
* THE NEWSLETTER OF THE *
* EASTBOURNE AND SOUTH DOWNS *
* PHILATELIC SOCIETY *

WINTER 1980/1

SEATED AT THE TYPEWRITER

"Don't believe everything you read." Now that is not a new epigram, but it does carry a lot of truth in its five words, especially for the Society at the moment. Those of you who read the issue dated 'Summer 1980' will recall that we hoped to produce the next of the four issues of the year before Christmas. Yet here we are well on the way to summer 1981 before you read the next copy. Are there any reasons? Are there any excuses? All we can say is that both editors have full-time jobs and interests outside the Society as well as offices within it. As a result the task of finally putting the newsletter 'to bed' has been put off and put off. All we can do is apologise and promise to do better in the future. It may be safer to say that the newsletter will continue, being issued occasionally, with between 2 and 4 issues a year.

However, not only did the last Newsletter carry misleading information, but also the programme which accompanied it. Circumstances beyond the Secretary's control have led to the exchange of the meetings on 28th April and 19th May. This means that the display of Falkland Islands Dependencies by Mr Leppard will be given on 28th April and the Elizabethan and Rous Cup Competitions will be held on 19th May, which gives all members a further three weeks to prepare their entries.

There was a further mistake in the last Newsletter, though one for which the editors claim no responsibility. We advertised the new albums being sold by the Post Office at all Crown Post Offices. However, when members living in Bexhill dropped in to their local Post Office they were met with blank looks! Eventually it was discovered that the albums were only being made available at the time in the Eastbourne area, as a trial. Our apologies must be given to members who were unable to obtain the albums as we thought they could, and we can only say that we did not understand the actual position. Anyway, as members may have seen in the philatelic press, these albums are now available generally, but at a much higher price.

The note last time that the albums were being made in Lewes was true, but your editor is refusing to explain which little bird gave him this information; it is understood that the Post Office do not know how the nugget got out.

The last edition of the Newsletter brought forward a number of letters of good wished from members. We would like to thank you and those other members who said nice things to us at meetings. One letter, from life member John Dight, appears later. Also in this issue Charles Dewey continues the story of Charles Dewey, Francis Kiddle, who progressed from judging at Earl's Court last May to judging at Eastbourne last September, writes on his views

of judging at an International, and John Griffin, in another hat, goes 'backstage' at the Society auctions.

Finally in this introductory potpourri, a very important date. The Eastbourne and South Downs Philatelic Society is acting as host to the Autumn Convention of the Association of Sussex Philatelic Societies on Saturday October 24th at the St Johns Ambulance HQ in Bourne Street. At the same time as this, an exhibition of members material will be on show and a number of dealers will be in attendance. Please note the date and keep it clear, and, when the Secretary comes asking for volunteers to act as Stewards, please offer yourself.

A REQUEST FROM THE SECRETARY

The programme for 1981/2 is being prepared, and Des Watson would welcome offers from members to show, either a complete evening or just a part in conjunction with another member; suggestions of collectors elsewhere who could be persuaded to display one Tuesday evening would also be appreciated. Even if it is not possible to fit either a member or a visitor in in the coming session, it does give the Secretary a starter for 1982/3.

A FEW WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues, Squirrels, Ferrets etc

I am sure you agree with me that the first issue of this Newsletter was a great success and was pleasingly received by us all. On those grounds and on your behalf I offer sincere congratulations to the editors.

For the premier issue I was given a project about which to scribe. This time I have carte-blanche! Don't be scared. I'm not going to be controversial. No, not me! I hope no-one will misconstrue my first few words:- Colleagues we all are, our interest basically is postal in one sphere or another; Squirrels: a human factor, applicable to most of us; Ferrets: that is what we are doing all the time, ferreting out items for our itinerary and satisfaction; Etc: this incorporates all those who don't deem themselves applicable to those three.

As I gaze through our kitchen window at the blustery, cold and unattractive world outside where the wind is tickling the leaves, inducing them to flutter like sparrows down the street, I wonder what induces us to leave our warm firesides to venture out to the St Johns Ambulance H.Q? Perhaps I may submit a few ideas:

1. The excellence of our efforts week by week making these evenings interesting and educational.
2. For the exceptional good fellowship enjoyed by all; a most convivial gathering.
3. The excellent service and most acceptable hospitality given by Thelma for providing nourishment for the inner man/woman.

4. Probably the most controversial - the bullying by your President in trying to maintain order and stability in a very pleasant environment.

5. You name it, we've got it

To those of you who support our meetings each week, I would like to convey my thanks and appreciation. It does give me concern that we do have members whom we only see occasionally. It would be nice to see you folk taking a more active part in our activities and attending our interesting evening displays and talks.

There is so much one could write about! But I'm sure that there is more important news to fill the space that I would take up.

My year so far has given me a great deal of satisfaction, and I do appreciate all the effort that is taken to make our evenings so amiable; also, and I'm sure you won't mind me being selective, my thanks to Des and Thelma for allowing the Committee to hold our meetings at their house. Perhaps that is why they go on so long! Without names, thanks to all the officers and ORs who contribute to the welfare of the society, our librarian and his assistant who is instituting the 'Dewey System', to the Secretary, and Treasurer, to Thelma and others - but mainly to YOURSELVES.

To conclude, may I wish you all the best in this hobby of ours. Behave yourselves. Don't do as I do, do as you are told. No more rabbiting on from me. (How's that for a Thematic engender?)

Charles (Dewey)

President

AN 'ASPIRANT' JUDGE'S VIEW OF LONDON 1980 - FRANCIS KIDDLE FRPSL

When I started judging competitions at National level I was called a 'Learner Judge' but as a full international is a grander occasion, it is considered more fitting to name newcomers 'Aspirant Judges'. I was very fortunate in being chosen as one of the two aspirants from this country to be represented on the London 1980 Jury and the following are my personal views and recollections of that great exhibition. I hope some of it may interest you.

First of all, how was it that I was invited to become an aspirant? Although I was not told why I was chosen, talking with the other aspirants (6 others, one each from GB, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, USA, Libya) some of the necessary qualifications became clear. In general all of us were between 35 and 45 (i.e. 20 years of competitive judging left in us); we had all judged national competitions for a number of years (5 or so in my case); for the lack of better words, we held senior posts in organised philately (I am Hon. Librarian of the Royal, the USA aspirant is President of the American Philatelic Society, and the Norwegian aspirant was to be secretary to the jury of Norwex 1980); and finally we could all converse in or read a second language (one juror was

fluent in 7!)

I was perhaps the most fortunate of all the aspirants in that I assisted on three classes of the competition: literature, juniors and Commonwealth. This is slightly misleading in that every juror was expected to view as many exhibits as possible in all the other classes, although each had a main class.

Three things impressed me most: the cosmopolitan nature of the Jury, how hard we all had to work, and the care taken in judging all the entries from diploma to large gold indiscriminately.

Let me give you typical examples of these three things:

On the first morning of the exhibition we were divided into judging teams and on my table were a German, an Italian, a Russian and a Swiss judge - German was the semi-common language (except that I could speak little of it) but communication was also in French and English. The juror I was attached to for judging the junior class was the German who could speak French, Czech and Italian but was comparatively not so good in English. For the whole time I was with him we carried a German-English dictionary (my fault, not his!). I sat with two Frenchmen and a Costa Rican juror for lunch and finally started judging in the afternoon. Although English was the official language, the junior class tended to be written up in the language of the entrant's home country, and so on the first day we were faced with entries written up in Russian, Czech, French, German, and even one or two in English. Do you know what 'Fairy Tales and Myths' is in Czech?

The second day set the scene of work load for the rest of the week of judging. I had to commute from home each day so up I got at 6.45 a.m. and was on the road by 7.15. Arrived Earl's Court 8.15 to 8.30 and looked on the Jury Room wall for all the provisional results from the day before to note those I ought to look at. 9.15 prompt, down to the exhibits to start judging. Break off for lunch - an hour - and also to compare notes with members of other teams. Finally, stop judging our section at 5.00 p.m. Back to the Jury Room to check on other results and then spent time up to 7.00 p.m. looking at entries in other classes. A quick change into my D.J. and off for the first social event of the evening - the jury were expected to attend most of the social functions and these averaged just under two per night. Finally home at some time between one and two in the morning to collapse into bed after checking the alarm clock was fully wound up ready for later that morning. Try that schedule for 6 days and you feel you have earned your bread - even a little butter too!

Towards the end of the judging week when all the exhibits had been allocated provisional awards, details of each award were put to the whole jury, and any juror could object to the level of the award. In the event of an objection by a juror, he had to explain, in detail, what his objections were and the challenged team leader had to justify the original award. It was astonishing to me the details of each exhibit which were retained in the team leaders' memories. If there was any doubt at all that the

award was incorrect then all members of the jury who knew the subject were told to look at the exhibit. It was certainly not the case that only the major awards were treated in this fashion. I remember one exhibit - I think it was finally awarded a silver-bronze medal - was checked in detail three times so as to ensure the right award was given. In the event of agreement not being reached unanimously (a very rare event - from memory it only happened once) the chairman, two vice-chairmen, and the honorary juror of the jury looked into the entry and taking into account all comments, resolved the situation. As an aspirant I was expected and encouraged to participate fully in the discussions, but only up to a certain level of award. This was quite correct. Nearly without exception I was tremendously impressed by the knowledge of each juror. Certainly I realised that it will take me much hard work to even approach the storehouse of knowledge the jurors had at their command. Imagine it - one juror celebrated at 1980 his 50th International Jury; one can visualise the marvellous collections he must have seen in his time, and the knowledge he must have accumulated. Indeed, throughout the exhibition, many jurors like him spent hours sharing their knowledge with me and answering all my questions, no matter how naive they may have been.

On a slightly more light-hearted note, two aspects of my period at London 1980 struck me as humorous. The first was well-intended but lead to many incidents. If you saw any of the jurors at the exhibition, you would have noticed that we had large blue and white rosettes pinned to our lapels. The idea was that we would thus be easily recognisable whilst judging and people would keep away from us. Unfortunately the public did not realise this; instead they thought we were officials or stewards! I think I must have given directions to over 100 people during the week on where to find toilets, the way out, exhibits etc. The other aspect was physically judging whilst the public were viewing the entries at the same time. I remember we were looking at one entry which was proving a bit contentious. We were all arguing on the merits and dismerits of particular items displayed when one of the teams suddenly suggested a short walk would be appropriate. It was not until we had moved away from the exhibit that he told us that the owner of the exhibit was standing right by us! I wonder what he thought?

To sum up, London 1980 was an experience. It was perhaps the most strenuous but exhilarating time in my philatelic life so far. In the end it was not the entries, the dealers nor the occasion which made the exhibition so enjoyable and memorable. It was the people. So many who were famous, so many people whom I have corresponded with over the years, even complete strangers, became friends rather than acquaintances. The comradeship and fellowship generated between us through having the same hobby are to be treasured. No matter how senior or junior a person was, all treated me the same, which demonstrated that our hobby, philately, recognises no class or creed distinctions; indeed we are all equal.

A LETTER TO THE EDITORS

(Shortly after the first issue was circulated, I received a missive postmarked 'Bournemouth', and knowing no-one there I opened it with interest to find a letter from John Dight, a life-member of the Society, who writes of earlier days in Eastbourne.)

It may be of interest to know that the original newsletter was in being in the late 1940s and in fact I edited it until my departure from Hailsham in 1950. It was at that time the newsletter of one of the constituent Philatelic Societies and was known under the munificent title of "South Downs Review, the official Organ of the South Downs P.S." Unfortunately I have no copies of these issues, but after I left it was edited for some years either by N J Hills or by Pate Whitmore. I believe Ken Sargent also had something to do with it in the 1950s. It might also be of interest to know that the 'Editorial Staff' ran a daily newsletter for the 1954 Congress of Eastbourne, involving printing some 300 copies sometime after midnight and distributing to all Congress hotels by 7 a.m. That week was a bit hectic! At that Congress I read a paper entitled "The Society Newsletter" which was fairly well received, although I was 'on' immediately after that most erudite speaker, Ian Hamilton. At that time, having given up the editorship of Wanstead and Woodford P.S.'s 'By-Post' on leaving the district, and was editing O.P.A.L.'s newsletter at the time O.P.A.L. was the world's foremost Middle Eastern Society! And for 11 years!

But I now have no time for philatelic journalism, although I hope that in a few years time the recently formed Swanage Society may well be big enough to need a newsletter.

Hope this bit of history might be interesting. I wonder how many members of those days are still philatelically active? I did meet Ken Sargent in London at the Exhibition, but that is all.

John Dight

P.S. I note from the programme that O J Simpson is still in Channel Islands - he was a member of Wanstead and Woodford P.S. in my days there. And Miss Rous - give her my regards please

JD

(Editor's note: I am always surprised how small the philatelic world is. As some of you know, before coming down to Eastbourne I was a schoolmaster in Surrey. I gave a hand with the school's Stamp Club helping the aforementioned Ian Hamilton! JMG)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM this year is a little later than usual. The date is June 23rd. This is when the current year's officials make their excuses, and you have the opportunity to make changes and have a say in the running of your Society. Details, nomination arrangements and the agenda will be posted on the Society noticeboard in due course.

RUNNING THE SOCIETY'S AUCTIONS - JOHN GRIFFIN

"We start the auction with lot number one". These words or ones like them open every auction. To you they may herald the beginning of the performance, but to Dennis O'Neill and myself they represent the culmination of hours of work since the last auction was paid out. In this article I would like to take you through the various steps involved in each auction, in the process explaining why we ask you to follow certain procedures and how you can help us and yourselves.

The auctioneers are open to receive lots at any time. Experience has shown us that about 180 lots is the maximum for any one evening, both in terms of time and maintaining bidders' interest. So we monitor the number of lots we have each received and keep in contact so that as soon as the limit is reached we can let prospective vendors know that all further lots will be held over until the next auction. Since we do not go through the lots at this time, it is important that we know exactly how many lots we are being given. If five members give us ten lots each and say, "There's half a dozen there", we are immediately 20 lots out. To complicate our running tally, we will accept as many lots from any member as he or she cares to offer, but maintain the right to limit each vendor to 20 lots per auction if too many lots are forthcoming. We do this to allow all members a fair share of the auction and to maintain variety. Without such a rule it would be possible for one member to take over the complete auction, offering 180 lots of, say, modern GB FDCs, or of pre-war Germany, or of....; such an auction would not attract many members.

When we have sufficient material (or two weeks before the auction date if the limit has not been reached) the auction is put together. All the lots are laid out on Dennis's living room carpet and the numbering begins. Each vendor is taken in turn, in the approximate order in which the material was handed in. To each lot is attached, usually by means of a sticky label, the lot number and a letter. (This letter is for our benefit, and represents the owner of that lot in this auction. The letter A is given to the first vendor in an auction, B to the next, and so on. A vendor will normally get a different letter in the next auction.) In order to maintain interest throughout the auction, we attempt to vary the kind of material being offered by consecutive vendors, and those with a large number of lots may find their material being split into more than one part.

It is in the numbering exercise that we find many problems, which usually arise because vendors do not think about the safety of their material or the requirements of bidders. Our work is made difficult by a variety of factors:

- a) Inadequately protected material: loose covers, mounted stamps uncovered, stamps in tiny envelopes and in boxes that do not fasten. Vendors must leave somewhere for the lot number to be written or attached, and must remember to consider whether their material will last the course until the auction. In the next few days, they will be transported

to and from Bourne Street, will be moved in and out of boxes at a fast rate, will lie uncovered in the warm atmosphere of the meeting room, and will, hopefully, be handled by many prospective buyers. Where possible, we cover unprotected items, but this is not always feasible. (It also uses up lots of old album leaves, and offers of further stocks will be gratefully received.)

b) Lots forwarded out of order: Much time is wasted on each occasion when lots are presented in a different order to that on the vendor's list. On some occasions it is not even obvious which description applies to each lot, and when the reserves are different this can cause headaches! (Where difficulties may arise, a small pencilled number to tie in with the vendor's reference can save us a lot of time.)

c) Misdescribed lots: damaged material not so annotated, wrong catalogue numbers and values, even wrong country names! Each occasion on which we spot such misdescriptions delays the preparation of the list; those that we miss are often picked up by viewers.

d) Non-use of vendor's forms. Vendor's forms were introduced to facilitate preparation of the auction by allowing for all our requirements and by being of uniform size. Old scraps of paper which do not leave room for our notes and are invariably the wrong size complicate our task.

e) Inadequately described lots: The task of putting the auction together is made longer by the frequent need to enhance vendor's descriptions so that they mean something to potential bidders. Among the aspects often disregarded by vendors are: condition, country, date, mint, used, mounted, unmounted, size or scope of lot. As far as possible these things are noted during the lotting process; when the shortcoming is not noticed until later, it is not possible to amend descriptions and some very unhelpful descriptions therefore appear in the auction list. Typical of the kind of description we find inadequate, and the questions we have to stop and ask, are:

'Cayman Is Silver Jubilee set' - George V or Elizabeth II?
mint or used?

'27 postcards' - type? country? used or unused? period?

'collection of animal stamps' - on pages? approximately how many?

'5 FDCs' - country? period?

'Mauritius 2R' - which set? mint or used?

Regrettably each auction sees too many lots as poorly described as those above. We also try to check that, for instance, the gem described (and reserved) as 'superb used' does not have a tear. (We once found that from two different vendors in the same auction!)

From the vendor's lists I type the master which Des Watson duplicates for the viewing evening. Often all this has to be

done in a few days between one meeting and the next and fitted in around the other activities we are all involved in (such as being sent out to earn our daily crust!)

Dennis meanwhile has been working out how best to lay out the lots for viewing. Clearly since viewing takes place at an ordinary meeting, the number of tables and boards available is limited. He attempts to arrive early so that the material is ready when most members arrive. To ensure that all the lots are present he sets them out carefully in numerical order. Some members give an appreciated hand, while others are so intent on viewing the material that they delay the laying out of the lots. If you should arrive early it will help everyone if you either give Dennis a hand following his directions precisely, or stand back until the auction is ready for viewing.

At the end of viewing the lots are counted back into boxes and taken home. Any misdescriptions spotted by members are followed up. Book bids are received and noted.

On auction day, Dennis again arrives early to put out the lots. The same assistance from members is requested as on viewing day. A few minutes before the meeting starts the lots for the first half are collected up so that, with abbreviated preliminaries completed, the first lot can be offered. We take it in turns to act as auctioneer. During the auction you can help by bidding clearly and quickly. Make sure the auctioneer sees your bid, and if you drop out during a bidding 'rally' make sure it is obvious that you are not continuing. The clearest way of bidding is to keep your hand raised when you are interested and to drop it immediately the price is higher than you are willing to pay. Leave it to the auctioneer to control the bidding steps.

When the last lot has been offered the work of finalising takes place. While at one table payments are taken in, at another unsold lots are returned to vendors in the room. And so home to sort out payments due and commissions, so that everyone can be paid out by the following meeting. And by that time lots for the next auction are usually beginning to pile up. (It is administratively easier to deal with auction lots through our own bank accounts rather than through the Society's, so cheque payments should be made to the auctioneer of the day).

I never try advising people as to what will and what will not sell. We are often surprised at the material that goes, and at the material that stays. However, to generalise, cheaper lots sell better than expensive ones. Highly specialised material rarely sells well. Unrealistically high reserves dissuade bidders. Mixed lots at low reserves (or none) usually sell. But there are exceptions to all these comments. We make no charge for unsold lots; we do not want to discourage vendors from putting forward unusual material.

The statistics for the Society auctions in 1979 and 1980 are interesting. In all, 2349 lots were offered, of which 1464 sold (62%). A total of £2744 was taken, an average of £1.88 per

lot. (Comparing this with the average reserve of £2.05 shows the extent to which cheaper lots sell and dearer ones do not).

The auctions regularly make a profit for the Society and serve to keep subscriptions down. Dennis and I enjoy running them, our only problem being those members who, as vendors or bidders, create difficulties for us. Our present auction technique seems to work well, but there may well be improvements that could be made. Please make suggestions to us. If we do not take up your ideas it will be because we have decided, after giving the matter much thought, the arguments against outweigh those for.

It would be invidious of us not to use this article to express our thanks to the members who help to share the load on auction nights by acting as runners, and especially Denys McCullough for his excellent service as auctioneer's clerk; their efforts keep the auctions going smoothly and are much appreciated by the auctioneers.

POST OFFICE ALBUMS

It is understood that the Post Office now has on general sale at Philatelic Counters and some main post offices three albums. One designed to hold 160 postcards (of PHQ size) costs £7.50. Two cover albums are available, the larger at £7.50 holds sixty-five covers, while the smaller holding forty covers costs £5. At first extra leaves were not available, but latest reports suggest that they are now available.

BPE 1981

... The 1981 British Philatelic Exhibition will be held at Wembley from 29th September to 2nd October, which means no Saturday opening.

OUR PREDECESSORS

Many thanks to Olive Rous and Ron Carter for discovering copies of earlier newsletters of the Society, as John Dight wrote about. No space to look at them this time.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- 19th May: Elizabethan and Rous Cups
- 23rd June: Annual General Meeting
- 24th October: ASPS Autumn Convention at Eastbourne - dealers hall; exhibition by Eastbourne and South Downs P.S.; inter-Society competitions; the guest speaker will be talking about and showing New Zealand.

Hope to see you at as many of these as possible.