

# WETS

## Newsletter No 5 Spring 1998

### PLACE NAME POSTMARKS

(continued from Issue No 4)

You can use Place Name Postmarks to add something a little different (and display your erudition) in other ways too. For instance, if you collect bridges then why not include a postmark from Saarbrücken whose name is derived from the earlier bridge? Or from Bristol - a name which means "bridge place"? If "Newspapers" or "Railways" is your theme, how about the town of Mirror in Alberta on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway which is named after the British daily paper in which they were advertising at the time? If you collect "Trees", you could always try a postmark from Dresden - a name derived from an old Slavonic word for forest. Or, for that matter, Plympton - a name which means "plum tree village". You might think that it took its name from the River Plym. Apparently it was the other way round; the river was named from the manor of Plympton.

There are a few snags with this method of course. One is that it is not always possible to elicit a postmark just by despatching a IRC. The place in question may never have had a post office and, even if it did, it may now be closed or its mail may be cancelled at the local Head Office; however, in these cases it is always possible to try and track down an older example. Another pitfall is that you need to check that there is actually a connection between the place and whatever it is you want to illustrate. For example, in the USA there are places named Wellington in Kansas, Texas and Ohio; but if you refer to the first Duke the last of these is no good - it turns out to have been named after an early settler by the name of William Welling. Whether you consider it quite playing the game to use a postmark if the person took their name from a place rather than the other way round is up to you; it can seem a little

thin if a reasonable alternative is available. After all, the town of Wellington in Somerset had been using the name for many years before Arthur Wellesley was even a gleam in his parents' eyes; on the same principle, maybe you could illustrate James Callaghan by a postmark from Cardiff! However Mijtheer van den Bold (see references) doesn't apply this strict criterion; so who am I to argue?

If this article has stimulated your interest, then, as a starting point, you might like to consult the books of Adrian Room, a prolific writer on toponymy (the study of place names). All those listed below are to be found in my local reference library (Torquay), so there is a good chance that they will also be available elsewhere. Prices are for the hardback editions but there may be paperback versions of some of them. You might also wish to consult the appropriate BTA handbook; if you do, it is available in the Wessex Library.

Maurice Buxton

### References

- Place Names of the World* by Adrian Room (Angus & Robertson, 1987, £6.95). Describes what is known of the derivation of over 1,000 place names world wide.
- Dictionary of Place Names in the British Isles* by Adrian Room (Bloomsbury Publications Ltd, 1988, £8.99). Lists the derivations of a large number of British place names.
- Dictionary of World Place names Derived from British Names* by Adrian Room (Routledge, 1989, £17.95). Very useful for places named after famous Britons.
- Handbook of Thematic Philately* by W E J van den Bold (James Bendon Ltd for the British Thematic Association, English edition 1994), pp86-7, 91-2.

## GUILTY

Two events recently conspired to leave me with a very guilty conscience. I had been reading Otto Hornung's article entitled "The Never Ending Flood" which appeared in the March issue of the Stamp Magazine. This was concerned with the annual review of the world issues conducted by Michael Rundschau and I was duly appalled by the fact that some 11,000 new issues had appeared in 1995, the year under scrutiny. Worst offenders were Grenada (and the Grenadines) and Guyana who together contributed over 1,000 to the total and they were followed by six former Crown colonies all with proud traditions in classical philately. In all, these eight territories produced over 2,500 new stamps.

Because I was preoccupied with other matters, I had not dealt for some time with the distributions from my new issue supplier (they claim to be the Number One in the World!). As I settled down to the task of catching up on additions to my collection of "Cars on Stamps", I became increasingly uneasy as packet after packet disgorged minisheets and sheetlets emanating from these same territories! Thus it dawned on me that, while I had been deploring these excesses, I had been guilty of giving them succour.

Thematic collecting has been heralded as a saviour for stamp collecting by bringing into the hobby groups of people, mainly the ladies and juniors, whose absence had been most pronounced in recent times. Certainly thematic collecting has well and truly arrived and it is probably correct to say that most, if not all, collectors indulge to some extent, if only to produce an exhibit or competition entry for the club. Publishers of catalogues have duly responded by bringing out specialised listings of this and that on stamps to facilitate the subject/topical collector.

And has not that not just fuelled the flood of

new issues by encouraging unscrupulous authorities to continue to produce more and more rubbish? Paradoxically then, might it not just be that the very cure for philately's ills will turn out to be the eventual cause of its destruction?

*Dr Colin Ross*

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## ADVANCE NOTICE

### DATES FOR 1998/99

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November 1998 the A.G.M. @ Buckfastleigh Town Hall FROM 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. Please bring some sheets to show, or, even better, we would very much like some 4 or 8 sheet displays from members that we could take round on the WETS Road Show. We are hoping to arrange for a dealer to attend. Tea and biscuits will be provided.

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Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> October 1998 CORNEX @ Liskeard. We shall be having a meeting at Liskeard between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. For all WETS members but especially for those from Cornwall who find it difficult to get to Buckfastleigh for meetings.

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WOULD YOU LIKE TO "SWAP" ANY EXCESS STAMPS? - HOW ABOUT BRINGING THEM TO EITHER OR BOTH OF THE ABOVE MEETINGS?

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1999 WETS DAY @ Dartmoor Lodge @ Ashburton will be held on Saturday ~~24<sup>th</sup>~~ ~~April~~ 1999. Further details later.

6<sup>TH</sup> March  
1999.