

## Report of the Annual General Meeting, 10 May 2025, at EuroPhilEx, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham

After 18 months of frustration and negativity, it was most encouraging to see 12 members (including seven from overseas) at this important meeting, where crucial planning was debated. The slight mood change may have been triggered by the promise of something new and exciting on the horizon – coupled with the recognition that something HAD to change.

The meeting was delighted to welcome Hany Salam (ESC 580), President of the Philatelic Society of Egypt (PSE), whose exhibit of amazing early Maritime Mail was on display in the EuroPhilEx Court of Honour.

Attending were: David Ogden (Chairman), Hany Salam (Egypt), Sami Sadek (Treasurer/ Auctioneer), Neil Hitchens (Webmaster/ Librarian), Herb Cowley (New Zealand), Aly Gabr (Egypt), Nael Hamdy (Egypt), Ken Sanford (USA), Atef Sarian, Greg Todd (Ireland), Jan van Zelleem (Netherlands), Richard Wheatley.

Apologies: John Davis, Mike Murphy, Jon Aitchison, Hani Sharestan, Trent Ruebush, Tammie Aaron Barrada, Tony Cakebread, Pierre Grech, Mike Bramwell, Vahe Varjabedian, Sue Claridge, Anabright Hay, Claude Poulson. Peter Newroth, Joe Chalhoub, Vincent Centonze, Michael Ryan, John Clarke, Patrick Moore, Scott Van Horn, Christopher Smith.

Chairman: David welcomed members present and congratulated Committee member Jon Aitchison (ESC 661) on receiving the highly regarded ABPS Congress Medal for his more than two years' work as Chairman and principal organiser of the EuroPhilEx exhibition. David congratulated Circle members who won awards for their wonderful displays.

His personal highlight of the year was the EgyPhila exhibition in Alexandria in September 2024. He thanked Greg Todd (ESC 585) for making a gift of his book *Egypt – 1866 First Issue Multiples* to all members.

David noted that three members had died during the year, including Ibrahim Shoukry (ESC 423), for long a stalwart of the PSE, expert in stamp issues and postal markings, generous with his knowledge; Tom Homa (ESC 303), one of the core collectors in North America over 50 years, specialist in the Third Issue; and Abdel-Rahman Daw (ESC 730), a young up-and-coming collector/dealer whose sudden and unexpected death shocked his Cairo colleagues.



**Members at Birmingham: left, David Ogden and Hany Salam; right, Ken Sanford and his wreck mail display**

Minutes of the last AGM: (6 March 2024, QC 289, pp 122-3) and matters arising were approved.

Election of Officers: Neil Hitchens' emergency move to Librarian was confirmed; and on the Committee Ali Abdelmegeid (ESC 746) was elected to replace Ibrahim Shoukry. Tammie Aaron-Barrada (ESC 643) was voted in place of Vahe Varjabedian (ESC 390), who was warmly thanked for his many years of long service. Remaining officers in situ.

Treasurer/ Auctioneer: Sami Sadek reported on two recent Auctions, with No 68 (545 lots offered) attracting 283 successful bids (53%) for a total sale value of £9,543 and ESC commission of £1,325; and No 69 (506 lots offered) attracting 203 successful bids (40%) for a total sale value of £8,080 and ESC commission of £1,431. As Treasurer, he reported an accumulated surplus of £26,979.88 after an annual surplus of £2,824.25 over 2023's £1,687.60). He appealed to all members to pay annual subscriptions (due January 1) by March 31; and to settle auction accounts in a timely manner. Sami proposed a vote of thanks for our accounts examiner Andy Gould (ESC 393), which was warmly approved.

Secretary/ Editor: In his absence Mike Murphy's report was read by David Ogden.

**Membership 2024:** We lost eight members but gained eight, and now stand at 164, same as two years ago. They comprise UK 39, Europe 31, Egypt 25, N.America 56, World 13. Those selecting the online QC, 35.

**MacArthur Award for 2024:** Member apathy was unfortunately echoed in the voting, with ballots cast for fewer QC articles than for many years. But there was no doubt about the runaway winner, which was "Notes from a philatelic visit to Alexandria" by David Ogden, which appeared in QC 291, December 2024, pp 170-3.

Mike's headline report stated: "This has been a most frustrating year, even more so than when I gave notice that I wished to step down from one or other position 18 months ago. Sadly, despite the Committee's best efforts, it has not been possible to find a volunteer to take over either role. So the Committee changed its direction of approach, by trying to ease the burden – David, Sami and Neil are in similar positions of being required to fill two demanding roles – to make continued occupation of both roles possible.

Attendances at face to face meetings have diminished rapidly since Covid, as have offers to present meetings. A move to online meetings via Zoom attracted new attendances, but again the potential number of presenters has dried up, to the point where it is very difficult to arrange meetings of any sort.

Which is in part why the proposals for the future are so drastic.... We are suggesting that we make much more use of the popular and lively Facebook page, and to cease publication of the paper QC and convert it to a digital publication supplied by email. Discussion of Agenda items offered potential solutions presenting a drastic step away from our long-held practices and at the same time preparing the way for moving forward to take advantage of advances in technology.

By sending more material to be Secretary will be relieved of some of notices, previews, auctions and the like. juggling articles and illustrations of jigsaw of 28 pages, by removing labels and visits to the post office, the time polishing articles and deepening renowned.

**Next meeting  
Our next face-to-face  
meeting will be on  
Saturday October 25,  
10.30-12.30, at Stampex  
in North London.  
Don't miss it!**

presented on Facebook, the the day-to-day routine of queries, By removing the necessity of many abilities and qualities into a purchases of envelopes, stamps, Editor will be able to spend more the research for which the QC is

By carrying out both exercises, we may be able to retain the services of a member who has grown into familiarity without realising it over the years – so many years that the burden has inexorably become overwhelming. For members in general, the technological advances involved are few and will quickly become familiar – the online QC can be printed out with the push of a button on your home computer; the website contains a wealth of unheralded potential research material; and the wide range of offerings from members and non-members alike on Facebook will prove a source of fascination for all.

The Circle is in the 21st century. Founded in 1935, it has survived for 90 years. Now is not the time to be stalled by a short-term unfamiliarity with technology that is developing into every aspect of our lives”.

Mike also observed that if QC publication and distribution costs were cut as suggested, saving some £3,000, it should be possible to consider alternative uses for the resources freed up, perhaps in a reduction in the annual membership fee, or towards upgrading to a more robust website. Those decisions are something for the coming weeks, after the overall decision in principle is agreed.

Webmaster / Librarian: Neil Hitchens reported on the newly reconstituted website, not yet in operation, which meets contemporary web standards including modern coding. There is a wealth of material concealed in its archives that members may not realise is available. The Circle Library (of books) is now in store awaiting Neil’s house move. He will update the catalogue list, as many items have been added since the last update.

Meeting continued....

Richard Wheatley suggested that we advise the magazine: note that a similar appeal was could arrange to have each complete y attractive Egyptian stamps. Cost and den

role to assist the Editor in compiling the 124. Hany Salam suggested that the PSE and posted to members on request with ed.

PSE’s Cairo headquarters: Hany Salam explained that the PSE is in the process of moving to new offices as a direct result of a change in the laws concerning rent control. It has been suggested that the ESC might contribute US\$5000 to buy one of 12 shares in the new office space. Joe Chalhoub (ESC 385) has volunteered to contribute an amount. Hany explained that any payment would be protected from any future liability.

Members favoured making a contribution, if necessary, but as discussions continue between the PSE and government officials any ESC decision will await the outcome of those talks. The meeting concluded with an interesting display by Ken Sanford (ESC 762) of Imperial Airways crash mails involving aircraft flying over Egypt.

- Those members in attendance were broadly in favour of the advantages of an online-only QC but decided that in light of the long-term importance of some of the matters under discussion, all members - including those not present - should have a voice. All were invited to vote online on the question:

“Are you in favour of using modern technology, including online preparation and distribution of the QC? The Committee hopes for your support and a move to digital delivery. As explained above, the current process is not sustainable.”