



West of  
England  
Thematic  
Society

Founded 1986

## Newsletter No.61 May 2018

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### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY –

**Autumn WETS Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2018** at Buckfastleigh Town Hall starting at 10.30 am. The morning meeting will commence with the AGM followed by Jim Wigmore who will speak and display on “WETS its History and Productions”, this will produce some significant insights into WETS beginnings and how we have evolved. In the afternoon members are asked to produce a display on the theme of “Food & Drink” Tea/Coffee will be available and a Buffet Lunch will be provided, cost for the day will be £8.00.

### APHRODITES ISLAND

Aphrodites Island chosen by RPSL South West to be part of their display to RPSL at their London meeting in April 2018 went down very well and being the only Thematic item attracted quite a bit of attention. All members who submitted displays received a certificate shown right.



### GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR)

This new Act comes into force as of 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018. The details of the Act were discussed during a presentation given by Wessex Federation President Jim Wigmore. It was explained that Wessex Federation had formerly adopted the recommendations issued by ABPS. The President had written to all member clubs initially to advise the need to comply with GDPR and provided a copy of the ABPS Guidelines plus examples of what had been done by member clubs who had already acted to comply with GDPR. Following the recent Wessex Federation Committee Meeting on the subject of GDPR and formal adoption, all clubs were requested to Sign Data Handling Agreements (DHA's) all present signed agreements during the meeting. The President had written to those clubs not present asking for DHA's to be signed. It was also pointed out to all that any club speakers not members of Federation Clubs should be asked to sign a DHA and that any persons supplying books to club packets who are not members of a federation club should also sign a DHA.

It was agreed by those present at the WETS Day on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2018 that WETS would comply with GDPR based upon Federation and ABPS recommendations a DHA has already been signed with the federation.

WETS members have been requested to sign a DHA and nearly all have complied, the Treasurer will be contacting those few who have not as yet sent their DHA to the Treasurer who will be responsible for holding all DHA's from members of other interested parties

## WETS SPRING MEETING 2018 “The Story of Vanilla”



This was one of the most amazing displays we have ever had at a WETS meeting. Our speaker Mark Humphrey had a very extensive knowledge of Orchids gained from very significant personal research, in particular the Orchid species that produce Vanilla. We were introduced to the production of Chocolate as originally produced in South America, we were given a taste of the end product it was horrible and only became palatable with a sweetener and was further improved with Vanilla. The particular Orchid that produces Vanilla is self pollinating in so far as it

contains both Male and Female sections divided by a thin membrane. In its natural state this membrane is burst by a very tiny Bee. The process of pollination was not understood by Europeans who had examples of the Orchid but were unable to get the plants to produce Vanilla. In was many decades before the actual pollination process was actually seen and the Bee that did the pollination naturally could not be transported, so another means needed to be found. Once this problem had been solved it was then possible to produce Vanilla and we were shown an example of a Vanilla pod. Once Vanilla was available as a taste enhancer the Worlds demand far outstrips the production of Vanilla Pods and Chemists were set to work defining the various elements that made up the taste of Vanilla, a difficult task, but once perfected it now is possible to produce a synthetic material

that can give the Vanilla taste. All who attended this presentation were enthralled by this tale and the extent of philatelic material and ephemera that had been found in order to tell the story.

Mark also had an extensive collection of Orchids on philatelic material for all to view beyond his main display. It was also very interesting to know that Marks Philatelic Entry on the Story of Vanilla at International level had been judged based upon the story of Vanilla in Wikipedia and not on his personal research which was far more extensive.



## DELIVERING THE MAIL

Following an excellent Buffet Lunch put on by Vicki & Jim Wigmore and a short discussion about GDPR we were enthralled by some very interesting short displays by attendee's who found some very interesting methods of mail delivery, It was truly amazing to see what happens to our mail once we put our letter into a Post Box or we hand our Parcel into a Post Office.

The journeys that some of these items take prior to delivery was fascinating, and the horror stories of the manner in which the Post Office ruin both general material and especially philatelic material was appalling especially when it was pointed out

that postmen and women are supplied with a special hand stamp for cancelling unmarked mail.

We learnt of the death of Richard Wheeler just after Easter. Richard was the Treasurer of WETS for a number of years and he supplied the PIP Trophy to WETS to try and encourage members to better plan their exhibits. Richard's wife Cynthia in conjunction with one of Richards sons provided us with a lovely Obituary that follows. We would like to thank his family very much for the information supplied and to

pass on our heartfelt sympathies as Richard was highly respected in WETS and he is very much missed.

## **Richard Wheeler - OBITUARY**

It is with great sadness that Richard passed away on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at the age of 84.

From the age of five, Richard had a lifelong passion for puppetry and entertainment. He gave his first paid puppet show, aged 9, at a local aircraft factory.

Richard acted in several school plays. These early experiences blossomed into a love for theatre, which continued throughout his life. No matter where he lived, he always found a local dramatic group with which to stage productions, both amateur and professional.

At fourteen, Richard wrote his first pantomime. Without telling his parents, he booked the local hall to stage it. They only found out when the vicar's wife phoned to say he could borrow curtains from the Church. Fortunately, it was a sell-out, and he went on to write and appear in two further pantomimes in 1949 and 1951. On leaving school, Richard, wanted to join RADA and become an actor, but his father refused. Instead, he went to Westminster Hotel School, training as a chef, followed by a Hotel Management course.

Richard took an RAF commission as a Catering Officer, later becoming a Flight Lieutenant. Notable highlights saw him as Head of Forces Broadcasting in Aden, and setting up supply depots in Bahrain for the Suez Crisis.

On demob, Richard became a professional entertainer, appearing under his two middle names, John Dudley. He toured UK theatres and carnivals performing with marionettes and magic. He was head Puppeteer for "The Telegoons" TV series with Harry Secombe, Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers.

Richard became a Member of the Inner Magic Circle with Gold Star. As Chairman of the Concert Artists Association with Leslie Crowther as President, he made great friends with the cast of Dads Army.

After founding a theatrical agency and production company, Richard presented many top musical names at Bishop's Stortford Rhodes Centre such as Tom Jones, The Animals and David Essex.

As theatres closed, Richard became a toastmaster. He was one of the busiest in London, and was eventually President of the Society of London Toastmasters. He met many members of the Royal Family, and even appeared on Blue Peter.

Richard married Cynthia in 1965. They raised two sons, Robert and Stuart.

In 1966, Richard returned to Westminster Hotel School as a lecturer.

He continued lecturing for the next 22 years. Each Summer during the 1970s, Richard presented puppet plays in the Royal London parks as The Dudley Telepuppets. He performed with this puppet theatre at stately homes and even Cheltenham Race Course.

In 1978, Richard was invited by Jordan's King Hussein to the Palace in Amman to entertain at the New Year's Day Children's Party.

Richard became Principal Lecturer at North Devon College in 1979, retiring from lecturing nine years later. He opened a self-catering complex and restarted full time children's entertainment, finally retiring at Christmas in 1999.

In retirement, Richard returned to his boyhood hobby of philately, taking an interest in Thematics and joining WETS. He served as Treasurer and Membership Secretary. He was also a member of the British Thematic Association, becoming Chairman in 2008.

Between 2006 and 2015, Richard exhibited his display of puppet related stamps, winning a collection of awards. The exhibit was initially called "Masks, Myths, Mimes and the Evolution of Puppets", later changing in 2012 to "The Evolution of Puppetry".

Richard's exhibit went to Torquay, Dublin, Essen, Paris, Vienna, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Thailand, India and South Korea. In 2012, at Stampex, in London, it won a Gold Medal and Best in Show.

Richard is survived by his wife, Cynthia, their two sons, two granddaughters, and his older brother Geoffrey.

