

# The Golden City Philatelist

BENDIGO PHILATELIC SOCIETY INC. A0016241J

P.O. BOX 962 BENDIGO, VIC. 3552

Now in our 87<sup>th</sup> year

November 2017



## Diary of Future Events

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| November 7th Tuesday   | Annual Philatelic Competitions: Display and Judging            |
| November 8th Wednesday | Daytime Meeting at Golden Square                               |
| December 5th Tuesday   | Christmas Meeting and Monster Auction. Note: <u>6.30</u> Start |
| December 6th Wednesday | Daytime Meeting at Golden Square                               |
- Please Note: The daytime meeting is on the Wednesday after the main meeting.

## President's Report November 2017

The year is running down and fast!!!

Only two meetings left this year.

Don't forget this month is the Bennett and Trezise Club Competitions so get your entries ready.

October has been a very busy month with visits. Several members travelled to the Ballarat and Geelong Stamp Fairs so I guess many little treasures were found.

Hospitality from our sister clubs is great and I am sure will continue as we mingle with other clubs and attend their Fairs in regional Victoria.

Our new executive team has settled in and working well.

A special thanks to Bill, Margaret and Angelo for a very professional Auction in October, thanks and well done.

Noel Earles has agreed to become the Club Valuer so any collections both within the club and outside will be professionally handled by Noel.

Maryborough Club will hold their second auction on the 21st November so we will discuss this at our November meeting.

Come along to our Wednesday Day Meetings and bring a friend!!! The camaraderie is great and all books are there for perusal and purchases.

Happy Stamping and keep the Exchange sheets coming.

Libby.



The general monthly meetings of the BPS are held on the first Tuesday of every month at 7.30pm at

**Old Long Gully School (now CVGT)**

**Cnr Stanfield and Jackson Streets, Long Gully**

Extra Daytime Meeting at Golden Square on the Wednesday after the main Tuesday meeting .

**Auctions** will be held at all Tuesday meetings

**EXCEPT MAY, JULY and NOVEMBER**

**5 items per member** are allowed for auctions

**except in December** when **10 items per member** are allowed for the Christmas bonanza auction.

Exchange sheets will be circulated at all meetings.

## CLUB CONTACTS:

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## The “stamp” that helped kickstart a country.

Your editor has always been attracted to the unusual so when a dealer in Canada offered this Cinderella stamp, he snapped it up. It is unusual to be able to find out much about items like this but they are worth adding to a collection, even if only for their beauty.

After a happy half hour or so trawling the internet, it turned out that not only is a lot known about this, albeit to a fairly specialized group of collectors, but it has quite a story behind it as well. It was produced for the Slovak League of America in 1907.

As can be seen, it was printed by the American Bank Note Company, who, you may remember from a previous article were asset stripped by a venture capital mob a few years back and all their archives and proofs were sold off. A savvy Czech collector managed to get the proof sheet to this item which had some of the production details typed on it. Two engravers worked on the die. Robert Savage probably did the vignette of the girl and Edwin Gunn, the other engraver listed was probably responsible for the frame and lettering.



In 1907, the Slovak League of America produced this label to raise funds to aid Slovak resistance to Hungarian rule. It was very successful but in the following years, world war one broke out. At the end of the war, Tomas Masaryk was uniting the Czechs, Slovaks, Moravians and Carpatho-Ukrainians with the promise of equality in the new Republic of Czechoslovakia. Building a new country after the devastation of Europe by the war was no small task and the league decided to donate the money this stamp had raised to the new republic. It was over a million American dollars, a fabulous amount at a time when the average weekly wage was around twenty dollars in manufacturing, mining and construction and only about twelve dollars in the service industry.

This windfall would have helped to kickstart the new nation’s fledgling economy and perhaps even helped ensure President Masaryk’s popularity for years to come.

## Preparing Exchange Sheets? Here’s a tip to keep everyone happy.



You often hear it said that exchange sheets are the life blood of our club and despite a few spirited challenges from our auctions, it still seems to be the exchange sheets that get the most attention. Preparing them takes some effort that rarely gets acknowledged which is a shame as most of our collections would be a lot poorer without them.

Exchange sheets are also the last bastion of the humble stamp hinge as for many collectors these have been made redundant by modern stock books and stamp mounts. Hinges can be awkward little devils to handle as our fingers lose the dexterity of youth and if not correctly applied, they can ruin a good stamp.

Recently, there have been several instances of this, mainly due to over-generous licking when they were being applied. When this happens to a gummed stamp the moisture can migrate into the gum, sticking the stamp firmly to the page. The only course of action may then be to cut out around the stamp and soak it off. For some people, this is too much trouble so the owner loses a sale. At other times, the buyer has suffered by trying to remove the stamp and leaving some behind, creating a nasty thin, or even tearing the stamp.

Fortunately, the remedy is very simple. When preparing exchange sheets, when the stamps are first hinged to the page, lift them gently with your tweezers and let the air under for a few minutes to dry any damp spots. That way, if there is a bit too much lick, it won’t cause a problem later on.

And to those of you who take the time to prepare sheets, a big thankyou from all of us!

## Philately and the Internet

The coming of the internet changed our world in many ways and this is particularly true when it comes to stamp collecting. Back in the eighties, many of us would have whiled away many happy hours in our local stamp shop, hunting through boxes and albums in search of that elusive bargain. Very few stamp shops still exist due mainly to competition from on-line dealers, who work from home without the overheads associated with a “bricks and mortar store”.

Another major change has been in valuations. Once collectors were given access to a world-wide selection of dealers, items that had been thought rare in the past were now found to be more common and so the prices needed to be reassessed. This was great for buyers but not so good for dealers who had stocks of the items or for collectors who had paid a high price for a rare item, only to see the value tumble.



*A happy pastime, killed by the internet*

Despite all this, the internet can be a wonderful resource for collectors. There are many on-line catalogues, including some that are extremely specialized. On-line translations are getting better all the time which means that the catalogue can be read in any language the reader desires. One catalogue that can be particularly useful is at <https://www.stampworld.com/en/>. Most paper catalogues only show one image per set of stamps which can be difficult if trying to find something like one of the French tourism stamps, half a dozen of which were released every year. Stampworld show complete sets, even if the only difference within a set is the value tablet.

Perhaps the most valuable internet resource is the ability to contact like minded collectors. A look at the list of collecting interests at our club will show that there is a vast array of differences and not that many shared interests. The internet can put a collector in touch with many others around the world who share their interests, usually by joining one of the online “chat groups”. These can be a bit daunting at first. Your editor remembers how confusing he found Stampboards at first but after a short while couldn’t remember why that was so. That group is the biggest with over 15,000 members including many dealers and international judges who will happily share their knowledge. It can be found at <http://www.stampboards.com/>

Another large group is the Stamp Community Family found at <https://www.stampcommunity.org/> which again has members from around the world and is a very laid back and friendly place to discuss stamps. Another favourite can be found at <http://www.thegomc.com/> which stands for the Grumpy Old Men’s Club, a slight misnomer as it also includes some Grumpy Old Women.

Many people in our generation (whatever that is) seem to be worried by computers. Just remember that it is only a tool like anything else. If when you were younger you could manage to operate a lathe or sewing machine, or even drive a car, all those activities took a lot more skill than using a computer. They still had to be learned, of course, but once that was done, you took the knowledge for granted. A computer is no different. With all of these groups it is better to visit and simply read the entries (known as posts) until you get an understanding of how it all works. Then join up and see how you go. You may never look back

## **Extra Daytime Meeting of the Bendigo Philatelic Society.**

If you are unable to get to our regular evening meeting, or want more time to pursue your collecting interests, we now have a daytime meeting on the morning after our main meeting.

Members are welcome to attend both meetings. Daytime meetings will not be formal meetings.

Venue: Golden Square Hall, 9 Old High St.  
(Bendigo Field Naturalists Club rooms)  
(Behind the Golden Square Fire Station)

Date and time: Wednesday November 8th. at 10.00am  
(Then every Wednesday following the Tuesday meeting)

Coffee, Tea, biscuits etc, available throughout the meeting.

The venue has lots of free parking, has ground floor and ramp access and is close to a bus stop in High street. Further details if required can be obtained from the club secretary.

## What would you do if there was no Stanley Gibbons?



If you have been following the news on Stanley Gibbons you will know that their financial woes just keep going on and on. The previous management, who have fortunately now been replaced, led the company into so many ill-conceived ventures, they lost many millions of pounds over a very short time. The new management have been trying to offload most of these and bring some sanity back to the organization, but is it too little, too late?

Three years ago company shares were over \$150. At the time of typing this, company shares have dropped to below seven cents, they are looking for a buyer and the venture capital wolves are closing in. The worst case scenario would be for one of these to buy the company, strip what assets remain - including many (over-priced?) high end stamps and discard the remains.

One thing that is holding the buyers back is the high level of debt that the company holds. Part of this is tied up in the “managed investment scheme” that was the brainchild of one of the previous management. This involved getting people to buy a portfolio of stamps as an investment with a guarantee to buy back the stamps if their value decreased. There are millions of dollars tied up in this but one can only assume that those who invested, didn't read the fine print.

Yes, there was a guarantee to buy back if the value decreased instead of going up but that value is determined by the Stanley Gibbons catalogue price. So if you have been wondering why Gibbons prices don't reflect what you see all around in the real world, this might give you a clue. Gibbons openly state that their catalogue simply gives you the price that they would be willing to sell an item for rather than its value. This is where the Scott catalogue is a better guide as they do not sell stamps but get their prices from the philatelic market. Despite the small print conditions, this issue has made many buyers cautious as the potential for litigation over actual value is very real.



But for those of us who have grown up with Stanley Gibbons catalogues, the thought of them being no longer available is almost too much to bear. Scott's habit of dividing everything into sub-groups makes it very difficult to use if you are not used to it. Gibbons no-nonsense chronological order is a far better system. Add to that the fact that their numbering systems are completely different and their colour descriptions also vary considerably and you can see that changing from one to the other would be a nightmare.

Maybe we should have a whip round. If every philatelist in Australia put in five dollars, I reckon we would just about have enough to buy the company ourselves. Then we could bring it to Australia and start running it properly. We could even take a leaf from the local primary schools book and run sausage sizzles, chook raffles and bingo nights to pay off that monstrous debt.

There has been ongoing discussion of this since 2014 on Stampboards so if you would like to read more, here is the link. <http://www.stampboards.com/viewtopic.php?f=13&t=67493&hilit=Stanley+Gibbons>

## Sculptors and Stamp Makers

If your car breaks down, you don't take it to the local watchmaker to get it fixed. Neither would you take a watch to be fixed by the local mechanic. Although both trades require an intimate knowledge of machines, and indeed some modern cars are built with the precision of a Swiss watch, the difference in scale means that they require very different skills.

It seems strange therefore, to realize how many sculptors of monumental works were also involved in producing stamps, either as engravers or as designers of engraved stamps which also requires a full understanding of the engraving process.

The National Gallery of Victoria has an exhibition of the work of the Australian sculptor, Bertram Mackennal, whose work includes the two metre bronze statue on the left. The name sounded familiar and on checking, it turns out that he was also the designer of the British seahorse stamps.



The massive sculpture at right, a memorial to French resistance heroes who died in world war two, is the work of René Quillivic who was also well known as an engraver. He passed this enthusiasm on to his son, also René, who spent two years studying engraving with Albert Decaris, the engraver of the French stamp at left depicting the monument. The younger René then went on to also become a prolific engraver of French stamps.



However, perhaps the best example comes from Switzerland. The Pax Mal Peace Monument at Flumserberg took 25 years to complete, from 1924 to 1949 and was the work of artist and sculptor Karl Bickel.



With its stunning backdrop of the Swiss mountains, it records one man's passionate plea for peace in the world, a work that continued while the rest of the world around him was being torn apart by world war two. Not all Karl Bickel's work was quite so large however as, for many years, he was the main engraver of Swiss stamps, a mantle he eventually passed on to his son, Karl Bickel jnr. The elder Bickel has often been acknowledged as one of the world's finest stamp engravers. Below is an image of Pax Mal flanked by some of Karl Bickel's stamps.



A biography of Karl Bickel can be read here: <http://stampengravers.blogspot.com.au/search?q=Bickel>

It's less than a year away! Time to start preparing and saving!



# BENDIGO Stamp Fair

Saturday

11th August 2018

9.30am - 3.30pm

Local & Melbourne  
Stamp and Coin Dealers

St Andrews

Uniting Church Hall  
24 Myers Street Bendigo

## Free Entry

Food and Drinks Available

Bendigo Philatelic Society Inc

P.O. Box 962 Bendigo Central, Vic. 3552

[www.bendigophilatelicsociety.org](http://www.bendigophilatelicsociety.org)

Enquiries to Fair Coordinator: Bill Trew

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