

Chandler's Ford 'Sociable', 9th July, 2015

The meetings in Chandler's Ford during the afternoons of the second Thursday of the month have become an increasingly popular event, particularly with those collectors who do not want to travel to down-town Southampton in the evenings (which can be rather daunting, especially in mid-winter). The format is deliberately kept informal, and there is invariably a wide range of 'bring-and-tell' displays, which are always interesting and quite often include something extraordinary. The informality results in these meetings being as much social occasions as philatelic events. The Committee was aware that a significant number of those attending did not participate in meetings, including social events, at the Bugle Street venue, and it was therefore decided to include in this year's Chandler's Ford programme a purely social occasion. This was the scheduled July meeting; the venue was the Dovetail Centre of the Methodist Church next door to our usual meeting place, the Community Room of the Hanover Housing Association. The event was organised by Debbie Hindson with the assistance of Janice Eastlake, and was chaired – in the usual informal fashion – by Alan Drysdall, who has recently been accorded the formal title of 'Convenor' and a place on the Committee in recognition of the important role that the Chandler's Ford meetings now play in the Society's overall programme.



President John Berridge (left) presents Alan with a certificate of Life Membership of the Society. Photo courtesy Debbie Hindson.

The Convenor opened the meeting by welcoming members and their guests. Just how many were present is uncertain; 58 signed the book but not everyone did, despite exhortations to do so, and a subsequent head count indicated a more accurate figure of 68. It was a remarkable turnout. The President, John Berridge, then took over the proceedings and in a short speech summarised Alan's philatelic career. He then presented Alan with a framed certificate recording his elevation (no less) to Honorary Life Member in recognition of his service to the Society and philately in general together with a superior bottle of his favourite tippie (red wine). John was followed by Vice Chairperson Pauline Gittoes, who pointed out that Alan's wife Cecile had not only left

Southampton and her family only two months after her marriage to accompany her husband to his first

posting in central Africa but had remained married to him since, spending some 30 years living overseas. It was her support that made it possible for Alan to pursue careers as both a geologist and a philatelist. Pauline then presented Cecile with a bunch of flowers.

It had been decided when the annual programme was finalised that this would be an entirely social event and there would be no philatelic displays. There was, however, a display of humorous Christmas, birthday and other cards, which certainly caused comment among those viewing. (Philatelists, especially postal historians, are familiar with such items as letters and postcards that have been through the post, and valentine cards have a serious following, but there seems to be little interest in other types of cards.)



Alan and Cecile Drysdall, photo by Debbie Hindson.

The draw was munificent, the membership having contributed very generously; the prizes included no less than five bottles of wine. Members and friends were also generous when purchasing tickets; our income totalled £133, possibly a club record for a draw. In deference to our hosts, who prefer that alcohol does not feature at meetings on their premises, labels on which the details of each bottle of wine were recorded were included with the prizes and had to be exchanged for the actual bottle in the car park after the meeting. It was a clandestine touch that added spice to the occasion. The President's wife, Mary Berridge, actually conducted the draw – perfectly as it happened since Harry Vinecombe (Treasurer) was only too happy to win the prize he particularly wanted – a large box of chocolates.

The refreshments were something else. The varied and generous selection of sandwiches was first class – probably the best the Society has ever served – the cakes, five different types (153 pieces!) all home-made by Janice Eastlake, were also greatly appreciated, Harry particularly favouring the

chocolate cake (of course). Paul Arnold (Secretary) provided excellent filter coffee, a very welcome upgrade from the usual 'instant'.

The quiz, set as always by Lorraine Simms, was a real stinker. There were 30 questions, but it was a certainty that no-one would score 30 and unlikely that anyone would score 20. Remarkably two people, Felicity Irons Smith and Brian Hague scored 17 (an incredible achievement). Felicity was the first to answer a tie-breaker question and consequently won the prize (another, in this case anonymous, bottle of wine).

A big thank-you is due to the many people who helped in one way or another to run this event. Top of the list must be Debbie and her friend Janice, and our appreciation was shown with a very nice bouquet presented to Debbie. (Unfortunately we did not know the extent of Janice's involvement until the afternoon of the event, but her contribution will be recognised.) A number of members, including Dave and Cora Edwards and Paul Arnold, whose contributions were much appreciated, helped to serve the refreshments. Harry, who had loosened his grip on the Society's purse strings for the occasion, was given another box of chocolates along with the good wishes of all present for a successful outcome to the medical procedures he still has to face. The frames were brought from and returned to our usual venue by Paul Arnold, the display was provided by the Convenor, Pauline Gittoes organised the draw and Lorraine Simms the quiz. Many others played a role and helped to make this one of the most enjoyable and successful events the Society

has held in recent years. The venue was perfect, the refreshments were great, the entertainment was first class, and the company was enjoyable; what more could you ask?

A.R.D.



A view of some of the tables and the display at the Chandler's Ford afternoon meeting photographed by Debbie Hindson.