

WETS

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HOW I ARRIVED AT MY THEME - BY CAR

It was 1961, and my beloved collection of fine used KG VI painstakingly assembled on a schoolboy's pocket money during the war years, had been sold in order to acquire a 1934 Riley Nine March Special (VJ5515, where are you now?). However, my stamp collecting mania was not long in recession and was soon re-activated by the appearance of the superbly printed issue of Monaco, featuring veteran cars. This was followed the next year by the far from superbly printed set from San Marino devoted to the same subject. Thus was born my interest in veteran and vintage cars on stamps combining two of my passions in life.

Through the '60's and '70's I scanned each new addition of the Stamps of the World for further issues on the theme but they were very few and far between. In the mid-'80's I realized that the centenary of the motor car was fast approaching; unfortunately this thought also occurred to a large number of stamp issuing authorities and a veritable deluge of "cars on stamps" descended on me, not least the notorious "Leaders of the World" series. With the centenary year in mind, I struggled with my philatelic instincts which dictated that my collection should be ordered chronologically by country and finally carried out a re-arrangement to show the development of the motor car over the previous one hundred years - "A Century of Motoring".

So big had the collection grown that, for exhibiting at Stampa, the Irish national stamp exhibition, it had to be split into two parts and was shown in 1985 and 1986. The judges, both members of the Royal, and renowned traditional philatelists at that, were not impressed by my efforts to convert a subject collection into a thematic one and awarded mere certificates of participation on

both occasions. Ironically, the theme of the 1986 Stampa was the Centenary of the Motor Car and my exhibit was the centre of attraction!

My faults were to show every stamp in my collection, as one would in a subject collection, so that there was repetition of famous models such as the Rolls Royce Silver Ghost which has been depicted on a number of stamps. I also deliberately and unapologetically included stamps not recognised by SG whose criteria on such matters is flexible to say the least.

However, I have turned the situation to my advantage by subtitled my display "How not to assemble a thematic collection" and have dined out on it ever since.

CARoss

AND ANOTHER PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

David Roseveare's letter in the first WETS Newsletter prompts me to write about my present, and it seems on-going, dilemma. Bear with me, for I will start at the beginning.

I started to collect stamps more than 30 years ago and started, as most youngsters do, with stamps from the mail which landed on the doormat, most of which were British and all of which were naturally "used". Then when we became teenagers, we put away childish things as I did in a tin box in the attic. In my case, it was not until I was married and with a young baby that I took up the hobby again. My father was turning out the attic and came across the tin box full of stamps and asked me if I wanted him to throw them out. Thinking that I might have missed Something Special, a missing Queen's Head perhaps, I said "No, I'll take them home and have a look through them. Needless to say I found nothing special, but while my husband was at sea or in some

exotic place with the Royal Navy and baby was tucked up in bed, it was something to keep me occupied. I started to buy all the new issues and tried to fill in the gaps of previous years as best I could. Then you get bored with just British stamps, don't you? And so you branch out into collecting another country, in my case Singapore and Malaysia. Why? Because my husband was forever telling me how fantastic Singapore was and the stamps in the catalogue which I borrowed from the library looked interesting. He never did get what was known in the R.N. as "A married accompanied draft". So one of the first things he did when he retired was to take my daughter and me out to Singapore and Malaysia on a fantastic three week touring holiday. On our return I set about re-arranging my collection of stamps and other material into a journal of our visit. This is what turned me into a Thematic Collector. I found that not only stamp collectors found my journal interesting; family and friends also were willing, if not eager, to have a look through.

I sold or gave away any Singapore or Malaysian stamps and material that I had not used for the journal. But what to do with the British collection? Should I sell the whole lot at a loss and start afresh or find a theme within it to use as a foundation. I am endeavouring to do the latter. But what theme to choose? I do not want the boring Birds, Beasts or Butterflies. Something unusual! Every Thematic collector I meet seems to have found such a brilliant idea for his theme which makes me all the more frustrated and eager to find a theme that is really special.

My first idea was "The Royal House of Windsor"; then I saw Mary's fantastic collection.

So I put together "Welcome on the Mat" with Greetings Stamps but most of the material is se-tenant or in booklets and difficult to display; but it might come to something given time.

Another idea to use most of the material I already had was "The History of the Royal

Navy" but this proved to be too large a subject. So I made it smaller. What about "Conveying the Royal Mail". This still did not enthuse me. Then I thought I had it with my next idea, "Tea". It would mean abandoning most of the material I already had but still I might at last get started. So I looked through the catalogues for stamps relating to the subject and the once bright flame flickered and died. I was back in the black pit of despair. Would I ever find a subject which would kindle a flame that would burn into a fire? I have decided that themes have to come of their own free will and it is just no good trying to force them out!. My main problem has been that, with my paternal aunt and her cousin, I have been researching our family history. This has taken up a lot of my time, enthusiasm and money. I am now hoping that the two interests will come together with perhaps "The History of London from 1865" (the year my ancestor moved to Westminster and joined the Metropolitan Police Force. I was born in Hammersmith Hospital. So maybe! I do hope so! I feel Thematic Collecting is the best way to collect stamps. It can interest everyone, not just a few stamp collectors. David's "Gandon" display - congratulations on the Silver; well deserved. Mary's "Royal Families of Europe" and Lesley's "Whales" are extremely interesting and appealing to everyone. If only I could find a theme half as interesting! If I do, I just hope I can put it together half as well as they have theirs. Wish me luck. I need it!

Linda Ann Summerson

19TH APRIL 1997 A THEMATIC DAY
At the Dartmoor Lodge Hotel, Pear Tree
Cross, ASHBURTON.

Mrs Nancy Gee on **The Boy King**
(Michael of Romania)

Booking Fee £4.00. Only £3.50 to
members of WETS. Contact Mrs Lesley
Marley, 38 Chappledown Rd, Torpoint.
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