

WETS

Newsletter No 8 2000

CROSSWORDS

The Times of 31st August 1999, Crossword Number 21,196, has a clue for 8 Down which reads "Subject of a Byzantine Province"(5 letters). I have to admit that the answer did not immediately spring to mind and I had to get all the odd letters and then do a trawl through the dictionary before the light broke; it was, in fact the very last clue in that crossword that I solved. Chambers 20th Century 1983 edition came up with

Theme a subject set or proposed for discussion, or spoken or written about; a thesis, a brief essay or exercise; a ground for action; the stem of a word without its inflexions; subject, a short melody developed with variations or otherwise (mus); and - wait for it - an administrative division of the Byzantine Empire".

So that dealt with No 21,196, but it set me off on a train of thought.

Chambers defines

Byzantine as "rigidly hierarchic, intricate, tortuous"

The Oxford English Dictionary (on CD) defines (after dealing with the Empire)

Byzantine as "reminiscent of the manner, style, or spirit of Byzantine politics. Hence, intricate, complicated; inflexible, rigid, unyielding. "

Now here is a challenge. What can anyone come up with to merge the Thematic discipline of Philately with all these Byzantine connotations?

Or has somebody at international level already worked out what a Theme should be?

I have to confess to enjoy having my tongue in my cheek. But, wait a minute, is it not a compliment to be told that the more unusual the material in your Theme the better? And are not those humourous Thematics all the better for the really lateral thinking? And do you like the idea that if Thematics has a Byzantine connotation, then it predates the upstart General Philately by hundreds and hundreds of years?

Peter Burden

MEMBERS' INTERESTS NOVEMBER 1999

Alison Burden - Flowers - 01364 653595

Peter Burden - French Paintings, Birds

Maurice Buxton - Parliament, W.W.II

Pearl Buxton - Food & Drink

Mary Claydon - Ruling Families of Europe, Women on Stamps - 01398 331731

Norman Claydon - Birds (G.B. & W Europe)
01398 331731

Adele Gunn - Royalty, Orchids, Minerals

David Herrity - American Indians, Western Americana

Pamela McDowall - Xmas, Heraldry, Lunar New Year, Whales & Dolphins, Ball Games, non kicking - 01392 430782

Lelsey Marley - Whales - 01752 816197

Anne Moorshead - Butterflies, Reptiles, Amphibians, Pigs, Czeslaw Slania - 01395 578495

Margaret Morrell - Farming, Food

David Oates - Ploughing, Heraldry, Cave Paintings

Valerie Oates - Bells - 01392 279722

Jim Parsons - Cunard & P & O Ships, Capt. Cook, Antarctic Explorers, Aircraft various, Lighthouses, "Diana", N.Z Cinderellas, Concorde - 01752 843587

Jill Prideaux - Swiss (thematically), Birds, Christmas, Bears - 01395 568770

Ken Ramsey - Fire Brigade & Services

Edith Rees - Folk Tales, Slania - 01392 252268

David Roseveare - French Designers & Engravers
01752 402981

Colin Ross - Cars on Stamps

Ron Sambell - Scouts and Guides

Roy Saunders - World War II, 3rd Reich

Tony Smith - Explorers, Explorers' Ships
01404 46358

Ivor Staunton - Ancient Greece, Queen's Portrait

Carol Turner - Malaria & Man

Ann Whitaker - Orchids, Cats, Wild Cats
01752 509331

Jim Wigmore - Evolution of Railways

Vicki Wigmore - Dogs, Birds

THEMATIC PACKET

At the A.G.M. it was agreed that we should explore the possibilities of starting a packet. Insurance for the packet would necessitate charging £1.00 to all participants plus, of course, everyone receiving the packet would be responsible for their own postage. This would mean that we could have two packets, each containing 8 books in circulation. Would all those wishing to join please let Pamela McDowall have their names and telephone numbers. The £1.00 would, of course, be in addition to the subscription of £1.50.

I thought the A.G.M. was a most interesting meeting, because apart from meeting everyone and having a chance to chat, we launched the above idea. This sort of thing encourages new members and the more members we have the more enjoyable it becomes. I am extremely grateful to Pamela for volunteering to run the packet in addition to the work she already does for children.

Please spread the news about WETS in your own clubs.

I was judging at one club and there were 8 entries in the Thematic section and I believe I am right in saying that only one member of that club is a member of WETS, so I did an advertising job for us about our thematic day next March and hope we may have one or two more attending who may after that become members of WETS.

I hope you all had a good winter with your collections - I shall continue to battle on with putting some of my collection on sheets via the computer - I am getting there but slowly.

Name and address of Packet Secretary

Mrs. Pamela McDowall
13, Powderham Crescent
Exeter EX4 6DA

WETS DAY 25th March, 2000. Speaker David Cox with his collection of "Birds"

Our largest attendance for four years came to Ashburton for the Annual WETS Day and we were pleased to welcome two new members. Tony Bigmead who collects Yachts and Yachting and Dr. Robert Symes. David Cox, having admitted that the subject of Birds is immense, proceeded to show us how he had broken his collection into many facets of ornithology. Not only did he show a huge variety of anything philatelic which included birds he also produced three beautiful fans made of feathers, bird nests, including one from New Zealand belonging to a Fantail and a Pigeon Box used by aircrew in wartime. They were used by the aircraft of Coastal Command and I have spoken to a pilot of Coastal Command who remembers quite clearly taking pigeons from the royal estates at Sandringham on patrols over the North Sea.

The afternoon section of the display was given over to a fascinating collection of the Wildfowling stamps and licences primarily of the United States and Canada. These are now being used by other countries such as New Zealand and Mexico. This display brought forth much comment!

Article from Tony Smith -

When David Cox said early on in his display at the Wets Day in March that his collection of *Birds* was getting almost too big I knew just what he meant.

My own collection is *The Story of Discovery and Exploration* and the number of stamps, cancels, postal stationery etc. which fit into that title seem to be increasing with every new edition of Gibbons Stamp Monthly. It has reached the point where I have to tighten my perimeter, close down certain areas of the globe - or, win the Lottery. Have any Wets members found that they cannot keep up with new issues etc. relevant to their thematic subject? If so, how have they tackled the problem?

When I first began collecting some 15 years ago and joined the BTA I lived in London and my work as a journalist meant long hours and only limited time to escape to my collection. That was not a problem because I could go via mail order lists to catch up on past issues of my Explorers while suitable new issues were usually two or three a month. Now retired, I learn of many more old issues but worse the number of new issues has trebled in the past few years.

My collecting needed some new rules - The first was simple, ignore all issues from countries where the average person has never heard of the explorers featured on their stamps. I have also realised that there is no point in saving perforation or watermark differences if the portrait on the stamp is the same as that used on the original stamp.

My collection is split into various men and areas of the

globe, each allocated a different "holding" album so stamps etc can be removed to special exhibition/competition sheets when I have to illustrate a particular story of exploration. I have Columbus (3) Cook, Portuguese Pioneers, Pacific Pathfinders, New World Before and After Columbus (2), The Poles, By Land, Sea and Air, and finally Internal Africa and Australia.

If I am to totally drop one or two areas, the obvious ones would be Africa and Australia plus The Poles. To reduce the New World section I could set a date when settlement rather than discovery was on the agenda. The latter poses problems though because Trans-Atlantic voyages in Elizabethan times involved trying to establish settlements, while as late as the early 1800s Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were canoeing down unmapped rivers and trekking over previously uncrossed deserts as their expedition went from the USA's east to west coasts.

Another way for me to save money and pages would be to become more selective in my Columbus new issues.

But then what do I do about the complete reprints in 1992 of the USA 15 stamp set featuring their discoverer? The original set was certainly beyond my pocket either mint or used while the newer issue designs could tell my Columbus story in exactly the same way. To add to the puzzle, do I collect the identical new issue sets from Spain, Italy and Portugal? I have given myself until the end of 2000 to decide which areas I will drop from my collection. Do I then sell Africa, Australia, Polar or whatever other areas stamps are currently in my collection or keep them and just not buy any new material?

Are there any WETS members who collect *Exploration* and might be interested in buying what I decide to sell? Even more important to me at the moment is advice from other WETS members who may have had to reduce their collecting area. I would love to hear, possibly via the Newsletter just how you tackled the matter.

STOP PRESS

Since receiving the above article Tony Smith entered Thematica and won the John Fosbery Competition. Our congratulations to Tony.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This will be held as usual at Buckfastleigh Town Hall and will be on the 11th November, 2000 from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. We hope that all those members who promised sheets for the 2001 WETS Roadshow will bring them along to the meeting. The theme, you may remember, was "The Twentieth Century"

The next Newsletter is scheduled for early in 2001 but this will only appear if the members provide the Secretary with some articles. No articles - No Newsletter.

You could all start with some thoughts on Tony Smith's article.

I wait to hear from you.