



West of
England
Thematic
Society

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Estate Agents? The President didn't need one when making a purchase



Tony Smith writes - The United States is the fourth biggest country in the world... territorially that is! But in 1783 when the War of Independence ended it was anything but a 'super state' and foreigners still controlled plenty of adjoining land. So what did an 'independent' nation have to do if it wanted to expand its borders? The USA put cash before bash and went to the bank!

In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson cast his eye on the vast territory in the heart of North America which the French had 'bought' from Spain some years earlier. He heard rumours that Napoleon Bonaparte wanted money to support a war back in Europe so US negotiator James Monroe was sent to France seeking a 'For Sale sign. He was amazed that Napoleon quickly offered to sell 800,000 sq. miles for \$15 million. Not surprisingly, the sale was quickly agreed. The deal became known as The Louisiana Purchase (SG 1017). Jefferson didn't even know what he had bought except that it ran north-west up the River Mississippi from St Louis with mountains, forests and rivers plus only small tribes of Indians living there.



The President recruited an expedition to explore the territory with Meriweather Lewis and William Clark (SG 1065) in charge. In two years they reached the Pacific and Jefferson realised a major addition had been made to their country.



Having decided that to obtain land it was better buying than battling - as the European nations had done in the past - the US next agreed the Gadsden Purchase (SG 1025) with Spain in 1853. This time they added some 30,000 sq. miles in modern New Mexico and Arizona. The \$5 million enabled them to build a major rail link to the Pacific from Texas, territory that the US had also bought three years before.

Andrew Johnson was the next President to remember offering hard cash to countries for land they didn't want. He sounded out the Russian Tsar about a barren land which had been their colony since 1744 and called Russian America. Again, the discussion was brief In 1867 the US representative William Seward and Russia's Prince Maksutov agreed a purchase of \$7 million for 586,400 sq miles (5G1303). The local Eskimos and Indians called the area Alaska, meaning "the big country" and it meant that for the USA. It added another 20 per cent to its territory - twice the size of Texas. The Bering Sea around Alaska was important for American fishing boats sailing from San Francisco but it was many years later when its strategic importance was realised so, after almost 100 years as a 'district' to Oregon, Alaska became a full state in January 1959.



The USA tried another style of 'buying' territory when in 1893 they helped topple the queen of the Hawaii Islands group in the Pacific and helped the locals set up a republic.. But the republicans wanted things their own way so in August 1898 the US annexed the islands. In August 1959 (SG 1133) Hawaii became the 50th state of the United States, adding another 6,450 sq. miles to its influence area. Another Pacific Island group which may have taken the same route were the Philippines. Spain had controlled them since the 16th century but at the start of the 19th century they ceded the islands to America for \$20m. In 1935 the Philippines were given US Commonwealth status (SG 483/7) but later successive US governments vetoed full independence. World War II and the Japanese invasion changed



the situation and when General MacArthur finally freed the Philippines the Americans settled for a republic in 1947 with a deal of financial aid in exchange for air bases.

Today even the greatest of nations cannot 'buy' foreign land. But there are other ways. Recently, seeking an Indian Ocean base for ships and planes, the US agreed a deal with Great Britain. The 4,000 local natives on the tiny island colony of Diego Garcia were moved thousand of miles to East Africa. Surprisingly, for a place so secret, the British a recent BIOT issue showed aerial maps of the island first discovered by a Portuguese ship 500 years before.



Anti-Slavery MP awaits recognition Tony Smith writes - William Wilberforce was the man who battled 30 years in Parliament to abolish slavery in the British Empire. But he could spend as long time waiting to be honoured on a GB stamp. Until then you will have to settle for this cancel from his constituency, Hull, marking the 150th anniversary of his ending slavery in March 1853.

Early on he was practically alone as he called for the ending of a disgrace which for 400 years had put profit before people and led to the death of millions of men, women and children. Others slowly joined him and formed an Abolition Society in the 1780s telling the British public -- slavery had long since ended at home -- about the abysmal lives still being forced on people as they worked on the other side the Atlantic.

In 1791 he first tried to get a ban on buying Negroes from their own rulers in West Africa then transporting to America. It was passed by the Commons but rejected by the Lords. The Commons v Lords battle continued until in 1834 the Upper House conceded and the Royal Assent was passed.



Wilberforce, his health hit by the struggle, died on July 29th only days after he achieved his goal. Several countries have marked the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, including Anguilla and St Vincent showing the MP from Hull. Canada has shown their abolitionist Josiah Henson as have the French with their activist Victor Schoeler. The



Portuguese and Spanish had begun the trade of buying natives from West African rulers and selling them to the New World plantation owners, West Country nobles like John Hawkins soon joined in. In the 1500's he repeatedly sailed from Plymouth to Guinea, collected 500 slaves and eventually exchanged them for goods to sell back in England.

WETS know their ABC

At the June 2004 AGM the members of WETS agreed to do a return to their roots meeting in November 2004 by bringing to the meeting thematic material and displays which fitted the criteria of ABC. The idea was to have a bit of fun, but also to actually produce something for the meeting that could possibly be used for the 2006 Roadshow. We had a very well attended meeting and were absolutely staggered by the response. No size of display had been specified and members brought along everything from 8 sheet displays to 32 sheet displays. Using the 4 display frames that could display 64 sheets per session we filled them twice, well done to all who attended. Our ABC session was indeed great fun and we will be looking to do DEF perhaps at the November 2005 meeting. There is no doubt that we will have a most interesting display for the 2006 Roadshow. A most enjoyable time was had by all and WETS proved they really know their ABC's.





THE BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

Following representation by WETS the British Thematic Association will be bringing their Roadshow to the South West on 24th September 2005. The venue will be the Dartmoor Lodge Hotel, Ashburton and will be open to all WETS Members, BTA Members and any other collectors who may be interested. The programme details are as follows:-

- 10.30 - 11.30 - Members Displays
- 11.30 - 13.00 - Speaker - Colin Mount "Pig in the Post"
- 13.00 - 14.00 - Lunch
- 14.00 - 16.00 - Workshop (with break for Tea).

There is no charge for attending, delegates will be required to pay for their lunch or make their own arrangements. The format of the Workshop will be advised to all delegates prior to the day.

All interested members should advise Mary Claydon as soon as possible please, we do need to advise attendee's in advance, see the head of the newsletter for Mary's details.

WETS Thematic Day 2005

Will be held on 23rd April 2005 at the Dartmoor Lodge Hotel Ashburton. This year's Speaker is **Brian Sole**, the current President of BTA - the subject is **"Go by Cycle"**. The charge for the day is £5.00 Members, or £5.50 for none members. **A booking form for the day is included with this newsletter or contact Richard Wheeler details at the head of the newsletter.**



THEMATICA 2005 - INTER-FEDERATION COMPETITION

There is to be an Inter-Federation Thematic Competition during this years Thematica which will be held on 25/26th June 2005 at the Carisbrooke hall 63 Seymour Street London W2. WETS have been invited to submit a 16 sheet entry. The judging will be in accordance with the rules for the Thematic Class at Stampex. **If a member of WETS would like to submit an entry on behalf of WETS** full details and the entry form can be obtained from the Editor details above. The entry will need to be submitted by the 13th May 2005 and the sheets submitted by 3rd June 2005.

STAMPEX VILLAGE GREEN 22-26 February 2006

WETS have been asked to take part in this event which will be none competitive. We have been asked to provide thematic material to fill 12 frames each holding 16 sheets. Your committee have met and discussed this situation and feel that as a society we could meet this challenge. We have had to make the decision without full consultation with our membership in order to submit our agreement by March 2005. Various WETS members will be asked to consider submitting display material. WETS will get the material to the venue and collect the material once released after the event. It has been considered that we could use the November 2005 meeting to gather the material for display. Further details will be given to members at our next meeting. **THIS WILL AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO ADVERTISE WETS NATIONALLY**, we will be able to produce and give out display material about who we are and what we do.

NEW OPEN CLASS in EUROPE An extensive article written by Jose Ramon Moreno the FEPA Board Member responsible for this new class has come into the possession of WETS. It covers much of the background of how the class came about and how it will function within the European Federation. This class is very much akin to Social Philately now being talked about and introduced here in the UK. It gives some very clear guidelines on structure and how a marking system for competition would be operated at European Federation level. As the article is spread across two full sides of A4 it is too extensive to reproduce in our newsletter. Copies can be obtained from the Editor (*details at the head of this newsletter*) if you are interested, it is well worth a read and consideration.

JUNE AGM - If there are issues you wish to raise or amendments to any rules of the society or the packet you need to submit them to Mary Claydon in time for publication with the meeting notification. The notification will be issued in early May, you proposals must reach us by the end of April 2005.

The eBay story BUYING ON EBAY. Trust it's OK? Richard Wheeler writes - For the past two or three years, I have successfully purchased several stamps that would fit nicely into my thematic exhibit "Masks, Myths and the Evolution of Puppets" – that is until this last three months.

The rot set in when I saw a link item for costuming puppets from a dealership in the USA. I put in a bid, which I won. I tend to watch an item when bidding is to close, I pay immediately, generally through PayPal. The stamps didn't arrive. I sent the dealers two emails and got no reply. Four weeks after I paid, I made a complaint to PayPal who duly investigated. After a short period they informed me that the seller was at fault and that they would try and reimburse me. Re-payment finally arrived in February 2005. Another item I bought from an American source has also not materialised. One email I sent did get a response to the effect that he had sent the item some two weeks after I had paid. Nothing received. I sent another email and no response. I have now entered another complaint to PayPal but don't hold out much hope as I have checked the feedback of the seller. He has had numerous complaints made against him and he is now no longer on eBay.



They say that like London buses, things come in threes. I bid for a 'rare' stamp, which had a missing colour, from a private individual in this country and paid a considerable sum of money. It arrived O.K. and I was pleased to see it, although concerned that the stamp overall had a washed out appearance. I spoke to a local dealer who pronounced immediately that to him the colour had been removed by a chemical. I contacted the seller who was very positive and said that he had initial doubts but thought the stamp was genuine. I suggested I contact the Royal Philatelic Society for the expert committee to give a verification. This was agreed and I sent the item to them. The charge

is £34. plus. However, a few days later, having had a conversation with them over the phone, someone had taken a look at it under UV light and said it was very obvious that the missing colour had been removed. I could wait for the committee verification and pay the full amount to receive the certificate or withdraw it for expenses of £5. I spoke to the seller who agreed with the latter course and he is to send me a cheque for the return of the item.

Lesson: I would suggest to anyone purchasing items on eBay to look at the sellers feedback rating before bidding to see how positive and reliable they are. *(Our understanding is that Richard has now been instructed to Invoice the seller via PayPal for reimbursement - Ed.)*

Dutch 'Lose' their Great Explorer - Our own intrepid explorer, Tony Smith writes. - When an explorer leaves his name on the map of the world he obviously did a good job. Most thematic collectors, for example, know why Captain Cook is honoured as Britain's greatest navigator. But can you tell us exactly where the Cook Islands are apart from "in the Pacific". But I'm sure you will quickly find the island Abel Tasman discovered. Off the south coast of Australia, of course.



Which makes it hard to understand why Holland, the nation which sent him on a



great voyage of discovery in 1642-43, has virtually ignored him philatellically. Netherlands issued a single stamp in 1992 for his discoveries but there was a map of "Staete Landt" (New Zealand) rather than a portrait of the great voyager.



Holland had been operating in the South Pacific for some years before Tasman, under orders from the governor-general of the Dutch Indies Company Anthony van Dieman, was told to seek as much "terra incognita" as possible on his ship "Heemskerck". Reaching an unknown area of southern Australia, which he didn't realise it was an island, named it after van Dieman. Following his orders Tasman continued east and became the first European to find New Zealand and later headed north into the Pacific to 'discover' the Fiji Islands and other islands. A second major voyage in 1644 saw him 'discover' more territory in the South Pacific. But when Netherlands returned to the area in 2002 for an issue it was for the 400th anniversary of east India Company -- and still no Tasman.



Happily Australia has shown him on three issues plus a postal card' New Zealand shows him twice and Fiji heads a list of other Pacific countries to honour the man virtually ignored by his homeland.