	<p style="text-align: center;">MAURITIUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY</p> <h1 style="text-align: center;">News Items</h1> <p style="text-align: right;">2004.2</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Founder Members: Yvan Martial – Mico Antoine</i>  <i>Address: P.O. Box 89 Quatre Bornes Mauritius</i></p>	

JUNE 2004

### MONTHLY SOCIETY MEETINGS

APRIL – The April meeting was held on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> April at 2 pm at Collège du St Esprit, Sir Virgil Naz Avenue, Quatre Bornes.

The **Mountains of Mauritius** stamps issued on 11<sup>th</sup> March were examined. Attention was drawn to the central gutter and the middle stamp in the bottom row where the printer's imprint is found respectively on the middle gutter only and the bottom middle stamp margin only. If the mountains depicted had never before been shown on Mauritian stamps in the past then someone forgot that *Corps de Garde* had been shown on a stamp in 1971, SG 436. Many other Mauritian mountain stamps of the past were on display as were maxicards and postcards and the range is surprisingly big.

Steve Pendleton's book on the general and philatelic story of **British Indian Ocean Territory** was reviewed and orders taken. In the "Introduction and Acknowledgements" to the book the contribution of someone from Mauritius gets a mention. Many illustrations and markings on pages 39 and 59 were provided by the contributor from Mauritius. The Indian Ocean Study Circle reviewed the book and describes it as "good bibliography and highly recommended."

The May **Outing** was discussed, members enlisted, the date was confirmed and final arrangements were made.

The Purchase List and Bid Board offered some interesting items and sales were good.

MAY – The May meeting was held on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> at the usual venue and at the usual time.

A charged agenda of three main subjects by Mico Antoine included:

The UPU Alpha-2 country codes and the International ISO Registered Barcode labels listings. Many incoming covers affixed with barcode labels were displayed and explained. Malawi for example uses South African ZA barcodes; Italian IT and NN barcodes are applied on Russian registered items which transit through Italy and then via Nairobi before arriving in Mauritius. The MU Mauritian barcode, which costs the Postal Services ½ of a Special Drawing Right (SDR) for every overseas registered label hence the fee increase from Rs 7 to Rs 25 in 2003, were also shown.

Six A4 pages (Chapter I) of Helen Morgan's forthcoming book, yet untitled, on aspects of Mauritian postal history during the Stuart-Brownrigg/Lady Gomm era was read out to members. This led to a lively debate which somehow degenerated into the fabulousness of some Mauritian publications after someone prematurely contested one of Helen's conclusions.

"Missent to Malaysia" Mauritian covers and half a dozen "First Flight/Eerste Vlug" Jo'burg - SSR International Airport commercial covers were explained.

Sales were good on a wide range of items and attendance was high.

JUNE – The June Meeting was held on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June at 2 pm at Collège du St Esprit.

The only item on the agenda was "*Le Transit de Vénus*" by Yvan Martial.

A small supporting display of space/planets stamps and covers was put up by Mico Antoine. The notice board carried many items of news from many sources and publications as well as press cutting on the **Transit of Venus** phenomenon. Unfortunately some were erroneous or very poorly researched and others were hyped with tripe.

Speaking in French, Yvan presented his subject using illustrations from the brand new 250 pages Amédée Nagapen book "*Le Transit de Vénus*" for a backdrop and large extracts from the book itself for his delivery. He concentrated on the French Alexandre Gui Pingré Rodrigues expedition of June 1761 when the Transit of Venus was scientifically observed for the first time in the Southern Hemisphere.

Attendance was excellent, sales very good and the meeting ended later than usual.

### MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Committee meetings were held on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April and Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May at the residence of the President at 88 Club Road, Vacoas.

The June committee meeting was held on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June at Collège du St Esprit, Sir Virgil Naz Avenue, Quatre Bornes at 13hrs, one hour before the monthly Society meeting.

### MEMBERSHIP

The following are no longer members of the Society:

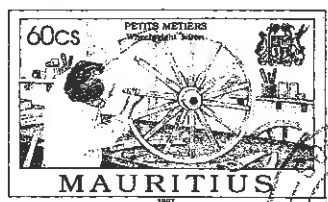
Thoolassingham COOTHEN, Tamraize HUSNOO, Olivier LALOUTTE, Isabella LINGAYA, Lakhi OUMAR, Sandy THUPOSY and Sydney VIRGINIE

### STAMPS

#### *Petits Métiers*

A set of four special stamps was released on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June featuring the following *Petits Métiers*.

- Rs 2 Ferblantier
- Rs 7 Cordonnier
- Rs 9 Forgeron
- Rs 15 Vannier



The stamps were designed by Andrew Robinson and printed by BDT International Security Printing Ltd. The Official First Day Cover is illustrated with a composite drawing showing tools and products of the four *Petits Métiers*. For the first time the back flap of an Official First Day Cover carries a logo of The Mauritius Post Ltd. The trades replicated on the stamps are Tinsmith, Cobbler, Blacksmith and Basket-maker.

In 1977 a set of four stamps were released on "Small Businesses" and are listed in Stanley Gibbons as SG 970/973. Compare the stamps.

### NEXT STAMP ISSUE

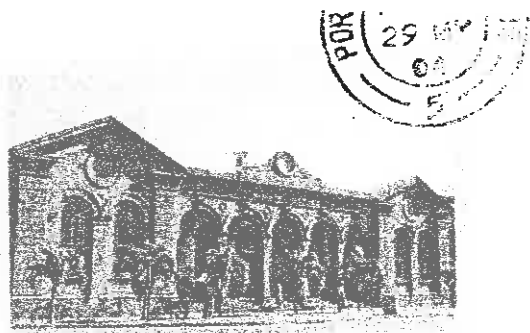
Two stamps will be issued in August to commemorate the SADC Summit to be held in Mauritius from 9<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> August. The stamps will be alike in design, will feature the Cyber Tower, the SADC logo and a young woman with her computer. The two values will be Rs 2, the Inland basic rate and Rs 50 the highest face value since the (Rs 50) dull purple and green Arms SG 222 of 1924.

### LA POSTE CENTRALE

The Port Louis **Central Post Office** (*La Poste Centrale*) also known (locally) as the General Post Office moved from the premises it had occupied since 1870 in a custom built basaltic rock edifice on the Port Louis Waterfront to other premises situated on Dumas Street near the former Central Railway Station of Port Louis known locally as *La Gare Victoria*. The last day of business at the Old General Post Office was Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May and the first day of business at the New General Post Office was Monday 31<sup>st</sup> May. Several last day/first day covers were made by some members of the Society.

A Press Notice dated 26<sup>th</sup> May 2004 from The Mauritius Post Ltd informed the public of the "Transfer of the General Post Office (Counter)" to the ex-Cooperative Bank Building near Victoria Square and that the following services will be available.

- Counter Service, Setting of Franking Machine, Banking Transactions, Acceptance of EMS, Philatelic Sales
- The Port Louis Station Post Office next to the New General Post Office and housed in the ex-Railway Station Building, Victoria Square will provide **Bulk Posting Services Only** and that sales of stamps and other postal transactions would be discontinued as from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2004
- Delivery of letters through Post Offices Boxes will continue as usual at the Old General Post Office on Port Louis Waterfront until further notice.



CLOSURE OF THE  
GENERAL POST OFFICE  
1870 – 2004

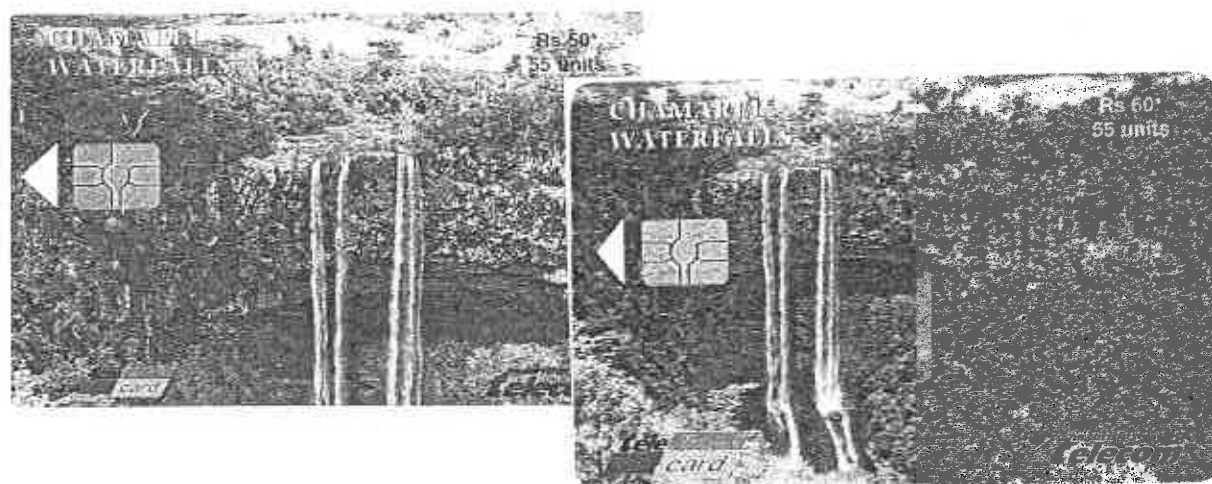


OPENING OF THE  
NEW GENERAL POST OFFICE  
31 MAY 2004

## MAURITIUS TELECOM SMART CARDS

A new and yet another 55 units Smart Card featuring the **Chamarel Waterfalls** without any manufacture date or the quantity produced imprint has been put on sale (reportedly) in May 2004. This card, the third successive one featuring **Chamarel Waterfalls**, has the same long range view as the first card but has an additional "tele-card" logo on front. On back the shaded area is light blue whereas the first card had a cobalt shaded area and carried the quantity and month of issue imprint.

The second card had a close up view of the falls, a white edge back and front and the shaded area was darker than that of the first card. The white arrow was bigger and the additional logo smaller on the second card than that of the third card.



### THE PRESS

L'express	23.4.2004	La poste se redécouvre dans le "cyber"
Week-End	25.4.2004	Un kiosque informatique pour Goodlands
L'express	27.4.2004	Postal services go cyber
Tamil Voice	01.5.2004	Le service de poste .....
Le Défi-Plus	22.5.2004	Service postal: construction et démolition
Week-End	23.5.2004	Queen Elizabeth's own stamps,....
Le Défi-Plus	29.5.2004	Le syndicat protest contre le reconstruction du bâtiment
L'express	30.5.2004	Ramcharitar proteste
L'express	01.6.2004	Le blues des postiers
Le Défi-Plus	05.6.2004	Le Centre Culturel Nelson Mandela réaménagé dans l'ancienne poste Centrale
L'express	11.6.2004	Open letter to the GM of the General Post Office
Le Défi-Plus	12.6.2004	Le bâtiment historique de la poste Centrale
L'express	21.6.2004	La poste offre l'internet à des prix concurrentiels
L'express	22.6.2004	Clickpost.com, le déclic
L'express	25.6.2004	Hausse. Le cout des timbres-poste inquiète Jeetah
Le Défi-Plus	26.6.2004	Autour du bâtiment de la poste Centrale
Le Défi-Plus	26.6.2004	La MPCB veut étendre ses services à Rodrigues
L'express	27.6.2004	Une juteuse idée repoussée

The Mauritius Philatelic Society, PO Box 89, Quatre Bornes, MAURITIUS  
 Edited by Mico W Antoine  
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2004

## News ItemS 2004.2

### A SPECIAL PRIVATE COVER

A special cover was put on sale on 9<sup>th</sup> June after several had been distributed as gifts to selected foreign and local personalities on 7<sup>th</sup> June. The cover commemorates the Transit of Venus, in front of the Sun, which occurred on 8<sup>th</sup> June. This rare phenomenon was visible to 75% of the inhabitants of Planet Earth, however Mauritius and Rodrigues (according to some) were the two spots on Planet Earth where the visibility was clearly or simply the best.

700 covers are franked with three values of the **Constellations** set of 2002, namely the Rs 7, Rs 8 and Rs 9 values, an incomplete set as the R1 value had been exhausted and only 700 part sets (of three values) were available. Hence, logically, only 700 covers could be made. The covers are illustrated with an Earth/Celestial scene, the same scene as that of the cover of a Mauritian book.

The three stamps are cancelled with one strike of the Port Mathurin 3 Rodrigues double circle cds dated 8 JU 04. A small cachet in blue shows the Earth, Venus and the Sun and in two lines - Pointe Venus Rodrigues / 8 June 2004, applied between the stamps on the right and the title of the cover on the left - "Transit de Venus / 8 Juin 2004 / Ile Maurice et Rodrigues." The back flap carries a logo of The Mauritius Post Ltd.

An insert gives scant information in English only. The covers were priced at Rs 35 each.

#### *Comment by Mico Antoine*

700 covers were produced by the *Comité Organisateur* set up by the Government of the Republic of Mauritius to oversee this "astronomique" event. Of these 300 were retained by the *Comité Organisateur* and 400 were put on sale. The sale was supervised by a member of the staff of The Mauritius Post Ltd on the premises of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority in the Air Mauritius Paille-en-Queue Building on John Kennedy Street, Port Louis. The sale opened at 10 a.m. and closed at 11 a.m. on the orders of the Postmaster General, not as a result of a crush (which never happened) but because the same buyers, some fifteen, were queuing up over and over again to purchase one cover per customer (down from two when the vendor realised he was selling to the same clients). A Government minister had previously announced on the 7<sup>th</sup> June that members of the public would be able to purchase two of the precious covers each so that as many people as possible would be able to own a souvenir of the "Transit of Venus".... from a total of only 400 covers.

The concept, production, servicing, disposal and whatever else about this cover was a comedy of errors from beginning to end, a complete shambles. The exercise was an example of how a special commemorative cover should not be made, handled, serviced or disposed of.

Despite the printing of the logo of The Mauritius Post Ltd on the flap of this cover, this cover was NOT a Postal Services product. The Postal Services and the Society were on the same orbit regarding this cover. But there are some who don't listen to good advice, who think they can do whatever they want irrespective of the outcome.

The Society was not involved in any manner in the "Transit of Venus" cover mess. The Society did not mandate anybody to be its representative or spokesperson on the *Comité*

*Organisateur* nor was anyone from the Society mandated to take any initiative whatsoever – local *palabres* notwithstanding. We do not get mixed up with foul-ups.

### ANNUAL OUTING

On 15<sup>th</sup> May 11 local members and one London-based visitor, Stephen Spark, visited the 26 hectare Ile-aux-Aigrettes Nature Reserve managed by the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation. Each local paid his own fee of Rs150 and Stephen the “foreign fee” of Rs500. The 11 locals met in the car park of London Spar in Vacoas and at 9.00 a.m. sharp left in three vehicles for Pointe d’Esny. Stephen met the group at the embarkation point near Preskil Hotel where at 10.00 a.m. sharp our guide Diane and her skipper José took us on their boat for the 10 minutes crossing to the Ile-aux-Aigrettes jetty.

In the reception area the rules were read and members purchased their souvenirs. We then had a guided tour of the islet where we visited the aviaries, the nursery, the Aldabra Giant Tortoises enclosure, the destroyed lime kiln, Caroline Cave, the Bay Viewing Platform, the Ebony Forest and the WW II long guns dismantled from a WW I British battleship and sent to Mauritius. The guns were never fired in anger, the Japanese never ever got close enough. When they were fired in practice, they woke up the dead ... on the mainland.

Amongst fauna seen were the Pink Pigeon, the Aldabra Tortoises, Round Island Skinks and Ornate Day Geckos. Several species of trees and plants, some indigenous to the islet but may introduced from the mainland for research and conservation purposes are found all over the place. One gets the impression that the greenery is dense, overwhelming and out of control – far too many trees and plants in too small an area.

The visit ended at noon and the group returned to the Mauritian landmass on a grey, overcast, humid day. A very pleasant visit, well worth the trouble.



**MAURITIUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY = POSTAL HISTORY OF MAURITIUS**