

THEMATICS

Nr 173: FEBRUARY 2023

Newsletter of *Thematics Southern Africa*/ Nuusbrieff van *Tematika Suider-Afrika*

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ARTICLES FOR THEMNEWS

Most of the articles which appear in **Thematics** are sourced from a variety of available philatelic magazines; however, it would be wonderful to use more local articles. I have adjusted the newsletter to allow for local and longer articles. The request for articles remains as strong as ever.

FROM THE EDITOR OF THEMATICS

Dear Thematicists,

In the previous newsletter I stated the fact that we need to have a rethink on the future of **Thematics SA**, asking for comments from you the members. No reaction was forthcoming, and in this lie the root of the present predicament. For this reason I have to repeat the message and highlighting it.

One of the most important aspects that I need to discuss with you is what needs to happen to our association. I have now been soldiering on for 5 years on my own trying to keep our association afloat, but it is becoming increasingly more time-consuming to act as chairman, treasurer and compiler of the monthly newsletter. I have requested help many times, but none have been forthcoming. I am prepared to continue with the newsletter as I do the reading in any case and learn from every newsletter that I write. The most pressing aspect is the treasury side. Being on my own I need to keep the annual reports to SARS as we are a registered NPO. The funds available are being used to help with bookkeeping and other pressing financial needs. As there is no need for more funds, there will not be a request for membership fees for 2023-24, as your membership will continue untouched. But I need your advice on what to do with the association as it needs to be run down with SARS. The matter of what to do with any remaining funds also available needs to be decided upon, as they need to be used in such a way that thematic philately is still promoted. **What do you say?**

Once again I need to emphasise that whatever decision is taken, **will not affect** the monthly newsletter. This is a service that **will continue**, and will be my continued effort to promote thematic philately. I must also say thank you to all the readers who send their congratulations on my being awarded the **W.E. Lea Cup** for my efforts in promoting the hobby of stamp collecting. This has made it all worthwhile.

Editor

THEMATIC MEETINGS / TEMATIESE BYEENKOMSTE

***First Saturday of the month** – The Pretoria Chapter meets at **10:00** in Greek Orthodox Church Hall, corner of Lynwood Road and Roper Street, (opposite UP main gate).

Contact: Helena Snyman 012-803-8922, 083-990-8953 or helena.snyman@gauteng.gov.za.

***First Saturday of the month** – The Western Cape Chapter meets at **09:30** in the Church Hall of the DR Church Bellville-Vallei, c/o Postma and St Andrews Street, Oakdale, Bellville.

Contact: Diederik Viljoen at 021-976-2661, 082-456-6653 or diederikaviljoen@gmail.com.

STAMP FAIRS

***First Saturday of the month – The Cape Stamp Fair** @ DR Church Bellville-Vallei, c/o Postma and St Andrews Streets, Oakdale, Bellville, Cape Town. **Contacts:** Robbie Harm 082 925 7103/Ken Joseph 072-597-1287. From 08:30 until 12:30. Please confirm the date of the next Stamp Fair, although reminders are sent via SMS/E-mail.

***First Saturday of the month – Pretoria Stamp Fair** @ Pretoria, Greek Orthodox Church, corner Lynwood Road and Roper Street, (opposite UP main gate) **Contact:** Paul van Zeyl at 012-329-2464 or paulvz@mweb.co.za.

***Second Saturday of the month – Kyalami Stamp Fair** @ Kyalami Country Club, Maple Road, Kyalami from 09:00. **Contact:** Clinton Goslin at 083-272-9367 or atlasauctioneers@lantic.net.

***Last Saturday of the month – Edenvale Stamp Fair** @ Edenvale Bowling Club, 6th Avenue, Edenvale. **Contact:** Clinton Goslin at 083-272-9367 or atlasauctioneers@lantic.net. Please check with Clinton first to make sure the Stamp Fair is on, although auction lists are normally sent in advance.

***Last Saturday of the month – Sunbird Stamp Auction** @ 1st Hillcrest Scout Hall, 16 Shortlands Road, Hillcrest from 08:00 until 13:00. **Contacts:** Kim and Carol Breytenbach.

***Last Sunday of the month – Durban Stamp Fair** @ Chantecler Hotel, 27 Clement Stott Street, Botha's Hill, Durban. **Contact:** Bev McNaught-Davis at 031-904-1522 or mood@telkomsa.net.

THEMATICS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Pretoria Chapter – 3 December

The last TSA meeting for 2022 was attended by 6 persons and we had 4 apologies. We were saddened by the passing of Petra Heath's husband, Isak, but very glad that she attended our meeting. The content was again a mixed grill and it seems as if people enjoy this way of sharing for the time being. Petra showed new acquired item from Australia namely Australian rivers as well her pages of the Russian Federation. Marge showed an envelope of the Pretoria Stamp Agency that had a shop in the African Arcade, envelopes from Cyprus with John F. Kennedy stamps as well as a Cape Town international envelope with the SA Nobel prizewinners. Erik impressed us again with his first album on **The Story of Christ** that includes sections on the promise, Maria and Madonna stamps, birth of Christ, the wise men, the flight to Egypt, Jesus' childhood, His baptism and Jesus in the temple. Mias showed his SAA envelope collection – most of them with departure and arrival stamps as well as SA Air Force envelopes. Chris showed a few pages on Hydrocarbons, Haloids: chlorides and fluorides. Our time together flew by and the meeting decided to only start meeting again in February 2023. A wonderful festive season for one and all.

Helena Snyman

WC Chapter – 5 November

Welcome to the following members at this last meeting of the year i.e. Maureen, John, Reanie & Diederik. Apologies from Robert (in Australia), Rianneke & Evert, and Henk (in hospital). **Future meetings:** Saturday, 15th January @ 09h30. The **Topic** will be confirmed soon. **Topic of the Day:** Thought that as we were a small group we will have a short

meeting but we just keep on discussing the International and the results achieved with the thematic exhibits. Maureen took plenty of photos and brought copies with which we discussed in great detail. I had an opportunity to talk with Johann Vandenhoute from Belgium who showed his Chocolate exhibit (Large Gold). Johann is also the chairman of the Belgian thematic society called Themaphila. According to him there are 3 major elements to exhibiting which one should comply with to extract the best results:

- **GREV** which stand for General Regulations of the EVALUATION of exhibits at FIP exhibitions.
- **SREV** which relate to the Special Regulation for the Evaluation of Thematic exhibits at FIP exhibitions.
- **Guidelines** which is the Guidelines to Thematic Exhibiting and give directions how to apply these for competitive exhibiting.

The trend is to follow only 5 main rules as far as the Guidelines are concerned and these can be summarized as follows:

- **Concept** – the message, which must show innovation.
- **Choice of material:** must be philatelic, preferably used philatelic material.
- **Postal Philatelic Material:** no privately used material.
- **Must be linked to the theme:** the story must run through the whole theme, use only linked material.
- **Presentation:** must look good, clean and neat.

A few other pointers:

- Give an introductory statement.
- If using an item that is borderline, give reasons why you include it.
- Stamps must have all perforations.
- Philatelic studies must have the theme running through it.
- No overlapping.
- Balance throughout the exhibit i.e. pages & frames.
- Limit number of stamps and use other philatelic material.
- Scarcity and uniqueness is trumps.
- Include a **Synopsis** (with your first page) as this is the only time you can "influence" the judges with your subject knowledge and showing off unique items. They have very little time during a show to see and read everything. You must make use of this opportunity.
- Enjoy the hobby and especially the exhibiting part.

This is my last newsletter as **Reanie** will be taking over. You will see many changes and improvements during the year as she is very capable and an excellent exhibitor. I have done it for 6 years and need a break especially as I plan to work more on my Southern Africa perfin collection. I will still be involved with thematic stamp collecting and plan an exhibit for SAVPEX depending how quickly all my items arrived via our postal system.... A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to everyone.

Diederik Viljoen

FACTS AND FEATS: THE POSTAL SERVICES

This series will stand over until such time that the Editor returns home and has access to the source document. Although I had copied the material for future use, I was unable to find it on my external (rather full) hard disk drive.

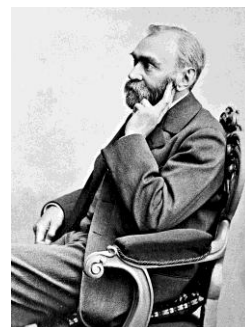
Facts and feats from Mackay, James, The Guinness Book of Stamps, Guinness Publishing Ltd, Enfield, 1988

Please note that the information used for this article has in many cases been overtaken by events – Ed

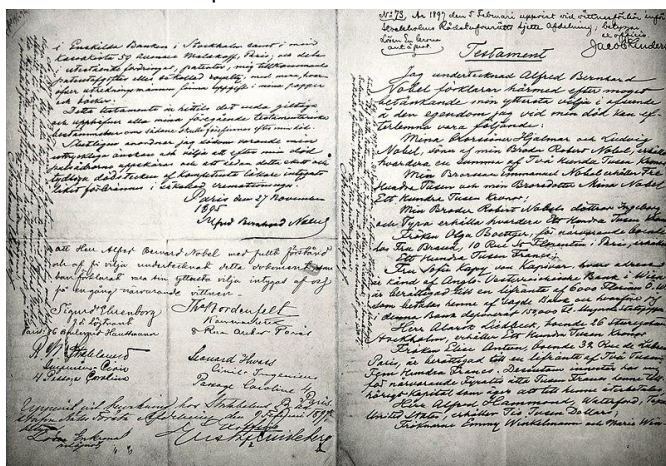
TIMELINE – THE FIRST NOBEL PRIZE AWARDED



On **10 December 1901**, the first Nobel Prizes were awarded. These prizes had been established by the chemist, engineer and inventor Alfred Nobel, who is best known for his invention of dynamite. Nobel was born in Stockholm, Sweden, on 21 October 1833 into a family of engineers. In his lifetime he made a fortune from some 355 inventions. In 1894 he



he build into a major armaments manufacturer. During his lifetime he wrote several wills and testaments, with the last one being signed on 27 November 1895. This one was the result of reading his obituary in 1888, published by a French newspaper and titled *The merchant of death is dead*. It was about his brother Ludvig who had passed away. As a result, he bequeathed 94% of his fortune in



establishing the Nobel Prizes for physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature and peace, to be awarded to those who, during the preceding year, have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind. Each recipient (known as a "**laureate**") receives a gold medal, a diploma, and a monetary award. In 2021, the Nobel Prize monetary award is 10,000,000 SEK. A prize may not be shared among more than three individuals, although the Nobel Peace Prize can be awarded to organizations of more than three people. Although Nobel Prizes are

not awarded posthumously if a person is awarded a prize is presented. The first recipients were:

- Physics - Wilhelm Röntgen (X-Rays) and Philipp Lenard (work on Catode Rays).
- Chemistry – Jacobus van't Hoff (Work on the study of chemical thermodynamics).
- Physiology - Emil von Behring (development of antitoxin against diphtheria).
- Literature – The poet Sully Prudhomme.
- Peace – Jean Henri Dunant (founder of the Red Cross Movement and initiating the Geneva Convention) and Frédéric Passy (founder of the Peace League and with Dunant in the Alliance for Order and Civilisation).

Since 1901 some 609 prizes have been awarded to 975 recipients (as of 2021). Nobel died on 10 December 1896 in his villa in San Remo, Italy of a cerebral haemorrhage.

Note: In 1968, Sveriges Riksbank (Sweden's central bank) funded the establishment of the Prize in Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel, to also be administered by the Nobel Foundation. *International Society of World Wide Stamp Collectors and Wikipedia*

CORRESPONDENCE ON TIMELINE

In the newsletter **Thematics1721Dec22** a story was included on the birth of Mikhail Kalashnikov, the creator of the ubiquitous AK 47 rifle. The newsletter also landed on the desk of Sten-Anders Smeds. He is the Editor of the Swedish philatelic newsletter **Motivsamlaren**. **Thematics SA** has had an arrangement to exchange newsletter for many years, and Sten has provided valuable comment before on articles he has read in our newsletter. His latest comment concerns the fact that Angola also depicted an AK 47 on a stamp booklet (shown below). His comment continues that the AK 47 has inspired other weapons used in other parts of the world. He states that



it seems the best Kalasnikov inspired variety seems to have been the RK 62 used by the Finnish Defence Force. Sten was introduced to this weapon during his 11-month national service almost 50 years ago. The RK 62 was the base for the

development of the Israeli Galil, which in turn inspired the South African M4.

Thank you, Sten, for the additional facts - Editor

THE HISTORY OF STAMP COUNTERFEITING AND HOW TO SPOT A FAKE

The first postage stamp was issued in Great Britain in 1840, and it didn't take long for the first fake postage stamp to appear as well. Counterfeiting stamps immediately became a profitable enterprise for those daring enough to try it. At first, forgers were just trying to make money off selling counterfeit postage. It was not until much later, when stamps became a collector's item and people began to pay large sums of money for them, that counterfeiters started focusing on reproducing rare and valuable stamps to bilk investors. A large number of fakes has prompted postal services to implement more stringent measures to guard against forgeries, much as national mints have done for currency. A few of these steps include:

- Using special paper
- Adding watermarks
- Lining stamps with silk threads
- Employing special engraving techniques
- Reissuing different series of stamps

These techniques have helped to cut down on counterfeiting, but it has not been entirely eliminated. Interestingly, this practice has actually been adopted by some nation governments, who have used counterfeit stamps as a form of warfare, trying to hurt their enemies. History may judge these nations harshly for those actions. But many people have also risen to fame, or perhaps infamy, for their bold counterfeiting schemes. Stamp counterfeiting is littered with these interesting tales. It's important to learn them, and learn from them, to ensure collectors don't get duped. It's also smart to learn how to spot a fake to make sure you don't become a part of this unseemly philatelic history.

The First Fake Stamps

The first valid postal stamp, the Penny Black, entered into service on 6 May 1840. The British citizenry embraced it. Within the next year, they mailed more than 70 million letters, and by 1843, more than 210 million letters were sent. Criminals soon saw an opportunity in this new form of communication. By the early 1860s, stamp forgery had become so rampant that several books had been written about it, including one by Edward Loines Pemberton, an early member of London's Royal Philatelic Society. Pemberton's guide included tips on how to identify forgeries and descriptions of fake stamps that had been found in circulation. Two different types of counterfeit stamps became common:

- **Fakes** were real stamps changed in some way. Sometimes this meant trying to remove the postmark stamp to use them again. As collecting became more popular, it often meant altering the stamp to resemble another, a more valuable one.

- **Forgeries** were outright imposters. These were modelled after real stamps and made to look as much like them as possible. In the early days of stamp counterfeiting, the forged stamps weren't very impressive, but post offices often found it hard to identify them. Forgeries became more sophisticated as the years went on.

Europe was an especially fertile ground for forgers in the early 20th century. Many of these men — it was largely a male industry — considered themselves not crooks but artists. They appreciated the detail that went into the best stamps and tried to match the technique and the artistic detail. The Italian and German forgers became particularly well-known during the first half of the 20th century. Italian forgers often worked in groups. More recently, in the 1990s and 2000s, there's been an increase in Nigerian forgers engaging in stamp counterfeiting, though Germany is also still quite active.

Fake Stamps in the United States

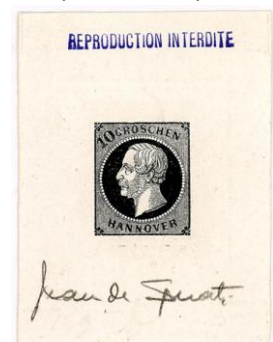
The United States didn't issue its first national stamp until 1847, seven years after the British. Within a decade, the post office got worried people were reusing stamps to send letters. But after the country became embroiled in a bloody Civil War, those concerns fell by the wayside for a few decades. The first serious instance of counterfeiting of U.S. stamps popped up in the 1890s when crooks in Chicago began forging stamps in an attempt to make money. These operations were mostly small-scale, with locals who had experience with printing and forgery producing fraudulent stamps. In the early 20th century, however, stamp counterfeiting in the U.S. went from small-time to organized crime. The mob saw a chance to profit and, by 1940, was heavily involved in forging stamps. Forgeries have continued on both a large and small scale since then. The advent of the Internet, of course, opened up an entirely new realm of opportunity for stamp counterfeiters. Suddenly, they could peddle their wares to anyone anywhere, and their efforts went largely unchecked. Though sites such as eBay operate on a "buyer beware" policy, it's become much easier for stamp counterfeiters to reach a wide audience.

The Most Infamous Forger



No discussion of the history of stamp counterfeiting would be complete without touching on the most infamous forgers, and the biggest of all was Jean de Sperati (shown **left** with his wife). Sperati, a native of France who was born not too long after the first stamp was issued in Britain, had a background in printing and photography. What made Sperati's stamps so convincing was he produced them much as the post office did. He made engraving plates that looked like the stamps he wanted to reproduce. Then he bleached other stamps so they lost their engraving and colour. He used his plates to reprint these stamps, which he felt gave them more

of the look and feel of the originals. Collectors evidently agreed. Many bought Sperati's stamps thinking they were the real thing, and to this day, not all of his forgeries have been unearthed. Sperati was the world's premier forger of stamps from 1910 to the early 1940s, when he was arrested for trying to ship fakes to Portugal. After being caught by the government, Sperati spent years fighting the French legal system but was ultimately convicted — not for fraud, but rather for upsetting the delicate French customs system. Oddly, Sperati made one of his



biggest sales in 1954, when the British Philatelic Association paid what was then a huge sum of money, \$40,000, for his collection of stamp forgeries to get his tools off the market. Sperati did a lot of damage up till then. Experts believe he forged more than 560 styles of stamps, reaching across 100 countries and totalling 70,000 individual stamps. He passed away in 1957, aged 73 years.

Other Well-Known Stamp Forgers

There have been other stamp forgers, of course, though none quite so prolific or proficient as Sperati. Four others who figured prominently in stamp counterfeiting history are:

François Fournier: Probably the best-known forger aside from Sperati, Fournier made a proper business out of his gift for reproducing stamps. He openly sold his fakes, admitting they were just imitations of the real thing. Collectors sought him out in the late 1800s and early 1900s to fill gaps in their collections for a low price, but the problem came when others resold Fournier's works claiming they were originals. He lived from 24 April 1846 to 12 July 1917.



Madame Joseph: This British forger, who operated between World Wars I and II, specialized in fake cancels she sold to dishonest stamp collectors. They could then make fake but perfectly placed cancels on their unused stamps, upping their value. As recently as 1990, the Royal Philatelic Society of London was still trying to protect its members from her fakes, but her instruments are now in their museum. Correct dates of birth and death are not known.



Dr Peter Winter: A German opera singer, he created a huge uproar in the late 1990s when he claimed to have discovered a second British Guiana 1c Magenta, one of the world's rarest and most valuable stamps. However, the Royal Philatelic Society of London identified the second stamp as a fraud. Winter has made many other forgeries, too, specializing in replicas of the world's most highly valued stamps. Shown here is Winter's forgery of Zurich, with '**replik**' written on the backside. Many of his forgeries had '**replik**' written on the back, but in many cases not.



Harold Treherne: Treherne was just 18 years old when he got into the business. During his work as a clerk, he figured out how to make forgeries using just black ink, a much simpler technique than most of his contemporaries in the early 1900s. Treherne later moved on to making overprints of Indian stamps, but his career was short-lived. Five years after he began, Treherne was arrested and eventually sentenced to four months of hard labour for his fraudulent crime. He was born in Brighton in 1884, and his date of death is not known.



Famous Cases of Counterfeit Stamps

Winter's fake British Guiana 1c Magenta may be the most audacious example of stamp fraud because the stamp being forged was of such great value. But there have been other famous cases over the years. In fact, one of the very first forgeries was perpetrated by the British postal service. In 1856, it commissioned counterfeits of its 1d stamps, just to see if its stamps were capable of being copied. The unfortunate news: They were. Later on, in the mid-to late-1800s in Hamburg, the printing firm Spiro Brothers produced some 500 reproductions. They weren't intended to deceive collectors, however. Spiro Brothers made no secret of the fact that they were forging stamps, which were meant to fill space in collections. However, over the years, the stamps were distributed so widely that people lost track of the fact that they were fakes and began treating them as the real thing. They



still pop up in collections today. At the turn of the 20th century, Belgian Dr Lucian Smeets was forging stamps. Those he's believed to have counterfeited include the British Victorian stamp, which is still held up today as an example of a well-executed fake watermark. By 1962, authorities learned that a lot that was supposed to include classic Mexican stamps instead consisted largely of forgeries by well-known forger Raoul Charles de Thuin, a

Belgium native who became a Mexican citizen. Another more recent example involves a sports victory. England's soccer team won the World Cup in 1966. The British public couldn't get enough of its victorious squad, so the British postmaster ordered the production of a commemorative stamp for the occasion. People went nuts. Lines formed outside of post offices to get the stamps, and the government did not produce nearly enough to meet the demand. That led to copies of the stamp being sold on the black market for many times their original value. Other famous stamps that have been subject to counterfeiting include:

- A Liberty Bell stamp from 1980 in the U.S.
- A depiction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge from 1932 in Australia
- Germany's 10pf from 1902 and 1909



The Odd Case of Government Stamp Forgeries

Individuals aren't the only ones who engage in counterfeiting. One of the strangest, but also most interesting, aspects of stamp counterfeiting is the large number of governments that have engaged in the practice. Their motives, of course, are very different from those behind the average stamp forgeries. Governments have used stamp forgery to essentially throw a wrench into a rival country's mechanisms. Counterfeit stamps can cost a country revenue, because its citizens pay for the fakes rather than the real ones, diverting money from the government. Fakes can also be used to distribute propaganda. For instance, a message can be printed on stamps that undermine the messages being sent by the government. Perhaps the best example of this came in World War II when the United States made postage stamps to attach to letters dropped into Germany. The stamps included an inscription that translated roughly to "*the Reich has been ruined*," and they caused great confusion and consternation among the German people.

Collections of Forgeries

Forgeries are an important part of stamp collecting history, so it's little wonder many collectors have become fascinated by them. A few high-profile collections even focus on stamp forgery. These include:

- The Turner Collection of Forgeries at the British Library Philatelic Collections
- Scottish Philatelic Society's reference collection of forgeries
- National Postal Museum Library Collections at the Smithsonian Institution

Protecting Yourself From Stamp Forgeries

You may be spooked after reading the history of stamp counterfeiting. Don't be. For one thing, fraud is not as common now as it was 100 years ago, largely due to technology. It's easier now to identify forged stamps. But you still need to protect yourself against stamp forgeries. Here are four ways to do it:

Only use respected dealers. Keep your business dealings with people you know and trust. Ask other collectors for references if need be.

Do business in person. Though the Internet is certainly convenient, you never know who you are dealing with. If someone refuses to meet you in person, there's generally a reason.

Spread the word to others. Whether you had a bad or good experience with a dealer, talk about it with your buddies. That way you warn others off of a bad dealer.

Read books on how to detect fraud. The more informed you are, the harder you are to dupe.

Don't Be Stumped by Bad Stamps: Stamp Authentication

It is clear stamp counterfeiting has been and remains a big business, despite modern technology that can detect fake stamps better than ever before. So what's a stamp collector to do? The best defence is a good offence. That is, collectors are best served by investing in stamp authentication to spot a fake before blowing lots of money. The American Philatelic Expertizing Service offers stamp authentication, which employs more than 120 experts to figure out the value and validity of a stamp. Of course, this comes at a price, so some people prefer to do most of the leg work on their own whenever possible.

Warning Signs: How to Spot Authentic Stamps

It's useful to know what to look for in stamps to determine if they're authentic. If you see any of these warning signs of a fake, you should walk away immediately:

Watermarks: Difficult to reproduce, watermarks differ by country and act as a "stamp" of approval from the issuing country's postal service. Check the Scott Catalogue against your stamp to see if the watermark looks correct.

False postmarks: Examine the cancel mark carefully. This is one of the key signs of fraud.

Regumming: Having the original gum is very valuable, and forgers know that. They try to "regum" stamp backs to make it look as though they are originals. The surface of a regummed stamp will be dull and have minor inconsistencies you don't see on the original gum.

Perforation: The perforation around a stamp may be modified or removed to enhance its value. Remember that most stamps are gummed first and then perforated, so look for signs that this did not happen in the right order.

Quality: Though there have been a handful of gifted forgers, most are not nearly diligent enough to achieve the fine attention to detail that defines a high-quality stamp. You can often tell just by looking at a stamp that the quality is too low to be legitimate.

Published by an unknown author in a news bulletin of Apfelbaum Inc, a stamp dealer of Jenkintown, PA, USA

Readers should be aware that the Philatelic Federation of South Africa has its own expertising committee headed by Michael Wigmore RDPSA. Additional information on fakes and forgeries can be found on the website www.stampforgeries.com - Editor

THE PICTURES THAT MOVED: THE EPIC TALE OF CINEMA – ACT 3

I had hoped that this article had been published before compiling this newsletter, but this was unfortunately not the case.

An article by Nicholas Oughton in Gibbons Stamp Monthly of September 2022

DELIVERING THE MAIL: DELIVERY BY AIR (AEROPLANE)

Continuing on his series of articles on the various ways mail has been delivered, the author now looks at how mail has been transported by air. This month he covers how aeroplanes have been effectively used to improve mail delivery across the globe. Delivery by air is divided into three categories: aeroplane, rocket and balloon and various other ways by which the mail has been delivered, some being philatelic with others unusual. In this article, he looks at the category of rockets and balloons.

Many attempts have been made in the past to deliver the mail by rocket. Some were genuine attempts, some were just experimental, and others were crack-pot schemes by pioneers and fraudsters. Many attempts were for philatelic purposes and sponsored by philatelists. Rocket mail has never really been a viable option for delivering mail due to the cost involved and numerous failures. The first suggestion of delivering mail by rockets was in an article published in Germany in 1810. Rocket mail (Astrophilately) is a subject itself, so the author is limited here to include just a few examples of covers, stamps and labels that have been influenced by rocket mail.

Niuafu'ou rocket mail



Friedrich Schmiedl, an Austrian engineer, is often credited with the first experimental rocket mail in the 1930s, but it was actually in Niuafu'ou (Tin Can Island in the Kingdom of Tonga) in 1901–2, that rockets were used for experimental ship-to-shore delivery from the **SS Hauroto (left)**. Passengers and islanders gathered to witness the delivery of mail by a rocket which was commemorated by a set of four stamps issued by Niuafu'ou in 1985. These illustrated; a) Preparing

to fire the rocket; b) The rocket in flight; c) the Ship's crew watching the rocket's descent; d) Islanders reading the mail (**right**). Unfortunately, the rockets frequently blew up in mid-air, landed in the water and sank, landed amongst the bushes and trees and caught fire, or overshot the island and landed in the lake.



German pioneer rocket mail labels



Many different coloured bilingual labels were printed in 1933–34 for use on German pioneer rocket mail flights (**left**).

Karel (Charles) Roberti 1934–35

Roberti was a dubious person whose rocket claims were somewhat obscure, and sometimes non-existent. Both his first and second rockets were fired on 6 December 1934

crashed and exploded. Most of the letters they contained were burnt. Roberti was more interested in the possible philatelic profit than the development of rocket technology. His



rocket flights were over short distances witnessed by only a few spectators. He colluded with stamp dealer, Gerard Thoolen, selling philatelic postcards and covers with rockets that did not exist. In 1935 he was exposed in a Dutch philatelic magazine, so he left Holland to continue his activities in Belgium, France and Luxembourg. He planned to fire a rocket across the

English Channel from Calais to Dover in September 1935, but this was considered too dangerous, and the mission was stopped by the French Minister of the Interior. Decorative covers were produced which were signed by Karel Roberti (**left**). These showed a map of the planned route, but the French stamps were cancelled with a blue cachet reading: 'Expérience interrompue par ordre du Ministère de l'Intérieur'. Roberti then vanished into obscurity.

Alan Young

In the 1930s, Alan Young was president of the Queensland Airmail Society of Brisbane and builder of the Orion Rocket. The Australian Rocket Society, under his leadership, planned a rocket flight across Brisbane Harbour on 28 October 1935, to commemorate the Silver Jubilee year of His Majesty King George V. However, the flight was postponed until 24 February 1936, by which time the Silver Jubilee year was over and the King was dead. Photographs of Alan Young, with the Orion Rocket, were prepared with various cachets, including one with the originally planned flight date. The stamp has a Brisbane postmark for 24 February 1936. Unfortunately, the Orion fell short of its target and fell into the water, with the result that the mail suffered water damage, as evidenced by the red boxed handstamp '**MAIL DAMAGED BY WATER**', before continuing the journey to the addressees (**right**).



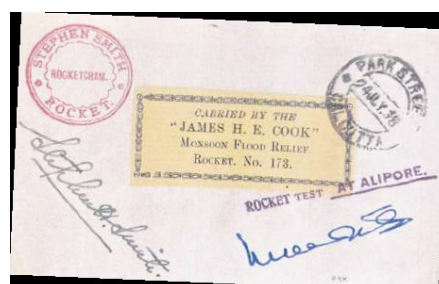
New York rockets

One of the first successful deliveries of mail by a rocket in the United States was planned for 24 November 1935 but was postponed until 23 February 1936, when two rockets were launched from New York over Greenwood Lake to the New Jersey side is less than 100 yards away. Between 9 and 17 May 1936, the third International Philatelic Exhibition was held in New York and was the occasion to launch night flight rockets. Covers were produced to mark the event which were franked with several different rocket labels (**left**).



India Monsoon Flood Relief 1938

In the 1930s, Stephen Smith was the secretary of the India Airmail Society, and his interest in rocketry earned him the title of '**The originator of rocket mail in India**'. He experimented with many flights, 80 of which contained mail. His achievements included the first rocket mail flown





over a river in India and the first to carry a parcel. To raise money for the India Monsoon Flood Relief, on 24 July 1938 he flew rocket 173, the **James H. E. Cook** at Alipore with 102 covers that were signed by him and which received a Calcutta circular postmark (**above right**). In 1992, India issued a stamp to commemorate the birth centenary of Stephen Smith (**left**).

Gerhard Zucker

Gerhard Zucker was a German rocket engineer, and fraud, who in the early 1930s toured Germany with experimental bogus postal rockets. All of his rocket flights were total failures. In 1934 he came to Britain in the hope that the authorities would be interested, and that the government to help finance his rocket experiments. In 1934, he planned to fly mail rockets between Dover and Calais, but his experiments were unsuccessful, with the rockets exploding and scattering the mail over the surrounding area; and all this in front of Royal Mail officials. He was deported back to Germany. After World War II he continued his experiments up until 7 May 1964 when an accident occurred that killed three people. This led to a ban on civilian rocket research in West Germany. On 4 November 1933, Zucker produced some philatelic illustrated rocket mail covers for an experimental flight in Germany. These were saved and flown again in 1960 with the boxed words: *'This rocket post was shot down with a test rocket on the occasion of the various trials in 1933/34, and was carried for the second time with the Rocket for the Silver Jubilee Rocket flight in 1960'*. But what did Zucker mean by **'Silver Jubilee Rocket Flight'**, as 1960 was 26–27 years later than 1933–1934? (**right**).



Non-dirigible balloons

Hydrogen or helium-filled balloons are used for the transport of mail, often with postcards to limit the weight. As balloons are not controllable, delivery of mail is often a matter of luck. Balloon mail that is not delivered, but found, should be returned to the sender if their address is known, with an indication of where discovered, so that the sender will know how far the balloon flew. Balloon mail has been used for spreading propaganda and by private activists to influence the population and governments, and frequently as part of a competition, for charitable purposes, or philatelically inspired for commemoration purposes.

Balloons and explosives!

Mail carried by balloon can be traced back many centuries. The author believes that in 1785, a balloon flight from Dover, England, to Calais, France, had carried mail, but he is not aware of earlier examples. The author has a copy of an early example of balloon mail that originated in the Republic of Venice in 1848–49 during the anti-Austrian insurrection. Nine different propaganda leaflets were thrown from hot air balloons. A summary translation of one of the leaflets reads: *'to direct the inhabitants of Lombardy-Venetia to incite them not to give respite to the enemy, taking them by surprise, and killing them mercilessly, especially the officers. In July 1849, the Austrians retaliated by launching balloons carrying explosives (that's one way of delivering messages!), but they failed by exploding in mid-air, falling into the water, or being blown off course by sudden gusts of*

wind. A second attempt was made the following month with more success, although causing minimal damage to Venice. However, whether because of balloon-bomb fear, or starvation, the Venetians surrendered.

On 17 August 1859 mail was carried for the first time by a balloon named **Jupiter** in the United States. John Wise was a pioneer balloonist, and in Lafayette, Indiana was given a bag containing 123 letters to deliver to New York. Unfortunately, the weather was not on his side with the wind blowing southwest, not east. He ascended to 14,000 feet, but five hours – and just 30 miles later – he gave up and landed in Crawfordsville, Indiana. The mail had at least been carried for a part of the way but was then put on a train to New York. A month later, he tried again, and this time he made it as far as Henderson, New York – flying nearly 800 miles, but a storm forced a crash landing, and he lost the mail in the crash.

Balloon mail interest



The following are a few examples of balloon mail that will demonstrate how much interest there is in balloon posts. Between 19 September 1870 and 28 January 1871, during the Siege of Paris, as well as pigeons to make contact with the outside world, beleaguered Parisians used balloons to carry mail out of their city (**left**). Because the Prussian forces surrounded the city and telegraph lines were cut, about 66 balloons were released from Paris, most of which succeeded in delivering the mail. Two services were

proposed, **Ballon Monté** (manned balloon) and **Ballon non-Monté** (unmanned) but only manned flights were used.

In 1965, the *Daily Mirror* sponsored a balloon flight in Australia, but due to an accident, it was rescheduled for 2 July 1966. Commemorative covers were produced with a *Daily Mirror* special stamp affixed. This was later cancelled with a mauve rubber handstamp reading: '**AUSTRALIA FLIGHT NEW SOUTH WALES CANCELLED DUE TO AN ACCIDENT 2 JULY 1966 CARRIED BY BALLOON TEIJIN IN**' (**right**).



Balloon race



In 1967, the Hackney Downs School Charities Committee organised a balloon race in aid of Starehe, a school for destitute children in Kenya. Cards, pre-stamped with Great Britain 3d. deep-lilac definitive stamps were flown by balloon, asking the finders to return them to the Charities committee. The card shown **left** was found at St Omer, Pas de Calais, and returned to England on 15 March 1967, with the finder's name and

address on the reverse. A similar card was found in Brabant, Belgium, but returned on 16 March from Budingén, Germany (**right**). Unusually, British stamps were accepted as being valid for postage back to England from the continent.

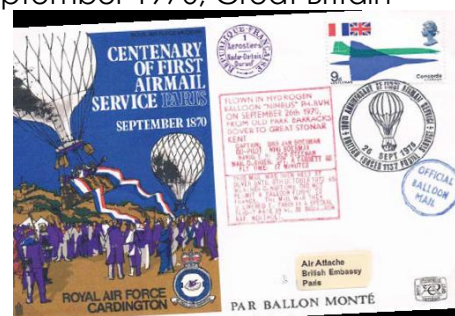




On 13 July 1967, to commemorate the centenary of Canada's first balloon race, special attractive decorative covers were printed and carried by free balloon (**left**). On 26 September 1970, Great Britain

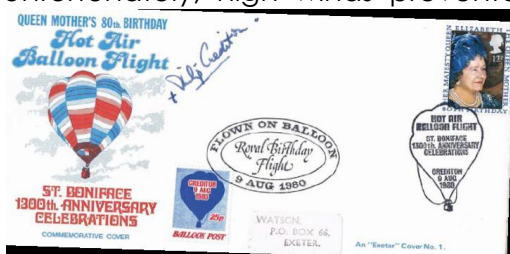
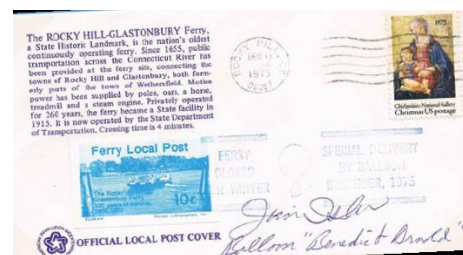
issued a cover commemorating the

centenary of the siege of Paris. They were flown in a balloon from Dover to Great Stonar, but due to bad weather, the mail was held, and on 9 October it was flown from Northolt to Le Bourget, Paris, in a Bassett Trident RAF aircraft (**right**). On 21 October 1971, there was a special balloon post flight from Vienna on the occasion of the International Post and Telegraph Conference (IPTT) (19-22 October), with specially prepared illustrated cards that were carried by a balloon.



Australia issued on 31 October 1974 more decorative covers to commemorate the centenary of the UPU and the 67th International Aeronautical Federation Conference (held from 27 October to 2 November), which were flown by balloon (**left**). The Rocky Hill to Glastonbury Ferry, Connecticut, was the

oldest continuously operating ferry in the USA, connecting the towns of Rocky Hill and Glastonbury, and operating since 1655. It was closed during the winter of 1975 and replaced by a balloon service. The cover shown **right**, postmarked for Rocky Hill, on 13 December 1975, was flown as special delivery by balloon, the Benedict Arnold, which commemorated 320 years of service. On 9 August 1980, to commemorate the 1300th anniversary of St Boniface of Crediton, Devon, and also the 80th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, the borough of Crediton organised a balloon post. The Vicar of Crediton was due to ascend in the balloon from a park in the middle of town with the commemorative covers that were signed by Philip (John Pasterfield) Bishop of Crediton before they were officially posted. Unfortunately, high winds prevented the balloon from taking off, but the stamps and



covers which had been produced for this occasion were nevertheless still posted. The covers were franked with the stamp issued a few days earlier to commemorate the 80th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother with the addition of a special 25p Crediton balloon post stamps that were issued for the vent (**left**).

In Austria again, this time in June 1965 there was a special balloon post flight from Vienna on the occasion of the International Post Exhibition. Special commemorative covers were produced, and the Austrian stamp was cancelled with a special Vienna balloon postmark. The Balloon was the D-Ergee-III (**right**).



Airships

Zeppelin mail is probably the most well-known of all mail deliveries by balloon. Unlike ordinary hot air balloons, Zeppelins were dirigibles with a solid frame and were more commonly referred to as airships. The article does not go into any detail here as Zeppelin mail has been well-documented. Readers are referred to the detailed article on '**Zeppelin Issues**' by Alan Wishart published in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* in March 2020. Zeppelins were developed by the German Count Ferdinand Adolf Heinrich August Graf von Zeppelin (1838–1917). Work on his first prototype was started in 1899, and the first flight (15 minutes) was in 1900. It was not until 1908 that a small amount of mail was carried. They were later developed to carry passengers as well and continued with mail across continents and oceans until 1937. There is an unlimited supply of Zeppelin mail available if you wish to collect this type of material.

On 2 July 1919, the first crossing and first double crossing of the Atlantic were made by the **R34** Zeppelin-type balloon airship that was built by the British Army for use during World War I (**right**). With a crew of 30 and 4900 gallons of petrol, it left East Fortune, Scotland, and arrived in New York on 6 July after over 108 hours in the air. The return journey to East Fortune began on 9 July, but because of engine failure and bad weather, it was directed to Pulham, Norfolk and arrived on 11 July, a flight that took only 75 hours.



About 120 airships were built over almost 40 years, the most successful of which was the LZ **127 Graf Zeppelin**, which made 590 flights. The postcard shown **left** of the LZ **127 Graf Zeppelin** which operated from 1928 to 1937, was flown by it from Zurich to Grasberg, Germany, on 2 November 1929. The cover shown **right** was



flown from Brazil to England on 18 November 1936, the 13th South America flight, and the ninth by the LZ **127 Graf Zeppelin**.



Many stamps have been issued featuring Zeppelins, one example of which was in 1974, when, as a part of its UPU centenary set, Equatorial Guinea issued a 1e.50 stamp of a Zeppelin airship (**left**). The **Hindenburg** was another famous airship. Two were built by the Zeppelin Company – the LZ 128 and LZ 129, the latter being known for the accident that occurred on 6 May 1937 in New Jersey. It caught fire and was destroyed with 35 fatalities. This disaster shattered public confidence in the dirigibles and marked the end of the airship era.

The next article will complete Part 7 of this series with the delivery of the mail with the other ways by which the mail has been delivered by air.

An article by John Davis FRPSL in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* of December 2022

PHILATELIC TERMS: M-11

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Millesime

The term **millesime** refers to an inscription that denotes the year of printing of certain French and French colonial stamps in the period 1891-1927. The inscription appears in the gutter between two panes and takes the form of a numeral representing the last digit of the year date. Similar numbers appear in the margin of the Belgian Medallion issue of 1849.



Millimetre (millimeter)

A millimetre is a metric unit of length and represents 1000th of a metre. It is abbreviated in the script as mm. In philately, the metric system of measuring length (distance) has always been applied internationally. Perforations are measured based on the number of holes in the space of 20 mm (2 centimetres). The size of stamps and length of overprints are expressed in metric terms, usually mm.

Millimetre Scale (millimeter skaal)

A millimetre scale is an essential part of every collector's toolbox. It is advisable to ensure that the scale is of excellent quality as not all of them are accurate enough. The highest quality millimetre scales have the scale engraved on the underside of heavy transparent plastic. This is read from directly above, and there is no distortion caused by the thickness of the material between the scale and the item being measured. It is graduated to 0.25mm, and it is an easy matter to measure this with the use of a good magnifier. Quite often, overprint and surcharge impressions require measuring to identify them.

Million Dollar Item



The first single philatelic item to sell for \$1 million was the *Blue Alexandria* cover bearing a copy of the blue Alexandria, Va., postmaster's provisional. The record price was paid at a David Feldman Ltd auction in Geneva, Switzerland, on 8 May 1981. This was reported in the July 1981 copy of Britain's *Philatelic Exporter*. The cover bears a single copy of the 5c blue circular stamp and it is the only recorded example. It is

postmarked Alexandria, Va., 25 November 1846. In 1955 the cover was sold at the Casperly sale for \$10 000 upon which it became part of the Boker collection. It had been purchased in 1975 by George Normann, by whom it was consigned to the David Feldman firm for the Geneva sale. The purchaser is reported to be a "European collector".

Miniature Sheet (miniaturvel)

This is a small sheet of stamps, usually 25 stamps or less. The British refer to it as a souvenir sheet. The US definition determines that the miniature sheet does not have any commemorative inscription in the sheet margin and is merely a smaller-than-usual sheet of stamps. Most other countries see these as souvenir sheets, issued to commemorate an anniversary, celebration or other events.

Minkus Catalogue

The Minkus catalogue is published in the US and is noted for the amount of background information supplied and the comprehensive listings. The Minkus firm also publishes a wide range of albums, the layout of which is based on the Minkus catalogues.

Mint (posfris)

A stamp is said to be in mint condition when it is exactly as purchased from the post office. With the modern emphasis on the condition of the gum, the term has come to mean more than a stamp that has not performed its postal function. It now means, to the modern collector, a stamp with gum that is pristine and unmarked by as much as a shadow of a hinge mark. Many collectors regard this as a chase after profit and instead will be quite happy with a stamp being lightly hinged. The term **mint**, therefore, refers to the state of the stamp and not necessarily to its condition. A **mint** stamp can thus be badly centred or show damaged perforations and is not worthy of being classified as *very fine*. It must be remembered that many such stamps have had their gum re-applied and are faked stamps.

Miss Rose Cover

The famous philatelic piece known as **Miss Rose cover** bears a vertical pair of the British Guiana 2c Cottonreel of 1851. This stamp was the first issue of the British colony and gets its name from the shape which resembles the label on a reel of sewing cotton. The stamps were type-set and printed at the Royal Gazette in Georgetown. The cover was first recorded in 1896 when a member of the congregation of Christ Church, Georgetown, donated it to help pay off the mortgage on the church building. It realised \$1005, but eventually ended up in the possession of Stanley Gibbons Ltd of London. After this, the cover was owned by a succession of famous collectors until it was sold to Claude Cartier in 1968. The cover gets its name from the fact that it was addressed to Miss Rose, Blankenburg, Blankenburg being the name of the sugar estate on the coast of British Guiana. The stamps are postmarked *Demerara AU 5, 1881*, and initialled *E.T.E.D.* This was a security measure observed by the British Guiana Post Office because of the primitive nature of the stamps, and the ease with which they were forged.



Mixed Franking Cover



These are covers legitimate franked with the stamps of more than one country. Before the Universal Postal Union was established, internal postage requirements in a receiving country sometimes necessitated the addition of that country's stamps, and occasionally the stamps of a country through which the letter was

passed. Such mixed franking covers are sometimes referred to as *combination covers*, but since that term is often applied to covers bearing the stamps of more than one issue of a single country, the term *mixed franking* seems more appropriate to the description above.

Mixture

The term **mixture** is used to describe unsorted stamps existing just as they are clipped from envelopes and wrappers and supposedly unchecked for desirable material. They are sold by weight, depending on quality by the ounce, the pound, or in the case of an officially sealed mixture, by the kilo. Although a lucky find of a valuable item is always possible, the most likely varieties to turn up are the ones not immediately obvious, such as perforations, watermarks or scarce cancellations. Since the stamps are on paper, one of the quality standards of a mixture will be the closeness of the trim. This is important as you are buying by weight and the more paper the stamps are on, the fewer stamps one is getting for the money. The price of the mixture generally will determine its quality. It must always be remembered that all mixtures will contain a fair number of duplications and a high percentage of definitive stamps.

Mixture, Bank

When a mixture is described as a **bank mixture**, it can be expected to contain higher-denomination stamps clipped from business mail or banks and commercial firms, usually from registered and insured mail and packages. It is sold by weight, and the quality may well mean that they are sold by the ounce.

Mixture, Kiloware

The term **kiloware** is used to describe a stamp mixture the source of which is a foreign postal administration that uses parcel post tags on which stamps franking a package are placed. The tags are retained by the postal administration. From time to time these stamps are clipped from the tags, placed in sealed packages weighing one kilo each, and sold, usually to the highest bidder. They are resold to collectors without the seal having been broken. Since this type of mixture contains stamps of a single country, it can be a useful source of cancellations.

Mixture, Mission

This type of mixture is usually collected by religious and charitable organisations from any number of sources, including foreign mail if the organisation has establishments abroad, and donations of unwanted stamps from collectors. Sold by weight, it may contain just about anything, and some very strange objects have been discovered in such mixtures.

Compiled by Robert Harm 16 September 2022