



West of
England
Thematic
Society

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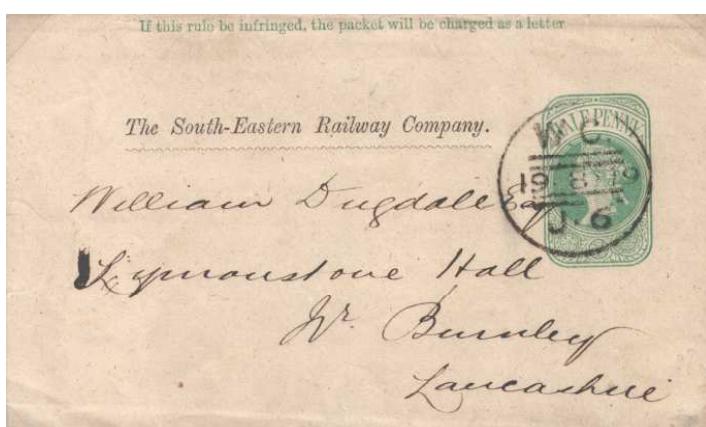
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MAN of VISION

Edward Watkin later Sir Edward had a dream of running trains from the industrial heartland of Manchester to the expanding markets of Continental Europe.

This was not as impossible as it sounded as he proposed to build a Channel Tunnel, and become not only Chairman of the South Eastern Railway connecting Dover with London, but also Chairman of the Metropolitan Railway, then extending its suburban line north-westwards from London through Rickmansworth.

Watkin had become General Manager of the Manchester Sheffield and Lincoln Railway in 1854 and its Chairman in 1864. He was a man of great foresight, and ambition who worked for years trying to achieve his dream, haggling with other companies to provide the links between the MS&L lines and London.



75th anniversary.

Sir Edward Watkins retired through ill health during 1895 so did not see the completion of his dream. Indeed it was to be in excess of 100 years before his vision was to be finally realised with a rail link capable of transporting goods between this country and mainland Europe. The route of the Great Central Railway is once again being looked at as a freight route its original line with its gentle gradients and shallow curves are now realised as being ideal - but will it ever be re-built?.

Sir Edward Watkins also had one other dream. Having visited Paris and seen the Eiffel Tower, he felt a similar attraction should be built in London. An architectural competition was run to obtain suitable designs. Despite many designs being submitted none of the proposals impressed the judges. When Gustave Eiffel would not accept the commission, the contract was reluctantly given to Sir Benjamin Baker designer of the Forth Bridge. The foundations were laid in 1892 with building commencing in 1893.



As the proposed working arrangements were always to Watkins's advantage the other railway companies would have none of them, so he was driven to constructing his own rail link southwards from Sheffield to link with the Metropolitan. The line opened in 1899, two years earlier the directors changed the name of the company to the Great Central Railway. It was the last to arrive in London and the first main line to be lost, it is still fondly remembered and special hand stamps were produced for the



The first stage of what was to be known as "Watkins Folly" was surrounded by pleasure gardens, featuring sports grounds, pagodas, bandstands and a lake and opened to the public in 1895. It was served by the Metropolitan railway that had opened a smart new station close by.



The public stayed away, and facing building difficulties the project was abandoned. The site was to be better known in later years as the Wembley Exhibition, with Wembley Stadium being built over the site of "Watkins Folly".



By the time the Channel Tunnel was completed and the above stamps issued to commemorate the opening, Sir Edward Watkin had been long forgotten. It has to be said, however, that Watkins dreams showed remarkable vision and the man deserves better than being simply forgotten about.

A plea – if you have any more information about "Watkins Folly", were any postcards produced?, or philatelic information relating to the Metropolitan Railway, e.g. stamps, postal markings, postcards etc. – them Jim Wigmore would like to hear from you.



WETS Annual Day – Ashburton

We were privileged to have as our speaker Christine Earle her international display "The Grey Goose Wing" was superb. No it was not about Birds, but about the sport which Christine had been a part of for many years Archery. She was part of Great Britain's Olympic Squad for Moscow.

Those of you who did not attend missed a wonderful display, not only about the sport of archery, but also of every aspect of philately. Christine herself held our attention quite effortlessly with her friendly charm coupled to her knowledge of subject and philately. Many of the attendees were quick to talk with her and pick up on some of her philatelic expertise.

To those of you who have not made these days a must in your calendar, make a note of APRIL 13th 2002 – this is the next WETS Day, when the speaker will be Sheila Foster who will be showing her international collection "Roses, Roses all the way"

A DELUGE OF MATERIAL FOR THE WETS NEWSLETTER?



Well not quite, although such a deluge would be welcome. Where are your bits of news, stories, and wants, they all have a place in what is after all YOUR NEWSLETTER?

Contact the editor at istug@aol.com or write to the address at the head of the newsletter.

We need lots of input from YOU for future issues

WHERE THE ONLY LIMIT IS YOUR IMAGINATION

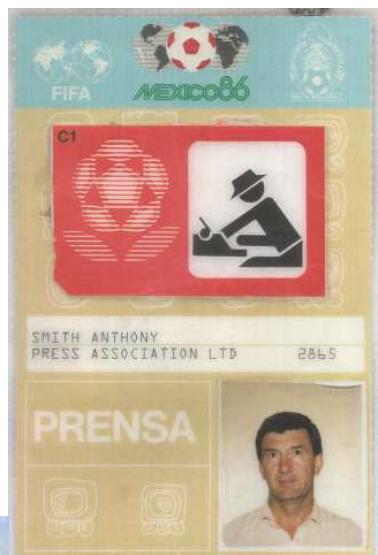
Not so long ago Thematics, called Topicals on the other side of the Atlantic, was the controversial newcomer. Now another "new boy" has entered the fray, Social Philately. It was included in the recent Glasgow 2000 get-together of collectors and is said to be a bridge between Postal History and Thematics.

Many things which cannot be included in a thematic collection, display, or competition entry, can seemingly, be kept under the Social Philately banner.

Our WETS Chairman Mary Claydon had obtained a leaflet published by Pat Grimwood-Taylor a specialist in this new field, and quoted from it at length in the last newsletter.

Could WETS member Tony Smith's identity card for the 1986 World Cup Finals be included in a display entitled "Soccer, the World Game"

Perhaps under this tag the postcard showing the London Eye could be included in a display with the title "Tourists View of London"



DON'T
FORGET
THE
PACKET

More good quality books are always wanted – contact the Packet Secretary details at the head of the newsletter.

YOUR
INPUT
MATTERS

Collect stamps and Friends – writes Colin Ross – Members may recall my account in a previous newsletter of how it was I came to take an interest in thematic collecting via the acquisition of my first car - a 1934 Riley 9 March Special. The arrival coincided with the issue of a very fine set of Monaco stamps depicting vintage and veteran motors. At a WETS meeting in 1998, I found myself discussing our collecting interests with Margaret Morrel, she said she would ask her son, a Riley enthusiast and member of the Riley register, if my old car VJ5515 (isn't it funny how one remembers so clearly the registration of ones first car) was alive and well. Some three months later, I heard from her that VJ5515 was indeed still on the register and living in St.Leonards-on-Sea and that the present owner would be delighted to hear from me. I duly contacted him and received a sheaf of photographs, which brought back many memories. He made it clear, however, that the car was not for sale and, if the truth be known, I didn't really covet it. My point in relating this yarn is to point out the undoubted advantages in belonging to WETS. You just don't know what delights may be in store.

It was a shock to your committee to learn on the day after the Thematic Day that Tony Smith had suffered from a stroke. To our great relief Tony is making a good recovery – both Jim and Mary have spoken with him on the telephone, and I am sure we wish him well and a speedy

WETS SHOW THE WAY

The recent Wessex Federation Competitions – Thematic Section was won by WETS member Jim Wigmore with "A Legacy of the 20th Century" – *Jim was totally amazed he had only put it in to make up the*

IF YOU HAVE A STORY – WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU



TOO MUCH SPAM?

(Spam – being defined as the mass of philatelic junk we are deluged with on a daily basis)

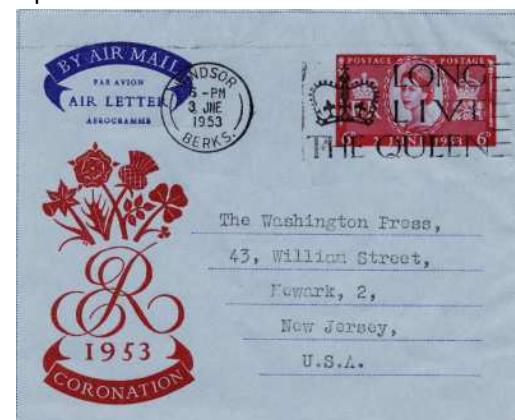
I wonder how many of you feel as I do that maybe we are wrong to encourage the countries of the world to pour out stamps by the hundreds merely to sell to collectors, with no valid reason for there issue in the country of origin. On the other hand how many thematic collectors would be able to illustrate certain aspects of their theme without some of these stamps. I am not always sure when contemplating purchasing some items whether I could use it in an exhibition, and I have often viewed with suspicion items

used even in national exhibitions, therefore I think I have been too careful in the past.

From this point of view a seminar on thematics would certainly be of interest to me. Christine Earle suggested this could be arranged, if enough people were interested, and I would be glad to have some feedback from members on this subject. Would those interested please contact Mary Claydon (telephone number etc, at the top of the newsletter).

Such items as the covers I get from a contact of mine in the USA – unaddressed envelopes with special cancels for various women. It seems the word Station refers to post office. The authorities designate one office to use the special cancel and temporarily name the office to co-ordinate with the cancel. Definitely contrived don't you think? However since this is authorised by and done under the auspices of the post office I assume I could use these in competition.

Having said all that, think of the numerous First Day Covers we all tend to use in our collections which these days are frankly only produced to con collectors. I don't think this was the reason for the issue of special cancels between the wars and before. There were special cancels for the Coronation Durbar in India for George V coronation – for the Prince of Wales Camps in the same country and for numerous royal occasions and visits, but when you think of today and the numerous stamps and covers issued by the Crown Agents for the Queen Mothers various birthdays – and what about the Gold Booklet, issued for the Golden Wedding of our present Queen and her Consort. I am sure we could use these.



So perhaps it does not matter – maybe we are all so delighted to get something to illustrate a particular point in our story that we do not care. I am going to a large thematic exhibition in Holland in September – I will take particular note of what is used and report in a future newsletter.



SOCIAL PHILATELY – following the item on this subject in the last news letter, we understand that Pat Grimwood-Taylor will be giving a workshop to the Bristol Society on March 20th 2002. The secretary of Bristol has been contacted, and we have been told they would be pleased to welcome any of our members who would like to attend. Anyone interested contact Mary Claydon in the first instance – details at the head of the newsletter.

THEMATIC DISPLAY – Margaret Morris will be the speaker at Minehead and District Stamp Club on September 17th 2001 Some of you may recall that Margaret gave an excellent display to WETS. For those of you who may think of attending Minehead Club meet in The Friends Meeting House, Bancks Street Minehead with meetings starting at 7.30 p.m. visitors are always welcome.

WHY NOT INCLUDE YOUR BITS OF NEWS IN FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

Now who would want to read stories in the WETS newsletter when they can listen to a face like that?