

NEWS ITEMS 2008.3

The Journal of the Mauritius Philatelic Society

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

SEPTEMBER 2008

MONTHLY SOCIETY MEETINGS

JULY – The July meeting was held at Collège du Saint Esprit, Sir Virgil Naz Avenue, Quatre Bornes at 2 p.m. on Saturday 5th July.

Mico Antoine put up a display of the Arms of Mauritius on stamps from 1895 to date; their origins, their amendments and additions, descriptions of the armorial ensigns and supporters, the 12th March 1992 “Presidential Flag” modifications and Peter Ibbotson study of the Arms. Doc Maderbokus and Mico Antoine reviewed and updated the first half of 2008 on the state of affairs of Mauritian philately viz. stamps or rather the absence of stamps issued, the politically inspired special covers produced by Mauritius Post, the philatelic policies of those in government circles and of all other parties involved. A nice R.L.O (Returned Letter Office) cover of 2002 and the four N.C.D (Non-Communicable Disease) special cachet used from January to December 1989 to promote and propagate regular physical exercises, the dangers of tobacco, a good diet and the benefits of consuming fruit and vegetable were the other topics on the afternoon’s agenda.

19 members attended the July meeting. Sales from the Bid Board and Purchase List were reasonable with a good range of new material on offer.

AUGUST – The August meeting was held at 2 p.m. on Saturday 2nd August at the usual venue in Quatre Bornes

At the July Society meeting members were informed that the only item on the August agenda would be the Society’s Members Display day. The convocation asked members to come forward and show other members their collections properly mounted and protected.

Pascal Chan You Fee showed his modern Australian covers and stamps which included the April 2008 Heavy Haulers set. Hans Bigler brought along a couple of museum pieces, two franking machines manufactured by Michel Morton Smith and Pitney Bowes respectively. Krishna Gunnoo a retired former executive officer of Mauritius Post gave explanations on the machines and on the regulations governing users of commercial franking machines in Mauritius. Mico Antoine had to put up a couple of filler displays as the convocation gave the undertaking that “senior members will prepare back-up exhibit on Postal History themes to fill any gaps”. Mauritian Bisects and the Coat of Arms of Mauritius on the Rs10 May 2008 Fish new printing and on the two Osman stamps of December 2007 viz. the July 2001 Cabinet decision that the Mauritian crest “will no longer appear on the Design of Stamps” decision filled far too many gaps.

Details of the ceremonials surrounding the re-inauguration of the Mauritius Postal Museum at its new site with its “A trip.... to the past.” brochure, special commemorative cover, invitation card, press cuttings, related data and paraphernalia were shown and evaluated.

Pinned to Tail Piece were a couple of hilarious, hopefully unintentional, incredibly bad French black humour pieces from the local rags.... “*L’autopsie...a attribue le décès à une dislocation du cerveau*” which translates into death by dislocation of the brain.... and a mangled report on a young man who died as a result of a car accident on two different days under two different circumstances and at two different sites.

A range of mint and used stamps consigned by an overseas member sold well. 22 members attended the August meeting.

SEPTEMBER – The September meeting was held on Saturday the 6th day of the month at Collège du Saint Esprit, Sir Virgil Naz Avenue, Quatre Bornes at 2 p.m.

Many topics were shown at this meeting. Ah Lan Lam Yan Foon who had recently visited the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland, talked about his visit and tied some Beijing Olympics stamps and covers purchased in Lausanne with several private covers he made in Mauritius to commemorate the 2008 Olympics. Our only local Swiss member Hans Bigler showed some Post Paid's and talked on the Lapirot **Mauritus** and **Maurituis** varieties. Derek Taylor brought along a plastic bag sealer and demonstrated how he uses it in his effort to protect his stamps and covers from Mauritian humidity. Gérard Louis displayed photographs taken during the Pamplemousses visit and spoke about the Outing. The Notice Board carried new additions to the *WebRiposte* labels project as more post offices come online. The sewers system environment cachet from Rose Hill and Quatre Bornes on a couple of commercial covers, Baobab stamps of Africa and Mauritius, some fly specks and fresh data on the Heavy Haulers Road Train and Ore Train stamps of Australia filled most of the other slots on the Notice Board. During his exposé on the Baobab Mico Antoine smashed open a Baobab pod and members were invited to taste the fruit – almost all had never seen the inside of the Baobab fruit before.

The Bid Board and Purchase List offered some very nice material and sales were good. 22 members attended a very lively meeting on a pleasant Saturday afternoon of September.

SOCIETY OUTING OF AUGUST

Seventeen members had signed up for this annual activity, ten of them ended up being no-shows as only seven turned up of which six were members of the Management Committee.

At 9 a.m. on Saturday 9th August the seven met outside the main gate of the Botanical Gardens in the village of Pamplemousses, waited for fifteen minutes for others to turn up and as no one else showed up the walk-about began. The French era "*Bain des Esclaves*" is a hole in the ground where slaves were cleaned up before being sold in the yard of today's Citizen's Advice Bureau. The site is closed on Saturdays, however viewing was possible through holes in the fence of the adjoining football ground. One could go in if one wanted to, the holes were that big!

Next to the football ground is the Pamplemousses Government School in the small yard of which stands the second biggest Baobab tree in Mauritius. The school attendant proudly talked about the tree as he distributed pods of the tree's fruit. He told the Outers that the biggest Mauritian Baobab tree is only a few yards away in the grounds of the Botanical Gardens.... but one has to look for it.

The Pamplemousses cemetery next to the St Francis of Assisi church contains the remains of some historical non-entities including the grave of an infamous slave owner whose tomb is venerated by the few as a national monument. The cemetery is full of unsung Franco-Mauritian heroes. The church itself is an impressive basalt edifice with the year 1756 chiselled in the stone over the main entrance. A bust of Labourdonnais and statues of Mauritian fictive icons Paul and Virginie are found in the yard of the church – very French and very catholic.

The unofficial graveyard and church guide is a small talkative Frenchman from France who seemed to have found his vocation in Mauritius after marrying a local lady thereby becoming, he puffed, *un franco-mauricien*. He eulogized non-stop about the merits and heroics of the "colon" occupants of his tombs and sepulchers. Scampering around caressing marble here and slapping basalt there whilst extolling the finesse of the "colon" craftsmen and the puissance of slave stone hewers of the era he had he declared found his version of paradise on earth in Mauritius. At the end of the visit he solicited a donation in cash or in kind. He got neither money nor weed-killer. The Outers then paid their homage to the local parish priest before proceeding to the Botanical Gardens.

The gardens were clean, well maintained, very green and very pleasant. The tree planted by Robert Mugabe in the visiting dignitaries tree-planting zone has survived and thrived. A fairly healthy

trochetia bush and a couple of other plants put in the ground by the famous, by Mauritian standards, line both sides of a tarred footpath. The giant *nénuphars* and lotus plants in the big pond were in good condition and the pond itself was full of coins tossed in by those wishing themselves well and wealth. A *talipot* tree was in full bloom. This tree supposedly flowers once every 100 years yet somehow the information panels state that the trees flower between the age of 40 to 60 then dies soon afterwards – or something to that effect. Several stumps and logs of dead *talipot* trees are found in the *talipot* plantation. Many trees are not identified and some identification tags are high up beyond visual contact having gotten higher as the trees grew taller.

There are several busts, an obelisk and other monuments as well as old neglected ruins and at least one dry pond in the gardens. There are also some nice kiosks where visitors can rest. One such kiosk, accessible by a footbridge, is surrounded by water. There were lots of fish in the water and noisy waterfowls, silent herons and other birdlife around.

The Pamplemousses Botanical Gardens are one of the most visited sites in Mauritius. Occupying some 65 acres, with a wide collection of plants from many parts of the world including some 80 species of palm trees and plants of the Mascarenes, it has many canals, ponds and other attractions such as a deer enclosure, a tortoise enclosure, a small sugar mill and a museum which is closed on peak visiting days, weekends and holidays. Well worth a visit.

The seven members of the Society ended their Outing at 3 p.m. on a very mild sunny August afternoon. Those who didn't turn up were the losers of the day.

MEMBERS NEWS

EX'ED MEMBERS

On Friday 12th September 2008 the Hon. Marie Joseph Noël-Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou was dropped from the Cabinet and ceased to be Minister of Information Technology and Communications, the Ministry responsible for the Postal Services. During his tenure of office....

Jean Marie Huron was revoked as Chairman of the Stamp Advisory Committee or SAC.

Vikash Rupear, representing the Mauritius Museums Council, was revoked as a member of the SAC.

The ex-Minister, the ex-Chairman and the ex-member of the SAC are all paid-up members of the Mauritius Philatelic Society!

VISITORS TO MAURITIUS

Stephan André from Biel-Bienne, Switzerland, visited Mauritius from 28th June to 19th July 2008. He participated in the Society lunch of 12th July, for what it was worth, and he met the members who attended the lunch at a Quatre Bornes restaurant.

JULY LUNCH

Several members of the Society met for lunch at a Quatre Bornes restaurant on Saturday 12th July. Someone took charge and he suggested tasteless boiled Chinese chicken because he liked boiled Chinese chicken when he had it once. He also ordered boiled rice, fried rice and steamed vegetable. The waitress disappeared. One member concentrated on his liquid lunch. Those who ate, know what they ate.

I' APOI

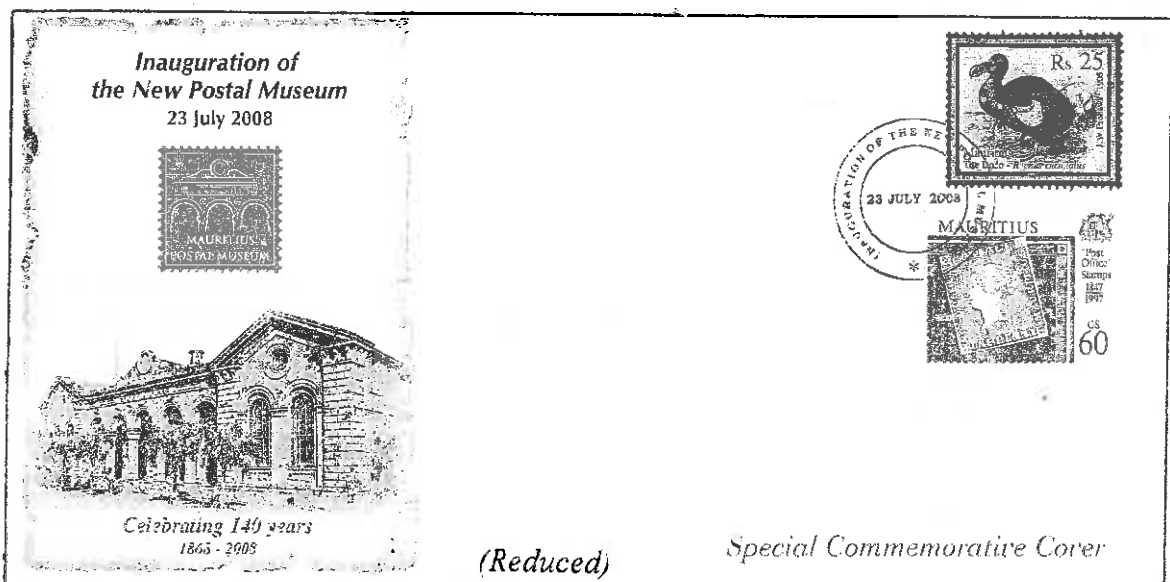
I' APOI, or *Association Philatélique de l'Océan Indien* commemorated its 50th anniversary 1958-2008 on 27th and 28th September at Saint Denis, Reunion. This association is supposedly composed of TAAF (*Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises*), Reunion, Mayotte, Madagascar, Comoros Islands and Mauritius.

The Mauritius Philatelic Society is not and has never been a member of I' APOI. More details in the next "News Items" of December 2008.

SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE COVER

On the occasion of the inauguration of the "New Postal Museum" and the commemoration of the 140 years of the existence of the Post Office Building (*La Poste Centrale*) at Port Louis Waterfront, Mauritius Post Ltd put a special cover on sale on Wednesday 23rd July 2008 at several post offices. The selected post offices were Grand Bay, Mahebourg, Flic en Flac, Beau Bassin, Rose Hill, Quatre Bornes, Curepipe, Vacoas, Central Flacq, Triolet and GPO Counter Port Louis. As from 24th July 2008 the cover was available at the Philatelic Bureau, until stocks are exhausted, as many covers remained unsold.

The special cover is illustrated with a photograph of the "*Poste Centrale*" building and a new "Mauritius Postal Museum" logo is inscribed "Inauguration of the New Postal Museum 23 July 2008 / Celebrating 140 years 1868-2008". Franked with a Dodo Rs25 stamp of 2007 and a 60cs "Post Office" stamp of 1997 and offered at Rs50 per unit the cover is cacheted with a double circle circular handstamp reading "Inauguration of the New Postal Museum / 23 July 2008" as shown. 2000 covers were produced.



A data card inserted within the special cover refers to the "Status and Heritage Aspect" and mentions that "The Postal Museum... was inaugurated on the 10th March 1995... it is relocated at the Waterfront in a newly designed set up." The "Physical Description" paragraph tries to justify the 140 years existence (1868-2008) early commemoration despite the completion of the building in 1870 and its occupation as the Port Louis Central Post Office as from December 1870 only – but chiseled in stone is the year 1868....

The new Mauritius Postal Museum was inaugurated with much pomp and ceremony by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam G.C.S.K. Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius. In a speech to the assembled invitees he revealed that he was a philatelist and the local state controlled television beamed this claim. The Prime Minister is not a member of the Mauritius Philatelic Society.

MAURITIUS POSTAL MUSEUM

A brochure offered by Mauritius Post Ltd titled "A trip... to the past." invites visitors to discover several events that marked the history of the postal services. It contains a location map and a plan of the museum. A sign in front of the building lists the occupants of and the services available in the (new) Mauritius Postal Museum site as follows; Postal Museum, Post Shop, Philatelic Bureau, Postal Academy and Waterfront Post Office.

Ed note. The 1995 Mauritius Postal Museum admitted the public free of charge. The 2008 new Mauritius Postal Museum charges the public an entry fee thereby fulfilling its pledge of "introducing a high value-added postal services"!!



THE STAMP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The "former" members of the Stamp Advisory Committee were revoked on 21st January 2008 after the Events and Anniversary Osman Rs5 "Ministerial System - 1957" stamp errors and subsequent blame game incidents and fallouts.

A "new" Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC) was reconstituted and approved by the Government of Mauritius at the Cabinet meeting of 18th July 2008. Reconstituted because some revoked members were replaced by new appointees from the very same government controlled institutions from which they (the revoked) were ousted...e.g. the Mauritius Museums Council and the Forestry Department!!

OFFICE OF EXCHANGE

The Office of Exchange moved from the premises it occupied at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport at Plaisance to the former Post Office Headquarters building located near the harbour off Quay Street in Port Louis.

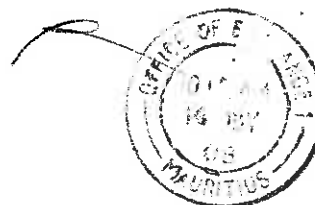
On Saturday 30th August 2008 the S.S.R. International OE (Office of Exchange) datestamps numbered 1 to 6 were withdrawn after the office closed for business at Plaisance. On 1st September 2008 the Office of Exchange began to operate from Port Louis.

Three new double circle circular datestamps 26mm in diameter numbered 1, 2 and 3 reading Office of Exchange at the top, with two thin lines at sides and Mauritius at the base were introduced as from Monday 1st September 2008. The name place, Port Louis, is not designated in the new datestamps.



RECEIVED
WITH TAPE

RECEIVED
WITH TAPE



RECEIVED WITH TAPE

A new RECEIVED/WITH TAPE two-line handstamp was introduced at the S.S.R. International Airport Office of Exchange sometime during the first half of 2008. The earliest item seen so far is postmarked 19th May 2008; an incoming letter secured with a large strip of sealing tape received from the USA. Initialled by the two postal workers who handled the item, (to assure the addressee that the postal item was not tampered with in Mauritius), it was then placed inside a transparent plastic bag and delivered the following day 20th May 2008 to the addressee in Quatre Bornes. Anyone seen an earlier date?

THE PHILATELIC BUREAU

The Philatelic Bureau was relocated to the Post Office Building (ex *Poste Centrale*) at Port Louis Waterfront on Thursday 24th July 2008. The Philatelic Bureau was temporarily transferred from *La Poste Centrale* to the Mauritius Postal Museum as from 29th April 2008.

REOPENING THE WATERFRONT POST OFFICE

The Waterfront Post Office was re-opened in the Post Office Building (ex *Poste Centrale*) on Thursday 24th July 2008 (as from 8.15 a.m.). The Waterfront Post Office was closed temporarily as from 29th April 2008.

ENVIRONMENT CONNECTION

Two double circle circular propaganda handstamps measuring 42mm in diameter reading **Mauritius Post Ltd Wastewater Management Authority** within the outer circles and **For a better environment** in three lines within the inner circle were used in Quatre Bornes and Rose Hill respectively from 20th August to 30th August-2008. Correspondence treated at the two post offices were cacheted with the handstamps in order to propagate the connection of the sewage systems of the two towns to the national sewage network.



Ed note. From a total of 634 commercial covers handled during the month of August from two sources based in Port Louis 42 were posted from Rose Hill and 17 from Quatre Bornes. The overwhelming number of commercial mail in Mauritius is from Port Louis senders to Port Louis addressees. 12 covers from Rose Hill and 7 from Quatre Bornes were mailed to Port Louis during the period 20th August to 30th August and of these one from Rose Hill and one from Quatre Bornes were cacheted with the "For a better environment" handstamp...so there will not be many around.

THE PRESS

Le Matinal	7.7.2008	Sur la voie de la profitabilité
Le Matinal	24.7.2008	Disparition regrettable de l'Imprimerie du gouvernement
L'express	24.7.2008	Un musée pour la postérité
Le Matinal	25.7.2008	A glimpse of history on show at new postal museum
L'express	2.8.2008	Nouveau cachet par la poste
Week-End	3.8.2008	Trois siècles d'histoire de la Poste à Maurice
Le Matinal	7.8.2008	Mauritius Post Ltd recompense à Genève
L'express	15.8.2008	Le cachet de la poste ne fait plus foi
L'express	19.8.2008	La poste fait peau neuve – Camp-de-Masque-Pavé
L'express	7.9.2008	Les juniors ont leur club philatélique
Le Mauricien	9.9.2008	Lancement d'un Junior Philatelic Club
Le Matinal	18.9.2008	Le timbre "Maurice bleu" exposé à Vienne
Le Défi-Plus	20.9.2008	Irrégularité à la poste
Le Mauricien	29.9.2008	L'histoire philatélique mauricienne retracée à la Réunion

MAURITIUS POSTAL HISTORY = MAURITIUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY

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