

# WETS

## Newsletter No 4 Autumn 1997

### Members' Interests

At our meeting at Ashburton in April we found that members would like us to make up a list of "Interests". This will help those with similar ideas to be in touch; it might lead to your being able to let someone else have something which is useless to you but will clearly help them; it might give you ideas to extend your own range. Make the most of it and let us have all the information needed to keep it up to date for correction, additions or whatever.

Gerry Barker - Australian History & Postal History.  
Alison Burden - Botany, New Zealand.  
Sue Burn - Charles Kingsford-Smith (Aviator).  
Maurice Buxton - Parliament, World War II.  
Pearl Buxton - Tea.  
Mary Claydon - Royalty, Women.  
Norman Claydon - Birds  
Eric Gordon - Birds (feathered).  
Adele Gunn - Royalty, Orchids, Minerals.  
Barry Hampton - Orchids & the mineral Gold.  
Pamela McDowall - Xmas, Heraldry, Lunar New Year, Ships, U.S.A., Precancels.  
Lesley Marley - Whales, Antarctica.  
Anne Moorshead - Butterflies, Reptiles & Amphibia, Pigs, Czwslaw Slania.  
Ken Ramsey - Fire Brigades & Services.  
Edith Rees - Faroes, Folk Tales, Hong Kong, Slania.  
David Roseveare - French Designers & Engravers.  
Colin Ross - Cars.  
Ron Sambell - Scouts & Guides.  
Roy Saunders - World War II  
Tony Smith - Explorers, Explorers' Ships, Maps.  
Ivor Staunton - Ancient Greece, Queen's Portrait.  
Linda Summerson - G.B. Greetings, G.B. Fiscals.  
Carol Turner - Malaria & Man.  
Ann Whittaker - Orchids, Cats, Australia.  
Jim Wigmore - Evolution of Railways.  
Vicki Wigmore - Dogs & Birds.

Any of the officers of WETS will help you get in touch.

### THEMATIC COLLECTING IS FUN

Thematic collecting is not new, it has been around for a long time. Since 1840 and the first postage stamp, stamp issuing countries have proliferated and, quite early on, it became very expensive to attempt a World collection. People therefore turned their attention to one particular country or one specific issue. Then some people began to collect the subject of the design and this led to Thematic collecting. Thematics can be an exciting new branch of an

already established hobby or an introduction to the hobby for beginners. I became a thematic collector after seeing a thematic display and realising that stamps could tell a story and that was what I would enjoy doing with my stamps.

If you collect in this way you do not follow a catalogue striving for completion, you do not have to complete sets; that is not what you want at all. You can take a stamp issued in 1890 and put it next to one issued yesterday by a totally different country to tell your story. A modern issue can have more value to you than the most perfect penny black if it fills a gap in your story and, believe me, you are just as thrilled with your modern "find".

You do not have to save up for months or years to achieve some wonderful piece, you can if you want to but you can tell your story with whatever you can afford and your collection can be as interesting as anyone else's if you tell your story well.

If you do not have a mind which works laterally, do not worry; you soon will have. A new aspect of your theme will suddenly strike you and off you go along a branch line instead of along the main track; this is what makes the collection so interesting.

Take the theme of "Dogs"; many breeds have been illustrated on stamps but suddenly you will want to know "Is the breed directly descended from the wolf?" "From which part of the World did the breed come?" "What race of people first bred this dog and why?". Herding, hunting, guarding, pulling sledges, life saving, the possibilities are endless and anyone who gets hooked on thematics will find themselves not only looking for stamps but for more knowledge on their chosen subject.

Stamps are not the only way of telling your story. Postmarks and special cancellations, booklets, special covers which may combine a cachet and a postmark and there is some fascinating "Cinderella" material which may add interest to your collection. The World is wide open to those who collect in this way. You can tell any story you want to; to mention a few - any aspect of the world of nature; birds, flowers, insects, trees, plants, animals, whales, fish; the story of the religions of the World or of just one religion; Associations such as the Red Cross, St John, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides; sports such as football, cricket, tennis, hockey; aviation or exploration; whatever you find interesting you can tell the story on stamps.

## PLACE NAME POSTMARKS

When I started to gather material with the nebulous idea of forming a collection on the theme of "The History of Parliament", I thought naïvely - surely there ought to be plenty of items with which to illustrate an important aspect of British history! However, closer inspection of the issuing policy of the Post Office revealed that political history is not a subject which will be depicted on stamps if it can possibly be avoided. Of course, it may still be controversial: no stamps were issued to commemorate the tercentenary of the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 as they might have been construed as offering support to the Orangemen of today. Similarly a proposal by Tony Benn for an issue on Trade Unionism was watered down into the "Social Reformers" set of 1976. Another very likely reason is that a stamp in 1995 commemorating (say) the 700th anniversary of the Model Parliament of 1295 would have sold a lot less copies than one featuring Cats, Sport, or whatever.

This leaves freaks like me who actually try to collect this sort of thing in a bit of a fix, as it is not always easy to find material even for major figures or events. For example, at the last recount, the number of British Prime Ministers who have featured on the stamps of their country is precisely two (Disraeli on the 1987 "Victorian Britain" issue, Churchill in 1965 and 1974). They do occasionally crop up on overseas issues (Balfour on an Israeli stamp, the elder Pitt from Nicaragua, Thatcher from Kenya), and the Post Office has recently earned itself a few Brownie Points from me with a series of booklets on the subject of 20th Century PM's. Unfortunately though, this leaves a large number of First Lords of the Treasury whose mug shots have yet to be depicted, including many of the more important figures such as Walpole, Russell, Palmerston and Gladstone. Special handstamps have filled in a few of the gaps (e.g. a Ramsay Macdonald centenary cancellation from Lossiemouth) but I'd still have had a far easier time if I collected Butterflies on Stamps. This brings me round to Place-Name Postmarks that you were probably thinking I'd forgotten about. Suppose there is a place somewhere in the world whose name derived from someone or something that you want to refer to - why not illustrate it by using a perfectly normal, non-commemorative postmark from the local post office (if there is one)? This method stands an excellent chance of impressing people with your ingenuity and depth of research and, in competition entries, it is also FIP Rules friendly (if you care about such things). For example, the town of Gladstone, Oregon was

apparently named in honour of the Grand Old Man by a local citizen of the time who admired him. A polite letter to the local Post Office, accompanied by an addressed envelope and an International Reply Coupon, produced, in due course, an example of their cancellation. Similarly, in the days before HMG's colonial policy resulted in the unfortunate contretemps between the American settlers and the Mother Country, at least two places in the USA were named after Walpole, Britain's first Prime Minister (at that time considerable sarcasm, incidentally was applied to him by political opponents frustrated at his grip on power). Switching continents, New Zealand provides Russell (the first capital) and Palmerston North. This last example is, of course, a reasonably well known and important place and, if this is the case, things are even easier as you can dig up an example or two from dealers' cover boxes at stamp fairs. In the field of Prime Ministerial postmarks, Melbourne in Australia, Salisbury in Rhodesia and Pittsburgh in the USA spring to mind.

You could find similar examples for many themes. It can be especially useful in referring to people once well known but unlikely ever to appear on a stamp where you need to refer more often than there are stamps depicting them or if you simply want some variety. For example, I'm only aware of one stamp with the picture of the Duke of Wellington issued by St Helena in 1982; but there are several places named in his honour; notably, of course, Wellington in New Zealand for the settlement of which the Iron Duke contributed a sizeable sum of money and which became Russell's successor as capital.

*To be continued in the next issue - Maurice Buxton*

### SPRING MEETING 1998

The 1998 Spring meeting will be held at the **Dartmoor Lodge Hotel ASHBURTON** on Saturday 18th April; it will start at 10.a.m. and finish at about 4 p.m.

The speaker will be ???????? who will present her display on ?????

The cost of attendance will be £??? and, as usual, those who come will be able to order their lunch from the very good menu provided by the hotel.