



West of
England
Thematic
Society

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IN THIS ISSUE – “The YOMPER”, “The POPES TRAVELS”, “Dates for Your Diary”, “The Railway Revolution – Railway Stations”, “Advertising”, “Our Website”.



THE YOMPER - Peter Robinson was the last marine in the line marching through the Falkland Islands with the Union flag in 1982. Known as “The Yomper”* he is pictured on this Guernsey stamp issued to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of

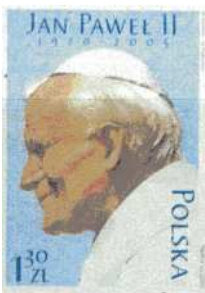
the Battle of the Falklands. “Yomp - British slang meaning - to march with heavy equipment over difficult terrain”.

At a glance you probably wouldn't recognise Falklands veteran, Peter Robinson on this stamp because his face is hidden. Peter Robinson is the man pictured in one of the most iconic images of our times. Pete's role in the war was immortalised when he was photographed walking through a snow-covered minefield towards Stanley with a Union Flag protruding from his backpack. That shot, taken in seconds, enthralled a nation and the world's press. The image also inspired a bronze statue, unveiled by Baroness Thatcher in July 1992, entitled “The Yomper”, (shown right) on display outside the Royal Marines Museum in Southsea, Hampshire. Aged 23 at the time and attached to 45 Commando. Corporal Pete Robinson was serving as a commander of an anti-tank detachment. “It was a spur of the moment thing (the picture) at that time” he said. It snowballed after that and became an image that summed up everything.



The Commando Forces Photographer, Pete Holdgate, took the picture shortly after victory was declared. Pete was serving as a Royal Navy Petty Officer but wearing the Green Beret and was aiming to illustrate how the “Commando Spirit” overcame the enemy, the weather and the terrain. Aged 30 at the time he was with Arbroath based 45 Commando. According to member Trevor Fray, Peter Robinson was for a time a Freemason in Plymouth.

THE POPE'S TRAVELS - There were no stamps from his homeland when Karol Josef Wojtyła became Pope John Paul II. A year later, when he visited Poland the Communist realised they had made a mistake. In a traditionally Catholic population thousands came to see him so they quickly issued two stamps and a mini-sheet.



Four visits followed over the years, each producing stamps and special cancels. His birthdays and anniversaries as Pope took the total to 38 issues including in 2004 a sheet of 25 telling his life story.

Many countries, including Ireland, issued stamps when John Paul II visited them.

Sadly, when the Pope spent five days in the UK in 1982 there was no such philatelic honour. Only

special cancels were used to celebrate the first visit to Britain by the Supreme Pontiff since 1531. And the Queen was missing when he met the Archbishop of Canterbury on arriving. Prince Charles represented Her Majesty.

Thematic collectors with the Papacy their topic can find cancels and postmarks from Gatwick, where he landed on May 28th, and a mass in Westminster Cathedral the same day; for May



29th when he prayed alongside the Anglican Archbishop at Canterbury Cathedral; at Liverpool, York and Coventry where thousands came to pray with the Pope. On May 31st Scotland's Murrayfield Stadium was packed to hear and see him and the next day an open air mass in Glasgow grew over 200,000. On June 2nd His Holiness moved on to Cardiff and once again thousands came to hear him. At all these stops special cancels were available.

Twenty-six years later it remains a mystery -- Why didn't Royal Mail issue at least one stamp? At least the



Vatican remembered the visit. One of its 'Journeys' set (1982 SG 821) showed the pope between Westminster and Canterbury cathedrals.

Her Majesty did meet John Paul II during a visit to Italy many years later and, it is understood, she was distressed to find the extent of the Pope's ill health.

When His Holiness died on April 2nd 2005 Prince Charles attended the funeral as the Queen's representative -- even delaying his wedding to the Duchess of Cornwall which had earlier been set for the same date.

Pope Benedict XVI celebrated his 81st birthday at the White House with President George Bush. Weeks before he had visited Australia and after these trans-Pacific and Atlantic flights he landed back in Europe to visit several countries --- a very arduous 2008. Fifty years ago such journeys by the Supreme Pontiffs of the Catholic Church were unheard of. They rarely left the Vatican.

Pope Paul (1963-78) began such trips when he travelled to parts of India, South America and Africa, but the man who decided to personally spread the word of God to the whole world was John Paul II who from 1978 to his death in 2005 visited more than half the countries on the globe.

It was typical of the man born Karol Josef Wojtyla in 1920 at a small Polish town near Krakow, grew up in harsh times during the build-up and during World War II, lost his mother through illness when he was only nine, personally found his father dead in their basement home when he was 20, and only escaped the German Commander's order "to arrest every boy and man between 15 and 50" following the 'Warsaw Rising' of September 1944 because two aunts hid him.



From this severe background, the same man became the first non-Italian pope in 450 years, the youngest pope in modern times and the second longest ever to occupy the papacy. He was also the first to visit all five Continents -- not just major nations but many Pacific islands, small states all over Africa and most Caribbean islands.

For thematic collectors with religion their topic he and his life have appeared on more than 250 stamps -- excluding Vatican issues. And the stamps tell a remarkable story. Certainly no other head of the Catholic Church once worked as a labourer in his youth, enjoyed playing football and wanted to become an actor before he decided to enter the priesthood.



He was ordained in 1946, moved to Rome in 1948 with the support of a Polish cardinal, became a cardinal himself in 1967 and was elected the Supreme Pontiff by the College of Cardinals in 1978. He was little heard of outside the Vatican but when "the Polish Pope" as he was first called, surprised when he spoke to the crowd in St Peter's Square addressing those below in fluent Italian.

The Vatican postal authorities produced the expected first stamps soon after his enthronement early in 1979. A year later they launched a remarkable series of stamps which SG catalogue refers to them as 'John Paul's Journeys'. The first set showed hands reaching out to touch the pope when he visited Mexico, Ireland, USA, Turkey and the land he felt a very personal identity with Poland.

Over the next 24 years the Vatican issued 18 'Journey' sets. Some years John Paul II visited eight or nine countries producing some 100 stamps. There were shorter journeys and issues of stamps when age and ill health reduced his later travels.

Remarkably too, stamps were issued by almost every country he visited. Most of North, Central and South America; Africa and India; the Far and Middle East; New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the smaller islands remembered his stay with at least one stamp.

Apart from John Paul's portrait, he was seen meeting children the ordinary people plus heads of state and politicians. He met millions of Christians as he travelled the world but he also became the first Pope to enter a synagogue and a mosque. He even visited a prison to meet and forgive the Turkish extremist who attempted to assassinate him in 1981.

Some called him "the political pope". He addressed the United Nations and talked with Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev and many European governments. He met Fidel Castro in Cuba.

Following his death 'In Memoriam' stamps were issued by dozens of nations adding to the scope for a thematic collection.



Dates for your Diary

Spring Meeting – will be on 25th April 2009 at the Dartmoor Lodge, the speaker will be David Griffiths who will be showing “Here be Dragons”. David is a thematic dealer and he will be dealing prior to and after his display.

Alison Burden and our Chairman Mary Claydon following a report of changes at the Dartmoor Lodge, decided to pay a visit and to have lunch there. They report that the place has been significantly improved with new decoration. As the result of this, we have moved our booking back to the larger room we used to use. We hope this improvement in facilities will encourage members to come along to this meeting. We will be issuing the full details and booking form with the next newsletter.

THE RAILWAY STATION *by Jim Wigmore* –

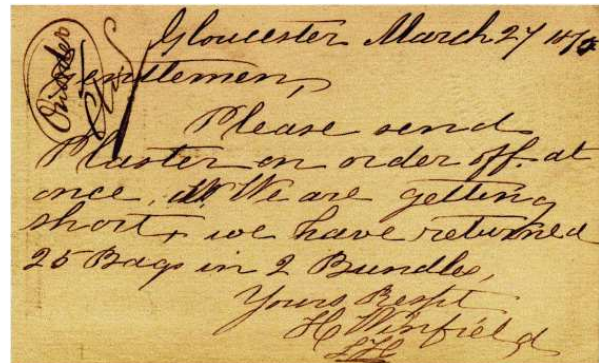
When looking at the Evolution of the Railways, one of the places we should not overlook is the Railway Station. There is lots of scope, from the large junction station to the small rural halt or the stations that have along with many railway lines disappeared. In the heyday of the railways and in many cases still today, they were either significant users of the postal system or were also acting as Post Offices and carriers for the Royal Mail. Most of the railway companies offered a railway letter and parcel service in competition to the post office.



Above is shown a cover from a letter sent by the Somerset Central Railway and cancelled at Glastonbury on 9th July 1853 a date almost a year prior to the railways actual opening. Glastonbury Station was the railway headquarters prior to its amalgamation with the Dorset Central Railway when it became the Somerset & Dorset Railway. Glastonbury Station is long gone as is the S & D.



The postcard above from March 1875 is an order being placed with a supplier of Plaster, it was posted at Gloucester Railway Station and carries a fine duplex cancel. The content requests supply of plaster and states that 25 bags have been returned.



Today we would simply go to our local builders merchants and return with the goods. How many people these days return bags.

The Headquarters of the Great Northern Railway was at Kings Cross Station in London. The letter below dated 19th Jan 1872 was an inter railway letter from the Manchester Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, both companies were at the time in dispute regarding the carriage of coal to London. Both companies no longer exist, the GNR was absorbed into the LNER at Grouping and the MS & L became the Great Central and was also absorbed into the LNER at Grouping.

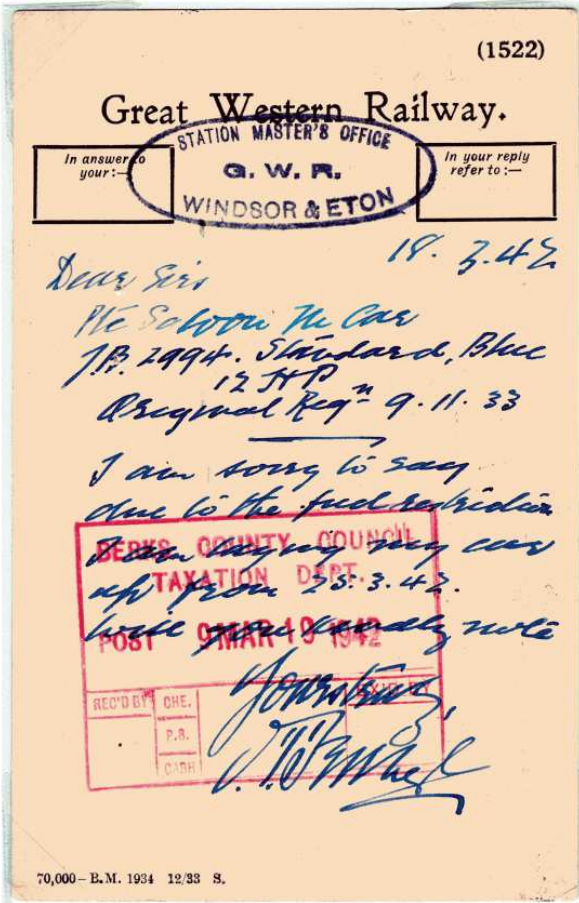


The second cover to the GNR in 1857 is a mourning cover and it carries the wax seal of Edward Dutton Cook who although at the time was working for a railway company was to become Drama Critic for Pall Mall Gazette from 1867 to 1873.

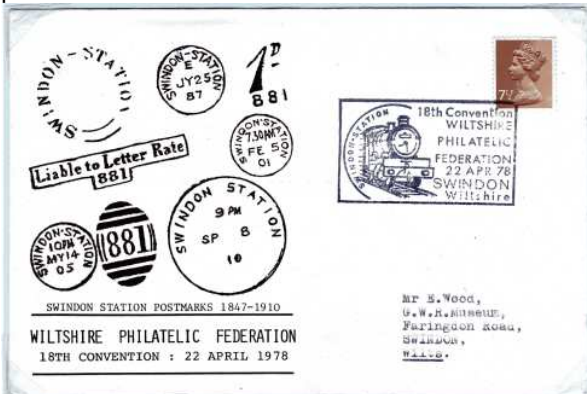
It is possible to find examples of railway station communication using the mail services prior to the introduction of the telephone as a main means of



communication. The card below is a typical example, with the Station Master at Windsor & Eton writing to the local authority.



With many railway stations having been in existence for very long periods of time a number of commemorative covers and cancels have been produced.



Wiltshire Federation at their 18th Anniversary produced a cover featuring the various cancels that were used at Swindon Railway Station which was also the site of the Main Works for the Great Western Railway.

A significant story could be built around the countries railway stations and their place in the communities they served.

The railway letter stamps could and do form quite a significant collecting interest.



The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway featured on the stamps shown above, is another Railway that disappeared at grouping and became part of the LMS. It is also possible to find railway newspaper wrappers with railway letter stamps.

All go to add to the story of the importance of the railway not only as a carrier of people and goods but also as an integral part of the community that it served and as such a part of our countries railway evolution and heritage.

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. *(We suggested this in the last newsletter and so far we have no takers – Ed)*

OUR WEB SITE the observant amongst our members will note that our website address has as suggested in the last news letter moved. It is now hosted by the Wessex Federation. This will give a major boost to all the clubs and societies who participate as they will be found more easily and open up the opportunity to attract more members by advertising their programme of events. In the case of WETS we now get a lot more hits on the site, we do not have advertising cluttering our pages and web searches find us directly. **Well done WESSEX**

**HAPPY
NEW
YEAR
TO YOU ALL**