

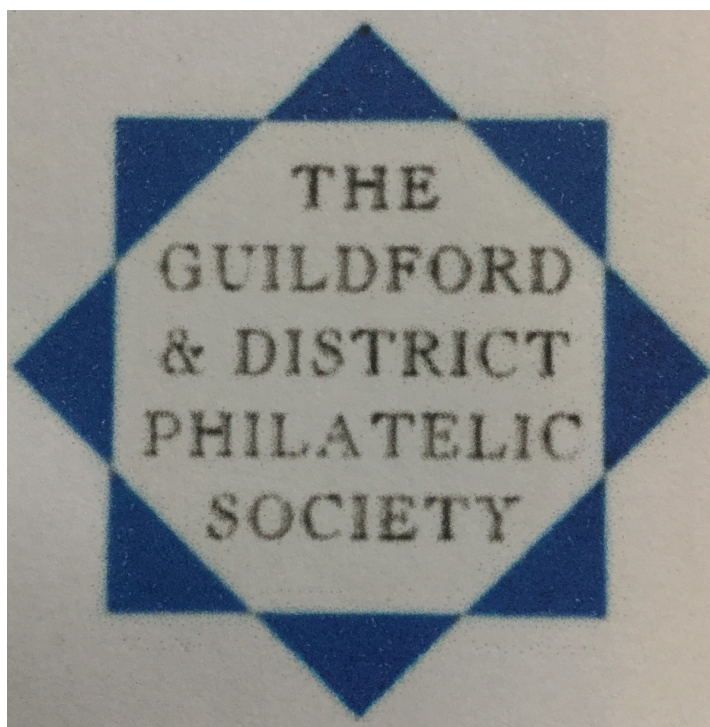
Dear Members

Hopefully the warm weather is back again after the recent rainfall!

This July newsletter focusses on Stanley Gibbons. They are holding a Valuation day on Tuesday 22 June between 10 am and 3pm at the Holiday Inn, Edgerton Road, Guildford GU2 7XZ, and suggest that anyone wishing to attend emails

pmathews@stanleygibbons.com or telephones 020 7557 4411 to make an appointment. If your collection is large they are offering to possibly make a home visit.

On the next page is an account of Edward Stanley Gibbons, put together by David Stafford for a BBC Inside Out show in 2007. Chris Forwood (Epsom and Ewell PS) recently told the story as part of an excellent Zoom presentation on interesting stamp facts.



As many members will be aware Stanley Gibbons purchased the British Guiana 1c Magenta at the Sotheby sale on 8 June, for \$8.3m (about £5.9m). 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. Stanley Gibbons plan to "democratise the ownership of this unique item", and whilst full details are not yet available it seems that collectors are being encouraged to become "digital philatelists", with a guaranteed payback of 75% of the stamp's value, or 100% of the price paid. The purchase was financed by a loan from Phoenix S.G. Ltd, who are also Stanley Gibbons' majority shareholder. The stamp will be displayed at the Strand Stanley Gibbons outlet, which has been recently refurbished.

I look forward to visiting the shop in the near future. Best wishes Susan



## Edward Stanley Gibbons

The name Edward Stanley Gibbons is synonymous with stamps and philately. Gibbons founded a global stamp empire from a chemist shop in Plymouth, but could he also have been a man who got away with murder? The Stanley Gibbons Group has grown from its humble origins to become the world's leading stamp business, with prestige London showrooms and sales of over £13 million a year.

The story of the company's founder has darker undertones. Edward Stanley Gibbons, the godfather of stamp collecting, married a succession of young wives. The early deaths of these women raises the possibility of Gibbons being a serial wife killer. Gibbons was born in Plymouth in a house on the site of what is now, appropriately, the city's main Post Office in 1840. After leaving school young Stanley joined the family business, a chemists, learning to mix and dispense medicines and potions.

Stanley had already caught the stamp collecting bug - and realised there was money to be made buying and selling them. By the age of 16 he was laying the foundations for what was to become the world's biggest philately business - trading stamps from a little desk in the corner of the chemist shop. When his father died in 1867, Stanley took over the pharmacy. Selling stamps was proving more profitable than dispensing medicines so he sold the pharmacy and moved to new premises in Lockyer Street which became a stamp outlet. It was there that he produced his first catalogues and stamp albums that had such an important effect on the growth of the hobby and of his business.

In 1872, Gibbons married a clergyman's daughter, Matilda Woon. Two years later they sold up in Plymouth and moved to London, where business boomed. Matilda survived as Mrs Gibbons for only five years. The cause of her death was recorded as marasmus - a wasting disease similar to anorexia. Maggie Casey became wife number two in 1887, but she'd been part of Stanley's life for at least six years before they wed. Maggie was the daughter of a publican and she was a barmaid. In 1899, after 12 years as Mrs Gibbons, Maggie died - of cirrhosis of the liver. Within months Stanley married wife number three - Georgina.

In 1890 Gibbons sold the business for the equivalent today of almost £2 million and left to travel the world. He visited Monte Carlo, Ceylon, Burma, Japan, Hawaii and the United States on his travels. But while philatelists were collecting stamps, Stanley Gibbons had been collecting wives.

When Georgina died in 1894 Stanley swiftly moved on to wife number four, Bertha Barth, daughter of a railway clerk. Stanley was now 65 - his new wife was 27. Bertha was with him for three years until she died of cancer of the liver. Less than a year later, Stanley was again adding to his extensive collection of partners. Sophia Crofts, however, outlived her husband - he died aged 72, on 17th February 1913. None of Stanley Gibbons's wives bore him children. Even his death is shrouded in suspicion. Official records say that he expired from a heart attack in his nephew's apartment—the more intriguing story is that Stanley was in the Savoy Hotel in the arms of his latest passion and was so overcome with her charms that he promptly expired of a heart attack. Stanley was bundled up in a carpet and transported to the nephew's pad in Piccadilly where his official death was recorded.