

JOHN F WILSON – PHILATELIST.



John was a collector – office buildings and shops, rents and stamps – each were an important part of his life.

He started attending meetings of the ChCh Philatelic Society in 1948 at the age of 16, but could not become a member until he was 18, which he did in July 1950. From 1948 until he stopped driving at night, he rarely missed any meetings.

In 1956 he became the Society's Auditor and over the next 26 years served as Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Vice President, Librarian, President and Patron.

A total of 56 years' service.

He was made a life member in 1985.

That year he began producing the society's newsletter ('Captain Coqk') and continued this until 2003 – 205 issues – much of it on that infamous typewriter that went with him to Ngaio Marsh Retirement Village.

He did win an early word-processor at Whitcoulls, but I don't think he ever mastered how to use it. [It's probably a collector's item.]

John was also the Treasurer of the organising committee of the 1977 Pan Pacific Stamp Exhibition from 1974 – 1978. After the exhibition and the sums were done - we found that we had sustained a loss. John decided that we should market our stock of souvenirs, and produced an order form. This was circulated this to everyone on our mailing list and any other lists of collectors that we could find. The result was that due to the generosity of these collectors the loss was turned into a profit.

This profit along with other money and loans was used by the Philatelic Foundation [the exhibition organisation] to purchase a building in Worcester Street (central Christchurch) opposite the Arts

Centre. John liked this location as it provided him with free car-parking on his wanderings around the city. He was Vice President of the Philatelic Foundation from 1978 until his death.

We started fundraising to repay the loans by running stamp auctions; - John typed the catalogues on that typewriter until we used a computer programme.

John used to deliver the typed catalogues usually around midnight or later to the printer, on the corner of Manchester St and Cambridge Terrace. He liked to tell how he had to ask the Manchester St girls to move from the doorway so he could put the printing order under the door.

In later years he even did the auctioneering, - he could see bids that no one else could!

We spent most Thursday nights lotting up material from estates and collectors from 1978 until 2016, - John had to stop when he could no longer get up the stairs at our property in Mandeville Street.

These nights were one of the highlights of John's week where he was in the company of fellow collectors, lots of friendly banter, and he told us of his exploits with his many commercial tenants etc.

We even managed to co-erce him into providing supper to celebrate his birthday – one night we had fancy iced cupcakes! – of course he had a tenant that made these.

In 1986 John was awarded the AWARD of MERIT by the NZ Philatelic Federation for services to Philately.

John formed three comprehensive collections of NZ philately –

- The Date-stamps of Temporary Post offices from the 1880's
- Vending machine stamps – [some of you might remember the slot machines outside post offices]
- And
- Franking Machine markings – those appliances used in offices to pay for postage.

It will be surprising to some of you that although he lived very frugally; he spent a lot of money on these collections to make them the important collections that they are.

John was happy to have these collections scanned – this is now being undertaken by the Philatelic Foundation, so that the information is available for reference by collectors throughout the world.

He exhibited some of these collections in competitive stamp exhibitions and won awards for these.

For one in South Africa, John was persuaded by the late Robert Samuel who was organising the exhibits from NZ, to enter one of his collections.

Robert told John how much it would cost for the entry fees – HORROR!

John finally agreed after all Robert was his accountant.

Robert arranged the bank draft to pay the fees only to find that he had supposedly used the wrong conversion rate – about ½ of what he had told John that it would cost - MORE HORROR -

John had to pay more money which he did reluctantly [it was too late to withdraw] but we do know that Robert ended up writing up the display for him.

It received a good award, but I think that we heard more about the cost of the entry than about the award that it gained, - but that was John.

Robert Duns.