

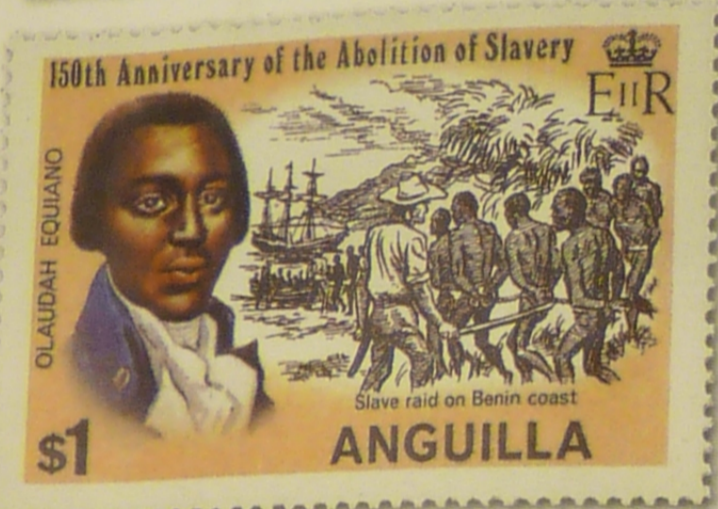
STAMP MAGAZINE™



Tanganyika's bold idea to replace the king with a giraffe



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Poland's war

Stamps as propaganda during the Nazi occupation and communist takeover

Slaying slavery

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Bobbin along

Lace-making had always fascinated Margareta von Bahr, so when she took up philately she decided to build a thematic collection telling the history of the craft

NAME

Margareta von Bahr



NATIONALITY

Swedish

AGE 71 years

OCCUPATION

Retired physiotherapist

SPECIALISM

The story of lace-making

SOCIETIES JOINED

- Trollhättan Stamp Club
- Swedish Philatelic Society
- Swedish Thematic Association

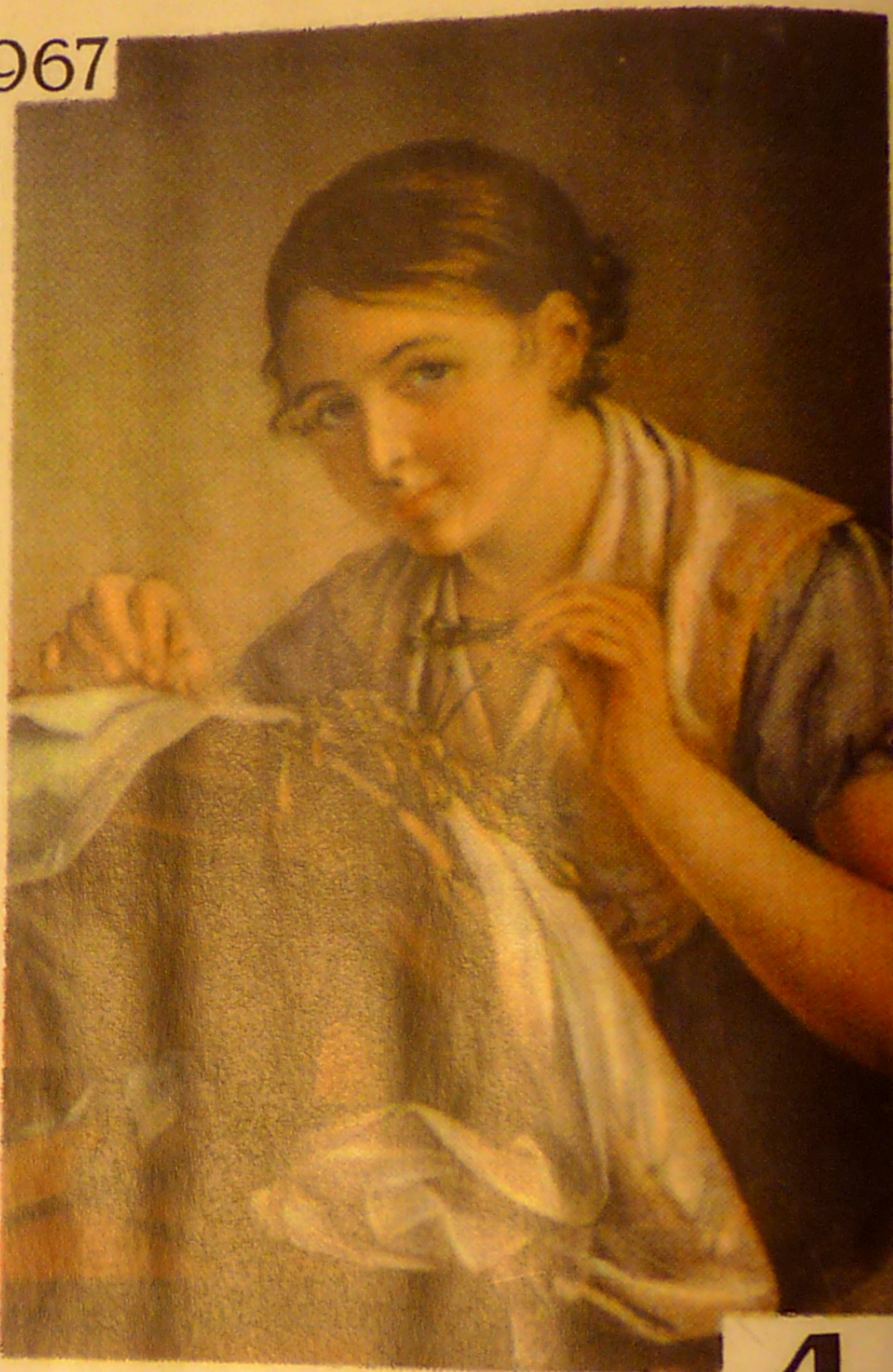
OTHER INTERESTS

Square dancing

RIGHT: Russian stamp of 1967 illustrating *The Lace-Maker*, an 1823 painting by Vasily Tropinin

1967

ГОСУДАРСТВЕННАЯ ТРЕТЬЯКОВСКАЯ ГАЛЕРЕЯ



В. А. ТРОПИНИН. КРУЖЕВНИЦА. 1823

ПОЧТА СССР

4к

When did you start collecting, and why?

In 2007, my son married the daughter of Hasse Brockenhuus von Löwenheim, a well-known Swedish philatelist. He told me a lot about his wonderful hobby. I accompanied him to a couple of philatelic exhibitions, and I got hooked.

I was fascinated by the Open Class. I found the thematic exhibits beautiful, and they really fired my imagination. To be allowed to use one's imagination and creativity to tell a story, within a framework, enticed me.

BELOW: Block of six Spanish stamps from 1989 showing three bobbin laces and three needle laces from different regions, with patterns which can be traced back to the 17th and 18th centuries, with se-tenant central labels showing bobbins



I began to wonder whether I could create something similar.

What is your specialism, and what attracted you to it?

My thematic collection deals with the history of bobbin lace-making.

Lace-making has long been an interest of mine. As a little girl, I used to watch the bobbins dancing on my aunt's lace-pillow, and sometimes she gave me the chance to try it myself. I returned to the hobby just before I retired.

Genuine lace can be produced only by needlework or with a bobbin.

To make bobbin lace, you need thread wound on bobbins, a pillow, pins and sometimes also a cardboard pattern.

You move the bobbins in such a way that the threads entwine, while being held in the desired position by the pins inserted in the pillow. There are only two basic stitches, cross and twist, which can be combined in innumerable ways to form a pattern.

Opinions differ as to where and when lace-making was invented, but the type of thin, white lace that we recognise as bobbin lace can be



ABOVE: A set of three stamps from Belgium in 1989 celebrated the lace-making cities of Marche-en-Famenne, Brussels and Bruges, showing a pattern typical of each

traced back to the beginning of the 16th century, when it was produced mainly in Flanders and Italy.

What does your collection aim to show, and why is it important to you?

I want my exhibit to highlight the social, cultural and economic importance of this handicraft. I hope to show examples of exquisite work, and promote the art of lace-making so that it will not be forgotten. Simultaneously, I want to honour the thousands of people, mostly women, who produced lace for the Church and the upper classes in earlier centuries, often for a paltry payment and under appalling circumstances.

How and where do you find your material?

I just keep my eyes open all the time. I visit stamp dealers, both locally and at stamp fairs and exhibitions, and I always go through every box I find.

Sometimes a conversation with other philatelists turns out to be useful. Lately I have also tried internet shopping.

How is your exhibit arranged?

It comprises five frames. The first describes what lace is, and the tools and materials needed to produce bobbin lace. The next three present theories of where and when the art of lace-making first appeared, and how it spread all over Europe. And the final frame presents lace-making in paintings and literature. ▷

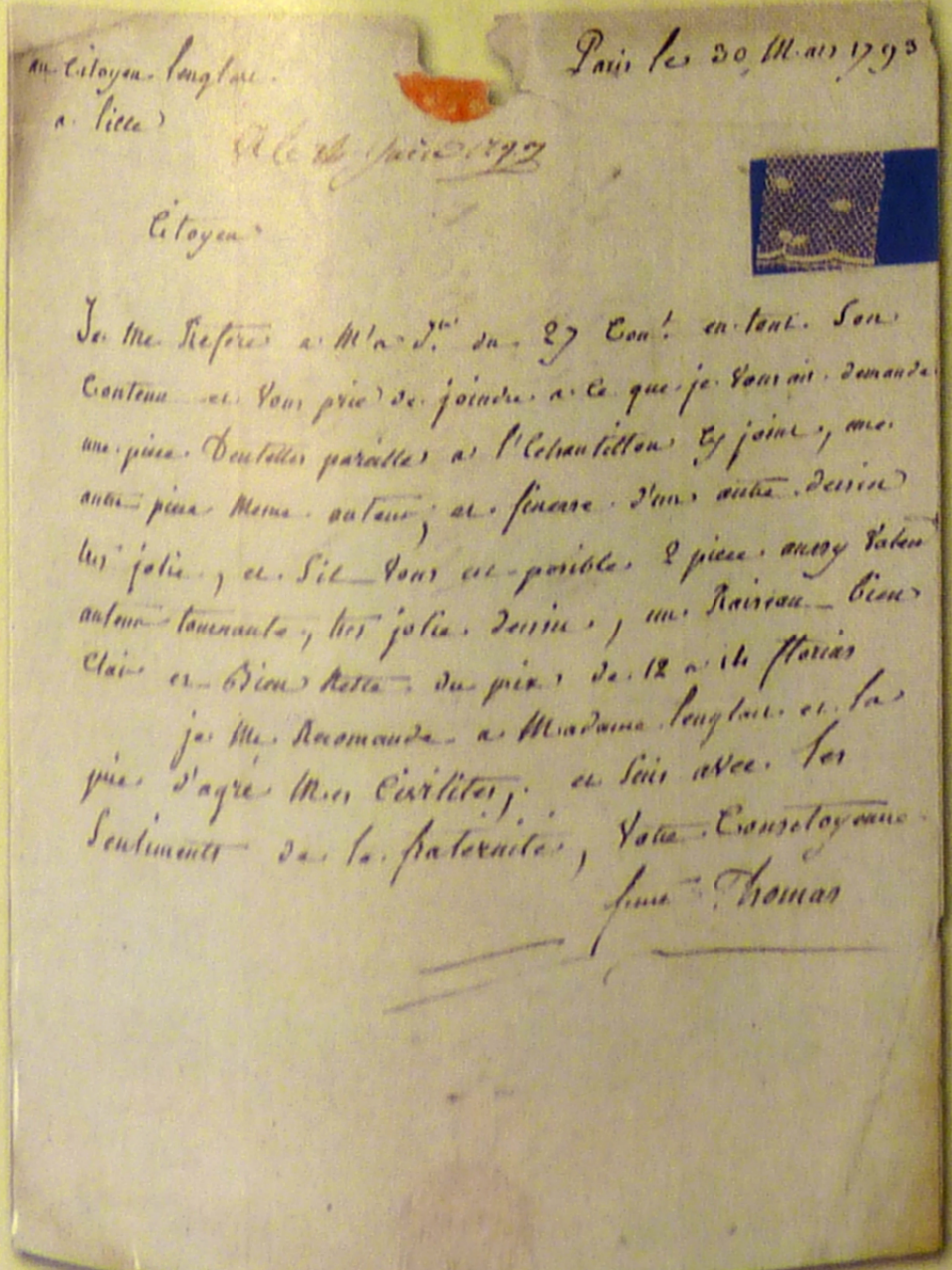
'As a little girl, I used to watch the bobbins dancing on my aunt's lace-pillow. Many years later I returned to lace-making myself'

What is your favourite item, and why?

I managed to acquire a lovely letter and its cover written in France as long ago as 1793.

Written by a Madame Thomas in Paris, it is an order for bobbin lace from a Madame Langlace in Lille, with a small specimen of the requested pattern attached.

It was sent as an unpaid inland letter, and the annotation on the cover shows that it was assessed at 7-sous on arrival in Lille.



ABOVE: A Swedish bobbin lace-maker working in the old town of Vadstena, on a 1975 stamp



ABOVE: An Italian lace-maker using a traditional Italian-style pillow, illustrated on a 1970 stamp



ABOVE: A Belgian lace-maker with a northern European pillow, on a 1948 stamp



ABOVE: A Spanish lace-maker from Camariñas in Galicia, on a 1976 issue

MY COLLECTION



How has your exhibit developed over time?

When I first showed my exhibit, at a regional exhibition in Sweden in 2008, the quality of my material was of no great concern to me. Nowadays, though, I am very choosy, and try to select only the very best items.

I have also become more aware of how important it is that the material really illustrates what I want to say.

What are you most keen to add to your collection?

I believe that I have almost every stamp in existence that is related to lace-making. What I can still add, though, are more stamps which illustrate garments decorated with lace, and other philatelic material, such as postal stationery, postmarks and postcards.

Moreover, I am looking for

What was your best chance discovery?

A friend gave me a small, rather inconspicuous stamp, which I did not find very intriguing at first, but which on closer inspection turned out to be a real find.

It was a Japan 1876 5r grey, heavily cancelled with a 'K' obliteration. This turned out to be from the city of Kobe, which has a fashion museum and hosted a lace festival in 2010.



consignment notes, order forms and other documents conveyed by post, and documents concerned with the transportation and smuggling of lace. Smuggling was once quite common, due to the value of lace and protectionist importation policies.

How affordable is this type of collection?

I was able to acquire my 1793 letter at a much lower price than I had expected, but it is still the most expensive item I have bought.

On the other hand there are many stamps showing kings and dignitaries

TOP TIPS

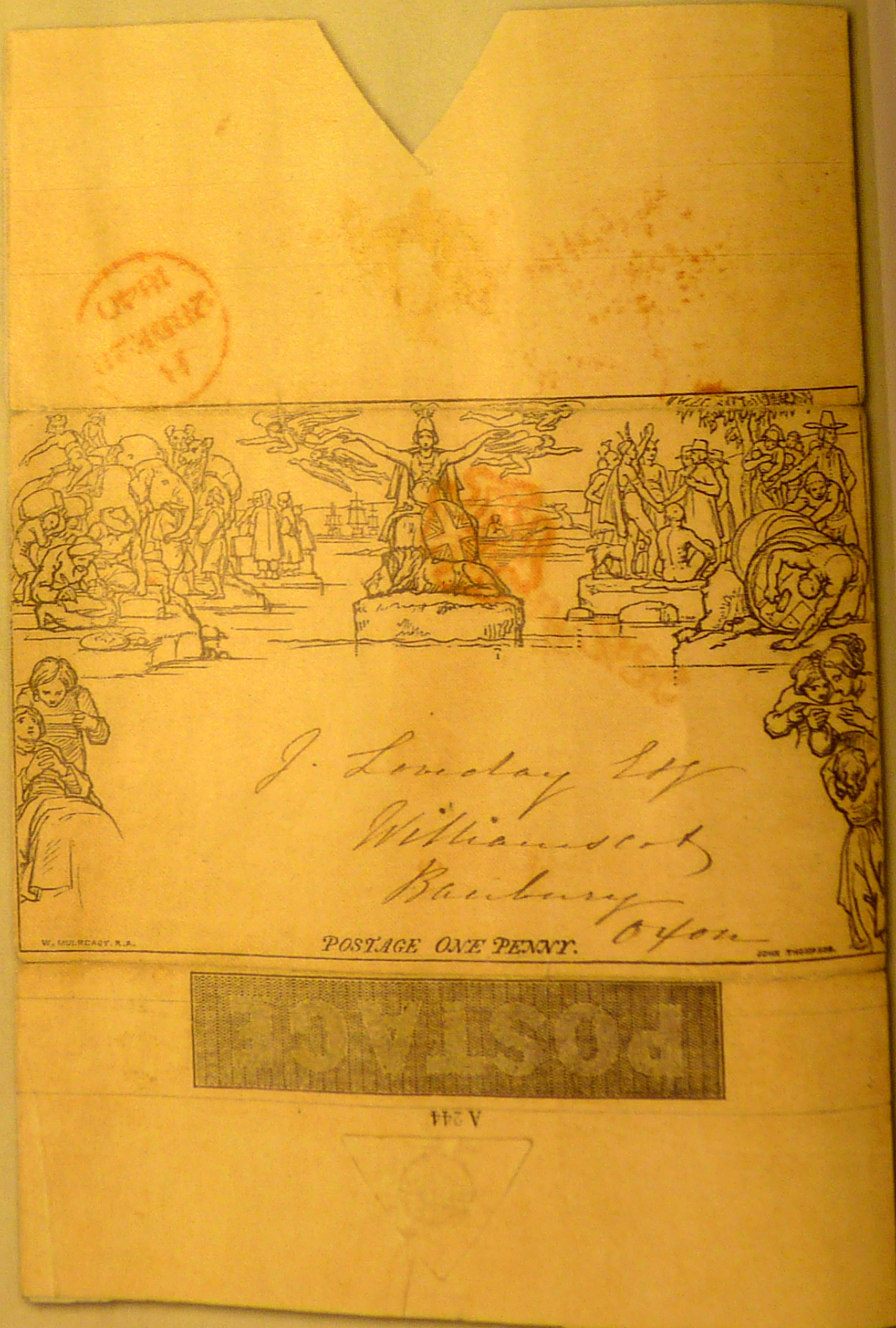
From your own experience, what advice would you give to other collectors?

- Collect what interests you, in a manner that suits you.
- Take the opportunity to try to interest other people in your chosen theme.

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

Great Britain's Mulready envelopes and lettersheets of 1840 are found in many Open Class exhibits, since their wealth of detail offers great thematic possibilities. My interest is that they were printed on silk-threaded security paper, and silk thread is among the materials that have been used to produce bobbin lace.

It took me a long time to acquire a Mulready lettersheet. But I told my stamp-collecting friends that I wanted one, and a couple of months later one of them found one for me at a philatelic exhibition in Denmark. It was posted on December 28, 1840, to Banbury, Oxfordshire.



wearing beautiful lace garments are rather cheap, and not hard to find. Although it gives me great pleasure to own unique items, to me their monetary value is not important. I am just as delighted with cheap but beautiful stamps that fit well into my exhibit.

What have you learnt from your research into this theme?

My general knowledge has increased considerably. I have learnt a lot about European history from the 15th century onwards, and about the social and economic circumstances faced by different classes of people over that time.

To thousands of 17th and 18th century women, lace-making skills made the difference between poverty and putting food on the table.

How do you store and display your collection?

It is mounted in sheets stored in plastic pockets in albums, standing up in a box so that the sheets do not press against one another.

'Although it gives me great pleasure to own unique items, to me their monetary value is not important'

Have you enjoyed the experience of exhibiting competitively?

Yes. I started by competing at a regional exhibition held in my home town of Trollhättan in 2008, and I have kept on going, with some success.

My exhibit achieved a vermeil medal at Nordia 2009 in Iceland, at the Antwerpia 2010 international exhibition in Belgium and at the Swedish national exhibition in 2011.

Are you involved in any philatelic societies?

I belong to my local Trollhättan Stamp Club, the Swedish Philatelic Society and the Swedish Thematic Association, and I have given displays at two other local clubs.

I have also given a couple of PowerPoint presentations of my exhibit to people who know nothing of philately but are keen on bobbin lace-making. They were strongly impressed by the fact that so much of their specialist knowledge could be illustrated by stamps!



ABOVE: 1994 Estonia stamp celebrating the 17th-century Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus, festooned with lace



ABOVE: 1973 British stamp portraying Sir Walter Raleigh, the 16th-century explorer, wearing a beautiful lace collar



ABOVE: 1974 Liechtenstein stamp showing Bishop Franz Marxer wearing an alb (clerical vestment) covered in lace in the mid-18th century



ABOVE: 1979 Niue stamp showing a detail of a painting by the Dutch artist Franz Hals illustrating that well-off European children wore lots of lace in the 17th century



LEFT: An East German 1988 miniature sheet of six illustrating bobbin lace patterns from the Erzgebirge region, which still has an active lace-making school

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

I like the challenge of searching for material and the thrill of finally finding what I wanted.

It is always fun to meet people I would otherwise never have met, and compare notes about our common interest.

And I enjoy exposing the wonderful world of lace-making to people who have not previously taken an interest in handicrafts.

What plans or ambitions do you have for your collection?

I want to rearrange and improve my exhibit. I think I might select certain parts of it and turn them into more specialised exhibits in their own right. □

YOUR TURN?

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

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