



Everybody loves a theme

Theme collecting: Story telling with stamps?

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Why am I a Theme based collector?

Few of us have just one philatelic collection or type of collection

Collecting or exhibiting of one philatelic Class e.g. Traditional, is NOT mutually exclusive of collecting another e.g. Thematic

There are challenges to all forms of collecting and exhibiting

There is no hierarchy of collection or exhibiting classes.

Why am I a Theme based collector (2)?

I could mention the challenge of searching for
and finding new material

or learning new things about my subject

or improving my philatelic knowledge

or meeting fellow philatelists

But all this comes down to

HAVING

FUN

What is Theme collecting?

The collection of philatelic items on a particular subject that are all related to, or are associated with, that subject.

What Philatelic items can I collect?

The quick answer is you can collect ANY Philatelic items you want!

And there are lots of them.

For instance:

Stamps, proofs, other pre-issue material, cancels, air letters, Airgraphs, V-Mail, booklets, postcards, postal stationery, telegrams.

What subject can I collect?

You can collect ANY subject:

For instance:



Parrots

What subject can I collect (2)?



or: Cats

or: Ships

What subject can I collect (3)?

ANY topic!



What subject should I collect?

Many of the best Theme collections are put together by people with a connection to their chosen subject.

Theme collections can take years to put together so they need to be interesting to the collector.

What does 'related to or associated with' mean?

As an example if you take the subject of parachutes, any philatelic item that depicts a parachute is related to the subject

A philatelic item that depicts something that is connected to the subject of parachuting is associated with the subject e.g. aircraft that are typically used for parachuting

Where can I find Theme based material?

The easy and quick answer is anywhere!

Look at other exhibits, and not just Theme or even Philatelic based ones

eBay and Delcampe and other web based auction houses

Auction catalogues or Philatelic books

BTA or Colnect website

Development of your Theme

Research into your Theme will
throw up new connections

Associated items are as important
as related ones

Read widely

So what is the link between Theme collecting and Topical, Thematic or Open Philately collecting?

Simply put:

Theme minus associated material = **Topical**

Theme plus a story = **Thematic**

Theme plus a story plus non-philatelic material = **Open Philately**

BUT

So what is the link between Theme collecting and Topical, Thematic or Open Philately collecting (2)?

The above terms only matter if you wish to exhibit

If you collect or give displays to groups then you can call your collection whatever you want!

So what is the link between Theme collecting and Topical, Thematic or Open Philately collecting (3)?

I should make it clear I do NOT see this as a sequence.

I do not expect collectors to start with Topical and 'work-their-way-up' to Open Philately. All three disciplines stand on their own.

Some examples of Theme collecting

WORLD WAR I - WAR BONDS



National War Savings Committee.

The government of Austria-Hungary knew from the early days of the First World War that it could not count on advances from its principal banking institutions to meet the growing costs of the war. Instead, it implemented a war finance policy modelled upon that of Germany: in November 1914, the first funded loan was issued. As in Germany, the Austro-Hungarian loans followed a prearranged plan and were issued at half yearly intervals every November and May. The first Austrian bonds paid 5% interest and had a five-year term. The smallest bond denomination available was 100 kronen.



German War Bond Cards.

HENRI DUNANT

However, he was not altogether inactive. During the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71, he was a welcome visitor to the wounded who had been taken to Paris. He also, at this time, founded *The Common Relief Society* and *The Common Alliance for Order and Civilization*.



He moved to various places between 1874 and 1886 – Rome, Stuttgart, Corfu, Basel – and, in 1887 – London

In 1887 he lived for a short time in London.

There, he met Florence Nightingale as he had heard of her care of wounded soldiers at the Crimean War.



He then disappeared into obscurity. He lived in a small town in the Swiss Alps – Heiden.

There he met Wilhelm Sondrigger, schoolteacher, who realised that the lovable 'patriarch' with the long white beard, living in the Pensioners' Hospice, was the long lost founder of the Red Cross.



Some examples of Theme collecting (2)

Energy and the Environment

Hydro and wave energy are forms of renewable energy that use the power of moving water to generate electricity. Watermills - dating back to circa 280-220 BC - convert water power into energy and were often used for irrigation and for operating mechanical devices and machinery (e.g. for grinding, sawing, powering looms, etc.). It was only in the 19th century that hydropower began to be used to produce electricity.



In 2018, hydroelectric power stations provided approximately 2.2% of the UK's total energy generating capacity (and 4.2% of renewable energy capacity). Several locations in Scotland provide hydro energy including the Cruachan Dam (Argyll), the Glendoe Hydro Station (Fort Augustus) and the Skye Hydro Electric scheme (Loch Lamond).



A cover dated the 8th November 1963 bearing the penguin cachet for the Vice Regal Visit and a complete set of the 1957 stamps.



This cover is addressed to W.F. Ponder the Architect responsible for the design, prefabrication and erection of Scott Base. The cover has been sent to him during the visit of the New Zealand Governor General Sir Bernard Fergusson to Scott Base and has been signed by the Governor General himself.

On this day the 8th November 1963 the Governor General's flight carried out a fly-over to drop supplies to an expedition in the area of Mount Gorton which due to bad weather was running short of rations.

Some examples of Theme collecting (3)

Capercaillie in art "The Fighting Capercaillies" 1

The 2003 Finnish booklet stamps feature the painting by Ferdinand von Wright (1822-1906). Of Scottish descent, von Wright was born near Kuopio in central Finland. Primarily a landscape painter, he also painted birds in lifelike situations. The Fighting Capercaillies from 1886 is his best known painting.



BISHOPBRIGGS

A Village that became a Town

The street name changes for the main road going through the town has changed several times from Cawder Road to Cadder Road and finally to Kirkintilloch Road.



Can I collect Postcards on a Theme?

Of course you can!

The next collection only uses postcards in its story

An example of a postcard collection on a Theme

2.1 Ready to go – The worst part of parachuting is waiting to go



1940s, -, Friko Bildverlag Osterode/Harz, unused, Unknown.

Waiting, sometimes for hours, is the worst part of parachuting.

In February 1914 Jean Ors parachuted from a Deperdussin aircraft and landed safely. See how the parachute is packed under the aircraft and the parachutist sits in a cradle between the wheels.



Circa 1914, -, -, unused, Halftone.



1943, -, MWM, used, Linen.

Taking a hostess with you might be one way to calm the nerves before you jump from the aircraft.



1930s, -, Paul Mehlhorn Mannheim, unused, Real Photo (RPPC)

Jumping from aircraft (and from my research this looks like a Bristol Bulldog) instead of balloons became the norm from the 1920s. The neatness of the parachute suggests they are about to get ready and take off.



1970/80s, M. Lebleaux, Promodis France, unused, Halftone.

The parachutists are in position ready to jump. See the orange static line attaching their parachute to the overhead wire via a short piece of cord. As they fall away from the aircraft the parachute will be pulled out and the connecting cord will be broken leaving the parachute free to descend.

The story

No subject is discrete

Whatever you collect sits within a wider context

The story can be fictional

Know what the scope of your collection is

The story (2) - the basics

Like all good stories it must have a beginning, middle and end

It must have a structure

The story (3) - the basics

Stories can be done on 1-page, 1-frame or more

Some stories do not fit 1-frame

Some stories do not fit 5-frames

So make sure the story fits the frame

Exhibiting Theme Collections

In the UK there are three relevant classes:

- Thematic
- Open Philately, and
- Postcards

For details of the rules for each class please see the FIP website at: <https://www.f-i-p.ch/regulations/>

Theme Exhibiting - judging

Judging will always be done to a set standard

Judges are human!

Thematic Exhibiting – some key points

Read the rules

The story is the key element

The story will need a title

The exhibit should use a wide variety of philatelic items

- from as many countries as possible

- in as many eras as possible

Thematic Exhibiting (2) – some key points

The Scope of the exhibit will need to be well defined

The exhibit will need a Plan showing its structure

The exhibit will need to be well Presented

Try and incorporate early material if possible

A page from a Thematic exhibit

5.1 Changes in parachute design. From a round parachute to a round parachute with lots of 'slots' and a 'skirt'!



No perforations.

A basic 28ft round parachute, in the 1940s.
A horizontal speed of a few mph could be obtained by pulling on the risers.



Taking out a few slots in the canopy made it easier to steer.



During the 1960s some parachutists started removing some of the material on the back of their parachute. This gave them a speed of about 5mph over the ground.
China Lottery Welfare Postcard. National lotteries in China started in 1999.



Slots or vents in parachutes became the norm by the 1950s.

In the 1970s the gaps or 'slots' in the parachutes became more elaborate giving the parachutist greater ability to steer.



The last world championship to be won using a round parachute was 1974. Since then rectangular parachutes have dominated.



By adding slots in the side, plus some 'skirts' around the bottom of the parachute thereby extending the parachute vertically, the parachutist can travel at about 10mph across the ground. But, by the mid-1970s, the day of the round parachute for competitions was over.

Open Philatelic Exhibiting – some key points

All of the above-mentioned Thematic points

A good mixture of non-philatelic items that support the story

Where possible some ‘technical’ information on the non-philatelic items

The non-philatelic items to be no more than 50% of the exhibit

A page from an Open Philately 1-frame exhibit



The Directors of the London Missionary Society gratefully acknowledge the receipt of a contribution of £ 5s. -d. from Wilfred Rushton towards the cost of the new missionary schooner John Williams V.

W. Charles Piggott, Chairman.
James L. Parsons, Treasurer.
Nelson Dutton, Home Secy.

JOHN WILLIAMS V.
The new schooner of the London Missionary Society for the South Pacific. — Launched May 1st 1930

The John Williams V was in use from 1930 until 1948 when it was wrecked in Samoa



"I NAME THIS SHIP THE JOHN WILLIAMS VI." PRINCESS MARGARET NAMING THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY'S SHIP AT THE TOWER PIER.

At a passing ceremony on August 5, Princess Margaret drew aside the flag from the bow of the London Missionary Society's new ship and named her John Williams VI, in the succession of missionary ships named after the great pioneer missionary, John Williams. Sunday school children have long contributed to the support of these ships, and the occasion was marked by the presentation of a poem by nearly sixty boys and girls. The ship leaves for the South-West Pacific in October.

In 1948 Princess Margaret named the next London Missionary Society (LMS) ship John Williams VI on the 5th August.

A hard-to-find receipt from the LMS for a donation.



MR. William R. G. Hopkins.
The Ash Guest,
40, Dilton Court Road,
Widely-on-Sea Ex. England.

Beru Island was the location of the headquarters in the South Pacific of the LMS from 1900 to 1960 when it moved to Tarawa.



JOHN WILLIAMS VII
By Robert Cox

The last LMS ship was the John Williams VII. Built in 1962 and withdrawn in 1968, its function now overtaken by aircraft.





The John Williams VI was built in 1946 and used from 1948 in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (now Kiribati).





John Williams, missionary and martyr, spent just over 20 years in the South Pacific. Missionary work continued after his death and today 98% of Samoans and 86% of Rarotongans consider themselves Christian.

The blue plaque can be found at Tottenham High Road London, near the site of John's birth.

Postcard Exhibiting – some key points

All of the above-mentioned Thematic points (apart from a wide range of philatelic material!)

A3 sheets give more design opportunities than A4

Give some technical information about the postcard e.g. artist/photographer, printer or method of printing

A page from a Postcard exhibit

3.0 A gentle ride to the ground – Not everybody has an easy landing.



1946, Phyllis Cooper, Millar & Lang, Used, Key Drawing using chromolithograph.

This young lady is heading for an uncomfortable landing. Carrying a dog, umbrella and suitcase and her hat is falling over her eyes!



Circa 1950s, -, used, Key Drawing using chromolithograph.

I never had this sort of landing! It certainly looks more attractive than landing on a grass field. This translates as 'Let yourself go, you will not get hurt'



1938, F.C. Lewin, Salmon UK, used, Halftone.

Will they end up landing in the sea or on the sand?

This translates as 'The brave parachutists'.

I can still hear my instructor shouting 'keep your legs together' and 'keep your arms up'!



1961, -, Colourpicture, Unused, Halftone

Landing in a water trough cannot be fun!



1958, -, u/n but Belgium, used, Key Drawing using chromolithograph.

In Conclusion

This has been a quick jog through Theme based collecting

It is a huge topic that many have written books about

I hope you have found this summary useful

And don't forget:

HAVE

FUN

References

Handbook of Thematic Philately. WEJ van den Bold. 1994

Topical Adventures. Congrove, Hamman and Miller. 2020

<https://www.britishthematic.org.uk>

<https://colnect.com/en>

Fédération Internationale de Philatélie definition of Thematic philately

Thematic philately is collecting stamps and other philatelic items that illustrate a theme: birds, soccer, history, art, way of life, trees, etc. The term "theme" has a dynamic meaning implying the personal elaboration by the collector, who develops a full story around it.

(<http://www.fipthematicphilately.org/>)