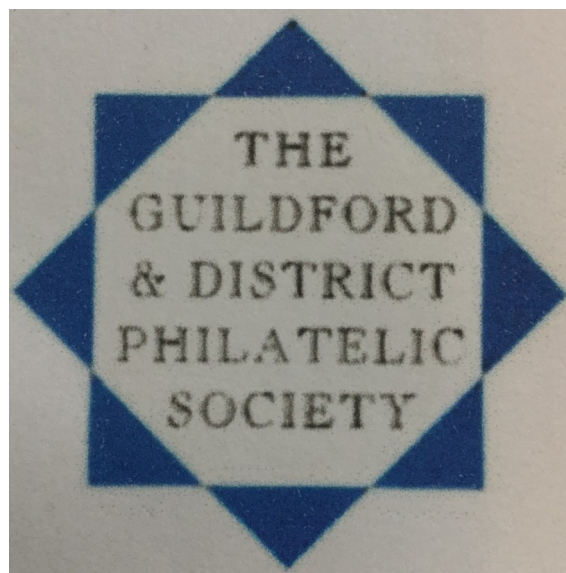


GDPS February Bulletin

This bulletin focusses on the Universal Postal Union. Most of us will have some UPU Commemorative stamps in our collection. Rob Cooke and Barry Stephens have kindly provided photos of some of their UPU stamps (thank you!). Peter White (Federation of Surrey Philatelic Societies) has advised that the delayed 2020 display competition has now been cancelled. Everyone was saddened to hear about Christine Earle's passing. Condolences to her family.



The Universal Postal Union is a specialised agency of the United Nations, established on 9 October 1874, to coordinate postal policies across the globe. UPU's headquarters are in Bern, Switzerland. This organisation has played a pivotal role in the development of postal systems and philatelic standards over its history.

Before its formation, countries exchanging mail negotiated individual postal treaties, and arrangements took lengthy periods to negotiate, were complex and often overlapped. German Postmaster General Heinrich von Stephan initiated an International Postal Congress in 1874 that led to the formation of the General Postal Union. Under the GPU uniform postal rates applied across the world, foreign and domestic mail was given equal treatment and each country was able to retain all the monies it collected for international postage. Initially there were 21 members in the GPU, but membership grew rapidly and in 1878 the GPU was renamed the Universal Postal Union. Today the UPU has 192 members, including the Vatican City. The UPU Congress takes place once every 4 years to review the actions of the UPU, and address any issues arising.

Towards the end of the 19th century the UPU issued rules for stamp design, to ensure maximum efficiency. The rules stated that stamp values should be given in numerals, that member nations should all use the colour green for postcards, red for normal letters and blue for international mail postage stamps.



In 1949 it was decided to mark the 75th Anniversary of the UPU by having all members issue stamps commemorating the event. The Omnibus UPU Collection of Commonwealth and Crown remains the largest Omnibus Collection ever issued, featuring 310 stamps from 84 different countries.. Last time I looked Westminster Collection—the dealers, were selling sets for £695



Here is an example of a first day cover from 1949, and below examples of the British Commemorative stamps for 1949, and again for 1974—the 100 year anniversary.



In subsequent years further anniversaries were acknowledged, most significantly the 1974 centenary.

In 1969 the UPU introduced a system of terminal dues to account for imbalance mail flows between countries. Such dues became the hot topic for ensuing UPU Congresses, and several alterations were made until in 1999 “country-specific” terminal dues were established that offered lower rates to developing countries.

The arguments continued. It was costing less to mail a parcel from China to the USA than it was to post a parcel internally in the USA. In 2018 Donald Trump’s United States Administration announced that it would withdraw from the UPU, if this matter was not addressed. In May 2019 (following an Extraordinary Congress) a new arrangement was introduced whereby countries could self declare terminal dues of up to 70% of the domestic postage rate. At the same time phased increases were announced on terminal dues and countries receiving more than 75,000 tonnes of mail pa (the USA only) could opt in to self declare terminal dues in return for a \$40 million “contribution” to the UPU.

The UPU aims to integrate postal services and the Internet by unveiling a range of international digital postal services over the coming years. It will be interesting to see whether it succeeds in this objective.



Barry Stephen’s
UPU Australia
stamps

The UPU organises an annual letter writing competition for children aged 9 -15. 2020's winner was Volha Valchkevich from Belarus. The theme of last year's competition was: "Write a message to an adult about the world we live in."

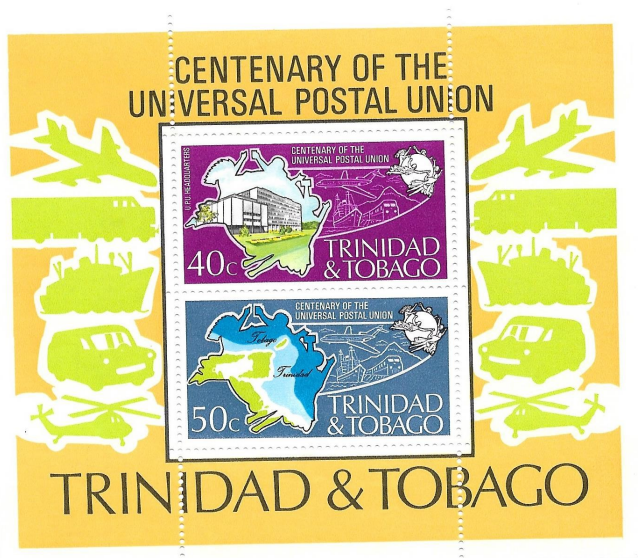
To quote from the letter:

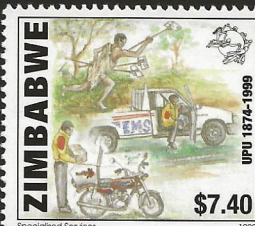
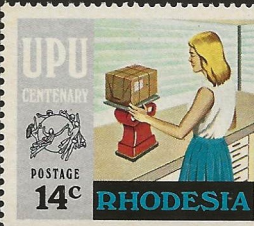
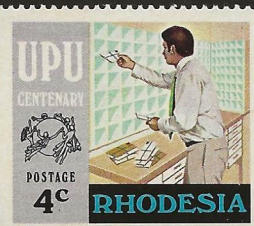
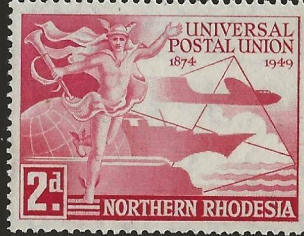
Ah, if you were alive, grandfather, I would come to you, sit knee by knee and tell you everything. And perhaps you would stroke me on the head and whisper: "Olga, you are living in a happy time, living in love and peace, in abundance and joy. Cheer up! Things will get better. Look at the world: it is wonderful!"

Some more 1949 UPU stamps from Barry Stephens...perhaps we have found a prize winning topic for the Surrey Competition as and when it next takes place?

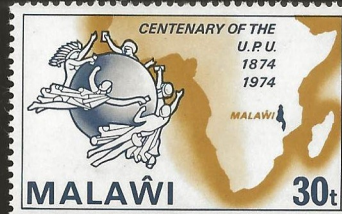
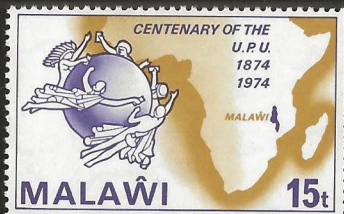
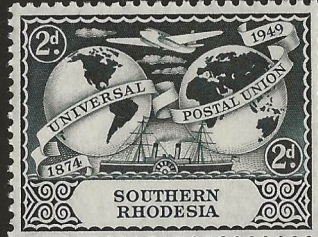
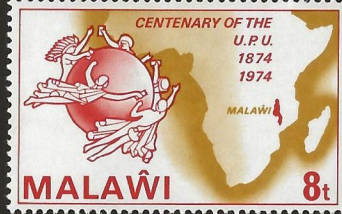
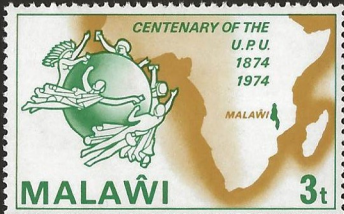
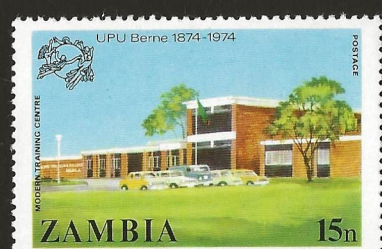


The Trinidad and Tobago Centenary mini-sheet





Rob's UPU
Commemorative
stamps from-
Nyasaland,,
Northern Rhode-
sia,
Rhodesia,
Zimbabwe,
Zambia, Southern
Rhodesia, and
Malawi.



I'll close with this quirky tale which illustrates the fact that we cannot believe all that we see on the internet. I was intrigued to find what looked to me to be a perfectly normal 1949 UPU St Lucia stamp listed as a valuable "Mercury" rarity on the catawiki site. Needless to say it is not rare however the Austrian Mercury stamp would be a find...anyone got one?

Kindest wishes until next month

Susan



fromdownunder
 Founder Member Joined April 2007
 Posts: 36127
 Joined: 23 Apr 2007 15:25
 Location: Lara, Victoria, Australia

Re: eBay and Other On-Line Dreamers - A Photo Lot Compendium

by fromdownunder » 11 Dec 2018 20:02

A comedy of errors leads to a listing that is so wrong it defies belief.

Our story starts off with The Austrian 1851 Red Mercury Newspaper stamp, worth in the order of \$75,000 USD.



Moving on, we get to the catawiki site, which has an incorrect scan illustrating the following text.

“The Red Mercury stamp is extremely valuable due to its rarity. Rather than a postage stamp, the Red Mercury was used for mailing newspapers. These stamps possess an image of the Roman god and were printed in yellow, red and blue depending on a number of newspapers in the bundle. However, the Red Mercury was short lived and was soon replaced, which is why so few copies have survived and why they hold such a high value of €37,000.

The problem is that this common St Lucia 1949 UPU Centenary issue takes the centre stage as the scan which should be the Austrian stamp above.



<https://www.catawiki.com/stories/4461-the-top-10-most-expensive-stamps-in-the-world>

This brings us to our man of the hour, eBay seller davojr67 who furthers the problem by substituting the common 1949 8 cent Fiji UPU stamp, and describes it as "similar to" the the common St Lucia (which to be fair, it is) then asks AU\$60,000 for it. In reality the Fiji stamp is worth 20 cents.

Looks like the Red Mercury stamp that is extremely valuable due to its rarity. The link above is about the same stamp only it has ST-Lucia Mine has Fiji on it as pictured



<https://www.ebay.com.au/itm/Universal-Postal-Union-Stamp-8d-...5wLr1cDw5->

Confused yet?

Norm

Against stupidity, the Gods themselves contend in vain