

# HELVETIA PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

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Secretary: Neville Nelder, 13, Bowbridge Lock, Stroud, Glos. GL5 2JZ Email: [nevilnelder@gmail.com](mailto:nevilnelder@gmail.com) Tel. 01453 766751  
Editor: Richard Donithorn, 10 Park Drive, Felpham, West Sussex, PO22 7RD Tel. 01243 583237

## POSTCARDS – FROM 1869 TO TODAY

JEAN-MARIE MICHELLOD

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Fig. 1 left The first postcard published in the world, by the Austrian Post, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1869. (Source: 'Catalogue Michel Autriche 2015', Schwaneberger Verlag).

Fig. 2 right Lithocard written on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1892 from the Grand-Hôtel du Mont-Blanc, Martigny.

## Introduction

In 2015, the Philatelic Club of Martigny celebrated its 50th Anniversary. The Society was formed on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1965, the day when some enthusiasts created a Philatelic Circle to share their passion for philately and stamps. One of those founding members is still an active member of our society, and our president and friend is Michel Favre, an artist and sculptor living in Martigny. Let us also mention among the founder members Léonard Gianadda, the Founder of the Gianadda Art Museum in Martigny, who needs no introduction, so much is his devotion to promoting the hobby known far beyond Martigny. Our Society is affiliated to the Federation of Swiss Philatelic Societies and therefore fully belongs to the world of philately. After a few years, a second group of collectors was formed: the "cartophilistes", otherwise known as "postcard collectors".

Philatelists and postcards collectors have a vision sometimes converging and sometimes diverging at the sight of a postcard. The former will focus on the back and look at the stamp, the franking device, the recipient's address and the message. The latter, on the other hand, are more interested in the front: the image, the photo, the view, - witnesses of an often bygone era. "Animated" postcards, that's to say those depicting people or landscape scenes, are particularly appreciated by collectors. They reflect bygone scenes of daily life, of forgotten trades or modes of transport that have since largely disappeared. Sometimes, one comes across an ancestor, a recognisable person or a village scene from our youth, part of a "regional or local collection"(heimat). One could even imagine a study of the two sides of the same card.

## The Different Categories of Postcards

The variety of postcards is almost infinite. Some general postcard categories are set out below:

aniconic (without illustration)	comic(with illustration)	precursors
folded postcards	coloured by different technical processes	
multi-views	photo-cards	thematic subjects
landscapes	anti-German caricatures (issued during the 1914/18 War)	
ethnological	artistic	with family's photos
anniversary/celebration	patriotic	historical
with museums reference	tourist	humorous
aeronautical	erotic	sentimental

### **The History of the Postcard**

England was the birthplace of the postage stamp in 1840 and Austria was that of the postcard. Doctor Heinrich von Stephan, Director General of the German Reichspost and founder of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), presented a paper on the postcard in 1865, in a speech at the Karlsruhe Postal Conference. The idea wasn't immediately taken up and it was not until 1<sup>st</sup> October 1869 in Vienna that Professor Emmanuel Hermann succeeded in convincing the Austrian Postal Administration to support the idea.

### **The Precursors**

If one considers the postcard as conveying a message of friendship or information, we can find its far off precursors in the special cards of the 17th century, used mainly to transmit brief information, such as compliments, wishes, thanks, etc. These messages were usually written on old playing cards. In the 18th century, this usage increased and the cards diversified and were sometimes decorated with simple artistic motifs. However, these were only produced in limited numbers and were generally distributed to their recipients by servants or private couriers. All these precursors of the postcard are rare and remain sought-after pieces which do not fall within the domain of current collections. In fact, it was not until the final years of the 19th century that the use of cards spread and they became officially 'postal' items.

It should not be forgotten that the invention of the postage stamp in the mid-19th century was a very important event which supported the development of postal exchanges. In instituting the system of payment by the sender, the postal service obliged the sender to obtain the payment by means of the postage stamp. That done, the sender endeavored to simplify his message to obtain a reduction in the postal-tariff. These practices eventually led the Postal administration to tolerate unenclosed messages.

### **The Birth of the Illustrated Postcard**

It was in Austria on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1869 that the illustrated postcard\* was born (Fig. 1). England and Germany followed soon after, before they began to appear in other European countries. France did not adopt the idea until December 1872 – the first postcard wasn't circulated until the 1st January 1873 in Paris and two weeks later in Marseille. The very first types were roughly illustrated with lithographic or typographic designs, the most well-known being the "Gruss aus ..." (Greetings from ...), usually of German production. But it was nearly twenty years before the first photographic postcard appeared, born of a tradition of friendship and a keen sense of economy.

A Marseille native living in Argentina, nostalgic for his hometown, asked a friend to send him a few photos. The friend in question, Dominique Piazza, obliged, but recoiled at the cost (5 to 9 francs) of each mailing. He then had the simple, but brilliant idea to take advantage of the reduced tariff accorded to postcards by sending, in place of the usual drawing, two or three photos of different sites. "Phototype" was then a scientific novelty, attributed to the work of Prof. Léon Vidal. Convinced of holding in his hands a real goldmine, Dominique Piazza partnered a "prototypiste" who printed for him a first series of one thousand copies - the "photographic postcard" was born. The first was sent on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1891, and the one thousand copies ran out in a few days. For several months, Piazza remained the sole master of this new market. But the Parisian publishers (Neurdin in particular) did not delay in interesting themselves in this promising niche, and the invention quickly escaped its inventor. Since then, the photographic postcard has commanded a major place in the world of communication. It is not jingoistic to recall that it was born in Marseille. Fig. 2 shows an early example.

\*Source: 'Une Provence si étrange' by René Gast et Olivier Bouze (Editions Ouest-France).

### **The Golden Age of the Illustrated Postcard**

From 1891 onwards, the postcard had considerable success in Switzerland as in the whole of Europe, above all with the 'Paris Universal Exhibition' in 1900. It experienced a golden age, until the end of the First World War. At that time, newspapers did not contain photographs. The postcard could be used as a new media: a kind of "forerunner of the TV". Alongside the big national publishers, the small local photographers would capture, for posterity, significant events, typical scenes of daily life, politics, etc. Hotels, cafes, restaurants, businesses, etc. used the postcard as a means of advertising: the owner posed with his employees and his family in front of the "shop window". All these little recorded moments of local history are today precious and very sought-after.

Until early 1904, it was forbidden to write on the back of the postcard. Three or four horizontal lines, across the whole width of the card, allowed one to write only the recipient's address. The photograph (on the front) didn't take up the whole space, in order to allow the message to be written next to the image. They were known then as "cloud cards" or, in English perhaps, "speech-bubble cards" (Fig. 3 – next page).



Fig. 3 Postcard (by Corbaz and Cie, Lausanne no. 163) written on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1902 and sent to Martigny-Les-Bains in the Vosges/France (front and back).

### The Turning point of 1904: The reverse is divided into two parts

From 1904, the decision was taken to allow users to write on the back of the postcard, which, as a result, was divided into two parts: one, on the left, reserved for the message, and the other, on the right, for the address. Henceforth, the photograph could freely occupy the whole of the other side.

While originally a postal document almost exclusively printed by the postal service, photographers, taking advantage of new technical advances, now began to sell their own postcards to a wealthy clientele at the major tourist sites. Fig. 4 shows a good example of a local scene.

The postcard helped spread photography throughout the world and into every social class. The public fully embraced the new format, even having their photo reproduced in postcard format, known as "photo-cards".

The golden age of postcards lasted from 1892 to about 1920. They circulated in their millions, throughout the world. Postcard publishers proliferated and any business in the smallest village had to see their name printed on postcards which only they disseminated, on behalf of a publisher in the region. Fig. 4 above shows Postcard (M.C. 612) written on the 18<sup>th</sup>



August 1906 from the Hôtel Suisse and sent from the Châtelard- Frontière Swiss Post Office (Valais).

### The Decline

We already see, from the 1920s, that the productions were of lesser quality. Due to profitability concerns, the publishers selected mediocre processes and materials and disseminated mainly characterless, general views, at the expense of more distinctive - but also more rapidly obsolete - scenes.

### Semi-Modern Cards

The cards published between 1920 and 1960 are categorised by specialists as "semi-modern". After the "golden age", the postcard entered a period of "purgatory" in its history. "Heliogravure" and other mass printing processes resulted in the beautiful productions of artisanal character almost disappearing. On the other hand, a new means of communication, more convenient and even faster, appeared: the telephone, which presented serious competition for the postcard. Henceforth, short, urgent messages, of the type: "I am arriving tomorrow at the station on the 10:42 train", were increasingly communicated by telephone. But it was above all the poor quality of the new printing techniques which most harmed the postcard. In parallel, to maintain the profit level of a particular photograph, the print run increased from 300 to 1,500, even 3,000 copies.

This type of production made it even more difficult to create cards which presented a scene of particular local interest. The publishers became accustomed to producing timeless, all-purpose cards, which should stay on the market for as long as possible. They therefore avoided too precise subjects and too revelatory details. Thus, certain shots were unscrupulously republished for ten, twenty, even thirty-something years consecutively. Less rich in illustrations' quality and often less carefully produced than in the preceding era, the so-called semi-modern cards nevertheless remain rare pieces and are examples of as great interest as those of any previous era.

For Martigny, for example, we can mention the cards of the 'Maison Gyger & Klopfenstein' of Adelboden, or those which are due to the talent of great photographers, like the Martigny natives Oscar et Michel Darbellay, the Dorsaz family, the Geneva photographers 'Boissonnas' and the 'Jullien Frères', and 'Corbaz SA' and 'Perrochet SA' in the Canton de Vaud.

### **Modern Cards**

The modern period began with the 1960s. The dimensions of the cards increased from 9 x 14 cm to 10.5 x 15 cm, but above all it was the spread of the colour card which was the source of a postcard revival. As for the artistic card, famous photographers gave it a new life. For the region of Martigny, Entremont, Verbier and the Valley of Bagnes, we must at least mention the remarkable printings of the publishers 'Editions Darbellay' in Martigny and 'Editions Jubin' in Vétroz, as well as the limited production of a few professional photographers of Verbier, Martigny and all the touristic regions of Valais.

### **And Today?**

As in the 1920s, postcards are today experiencing a second decline. In fact, with the introduction of smartphones, it is now possible to send personalised images in a few seconds. The careful search in the shop for the most appropriate postcard for its addressee only appeals today to the romantics, most people preferring a virtual image to the traditional postcard.

The use of the smartphone now removes the wait. The sending of the image – even to the other side of the world – is instant. Travellers today can share their experiences, their exploits and their favorite shots directly, without the recipient having to wait more than a few seconds. The recipient's reply can also be made very rapidly and the wait no longer exists. We are far from the time when the return of holidaymakers preceded the arrival of the precious postcards!

Thanks to Jean-Louis Emmenegger, Chief-Editor of Rhône Philatélie, for having made the proof reading of this translated article.

### LANDI CATALOGUE

RICHARD T. HALL

Eric Lienhard, myself and, from Switzerland, Remi Kohler and Hans Baumann have compiled a catalogue of Landi (National Exhibition) postcards and related memorabilia. The catalogue is available for downloading from the Research Resources section of the American HPS's Website - [www.swiss-stamps.org](http://www.swiss-stamps.org). I encourage you to look through it. You will notice that there are blank spaces in the catalogue. We have assumed that the numbering of the cards (the "L.A." numbers found on the message side of the card) was continuous and that we just haven't seen a card with the missing number. If you have a Landi postcard that isn't in the catalogue, please let me know and we can add it. (Write to the Editor to pass on – thank you.)

### THE AMERICAN HPS's NEW CHAT BOARD

ROGER HEATH

The American HPS have added a Chat Board to their Website for the use of its members. If members have a Swiss philatelic question, they can post it on the Chat Board and, if someone knows the answer, he or she will post it there. They hope that members will look at the Chat Board often, both to learn something or answer one of the questions. It can be used to seek opinions about items members own or show some of their special items. Images are welcomed. It should enable collectors with shared interests to identify and contact each other. The site can be accessed through the AHPS's website or direct using the address: <http://www.quicktopic.com/51/H/qdRWHrshP637>. They hope that the chat board could become a focal point for Swiss collectors, advanced and new, and that the exchange of information between collectors of Swiss material will make for a stronger society.

### CORINPHILA AUCTIONS

Corinphila has sent the Society the results of their auctions of Swiss, Liechtenstein and other European material which took place in Zürich in November last year. It has been placed in our Library for inspection. Their next auctions are 'Rarities' at the World Stamp Show in New York on 3<sup>rd</sup> June and 'International' material in Zürich on 15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> June. The closing date for consignments is 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. For further details their Website is [www.corinphila.ch](http://www.corinphila.ch)

IDENTIFYING THE SYNTHETIC PRINTINGS OF ZUMSTEIN 27D

JOHN BARRETT

The pigment used for the printing of this stamp was discovered by accident by an 18-year old English chemist, William Perkin, while trying to produce synthetic quinine from coal-tar waste. Quinine (an alkaloid) was then (1856) the only satisfactory treatment for malaria, the scourge of the 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries and was only available by the extraction on cinchona tree bark from Peru and Bolivia.

In August, shortly before his 'discovery' of the mauve (aniline purple) dye, Perkin filed a patent after finding out that it was a 'new' colour, which dyed silk, cotton and other fabrics quite well. Queen Victoria was often seen wearing 'mauve' dresses! Up to this time, all fabric dyes were natural products (such as indigo, madder, cochineal, woad, saffron, etc.) and were very expensive.

The entire Perkin family went into business producing this first of the 'aniline' dyes in late 1857 and became fairly wealthy within ten years. However, Perkin had failed to file the patent abroad within six months, and 'purple-like' dyes began to appear on the Continent in early 1858. 19<sup>th</sup> century espionage!

Research to date has shown that the Swiss Mint used this 'mauve' dye on at least one printing of the 1Fr of the last imperf issues of 1854-62. The problem has been to specifically identify which stamps are from this printing.



Printings using natural pigments (logwood-madder), February 1855-1857.



Printing(s) using the new synthetic dye. Early 1858 until early 1860.

This pigment is extremely liable to light, heat and chlorine-containing water; therefore you can see varying degrees of fading/degradation of each stamp. Don't forget that these are 150 years old! More recent research using an FTIR spectrometer has identified/compared the degradation products of the dye, which verifies its (synthetic) origin.

P.S. This was the initial study which was undertaken about 5 years ago. Subsequent data is now being prepared which should provide a possible easy method to identify the synthetic printing(s) of Zumstein 27D!

Editor's note – The underlining denotes the author's emphasis of certain words. Apologies for the picture quality.

THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL NATIONAL MEETING 30<sup>th</sup> April - 1<sup>st</sup> May 2016

Full details of this meeting, to be held at The Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate, were included with the January Newsletter. If you have not already booked and would like to attend, please send your booking form for the meeting to the Treasurer as soon as possible and make your hotel reservation direct to the hotel quoting the Society Tel. No. 01423 500055. If you have not attended one of our meetings before you would be made most welcome. We look forward to seeing you there.

## Werner Gattiker

For most aspects of Swiss Philately and Postal History



- Free Standard Price List 1850 – 2012 with both Zumstein/SBK and Stanley Gibbons numbers.
- "Werner's Treasure Trove" sent most months to my customers, full of offers of stamps, covers, cards, blocks, collections & lots, literature, etc.
- Liechtenstein also available.

Werner Gattiker, P O Box 791 Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 ODP – 01273 845501 - [werner@swisstamps.co.uk](mailto:werner@swisstamps.co.uk)

## LUCERNE 2016

### THE 70th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF OUR SOCIETY

We are celebrating our 70th Anniversary in Lucerne this year, 8th-10th June. We plan to have keynote philatelic displays over the first two days with speakers from Switzerland, in addition to a number of smaller displays from our Society members and from local Swiss societies. There will be a celebratory dinner on the first evening. The third day will comprise an optional visit to the Museum of Communication in Berne.

If you have been tempted by previous notices but have not yet taken the plunge, please contact me for further information about what will be a rare opportunity to enjoy displays which cannot be seen in England and to talk with eminent Swiss philatelists.

Neville Nelder, Secretary– nevilnelder@gmail.com ; 01453 766751

#### REGIONAL MEETINGS OF THE SOCIETY

The Southern Group – The next meeting will be on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2016 starting at 10am for coffee and a chat, with business getting under way at 10.30am and lasting until about 4pm. This will be a Peter Vonwiller Memorial meeting with Werner presenting two parts of Peter's collection: 'Bodensee Shipping and Ship Mail' and 'WW II Soldier Mail and Stamps'. The afternoon session will be, as usual, a potpourri of members' short displays. The new dates for the Summer and Autumn meetings are 25<sup>th</sup> June and 15<sup>th</sup> October. "The Three Crowns" at Whaddon, just off the A36, about 3 - 4 miles south of Salisbury (postcode SP5 3HB) is now our permanent venue. Further information is available on the Society's Website or from Werner Gattiker werner@swisstamps.co.uk, Tel. 01273 845501.

The Northern Group – The next meetings are on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2016 – Chairman's Presentation and on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2016 - Members' Choice/New Acquisitions. All meetings take place at Corporation Mill, Sowerby Bridge, Yorkshire commencing at 2.00pm. Further details from David Hope Tel. 0161 3030091.

#### NEWS FROM THE LIBRARIAN

BOB MEDLAND

The November 2015 Newsletter (p101) contained a review of the new handbook on 'Razorblade' date cancels. I am pleased to advise that there is now a copy in the Society's library available for borrowing. This is a yet another top-quality publication as we have come to expect in the field of Swiss philately and postal history. The research has evidently been taken to extremes and the presentation, diagrams and summary tables are very clear and easy to follow. This is a superb book, a joy to hold and read whilst being a 'must' for any student of Swiss postmarks.

Meanwhile the supply of the usual 'exchange' journals has continued. What follows is a short summary of articles that may be of interest to members. I am happy to lend out these journals to UK-based members as usual (refund of my postage costs on return please).

- 'Swiss Express' (no. 124), per Swiss Railways Society. Restoration of the paddle-steamer 'Neuchâtel'; also the d/s 'Greif' (a tiny steamboat on Lake Zürich dating from 1895 so even older than the 'Uri').
- 'Tell' (Vol. XLI, no. 6 & 8) per AHPS. Pioneer airmail services; steamer mail on Lake Constance; modern canceller errors; descriptive tabs in sheet margins.
- 'Arbeitsgemeinschaft Schweiz e.V. per Arge Schweiz (in German). Mail between Switzerland & Germany 1945-46 including courier & Red Cross mail, postage due, taxe perçue & registered service.

#### WEBSITE: GLOSSARY OF PHILATELIC TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

FRED HOADLEY

How many members make use of the 'Glossary' page on the Society's website? This page was originally constructed using the contents of an article written by Felix Ganz for the Newsletter in December 1969, and has been extensively updated since. It is of great value to researchers, who, for example: find a cover or postcard with an unidentifiable handstamp; discover a postmark bearing an unusual abbreviation; or perhaps encounter an uncommon word in philatelic literature. Additional entries are included in the glossary as they are discovered. If you are aware of any interesting terms, abbreviations, unusual postal markings, etc. please send an email to me.

SWISS MAXIMUM CARDSRICHARD DONITHORN

Maximum cards may be defined as: “normally or ideally, postcards with a design related to that of a stamp and with the design affixed to the design side of the card and cancelled in a related post office”.

Three main types of maximum cards have been produced in Switzerland: –

- Privately Produced Cards which have an illustration related to a greater or lesser extent to the subject of the stamp design. Many modern examples have special first day cancels. Such cards may be produced by stamp dealers, philatelic societies, private organisations (including the Pro Juventute Foundation in 1987-1989) or private individuals. The key third element, a cancel which is specifically related to the stamp, is often missing or is affixed to the address-side. Sometimes the cancel relates to the stamp, through the locality, building, event or organisation portrayed or otherwise referred to.
- Official maximum cards produced by the P.T.T. and SwissPost, the latter organisation being considerably more prolific. Such cards have an illustration closely related to the new issue stamp. The stamps are affixed to the picture side, cancelled with a special matching cancel. The first were to commemorate the 1954 Football World Cup (Z319) and the 1956 5c Postbus (Z324).
- Official so-called “Stamp Cards” probably produced by the P.T.T. for promotional purposes in the 1980s which have a blown-up illustration of the corresponding newly-issued stamp. The stamps are affixed to the picture side. Cancelled on the first day of issue with an appropriate cancel. They were not intended to be posted as they did not have a space for an address or message. The other side of the card was used for printing details of the stamp – the designer, printer, period of validity, paper type, etc.

Collections of such cards, particularly those related to stamps which were not the subject of Official Cards, whilst extremely “philatelic”, can also be very attractive and very interesting. If you don't collect them, the illustrations below will give you a flavour of what could be in store!

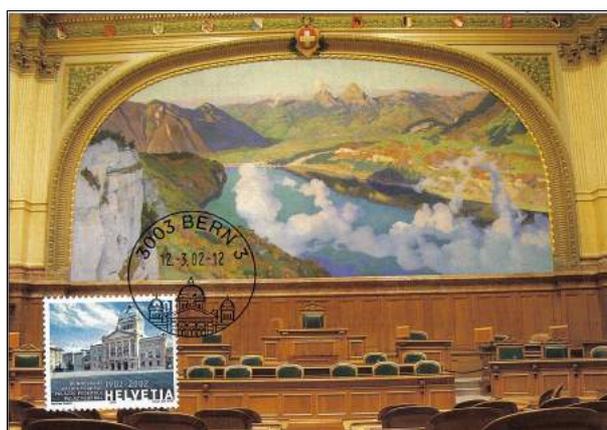


Fig. 1 (left) Official PTT Maximum Card - 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International PTT with World Congress in Interlaken special cancel. (n.b. the Z719 stamp was first issued on 10.9.85.)

Fig. 2 (right) Official SwissPost Maximum Card Centenary of the Federal Parliament Building (Z1046) depicting one of the interior murals.



Fig. 3 (left) Privately produced maximum card for the 50c Architecture definitive (Z417) depicting the Castle and the Collegiate Church in Neuchâtel. Postcard – Bovey & Cie. Editeurs, Geneve. Cancel not first-day.

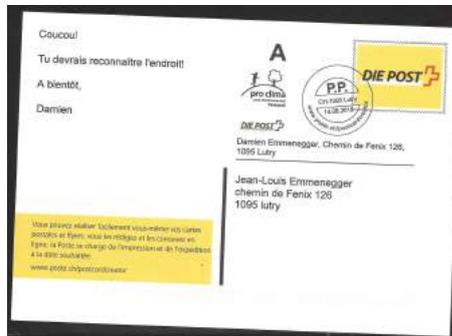
Fig. 4 (right) So-called “Stamp-card” for the Centenary of the History of Art Society depicting the Town Hall in Winterthur (Z638). Winterthur cancel on stamp's first day of issue.

**The Society is grateful to Swiss Post for allowing the use of the illustrations of its products.**

POSTCARDS FROM 1869 TO TODAY

JEAN-LOUIS EMMENEGGER

As a “final note” to Jean-Marie Michellod's article (see our front-page article above): it is interesting to mention here the new postcards that the Swiss Post prints for a private person or commercial company when they send it a photograph or document, a small text and the addressee’s address by email (e.g. using their smartphone),. The Swiss Post prints the photo or document on a photo paper of a postcard size, puts a franking device on the text’s side and sends the postcard to the address provided by Priority mail. In our view, this can be considered as a new development for the postcards! The illustrations show two such cards (front and back) :



A photograph of a mountain restaurant sent by my son Damien : front - photo; back - message, address and franking device of Swiss Post.



A commercial message from Schwarzenbach Auction’s house in Zürich : front : publicity text ; back - message (= publicity), address and franking device of Swiss Post. (The Society is grateful to Swiss Post for allowing the use of the illustrations of its products.)

FORTHCOMING PHILATELIC EXHIBITIONS

Two significant exhibitions are being held in Switzerland in April 2016:

The Eastern Switzerland Collectors' Fair to be held in the community centre in Mörschwil SG - stamps, postcards, coins, documents (ephemera), literature and a small exhibition. A joint bourse of the clubs of St. Gallen, Arbon. Rheintal and Romanshorn on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April from 10am to 4pm. Further information on the website – [www.swissphila.ch/sammlerboerse.html](http://www.swissphila.ch/sammlerboerse.html)

INPOSTA 2016 - International postal history exhibition with a large stamp and coin fair to be held on 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April in the Lintharena in Näfels. Further information on the website – [www.inposta2016.ch](http://www.inposta2016.ch)

And don't forget 'Spring Stampex' at the Business Design Centre in London from 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> February and the World Stamp Show at the Jacob Javits Convention Centre in New York from 28<sup>th</sup> May to 6<sup>th</sup> June. For further details visit their Website: [www.ny2016.org](http://www.ny2016.org)



# RÖLLI PHILATELY

- Online Auctions: at irregular intervals throughout the year
- Main Auction: yearly in February **Register now!**
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