

MINUTES OF THE 55th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BWISC
HELD AT 1:30 PM SATURDAY 2 May 2009

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

The meeting was opened by Peter Ford who welcomed the 27 members present, and thanked Spink for their hospitality in allowing BWISC to hold our AGM on the premises.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Victor Toeg, Michael Medlicott, David Richards, Tim Pearce, John Riggall, John Keegan, R. Upcroft, Richard Foden, Peter Longmuir, Chris Harman.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING 2008

The minutes of the previous meeting on 28 April 2008, as published in Bulletin No. 217, June 2008, pages 31 to 34, were accepted by the attendees.

4. REPORT BY THE HON. GENERAL SECRETARY (CHAS GEE)

As at 30 November 2008 (date of issue of December Bulletin) the membership total was 347. Of these 229 were UK members and 118 from overseas. This represents an increase of six members compared to the same time in 2007.

During the year there have been 24 new membership applications, and we have lost 18 existing members.

Members are urged to let the Secretary know of any change of address as soon as possible to ensure that they continue to receive issues of our Bulletin.

Report accepted by the meeting.

5. Report by the Hon. Editor (Steve Jarvis)

Another year passes, I think successfully. I am thankful that authors (old and new) continue to supply me with a steady stream of quality material to publish. However, I sometimes lack short articles to provide appropriate balance to the Bulletin. So, please, don't be shy, send me something of interest from your collection (as well as more heavy-weight research articles).

The work of putting together the publication is still a pleasure but I confess that towards completion of an edition, I find the words blurring in front of my eyes. Therefore, the quality of the Bulletin produced owes much to the efforts of Charles Freeland and Peter Ford, who scrutinize the articles, in detail, for accuracy and presentation.

The web site continues to be stable and fulfils its purpose with on average about 1,000 visits per month. No radical changes this year but new articles and gallery features continue to be added. I would particularly draw Members' attention to the 'Auction/Dealer' page (accessed from the button under 'Links'), where Charles Freeland provides up-to-date information on auction activity.

Report accepted by the meeting.

6. Report by the Hon. Treasurer (Ray Stanton)

I have pleasure in reporting that the Study Circle has generated a surplus of income over expenditure in 2008 of £885 which means that once again we have a reasonable cover going forward for our activities.

Income from subscriptions has remained steady but in 2008 did not quite cover the cost of the Bulletin production and distribution the cost of which rose significantly during the year. Moreover there will also be a significant increase in postage costs during 2009. Whilst we have a surplus from other activities this is not a serious problem but it may well be that we will need to revisit the level of the subscription sooner rather than later.

Income from the Study Circle auction continues to be an excellent source of funds and was very similar to the previous year. Income from publications this year amounted to £1,875 which was almost exactly the amount spent during the year on publications printing costs.

With regard to expenses, we have again limited our meeting room expenses due to the generosity of Spink with our grateful thanks. The ABPS subscription was increased substantially in 2008 compared to 2007, otherwise expenses remained very similar.

The value of the balance sheet Accumulated fund was increased not only by the surplus that arose on our activities but also by the gain on exchange of £590 resulting from the increased value in sterling of our US dollar funds following the pound's decline during 2008.

I would like to thank John Davis again for being our auditor and for the advice and help he has given.

Accepted by the meeting.

BRITISH WEST INDIES STUDY CIRCLE

INCOME STATEMENT : YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2008


	£'s	2008	£'s	2007
INCOME :				
Subscriptions		3,624		3,710
Publications – Sales less commissions		1,875		1,667
Auction and other donations		1,494		1,533
Interest received		70		80
TOTAL INCOME		7,063		6,990
EXPENDITURE :				
Bulletin Costs less advertising	1,860		947	
Distribution and editorial expenses	1,813	3,673	1,575	2,522
Publications: Printing costs	1,874		1,864	
Publications Distribution	–		4	
Printer depreciation	–	1,874	470	2,338
Leamington Convention – net deficit		–		110
Library – Books and expenses		200		–
ABPS affiliation fee		230		140
Officers administration – Stationery, postage, telephone etc		123		130
Bank charges		–		5
Website		35		81
Other		43		
		6,178		5,326
SURPLUS EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME	£'s	885	£'s	1,664

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2008

ACCUMULATED FUND				
Balance at 1st January 2007		4,347		2,719
Add: Surplus for the year		885		1,664
Dollar conversion profit (loss)		590		(36)
	£'s	5,822	£'s	4,347
REPRESENTED BY:				
Cash at banks		5,526		5,302
Debtors – amounts due to us		4,509		5,271
		10,035		10,573
Less : Subscriptions received in advance	(2,182)		(2,807)	
Loan	(2,000)		(2,500)	
Other creditors – Amounts due by us	(31)	(4,213)	(919)	(6,226)
	£'s	5,822	£'s	4,347

AUDITORS REPORT

I hereby certify that the income statement for the year ended 31 December 2008 is in accordance with the books, vouchers and explanations given to me; and that the Balance Sheet at the 31 December 2008 shows the financial state of the British West Indies Study Circle as at that date.


 J G M Davis FCA (Not in practice)

7. Report by the Hon. Librarian (Ian Jakes)

There has been a loan of seven books to four members during the year. This compares with a loan of 19 books to eight members during the year ended April 2008. The computer age is clearly affecting the demand for loan of books. However, there is still much philatelic information which cannot be accessed via the internet. I am noticing an increase in requests for philatelic information which cannot be found on the web. Examples are: requests for information relating to the Barbados Belgium Relief Fund Labels (once again!), St. Vincent covers and Bermuda Censor Marks.

One member has requested a Library List.

You will recall from last year's Library Minutes that the late Derek Nathan donated a number of books to the Library. The Author of one of those books had not retained a copy — I photocopied 'Decade of Decision Ramphal 1970' and sent it to the Author. The Author is using the information provided as an aid to his Memoirs which he is writing in Barbados.

There has been a donation of Michael Nicholson's papers relating to the Jubilee issue of British Guiana via Sandafayre. These papers have the same weight as a sack of potatoes. Our Chairman, Peter Ford is taking these papers to Spain to sort them out. The Nicholson papers clearly contain lots of interesting information although my secretary Sharon is most uninterested.

Finally, I have had lengthy correspondence with Peter Fernbank relating to the Bahamas Special Delivery Stamps. Poor Peter will clearly not be able to sleep at night until he has finally resolved questions relating to the first, second and third printings of the first issue. We eagerly await further revelations in a future issue of the Bulletin.

Report accepted by the meeting.

8. Report by the Hon. Publications Officer (Peter Ford)

Last year saw the publication of the final volume of Michael Rego's Steamship Lines to the Caribbean. These books have been a long time in coming; I remember that they were first discussed when I first took over the Publications empire. However, I believe the wait was worthwhile and much credit has to go to Mike who has researched his subject assiduously.

Sales of our publications remain buoyant despite these straightened economic times, Mike Rego's Steamships books selling the most with Vol. 1 selling 22 copies, Vol. 2 31 and Vol. 3 19. Another good seller was Richard Maisel's Cayman Islands booklet with 19 sales. All in all, sales are at a satisfactory level, although we could always do with more. David Druett, who handles the distribution, does a really marvellous job spreading news of our publications far and wide in order to encourage sales.

John Davis's War Tax book was to be our next publication, but for many different reasons we, that is both John and I, decided that an offer to publish the book by the Royal Philatelic Society London could not be refused. This is a significant publication and deserves to be published in hardback, something that we, as a Study Circle with limited funds, could not finance. By way of consolation, the book will be offered to members of our Circle at a discount. There will be a flysheet with details in a forthcoming Bulletin.

Again because of the high cost of publishing a hardback book, we are cooperating with the BCPSG who will hopefully help finance the Trinidad book. This has been delayed slightly because of the fact that my hard drive was destroyed during a storm and, despite backing everything up on an internet website, they seemingly hadn't done any backing up since January. However, I am hoping to have it published by the end of the year.

We have another booklet in prospect on early St. Vincent postmarks by a new member, Michael Louka. This will be the second in our Study Paper series and I am hoping that we can have that ready by the time of our Convention. Further in the future, there are other Study Papers in preparation and I will announce details of these when I have them.

Our publications are doing very well and I am more than happy that we continue to produce first class books which, as well as extending research also helps bring new members to our ranks. When I looked at the sales figures for last year, what struck me was that we have 17 different publications on our stocks. There cannot be any other specialist society with that many publications to their name. However, I can only publish what our members write and ideas for new books are always welcome. No subject, however specialist, is taboo.

Report accepted by the meeting.

9. Report by the Chairman of the Committee (Peter Ford)

I have to report to the membership yet another successful year for the Study Circle with our annual auction in April proving to be the most beneficial in terms of sales thus far. Our auctioneer seems to somehow inveigle prized lots from our members every year, describe them very invitingly and then manage to elicit the best possible realisations; meanwhile buyers go away thinking they have got a bargain. Long may it continue! We have Spink to thank for providing their premises as they are doing again this year.

Every year I say that the Bulletin has improved, both in content and production; this is very true, so much so that we have decided to enter this year's issues into the Literature Section of LONDON 2010. I am sure that when we come to have our dinner on that occasion, we will be able to celebrate an award of great distinction. Our Editor has to take credit for soliciting articles from members, typesetting it all and liaising with our printer; the net result is a Bulletin we can all be proud of. Whilst on the subject of the Bulletin, this year sees the presentation of the Gilbert Collett Award; the decision on this is reached as each member of the Committee selects 3 articles from the previous 2 years' issues in order of merit and these are combined using a simple points system to decide on the recipient. This year the winner of the award of a £40 voucher to be spent at the Study Circle auction is Peter Fernbank..... Congratulations!

Last year we lost two of our most active members. Early in the year Derek Sutcliffe died after a long illness and later, in November, the other Derek, Derek Nathan also died. They both have been sufficiently eulogised in the Bulletin but let me say that our Study Circle will be much the poorer for their passing.

We held our second PHILATEX meeting in November at which we were treated to a formal display by Paul Wright of just a small part of his Jamaica collection. I won't try in a few words to describe it; more information is available on our website. But I would like to thank Paul who incidentally had taken no offence that I had asked him to display at the previous meeting at PHILATEX, and promptly forgot that I had. Subsequently I had to put him off. The remainder of the meeting was taken up by members providing short displays of their material. Short they may have been, but there was a plethora of quality on display. We have decided that next time we meet at PHILATEX, the whole afternoon should be devoted to similar displays by members; this will give them more time to describe their exhibits.

This year is, of course, Convention year. The Committee have decided to try something slightly different in that we are changing the venue, the date of the Convention delaying it until October, and also we are holding it on a Sunday. We are hoping that this might persuade more of our members to attend. It is a very enjoyable affair and everyone who attends comes away satisfied with the day's events.

The arrangements for the LONDON 2010 joint events with the BCPSG are moving apace and details will shortly be published in the Bulletin. Our Bulletin Editor is doing much of the hard work in this regard and hopefully it should be a good show, as it was last time.

As usual, I have to thank the Committee for their hard work during the past year. Although I am Chairman, even I'm not completely aware of everything that goes into much of what we achieve. The organisation of the Circle's events such as today's, the effort that goes into arranging the auction, keeping our website up-to-date with events and such things as trying to organise next year's events at LONDON 2010, these all take up a lot of the Committee's time. This is all done willingly by volunteers, their only reward being the success of the Study Circle as a whole.

Report accepted by the meeting.

10. RE-ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

Peter Ford was re-elected unanimously.

11. RE-ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The President, Vice-Presidents, Hon. Officers and Messrs. N. Chandler, P. Fernbank and M. Hamilton have all agreed to continue as members of the Committee. There were no further nominations, consequently, all are automatically re-elected.

12. ELECTION OF THE HON. AUDITOR

John Davies has agreed to continue with this role.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

- Further to the Hon. Treasurer's report: Ian Crane said that he thought it important that the Society maintain sufficient funds to ensure that we can maintain the quality of our Bulletins, and are able to finance, adequately, future planned Society functions. Bearing this in mind the Society should consider increasing membership fees sooner rather than later, in spite of our apparent satisfactory financial position at the present time.
Simon Goldblatt replied to this by saying that the Society Committee do ensure that an appropriate balance is maintained between outgoings and subscriptions, and that the Committee will act to recommend an increase in subscriptions when this becomes necessary.
- Chris Southgate offered his thanks to the Committee members for their work. He expressed confidence in the way the Society is run and complemented all involved in Society publications which he thought were of excellent quality.