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NATIONAL AWARD FOR WETS



At a prestigious awards ceremony at the Skinners Hall in London and before a distinguished gathering our Chairman Mary Claydon was presented with the Rowland Hill Award for Society Work for her work with WETS. We as a society are delighted that Mary was firstly nominated and secondly won over two other nominees for the same award. We should also like to thank Sheila Foster who was one of Mary's principle nominees. The picture shows Mary actually being presented with the award by Francis Kiddle and Miles Kington, and if you look at the picture carefully you will note the name of the West of England Thematic Society is up on the screen for all to see. **WELL DONE MARY.**

Following on from this triumph and based upon a tip off that

ABPS will in future only be giving grants to ABPS member societies, your committee have taken an executive decision on WETS actually joining ABPS. We are now full members of ABPS in our own right, our Treasurer Richard Wheeler actually received a telephone call on a Saturday morning to welcome WETS to ABPS. This also means we now qualify to enter next years "Society Journal of the Year" run by ABPS.



MANIC MOTORCYLIST'S

were not on the agenda of the WETS Thematic Day held at the Dartmoor Lodge on Saturday 3rd April, when the guest speaker was John Hayward showing his thematic display of the "Motorcycle". John explained that the internal combustion engine had been developed for fitting to a bicycle, this was a form of transport considered to be most useful to the average person, and in the world of today this is still the case. John traced the evolution of the Motorcycle from these early days up to present times

through a variety of stamps, booklets, postal markings, and postal history plus a degree of ephemera relating to the theme. In the development of the theme, the Isle of Man TT Races were covered along with some of the other racing events where the motorcycle is featured. We were staggered by the extent of material that John had been able to find and include in his display, including some of the very early slogan cancels of motorcycle manufacturers many of who are now long gone. What looked on the surface to be a bit of a dry subject, turned out to be an absolute delight, all put across by a very able speaker. After lunch we enjoyed a very free flowing question and answer session with John where a very wide span of questions were raised regarding thematics in general. As always the day was very much enjoyed by all who attended, and everyone will have learned something from the experience. Your committee is currently working upon a similar day at the same time next year, so watch this space.



A THEMATIC NIGHT

- Tony Smith our news co-ordinator has come up with a very good suggestion. Why not promote in your club a thematic night, something to try on those nights when it is cold and dark and difficult to get visiting speakers. Tony's suggestion is that ALL attendee's at the meeting should have a go, the subject matter could be of their own choosing, and the material drawn from what they collect. Everyone should be able to put together 8 sheets on a thematic subject of their own choice from what they collect, and this would be a good way of getting them started. Most clubs have now seen the WETS Roadshow and should be aware of the requirements. The most important aspect as Tony so rightly puts it, is "they have a go." **MOST CLUBS ARE LOOKING FOR NEW IDEA'S TO INCORPORATE INTO THEIR PROGRAMME - SO WHO WILL BE FIRST TO GRASP THE NETTLE?**

WATCH THE MARGINS - by Jim Wigmore



For all thematic collectors of Transport based thematic collections the "Classic Locomotives" stamps issued by the British Post Office are a must. For once the Post Office have excelled themselves with this issue and there is far more to the issue than at first meets the eye. The stamps are printed in sheets of 4 x 8 and have a good look at the margins of the printed sheets. The top right hand corner margin carries the crests of companies the locomotives belong to, and the bottom left hand corner carries a black/white view of the locomotive that appears on the stamps on the sheet.

Good things do not end there however, have a look at the Miniature Sheet produced to go with the series of six stamps and you will find the margin adjacent to each stamp has the arrangement and colours of the lining used on the locomotive.



What a lot of possibilities this opens up for the thematic collector. Be sure to look at more than just the stamps, have a good look at the margins also, you never know what you will find.

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RAILWAY MYSTERY SOLVED - By Jim Wigmore

A little while ago, looking at the Auction List of the Railway Philatelic Society, I noticed a cover being offered relating to the Somerset Central Railway. My immediate reaction was what was the Somerset Central Railway, and at the starting price of just £3.50 its worth a look, so I put in a bid and was successful. What came back was the cover shown right, and at this point the real search began for the railway company. My initial thought was that it was a company absorbed by either the Great Western or the earlier Bristol and Exeter Railway, both drew a blank.



At this point I had a brainwave, what about the Somerset and Dorset Railway, and yes, this was one of the original constituent companies.

The Somerset Central opened its first section of railway in 1854, this letter however was actually posted on 9 June 1853 in Glastonbury more than six months before the opening of the railway. The letter was sent to a Solicitor in Glastonbury, and has a Glastonbury postmark, see left, was it also posted in Glastonbury, after all Glastonbury was one of the major stations on the route. The Somerset Central merged with the Dorset Central to form the Somerset and Dorset Railway

in 1875. What a gem for inclusion in the "Evolution of Railways" and from a source who, you would expect to have known the true value of the item being disposed of. Research always pays, and of course, is what makes our thematic collections so diverse and interesting.

Modern Revolutionary *Beijing* Opera

TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN BY STRATEGY



Concerning the Masses
in the Forest

Going Across the Forest

Yang Zi-rong



Victory !

Arousing the Masses

Having a Well Thought
Out Plan

Date of issue: 1 August 1970

Designed by: *Yang Baizi*

Printed in photogravure by
Beijina Stamp Printing House

"Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy" is one of the eight Peking Operas, written on the revolutionary theme, contemporary during the late 1960's: The Period of Cultural Revolution in China

Set in 1946, the story is about a small detachment of the PLA suppressing a gang of bandits, controlled by *Kuomintang* Authorities, in the snow laden forest of Tiger Mountain, NE China.

Yang Zi-rong, leader of a PLA scout patrol and hero of the opera, is despatched to infiltrate the bandits' stronghold by disguising himself as a refugee from another group of mountain bandits.

At the risk of his life, *Yang* uses all his ingenuity to worm his way into the confidence of the Bandit Chieftain of Tiger Mountain, known as "The Eagle" and head of the *Kuomintang* "Fifth Peace Preservation Brigade",

Relying on mass mobilization and information sent out by *Yang*, a small detachment of the PLA and The Peoples Militia, attack and destroy the bandit's stronghold while New Year Celebrations are under way, as " The Eagle " gives a " One Hundred Chickens Feast " to the bandits in celebration of his 60th Birthday.

We will be showing more stories from Modern China in our next issue - **DO YOU HAVE A STORY**

SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

WETS AGM and GENERAL MEETING - Saturday 5th June 2004 at Emmanuel Church Hall, Western Road, Exeter. The hall will be open from 1.00 pm when we hope to have a dealer present. The AGM starts at 2.00 p.m. and will be dealt with as quickly as possible to allow some displays by members. **Please make the effort to attend, we need your input regarding future speakers and the society future direction.**

BRING ANYTHING YOU WISH TO DISPLAY - OR ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT

AUTUMN MEETING - Saturday 13th November at Buckfastleigh Town Hall starting at 2.00 p.m. we will be looking for members to display at this meeting. Full meeting details will appear in the next news letter.

WETS Thematic Day 2005 - Saturday 23rd April 2005 at the Dartmoor Lodge Ashburton - the speaker will be Brian Sole who will be showing his Award Winning Thematic on Cycling - more details in future news letters when we finalise the details.

THE PACKET - Is getting better, however Anne Moorshead needs a constant supply of books to keep the circulation going. We also need in the packet more than just stamps, what about bits of postal history that has a link to some of our themes, slogan cancels, advertising booklets, and thematic ephemera.

We should all be aware by now who collects what, and be able to feed the need.

WHATS IN YOUR COLLECTION - You all have items of interest in your collection, and some of you have been good enough to submit articles. We need more of you to take a few moments to write down small piece about the things that interest you. Articles need to be illustrated, so send to the editor either the original or a colour copy, all originals will be copied and returned promptly. Why not email it? (*Our newsletter like the packet needs a constant supply of information, Tony and I are rapidly running out of both material and ideas - Ed.*) The editors email address is at the head of this newsletter.

WETS ROADSHOW is, by all accounts to date, going down well with the clubs it has so far been taken to. Thanks, to all those WETS members who have so far given up time, to take the Roadshow to other clubs, and give the display. We are still able to accept bookings from club in the Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset areas for dates up to December 2004, make sure your club meeting secretary is aware of this. **We want as many clubs to see the display as possible.**

THE MODERN OLYMPICS - by Tony Smith.

As we prepare for the Olympics in Athens later this summer let us look back to a coincidence in the same country over 100 years ago which prepared the way for the world's ultimate sports gathering -- the Modern Games.



It began with a happy chance in the late 19th century when a young Frenchman, Pierre de Coubertin, was visiting Greece when he heard that a group of German archaeologists had discovered some ancient sporting sites in the region of Peloponnese, over 150 miles from

Athens. Always interested in sport and history, he travelled there, watched the excavations at Olympia, was enthralled by the ancient venue, and listened to everything about the background to the Ancient Games which had started there in 776 BC and continued for almost a thousand years.

He particularly loved the idea of a 'Sacred Truce' which meant war between Grecian states and later nations was halted so they would face each other at sport.

Second son of a very rich aristocrat, de Coubertin had already travelled to the USA, England and many other European countries and perhaps looking for a "raison d'etre". The young Baron found it at Olympia "The true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honour for our teams" as the Olympic oath now reads.

After several years working to spread the word of creating a Modern Olympics de Coubertin, in 1894, invited nations to come to Sourbonne University in Paris and discuss the idea. Great Britain, the USA, Imperial Russia and nine other countries were represented. The 31 year-old talked with such conviction that all present agreed to relaunch the Games with 1900 the starting date and Paris the venue.

As more countries asked to take part, however, voices began to call for an earlier start. They wanted 1896 and beginning in the land of the Ancient Games -- Greece.

The Baron continued as the main director/organiser and carried the title, The Olympic Secretary General. On March 25 the Modern Games began with 311 sportsmen taking part, representing 13 nations. Great Britain won three gold medals.



By the time the II Olympics came to Paris in 1900 de Coubertin had become President

of the International Olympic Committee -- a title he held until 1925. France saw over 1,000 men from 22 nations competing, but sadly the Games were secondary to the host nation's Paris International Exhibition.

The USA staged the 1904 Games but like Paris clashed with another government-backed event, the World Fair. Only 13 countries took part and Americans won most of the events.



Rome was chosen for the IV Olympics but after two years preparation Italy withdrew. De Coubertin turned to Britain to put his "sport and friendship" dream back on course. In quick time a 68,000 capacity stadium was built in West London costing £40,000, including a swimming pool and a cycle track alongside the athletic arena.

Over 2,000 men -- and at last women -- paraded behind 22 national flags before King Edward VII opened the Games on 27 April. By the close Britain topped the 'gold medal' list with 57 champions.

In 1912 Stockholm staged a successful Olympics but not long afterwards de Coubertin learned that -- unlike the ancient Greeks -- modern nations did not put sport before war. Berlin had been set for the 1916 Games, but two years earlier the start of the First World War prevented the VI Olympics taking place.

Now aged 57, the **Father-of-the-Olympics** somehow restored the Games despite post-war economic ruin. Germany and its allies Austria, Hungary & Turkey were, of course, banned for the VII Olympics (the Games numbering system has always been maintained despite war cancellations) but 29 nations were represented in Antwerp in 1920.



In 1924 de Coubertin's birthplace staged the next Games and after seeing 3,000 competitors from 44 countries present in France, the Baron retired.

He died in Switzerland in 1937 and, in accordance with his wish, his heart was taken to Greece where it now rests beneath a magnificent monument at the place where that splendid coincidence happened all those so many years before -- **Olympia**.