

## MISCELLANY

by Michael Saclier

### *Association of Archivists*

If, as seems possible from what the Editor has told me, this issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* appears somewhat late\*, the meetings to be held in the various cities sporting archival institutions to discuss the draft constitution prepared by the Steering Committee (and published in its *Newsletter No. 3*) will have been held. Whether those meetings regard the draft as being basically acceptable or not (particularly in respect of the membership provisions) will determine future action.

If they do, it is hoped to hold a one or two day conference in Canberra on the weekend before Easter, i.e. 22-23 March, at which the inaugural meeting of the Society will be held in conjunction with a small program of papers and discussion. If a majority of those attending the meetings do not accept the membership provisions then the inaugural meeting will have to be put back until May (at least).

The reason for this is simply that, since the society envisaged by the meetings in 1974 was one having a professional membership controlling the affairs of the organization and an associate membership participating in its activities but not voting, the criteria for professional membership must be settled and agreed *before* the inaugural meeting so that those adopting the constitution may be of that class eligible for professional membership.

If the majority of people attending the regional meetings do not accept the Steering Committee's recommendations, then the alternatives which they put up must be circulated for consideration at further meetings, the results of those meetings analysed, and so on, so that the inaugural meeting can begin with an agreed formulation of what a professional member's qualifications must be, in terms of employment, education and experience.

\* The Editor has no intention of allowing this issue to appear late.

### *De-Acidification*

In a note in the *Journal of the Society of Archivists* (vol. 5, no. 1, April 1974, p. 41) Dr A. E. Werner and Mr A. D. Baynes-Cope issued a warning against the indiscriminate use of a solution of magnesium acetate in alcohol for deacidification. This arose out of a practice which had grown up of referring to such a solution as Lime Water, which, of course, it is not — Lime Water being strictly defined in the British Pharmacopoeia Codex 1973 as a saturated solution of calcium hydroxide in distilled or deionized water.

The warning was that there was clear evidence that the free acetic acid liberated by the decomposing magnesium acetate seriously corrodes any free lead attached to paper "either as leaden bullae or as the inserted slip on which revenue or other stamps are affixed". For those Australian archivists who saw it this may have seemed to have little relevance since there are relatively few leaden bullae attached to our documents.

I am indebted to Mrs Mary McRae however for showing me the

correspondence which she has had with Mr Baynes-Cope in clarification of this matter. Since the publication of the note Dr Werner and Mr Baynes-Cope have been given access by Dr L. Santucci of the Instituto di Patalogia del Libro, Rome, to the results of his comparison of magnesium acetate and barium hydroxide. Dr Santucci came to the conclusion that the use of barium hydroxide solution under proper conditions was acceptable, but that the treatment of acid paper with magnesium acetate caused further damage to the paper and that its use should be abandoned forthwith. It is to be hoped that Dr Santucci's research which is described in a paper for publication (which may already have appeared) will be translated and made widely available.

In concluding his letter to Mrs McRae, Mr Baynes-Cope recommends the use of magnesium carbonate solution applied by spraying. He points out that if a fine spray is used the paper will not be wet sufficiently to cause problems with water soluble inks but the treatment will still be effective since the magnesium bicarbonate solution has about four times the neutralizing power of an equivalent volume of lime water. He describes a simple method for making the solution: Place 10 g of light magnesium carbonate (B.P.) in a sparklet syphon, fill it with water and blow in one bulb of carbon dioxide. Shake well at intervals during an hour. Decant it and filter. The solution is said to keep quite well for a few days.

#### *Promatco Heat Set Tissue, Acid-Free*

Mrs McRae has also provided me with a copy of Technical Bulletin No. LS-133-AD, August 1972 of the Process Materials Corporation, Carlstadt, New Jersey, describing the above product. An extensive quote from the bulletin seems the easiest way of dealing with the contents.

"The tissue is a 100% Polyamide Resin Adhesive of pure white colour, absolutely neutral with a pH of 7.0, which resembles Japanese tissue in appearance. It does not contain any plasticizers or other additives which could be harmful and has outstanding ageing characteristics. The shelf life is unlimited, if stored in a cool and dry place.

"The tissue has been employed very successfully as a bonding agent in laminating Japanese Tissue, Lens Tissue and Nylon Tissue to paper substrates. Best results are obtained with a heated press or a flat iron, using moderate pressure. *It is very important to maintain the proper heat setting temperature.* If insufficient heat is applied, the resulting bond is not satisfactory, and if too much heat is used, the adhesive melt may result in glossy spots or may even result in discoloration of the paper.

"On the basis of our tests, the most desirable heat setting temperature appears to be 200°F, which will result in a positive bond with no danger of overheating. It is advisable to tack the heat set tissue to the paper being repaired, using a *warm* flat iron or tacking iron in order to hold the materials together while they are being sandwiched between Silicone Release paper and blotters for insertion between the heated plates of the press. Excellent bonds are obtained by applying moderate pressure for about 20 seconds, at 200°F.

“Promatco Heat Set Tissue may also be used by itself for strengthening papers which have been weakened by acid hydrolysis or by fungi damage. Following the procedure outlined above, the heat set tissue is simply applied over the paper being treated resulting in a considerable increase in paper strength, with the molten tissue virtually invisible. Again, maintaining temperatures is imperative, and papers which are reinforced in this manner will not show glossy spots, will not have a “plastic” appearance and will not change appearance after aging.

“Promatco Heat Set Tissue is soluble in both ethyl and methyl alcohol, thereby meeting the requirement of reversibility in restoration materials.”

The tissue is sold in rolls 20 inches wide by 50 yards long. The prices, FOB Carlstadt in August 1972 were: 1 roll—\$US28.50, 4 rolls—\$24.95 each, and 16 rolls—\$23.50 each. No doubt inflation has increased these prices but the list does give an impression of the order of cost involved. On the above rate for one roll it would cost under 7c (American) to reinforce a weak sheet of quarto paper.

#### *De-Acidification—an Afterthought*

The reference in the above item to Dr Santucci’s endorsement of barium hydroxide prompted me to enquire a little further on the matter. The advice of Mr Ian Cook of the National Library is that for all but the rarest of documents or artwork which will be treated and then sealed in an untouchable environment the use of barium hydroxide is “not on”. The problem is that the material is extremely poisonous as is the solvent (methyl alcohol) and that for the majority of documents which will be handled by readers and staff it is just a bit too dangerous. In addition to possible residual effects there is also the problem that, because of its poisonous qualities quite sophisticated fume exhaust systems are needed to protect the operators. And as you may have noticed, sophisticated equipment of most kinds is notably lacking in most archives.

#### *National Monuments and After . . .*

I am informed that there is no truth whatever in the rumour that Dr Werner of the British Museum who visited Hobart during the Christmas-New Year holiday period is to be retained to restore the Tasman Bridge.