

Brian John Birch

Born in Liverpool, UK, on the 18th January 1949, the second son of Frederick Birch, a policeman, and his wife Edna May, a hairdresser. Following his schooling, he attended the Department of Metallurgy at the University of Liverpool in 1967, graduating three years later with a B.Eng. Following two years research, he received his Masters degree (M.Eng.) The next seven years were spent in the same Department carrying out industrial research into the heat treatment of metals, eventually leaving to join a small private company, Nemo Heat Treatments Ltd.



It was during his stay at the University that he met and married Marion Eslick, with whom he had two children, Sally and Geoffrey.

In 1983, Nemo Heat Treatments was taken over by the industry leader, Blandburgh, part of Bodycote International plc. Brian spent the remainder of his career with Bodycote, managing various plants and ending his time there as Director of Health, Safety and Environmental Compliance for this large multi-national conglomerate. He retired in 2009 after 31 years service.

His interest in stamps was sparked at the age of 9 when their father gave his two sons stamp albums and a small packet of stamps. With two worldwide collectors in the same household, change was inevitable in order to avoid conflict. It was agreed that Brian should collect Commonwealth and His brother, David, European stamps and that they would collaborate on the rest of the world.

Eventually, family life and increased commitments at work lead to the stamps being laid aside for extended periods of time. Inevitably, during these low periods even new issues were neglected and this lead to a loss of interest in a collection getting ever further from completion. Following some training in information science at the British Library, Brian transferred his interest to the literature of philately and the stamp collection was abandoned. With no collection to support, the standard monographs and handbooks held little interest for him and he chose to specialise in philatelic bibliography and the history of philately, its literature and its adherents.

This change in direction lead him to begin a number of bibliographies which expanded to a greater extent than expected and became substantial books. Although he spent a great deal of time in compiling some of these over the past 30 or so years, it was evident that their scope was such that they would never be finished and so could never be conventionally published. Accordingly, they have all been placed on the FIP literature Commission web site and are updated each year. The site: <http://fipliterature.org> currently holds over 6,500 pages of Brian's freely available bibliographic and biographical research.

The limited time available, given his domestic and employment responsibilities had made his involvement in organised philately somewhat problematic. Nevertheless, his earliest continuous membership is that of the Perfin Society, dating from 1972. Brian joined the American Philatelic Society and American Philatelic Research Library in 1976, subsequently becoming a Patron and Life Member of the latter. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society London (1981) and a member of the Collectors Club of New York (1983).

Although he had always published the occasional article, retirement gave him the time to at least begin to catch up on all of the projects that had been started and then laid aside for lack of time.

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