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IN THIS ISSUE - Thematic Mania, The Report of our November 2002 AGM, Jingju (The Story of Beijing Opera), How we got on at Chester 2002. What do you collect - How & Why. Plus various Snippets.

THEMATIC MANIA

- How do thematic collectors choose a topic to fill their



Fire Pumper
The Fire Pumper brought greater fire safety to nineteenth century America.

thematic pages? The reasons are endless, we did however at the WETS Meeting in November have an insight into two reasons, both leading to fine displays. Ken Ramsey looked back over his 30 years working as a fireman with "The History of the Fire Service", whilst Jim Wigmore featured the life and times of Cyprus with "Aphrodite's Island". Ken's career in the fire service had spanned 15 years in Essex, with a further 15 years in Dorset, and his knowledge was well worked into his display using stamps covers, postmarks, etc, from all over the world.



was emphasised by four 1974 stamps. The very first hand pump engine from 1766 was featured on one issue and stressed just how long Britons have fought fires. While others showed the very first steam engine and the first to carry a giant ladder of the type which has become a part of everyone's view of battling fires. The USA featured engines from the 1860s, 1981, and 1985, while the man who pioneered fire fighting in America, Peter Stuyvesant, was featured on a 1948 stamp. The display features material from all around the world, and Ken regularly shows a full display of 120 sheets to clubs around the South West area.



Great Britains pride in the work of the firemen according to Jim Wigmore who was a National Serviceman with the Royal Air Force in Cyprus. "How can you not be fascinated by an Island that has over 8000 years of recorded history, has been part of the ancient Greek Empire, linked to both the Egyptian and Phoenician Empires, became part of the Eastern Roman Empire, was given to Richard the Lionheart, sold to Venice, and taken by the Ottoman Empire." Much of this has been featured on the stamps and postal markings of modern Cyprus, although many of the old postal markings carry names that go back 1000's of years and feature in the island history. Such as that at Enkomi which goes back to the Bronze age.

This is the island where the Aphrodite, Daughter of the God Zeus, was born from the surf, according to the fable. Not having returned to the island since 1962 Jim maintains an interest in the islands history and its stamps, postal markings, etc. The thematic display of "Aphrodite's Island" is an introduction to a very well developed collection of stamps and postal history of this fascinating island, Jim has shown widely, as he is also the Membership Sec. of the Cyprus Study Circle, an international organisation.



MINUTES OF THE WETS AGM - Held at Buckfastleigh on 16th November 2002

Apologies were received from: David Roseveare, Jill Prideaux, Andrew Austen.

There was an attendance of 18 members plus 1 guest.

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting. Members were reminded of the date of the Workshop at Dartmoor Lodge on April 5th to be given by Christine Earle and Sheilah Foster. An invite will be circulated to all members, see the note below.

Treasurer: A copy of the accounts is annexed in the Minute book. Proposed they be adopted Jim Wigmore, seconded Margaret Morrell. The Treasurer outlined changes to the Packet rules, bringing them into line with current operation of the packet - agreed. Proposed Ray Morgan, seconded Anne Moorshead.

The AGM to be held in June in future, this had been previously proposed - agreed. Proposed Pamela MacDowall, seconded Tony Smith.

The question of joining the ABPS was discussed. All members are already members of ABPS through their membership of other clubs and societies in the Federation, it was decided to leave this until a later date.

On his retirement as Auditor Peter Burden was thanked for his work since the formation of WETS. The new Auditor is Andre Poitier. Proposed Pearl Buxton, seconded Vicki Wigmore.

Newsletter: Thanks were given to the co-editors. Copies of the Newsletter were entered in the Literature class at Chester 2002. Members were reminded that items are always required for the newsletter.

Packet Secretary: More books are required for circulation. Due to family commitments Pamela will only be able to continue as Packet Secretary for another year. Anne Moorshead volunteered to assist and eventually run the Packet

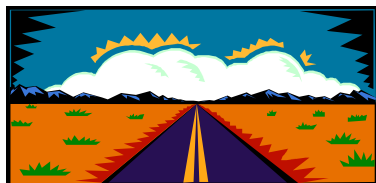
Election of Officers: Wendy Lambie proposed the existing officers be re-elected 'en bloc', seconded Margaret Morrell. The Chairman asked all to consider the fact that the society should consider changing its officers if for no other reason than they have been in place for a long time and are not getting any younger.

Any Other Business: It was requested a different venue might be found for the 2004 WETS Day held annually in the Spring. Secretary to see if Buckfast Abbey would be suitable.

Following the AGM - members gave the following 32 sheet displays.

A History of the Fire Service - Ken Ramsey

Aphrodite's Island - Jim Wigmore



"Philatelists have it licked for the coming season." - So reported the local paper when reporting that the WETS Roadshow would be shown at the first meeting of the year for the Brixham Stamp Clubs 2002-03 season.

WETS Members are reminded that we need a series of displays for the 2004 Roadshow, these may be 8, 16, or 32 sheet displays. Members willing to offer displays should contact the Chairman, and bring their display material to the November 2003 meeting or hand it in by arrangement earlier.

**THE WETS ROADSHOW IS OUR SHOWCASE & AN ENCOURAGEMENT FOR OTHERS TO JOIN
PLEASE ENSURE YOUR CLUB BOOKS OUR 2004 ROADSHOW**

WHAT DO YOU COLLECT, HOW & WHY? - Judging from replies to our survey of the same name, Animals seem to be the favourite theme among WETS members. Cats, Dogs, and Farm Animals head the topic list, while those who want to get stamps flying into their albums, go for Birds and Butterflies. Flowers feature strongly, with Lilies best of the bunch, while those having interests in man made products put Railways at number one, followed by Aircraft, and Ships. Performing Arts in various forms figure strongly, with Music, Composers, Instruments, and Choirs being heard too.

The majority go for mint rather than used stamps, while of the 21 members who responded, only 5 stated they do not save First Day Covers. Our respondents include Postal Stationery and Postcards relevant to their theme, and all except one stated they include Special Cancels. Almost all members say they have philatelic interests beyond thematics. And how long have they been collecting thematically - one goes back over 30 years, with many collecting thematics for around 20 years, the average time spent on our unorthodox collecting habit works out at around 11 years.

TELL US WHAT YOU COLLECT & WHY

INTRODUCING JINGJU (BEIJING OPERA)

By Mike Watson

JINGJU: A national treasure with a history of 200 years. In the 55th year (1790) of the reign of Emperor *Qianlong* of the *Qing* Dynasty, four big *Huiban* Opera Troupes entered the capital and combined with *Kunqu* Opera, *Yiyang* Opera, *Hanju* Opera and *Luantan* in *Beijing's* theatrical circle of the time. Through a period of more than half a century of combination and integration of various kinds of opera there evolved the present *Jingju*, the biggest kind of opera in China, whose richness of repertoire, great number of artists, performances, audiences, and profound influence are incomparable in China.



Jingju is a synthesis of stylised action, singing, dialogue and mime, acrobatic fighting and dancing to represent a story or depict different characters and their feelings of joy, anger, sorrow, happiness, surprise, fear and sadness.

The repertoire of *Jingju* is mainly engaged in tales of preceding dynasties, important historical events, emperors, ministers, generals, geniuses and great beauties, from ancient times through to Revolutionary P R C. The musical melodies may be classified into two groups: "*Xipi*" and "*Erhong*", guiding pattern, original pattern, slow pattern, quick pattern, and desultory pattern being their chief patterns. The main musical instruments are *jinghu* (a two-stringed bowed instrument with a high register), *yueqin* (a four-stringed plucked instrument with a full-moon-shaped sound box), *Sanxian* (a three-stringed plucked instrument), *suona* horn, flute drum, big-gong, cymbals, small-gong, etc. The costumes in *Jingju* are graceful, magnificent, elegant, and brilliant, most of which are in handcrafted embroidery. As the traditional Chinese patterns are adopted, the costumes are of an high aesthetic value. The types of facial make-ups are rich and various, depicting different characters and images, there are numerous fixed editions of facial make-up.



There are four (main) role types:

SHENG Male, several categories: Senior, Junior, Acrobatic, Junior Acrobatic, Child, Red-face, Poor, Official, etc. These are classified according to the role's characteristics. Male roles are either civil or military. The actors themselves are mainly trained for three main parts: *Lao Sheng*, a middle-aged or old man who wears a beard, *Xiao Sheng*, a young man, *Wu Sheng*, a man of military tenor, especially skilled in acrobatics.

DAN Female, quite often taken by a man, early in the 18th Century, at the time of Emperor *Chien Lung*, women were not allowed to appear on the same stage with men. Six main types of *Dan*: *Qing Yi*; modest and virtuous, *Hua Dan*; flirtatious, *Gui Men*; a young married girl, *Dao Ma Dan* a stronger, more forceful character, usually a woman general, *Wu Dan* the female acrobat and *Lao Dan* an old woman.



JING Male, with gruff, bass voice and grotesquely painted face together with his swaggering self-assertive manner all combine to make him the most forceful personality in most scenes in which he appears. The *Jing* has a vivid painted face: red for good, white for treacherous, black for brusque, and blue for wild, i.e. a bandit would have a blue face. All *Jing* actors wear a heavy, ornate costume with a head-dress and a padded jacket, underneath to enhance the effect,

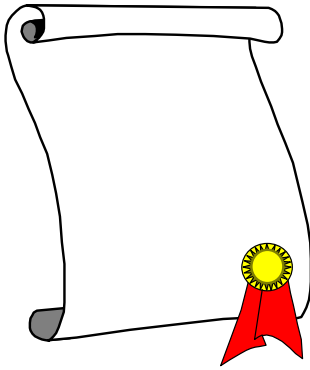


CHOU Comedy actors who generally play the role of a dim but likeable and amusing character with blinking eyes and all the appropriate gestures. Sometimes the *Chou* can be a rascal, with a slightly wicked nature.: *Wen Chou* who is usually a civilian, such as a jailor, servant, merchant or scholar and *Wu Chou* who performs minor military roles as a soldier and must be skilled in acrobatics. Costume is either elaborate or fussy if of high social position but simple if of low social standing.



In our next issue Mike will be showing more stamps from China and explaining the stories they tell.

(The information in this issue will be fascinating to anyone who is producing a thematic collection about the theatre or the performing arts - information such as the above is very hard to come by. Nobody produces definitive information about the meanings of the scenes on Chinese Stamps. We are given to understand that these stamps may be difficult to obtain, and may not be cheap, there is an insatiable demand from within China itself. - Ed.)



CHESTER 2002

- How many clubs and societies actually have a newsletter, let alone one that is produced in colour, not many I suspect. This fact encouraged us to submit copies of our newsletter into the literature section of Chester 2002. Based upon results this may not have been one of our smartest moves, we only received a BRONZE. The judge's comments make some interesting reading.

1 - Needs more Content (*Did they actually look inside?*) 2 - Too much emphasis on GB material. (*They definitely did not look at the content. A proper look at the content shows material appearing from all around the world*) 3 - Needs running headers and footers (*We fail to see the value of this in a four page newsletter - page numbers we could usefully add.*) We have now added a

content list to the front page. It has always been our opinion, and still is, that judging should be fair, and any comments given should be constructive. In this case we do not believe this actually happened, and I feel sure that WETS members will have their own opinions on this subject.

Those given to date are un-printable.



WETS Newsletter - did anyone actually read it - No - never mind - BRONZE then, OK with everyone - all we need now are some useless comments.

NEW PACKET SECRETARY

- Please note that due to personal circumstances our Packet Secretary Pamela McDowall has resigned, and the post is now being filled by Anne Moorshead who can be contacted on telephone number 01395 578495. We would like to thank Pam for her efforts in both starting the packet and building it up to that which it is today, and we wish Anne every success in her new role. The packet always needs new contributors, and support from our members, please ensure that all information relating to the packet is now directed at Anne. **A COPY OF THE PACKET RULES IS INCLUDED WITH THIS ISSUE**

THEMATIC WORKSHOP

- This will be run by WETS at the Dartmoor Lodge Hotel, Ashburton on 5th April 2003. The workshop will be presented by Christine Earle and Sheila Foster who have both given superb displays to WETS in the past. This will be an excellent opportunity to find out the fundamentals of thematics from the experts, in an informal setting. You will find the booking form included with this newsletter, your booking must be with us by 28th March 2003. If you have a friend or fellow collector who is interested in thematics, but is not sure how to start, persuade them to join you. Cost for the day is £4.00 for members, or £4.50 for non-members - this includes the cost of refreshments on arrival. Lunch may be purchased at the Hotel from a varied and interesting menu, or you may make your own arrangements.

THIS IS GOOD VALUE - FOR A SUPERB DAY

2003 SUBSCRIPTIONS

- Your subscription for 2003 is now due, still good value at £2.50, remember if you wish to continue to receive the packet, you must include the insurance fee of £1.00 with your membership fee. Your membership fee Invoice and Thematic Workshop can all be cleared using the form included with this newsletter. Your subscriptions, plus Thematic Workshop bookings should be sent to our Treasurer, Richard Wheeler - details on the form - all cheques should be made payable to WETS,

PLEASE PAY PROMPTLY

THE NEXT WETS NEWS

- will appear in time for the June meeting. Contributions should reach us by no later than 5th April, and should include both text and full colour illustrations. If you do not have the facility to produce the illustrations yourself, send the originals to the editor. All originals will be copied with great care, and returned within days. Circulation is now to ALL members, you have no excuse for not knowing what is going on within WETS. Both WETS and WETS News depend on your contributions - **KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK** and help us maintain our high standard.

SUBMIT YOUR COPY TODAY