



West of
England
Thematic
Society

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IN THIS ISSUE - WETS Hit Top, Another Award, Check our Web Site, Social Philately, Subs Due, WETS Auction No.1, The Royal Houses of Europe, Tapestry.



WETS Hit Top - Our display at STAMPEX Village Green looked absolutely splendid stated our Vice Chairman Jim Wigmore after his visit to the site to mount the displays on the Tuesday prior to the show opening on the Wednesday. There were some very interesting exhibits from all the other thematic societies as well as some individual displays including "A Tale of Whales" by Leslie Marley one of our members and the Vice Chairman of BTA. Our display did not perhaps have the best of sites and its write up in the BTA Booklet produced for the show was poor despite BTA being given all the details at the same time as the feature on WETS which did look splendid in the

booklet. WETS appear to be the only thematic society to have their own web site and we are one of the smaller societies. Imagine Richard Wheelers absolute surprise when he arrived on the Sunday to be told we had won the trophy for the best display in *show* (*We didn't even know there was a Trophy.*). Well done Richard, for letting Mary Claydon know immediately. This is a great tribute to all those WETS members who contributed to our display, well done and thank you all. Our Chairman Mary Claydon is thrilled to bits as I am sure we all are. Watch out for the reports in the philatelic press about WETS and our triumph, submitted by our journalistic genius Tony Smith.



Another Award - Our Treasurer is to be awarded the "The Franceska Rapkin Memorial Bowl" at Thematica in June this year. Why, for submitting the most popular article to be printed in Themescene during 2005. The committee of BTA made the award decision. Well done Richard, its fantastic that WETS members are doing so well and hitting the headlines at National level.

CHECK OUR WEB SITE - Visit www.geocities.com/westofenglandthematics and have a look at the new page we have created covering all the awards made to the society and our members including some of the pictures, we are grateful to Leslie Marley for taking and supplying copies of the pictures to us.

Social Philately - Will be the subject of our **Spring Meeting** on the 29th April 2006 at the **Dartmoor Lodge Ashburton** when the **speaker will be Pat Grimwood-Taylor**. Full details of the day are included with this newsletter along with the booking details, costs etc. **BOOK EARLY**

Society Subscriptions are now due - If you have not already paid, details of your payment and packet subscription are included with this newsletter - **PLEASE PAY PROMPTLY.**

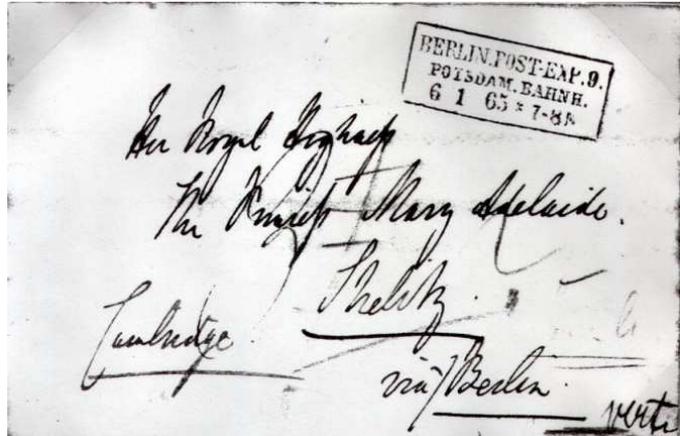
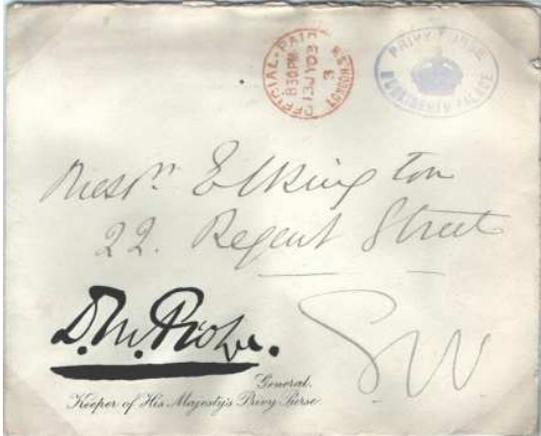
WETS Auction No.1 - You will find the Auction List included with this newsletter, its success depends upon how well it is received by you. **Please note the end date for bids is 28th April 2006 - DO NOT TRY AND SUBMIT BIDS AT THE SPRING MEETING THEY WILL BE TOO LATE. GOOD LUCK and good hunting.** This listing has also been posted on our website.

THE ROYAL HOUSES OF EUROPE by Mary Claydon



When I started collecting 'The Royal Houses of Europe' it was because of my interest in history. Relatively modern history – you can't illustrate much postally before 1840!!! For several years I collected stamps illustrating the Royal families and any other postal material that I could find. Then back some nearly 20 years ago, I purchased from Michael Jackson, who many of you may remember, a letter written by Queen Mary and the cover also written by her, and I was hooked.

In 1992 Glen Morgan F.R.P.S. published his book on Royal Household Mail, this had the effect of interesting many more people in the subject and prices rose but the information in his book made me even more interested in the subject.

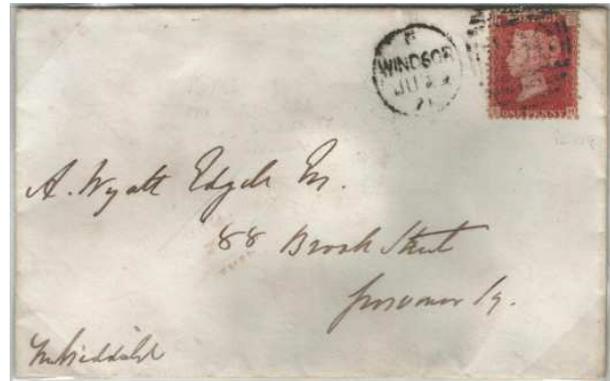


In this article I will not go into details of the Royal Post prior to the reign of Queen Victoria, when free post concessions applied, but here I would ask any German postal historian to tell me what free post applied there because I have a cover signed by the Duke of Cambridge sent to his sister Princess Mary Adelaide (Queen Mary's mother) in Germany bearing a Potsdam cancellation but no postage stamp

Three years after Victoria became Queen on 10th January 1840 Rowland Hill's uniform Penny Post was introduced. The franking privilege for Royal Mail ceased, the Queen gave this up as a gesture of goodwill and paid for her postage just like her subjects but signing the envelopes VR or The Queen.

Two sub post offices were opened during her reign one at Sandringham for the benefit of the Prince of Wales and in 1897 Osborne House had a post office opened on site for use by the Court.

Edward VII re-introduced free post for himself and his household and introduced overprinting on postage stamps 'RH Official' of which there are only two values. These are very expensive to obtain and according to Glen Morgan attractive to forgers. They were used on post from the various departments in his household. In 1902 the first sub Post Office was opened at Buckingham Palace. It sold postage stamps, postal orders, and dealt with parcels, and registered letters. – the first registration cancellation issued 4th November 1920.. The Sub Post Office was subordinate to the South Western District Office (London)



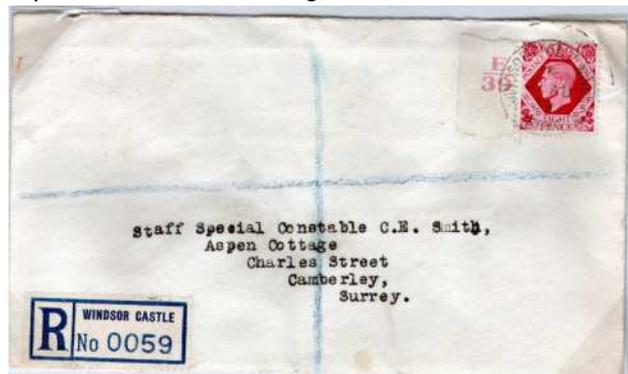
George V's reign did not bring changes, but Edward VII introduced the 'King's Flight' now the 'Queen's Flight'. These air services sometimes carry items of Court Post.

Today the volume of post handled at Buckingham Palace is vast.



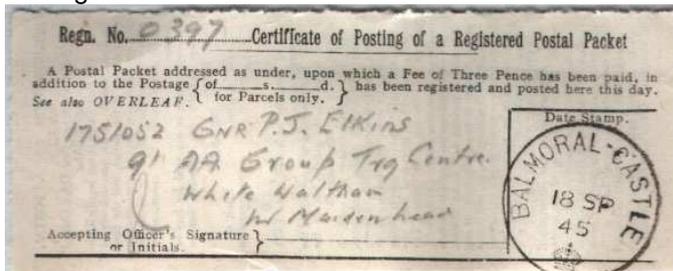
The Royal Household is now run by 645 staff assisting the Queen in her

Royal duties. This is now really a business. In the past each Department sending mail applied a cachet to the bottom left hand corner, sometimes bearing authenticating initials indicating it was mail of an official nature. Mail was collected up and sent to one of Royal Mail's Sorting Offices. Prior to March 2001 all this post went free of charge, however from April that year these were charged making it



necessary to charge the relevant Department. From 12th April 1998 at Buckingham Palace and 5th April 1999 at Windsor Castle 1st class franking machines were introduced followed by 2nd class on 2nd April 2001. No longer would all Royal Mail automatically be first class.

Mail from Buckingham Palace is franked with a blue coloured first or second class Pitney Bowes meter mark and is forwarded via the London South Mail office at Nine Elms. Items for Britain and the Commonwealth bear a machine applied Royal monogram certifying stamp. Mail from Clarence House now the London residence of the Prince of Wales and his sons is collected and sent to Buckingham Palace where it receives the standard cancellation and the appropriate Royal monogram.



Mail from Kensington Palace – the London residence of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, the Duke and Duchess of Kent, and Prince and Princess Michael of Kent is treated as mail from Clarence House. Mail from St. James's Palace – London residence of the Princess Royal and Princess Alexandra receives the same treatment.

Mail from Windsor Castle is franked with the blue coloured first or second class meter marking and forwarded to the Royal Mail local office. There is a machine applied Royal monogram on mail to Britain and Commonwealth countries.

For all the above information I am indebted to Glen Morgan without whose book I could not have gained the knowledge I now have.



The Story is in the Tapestry - As most thematic collectors know stamps are art in miniature. Perhaps that's why paintings are high on every list of favourite topics. But if you really want a real large to small theme have you thought about tapestry? Defined as "ornamental heavy textile fabric for covering walls" they go back a thousand years and

many still exist so that we can admire the work of the original craftsmen and women who made tapestries "by interweaving plain warp threads with silk or wool". Tapestry came in many colours and textures and they were art on a par with paintings, writes Tony Smith. For a stamp collector, the tapestries created during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries benefit from modern printing technology to show them at their very best. The original tapestries were often 30ft wide & 1 5ft high. To create something of that size meant smaller sections were woven individually then sewn together. The separate pieces, when linked up, often told a story. Doesn't that sound like the 'narration' of a 21st century thematic display!

The French and the Flemish (Belgians) were Europe's leading tapestry makers and they now show some of their finest on their stamps. Spain, Italy, Germany, the Scandinavians and Russia also produced fine work. Look hard in catalogues and you can find some of theirs too. Great Britain, as I'm sure you know, issued a set of eight stamps in 1966 showing the 'Bayeaux Tapestry'. But more about that later.



A 1965 French issue (SG 1673) showed part of the 14th century tapestry 'Apocalypse'. Created it for King Louis I to be hung in the royal chapel at the castle in Angers. The scene on the stamp is one of several panels still found at Angers museum. The whole measured 472ft wide and 1 8ft high. Because of its 'appeal' to rich 19th century art lovers half the original 20 pieces have long since disappeared from public view.



Religion was the theme of the majority of tapestries and was intended to hang on the walls of European cathedrals, abbey and churches. A 15th century 'Nativity of the Virgin' appears on a 1966 stamp from Dahomey (SG 268) showing the full Christmas story in 17 scenes. It was created for the church of Notre Dame.

Various towns in France and Belgium were renown for the designers and workers who created their tapestries. Jean and Philibert Gobelin established a



'factory' in Paris in 1662. Their leading designer was Charles du Brun and a 1962 French issue (SG 1575) showed how the tapestries were chosen and created. It has Louis XIV visiting the factory in 1667. The stamp shows one small section of the 40ft x 20ft tapestry. When in 1659 France and Spain marked the 300th anniversary of their Pyrenees Treaty Du Brun created a tapestry. A Spanish stamp of 1959 (SG 1312) shows that.

If you want a romantic tapestry tale try 'The Lady of the Unicorn'. This 1964 French issue (SG 1639) was ordered by a 15th century nobleman as a wedding gift to the family of his wife. It is now in a Paris museum. Flemish 'factories' an odd name for the art they created stood alongside France in Gothic times. Brussels, Ypres and Tournai had gifted workers. The design was generally drawn or sketched by a gifted artist, which became the base of the tapestry.

A 1960 Belgian stamp (SG 1712) shows 17th century work shows Countess Alexandrine of Taxis. European nobility, even royalty, wanted their textile portraits for



their palaces and estates. Again they had to be very big She is riding a horse and perhaps could feature in someone else's topic because she was 'Postmistress of Thurn & Taxis'. Look for two Belgian stamps from 1967. 'Caesar Crossing the Rubicon' (SG 2028) and 'Maximillian Hunting Boar' (SG 2029). The first is still in Toumai but the second is The Louvre. A 1969 Belgian Cultural Series (SG 2125-7) includes a 15th century tapestry 'Feats of Arms'.



Goya prepared designs for Spain's factory at Santa Barbara, Madrid, and though Velasquez never went that far his 1657 painting featured "Tapestry Weavers at the Royal Workshop". It is on Spanish issues (SG 1302 & SG 1599).

East European nations have looked back to their tapestries via stamps. Czechoslovakia, for example, tell the story of "Hero And Leander" with pairs of stamps for 1974, '75 and '76.

Hungary have also featured their weavers, the most recent showing children at play for a 2004 Europa issue.



If you want a West Country connection you will have to go to the Victoria & Albert Museum (V & A) in London. At Hardwick Hall a previous Duke of Devonshire found four XV century tapestries showing hunting scenes. The biggest was 37ft x 14ft. They were cut up for use as draperies before later being sent to the V & A.

Victor Hugo's exile in Guernsey is recalled by his "Hauteville Tapestry Room" in a 1975 issue (SG129).

So if you are looking for a different "Art" topic, why not try tapestry. Oh but don't start with Britains Bayeaux Tapestry stamps. Kept in the Cathedral at Bayeaux, **it isn't a tapestry**. Made soon after the 1066 battle and measuring 230ft z 20ins it is of woollen thread on decorated coarse linen.



Worth a spectacular "error " finale to a tapestry display though.



**THIS SPACE COULD
HAVE BEEN FILLED
BY YOU**