

# q travel: with BARRIE MAHONEY

'Tweeters from the Atlantic'

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## Wish You Were Here

**When was the last time that you sent a postcard? I guess, if you are anything like most of the younger members of the population, it was some time ago; maybe several years. Thinking about this question recently, I realised that I haven't sent any for several years, but with the exception of one of those fun and expensive 3D picture postcards that we thought our elderly aunt would enjoy receiving. Sadly, she didn't even mention it when I spoke to her, so I doubt it made any impression, and we needn't have bothered.**

It came as no surprise to read that the UK's foremost publisher of picture postcards, J Salmon, is going to stop production in December. This family-owned company has been publishing calendars and postcards since 1880, but now sales have dried up. Charles and Harry Salmon, the fifth generation of the family of postcard publishers, recently commented that the popularity of social media has had such a negative impact upon their business that their production was now unsustainable. Many will remember the beautiful scenic shots, the comic ones, as well as those very 'rude' ones that were often so popular at seaside beach shops.

I still like to receive postcards and pin them to a display board. It is fascinating to receive a card from some faraway place that I have never visited. A postcard from somewhere that I remember is also welcome, since it brings back many happy memories and experiences. The closest that I get to this nowadays is sending a 'virtual postcard' to a few special people with one of my own photos, by using an app on my smartphone. It is quick, convenient and good value and takes away the need to try to find a post office in some foreign land to buy a stamp, only to find that it has closed for siesta.

Do you remember that well-worn phrase to quizzes in newspapers, magazines and radio shows? It was always "Answers on a postcard please"; now it is "send a text to...", usually at a premium rate charge. The demise of the humble postcard seems to have gone almost unnoticed.

As a replacement for postcards, many people now post some of the more ecstatic moments of their holiday experience on Facebook, Instagram and other social media sites. This is fine for the sender, but how many of us are bored senseless with seeing endless platefuls of holiday food from some exotic holiday destination on Facebook, and the alcoholic "I'm all hung over" posts that seem to have replaced the humble postcard from the younger generation. Are today's electronic offerings intended as merely a showcase for the sender, or for the enjoyment of the receiver, I wonder? Do we really need to see yet another pizza or giant plateful of a cooked English breakfast? A shot of the Leaning Tower of Pisa or the Sydney Opera House would be a nice alternative; just a thought.

A few years ago, I remember spending several enjoyable hours sorting through a battered suitcase belonging to a great aunt containing hundreds of sepia postcards with stamps bearing the head of long dead monarchs. Photographs of exotic destinations, such as Weymouth, Edinburgh, Yarmouth and Blackpool, peppered with occasional postcards from more adventurous destinations, such as Venice, Bruges and Paris. As well as the fascination of seeing how popular resorts have changed over the years, the comments on the back were often very revealing.

I remember some of the lengthy discussions that my parents had when selecting postcards for family members and friends when we were on a family holiday. Should we send a scenic shot of the beach to Aunt Joy, would Uncle Frank like something a little more cultured, or is that one just far too rude for cousin Paul? We had better be careful what we write on the back of that one to Brenda, because we know that her postman always reads them, and he is such a gossip...

I shall miss those photographic treasures from J Salmon and other publishers. I guess that the publishers are right to draw a halt to the production of this much loved remnant of the past. Like so many things in our lives, times change and maybe it is now time that the humble postcard be relegated to history.

*If you enjoyed this article, take a look at Barrie's websites: <http://barriemahoney.com> and <http://thecanaryislander.com> or read his latest book, 'Footprints in the Sand' (ISBN: 9780995602717). Available in paperback, as well as Kindle editions.*