



SIPA Bulletin

For Private Circulation to Members only

Vol. 25 No. 6

November - December 2004

Bimonthly

Editorial

IS STAMP COLLECTING AN EXPENSIVE HOBBY?

Is stamp collecting an expensive hobby? This is a frequently asked question which, as it stands cannot be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No".

The answer to that million dollar question is "Yes" if you focus your interest and attention on rare and scarce stamps. For example if you want to make 'a Gandhi Rs.10/-service' or 'an inverted head of the queen' your own and will not rest until all the varieties are your collection, your 'stamp collecting' will be truly expensive. The answer is "No", if you just want to have a bit of fun and happiness in collecting stamps, confining yourself to modern times and designs and set yourself an upper budget limit. Almost every collection starts with the well-known shoe box of stamps cut, off envelopes which is practically free, thanks to the kind assistance of friends and relatives. Subsequently, when you want to develop your collection further, and if you find you are a stamp or two short of a set or theme, you can always solve the problem by buying.

Nowadays it is a lot easier for people who have new issues standing order with India Post by having 'Philatelic deposit account' with the nearest philatelic bureau. For around Rs.200/- (recouped whenever reduced to a minimum) all new stamps are sent to you automatically, either mint or on FDCs., as you please. And if you want to save the trouble of organising regularly or monthly, you can buy a 'year pack' of stamps, a few months after the completion of the year and set yourself in order.

Even if you don't want to spend so much money on having a complete collection, that's no problem not in having more than one copy of each stamp in your collection. With an individual order, you can pick and choose, say, you can request 'supply only personalities' or 'supply without personalities' whatever suits you. There are no strict rules when you collect for fun. You can do exactly as you please, and display your treasures in whatever way you wish. Here again, stamps and philately has just the right thing for you, in the form of a wide variety of albums and stock books.

So stamp collecting is still hobby for everyone. And it's completely up to you to decide whether it is a cheap or expensive pastime!.

SIPA
Wishes its members
a
Peaceful,
Pleasant and
Prosperous
New Year 2005

Our Second Sunday Meetings were held at the CPMG's Conference Hall, Anna Road, HPO, Chennai - 600 002. (10.30 - 12.30 pm) regularly where around 40 members attended with President Shri Balakrishna Das in the Chair. Mr. Ram Mohan spoke on "Gandhi and philately" in October 2004.

STAMP NEWS

K. SUBRAHMANYAM

10.09.2004

500

0.6 Million

Shri K. Subrahmanyam was born on April 20, 1904, the eldest son of a well known lawyer and educationist C.S. Krishnaswami Iyer and Venkalakshmi of Papanasam village in Kumbakonam in Tamilnadu. At the age of 16 he got married to Meenakshi of Nagapattinam. After graduating from Kumbakonam College he studied Law at the Madras Law College. But soon the creative urge in him drew him into the film Industry and he joined Raja Sandow as Assistant Director. Later, Shri K. Subrahmanyam blossomed as a pioneer film producer-Director.



Apart from silent films, he made several mythological and social movies in Tamil and also a few in Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada. He was the first South Indian filmmaker to produce a film in Hindi, namely 'Premsagar', and was the first

Indian to direct a Sinhalese film. His Madras United Artistes Corporation (MUAC), Kalaivani Films and later Morak Pvt. Ltd. were fore-runners in producing thought-provoking films.

Even after he retired from film production in 1957, his interest as a pioneer in documentary films was not lessened. He continued to supervise short films produced by his Morak Pvt. Ltd. till the end. He was Honorary Adviser for the newly constituted Development of Visual Education of the then Govt. of Travancore.

Shri Subrahmanyam played a vital role in the formation of Film Finance Corporation, Children's Film Society, NFDC, the Film Institutes at Pune & Chennai, the National Film Archives in Pune, the Film Federation of India and the Central and State Sangeet Natak Academies.

Shri Subrahmanyam had also a strong social commitment in life. He devoted himself in organizational work whether it was the mammoth Mahamagam Exhibition at Kumbakonam (1932) or the Indian National Army (INA) Relief Exhibition at Chennai (1946). He was the brain behind Govt. of India's schemes such as Inter-State Cultural Exchange, and Railway concessions for artistes to promote national integration.

He was not only the Founder Member and later President of the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce, but also founder of South Indian Artistes Association (Thennindia Nadigar Sangam). Indo-Soviet Cultural Association, Nataka Kazhagam, Nadaswara Vidwan's Association and Nrithyodaya, a School to provide free training in dance and music to deserving poor students. He was the first Vice-Chairman of the State Sangeet Natak Academy (Now Tamilnadu Eyal Isai Nataka Mandram) and Chairman of the Tamilnadu Film Institute.

Shri K. Subrahmanyam died in 1971 but his legacy lives on.

Theme : Personality, Cinema, Entertainment, Pioneers.

M.C. CHAGLA

01.10.2004

500

0.6 Million

Jurist, judge, educationist, diplomat, Union Cabinet Minister and statesman, M.C. Chagla was a multifaceted genius. Born on September 30, 1900 and educated at Bombay's Saint Xavier's School and Lincoln College, Oxford, England, and became the Chief Justice of the High Court of Bombay. He taught law at the Government Law College, Bombay and later became the Vice Chancellor of Bombay University. He served as a Member of the Law Commission and was ad-hoc judge of the International Court of Justice at the Hague. He was Governor of Bombay for a short spell and was India's Ambassador to the USA for 3 years and High Commissioner for India in the UK for a year.

As a Member of the Indian Cabinet, first as Minister of Education and later of External Affairs, he headed the

Indian Delegation to the Security Council Debate on Kashmir in 1964, to the Commonwealth Education Conference, Ottawa (1964), to the General Conference of UNESCO (1964) and to the UN General Assembly (1964). He was also given the UNESCO Award for distinguished services to Human Rights in 1978. His published works include the Indian Constitution; Law, Liberty and Life; The Individual and the State; An Ambassador Speaks; Education and the Nation; Unity and Language and his Autobiography, 'Roses in December'.

On the enactment of the Constitution of India in 1950, problems without precedence were placed before Courts of Law for solution. Justice Chagla brought to these problems a balance between the rule of law and the liberty of the individual. This was the ideal which he himself achieved, starting work at the Bar as "a lonely, friendless figure, without any support from solicitors at that stage, and without the support of wealth or influence".

Theme : Personality, Lawyers, Judiciary.



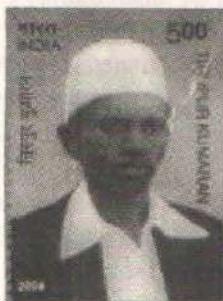
TIRUPUR KUMARAN

04.10.2004

500

0.6 Million

Tirupur, an important town in the state of Tamilnadu, is not only famous for its Cotton products, but also for the supreme sacrifice made by Shri N. Kumaran whom we know as Tirupur Kumaran.



Kumaran was born on 4th October 1904 in a poor weaver's family at Chennimalai, a small town in Erode District in Tamilnadu.

He got his primary education upto fifth standard in his village school and due to poverty could not continue

his education further. At the age of ten, he left for Pallipalayam, near Erode, to get himself trained in weaving and mastered within two years. He was married at the age of 17 with Ramayammal. He migrated to Tirupur to earn his living.

He was deeply influenced by the Gandhian principle of non-cooperation, which had gained wide popularity at that time.

Kumaran, an admirer of Gandhiji, became an active member of the Desabandhu Youth League through which all the Gandhian programmes were carried out.

When by the orders of Lord Wellington, the Viceroy, Gandhiji was arrested on 04.01.1932 a procession was carried out in Tirupur on 10.01.1932. Shri Kumaran wanted to dedicate himself to this movement despite strong objections from his relatives and friends citing the recent death of his father and his responsibilities towards his mother and wife. He was also well aware of the consequences of this agitation and the intention of the police.

After the arrest of Shri Ahaar and Smt. Padmavathi Ahaar, Tirupur Kumaran and others continued the agitation with renewed vigour. On 10th January 1932, while he was marching ahead holding the Tricolour in his hand, the Police launched a brutal assault on him. Exhibiting exemplary valour, Kumaran held the flag and kept chanting "VANDEMATARAM". Next day, on 11.01.1932, he breathed his last. He is aptly known as "Kodikatha Kumaran", i.e. "Kumaran, the protector of the Flag".

His sacrifice was widely honoured and within a month of his demise Mahatma Gandhi visited Tirupur and met his wife.

Former Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Shri Rajaji, Shri Jaya Prakash Narayan visited his house and paid homage.

Theme : Freedom Struggle, Martyr, Independence.

150 YEARS OF INDIA POST

04.10.2004 500,500,500,500 0.8 Million each
M/S 2000

On 1st October, 1854, India Post, as we know it today, was born with a skeletal network of 701 post offices under the control of a Director General. The Post Office Act of 1854 reformed the earlier postal system, providing total monopoly to the Government for the management of the Post Office and the exclusive privilege for conveyance of letters. The Railway Mail Service was also established in 1854, and a new sea mail service was introduced from India to Great Britain and China.

On 1st October, 1854, the first postage stamp valid across the country was issued at an affordable and uniform rate of postage, fixed by weight and not by distance. For the first time the common man could use a facility which included free delivery of letters from door to door - a privilege previously enjoyed only by Heads of States and State officials.



From this day forth, the Post Office touched the life of every citizen.

The postal system in India is the synthesis of many influences. Its origins include elements of systems established from the time of the Mauryas, as also those established later by the British, the Princely States, the District postal systems and the Zamindari dak. The British Postal system in India was established by Lord Clive in 1776, and further developed by Warren Hastings, who established the Calcutta GPO in 1774. GPOs at Madras and Bombay followed in 1786 and 1793 respectively. The Post Office Act of 1837 united the Post Office organizations in all the three presidencies into one all-India Service. By 1908, of the 650 princely states, some of which were well developed with local postage stamps of their own, 635 states cast their lot with the Indian Post Office.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the post office served as facilitator of travel with its conveyance systems, and by maintaining the dak bungalows and dak serais. Mail order services were started with the value payable system introduced in 1877, while fund remittances at the doorstep became possible from 1880 through money order services. With the introduction of the Post Office Savings Bank in 1882 banking facilities were accessible to all and by 1884 all Government employees were covered by the Postal Life Insurance. The post office has even been used to retail quinine and salt in public interest.

The postal network of over 1,55,000 outlets is the largest in the world, and arguably, the largest retail network in the country. Today, the focus is on modernizing and computerizing the network to enhance its capacity to render various e-based services like e-post and value added premium services like Speed Post, Business Post etc. to meet the emerging needs of customers and also provide e-governance facilities.

Theme : Postal System, Postal History, Philately.

ASHOKA CHAKRA WINNERS NEERAJA BHANOT AND RANDHIR PRASAD VERMA

08.10.2004 500,500 0.6 Million each

Ashoka Chakra is awarded for the most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent valour of self-sacrifice other than in the face of the enemy.

The medal was originally established in 1952 as the 'Ashoka Chakra Class I' as the first step of a three class sequence of non-combatant bravery decorations. In 1967, these decorations were renamed as the Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra.



Courage, Commitment and Compassion, these three simple words personify Neeraja Bhanot who was recognized internationally as 'the heroine of the hijack'.

Neeraja Bhanot, daughter of Shri Harish Bhanot was born on 7 September 1963, in Chandigarh. She joined the Pan American World Airways on January 16, 1986. Her leadership qualities were quickly recognized and she was elevated to the position of 'Purser' on April 1, 1986. On September 5, 1986, Neeraja Bhanot was in the Pan American Airways flight from Bombay to New York when the plane was hijacked at Karachi Airport. Nearly 400 passengers and crew members, were held at gunpoint for over 17 hours.

At the end, the hijackers opened fire and set of explosives. Acting quickly, Neeraja opened the emergency doors and helped a number of passengers to escape. While shielding three children from a hail of bullets, she was fatally wounded by the gunfire.

She is the only Indian to have been conferred with the 'Heroism Award of the Flight Safety Foundation'.

Randhir Prasad Verma was a person who made a glorious history in a short life span and made his country proud by displaying extraordinary courage, bravery and dedication to his duty.

He was born on 3rd February 1952 in Saharsha district of Bihar. His qualities started showing up when he was studying in St John's School, Ranchi and Patna College, Patna.

He joined the Indian Police Service in 1974. He eliminated the gang of notorious 'Matka Gamblers'. He also smashed the gang of another notorious criminal, Kamdev Singh, in the initial training period of his police service.

On the fateful day of 3rd January 1991, Randhir Prasad Verma, posted in Dhanbad as the Superintendent of Police, learnt about an attempted robbery in the Hirapur branch of the Bank of India. He rushed to the spot accompanied only by his bodyguards, and entered the building. He met with a hail of gunfire. He took out his service revolver

and asked the robbers to surrender. One of them fired upon him with his automatic weapon. Shri Verma was badly wounded, still he managed to shoot one down. He was again fired upon which proved fatal. Showing exceptional dare-devilry and courage, Randhir Prasad Verma laid down his life.

By his act of gallantry, Shri Randhir Prasad Verma set an example for the society.

Theme : Personality, Awards, Heroes, Heroines

GURU DUTT

10.10.2004 500 0.6 Million

The 50's was undoubtedly the golden era of Hindi films blessed with directors and artistes who could stamp their individuality on their work. One such personality who carved a niche for himself as a director, actor, and producer in the decade, was Guru Dutt Shivshankar Padukone.



Guru Dutt was born on July 9, 1925 in Bangalore. His father Shivshankar Padukone worked as a school headmaster and then in a bank in Bangalore, and his mother Vasanthi was a school teacher.

He had his early education in Calcutta and completed in 1941. He was interested in photography and had a natural inclination for dancing and music especially Hindi and Bengali folk music. He joined the 'Uday Shankar India Culture Centre' in Almora. After his dance training, he got a break in films as a dance director on a three-year contract at Prabhat Films, Pune when along with choreography, he assisted directors otherwise and even acted in some small roles. After his contract with Prabhat was over he managed to get a job as assistant director to Amiya Chakravarty, a leading film director at the time, in his film 'Girls School', and in 1950 he assisted Gyan Mukherjee in Bombay Talkies film 'Sangram'.

Finally in 1951, he was called upon by his friend Dev Anand, to honour a promise made when they were working together at Prabhat, to direct 'Baazi', a crime thriller. 'Baazi' was a huge success and was a trendsetter in the genre of crime films. Most of the songs for the film were sung by Geeta Roy a star singer at that time. Guru Dutt and Geeta Roy met during the song recordings of 'Baazi' and fell in love, which culminated in marriage on 26th May 1953.

'Aar Paar' released in 1954 established Guru Dutt as a director to reckon with, followed by some of his best works like 'Mr. And Mrs. 55', 'Pyasa' and 'Kaagaz Ke Phool'. But 'Kaagaz Ke Phool' was a dismal failure at the box office and a dejected Guru Dutt never directed a film again. In fact soon after, he produced and acted in 'Chaudhavin Ka Chand', which was an instant success and helped Guru Dutt recoup all the losses that he had suffered in 'Kaagaz Ke Phool', and 'Sahib Biwi Aur Ghulam' won the President's silver medal as well as the Film of the Year award from the Bengal Film Journalists Association besides going to the Berlin Film Festival.

Apart from his own productions, Guru Dutt acted in outside productions like 'Twelve O' clock', 'Sautela Bhai', 'Bahurani', 'Bharosa', etc.

On October 10, 1964 the Hindi film world suffered a great loss with the demise of Guru Dutt.

Theme : Cinema, Entertainment, Personality.

MARUDHU PANDIAR BROTHERS

24.10.2004

500

0.4 Million

The Marudhu Pandiar Brothers of Sivaganga have a special place in the memory of the people of the Tamil Nadu. They spearheaded the South Indian rebellion against the British in 1800-1801. Some historians have hailed this rebellion as the earliest form of freedom struggle in India.

Periya Marudhu and Chinna Marudhu were born to Udaiyar Servai, a General in the army of the Raja of Ramnad, and to his wife, Ponnathal, in 1748 and 1753 respectively. Trained in the martial arts by their father, the two brothers were conferred the title of "Pandian" in appreciation of their valour by the Raja of Ramnad.

Subsequently, on the invitation of the Raja of Sivaganga, they became lieutenants in his army. In 1772 Sivaganga was attacked by a strong English army. The Marudhu brothers fought bravely but could not save their king, who died on the battlefield. The brothers devoted themselves to the protection of their queen Velunachiar. They also assisted her in administering her kingdom. She later transferred her authority to rule the kingdom to the Marudhu brothers fully. They ruled Sivaganga from 1780-1801.



Their rule was marked by secularism & harmony. They promoted employment schemes for the poor & construction of places of worship of different religions. Chinna Marudhu, the younger of the two brothers was the political strategist who spearheaded the task of forming political alliances from Thanjavur to Tirunelveli. He then engineered rebellions against the British at several places, assisted by local leaders. On June 16, 1801, he issued what came to be known as his 'Rebel Proclamation' at Tiruchi & Srirangam. It appealed to people of all sections to take up the patriotic cause and to wage war against the British.

Several battles were fought under their leadership. But in 1801, the brothers were captured by the British and hanged at Tirupattur on 24th October, 1801 along with many of their kinsfolk and allies.

Theme : History, Rulers, Rebellions.

Indian Army in UN Peacekeeping Operations

24.10.2004

500

0.8 Million

M/S 500

Indian participation in the United Nations Peacekeeping is as old as the history of the UN Peacekeeping itself and

goes back over five decades. So far, the Indian Army has participated in 36 Peacekeeping Missions with more than 70,000 troops. India is amongst the largest contributors to the UN Peacekeeping Operations.

The most difficult areas across the world and the range of sensitive Peacekeeping Operations India has participated in, are the testimony to India's commitment to the UN Charter and its objectives. The first deployment came early enough, when India sent troops to Korea as a part of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission in 1953-54. This



was a delicate task, involving the repatriation of Prisoners of War. This was followed by a stint at Gaza to keep Israeli and Egyptian forces apart.

The largest (and longest serving) contingent was sent to Congo in 1961. A complete Independent Brigade Group helped bring about peace and its enforcement thereafter. The mercenaries themselves conceded, in later writings, that the Indian contingent's activity curbed their style. Capt. GS Salaria was awarded posthumously, the country's highest gallantry award, the Param Vir Chakra, for his brave action at Katanga.

After Korea (1950-52) and Congo (1960-63), India again sent a Brigade Group to Somalia and displayed its resolve to support international community in peace and security issues. India has deployed Battalion Groups, engineers, medical teams in Cambodia, Angola, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Lebanon and Ethiopia. Observers and staff personnel have made their contributions to the international peace efforts in Central America, Iran, Yemen, Iraq, Kuwait, Liberia, Lebanon, Ethiopia-Eritrea, Mozambique, Burundi, Ivory Coast and Congo.

India has also provided able leaders for various missions, to name a few, General Thimayya in Korea & Cyprus, Lt Gen. Dewan Prem Chand in Cyprus & Namibia, Lt. Gen. Satish Nambiar in Yugoslavia, Maj Gen Inderjit Rikhye in Sinai, West Iran & Yemen, Maj Gen PS Gyani in Yemen, Sinai & Cyprus, Maj Gen V Jaitley in Sierra Leone and Maj Gen LM Tiwari in Lebanon apart from many a Contingent Commander. Currently, Maj Gen Rajender Singh, SM, VSM has the honour of commanding the Peacekeeping Force in Ethiopia-Eritrea.

Present contribution of the Indian Army is 2357, inclusive of all ranks.

Theme : United Nations, Peace, Army

GREETINGS

25.10.2004

400,400

8 Million each

Greetings, a medium of expressing emotions and feelings, have been playing a vital role not only to celebrate and strengthen relationships but also in social interactions. The exchange of greetings has now become a very common phenomenon in celebrating important occasions.

History has recorded the prevalence of greetings in ancient Egypt and Rome where the New Year was marked by the exchange of symbolic presents of scent, laurel or olive branches coated with gold leaf etc. This practice continued and further developed. A fresh impetus was given to this form of expression with the advent of the printing press, and with the coming of the penny post in 1840, greetings became a common feature. The modern day greeting cards crystallized

in 1843 when the first Xmas card with Season's greetings was designed in the United Kingdom.



India is a land of festivals. Almost all festivals like Diwali, Holi, Pongal, Durga Puja, Baishakhi, Christmas, Bihu, Id etc. are marked by sending of greetings cards. They are now also used to express a gamut of emotions; love, friendship, sympathy, affection and for conveying congratulations and thanks. Greetings stamps introduced and issued from time to time by the Department of Posts since 1990 carry out the role of harbingers of glad tidings.

In the festive season, a set of two stamps on the theme of kites and dolls is being brought out for greetings. In India, kites and dolls have been a part of our traditions and cultural beliefs. In a small but significant way, these postage stamps at the first glance convey the feelings that have gone into sending the missive.

Dolls are the beautiful medium through which the rich cultural heritage through the ages are vividly depicted, although the medium of expression has diffused from stone and canvas to cloth and celluloid. The history of India beginning from the ancient times to the modern is reflected in its variety of dolls. Dolls act as cultural ambassadors and have evolved through the 5,000 years of Indian civilization.

Kites have been objects of interest and fascination to people throughout the world. The exact origin of kiting is unknown, but it is believed that kites were flown in China 2,000 years ago. In India, kiting is a part of a great social festival. The earliest evidence of Indian kite flying comes from miniature paintings from the Mughal period. In the 18th and 19th centuries, kites were used as tools for scientific research. Kite played a significant role in helping us understand some of the great aerodynamic principles. Nothing can beat the excitement of flying a kite with the friends and family.

Theme : Greetings, Paintings, Paintings

DR. S. ROERICH

27.10.2004

500

0.6 Million

Our country has attracted people from all over the world. Dr. Svetoslav Roerich was one such legendary artist who, a Russian, made India his home.

Svetoslav was born on October 23, 1904 at St. Petersburg, Russia. His father Prof. Nicholas Roerich was known

for his lofty contributions in the field of fine arts, innumerable paintings, culture, ideology and humanistic ideas. His mother Helena Roerich was also a scholar in her own right. She wrote on ethical and spiritual subjects, especially on the importance of women's role in the new era. At the age of 12, Svetoslav painted his first portrait of his father, which was greatly appreciated. In 1919 in London, he started studies in architecture and painting seriously. Soon his family moved out of England to the United States of America in 1920, where he entered the Architectural Branch of the Columbia University. He continued his education at the Architectural School at Howard University. In 1926, at an exhibition to mark the 150th anniversary of American Independence in Philadelphia, Svetoslav won the Grand Prix.

On completion of his studies in the USA in 1931, he left for India to live with his parents in the Kulu Valley in a



place called Naggar where they have been residing since 1923. He was made the Head of the Department of studying the local pharmacopoeia, flora and fauna in the scientific institute called 'Uruswati' founded by his father. He married

Devika Rani, a grand niece of Poet Rabindranath Tagore, in 1945. She was the First Lady of the Indian Cinema. In 1947, after the death of Nicholas Roerich, Svetoslav and Devika shifted their residence to South Bangalore. His amiable manners, broad outlook and keen appreciation of human values won friends among the eminent personalities like Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Sarojini Naidu etc. He was conferred the Padma Bhushan Award, one of the most coveted honours of India in 1961. The Bulgarian Art Society, Sofia, and the Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR also elected him as an Honorary Fellow in 1978.

The Indian ethos left an imprint on his aesthetics. In a majority of his canvases he painted in India, he presents a mosaic of vistas of this country, its people, its landscape dotted with high mountains, its flora and fauna, its legends and anthropological peculiarities. He was honoured Fellowship by Central Lalit Kala Akademy in 1987.

Dr. Svetoslav Roerich passed away on January 30, 1993. Dr. Svetoslav Roerich's contribution will keep his memory alive, as a true embodiment of aesthetic fervors and indelible union of two cultures, India and Russia.

Theme : Fine Arts, Painters.

AUSTRALIA'S 1956 OLYMPIC GAMES STAMPS

Richard Breckon

The stamps issued for the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games included Australia's first multicoloured, photogravure productions, as well as a number of interesting complications.



The design of the 1s. stamp was based on this view of Collins Street, Melbourne

Early in 1954 the Australian Post Office was asked by the Melbourne Olympic Games Organising Committee to issue a stamp publicising the Games in advance around the world. The suggestion was immediately adopted and it was decided to release a 2s. stamp in December 1954, when its usage on Christmas mail to overseas destinations would give wide coverage. Two shillings was Australia's basic airmail postage to Europe, North America and much of the rest of the world.

At the Organising Committee's suggestion, the Olympic publicity stamp design was based on the official publicity poster for the Melbourne Olympic Games. The poster was designed by Richard Beck, an English industrial designer who had emigrated to Australia and lived in Melbourne. Beck won a competition to design the poster and was awarded 120 guineas (£126). His entry featured an invitation card bearing the Olympic rings and Melbourne's coat of arms. The Organising Committee arranged for 35,000 posters to be distributed worldwide.

The first versions of the Olympic Publicity stamp design prepared by the Note printing Branch incorporate the poster's main features in a 'commemorative size' (24mm x 37.5mm) stamp in vertical format. Later, the question of copyright in the poster was raised and it was thought prudent to consult Richard Beck about the stamp. He liked the overall design, but wished to see typography and other details improved.

Beck was commissioned to prepare a new version of the Olympic publicity stamp, having earlier designed the 1953 Tasmanian Stamp Centenary issue. (This marked a point where private artists became increasingly involved in stamp designs, whereas previously Note Printing Branch artists had been almost exclusively responsible).

In August 1954 the Stamp Advisory Committee accepted Beck's revised Olympic design ('a more finished' effort than the earlier version) and it was approved by the Postmaster General. A curious aspect is the inclusion of 'POSTAGE' on the stamp at the insistence of the Post Office Director General, even though the word had been dropped from commemorative stamp designs since 1947. At the artist's request, the 2s. Olympic stamp was deep blue corresponding with the poster's background colour.

Not everyone was happy

The stamp was issued on 1 December 1954. Based on

the month's normal requirements of 1.7 million stamps, the print run of the 2s. Olympic stamp was fixed at 2 million. Even so, supplies began to run out within a week of its issue. The Post Office took the unusual step (for a commemorative stamp) of authorising the urgent reprinting in mid-December of 1.8 million Olympic stamps, which brought the total quantity to 3,804,320 stamps. This was evidence of the stamp's popularity, although not everyone was happy about the issue.

Australia was the first Olympic host country to issue advance publicity stamps and to some this precedent was not welcome. GSM (December 1954) featured an article by Stanley Gibbons' Managing Director, F S Wall, questioning the need for the Olympic publicity stamp and inviting readers to comment. In a letter to the Australian Post Office, Wall noted that he had received 'a fair amount' of correspondence and 'almost without exception they (i.e. GSM readers) would prefer not to see actual stamps to provide advance publicity so much beforehand.



The official publicity poster produced by the Olympic Games Organising Committee served as the basis for the design of the 1954-55 Publicity stamps. The poster was designed by Richard Beck who also prepared the stamp design. The stamps were popular with collectors but the precedent was not liked by some.

The Olympic Games Organising Committee thought the stamp had been a wonderful success and they urged a reissue in December 1955. The Post Office had anticipated this when planning the 1954 stamp and instructed the Note Printing Branch to retain the printing plates. The matter could not be decided without consulting Postmaster General H L Anthony. He had recently told Parliament that the frequency of commemorative stamps was too high and in future they would be curtailed. Nevertheless, the Olympic publicity stamp's reissue was approved by the Postmaster General on 29 September 1955.

In a new colour of greenish-blue, the 2s. stamp was issued on 30 November 1955 for one month's sale. To ensure adequate supplies were available, the print run was increased to 3,936,000 stamps. The official publicity stated that 'last year's stamp attracted considerable attention abroad and the reissue of the stamp would assist further overseas interest in Australia and the Olympic Games next year.'

The 1956 commemoratives

When the Post Office began planning commemorative stamps for issue at the time of the 1956 Olympic Games, it

envisaged three values to be recess-printed in the Note Printing Branch:

- 31/2d. Olympic rings, torch and Southern Cross constellation - basic letter postage within Australia and to British Commonwealth countries;
- 71/2d. Aerial view of the main Olympic Stadium (Melbourne Cricket Ground) - basic surface letter postage to foreign countries;
- 2s. A reissue of the Olympic publicity design, possibly with modifications-basic airmail postage to most overseas countries.

The choice of stamp values and subjects was announced publicly in April 1955. At the same time, it was anticipated that



private artists might wish to contribute ideas for the Olympic stamps and, without organising a formal competition, the Post Office announced that designs forwarded by the end of July 1955 would be considered by the Stamp Advisory Committee. None of the designs submitted were chosen or had influence over the adopted stamp designs.



Notwithstanding the publicised plan to issue three Olympic stamps, the Stamp Advisory Committee subsequently made extensive changes - new subjects were chosen, se-tenant 31/2d. stamps would be issued, a commemorative stamp booklet was planned, a 1s. stamp was added to the set (basic airmail postage to nearer Asian countries), a commemorative aerogramme would be issued and, most significantly, the 1s. and 2s. stamps would be printed overseas by



The 1956 Olympic Games stamps included the first Australian photogravure stamps, which were also the first since Federation to be printed outside Australia



The unissued 31/2d. stamp was abandoned because of a postal rate increase which made this value obsolete for normal letter mail.



the photogravure process. By October, 1955 the proposed make-up of the Olympic Games stamp issue had been fixed as:

- 2x31/2d. se-tenant obverse and reverse of the Olympic medallion to be awarded to all participants in the Games. The 31/2d. stamps would be

'medium size' (23.4mm x 28.5mm) to facilitate their arrangement in stamp booklet panes of six;

- 71/2d. Olympic rings, torch and Southern Cross constellation. The Main Stadium was thought to be better for depiction on the aerogramme;

- 1s. View of Collins Street, Melbourne;

- 2s. View of Melbourne from across the Yarra River. As the 2s. and 1s. stamps featured views it was thought best if these were printed photogravure.

It had always been the Post Office's intention not to feature specific sports, but rather emphasise Melbourne as the host city and Olympic symbolism on the stamps.

Rejection

A submission to the Postmaster General seeking approval to the revised plan was accepted, except that the Minister rejected the 31/2d. medallion designs as being 'crowded'. Instead, a single 31/2d. design was prepared that featured Melbourne's coat of arms on a white background. At this stage, development of the Olympic stamps divided-one path involved the normal recess production by the Note Printing Branch and the other involved an unfamiliar course of photogravure production by two overseas printers.

Production of the 31/2d. and 71/2d. recess stamps should have been straightforward, but for different reasons the stamp dies originally engraved for both values had to be abandoned and new dies engraved. The 31/2d. stamp die was engraved at an early stage because the lead-time needed to manufacture the stamp booklet was lengthy. The booklet would accommodate 12 31/2d. stamps arranged in two panes of six. The booklet printing plate featured 216 stamp impressions grouped in 36 panes of six. The Olympic booklet was to be the first commemorative type since the 1927 Canberra Parliament House booklet and would feature trilingual inscriptions (English, French and Spanish) to describe postal rates. It was not to be.

Abandoned

In August 1956 the Federal government imposed increases in postal rates and basic letter postage rose from 31/2d. to 4d. The increases took effect on 1 October and the 31/2d. Olympic stamp became obsolete for letter postage. The change to a 4d. value was effected in late August by re-engraving the impression taken from the transfer roller (the cylinder used to transfer the die to the master plate). It was a common practice to accommodate two impressions of the die on the transfer roller and therefore the engraving of '4d'. had to be done twice. This explains the variation in the '4' in each vertical pair throughout

the sheet. (The base of the '4' is weaker on one stamp compared to the other). The postal rate increase made it impossible to manufacture a 4d. stamp booklet in the available time and the proposed Olympic booklet had to be abandoned.

Production of the booklet reached the stage where 18 million 31/2d. stamps (enough for 1.5 million booklets) as well as other components had been printed, but no actual booklets were collated. All this material was destroyed, except for two 216 on booklet sheets and matching quantities of covers and inserts, which were transferred to Post Office archives (40 examples of the unissued 31/2d. Olympic stamp were sold in the 1987 Australia Post archival sale). Interestingly, the Post Office briefly considered issuing the 31/2d. Olympic booklet sheets as normal sheets in 1956, since 31/2d. now served for printed matter postage. However, this was decided against because publicity already released specified 4d., 71/2d., 1s. and 2s. values in the Olympic set, and also the quantity of 31/2d. stamps would have been inadequate for their expected use. The designer of the 4d. stamp was Peter Morris and its engraver, Frank Manley.

Engraving the 71/2d. stamp die, which was not affected by the 1956 postal rates increase, also involved an unfortunate set-back. After the die had been finished, it was noticed that the Olympic rings were in the wrong sequence. The five rings overlap or underlap each other in a particular sequence, but a reverse sequence was shown on the stamp die and it had to be re-engraved. Frank Manley was the designer and engraver of the 71/2d. stamp.

In other respects, production of the two recess stamps proceeded normally. The stamps were in sheets of 120 (4d.) and 80 (71/2d.) and without marginal inscriptions, in colours of carmine (4d.) and blue (71/2d.). The issue date of the stamps was 31 October 1956, two weeks later than originally planned, but they remained on sale throughout the Olympic Games (22 November-8 December). The 4d. print run was 119,309,880 stamps-triple the normal quantity for a base rate commemorative. This was done to ensure supplies were sufficient for five weeks, during which time there was increased demand for 4d. stamps. (A 4d. Queen's head definitive was not issued until March 1957 and, in the interim, production of the 4d. Koala stamp was escalated.) The 71/2d. stamp's print figure was 4,602,000.

'The best in the world'

Production of the 1s. and 2s. photogravure stamps followed a very different course, because the Post Office had never produced stamps by this process or dealt with overseas stamp printers. Following the Postmaster General's approval in November 1955 to issue the photogravure stamps, immediate steps were taken to arrange this. A senior Post Office official, who happened to be travelling in Europe, approached the two firms selected for the task-Harrison and Sons (1s.) and Courvoisier SA (2s.). Harrisons were chosen for their role in British stamp production and because they were 'far better equipped than any other British firm'. Courvoisier enjoyed an acknowledged status as 'the best in the world for photogravure stamps'. The use of two firms was thought useful for comparison purposes and for maintaining a competitive edge.

Colour and contrast

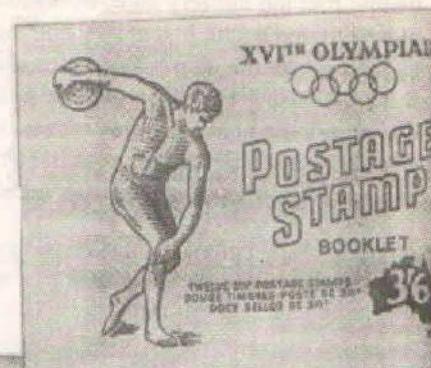
Specifications provided to both firms required 'commemorative size' (37.5mm x 24mm) stamps in horizontal format in 80-on sheets; with delivery of 7.5 million stamps of each value required by 10 September 1956. No artwork was supplied because each firm was asked to create a design using a 35mm colour transparency of the scene to be depicted. (They were taken by Post Office photographer M Murphy.) Numbered stamp proofs had to be submitted by each printer before authorisation could be given to proceed with printing. The Post Office noted that 'Brilliance of colour is desirable, in view of the strong sunlight in Australia, and contrast is considered of importance.' The liaison with Harrisons was facilitated by the Australian Post Office representative, Australia House, London, (R V McKay) and at Courvoisier by the Swiss PTT, which usually acted on behalf of other postal administrations using that firm to print stamps.

Work at the two printers began with the preparation of original drawings by staff artists, based on the transparency images and incorporating the specified wording. Harrisons had to make considerable changes to their photograph to get a suitable image for reproduction. The next step, involving stamp-size proofs, necessarily meant etching plates for each colour used in the stamp artwork. Three or four colours had been suggested and both firms opted to produce stamps in four colours.

In early March 1956 Courvoisier submitted three 2s. proofs in different colour combinations. Their stamp size (38.5mm x 24mm) was better suited to the firm's machinery. The etching was considered satisfactory by the Post Office, but additional proofs were requested in which the blue colour was more

One of two mobile post offices that were purpose-built for use at Olympic events of limited duration.

The cover of the abandoned Olympic stamp booklet. Following a postal rate increase it was not possible to incorporate a 4d. stamp in a commemorative booklet.





The 2s. Olympic stamp incorporated Courvoisier's imprint on the sheet, a distinctive feature as imprints had been discontinued in 1952

The 2s. Olympic stamp incorporated Courvoisier's imprint on the sheet, a distinctive feature as imprints had been discontinued in 1952

subdued. Five such proofs were forwarded in late April, also in different colour combinations, and with the inscription at top in coloured or white lettering. One proof comprising light blue, yellow, greyish violet and rose, and coloured lettering was selected. By mid-May Courvoisier had the go-ahead to proceed to full production.

Harrison's 1s. proofs involved a few difficulties. The first submission received in mid-April 1956, comprised four proofs with different coloured borders. They were rejected because the design showed too much regularity in the trees (a 'hedgelike effect') and insufficient detail in the outline of buildings. This led Post Office artist L Coles to prepare a model sketch to demonstrate the required changes from which Harrison's artists prepared a new design. By mid-July, revised proofs submitted were considered 'a vast improvement over earlier efforts'. One of the proofs in brown, blue, green and yellow was approved subject to minor modifications. The 1s. stamp size (38mm x 25mm) also differed to specifications because of production requirements.

Suez crisis

Courvoisier had more lead-time than Harrisons, but neither met the delivery date. Courvoisier completed production of their stamp by the end of July and then arranged for despatch by the Grootekerk, departing Genoa on 22 August. The looming Suez Crisis put the Grootekerk's passage through the Suez Canal in doubt until news was received on 1 September that the ship had passed Suez. Harrisons used the P&O liners Stratheden and Himalay, dividing the consignment into one million stamps

Australia's first commemorative aerogramme was issued for the Olympic Games. The 'SPECIMEN' overprint was applied to examples distributed through the UPU.



in the first dispatch and the balance in the second. By early October the full supply (7,500,000 of each stamp) was in Melbourne, where it was reported that all sheets were received in good condition. Fortunately, the 1s. and 2s. values were not affected by the postal rates increases.

Both Harrisons and Courvoisier requested permission to incorporate their imprints in the bottom margin of each stamp, and although the Post Office had misgivings, this was agreed as long as the lettering was not intrusive. Courvoisier also featured their imprint in large lettering, spanning six stamps, in the top and bottom sheet margins. The 2s. sheet featured a serial sheet number in the right margin. The 1s. sheet carried no marginal inscriptions.

Each printer was asked to supply 15 imperforate proofs separately mounted on cards. These were for presentation together with die proofs of the recess stamps. Between 1945 and 1964, the Post Office presented die proofs of every new stamp to the Queen, Governor General, Postmaster General, Director General and Deputy Director General of the Post Office and to the three or four private members of the Stamp Advisory Committee. The 1s. and 2s. Olympic stamps are presumably imperforate examples taken from printed sheets.

The appearance of bright, multicoloured stamps had a considerable effect on collectors. The Post Office was pleased to report philatelic sales of the Olympic stamps estimated to have exceeded £50,000. It is also of interest that the Yarra River scene on the 2s. stamp was reproduced on the front cover of the souvenir program for the Olympic Games opening ceremony.

The aerogramme

On 12 November one further postal item was issued for the Olympic Games, this being the 10d. aerogramme. It was Australia's first commemorative type and was inspired by Britain's aerogramme for the Coronation. The Olympic aerogramme featured the Main Stadium and commemorative inscriptions at left with Melbourne's coat of arms in the stamp indicia. The production was by letterpress in red on blue paper and without the usual variegated border. The print run was 4,377,789 aerogrammes, which was sufficient for two and a half months sale. The issue date coincided with the Olympic Philatelic Exhibition organised by local stamp clubs and the first of its kind in an Olympic host city. Also 379 Olympic aerogrammes were overprinted 'SPECIMEN' for UPU distribution (distribution of postal stationery to UPU countries ceased in about 1962).

Postal arrangements

As well as issuing stamps, the Post Office faced the immense task of organising postal and telecommunications facilities for the Olympic Games. The facilities were provided at the various competition venues, the main Olympic Village at Heidelberg (a Melbourne suburb) and at the Olympic Hostel at Ballarat. 15 Olympic temporary post offices were established at which 52 different pictorial postmarkers were used. Philatelic mail order facilities were provided, allowing collectors to obtain postmark impressions. Today these covers are plentiful enough but the facilities did not provide for registration, and examples of registered covers from Olympic post offices are elusive. It was left to individual collectors to visit venues to make their own



The temporary post office located at the Olympic Village, Heidelberg. Seven of the 52 pictorial postmarks were used there
 Right : A selection from the 52 different pictorial postmarks used at 15 temporary post offices located at Olympic venues.

arrangements and few did so. Also scarce is commercial mail handled at Olympic post offices. The focus of collectors' endeavours in 1956 involved securing attractive philatelic covers, not mundane varieties presented by normal mail.

More than half of the 616,000 Olympic postal articles were processed at the Olympic Village, Heidelberg. This post office was located outside the Village's main entrance and was accessible to the public. For most of its two months of operation, the post office was open 14 hours a day, Monday to Saturday. The second Olympic Village post office was in the migrant hostel at Ballarat, established for rowing and canoeing events on Lake Wendouree.

The focus of Olympic activity was the Main Stadium where athletic events and the opening and closing ceremonies were held. A post office operated in the grounds outside the stadium to allow the public access. At Olympic Park, the venue for swimming, soccer, hockey and cycling, a post office was located in the outside grounds. Another post office at nearby Richmond Park supported Olympic Park and although Richmond Park was only a 'stamp selling kiosk' it did a considerable amount of business. Other post offices were provided



at the Exhibition Building, Carlton (wrestling, weight-lifting and basketball) and St Kilda Town Hall (fencing). Post offices were established for the media's use inside the Main Stadium and at Olympic Park, and consequently these offices were only accessible to ticket-holders.

The majority of Olympic post offices operated for the full duration of the Games, and the others operated at times linked to their associated events. For most events of limited duration, mobile post offices were provided. They were of a caravan type with a serving window, teleprinters and public telephone cabinets. Two mobile post offices were specially built for the Games. Mobile Post Office No 1 operated at pentathlon, shooting and cycling venues and No 2 at yachting. Both mobile offices were present at the opening and closing ceremonies to give assistance to the fixed post offices.

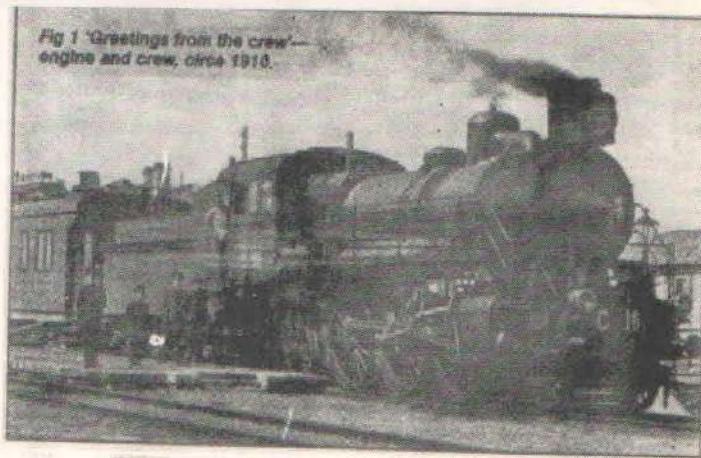
An Olympic post office operated at Melbourne Airport at irregular hours that coincided with the arrival and departure of aircraft. It was planned to operate a post office at Port Melbourne's Station Pier to provide similar facilities for ship arrivals and departures, but it was not possible to arrange this. To keep faith with collectors who had ordered Olympic postmarks, the Station Pier postmark was used by the Philatelic Bureau in Melbourne.

Courtesy : Gibbon's Stamp Monthly, 2003.

Looking at the Railways of Russia

Leonard Tann

Leonard Tann reviews the history of the Imperial Railway Postal Department



Russia boasts the longest railway in the world—the Trans-Siberian Railway, stretching some 6000 miles from Moscow to Russia's Pacific port at Vladivostock. Even by the end of the first decade of our Past century, Russia could boast of the most extensive complex of railway branch-lines, including the major branch of the Trans-Siberian, the Trans-Caucasian railway reaching down through the Caucasus to the border with Turkey, and the Trans-Caspian, deep into Central Asia. Also, there were many local branch lines linking small towns—even villages—to the main railway network. Russia used the broad-gauge for its rail-

ways, allowing much bigger and broader carriages and very powerful steam engines. On some of the steep inclines—such as the mountainous stretches of the Trans-Siberian approaching Vladivostock—trains were often double or triple headed - evoking images of massive steam engines belching out volcanic plumes of smoke as they strained to haul long trains over these gradients—indeed awesome!

It was very early in the development of Russia's railways, in the 1830s, that postal vans were added to the trains to carry mail. The very first railway was built from the capital, St Petersburg, to the Czar's country palace at Czarskoe-Selo (some 14 miles), for the use of the Czar, Imperial family, ministers, ambassadors and sundry officials. It was also the first railway to carry mail—urgent government missives to and from the Czar, and it was but a tiny step to providing postal facilities on the train itself for the use of passengers and the local stations. As the rail-network expanded—very rapidly—postal services expanded likewise, until a separate Imperial Railway Postal Department was established to handle mail under their jurisdiction. It co-operated with the State Postal Department, but was administered separately.

Various types of postmarks were used by the Railway Postal Department, all indicating the station post office of posting, or the mail-van and route number of the train itself. By 1903 it was decided to establish oval postmarks for railway post-vans and main or central station post offices, so at a glance they would be seen to be different from the standard circular postmarks used throughout the Empire by the State Post Offices.

Each railway line that had official railway post mail-vans was given a route number. Each line had a 'pair' of numbers,



indicating 'outward' and 'homeward' journeys thus the route St Petersburg-Moscow was allocated route number 1-2 (St Petersburg-Moscow was route 1, the reverse journey was route 2).

By the time the Revolution of 1917 exploded, route numbers extended to numbers 351-352 (although two or three pairs were unused, perhaps reserved for future use). It must be stated that some of these route numbers are extremely rare some as yet not even recorded. In some cases, because mail was sent in greater quantity in one direction—for example from a remote town up the line into main land Russia—one route number of the pair may be fairly common, while the reverse route—down to the remote village—might be very scarce or unknown. Examples will be mentioned later.

The Trans-Siberian Railway

This railway technically commenced in Moscow, crossing nine time zones and some 6000 miles to the port of Vladivostock. Until 1905 the line ran to Irkutsk, where passengers embarked on ferries that took them across Lake Baikal, to resume the journey from the other side. The line then ran from

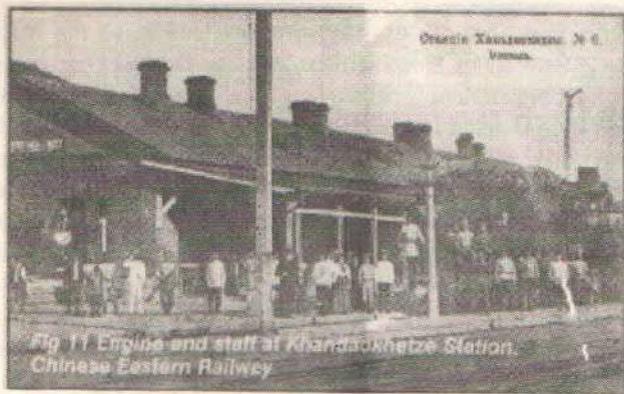


Baltic Provinces:
Fig 4 VYATKA 280 ST
P'BURG
Fig 5 PERNOV 126 PSKOV



Chita, crossing the border again to enter Russian territory, to terminate at Vladivostock. Since this area was effectively under Russian control, although technically Chinese territory, Russian stamps used on the railway in this area, at the station post offices and indeed at the state post offices in several towns, are classed as 'Used Abroad', and are popular not only with Russian collectors, but Chinese collectors and railway-thematic specialists too.

When the war broke out in 1904 between Russia and Japan over the control of Korea, it was the single-line Trans-Siberian railway that had to carry the countless thousands of the Czar's troops to



the Far East. The Irkutsk-Lake Baikal change from railway-ferry-railway proved a dreadful bottleneck. The Russians tried laying railway tracks across the thick frozen ice of the lake, only to see entire trains-engines, rolling stock, munitions and troops-fall through the ice to a frozen tomb in the unfathomed waters below! After the war was over in 1905, Russia built the missing section of the line to skirt the southern edge of Lake Baikal, and from Chita, they built an extension of the line to skirt the border with China, so that the Trans-Siberian line ran entirely within Russian territory. Much of this part of the line was built by convicts and railway chain-gangs! An oval postmark of a temporary mail van that ran on the sections of this line while it was being built only recently came to light, and is-so far-unique. Figs 6 to 10 show postmarks of various parts of the Trans-Siberian line.

Trans-Caucasian Railway

This important branch went southwards from Moscow to the area of Russia lying between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. This is the area of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. This area recently broke away from the old Soviet Union forming independent republics with their own stamp issues and overprints-creating a new and complex chapter in Russian philately. The main east-west Trans-Caucasian railway was allocated route numbers 95-96 (Baku-Batum) and illustrations are shown of these (Figs 12 and 13). One main branch ran down to the Persian border at Dzhulfa, route numbers 229-230 (Tiflis-Dzhulfa). There were also some little local branch-lines from the main railway, and though these have no official route numbers, postmarks were oval, but examples are scarce (Fig 14).

Trans-Siberian Railway:

- Fig 6 STRETENSK/STATION 1910
- Fig 7 TYUMEN 170 PERM 1911



- Fig 8 IRKUTSK 198 KRASNOYARSK 1913
- Fig 9 VLADIVOSTOCK/STATION 1914
- Fig 10 KHARBIN/STATION 1917
- Trans-Caucasian Railway:
- Fig 12 BAKU 95 BAKUM 1915
- Fig 13 BAKUM 96 BAKU 1914
- Fig 14 1915 Postcard used on the unnumbered Borzom-Mikhailovo branch line

Trans-Caspian Railway

This line branched southwards from Samara to serve the vast area of Russian central Asia. In the days of the Czar, as this century opened, there were two local emirates here-Bukhara and Khiva. The arrangement was that the local emirs would continue to enjoy the good life, their harems and thrones, while recognising the Czar in St Petersburg as their sovereign overlord. The result was that post offices were established in these regions, and the Trans-Caspian line ran east-west from the shores of the Caspian Sea, through Bukhara and ending on the border with China (route numbers 203-204, 205-206, 207-208,



Krasnovodsk-Chardjui, and through to Adizhan). An example is shown (Fig 15). A branch line-for military purposes-ran from Merv down to the Afghanistan border at Kushka (routes 227-228). As the Russian boys stationed at Kushka wrote home to families and sweethearts, almost all mail went northwards-and ovals of route 228 are not uncommon (Fig 16). But mail southwards-route 227-was very sparse, and only very recently did this writer discover an example of the 227 oval. It is difficult to see as it was stuck over a town postcard, but it has been added to the annals of the known material.

Other branches

In a general article, it is only possible to highlight one or two such branch-lines. Some railways were built to connect important towns to develop trade and industry. Other lines were built to transport material to ports for onward transmission. Some were built-as noted above-for military purposes.

The railway line from Vyatka-Kotlas was built across a very northern-often frozen-area that had, at best, few villages. But it was an important line to the port of Kotlas which gave access to the White Sea. This was useful for both military purposes and for the transport of goods, taken onwards by ship or barge. Route numbers allocated were 219-220, and examples

Fig 17 KOTLAS 220 VYATKA
 Fig 18 POST VAN No 219
 Fig 19 KERCH 131 DZHANKOI
 Fig 20 POST VAN No 132



21) a very interesting postcard that was sent to one of the stations on this line-Piterka Station. The postcard bears two circular postmarks-one of the route 157-which is down to the Aleksandrov-Gai terminus, and also of route 158-the journey back. My guess is that the postal clerk forgot to leave the postcard at Piterka station on the way down, so he dropped it off on the way back-adding the return-journey postmark! By 1909, a major branch-line was built from Urbakh down to the city of Astrakhan, given route numbers 287/288.

There are numerous other branch-lines that need study-the intention of this writer over the next few years. And we must mention that since Finland was a part of the Russian Empire until the end of 1917, when it declared independence, Russian stamps (as well as Finnish stamps-they were used side-by-side) can be found used with Finnish railway postmarks - that are bilingual (Russian-Finnish) or even trilingual (Russian, Finnish, Swedish).

Railway Station Post Offices

To provide the widest possible postal service, railway

are shown here-both of the earlier circular type and of the later oval type (Figs 17 and 18).

In the Crimea, one of the southernmost points of Russia, the main line ran from Kharkov-Dzhankoi-Sevastopol, an important port on the Black Sea. But from Dzhankoi, a branch-line ran to the eastern tip of the Crimea, at Kerch. The Dzhankoi-Kerch line (route numbers 131-132) is another example of a minor-branch line where-from surviving material-much more travelled from the terminal to the main-line than down the branch (Figs 19 and 20).

In the region of the Volga River, there are two branch-lines of interest. The railway from Saratov, via Urbakh to Aleksandrov-Gai was operating before the 19th century closed. This branch was given route numbers 157/158. Right up to the 1917 revolution-and probably for some time thereafter-a single train chuffed up and down this line once a day. It is probable that this train did not have a mail-van as such, but a postal clerk sitting in the last compartment of the train, using his stamp and ink-pad to cancel the very few items carried

on this line. I show here (Fig

stations had post offices. Main-line stations in all the major cities-St Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Warsaw, Odessa.. had one or more with registration facilities, there are interesting covers with registration labels of the railway stations in Cyrillic for Russia, and in Latin letters for use abroad. Some of the tiny stations on main and branch-lines had post offices using a circular postmark with text indicating the station and the railway line. Indeed, to demonstrate how sophisticated the Russian postal service was in the days before airmail and modern technology, there were post office facilities (perhaps a tiny post-desk with a clerk in attendance for a couple of hours) at sidings and railway halts.

The 1917 Revolution and beyond

The 1917 Revolution exploded causing the abdication of Czar Nicholas II, the establishment-briefly-of the Russian Republic, and then the coup-d'etat by the Bolsheviks (Communists) in October 1917. This plunged Russia into a bitter and murderous civil war that lasted until 1921, with the ultimate victory of the Bolsheviks, leaving Russia prostrate, exhausted and in turmoil. The postal system and the railway system were massively disrupted by this catalysm, and yet we must even now admire the postal clerks and railway personnel that tried to keep these services functioning through this disrupted period.

The railway postmarks of the old Czarist period continued for some years. The Bolshevik administration augmented them with new postmarks in the same style but by the mid-1920s the Soviets were issuing new types of railway postmarks, in circular style, with the 'new style' Soviet spellings. (Certain letters were abolished by the Revolution, and the new spellings reflected these autocratic reforms.) Some of the Czarist types are recorded as being used as late as 1928, 1929 and even in 1932! By this time the Soviets had introduced airmail services across Russia to Vladivostock, Chita, Irkutsk and on shorter routes, thus reducing the need for mail-vans on the trains. But some railway mail-vans continued into the 1960s.

Registered post on mail-vans

While station post offices were usually positioned so that not only passengers but also the general public from the street could walk in and use them, the railway postal-vans had a letter box on the side so that passengers at stations (or the general public visiting the stations in some cases) could post letters directly on to the trains. It was possible too for passengers to walk up to the mail-vans on trains-while the train was at a station-and register a letter with the postal clerk. It would seem that the letters had to be stamped already for the rate required-these clerks did not sell stamps. But the letter could be registered, and entered into a register by the mail-van clerk. Up to April 1914, the letter would have handwritten notation of the registration number (normally a 1 or 2-perhaps 3-being the number so registered for that day) the route number and perhaps the initials of the clerk. From April 1914 a rubber handstamp was issued to mail-vans to write in the registration number and the route number. These are extremely scarce. The present writer has two such items. Other collectors may have a handful. It is possible that a few more may come to light.

Thematic possibilities

For thematic collectors, the Soviet Union issued a



Fig 21 1902 postcard showing the scarce pairing of POST VAN 157 and 158 (below)
 Fig 22 1913 cover registered at the St Petersburg Nicholas Railway Station Post Office (left)
 Fig 23 Registration handstamp (inset below)

number of stamps and sets showing railway locomotives-steam, diesel and electric-and trains. The first was one of the 1922 Famine Relief sets, sold for 20 roubles plus 5 roubles for famine relief. The 1948 set shows steam and electric locomotives (SG 1403/6) and 1949 saw a set for modern railway development (1554/7). Other sets are 1978 (4757, early Russian steam locomotives), 1979 (4861/5), Electric locomotives), 1982 (5229/33) and the 1986 set (5697/700).

The railways and railway-posts of Russia-from the beginning almost to the present-are fascinating, and add a huge dimension to Russian philately, and the thematic study of railways.

The British Society of Russian Philately welcomes any collector with an interest in any area or period of Russia and its associated or successor states. It has an excellent Journal, a newsletter, and London and Provincial meetings. For further information contact; Leonard Tann, BSRP Information Officer, 61 Wheelleys Road, Birmingham B15 2LL, who will be happy to send you an information sheet, Newsletter and details of the Society.

Courtesy : G.S.M. September 1998.

