

THEMATICS

Nr 180: SEPTEMBER 2023

Newsletter of *Thematics Southern Africa*/Nuusbrief 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,

The fundi says that one should never start an editorial with an apology. I will make an exception in this newsletter, as it will be more personal than philatelic. While I was preparing last month's newsletter, I was well aware that I was approaching an important event in my life, my 80th birthday. I am well aware that it is just a figure and that it has little to do with how one feels, but more about how one thinks about it. So, although the date was important, I was not so concerned about how young I was becoming. But there was a big surprise in the offing. My only son and his family emigrated to Australia in 2016 and became citizens of that country in 2021. He had just started a job at a new company. There was, therefore, no chance that they could spend my birthday with me. But they had other plans, and about a week before their arrival, they informed us that they would be spending my birthday with me. That was a big surprise and the best birthday gift they could have given me. It did mean that the first fortnight of this month was taken up by them. Despite that, this newsletter will be more or less on time. Thank you also to those readers who knew and congratulated me, while a few others provided me with some information that might have gone stale in my newsletters. I hope that you enjoy the articles.

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: Reanie de Villiers at 082-567-0353 or Reanie.devilliers@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:** Ken Joseph 072-597-1287 ken@philatelicfriends.co.za Robbie Harm 082 925 7103, robertharm9@gmail.com, 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 randstamps@gmail.com. From 09:00, auction at 11:00.

***Last Saturday of the month – Edenvale Stamp Fair** @ Edenvale Bowling Club, 6th Avenue, Edenvale. **Contact:** Kenny Napier Kenny.napier@mweb.co.za. From 09:00, auction at 11:00.

***Last Sunday of the month – Sunbird Stamp Auction** @ 1st Hillcrest Scout Hall, 16 Shortlands Road, Hillcrest from 09:00 until 13:00. **Contacts:** Kim Breytenbach sunbird.stampauctions@gmail.com.

THEMATICS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Pretoria Chapter – 5 August 2023

TSA Pretoria met as usual at the Greek Church, Lynnwood Road. There were 7 people at the meeting with one apology. Mias showed us some of the items from his newly "inherited" collection which he is now sorting through. He showed a world album that has the date 1947 on the cover. It is a typical schoolboy collection but very nicely hinged and very full. Normally one sees an album with a few stamps but nearly all the pages are filled with stamps. We are sure he will unearth a few gems. Mias also showed two envelopes of pigeon post. Marge showed self-decorated envelopes that went through the post. Nice colourful envelopes with either coloured pencil drawings or black and white drawings of a variety of topics. She also showed airmail tags and huge postcards from the Railway Society of Southern Africa. Helena took the attendees on a postcard trip to and through St. Helena Island after a recent trip to the island. She also showed a few stamp acquisitions bought on the Island but because of the pound-rand rates not as many as she wanted to acquire. Then there were a few suggestions on how to handle her St. Helena Island collection and the consensus was that it needs a thematic approach. It is a collection with a few themes that will manifest themselves. The group enjoy this informal sharing of information and themes, and we think that will be our future pattern as well.

Helena Snyman

WC Chapter – 5 August 2023

No report was received.

Reanie de Villiers

FACTS AND FEATS: THE POSTAL SERVICES

War Tax stamps were issued to raise money for the prosecution of a war. They were issued for the first time by Spain in 1874-7. These stamps were inscribed **IMPUESTA DE GUERRA** (war tax), and they were obligatory on all correspondence, the money being used for the conduct of the Carlist Wars. War tax stamps were used by Spain once more in 1898 to raise money for the conduct of the Spanish-American War. In several cases, these stamps continued to be used long after the war, in some cases as late as 1920. The idea was revived by Canada in February 1915 when they issued three postage stamps overprinted **WAR TAX**. The stamps were intended for fiscal use but were in fact used for postal purposes. Later in 1916 1c and 2c stamps were issued inscribed **WAR TAX** for compulsory use on all correspondence in addition to the normal postage. Still later in 1916 stamps



combining postage and war tax were issued. Stamps overprinted **WAR TAX** or **WAR STAMP** were issued in 1916 by several countries within the British Commonwealth, e.g. Fiji, Dominica, St Helena, St Lucia, Grenada, St Vincent, Antigua, Jamaica and British Honduras. In 1917 Montserrat, Virgin Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands and the Cayman Islands followed their example. Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Bahamas, Bermuda, British Guiana, Gold Coast and Malta did the same in 1918. Surprisingly Great Britain never issued such stamps, but postal rates were raised by a halfpenny in February 1918, allegedly as a temporary wartime measure. Outside of the Commonwealth, only Liberia issued war tax stamps in 1918. No stamps were issued for this purpose during the Second World War.



Zemstvo stamps were issued in many parts of Tsarist Russia, the word meaning *rural*. The Russian imperial post only served the cities and major towns, but in 1864 local authorities were permitted to establish postal services in the rural areas and to connect them to the imperial post. The first zemstvo post was established at Vetlonga in 1864 but no stamps were issued. The first stamps were issued at Schlüsselburg in 1865. By a decree of 3 September 1870, the zemstvo posts were allowed greater freedom in their choice of



design, and from then until the Bolshevik Revolution several thousand stamps were produced. The Revolution suppressed the surviving services. These stamps include one of the world's rarest stamps (Kotelnich)(*left*) and some of the oddest shapes, such as oval (Vessiegonsk), diamond (Dmitrov and Pskov)



and circular (Kasimov and Maloarchangelsk). The Zemstvo services gradually died out between 1900 and 1917.

From next month we will look at Facts and Feats on the technology of stamps – Editor.

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 – BOBBY FISCHER DEFEATS BORIS SPASSKY – 31 AUGUST 1972



The World Championship for chess took place in 1972 in Reykjavik, Iceland, and was decided over 21 matches between the world champion Boris



Spassky (35) of the Soviet Union and Bobby Fischer (29) of the United States. The last match was played on 31 August at which time Bobby Fischer became the 11th undisputed chess champion of the world. The final score was 12½ to 8½. The match had been dubbed the **Match of the Century**. Fischer became the first

American born in the United States to win the world title, and the second American overall (Wilhelm Steinitz, the first world champion, became a naturalized American citizen in 1888). Fischer's win also ended, for a short time, 24 years of Soviet domination of the World Championship. The match was played during the Cold War, although during a period of

increasing détente. The Soviet Chess School had a 24-year monopoly on the world championship title, with Spassky the latest in an uninterrupted chain of Soviet world chess champions, stretching back to the 1948 championship. Fischer, an eccentric 29-year-old American, claimed that Soviet players gained an unfair advantage by agreeing to short draws among themselves in tournaments. Fischer himself rarely agreed to early draws. Spassky faced enormous political pressure to win the match. While Fischer was often famously critical of his home country (*"Americans want to plunk in front of a TV and don't want to open a book ..."*), he too carried a burden of expectation because of the match's political significance. No American had achieved the world championship since the first champion, Wilhelm Steinitz, became a naturalized American citizen in 1888. The unusual public interest and excitement surrounding the match were so great that it was called the **"Match of the Century"**, even though the same term had been applied to the USSR vs. Rest of the World match just two years before. Spassky, the champion, had qualified for world championship matches in 1966 and 1969. He lost the world championship match to Tigran Petrosian in 1966. In the 1969 cycle, he won matches against Efim Geller, Bent Larsen, and Viktor Korchnoi to win the right to challenge a second time, then defeated Petrosian 12½–10½ to win the world title. He is often said to have had a *"universal style"*, *"involving an ability to play the most varied types of positions"*, but Garry Kasparov notes that *"from childhood he clearly had a leaning toward sharp, attacking play, and possessed a splendid feel for the initiative."* In the Candidates matches en route to becoming the challenger in 1972, Fischer had demolished world-class grandmasters Mark Taimanov and Bent Larsen, each by a perfect score of 6–0, a feat no one else had ever accomplished in any Candidates match. In the Candidates final against Petrosian, Fischer won the first game, lost the second, drew the next three, then finished with four consecutive wins to win the match 6½–2½. From the last seven rounds of the Interzonal until the first game against Petrosian, Fischer won 19 consecutive games (plus 1 win on forfeit), nearly all of which were against top grandmasters.



International Society of World Wide Stamp Collectors and Wikipedia

THE TRABANT AUTOMOBILE, AN ENDURING SYMBOL OF EAST GERMANY, COMMEMORATED ON POSTAGE STAMPS AND COVERS

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ... " Thus did Charles Dickens encapsulate the hopes and horrors of the era of the French Revolution in the opening of his novel **A Tale of Two Cities**. In the glow of nostalgia, elements of the bad old days can sometimes take on an aura of the good old days. So it is with the car known as the Trabant, the enduring symbol of the people of the German Democratic Republic, also known as East Germany. Shown **right**, a 1961 Trabant P50 is pictured on the Federal Republic of Germany €0.55+€0.25 semi-postal stamp with attached selvedge (margin paper) from the bottom right corner of the pane. The stamp was issued on 5 December 2002. It bears a socked-on-the-nose Post Philatelie Frankfurt-am-Main first-day-of-issue postmark. The surtax was for the *Freie Wohlfahrtspflege Deutschland*, a non-governmental organization that includes all services and facilities run by non-profit organizations active in the health and social sectors. The selvedge at right shows a schematic diagram of a Trabant P50. Inscriptions below the



design on the stamp give the model year, 1961; length, 3,361 millimetres; width, 1,493mm; and height, 1,460mm. The stamp was printed by lithography and is perforated gauge 13¾.

East Germany, officially the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) from 1949 to 1990, was one of the most repressive and vile of the Eastern European communist dictatorships. The country was literally a prison because the communist government erected walls and barbed wire barriers patrolled by guards with machine guns to keep its citizens from fleeing abroad. The textbook definition of a police state, East Germany maintained its choke hold on the people through the Ministry for State Security (Stasi), a hydra-headed secret police organ adept at getting friends and family members to spy on each other on behalf of the party and the state. The Stasi included around 100,000 officers and an estimated 2 million informants. During the years of communism, it was responsible for the arrest of at least 250,000 East Germans.

The Trabant, affectionately and sometimes derisively known as the Trabi, was a series of small cars produced by the East German manufacturer **VEB Sachsenring Automobilwerke Zwickau** from 1957 to 1991. The name Trabant means a moon, satellite or companion, reportedly a reference to Sputnik, the first successful Soviet satellite. (Several years ago, the author and his wife visited Berlin. One of the excursions on offer was a windshield tour of the former East Berlin by Trabi. Unfortunately, we didn't have enough free time to take



the excursion.) Illustrated **left** is a Hungary souvenir sheet of six 120-forint stamps featuring Soviet-era Eastern European automobiles. The car at the lower left position is a Trabant P50. The other cars shown on the stamps are a Polish Warszawa 220, Soviet Moskvics 407, Soviet GAZ-12 ZIM, Czechoslovakian Tatra 2-603 and East German Wartburg 311. The souvenir sheet was issued on 1 September 2017. It was printed by lithography and embossing and is

perforated gauge 12 around the stamps.

There were four models of the Trabant: the Trabant P50 (also known as the 500), Trabant P60 (also known as the 600), Trabant 601 and Trabant 1.1. The P50 was in production from 1957 to 1962, and 131,495 were produced. The P60 was the second production model of the Trabant; between 1962 and 1965, 106,117 cars were produced. The third production model, the 601, was in production for the longest time, from 1964 to 1990. A total of 2,818,547 model 601 cars were produced, making it the most common car in East Germany. The Trabant 1.1, which was powered by a Volkswagen Polo engine, was the fourth and last production model of the car. Only 39,474 were produced between May 1990 and April 30, 1991, when all production ceased. A Germany Post Modern €0.47 M-Brief private post stamped envelope featuring a Trabant is shown

right. The envelope bears a postmark commemorating the International Trabant Drivers' Meeting held 20-22 June 2008, at the airfield in Zwickau, Saxony, Germany. The show was attended by more than 10,000 Trabi enthusiasts. Until the administrative reorganization

in 1952, Saxony, home of the Trabant factory, was the most populous state in East Germany. The indicium (stamp design) on the envelope shows a blue and white Trabant



with two people in the front seat. The cachet shows white, light blue and yellow Trabants parked in a row at the airfield. The cachet indicates that it is the 15th meeting of the auto club. There are still 37,000 Trabants registered in Germany. In addition, there are Trabant clubs throughout Europe and even one chapter in Washington, D.C.

Post Modern is a private mail and delivery service based in Chemnitz, Saxony, Germany. The company operates 1,400 mailboxes and 880 service points throughout Germany and delivers more than 4 million parcels and letters annually. It produces stamps for prepayment of mail and for sale to collectors. The Trabant's first appearance on a postage stamp was on the East Germany 20-pfennig stamp shown **left**. The stamp is from the Day of the Chemistry Worker set of four issued on 10 November 1960. The stamp design features a head-on view of a Trabi at right, below the denomination. The stamp was printed by lithography on paper watermarked quatrefoil and "DDR" and is perforated gauge 13 by 13½. The light and lightly powered cars had a duroplast body on a steel chassis. Duroplast, developed in East Germany, was a resin plastic made from cotton waste and reinforced with waste fabric fibres from garment manufacturing. It is lighter than metal and almost as durable. The gravity-fed fuel tank was perched above the engine, obviating the need for a fuel pump. The interior of the car was cramped and uncomfortable. The drivetrain comprised a small, smoky two-stroke transverse engine and front-wheel drive that could attain a maximum speed of 62 mph. The standard model Trabi came equipped without a fuel gauge (a dipstick was used to check the gas level), no turn signals and no brake lights. The two-stroke engine required oil to be added to the fuel and was a significant source of air pollution.



Beginning on 19 August 1989, as European communism was collapsing, large numbers of East Germans fled to the West via Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Neither the East German government nor the Soviet Union took effective action to block their departure. The East Germans required special permission to drive their Trabis into the Federal Republic of Germany because the Trabi's exhaust emissions were four times greater than allowed in the European Union. Shown **right** illustrates an East German 5pf stamp from a set of four Traffic Safety stamps issued 18 February 1969. The stamp pictures pedestrians, a traffic sign and a red Trabant facing left with silhouettes of a driver and rear-seat passenger. The inscription "Aufmerksam + rücksichtsvoll" translates as "Attentive and considerate." The stamp was printed by lithography and is perforated gauge 13 by 13½. **VEB Sachsenring Automobilwerke** was a state-controlled monopoly with all the inherent inefficiency and corruption of such a system. Demand for the cars outstripped production by about 40-to-1, and the wait time for a new car, once ordered, was normally 10 to 13 years. The official price for a new Trabant was 7,450 marks. Used cars sold for about twice as much as new, but it was still an attractive alternative for buyers



who didn't want to wait a decade or more for delivery of a new one. An East Germany souvenir sheet of two with a se-tenant label commemorating **VEB Sachsenring Automobilwerke** is pictured **left**. Issued 3 April 1979, the sheet was printed by lithography with gauge 14 perforations around the stamps and label. The design of the 35pf stamp at right features a 1978 Trabant 601S Deluxe. This

The design of the 35pf stamp at right features a 1978 Trabant 601S Deluxe. This

model featured optional fog lights, a rear dome light, an odometer, a two-tone paint scheme and a chrome bumper. The 20pf stamp at the left shows a 1911 Horch 8. Founded after World War II, **VEB Sachsenring Automobilwerke** is still in operation as a free-market private corporation renamed HQM Sachsenring GmbH. Today, it mostly produces parts for Volkswagen.

On 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall, which stood as a grisly symbol of the Iron Curtain that had divided East Berlin from West Berlin since 1961, came down, both figuratively and literally. An announcement on the evening of 9 November 1989, said that East Germans would be allowed to cross directly into West Germany at all border crossings. Although the East German government had probably not meant the announcement to apply to the checkpoints at the Berlin Wall, thousands of jubilant East Berliners quickly made it so by swamping the guards at the crossing points. Impromptu destruction of the wall began almost immediately with Germans on both sides attacking the wall with whatever tools were at hand. On 30 June 1990, the East German government gave in to the inevitable, and East German border guards began dismantling the rest of the wall. By 1994, except for short sections retained as memorials, the Berlin Wall was relegated to the dustbin of history. Pictured **right** is a Germany 100pf stamp issued 9 November 1994, for the fifth anniversary of the opening of the Berlin Wall. The design of the stamp shows cheering Berliners lining the sides of the road as a queue of Trabis drives through an opening in the wall. The black, red and gold colours of the German flag are at the bottom of the design. The stamp was printed by lithography and is perforated gauge 13 by 12½. On 3 October 1990, the Unification Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the DDR went into effect, dissolving the East German government. That day has since been celebrated as the Day of German Unity.



German reunification was completed on 15 March 1991, when the Treaty of Final Settlement concerning Germany signed by representatives of Germany and the four occupying Allied powers — the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union and France — went into effect. **Left** illustrates a Germany 100pf postal card bearing a 27 October 2000, Sindelfingen, Baden-Württemberg, Germany, special cancellation for the International Stamp Fair held there. The cancellation, inscribed in German, translates as "Collector Service of

the German Post." The cachet (decorative design) at left shows a Trabant symbolically bursting through the Berlin Wall. The car's front tag bears the date 9 November 1989. The German inscription at the top of the cachet translates as "10 Years of German Unity." The inscription at the bottom of the cachet translates as "Monument to the Berlin Wall." The design of the cachet is based on a famous wall painting, **Test the Best** (later retitled **Test the Rest**), by German artist Birgit Kinder. The mural is on the East Side Gallery, the longest section of the Berlin Wall still standing today, which we toured on our visit to Berlin.

An article by Rick Miller in Linn's Stamp News Weekly of 28 August 2023

I have seen this also during a visit in 2010 to the city of my birth - Ed

LOST TREASURES AND FAMOUS PHILATELIC DISCOVERIES

It's every collector's dream to discover a long-lost treasure, especially if it has been hidden away for many decades. Such discoveries often make headlines around the world and not just in the philatelic press. The author discusses the stories behind some of the most famous and infamous headline grabbers from over the years.



When people start wearing T-shirts with a picture of a stamp on them, you know that something's up – especially when you see them all smiling! **(left)**. The British Guiana 1c. Black on Magenta, the world's most famous and valuable stamp (by being the only one known to exist) **(right)**, thrilled not just the stamp collecting world but the wider public when it was bought at auction in the USA in June 2021 for a staggering \$8.3m (including buyer's premium) (about ZAR 154.532 million).



One can only imagine what the person who originally stuck it onto an envelope in 1856 would think about that. The lucky buyer, Stanley Gibbons, not only made it immediately available for viewing at their flagship store at 399 Strand, London but also still allowed any of the rest of us to co-own it. The thrill of something so precious being found always shines a light on the prospect of the next lost stamp turning up, however famous, infamous or, more commonly, with a story but no fanfare. It also makes one hope that the original finders, in this case, a child, are treated faithfully. It was 12-year-old Scot Louis Vernon Vaughan, who lived in the Guyanese county of Demerara (whose postmark the stamp bears) and found it in 1873 amongst his uncle's letters. He sold it to a local collector some weeks later for six shillings. Naturally, whenever such large sums are involved along come the inevitable fakes. Other stamps purporting to be a 1c. Black on Magenta have duly popped up, such as one in 1999, claimed to have been discovered in Bremen, Germany, owned by German 'stamp reproducer' Peter Winter – well known for printing famously rare stamps as facsimiles on modern paper – but the stamp was twice-quashed under steely examination by the Royal Philatelic Society London.

The celebrity factor



Of course, the word 'lost' can be used to imply mystery, evident or not, such as the **Mirror's** March 2016 story headed 'John Lennon's lost album' of stamps, which he collected as a child, complete with the future Beatle's cheeky doodles **(left and right)**'. Not exactly 'lost' at all,



the album has the charm of a child's handwriting at the front where John wrote his name and address and numbers crossed out showing the running total of stamps he had in it, not forgetting the painted blue beards he added to the printed faces of Queen Victoria and King George VI. Sold by Stanley Gibbons to the US National Postal Museum in 2005, reportedly for £29,950 (about ZAR 701 150), it is valuable simply by being Lennon's; made even more touching by the fact that in 2018 the US Postal Service issued a John Lennon Forever stamp.

Genuinely lost, for 59 years anyway, was a letter (first-day cover with a blue four-penny Jubilee Jamboree stamp) that Boy Scout William Knight sent to himself in 1957 from the 6th World Rover Moot (an event for 18-25-year-olds called Rovers – he was 28) held at Sutton

Coldfield, West Midlands. It arrived 20 years after he died at the age of 67. The letter found its way to his sister, Mary Bristow, who told the **Daily Express** in December 2016 that William 'had sent the letter to himself so he could get his stamp collecting badge to go on the sleeve of his Scout's jumper'. Sometimes 'lost' means believed lost. A 2010 special philatelic auction at the Rapp auction house in Wil, Switzerland attracted several hundred



stamp collectors and investors from all over the world; it was a collection from Ticino, the southernmost Swiss canton, with a surprise. It contained a cover, previously thought 'lost', bearing three copies of the so-called Neuchâtel stamp (**left**). Appearing on a cover dated 1 January 1852 and addressed from Geneva (the second of the Swiss

cantons to issue postage stamps) to the Canton of Fribourg, this cover was expected to fetch more than 250,000 Swiss Francs (CHF) (or some £263,000 today). In the end, the cover sold for CHF 348,000 (including surcharge without VAT)(about ZAR 7.08 million), according to Ilona Würgler at Rapp.

Disaster mail

Of course, the worst way for a stamp or cover to disappear is in an accident. When Queen Victoria was 60 she would have heard the news on 28 December 1879 that a train heading across the River Tay in Scotland (and only minutes from arriving at its intended destination of Dundee on its northern bank) had crashed into the river. She had travelled across that very same newly built and presumably sound iron-framed Tay Bridge when she had opened it in June 1878. Yet a Board of Trade inspector four months before (the Report of the Court of Enquiry noted) had made this vague pronouncement: 'When again visiting the spot I should wish, if possible, to have an opportunity of observing the effects of high wind when a train of carriages is running over the bridge'. No action followed. It would have been packed with passengers full of Christmas spirit when the six-carriage train approached Dundee in a storm and entered the Tay Bridge at about 7.15 on the evening in question. When it reached the middle of the bridge the structure collapsed and the train dropped into the river, causing the death of every one of the approximately 75 people on board, the Minutes of Evidence noted that divers later found the train 'still within the girders'.

Poignant reminders of that awful incident surface today in the form of the mail carried by that train that was later retrieved from the River Tay. An envelope from one of these letters was a prize exhibit at a stamp auction on 6 February 2012, run by Robert Murray's Stamp Shop in Edinburgh, and carefully catalogued as follows: '1879 cover London to Dundee, probably recovered from the Tay Bridge Disaster... with penny red plate 213 cancelled by London EC duplex mark (DE 27) – stamp has become detached and been replaced in slightly incorrect position... Manuscript note... reads, "In the train that fell with the "Tay Bridge"" in a style that appears contemporary. It is known that two bags of mail were washed up from the wreck, with perhaps only about ten items known to have survived. It fetched £880 (about ZAR 20 643)(**right**). Another envelope, auctioned in London as an item from the Tay Bridge Disaster, had turned up some two years previously under curious circumstances. In a smudged and harder-to-read blue envelope, the Aberdeen-addressed letter had been posted on 27 December



from Forres (both places well north of Dundee) and was possibly sent south with all the Christmas mail, say to the bigger sorting office in Edinburgh, either by mistake or intentionally to be handled more quickly and be re-posted on the ill-fated north-bound train. This sold for £2300 in 2010, the Grosvenor Philatelic Auctions catalogue noted that the letter had arrived in Aberdeen the day after the disaster. Curious as this sounds, since the train was trapped in the river, it does seem plausible given an odd discovery (although no date or time is mentioned). Word was brought to Mr Gibb, a Dundee postmaster, that several of the mailbags that were on the train were picked up on the beach at Broughty Ferry, on the Tay's northern shore. From there they were presumably dispatched to finish the rest of their 60-mile-plus journey to Aberdeen.



the 1852 '**Dawson Cover**', the only known cover bearing the Hawaiian 2c. value Missionary stamp. It was rescued from a furnace in 1870 (**right**).

Letters recovered from fire invariably record extraordinary events. The **Hindenburg** was the German passenger-carrying airship that caught fire on 6 May 1937 over New Jersey, USA, killing 35 of the 97 people on board – one cover (among 360 of 17,000 items of mail on board that were recovered) – showing scorch marks is shown **left**. Another rarity rescued from fire was



Sometimes letters simply fall off the back of a horse. America's most extraordinary and rarest example is an 1860 Pony Express cover, carried via the famous Pony Express service from San Francisco eastward to St Joseph, Missouri – that is until the rider heard the galloping hoofs telling them that American Indians were approaching fast. The Smithsonian National Postal Museum adds the grisly point that, 'the Pony Express rider was overtaken (and purportedly scalped)'. The horse must have run off with the letter pouch, which was later recovered from the plains, this letter was finally delivered two years later, the message written on the front, 'recovered from a mail stolen by the Indians in 1860', providing indisputable evidence of



what had happened to it (**above**).

A long-lost piece of the jigsaw

It is every stamp collector's dream to be the one to stumble onto something similarly precious. And so it was in 2020 with Stuart Chandler of Henley-on-Thames-based Empire Philatelists whose find meant the welcoming back a missing piece of history: a long-lost Barbados rarity hiding from him among a batch of Commonwealth stamps he'd acquired. 'You always think it's out there somewhere', Stuart told me. 'We're always on the lookout for that elusive discovery. At first, I didn't notice it as there were so many pages, but when I started to break it down I spotted it quite quickly'. He had bought a huge comprehensive collection at Spink's auction house, a general A-Z Queen Victoria to King George V Empire Collection intending to break it down into lots for other collectors to buy. When he reached the Barbados section he



started with early imperforate stamps and not long afterwards reached the rarity. 'Once I removed it from the page it was clear that it was a Perkins Bacon **'CANCELLED'** stamp,' Stuart said, the 1861 stamp soon afterwards appearing on his website for sale for £7950 (about ZAR 187 050) (**above right**). The stamp has also been the subject of a book, **Cancelled by Perkins Bacon**, written in 1998 by Barbados collector Peter Jaffé who described how Perkins, Bacon & Co (famous as printers of the Penny Black) lost their Crown Agents printing contracts after agreeing to a request from Ormond Hill (nephew of Sir Rowland Hill, Secretary to the Post Office, 1854-64) for some 'remainder' stamps. Six 'obliterated impressions' were then handed over, but the news caused such public fury that Hill offered to return them so long as he could give away any 'superfluous' ones. These Barbados stamps had all been struck with a handstamp, with four bars above and below the word **'CANCELLED'**. The whereabouts of four of them were already known, meaning that Stuart's find was the fifth of the six, its markings showing precisely how it fitted into the jigsaw (**left**).



Stolen recovered

Crime accounts for many losses. In 1983 the FBI finally recovered 82 stamps valued at US\$500,000 (about ZAR 9.3433 Million), stolen in 1977 from the New York Public Library one May weekend, when the library was closed. Taken from oak cabinets temptingly located next to the information counter, they included a rare 24-cent 'Inverted Jenny' (featuring an image of a Curtiss-Wright JN-4 'Jenny' biplane that was printed upside-down by mistake) airmail stamp and an 1867 30-cent orange stamp on embossed paper, valued at \$150,000 (about ZAR 2.803 million) each (**right**). Such thefts have been frequent enough for the FBI, in 2004, to launch a special Art Crime Team, which has since managed to recover some 2000 items valued at around \$150 million (about ZAR 2.803.4 billion). Fort Lauderdale stamp collector Michael Perlman was familiar with Charles J. Starnes's stamp collection with 400 covers that had unique pen marks and imperfections. Spotting some of them on eBay, he tipped off the FBI and after bidding \$11,000 (about ZAR 205 500) – without knowing if he would get his money back or not – travelled to Tampa with an FBI agent. The seller didn't realise they were stolen or were in fact worth about \$1 million (about ZAR 18.680 million).



Another stamp dealer and his two sons were tied up by thieves dressed as police officers who came to their Torquay home and stole a £400,000 (about ZAR 9.406 million) stamp collection in 2008. Actual police officers then warned the UK stamp trade about it, one local dealer saying that much of the collection had been photographed and was easily identified, making it hard to sell on.

Unsung heroes

Among all the tales of false hope or mischief in bids to own valuable stamps is the commonplace and usually unsung work of the people who always do their best to look after the mail, however valuable it is. Ironically, there is one example of ordinary stamps and covers becoming priceless – simply because of what was about to happen to them. The **Titanic** is famous for the terrible loss of life involved in its sinking after hitting an iceberg in the Atlantic on 15 April 1912, yet it



is not widely realised that its full title **RMS Titanic** meant that it was a Royal Mail Ship (at the time called a 'Royal Mail Steamer') charged with the job of carrying mail under contract with the Royal Mail and US Post Office Department. A total of 3364 sacks of mail, some six million items, were being looked after in the **Titanic's** Post Office and Mail Room deep in the ship on decks F and G (**above right**). Manned by five postal clerks (three Americans – John March, Oscar Woody and William Gwinn – and two Britons – Jago Smith and J B Williamson), they worked 13 hours a day, seven days a week and sorted up to 60,000 items a day. Whether they suspected what their ultimate fate might be or not – none of them survived – it does appear to have been a matter of honour for these clerks to keep working. To them, it had nothing to do with rarities or famously elusive covers, all of which they would now surely become. It was just the daily duty of care for other people's property. According to the Postal Museum, when the night-time collision happened the postal workers were celebrating Oscar Woody's 44th birthday. And when the Mail Room started to flood they set about trying to move 200 sacks of registered mail to the upper decks; even trying to get some stewards to help them, one of whom later said, '*I urged them to leave their work. They shook their heads and continued at their work. It might have been an inrush of water later that cut off their escape, or it may have been the explosion. I saw them no more*'. A memorial to the five men would be built in Southampton, from where the **Titanic** had departed, part of it reading: '**Steadfast in peril**'. All they cared about was the same as any honest postal worker would think today, getting people's messages safely to those they had written to.

Not that stamp collecting should become too clouded by tragedies since it has always celebrated the whole of human history, not just its happier corners. Various, seeking rarities can be merely a pragmatic challenge to complete a set, or the simple fun of pursuing the unlikely purely for the sake of it, or an even more earnest wish to feel reunited in some way. For whatever reason we are drawn to this ever-tempting quest, it is certainly the case that whenever some elusive item believed to be well and truly lost does finally turn up it is almost always a show-stopper.

An article by John Wright in Gibbons Stamp Monthly of July 2023

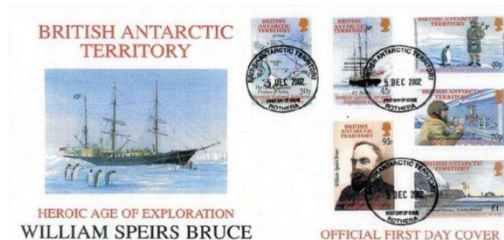
TO THE SOUTH ORKNEYS – IF YOU DARE!

The author explores some of the philatelic items to be found connected with the South Orkneys archipelago – a small group of scarcely habitable islands in the Antarctic Ocean. They have an unusual postal history, which is certainly worth pursuing, thanks to some very elusive items.

A few years ago I found myself bound from South Georgia to Deception Island. That's across the Scotia Sea, a nasty piece of work if there ever was one! We were within sight of the craggy archipelago named the South Orkneys (**right**). Unfortunately, we couldn't see them – we were in a Force 6 storm at the time! However, storms should not keep you from

investigating this fascinating

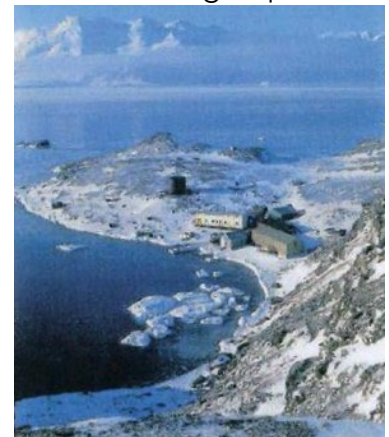
group. They have an unusual postal history, due to the existence of two scientific bases, a classic expedition and a most unusual stamp issue. The



South Orkneys lie on the edge of the Scotia plate, along with South Georgia, the South Sandwich Islands and the Elephant Islands. They are scarcely habitable – consider the neighbourhood! They were discovered around 1821, and thereafter lapsed into obscurity until 1903. A Scottish expedition, led by William Bruce, left Scotland in late 1902 (**above left**). After exploring the Weddell Sea, they wintered at Laurie Island in the group. After another voyage south, they left the Orkneys for good in January 1905, having left their base in the hands of Argentina.

Oldest permanent Antarctic 'settlement'

That base became (and still is) the oldest permanent Antarctic 'settlement'. From 1905 to 1946, it was the only human habitation in the group – and sometimes, the whole of the Southern Ocean. In January of 1946, the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey established its own base, also on Laurie Island. However, this was abandoned in 1947 for a new site on Signy Island; a small outlier to the west, which had an old whaling shore station (**left and right**). Since then, the two stations have more or less coexisted. That situation continued even during the hostilities of the Falklands War. Today, the Argentine Base Naval Orcadas has about 45 summer and 15 winter residents, while Signy usually has about 10 summer investigators.



Stamp issues

Argentina has issued several stamps about the South Orkneys. In 1954, there was one honouring the 50th anniversary of the takeover of the scientific station (see **left**). A map adorns a 1964 issue. One of the first Argentines, Hugo Acuna, is seen on 1975 and 1986 issues. In 1980, two sheets of 12 were released showing wildlife and a view of the Orcadas station. A miniature sheet was released in 2004 showing a helicopter and the observatory over Laurie Island, plus a depiction of a 1904 postal cancel. British issues include stamps from the territory itself, the Falkland Islands Dependencies and the British Antarctic Territory. In January 1944 (with two or three printings through to 1945 depending on the value), eight values of the Falkland Islands 1927–28 definitive issue (½d.–1s.) were overprinted in two lines of red ink '**SOUTH ORKNEYS/DEPENDENCY OF**' (**right**). The low value ½d. had an eye-popping printing of 396,480 and the 1s. stamp no less than 78,220. What's even more astonishing is that there was no postal use at all for these stamps. At the time of issue, the only inhabitants of the islands were the staff at the Argentine base. Needless to say, they would have no intention of using any such issues.

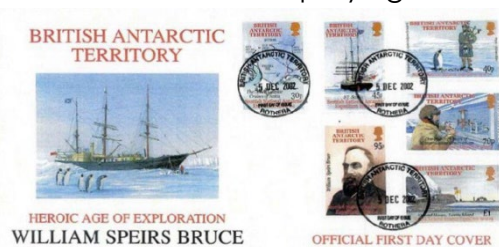
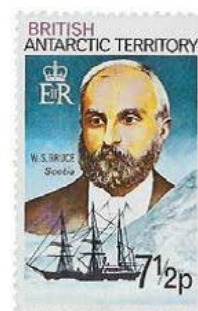


First Falkland Islands Dependency postmark

Covers do exist with the first '**SOUTH ORKNEYS FALKLAND ISLANDS DEPENDENCY**' postmark. However, these were cancelled either in Stanley or aboard the supply ship **Fitzroy** if the date was before 18 February 1945 (see **cover above right**). It is possible that some covers dated later than that in 1945 actually landed in the group, but that is far from sure. Why the rush? It seems to be a shot across the bows of the Argentine government, to persuade them of the seriousness of British claims in the southern ocean. These issues were replaced in 1946 with the Falkland Island Dependency maps definitive stamps (**left**), which were used in all the dependencies. However, covers can be found with these stamps used (probably philatelically inspired) until the stamps were invalidated in 1964. The William Bruce Scotia expedition has been



memorialised on several stamps. The 1954 Falkland Island Dependency definitive 5s. issue has the ship *Scotia*. The ships/explorers British Antarctic Territory 1973 series shows William Bruce and the *Scotia* on the 7½p value (**right**). This stamp was reissued in 1975. In 2002, the British Antarctic Territory released a set of six stamps for the centenary of the expedition. Five relate to the South Orkneys. William Bruce and the **Scotia** are shown, plus the weather station, Osmond House and a rock structure built by expedition members on Laurie Island. The 40p stamp shows a rather famous photo of one of the crews playing the bagpipes for what appears to be an



attentive penguin. What you can't really see is the tether used to tie the penguin to the piper (see **left**). The ship and explorer are also seen on the 65p value of the British Antarctic Territory explorers and ships definitive stamps of 2008. The more recent Signy Island British Antarctic Survey station is shown on a 45p value of the 2003 research bases definitive set. (The station has been rebuilt since this depiction.)

The Argentines and William Bruce

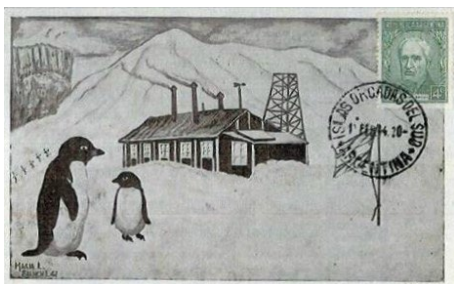
When William Bruce revisited Buenos Aires in 1904, he asked the Argentine government if they would be interested in taking over the base his expedition had built on Laurie Island. They agreed, and three Argentines accompanied the return that year. One of the three, Hugo Acuna, had a date stamp and cachet, as well as much of the other paraphernalia required. The date stamp was a single-ring circle, with the words '**ORCADAS DEL SUD/DISTRITO 24 RIO GALLEGOS**' (this was a reference to the southernmost area of continental Argentina, which has a large town of that name). The cachet read '**OFICINA METEOROLOGICO/ ARGENTINA**' and had the national coat of arms in the middle. One of William Bruce's men, future philatelic writer J H Harvey Pirie, reported that he created a small number of covers (perhaps 20) with these markings plus an oval '**SCOTTISH NATIONAL/ ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION**' cachet (**above right**). These covers come up for auction occasionally. There was one in a 2014 Grosvenor auction and another in 2021. The 2014



auction also contained another rather unusual lot, a piece of toilet paper which contained the findings of a field party. Luckily, it seems to have been unused. The cancel was not used after 1905. The Argentines, however, remained (**above left**). Until 1927, they had no means besides the supply ships to communicate with the outside world. In that year, they opened a radiotelegraph station. From 1905 to 1942, a few cards were known from the base, but they did not receive a postal cancel there.

Argentine post office

On 2 February 1942, a post office was reopened. It has continued in operation to the present. There have been at least five phrases used to describe the base. They are: '**ISLAS ORCADAS DEL SUD**'; '**ISLAS ORCADAS DEL SUR/ANTARTIDA ARGENTINA**'; '**OBSERVATORIO METEOROLOGICAL ORCADAS**'; '**DESTACAMENTO NAVAL "ORCADAS"**' and '**BASE ORCADAS**' (**right**). At least one date stamp design exists for each. The first Del Sud was used from 1942 to 1948



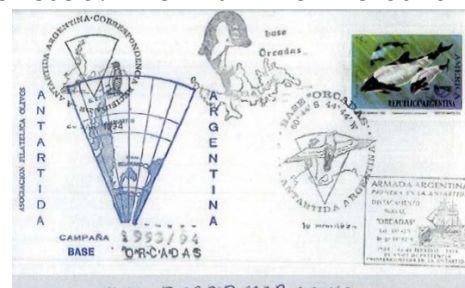
and reads '**ISLAS ORCADAS DEL SUD/ ARGENTINA**'. It is a single-ring circle (**left**).

From 1949 to the 1970s, four types of cancel with Antartida Argentina are known. These have the base name, a depiction of a spouting whale at the top centre and the Southern Cross at the bottom (see **above right**). They can be differentiated by the size of the box around the date, the

location of the whale's spout and the position of the stars in the cross. Between 1971 and 1978, three versions of the **Observatorio** cancel were used. The first two words are abbreviated, but the whale and cross motifs were still used. From 1974, the **Destacamento** wording was used. One had the usual whale and cross, while the others used different designs and maps (shaped as a triangle showing the Antarctic Peninsula ending at the South Pole). Since 1987, there have been a variety of pictorial cancels using the Base Orcadas name. Some have maps, one has a bird flying above a map (**right**) and



was a philatelist in residence?).



another features *Galerina Antarctica* (mushrooms). There are also several cachets, originating from the Met Office, Armada Argentina and visiting ships. Argentine icebreakers are common visitors, as well as occasional tourist ships. Letters are known from the **Yapeyu** and **Lindblad Explorer** as well as others (**left**). The use of these cachets is particularly noticeable on covers from 1961–62. (Maybe there

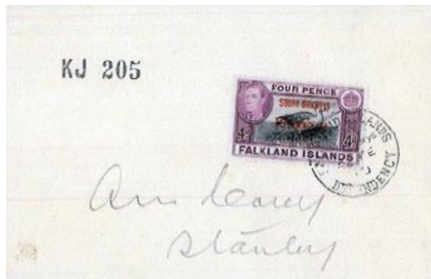
The UK comes to the South Orkneys

In early 1945, a small party of scientists landed at Sandefjord Bay, on the north coast of Coronation Island (the largest in the group). This was called Base A. It may later have been called Base R. However, it was never put into use. The next year, another base was built on Laurie Island at Cape Geddes. This was where the first mail known to have been on the

island was cancelled. The Laurie Island base was separated from the Argentine base by a mountain range. Its opening day was 21 January 1946. However, for some reason, this site also proved unsuitable. On 18 March 1947, a new base at Signy Island, south of Coronation, was opened and continues to be used to this day. During that time, the base has been modernised and expanded. It started as a year-round hut, but now the buildings are capable of holding up to 45 personnel. More recently, it was used as a summer-only facility.

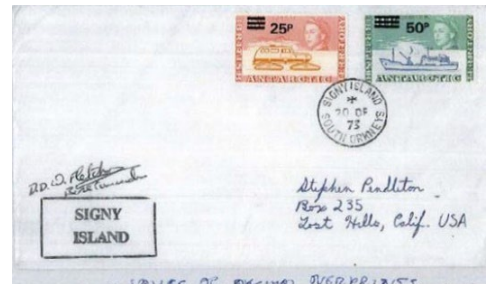
Sledge covers

One very fascinating cover can be found dating from the early period. In the southern winter of 1950, Falkland Island Dependencies member, J J Cheal, made a sledge journey from Signy Island around Coronation to the old base site. He carried a small number of covers addressed to himself at the old base site. These were cancelled on 20 August 1950 (**right**). The date seems to indicate the excursion was done over the frozen sea ice. There are



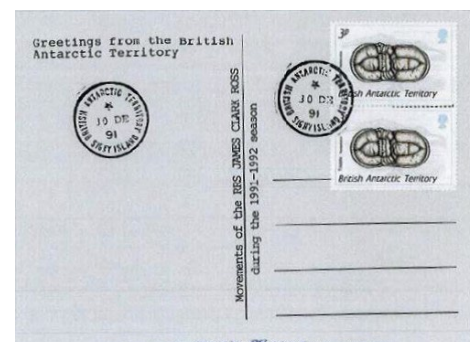
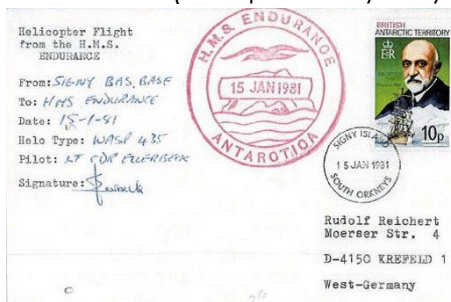
numerous varieties of postmarks. The first two used in 1947–48 are of the same type seen in the other Dependencies. That name is seen around the edge of the cancel, with '**South Orkneys**' across the middle. Another with the same wording but a bigger type was

used until 1953 (**above left**). Since then there have been more than 15 different cancels. They are all single-ring date stamps. Several of these have the wording '**SIGNY ISLAND/SOUTH ORKNEYS**' (**above right**) (One reads '**SIGNY ISLANDS**' and another has a very worn upper segment). Beginning in 1981, the wording was changed to '**BRITISH ANTARCTIC TERRITORY/SIGNY**'. This is the wording found today (**left**). In 2004–5, self-inking date stamps were introduced. There is also a first-day cancellation sometimes found in regular mail.



Rarest Signy cancel

On 30 December 1991, a most unusual cancel was introduced (and probably only used that day). It has the unique wording '**BRITISH ANTARCTIC TERRITORY/SIGNY ISLAND**' (note the additional word). Very few covers were serviced, making it the rarest Signy cancel (**right**). There are many cachets available, and also many ship



cachets. The **Discovery, Shackleton, John Biscoe, Endurance, Bransfield** and **James Clark Ross** have all visited (**above left**), as well as the usual tourist ships (**below right**). For a real treat, try finding a registered cover. In 1998, the British Antarctic Territory introduced registration labels for each base. There is one word '**BRITISH ANTARCTIC TERRITORY – SIGNY**'. As you can see, South Orkneys philately isn't so scary – though the weather may be. It's certainly worth pursuing, with some very elusive items. There are several good guides, highly recommended is Stefan Heijtz's series of Falkland Islands and Dependencies specialised catalogues, as well as Stanley Gibbons Antarctica catalogues.



An article by Steve Pendleton in Gibbons Stamp Monthly of March 2023

Compiled by Robert Harm 29 August 2023

PHILATELIC TERMS: N-6

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Nikolaevsk

The name Nikolaevsk Issue is given to stamps issued in 1921 under the general heading of Siberia.



Nippon

The inscription **Nippon** is found on modern stamps of Japan. It translates as *the land of the rising sun*.

Nisiro

Nisiro (or Nisiros) is an island in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Turkey. Once a member of the Italian Dodecanese group, it is now part of Greece and uses Greek Stamps.

NL + 10



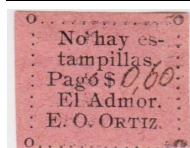
A 30 ore stamp of Denmark's definitive series bearing the overprint **NL +10** was issued on 13 February 1953 to raise funds for relief aid in the Netherlands, devastated by floods. The **+ 10** indicated a surcharge of 10 ore, which converted the stamp to a semi-postal stamp. In this case, the surcharge was also a surtax.

N^{LE} CALEDONIE

The overprint **N^{LE} CALEDONIE** on a French stamp identifies the stamps of New Caledonia, a French colony in the South Pacific. It is an abbreviation for Nouvelle Calédonie.



NO HAY ESTAMPILLAS



This inscription translates as *There are no Stamps* and can be found on

various provisional issues of Colombia.

NOPTO PORTO

This is an inscription found on the postage due labels of Yugoslavia.



NORDDEUTSCHER POSTBEZIRK



The term identifies the stamps of the North German Federation, the forerunner of the German Empire.

NOREG/NORGE

The inscription **NORGE** identifies many stamps of Norway, but in recent years some Norwegian stamps have been inscribed **NOREG**. Sources in Washington D.C. provide the following background information concerning the two versions of the country's name. For hundreds of years, Denmark governed Norway, and most officials were Danish. As a result, the Danish language was the lingua franca. By the middle of the 19th century, the language spoken and written was for practical purposes almost pure Danish. In time, certain Danish words became adapted to Norwegian use in a kind of "dialect" usage. When Norway became an independent country in 1814, the Norwegian language (especially the spoken language) could be considered to differ somewhat from Danish, although the two languages could easily be understood by both peoples. During the 19th century, many Norwegian writers took on the task of *cleansing* Norwegian attempting to exclude anything Danish, the *nyorsk* movement. The movement was strongly influenced by people living in isolated areas of the country, and who had preserved much of the *old* Norwegian language, the language spoken by Vikings. The movement became stronger over time and the efforts to *purify* Norwegian became stronger. Due to this history both **NOREG** and **NORGE** identify Norway, where **NORGE** is the Riksmåal version and **NOREG** is the new Norwegian version.

North China

Following World War II, but before the formation of the People's Republic of China, postal administrations in what was termed the Liberation Areas issued postage stamps. One of these areas was **North China**, which encompassed the provinces of Chahar, Hopeh, Shansi, and Suiyuan.



Northeast China



Following World War II, but before the formation of the People's Republic of China, postal administrations in what was termed the Liberation Areas issued postage stamps. One of these areas was **Northeast China**, which included the provinces of Heilungkiang, Jehol, Kirin, Laoning plus Manchuria (or Manchukuo).

North Borneo

North Borneo is situated on the northern tip of the world's third-largest island (after Greenland and New Guinea). It joined Malaysia in 1963. After the discovery of the island in the early 1500s by the Portuguese, the Dutch and British went to war over the island. That resulted in the reaching of an agreement giving the northern tip of the Island to the British. It was administered by the British North



Borneo Company under a royal charter granted in 1881 until occupied by the Japanese. Australian forces expelled the Japanese in May 1945, when stamps of 1939 were overprinted **BMA**. North Borneo then became a Crown Colony under the name of Sabah, until it joined the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. The stamps of North Borneo depicted the country's wide variety of animal and plant life.



North Epirus



When in 1940, Greek forces thoroughly beat the invading Italian forces, and they pushed them back to Italian-occupied Albania. Greek stamps were overprinted for use in the area of Albania that was liberated and known as North Epirus.

Northern Ireland



The six counties of Northern Ireland (Ulster) chose to remain a part of the United Kingdom in 1922 when the rest of Ireland became a Dominion and later a republic. It has an area of 5451 square miles and a population of 5,056,935 (2023). The capital, and the only major city, is Belfast, which is a shipbuilding centre. The country was for many years wracked by violence between the Protestant majority and the Roman Catholic majority, the best-known group calling themselves the Irish Republican Army. Peace has now been restored. The first stamps for Northern Ireland were issued in 1958 when the regional issues appeared. The regional issues for Northern Ireland feature the Red Hand of Ulster. Although these stamps were sold only in post offices in Northern Ireland, they were valid to prepay postage throughout the United Kingdom.



Northern Nigeria

Northern Nigeria was a British protectorate covering an area of 281,703 square miles. The capital city was Zungeru. It merged with Southern Nigeria in 1914 to form the colony of Nigeria, which later became the Republic of Nigeria. British colonial key-type stamps were in use from 1900 to 1914.



North German Federation

The North German Federation was a federation of several small independent states, grand duchies, and free cities that dotted the German landscape. This represented the first unified Germany in modern history, before becoming the German Empire. It was created by Otto von Bismarck, the Prussian Chancellor in 1867, who viewed it as a first step on the road to full German Unity in 1872. The states making up the federation were Bergdorf, Bremen, Brunswick, Hamburg, Hanover, Lubeck, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Oldenburg, Prussia, Saxony, and Schleswig-Holstein. Stamps for the federation were introduced on 1 January 1868, and they were superseded by issues of the German Empire on 1 January 1872.



Compiled by Robert Harm 12 Aug 2023