

## **Beryl Jarman** **She worked to the book**

*“Sponsor donations have helped the library to grow*

Much of Beryl Jarman’s birding life has been bound up in the BOCA library and its people. There is no record of a library until 1948, she says, even though BOCA was established in 1905.

In charge of the fledgling library of those days was a Miss Dobson who, Beryl says, remains unremembered by members today. “Edgar (Eddy) Whitbourn took over from 1953-57. There were then 226 members and only about 50 books.”

Other librarians have been David Mitchell, Dudley Dickinson and his nephew Harvey. Len Robinson, BOCA President from 1958-61, Beryl notes, searched out privately owned past copies of the ‘Bird Observer’ and had them reprinted by his family’s printing firm. Until that time the club did not have a complete set.

Beryl’s late husband, BOCA stalwart Howard Jarman took charge of the collection in April 1966, working from the couple’s home in Melbourne’s east. “When the books were put in the basement of our house Howard got the club to provide metal shelving.”

After an enterprising thief broke into the premises, borrower appointments were brought in and transactions recorded in a school-style exercise book. Some requested books were posted out. In those days the postage cost per book was 65 cents to Queensland and 39 cents to the Melbourne suburb of St Kilda, Beryl said.

Railway freight was also used. Much time was spent wrapping books and delivering them to the local railway station or picking up returns. Charges in the area of 35 cents for 20 copies of magazines were the order of the day.

Tess Kloot and Ellen McCulloch were two BOCA identities who visited the Jarmans to work on the books they were currently writing, as were Rosemary and Peter Balmford.

Slowly, Beryl says, library stock increased to bring in new books, and eventually audio and video tapes. Howard reviewed books in many issues of the ‘Bird Observer’ and suggestions from readers were also followed.

The making of audio tapes for members was suggested by Rex Buckingham around 1974. Talks were recorded by members with special knowledge and became very popular. Birdcall tapes eventually became available and were included in the library service from 1986. CDs and CD-roms were later innovations.

Cataloguing came next. Previously a primary school librarian Beryl provided what she calls a “somewhat over-simplified” book to serve as a model. By 1982 BOCA held 800 books and 60 periodicals in its collection.

Howard Jarman died during this year (1982) but Beryl kept on the work still operating from home. Others helped out. Anthea Fleming and Vera Wicks catalogued the collection and soon after it was housed in BOCA’s headquarters.

Dulcie Goode, another volunteer librarian, became registrar for journals and newspapers. A library committee advised on buying and procedure aided by experienced hands like Rex Buckingham.

A big day came, says Beryl, when the HQ was extended to include a library. Beryl and her books - all 1000 of them each with a borrower's pocket and card - moved in in 1986 and the team of working volunteers grew.

Sponsor donors have helped the library to grow, she said. A video player was donated in memory of Betty Keown, and a tape collection by Ruth Akie.

Virgil Hubregste offered her services in cataloguing and classification; Noeline Sherwin and Jenny Mortlock came on board - all three librarians by profession. Anne Campbell replaced Dulcie Goode and Marlene Lyell undertook the huge task of covering all books with plastic while Delina Schembri-Hardy computerised the catalogue.

In 2001, Beryl says, the library was again re-located, this time to its present home in the enlarged club HQ in Nunawading abutting the Edna Walling room and accessible through the Blue Wren Gift Shop.

This space offers home comforts to readers and workers alike as well as efficient and up-to-the-minute storage facilities.

*Written by Leonie Robbins based on an article in The Bird Observer 814/16 17 and phone interview.*