

Hello, and here's wishing you all a Happy March. Perhaps there will be good news soon and we'll be able to plan meetings and holidays once more.

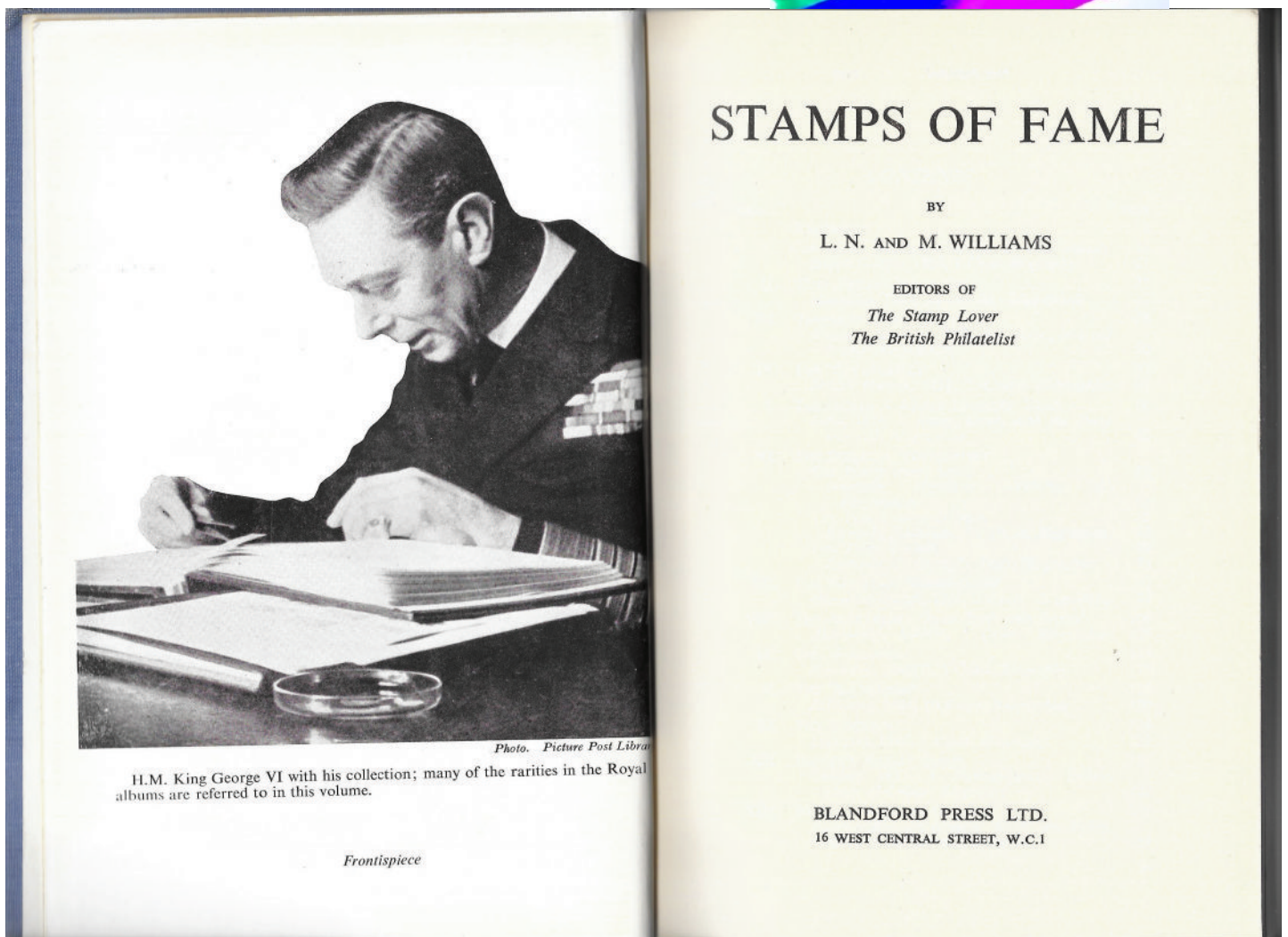
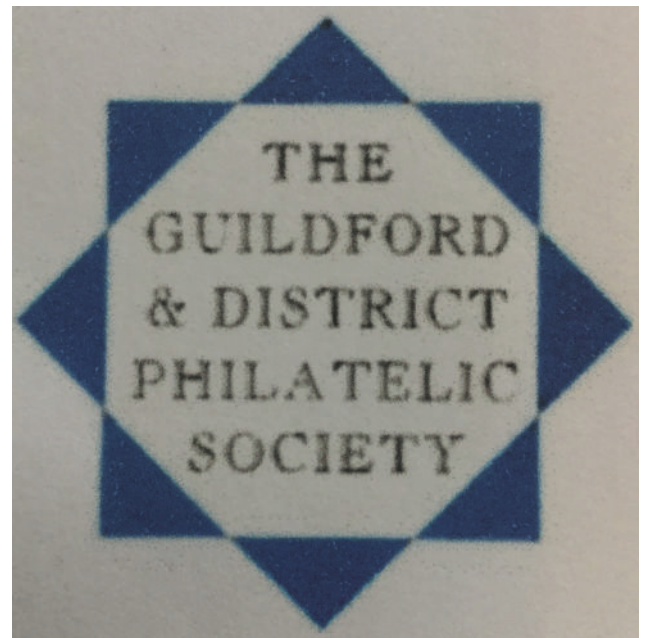
This month's newsletter focusses on Stamps of Fame, because the below book, published in 1949 by the brothers Leon and Maurice Williams has been a real eBay find! This article describes some of the rare stamps that are around today.

Barry Stephens has wise advice about rarities—"the message for "rare" stamps is authentication, authentication, authentication!"

Hopefully everyone is getting vaccinated and we can look forward to seeing one another in September.

Kind regards

Susan



H.M. King George VI with his collection; many of the rarities in the Royal albums are referred to in this volume.

Frontispiece

The One Cent Magenta was exhibited by Sothebys at the National Postal Museum in Washington prior to its latest sale in 2014. It was described as ‘resembling a red-wine stain or a receipt that had been through the wash several times’. The stamp was originally found by Vernon Vaughan - a 12-year-old Scot, living in British Guiana, amongst his uncle’s papers. Vernon sold it to a local dealer, McKinnon for six shillings. In 1878 Count Philippe la Renotiere von Ferrary...arguably the greatest philatelist in history, acquired the stamp and researched its origins. On Ferrary’s death the stamp was donated to Berlin’s postal museum. After WW1 the stamp was seized by France as part of its war reparations, then sold on to Arthur Hind, Frederick Small, then to a Pennsylvanian Irwin Weinberg. In 1980 John du Pont (Chemical Heir) paid \$935,000 for the One Cent Magenta. Following du Pont’s death in 2010 in prison the stamp was put up for sale and sold in 2014 for \$9.5 million (c.£6 million) to Stuart Weitzman (the shoe designer). The Smithsonian was in 2014 able to use state of the art forensic technology to verify the One cent Magenta’s authenticity. An infra-red filter also allowed curators to reveal markings made on the stamp over its century and a half lifetime. Edmond Wright’s initials were clear, as was the postmark – 4 April 1856.

Many of us philatelists are very focussed on the image of a stamp, any imperfections, and its watermark – but of recent I have become intrigued by the marks on the backs of stamps – often left by previous owners.



There were a number of ‘owners marks’ on the back of the One cent Magenta (two impressions of Ferrary’s trefoil mark, the H of Arthur Hind, the FK of Finbar Kenny, a small shooting star by Frederick Small, a pencilled IW by Weinberg, A large pencilled J E d P by du Pont plus a large 17-pointed star ...origin unknown).

The Williams brothers relate the tale of an anonymous letter sent to a Mr August Dietz (philatelic publisher) in October 1938. The writer states that at the time when Arthur Hind owned the One Cent Magenta he made contact to advise that he also owned one, and travelled to Utica with it. Mr Hind agreed with the writer that there should only be a single One cent Magenta, and paid an undisclosed sum, in cash, before setting fire to the second stamp with a match. The Williams said “ The stamp is unique”...but asked whether it always had been.

Britain's Penny Red stamp 1841—whilst many collectors own examples of the Penny Red, which succeeded the Penny Black, stamps from plate 77 in 1863 are truly rare. This plate was not meant to exist. The stamps were printed but never sold at post offices because of quality concerns. In 2012 Stanley Gibbons sold a Plate 77 Penny Red to a client in Australasia for £550,000. How can you tell if your Penny Red is a plate 77? Take a magnifying glass and look carefully at the laced decoration opposite the Queen's nose. Embedded in the pattern is the plate number. Some people collect examples of the varying numbers.

77



64



The Roses Error stamp 1978—When this attractive series of rose stamps was issued the 13p face value did not appear on three specimens that are known of. The Queen owns two of them and the third was sold by Stanley Gibbons for £85,000 in 2010.



The Lady McLeod—was the first ever adhesive stamp issued in a British Colony and is identified as SG1 in the Stanley Gibbons Catalogue for Trinidad. It is thought that there are about 85 of the stamps in existence. The stamp exists Un-used, Used and On Cover. Many of the Covers derive from a collection of correspondence addressed to Taylor and Co. in San Fernando. “The covers” are actually folded letters that were wax sealed on the back, rather than envelopes. Usage of the stamp ranges from 28 April 1847 to 21 August 1849. Used stamps are usually cancelled with a pen marked cross. The Lady McLeod was a paddle steamer that carried mail between Port of Spain and San Fernando. The stamps sold for 5c each, or \$4 per 100. Colours vary (see below). Today Lady McLeod's usually sell for about £25,000.

A Dr Winter, from Bremen famously copied and attempted to sell forged Lady McLeod's in 1958. The British Library (from where he obtained copies of the stamp) took legal action.

The Trinidad and Tobago Post Office issued the below stamps in 1972 to celebrate the 125th anniversary of their first adhesive stamp.

