

Some Notes on the History of the Wessex Philatelic Federation

The Federation dates from a meeting held at the Rainbow Cafe in Exmouth on 16th November 1946. The six clubs present (Exmouth, Exeter, Pinhoe, Plymouth, Torquay and Bath) voted unanimously to form an association of philatelic societies in the South-West of England - the first such association to be founded in Great Britain.

The name "**Wessex Philatelic Association**" was decided upon, as it covered the area of "**Wessex**" as defined by Thomas Hardy. The original members were quickly joined by Ilfracombe, Weston-super-Mare, Falmouth, Liskeard, and Sidmouth, and further clubs from Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, and Dorset were added later.

The first Chairman was Mr. Hadfield Craven, a stamp dealer from Torquay, and the first Secretary F. H. (Tommy) Thompson of Exmouth, a Yorkshireman who had spent his life in the Bradford wool trade. Both are names associated with current Wessex competition trophies. The first Wessex annual meeting and exhibition was held at Torquay in June 1947 corresponding with the Jubilee of the Torquay Society.

At this time two exhibitions were held each year, hosted by member clubs in rotation; the Main Exhibition, at which individual competition entries in four adult and three junior categories were displayed, and the Thompson Cup Exhibition for the entries in the inter-club competition.

The difficulties of covering such a wide area meant that in the 1970's two further federations were formed, Cornwall Federation and Somerset and Dorset Federation, at this time the Wessex Philatelic Association became the Wessex Philatelic Federation. Some clubs became members of more than one federation with the Wessex Federation covering mostly the Devon area. The three Federations come together in a biennial exhibition **SWIPEX**