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# OBITUARY – STAN WILSON AM MPS PhC JP

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Walter R. Bloom



Stan was born in Midland in Western Australia and attended a local school. He won a scholarship to Scotch College, and then studied Pharmacy at Perth Technical College, at that time in St Georges Terrace. This was a four-year degree, and after he obtained his certificate he joined up with the AIF, in 1941. His first posting was to the Eastern States at the medical unit in Connolly, which served as a clearing station for the Australian Armed Forces, and then he was posted to Bougainville in the Solomon Sea. Stan

was repatriated to Perth before the end of the war, suffering from the range of diseases that affected many soldiers in that area of the world.

Stan and Pamela were married on 27 March 1943. They have two daughters, Patricia and Lesley (Temple), and one grandchild, Daniel Temple.

Back in Perth Stan opened up his first pharmacy, on the Canning Highway in Como, and later he had a shop in Victoria Park. Stan was very active in the National

Pharmacy Guild of Australia, his membership dating from 1946. He was appointed Pricing Officer, obviously a good choice for a budding numismatist, and this took him to Melbourne on a regular basis. He became WA President in 1971, and was made a life member in 1983.

In an article in the March 1973 issue of the Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Stan was described as the President of the WA Branch of the Pharmacy Guild who led something of a double life. "Tall, bespectacled, quietly spoken, you will find him much of the week in his Victoria Park pharmacy. But for several hours every week he hangs up his white jacket and moves from a backdrop of capsules, tablets, ointments and medicines, to a secluded corner in the West Australian Museum. There, flanked by old Victorian gas brackets, 19th century typewriters, Aboriginal spears and European and Oriental 15th century gold and silver coins, he identifies and restores pieces of eight and other old coins."

The first major numismatic discovery of a shipwreck off the Western Australian coast was that of the *Batavia*, which was wrecked in the Houtman Abrolhos Islands in 1629, and discovered in 1963. The some 10,000 coins recovered from the vessel served as a time capsule of the economy of Europe, with the currency of the Holy Roman Empire and the United Netherlands figuring substantially in the hoard. This was preceded by the discovery of the *Zuytdorp* (wrecked 1712) in 1927 but not conclusively identified until 1958, the *Vergulde Draeck* ('*Gilt Dragon*', wrecked 1656) in 1963, the *Zeewijk* (wrecked 1727) in 1968, and the *Rapid* (wrecked 1811) in 1978.

Stan's interest in coins commenced at an early age, but his first serious study was on

the coins of the *Vergulde Draeck*. At that stage Stan became an Honorary Associate of the Museum, a position he held until 1971 when he was appointed Assistant Curator in History, a part-time position on the Museum's staff establishment. During his period as Assistant Curator Stan worked primarily on the numismatic collection of the History Department. Made up of many donations, it required a lot of work to bring these coins into a well-documented collection. Stan worked for two days a week on this.

Stan was appointed to the Museum's historical materials advisory committee, formed to foster research and the recovery of relics from ships wrecked off the West Australian coast.

The job of cleaning, identifying and classifying the coins was long and arduous. In all, Stan registered some 50,000 coins, an amazing accomplishment by any standard.

The Western Australian Maritime Museum was established in Cliff Street, Fremantle in September 1979. Up until that time Stan was mainly in the Perth office, then he had offices in both locations. In 1987/1988 Stan retired from the Assistant Curator's position, and then had two four year periods as an Honorary Associate, from 1 January 1991 through to the end of 1998 when ill health finally prevented his working any further.

Stan also contributed to the general numismatic community, having been made an Honorary Life Member (1972) and Vice-Patron of the Perth Numismatic Society. He was also a member of the Western Australian Numismatic Study Group, from 1989 to 1998. On 22 October 1977 Stan became one of the inaugural awardees of the Paul Simon Award, Australia's highest recogni-

tion in numismatics. He then served on the Paul Simon Award selection committee, a position he held up until 1996.

Stan had a small private collection, his interest being anything numismatic that made reference to Edward VII.

In later years the Parkinson's Disease took its toll, and Stan was frustrated by not being able to function like he was used to. In particular his failing eyesight made examining coins almost impossible. He died after a long illness.

Everyone that I have spoken to has fond memories of Stan. He was invariably described as being quiet, gentle, likeable, punctilious and a great person to have around. In my personal experience I can certainly attest to these attributes. Stan is dearly missed by us all.

### **Some publications**

*Coins from the Zuytdorp*, JNAA 1(1985), 24-30.

*Doits to Ducatons, The coins of the Dutch East India Company ship BATAVIA*. Western Australian Museum, 1989.

*A preliminary report on coins of the Ningaloo or Point Cloates, wreck, Western Australia*, The Australian Coin Review 16(October 1979), 3, 5.

*Coinage of the Vergulde Draeck*, pp. 293-339. In: "The loss of the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie Jacht Vergulde Draeck", Western Australia 1656, ed. JN Green, Br. Archaeol. (Suppl.), no. 36(ii), Oxford, 1977.

*The significance of coins in the identification of old Dutch wrecks on the West Australian coast*, The Numismatic Circular 72(September 1964), 191-195.