

Bulletin

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Dear Philatelic Enthusiasts

On the surface there is not much going on at our Club. But, in fact, all Committee Members are working in some way. We are planning how to hold a postal auction before Christmas, and we hope to be able to allow socially distanced viewing. Our Exchange Coordinator, Howard Ellis is poised to restart his Melbourne Circuits as soon as lockdown eases. Other Members are checking our Bri Phil House, cataloguing our comprehensive library and paying our bills. Our Membership Secretary, Debbie Harms is busy with membership records, renewals and email communication. The list continues!

An unusual thing happened at our September AGM, with one exception, all last year's Committee were re-elected for the next year, 2020-21. We will endeavour to give you a good program! When we get to 'Covid- normal', Internet and Zoom-style meetings are going to occupy a very different place in Australia. Many more workers and students will be working and studying on-line much of the time. So our Society needs to think about how this will change our Auctions and Displays. Already the Royal Society is having regular meetings on Zoom, attended by members from London, Sydney and Perth as well as those in Melbourne. The main recent philatelic activity has been postal auctions!

I commend you to visit a national virtual exhibition called 'Ausvipex' during November. Fuller details are given in this Bulletin on page 5.

I look forward to our meetings re-starting in a couple of months, when allowed. If you are feeling out-of-touch, visit our website (see above). I hope you are keeping clear of the virus and finding interesting things to do.

Best wishes in philately,

Ian Sadler, *President*

Reports from the Annual General Meeting

President's Report – 2019/20

What a peculiar Year! It began in normal fashion from October to mid-March. Display and Education Meetings, Auctions and Day Meetings all went according to plan. We continue to have full houses for all Auctions and low, but committed, numbers for other events.

Then came Covid-19. It hit us, with restrictions, for the March Day Meeting. Then all further meetings have been cancelled as I write in September. There was a period in July when we planned to re-start in September, but then the Stage 4 lockdown prevented any further meetings this (philatelic) year. Regular notes and Bulletins were circulated to keep members in touch with the Club. Local Exchange sheets continued until Stage 4 lockdown and Meetings Sheets are continuing in regional Victoria. The other peculiarity is the roll-over of all Executive and Committee positions, due to the loss of six months of meetings, and the willingness of almost all concerned to continue 'rowing the boat'.

The Special Occasion we remember was the Christmas Supper on December 10th. It was my pleasant duty to honour three long serving Officers of the Society with Certificates for over twenty years' service each. They were John Rennie, as Secretary; Ross Newton, as Building and Security Superintendent; and William Wells, as Exchange Superintendent. They received lengthy applause from the wide gathering of members and then we all proceeded to pavlova. Their duties have been taken up by Stephen Bradford, Eric Klay, Howard and Jim.

New Officers. The key succession of this year was the splitting of the Exchange Sheet job into two. Bri Phil is now well served by Howard Ellis looking after Members Local Circuits, whilst Jim Marinis is ably tending the Meetings Circuits which go all around Victoria and to New South Wales. Without in any way denigrating their work, it takes two people to succeed William! We are grateful for Debbie Harms taking over Membership from Carole Czermak and being very committed to this important area.

Other Areas. An important succession is the work of Building Supervision now being ably undertaken by Eric Klay. There was great excitement when he got a plumber to survey our roof by drone! Often unseen, Ray Price continues his indefatigable work on the Library. He has just issued a new on-line catalogue to improve our philatelic knowledge. Rarely seen but highly valued, John McKay did an excellent job in editing our Bulletins, whilst Ross handled printing and distribution. Our long-serving Treasurer, Brad Baker continued to steer the Club's expenses and finances extremely ably, whilst David Shutler was active in Sales Branch. Jim Bell continues to lead sales branch: he and his team ably organised Uncatalogued and Catalogued Auctions until the virus stopped them. Andrew Balliss, 'Dr Stamps', has taken over Public Relations from Carole. His comprehensive plans will come to fruition when lock-down finishes. Last, but not least, Michael Tonta has skilfully loaded our website: especially important as the whole world moves (for better or worse!) to internet communication.

Sincere Thanks. In conclusion, I thank all the Executive, Committee Members and other Members of our wonderful club for running the Club in all its aspects for this bifurcated year. I single out our Sales Branch team who collect stamps from all over the state, assemble them into lots and auction them to delight our fervent Members. I look forward to all these members bringing the Club to life again as soon as State laws permit. Carole Czermak is leaving our Committee for personal reasons after about five years of wide-ranging service including being President, PR, Membership and Auction

computer operator. She succeeded in making us all think about the wider possibilities for our Club.

Ian Sadler, *President 2019/20*

Treasurer's Report

As all members would expect, the enforced closedown of Society activities for a significant part of the year had important financial implications for us. Commissions from auctions were well down, from \$31,493 in the previous year to \$24,316. As a result our total income declined from \$54,811 to \$44,716, with membership revenue down only slightly to \$12,158. However, the reduction in activities also meant that some of our normal expenses were also reduced, including cleaning. We also spent less on building maintenance (\$4,567) and postage for the Bulletin was also sharply down, from \$5,410 to \$3,416, reflecting the willingness of many members to receive their Bulletins via email. If members were all to consent to the email of these items, as required by the Anti-Spam Act, this expense could be reduced still further. Our other major expenses were our old usuals, insurance \$6,486 land tax \$6,926 and council rates \$4,337. However, given the difficult year that we have endured the overall result was quite reasonable, with a profit of \$7,384 compared with \$10,463 the previous year.

Bradford J Baker, *Honorary Treasurer*

Membership Report

The 2019/20 Membership year saw a large number of members enjoying club-run activities including Education and Display meetings and Auctions. However, the onset of COVID early 2020 and the restrictions placed, particularly in Victoria has been felt by all!

We had 351 members at 30th June 2020 of which 45 were non-financial members. We welcomed a number of new members throughout the year and continue to encourage new memberships including offering \$1 memberships to young members (children). We hope that Covid restrictions will be lifted soon, and club activities can resume shortly!

Deborah Harms, *Membership Officer*

Exchange Reports

A highly successful transfer was made from William Wells to Howard Ellis (Members Circuits) and Jim Marinis (Meetings Circuits). At the Christmas Supper, William was highly commended for serving the Club as Exchange Superintendent for over 20 years, a key position for Club wellbeing.

Members Circuits: Howard Ellis reports that circuits continued efficiently through the year until the second Corona Virus lockdown. They then came to a halt at the end of each Circuit, or sometimes earlier when a Member was not able to forward. They will recommence as soon as the lockdown is released.

Meetings Circuits: Jim Marinis reports that there are 45 books which are currently out at various clubs. I have pages for one more book only. The only clubs not taking books are us, Ballarat and Geelong. Come October I will have no more books to send out so I desperately need more pages.

Sales Branch Report

Despite the Corona virus shutdown the Sales Branch continues to work hard and provided the Society with a considerable income from sales at the Catalogued Auctions,

uncatalogued auctions and the decimal stamps sold for postage. Thanks to Ross Newton and Marco Turco who have collected and sorted a vast amount of material from many vendors across the state. Richard Sealey has continued to operate the decimal stamps sales for postage and this operation obtained steady revenue, so a great deal of thanks goes to Richard. We are still getting a large supply of material from deceased estates and collectors wishing to dispose of their collections. David Shutler is operating the financial side of sales branch and again this is very time consuming. I thank everyone involved for their support and am confident that Sales Branch will continue with its excellent work in the future.

Jim Bell, *Sales Branch Convenor*

Library Report

With the lockdown in place for much of this financial year there has been little library borrowing and use over the year. However, Ross Newton and I commenced a stocktake before the lockdown started. The shelves have been reorganized and all books without shelf labels were removed and now have new labels on them. All uncatalogued items have now been catalogued and an up to date catalogue is now on the Society's web site. The format of the catalogue is suitable for printing so that every member with a printer can have their own hard copy of the catalogue. We will be chasing up all outstanding loans which are now long overdue as soon as we are able to get into the library area. All donations have been processed as well and either added to the catalogue, boxed into lots for sale at the Society's auctions or discarded. Shelf space remains at a premium and a number of juvenile and old books in the collection will be removed, and some broken runs of auction catalogues and journals are also due to be removed as part of the stocktake. A number of new books have been purchased from the Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria, the Royal Philatelic Society London and other vendors. The most recent books will be placed in one of the small display cases so that members will be able to see the new books.

Ray Price, *Librarian*

New Members

Please extend a friendly welcome to the following new members:

Tyson Carruthers – Fitzroy

Robert Lyon – Caulfield South

Erik Berthelsen – Kallista

Appointments for 2020-21

Officers

President: Ian Sadler	Vice President: David Shutler	Treasurer: Bradford Baker	Secretary: Stephen Bradford
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Office Bearers

Librarian: Ray Price	Exchange Superintendents Howard Ellis & Jim Marinis	Sales Branch Convenor: Jim Bell
Bulletin Editor: John McKay	Public Relations Officer: Andrew Ballis	Meeting & Education Coordinator: Ian Sadler
Building Services Superintendent: Eric Klay	Membership Officer: Deb Harms	Website Management Michael Tonta

Other Committee Members

William Wells	Ross Newton	Charles Bromser	Marco Turco
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An Invitation to See Stamps On-Line at ‘Ausvipex’

This is your chance to see an exhibition of the best philately in Australia without leaving your home. At this National On-Line exhibition, philatelists are showing 16 sheets each: their exhibits will be judged. You can see them from November 1st and the scores and comments will be available from November 7th for some time. It is organised by our own Stephanie Bromser.

Just visit <https://ausvipex2020.com.au>

The Class of 2020: Philately's New Recruits

Gerard McCulloch, BPS Member

2020 has been a funny old year, but it has left me in no doubt that philately has a future. It's just that it might look quite different from its past. I'm speaking as the writer of a philatelic blog, the Punk Philatelist. For the uninitiated, a blog (it's short for 'web log') is an online journal. You can find mine at www.punkphilatelist.com.

I started Punk five years ago, and I'll admit that it was partly a reaction to reading many philatelic articles that were dry, technical, and, if I'm honest, a little on the dull side. There's a place for those articles (I've written some myself!), but 'Punk Philatelist' set out to celebrate stamp collecting of all kinds, and at all levels. There are new issue reviews, auction reports, 'how-tos' for beginners, and opinion pieces, all written with irreverence and humour. Well, *my* humour, anyway.

Initially, 'Punk' began as a fictional character - I'm a writer by trade, so it didn't feel like much of a stretch. I didn't expect how quickly 'she' would be dragged into real life, as readers wanted to know about the person behind the blog, and requests were received for guest articles in stamp magazines. *The Age* even picked up one of my articles (about the funny locations that Australia Post chooses for FDI postmarks) - it became one of the most-read articles on the Fairfax websites on the day it was published! I briefly hid behind a pseudonym, even in my emails. (I still owe apologies to a couple of correspondents who know me!) But I've come clean. My fictional alter-ego has handed over the blog and signed off. It's just me now.

Frequently posed in traditional collecting circles is the question: where are new collectors going to come from? From its earliest days, my blog showed me that they are already here. Philately has a vibrant presence on the internet, almost completely removed from the traditional scene. Social media sites such as Instagram and Twitter are chock-full of photos of stamp collections, and colourful envelopes sent by 'snail mail' aficionados. The pioneering YouTube channel *Exploring Stamps* offers information and inspiration to both old and new collectors. Another modern iteration of the hobby is 'Stamp Art', where stamps are used as raw materials in the creation of beautiful artworks. Some may clutch their pearls at such vandalism, but many people have come to discover 'proper' stamp collecting through Stamp Art. If you ask me, it's better to press worthless used definitives into service in this manner than to have them rot away in a dealer's attic.

In one of the few bright stories out of the worldwide COVID-19 shut-in, it seems that many lapsed collectors took the chance to return to the hobby, and many new collectors were born. Dealers reported being busier than ever – and anecdotally, many of the new clientele are young and female. From our bedrooms and studies, closer connections were made among this community of 'modern' collectors, but bridges were also established between this world and that of traditional collecting. Initiatives by bodies such as the American Philatelic Society and Britain's Philatelic Traders' Society led to such an explosion of online presentations, exhibitions, and other content, that I can't keep up. Traffic to my blog has skyrocketed during 2020, and I'm delighted to say that it's not just younger collectors who are stopping by. I've received wonderful feedback from

readers in their eighties and nineties who enjoy my posts and, unbelievably, even my jokes.

As we extract ourselves from these dark coronavirus days, it is possible that newly-hatched collectors might wander into our club seeking to explore their new hobby. As someone with a foot in each world, I believe it is hugely important to bring traditional and modern collectors together. I hope that newcomers are met with smiles and a warm welcome, like I was a few years back. Traditional collecting is a world unto itself; it's easy to forget that its language and procedures can be alien to a newcomer. So if you get the chance, please do take the time to explain what's going on, what 'frames' are, how auctions work, what you're meant to do with the binder full of stamps that someone just threw at you. Try not to snort if they don't know what they collect, or if they happen to like 1980s First Day Covers instead of Empire classics. We all start somewhere!

There's no reason why the cross-pollination can't move in the other direction, too. If you're curious to explore the world of online philately, pull out your smartphone or laptop, perhaps rope in your family's resident social media expert, and poke around. A great place to start is the blog of another Melburnian, 'The Digital Philatelist' – www.thedigitalphilatelist.com. It's a fantastic resource for online philatelic links, with useful explainers for those who aren't familiar with social media.

The COVID boom of 2020 and the growth of online philately both represent big opportunities for the hobby. I am confident that this momentum will come to bear fruit as philately finds its way further into the 21st century.

See you at www.punkphilatelist.com!

Stamp Tip: Get Off the Floor!

Don't store stamps directly on the floor. It has happened to all of us: Our stamp desk is overflowing, the bookcase is full... what could the harm be of "temporarily" setting a box of stamps on the floor? Unfortunately, for too many of us, all too often the box sits in that spot for years. If the floor is concrete (even if covered by carpet, etc.), moisture can wick through and up into whatever is set upon it. If the floor is over the basement or crawlspace of a home (or even over a high humidity room such as a kitchen or laundry room or bathroom), again moisture can come up through. The reason this comes to mind is that I recently unpacked a box of stamps from an estate; the box was full of glassine boxes which were full of stamps. In the bottom row of the glassine boxes, inside the larger box, the mint stamps were all stuck inside their glassines. I happen to know that for several years this box had been on carpet overlying a concrete floor. Also, insects are more likely to live and hide at floor level. The problem is that if boxes are directly on the floor, you don't have an opportunity to see the bugs that might enjoy munching on your stamps. If boxes are raised off the floor, then you have the opportunity to a) see the little buggers and to control the crawlers. So, if you really have to store items on the floor, at least make a cheap "pallet" by using something that insects don't eat. My favourite temporary fix is to use larger chunks of that ubiquitous styrofoam packing material that you find in shipping boxes of appliances or other items.

[Stamp tip courtesy of Jay Smith, as stamp dealer specialising in Scandinavia from Snow Camp, North Carolina]

