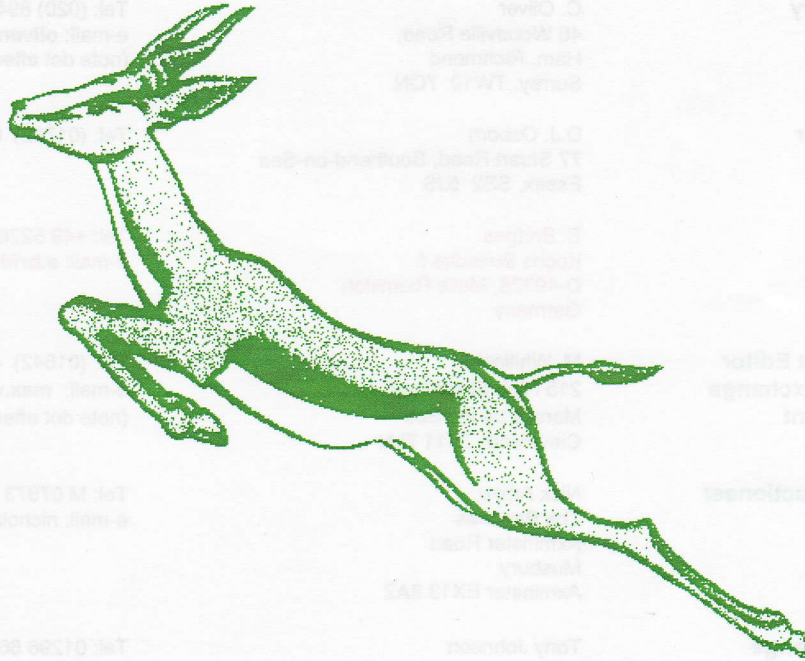


THE SPRINGBOK

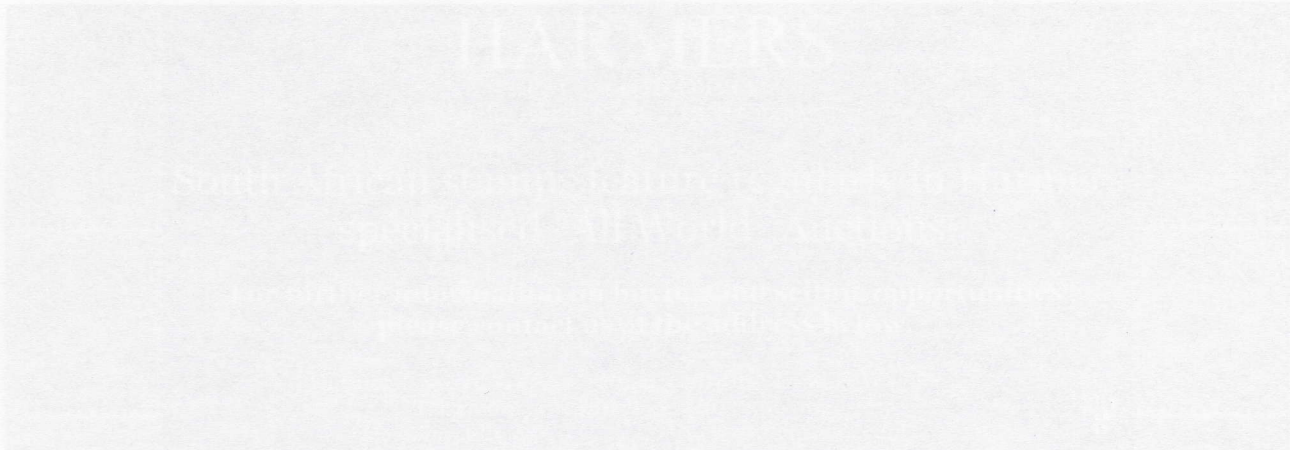


**SOUTH AFRICAN COLLECTORS' SOCIETY
QUARTERLY**

Vol. 59

No. 2

Apr/Jun 2011





The Springbok

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ISSN: 0955-6753

Vol. 59 No. 2 Whole No. 314

Founded 1947

Member:

Association of British Philatelic Societies

The Philatelic Federation of Southern Africa

We are also a sponsor of the Stamps in Schools Project

Web Site: http://www.ukphilately.org.uk/Societies/sites_we_host/SAfrica.html

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The Springbok is published quarterly for the benefit of Members of the South African Collectors' Society. It is not available to non-members. Contributions in the form of letters, notes, reports of SA related activities, articles, etc., are always welcome and should be sent to the Hon. Editor. All correspondence including a SAE will be acknowledged.

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What happened to the Atlas Catalogue of R.S.A.?

By Odd Gunnar Skagestad

For intelligent communication, common languages and common yardsticks are necessary tools. Likewise, for us stamp collectors, catalogues are a *sine qua non*.

Although the undersigned had been a stamp collector since 1951 - at the age of seven - it was not until 1984 (when I was posted to Cape Town for a 3-year assignment as the Consul of Norway) that I seriously started collecting South (and Southern) Africa.

For me, this was, in the philatelic sense, a totally unfamiliar and uncharted territory. Immediately, the need arose to acquire a stamp catalogue which could guide me into this exciting but slightly bewildering landscape. As a starter, the Stanley Gibbons (Vol.1) provided a useful tool with a wealth of fascinating information - its colourless, somewhat dull layout and generally drab appearance notwithstanding.

At the same time, however, I discovered the South African Colour Catalogue (SACC), and became the happy owner of a copy of the 6th edition (1983-84). From the very outset and up to the present, the SACC - in its subsequent editions - has been an invaluable guide and companion during innumerable hours spent at exploring the spell-binding world of South African stamps. After the brutal murder in 2009 of the catalogue's founding editor and publisher Lutz Heffermann, one might well have felt some uneasiness about the future fate of the SACC - would new editions be forthcoming, and would the catalogue live up to the exacting standards which Mr Heffermann had accomplished to create? The 30th edition, which appeared in April 2010, put paid to any doubts in this respect. Or did it really? In a book review in The SA Philatelist, June 2010 (p.81), the reviewer Mr Paul van Zeyl (of Rand Stamps) declared that "*The long-awaited SACC is squeaky clean but collector unfriendly*". Among other peculiarities, it was noted that the catalogue's new co-ordinator/publisher, Mr Nick Troester, omitted placing his name anywhere in the publication (perhaps anticipating some negative feedback?). The reviewer went on to urge collectors let Mr Troester (who can be contacted at razztro@iburst.co.za) know if and where he could improve the next edition. In my opinion a sensible suggestion.

Reverting to the time (1984) of my initial encounter with collecting South African stamps, I then also had the delightful experience of coming across a slim (108 pages) volume proudly titled the Atlas Catalogue of R.S.A. Dealers I spoke to in Cape Town gave the unanimous verdict: This was the very best catalogue of South African stamps, - better than the SACC especially as far as definitives were concerned. And indeed, with an incredible amount of detailed and useful information, presented with a neatly illustrated and reader-friendly layout, at R.8,50 this catalogue did turn out to be an excellent buy. In addition to the main section of definitives and commemoratives in chronological order, the Atlas Catalogue of R.S.A. also contained - *inter alia* - exhaustive presentations of souvenir sheets and miniature sheets, first day covers, S.A.A. flight covers, commemorative postmarks, postal stationery and a whole breathtaking section dedicated to instructions on how to sort out Groups I to IX of the 1st Definitive series, as well as a guide to the specialised listings of the 2nd (de Jong series), the 3rd (Proteas) and the 4th (Buildings) Definitives.

The only obvious shortcoming of the Atlas Catalogue was announced in its title: Being confined to the R.S.A. issues, collectors of Union material would necessarily have to rely on other catalogues, like Stanley Gibbons or SACC.

Another matter of more calamitous nature was – at that time - yet to reveal itself. The names of the editors – Glen Carpendale and Coen Slagt - appeared in bold letters on the front cover, proudly announcing that this volume was the “FIRST EDITION 1983/4” (see illustration). Judging on the basis of the fine quality of this first edition, one would have ample reason to harbour high expectations with regard to the next – and subsequent – issues. Indeed, to leave no doubts about their noble and ambitious intentions, Messrs Carpendale and Slagt made it clear in the catalogue’s Foreword that there would be more to come. Appealing to the readers for assistance (“We need your help”) in improving the contents of “our next issue”, the editors also made it known that work had started on preparing new catalogues on Union and S.W.A. stamps.

Unfortunately, none of this seems to ever having materialized. As far as I have been able to ascertain, The Atlas Catalogue of R.S.A., First edition 1983/4, turned out to be a one-off event. A brave attempt at achieving excellence of a more lasting nature, but what went wrong? Can anyone tell us what really happened to the Atlas Catalogue of the R.S.A.?

Anyway, although this promising project never came to fruition as a publication to be issued as an annual or a regular fixture, for the period which it covers – i.e. from 1961 to 1983 - the Atlas Catalogue of the R.S.A. remains unsurpassed as a standard reference catalogue.

