



West of  
England  
Thematic  
Society

## Newsletter No.35 April 2009

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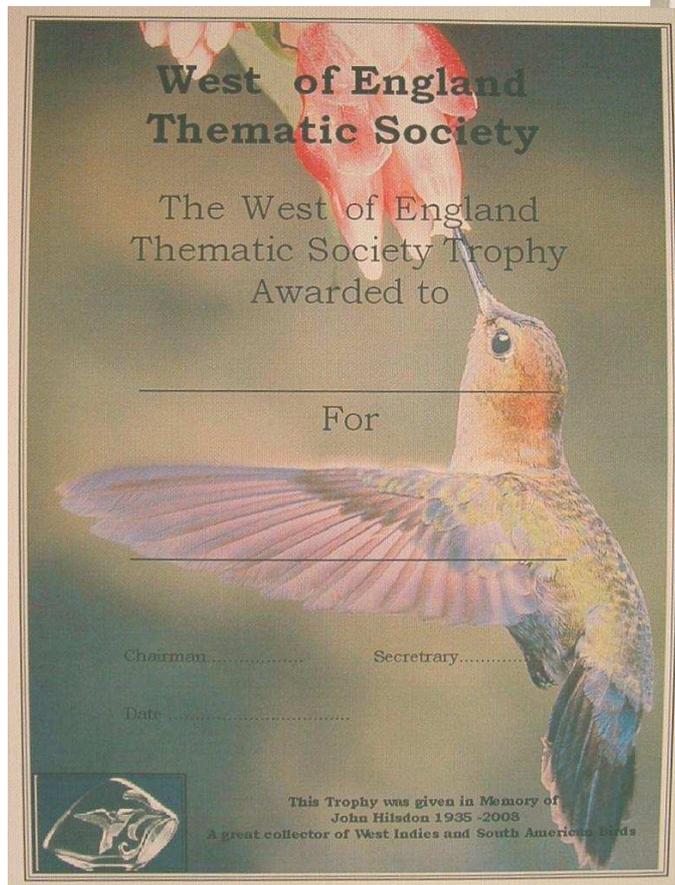
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### The WETS Trophy (*in Memory of John Hilsdon*)

– Following our acceptance of this trophy which had been arranged by member Leslie Marley and brought to our attention at last years AGM, we were delighted to actually see the trophy and the splendid certificates which have been produced to go with it. The trophy is a piece of etched glass featuring a Humming Bird one of John’s favourite birds, see the pictures of both the trophy and the certificate. Leslie suggested that the use of this trophy could be flexible rather than for a fixed purpose as some trophies, the suggestion was that some years it could be for the best competitive entry and perhaps in other years for the best article in the newsletter, etc. Members attending the WETS Day thought this was a good idea and it was agreed that in 2009 it would be awarded to the best WETS competitive entry, especially as WETS will be responsible for the Roadshow in 2010. The committee and members of WETS would like thank



Leslie for all her hard work and effort in obtaining this splendid trophy and for creating the associated certificates.

Competitive entries for this award in 2009 must be 16 sheets on any subject. They must be brought to or sent to the Autumn Meeting of WETS on October 24<sup>th</sup> at Buckfastleigh where they will be formally judged.

**We hope that as many of our members as possible will produce an entry, COLOUR COPIES OF ALL ENTRIES will be used in next years Roadshow.**

**This means you can use your best material without the fear of loss for 12 months or worse still being put at a significant insurance risk.**

**2010 WETS ROADSHOW** – will be formed from copies of the WETS Trophy Entries as stated above. **Let’s make this a really good show.**

As already stated no original material will be used. The Wessex Federation have in 2009 displayed only colour copies and all who have seen it will agree it’s a splendid show and has allowed some high quality material to be seen that would not normally appear in such a show.

By following this lead we should be able to show the best of Thematic Collecting raising the profile of our discipline and win a few more converts.

**“Here be Dragons”** – is the statement on many old seafaring maps and formed the basis for the fascinating display by David Griffiths at our WETS Day at Ashburton. Some members had asked "How can anyone display and talk for over an hour about England's St George slaying one of those monsters which is on the Welsh flag?". David's splendid gold medal display answered this question in style. However as David was quick to point out, St George was not British and the tale although part of British folklore almost certainly was adopted from elsewhere. His stamps and other philatelic material took a strong WETS attendance back over 100's of year's, he had even found a Mullready letter with a dragon. David demonstrated that the Dragon represented the unknown in all countries around the world with the Chinese having a total of nine dragons representing all aspects of their culture. There are even modern books which portray the Dragons of today's world. Talking of books David had an impressive number of reference works collected over a number of years, proving the point once again about the importance of research for any exhibit. The worldwide web was also mentioned as a good research tool which could highlight the international aspects of Dragon belief and associated philatelic material produced around the world featuring the Dragon. It was pointed out that in our own culture the Christian Church banned the reference to dragons as they took the view that the dragon was the anti-Christ or devil, hence the very few instances of dragons appearing on British philatelic material, unlike the rest of the world.



We were shown how the Dragon overcame fire, flight, water and every other frightening element with philatelic material being produced to fit all the aspects discussed.



For those with a military theme it was pointed out that even the Romans used the Dragon as a symbol of one of their regiments. The pendants carried by one of the Roman Legions had the appearance of Dragons in flight. That modern Dragoon Regiments owe their histories back to these Roman Legions. The postcard lovers had Mother-In-Law cartoons with pictures that fitted the "dragon" theme.

Mary Claydon thanked David for his splendid display which was much enjoyed by all who attended. There was a bonus for WETS members as David Griffiths is "dealer" and he had been provided with details of the subjects that members collected to enable him bring material addressing as many of those interests

as possible. Judging by the mass of people sorting through David's material he had done a good job. It was a great pleasure for all as our hosts "The Dartmoor Lodge" had not only re-decorated the venue but went to a great deal of trouble to make us feel welcome. We have booked the venue for next years WETS Day.

A big thanks to all who worked so hard to bring this show about, it was well worth the effort "Thank You" we all enjoyed it immensely and it must be regarded as one of the best WETS Days we have put on for a long time.



**A WORD FROM OUR CHAIRMAN** - First to those of you who were not at our WETS day at Ashburton you missed a treat. David Griffiths showed us his Gold Award collection "Here Be Dragons". I never knew there was so much to know about Dragons. We heard about their origins in mythology - China I believe has many different types of dragons - and their fame has spread world wide. As one would expect in a Gold Award collection David showed every aspect of philately illustrating dragons and his own knowledge of the subject was staggering. David is also a dealer and did a brisk trade after lunch - I got two things for my own collection including a postmark illustrating Mata Hari for my Women.

Now to our Autumn event- our meeting at Buckfastleigh on October 24<sup>th</sup>. For this meeting we have asked members to bring 16 sheets on any subject - no rules - which will be judged by our Treasurer Richard Wheeler who, as you no doubt know, is a qualified Thematic judge and has himself received a Gold Award at International level. We are hoping to make up the WETS Roadshow for 2010 from your display and would suggest we photocopy our sheets for the Roadshow this year so that none of us will be without our material.

Our next meeting will be the A.G.M. on June 20<sup>th</sup> at the usual venue in Exeter. May I appeal to all of you to try to attend. This is your chance to tell us (the committee) what you would like us to do to keep the interest in WETS going. It's no good sitting back and not having your say - we can only know what you the members would like if you tell us. This year please make a big effort and let us have a really good productive A.G. M.

## Dates for your Diary

**June 20<sup>th</sup> WETS Annual General Meeting** at Emmanuel Church Hall, Western Road (off Okehampton Street), Exeter. The minutes of the previous AGM were published in Newsletter 33 of September 2008.

The meeting starts at 2.00 pm. the Agenda for the meeting will be.

- 1 – Apologies for Absence.
- 2 - Minutes of the Previous Meeting.
- 3 - Matters arising from the Previous Minutes.
- 4 – Chairman's Report.
- 5 – Secretaries Report.
- 6 – Treasurers Report.
- 7 – Newsletter Editors Report.
- 8 – Publicity Officers Report.
- 9 – Election of Officers.
- 10 – Any Other Business (*The secretary should be advised of any items prior to 18<sup>th</sup> June 2009*)

After the AGM a display of "Along Lost Lines" will be given by Jim Wigmore, this is the entry he will be putting into the Healey & Wise Trophy Competition on behalf of the Wessex Federation. It will be on display at Midpex.

**October 24<sup>th</sup> WETS Autumn Meeting at Buckfastleigh**, the meeting starts at 2.00 pm. Bring your entries for the **WETS Trophy** the winner will be awarded our new trophy in memory of John Hilsdon. Entries may be on any subject but must consist of 16 sheets. All entries may be brought to the meeting or submitted via a committee member. Please note that we would like to copy all entries for use in the 2010 WETS Roadshow.

**Please make the effort to attend – Your voice matters.**

## ADVERTISING

**ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A NEW THEME?** A large collection of circus stamps and covers are for sale. Price by negotiation. Contact Richard Wheeler 01271 813940.

**Why not advertise your wants and sales here – Contact the Editor.**

## EVOLUTION OF RAILWAYS

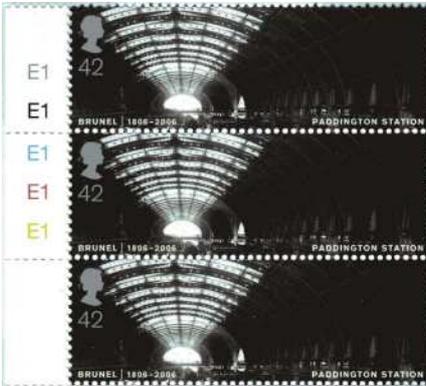
*by Jim Wigmore*

**CIVIL ENGINEERING** has played an enormous part in creating our railway system. The Civil Engineer has been responsible for producing a track bed that is as level as possible. This has involved huge viaducts, bridges, tunnels and cuttings to drive the railway through the countryside. All this has meant new and untried techniques being pioneered and developed. Our railways of today still use many of the original civil engineering works, a tribute to the skill and the solid

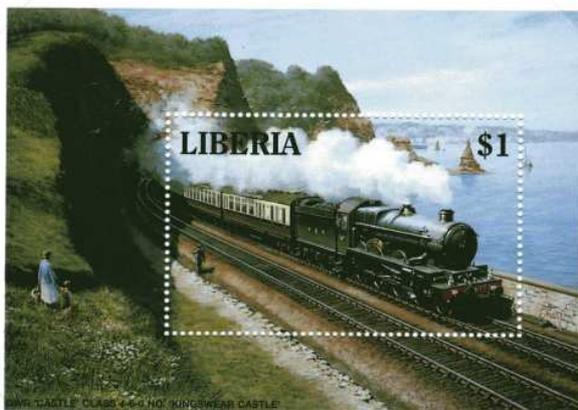


construction of the original builders who could not have conceived today's heavy usage which is way beyond the original requirement.

One of the original unique civil engineering solutions was that of sinking large volumes of wooden faggots into Chat Moss to create a firm bed for the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, an earlier first was that of the Stockton & Darlington Railway who pioneered the method of testing railway viaducts, shown on the postcard above. Having built their viaduct they had no means of actually testing the structure other than to run one of their heaviest locomotives to the centre of the structure and check for any deflection, it worked and many of the structures still stand today and are still in railway use.



Isambard Kingdom Brunel created some very handsome pieces of civil engineering in his construction of the Great Western Railway (GWR) between London and Bristol. The arched roof on Paddington Station was at the time the largest unsupported arch. The very flat arch of the bridge over the Thames at Maidenhead was a masterpiece of engineering, it was fully expected to fall into the Thames as soon as the first train went over it, it's still in use today carrying loads unheard of at the time of construction. Box Tunnel is another superb piece of engineering where the rising sun shines right through the tunnel only on the day of Brunel's Birthday. The GWR absorbed a number of other railway's including the Bristol & Exeter and South Devon Railways. The quest to cross the Tamar at Plymouth was hampered by more than the river. The Admiralty insisted the bridge was high enough to allow their sailing ships to pass underneath to reach the ammunition jetty at Ernesettle. The Royal Albert Bridge was Brunel's final piece of engineering, he lived just to see it finished, dying very shortly afterwards.



The London & Greenwich Railway found the best solution to crossing the major conurbation of London was to build a series of almost continuous viaduct, this major piece of civil engineering appeared on a cancellation dated 8<sup>th</sup> February 1989 to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its opening.



Other civil engineering achievements, such as the sea wall at Dawlish, can be found illustrated philatelically but sadly not on material produced by the Royal Mail.

It seems sad that the country that gave the world railways shows such scant regard for its own achievements or the achievements of its brilliant engineers who have given the country so much to be proud of.