



The Ephemera Society is a non-profit body devoted to the conservation, study, and presentation of printed and hand-written ephemera

The Ephemera Society is published quarterly by The Ephemera Society

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The Editor is always delighted to receive contributions about any aspect of ephemera and collecting ephemera.

Submission deadlines are:  
Winter N° 203 15 November 2023  
Spring N° 204 15 February 2024  
Summer N° 205 15 May 2024

# Call for articles

If any collectors or writers would like to contribute on the theme of ANIMALS & BIRDS the Editor would be delighted to hear from you... Examples might include: anthropomorphic; circus; advertising eg Guinness; Victorian scraps; greetings cards; Easter bunnies; pets; domestic companions; farming; Poisson d'Avril cards; bee-related; billheads; calendars; financial bulls, bears & lame ducks; Jumbo-the-Elephant transportation to America; labels; military (animals at war); novelty items; transport; lost & found notices; hunting, coursing, racing (greyhounds and horses); dog licences; pet cemeteries; zoos, lofts, racing pigeons, doves, dogs collecting for charity, animal mascots in the Services.

Congratulations to Anabel Pollen whose book *More Than a Snapshot* has won a Designing Writing Award organised by the Design History Society based on her article 'A carrier bag theory of photography' in Issue 201 of *The Ephemera Society*.

We are delighted to welcome the following new Members to The Society:

YOUNG, Mr Taras  
*British preparations for nuclear war, particularly local authority war books and householders' guides, Home Office/Central Office of Information manuals, and Civil Defence materials, coldwar.org.uk*  
E taras@sendhere.org

LYSTER, Miss Bronte  
2 St Andrew's Road, Exeter,  
Devon EX4 2AA  
E bronte.lyster@outlook.com

GISBORNE-WEARE, Ryan  
*Political and historical works; ephemera from the 18th and 19th century as well as CDVs and Cabinet Photography.*  
Trades as The Antique Collective, 31 Lower Road, Chorleywood, WD3 5LQ  
T 07703 389912  
E rgweare@gmail.com  
I @the\_antique\_collective

# Society changes

The Ephemera Society has recently accepted the resignation of our Chair, Valerie Jackson-Harris. We are grateful for her many years of dedicated service, and in particular her enthusiastic championship of the Ephemera Fairs, the backbone of The Society's activities, for over forty years. Valerie masterminded the Society's fortieth anniversary celebrations, a well-planned series of events over two weeks in May 2015, which included 'insider' tours of major British collections, a banquet at which the American Society was awarded the Peps Medal and a wrap-up reception at Armourer's Hall. Thank you Valerie.

We are delighted to welcome our new Chair, Dickon Weir-Hughes, who readers will recognise as the collector and regular contributor of articles about airline ephemera. Dickon's background is largely in healthcare; a Registered Nurse and after many years in critical care and flight nursing plus academia became Chief Nursing Officer, Director of Governance & Deputy CEO at The Royal Marsden. Later a Professor and regulatory CEO, finally returning to academia in Oxford before retiring in 2019. He still lectures widely, and is a permanent resident of France. Dickon has also been a trustee and President of several health care charities. In retirement, he has gained an Advanced Diploma in History at Oxford and a diploma in food history from Edinburgh.

We are also delighted to welcome three new members to the committee, Ellie Kilburn, Julie Anne Lambert and Sara Chapman. They join our current committee members John Hall, Kirsten Hardie, Graham Hudson, Robertino Poposki, John Sayers, Michael Twyman, Malcolm Warrington.

# Labels of Empire

Susan Meller

"...a bit of print is now to be found in almost every palace, cottage, hut, and tent of every country with which commercial relations have been established."

James Best Fothergill,  
*The Principles and Practice of Textile Printing*. London, 1924



1  
Sample Sari Cloth Booklet, c.1910. Each sample is Printed cotton sari cloth was a mainstay of Lancashire mills' speciality export textiles. Found in India. Each sample is 330 x 191mm

All images in this article are © Susan Meller, 2023 [www.labelsofempire.com](http://www.labelsofempire.com)



piece of folded cloth. Known as 'shipper's tickets' in the trade, most were designed, printed, and registered in Manchester. They bore the company's name and as such, served as its brand, its trademark. However, when dealing with a largely illiterate population it was the image that became all-important.

Shipper's tickets were designed to catch the eyes of shoppers in the bustling city and upcountry bazaars. The artists in the UK who created the labels had never been to India, but they had a wealth of reference material to draw

upon from those who had – illustrated travel books, English periodicals such as *The Graphic* and *The Illustrated London News*, and Indian bazaar prints. They turned out hundreds of thousands of labels in order to satisfy the huge demand for unique images. There were realistic depictions of Indian everyday life – irrigating a field, a woman spinning, water carriers in the bazaar; native animals such as tigers, elephants, and peacocks; scenes from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana; Hindu deities; Maharajas and dancing girls; British

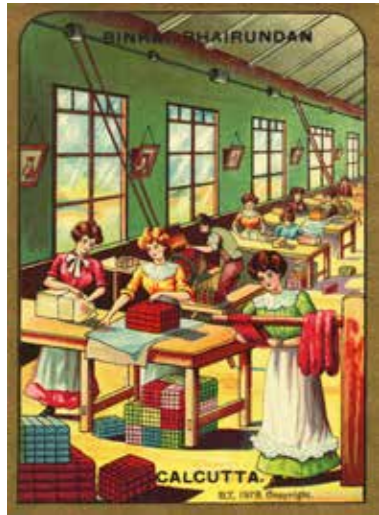
royalty; and most popular of all – the Beauties, or 'Lady Tickets' as they were called. Gods, maharajas, kings and queens could be appropriated from their lofty realms to grace a piece of fabric, but it was the lovely, slightly flirtatous ladies who really sold the goods! (3-9)

Much time and expense went into producing these labels. Certain printers in Manchester specialized in tickets and pattern cards for overseas markets. Two of the largest establishments were B. Taylor & Co., Ltd. and Norbury, Natzio & Co., Ltd. They offered both custom

designed ('Private Ticket') labels as well as an enormous selection of 'Stock Tickets' for textile manufacturers and their agents to select from. Blank spaces were provided for their names, etc. to be printed. Various sizes of the same label were available – from an average of 102 x 76 mm for the smallest to as large as 301 x 203 mm (10). Most were rectangular, but there were also die-cuts. Prior to the mid-1930s (when mechanical printing machines were introduced), the labels were printed by chromolithography. It was a costly and laborious process. The

images were quite detailed and had to be reproduced on the prepared limestones in reverse. Each colour required a separate litho stone. It was not unusual to have at least eight colors. The labels made for the Indian market usually had a narrow metallic gold border and sometimes gold accents within the image. After they were printed with pigment inks on gummed paper, each label was run through a varnishing machine which gave them a glossy, crisp-looking finish. The final result was a beautiful miniature work of art.

All this effort paid off for both the manufacturers and their agents – and for the customers who bought their goods in the bazaars. Not only did the labels promote the cloth they were pasted onto, they served as premiums, free gifts. One of the reasons so many of these perishable pieces of paper ephemera have survived is because they were valued by the Indian people. Images of the gods and goddesses were framed and hung in temples, homes, and shops. Sometimes they were simply pasted directly onto walls. Others like the



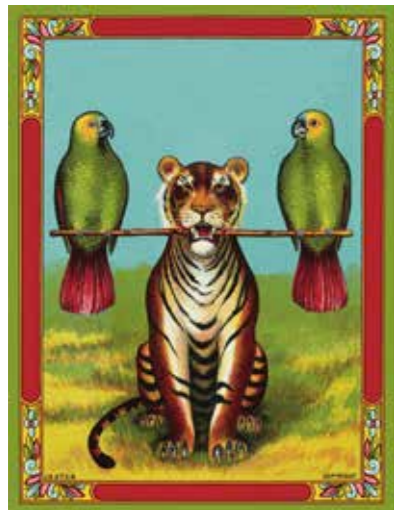
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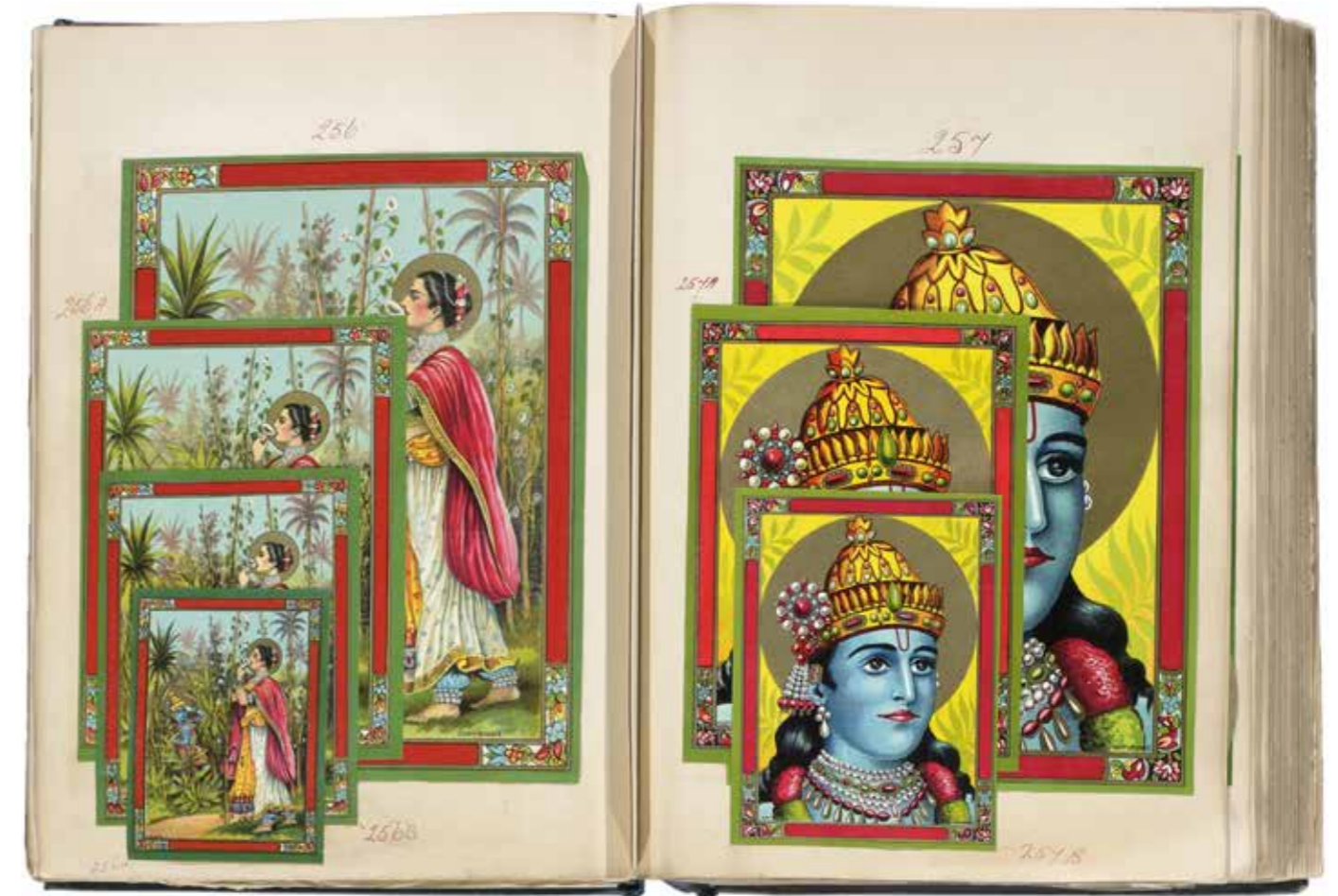
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**2** Making-up Room, c.1900-1910. Women 'makers-up' are preparing bundles of yarn for export in a Manchester packing house. Skeins of yarn were shipped in boxes with labels similar to fabric labels pasted on them. B. Taylor & Co. printer. Found in India. 178 x 127 mm

**3** Hindu Trinity. c.1910. The Hindu Trinity is composed of the three principal gods – Brahma, the Creator; Shiva, the Destroyer; Vishnu, the Preserver. Printed in Manchester for F. Steiner & Co., a major exporter of cotton cloth to India. Found in India. 195 x 247mm

**4** Palace Dancing Girls. c.1900. Young women dancers were called "nautch girls". Often maharajas and other wealthy individuals kept their own troupes for entertainment. Graham was one of the largest Scottish merchants doing business in India. Found in India. 165 x 133mm

**5** Tiger and Parrots. c.1910. Printed in Manchester for the Indian market. From a ledger of Norbury Snow stock labels, Manchester. 184 x 127 mm

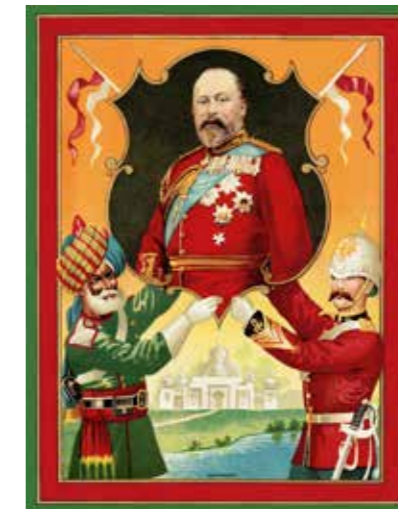
**6** Irrigation. c.1910. Label made for Sir Jacob Behrens & Sons, Manchester. Found in India. 152 x 114 mm

**7** Indrajit Captures Hanuman. c.1910. Scene from the Ramayana. Hanuman is trapped in Indrajit's magic noose of venomous snakes, the 'Nagapasha'. Handmade tin frame. Printed by Norbury Natzio, Manchester. Found in India. 184 x 133mm

**8** King Edward VII. c.1910. A Sikh officer and a British officer honor the King-Emperor of British India. Stock ticket from a Norbury, Snow ledger, Manchester. 254 x 191mm

**9** 'Lady Ticket' c.1920s. This English beauty casts a seductive glance. She would have been a popular choice for fabric goods and pattern cards shipped to India. Printed by B. Taylor and Co., Manchester. Stock catalogue label. 171 x 133mm

**10** Norbury, Snow & Co. Ledger. c.1910. Stock tickets depicting Vishnu. Available in various sizes as shown in a Norbury, Snow & Co. ledger from Manchester. 356 x 241 x 81mm



8



9

Beauties, were collected and privately admired.

While this article deals with shipper's tickets that were sent to India, tens of thousands also accompanied cloth that was exported from the UK to its other colonies and overseas markets around the world, particularly Southeast Asia, China, Africa, and South America. These too were designed to appeal specifically to the local population. Label printers back in the UK were kept informed by regional agents as to which images proved most popular. Some were

soon discontinued while others were kept in production for decades (11-14).

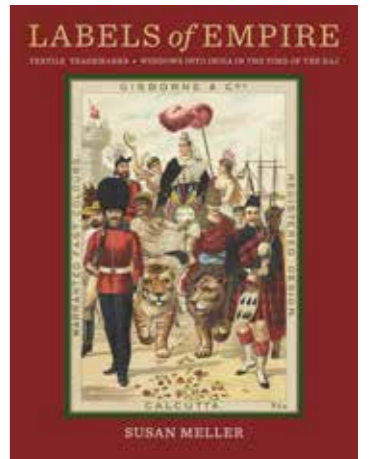
The two World Wars severely disrupted Britain's textile industry. It managed to recover somewhat after WWI, but by the time WWII ended, most of the textile mills had closed. During the interwar years, Japanese trading companies established a strong international presence which cut deeply into Britain's markets in India and Asia. With India's independence in 1947, Indian mills became important suppliers to their domestic market, further

curtailing the import of British textiles. The use of shipper's tickets proved such a successful marketing tool that Japanese and Indian textile firms printed their own labels – and many rivaled their British counterparts in quality (15,16).

While these labels have a checkered past, they were an important, but little known part, of an enormously prosperous industry. At one time, it was said that Great Britain clothed the world – and these labels went along for the journey. 🌐

Susan Meller is the author of the recently published book, *Labels of Empire: Textile Trademarks. Windows into India in the time of the Raj*. Novato: Goff Books, 2023. Nine years in the making, with 544 pages and 1285 colour images, this is the first book ever written on this subject, and will most likely remain the most comprehensive.

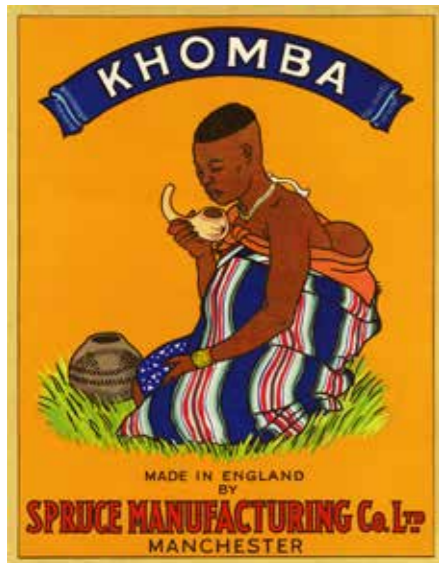
Meller is also the author of *Textile Designs; Russian Textiles; and Silk and Cotton* – all published by Abrams, New York.



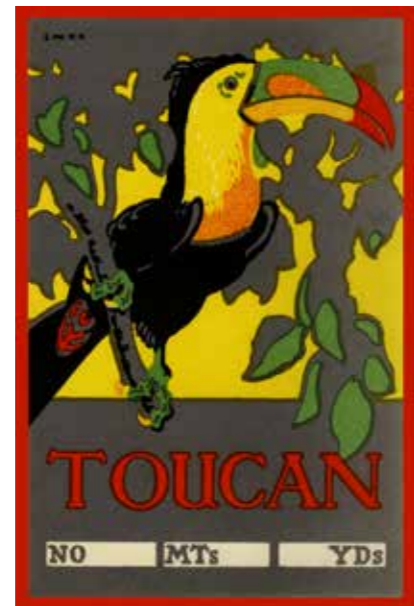
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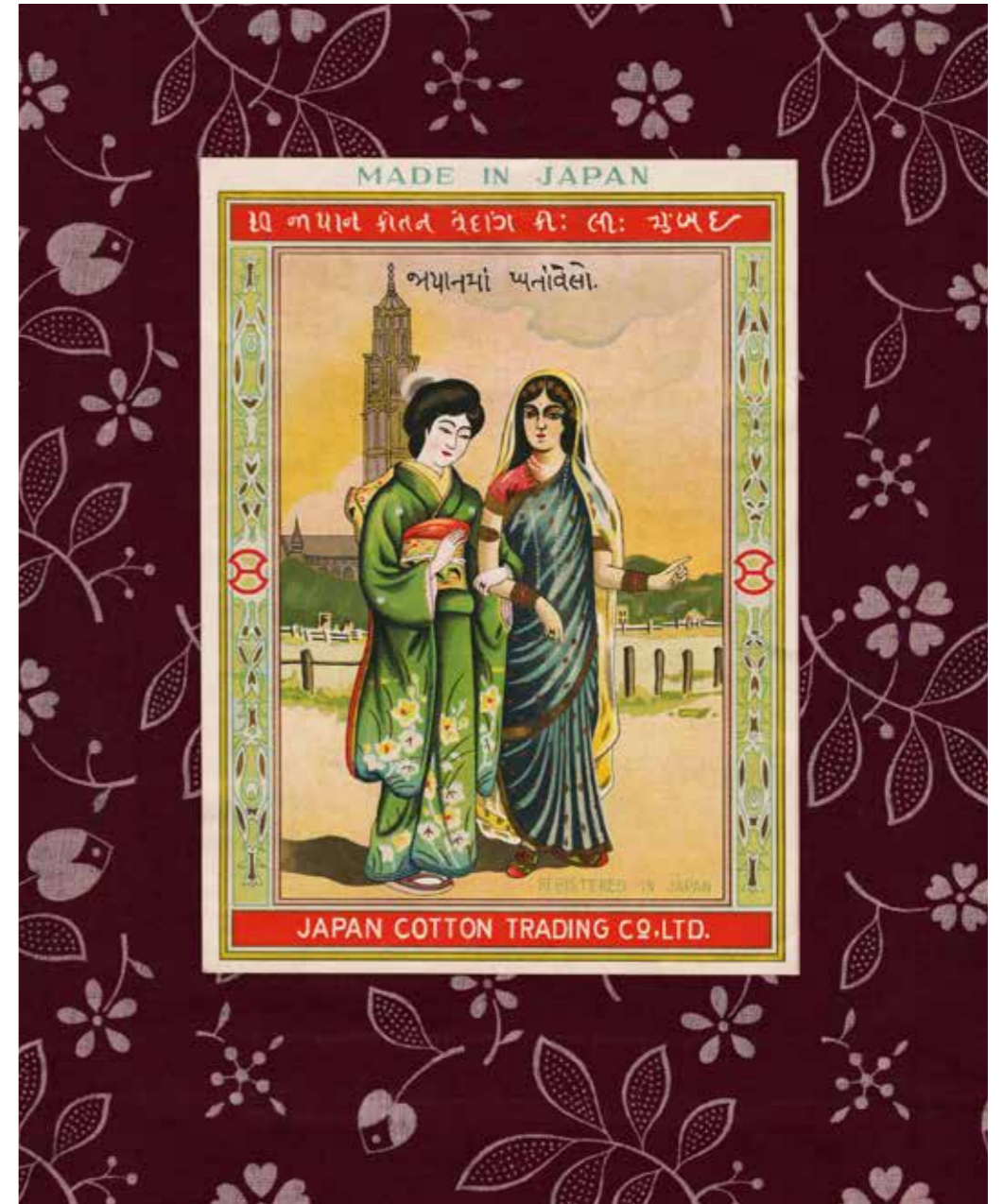
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**11** Burmese Market, c.1900. Acrobatic acts were a popular subject. While this label was most likely designed for the Burmese market it was found in India. 140 x 101mm

**12** Chinese Market. c.1910-1915. Tickets destined for the Chinese market were usually not varnished as a flat, softer look was preferred. This stock label was printed by B.Taylor, Manchester and found in England. 199 x 235mm

**13** African Market. Second half 20th C. Spruce Manufacturing Co., Manchester was a major exporter of cotton textiles to South Africa. Found in England. 222 x 171mm

**14** South American Market. c.1920s. Designed by Edward McKnight Kauffer for the Manchester textile manufacturer, Steintal & Co. for cloth exported to South America. Kauffer was a celebrated graphic artist. It's rare to be able to attribute a label to a specific artist. Found in England. 165 x 108mm

**15** Mother India. c.1920s-30s. Mother India, known as *Bharat Mata* became the primary icon of the Indian Independence movement. Labels such as this proudly proclaimed that the goods they were promoting were 'Pure Swadeshi' – 'of one's own country'. Printed and found in India. 159mm diameter

**16** Japan Cotton Trading Co., Ltd. c.1930s. Kimono- and sari-clad women lock arms in symbolic Japanese/Indian friendship. Label pasted on Japanese roller-printed cotton sample. Found in India. 171 x 127mm, label only