

A REPORT ON AMPHILEX 2002, Glenn H Morgan

Amsterdam was recently host to an international stamp exhibition at the RAI Centre on the outskirts of the city. Pre-show publicity indicated that there would be much to see and do during the five days. I had been looking forward to this Dutch show and to renewing my acquaintance with the friendly city of Amsterdam and I was not disappointed.

I paid my five euros entrance fee and made my way to stamp printers Enschedé, Questa and Walsall for, as readers will be aware, these are three of the printers utilised by Royal Mail. De La Rue was not in attendance.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Enschedé of nearby Haarlem had the largest stand. They demonstrated perforating and had displays featuring artwork, dies, stamps, etc from their extensive archives of historical and modern stamps. For one euro, they sold an attractive publicity sheet designed by Inge Madlé (the engraver of the Enschedé version of the British castle high values). Inge showed visitors how stamps are engraved at regular intervals throughout the day.

Walsall gave away a sheetlet revealing their new logo, together with that of their recently acquired company Courvoisier. The design was of a typical British (Houses of Parliament) and Swiss (mountain) landmark. Recently produced stamps formed the basis of their display.

Questa seemed only to be showing current stamps of Jersey and Guernsey. Their reason for being at the show was not obvious, for they were not selling the stamps; neither were they offering any literature or souvenirs to visitors.

There was a fourth stamp 'printer' at the show, namely the Royal Dutch Mint. Back in 1852, they had printed the first stamp of The Netherlands and, last year, re-entered the stamp production market with a self-adhesive stamp manufactured (for printed is the wrong terminology) of pure silver. For one euro, they were selling AMPHILEX publicity 'stamps' that utilised this unique laser and die-cutting technique known as MSP (Minted Stamping Process).

Other souvenirs of the exhibition included daily handstamps and the show catalogue, which came bundled with an excellent thick handbook on the first issue of Holland for a mere twelve euros in either an English or Dutch edition.

The competitive exhibits were of a high standard but unfortunately, as is usual at European shows, they received little patronage from visitors. UK exhibitors fared well. Congratulations in particular go to Tony Walker for his exhibit *Sterling Machins 1967-1971*, which received a gold medal together with the felicitations of the jury.

It was refreshing to see a modern-era exhibit do so well. Indeed, it was refreshing to see a modern-era exhibit! Let us hope that Tony's efforts will encourage others to consider entering displays of modern material and that judges recognise that it is not just the classics of philately that deserve to do well. I lost count of the number of (probably) unique colour trials and proof items included in his display.

The invited non-competitive exhibits, especially that of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, were popular due, I guess, to the publicity that they had received in advance of the show.

It has become common at recent philatelic internationals for some form of (often too loud) entertainment to be laid on and AMPHILEX was no exception. However, they got it right by having a young woman pianist unobtrusively playing an ever-changing range of background music at set times during the day.

There were pirates, stilt-walkers and clowns to amuse the children and a slightly mad man took a Polaroid of you while you posed within an empty picture frame. Tombolas, PC workshops, huge murals, painting sessions, items from ships chandlers, pneumatic mail demonstrations, a mailcoach, old and new posting boxes and postal uniforms all added to the atmosphere for young and old alike.

It was good to see plenty of seating around the halls, with tables displaying copies of the latest stamp catalogues for you to peruse. These tables also had lots of free sales literature, including hundreds of cards promoting our Autumn Stampex.

There were lots of dealers and postal administrations in attendance and it is hoped that they did well. Certainly, on the opening day, crowds were five deep around many of the stands. Publicity had been well organised, as every posting box at least 35km beyond the city had posters on them and there was even television advertising. The organisers had predicted an attendance of 75,000 and I would be surprised if they had failed to reach this figure.

Congratulations to the Dutch Post Office, NBFV and NVPH, under the guidance of Ruud de Jong and Monique Hoogvliet, for producing such a well organised show with so much to see and do.

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