

A PLEASANT SURPRISE

By Jack Marshall

After having been a member of the Society for what seemed a very long time I had let my membership lapse, not because of any lack of interest, but the changes in venues made attending meetings inconvenient.

However, I missed receiving the magazine each month so I reapplied to join stating that I had been a member since about 1948. Bob McKechnie, by the way, was instrumental in establishing the magazine which started as a roneoed sheet.

Shortly after I had a call from Tony Melbourne to say that as I had already been a member for over 50 years I was entitled to the 50 year membership badge. We also discovered that I had been a member for the Brighton R.S.L. with Tony's father.

But to start at the very beginning.

I have kept fowls and birds for most of my life. Prior to the 1939/45 war there was only canaries and budgies with a few red strawberry finches which never seemed to breed because, as I now know, they were all cocks.

After service in the Royal Australian Air Force with Graham Hogg we were both discharged towards the end of 1945 and Graham then introduced me to the Society.

Meetings at that time were held in the Royal Society rooms on North Terrace with Herb Mansfield from the Adelaide Zoo as secretary. Shortly after this Bob McKechnie became Secretary and it was then that I joined which would have been in 1946.

My dearest wish was to be awarded a medal for a first breeding report but this was never to be. The nearest I got was with a pair of yellow hammers which built a large cup shaped nest into which one egg was laid. The next morning the hen was dead. Why I'll never know. On showing the egg to Bob McKechnie he explained that the yellow hammer was also known as the scribble finch because of the scribble like marking on the egg.

Over the years I have kept an assortment of birds comprising finches, parrots, pigeons, plovers and pheasants most of which I have been successful with.

I seem to be mentioning Bob McKechnie a lot, but he and Graham Hogg were my mentors.

Early on Bob obtained a permit to acquire several thousand wild Masked, Hecks and Gouldian Finches which were distributed amongst members – the first two for 3/6 (35 cents) and the Gouldians for 6/6 (65 cents) a pair. Later on Eric Baxter obtained a similar shipment.

A great deal of enjoyment was derived from the monthly meetings with speakers always of a high calibre including David Attenborough, Klaus Immelman and Jean Delacour.

On being presented with my 50 year medal, which I had expected to be like a name badge, I found that it was actually a handsome medal which I believe is the same as that awarded for a first breeding report so I have finally achieved my goal. It will be kept among my souvenirs and hopefully retained among my family for many years to come.

Sadly I found that the only other member of the Society I was familiar with was Jack Hannant, the only other 50 year member, and he couldn't remember me although I had been on the committee for a short time with him and had visited his aviaries with members of the Society.

I look forward to the future.