

A brief history of the Journals, Crests, Medal and Seal of the Royal Society of Western Australia and previous Societies, 1897-1997

The History of the Royal Society of Western Australia was described by an unpublished manuscript of W M Traylen (1924) and a Presidential Address of C F H Jenkins (1965), and addressed in passing by Summers (1982). These historical accounts briefly covered the various societies which were the forerunners to the Royal Society of Western Australia, the Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia, and other aspects such as finances, endowments, roles, medal, housing, management and future prospects, and the early Minutes and Correspondence of the Society. A **Bibliography and Index to the Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia** was published by Bougher & Semeniuk (1991) and updated for volumes 71-75 by Withers (1992).

As Honorary Editor of *The Journal of The Royal Society of Western Australia*, I have had the Society crest or medal reproduced for publication, and on these occasions I have wondered about their origin and meaning. However, on looking through accounts of the history of The Society I have not been able to learn anything of the history of these images. The Society was granted Royal status in 1913 and incorporated in 1937, and the first Gold (Kelvin) Medal was awarded in 1924. But, when, why and by whom were the crest and medal images produced? And what is the Seal? These questions have led me to broader issues such as of the nature of the predecessor Societies, and their Journals.

I present here a brief summary of the predecessor Societies to the Royal Society of Western Australia, a summary of their publications, and descriptions of the various crests and emblems used by the Societies.

The Western Australian Natural History Society

This Western Australian Natural History Society was founded in 1891 under the Presidency of Sir John Forrest. It was especially active in establishing a nature reserve of several thousand acres between Pinjarra, Dardalup and Bannister. Despite its early enthusiasm, its activities waned and it eventually became moribund. This Society did not survive beyond 1898, and did not publish a journal, but it provided the foundations for subsequent botanical then natural history societies in Western Australia.

The Mueller Botanic Society

In 1897, the Mueller Botanic Society was formed by a group of amateur botanists; it was inspired by and named in honour of the famous botanist Baron Ferdinand von Mueller. The first President of the Society was Sir John Forrest, with E J Bickford as Chairman.

The enthusiastic members, with the assistance of a £50

grant from the Western Australian Government, published some valuable botanical contributions in the *Journal and Proceedings of the Mueller Botanic Society* (Fig 1A). Eleven issues of Volume 1 were published between 1899 and 1903.

West Australian Natural History Society (with which is incorporated the Mueller Botanic Society)

The scope of the Mueller Botanic Society was broadened in 1903, due to widespread interest in other branches of natural history, and the title was changed to the West Australian Natural History Society with which is incorporated The Mueller Botanic Society. The first President of this society was C R P Andrews MA.

This Society published the *Journal of the West Australian Natural History Society* (Fig 1B); six issues of Volume II were published, beginning with No. 1 in May 1904, and ending with No. VI in 1909.

Natural History and Science Society of Western Australia

In 1907, several meetings of the West Australian Natural History Society lapsed for lack of a quorum and it was suggested that 'monthly' meetings only be held when there was a paper to be presented. At the Council meeting of November 1907, a subcommittee was appointed to investigate the possibility of forming a Royal Society, or affiliating with the Royal Society of South Australia, or other means. No action was taken, but in 1909 Mr A Gibb Maitland proposed that the Society be renamed the West Australian Science and Natural History Society, and at the next General Meeting the title was formerly changed to The Natural History and Science Society of Western Australia. The first President was Dr Frank Tratman.

The publications of the previous societies were continued as the *Journal of the Natural History and Science Society of Western Australia* (Fig 1C). This series commenced with Volume III No. 1 in 1910, then No. 2 in 1911, Volume "The Fourth" in 1912 and ending with Volume "The Fifth" in 1914.

The Royal Society of Western Australia

In March 1913, Mr A Gibb Maitland gave notice that he would move at the next meeting that "the time has arrived for obtaining a Royal Charter for the Society and, if granted, altering the designation to the Royal Society of Western Australia". Discussion was adjourned at the next meeting because Mr Maitland was not present, but



Figure 1. Covers of the various regular publications of the Royal Society of Western Australia, and its predecessor Societies.

at the May Meeting there was a preliminary discussion and it was agreed that the recent inauguration of the University (of Western Australia) meant it was an appropriate time to consider seeking a Royal Charter; in the words of the resolution of Mr Maitland, "...the time has arrived for taking the necessary steps for altering the designation to 'The Royal Society of Western Australia', and for obtaining Royal assent thereto; and that the matter be left in the hands of the Council" The resolution was carried, that "A subcommittee of Mr Maitland, Mr Grasby and the Secretary [Mr Browne] consider and report on the best manner of obtaining a Royal Charter". This subcommittee decided in June to address a memorial to His Majesty King George V and write to His Excellency the Governor Major-General Sir Harry Barron to forward the memorial to the King. Draft letters were read and recommendations carried at the Council Meeting on 10/6/1913 to proceed (copies of the letter to the Governor and the memorial to His Majesty the King are reprinted in Volume 1 pp v-vi, 1915).

Approval for the Royal Charter was received from His Majesty through The Governor in a letter dated 18/11/1913 (see Volume 1 pp vii-viii, 1915) and this was announced at the next meeting of The Society (2/12/1913). A copy of the letter conferring Royal Society status was published in *The West Australian* on 11/3/1914. The Society assumed its title, The Royal Society of Western Australia⁺, as of 1/7/1914 (Minutes, 10/3/1914). No mention was made in any of this correspondence of The

King being Patron of The Society, or of a crest for The Society. Subsequently, His Majesty was petitioned to act as Patron of The Society, which was subsequently granted (Minutes of The Society, 21/4/1914). Royal Patronage was continued by His Majesty King George VI in 1936, and by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1952. The Society published a combined *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Western Australia* (Fig 1D) which was split at Volume XI (1924-1925) into a separate *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia* (Fig 1E) and *Proceedings*.

At its meeting on 8/6/1936, The Society decided to incorporate, and a motion was proposed and passed to this effect. With the assistance of John Nicholson MLC and the firm Nicholson & Nicholson, the process of incorporation was followed. On 13/10/36, Mr W E Shelton was named Trustee for incorporation to proceed. On 30/6/1937, all of the paperwork for incorporation had been completed and the certificate was expected early in the next financial year. The certificate was displayed at

Footnote: The Royal Society of London was originally the "College for Improving Knowledge" but in 1661 King Charles II became a member and the College became The Royal Society. The use of "Royal" without qualification (in the British Empire) is confined to scientific bodies which share the intent of The Royal Society of London, of "improving natural knowledge". All other "Royal" societies have a qualifier e.g. Royal College of Surgeons, Royal Agricultural Society, Royal Zoological Society.

the 7/9/1937 meeting of The Society. Subsequent to incorporation, The Society's crest was altered to indicate the date of incorporation, which appears in Volume 33 (1936-1937) of the *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia* (Fig 1F).

The *Journal of The Royal Society of Western Australia* since incorporation has undergone a number of practical and cosmetic alterations. In 1955 (Volume 39), the Journal changed from roman to arabic numbering with two parts per volume, and the cover design altered to a rather plain style (Fig 1G). Then in 1956-1957 (Volume 40) the Journal was issued regularly in four parts. Colour was added to make a bolder cover style for Volume 68 in 1985 (Fig 1H). In 1991, an A4 size and restyled format was introduced to modernise the appearance of the journal, with double columns and accommodate more printed material, for the Leeuwin Current Symposium issue and the Bibliography and Index to the Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia Supplement, then was continued for the regular issues (Fig 1I). In 1995, with the demise of Government Print, printing of the Journal was transferred to the Publications Department of the Western Museum, and a minor restyling of the cover was necessary (Fig 1J).

Crests, Medal and Seal

Perusal of *The Journal of The Royal Society of Western Australia* indicated that the original crest first appeared on the cover and front page of Volume 1, which covers the years 1914-1915 but was published in 1916. The Society received the issue from the printer on 14/11/1916. It replaced the simple but elegant flower crest (Fig 2) of The Journal of the West Australian Natural History Society (first appearing in issue No 6) then The Journal of The Natural History & Science Society of Western Australia, the last issue (Part 5) of which was published in 1914.

The Natural History and Science Society of Western Australia became The Royal Society of Western Australia by Royal decree in 1913. But what of the new Society's crest? At the September 1915 meeting of The Society, the President A. Gibb Maitland proposed that a medallion or seal be designed for The Society. At the next meeting (12/10/1915) a design for a medallion or seal was received from Mr Gibb Maitland, and it was agreed to have a block made of the design, at the expense of the Society, for use on The Society's publications and notepaper. The block was received at the next meeting



Figure 2. Emblem commonly used in the *Journal and Proceedings of the Mueller Botanic Society*.



Figure 3. Crest of the Royal Society of Western Australia prior to incorporation.

(9/11/1915). Unfortunately, I could find no description of the design or block, and I presume that it was the design for the Society crest, which first appeared on the cover and front page of Volume 1 of *The Journal*. The design of the "medallion" (Fig 3), as it was referred to, was apparently not the Gold (Kelvin) Medal, which was not yet in effect. The Constitution booklet, published in 1914, did not have The Society crest.

At its meeting on 8/6/1936, The Society decided to incorporate, and a motion was proposed and passed to this effect. With the assistance of John Nicholson MLC and the firm Nicholson & Nicholson, the process of incorporation was followed. On 13/10/36, Mr W E Shelton was named Trustee for incorporation to proceed. On 4/3/1937, Nicholson & Nicholson requested that an impression of The Royal Society of WA seal be affixed to the incorporation documents. Soon thereafter (11/3/1937), The Society requested from Shannon's Engraving & Stamp Co a common seal with "Royal Society of W A (incorporated) Common Seal" at a cost of 17s 8d, and subsequently (23/3/1937) modified this to "The Royal Society of W A (incorporated) Common Seal" (Fig 4). On 30/6/1937, all of the paperwork for incorporation had been completed and the certificate was expected early in the next financial year. The certificate was displayed at the 7/9/1937 meeting of The Society. Subsequent to incorporation, The Societys' crest was altered to indicate



Figure 4. Imprint made from the "Common" or Presidential Seal of the Royal Society of Western Australia.



Figure 5. Crest of the Royal Society of Western Australia after incorporation.

the date of incorporation, which appears in Volume 33 (1936-1937) of *The Journal* (Fig 5).

To mark the centenary of the birth of Lord Kelvin (26/6/1824), the Royal Society of Western Australia instituted an award for outstanding work in science, the Gold Medal, now usually referred to as the Kelvin Medal. The Medal was designed by Miss Enid Isabel Allum, of 7 Richardson Street West Perth, for which she received a £5-5-0 honorarium. Miss Allum was a member of The Society, and had been Treasurer of The Society and was a member of the Social Committee. Messrs Stokes & Co, of Melbourne, was commissioned through the Royal Mint, Perth, to produce the dye for the medal, but the original drawings were lost. Miss Allum was asked to produce a second set of drawings, from which the dye (Fig 6) and two tin replicas were produced. The first medal was presented to Dr W J Hancock in 1924.



Figure 6. The Kelvin Medal of the Royal Society of Western Australia.

This modified crest has been in use by The Society until 1996, when The Council considered it opportune to modernise the layout of The Proceedings, and this included revising the crest. The new crest (Fig 7) has a stylised swan, and banksia and kangaroo paws instead of the original images (including a sheaf of papers bound in a ribbon?).

A special emblem for the Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia was commissioned by open competition amongst members, and the design of Dr Jan Taylor was selected for use on the Journal cover (Fig 8) since Volume 75 Part 2, 1992.



Figure 7. Revised crest of the Royal Society of Western Australia, 1997.



Figure 8. Emblem of the *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia* (by J Taylor).

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