

Editor's Note : I asked Richard Thompson, a subscriber to the Journal who has lived in France for many years, to write an article on « Collecting in France » When he agreed to do this, he asked me to state to the readers of the Journal that, firstly, he might – quite possibly, indeed probably - be telling them things that they already know: and for this he apologises; that, secondly, the comments made and the opinions expressed (being based on his own experience) are solely his; and that, thirdly, errors, omissions and mistakes are his alone.

COLLECTING IN FRANCE

1. Ah! The delights of Christmas 1945 – in Southend - when a maiden aunt, herself a collector, gave me the key to the golden door of stamp collecting: an old album and a packet of 200 Whole World stamps, in a condition that dealers would qualify as 'Mixed'. No matter, that gift got me going: a miniature geography (and, later, a history) lesson, leading to an awareness of foreign languages, and non-Sterling currencies. Even then, specialisation crept in, and by the time I was ten, hoarded pocket money had made me the proud owner of a 1d Black, a 2d Blue, and an imperforate 1d Brown , albeit three margin copies, (but beauty is in the eye of the beholder) . I have kept all three of these stamps on an Album page headed "In the Beginning..." . Nowadays, it is lodged in the last of a half-dozen albums which contain

- i) Stamps (GB, British Colonies, France, European Countries and selected World Wide),
- ii) Franked Covers (GB, France and Selected Countries) and
- iii) pre-stamp postal History (GB and France) starting late 16th Century.

A fascinating culmination to a life-long hobby which had begun with enthusiastic relatives, friends and teachers; and which matured with the accumulated wisdom of the proprietor of the local stamp shop, and the advice and encouragement of the members of the local stamp club..... A perfect world, as it used to be in England.

2. Why this 'perfect-world in England' introduction to an article on 'Collecting in France' ? Because there are similarities in France to what I think must have become the situation in the United Kingdom in the 1970's , when it became well-nigh impossible in France to inculcate philatelic interest into potential young collectors. To illustrate : by the time my own children were of an age to take an interest in the world outside home and 'école primaire' and - later - 'collège' , I gave them each an album and a selections of stamps – Whole World, European Countries and France. Spurred on by 'papa', interest was keen to start with, but it then subsided. The stamps were swapped for model cars, cigarette-card sized coloured photos of French footballers, and animal figurines for a miniature zoo. Why should this 'stamp graft' have failed in France? I think because the 'supporting cast' (that I had known in England, and benefited from as a youngster, before moving to France) had withered away over here:

- i) Peer-group encouragement: none of my childrens' friends collected stamps:
- ii) School Stamp Club : out-of-school activities (such as a 'Club Philatélique') were not looked upon favourably by the 'maître d'école', who preferred playing rugby:
- iii) The stamp 'boutique' (where collectors young and old used to be able to browse for a while) had disappeared from the 'Grande Rue', victim of low turnover, minimal profits and high inflation:
- iv) The local 'Société Philatélique', failed to attract a younger generation, and existed as a monthly meeting point (not always congenial !) for its members. True, it lived on, but outside the main-stream concerns of 'la vie de tous les jours'.

(Continued overleaf)

3. So, what do we have in France today to encourage collectors ?

Despite the gloom expressed in the four points above, I admit to being surprised at the variety of support available for a collector wishing to advance in his hobby. True, a few school stamp-clubs have battled on, and the side-street stamp 'boutique' for over-the-counter transactions is still to be found in the larger towns and cities (i.e. Paris, Marseilles, Lyon, Lille, Toulouse, Perpignan, Bordeaux and Nantes). There are however other structures.

i) The network of 'Clubs Philatéliques' is far from defunct. True, clubs have disappeared; but others have amalgamated. I can mention the Club Philatélique in La Grande Motte which absorbed six other local stamp Clubs between 1995 and 2003. It now has over 60 active members. And country-wide, we must note that for the month of November 2014 alone, 128 'Clubs Philatéliques' will be opening their doors for open-days, exhibitions and stamp fairs. To attract the young collector, there will probably be a 'Golden Hallo', e.g. a small album, a pair of tweezers, and an envelope of Fine Used stamps – France, French Colonies, and World wide. For seasoned collectors, there will be illustrated talks (with a rear-projector) on such subjects as 'Overprints on 19th Century Ivory Coast'; plus other display material e.g. Early Transatlantic Airmails, colour varieties on Classic 'Cérès', printing errors on some 1930's commemoratives... and there will be plenty of opportunities to buy stamps from the approval envelopes which circulate.

ii) There are publications, too, catering for a wide range of collector interest. One can note the monthly 'Timbres Magazine' – a publication of quality, which contains specialist articles which are of interest to all lovers of Philately (France and Overseas) and 'Marcophilie' (a.k a Postal markings) on pre- and post-1849 covers.

iii) Stamp Dealers abound – but principally for postal purchases. There are some thirty or so well-known dealers, established in the main towns (Marseilles, Lille and Paris) Indeed, in Paris, if you take a stroll along 'Avenue de l'Opéra' and 'Rue Drouot', you will find a variety of collectable material which matches what you might find in, say, the Covent Garden/Strand area. And if your lunch break allows you time to go to the bottom of the 'Champs Elysées', you should go to the 'Carré Marigny' and visit the 'Pieds Humides' open-air stamp market. (Why 'Pieds Humides' ? Well, when it rains, your feet get wet – but the stamps on display are well protected under a double layer of cellophane)

iv) Public Auctions, with the lots being knocked down by the auctioneer, are common in all large towns and cities in France, but only rarely are there any lots of a philatelic interest.

v) Postal Auctions, on the other hand, are widespread and popular. Some dozen or so reputable dealers, nationally, can each organise up to three or four auctions annually. The catalogues are well produced, with prolific colour illustrations of the lots for sale, by postal bid. They are distributed by post to existing customers, and the lots can also be viewed on the Internet. One of the better known Postal Auction houses is Roumet, in the 'Rue Drouot: it is a 'must' for classic material, from France, Belgium, Switzerland and GB. A separate branch of Roumet (Roumet R.H.P.) deals in Postal History. Experience shows (and this should not be construed as a criticism of any of the Auction Houses) that over the last few years the reserve prices (as a percentage of catalogue values) have tended to increase a little faster than the referenced Catalogue values themselves – rising, on an average, from 30% to 40% thereof. A word about costs: the price paid by the successful bidder is net. The vendor pays the dealer's commission, which is fixed on a sliding scale calculated on the successful bid price,

(Continued overleaf)

ranging from, say, 30% on inexpensive items, up to 15% on top-quality lots. And another observation from experience is that buyers' pockets are getting deeper and deeper (especially for classic items: France, Switzerland, G.B.) with scarcer, good-quality items going at prices just short of Catalogue.

vi) One must not neglect the attraction of the National Stamp Exhibition. This year, there were some 55 Exhibitors and dealers, from France and Switzerland. The quality of the exhibits, as in previous years, was a sight for sore (and envious!) eyes. And, Yes!, there were hundreds of visitors.

vii) Finally, we must mention the efforts of the French Post Office to attract collectors. Each major town is equipped with a 'Bureau Philatélique' where (French) New Issues are on sale. I shall be talking of New Issues.

To resume, any collector who is serious about his hobby has ample source material and opportunity to find that elusive stamp or cover.

Richard Thompson

This is a five page article, which I have had to split into two halves - so you can eagerly await part 2, which will be published in the May 2015 issue of the Bulletin

Thank you Richard, unfortunately there is no fee payable, but I wish you well should you decide on a Journalistic career in your latter years.

PJOK.

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GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY

What the youngsters think !

Up to date dictionary of phrases you might have heard - if not, they will be soon.

DISTINGUISHED - Bloody old UPSTANDING - Dull.

WISE - Surely, he must have learnt something by now ?

MATURE - He's started to smell. ECCENTRIC - Senile.

A LOT OF GET UP AND GO - Prostrate trouble ! RESPECTED - Scary

AUTUMN YEARS - Not long for this earth !

DAPPER - Dodgy dress sense ! SPRIGHTLY - Still able to move !

So now if you are described as any of the above, you should understand what your Friends (?) really think.

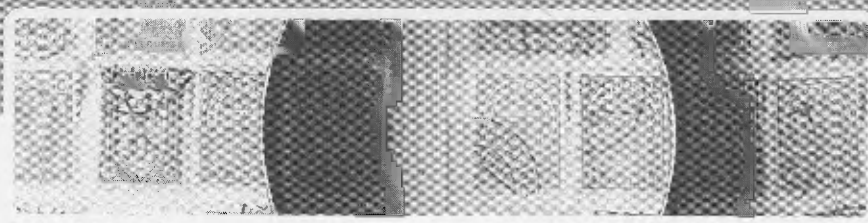
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SELFRIDGE'S PHILATELIC DEPARTMENT (continued)

In 1934, the world famous Oxford Street department store could boast a thriving stamp department, and several leading stamp collectors and dealers of the day cut their teeth behind its counters, including Kenneth Chapman.

However, the department did not sit perfectly comfortably within Selfridge's, mainly because when buying collections the company disliked the idea of having to pay on the spot. The head of the department, Alan Robertson – best known for his expert knowledge of ship letters - decided instead to buy some collections for himself, for which he was sacked. Chapman was also sacked - for not reporting the matter. The department had one of the best arranged stamp displays in London, it had grown from a small table to a large department on the ground floor. There were dozens of showcases, and at least ten thousand stamps on display.

The main illustration is part of the layout of the Philatelic Department, (apologies for the blurred printing, copied from a magazine). There is also part of the back flap of one of their large envelopes.



I doubt that any of our more senior members would have called or even seen this shop in its hey day, and although prices might today appear cheap, they probably had few sheets, if any, strung up in the window with odd values offered cheaply, as I can remember in the late forties and fifties in stamp shops around the country, !

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January 2015

| | | | |
|---------|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Mon 5 | Medway Towns | President's Night | Richard Barnard |
| Tue 6 | Lewisham | Letter 'M' | Members |
| Wed 7 | Sevenoaks | Social evening | Members |
| Thur 8 | Eltham-Woolwich | Members Displays | Members |
| Thur 8 | Maidstone | Munich Crisis 1938 | Tony Hickey |
| Thur 8 | Tunbridge Wells | Reach for the Sky: Balloons | Michael Thompson |
| Fri 9 | Herne Bay | New Year Bourse | Members |
| Fri 9 | Swale | Advertising & Halfway | Francis Howland |
| Mon 12 | Dartford | Starting with S, T or U | Members |
| Mon 12 | Dover | Letters Q, R & S | Members |
| Tue 13 | Malling | 5 sheets or 25p | Members |
| Tue 13 | Sidcup | Travel | Members |
| Wed 14 | Bromley & Beck | Letter C for Nugent Cup | Members |
| Thur 15 | Edenbridge | Open Evening - WW1 | Members |
| Fri 16 | Bexley | <i>To be arranged</i> | |
| Sat 17 | Kent PHG | Sussex PHG & New Acquisitions | Hurst Green |
| Tue 20 | Lewisham | A Miscellany | Simon McArthur |
| Wed 21 | Bromley & Beck | Annual Dinner - The Warren | Members |
| Wed 21 | Isle of Thanet | Letters D, E & F | Members |
| Thur 22 | Eltham-Woolwich | Victory and Peace | Tony Hickey |
| Thur 22 | Maidstone | Club visit from Deal PS | - |
| Thur 22 | Tunbridge Wells | (AM) A Miscellany of Early GB | Ian Marshall |
| Fri 23 | Gravesend | (PM) President's Meeting | - |
| Fri 23 | Herne Bay | Letters C & D | Members |
| Mon 26 | Dover | Memorabilia | Members |
| Tue 27 | Sidcup | President's Evening | - |
| Wed 28 | Bromley & Beck | From the Collections of | Chris Sands |
| Thur 29 | Maidstone | (AM) C is for | Members |

February 2015

| | | | |
|--------|-----------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Mon 2 | Cinque Ports | Chairman's evening | - |
| Mon 2 | Medway Towns | Competition Night & Bourse | Members |
| Tue 3 | Lewisham | Tristan da Cunha | Ron Burn |
| Wed 4 | Dartford | 1936 Berlin Olympics | Tony Bosworth |
| Wed 4 | Deal | The Committee Entertains | - |
| Wed 4 | Isle of Thanet | Islands on Stamps & Bourse | Members |
| Wed 4 | Sevenoaks | Displays | Members |
| Thur 5 | Eltham-Woolwich | Tour of Africa | Clifford Ayers |
| Thur 5 | Maidstone | Competitions & Bourse | Members |
| Fri 6 | Bexley | Auction | Members |
| Fri 6 | Herne Bay | Club Auction | Members |
| Fri 6 | Swale | Cranbrook through time | Robert Turcan |
| Mon 9 | Dover | Anything South of the Equator | Members |
| Tue 10 | Malling | Competitions and Bourse | Members |
| Tue 10 | Sidcup | Spring Auction | - |

| | | | |
|---------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Wed 11 | Bromley & Beck | Visit by Basildon PS | - |
| Wed 11 | Orpington | 8 sheet Competition | Members |
| Thur 12 | Maidstone | (AM) Anti-Communism 1919-45 | Tony Bosworth FRPSL |
| Thur 12 | Tunbridge Wells | Brunel's 3 Ships | Graham Booth |
| Fri 13 | Gravesend | (PM) South Africa | John Shaw |
| Mon 16 | Cinque Ports | Visit from Whitstable PS | - |
| Mon 16 | Dartford | Love and Romance | Members |
| Tue 17 | Lewisham | Competitions, Bourse, Displays | Members |
| Wed 18 | Isle of Thanet | Royalty | Bernard Kennett & Members |
| Thur 19 | Edenbridge | General Postal History | Derek Hamilton Smith |
| Thur 19 | Eltham-Woolwich | Auction | Members |
| Thur 19 | Maidstone | Whales & Whaling | Harry Ward |
| Fri 20 | Bexley | Morocco: KGVI & QEII Reigns | Barrie Cook |
| Fri 20 | Herne Bay | Postal History | Maurice Porter |
| Fri 20 | Swale | An Evening of Open Philately | Chrissie Baker |
| Mon 23 | Dover | Competition & Bourse | Members |
| Tue 24 | Sidcup | Visit from Kent President | John Shaw |
| Wed 25 | Bromley & Beck | GB Booklets | Ian Harvey |
| Wed 25 | Romney Marsh | Red Cross Part 2 | Richard Mittell |
| Thur 26 | Tunbridge Wells | (AM) New Zealand Definitives | Brian Stonestreet |
| Fri 27 | Gravesend | AGM | - |

March 2015

| | | | |
|---------|-----------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Mon 2 | Cinque Ports | Iceland | Tony Davis |
| Mon 2 | Medway Towns | Visit from Malling SC | - |
| Tue 3 | Lewisham | British Army of the Rhine | Michael Dobbs |
| Wed 4 | Dartford | Club Auction | - |
| Wed 4 | Deal | Great Little Trains of Wales | Michael Thompson |
| Wed 4 | Isle of Thanet | Visit from Romney Marsh | - |
| Wed 4 | Sevenoaks | Commonwealth Mystery Tour | Maurice Flack |
| Thur 5 | Eltham-Woolwich | Zanzibar | Mike Farrant |
| Thur 5 | Maidstone | New Zealand - George V | A Dove FRPSL |
| Fri 6 | Bexley | Visit from Deal PS | - |
| Fri 6 | Herne Bay | Club competitions | Members |
| Fri 6 | Swale | "Hold Tight Please" | Bob Appleton |
| Mon 9 | Dover | Visit from Whitstable PS | - |
| Tue 10 | Malling | Me and My Collection | Steve Alpe |
| Tue 10 | Sidcup | Victor Mills Memorial evening | Members |
| Wed 11 | Bromley & Beck | Competitions & New Acquisitions | Members |
| Wed 11 | Orpington | Polar WW1 Naval Base | B Day |
| Wed 11 | Romney Marsh | French Colonies | Paul Cahill |
| Thur 12 | Maidstone | (AM) Flight around the Baltic | Paul Cahill |
| Thur 12 | Tunbridge Wells | Auction & Bourse | Members & Guests |
| Fri 13 | Gravesend | Spring Auction | Members |

THE KENT CLUBS PROGRAMME LISTING as supplied to Michael Dobbs
If YOUR club is not listed, they have not bothered to give him the relevant details

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|---|---------------------|
| Mon 16 | Cinque Ports | Visit from Bromley & Beckenham PS | - |
| Mon 16 | Dartford | GB 2d Blue | Tony Davis |
| Tue 17 | Lewisham | Hungary before 1939 | Roger Morrell |
| Wed 18 | Isle of Thanet | Visit from Herne Bay PS | - |
| Thur 19 | Edenbridge | Displays - up to 10 sheets | Members |
| Thur 19 | Eltham-Woolwich | Tristan da Cunha | Ron Burn |
| Thur 19 | Maidstone | Boxer War (CEF) | J Latham FRPSL |
| Fri 20 | Bexley | China | David Sibley |
| Fri 20 | Herne Bay | GB with a difference (Part 3) | Don Davies |
| Fri 20 | Swale | Aerophilately | Paul Cahill |
| Sat 21 | Kent PHG | AGM & Bourse | Sandling |
| Mon 23 | Dover | Visit from Cinque Ports | - |
| Tue 24 | Sidcup | Visit from Kent PHG | - |
| Wed 25 | Bromley & Beck | Postal History of Wakefield | Brian Asquith |
| Wed 25 | Romney Marsh | Iceland | Tony Davis |
| Thur 26 | Tunbridge Wells | (AM) Canada to 1936 | John Wright |
| Fri 27 | Gravesend | Israel | John Corderoy |
| April 2015 | | | |
| Wed 1 | Dartford | April Fool's Day: "Humour" | Members |
| Wed 1 | Deal | Spring Auction | Members |
| Wed 1 | Isle of Thanet | My Other Hobby (Hobbies) | Members |
| Wed 1 | Sevenoaks | Smaller Channel Islands | Michael Thompson |
| Thur 2 | Eltham-Woolwich | Quiz Night with Harry Layne | Members |
| Thur 2 | Maidstone | (AM) Japan | J Grant |
| Fri 3 | Bexley | Nelson & Trafalgar | C Dadswell |
| Tue 7 | Lewisham | Austro-Hungarian Navy | Lindy Bosworth |
| Wed 8 | Bromley & Beck | Thematic Selections | Members |
| Wed 8 | Orpington | The OPN Away Team Entertains | - |
| Wed 8 | Romney Marsh | Philatelic Competition | Members |
| Thur 9 | Maidstone | Heraldry | M Cox |
| Thur 9 | Tunbridge Wells | Persia / Iran | Nigel Gooch |
| Fri 10 | Gravesend | 1 page Competition & Bourse | Members |
| Fri 10 | Herne Bay | President's Night | David Goodban |
| Fri 10 | Swale | View from the Rostrum | Joseph Cottrill |
| Mon 13 | Cinque Ports | Competition Night & Mini Auction | Members |
| Mon 13 | Dartford | Palaeontology | Bob Higgins |
| Mon 13 | Dover | Iceland | Tony Davis |
| Mon 13 | Medway Towns | Maurice's Choice | Maurice Flack |
| Tue 14 | Malling | Spring Auction | - |
| Tue 14 | Sidcup | AGM: Wine & Cheese | Members |
| Wed 15 | Isle of Thanet | Recently Acquired | Members |
| Thur 16 | Edenbridge | Postal History of Brighton | Frank Parsons |
| Thur 16 | Eltham-Woolwich | South Africa | John Shaw |
| Fri 17 | Bexley | Australia | Michael Musgrave |
| Fri 17 | Swale | Postcards & Stamps | Frank & Pat Parsons |
| Mon 20 | Dover | Annual Dinner | Members & Guests |
| Mon 20 | Cinque Ports | Brazil: Stamps & Postal History | John Priestley |
| Tue 21 | Lewisham | Poland in WW2 | Albert Jackson |
| Wed 22 | Bromley & Beck | Grand Auction | - |
| Wed 22 | Romney Marsh | Joint meeting at Rye with Hastings & East Sussex PS | - |

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Thur 23 | Maidstone | Club Auction | - |
| Thur 23 | Tunbridge Wells | (AM) King George V covers | Maurice Lovell |
| Fri 24 | Gravesend | Members Night | Members |
| Mon 27 | Dover | Visit from Medway PS | - |
| Tue 28 | Sidcup | Bohemia & Moravia 1939-45 | A J Bosworth FRPSL |
| May 2015 | | | |
| Fri 1 | Bexley | Competitions & Displays | Members |
| Tue 5 | Lewisham | AGM | - |
| Wed 6 | Dartford | AGM | - |
| Wed 6 | Deal | Dover entertains | - |
| Wed 6 | Isle of Thanet | President's Evening | - |
| Wed 6 | Sevenoaks | Airmails: Interrupted Mail | Paul Cahill |
| Thur 7 | Eltham-Woolwich | AGM | Members |
| Thur 7 | Maidstone | Competitions & Bourse | Members |
| Thur 7 | Tunbridge Wells | World Railways | Richard Hart |
| Fri 8 | Gravesend | Me and My Collection | Steve Alpe |
| Fri 8 | Herne Bay | Club Auction | Members |
| Mon 11 | Cinque Ports | Visit from Hastings PS | - |
| Mon 11 | Dover | An evening with | Maurice Flack |
| Mon 11 | Medway Towns | Members Night | Members |
| Tue 12 | Malling | Members' Displays | Members |
| Tue 12 | Sidcup | Summer Auction | - |
| Wed 13 | Bromley & Beck | Visit by Medway Towns | - |
| Wed 13 | Orpington | AGM & Members auction | Members |
| Wed 13 | Romney Marsh | Flying down to Rio | Ian Nutley |
| Thur 14 | Maidstone | (AM) Australia | E Warden |
| Fri 15 | Bexley | Canada - George V | Mel Doyle |
| Fri 15 | Swale | AGM, Competitions & Displays | Members |
| Mon 18 | Cinque Ports | AGM & 1 page competition | Members |
| Mon 18 | Dartford | Fiji | Ted Needham |
| Wed 20 | Isle of Thanet | AGM | - |
| Thur 21 | Edenbridge | Something Beginning with G or H | Members |
| Thur 21 | Maidstone | Cayman Islands | G Booth FRPSL |
| Fri 22 | Herne Bay | Postcards | Members |
| Tue 26 | Sidcup | Visit from Lewisham PS | - |
| Wed 27 | Bromley & Beck | President's Comp. & AGM | Members |
| Wed 27 | Romney Marsh | AGM | - |
| Thur 28 | Tunbridge Wells | (AM) The GB 2d Blue | Tony Davis |
| June 2015 | | | |
| Mon 1 | Cinque Ports | Visit from R. Tunbridge Wells PS | - |
| Mon 1 | Dover | AGM & Bourse | Members |
| Mon 1 | Medway Towns | 1936 Olympic Games | A J Bosworth FRPSL |
| Wed 3 | Dartford | Australia | Keith Prime |
| Wed 3 | Deal | AGM & President's Shield Comp | Members |
| Wed 3 | Sevenoaks | AGM & Auction | Members |
| Thur 4 | Maidstone | AGM Cheese & Wine | Members |
| Fri 5 | Bexley | AGM & Displays | Members |
| Fri 5 | Herne Bay | AGM | Members |
| Sat 6 | Kent PHG | Squared Circle, Maritime pmks | Ringwold Vill. Hall |
| Tue 9 | Malling | History of Royal Navy to WW2 | Cliff Ayers |

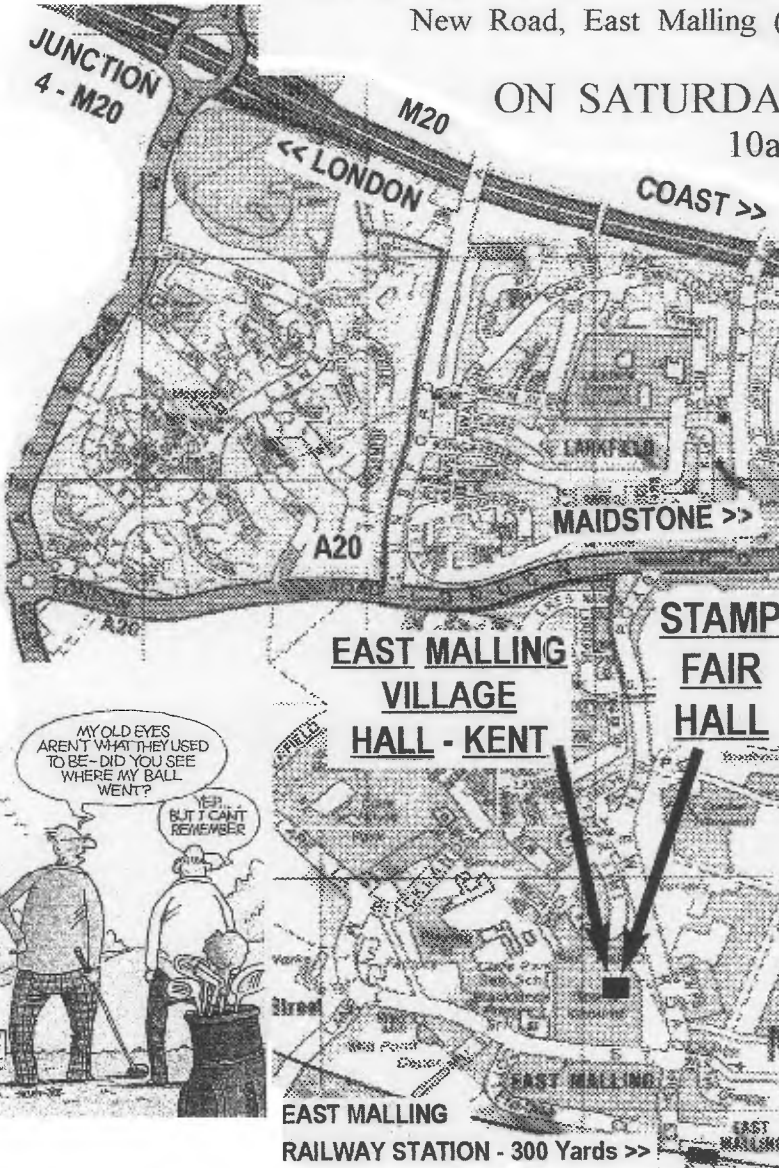
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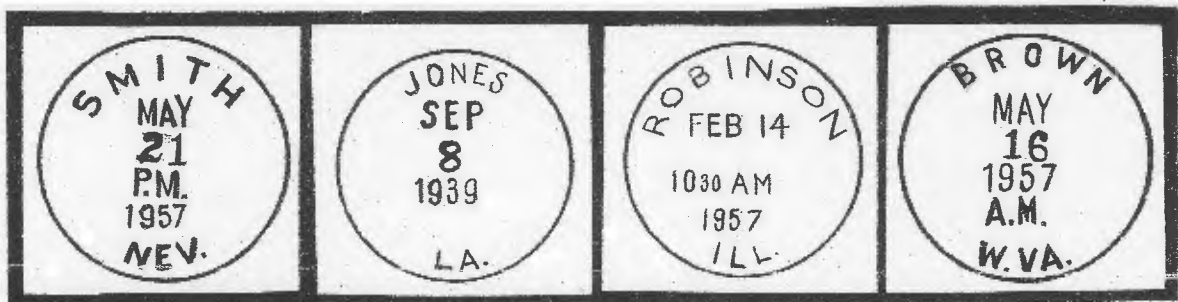
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