

The Royal Philatelic Society London

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PRESS RELEASE

A matter of taxation

Giving the annual Sir Daniel Cooper Lecture to The Royal Philatelic Society London on 14 March, Chris Harman told of The British Stamp Office and Taxation from 1671 to 1853. Sir Daniel Cooper was the first President of the Society, and the lecture examines material that he might have collected.

Chris explained that 'the study of revenue duties and the stamps that were involved bring the very fabric of society into the mind'. The Dutch introduced the concept of Stamp Duty in 1624; from that time Governments frequently used taxation when they ran out of money, particularly in time of war.

In Great Britain a tax on legal documents was introduced in 1671. On 28 June 1694 came Stamp Duty, denoted by affixing an escutcheon to the item. It became popular to tax paper, such as Almanacs and newspapers, although many regarded the latter as a taxation on knowledge. Chris commented that on 15 September 1836, the newspaper tax was reduced to 1d, this giving free postage, and wondered if such was the start of penny postage. At one time some 100 million newspapers annually had to be 'stamped'.

Among other items taxed were vice, such as playing cards and dice, wagons, wallpaper, banknotes, hats and perfume.

Giving the vote of thanks, Peter Cockburn commented on 'a great show' that had 'put material into the context of history'.



Chris Harman (left) with Brian Trotter, President of The Royal Philatelic Society London.

Those wishing to visit The Royal Philatelic Society London at 41 Devonshire Place, London W1G 6JY, or be a guest at one of its meetings, are kindly asked to contact in advance the Administrative Office on 020 7486 1044.

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