



# The Rossiter News

The newsletter of the Stuart Rossiter Trust



The e-newsletter of the Stuart Rossiter Trust

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## Report on the Seminar 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 2025

### 'What is Postal History?'

Sixty three attendees gathered at RPSL for this event. If asked "Are you a Postal Historian?" some would have replied 'Yes' some 'Not Sure' and others would have echoed the title - 'It Depends, What is Postal History?'

These notes are only a very brief summary; the links to the YouTube recordings of the presentations will be found on the SRT website [www.rossitertrust.com](http://www.rossitertrust.com) with the PowerPoint presentations from the speakers.

The Corresponding Trustee Andy Gould FRPSL opened the event with some background on Stuart Rossiter the man, and on his eponymous Trust.

James Grimwood Taylor RDP FRPSL's presentation entitled "[Was the most important event in postal history the invention of the postage stamp?](#)" suggested various other possibilities. Starting with the invention of writing, the production of paper, creation of Royal Mail, postal charges, postal stationery etc etc.

Douglas N. Muir RDP FRPSL's presentation "[Must postal history have a stop?](#)" expanded on the History of the Post from earliest times through to the present day. It concluded that we can (and do) collect artifacts about Postal History but cannot and do not actually collect History – it being the study of events.

It included an extract of film about the first machine to sort the mail, and another in which Douglas was interviewing David Gentlemen, designer of many British postage stamps. The short answer to the opening question is "No" history doesn't stop; therefore, Postal History doesn't stop.

After lunch Theo Brauers talked on "[The Treatment of Mail on the Continent.](#)" This is a highly complex area with problems relating to varying routes, multi-currency rates and multiple Postal Conventions. Attendees admired his diligence and achievement, though several expressed relief that they personally had chosen less taxing areas to research.

Nigel Gooch FRPSL "[Is Postal History only Rates, Routes and Postmarks?](#)" using examples from his collection of Iran Nigel showed confusing rates, obscure routes and postmarks in Farsi. He was then able to show that these illustrate: A Cholera epidemic, Postcard Tax, Postal Agency in Turkey, Alternative uses for Registration Labels, Famine and Regime Change, etc etc. Again, the short answer to the question is "No"

Birthe King RDP FRPSL is well known for promoting Open Philately and her presentation was "[An Open Goal ...](#)" her approach is that we can include whatever we like in our collections. Rules only apply if and when we want to enter competitions. The main difference between Postal History Class 2C and Open Philately is the amount of non-philatelic material used. In Postal History the non-philatelic material must have close relation to the philatelic items and illustrate these. In Open Philately the non-philatelic material must illustrate the philatelic items and

bring the story forward. Birthe illustrated the differences with pages from her Postal History and Open Philately displays. She ended with “enjoy your collecting, displaying, and exhibiting”

Wolfgang Maassen’s presentation was “The Next Steps?” - this is research, documentation and publication. He emphasised the importance of using primary sources for research, not relying on what has been published before, the results of this research need to be documented carefully and then published. Otherwise, it is all for nothing! Your good work is lost. Wolfgang publishes a journal, four times a year, downloadable as pdf from [www.philahistorica.de](http://www.philahistorica.de).

At the close, James Podger FRPSL, who had acted as Master of Ceremonies all day, thanked the Royal PS staff for their organisation and catering, and Mark Bailey for his IT expertise.

This was an International event, with speakers from the UK, Germany, Belgium and Denmark. The audience also included visitors from USA and Canada. We were particularly pleased to meet Marty Bratzel from Canada as the SRT has sponsored his publications about the Cameroons. <https://www.rossitertrust.com/book-shop/sponsored-books/>



James Podger introducing Birthe King

**2026’s event** A lecture by Rob May FRPSL on **Tuesday 15th September 2026**  
**Please note the changed date**

More details including the title and how to book to attend will be announced in the New Year.

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