

The Journal of the

STAMP-BOX

Collectors Society

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Dear Members,

We are now in the run up to our meeting at Stampex and we hope as many of you as are able, will be there. In the meantime, here is the news and this is your Editor writing it.

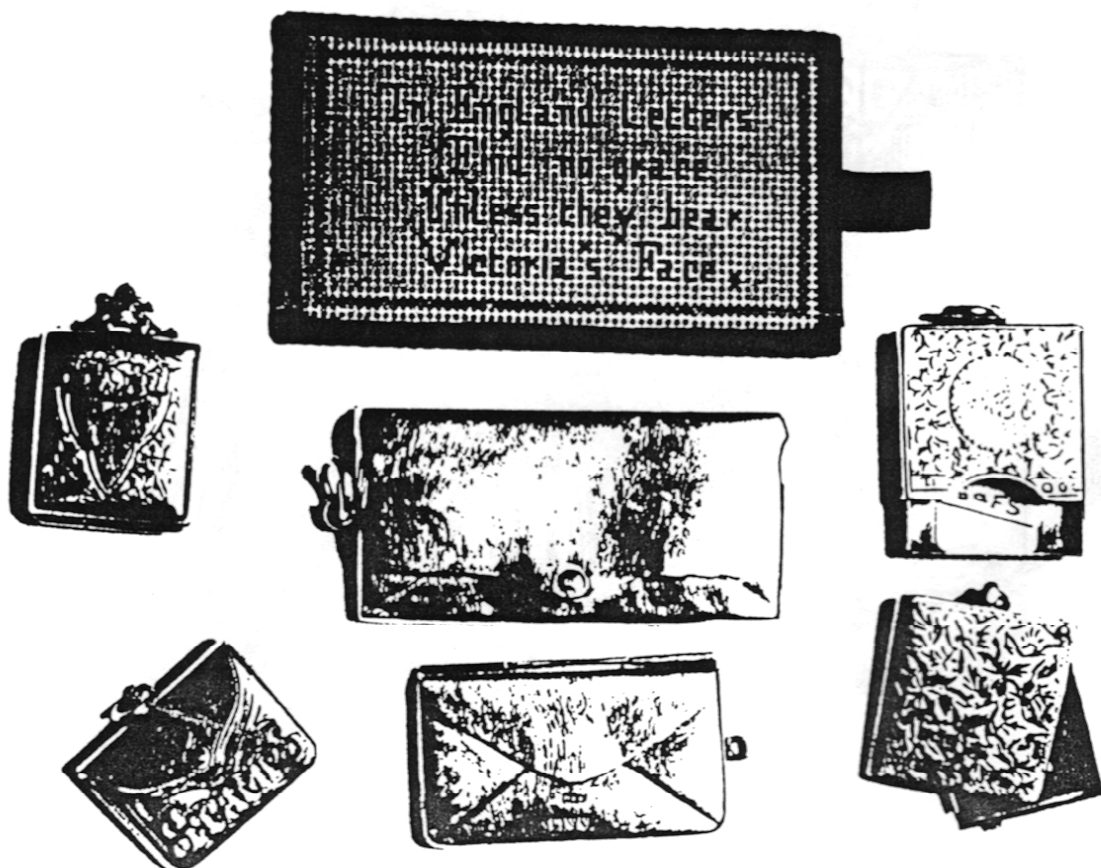
Correspondence first. Member 30 has kindly sent in some information on the Chester marks, and some excellent photocopies of some of his pieces. I also want to thank other members for the Chester information but as it duplicates M.30's letter, I am printing his letter in full, as you will agree it is pretty comprehensive.

CHESTER MARKS

The Chester Assay Office is now closed and its records have been taken over by the Birmingham Office. The address is The Assay Office, Newhall Street, Birmingham, B3 1SB and communications should be addressed to "The Assay Master".

Some of the Birmingham, and other, gold and silver smiths preferred to use the Chester office because it had a reputation for taking rather more care in the placing and punching of its marks. This was not unimportant for small articles like stamp cases where an appropriate placing of the mark could enhance the design (indeed in the plain gold and silver ones it was usually the only form of "decoration") and, conversely, a badly placed mark could seriously mar the embossed or chased decoration.


I have a dozen or so marks, mostly from Birmingham, but have so far found only one maker who consistently used the Chester mark. He was Albert Ernest Jones ("AEJ") of 30 Victoria Street, Birmingham, who described himself as a manufacturing jeweller and who first registered in December 1902.



M.15 has a number of interesting points in his letters to me. One of which is answered when he asks whether members will ever meet. As he knows now, Stampex is the venue and if it is a success (both attendance and moneywise) we will hold another at the B.F.F. meeting in the autumn. With the other question of security, in that two collectors can be within spitting distance of each other and not know it, I believe it is up to individual members to ask me to put their names and addresses forward, or at least the areas in which they live. Members doing this, will then be acting on their own responsibility and will be aware of any risk involved. In the meantime, I will always act as a clearing house. The last point he makes is one of reproduction of items in our possession. Copying machines are ideal for fairly flat pieces, but a camera is required for others and this is where, quite frankly, I am stymied. Even if the Society eventually buys a camera with the appropriate lens, how is it to be used? Do we send it to members in turn? Do members send us their items for photographing? You only have to say it to realise how absurd both ideas are. Therefore ideas are required as a matter of urgency please. As a further aside, a new member M.43, kindly sent me a colour photo of a stamp box who antecedents he is enquiring after. If it copies well, it will be included in a future newsletter.

Our Treasurer, very kindly, has contributed the following:-
 "One evening, I had a telephone call from ██████████ who said "Feel free to say no". To what? Well ██████████ wanted to get a stamp box society going and had been given my name as someone who might be persuaded to assist as Treasurer. Well ██████████ was so full of enthusiasm, how could I say no? My interests have always been on the periphery of stamp collecting, I even boast a stamp collection of one! However, having an interest in philatelic societies and being an accountant by profession I thought it would be no hardship to assist. The starting up of any society depends upon the initial and continuing enthusiasm of its officers. What the society can offer depends upon finance which means subscriptions. The most important item the society needs is a well produced journal. This will probably need a modest increase in subs. to keep the society in funds and prevent the need for anyone to subsidise it."

Trust an accountant to think of that! In fairness I must say that ██████████ started the Philatelic History Society some time ago, and has a membership of approaching a 100. Anyone interested in joining his society, please write to me in the first instance and I will pass your letters on. His letter does however raise a few relevant points, subscriptions almost certainly will have to rise, but this will be something to discuss at Stampex. The question of the journal is of prime importance. If I am to keep up with the security I promised would be at the heart of this society, then a journal of sorts will be imperative in the sense that the journal will be the instrument for holding us together. With that in mind, I have taken steps to improve on my first amateurish effort and I hope you like this newsletter. The frontpiece has been designed by my daughter, who insisted on writing the next article (at my instigation of course!)

THE "NEW" HOBBY - 

Some years ago, my youthful Aged P, poring over his small pieces of philatelic history, declared to his somewhat bemused daughter, "I collect philately, dear, not Victorian bits and pieces." Ah, well, there goes this year's Christmas present, I thought, and reluctantly put away something quite philatelic, which I just thought might interest him.

Ten years later, and even more swallowed words later, the little "box" which I hoped might have aroused his curiosity, has begat a prodigious amount of philatelic sisters and cousins and aunts. Of poor Cinderella of ten years ago, no trace remains. But of her numerous progeny - we now require a Society to protect, nurture and classify THEM!

The original stamp box which attracted my eye in Portobello Road all those years ago, measured just $1\frac{1}{2}$ " by $1\frac{1}{4}$ ". Bearing Queen Victoria's head and surrounded by an estimated 1,600 small pieces of wood, my father and I made our first acquaintance with Tunbridgeware. Since then, we have noted hundreds of this intricately entwined miniature pieces of wood made up into all sorts of articles. But surely, not one is so subtle and sophisticated as the stamp box? Sitting on some lady's escritoire perhaps, or gentleman's Victorian office desk - what tales could it tell of famous people who might have used it to hold their 1d. postage stamp. Perhaps there was even one in Doughty Street, when "Oliver Twist" was being written?

Together with the very first Tunbridgeware box which I acquired for my philatelic mentor, I purchased a small round tartan-covered box - somewhat akin to a pill-box, with Queen Victoria's head engraved on a 1d. red on the lid. Decorated with tartan, the box exemplified Victoria's Balmoral Scottish obsession and oozed John Brown and History with a capital "H".

Later Tunbridgeware acquisitions included a rectangular double box with K Ed. VIII head on the stamps, proclaiming him the King who never was. Together with a G V stamp, altogether a family affair.

And so - we were off - stamp boxes began to be of interest. They were given a space on the hallowed desk, especially for them. They moved, went forth and multiplied - they occupied a whole display shelf to themselves - then two, then a cabinet - and..... Well, we all know the end of that one! Like the family of man in the popular school hymn, they kept growing.

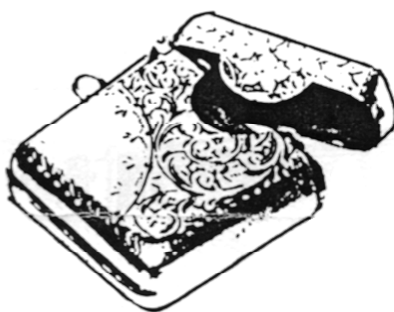
Wood ones, silver ones, leather ones, brass ones, Swiss ones, ornamental ones, plain ones, carved ones - it needed a philatelic Pied Piper to call them to order. And so the Stamp Box Collectors Society was born. The boxes had become respectable.

"Funny thing", said the ever-more Aged P the other day - haven't had time to look at my stamps recently. Found any more of those quaint little boxes, Jan?"

My last piece of correspondence for now is from one of our first members M.14. His long letter is mainly concerned with the accumulation of information as in catalogues. By the nature of the items we collect, a catalogue would be almost impossible to produce, although I must say, I have seen some weird catalogues in my time. No, the way information will be correlated, for now anyway, is via letters to this Society. M.14 also goes on to ask about the availability of extending his collection. The obvious answer to that is through dealers. And that raises a problem. What many of you are not aware of, is that a large number of stamp dealers have joined our Society. Not as buyers and sellers of boxes, but as collectors of boxes in their own right. Add to the list of members too, principals of some of the largest auctions in the country, and once again, in their own right. Here we obviously might have a clash of interest, especially as a major house in the south has refused to join our Society, even though part of their auctions are regularly of stamp boxes. As you can see from the attached Stampex agenda, I propose to give the whole matter an airing at Stampex and hear from those that attend what their views are. You are welcome to write to me with your views.



Double Stamp Box



Vesta with stamp compartment



Double Envelope Type



King Edward VII
head envelope



Silver envelope
type on stand

Now to the technical side of things. Many of you deplore the fact that items for our collections are getting scarce. If you are referring to valuable silver and gold items, then you are right, but if you include the more mundane items in your collection, then you are not right. Consider this. I was given as a Christmas present last year a plastic box, about 6" x 8 1/2" x 1". This was given away in 1967 by the Canadian Post Office to commemorate the centenary of the first issue of Canadian stamps. It has a reservoir to hold water and plenty of space to hold stamps. Its frontpiece contains a set of the current stamps. It contains a leaflet with instructions in English and then French as to how to use the stamp box (their words, not mine).

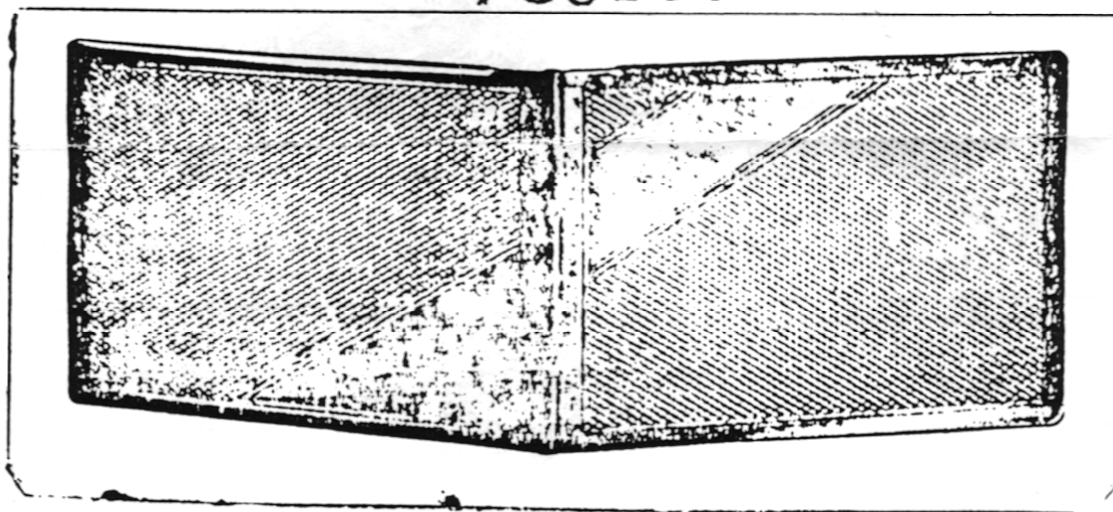
This Christmas, as a change to the Christmas booklet and in addition to it, the Post Office put on sale a very nice card folder, decorative and practical, in the sense that one could buy it empty for 50p or full of loose stamps, 50 x 12p for the sum of £6.00. Can one deny they are both stamp boxes? because if one does deny that, then one is put in the invidious position of defining what a stamp box is.

So many of you asked about the booklet holders written about in my last newsletter that I thought it would be a great idea to cut our teeth on a little research as a model for further use.

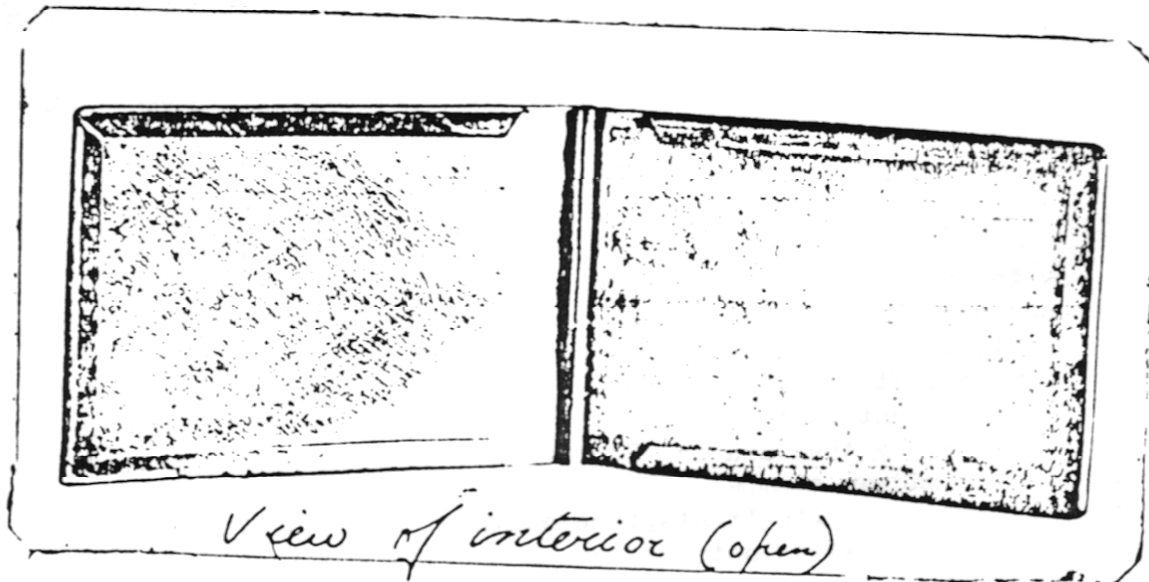
Here is a photocopy of the copy sent me by the Patent Office and on the next page you will see all the information to hand. If members could add to this list, we should finish up with a comprehensive list of the items made. Incidentally, to save some of you the bother, I have checked with the Companies Register at Cardiff and no firm with these names are extant. I also wrote to the Chamber of Trade in Birmingham, in the vain hope of them having something in their records, but even with a s.a.e., no reply was received.

Metal Case to hold a Book of Postage Stamps.

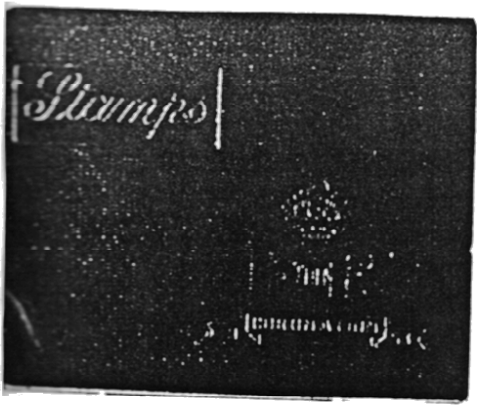
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View of Exterior (open)



View of interior (open)



Town Crests I Have.

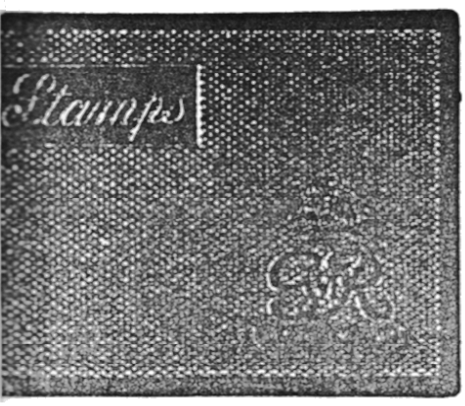
- Brighton
- Bexhill
- Deal
- Blackpool
- Whitley Bay
- Ilfracombe
- Caerphilly Castle
- Isle of Man
- Cheddar
- John o' Groats
- Torquay.

Others.

The 2 Coronation ones shown here.

A painted one, with a crinolined lady in a garden of lupins. (I have seen a GV. head in red/blue/silver).

One with a blank blaze across the left hand side. Similar, but with STAMPS engraved on the blaze.



No. 983309. ✓

Class 1.

Date of Registration 24th. May, 1933.

George Alfred Rogers, and Harold Rogers (both British Subjects)
Trading as G. & H. Rogers, 101 Tyse Street, Birmingham, B.

30th. April 1938. COPYRIGHT EXTENDED FOR SECOND PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS. D.

9th. June 1943. In pursuance of an application received on the 13th. May 1938
to proprietors (Rogers (Stamplings) Limited of 101, Tyse Street, Birmingham registered
George Alfred Rogers by virtue of a deed dated 11th. May 1938 executed by
as partners of Rogers and Harold Rogers.
G. A. Rogers, 101, Tyse Street, Birmingham, 2.

11th. May, 1943.

Copyright expired. 24 MAY 1948

George Alfred Rogers

STAMP APPLICATOR OF EDWARD VII

One of the most spectacular philatelically associated items to reach the open market in recent years has been a unique stamp applicator about 9 inches (22cm.) high. It bears a resemblance to a post-office hand date-stamping machine. Here the resemblance ends.

The item is still in its original purpose made box, and consists of a plunger to dispense one stamp at a time on to an envelope and also incorporates a roller-moistener on a release mechanism. This sweeps across the corner of the envelope dampening it for the stamp to adhere. It's efficiency is questionable as, like the small plunge dispensers with the silver, ivory or wooden handles which can occasionally be found, it usually dispenses, not just one stamp at a time, but several or none at all. However for novelty value it is unbeatable.

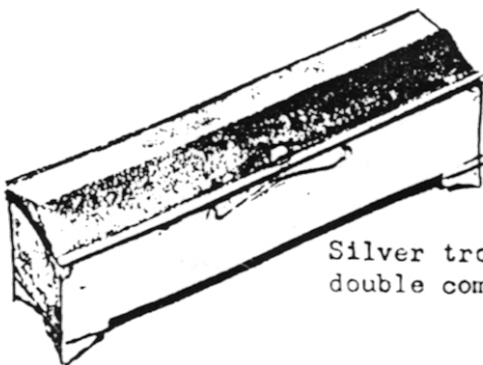
Its rarity and novelty value is enormous because it is a one-off piece in solid silver and it was so intricately designed and made for its day that it is a truly outstanding museum piece for its silver and artistic merit alone, let alone the fact that it is of such philatelic importance.

The applicator is in hallmarked silver dated 1884 and by the silversmiths Sampson and Mordan. It has an ivory handle. Every small part of the item is hallmarked right down to the last screw. The ivory handle has the Prince of Wales plume of feathers on one side together with the initials AE (Albert Edward) on the other side.

This spectacular piece was the property of HRH The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, and was made in 1884 from the design of Elizabeth de Bunsen. De Bunsen patented the applicator for subsequent marketing in the U.S.A. but in a cheaper metal, as an accompanying letter from her to the Prince of Wales points out, and the item in silver was a one-off creation, specially made for the Prince. The letter also asks the Prince for his opinions on the applicator and its performance, and there are various later jotted notes on the original letter stating that the Prince of Wales is unable to pass opinions about new inventions because of policy.

This remarkable item will be on display at Stampex 1986 amongst other stamp boxes and postally related items on the stage area.

Martin H. Leverton.



Silver trough
double compartment



Vesta Stamp Box
and Coin Case
combined



Wheelbarrow Box

At the risk of pandering to the ego of our Hon. Secretary (hopefully) I am including in this issue of the journal another article by [REDACTED]. It is too long for one issue, so it will be concluded in the next issue of the journal. You will no doubt agree with me that it is a very erudite article and I know you will all be looking forward to the second half.

SILVER

Both silver and gold stamp boxes, stamp cases and stamp envelopes are generally more collectable with English hallmarking, as this is the only method of being able to date the item with any accuracy, unless there is a date incorporated within the engraving of an inscription on perhaps a commemoration piece. A rare item such as a large desk piece will command a high price on its own merit, however, whether English, Continental or whatever.

The word 'hallmark' is derived from the hall of the London Goldsmiths Co. who were the original markers of gold and silver. A hallmark is impressed onto a vetted and tested piece to indicate authenticity at the time of making as far as the quality of the silver or gold is concerned. The markings will consist of the Assay Office and the maker's mark and the sterling standard of a lion passant as well as the date letter to be able to ascertain the age and origin of the item. There are other markings on English silver, such as a crowned lion's head, but these are not within the scope of silver with reference to stamp boxes - these are on earlier pre-stamp items.

On the early silver stamp boxes, up to April 1890, the hallmark also showed Queen Victoria's head, indicating that the duty had been paid on the item. As the head shows that the item is very early for a stamp box at a glance, even without the effort of exact dating, this adds a lot to its value. As each year date letter varied from one Assay Office to another, it needs a very retentive memory, and months or more of studying the sequences and the formats of the letters, to be able to date with any accuracy, without being armed with a silver collector's bible - a book of hallmarks.

Pure silver, like pure gold, is too soft a metal to be used in manufacture satisfactorily, so, to make it viable for everyday use, therefore, it is necessary to harden it. This is done by alloying it with a base metal, usually copper.

Sterling silver means silver of purity .925 or 925 parts in 1000. More technically speaking, this is 11 ounces and 2 pennyweights of silver to 18 pennyweights of the base metal. There are 12 ounces in a Troy pound. .925 has been the legal standard in this country for silver since the year 1300 (except 1697-1720 when the standard was an even purer .958).

The origin of sterling is widely believed to have come from an East German tribe, the 'Esterlings', in the 12th. and 13th. centuries, who used particularly fine and reliable silver alloy in their financial dealings.

An item marked 'sterling', without full hallmarks, does not enable the collector to identify the date whatsoever, and there have been a few copies made fairly recently of the silver envelope types, marked in this way, which will still be priced similarly to their predecessors, but are not as collectable.

Of course, one does gradually get a certain feel of an item, and there are some lovely examples of 'sterling' marked pieces which are obviously early, especially some specially commissioned U.S.A. pieces.


Silver marked '800' is also frequently undateable, but a collector will, with just a little experience, be able to ascertain whether an item so marked is of interest enough to purchase. '800' marked silver is about 15% less pure than Sterling. It is four parts silver to one part alloy, or 80% pure. It is the standard in some Continental countries, especially Germany and Italy, and as such does not detract all that much from the value of stamp connected items as there is such a strong demand for stamp boxes and related items, whereas ordinary '800' silver such as tableware is difficult to sell in the U.K. generally.

So, an interesting aspect of silver stamp box collecting is the fact that one can identify the year of manufacture of the article, whereas with most other materials, with the exception of gold and some porcelain items perhaps, there is no way of being too accurate, unless the item is dated as a commemoration of some sort. Even with an obvious art nouveau or art deco piece, one can be several years out.

The prices for items in this category, silver, range from as little as twenty pounds up to well into four figures for one of the rare desk pieces.

At the lowest end of the scale one finds the small stamp-sized or double-sized envelopes, which are the most common of all the silver stamp boxes. The small envelopes are just larger than a definitive postage stamp, and are in the form of envelopes, each with a flap at the back for putting in, and taking out the stamps. They sometimes have a tiny ring loop, also in silver, where they might have been originally put on a chain, or occasionally hanging from a lady's belt as part of a chatelaine, as the illustration shows. These envelopes turn up in a variety of styles, either plain in design, or elaborately chased, embossed or decorated, often incorporating the engraved initials of the original owner within the decoration. Often the envelopes can be found with very heavy embossing or with enamelling, sometimes with 'stamps' worded across the envelope. These silver stamp envelopes make an excellent start to a collection, and can easily be obtained still from twenty to thirty pounds each. A more unusual and intricately designed envelope will fetch a higher price, especially if still in good condition. These envelopes, being small and fragile, are, of course, vulnerable to damage - i.e. serious bruising or crushing - which does reduce the value of the item considerably, as the size does not make any repairing of an item so small a viable proposition. A double sized envelope has compartments for two lots of stamps and these envelopes will be roughly double the price of their single counterparts.

(To be continued)

It appears that we have a nice balance here. In this sending you will find 's address. As you can see, he is the bod to write to for anything of a technical nature where silver and gold is concerned. Fortunately for the rest of you whose aspirations, like mine, are not set too high, you can always write to me about the less valuable items, as most of my collection consists of wood, chrome, leather and etc.

See you at Stampex or in the next copy of the journal.

Happy Hunting!