

STAMP

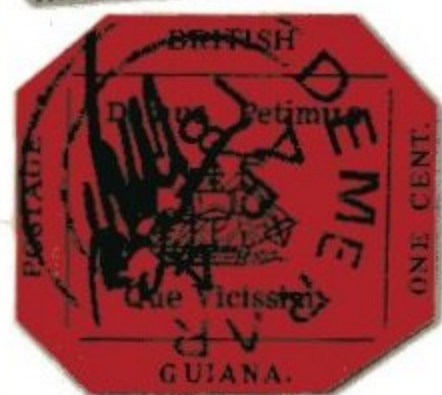
MAGAZINE™



Grenada's first commemorative design of 1898



Who are the latest citizens honoured by Royal Mail?



Back up for sale!

Will this stamp regain its title as the world's most expensive?

Thematic guide to ancient writing



Hyperinflation

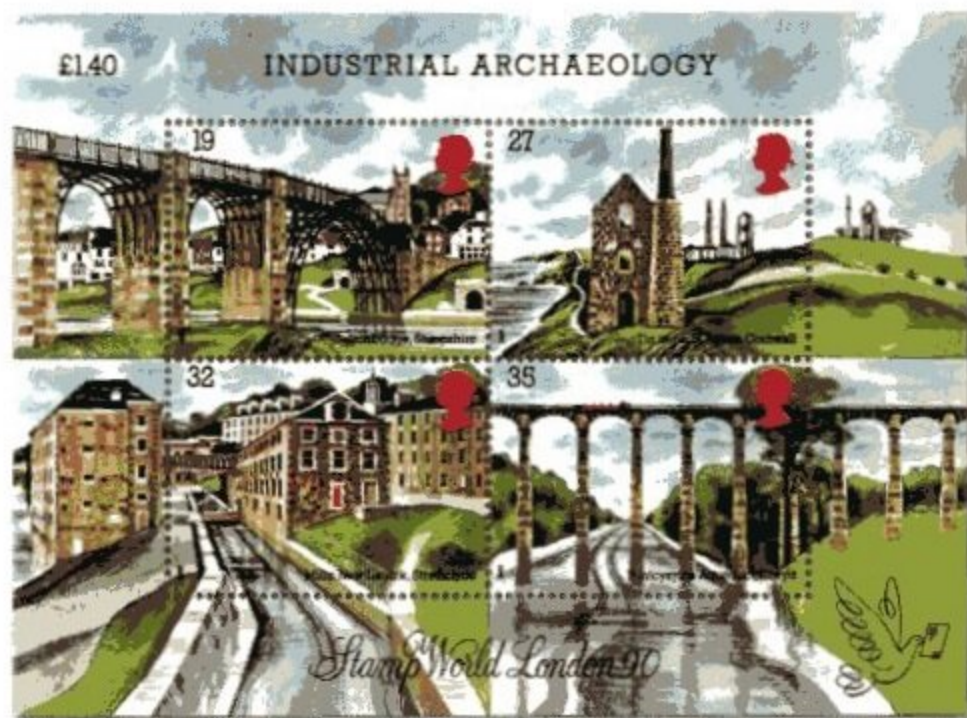
Unusual postal history from Germany in 1923

www.stampmagazine.co.uk £3.95



Little Britain

10 major landmarks in the evolution of the miniature sheet since 1978



Over-printed?

Were all the 1961 decimal surcharges of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland truly necessary?

WELCOME

'They want twenty million dollars for that?' Show a picture of the British Guiana 1856 1c black on magenta to any non-philatelist and you'll probably get a similar incredulous response.



'But it's unique,' you can reasonably protest. 'Yes, uniquely unattractive,' will likely be the retort. 'You can barely read the inscription. You can't make out the motif at all. To cap it all, someone's cut it to an asymmetrical shape and then scribbled across it.'

All of these criticisms are true. The stamp might be a legend, but it is not a looker. Worse, comparing old black-and-white photographs with modern digital scans appears to suggest that the printing has faded over the years, despite rarely seeing daylight.

In fact, so unphotogenic is this particular stamp that we recoiled from any thought of using a credible image on this month's front cover and opted instead for the heavily 'cleaned-up' illustration which adorned Guyana's 1967 stamp-on-stamp design!

But love is blind, and Sotheby's announcement that it is to auction this icon in June (see page 8) has sent a frisson of excitement around the philatelic world. As well it might.

The 1c fetched almost \$1m when it was last auctioned, and that was in 1980; however optimistic the upper estimate might appear, the current world record for a single stamp, which is about \$2.2m, must be under serious threat.

All it would take is two millionaire bidders who really, really want it. And who appreciate that the opportunity tends to come but once in a generation.

GUY THOMAS, Editor

guy.thomas@mytimemedia.com

Stamp Magazine, MyTimeMedia Ltd, Hadlow House, 9 High Street, Green Street Green, Kent BR6 6BG

Assistant Editor

Julia Lee
julia.lee@mytimemedia.com

Art Editor

Alexandra Bourdelon

Advertisement Sales Consultant

Jay Jones
jay.jones@mytimemedia.com

Junior Advertisement Sales Executive

Dominique Blenman
Tel: 01689 869893
dominique.blenman@mytimemedia.com

Overseas Advertisement Sales

Uly Rohrs
Tel: 020 7834 0085

Group Advertisement Manager

Duncan Armstrong

Design Manager

Siobhan Nolan

Publisher

Julie Miller

Chief Executive

Owen Davies

Publisher

MyTimeMedia Ltd, Hadlow House,
9 High Street, Green Street Green,
Kent BR6 6BG
From inside UK, Tel: 0844 412 2262
From outside UK, Tel: +44 1689 869840

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mytimemedia@subscription.co.uk

Subscriptions: USA & Canada

Tel: +1 877 363 1310
expressmag@expressmag.com

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Tel: +44 1689 869896

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From inside UK, Tel: 0844 848 8822
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customer.services@myhobbystore.com
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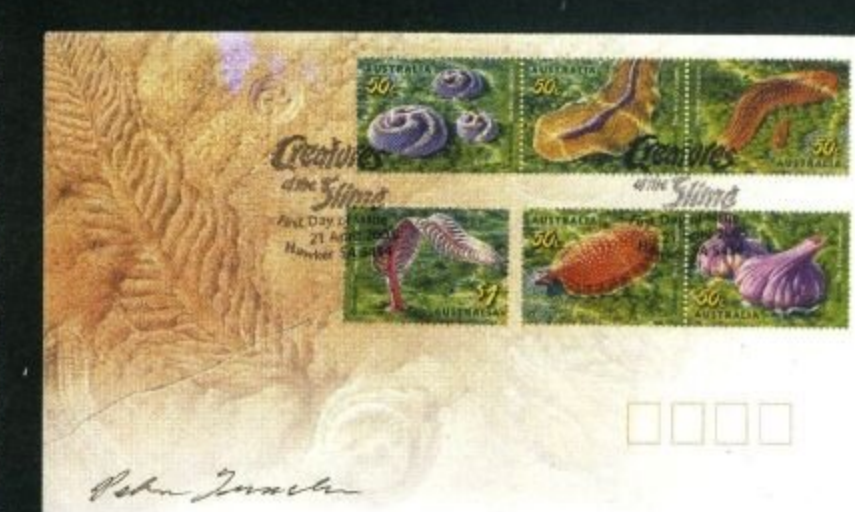
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When Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland decimalised in 1961, why were so many varieties created?

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Before paper was invented, writing materials included stone, clay, metal, animal skins, wood and plant leaves. Stamps take up the story

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Skyrocketing stamp denominations were accompanied by equally interesting postal history

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Win a Remarkable Lives presentation pack! And test your recall of GB stamps. See page 37



'Part of philately's appeal is its sheer diversity, and specialist dealers are crucial to that'

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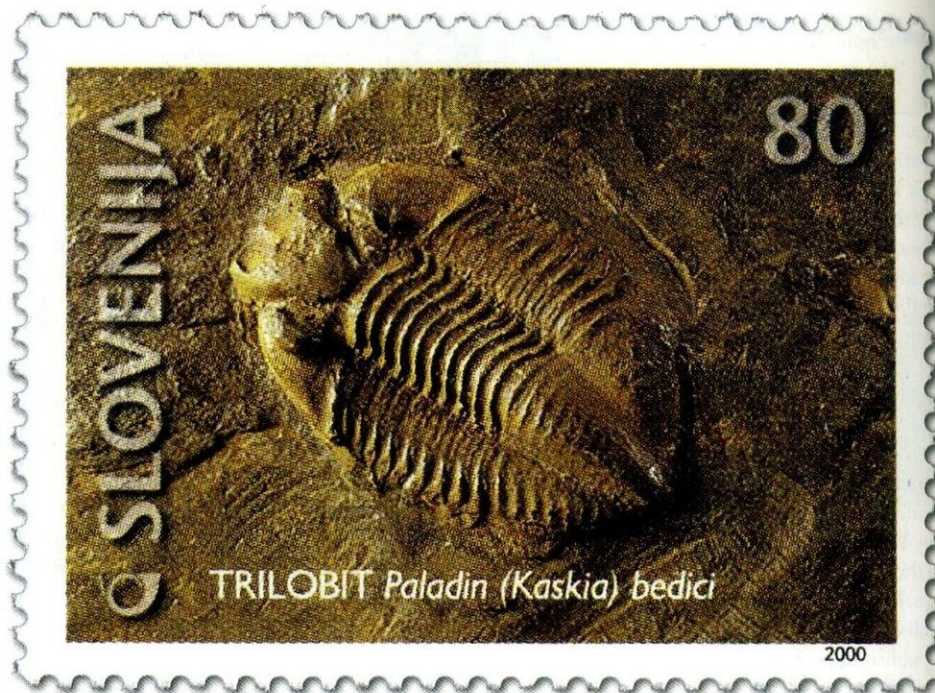
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Fossil hunter

Finding a fossil as a child sparked Michael Kogan's interest in palaeontology, and in adulthood he has found it a rewarding philatelic theme

NAME	
Michael Kogan	
NATIONALITY	
German (born in Ukraine)	
AGE	42 years
OCCUPATION	Electronic engineer
SPECIALISM	Palaeontology
SOCIETIES JOINED	none
OTHER INTERESTS	Dogs, travel, reading



ABOVE: Slovenia stamp of 2000 illustrating the fossil of a trilobite, a primitive type of marine arthropod which was among the most numerous animal species in the Palaeozoic era, approximately 250 million years ago

When did you start collecting, and why?

I started to collect stamps on various themes when I was a small boy in the mid-1980s.

I used any opportunity I could to obtain new stamps. I removed them from the envelopes my parents received, saved my lunch money and went to the local stamp club with my

father at the weekends.

It was very exciting to acquire international stamps, sort them by country and theme, and swap them with fellow philatelists.

What is your specialism and what attracted you to it?

Things changed after I found my first fossil in a piece of stone. I took it to the natural history museum,

What are your favourite items, and why?

I like the stamps designed by famous palaeo-artists, because I appreciate the effort involved in cooperating with leading palaeontologists to produce accurate reconstructions.

One example is Cuba's 1967 issue by the Czechoslovakian artist Zdenek Burian, which was the first set ever to illustrate prehistoric humans. Each stamp shows a skull fragment for the relevant stage of human development.



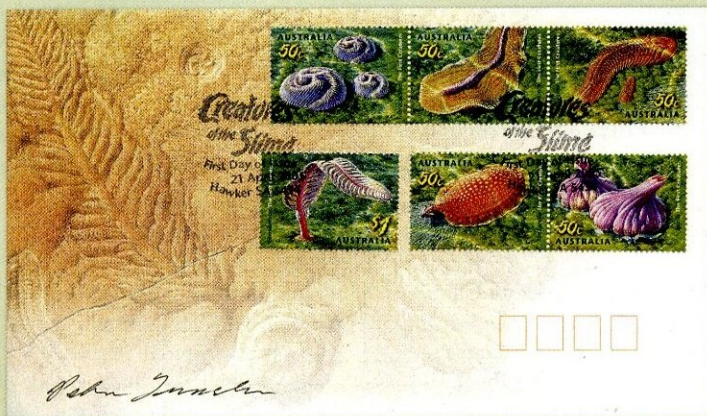
ABOVE: Part of Cuba's 1967 set, designed by Zdenek Burian, showing high-quality artist's impressions of early hominids

Which covers are you most proud of, and why?

I am proud to have several covers which have been signed by the artists who designed the stamps.

One example is Australia's 2005 Creatures of the Slime issue, by Peter Trusler, showing 560-million-year-old multicellular organisms called ediacarans, whose fossils have been found in the Flinders Ranges in South Australia.

Another is Germany's 2008 For Youth issue, by Werner Hans Schmidt, featuring dinosaur remains on display in Frankfurt's Senckenberg Museum. The organisation which benefited from the charity surcharge produced an illustrated first day cover, and I have one sent from the special presentation event at the museum.



ABOVE: First day cover for Australia's 2005 Creatures of the Slime set, signed by artist Peter Trusler



ABOVE: First day cover for one of Germany's 2008 For Youth stamps, posted from the stamp launch event and signed by the designer Werner Hans Schmidt

'Just filling an album with stamps and covers is boring, so I always try to find out as much as information as possible about every new purchase'

where an employee explained what I'd found. It was a tooth of a prehistoric fish.

I was surprised, because in Lviv, the Ukrainian city where I grew up, there was no sea or even a major river. Prehistoric creatures began to

occupy my imagination. I began to study them, and collect stamps on the theme.

Shortly after I finished school, my family moved from Ukraine to Germany. Many life changes, such as adapting to a new country, military



ABOVE: One of the stamps issued by Czechoslovakia in 1968 for the International Geological Congress in Prague, showing the fossil of a palaeobatrachus, a primitive frog of the Cretaceous era, found in the country's mountains

service, university, marriage and a career, left no time for a hobby.

But then, three or four years ago, I found my stamp album when I was sorting out some old books. I leafed through the pages, and it lured me in again.

What is the scope of your collection?

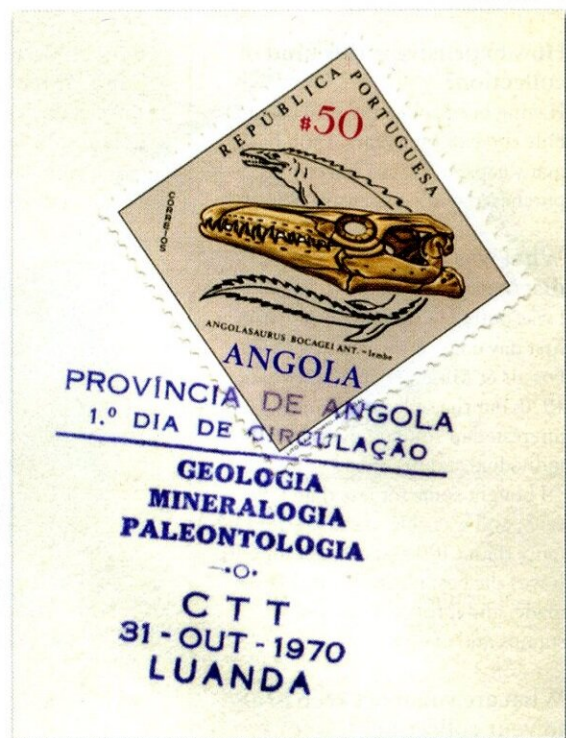
I collect any kind of philatelic item which is related to palaeontology.

By this, I mean not only stamps and covers that depict prehistoric creatures and fossils, but also items that commemorate palaeontologists, fossil finds, museum exhibitions and so on.

But just filling out an album with stamps and covers is boring, so I always try to study the stories behind them and find out as much as information as possible about every new purchase.

I treat my collection as a 'museum in an album', and I only add items with some background history. ▸

BELOW: First-day cancellation on the \$50 value in Angola's 1970 Fossils & Minerals definitive set, illustrating the skull of an angolasaurus





How and where do you find your material?

Almost all the material I buy is via the internet. Delcampe is my favourite site for older stamps and covers, but I try to buy new issues directly from the issuing authority, not only because it is usually the cheapest way but also because it gives me an opportunity to see how the various postal administrations work. In some case it is a chance to get unique, created-on-demand products.

I've made a lot of swaps with collectors around the world on Facebook. There are more than 800 friends in my network, from several dozen countries, and they are a great help in finding material and information.

How expensive is this kind of collection?

Having been collecting seriously for only three or four years, I still have many gaps to fill, so I haven't yet purchased really expensive material.

What was your best chance discovery?

I was outbid at the last minute on a first day cover for Angola's 12-value Fossils & Minerals definitive set of 1970, but the seller asked me if I was interested in similar covers bearing individual stamps only.

I bought some for less than €2 each, and was able to sell one for more than €100 and another for €50. It was the best philatelic deal I ever made, and it funded many new stamps and covers!

What are you most keen to add to your collection?

ABOVE: Fossil of an ammonite, illustrated on a Liechtenstein stamp of 2004



ABOVE: A 2009 stamp from Portugal depicts Charles Darwin, who laid the basis for the science of palaeontology with his visit to the Galapagos Islands in 1835, accompanied by a skull and fossils

I'd like a first day cover for China's 1952 Mural Paintings issue, which featured one of the first stamps depicting a prehistoric animal.

I also want to add more covers produced by palaeontological museums or societies, so that I can learn more about their exhibits and discoveries.

How do you store and display your collection?

I try to arrange all my stamps in albums by subject, so I have separate

albums for fossils, palaeontologists and dinosaurs, for example.

Covers are stored in purpose-designed albums or shoeboxes, or document files in the case of problematic oversize envelopes.

Have you exhibited competitively, or given presentations to other collectors?

I have not exhibited so far, but I show off my collection on my website, www.paleophilatelie.eu, and also on

Which were the earliest stamps commemorating palaeontologists?

As far as I know, the first two were issued by the USSR in 1947, marking the birth centenary of A P Karpinsky, the first elected president of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Among other claims to fame, he made important palaeontological discoveries in the Ural Mountains.

In 1952 the USSR also issued a single stamp marking the birth centenary of V O Kóvalevsky, an early follower of Darwin, this time with an inscription specifically noting him as both a biologist and a palaeontologist.

Ten years later, a Romanian stamp commemorated Grigore Cobilcescu, a palaeontologist who was the first professor of geology and mineralogy at the University of Iasi.



ABOVE: Stamps from the USSR in 1947 and 1952 commemorating the prominent Russian palaeontologists A P Karpinsky and V O Kovalovsky

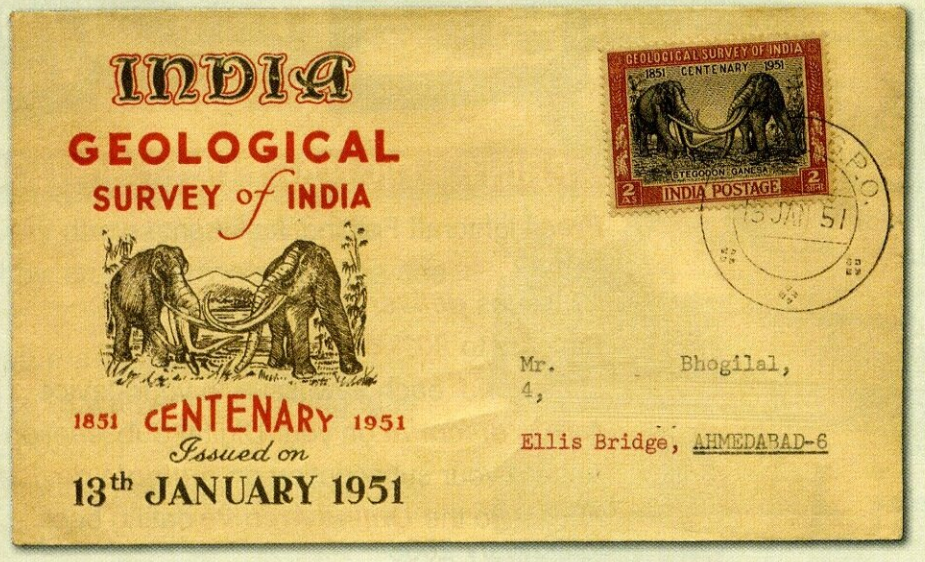
ABOVE: Romania stamp of 1962 honouring Grigore Cobilcescu

Is there any item that you had to work particularly hard to find?

For a long time I had been looking for a first day cover from 1951 commemorating the Centenary of the Geological Survey of India, but all the examples I saw were either very expensive or in bad condition.

When I bought something from an Indian dealer through an online auction, I asked him if he could help me to find such a cover. I had little hope, but I was very surprised to get an e-mail from him the next day with a scan of the best-preserved example I had seen, and offered to me for a reasonable price.

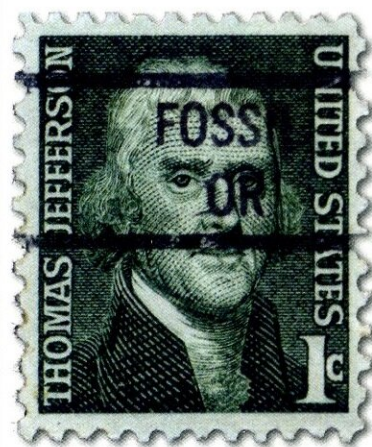
It was a lesson learned: never hesitate to ask dealers about items they don't advertise.



TOP TIPS

From your experience, what advice would you give to other collectors?

- Philately is not just about filling albums. It is an opportunity to learn something about a subject that attracts you.
- Be selective as to which items you collect. You don't have to have every single stamp or cover which fits your theme.



ABOVE: This 1968 USA 1c stamp portraying President Thomas Jefferson, who was an amateur palaeontologist, was cancelled in Fossil, Oregon!

'I've made a lot of swaps with collectors around the world through Facebook. There are more than 800 friends in my network'

Facebook and various forums, including the *Stamp Magazine* forum.

What is it about philately that gives you the most satisfaction?

Usually it's finding information, and then sharing it, that makes me happy.

I try to provide as much information as possible on my website, and I go to a lot of effort to find swap-partners around the world who can send me new covers. It's very satisfying when one of those arrives in the post.

What ambitions do you have for your collection?

I hope to be able to create an online catalogue and encyclopaedia about 'palaeophilately', while continuing to improve my collection.

BELOW: A fossilised fern illustrated on a 1990 issue from the British Antarctic Territory



ABOVE: Block of two stamps and two labels from the Czech Republic in 1999 commemorating the French palaeontologist Joachim Barrande, and showing some of the 3,500 fossils he collected in Bohemia, including several which were named after him, *Carolicrinus barrandei* and *Placoparia barrandei*



YOUR TURN?

Would you like to see your collection featured in these pages? Please get in contact, telling us briefly what your specialities are.

E-mail: julia.lee@mytimemedia.com