

Dinosaur hunter

A lifelong obsession with dinosaurs and a chance visit to a stamp fair conspired to kick-start Jon Noad's fearsome thematic collection

NAME
Jon Noad

NATIONALITY
British

AGE 48 years

OCCUPATION
Exploration geologist

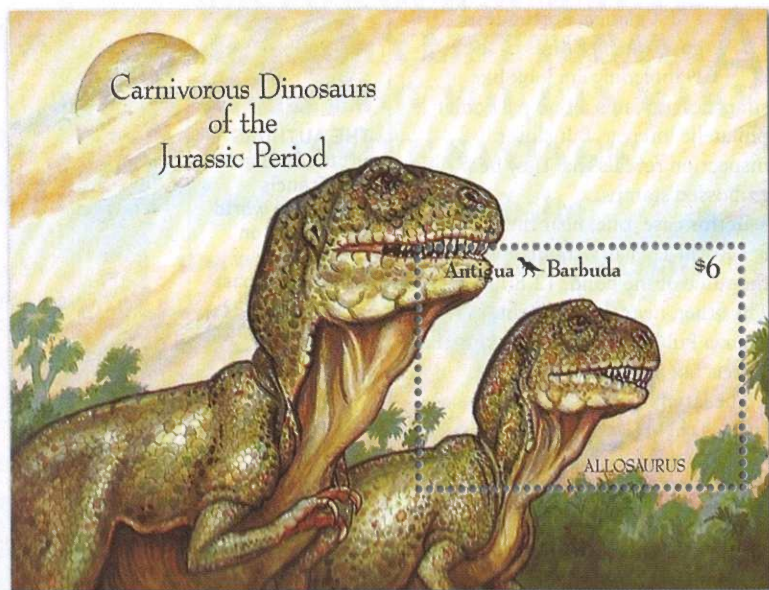
SPECIALISM
Dinosaurs on stamps

SOCIETIES JOINED
None

OTHER INTERESTS
Marathon running, hiking, climbing, skiing, football, fossil hunting



RIGHT: \$6 miniature sheet illustrating allosaurus, part of Antigua & Barbuda's 1992 Prehistoric Animals set, one of the first in Jon Noad's collection



When did you start collecting, and why?

I had a worldwide stamp collection as a child, which lapsed as I entered my teens.

In 1992, when I was a mature student in London, I was walking from Waterloo Station towards University College when I happened to pass a sign for the stamp fair at the Strand Hotel, and I popped in.

There was a thematic stall and, as a lover of dinosaurs, I began browsing through the relevant albums. I was amazed at the variety and beauty of the stamps, and walked away £200 poorer but with the start of my collection.

What attracted you to your specialism?

I have always been interested in dinosaurs, ever since my great aunt gave me a book on the subject, illustrated by the great natural history artist Rudolph Zallinger. My interest also influenced my choice of career as an exploration geologist.

I collect dinosaurs on stamps, covers, booklets, presentation packs and ephemera. I even have a few examples of the original artwork for issued stamps, although such items come up for sale very rarely and are

What is your favourite item, and why?

I have a striking souvenir folder which accompanied a stamp issue in 1977 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Science Museum in Japan.

The dinosaur illustrated on the stamp is the 'futaba suzukiryu' (futabasaurus), a type of plesiosaur discovered only in Japan. The stylised Japanese artwork gives the design extra appeal, and the folder has an engraved metal version of the stamp which has been plated with more metallic layers.



国立科学博物館百年記念郵便切手
東京・上野の「国立科学博物館」は自然科学の知識普及に役立つ興味の博物館で、その創立百年を記念する郵便切手が発行される。この郵便切手は明治10年1月(1877)上野で発足の「教育博物館」がはじまりとされるが、その前身は、明治5年に東京府に設けられた「文部省博物館(のち東京博物館と改称)で、国立科学博物館」は昭和24年の改称である。切手に描かれたフタバスクリュームはクビナガリウの一種で約8千万年前の生き物、その化石は昭和43年に福島県いわき市で高校生鈴木直君が発見した。

発行日: 昭和52年11月2日
額: 50円郵便切手
意: フタバスクリュームの骨格復元図と星形を国立科学博物館を記す
原画作者: 久野 史氏

彫金(電鍍)
原作者の絵を瀬田芳正氏に依頼して彫金とし、これを原画として電鍍・彫金・仕上げ加工を施工完成したものである。(守屋隆雄工芸)

CENTENARY OF NATIONAL SCIENCE MUSEUM COMMEMORATIVE POSTAGE STAMP
A special postage stamp depicting Futabasaurus will be issued to commemorate the centenary of National Science Museum at Ueno, Tokyo. The Futabasaurus is a plesiosaur and its fossil bones was discovered in 1968 at Iwaki-city, Fukushima Prefecture by a senior high school boy.
Date of Issue: November 2, 1977.
Denomination: 50-yen.
Design: A model of Futabasaurus skeleton and a constellation with National Science Museum
Designer: Mr. Minoru Hisano.

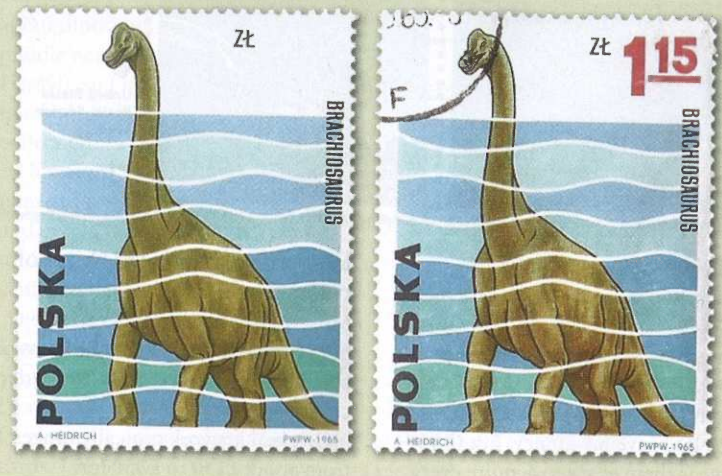
METAL ENGRAVING
Original pictures are taken from the masterpieces of the famous Mr. Minoru Hisano. As a foundation work, metal engraving of the drawings is done by Hoshii Hotta. Then, thick-plating, colouring with various kinds of precious metals, and finishing hand-work are performed.

Which stamp are you most proud of, and why?

I was browsing through eBay when I found a large lot of dinosaur stamps. I realised that one of them, from a set I had my collection when I was a child, looked a little unusual.

It turned out to be a previously unreported error from one of the earliest issues in the theme, the 1965 Prehistoric Animals set from Poland. The 1.15z value, showing a brachiosaurus, was missing the value.

I ended up winning the lot for less than £15.



'I realised that the most attractive way stamps are presented is usually on first day covers, so I began to concentrate more on these. They're now my pride and joy'



usually out of my price range.

What I enjoy is seeing how different artists handle the theme in different ways. Often stamp designs reflect the era in which they were issued.

How has your collection developed over time?

Initially I concentrated simply on trying to find every mint dinosaur stamp issued.

Gradually I realised that the most attractive way the stamps are presented is usually on first day covers, so I began to concentrate more on these. I now have hundreds,



ABOVE & RIGHT: Original artwork for Mali's 1989 Prehistoric Animals 120f stamp depicting a dimetrodon, and the issued stamp



and they're my pride and joy. My favourites are generally the older covers, especially from pre-1990, which have most artistic merit.

How and where do you find your material?

Like many collectors, I can divide my collecting history into before and after the advent of the internet and eBay, which completely changed the way I search for stamps.

In the early 1990s there were no online auction sites or reference material. I bought magazines and books to try to obtain the addresses of stamp dealers, and I wrote to hundreds of dealers asking for elusive stamps and covers.

I am glad I started collecting at this time, because many of the items I bought then are now near impossible to locate.

I discovered eBay in 2003, five years after it launched, and was amazed at the diversity of stamps already available for sale back then.

I now keep a regular watch on several auction sites for rare items, and seem to be bid against the same collectors (many of whom are Chinese) again and again.

What are you most keen to add to your collection?

I am still missing first day covers for some of the earlier dinosaur issues, such as the stunning set issued by the Maldives in 1972. In some cases, it remains unclear whether the

LEFT: Possibly the earliest item of postal stationery featuring a dinosaur was this 1922 2c prepaid envelope from the USA, used by the Torrance Lime & Fertiliser Company, which shows a wobbly herbivore to the lower left of the postmark

LEFT: First day cover of Lesotho's Footprints of Prehistoric Reptiles issue of 1970



stamps were ever used on illustrated covers, so I might never find one.

How do you deal with 'wallpaper' issues?

It seems as if almost every country in the world has issued a dinosaur stamp, although in fact there are a few notable exceptions, such as Spain and Italy.

The number of issues which have no genuine postal use exploded in the mid-1990s, from countries such as Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Malawi,

ABOVE: USA 1989 Prehistoric Animals se-tenant block of four missing black (left), and the correctly printed block (right)

Mali and various central Asian states, and they now dominate the market.

It is easy to find myself buying more and more of these stamps, and fewer 'real' issues, and I keep telling myself to save my money. But the drive is there to try to acquire every stamp on the theme, to keep my collection 'complete'.

How affordable is this kind of collection?

Most of the stamps are cheap to buy, but I have spent considerable sums on original stamp artwork, rare first day covers or errors.

Original artwork typically ranges from about £150 to £350 for hand-painted items. The most expensive stamps I have bought

'I have always been fanatical about dinosaurs. My children's middle names are Rex, Maia and Plessey'

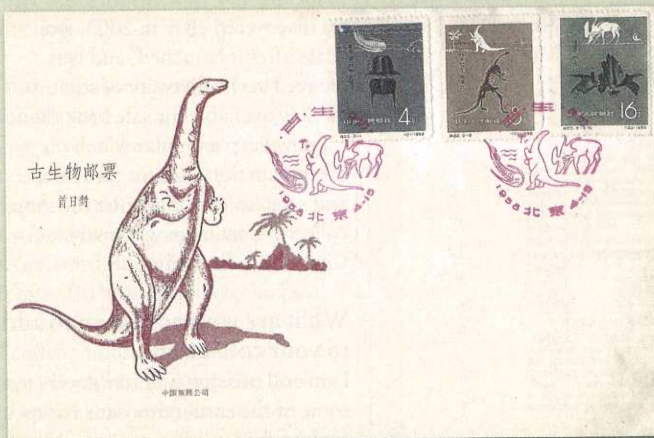
Are there items that you had to work very hard to find?

Two items spring to mind, both from the far east. I had seen pictures of an attractive Chinese illustrated first day cover of 1958, for what is recognised as the first ever dinosaur postage stamp, the 8f value in the Chinese Fossils set depicting the lufengosaurus. I was desperate to add it to my collection.

It took more than eight years, and many letters to dealers around the globe, but by an extraordinary coincidence two similar covers arrived on my doorstep on the same day from different dealers!

Another issue I knew about but struggled to track down was a Japanese folder from 1992 comprising a set of booklets illustrating dinosaurs on the covers.

I had been unable to find any dealer who could help, until I was sent to Japan on business and managed to track down a dealer on the outskirts of Tokyo who sold me one. I have never seen another.



ABOVE: First day cover for the world's first dinosaur stamp, in China's 1958 Chinese Fossils set



ABOVE: Two booklets from Japan's 1992 set of 15 with illustrated covers

were a se-tenant block of four of the USA 1989 Prehistoric Animals set missing black (which means they have no inscriptions at all), for about £230.

What have you learnt from your research?

I have always been pretty fanatical about dinosaurs (my children's middle names are Rex, Maia and Plessey!), so I have not learned so much scientifically from my collection.

However I have learned a lot about nomenclature and global geography, and even a little Russian to try and understand the many issues from the central Asian states.

How do you store and display your collection?

I have a big bookcase full of albums for stamps, covers and maximum cards. I also have a chest of drawers and a few shoeboxes that need sorting out.

Which is your favourite maximum card?

I was looking through a box of covers at a thematic stamp fair when I found a maximum card for the elasmosaurus stamp from one of my favourite sets, the 1965 Prehistoric Animals issue from San Marino. It spurred me on to try to find maximum cards for the rest of the set of nine.

Many dealers told me that they did not exist, but the fact that I had one kept me hunting for the others, and I eventually found an Italian dealer who made my day by selling me the set. I didn't tell him that I would happily have paid five times his asking price!



FALKLAND ISLANDS PHILATELIC BUREAU		PORT STANLEY, FALKLAND ISLANDS	
Mon	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29
Tue	8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30
Wed	9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24
Thu	10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25
Fri	11 18 25 31	8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26
Sat	12 19 26 29	9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27
Sun	13 20 27	10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28
Mon	14 21 28	11 18 25	8 15 22 29
Tue	15 22 29	12 19 26	9 16 23 30
Wed	16 23 30	13 20 27	10 17 24 31
Thu	17 24 31	14 21 28	11 18 25
Fri	18 25 31	15 22 29	12 19 26
Sat	19 26 29	16 23 30	13 20 27
Sun	20 27	17 24 31	14 21 28

ABOVE: British Antarctic Territory calendar card of 1991, reproducing its Age of the Dinosaurs 26p stamp showing a hysilophobont

Have you ever exhibited competitively, or given presentations to other collectors?

No, but I was once featured on a British television programme called *Collector's Lot* on Channel 4, where I showed all sorts of dinosaur material, including stamps.

The other two collectors featured in the same edition of the show were a lady who collected photographs of Princess Diana and a man who collected antique Japanese ivory toothpicks!

Are you a member of any philatelic societies?

I am not currently a member of any

TOP TIPS

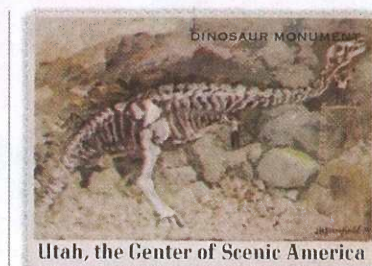
What advice would you give to other collectors?

- eBay offers the easiest way to build your collection, but take time to learn about bidding strategies.
- eBay is also the best place to gauge what your own stamps are worth. The prices of stamps are now set by online bidders, rather than by stamp dealers.
- Writing to stamp dealers, especially those based in more exotic locations, can still turn up treasures.



ABOVE: South Africa's 1982 Karoo Fossils set of four in a striking miniature sheet

RIGHT: This cinderella promoting the US state of Utah is thought to date from 1932, possibly making it the world's first dinosaur stamp, albeit not one which was valid for postage



philatelic societies. I find that my collection is very well defined, and has little crossover with those of other collectors.

What is it about philately that gives you the most satisfaction?

Browsing the internet and sorting through my collection are stress-relievers. And when you make an unusual discovery or win an internet auction to plug a gaping hole in your collection, it can be very exciting.

Looking through an album of treasures always brings back memories of how you tracked them down, and many stamp designs are simply works of art.

What plans or ambitions do you have for your collection?

I eventually hope to show all my stamps on a special website, to provide a source of reference for other collectors. □

YOUR TURN?

Would you like to see your collection featured in these pages? Please get in contact, telling us briefly what your specialities are. E-mail: julia.lee@mytimemedia.com