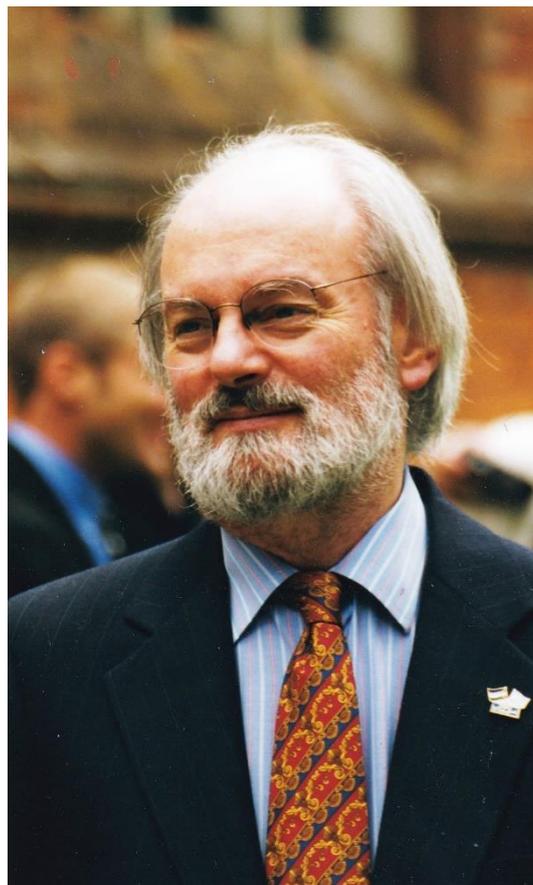


Edmund Hall, ESC 239 (1943-2017): An Appreciation

Edmund Hall arrived a little late for one of our Study Circle meetings in early 1998, just as discussion had foundered on who might take up the vacant role of Editor of the *Quarterly Circular*. Without taking off his cap, and without even a single thought for the multiple complexities he might face beyond his computer, his scanner and his optical character recognition software, he said immediately: "I could do that!"

It was typical of the man, and typical of his life in the Circle, that he should see a problem, rise instantly to the challenge – and, despite the difficulties, make an outstanding success of it. For a collector suffering profound dyslexia, it was a brave if not even foolhardy challenge. But Edmund knew he could handle it, and with a devoted backroom team to help, he performed magnificently as Editor. Over the next 19 years he provided the Circle with a glittering succession of 76 *QCs*, far and away more than any previous incumbent in the role, and he oversaw a gradual change – it had to be gradual, to appease those unwilling to spend an extra penny on publishing – from black and white typed pages to true printing, and even more gradually, from four colour pages to a full-colour magazine that is today the envy of many other societies.



And he wrote for the *QC*, too. This was partly forced on him because the flow of members' material has never been strong enough, but his two loves of military philately and making the stamp fit the rate provided a steady stream of articles that not only filled the magazine but also earned him merit from his colleagues in the form of the MacArthur Award for the best and most significant article of the year. Five times.

Edmund was not only print-minded, however. He it was who persuaded a doubtful and generationally-challenged group of officers that in this modern age we should have a website, and that we should spend a little money on it. Today, ten years after its official launch, it provides a constant source of new applicants, a home for the Auctions, and beyond that a massic encyclopaedia of Egyptian philately unmatched anywhere in the world, with over 3,000 pages of material, the vast majority provided by Edmund himself. Many of the military elements are illustrated with his hand-drawn depictions of men and uniforms, something he always loved to create.

Another of his brilliant conceptions was to digitise back copies of the *QC*, the *L'OP* and *Egyptian Topics* – and, a master-stroke, to gain Peter Smith's permission to do the same with his "bible" - and to have them available on the website for all members to consult at will. A wonderful research tool.

And as a further step into the future, Edmund was one of a small team headed by Hani Sharestan who have for the past three years provided Egyptian philatelists – ESC members and non-members alike – with a Facebook page, on which ideas and illustrations can be exchanged at the press of a button or two. It has become a lively forum, with over 300 members, and again provides a steady, if so far fairly slow, source of new members. It could not have happened without Edmund's enthusiasm.

This enthusiasm overflowed into his meeting displays, where whatever the topic – postal rates, postmarks, air mails, TPOs, stations – his presentation was always embellished with a quirky sense of humour that brought out the best and most unexpected in his material.

Edmund joined the Circle in mid 1978 at a time when such distinguished and respected collectors as MacArthur, Smith, Sears, Horesh, Grimmer and Clarke formed the committee, but Edmund soon showed his abilities by taking over from Dennis Clarke in December 1979 as Secretary/Treasurer, a role he would maintain for seven years. During this period he provided yet another innovation – the Auction. Started out as a private concern when he wished to branch out as a dealer, it was quickly taken under the Circle's wing and has flourished ever since – we are now at Number 56.

It must not be forgotten that collector of military membership of the Forces pretty well all committee in the position of President, only earlier this year. I well display he gave – almost in fascinating material from all over the world – the Far wonderful IRA covers, a ranging interest and a



Edmund receiving one of his five MacArthur Awards from John Davis

Edmund Matticott Hall was Essex, to which his parents wartime bombing. He made and mussels in Southend, to life than that and studied polymer and plastics North London University.

and eventually to textile-testing machinery before graduating into computer software. Always fascinated by maths, he took a masters degree at University College London in mathematical education. After passing with flying colours he was told by his tutor: "I'm fairly sure I've just read something very important; but I can't quite put my finger on what it is!"

Edmund was a very keen philately. During a lifetime of Postal History Society he filled and official roles, culminating from which he stepped down remember a truly astounding defiance of his illness – of "the small wars" from literally East, Africa, South America, true indication of his wide-delight to see.

born in March 1943 in Ilford, had been evacuated during an early living selling cockles but decided there must be more in the evenings for a degree in technology at what is today He moved on to adhesive tapes,

Edmund worked very hard for that degree, including popping over to my house when finally the treatise was written, "for a couple of hours to tidy up the English". He stayed the night, and it was long into the following afternoon before the text was deemed satisfactory. But Ed was a true polymath, able to converse knowledgeably and in depth about politics, history, geography and science, taking part as both speaker and interested observer at meetings of the local University of the Third Age, and thoroughly enjoyed running an infants' school in his village on retirement.

With his wife Ann and daughters Katharine and Judy, he was also an ardent traveller, visiting some truly out of the way places in his search for knowledge: not only Australia, where Judy has made her home, and Egypt several times, but also Syria, the Sahara Desert, North Korea and Libya ... as far off the beaten track as they could get! Edmund and Ann were justly famous for their hospitality, with many of the visiting greats of Egyptian philately enjoying evenings in their home in Little Chalfont over the years, the informal meetings overflowing with good cheer and good food ... just a casual gathering of like-minded people that allowed the pressures of the world to slip away.

If Edmund's split-second decision to take over the QC surprised many, his announcement at the September 2015 meeting that he had terminal cancer and a prognosis of only six months was an equally immediate reaction to the bad news – as was his absolute determination to fight on and not give in to the medical sentence. His courage and willpower over the ensuing period won for him and his family a further two years – and gave the Circle opportunity to come to terms with the forthcoming tragedy. He fought on with immense bravery against a series of increasingly painful chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments, bearing it all with immense fortitude and concentrating on living as full a life as possible.

In the passing of Edmund Hall the Circle has lost an excellent researcher, a great collector, a man who has given vast amounts of his time and expertise over very many years by providing a backbone to Circle affairs, deeply connected with the whole membership not just four times a year when the *QC* appears, but with every meeting, every auction, every event. We shall miss him. Enormously. **Mike Murphy**

John Davis (ESC 213) writes: I first came across an Edmund Hall when I was a teenager and into jazz. He was a clarinet maestro who played alongside Louis Armstrong, but perhaps not quite a legend. Years later I joined the Circle and soon another Edmund Hall joined too. This one became a legend in his own lifetime and a great personal friend. While writing a book on military postal history I joined the Forces Postal History Society and again came across our Ed. I noted his progression through the ranks until he became its President and wondered what he did in his spare time. At every meeting he made me welcome in his inimitable way and I realised why he was President: he was both very popular and extremely knowledgeable.

When one considers what he did for the ESC, I really do wonder how he found the time. Not only did he take over the editorship of *QC* but he improved its presentation, its content and its quality beyond measure. Meanwhile, he set up and ran the website that must be the envy of most societies, and was auctioneer at live auctions. He was the 'backbone' of the ESC at a time when people are shying away from such commitments.

I have lost a special friend, one who always gave you the impression that you were what mattered to him. Not many people have that ability, but Ed had it in spades. I expect he was your friend too. Bless you Ed.

Anton Jansen (ESC 383) writes: Notwithstanding the life threatening judgment he received, he carried on and fulfilled a brilliant task in editing the *QC*. I know from experience how difficult it can be to run a journal, but the fact that the *QC* has continued to appear regularly, and with good content, means that you had the balls to do it. I will miss you!

Tony Cakebread (ESC Antipodean Agent), writes: At the most recent meeting of the ESC NZ Chapter in Wellington - at which we were fortunate to have everyone present: Sue Claridge; Anabright Hay, myself; Claude Poulsen and Herb Cowley - members asked that I pass on their condolences to Edmund's family on learning of the sad news of his passing.

While distance meant that few of us knew Edmund especially well, those fortunate to have attended meetings in both London (Sue, Herb and myself) and, more recently, New York (Anabright and Herb) remember Edmund's updates and addresses at those gatherings and especially his unstinting commitment to both the *Quarterly Circular* and ESC website. We can only imagine how much time and energy has been involved with both initiatives over the years and we are all very grateful to have had Edmund's willingness to take a leadership role with these important tasks that have helped provide the global glue of our organisation.

The Editor adds: When Edmund was late in printing his very first *QC*, he lamented that he had "fallen at the first hurdle". I fear that I have done the same. But it never occurred to me that I would have to carry out the production of an Edmund tribute issue. I trust he will understand with his usual grace and good humour.