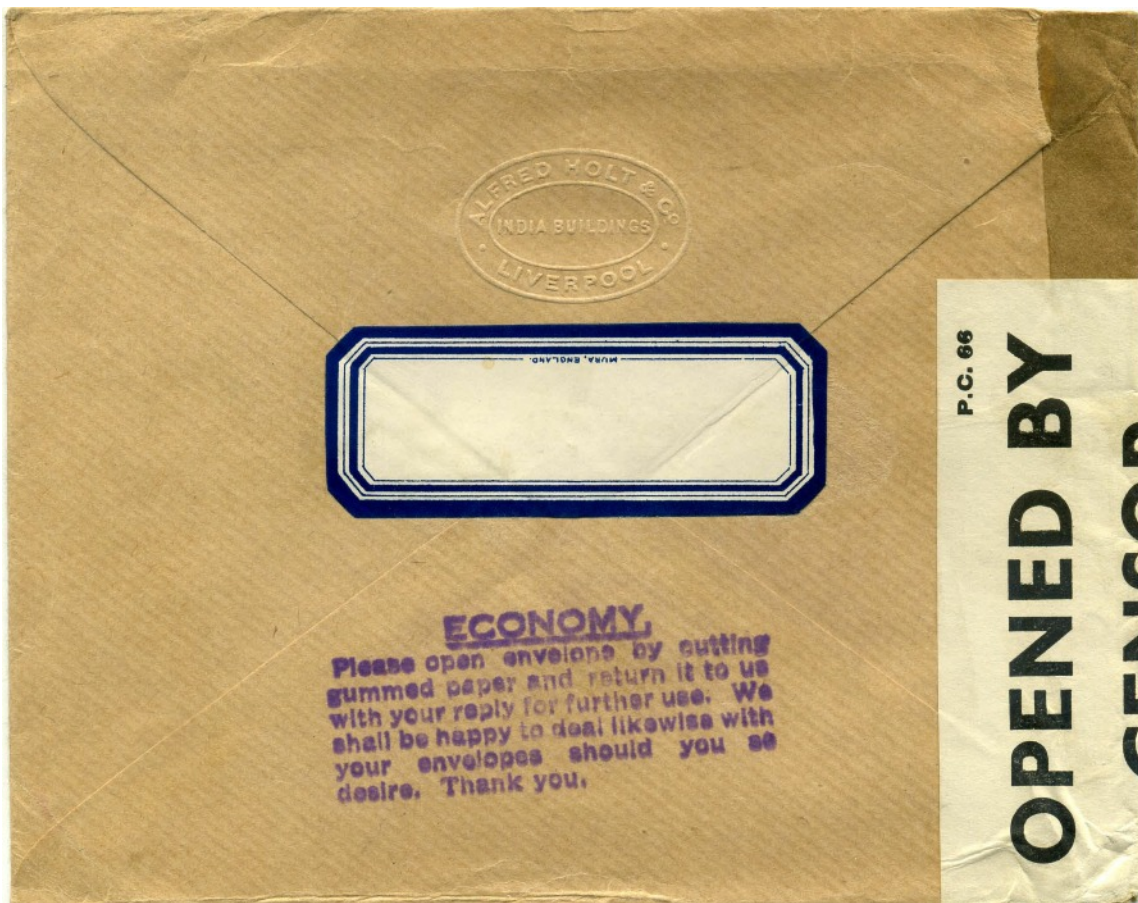
After a break it's time to embark on the afternoon duties, making collections from roadside letter boxes, trying your best to evade members of the public running after you with late letters! Take the letters back to the delivery office and its 'job done'. After a busy day, it's time to go home.



Postcard issued circa 1907, designed by Fred Spurgen ('FS') published by Blum & Degen, printed in lithography, unused

Three Aspects of the British Home Front in 1940

This display takes just three aspects of the Home Front during 1940, each in different ways having an impact on the civilian population: the evacuation of children and mothers with young families from areas considered at high risk of aerial bombing, censorship of mail, and the campaign to recycle materials that were useful to the war effort. It endeavours to tell part of a much wider story of the impact of war on Britain's population during 1940 using postal history, postcards and paper ephemera contemporaneous with the period. As such it may be considered a "themed" display that conforms to a much looser definition of thematic collecting than is more generally determined by the exhibiting rules of the Thematic or Open classes.



A cachet applied to the back of an Alfred Holt & Co envelope addressed to Rotterdam requesting its recycling

The Road to Independence: Ireland from the Act of Union to Irish Free State

The Act of Union of 1 January 1801 was a reaction to the threat of France using Ireland as a base for an attack on England, and the insurrection of 1798 which had been the culmination of revolutionary activities of The Society of United Irishmen.

The Easter Rising of 1916 and War of Independence which followed in 1919-21 have had a profound influence on the shaping of modern Ireland. The political and social background to 1916 emerge from the preceding decades and failure of Britain to grant a measure of Home Rule to Ireland. This story is illustrated under the following chronological groupings which include personalities and events involved:

- Ireland under the Union
- The demand for Home Rule
- The Easter Rising of 1916 and its consequences
- A Nation Once Again.



The "Rent Mill" Mulready caricature

The connection of nationalism and Catholicism develops from the time of Daniel O'Connell – a distinct change from the Grattan parliament and United Irishmen of the late eighteenth century.

Here Daniel O'Connell on his estate Derrynane, turns the handle of the mill which is converting the peasantry to coins. Most of his supporters did not have the vote but were members of The Catholic Association of Ireland, subscribing a penny a month, and with collection usually at the church door it became known as The Catholic Rent. In stage-Irish Rent becomes Rint - as shown on the caricature!

**Toward United Nations:
a story of optimism and failure**

This exhibit illustrates three international movements formed to prevent war. They are the Peace Movement, the League of Nations and the forming of the United Nations.

The exhibit does not describe them; rather it offers an historical overview of man's efforts to secure peace by their creation. We see how the Peace Movement developed in the 19th century reaching its zenith when the International Peace Bureau, Berne was formed in 1890-91 and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1910. However, it was unable to prevent World War One, the horrors of which are illustrated.

During the war, Woodrow Wilson led the way in proposing a league of nations on the basis that bringing governments together would prevent war between them; the League of Nations was formally created by the Treaty of Versailles on 28th June 1919. The League struggled for the whole of its existence and could not prevent the horrors of another world war in 1939 which lasted until 1945.

This was a terrible time; added to the loss of life and injury was the Nazi treatment of the Jews and the war's ending with the use of atomic bombs. During those years Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt met several times to thrash out a post war plan and the creation of the United Nations was the result. Fifty countries were represented at the first meeting.

Many will know the opening words of the United Nations Charter: 'We, the people of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of War'

This exhibit was created in 2011. It does not make any comment on the United Nations today.



United States 1945, stamp issued 9am on 25th April for the first meeting of the United Nations in San Francisco. The UN Charter was completed on 26th June and came into force on 24th October 1945. Note the olive branch, symbol of Peace, at the lower edge of the design.

Post World War II Postcards in Sarawak

Following the liberation of Borneo and the subsequent surrender of the Japanese, the focus in Sarawak, as in all of S.E. Asia, was on feeding the local population, repatriating POW's and Japanese soldiers, and beginning the process of reconstruction. The tourist and the essential adjunct, the postcard, did not exist. It was not until the very early 1950's that any kind of visitors began to arrive, and to meet the small demand for postcards a few local photographers began to produce black and white photographs, at postcard size, that could be sent at the postcard rate by dividing the back and putting on a stamp. The output was very small and these cards are rare.



Two outstanding local photographers emerged during this early period (Lim Poh Chiang and K. F. Wong) who contributed the major portion of output in the early years. Their early work chronicled the diverse groups of indigenous peoples whose social mores had hardly changed during the 100 years of the Brooke Dynasty's rule, but which were to see enormous changes during the next 30 years.

This display covers the period of the early photographers, the shift to printed coloured cards and the rise of the large postcard publishers. The images are an enduring record of a society and country undergoing radical changes in their way of life as western influences increasingly intruded.

Ritual dance by Dayak women carrying human skulls.

Longhouse in the 2nd Division, circa 1980.

The Dayaks were originally head-hunters and many of the longhouses retained the skulls.

Postcard SR 7909: Published by S. W. Singapore

The Seductive Power of Gold

When the universe was created, the Big Bang, there was only hydrogen and helium. Stars formed and nuclear fusion started, leading to the creation of heavier elements. Very large stars would eventually collapse and explode as Super Novae producing the very heavy elements including gold. The evolution of galaxies and solar systems incorporated these elements which later would be found in the rocks that make up the earth's crust.

It is not known when or where man first saw gold, possibly as a shining yellow flake or pebble in a riverbed or stream. Since early civilisation, man has been seduced by this lustrous precious metal. It was quickly realised it was too soft to make tools or weapons, but was used for personal adornment, as it is today, denoting the wealth of the wearer.

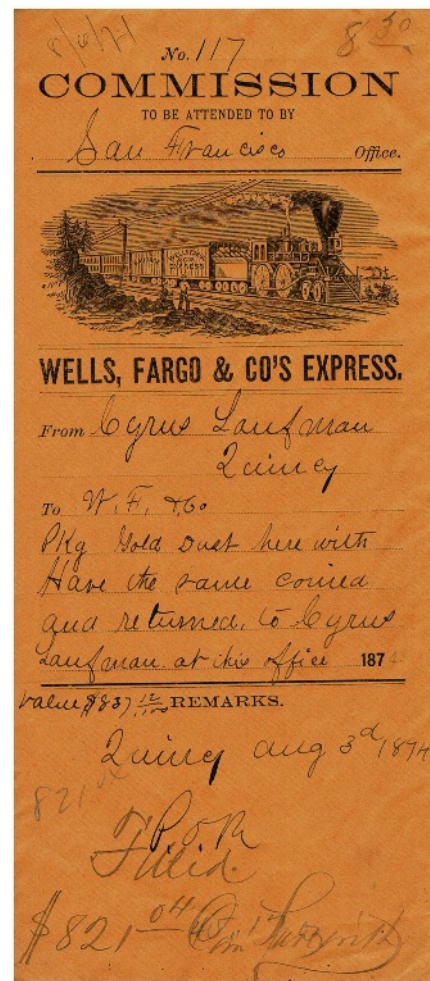
Throughout the ages gold has continued to be sought and discovered the world over, highly prized for its rarity, durability and beauty. It became a status symbol denoting wealth and power, for individuals, the Church and the State.

The earliest examples of gold being used were found near Lake Varne, Bulgaria. Here artefacts from between 4600 and 4200 BC were discovered. The Egyptians were making gold objects by 4000 BC and Mesopotamian gold artefacts date from 2600 BC. Such items were placed in the tombs of high ranking people, many being found thousands of years later.

In the Middle Ages man's desire and greed for gold caused wars over the possession of the countries where it had been found in, to gain power and wealth. Later men travelled far and wide, in appalling conditions, to find wealth but few achieved their goal.

Because gold does not rust or decay there are many myths, legends and fairy tales around its desirability, some tell how owning it can be a mixed blessing.

This display gives a brief insight into the history of gold from early civilisations to the very recent past, its discovery and extraction from the earth, and its fabrication into items of great beauty and value.



August 3 1874 Well's Fargo envelope that had contained gold dust, sent from Quincy, California, to the San Francisco office.

Go By Cycle!

The display begins with the Walking Machine designed by Karl von Drais in Germany, 1817 and improvements by Denis Johnson, in London, 1818. Pierre Michaux added cranks and pedals to the front wheel in Paris, in 1861. To ride faster, the Ordinary bicycle or Penny-farthing, had a front wheel larger than the rear, in 1881. The Scottish blacksmith, Kirkpatrick Macmillan's machine added pedals and chain drive to the rear wheel c. 1840, but with minimal publicity. The emergence of the Safety bicycle, with same size wheels and chain drive to the rear wheel in the 1890s enabled riders to rest feet on the ground. There is a short chapter on anatomy i.e. frame, handle bars, saddle, wheel and brakes.

The leisure aspect of cycling includes children being encouraged by their parents to ride bicycles from an early age. Cycling also assisted women's liberation by allowing them the freedom to wear more comfortable clothes instead of long dresses and tight bodices. Fairly soon, cycling clubs at home and abroad grew up. Note the artist's drawings for the 1978 GB stamp issue for the 100th anniversary of the Cyclists' Touring Club and the British Cycling Federation, which provides Rules and regulations for racing on the track, road and country (cyclo-cross) over land. The Road Time-Trial Council has regulated road time trials in U.K. since 1937. There is also a governing body for World Cycle Racing i.e. Union Cycliste Internationale, which prescribes wearing apparel when racing in World Championships etc. Cycling is normally included in every Olympic Games and the most famous world cycle racing event is The Tour de France.

The bicycle's first use in War was during the Siege of Mafeking, 1899-1901 when boy cadets delivered mail to the town and to the front. There are covers sent during the First and Second World Wars and between World Wars.

Finally, Mail by cycle. Note the cover from Victoria, Australia, with thin pages of advertisements c. 1900 and Local Posts by Coolgardie Cycle Express, 1895, San Francisco Bicycle Mail, 1894 and Lake Lefroy Goldfield Cycle Mail, 1897.



Proof of Solomon Islands stamps for Capex '96

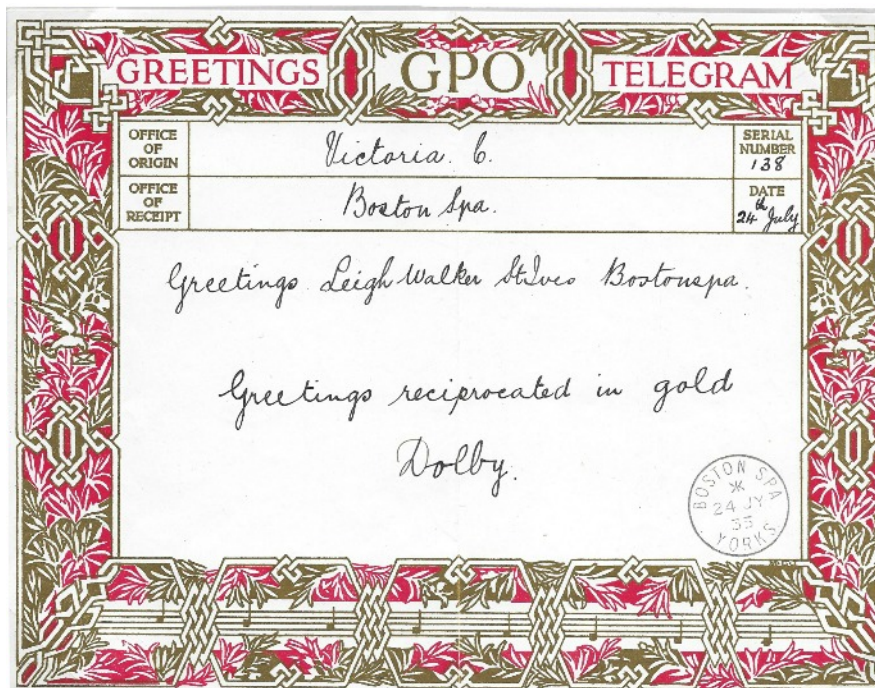
The British Greetings Telegram Service 1935 - 1982

The display opens with the first Greetings Telegram sent on the First Day of issue followed by the second, introduced 1 January 1936. The success of these first two Greetings Telegrams encouraged the GPO to issue a Greetings Telegram for St Valentine's Day 1936, but on that day only. To advertise the Service, surplus Greetings Telegrams were overprinted and issued at Post Office Exhibitions, e.g. at Canterbury in 1937.

The 14th Greetings Telegram issued 3 October was sent by Doris Green and husband to their granddaughter, Rosemary. Mrs. Green had published a Check List of Greetings Telegrams in 1967, updated in 1969.

Issue no. 23 was an economy issue in black and brown and a mint error is shown with black omitted. The Greetings Telegram Service was suspended during World War II and did not recommence until November 1950.

Multicoloured paper forms continued until 1966, but interspersed with the occasional 'luxury' 4-page cards with matching envelopes commencing with the Greetings Wedding Telegram issued 1 March 1957. This was followed by other Greetings Telegram cards for the Birth of Babies by Gordon Burrell and Hans Schwarz; Birthdays by Rowland Emmett and Norman Thelwell; and Wedding cards by Anna Zinkeisen and Albany Wiseman. The shape of the final Birthday Card in October 1979 had changed, and a telex type message placed in a pocket. These larger cards were compared with cards in shops and were not as popular. This may have contributed to the downfall of the telegram service which ceased entirely on 1 October 1982.



The first Greetings Telegram, 1935

The Firm of John Dickinson, Paper Maker

Paper has always been important: since its invention it has played a pivotal role in the development of human culture by documenting social, economic, cultural, political and religious history. And for the philatelist it carries a particular significance since most stamps and covers are made of paper.

By 1800, when paper was still being made by hand, there were 430 paper mills in England and Wales and fewer than 50 in Scotland. The invention of a paper-making machine led to an increase in production: by 1840 there were around 700 mills in England and Wales and 70 in Scotland. Some of these only lasted a few years whilst others became major producers. Some names are familiar to philatelists as the suppliers of paper for printing stamps and postal stationery, and one of these is John Dickinson (1782 - 1869), who founded his paper-making company in 1809. Developing and expanding his mills successfully required him to be a manager, financier, builder, inventor and engineer. His flair for business attracted him to Rowland Hill's proposals for postal reform, and his company played a pivotal role in the introduction of the first postal stationery.

This display looks at the company's history from its founding, its rapid expansion, and its involvement in postal reform with the use of silk-thread paper for Mulready envelopes and postal stationery. It charts the growth of the company after the death of its founder to become one of the biggest paper producers in the British Isles.



"5.30 pm at Apsley Mill". In 1904 Dickinson's Apsley Mill employed 1,283 manufacturing staff plus 209 clerical staff. That meant a lot of people pouring out at the end of the shift, as shown in this postcard, published by local publisher Harold W. Flatt in around 1910.

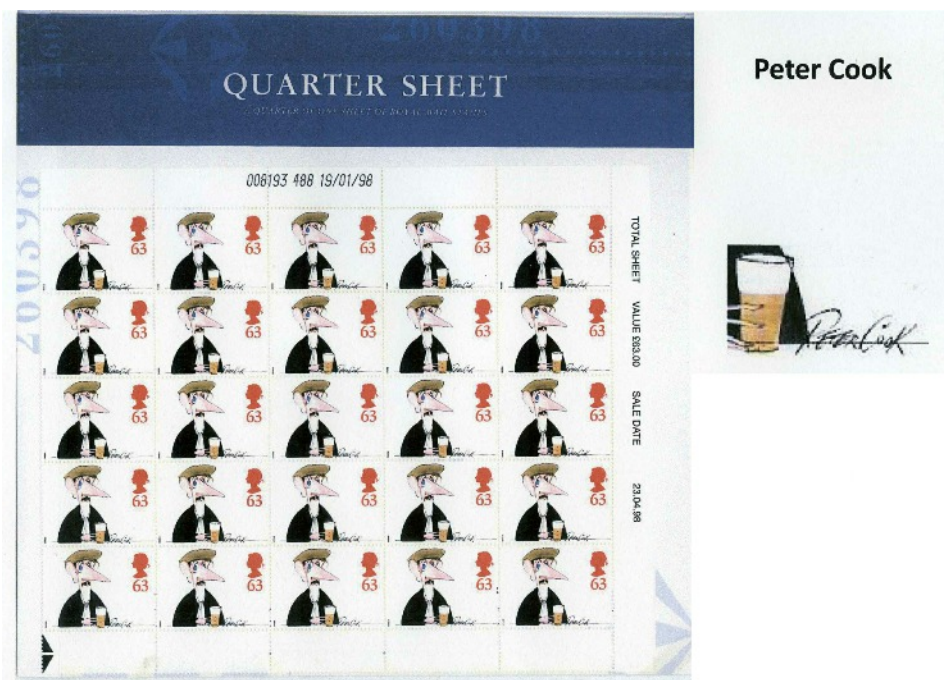
Supermarket Philately

This display looks at the changes in advertising between 1971 and 2001 relating to the Royal Mail and its products, whether it is stamps or other products.

Stamps combined with commercial advertising go back as far as the 19th century, but with the introduction of large scale manufacture and distribution the influence of advertising and sales promotions on the production of specialist philatelic items for the general public can be seen to have increased in recent years.

The connections between advertising and philately can be divided into sections.

1. The promotion on a non-Royal Mail product gave offers which had philatelic interest.
2. The promotion on a Royal Mail product required proof of purchase of stamp booklets or other philatelic purchase. This gave a non-philatelic item as the offer, such as postcards, a recipe or garden booklet, chocolates or even cakes.
3. Specialised philatelic items produced or approved by Royal Mail for individual company promotions such as birthday cards with a printed stamp impression on the envelope.
4. In 1998 prior to "Stamp Show 2000" Royal Mail packaged cylinder blocks, gutter pairs and even quarter sheets in such a fashion they could be placed in a "basket" and taken to the till for payment – in Supermarket style.



Peter Cook - Format Packs - Quarter Sheet bought at Birdpex '98 - Wembley

The World of Copper: properties, uses, production and trade

This display's aim is to illustrate how and when the properties of copper and its main alloys were first used since its discovery around 8000 BCE; how they are associated with advances in technology; how they have influenced culture and society; and, how these aspects have stimulated trade and led to advances in mining and metallurgy. The take home message is that copper is an extremely important metal globally with a very long and influential social and economic history.

Copper was discovered during the Neolithic in modern-day eastern Turkey. The first properties exploited were malleability and ductility. Archaeologists call it 'the first metal'. It was very important in the Ancient, Greek and Roman Worlds. Alloying to make bronzes and brasses were early discoveries, as was its use as a pigment, and in jewellery and bell making. Later it was used to make coins and cannons, and in building and printing. During the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions (c.1550-1850) the discovery of its biocidal properties led to its use in shipping and crop protection. Electrical conductivity, its most important property, was exploited at the start of the 19th Century - though unwittingly it was the basis of lightning conductors from the 1750s. Its ability to conduct heat was also exploited at the start of the 19th Century. Copper use and production has increased exponentially since the Industrial Revolution. Its role in maintaining animal and plant health was discovered in the 20th Century, as was its vital role in human health.

The first recorded commercial trade in copper was in the Arabian Peninsula. From the late Bronze Age to Roman times a copper trade connected the Mediterranean to the British Isles, and to China and India. During the Medieval Era mines in Bohemia, Saxony and Hungary were the major producers until they were overtaken by the Falun mine in Sweden. European colonial expansion introduced copper mining to new worlds. The Spanish opened mines in the Americas from the 16th Century. Between c.1830-1870, mines in British colonies and the Americas started to ship ore to South Wales for smelting – an early example of globalization. The focus of mining and smelting moved to the western USA in the late 1800s. A major shift in mining techniques led to the development of large open pit mines around the Pacific Rim, from Chile to Papua New Guinea, from start of the 20th Century.



The 3500-yr old Nebra Sky Disc - the earliest model of the cosmos was used as a portable Stonehenge-type seasonal calendar - is made of metal from copper, tin and gold from Cornwall and Austria

Discovering the World of Umbrellas and Parasols

Like so many of us, I had little regard for or interest in umbrellas and parasols. My interest was awoken and a new thematic collection started around 35 years ago when, for my work at the then UK Patent Office, I needed to get up to speed on the manufacturing processes for these items. In the course of this, I discovered a fascinating, very comprehensive book on all features of this field¹.

Aspects covered in this display include

- A reminder of their everyday use.
- Their emergence as symbols of power and prestige from around 1800 BC, for example in Sri Lanka and China.
- And linked to this, their role in fashion, religion (see below), art and literature.
- Their use in entertainment, advertising and meteorology.
- Their symbolism to emphasise the protection provided by insurance companies and health services.
- Manufacturers, retailers and repairers.
- The only museum in the West devoted entirely to umbrellas and parasols.
- Relevant exhibitions and displays, and
- Transport, heraldry, nature, anthropomorphism, and buildings.

While primarily based on postal material, other relevant items include postcards, trade cards, poster stamps and book illustrations.

¹ Crawford, T. S. (1970) *A history of the umbrella*



Umbrellas are symbols of the basilicas in the Catholic Church and are known as 'pavilions' in this context. On this entire of 1864 from Rome to Toscanella, the cachet for the Director General of Stamps, Registry and Mortgage Taxes for the basilicas incorporates this symbol.

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Frame Layout

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