

## CROYDON PHILATELIC SOCIETY

### NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2023:

At the meeting held on **11<sup>th</sup> April 2023** at Shirley Methodist Church **Terry Page**, a member of Croydon Philatelic Society, gave his display **Russia – Zemstvo Postal History**.



In Russia from 1864 the Zemstvo system of elected rural assemblies was set up. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Imperial State Russian postal system covered the major cities and towns of the empire. Away from the main postal routes a vast number of remote, neglected, rural communities were denied the benefits of a postal service. The newly formed zemstvo districts

then opened post offices. As the services met a genuine public need the number of districts providing postal services grew. An increasing number of zemstvo districts issued postage stamps. The Imperial Postal system was initially hostile to this situation, but they gradually expanded their coverage to rural Russia. Several Zemstvo districts continued to operate postal services until 1917 but following the October Revolution the new communist government dissolved the zemstvos.

The presentation showed covers and stamps from a range of Zemstvo districts alphabetically arranged from Ardatov to Zadonsk. On some covers were Imperial postage stamps as well as Zemstvo stamps. Some of the material shown was rare and some had been obtained from the Fabergé Collection Auction held in 1999. Most of the mail shown was internal with letters from abroad being very rare. However, outgoing letters sent to Switzerland, Sweden, the Russian Post Office in China, London and the Levant were shown as well as a few incoming letters from Finland, Germany, Austria and Turkey. Postal stationery/sheets from every district that issued such material were displayed.

Members enjoyed Terry's explanation of the display as well as the material on view. The presentation, the result of a lifetime's work, has been internationally recognised as well as by the Royal Philatelic Society.

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