



DUNDEE AND DISTRICT PHILATELIC SOCIETY
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN YEARS
www.dundeephilatic.org

NEWSLETTER 2018

SESSION 2018-19

Letter from the President

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**Hon. Exchange Packet
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David Easson

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Norman Kelso

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Marjorie Kennedy
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Peter Dix

Sitting here today it's hard to believe that we are getting ready for the next season, 2018-2019, when the sun is shining so brightly and the summer feels like it will never end. September will be upon us soon so I will just have to get on with this letter and at some point finish my President's display.

Like last year I cannot believe just how much resources are needed to put together such a display. After hundreds of hours I have just realised that I have been enjoying this task so much that I have overshot and ended up at 180 sheets. No going back now and as I am the President, you will just have to indulge me and I will use an extra table to show the extra sheets. I believe you will find the content to your liking and won't mind.

Last season a plaque was unveiled on Discovery Walk in honour of James Chalmers, at a ceremony attended by myself, Charles and Colin. In the evening we also attended a presentation to the team behind the idea and to the artist.

Pictures in the Courier this year have been fab; well done to Colin. I have had my picture in the local rag more times than Nicola Sturgeon. She has taken to trolling me on the net about this.

Looking back on all the good work of last season I do remember some very good displays.

- A celebration, Dennis Collins: well met by all members and a fitting evening for 70 years of membership.
- South Australia: Sandy Forbes was a very memorable evening with some fantastic commentary.
- Fernando Po: Sheila Den, what a subject and a great display
- Colin Fraser: all the way from the Big Apple; a very good night.

And many more, not least of all our participation nights at which everyone is encouraged and welcomed to take part.

The season ended with another great well attended dinner and I do hope anyone who has never been or not been for a while to try and come along next year.

I would like to thank everyone for their continued commitment to the club and look forward to a great event filled season put together by our Secretary Charles, who despite his modesty loves every minute of his role.

I do hope this letter finds everyone in good health and ready as I am for the coming season. One good thing for this year end is we will not have to spend a fortune on World cup stamps, or Andy Murray.

Well enough from me! Please feed-back (as usual) any ideas you have about the club and in particular how we can grow the membership. I think this will be our big challenge for the coming years, as it is with so many other organisations.

Hope to see you all in September

Yours,

David Millar

News of Members

At the census date, 1 July 2018, our membership stood at 31 having fallen from 33 last year. Reductions in membership are being experienced by all philatelic societies in the UK. If you know of anyone who collects stamps (or has shown interest) please invite them to come to a meeting and I hope that this will result in a new member. Most non-philatelists mistakenly perceive our hobby takes place exclusively alone at home. It is true that this environment suits some members. However, many others enjoy each other's company at meetings and take great pleasure in displaying our collections, participating at member's meetings and seeing the collections of others. We increase our knowledge as we learn from each other.

Sadly, two members, George Soutar and Dennis Collins, have passed away since 1 July 2017. (Please refer to the 2017 newsletter for an appreciation of Dennis.) Also, I must mention the recent death of Brian Cargill who regularly visited our meetings and brought displays with him. He was the Hon. Secretary at Arbroath Stamp and Postcard Club for many years, a keen philatelist and a good friend to our society. Our heartfelt condolences are extended to their families.

Members resign from the Society for one of a number of reasons – moving home, difficulties attending meetings, a change in collecting interest etc. This year four individuals have resigned: Doug Howkins, Mark Lendon, David Cree and Len Stoneman. Both Doug and Mark served as committee members and we thank them for this. Doug specialised in South and Latin America while Mark in Romania. You will recall with pleasure Doug's displays on Cuba and Latin America and Mark's "A Transylvanian Night - Postal History and Stamps from the Land Beyond the Forest".

We have recruited three new members: Elspeth Collins (as an honorary member), Ambrose Crosbie (who regularly attends evening meetings) and Sonny Rychter (who is a junior and our youngest member). We welcome all three and congratulate them on membership of the finest philatelic society in Scotland!

Finally, I congratulate Richard Young for becoming our other honorary member this year. The Society offered this recognition for the years that Richard has devoted to inspecting our accounts and ably supporting the honorary treasurer in managing our finances.

Review of the 2017-18 programme

This year we enjoyed 14 evening meetings, all of which were well attended. The highest attendance was 23 on the 9th November (the special evening, celebrating "Dennis Collins – 70 Years a Member") with 9 being the lowest attendance (Recent Acquisitions / Single Sheet Competition on the 14th December, a night of dreadful

weather and at the Learning Zone on the 12th April). On average 15 individuals were present, which is 3 lower than last year and not surprising because we have lost a number of “regulars”.

We enjoyed entertaining and informative displays that were well presented by all of our speakers. Our President opened the year by taking on the whole world single-handed, attempting to collect a stamp from every country listed in Scott’s catalogue. We agreed that he had pretty well succeeded since he displayed 160 sheets. It was a year of exceptional meetings. Colin Fraser, a Dundonian ex-pat living in New York, flew across to show his gold medal winning display of British Central Africa. Such is the value of his collection that displaying it could only be done with high quality photocopies – insurance and customs militate against bringing the originals. Although we all love to see the actual stamps, the quality of reproduction was outstanding and we could appreciate one man’s effort which resulted in the finest collection on that territory currently in existence. The third full display was given by Sandy Forbes. His South Australia was many years in the making and worth the wait for us to see. A fine commentary accompanied his comprehensive collection with technical details and little known facts explained in a way easy to take in. Sheila Den brought Fernando Po to Dundee. A little known small Spanish colony in West Africa with stamps and covers that few of us had ever seen! Sheila’s interest came about from its association with Cuban postal services (which she displayed last year) – a most interesting evening. The final individual display was brought from Middlesbrough by Bill Shand, Straits Settlements. His was a fascinating collection spanning the QV to KGIV reigns with rarities in stamps, cancellations and postal history accompanied by an entertaining commentary.

Visitors from other societies brought: The Penny Black on cover, British Occupation of Former Italian Colonies, The Statue of Liberty, “Hobbit” miniature sheets of New Zealand, Raphael Tuck postcards, Pro-Juventute Charity, Explorers (Sea Captains), Lanarkshire Postal History, Fiji, Bomber Fund Labels.

Two of the members’ participation evenings held three of our staples – recent acquisitions, the one sheet competition (5 entries) and the main competitions (8 entries). Although entries in the competitions were down in number (compared with recent years) their quality was high. This year we reached the letter “O” and on “O-Night” over 160 sheets were displayed, continuing the popularity of the theme. “Philatelic Miscellany” has been renamed “The Learning Zone” and this year there were two offerings. David Millar explained how to plate the early classic British stamps, i.e. the 1d black, the 2d blue and 1d red whereas Charles Lloyd demonstrated how he uses PowerPoint to produce album pages populated with maps and illustrations (including the use of a digital microscope images). It was to show what could be done rather than give a prescriptive methodology.

November the 9th saw a unique member’s night to celebrate Dennis Collins and his achievement as a member. Originally conceived as our way to commemorate his record 70 years as a member, with his passing it became a celebration of his life, his love of philately and his contribution to the society in these years. We approached Elspeth to find out if it would be appropriate to hold such an event, to which the answer was an emphatic “Yes”. So many members wanted to contribute that we had to limit ourselves. 12 members produced a display of 160 sheets, choosing material that would have interested Dennis. It was a most satisfying evening for all, topped off with a celebratory cake brought by Elspeth.

I think you will agree that we had a very varied programme, no less than what we deserve.

As it was last year, we finished this season with a Society Dinner at The Invercarse Hotel, on the 10th May. This social event was a very pleasant way to round off our successful year. We have David Millar to thank for making the arrangements.



Members and wives at the 2018 annual dinner, held at the Invercarse Hotel

Standing, from the left: Jill Duguid, Robert Duguid, Ambrose Crosbie, Peter Dix, Harry Jackson, Charles Lloyd, Jenny Easson, Sabine Hotho, Colin Campbell, Francis Podger

Seated, from the left: Janet Millar, David Millar (President), David Easson, Sandra Campbell, Lynn Podger

Competition Winners (2017-18)

One Sheet: Norman Kelso, *"A 1931 Saskatchewan Electrical Revenue Document"*.

National & General: Charles Lloyd, *"African Pan American Clipper Mail"*.

Thematic: Norman Kelso, *"Bermuda Shipwrecks"*.

Social Philately: no entry

Postal History: Harry Jackson, *"16 Years of Stamp Issues from the Kingdom of Hannover"*.

Secretarial Matters

The "guidance" on timing at meetings is established and gives more balanced meetings with the absence of embarrassing overruns. Visitors are provided with this guidance as part of the information sheet and find it helpful. For as long as I care to remember, officer's reports are given between the first and second half of the meeting which allows time for presenters to change sheets on the frames. At the AGM a member asked if this practice might be dropped when visitors displayed with the objective that we could end the meeting earlier. Others did not agree. Officers need to provide information that cannot be delayed and exchanging 80 sheets does take time. Consequently, at such meetings officers reporting time will be limited by the time taken by the presenter to put up part 2. There is the flexibility for the chairman to move to questions before the end of the time allotted for viewing part 1 if it is clear that those present have finished examining the display. This would benefit the continuity of the meeting and might result in an earlier unforced end to the formal part of the meeting.

New EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) came into force on 25th May 2018 to replace the UK Data Protection Act. All organisations, operating in the EU, including DDPS, must comply with them. All data held on individuals, whether in print or in electronic format are included. This affects DDPS in two ways: First, we must hold member's data securely and not transfer it to other organisations, which we do already. Second, we must obtain your consent to contact you (whether this is by e-mail, phone or letter). We are required, if asked, to

provide evidence that we have complied with the Regulations, which is why there is a tick-box form being sent to you along with subscription renewal form and the 2018-9 syllabus. Please return it.

Our morning meetings are now an essential part of DDPS, increasing the diversity of our services to members by meeting in the daytime and having a different structure to the traditional meeting. Circumstances have caused other societies to change from evening to daytime meetings and one or two have the capacity to operate both, which is ideal. I am pleased to report that Marjorie Kennedy, a daytime regular, accepted nomination as a committee member and was elected unanimously at the AGM.

Finance

Our Treasurer, Robert Duguid continues to manage our finances well and we maintained a positive balance last year. In 2017 our income (at £1742) was once gain less than that in the previous year though our expenditure rose (to £1675) which resulted in a surplus of £67, some £316 less than in 2016. Looking at the balance sheet there are small changes (some up, some down) in all items with two exceptions: subscriptions paid fell by £90 to £210 and publicity expenditure increased by £90 to £177. This increase resulted from a no-recurrent payment, a quarter-page notice written by Colin Campbell in the national magazine *Stamp & Coin Mart* as part of a special directory of stamp clubs which accompanied a feature on why collectors should join one. This appeared in February. We decided to do this because we need to recruit members and it could reach collectors who might be outside our usual publicity net. The subscription rate is held at £10

The Exchange Packet

Once again we are very grateful to David Easson, our Packet Secretary, for all his hard work in preparing and administering the Exchange Packet. During the year eight exchange booklets had been in circulation, numbers 108 to 115. The level of sales was down (13% from 19%). Because packets are sent out throughout the year, at any time each will be at a different stage in its progression. However, at the time that this newsletter appears all sellers will have been paid, and David has been able to pass £110 from the surplus to the general funds of the Society. The falling number of members on the circulation list concerns David. He feels we should try and increase the number by means that are within the rules and limits we have set. He hopes to bring forward proposals later in the year.

The Library

Generally, the Library Working Group - David Easson (Librarian), Norman Kelso and Peter Dix - meets once a month. Their task is approaching its conclusion with Phase 4, the positioning of the books in the bookcases. Norman continues to compile the library database in the member's area of our website to enable us to search the catalogue at our leisure. The latest estimate for the stock is 770 books. New books have been acquired, being gifts from members. No new books were purchased this year, though purchases are anticipated in coming years in response to the requirements of members. Space in our cupboards is at a premium and we will continue to dispose of unwanted books (i.e. duplicates or non-philatelic) to create the space for new books.

Morning Meetings

The monthly morning meetings continue to be enjoyed by those who attend. A relaxed atmosphere is a feature of these meetings with more experienced collectors offering advice over a cup of tea. There is no set format but members bring material either to pass around and be looked at, or to sell, or even to give away! They help each other on matters of identification, sharing knowledge and experience, and use the library to answer questions.

From time to time we get visitors who see the notice of a meeting in the Courier and bring along inherited collections for advice. Others will contact the Secretary (via the website) who directs them to the meeting. Scanning through these collections over a cup of tea in an informal atmosphere is more relaxing. The experienced members who attend can offer advice on how best to sell, based on what they see. Who knows, one day one of these visitors may be converted to philately.

The Society's Web-site

The secure password protected "Member's Access" area is operational and each member has been assigned an initial password which they should change (as is normal practice at any log-in site). As mentioned above the library interactive catalogue is in progress now that the books we possess have been listed (with cross referencing). Our webmaster appeals to all members who have published philatelic articles to send him electronic copies and allow him to put these on the site. (They will be posted on the Members Access area.) Norrie is to be congratulated on continuously updating the site, a time consuming task. Too many society websites are left untouched for many months (and often years) which you will agree gives the wrong impression to the wider public. The site continues to enjoy a high number of new visitors, currently about 27 per month with an increasing number of returning visitors. (The latter being double our membership!) Make sure you visit www.dundeephilatelic.org regularly because the site is updated frequently with news and information being posted on it. We can still claim that it is the best philatelic website in Scotland.

Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies

Each year, the ASPS Congress is held (in April) at the Dewar Centre in Perth, hosted by one of the larger Scottish philatelic societies. Congress is the highlight of the ASPS year. As most of you know, it is attended by many collectors and many stamp / postcard dealers. Competitions and displays are held. Scottish members of specialist societies use the opportunity to meet together. There is a Congress dinner and ASPS medals are awarded to the chosen ones. I would urge anyone who has not been to go because it is a most enjoyable day out. Befitting its key role in the founding of ASPS, DDPS has been invited to host Congress in its centenary year, 2023. Our President anticipates that DDPS members will support this event to make it a memorable celebration of the centenary.

We should think of nominating Dundee members for the three ASPS awards. It has been a long time since a Dundee member has been recognised in this way: 1) There is signing the *Book of Scottish Philatelists* (to enable those who have achieved eminence in the advancement of philately or for outstanding original research to be recognised) – the last Dundee recipient was David Stirrups in 2005. 2) The *Alex McConnell Medal* (for longstanding service to philately in Scotland at club and society level) – Sandy Forbes in 2007. 3) The Award of Merit (recognising those members who have served their local societies well) – Dennis Collins in 2005. Please send suggestions to the President, David Millar.

Publicity

Our hard-working Publicity Officer, Colin Campbell, continues to draw attention to our activities wherever and whenever it is appropriate. Those who see ABPS news will have read his regular reviews of our meetings, along with seeing the photographs he sends. Our local press (Courier and Evening Telegraph) usually prints brief reports, though (unfortunately) confined to the Dundee edition. The *What's On?* insert in the Courier occasionally carries details of our next meeting. However, full details do appear on the paper's website. Information on the society is present on the Dundee City Council website and A4 notices are in the libraries and

at Cornucopia Collectors (Frank Tonelli's). Our own web-site has been very successful in promoting the Society. The Society received publicity through the installation of the James Chalmers plaque in Slessor Gardens. (see later)

The 2018-19 Programme

2018	
September 27	The President's Evening: David Millar <i>Victorian Mail</i>
October 5	<i>Visit to Lanarkshire PS</i>
October 11	Richard Cuthbertson (The Scottish) <i>Macau</i>
October 19-20	SCOTEX, Perth
October 25	Bob Murray (Robert Murray Stamp Shop) <i>Philatelic Vexillology</i>
November 8	<i>Visit from Dunfermline PS</i>
November 22	<i>Visit from The Scottish Philatelic Society</i>
December 13	<i>One sheet competition & Recent acquisitions</i>
2019	
January 10	<i>The Learning Zone</i>
January 24	Norman Watson (Perth) <i>The Penny Dreadful</i>
January 29	<i>Visit to Edinburgh Philatelic Society</i>
February 14	<i>"P" night</i>
February 26	<i>Visit to Stirling PS (up to 4 volunteers required)</i>
February 28	<i>Visit from the Caledonian Philatelic Society</i>
March 14	Bob Barclay (Kirkintilloch PS) <i>New Zealand</i>
March 28	<i>Annual DDPS competition(s)</i>
April 4	DDPS Council meeting
April 11	George Henshilwood (Caledonian) <i>Greenland</i>
April 12 - 13	ASPS Congress, Perth
April 25	AGM
May 9	Society Dinner

This year we will have 14 meetings, 6 individual displays (1 by our President and 5 by visitors) and 3 visiting societies (The Caledonian, Dunfermline & The Scottish). There will be 4 members' nights. We have received and accepted requests from 3 Scottish philatelic societies for Dundee to visit them and display. The year will be rounded off, as we have become accustomed to, with the AGM and our Society Annual Dinner.

On 27th September our season starts. This will be the second *Presidential Display* given by David Millar - his

chosen subject, *Victorian Mail*.

On Friday the 5th October (in the evening) we pay our first visit, which is to Lanarkshire Philatelic Society to give a society display. Our other visits are to Stirling and Edinburgh in the new-year. For each I require 3 volunteers. I will be able to tell you the number of sheets required nearer the dates.

Two weeks after our opening meeting we will be visited by Richard Cuthbertson who brings “*Macau*”. This former tiny Portuguese colony lies 25km west from Hong Kong across the Pearl River delta and became a SAR of China in 1999. Its former postal practices and stamp issuing policy parallels that of other Portuguese colonies overlaid with a local interest. We may be familiar with the philately of Hong Kong but most of us will only have a minimal knowledge of this 30 km² neighbouring enclave.

Bob Murray of Edinburgh provides our third meeting which has the intriguing title of “*Philatelic Vexillology*”. To save you a hunt in Google to find out what you will see, it is the study of the history, symbolism and usage of flags. I am curious to learn more about the philatelic aspect since we are familiar with the presence of flags on stamps but there is more to this than seen at first sight: politics, propaganda and more.

There are visits from other societies (Dunfermline and The Scottish) on consecutive meetings (8th and 22nd November). It is into the New Year when a third society visits, the Caledonian. When a society visits what their members bring is always a surprise. Society displays never fail to interest, having something for everyone with an opportunity to see material that is suited to a shorter display format.

We end 2018 in our traditional way with the one sheet competition, recent acquisitions and seasonal fare.

In a response to a member’s request our competition night has been moved from the first meeting in January to the end of March. For a variety of reasons, a number of members find the seasonal break a busy time which restricts the time available to produce competition entries. The “*Learning Zone*” has been brought forward to replace it. Given the vagaries of our weather in January, I prefer not to ask a visitor to travel any significant distance to Dundee and having a members’ night is more appropriate.

Those of you who were at the meeting last year when Perth PS visited will remember Norman Watson’s wonderful collection of Penny Blacks on cover. During a talk over tea at the end, he mentioned that possibly his Penny Red collection was better. Your secretary never lets such an opportunity pass-by and words to the effect “Can I put you down for next year” were said. Norman agreed and being local, he is happy to treat us in the winter months.

2019 is the year of the letter “P”. Bring philatelic material that will educate and entertain us on February the 14th, “*P-Night*”. The scope is wide – Portugal, perforations, perfins, provisional issues, postage due, etc. No doubt, there will be great fun to be had stretching the interpretation. But, the catch-all “philatelic” is banned!

New Zealand has always issued attractive stamps befitting the quality associated with a British dominion postal service in the past and this has continued to this day with issues using national themes. Occasionally, we do see an occasional departure from this norm, which adds to the interest. Among DDPS officers NZ was a popular choice and we are fortunate to have Bob Barclay agreeing to display his excellent collection.

Our final display of the year is given by George Henshilwood who is President of The Caledonian Philatelic Society. He will be giving a display on Greenland. Greenland is an autonomous Danish territory, a huge island (2.4 million km²) with a tiny population (56,000). I cannot recall seeing a display of this country and given its

limited population the policies of its post office will be interesting and there is the potential for curiosities.

As usual, we round off our philatelic year with the AGM and Society Dinner. The latter is always enjoyable and I recommend it to you.

Finally

The DDPS Newsletter always features a short article on an aspect of Dundee postal history. This year we have a short piece on the James Chalmers plaque on Discovery Walk. Without him, I would not be writing this newsletter.

It just remains to wish you a good collecting season and we look forward to seeing you on September 28th.

Charles Lloyd

(Hon Secretary)

James Chalmers

Inventor of the adhesive postage stamp

In 2016, as part of the regeneration of the riverside in the city, *Discovery Walk* was created in Slessor Gardens. Bronze plaques are set in the pavement honouring individuals, resident or working in Dundee, who “passed their contemporaries and impacted the world as we know it”. Kelly Marr, Chairman of the Discovery Walk Committee explained that it is akin to *The Walk of Stars* in Hollywood when she



contacted me early last year to ask for our help in produce a plaque to honour James Chalmers. We contributed to the inscription, but in particular she wanted a quote from the Society.

The Chalmers plaque was unveiled on the 27th April accompanied by pipers and the obligatory speeches from local worthies. It is one of 14 and there is an intention to add more.

*David, Bob Murray (of Murray's Stamp Shop)
Charles & Colin at the opening ceremony.*

The inscription reads:

“Philatelists everywhere celebrate this outstanding Dundee businessman whose invention so benefited the World’s postal systems.” Dundee and District Philatelic Society

JAMES CHALMERS

(1782 – 1853)

Established as a prominent printer and publisher in Castle Street, Dundee, James Chalmers became an avid campaigner for Britain's postal system. His efforts would eventually succeed in reducing the Edinburgh to London Service by nearly a day in each direction. This son of Arbroath is regarded as the originator of the concept of adhesive postage stamps and postal franking, paving the way for the UK to become the first country in the world to introduce postage stamps with the launch of the Penny Black in 1840.

The Controversy surrounds this claim!

Like most of our members I accepted the claim that James Chalmers invented the adhesive postage stamp. I bought the book, *James Chalmers: Inventor of the Adhesive Postage Stamp* (1) but had never read it until now. I was aware that Roland Hill is widely credited with this invention but did not know why his claim persists. With the unveiling of the Chalmers plaque on Discovery Walk and I decided to investigate the conflict. What I discovered was that "Fake News" is not a new phenomenon: it has existed at least since postal reform in 1840.

There are key dates to keep in mind when examining the two claims. 1) The production of essays by Chalmers in August 1834, which is poo-pooed by Hill's supporters. 2) The comment made by Hill in February 1837 that in exceptional circumstances an adhesive postage stamp could be used. In November 1837 Chalmers sent examples of his adhesive postage stamps to Robert Wallace MP and suggested that they should be used universally.

In August 1834 Chalmers printed identical multiple impressions of what we would recognise as a stamp on a gummed sheet of paper. An apprentice was instructed to carefully cut the sheet into small squares, thus making the prototype postage stamp. This was witnessed by at least 3 employees and over the coming years the stamps were shown to numerous worthies. Some 50 years later, at the behest of his campaigning son Patrick, some of these witnesses testified to their existence and when they were produced. The problem is that none of this event was recorded at the time. Also, more recently others (Hill supporters) have cast doubt on the authenticity of examples of the 1834 stamps that have come to light.

The year 1834 is important, as in that year the cost for sending a newspaper by post was reduced from 4d to 1d. At that time, a newspaper had to be sent in a prepaid wrapper on which there was a printed stamp. In the 1st June 1834 edition of *Companion to the Newspaper*, its editor, Charles Knight (a prominent London publisher and postal reformer) advocated a 1d wrapper. Chalmers published the *Dundee Chronical* and was familiar with the unsatisfactory nature of the 4d wrappers. He conceived an alternative to the proposed 1d wrapper. Use a plain wrapper onto which an adhesive stamp (about one inch square) would be applied as the last action before posting. Being a bookseller, Chalmers stocked Knight's newspapers and was in regular correspondence with him on business matters. A postal reform campaigner himself, Chalmers was in contact with other reformers, including Knight, corresponding and exchanged ideas. No doubt he described his invention of this adhesive prepayment stamp for postage. (Incidentally, adhesive stamps already existed for revenue use but no one had yet thought of their postal application.)

Robert Hill claimed that his idea for an adhesive postage stamp was made public during his interview with the Commission of Postal Enquiry on the 13th February 1837. His pamphlet on postal reform had been received by the Treasury a month earlier and led to the Commission inviting him to discuss his proposals. Contrary to what many of his supporters claim, the adhesive postage stamp is not mentioned at all in his January 1837 pamphlet.

Hill proposed that covers and letter-sheets with imprinted stamps should be used to record pre-payment. It is worth quoting what Hill says of this meeting, written in 1867 and included in his autobiography *The Life of Sir Roland Hill and the History of the Penny Postage* (2):

“Having previous to my examination, in a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer made the mention of stamps, I repeat the suggestion here. I have said whence the first notion was derived and how far it extended; there has been little public discussion on the matter, I extract from my evidence the passage relating to it –

“A few years ago, when the expediency of entirely abolishing the newspaper stamp, and allowing newspapers to pass through the Post Office for one penny each, was under consideration, it was suggested by Mr Charles Knight, the publisher, that the postage on newspapers might be collected by selling stamped wrappers at a penny each. Availing myself of this excellent suggestion I propose the following arrangement:

(Comment by CHL: At this point he gives a detailed description of the use of covers and letter-sheets on which there is a printed stamp. This is irrelevant to my article except that it is clear that up to now he is referring only to stamps printed on these)

The only objection which occurs to me to the universal adoption of my plan is the following: Persons unaccustomed to write letters could, perhaps, be at a loss of how to proceed. They might send or take their letters to the Post Office without having recourse to the stamp. It is true that on presentation of the letter, the receiver, instead of accepting the money as postage, might take it as the price of a cover or band in which the bringer would sometimes be unable to write. Perhaps this difficulty might be alleviated by using a bit of paper just large enough to bear the stamp and covered at the back with a glutinous wash, which the bringer might, by applying a bit of moisture, attach to the back of the letter, so as to avoid redirecting it”

Clearly, he had prior knowledge of the adhesive postage stamp but dismissed it as a possibility for universal pre-payment because he did not include it as a proposal in his January 1837 pamphlet. It is the above passing comment that Hill’s supporters use to claim pre-invention. However, Knight is a link between the two and Chalmers would have revealed his invention to Knight. Up until it proved to be a failure, Hill considered the use of covers bearing a printed stamp as the means by which pre-payment would be achieved, universally. Adhesive stamps would be used only for very exceptional cases.

Hill supporters suggest that there is no evidence for Chalmers’ 1834 claim and that all those individuals who came forward to testify in support of Chalmers 50 years later, had faulty memories. However, there is physical evidence. One of these 1834 prototype stamps, owned by the Austrian collector Franz Himmelbauer and on loan to the Viennese Unterdöbling Postal Museum, was exhibited at the 1890 Vienna Philatelic Exposition (3). It was still in possession of the museum when the director, Sigmund Friedl, relocated the museum to Frankengasse in 1891: “The finest object in the collection is believed to be a Dundee stamp worth £500 Sterling” (4). In the following edition of the *Philatelic Record*, Patrick Chalmers states that it is one of the 1834 essays.

The proceedings of Commission of Postal Enquiry were reported in *The Times*. In November 1837 James Chalmers wrote to its chairman, Robert Wallace (MP for Greenock and an ardent postal reformer) detailing his scheme for prepayment of letters with adhesive stamps to be cancelled by a handstamp to prevent reuse. He enclosed a sample of his invention, suggesting that it might solve the problem of implementation of the proposed prepayment. In February 1838 Chalmers sent his plans with a detailed description of the stamp, its

production and its use to the Commission and these ideas received wider recognition. A letter and samples were also sent to Roland Hill who acknowledged their receipt and informed Chalmers that he would probably make use of his proposals in his evidence to the Commission. Note: In Hill's acknowledgement there was no mention that the adhesive postage stamp had been invented already (by himself).

From the outset, Hill proposed using stamped covers or letter-sheets for prepayment. The Treasury had grave concerns about the possibility of the forgery of these and fraudulent reuse, The Commission devoted considerable time on this topic. Hill's suggested solution: use "peculiar paper", paper containing silk threads, produced exclusively by Dickinson papermakers - not any mention of adhesive stamps as an alternative solution.

The Penny Postage Bill was introduced in Parliament in July 1839 and Hill's stamped cover proposal was severely criticised in both Houses. During the Commons debate Robert Wallace intervened to put forward the adhesive postage stamp as the alternative to Hill's covers. When the Bill was passed at the start of August, it contained no details on how prepayment was to be collected. The Chancellor of the Exchequer wisely decided to give unrestricted freedom to those implementing the act to decide. On the 28th August the Treasury invited the public to submit proposals, the result of which was the selection of two methods – stamped covers (including letter-sheets) and adhesive postage stamps. Hill, who had been given a two year appointment in the Treasury to oversee the introduction of the Penny Post, was still wedded to the former.

We also have a revealing piece of evidence in an article headed "Post Office" published in the *Penny Cyclopaedia*, volume 18 1840, which sets Hill's claim in its proper place:

"He (*Roland Hill*) proposed that the rate of postage should be uniform to be charged according to weight and the payment should be done in advance. The means of doing so by stamps was not suggested in the first edition of the pamphlet and Mr Hill states that this idea did not originate with him."

It is damning evidence because the publisher of the *Penny Cyclopaedia* was Charles Knight and Roland Hill was on its Committee of Management! Had the statement been untrue, Hill would surely have seen that it did not appear. Right up until the success of the Penny Black, Hill had shown little regard for the adhesive stamp.

Rather late in the day, 26th December 1839, Bacon, Petch & Co was invited to produce a postage stamp which we now refer to as the Penny Black. The introduction of a uniform Penny Post was just days away, on the 10th January! When the day arrived Hill's covers proved a disaster while the Mulready letter-sheets were widely disliked. The Penny Post was saved by the arrival of the Penny Black adhesive postage stamp on the 6th May 1840. But too few were ordered and post offices soon ran out. A massive reprinting programme was undertaken to try to keep up with demand. The adhesive postage stamp was a runaway success with 68 million printed and sold before it was replaced nine months later by the Penny Red.

With its success, Hill's change of mind on the adhesive postage stamp was astonishing: He was now claiming its invention! In his biography (5) he relates sending a paper to the Mercantile Committee on Postage (set up by merchants early in 1838 to agitate for postal reform). Intriguingly, he tells us that that "This paper in question will not be found among those issued by the Mercantile Committee on Postage. It is No. 65". Is it too much to say its loss is convenient? If Hill is to be believed the number 65 implies publication later in the year. By then Hill had a copy of Chalmers' detailed February 1838 paper. Hill states:

"I consequently prepared a paper which was printed and circulated by the Mercantile Committee: *On the Collection of Postage by Means of Stamps*. It describes in considerable detail the plan of which the first bare

suggestion had been given, as already shown early in 1837, and except that there is no mention of the Queen's Head – which was an after-thought – it describes with great accuracy the kinds of stamps now in use and the means of distributing them. The envelopes and adhesive stamps now so familiar to all, are described the one as 'little bags called envelopes' and the other as 'small stamped detached labels – say about an inch square – which if prepared with a glutinous wash on the back may be attached without a wafer'. I must admit however that as the paper shows I still looked upon stamped covers or envelopes as the means which the public would most commonly apply still believing that the adhesive stamp would be reserved for exceptional cases."

A few pages later (6) he contradicts himself and makes additional untrue statements:

"I originally proposed* a whole sheet of penny stamps containing 240, the equivalent of £1 and that each row contains 12 stamps.....In the outset it was foreseen that stamps might be used in ordinary payment."

* He refers to the previous quote (5) with the year 1837 being the outset. His pamphlet and response to the committee in February 1837 contains nothing of the sort.

After the appearance of the Penny Black, the success and popularity of the Penny Post had given Hill the status of a national treasure and with that influence as well. As seen, he was not a modest man! Honours were showered upon him. He produced a biography with the history of the penny postage. [It follows the Churchillian quotation "History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it". (7)] In fact Hill was at best a recycler of other people's ideas. Agitation for postal reform has been around for 20 years before he became involved, with reformers being in contact and exchanging ideas. Hill benefited from this knowledge of other reformers work, synthesising it into one document – his 1837 pamphlet. By contrast, Chalmers was a modest man living well away from the seat of power and he did not press his case as hard as he might. He died in 1853 and for the next 26 years Hill cemented his claims.

Patrick Chalmers, James' son (born 1819), left Dundee as a boy and returned to Britain after a working life on tea plantations in China. He missed the years of postal reform. In 1879, on discovering that Hill had (to his knowledge) wrongly claimed to have invented the adhesive postage stamp, he set about putting the record straight. Almost immediately he locked horns with Pearson Hill, son of Roland who was keen to protect and preserve his father's reputation and good name of his family. Pearson Hill was dismissive, refused to accept any evidence, obstructive and somewhat unpleasant. Patrick uncovered a remarkable fact: Without authorisation Roland Hill had removed all correspondence between James Chalmers and himself from the Treasury records when he left office in 1841 and passed these documents to his son when he died in 1889. Did these files contain evidence undermining his claim? Whether they do or not, Roland Hill had no right to take public documents. When asked politely by Patrick Chalmers to restore these public documents to their rightful owner, the Treasury, there was a blunt refusal. Fortunately, some of the correspondence emerged in Dundee overtime but is incomplete. Up until his death in 1891 Patrick met with remarkable success. Unfortunately, as we know, ultimately, Hill prevailed and at best Chalmers is portrayed as an unsuccessful claimant. Publications on the dispute are voluminous. *The Bibliography of General Literature in the Philatelic Library of Brian J Birch* contains a list of many hundreds of letters and publications on 75 pages (8). The Achilles heel of Chalmers' case is the paucity of documentary evidence from before 1838 and the 50 year gap before Patrick started his campaign. Also, Patrick's campaigning may have backfired, alienating some in influential places who then tended to accept the account according to Pearson Hill. That said, Pearson Hill claims his father received a letter from Chalmers

withdrawing his claim but when challenged he refused to publish the letter in full. This raises suspicion that Pearson Hill might have been economic with the truth. Little wonder that the dispute still remains unresolved!

We should not begrudge Roland Hill credit for his contribution to the introduction of the Penny Post, but at the same time we must acknowledge the contributions made by others, such as James Chalmers, without which Hill's scheme would never have succeeded.

What of Roland Hill's other contributions to Victorian society?

When presented with the invention of perforations to separate stamps, he saw little merit in this, causing the Treasury to reject the invention, in spite of the enthusiasm of others (such was his influence). This rejection resulted in reference to a Commons Select Committee which awarded the inventor a substantial sum and perforations immediately became a standard feature on stamps.

A second point: Before postal reform he took an interest in social reform. He believed that the social problems of Britain were caused by overpopulation and overcrowding, publishing a pamphlet in 1832 *Home colonies: sketch of a plan for the gradual extinction of pauperism and for the diminution of crime*. His plan was to transport the paupers to South Australia to create a settlement without convicts. Today we would question the morality, but in that era this appealed to the governing class. The South Australia Colonisation Committee was formed with Roland Hill as its Secretary from 1833 until 1839. A consequential result, unforeseen by Hill, would be a display of South Australia adhesive postage stamps by Sandy Forbes in Dundee 185 years later.



A Treasury essay of James Chalmers submission for an adhesive postage stamp in the August 1839 competition. (Endorsed on the envelope bearing it with the Treasury reference number 22799/39.

Offered for auction sale by Siegel in New York on 27th June 2017: lot number 338 in sale 1159. It was estimated at \$30,000 to \$50,000

References

- (1) Anon, *James Chalmers, Inventor of the Adhesive Postage Stamp*; Winter, Dundee (1971)
- (2) Hill Sir R and Hill GB. *The Life of Sir Roland Hill and the History of the Penny Postage*; Thos. de la Rue & Co., London (1880) page 270
- (3) Katalog der 1. Internationalen Postwerthzeichen – Ausstellung, Wein, 20 April – 4 Mai 1890. P15
- (4) The Postal Record Vol 13, June 1891
- (5) Hill Sir R and Hill GB. *The Life of Sir Roland Hill and the History of the Penny Postage*; Thos. de la Rue & Co., London, (1880) page 345
- (6) Ibid. page 406
- (7) "History will be kind to me for I intend to write it." misquotes Churchill who said, "For my part, I consider that it will be found much better by all parties to leave the past to history, as I propose to write that history".
- (8) Bibliography of general literature in the philatelic library of Brian J Birch. fipliterature.org/bjbl.PDF

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