



West of
England
Thematic
Society

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IN THIS ISSUE – “The RED Versailles Congress Cancells”, Beware before you BUY, A Holiday in Northern Italy, WETS 2008 AGM Minutes. Advertising, Our Web site, Who was your Football Team Mate?

THE RED "VERSAILLES CONGRES" CANCELLATIONS. By David Roseveare -



Several years ago I acquired a collection of material featuring the French Presidential Election "VERSAILLES CONGRES" cancellations. Unable to research the subject more deeply I obtained a copy of "Les Cachets de Congres et d'Expositions Internationales" by Pierre Savelon who used the Pothian publication "Catalogue des Obliterations Temporaires Francaises-Non Illustres" as his source. This publication lists all the relevant marks, circular and straight-line, used during the years 1899 to 1953 and adds that they were only applied to mail leaving the chateau of Versailles in black ink. Since 1913 when Raymond Poincare became President of France all the cancels

were of the type 04 variety, (refer to my article in the previous newsletter).

Some time later, I was given three of the cancels in red ink on pieces. Two were from the year 1920, in January and September, and the other from 1932 on a fragment of the official "Chamber of Deputies" notepaper. (see illustration).

In order to find out more I wrote to the secretary of the French Postal History Society at Versailles enclosing photocopies of my examples who took them along to a meeting of the



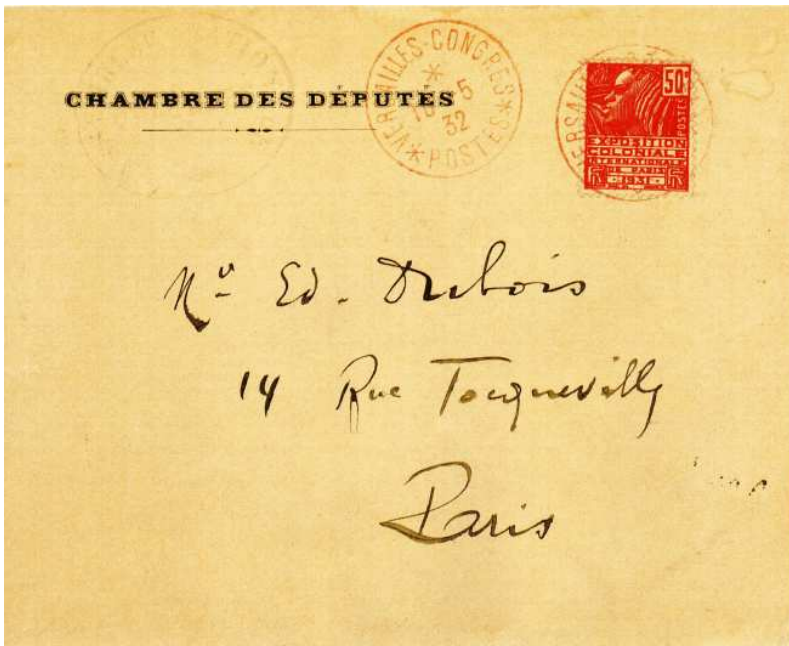
Versailles Philatelic Society to find out if anyone there could help me. A short time later I received a letter from Mr Derek Harman, (the surname might ring a bell with GB collectors), who at that time, lived at Viroflay just outside Versailles. He was a specialist in the subject but he had never seen anything like them before. He had contacted Vincent Pothian, the expert and author of many catalogues, who could not recall having seen my three dates in red but said that he had only seen a red cancel of the Peace Conference of 1919. (illustration). He thought that they might have been "souvenirs" of the events, being cancelled "by favour".

I had my doubts as one of the pieces carried the cancel on an inverted stamp, not very appealing as a souvenir. Some time after, I attended the 'Salon d'Automne' exhibition in



Paris and whilst looking through a dealer's box I came across a red cancel for the 1953 congress on a complete unaddressed cover with a clean sheet of the official "Parlement" notepaper inside. I purchased it and knowing that Vincent Pothian was in the hall, took it along to show him. He remembered reading my letter but he could not explain the cover that I had just acquired and added that he would have to make more research on the subject.

Some time after, I visited Claude Lehuard, the treasurer of the Versailles Society, the owner of a number of gold-medal postal history collections who was also unable to shed any light on the subject. He possesses a vast collection of congress cancels.. .but all in black.



Six months later I received a catalogue from Jean-Claude Fourcaut's auction in France and on browsing through its contents one lot caught my eye. It was a cover sent from Versailles to Paris in 1932 bearing a red congress cancel. Could this be a commercial cover? The only way to find out was to make a bid for it. I was successful and a fortnight later the cover arrived, (illustrated). I sent photocopies to Claude and Vincent and it appeared at that time that my example was the only one to be found that has been sent through the post. Intriguing. My own research has established that in the temporary post office set up for the event red and black inkpads were available for use, the red to be used only on printed matter in unsealed envelopes. One has to remember that over six

hundred senators and deputies were present for each congress which was only held for one day and that number does not include their secretaries etc. Imagine the hustle and bustle, the priority was to dispatch the mail, no time to worry about red or black cancels. Most of it wasn't "imprimes" anyway so the black was used most of the time. That is why they have been omitted from the catalogue. For several years after I made a note of visiting Vincent Pothian in his shop in Paris, supplying him with snippets of information. Sadly since then he has retired and all his work has ceased. Recently we have lost a number of highly respected philatelists who have done their own research into various subjects and have supplied us all with very useful information. What of the future? There is so much to be learnt about our hobby. So many unanswered questions. Who will do it... it is only us.

Beware before you buy! - Do you ignore stamps from countries which have no connection with your subject? WETS "Explorer" Tony Smith wasn't concerned when he spotted the American Topical Association was promoting its summer meeting *- at Oregon - by advertising a new set featuring explorers involved with the region's history. There was Sir Francis Drake "the first European to view the Oregon coast". Imagine Tony's feeling when in exchange for his dollars he received a Miniature Sheet and a FDC showing Devon's great sailor on an issue from **Sierra Leone**. If Sir Francis ever went there it would have been to capture slaves, long before he sailed the Atlantic and reached North America.



A holiday in northern Italy included a day trip to Venice for a WETS member. Wanting to find out if or where the city had a statue of Christopher Columbus, he went into a Tourist Information Office on St Marks Square. "Why should we have a statue of him here. He came from Spain" said a young lady behind the counter. So much for fame, even though Italy's post authorities remembered he was born in Venice and was one of the few countries to issue a stamp in 2006 to mark the 500th anniversary of his death.



Recently a Russian TV station asked its viewers to vote for the person who represented their country in history. Over two million voted and, amazingly, Stalin finished only second to Tsar Nicholas II. Lenin managed to squeeze in third but Russia's original spaceman Yuri Gargarin was well supported and there was even a top ten place for Ivan the Terrible! Winston Churchill once topped similar television poll in Britain. But look through your albums or catalogues and find how philatelists today would have picked **THE FACE** which represents Great Britain around the world. We must rule out Her Majesty, known and respected throughout the world, but who else is at the top - stampwise? Is it still Churchill, perhaps the Beatles or entertaining from another age Shakespear? If you are a betting man or woman there's a good chance Princess Di will top the list. Let the Newsletter know who you would vote for **THE PHILATELIC FACE OF GREAT BRITAIN**.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the West of England Thematic Society

Held at Emmanuel Church Exeter on June 21st 2008.

PRESENT. Mrs. M. Claydon (Chairman), Mr. R. Wheeler (Treasurer), Mr. J. Wigmore (Vice-Chairman and News Letter Editor), Mr. T. Smith (Publicity Officer), Mrs. A. Moorshead (Packet Secretary), Mr. N. Claydon, Mrs. V. Wigmore, Mrs. L. Marley, Miss E. Rees, Mrs. P. McDowall, Mrs. G. Grey, Mr. D. Herrity, Mr. R. Sambell

1. **Apologies.** Mr. G. Green (Secretary) and Mr. D. Roseveare. The Chairman explained that the Secretary was ill in bed and therefore unable to attend.
2. **Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting.** These had previously been circulated and were passed unanimously proposed by Mr. D. Herrity, seconded Mr. T. Smith.
3. **Matters arising from the Minutes.** There no matters arising.
4. **Chairman's Report.** The Chairman said she wanted first of all to thank all the people who work hard to make this Society a success, Jim Wigmore, Richard Wheeler, Tony Smith, and Anne Moorshead. She said she believed the committee would agree with her that they would welcome more input from the Members telling us if there is anything they feel would improve the Society in any way. Jim is always keen to receive articles for the Newsletter and support from the members is essential to the success of the Society. Attendance was low at the last WETS day possibly some of the members had seen the display before. In April next year we have David Griffiths showing us "Here Be Dragons" which has just won a Gold Medal at Tel Aviv. He is also a dealer 'Thames Themes' and he will be dealing on the day. Perhaps that will raise interest for a bigger turnout. But it will be first come first served because the room only holds 30. The Chairman said the Society meant a lot to her and any ideas to make it even more appealing to existing members and attract new ones would be welcome.
5. **Secretary's Report.** Firstly please accept my apology for not attending this AGM. I am at home ill in bed. This being my first year as Secretary of WETS has been a bit of a learning curve and I must thank Mary Claydon for all her help and guidance throughout the year. Thanks must also go to Jim Wigmore for his support and also to Richard Wheeler, Anne Moorshead and Tony Smith as well as other members of the Committee. The WETS meeting in October went really well and many thanks to Richard Wheeler for his Gold Medal winning display "Masks, Myths, Mime and the Evolution of Puppets". We had a good attendance at the April WETS Day for Brian Asquith's magnificent display on "The Story of Concorde" and an enjoyable lunch afterwards, I hope we will manage to get a few more members to attend next year. Finally I would like to thank the membership for supporting WETS this year and hope this will continue in the years ahead.
6. **Treasurer's Report** The Treasurer presented the accounts for the General Account and the Packet Account. The position with the accounts showed a reasonably healthy balance but he then went on to say that the insurance on the packet had however worsened the position. This led to a discussion being held later in the Agenda under the Packet Secretary's Report. The accounts were passed unanimously proposed Mr. D. Herrity seconded Mr. T. Smith.
7. **Newsletter Editor's Report.** The Newsletter Editor said he was always pleased to receive contributions to the News Letter whether long or short because it was often useful to have short items available to fill in space. He asked the membership to report anything interesting about their collections or any other aspect of our hobby.
8. **Publicity Officer's Report.** The Publicity Officer said he continued to supply information on the Society's activities to stamp magazines though sometimes the magazines cut them to a very small paragraph. It seemed a small society in the South East might get more coverage.
9. **Packet Secretary's Report.** Since June 30th 2007 seven packets have been circulated. The last two have now arrived back to base and await scrutiny and payment to vendors. This year there have been 19 names on the circulation list and 8 contributors of material. The value of the items in the 7 packets was £2,172.15 an average of £300.31 per packet. They generated sales amounting on average to £43.07 per packet - £30.17 for the year being our commission of 10% at an average of £4.31 per packet, not nearly enough to cover the insurance premium let alone the initial postage, which varies between £1.92 and £2.38 per packet. Of course the booklets have to be posted back to their owners hopefully with a cheque to cover sales. Following this report there was a long discussion during which details of the insurance needed to cover the packet. It was finally decided that the Secretary be asked to write to the contributors asking if they would be willing to continue the supply of books if they were not covered by insurance. It was agreed the Secretary would include a slip to be signed by the vendors indicating their agreement or not. Proposed Mr. D. Herrity seconded Mr. T. Smith and unanimously agreed.
10. **Election of Officers.** It was proposed Mr. Herrity seconded Mrs. L. Marley that the officers be re-elected en bloc - agreed unanimously.
11. **Any other business.** Mrs. L. Marley said that a founder member of the Society - Mr. John Hillsdon - had recently died and in lieu of flowers at the funeral there had been a collection. She had suggested to the family that a trophy of some sort might be given to WETS in John's name and they had liked this idea. At the end of the meeting Mr. Wigmore gave a display of 'Aphrodite's Island' which was much appreciated by the members.

ADVERTISING – How about advertising your sales and wants here in WETS News. The cost to ordinary members will be 50 pence. We will also consider adverts from our trade members by negotiation based upon size and the work needed to incorporate into the newsletter.

OUR WEB SITE is likely to move soon. The Wessex Federation has agreed to have its own dedicated web site and host websites for ALL its constituent clubs. This should be a help to all clubs in recruiting new members and bringing philately into the 21st Century. As soon as the Wessex site is up and working our site

will move to become part of the Wessex site. Watch this space for future developments.

WHO WAS YOUR FOOTBALL TEAM MATE?

- Having not signed on for the Fleet Street football "team" until 1968, I had to watch England's great World Cup extra-time triumph at Wembley two years earlier via television, writes Tony Smith.



But those same internationals were still there to watch, report on and talk to in the 1970s and 80s once I was working from the press box.

This was the day

when players didn't have agents so reporters regularly talked to most of them as friends.

As for asking for their autographs....? I did it only once. A neighbour's son had an incurable illness but loved football. When I explained the situation to England goalkeeper Peter Shilton he got every player in the then current squad to sign a photo and he added a personal message to the lad. Which brings me to the point of this Newsletter item – "autographed covers" as sold by several dealers. Looking through offers recently I noticed two names from that great Wembley day were usually missing. The captain, Bobby Moore, had stood alongside his team mates on the covers until 1993 when he died aged 52, but manager Sir Alf Ramsey made only a few philatelic appearances before his death in 1999. Perhaps the cover producers found him, as I did, a taciturn fellow who let his football brain speak for him. But the Wembley winner whose autograph I find hardest to find is Bobby Charlton. A long-time ambassador for English football since retirement, and knighted in 1994, he is now a director of Manchester United. His 106 international caps spell out his status to football fans and cover collectors. I suppose I could have got his signature in 1981 but you couldn't ask a team mate could you! A team mate? Oh yes, I once played with the great man. England were playing in Switzerland. Our press team asked the Swiss reporters if they would they take part in an "International". They said "No" but then one of them saw Bobby Charlton working with the BBC.

"If he plays we'll play" they said, so Bobby, then 44 years old, agreed to have a 30 minute run out. Which meant that at 43 I

had the high point of my football life... playing in the same team as Bobby. Today collecting autographed soccer covers isn't cheap. A cover with the readable names of Sir Alf and nine



Tony is third from left in back row, Bobby Charlton is front right and Terry Venables is front left.

other players (no Bobby Charlton, of course) would cost you over £600 and others range from £500 for eight or nine players to £50 featuring the hat-trick hero all those years ago, Sir Geoff Hurst. In most cases the World Cup players give a percentage of any fee to a charity. Try getting something like that from today's £50,000-a-week players! Soccer is a good theme if someone is looking something to interest a youngster. With the WHOLE world now interested in OUR game you'll find soccer stamps from everywhere. The late, great, Bobby Moore featured in Great Britain's 1996 Soccer Legends' set while, for example, Ghana included in a 2002 set, the England players celebrating with the trophy at Wembley.

A good theme. Yes. And you don't have to write big cheques to get an autographed cover.... unless Sir Bobby Charlton



is there with his brother Jack and rest of the team!

So what is your philatelic claim to fame.? – Ed

Dates for your Diary

Autumn Meeting – will be held on 25th October 2008 at Buckfastleigh starting at 2.00 pm. Members are asked to bring along 6-8 sheets on the subject "A Day Out", a Bring and Buy will follow, plus a raffle.

Spring Meeting – will be on 25th April 2009 at the Dartmoor Lodge, we hope to have David Griffiths as our speaker showing "Hear be Dragons". David is a thematic dealer and he will be dealing after lunch.