

Susan writes...

**When did you start collecting stamps?**

Aged 9 when I started, but having lapsed as a teenager, I took philately up seriously about 5 years ago after taking my father's collection over.

**What areas do you collect and why?**

The West Indian islands of the Caribbean have beautiful, colourful stamps. Having lived in the Caribbean as a child I find the social history of this area fascinating.

**What made you join Guildford and District Philatelic Society?**

The members at the Guildford club were friendly and welcoming when I attended one evening for a 'look-see'.

**Where do you buy your stamps from?**

It's fun to search the internet, and to attend club auctions. There are some stamp dealers whom I regularly buy stamps from, in fact they alert me if they find something that they know I may be interested in. The Surrey philatelic clubs also circulate 'packets' (booklets of stamps that members are selling at reasonable prices).

**What advice would you give new collectors?**

Think carefully about how to keep your stamps. Initially a large stock book may be a good idea as this will save you from having to remount your stamps as your collection grows. Look out for interesting 'covers' (envelopes with stamps that have been posted) and stamped postcards as these will add variety to your collection. It can be interesting to research who an old envelope was written by and who it was going to. Buy a good catalogue, and if it exists, a philatelic book about the stamps you collect.

**What would you do differently with your own collection, if you were starting out again now?**

I initially used black mounts, but now I would use the transparent ones. They look much better in displays. I have learned how important knowing about postmarks can be if you want to avoid buying forgeries of old used stamps.

**What are your favourite stamps?**

Old rare stamps are all very well, but I get much more excited by some of the Caribbean bird stamps from the 1970's.