

The Stamp Atlas



The Stamp Atlas, Stuart Rossiter and John Flower. Macdonald, 1986. ISBN 0-356-10862-7. Now also available on the Internet via the Sandafayre web site www.sandafayre.com/html/Atlas.htm

When it was suggested that I write about a philatelic work available through a public library it set me thinking that, unfortunately, the stamp collecting section is generally lacking in content.

However, armed with the above bibliographic references it should be available through the Inter-Library Loan Scheme – ask locally. It is also available for consultation by all collectors at the library of the National Philatelic Society, British Philatelic Centre, 107 Charterhouse Street, London, where the writer of this piece is its librarian.

Incidentally, do consider regularly borrowing books on our hobby from your local library, for the more frequently that stamp collecting publications are taken-out on loan, the more likely it is that the librarian will add other newly published works to holdings for the benefit of all.

An atlas is an essential 'tool' for any philatelist, so when written by postal historian's who were a Blue Guides editor and a cartographer respectively, you know that it comes with a fine pedigree.

The book contains 144 maps, over 750 illustrations and a comprehensive index. The pictorial elements are held-together by a text that records boundary changes, postal routes, postmarks, currencies, date of issue of first stamp and much more besides. This information is all broken-down by continent and country in a logical sequence.

In the introduction to the book, W. Raife Wellsted claims that it is "almost impossible to assemble a collection of stamps without some knowledge of the political history of a country". For the postal historian he wrote that "...a knowledge of geographical changes and history is an essential part of his study". I agree totally and believe that there is a much deeper fascination and pleasure to be derived from our hobby when it includes research.

This book brings together otherwise scattered information and increases our knowledge of countries and the postal service therein. The images chosen add much to the pleasure of the reader and certainly inspired me to delve deeper into the workings of communication by letter, especially the boxes that they are posted in.

The borders between nations and country names are forever evolving and the years since the publication of this work has seen many unexpected changes as newly-found 'people-power', wars and political upheaval have helped to reshape the map of our planet. A supplement recording these changes would be of great value.

All postal history covers and stamps have a story to tell and The Stamp Atlas enables us to put our philatelic treasures into an historical context and to gain a greater understanding of what we possess. I have referred to the book many times when writing-up my own collections and exhibits and commend it to all readers to borrow a copy, or to track it down from a philatelic bookseller so that it can always be to hand.

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