

## Taking Liberties



The British Library's free exhibition **Taking Liberties: the struggle for Britain's freedoms and rights** uncovers the roots of British democracy over a period of more than 900 years.

The exhibition will include examples of National Health, and Unemployment Insurance stamps that were first issued in 1912, following the National Insurance Act of 1911.

The exhibition will be from 31 October 2008 to 1 March 2009.



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## Donation of The Johnson Collection



The Library was pleased to receive the collection of postcards relating to the Post Office, recently donated by Robert Johnson FRPSL. The collection, which was formed over 20 years,

focuses on humorous cards that incorporate postal themes, and which illustrate the importance of the Post Office to the ordinary man in the street.

Many of the cards also give a wonderful insight into the political scene and social mores of the day – humour that might be frowned on at home was acceptable when one was on holiday. Most of the cards are from Great Britain and range in date from the early to mid part of the 20th century, and includes cards by artists such as Donald McGill and his contemporaries. There is also an important section which illustrates postal uniforms and methods of carrying the mail in different parts of the world, portrayed on postcards, cigarette and trade cards.

The collection has been the subject of a number of lectures by Mr Johnson and has proved to be equally popular with philatelic and non-philatelic audiences alike. He explains "As I presented the postcards I observed the audience – certain things became obvious: not many people had connected the comic postcard with the long British tradition of caricature, cartoons and

graphic design. Women, in particular were interested in the ladies' fashions shown on the cards, while the men enjoyed the humour and the representations of people and objects connected with the Post Office at home and in other countries."

The donor has prepared a PowerPoint presentation and lecture script that will be available, to any societies or interested groups of people. "The idea of the PowerPoint presentation is to alert people to the vast resources of the British Library and in particular the Philatelic Collections which can be used both for research, education and personal entertainment in the broadest sense. I want those seeing the presentation to be encouraged to use the BL and also to get interested in a subject such as the history of the Post Office or the development of an art form with words that is accessible to most people."



Postcard showing the importance of women in the war effort in WWI.

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# The Row Collection



1883-85 1 solot colour proof strip of three.

*'This collection of Siamese stamps, comprised in twenty-two volumes, was brought together and arranged by R.W. Harold Row, BSc, FLS, FZS, Assistant Lecturer and Demonstrator in Zoology at King's College in the University of London, who died on 16th February, 1919, while engaged in Research Work at the Pathological Laboratory of the Fourth London General Hospital (Malaria Department) undertaken during the Great War. In accordance with his wish it was presented by his mother, Eliza Row, of Mount Vernon, Exeter, to the British Museum, and accepted by the Trustees 11th October, 1919'*

So reads the label that was attached to the inside covers of the albums that originally contained the Row Collection. Harold Row was acknowledged as the leading expert of Thailand philately at the time, and as well as publishing articles in *The London Philatelist*, also prepared a series of articles that appeared in the *Stamp Lover* magazine. These were later published in 1913 as a handbook, "The Adhesive Postage Stamps of Siam".

At the time of the donation, the entire collection was mounted and written up by Messrs. Frank Godden Ltd.,

and these pages are now stored in twenty-two conservation boxes, plus a larger box containing oversize items such as sheets and blocks.

The collection encompasses the period from 1883, when stamps were introduced, to 1914; chiefly comprising unused, with many blocks. The collection is strong in the various provisional surcharges, particularly the 1885 1 Tical surcharges of which Row made a particular study. There are also some essays, proofs, and postal history items, with two volumes of Thailand used in the Malayan States of Kedah and Kelantan.



Members of the Thailand Philatelic Society visit the British Library.

As part of the celebrations to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Thailand Philatelic Society, the society arranged a group visit in April to see the Row collection, and were captivated by the scope and quality of the collection.



One of the highlights of the collection, 1883-85 1 solot indigo a block of twelve and a block of twenty used on the reverse half of an envelope (below).



1885-87 1 Tical on 1 solot indigo, variety surcharge double, once in red and once in black, (SG 7e), unused.

**For details of the Thailand Philatelic Society please contact:**

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**See Society website:**

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# Researcher's Note

By Dr Geoffrey Eibl-Kaye, FRPSL



Dr Geoffrey Eibl-Kaye, FRPSL

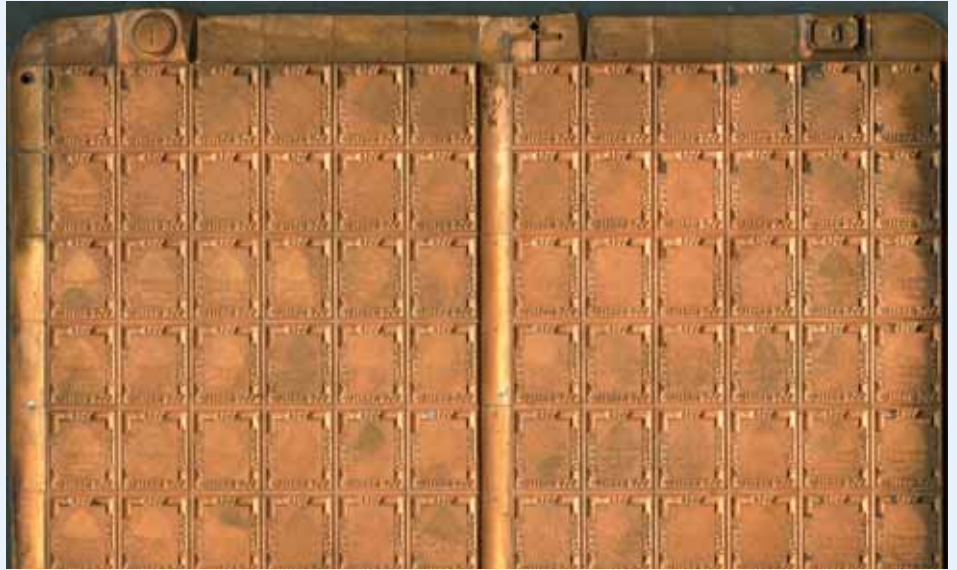
I have researched Indian Postal History and the History of the Indian Postal Service for more than 25 years. Much of this work has been done

in the India Office Records, starting when they were housed in a building of their own in Blackfriars Road. With the building of the new Library it brought together the India Office Records into the same building as the Library's Philatelic Collections and in doing so brought me into more regular contact with the curatorial staff of the Philatelic Collections.

Any philatelist interested in the Indian Postal Service and Mail between Britain and the regions, east of the Cape, where the East India Company traded, must eventually have recourse to the vast records in the India Office collection. For instance, if you collect or study ship letters carried on the Company's ships then the many thousand captains logs of almost every voyage made by an East India Man in the archive are available for study and the extracting of vital information on the progress of the voyage. From 1813 the Company's monopoly of trade east of the Cape was restricted to the China trade and trade with India was open to anyone. With the loss of this monopoly the



India 1878 Queen Victoria Head Die.



Orange Free State 1878 5/- printing plate.

Post Office could look to other traders to carry the Indian mails. The correspondence between the Company and the Post Office gives an astonishing insight into the attitudes and procedures within the British Post Office.

Another area of my research has been the printing and perforation of the *East India* stamps produced by the printers De La Rue. The proof sheets in the Philatelic Collections have been most valuable in this research.

Not only do the Philatelic Collections hold large collections of stamps and the records of the stamp printers, they also have (surprisingly to some philatelists) an extensive collection of the metalwork associated with stamp production. There are dies, electros and other printing plates for many issues and countries. There are also *Electro Proofs*, or as they are erroneously called *punches*, for the embossed stamps used by the British Stamp Office for the collection of stamp duties. These materials I have found valuable as Curator of the Museum of the Royal Philatelic Society London. Whilst these artefacts do not supplement the artefacts in the Royal Philatelic Society London Museum, they do complement our collection, and have often proved

valuable in assisting the interpretation of our artefacts.



When one visits the British Library Philatelic Collection one is amongst friends, who are only too willing to share their knowledge with you and assist in any way possible with your research (without doing the research for you). They may not always agree with your hypotheses or ideas, but they provide a valuable sounding board for new ideas, and provide valuable criticism which can only help in firming as yet inchoate research.

# Seeing the Philatelic Collections

For details about our collections and services please see the Philatelic Collections web pages at: [www.bl.uk/collections/philatelic](http://www.bl.uk/collections/philatelic)



**Open free of charge, during the following times**

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 09.30 – 18.00

Tuesday 09.30 – 20.00

Saturday 09.30 – 17.00

Sunday and Bank Holidays 11.00 – 17.00

**Researchers may view material; not on display, by appointment. A British Library Reader's Pass is required.**

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## News Roundup

### VISIT OF THE ACADEMIE EUROPEENE DE PHILATÉLIE



On February 29th twenty-three members of the Académie Européenne de Philatélie visited the Philatelic Collections. Members were impressed by the diverse range of material that they examined.

### AQUISITIONS AND DONATIONS

With the help of the Friends of the British Library, the Department was recently able to purchase an important addition to the collection of auction catalogues, a complete set of the dispersal sales of the **Colonel E.H.R. Green** collection, held in U.S.A. between 1942 and 1946.

Earlier in the year the Department received **The Heyes Collection of British Greetings Telegrams**, formed by the late Norman Heyes and donated by his son, Jonathan Heyes.

Dr Robert Macmillan has donated a fascinating twelve page collection of the **Netherlands 1901 "Brandstempel"** cancellation trial. Instead of using ink, the Dutch authorities experimented with heating the cancellation die, which left a singed impression on the stamp.

On behalf of **Lady L M Baillie** and Sotheby's Stamp Department, Richard Ashton presented a complete set of colour photographs of one of the three prepared leather bound albums '**Philatelie d'art les Jean-de-Sperati**'. The original album includes a magnificent range of the master-forgers stamps and die-proofs.

An interesting volume '**Wiggins Teape / Samuel Jones Specimen Book of Stamp Papers**', and another Printers sample album of the 1960's, have been donated by Michael St John Wright.

### PUBLISHED RESEARCH

Many of the users of the Philatelic Collections are working on books or articles, and amongst those which have recently appeared is:

**The King George VI Large Key Type Revenue and Postage High Value Stamps 1937-1953.**

Eric P. Yendall: The Royal Philatelic Society London: 2008, ISBN 978-0-900631-54-2, 358 pages. For further details see [www.rpsl.org.uk](http://www.rpsl.org.uk)

