

First in a Series

OF SLED DOGS AND STAMPS

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Antarctic Sled Dog History Comes Alive Through Collection

Stamps depict years of sled dog assisted exploration in Antarctica - as well as the decision to remove dogs from the region.

THE STAMP COLLECTOR'S STORY

Let me introduce myself: my name is Arie Schwarz, and I live in Israel. My acquaintance with dogs started in 1984, with a Siberian Husky, Israeli Champion Poof Omran Gvilot. Later I moved on to Malamutes, owned some dogs and handled and judged both breeds under FCI - the Fédération Cynologique Internationale or World Canine Organization, which is an international federation of kennel clubs based in Belgium. I chaired the Israeli Spitz Dog Club and was a Board of Directors member for the Israeli Kennel Club.

I started my "mushing" career in 1994, joining longtime malamute-breeder Nancy Russell and famous dogsled racer Jamie Nelson on the historic first ever all-malamute Iditarod run. A few visits to dogsled-malamute-get-togethers in Camp Nicolet, Wisconsin followed, and soon this group of wonderful people had me hooked on dogsledding (don't forget, there is no snow in Israel...).

In addition to all this, for the last 35 years I have collected dog stamps. After collecting thousands of them, I looked for a new and more interesting way to expand my collection.

Re-Inventing the Wheel?

In these British Antarctic Territories stamps, why does the dogsled have a wheel behind it?

Answer: This is an odometer. In a land with no roads, signs or landmarks, the only way to know where you are is by using an odometer and compass. Maps are no use when all you see around you is ice!



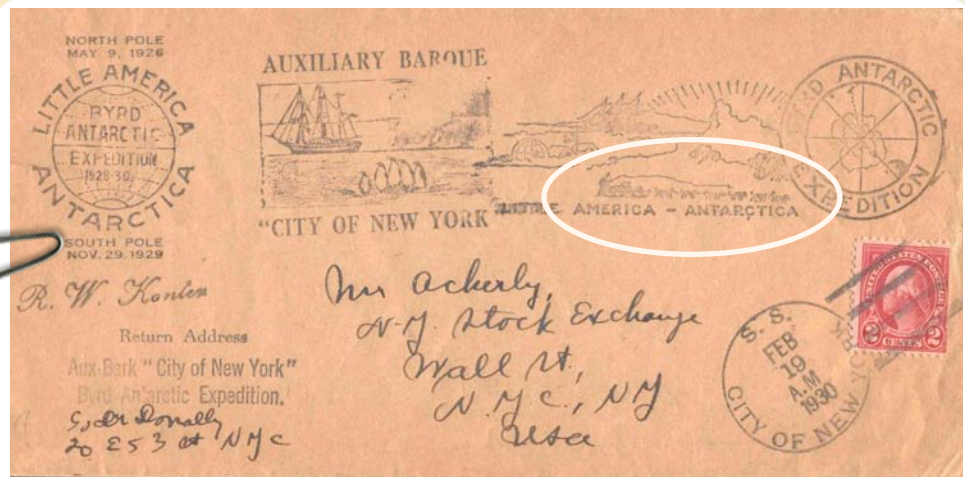
Rare BAT stamp, overprinted in 1971.



Nine pence stamp above and British artist's sketch - "Sledging" below.

OF SLED DOGS AND STAMPS

Thus began my collection based on the topic of sled dogs and dog sleds, which has been exhibited around the world, winning several awards. This collection teaches and illustrates the different sled dog breeds and all about sledding. My joy in the stamp world, as in the dog world, is learning more and sharing my knowledge with friends. I thank the editor for inviting me to write and share these two passions - dogs and stamps - with you.



Letter dated February 19, 1930 from "Little America". A tiny sled and dog team is on the lower side of the cancel (inside white oval).

BEGINNING WITH BYRD

Richard Evelyn Byrd was an American naval officer, polar explorer, and aviator who is best known for his contributions to polar exploration. Byrd's fascination with the Polar Regions was probably born when he participated in a 1924 expedition to Western Greenland.

After several unsuccessful attempts to fly over the North Pole with the Navy, Byrd raised funds to embark on a private mission in 1926. He was racing another explorer, Roald Amundsen (1872-1928), for the honor of being the first to fly over the North Pole. Which man actually flew over the North Pole first is still controversial today.

Next, Byrd traveled to Antarctica with intentions to fly over the South Pole and claim the land for the United States. His

first expedition there established a base called "Little America". On his explorations, he mapped and claimed a significant area of uncharted territory for the United States, which he called "Marie Byrd Land" after his wife. Byrd made a total of five expeditions to the Antarctic; each successive trip more elaborate than the last.

STAMPS OF ANTARCTICA

In the 1950s the Antarctic Treaty was negotiated to demilitarize the region and retain Antarctica – defined as all land and ice shelves south of 60°S latitude – for peaceful research purposes. The treaty was passed in 1961.

On February 1st, 1963, the first stamp series for the British Antarctic Territories was issued, comprised of 14 stamps. Four of them depict sled dogs or dog sleds: the 3p (pence) prussian blue stamp depicts the research ship the *RRS John Biscoe* with some sled dogs next to it; the 4p sepia stamp depicts a camp scene; the 9p olive stamp depicts a dog sled; and a wonderful two shilling stamp depicts sled dogs and the *Aurora Borealis*. All of these stamps were designed by a British artist.

In 1971, England changed its monetary system to a decimal one. All existing stamps had to be withdrawn and replaced. Unfortunately, the British

Stay Tuned
At the 2010 AMCA annual meeting the illustrated breed standard was discussed. For the next story in this series, I will show you my interpretation of the standard through stamps and other philatelic items from around the world.



Overprinted two shilling stamp.

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Antarctic Territories' population of around 100 scientists was not big enough to deserve new stamps, so the British Postal Service used the old stamps it had in stock, and simply overprinted them with the new denomination. These stamps are relatively rare.

A few years ago, after the designing artist for the British stamps passed away, his widow sold his private archive through a well known auction house in London. I had to have the sketches he made for those stamps, and bought them for my collection. "Had to have", by the way, is a term used by collectors of all types, and has nothing to do with reason or common sense whatsoever. From time to time I hear the term from dog breeders as well.

END OF AN ERA

In 1991, under pressure from environmentalists, a new clause was incorporated into the Antarctic Treaty: "Introduction of non native species, parasites and diseases: dogs shall not be introduced onto land or ice shelves and dogs currently in those areas shall be removed by April 1, 1994".

By 1993 only two dog teams remained in Antarctica. An emotion-filled take off in a Dash 7 aircraft on February 22nd, 1994 took those last Huskies to their new homes.

The Australian postal service commemorated the event with a series of four stamps issued on January 13th.



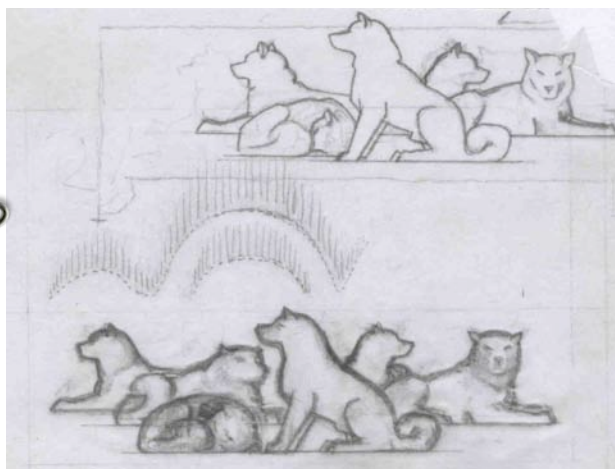
Australian Antarctic Territories "last huskies" first day cover. These stamps commemorated the removal of the last sled dogs from Antarctica.

Interestingly, the dogs harnesses depicted on these stamps are old style hide harnesses, not the modern ones used for recreational mushing.

I believe some of these dogs ended up at Jamie Nelson's kennel, in Togo, Minnesota.

So ends this story, which began by telling you of my Iditarod experience with Jamie, in the same year. For further reading and hundreds of beautiful dog pictures I recommend the book *Of Dogs and Men* by Kevin Walton and Rick Atkinson.

Word of the Day:
Philately - the study of stamps, postal history and other related items.



Sketch of sled dogs and the Aurora Borealis.



Artist's concept for 2 penny stamp in the 1963 series. This sketch was not used for a stamp, so is one of a kind.