

A RECORD OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA PHILATELIC CONVENTION AT LEAMINGTON SPA HELD ON 7TH – 9TH NOVEMBER 2014 AT THE FALSTAFF HOTEL.

Some delegates had gathered at the hotel on the evening of the 7th November for a social and a good meal.

The business of the convention started on Saturday when some more of us had arrived. Simon, our convener, had arranged for some better display frames at this meeting, much to the relief of those presenting. About 40 people attended, together with fleeting visits from some who only stayed for a short time. The usual raffle was well supported.

Chris Board gave the first of the invited displays and his subject was Cape Postal Stationery. This consisted mainly of Victorian postcards. A local post office provided the opportunity to produce the first postal card in 1878, but very few were used before 1882. These were often badly cut and it is not known how many were on a sheet. By 1882 a 1d rate was introduced throughout the colony including eventually Bechuanaland & Mashonaland. The display continued with variants on the 1½d International U.P.U. Postcard; surcharges and examples of illustrated postal cards. and, following a change in rate, thin paper illustrations produced in Germany were stuck over the 1½d postcards presumably in Cape Town. We saw 1d and 1½d news-wrappers; reply cards; postal cards and colour & format variation on 1½d pictorial postcards. On the Maskew-Miller pictorial cards a local scene was printed directly on the reverse side. The Post Office, not to be outdone, also produced its own illustrated card by adding a small vignetted scene on the address side, copying an idea from Argentina. A Union Shipping Line publicity cards where its named ships were all shown by a multi-colour picture of the same vessel. The surcharged 1d postal cards were overprinted for use in O.R.C in 1900. Chris finished his display with a selection of Edwardian postal stationery including several photographic essays and proofs.

The second presentation, by Roald Sand, employed Powerpoint beside a display of the material. Roald has been studying, the Union Official sets 1 to 6 issued between December 1926 and 1931. Stamp values were high compared with a postal clerks' wages so overprinting of stamps for official use was undertaken. Conversely this created a market with collectors' for stolen overprinted stamps. The practice of overprinting officials ceased in 1954. This is a challenging but limited collecting area and has some attractions. The speaker explained that the first set was excellently printed but by the time that set six was produced the plates were worn and printing was far from exact, especially on the ½d value where the top of the sheet differs from the bottom due to progression of wear. There were 71 varieties per half sheet on the ½d value. Roald showed, on the screen, the varieties of the deforming "O" and described the sheet location for these. Sheet numbers and marginal arrows have recently been examined by students of the Official Issues.

Even more modern material formed part of Richard Barnett's display on Zimbabwean inflation mail. The former name of Rhodesia was often included on postmarks until the end of 1979 but after this date the slugs were obliterated or removed. Richard showed the rates for each year since independence, with the exception of 2008, to indicate that hyperinflation had commenced with the airmail rate introduced on 10th June 2002. Initially stamps were overprinted with new values but from 2005 N.V.I. (no value indicated) stamps were used to avoid the use of multiples of stamps to achieve the required rate. From 18th February 2009 some financial stability has been achieved by pegging the local currency to the American dollar and allowing the use of the Rand to purchase goods and services.

Otto Peetoom took Ascension Island as the theme for his display and a more detailed account of this presentation can be viewed on the website of the South African Collectors' Society www.southafricacollectors.com This island, in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean although initially a dependency of St. Helena, is central for cable routes feeding Southern Africa with North America and the U.K. The display included some pre-stamp material and early use of British stamps in the island but the amazing part of this presentation was the Die Proof material and Specimen stamps of the KGV & KGVI period and beyond with the repeat design on the QEII Specimen issue of 1956. The stamps, which are attractive and colourful, are prone to varieties and paper tone variation. These were included in the display.

A postal history display by Richard Stock concerned the Zulu War 1879, the Second Boer War 1899-1902 and the Bambatha Rebellion 1906. Interesting correspondence from some of the participants was included. Some correspondence, it was explained, concerned the award of the Victoria Cross to an officer during an action at Hlobane Mountain in March 1879. There were also references to the Scott-Douglas correspondence killed in action shortly before the battle of Ulundi. Boer forces invaded northern Natal in 1899 and advanced rapidly, capturing Newcastle and Dundee. They besieged Ladysmith and the British forces defended a perimeter of six miles. Richard's material included mail from temporary post offices set up by the Boers, items to and from the siege area, mail trapped by the siege and released at the end of the conflict, a short-lived F.P.O. 9 mark use at Colenso, emergency cancellations and P.O.W. mail. Correspondence from R.J.L. Tindall following his capture at Elandslaagte on 21st October 1899 and his time as a Transvaal P.O.W. was shown. The final section featured mail sent during the Bambatha Rebellion in 1906 caused by the imposition of a poll tax on natives of 21 years and over. It was put down in 12 months.

The last of the invited displays was given by Eddie Bridges who has been studying the printings of the 2d & 3d Pictorial definitive stamps, comprising the Bradbury Wilkinson printings; the Pretoria unhyphenated and the Pretoria hyphenated printings. Eddie had carefully examined the bottom two rows of the inter-pane printings of the Bradbury, Wilkinson printings. These were from the archive sheets sold by Robson Lowe in the 1980's. The printing dates had been recorded on the upper inter-pane blocks which indicated more printings than recorded

in the literature. All the perforation variations were shown. Dots and lines had been introduced to assist alignment of the perforation and guillotining of sheets but these differed from issue to issue. There were similar perforation problems experienced in the unhyphenated Pretoria printing of the 2d. The initial 3d Bradbury, Wilkinson and unhyphenated issue was in black & red with the second unhyphenated issue changed to blue to suit U.P.U. convention. These Issues included the well-known window flaw and one of the last hyphenated printings used intense blue of which several certified examples were shown. All the items shown were in blocks of four or larger and mounted on double pages to suit.

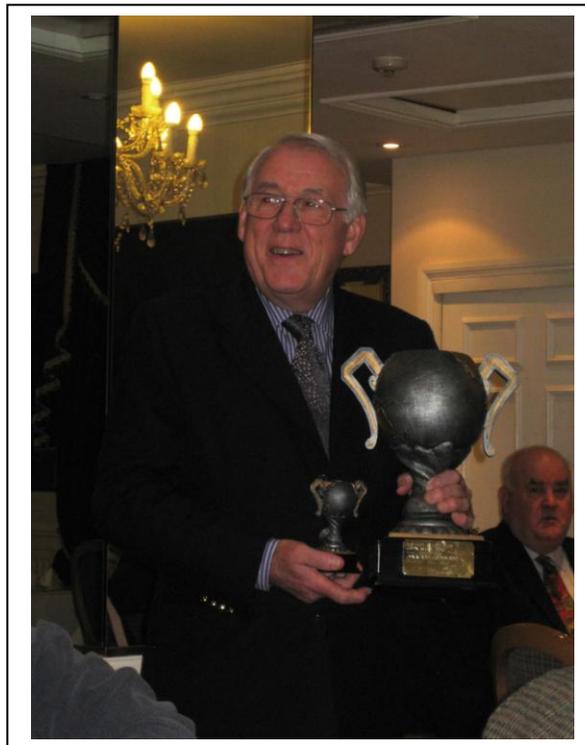
These concluded the displays for Saturday so the winners of the raffle were announced and votes for the best display of the day were collected from those present. Most of us convened, later, in the bar prior to a convivial dinner. During this time the Tony Chilton Memorial Trophy was awarded to Richard Stock for giving us an insight into the social and postal history of the Boer War.



John Shaw presenting the award



Enjoying the displays



Richard Stock with the Tony Chilton Trophy

On Sunday morning an early start was made to see short contributions from some others present.

First away was Otto Peetoom who showed a miscellany of interesting material. His first frame comprised photographic examples of proposed stamp designs from the Bradbury Wilkinson archive 1922 – 24, as released by S.A. postal authorities. This was followed by an update on the Robert Falcon Scott letter sent from S.A.; an inverted “Official” overprint on cover; A Mercier mission cover to Zambesia via Chindi & Fife which took 10 months in transit; a military cover; Southern Rhodesian archival postal stationery; used postal stationery when long postal stationery envelopes are rare used and mint and finally some aerogrammes.

Bob Hill had some postmarks and postcards, themed around the apartheid system, to show us. He explained about the Shepstone Compounds built to ensure that diamonds remained on the mining site and also displayed Indo-native cancellations, a Durban Bantu cancellation and a Non-European parcel cancellation. Bob’s presentation then included a 1935 notice of the closing of a Bantu Post Office; segregated Homeland cancellations; Gold Mine returned mail and four pages of Cape material.

A display of 1923 S.W.A. Postal Stationery by Denis Firth started with that issued on the same date as the first stamps of that territory under S.A. jurisdiction. The Dutch overprint was “Zuid-West Afrika” but later issues show the overprint as “Zuidwest Afrika”. Denis showed comprehensive examples of both issues.

Carol Bommarito displayed one cover from the Cape to Massachusetts via the Falkland Islands circa 1860’s. It was considered that this interesting item related to the whaling fleet.

Robert Johnson presented a social scenario of S.A. comprising early picture postcards of people, industries, buildings and ships etc.

The display by Brian Trotter was of surcharged pre-stamp and stamped mail. Postage due rates changed with a 4d rate 1846 -79; 3d rate 1879 – 82; 2d rate 1882 – 88 and 1d rate 1903 -11. A cover from the Warren Expedition to Bechuanaland was surcharged 2d because his wife had moved to a new address. We were advised that there were different rates adopted for British Bechuanaland at 2d and the Bechuanaland Protectorate with 2d + 2d (4d) at this time.

Alan Drysdall returned to his beloved railway posts in his presentation. The S.A.R. (Transvaal Rail) was essential for Witwatersrand industry. Coal was carried from Boksburg to Johannesburg on the Rand Train, a 3'-6" gauge railway of S.A. which was extended to Springs. Alan showed post cards and other illustrations featuring the stations on the Rand Train line of pre-Boer War times. Krugersdorp was a fine example of railway architecture.

Regiments of the Indian Army served in S.A. during the Boer War. Richard Stroud explained that this did not include Indians fighting in British or S.A. units but contingents raised by Lumsden in India. This included white Indian nationals from the whole sub-continent (Lumsden's Horse) and a second company embarked 26.02.1900 & 30.04.1900. with Lieutenant Walker its first casualty. The story of some of the members of Lumsden's Horse was shown in their correspondence and can be induced from the postal history in Richard's display.

Tony Stanford's display of the Postal Stationery of the Cape, Transvaal and British Bechuanaland showed the various G.B. overprints which can be encountered.

Eddie Bridges has, with others, been examining the 1927 & post 1930 postal stationery cards which have scenic pictures on the face in grey and ½d Springbok stamp impressed on the reverse. From the items shown, Eddie considered that two post 1930 issues had been made and would like scans of examples, either used or unused.

The next display, by John Shaw, was of the pictorial issues described as Waterlow or Bradbury Wilkinson printings but in which De la Rue had a hand. The inclusion of the Delville Wood memorial on the Rotogravure 2d prompted the question of what was Delville Wood. John explained that the wood in Belgium was the scene of a terrifying slaughter of S.A. troops during WWI. His display included the Royal Mint engraving of the London Printing by Nicholson from which Waterlow's dies were taken. John also displayed 1d ship stamps from three plates and a rare sideways watermark on the London Printing.

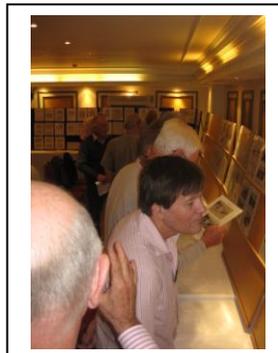
Chris Oliver presented some artists sketches for the RSA Antelope stamps, some proofs of the first Antelope booklet and some trial printing sheets produced by the Government Printing Office.

Our last display was by Tony Howgrave-Graham who presented a miscellany of S.W.A. with some coil stamps, proofs of the unissued Kruger commemorative by A.S. Konya, provisional rubber cancels and handstamps, converted German SWA handstamps, a registered mail item of 1921 and an example of the cancellation of the returned letter office in Windhoek.

We then adjourned to reassemble for another of Nick Arrow's splendid auctions. Following this Nick and his team were thanked for their efforts but the accolade was reserved for Simon Peetoom who had, yet again, spent a lot of time and effort into achieving another splendid weekend.



Enjoying the displays



Nick in last-minute preparation