

Stamp collecting is extremely popular in the People's Republic of China today and the great classic stamps and even comparatively modern issues are much sought after by collectors. China stamps and postal history fetch high prices at leading auction houses throughout the world.

It is therefore not surprising that the Royal Philatelic Society London, the oldest philatelic society in the world is actively cultivating and strengthening its links with organised Chinese philately. As part of this strategy the Royal was honoured to be invited to host the 'China Stamp Exhibition', one of the 2012 London Book Fair China Market Focus events during April.



## Outstanding China Stamp Exhibition at the Royal Philatelic Society London

By Peter Jennings FRPSL, FRGS

This magnificent three-day exhibition was officially opened on Monday 16 April 2012 at 41 Devonshire Place, the London home of the Royal, founded as the Philatelic Society, London during 1869. The Society is honoured and delighted that Her Majesty The Queen is the Patron in this her Diamond Jubilee Year, as she has been since her accession to the throne during 1952.

There were 48 frames of philatelic material on display in the first-floor meeting room, provided by two individual philatelists, and from the China National Post and Postage Stamp Museum Collections.

### China Stamp Exhibition booklet

A specially prepared 16-page *China Stamp Exhibition* booklet, produced in English and Chinese, was given to all who visited the exhibition. The booklet included a message by H E Liu Xiaoming, the Chinese Ambassador to the Court of St James. In it he wrote: 'Stamps offer a best showcase for a country. They speak about the country's history, culture, national landscape, economic and social progress.'

Ambassador Liu added: 'As we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of China-UK full diplomatic relations and China Market Focus at the London Book Fair 2012, I warmly congratulate the China Stamp Exhibition hosted by the State Post Bureau of the People's Republic of China at the Royal Philatelic Society London.'

### The State Post Bureau

The following is a summary of the helpful background information included in the booklet: The State Post Bureau is a national administration set up by the State Council. It supervises and manages the Postal Sector and the Universal Postal Service, as well as the Postal Market.

The All-China Philatelic Federation was set up on 30 January 1982 with the approval of the State Council. It is a cultural organisation composed of the philatelic associations of the provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities and national trade philatelic organisations. ACPF joined the Federation of International Philately (FIP) in July 1983 and the Federation of Inter-Asian Philately (FIAP) in August that year. Today the All China Philatelic Federation has more than a million members throughout China.

The China National Post and Postage



The front cover of the *China Stamp Exhibition* booklet produced in English and Chinese

Stamp Museum opened on 22 August 2007 and shows the origins and development of China Post. It makes archive material available for academic research and cultural exchange and also displays Chinese and foreign stamps. The Museum has 5500 square metres of exhibition halls and 3000 square metres of warehouses.

This vast collection consists of the stamps issued by the postal services in the different historical periods since the Qing Dynasty and also stamps from more than 200 other countries.

The General Administration of Press and Publications of the People's Republic of China (GAPP) is the administrative agency

responsible for promoting and regulating the press and publishing in China.

### Spectacular

The exhibition comprised four exhibits—The spectacular Customs Large Dragon Stamps 1878–1897, belonging to Mr Sun Jiangtao. The booklet states: 'Customs Large Dragon Stamps were the first set of stamps issued by Chinese National Postal Service in late July 1878.'

These stamps, known as the Large Dragons, were used by the Imperial Customs Post in 1878, differentiating them from the Shanghai Large Dragon Stamps issued by the Shanghai Local Post in 1865. They were withdrawn after the Chinese Imperial Post Office was established in 1897.

The second exhibit consisted of the 1897 Red Revenue Surcharges of China owned by Mr Ding Jinsong. The booklet explains: 'On 20 March 1896, the Qing Government officially approved a proposal to establish a national postal service, with the silver dollar as the new monetary unit in which postage stamps were to be designated.'

Mr Zhao Yue pictured in front of the magnificent display of 1897 Red Revenue Surcharges of China. The actual exhibit belongs to Mr Ding Jinsong, who was not in London



# 邮票展览

Cover on album sheet showing three Panda stamps – an iconic image of China in the West. The stamps were designed by the Chinese artist Wu Zuoren and the cover is postmarked 5 August 1983

'New stamp designs (coiling Dragons) were ordered from Japan, but the printer was unable to supply the new stamps in time for the February 1897 inauguration of the Chinese Imperial Post. To solve this crisis, existing stocks of Small Dragon and Dowager issues from the earlier Customs Post were surcharged and new supplies of the latter were printed for surcharging. The 3c. red revenue stamp was also surcharged for postal use.'

Also on show was a display entitled 'Essence of Traditional Chinese Culture—Selection of China National Post and Postage Stamp Museum Gems. Chinese Stamp Printing Process'—Presented by the China National Post and Postage Stamp Museum.

## China Stamp Printing

The China Stamp Exhibition booklet also includes an article entitled 'Chinese Stamp Printing Process'. It explains that the People's Republic of China has witnessed a great development of printing techniques, including the use of special paper, security inks, perforations and anti-counterfeiting technology.

The following Foreword was included in one of the exhibition frames: 'The China Stamp Exhibition is one of the 2012 London Book Fair China Market Focus events. The exhibition is headed by the State Post Bureau of the People's Republic of China, organised by All-China Philatelic Federation, China National Post and Postage Stamp Museum. China Stamp Exhibition aims at promoting Sino-British cultural exchange through stamps and publicising cultural achievement in China.'

The Foreword continued: 'China National Post and Postage Stamp Museum presents the profundity of traditional Chinese

culture by displaying stamps, first-day covers, postcards, etc, covering subjects such as pottery, bronzes, coins, calligraphy, painting, literature, architecture, gardens, traditional Chinese medicine, technology, drama, music, tradition and so on. By elaborately selecting the representative stamps, the exhibit reflects the development and characteristics of Chinese stamp printing technology.'

It concluded: 'China Stamp Exhibition has received great support from General Administration of Press and Publication of the People's Republic of China and The Royal Philatelic Society London. We hereby highly appreciate their great support.'

## Official opening

During the official opening ceremony, a warm welcome was extended by the Deputy Director General of the State Post Bureau of the People's Republic of China, Mr Xu Jianzhou, and by the President of the Royal Philatelic Society London, Mr Brian Trotter RDP, FRPSL.

During his speech delivered in Chinese translated into English, Mr Xu said: 'First and foremost, on behalf of the State Post Bureau of China, the host of the exhibition, I should like to express my sincere welcome and thanks to all the guests present at the opening ceremony.'



Mr Sun Jiangtao pictured on front of his sensational 'Customs Large Dragon Stamps 1878-1897'



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Mr Xu Jianzhou, Deputy Director General of the State Post Bureau P R China, pictured next to his interpreter during his speech at the Opening Ceremony of the China Stamp Exhibition

Distinguished principal guests pictured during the official Opening Ceremony



### Positive role

'As part of the China Market Focus events, the China Stamp Exhibition is held in parallel with the London Book Fair 2012 and will play a very positive role in promoting the cultural exchanges between China and the UK.'

Mr Xu emphasised: 'Stamps are not only certificates of a (pre)paid service they are also historical, cultural and artistic treasures of a country.'

He reminded his philatelic audience that: 'The two postal administrations jointly issued stamps in 2008, showcasing landmark buildings in London and Beijing.'

Royal Mail released a special 'Handover of the Olympic Flag' from Beijing to London miniature sheet containing four × 1<sup>st</sup> class stamps on 22 August 2008. The stamps show the National Stadium, Beijing; the London Eye; the Tower of London and the Corner Tower of the Forbidden City, Beijing (MS 2861).

Mr Xu concluded: 'We believe that as an important cultural bond, stamps will promote the friendly relationship between the two postal administrations and philatelists, and this exhibition will enhance the cultural exchange between our two countries.'

### Ribbon cutting ceremony

The exhibition was declared open following the cutting of a ribbon by Mr Xu Jianzhou and Mr Brian Trotter, accompanied by Mr Wu Shulin, Deputy Director General of The General Administration of Press and Publications of The People's Republic of China, and Mr Harvey Marshall, Lord Mayor Locum Tenens of Westminster.

In the care of Mrs Birthe King FRPSL, the special scissors used to cut the ribbon were on the silver salver that had been presented to Edward Denny Bacon CVO, President of the Royal Philatelic Society, London 1917–1923, to mark his 50th anniversary as a member of the Society on 8 May 1930.



Royal Mail miniature sheet, issued on 22 August 2008 (Reduced)



The Ribbon Cutting Ceremony during the Official Opening of the Exhibition

### New stamps from China

As they left the meeting room, everyone was presented with a folder containing four special stamp issues from China National Philatelic Corporation. These were: *Plum Blossom, Orchid, Bamboo and Chrysanthemum*, four stamps, face value of 4.80 yuan, issued on 18 October 2010. *Fengxiang New Year Woodprints*, four stamps, face value of 4.80 yuan, issued on 10 January 2011. *Furniture of the Ming and Qing Dynasties*, six stamps, face value of 6.80 yuan, issued on 20 June 2011. *Scroll of Eighty-Seven Immortals (Part)*, six stamps, face value of 9.30 yuan, issued on 26 September 2011. A lovely memento of a memorable occasion!

### Future plans

Earlier, a meeting had been held in the Council Room, between leading members of the Chinese delegation and Brian Trotter RDP, FRPSL, Alan Huggins MBE, RDP, Hon FRPSL, a Past President, Chris King FRPSL, Vice President, and Mrs Birthe King FRPSL, on behalf of the Royal Philatelic Society London.

Later, Brian Trotter told GSM: 'We enjoyed a very open and fruitful discussion on future cooperation between the Royal Philatelic Society London and the All China Philatelic Federation, culminating in the signing of a letter of intent on future co-operation'



Stamps from the special folder given to visitors



The complete set of four Fengxiang New Year Woodprints, issued on 10 January 2011



Brian Trotter RDP, FRPSL, President of the Royal Philatelic Society London, pictured in the meeting room with, left to right, Mr Sun Jiangtao, owner of the 'Customs Large Dragon Stamps 1878-1897' exhibit; Mr Xu Jianzhou, Deputy Director General of the State Post Bureau P R China and Mr Wu Shulin, Deputy Director for the General Administration of the Press, People's Republic of China, after the official opening ceremony of the China Stamp Exhibition on 16 April 2012



Brian Trotter RDP, FRPSL, President of the Royal Philatelic Society London, pictured with Westminster Councillor Dr Harvey Marshall, Lord Mayor Locum Tenens of Westminster, during the China Stamp Exhibition on 16 April 2012



Mr Kin Chi Danny Wong FRPSL

Alan Huggins MBE, RDP, Hon FRPSL, a Past President of the Royal Philatelic Society London, pictured with Andrew Hammond, Managing Director, Royal Mail Stamps and Collectables, in the small library. It was the first visit by Mr Hammond to No 41 Devonshire Place. Appropriately this picture was taken against a background of books about some of the great line-engraved stamps issued by Great Britain



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to foster philatelic research and cultivate cultural exchange.

'The main points covered in the letter of intent were as follows:

- Both parties welcome and would facilitate regular exchange visits of the philatelists and leadership of both parties to the United Kingdom and China respectively.
- Each party might invite the other to deliver academic research presentations in philatelic studies, competitive philately, identification of forgeries and similar activities, with a view to enhancing exchange of philatelic knowledge.
- The philatelists from both parties are encouraged to hold philatelic displays and exhibitions in both countries. Each party shall provide assistance to the other to conduct such philatelic displays and exhibitions. For example, the use of the premises of RPSL and those of the China National Post and Postage Stamp Museum respectively.
- Both parties would utilize their journals, electronic media, and others sources to publicise each other's activities.'

Brian Trotter added: 'We are delighted with progress we have made and are continuing to make in working together with the Chinese philatelic community to promote philately.'

### Great success

Before the morning events drew to a close, Michael Sefi RDP, FRPSL, Keeper of the Royal Philatelic Collection, proposed a vote of thanks to everyone concerned in helping to make the China Stamp Exhibition such a great success.

### An ambassador for the Royal in China

Mr Kin Chi Danny Wong FRPSL, one of the two Royal Philatelic Society London China representatives, and editor of the *Asian Philatelist*, played a crucial role during the China Stamp Exhibition and the visit of the high level Chinese delegation to London and deserves special acknowledgement and grateful thanks for all he is doing to promote the hobby of philately.

After a buffet lunch, some of the invited Fellows, Members and guests returned to the meeting room for a number of short presentations. At 3.00 p.m. the exhibition



The China 1897 2c. on 3c. 'Red Revenue' with surcharge double both inverted from the Murray Collection. Courtesy of the British Library Philatelic Collections

Shown here actual size



opened to members of the Royal. The following two days, Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18 April, the exhibition was open to the public from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

### Chinese delegates visit British Library

On Tuesday 17 April, ten members of the China delegation visited the British Library Philatelic Collections, where David Beech FRPSL, Head of the Philatelic Collections and Paul Skinner FRPSL, Curator of the Collections, put on a splendid tour.

During their three-hour afternoon visit the distinguished guests of the All-China Philatelic Federation and the China National Post and Postage Stamp Museum were shown some spectacular China gems owned by the British Library. These included the famous China 1897 2c. on 3c. 'Red Revenue' with surcharge double, both inverted, from the Murray Collection—one of 20 known examples.

David Beech reported that there were 'gasps of delight' as none of the distinguished Chinese visitors had ever seen this particular example of this famous Chinese stamp before.

### Careful examination

Paul Skinner, told GSM: 'It is always a pleasure to show a group of knowledgeable philatelists rarities from their own area of specialisation. On this occasion the reaction was one of excitement, followed by a lively discussion about the merits of the items being shown.'

'We had selected a China 1878-83 Large Dragon 1 candarin vertical pair imperforate between, unused, (one of five known), together with 37 pages of Shanghai Local Post issues from the Tapling Collection; China Postal Circulars of 1897-1902 (possibly the only complete set in the Western world), and a China Postal Atlas of 1919 (showing details of postal routes and postal establishments).

'We also selected several items from the

Murray Collection of China, which included an example of the 1897 3c. red revenue with small 2 cents surcharge double and inverted. This stamp has been the subject a special study by one of the visitors, Mr Zhao Yue, who had previously been able to identify the positions of 16 stamps out of 20 possible examples. This had been the subject of a paper that he had given to the Royal Philatelic Society London just the previous day.'

Mr Skinner emphasised: 'The example at the British Library is now the 17th that he has recorded, and after a careful examination he was able to identify the position on the sheet. This made for a truly memorable visit, both for us at the British Library Philatelic Collections and for our Chinese guests!'

### Brothers in philately

David Beech added: 'At the end of the visit Mr LV Xinghua, Deputy Director, China Post Literature and History Center, said that the British Library has remarkable depth in its Philatelic Collections of China and that the visit was from brothers in philately to brothers in philately.'

### British Postal Museum and Archive

On Wednesday 18 April, members of the Chinese delegation visited the British Postal Museum and Archive at Freeling House, Phoenix Place, where they were welcomed by Adrian Steel the Director.

Gavin McGuffie, Acting Head of Archives and Records Management at the BPMA, took them for a tour of the Royal Mail archive, including records in the collections relating to China. The distinguished guests were also shown three telegrams sent in response to the Post Office's concern about its employees and the mail on board the RMS *Titanic*.

### Future relations with the Royal Philatelic Society

The Royal Philatelic Society liaison with the

Chinese Embassy in London and with the People's Republic of China is Chris King FRPSL, the Vice President. GSM asked Mr King for his assessment of the China Stamp Exhibition and the visit to London by the Chinese delegation.

Mr King replied: 'We have been very fortunate to have representatives of the Press and Publications Ministry, China Post, and both the Philatelic Federation and the Chinese Philatelic Federation together in one room today. This makes building a positive partnership more probable and I am looking forward to visiting Beijing myself in November to carry this forward.'

Why China? Mr King said: 'When tens of thousands of collectors have joined our hobby during the space of relatively few years, it's a great opportunity for us to involve others in our Society, and to welcome them into the wider world of philately. We are quite sure that with a new emphasis on China, and the Royal's expertise in philately, there's a lot we can do to develop together.'

### Challenges

Asked what particular challenges he faced in organising the China Stamp Exhibition, Mr King said: 'China is a challenge because it has a complex bureaucracy and getting decisions made in Beijing against the pressure of a London deadline was interesting. Our cities and working styles are also different, but there was always goodwill and the show turned out to be better than any of us really expected. There was a lot that could have gone wrong.'

Asked whether he was pleased with the response by Fellows and Members and whether many members of the public took the opportunity to visit the exhibition, Mr King replied: 'The Fellows and Members of the Royal really rose to the occasion, as did our Chinese guests. The response was excellent from both sides. The first day was really busy and there were the expected numbers during the remaining two days. Our expert committee was also very pleased to be able to see the material from the classical period, and two Danish visitors spent several hours walking through the more modern material.'

### Reaching out

Asked about future plans, including a return to the People's Republic of China to further the relationship with the Royal Philatelic Society London, Mr King revealed 'The RPSL will hold its third regional meeting in China on 10 and 11 November 2012 in Beijing. We are expecting at least 50 Fellows and Members at the meeting. The Royal is committed to reaching out to serious philatelists around the world, and this is just one part of our programme.'

He concluded, 'The Royal has always been the pre-eminent philatelic society in the world. The world of philately is changing, although the basic principles of the Royal to be both expert and discriminating remain. It is encouraging to see the new philatelists of China, and elsewhere in the world, wanting to support these principles.'

All Pictures in this article by Peter Jennings FRPSL, FRGS