

Seventy-year-old club collects the obvious topic



TOPICALS

By Carolyn Mullin

Michael Merritt admits that he belongs to a topical group that has no problem sending out an S.O.S. signal when needed.

Well, actually, it is an *SOS Signal*, and it is the newsletter of a study unit of the American Topical Association, officially named the Stamps on Stamps Collecting Club (SOSCC).

Collecting stamps that depict or are about stamps or philately just makes sense, the New Jersey member says.

"Why collect stamps on stamps? The question is a bit shocking, almost as absurd as 'Why collect stamps?'" says Merritt, the group's secretary-treasurer. "The answer to a philatelist is clear: If you love stamps, what other topical category is there?"

"Since particularly beautiful and valuable stamps are often chosen for depiction, this topic offers an opportunity to collect exquisite specimens at very reasonable cost."

The idea of collecting stamps on stamps started around 1940 with the centenary of the postage stamp; at that time, the club that formed in the United States was appropriately called The Stamp on Stamp Centenary Unit. As would be expected, there were many, many issues released around this time commemorating the Penny Black, as well as the centenary of each country's first issue. Since then, of course, Merritt adds, the club has also seen many sesquicentennials celebrated as well.

The SOSCC has been a member of the ATA since 1954 according to the ATA website. The majority of members come from the United States, with Canada coming in second at 13 members. There are about 80 people on the mailing list currently, from countries such as Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, the U.K., India, Israel, Japan, Mongolia, South Africa, Switzerland and Italy.

Royal Mail...

Continued from page 6

of the country's flora and fauna definitive set of 2007-11. He notes that these attractive and varied stamps, designed by local artist Wong Wui Kong, have been reprinted with different marginal markings, perforation changes (the

intersections of self-adhesive issues can vary), booklets and collectors' sheets.

No doubt plenty of interesting covers can be found too, although I rarely have much luck in this regard now that Singapore's attentions are firmly centred on the rest of Asia rather than the United Kingdom. I will return to the island one day when I have more space. ♦



Singapore's flora and fauna stamps have been reprinted with different marginal markings and perforation changes.



The stamp on the left is the original 1928 *Blue-nose* stamp issued by Canada Post. Considered by many as one of the world's most beautiful releases, it has seen new life at least twice in more recent years, as reproduced on this 1982 stamp marking the International Philatelic Youth Exhibition.

The newsletter is currently in hiatus as the group seeks a new editor. As a result, there aren't membership dues at this time, since the publication costs formed the major expense for the club. However, they are still recruiting new members.

The website is also maintained on a regular basis, Merritt notes, and includes lists and micro-sites offering articles, checklists and insight on the subject from around the world, including alphabetized new issues, complete with images. For example, the list includes Canada's 2012 set of stamps marking Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee by reproducing the stamps issued during each of the previous five decades of her rule.

Some of the SOSCC members restrict their collections to centennials and other anniversaries, he notes. The main checklist follows the group's long-established distinction between three different types of stamps-on-stamps. Type A is defined as the reproduction of the original stamp on a new stamp, and includes the original image in

whole or in part. Type B uses the original design with modifications, such as using a part of the original design or changing denominations and country names to current ones. Type U is a reproduction of a stamp in an unidentifiable form, such as indicating a stamp on an envelope or in an album, or having a simulated perforation design to indicate a stamp. These abstracts are often simply referred to as "blobs," Merritt notes.

As for his own preferences, Merritt confesses to a sort of greediness for the whole topical, (a gourmand, he calls it), so he collects all types, mint and used, on covers, first-day covers, and maxi cards. He even has an auxiliary collection of stamps on stamp safes.

While collecting began in earnest in the 1940s, the earliest Type A has been identified by Lou Guadagno, club member and researcher, as a set of four stamps issued by Japan on April 20, 1921, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the modern Japanese postal system.

Merritt's checklist includes 331 different stamp-issuing organizations, some of which are colonies and some protectorates, but perhaps none as "spectacular" as Canada (Merritt's description).

"Many depict the first Canadian stamps, but two issues, one in 1982 and one in 1999, depict the 1928 *Blue-nose* stamp. The latter has been described as the most beautiful stamp design ever.... What could be more enjoyable to a philatelist, than collecting stamps which depict such a venerable image?"

But while Canada has issued many stamps on stamps over the years, Merritt looks to Hungary's issues to find his favourite. He says, "In 1951, several values and types along the same design were issued to commemorate 80 years of Hungarian stamps, celebrated also at a stamp exhibition. These beautifully engraved stamps depict the first issues of 1871, but with the monarch's image (Franz Josef) replaced with a postmark."

"The issues are listed in Scott as numbers 973, B207-B208, C95 and CB13-CB14. The latter three are souvenir sheets, and C95 comes in olive-green, and also in a rose lilac variety; 1,200 of these were issued, perf and imperf., [and] were presented to exhibitors and members of the arranging committee of the exhibition."

Merritt notes that according to his Scott catalogue, the issues are worth \$500 in either form.

For more information on the SOSCC, visit the group's website at www.stampsonstamps.org. ♦

1951 OKTOBER 6-14



1951 OKTOBER 6-14

1951 OKTOBER 6-14



1951 OKTOBER 6-14

Hungary produced several values and types in 1951 to commemorate 80 years of Hungarian stamps. They all depict the first issues of 1871, but with the monarch's image replaced with a postmark.