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The Society's Second Annual General Meeting

The 2008 Annual General Meeting of the Society, marking the end of its second year of existence, was held at the State Library of New South Wales on Saturday 29 November in the historical and serene atmosphere of the Friends Reading Room. The former Mitchell Library Reading Room was the perfect venue for a relaxed, bookish meeting attended by a dozen or so members, and was kindly provided for us by our guest speaker Paul Brunton, the Mitchell Library's senior curator. The routine business of the day was first dealt with: the minutes of the 2007 AGM were confirmed; the President gave his report highlighting the continuing positive feedback from members concerning the *Newsletter*, the major event and membership drive associated with the State Library of Queensland exhibition and noting that 22 new members had joined in 2008 resulting in 60 financial members for the year; the Treasurer's report showing that the Society was in the black and proposing modifications to streamline some of the Society's administrative processes (which were all agreed to). The current office bearers were re-elected: President, Mark Ferson; Secretary, Mary Keep;

Treasurer, Ronald Cardwell; and Vice President, Mike Carter. In addition Roy Howard offered to join the Committee to undertake any tasks that would aid the running or promotion of the Society. Members should note that the draft minutes of the Meeting will be available on the Society's website early in the new year.

As always, ideas for promoting the Society and raising awareness of bookplates were kicked around, and Mike Carter offered to raise at the upcoming meeting of the Australian Society of Miniature Art the possibility of the President addressing its members at some future time. The President had also offered to give a talk to the Twentieth Century Heritage Society of New South Wales and this is scheduled for the middle of 2009. Other suggestions were to design a new flyer which could be provided at suitable events and locations such as bookshops and libraries; to promote the Society to members of the UK Bookplate Society; to list the Society in the services section of *Art Almanac* (a monthly Australian art gallery guide issued in print and on-line); and to conduct a bookplate design competition.



Water Board Library, 1909

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Members at the Society's Annual General Meeting on 29 November, (l-r) Mary Keep, Paul Brunton, Mark Hildebrand, Mark Ferson, Roy Howard, Mike Carter, Brenda Heagney, Jennifer Lamm and Alex Ferson.

With the formal business concluded, those present were given a pleasant surprise in the form of a brief address by Jennifer Lamm, President of the Auckland Ex Libris Society. Jennifer was in Sydney serendipitously for the weekend to receive the award of the Master of Laws from the University of Sydney and was delighted to be able to attend the AGM. She spoke a few words about the various forms of cross fertilisation between the two societies through sharing of interests and members. At last it came time for the guest of honour to speak on 'Collecting other people's books: David Scott Mitchell's sources.' Paul Brunton has worked with the Mitchell Library since 1973, was President of the Australian Society of Archivists, 1991-1993 and received the Centenary of Federation medal for services to libraries in 2003. Among his many exhibitions and projects, he edited for publication letters of William Bligh (Allen & Unwin/University of Hawaii Press, 1989), Matthew Flinders (Hordern House, 2002) and Miles Franklin (Allen & Unwin, 2004).

Paul's talk was based around perhaps 15 to 20 of Mitchell's own books held by the Library. He used the bookplates, inscriptions and other marks of provenance to weave a story firstly about the origins of Mitchell's bibliophilia and then of his later collecting when he used, at times, ruthlessness and subterfuge, to gain his desiderata (desired objects) at almost any cost. Mitchell's passion and the foresight of key players involved with the then Public Library of New South Wales and the State Government, if swayed by the eloquence of eminent book seller George Robertson, led to the deposition of Mitchell's unique and irreplaceable collection in Sydney where it is used by historians and researchers from all around the world. Further information on Paul's talk will appear in a future issue of the *Newsletter*.

Further reading

A grand obsession: the DS Mitchell story (exhibition catalogue). Sydney, State Library of New South Wales, 2007

Brian H Fletcher, *Grand obsession: the story of the Mitchell Library, Sydney*. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2007

32nd FISAE Congress, Beijing, October 2008

Andrew Peake, Adelaide

The FISAE (International Federation of Ex-Libris Societies) Congress, which is held every two years, was held this year on 14-17 October at the China Millennium Monument, Beijing. This is a new building and the Congress was held in the basement. There was an extensive exhibition area, together with a large (though probably not large enough) exchange hall. The exhibition area was excellent, but unfortunately the air-conditioning was not used in the exchange hall and as a result it became very stuffy and uncomfortable.

For most of those not familiar with these events, they serve as an opportunity for those interested in bookplates, be they collectors or artists, to meet other like-minded individuals, to exchange and sell bookplates, commission new bookplates from artists who attend, view exhibitions and competition entries of bookplates and keep up with trends in bookplate creation and collecting. This year 260 people registered to attend, of whom about half were non-Chinese. Probably the attendance from Europe and North America was less than usual due to the venue. In fact, I was one of only three native-English speaking registrants, ie one each from Australia, England and the United States. However, most of the Europeans there and many of the Chinese spoke English.

A bookplate competition was held, with 4375 bookplates submitted for judging, from 1050 artists from 42 countries. I was embarrassed to note that no Australian artists had submitted a bookplate to the competition. A gold, two silver and three bronze prizes were awarded plus 49 honourable mentions. Hundreds of other bookplates were selected to be exhibited. All of these bookplates have been published in a book provided to all registrants. All mediums were evident. Although etched and engraved bookplates were the premium, I noted that a computer guided design received a silver medal and many other mediums received

honourable mentions and were published in the competition book. Other mediums such as woodcuts, wood-blocks and linocuts were much in evidence as many Chinese artists work in these mediums. As was to be expected many of the bookplates had an oriental flavour and some reflected on the recent Olympics.

There was also an exhibition of bookplates by ten selected artists from around the world. This included Peter Ford from England, three Czech artists and a Latvian artist.

I previously attended the 30th FISAE Congress at Fredrikshaven, Denmark, in 2004 and it was interesting to make comparisons between the two Congresses. With the fewer eastern European artists in attendance in Beijing, there appeared to be less commissioning of new bookplates and the Chinese artists were less assertive in marketing their skills. At Fredrikshaven the emphasis was very much on the elite art forms of etching and engraving; line drawings and computer guided designs (CGD) were looked down upon, but this divide was less evident at Beijing. As a result most artists were prepared to exchange bookplates, no matter what the medium, or offer to sell plates.

At each Congress a plenary meeting of FISAE delegates is held, to decide upon the venue of future congresses, admit new member societies, discuss previous and forthcoming competitions and consider policy matters. For example there will be a meeting in the spring of 2009 at the British Library to discuss a model means to catalogue bookplate collections. The 33rd Congress was confirmed to be held at Istanbul between 25 and 29 August 2010. The 2012 Congress will probably be held at Naantali, Finland and the 2014 Congress near Barcelona. The New Australian Bookplate Society was admitted to membership of FISAE. A report was received on the 3rd Computer Guided Design Competition in 2007, to which over 1000 bookplates were submitted for judging (half from Turkey!) from 425 artists, and there was a prize pool of 4600 Euros. Details of the 4th CGD Competition will be released in 2009.

The Beijing Congress concluded with a banquet and the organisers also arranged a bus tour to the Great Wall of China (it has to be seen to be believed). The 2010 Istanbul Congress promises to be even better, with a number of tours available such as the Grand Bazaar, Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia, Topkapi Palace and a cruise on the Bosphorus (after all not every body wants to exchange bookplates for four full days!).

I came away concerned that Australia is inadequately promoting itself in the international bookplate community. We should be encouraging artists to submit entries to competitions, which will not only promote Australia, but also attract commissions to the artists, and of course more Australians should attend future Congresses. The next Congress will be a good opportunity to visit Turkey (the food's great) and hallowed ground at Gallipoli.

[You may wish to view the minutes of the plenary meeting of FISAE delegates at www.fisae.org/Beijminutes.htm – Ed]

New Zealand report

U3A course: Bookplates: ex libris, a study and hobby course, held in Dunedin, New Zealand, 4 March-15 April 2008

Jim McCready, Dunedin

At the age of 85 Jim McCready was able (just!) to give a small study and hobby class for senior citizens at the local U3A. The University of the Third Age, now spreading world-wide, is a charitable trust for the retired. In Dunedin it operates under the aegis of the University of Otago.

Nine enthusiasts attended six 2-hour sessions designed to tell the story of Bookplates, with the aim of encouraging all to make their own personal plate, in the form of a design printed by colour laser on self-adhesive paper. The program week by week was: Introduction and history; Making a bookplate (designing, printing); Beginning a hobby (collecting, societies); Bookplate artists of New Zealand, Australia, Britain and their work; Bookplate artists of

the rest of the world; The best of the best – favourite and noteworthy plates, exchanges. The session on designing the image (and methods of printing) had to be introduced early to enable all class members to start work with sufficient time to be finished and to be ready for printing by the second-last session. This goal was achieved and the last session opened with a rush to exchange with other class members.

Some simple methods were suggested for 'tyros'. Besides sketching, drawing and painting for those with the skills, the others could design a personal badge or emblem and build up a design around it. Modern art styles, using splotches of paint, could be tried. Collages of coloured paper from advertising magazines, either carefully built up with colour balance, or mosaics of irregular shapes, could be attempted. Finally, a favourite photo (taken by self!) could be turned into an ex libris. For this a snapshot should be colour laser enlarged on to an A4 sheet of paper. This can be painted on, or have emblems and names glued on. Imagination could produce results similar to computer assisted designs, which may well be beyond the skills of our elderly.

Manuscript bookplates, or is that manuscript 'ex libris'?

Mark J Ferson, Riverview, Sydney

You may be slightly puzzled, as I was, that the term 'ex libris', otherwise considered as completely synonymous and interchangeable with the word 'bookplate', has an added shade of meaning. According to the oft-mentioned BN Lee, the late British authority on the subject, whereas a bookplate is defined as a label inserted in a book to indicate ownership, the term ex libris has been allowed somehow to extend this usage to include a design denoting ownership that has been drawn into a book individually, hence manuscript. But perhaps Lee did not actually claim this to be a dictionary definition, rather the pragmatic application of an expression that allows the passionate, even obsessed, bookplate

student the liberty to slightly broaden his or her field of interest.

Being painted with the same brush, this particular bookplate collector has been on the lookout in recent years for anything that could conceivably be thought even a distant relative of the bookplate. Might I submit in evidence my articles in recent issues of the *Newsletter* which refer to other forms of labels pasted inside books? Those described are patently not bookplates, yet they do cast some light on the life and use of that individual volume, and to the booklover imbue that same volume with a sense that across time another booklover (hopefully) handled, read, imagined or critiqued it.

Here are depicted some manuscript bookplates which have come into my collection in recent years. One presumes that in most cases, the bookplate is unsigned and the owner carried out the design, although examples have been sighted which show the designer's initials. Owners included author and historian Margot Hentze (in her copy of Mary Webb, *The house in Dormer Forest*, London, Cape, 1929); and Tony Rae (in Frank H Shaw, *Stirring deeds of Britain's naval might*, London, Harrap, 1940; also with Scots College, Sydney, plate marking Dr George Bell's Prize awarded to AJM Rae, form 2A for 1st in Physics, 12 December 1941). These two bookplates were very competently and confidently executed, although this is not always the case.



Ink and colour pencil label for Janet Cosh



Ink design Margot Hentze

To confuse the terminology – for those who worry – there also exist what might be referred to as intermediate forms, labels which have been decorated by hand and then stuck into the volume. Two examples are the rough and ready fountain pen drawing for Mary Parker (dated 1951, in Herbert Jenkins, *The Bindles on the rocks*, London, Jenkins, c. 1929); and the pen and coloured pencil image for Janet Cosh (in Austin Dobson, *At the sign of the lyre*, London, 1890). I might also add that that great bookplate collector, Jeff Bidgood, let me browse through his collection where I

found a variety of manuscript bookplates in a range of techniques. Owners included Audrey J King, RG (dated 1919), JA McGeorge and Wilson. Space does not allow for more illustrations here; however, I plan to place the images on the Society's website. I would be grateful if you come across any of these rare and often beautiful designs if you would care to send me an image file in 150dpi resolution and whatever details are available about the book and the owner.

Further reading

BN Lee, Manuscript ex-libris, *Bookplate Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1, Mar. 1989, pp18-25

J Blatchly, A selection of manuscript labels, *Bookplate Journal*, new series, vol. 4, no. 2, Sep. 2006, pp95-100

Notes and happenings

International context for ex-libris, short stories and sculptures
 "The enchanted wood"

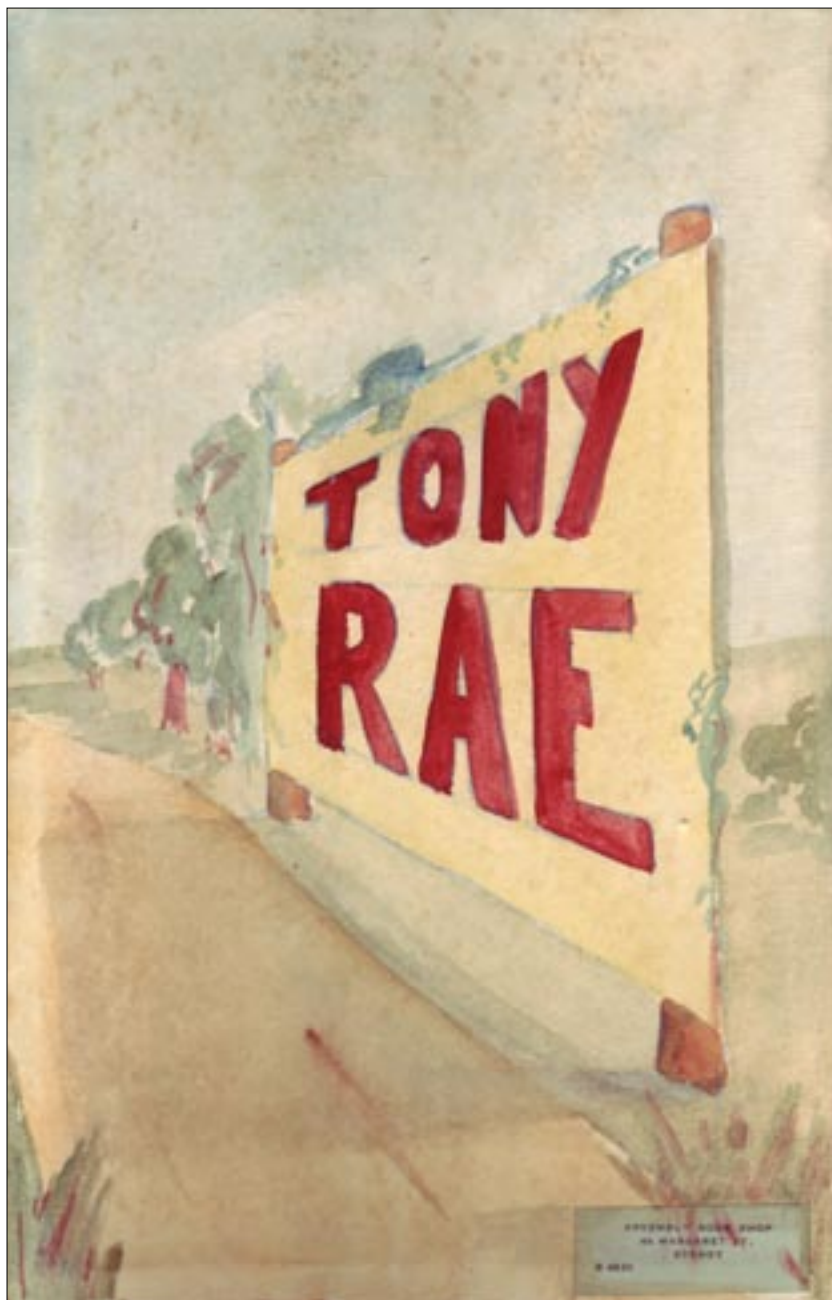
Now that the Society is a member of FISAE, we are on the mailing lists of kindred societies from around the world. Mary Keep and I received an email notice in November concerning the above bookplate competition, based in the Italian town of Bosia. The theme of the competition seems obscure to your Editor but is 'The God Tammuz, Myth of the Seasons', explained thus: In ancient Babylon the god Tammuz represented youth, prosperity and the mystery of life when it awakes, in spring, after the long winter sleep. His fulfilment is his faithful wife Istar, goddess of love and life. Tammuz, attacked by a boar, dies and the beautiful Istar descends to Hell to claim her husband back. Prizes range in value from 500 to 800 Euros. Applications with designs are due by 30 March 2009, and the exhibition and announcement of winners takes place in September. More information may be obtained by email enquiry to the organisers at info@boscostregato.com or from the Editor at the usual address.

XXXIII FISAE Congress, Istanbul, 2010

Further to Andrew Peake's report on the 32nd FISAE Congress in Beijing, confirmation has been received from Professor Hasip Pektas, president of the Istanbul Ex-Libris Society, that the 33rd Congress is to be held in Istanbul rather than Ankara as had originally been planned. Information on the Congress may be obtained from Professor Pektas on hasipp@ttmail.com or at Isik University Faculty of Fine Arts, TR-34398 Maslak-Istanbul, Turkey. The program and many interesting links are available on the Istanbul Museum of Graphic Arts website www.aed.org.tr/english.html



Above: Ink label for Mary Parker, 1951
 Right: Watercolour design for
 Tony Rae, 1941



Exlibris Aboensis No. 64 2008/4 Finland

Another result of our affiliation with FISAE was the appearance in my letterbox of the fourth issue for 2008 of the colour magazine of *Exlibris Aboensis*. Based on my gleanings from the FISAE website, this is one of two Finnish bookplate societies. It was founded in Turku in 1992, the other being Suomen Exlibrisyhdistys (Finland Exlibris Society) founded in Helsinki in 1946. The 32-page magazine is in Finnish but includes a one-column English-language summary. Inserted is a small booklet on Finnish bookplate designer Raimo Kanerva (1941-99) produced for the Beijing Congress. Among the several pages giving reports on the Congress is a photo of our Society member and frequent contributor to this *Newsletter*, Andrew Peake, together with a reproduction of his caricature bookplate by A Mitchell (2000). It was Andrew who was the de facto ambassador of the New Australian Bookplate Society to FISAE.

Bookplate Journal September 2008

The *Journal* of the Bookplate Society (UK) occasionally has items of Australian interest,

although the September issue which came in the post toward the end of the year did not. However, in the context of the Asia-Pacific region, its 'Notes' section included a potted history of bookplates in China. What interested me was that although Chinese book collectors have always used the traditional stone seal to mark their books, in the early twentieth century Chinese artists brought back from Europe or North America the idea of the bookplate. An issue of the journal of the Modern Woodcut Printing Association (founded 1934) published in 1935 brought to notice new bookplates designed by members. After

decades of absence, interest in bookplate resurfaced in 1980 and the Chinese Ex Libris Association was founded in 1984.

More on Brian North Lee

Librarian friend Ian Stubbin irregularly sends me envelopes stuffed with articles on bookish topics clipped from pages of the *Times Literary Supplement*. One of these clippings dated 5 December 2007 comprised a review by James Fergusson of the sale of part of the library of novelist John Fowles and also the previously noticed (*Newsletter*, Sept. 2007 and Dec. 2007)

auction by Bonhams of Bond Street, London, of the bulk of Lee's bookplate collection. The results for many lots far exceeded the auctioneers' estimates.

If you are interested go to:
http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/the_tls/article3006095.ece

News from members

A beautiful cabinet for bookplates

Roy Howard, Sydney, has forwarded photographs of a beautiful cabinet in which he now keeps a significant collection of bookplates and associated material. Roy writes: "Having purchased the bookplate collection of Claude Dany, I decided to use my cabinet-making skills to build a mahogany cabinet to contain my complete bookplate collection, plus my reference library and stock of personal bookplates. The cabinet, which is 1.6 metres tall, also holds newsletters from the Australian, UK and USA bookplate societies. In order to give the cabinet a distinctive look, I reproduced on the front in pyrography [literally, drawing with fire], a copy of the 'Iglter' bookplate from 1450."

Member wishes to swap bookplates

New member Peter Schoch wishes to swap bookplates, and has duplicates by Norman Lindsay, Adrian Feint, Harold Byrne and Helen Ogilvie. Peter is not on email but can be contacted by mail at Unit 2, 59 Pearl Parade, Scarborough WA 6019, or by phone on 08 9245 5102.

Editorial

The Society's year ended with a wonderful Annual General Meeting hosted by guest speaker Paul Brunton in the lovely Friends Reading Room, the former Mitchell Library Reading Room. Paul spoke with enthusiasm about David Scott Mitchell's initiation into a love of books and the various techniques

and subterfuges he used to gain ownership of desirable books. Paul's talk was tailored to his audience as he underpinned his arguments with bookplates and other marks of provenance in the well-chosen selection. Those members present also had the bonus of hearing a few words from Jennifer Lamm, president of the Auckland Ex Libris Society, who was fortuitously in Sydney for the weekend to receive the award of a degree from the University of Sydney.



Mahogany cabinet by Roy Howard, 2008

This December issue of the *Newsletter* has benefitted from contributions from Jim McCready on his course on bookplates for the University of the Third Age in Dunedin, and Andrew Peake for his perceptive report on the FISAE Congress in Beijing. Andrew also had the distinction of being the only Australian at the Beijing Congress, and for his troubles became the delegate, though ambassador might be a more fit term, when our Society was ratified as a member of FISAE. Andrew has rightly used his report to draw attention to the under-representation of Australian artists in international bookplate events. This issue also includes an article on 'Manuscript bookplates' – one that I have been meaning to write for a few issues now. There is necessarily a limit to how many bookplates one can reproduce in any single article, and I plan to place more of these unusual and unique designs on the Society's website. If you do come across books containing manuscript bookplates, even if you don't yourself find them captivating as I do, please snap them up and let me know, and I will relieve you of your burden.

This is the last issue of the year 2008, or, due to its lateness for which I apologise, unofficially the first for 2009. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all contributors for sending in articles and notes; and of course Mary Keep, whose skill in making every issue beautiful and elegant, continues to attract positive comments from members and other readers.

The Society remains healthy, if not large, and at the end of 2008 we can boast of over 60 financial members scattered throughout Australia and in New Zealand, including an increasing number of institutional library members. We have plans for 2009 which, it is hoped, will increase both our member base and the profile of bookplates and bookplate artists in the broader community. Any suggestions on how the Society might achieve these ends will be gratefully received. It thus remains for me to thank you for your continuing interest and support, and to wish you all the best for 2009.

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