

# The Basildon Stamp Collector

Volume 2 Number 2

April 1997

## Dates for your diary

- 5 Apr Stamp Fair at Christchurch Hall, Wanstead.
- 6 Apr Stamp Fair at Freight House, Rochford.
- 12 Apr Kent Federation Spring Rally, Ashford, Kent.
- Stamp Fair at University of East Anglia, Norwich.
- 19 Apr Spring BasPex at Laindon Community Centre.
- 20 Apr Stamp Fair at Wilton Hall, Bletchley.
- 24 Apr – 27 Apr Stamp '97, Wembley.
- 4 May Stamp Fair at High School, Folly Road, Wymondham.
- 11 May Stamp Fair at Southend Airport Hotel.
- 24 May Stamp Fair at Laindon Community Centre.
- 25 May Stamp Fair at Kesgrave Memorial Community Centre, Ipswich
- 31 May Kent Federation Day & 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Bradbourne School, Sevenoaks.



*Edward Stanley Gibbons is the subject of Victor Short's display on 1 July.*

## Forthcoming Meetings

- 7 Apr Auction Night.
- 22 Apr Basildon v Billericay Quiz.
- 5 May no meeting.
- 20 May "Hints & Tips" — Stamp collecting workshop.
- 2 Jun "The Committee Entertains" — display by Pat Harris.
- 17 Jun Annual General Meeting.
- 1 Jul "Edward Stanley Gibbons" by Victor Short.
- 22 Jul "8 Pages From My Collection" — members' displays.

## From Your Secretary

Since our last newsletter we have had a number of well attended meetings, reports of which appear elsewhere in this edition. Our informal meeting and mini fair in January was not only the best attended for some years but also had some eight dealers selling goods.

We have a varied programme for the coming quarter but do remember that there is no Monday meeting in May due to the bank holiday.

Our AGM takes place on 17 June. It is your chance to have a say in the running of the Society so please come along.

*Pat Harris*

## Auction News

The Society's spring auction list has been published and distributed to members. If you have not received your copy please contact Pat Harris or the Auction Secretary, Michael Musgrave. Anyone with access to the Internet can check out the on-line version at:

[http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/charles\\_mead/auction.htm](http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/charles_mead/auction.htm)

You can even send in your bids by electronic mail to:

[michael.musgrave@virgin.net](mailto:michael.musgrave@virgin.net)



### The Basildon Stamp Collector

The newsletter of the Basildon Philatelic Society is published quarterly and issued free to all members.

Our next issue, July 1997, will be available at the meeting of Tuesday, 17 June.

Articles, letters and advertisements must reach the editor by Tuesday, 20 May.

### Contacts

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**Exchange packet** 01268 559058

**Librarian** Len Scharde  
**Library requests** 01268 542104

The committee are happy to deal with your questions and receive suggestions for improving the Society.

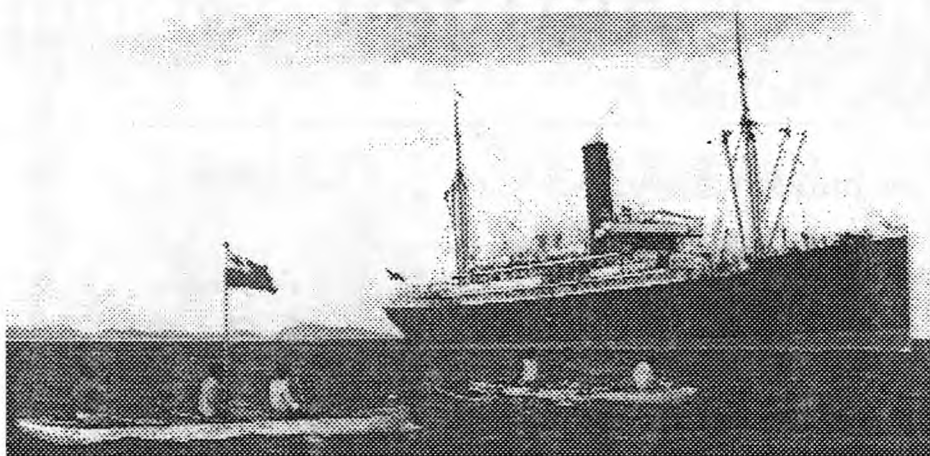


Fig. 1. Collecting the mail from Niuafu'ou. From a painting by Chris Mayger.

## The Tin Can Mail of Niuafu'ou Island

by Arthur Hobbs

To this day the island has no telephones or television, only one store and a Post Office serving a population of approximately 2,000 folk. The postal service, to and from the island was therefore most important and necessary to the life and welfare of the inhabitants.

Mail arrived at the island, in the main from ships of the New Zealand Steam Ship Company and outgoing mail was collected by the same vessels. Because of the very

steep sides of the island the transfer of goods and mail from ship to shore was often a most hazardous operation and mail was frequently lost or damaged. In extremely stormy conditions the islanders were sometimes forced to watch the ship sail away without attempting a delivery.

In 1884 the first mail system involving the use of sealed containers was introduced. Letters from this period are very scarce.

Originally items of outgoing mail were wrapped into waterproof packages and carried by postmen swimming with mail in a cleft

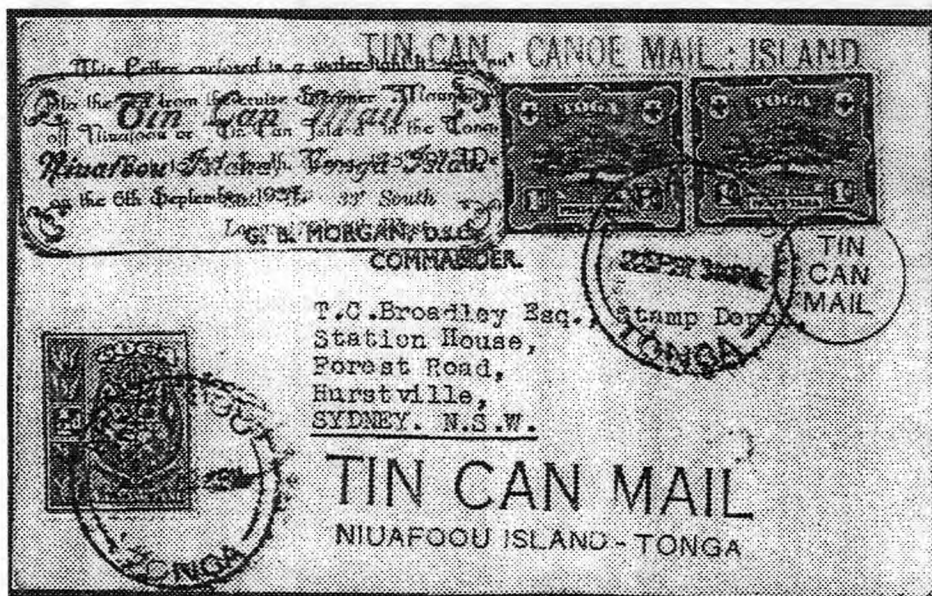


Fig. 2. 1937 Tin Can Mail cover bearing the colourful pictorial stamps of Tonga.



stick, often through shark infested waters. This method was abandoned when it was considered to be too dangerous.

Incoming mail was wrapped in oil-cloth sealed into oil drums and dropped overboard from the mail ships to be picked up by the islanders in out-rigger canoes (fig. 1).

This system served the island adequately until the early Thirties when it came to the attention of philatelists who began sending covers to the local post office to be posted back to them in due course.

It was at this time that an enterprising local trader, a German émigré named Walter George Quensell, came into the story. Between 1932 and 1944 he advertised a service to philatelists to send covers endorsed *TIN CAN MAIL* to anywhere in the world for the princely sum of six old pence, plus postage. He had handstamps prepared originally with which he stamped covers

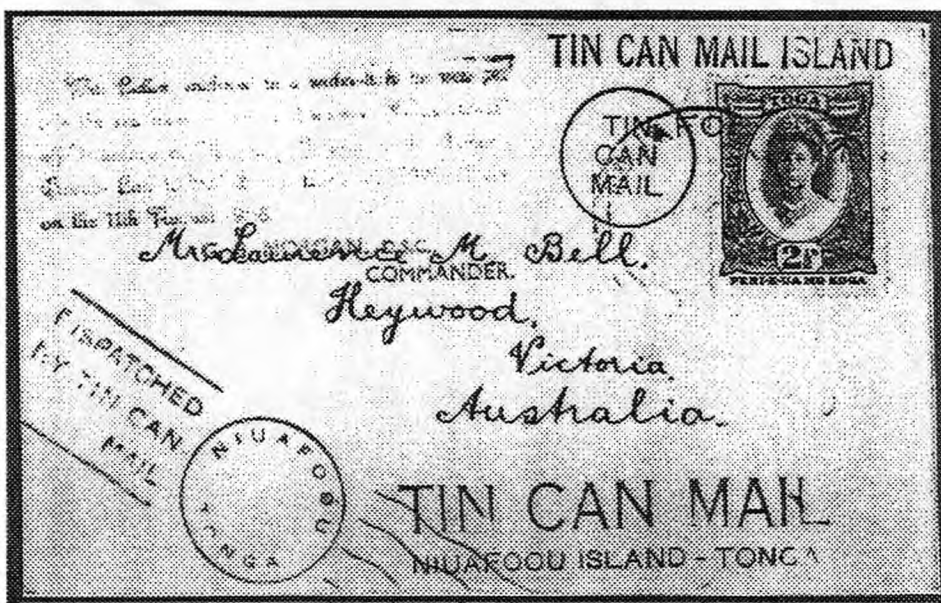


Fig. 3. 1938 cover bearing the Tin Can Mail Islands cachet. The stamp bears the portrait of Queen Salote.

bearing the colourful Tongan stamps of the period or those bearing a portrait of Queen Charlotte, or Salote — the native pronunciation of her name (fig. 2 and 3).

His lucrative business expanded so he had more and more varied stamps prepared in a number of languages, including Irish, German, Afrikaans and even Greek. These were used liberally

on his covers in a variety of colours wherever space permitted (fig. 4 and 5).

Mention of this “service” in the philatelic press brought increasing numbers of letters from every corner of the globe requesting items of Tin Can Mail, until eventually the resources of the little island post office were virtually overwhelmed making it difficult to continue legitimate business of the mail service.

A violent volcanic eruption which shook the island in 1946 brought about the abrupt end to Walter Quensell’s operation, when the surviving population of the island, some 1,200 souls, were evacuated to nearby islands in the Tongan group.

Although the island has now been resettled the Tin Can Mail has never been resumed and the story of this unusual mail service has passed into philatelic folk-lore.

Fig. 5 is on page 4.

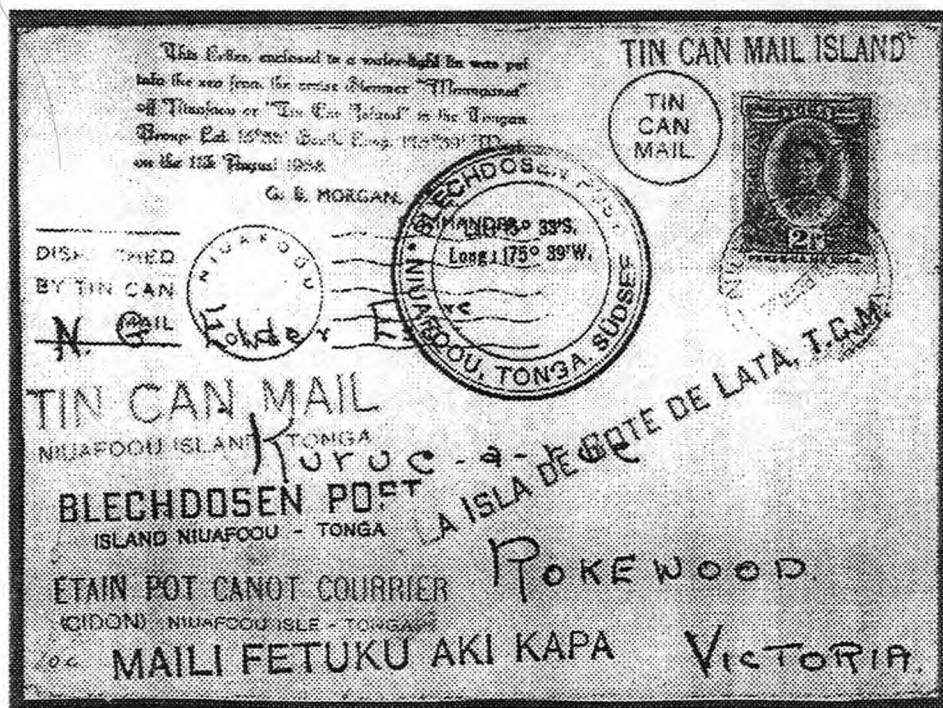


Fig. 4.



Fig. 5. 1937 Tin Can Mail cover with a variety of cachets in many languages and colours.

## Reports of Recent Meetings

by Pat Harris

### 17 December Festive Evening and Tomex Quiz

The end of the year meeting of our Society was a successful event despite a number of members having the Flu and not being able to attend. The evening began with the stamp quiz conducted by Albert Thomas that as always caused much debate and barracking the eventual winner was Arthur Hobbs.

The second part of the evening was taken up with presenting awards earned in our various competitions. Arthur was again a winner in two competitions the Stamps and Postal History and jointly with Mark Wheeler and Charlie Hemmings the winning team in the annual Basildon v Billericay quiz. Charles Hemmings the competitions registrar won the

Thematic cup and presented John Pettit with the Aerophilatelic trophy with May Covill taking the ladies cup. The high point of the awards was to John Choppen a junior member of only a few months who took home four cups as he came second in both the Stamps and Thematic competitions winning not only the junior cups but also the novices awards. The evening finished with members enjoying seasonal fare.

### 6 January Channel Islands Postal History and the German Occupation *display by Alan Moorcroft, FRPSL*

Some twenty-five members of the Society turned out to see Alan Moorcroft of the Channel Islands Society give his talk and display of Postal History and a story of the occupation. The display started with a number of letters dated prior to 1794 when letters between the islands and the British mainland were handled by agents

and ships masters a number of these endorsed at 1d per letter were displayed with the earliest being dated 1725.

Next on show were covers from 1794 when the royal mail set up a weekly service, up to 1800 a rival service was carried out by the agents but by increasing the service to three times a week the royal mail caused there rivals to close examples of both types were shown.

The postal rates were regularly increased until in 1815 it stood at 8d the islanders refused to pay this amount and reverted back to the system of agents until in 1834 after an inquiry by the Post Office a uniform rate of 1d was reintroduced.

Alan completed this section of the display with a number of 1d and 2d Mulready envelopes including one written by a boy on the island to his mother using a 4 margin 1d black on the reverse side of the envelope seal that was cancelled with a red Maltese cross. His mother had to beautifully bisect the stamp to read the letter.

Arthur Hobbs gave a vote of thanks to Alan and his wife for an excellent display and very entertaining evening.

### 3 February Triangles *display by Margaret Thompson*

The Basildon Philatelic Society was entertained with a feast of triangles at a recent meeting by Margret Thompson. She started



her display by saying that her profession was mathematics and as such became interested in triangles and then proceeded with her display of some 200 sheets. As most collectors the beginning of this collection started in 1989 was of a single country Liberia and went on to display not only sets of stamps and covers from 1864 but mint sheets including surcharges and die proofs adding an anecdote that she had seen an auction list that had offered special inverted overprints then produced a strip of stamps showing that every other stamp was inverted, the section continued with a first flight cover to America from 1942 and a selection of uprated stamps with purple blobs obliterating the old values.

The next section was of South African triangles starting with the Cape of Good Hope selection of true and fakes imperf, perf and rouletted used unused and on cover also a packet as sent from London displaying the wide margins this continued with the 1926 South African issue and the 1953 centenary issue Margaret enhanced this part by wearing a necklace with a pendant of a pair of cape stamps. Bisects on cover formed the next part of the evening with items from Hungary, Guernsey, Poland Germany and many other countries including an oblong stamp of Guatemala diagonally perforated.

A section of GB marks and cancellations followed including triangular cancellations with wavy lines or slogans, check marks and some covers monitored by the Post Office checking that metermarks were not out of date for posting and being marked with

a triangle to let people know that it was not the post office that delayed the mail. Margaret in the final section of the display showed a series of postage due triangles from African countries including from Dahomey both a colour trail and issue sets, finishing off with local and Cinderella items from places like Lundy, Herm and Rattlesnake Island with examples of Pigeon Post and free Ireland labels. Arthur Hobbs thanked Margaret on behalf of her fellow members for such an excellent display marvelling at not only the quality of material but the quantity amassed in such a short time and for giving us a most entertaining evening.

### 18 February Recent Acquisitions *Members' displays*

Our recent meeting was for members latest acquisitions, Pat Harris started the evening off with the latest GB PNC covers including the Henry VIII and the cover for the centenary of the first London to Brighton road race that celebrated the raising of the speed limit to 12 mph also on show was a cover that was carried on the 150th anniversary run of the first London to Norwich mail coach run that took place over the 14-15 June 1996 and was signed by the driver John Parker. He also displayed some of the latest New Zealand pictorial stamps and mini sheets which was also part of John Pettit's display of New Zealand stamps of the Kiwi definitive and a full range of material for the Rugby League centenary.

Charlie Mead showed a sheet of error on Fiji stamps and a print of

the original post office in Lombard street and the 1996 Christmas issues of Fiji with the Don Bradman issue of Australia that he received on the evening. Charlie Nicolson then set a bit of a poser with several sheets of cut out of Queen Victoria halfpenny stamps from pre printed card all with cds and number cancellations. He asked if anyone knew what they may have come from a possible answer was that they were attendance reports from schools to the Education boards if you know he would be happy to hear from you.

The 1923 Inflation registered labels from Germany to Switzerland was Jim Thompson contributions to the evening showing in chronological order that the rate was fixed against the Gold Franc at 1500 in January but had reached 1,700 million by August. Dennis Sales theme was of the red cross with items from the Henri Dunant society and some French booklets. David Church brought us up to date with the Faroe Islands with a display of Christmas stamps and seals together with a number of postcards with a variety of hand stamp from international exhibitions.

Len Stanway brought the evening to a close with a display of material from the start of the Essex Philatelic Federation in 1946 including newspaper cuttings photographs essays of post card and cachets and hand stamped covers from a mobile post office at the 1946 stamp day Arthur Hobbs gave a vote of thanks to all those who had contributed to the evening.

### 3 March Agriculture on Stamps display by Brian Downham

Mr Brian Downham of Cambridge started off by saying that he came from a farming background hence his interest in the subject.

The first part of the display showed cattle on stamps from around the world, including the Argentine and Great Britain. Cattle as working animals for ploughing and moving goods were illustrated. The display continued with stamps showing butter and cheese production and included a set of Spanish stamps on Bullfighting. Brian told a tale that the Guernsey stamp on cattle increased in value to point where it was once worth more than the calf it depicted. He completed this section with a thematic display on the banana plant.

The second section was titled "To be a Farmers Boy". A tongue in cheek story of every day farming life with stamps being used in a humorous and sometimes irreverent context. The 1963 "Freedom from Hunger" issue followed with issues again from all round the world. A look at the World Ploughing Competition in stamps and covers with the various methods used in ploughing over the tears from oxen to tractors completed part two.

The final section of the display was about tobacco. This section was mounted on paper called "fag ash" colour by Brian and told the story of tobacco. The story started with Sir Walter Raleigh and went on to show how King James I disliked tobacco so much that he

imposed a tax which remains to this day. The display continued with some post cards of the Great War which troops in the front line sent back to people that had sent them cigarettes and other comforts. Charlie Mead gave the vote of thanks.

*Tuesday, 6 May  
provisional date.*

*Tuesday, 20 May  
provisional date.*

*Tuesday, 3 June  
provisional date.*

*Tuesday, 17 June  
provisional date.*

### Neighbouring Societies



*Thursday, 3 April*  
Early Romania, display by Denis Heeley of Chelmsford PS.

*Monday, 21 April*  
Open night with dealers.

*Thursday, 1 May*  
Papua New Guinea Lakators (Trading Canoes), display by D Strachan.

*Monday, 19 May*  
France, display by M Fuller.

*Thursday, 5 June*  
Abraham Lincoln and The American Civil War, display by Barry Lobell.

*Monday, 16 June*  
Open night with dealers.



**Thurrock & District SC**

*Tuesday, 15 April*  
Auction.



This major stamp fair and exhibition will be the biggest event our Society has organised and the largest ever staged in the Basildon area.

The exhibition incorporates *Stamp Essex* (Association of Essex Philatelic Societies spring convention) and *Spring BasPex* (Basildon Philatelic Society stamp fair). It will be based around the Dawes Cup (Home Counties inter federation stamp competition) and the AEPS spring competitions.

A total of more than 1,000 sheets (album pages) will be on display. In addition to the competitive entries there will be displays by our own members.

Space for more than twenty-five dealers has been included to make this a really great event.



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## Last Month's Puzzle

The issuing countries for the five  
mystery stamps were:

1. West Germany
2. Canada
3. Spain
4. Sudan
5. India

## This Month's Puzzle

Once again we present illustrations of stamps with the name of the issuing country masked out. Can you identify each of the countries.



1.



3.



4.



6.



7.



2.



5.



8.

## Advertising Rates

Display advertisement rates are based on an A4 page. Cost per issue:

Full page	£15.00
Half page	£8.00
Quarter page	£5.00

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## Small Ads

**WANTED:** Information on railways and tramways of Malaya and British Borneo for inclusion in a monograph history. Reply to: L.C. Stanway, 25 Clay Hill Road, Basildon, Essex, SS16 5DD.

**WANTED:** Iceland SG 339 2kr mint. Reply to John Church, 102 New Century Road, Laindon, Essex, SS15 6AQ. Phone: 01268 543371

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Remember each member is entitled to **three** free ads every year.