

RHSV Fellowship Nomination of David Thompson

14 March 2019

David Thompson was born in Northern Ireland and gained a PhD from Queen's University, Belfast. An aeronautical engineer, he accepted an Australian government contract to join the Aeronautical Research Laboratories in Port Melbourne. He worked there from 1969 until his retirement in 2001.

David started volunteering at the RHSV in 2002 and increasingly gravitated towards the Images room. Here he indexed the Topographical Maps, then quickly moved to cataloguing and re-housing the ArtWorks, and improving storage of the Maps and Objects Collections, tasks which continue. He has shared his archival box-making skills in-house and with local historical societies through workshops.

Although based in the Images Room, David has supported the RHSV in multiple other ways. He was involved with the Disaster Management Plan and has helped with the set-ups for numerous events. He has contributed to general maintenance and the design and provision of storage facilities. In recent years, he has heightened the society's profile through monthly articles on history and heritage subjects in the *CBD News*.

David's outstanding contribution has been as the curator of or assistant to the curation of successive RHSV exhibitions. His collegial attitude, disciplined work ethic and practical skills have made him invaluable to the implementation of exhibition concepts, especially in the artistic mounting of images and display of objects. His first significant contribution was to *Ships and Shipping*, 2005, which showcased RHSV ArtWorks. *Volunteers and Valour*, 2006, focused on volunteer defence forces while *History Begins at Home: The Story of the RHSV Neighbourhood*, 2007, dovetailed with a VCE History subject. *Melbourne's Moving Markets*, 2008, and *Spirit of the Time*, 2012, followed. Later exhibitions included two relating to the Australian Red Cross and the current *Cold War Games*.

David's own exhibition *Dancing the Skies*, 2011, reflected his strong interest in aviation and the depth of the collection. David curated the RHSV's most successful exhibition *Nail Can to Knighthood: the Life of Sir Macpherson Robertson KBE* in 2015, cooperating with the MacRobertson Girls' High School, Fitzroy History Society and History Teachers Association of Victoria. Jo Clyne of the HTAV in partnership with the RHSV developed a digital version of this exhibition for the Culture Victoria website.

Although David is modest about his curatorial work, it is actually a long, detailed process of research, design, planning and execution, all achieved with comparatively little cost and angst to the organization. Through this, David has saved the society tens of thousands of

dollars. In addition to RHSV service, he has volunteered for many years at Museums Victoria and Heritage Victoria.

Through his creative and highly professional work at the RHSV, David has enhanced the reputation of the society and made a significant contribution to the history movement in Victoria. In recognition of this, the RHSV has already honoured him with an Award of Merit, 2012, and a Distinguished Service Award, 2016. We commend David Thompson for the society's highest honour of a Fellowship.

Richard Barnden, FRHSV
Coordinator, RHSV Images Collection

Carole Woods, FRHSV
Hon Secretary RHSV