

The collection and study of postage stamps became popular in the second half of the 19th Century, and soon came to be called “philately” (from the Greek “ateleia” meaning “exempt from tax”). The interest in stamp collecting quickly followed the issue of the first adhesive postage stamps by Great Britain on 6 May 1840. The introduction of the postage stamp was only part of a much wider reform of the postal system. Prior to December 1839, the charge for sending letters was calculated depending on the number of sheets of paper and distance travelled within the British Isles, and was usually collected from the recipient of the letter.

From 10 January 1840 letters were charged purely by weight, and not by the distance travelled, and prepayment was made compulsory. The standard single rate of inland postage was reduced to 1d, which was paid in cash by the sender. Thus the introduction of the 1d Black was a landmark in that it made the whole process of posting a letter more affordable, and much easier.



Foreign postal administrations followed Great Britain in issuing stamps, which led to a worldwide interest in the hobby. By the 1860's stamp collecting had brought about the introduction of catalogues and albums as well as the beginnings of the philatelic profession.

HOW TO COLLECT STAMPS

You can collect stamps in many ways. Some collectors concentrate on the issues from one country, or those issued during a particular period,

such as the reign of a monarch or head of state. Other collectors study particular types of stamps, the watermarks of the paper, etc. By looking at exhibits and talking to other enthusiasts you will learn of the enormous variety and the complexity of stamps. Once you have decided upon your subject, you can begin the hunt for your collection!



WHERE TO FIND STAMPS

There are many different sources for stamps. Obviously you can buy new issues from the Post Office, which is one of the cheapest ways to enjoy the hobby. Dealers at stamp fairs often have boxes of less expensive, as well as the more expensive stamps. There are also specialist auctioneers of stamps, and several magazines which will give you lots of information about new issues, when and where fairs are being held, and advertisements from the many hundreds of dealers who have stamps to sell. Once you've started, you may find a specialist book helpful – there are hundreds of philatelic catalogues and reference books available. For the names and addresses of organisations which can help you, see the back cover of this leaflet. Another way to collect is to join your local stamp club. You will find a listing of the regional clubs at the local library, or contact the Association of British Philatelic Societies (ABPS). Members love to swap stamps, or buy them from the “exchange packet” (a circulating package of stamps etc) which is run by most societies. The displays and talks given by visiting speakers can also benefit collectors with

new information and ideas.

With any hobby, try to “tailor” your collecting to suit your budget and your interests. Do not pick a subject, which has limited material available, or one which will stretch your pocket too far. If you wish to buy wisely so as to “protect” the funds you've spent, be certain to obtain expert advice first – as with any “collectible”, the modern, mass produced issues will not necessarily increase in value.

WHAT TO COLLECT?

Stamps may be divided into sub-groups according to their various functions, as follows: *Postage Stamps* – we normally think of stamps as being for the payment of postage (“franking”) for the ordinary correspondence. They may be divided into three groups, all of which are generally used for the prepayment of postage: *Definitives* – ordinary stamps which are issued for general use at values applicable to current postage rates, or multiples of that rate. Generally they are printed in sheets, or in booklets or coils.

Commemoratives – these stamps are issued to mark a particular event or anniversary or purpose and are normally only in circulation for a limited time. They are particularly popular with collectors of *Thematics*.

Provisionals – these stamps are generally used as a temporary measure and drawn from existing and current stock. They are overprinted for changes in rates, usage and events when there is insufficient time to design and print a new issue.

Postage Due Stamps - where correspondence has been under-paid/understamped with respect to the required rate, stamps can be affixed to the letter or parcel indicating the amount which needs to be paid by the addressee. Not all postal administrations use postage due stamps (also known as “Unpaid Letter

Stamps”), but rather use instructional markings on the letter as an alternative.

Airmail Stamps – these are extremely popular and probably the most common “special purpose stamps”. They resulted from the rapid growth of mail-carrying by air transport in the 1920’s. This was a special service and hence required a special fee (sometimes referred to as an “air tax”) in addition to the normal surface postage. Some countries used special stamps for this additional fee, whilst others used extra normal postage stamps. If no special stamps were used, “Par Avion” labels were affixed, or instructional marks hand-written on the items.



Charity Stamps – these stamps have one part with the postal value and the other with the amount donated to a particular charity or charitable cause, eg: Red Cross, child welfare, natural or war disaster, etc.

Special Delivery Stamps – these are issued by the postal administration to distinguish the different systems of payment for, and delivery of, different types of correspondence, such as Express Letter, Registration, Advice of Delivery/Receipt, Newspaper, Printed Matter, Parcel Post, Pneumatic Tube Post.

Government Department and Revenue Stamps – eg: Inland Revenue, Board of Education stamps (issued by GB from 1882-1904), Dept of Agriculture/Interior/Navv etc. (issued by the USA). Revenue stamps are issued specifically to collect

taxes, and in some cases have the dual purpose of paying postage. They are also known, as “fiscal” where their sole function is to pay duty or a tax (eg Duty on a contract).

Local Stamps – these are issued for use in a specific area (a town or district) or to pay for the private delivery of letters to routes where the postal service is not operated by the government, and as such are often the precursor to a country’s first issued stamp.

Telegraph/Telephone/Unissued/Testing Stamps - these are known as “Official Cinderellas” and were used in services closely aligned with the post office, sometimes even paying the postage.

Postal Stationery - this term defines the envelopes or cards which had stamps pre-printed or embossed on them, such as postcards, aerogrammes, wrappers etc. With any hobby, the range and diversity within stamp collecting is enormous.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT:**

The National Philatelic Society

E-mail: nps@ukphilately.org.uk

Internet: www.ukphilately.org.uk/nps

or ABPS, c/o RPSL,

15 Abchurch Lane, London EC4N 7BW

E-mail: secretary@abps.org.uk

Internet: www.abps.org.uk



ABPS

What is Stamp Collecting ?

Association of British Philatelic Societies