

2007



NEWS ITEMS 2007.2

The Journal of the Mauritius Philatelic Society

P.O. Box 89 - Quatre Bornes - Mauritius - Indian Ocean

JUNE 2007

MONTHLY SOCIETY MEETINGS

APRIL – The first meeting of the second quarter of the year was held at College du St Esprit, Sir Virgil Naz Avenue, Quatre Bornes at 2 p.m. on Saturday 7th April 2007.

Two items were on the agenda, (1) STAMPS AND COVERS OF INDIA by Soorooj Ramdewor and (2) ONE ISRAELI STAMP by Georges Antoine Louis.

Soorooj put up a comprehensive display of modern stamps of India acquired during his visit to the sub-continent at the beginning of 2007. He delivered a very refreshing and humorous account of his experience and his appreciation of the country and its people – the smells, the dirt, the water, the traffic, the hustlers, the shopping and his bargaining for several stamp albums offered at Rs10,000 for which he finally paid Rs2,000.

Georges showed one Israeli stamp of the first Israeli astronaut, Israeli Air Force pilot, Colonel Ilan Ramon who flew on the Columbia Space Shuttle in January 2003. The stamp was issued on 24th February 2004 one year after Columbia blew apart on re-entry killing the crew of seven on board. Georges made some interesting disclosures on the Colonel's career and destiny, the Kabbalah, the week of the Pesach and other aspects of Judaism.

The presentations were a first for the two members and the unnecessary interjections during both presentations from one member were not appreciated.

The Notice Board was well garnished with the latest on Mauritian philately. Magazines, catalogues and other publications, surplus to the Society's need, were distributed free to members. The Purchase List and Bid Board offered a wide range of items and sales were good.

26 members attended the April meeting.

MAY – The second meeting of the second quarter of 2007 was held at College du St Esprit, Sir Virgil Naz Avenue, Quatre Bornes at 2 p.m. on Saturday the 5th of the month.

The agenda included the CORAL stamps and a preview of the monograph by Mico Antoine and Patrick Kwan Cheung titled MAURITIUS - A Brief Introduction To The Mauritius Government Railways, Barred Oval Numeral Cancellers, and Double Circle Circular Datestamps of Mauritius.

Dr A.N. Maderbokus made some critical and pertinent observations on the CORAL set of six postage stamps issued on the 30th April. He did not like the background colour of the Rs10 value or the cut-off of the Coral, top and bottom, on the Rs3 value and he likened the over-illustrated (recto-verso) of the Official First Day Cover to a Mauritian wedding invitation. He took note of the tiny characters of the Coral cancellation cachet and he questioned the inclusion of the Rs3 value as well as the absence of a Rs30 value for the overseas registration fee.

Mico Antoine showed the drafts of several pages of the monograph and he gave a brief account on its three aspects of Mauritian postal history as well as the work entailed in preparing the monograph. Pre-publication orders were taken. The monograph will be reviewed at the August 2007 meeting after its publication.

The 1970 Birth Centenary of Lenin stamps SG 417/8 were examined. Luminescence and ultraviolet light reaction on the two values explained and the observations of a Russian collector were shared with those who may wish to pursue the study of the Lenin stamps further.

The Society's Polo Shirt was delivered to those who had placed orders and the annual Outing was confirmed for May 19th. The June Jumble Sale participation form was distributed to potential vendors and the strictest adherence to procedures was emphasized.

The Bid Board offered several Mauritian BONCs on mainly Queen's Head stamps which quickly sold out and a range of modern stamps, blocks, sheetlets etc. of France did not sell at all.

26 members attended the May meeting.

JUNE – The third meeting of the second quarter was held at the usual venue and at the usual time on Saturday 2nd June.

The convocation for the JUNE JUMBLE SALE contained this instruction which was decided upon by the Committee: "N.B. Lots can only be offered through and on the special Society form which **MUST** be collected at the May meeting. If you cannot collect the form in May – **DO NOT** come to sell your material in June – your material **WILL NOT** be accepted." A pathetic phone call from a potential participant who did not attend the May meeting elicited the appropriate response; he got the message and he did not show up.

The June Jumble Sale turned out to be the worst managed of the three to date. The lots offered were generally of poor quality and only seven members participated of whom six had offered material before. Turnover was low and the work entailed in preparing the sales as well as the commissions earned not worth all the trouble. Worst of all a vendor participating for the third time contravened the rules of participation by offering his unlisted first day covers, leftovers from two previous sales.

There were however several subjects on the display boards to save the day namely Royal Post illustrated aerogrammes featuring Railways and Birds, incoming postcards from abroad with a philatelic content, Port Louis GPO registered covers and photographs of the May Outing. A PowerPoint show by Anil Hurdyal of the sites visited during the May Outing at the very least enlivened the meeting, especially some unguarded comments on the sound track.

A special May Outing cover serviced at Black River post office and cacheted with the damaged Martello Tower rubber stamp was offered at Rs50 per unit.

News Items No 1 of March 2007 was distributed. 22 members attended the June meeting.

MONTHLY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Management Committee met at College du St Esprit to discuss Society matters on Saturday 7th April, Saturday 5th May and Saturday 2nd June at 13.00 hrs, one hour before the monthly Society meeting.

STAMPS

CORAL

Mauritius Post Ltd released a set of special stamps on Monday 30th April 2007. The issue comprises 6 postage stamps featuring Coral species as follows: -

Rs 3 *Acropora rodriguensis* (Rodrigues endemic)

Rs 5 *Dentronephthy sp* (Soft coral)

Rs 10 *Ctenella chagius* (Chagos coral)

Rs 15 *Porites lobata* (Head coral)

Rs 22 *Acropora clathrata* (Table coral)

Rs 25 *Tubastrea coccinea* (Tube coral)

The stamps were designed by Mauritius Post Ltd and printed by BDT International Security Printing Ltd of Ireland. The colourful Official First Day Cover is gaudily illustrated back and front with the coral *Pachyseris speciosa* and the six stamps affixed over the illustration are cancelled with three strikes of a special cachet also illustrating corals. The data card (insert) contains scant information and is poorly written up. The sheet is composed of 50 stamps in two panes of 25 with a central gutter strip between the two panes. The middle gutter imprinted with the logo of Mauritius Post Ltd is now a regular feature of a standard sheet of Mauritian stamps.

[Priced at Rs115 with a face value of Rs80 for the stamps, the exorbitant Rs35 mark-up is counter productive, evidenced by declining FDC sales now averaging around 3000 per issue out of an average total of 4000 produced for each new issue. Remainders are sold to a direct competitor of Mauritius Post where they are resold at a substantial mark-up.]

On the morning of 30th April 2007 the Honourable E. Sinatambou launched the Coral stamps at Grand Bay post office in the north of the island.

THE DODO

Raphus cucullatus

A set of four special postage stamps was released on 25th June 2007 on the famously extinct national bird The Dodo *Raphus cucullatus*. The stamps are inscribed:

Rs 5 The Dodo *Raphus cucullatus* – Journal of the Gelderland, 1601

Rs 10 The Dodo *Raphus cucullatus* – Adrian van de Venne, 1626

Rs 15 The Dodo *Raphus cucullatus* – Harrison, 1798

Rs 25 The Dodo *Raphus cucullatus* – J.W. Frohawk, 1905

An unprogrammed Souvenir Sheet featuring a 2001 painting by Julian Pender Hume showing “a reconstruction of endemic fauna of Mauritius” with a face value of Rs25 was also issued.

The stamps were designed by Mauritius Post Ltd and printed by Cartor of France. The Official First Day Cover is illustrated with “a reproduction of the Dodo’s head from a bronze statue situated at Ile aux Aigrettes” (*sic*) and the stamps are cancelled with a special cachet also featuring the extinct national bird. The Official First Day Cover was priced at Rs85 for the total face value of four stamps at Rs55. No Official First Day Cover was produced for the souvenir sheet, however a “Presentation Pack” containing the set of four stamps and the s/s

with the heading "Artistic impressions of the Dodo" was produced and was put on sale at Rs125 per unit.

The official launching of The Dodo was made by the parent minister of Mauritius Post Ltd, the Hon. E. Sinatambou at Trois Boutiques post office on Monday 25th June 2007 at 9.30 in the south east of the island. This post office is the closest to Mare aux Songes, the Mauritian Dodo's graveyard.

[According to press reports and the national TV – in the month of June 2007 soon after the stamps were issued Julian Pender Hume, whose painting was reproduced on the s/s, was in Mauritius and he announced the discovery of the remains of a Dodo in a cave at Kanaka. Fred, that's the name of this new bird, fell down a hole way back.... Hmm... and then depending on which paper one read Fred was a couple of bones, a complete skeleton, an almost complete skeleton and even a *fossile presque complet*. Well Fred was lucky he was not vapourised when he fell down some hole in an extinct volcano crater. Incidentally Fred's finders were looking for cockroaches!!]

REDUIT

The two misspelt REDIUT 1 and REDIUT 2 double circle circular datestamps introduced on 6th October 2006 at Réduit post office were replaced by two new correctly spelt REDUIT 1 and REDUIT 2 datestamps in April 2007.

THE PRESS

Le Matinal	30.4.2007	Bribes – Comme une lettre à la poste !
Le Matinal	1.5.2007	Suivre les coraux à la lettre
Le Mauricien	3.5.2007	Internet : accès étendu à 93 autres bureaux de poste
Le Défi-Plus	5.5.2007	La poste honore nos coraux
Week-End	6.5.2007	Pleins feux sur les coraux
Le Défi-Plus	12.5.2007	La souveraineté de Tromlin
Le Matinal	14.5.2007	Au pied de la lettre...
Le Matinal	17.5.2007	Lancement du CEM de la poste ⁽¹⁾
Le Mauricien	23.6.2007	Voyage sur la lettre vers hier et ailleurs... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thématiques • Combien ça coûte • Le Dodo en First Day Cover ce lundi
Le Défi-Plus	23.6.2007	Bureaux de poste : bientôt sous surveillance
Le Matinal	26.6.2007	Dodos stamped alive
Scope	27.6.2007	Vive le dodo !
Le Matinal	28.6.2007	Quatre nouveaux timbres à l'effigie du Dodo
L'express	29.6.2007	Fred le dodo sort de sa cachette

⁽¹⁾ CEM – Community Empowerment Programme?

MAURITIUS POSTAL HISTORY = MAURITIUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY

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THE MAY 2007 OUTING

At the May meeting on Saturday 5th May sixteen members signed up for the Outing, the highest number of participants for any Outing since the Society introduced this annual activity.

The rendezvous point was Collège du Saint Esprit where secure parking had been arranged for and from where two vehicles, Judex Adrien's minibus and Hans Bigler's Range Rover provided transport for the thirteen members who eventually turned up at the college.

One member had with prior notice desisted due to indisposability, one committee member decided not to show up without any prior notice contributing hugely to a late start and another committee member who had not signed up turned up. Two other members used their own means of transport; they were the only two on time and the Secretary had gone ahead of everyone to prepare some covers at Black River. Needless to say, and the least said the better, the scheduled departure time from the college of 9 a.m. sharp was not respected because of the wait for over half an hour for "no show" and another member who has a couple of loose bolts in his head.

Destination: Martello Tower (La Preneuse) – The Flinders' Memorial (Baie du Cap) – La Nef (Souillac) and the discussed Savanne Railway Line from Souillac to Rose Belle.



Atop Martello Tower – 19th May 2007

At Martello Tower a couple of members including "loose bolts" had to be reprimanded for scampering over the gun at the top of the tower. A couple of others handled objects on display, however those on their first visit to the tower were impressed.

At the monument erected in honour of Matthew Flinders at Baie du Cap the promised lecture by "no show" was not delivered, so someone else had to fill in. There is always someone to fill in... and then it began to rain and it continued to rain all the way to Rose Belle.

At La Nef, Edward Hart's demolished and rebuilt residence, once again a lot of touching and handling of items on open display was the norm. "Loose bolts" handled everything not nailed down ignoring the DO NOT TOUCH notices. The Outers then headed for Gris Gris for lunch; impossible to find shelter from the wind and rain. The weather and the mood were on par.

After Gris-Gris the group headed north to Rose Belle following the Savanne Railway Line which for most of the 11 miles and the 42 feet to 874 feet elevation lay to the right side of the road with stops at :

- the Souillac Railway bridge totally concealed in cane fields near the former road bridge.
- at Rivière des Anguilles, the Range Rover took a wrong turn after visiting the former railway station (which incidentally was never demolished – Ibbotson *Revisions and Additions* – Page 28) and missed the visit to the impressive Rivière des Anguilles railway bridge with its magnificent piers in the middle of sugar cane fields.
- found the Range Rover with its five occupants waiting at Britannia post office and went to Rivière Dragon – the railhead of the Mauritius Government small gauge light railway serving sugar estates in the area. The sugar stores and station building, the water tank, the hand pump, the railway quarters and the small bridge at the south end of the village still stand today.
- at Rivière du Poste not much left apart from the small bridge where some very recent rehabilitation has deformed its original state as well as that of the surrounding area. Developments will take place at this site because of a *source* under the bridge.
- a quick diversion from Rivière du Poste to Rose Belle (away from the railway line) took the convoy to the former New Grove post office and railway station. This site is disappearing slowly – the remaining stonework is being stolen!
- the Savanne Railway Line ended at Rose Belle and the railway bridge at the end of Madame Lolo on the way to Cluny is worth a visit. An ashram has been constructed at the north end of the bridge and 108 concrete steps lead to the bottom of the bridge where two streams meet and where many idols of the Hindu pantheon have been installed. However the chiselled stone piers (with the reinforced structural additions on the main pier to accommodate the Garrat locomotives) are very impressive and are testimony of the railway era of the island – recent disfiguration of the site notwithstanding.

It was still raining when the Outing ended at the Rose Belle bridge at 4 p.m.; the rain and the rather late hour did not allow for visits to the locomotive shed and two small bridges located at the southern entrance to Rose Belle nor for a walk along the embankment at Madame Lolo.

[The May 19th Outing was organised after the proposed Mondrain “indigenous nature reserve” visit fell apart because it was never organized, the initiator assumed that by proposing something he had organized everything!]

POSTAL HISTORY

MAURITIUS ~ A Brief Introduction To The Mauritius Government Railways, Barred Oval Numeral Cancelled and Double Circle Circular Datestamps of Mauritius by Mico Antoine and Patrick Kwan Cheung.

26 pages of text and illustrations plus 3 maps / A monograph on three important aspects of Mauritian philately / Only 100 produced / Distributed by Mauritius Philatelic Society / Price to local members Rs150 plus registered inland postage and packing Rs50 / Price to overseas members Rs150 plus postage airmail (Rs150-Rs375) / Price to others US\$10.00 plus postage.

CORRIGENDUM

In News Items 2007.1 of March 2007 “**New Type D Double Circle Circular Datestamps**” on page 3; amend 27 cm to 26 mm in line two re the diameter of the cds. All New Items sent by post, local and overseas, were corrected before despatch therefore copies distributed at the June meeting should be corrected accordingly.