

MABEL LUCIE ATTWELL
Illustrator & Designer

She was the most prolific and well-known female designer of the 20th Century. Born on 4th June 1879 at Mile End, London, (Died 5 November 1964) at her final home in Fowey, Cornwall.

She studied at the Regent Art School, and by the age of 16, she had a Portfolio filled with drawings of fairies and children.

In 1905 and 1917 she designed posters for the London Underground (The Tube).
In 1911 she started designing Postcards for Valentine & Sons of Dundee.

VALENTINES & SONS
Established in 1851 at Dundee.

In 1897 the Government allowed correspondence to be written on the reverse side of a Postcard.

By the end of the 19th Century, Valentine's had developed the perfect method for producing cheap reproduction of Postcards.

During the first half of the 20th Century they became the largest printer and producer of Postcards, with offices both in London and overseas.

THE PRIMROSE
COLLECTION

Val, has collected Mabel Lucie Attwell Figurines etc. for many years and since 1991, started saving Postcards, which saw the start of the "Primrose Collection"

Unlike most Postcards which when numbered, have the numbers chronological, in the case of this collection; the numbering system is completely haphazard. Consequently there was great difficulty in being able to ascertain any logical date of issue or order.

It was soon noticed that there were marked differences in the printers imprint, some quite minor, but on some there were major changes in both the design and layout; in fact there were at least 24 noted differences. Together with dated copies of the used specimens, some chronological order was established between 1916 and 1956.

Quite recently, through "eBay" Val was made aware of a book by John Henty first published in 1999, which set out the details of date of issue of the Postcards.

Whilst the original dates calculated on the details of the imprint was reasonably accurate, many of the designs with the same number have been printed on different stock with varying imprints, to confound things even more in some cases the same design has been re-issued over many years with different captions.

They have also been printed with captions in different languages.

None of the group of the numbers are consecutive, with some of the earliest dated cards (1916) starting with 4012 -, and the 1940 cards starting at 391-.

In addition to the ordinary Postcards, there are a series of Novelty Cards, with an attached pouch containing a concertina strip of pullout images. Whilst the designs are the same as the issued Postcards, they have completely different numbers!

Birthday Cards also have different series numbers, and these too bear no relationship with the numbers shown on the similar Postcard designs.

Another factor, which Val was made aware of more, recently, is that after 1953, the Postcards issued between 1954 and 1963 were the work of Mabel Lucie Attwell's daughter Peggy Wickham.

Whilst Val is a member of the Postcard Society of New Zealand, she is not competitive (Unlike Gerald) and does not intend to exhibit competitively, although it gives her great pleasure in sharing her collection with family and friends.

As you will see from the display, the Postcards are characterised by the meaningful, optimistic captions and verse. They are often indicators of topical subjects such as fashion, social and significant events, and more obviously between War and Peace. The styles also changed, as did the type of lettering being used, and smaller figures.

Colour also was an important factor in the design of the Postcards.

Introduction to the talk and display given to the Wellesley Philatelic Society March 2015

Gerald Elliott Patron

As patron it gives me great pleasure once again to present a talk and display. There is only one problem, that after so many years, I have now run out of treasures to show and I cannot really recycle what's left.

So this evening, I am going to display a small part of a collection of picture Postcards.

I think it is now appropriate, as there is now a class for Postcards at our National Exhibitions, however I should make it quite clear, that I am no expert on the rules and regulations of exhibiting Postcards.

I have to also point out that I am not a member of the Postcard Society, and the Postcards on display all belong to my wife Val.

However I am the Official Keeper of the collection, rather like the Keeper of the Royal Collection at Buckingham Palace, the only difference being, I shall not be getting a Knighthood, I might get a Nightcap if I am lucky.

My job is to try and fill in the gaps, which I have now come to the conclusion is going to be virtually impossible, especially as there is no way of knowing the extent of what has been issued, even though it is a definite time frame of **38 years**.

First of all I will introduce you to some of the details of the PRIMROSE COLLECTION, including the Artist and the Printer. These notes are part of the display.

The Display will be on eight frames, and I shall give you details of a few of the postcards, published during the years 1916-1953. The cards have been identified with a "Red Dot" and I have to assure you that they are not part of the Auckland Society's Red Dot Sale!

As they say ON WITH THE SHOW

FRAME ONE

The **PRIMROSE** Collection.

The **Introduction**. (4 pages)

1916 **16 cards** (9 cards)

The first Number is **4012**, "**All for the Love of a Soldier**" however the same design is issued without the number as well as with it, and to complicate things even more the same design has been issued with different captions.

Someone has also made a **LOOK A LIKE card**.

To complicate matters even more they have different printers imprints.

You will also note that the next card has different captions "**The Zepps**" and **AIR RAIDS, but the same design**

1917 **11 cards** (6 cards)

Completely different designs, two different imprints and one different font, and one card same design, but without the **Border frame**.

1918 **36 cards** (11 cards)

Six cards have different imprints; it now appears that there would have been more than one issue. There are two double captions, one triple caption, one is signed in a different place, and one issued with different fonts. Roman letters as well as Block Letters.

Far worse than saving "Plate Blocks and Overprints!!!!"

FRAME TWO

1919 **14 cards** (6 cards)

A new problem has now emerged, instead of the printing being done in England, some of the cards were printed in France with French sub-titles, both printed and written! The **BRIDE & GROOM** Card is extra special, **God BLESS the Bride, God HELP the Groom**.

The sender of one of the cards is **STAN** who has attached a cutting to **Annabel** how much he feels for her.

"I love you with all the passion the world has ever known. I would sacrifice everything I have for you. I would swim the deepest torrents, climb the highest mountains, and go through valley of fire to be at your side, Lovingly STAN. PS I will come and see you on Saturday if it doesn't rain!!!"

1920 **20 cards** (8 cards)

The first thing I thought about the issue of this year was the fact that there was a new bottle of **black ink** in her Paintbox. **Black Bobs and Bows**. The numbering system has taken even a worse turn with **Letters added**, either an **"A" in front or an "M"** at the end, this in addition to the straightforward number! Which of course is in no particular chronological order!! In addition there are now Christmas **Cards**.

1921 **20 cards** (10 cards)

The theme this year is **"Fairies and the Boo Boos"** annoyingly these are sought after by nearly everyone! Mabel has still got lots of black ink, and the cards are getting more colourful and the signature has changed?

1922 **31 cards** (16 cards)

This was a very very **expensive** year, where postage stamps are cheaper than Postcards, as far as the **"Black Cards"** are concerned.

Likewise cards with **cats, dogs, gollywogs and similar** are also in great demand, once again there are several variations of the same design.

1923 **20 cards** (7 cards)

There is a great demand for sports cards so the **Golf Cards** are hard to get, I think you will find the card with the caption **"Mother's been to the sales"** a similar card was issued later with the caption **"Mother will now have to buy new curtains"**

It now appears that the cards printed in any one year were actually issued in the next year, this would definitely apply to those issued in the first part of the year, although I guess there would be a mid year printing ready for the holiday rush, in the same year. **Room for further research!**

FRAME THREE

1924 **26 cards** (7 cards)

I guess this was the year that Radios were generally available to the masses? And the **Charleston**.

The salespeople had obviously thought up a new idea to sell even more cards, and they now issued duplicate cards one with a crossword puzzle at the top with the answer below!! **(Same Numbers)**

1925 **35 cards** (11 cards)

A very mixed bag of designs. It rather looks as some new **chairs** had been purchased as they figure in a lot of the cards. The **"Top Hatters"** design was used twice. The **captions**

had grown from single lines to multiple **7 or 8 lines!** A **calendar** for 1926 used the 1925 design. Interesting design?

1926 **32 cards** (7 cards)

A very special year, not only for me but also for everyone, it was the year which saw the birth of the future Queen Elizabeth in the month of April. It looks as tho' the **Charleston** was all the rage and the cards generally have that design and colour radiating happy times and days ahead. (If only they had known)

1927 **12 cards** (5 cards)

There was just one set of twelve cards this year, for a change all **consecutive** numbers. The one card which I particularly like has the

"There's a good time a coming – but it is a good time a coming!"

1928 **36 cards** (9 cards)

This year there was a special set of twelve cards incorporating the popular child actor **"SNOOKUMS"**. These were issued by permission of Universal Pictures. A total of 39 films all entitled **"The Newlyweds..." and the antics etc., of their baby son Snookums"** The character was played by Sunny Jim McKean (1924-1938)

As an extra bonus and an extra complication for me, some of the cards now have **German** captions.

"I'se tickled to death 'bout you!"

FRAME FOUR

1929 **23 cards** (4 cards)

Most of the cards now have the first capital letter in a boxed frame. The cards reflect the depression and also the Talkies. The last card **"I THINK DADDY WANTED A BABY CARD"** reminds when I went out to look at and possibly buy MUMMY a car and came home with a pigeon gram!

Card No. 1597 (Not shown) is unrecorded in Henty

1930 **36 cards** (6 cards)

Most of the cards printed this year are predominantly coloured **Red with black.**

1931 **43 cards** (10 cards)

The Printers imprint has been completely redesigned, incorporating the globes of the world as the central motive. Designs similar to the previous year. These cards take up one complete Album

1932 **48 cards** (10 cards)

Again a very big issue and strangely enough there are more cards missing in the collection than for any other year! From some of the captions it is still **hard living with jobs few and far between.**

(Last Cards) - Three different cards to collect for the same design, could even be a fourth one to find (German)?

1933 56 cards (6 cards)

Valentines have really gone to town, although a large proportion of the cards are “Moving Cards” cards like the Post Office used to issue when you changed your address. These particular cards were probably thrown away! and seldom seen. I love the “**MOVEUM & SMASHEM**” Truck. I feel sure Mabel like me just loved **RED**
Another difficult year to get all the cards! almost impossible

FRAME FIVE

1934 34 cards (10 cards) & 2 posters

POSTER

It obviously pays to advertise, as there were at least two printings of both cards illustrated **LAZY BONES**

POSTER - Mrs GRUNDY anywhere about

Mrs Grundy was the watchdog of propriety

(LAST CARDS) Once again the same design has been used for three different cards, and there may even be a Fourth?

Guess there will be no point to trying to complete.

1935 33 cards (4 cards)

Most of the cards have the solid background colours, and several “One Liners”

1936 32 cards (4 cards)

I particularly like the **(Second card)** Pram card, which reads

“GENERALLY SPEAKING – WOMEN ARE GENERALLY SPEAKING” I hope I will still get a ride home?

1937 33 cards (6 cards)

Obviously a good year in the garden, plenty of flowers. Cards again in French and English. I like the penultimate card ...

...WOTEVER YOU DO IS BOUND TO BE WRONG

1938 30 cards (8 cards)

POSTER

Two of the cards illustrated in the poster are on display.

The cards are rather sentimental, sweet and happy.

Again three different cards for the same design, two colours and in French **“SURE I’m expecting you,”** the message on one of them reads **“Make it Soon Darling XXX”**

FRAME SIX

1939 39 cards (8 cards)

POSTER – Birthday Cards

I guess they were winners however there is not one example in the collection, I just couldn't think why? But looking again it is now obvious they are **CARDS** not Postcards!

Gardening again seems to be the theme. The declaration of War is looming. According to what I have read, "**The designs were for the children and the captions for the adults**" hence the last card may have got people thinking? "**Don't mind the Black-outs you can always stay the night**"

1940 **24 cards** (6 cards)

War time themes, Gardening "**DIG FOR VICTORY**" etc.

Same design used for a Birthday Postcard, complete of course with the **RATION BOOK**.

The design for the last card on display has been used previously and is numbered **507**, which was not recorded by Henty

1941 **19 cards** (4 cards)

Sign of the times with the "captions" and a fine **Maritime Mail** cancellation, however all though the postage didn't need to be paid, it has been charged **4d postage due**, fine boxed mark on the **obverse!** Yes the obverse, after all in Postal History and Postal Stationery, the stamped side is always the obverse, therefore when you are looking at the picture on a postcard it is on the **reverse or backside!**

1942 **23 cards** (6 cards)

Most of the issues this year were **Birthday Postcards**, with a lot showing the reuse of knitted garments and recycling the **wool**.

1943 **14 cards** (6 cards)

Most of the issues this year featured the **Armed Services** and the Home guard including the **STIRRUP PUMP**, and the continuation of the reuse of **wool**.

FRAME SEVEN

1944 **6 cards** (2 cards)

There were only six cards printed this year, and there are still three missing from the collection, maybe I will be sacked on this poor performance, I am expected to much nearer 101% No doubt some of here will remember the "**UTILITY**" label on the "**Demob suit**"

1945 **40 cards** (6 cards)

Full production again, although the same designs were being used for more than one card, different captions, and French sub-titles, even using the same numbers. Far worse the **CP or SG**. For the non-philatelists Campbell Paterson and Stanley Gibbons catalogues.

1946 **21 cards** (8 cards)

My favourite card "**ALONE I DID IT**" If Derek is here, he will be pleased to know, the tomato plant he gave me, eventually did flourish and produce after a lot of TLC, basically because of the lack of rain on Waiheke Island. The boy painting his bike could have been me a very long time ago; I did love my "**BITSA**" bike. Did the penultimate card for-see the **BABY BOOMERS?**

1947 24 cards (8 cards)

The cards have now got a completely new look, change of layout, fonts and facial expressions. I plead not guilty in drawing your attention to the first card “ **Two Ladies enjoying the PEACE**” but felt it appropriate having previously pointing out the 1936 card “**Generally Speaking – Women are generally speaking**”

1948 No cards (0 cards)

I have no idea why they had a lay year, new machinery? A fire? One significant thing, which affected the firm, was the introduction of Purchase tax in 1947, and this took 2d out of the 5d, which was at that time the average price of a Postcard.

1949 35 cards (8 cards)

These cards are quite thought provoking, I particularly like the Marrow Card, and unfortunately it looks more like my courgettes!! The Last card is really something. “**DON'T KNOW WOT I WANTS – BUT I WANTS IT SO BAD!**” Like me going into an Antique shop!!!!

FRAME EIGHT

THE LAST FRAME – I heard that sigh of relief!

Seriously we have got through the “**Roaring Forties**” and now heading to the finish line, only four years to go!!!

1950 31 cards (8 cards)

The first card is a great start for the new decade “**NAPPY DAYS**”.

Must have been an addition in the family or just representing the new decade? **YELLOW** seems to be the dominant colour on her Palette, and teddies and fairies are in place of honour.

1951 18 cards (8 cards)

There is a definite change in the style of the cards, reflecting no doubt the changing times and attitudes. Certainly not 1921 PC “**Fancy Pants**” indeed I can hear Mrs Grundy exploding!! I think we all agree that “**THE NICEST THING ABOUT GOING AWAY IS TO GET BACK HOME AGAIN**” The next card of the little **PUPPY** is included for a **special young lady** with us this evening, I guess it should also have been a **kitten**? The last card is a little familiar

1952 15 cards (8 cards)

The cards reflect a year of happiness, almost the end of rationing, 12d worth of meat per person, if you wanted a leg of lamb that was your ration for the month!! Incidentally the “**d**” stands for **Pence**, as I had to explain to Neil who pointed out to me that most of us oldies forget that the younger members have only grown up with **metric** money! Most of the captions are so very apt, to me anyway. I sent a copy of the last card to my daughter in law, who is a Hairdresser.

1953 18 cards (8 cards)

The last year that Mabel Lucie Attwell produced cards without the help of her daughter Peggy Whitmore. How I enjoy the sound of the Bagpipes, it must be in my blood, Robson Lowe once sent me details of a **wanted notice** dead or alive the noted border rebel GILBERT ELLOT. The two ladies off to see the Queen, I gave my ticket away to my sister in law, I watched the Coronation in the dry.

I am not quite sure about the last card but it will mean something to that special young lady who I mentioned before, as she is now due to spend some time having her arm repaired after being nearly pulled off her feet by a mate of Spotty. **I HOPE YOU ENJOY.**

STATISTICS PRIMROSE COLLECTION

20 Albums

1916 - 1953

Mounted	973
On Display	270
Novelty	24
Unmounted	41

1954 – 1963

Mounted	95
Similar Cards	22

Pre 1916	15
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Ditto Valentine's 4

Current total (23 March 2015)

Postcards

Main collection 1916 – 1953

1038

Others

136

