

ABERDEEN PHILATELIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER January 2014

Forthcoming meetings: We begin the year with President's night (my guess is that it could just be Canada), followed by Bruce Walker's Aberdeen postal history, which will assuredly be a treat. Then we have the annual alphabet night. Letter C should surely cause no problems. We all have some cancellations, charity stamps or even some cheap stamps, but who will come up with Cherifien, colour trials or College stamps (more of a challenge)?

We remember Mike Ward, who passed away on 27th October. Mike was a regular attender at Society meetings, interested in postal history, as well as the philately of Venezuela.

The host society at the **ASPS Congress in Perth** on 11-12th April 2014 (please note not as shown in the Aberdeen PS syllabus) will be the Scottish Postal History Society. David Kindley is the Society's delegate to ASPS Council and will therefore preside over Congress this year. Setting up the event on the Thursday 10th is a major exercise and David would be grateful for any assistance from our membership, as we have recent previous experience. Have a word with David if you feel that you may be able to help.

The host society's display will obviously be a very strong showing of Scottish postal history. Souvenirs will include a postcard with cap badges of the Scottish regiments at the start of World War I and a cover plus commemorative postmark with a Ryder cup theme. The Tom Rielly Memorial talk and display will be given by Ian Evans, who visited our Society last October. The after-dinner speaker on the Friday will be Tony Pollard, Professor of Battlefield Archaeology (if you can recall "Two Men in a Trench" – he was the real archaeologist opposite Neil Oliver), an excellent speaker. A Post & Go machine from Royal Mail will again be available at Congress, producing stamps with an overprint specific to the event.

As always, Congress will include the national competition and the open competition. Our national competition is an ideal exhibition for a first shot at competitive exhibiting, with a full range of classes including traditional philately, thematic, postal history, social philately, aerophilately, cinderella and literature. There is also a picture postcard competition. If you would like an entry form, a copy of the rules and advice for exhibitors, please contact our society's delegate to ASPS, Jeff Stone. The deadline for receipt of entry forms is 1 March. There is a lot of experience of competitive exhibiting in our society, so plenty of advice available, if you would like to have a go. Incidentally, there was an ABPS seminar for judges in Scotland last summer, providing a refresher course for qualified judges at Federation level, plus five new faces. Two of our Scottish judges have now qualified at national level and the judging day for our 2014 national competition will be attended by two internationally qualified judges from ABPS, as part of the judging seminar sequence.

Report on Aberdeen Philatelic Society Auction 28: 1183 lots with a total reserve of ca. £14000 were submitted by 25 vendors of whom 9 are members. Distribution of the catalogue by email is increasingly allowing savings to be made in printing and postage though the electronic medium is not always as good for browsing the catalogue and may deter some bidders. The auction attracted 150 bidders but sales were down, ca. £6000 compared with ca. £7000 from previous auctions - is this because collectors are taking austerity measures? At the time of writing not all monies are in but it is hoped to raise £500 for the Society.

The **Association of British Philatelic Societies** (to which we are affiliated) proposes to maintain a record of packet secretaries wanting new material to circulate and also of vendors with material to sell. The intention is to match the two up by supplying lists to the interested parties. Anyone with books made up for circulation and who would like them to go beyond the Aberdeen PS circuits should contact John Dickenson at dickenson17@ntlworld.com or read more in *ABPS News* 20, 4, Winter 2015, pp. 14-15. Our Secretary has a copy.

Members will recall the superb display by Charles Kiddle last November on poster stamps and other cinderellas. He opened his display with an advertising label produced by the Aberdeen nineteenth century commercial photographer, **George Washington Wilson**.



I was intrigued by this item which I had not seen before, and I made further enquiries. There is an excellent biography of the firm (*George Washington Wilson Artist and Photographer 1823-93* by Roger Taylor, AUP, 1981), with an illustration of a block of four. From the text, I learned that it was issued on 31 March 1887, four days after a former business partner was bought out. No doubt, the firm's changed circumstances to a family firm were significant in the production and design of the label, which shows a portrait of GWW in a central medallion with his initials and those of his three sons, John, Louis and Charles, (also partners in the firm) at each corner. The labels were presumably printed and perforated in-house. The firm certainly possessed a lithographic press. Taylor goes on to say that "as in colour, size and general appearance it resembled the postage stamp, the postal authorities took exception to it and ordered it be withdrawn". I was surprised to learn that the postal authorities had such powers, although I can understand that they had the authority to forbid its use on the front of a postal document. I have since learned that two of our members have examples; one has copies in black and brown and the other has a marginal strip of three in black. Also, there is a block of four and a single in the Society's forgery collection, so our visitor's copy is not alone. How did copies get into circulation? Was it in the days before "withdrawal"? Were they not so strictly withdrawn that no more left the business premises? Or did they come on to the market after the successor firm ceased trading and "The Whole Plant & Stock in Trade" of G W Wilson & Co., was sold by John Milne, Auctioneer, Aberdeen, on 9-11 July 1908? None of the descriptions of the 900 lots in the auction catalogue contain any suggestion of advertising labels, although interest in collecting poster stamps was growing rapidly at that time. Just how rare is the label? Do any exist on cover, preferably tied by a cancellation, from the period before it was banned? They can be found in two colours, black and grey. Are there any other colours? Aberdeen University library, which acquired the GWW archives, holds a block of 20 in grey with margins on three sides which might be a complete sheet of the label. I will submit a picture of that block to *The Cinderella Philatelist* for publication, so that it is available on record for interested collectors. Please let me know if you have a copy or know of others in existence. Any further thoughts or comments on this local item gratefully received and will be included in the next newsletter.