



# NEWS ITEMS 2008.4

The Journal of the Mauritius Philatelic Society

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

DECEMBER 2008

## MONTHLY SOCIETY MEETINGS

**OCTOBER** – The October meeting was held at Collège du Saint Esprit, Sir Virgil Naz Avenue, Quatre Bornes at 2 p.m. on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> October.

Several subjects were examined at the October meeting. The Notice Board was well garnished with news clippings on the “*Maurice Bleu*” Post Office Two Pence stamp on show at Wipa in Vienna, an extract from Mark Twain’s “Following the Equator”, a series of postcards from the Chinese Heritage Centre and last day SSR Airport OE (Saturday 30/8/2008) and Office of Exchange first day Port Louis (Monday 1/9/2008) covers amongst other tit bits.

Soorooj Ramdewor updated India with several pages of stamps and covers from the subcontinent. In the main these had a connection with Mahatma Gandhi’s 2<sup>nd</sup> October Non-Violence Day. Several stamps and covers from Bhutan and other Asian sources on the Buddha were included in Soorooj’s presentation. He also gave a short chat on Jean-Baptiste Meon, the early Belgian philatelist and stamp dealer famous mainly for his ownership and dealership in Mauritian primitives.

Mico Antoine reviewed the 2001 article from the Society’s News Bulletin No 18 about the 75cs flaw from the Environment definitive set issued on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1991 and the surcharged stamp of 15<sup>th</sup> September 1993 (SG890) 40c on 75c, Bassin Blanc. Covers and stamps featuring the flaws of 1991 and 1993 and details relating thereto as well as the reasons for locally surcharging the 75 cs stamps were provided.

Maritime Mail from BIOT was made up of a small collection of covers and was shown to illustrate the correct use of the philatelic term Maritime Mail as distinct from Packet Letter and Ship Letter.

Sales from the Bid Board and the Purchase List were reasonable. 18 members attended the October meeting.

**NOVEMBER** – The November meeting took place at Collège du Saint Esprit, Quatre Bornes on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November at 2 p.m. in the staff room of the college.

To mark John Shawley’s visit to Mauritius the scheduled agenda was postponed to December. A small Australian display served as a backdrop to the meeting. The Notice Board carried the latest additions to the Webriposte project and World Post Day – Universal Postal Union 9<sup>th</sup> October commercial and philatelic cacheted covers.

Firstly John attended the tail-end of the Management Committee meeting together with Hans Bigler who had picked him up at the Postal Museum in Port Louis and who would after the meeting return John to his hotel in the north of the island. Secondly John handed over the BONCs orders placed by Derek Taylor and Saoud Mauthoor. Before presenting his display he made two observations: (a) he was glad to note that whereas everything on the island was French the language of the Society was English and (b) that the average age of members of the Mauritius Philatelic Society was “young” unlike the average age of other societies he was involved with.

He then gave a brief talk on the historical links with Australia viz Matthew Flinders, early sugar exports from Mauritius to New South Wales and Pipon Bell entires from and to Australia.

He brought along colour photocopies and scans of BONCs, examples of the early cancellations and handstamped marks of Mauritius and much data on his research and study of the Dardennes. In this regard he asked members to provide him with good scans and clear colour reproductions of their Dardennes as he is re-examining and reconstructing the Dardenne sheet. He offered to exchange information with those who wish to know more about Dardenne's lithographs as well as helping MPS members with their BONCs collection. The call is still out so if anyone out there wants to answer the call, get in touch with John directly or via the Society. 21 members were at the meeting.

John Shawley, Australian member of the Mauritius Philatelic Society, hails from Victoria State. He is currently Vice President, Council Member and Secretary of the Expert Committee of the Royal Philatelic Society of Australia. He is also a member of the Indian Ocean Study Circle, the British West Indies Study Circle and the Royal Philatelic Society of London.



*Hans Bigler and John Shawley wearing their white Society shirts*

DECEMBER – The December meeting was held on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December at Collège du Saint Esprit, Sir Virgil Naz Avenue, Quatre Bornes at 2 p.m.

The last Society meeting of 2008 was well supported with 24 members in attendance plus two special guests from Mauritius Post invited by the Management Committee. It was however noted that not one member brought a guest along thus no potential member simply because no one made the effort!!

Three items were on the afternoon's agenda: Paul and Virginie / Bernardin de St Pierre by Ah Lan Lam Yan Foon; Following the Equator / Mark Twain and an introduction to Social Philately by Mico Antoine.

The invitation to other members to present Georges / Alexandre Dumas, Sonnet À une Dame Créole / Charles Baudelaire and A Smile of Fortune / Joseph Conrad were not taken up. Mico Antoine partially filled up the gaps by presenting brief biographies of the authors only not having read any of the works referred to on the stamps featuring the trio.

Ah Lan Lam's presentation was of the highest quality. The supporting display with the written up flip cards laid bare the distorted facts and fictional deformations so common to Mauritius. The exposure of superficial local preference for fiction rather than facts, and then mixing-up everything was illuminating. The deliberate elevation of Mauritius' own mythical iconic pair to virtual sainthood, with statues in churchyards, parks, gardens, and in at least one private museum were explained. Mark Twain best sums up the Paul and Virginie Mauritian obsessive delusion thus; "No other book is so popular here except the Bible. By many it is supposed to be part of the Bible....It is the greatest story

that was ever written about Mauritius, and the only one.” 100 years plus later nothing much has changed. Bernardin de St Pierre was not even on the original list of authors to be honoured on this set of stamps. He had to be included; the greatest “Mauritian” author simply could not be left out even if he and his couple have been shown on many Mauritian stamps in the past.

The local distorted paradisiacal comparison of Mauritius to heaven is best illustrated by the label stuck to a bottle of rum which reads “You gather the idea that Mauritius was made first, and then heaven....” The sentence from the book reads “From one citizen you gather the idea that Mauritius was made first, and then heaven and that heaven was copied after Mauritius.” The capital Y of You instead of y on the bottle of rum is extravagant. Moreover Mark Twain’s “quote” is immediately preceded by “You get all sorts of information.” and is preceded by.... “another one tells you that this is an exaggeration;....” The one delirious rum soaked citizen from whom Mark Twain got the heavenly comment was evidently full of spirit! Mauritius gets less than two chapters, no more than seven pages in the 300 plus pages of Samuel Langhorne Clemens’ journey around the world and much of it is not complimentary.

An introduction to Social Philately was an attempt to use the “Post Office” stamps of 1847 and Joseph Osmond Barnard in a new concept of collecting by including relevant non-philatelic material and other ephemera in one’s collection. Due to the early departure of some members the topic will be presented again at the February 2009 Society meeting by special request.

News Items 2008.3 of September was distributed. Sales were rather poor – maybe because of year-end overspending and the economic downturn.

### MONTHLY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Management Committee met at Collège du Saint Esprit at 13.00 hrs on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> October, Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November and Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December. The quorum of five was met with the presence of 6, 7 and 9 members for the three respective meetings. One member was absent from Mauritius during September, October and November.

The Management Committee meetings of the second quarter were held on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July, Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August and Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September with 9, 6 and 8 members in attendance for the three respective meetings.

### MONTHLY SOCIETY MEETINGS 2009

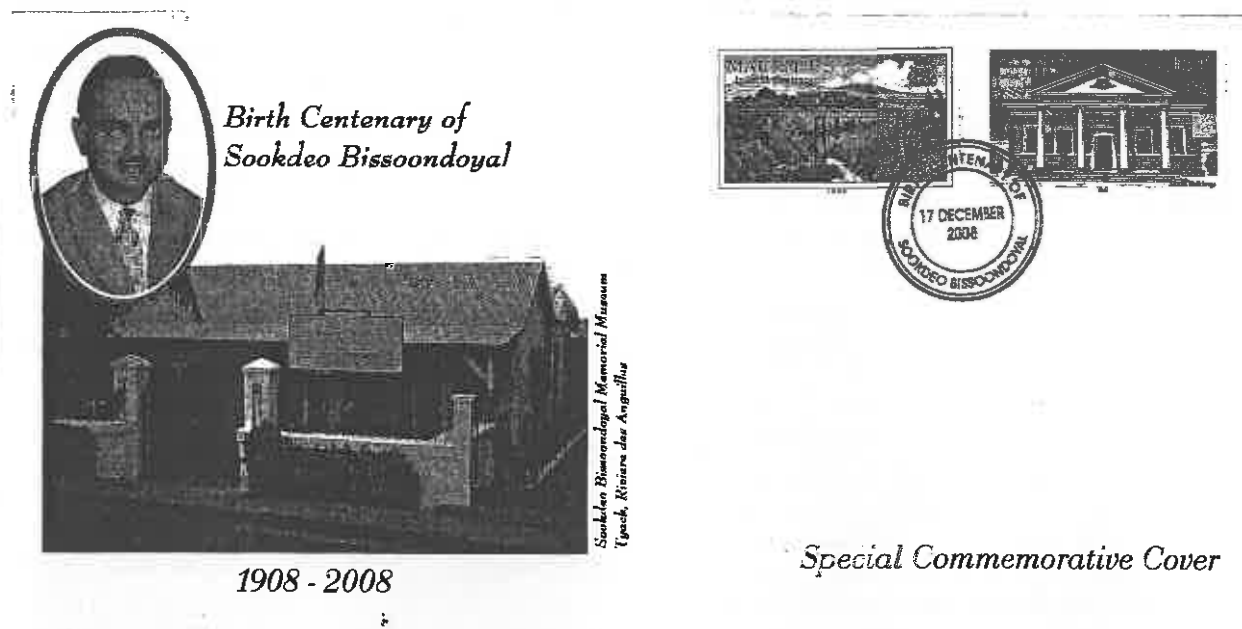
Society meetings are held on the first Saturday of the month at Collège du Saint Esprit, Sir Virgil Naz Avenue, Quatre Bornes at 14.00 hrs. The calendar for 2009 has been established as follows: 7<sup>th</sup> February, 7<sup>th</sup> March AGM, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 6<sup>th</sup> June, 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1<sup>st</sup> August, 5<sup>th</sup> September, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 7<sup>th</sup> November and 5<sup>th</sup> December.

### BIRTH CENTENARY OF SOOKDEO BISSOONDOYAL

One novel development since the incorporation of Mauritius Post Ltd is the proliferation of public service politically solicited special covers and the comparative decline in the production of commercial private sector sponsored commemorative covers.

The latest addition to Mauritius Post’s special cover listing was issued on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008 to mark the **Birth Centenary of Sookdeo Bissoondoyal** (1908-2008) who was born on Christmas Day 25<sup>th</sup> December 1908. The cover is franked with two stamps, the 40cs Inland Transport SG978 *Steam Train on Viaduct* (Rivière des Anguilles) and the Stone Buildings SG1134 *Carnegie Library, Curepipe* to signify the location of Sookdeo birth place (Tyack) and the value he gave to education. Both stamps are cancelled with one strike of a special circular cachet reading “Birth Centenary of Sookdeo Bissoondoyal 17 December 2008” and the cover is illustrated with his portrait and his memorial museum at Tyack. The back flap carries the logo of Mauritius Post and the data card eulogises the “great social worker, teacher, humanist and politician” in addition to his being “a champion of

education, a Gandhian, an influential journalist, patriot"...plus his historic achievements and his illustrious political career and political party leadership and so on.



500 covers were produced. 300 were requisitioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources and 200 were offered to the public through the Philatelic Bureau in Port Louis at Rs40 per unit. These promptly sold out as demand overwhelmed supply laying bare the marketing ineptness or talent of Mauritius Post.

### STAMPS

Mauritius Post issued the only set of commemorative stamps produced in 2008 titled **Mauritius in World Literature** on 8<sup>th</sup> December at a launching ceremony graced by the presence of the new Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Hon. Mohammad Asraf Ally Dulull at the Mauritius Postal Museum in Port Louis.

The **Mauritius in World Literature** set of five stamps depict five authors who wrote something about the island:

Rs5 Bernardin de Saint Pierre 1737-1814

Rs22 Mark Twain 1835-1910

Rs10 Alexandre Dumas 1802-1870

Rs25 Joseph Conrad 1857-1924

Rs15 Charles Baudelaire 1821-1867

The respective works of the writers inscribed on the stamps are *Paul et Virginie*, *Georges*, *Sonnet - À une Dame Créole*, *Following the Equator* and *A Smile of Fortune*.

The pedestrian design of the stamps is attributed to an employee of Mauritius Post and the stamps were lithographed by BDT International Ltd, Ireland. The stamps are printed in sheets of 50 divided in two panes of 25 separated by a central gutter strip with only the middle gutter bearing the logo of Mauritius Post.

The Official First Day Cover is illustrated with "a manuscript with a feather" and the five stamps are cancelled with two strikes of a special device. The cachet is inscribed with the title of the set, the date of issue, an open book and another feather. Priced at Rs110 for a face value of stamps of Rs77 the cover was available at all post offices on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December and thereafter from the Philatelic Bureau, Quay Street, Port Louis... "until exhaustion of stock".



N.B. [The Mauritius in World Literature set without Bernardin de Saint Pierre was programmed for December 2007 then reprogrammed for 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2008 on the occasion of World Book Day again without Bernardin de Saint Pierre. Finally scheduled for 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008 the set was actually released on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2008 as the 4<sup>th</sup> day of that month had become an inauspicious day. On 4<sup>th</sup> December 2007 the Osman error was issued and then that error was withdrawn on 8<sup>th</sup> December – now supposedly an auspicious day!!]

**S T A M P PROGRAMME 2009**

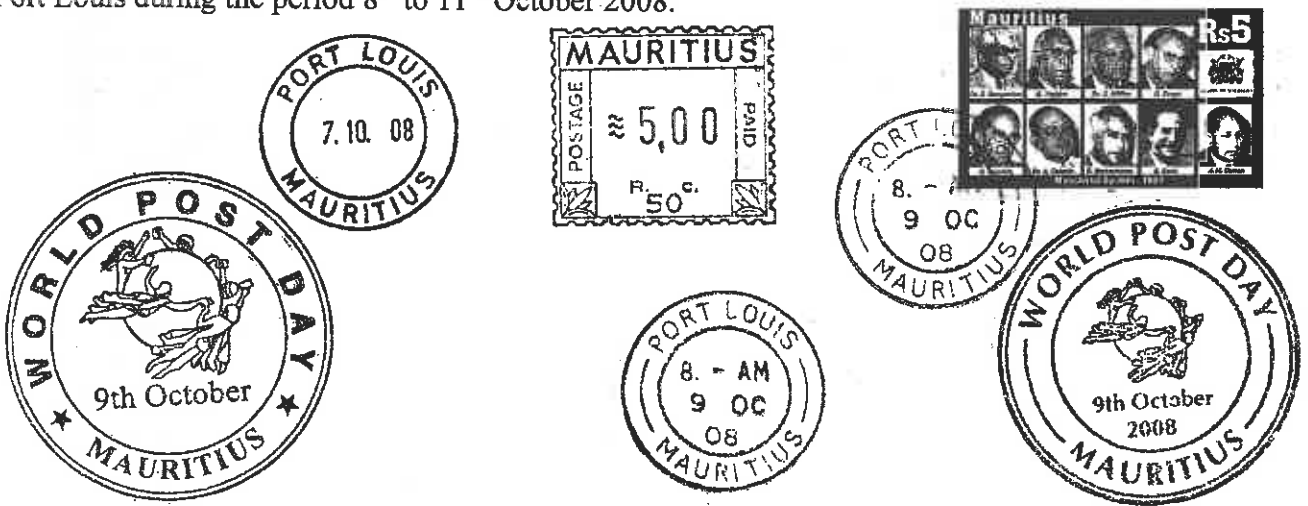
Item 11 on the list of Cabinet Decisions from the Prime Minister’s Office dated 5<sup>th</sup> December 2008 took note that the following themes have been approved for calendar year 2009.

- Endemic Flowers of Mauritius
- Mauritian Painters
- Evolution of Police Uniforms
- Events and Anniversaries

The first item is a new definitive of 12 stamps – the grapevine has it that the lowest value will be Rs3, the highest value Rs50.

**WORLD POST DAY**

The normal World Post Day dated 9<sup>th</sup> October (without the year) rubber stamps were supplied to the following offices for use from 8<sup>th</sup> October to 11<sup>th</sup> October 2008: Beau Bassin, Central Flacq, Curepipe, Eau Coulée, Goodlands, Grand Bay, Mahebourg, Port Louis Centre, Petite Rivière, Phoenix, CMO Delivery (Port Louis), CMO Sorting (Port Louis), Office of Exchange (Port Louis), Quatre Bornes, Rose Hill, Triolet, Vacoas and Chemin Grenier. A single new World Post Day cachet dated 9<sup>th</sup> October 2008 (the only rubber stamp indicating the year) was in use at the Philatelic Bureau only in Port Louis during the period 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> October 2008.



*Note the use of the normal (no year) WPO cachet on 7-10-08 metered cover posted in Port Louis received in Quatre Bornes on 8-10-08; usage therefore correct*

N.B. [In 2007 only two World Post Day rubber stamps were used at two venues only, the Philatelic Bureau and the Postal Museum, and both bore the date and year 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007. In 2008 normal rubber stamps were supplied to 19 offices in addition to the Philatelic Bureau.]

### WORLD POST DAY II

On 9<sup>th</sup> October 2008, between 9.30 and 10.45 the World Post Day programme of Mauritius Post Ltd was as follows. Launch of a scanner at the Office of Exchange. Walk through at the Office of Exchange. Unveiling of a commemorative plate – 140 years of Historic Building (Postal Museum). Kick-off of World Post Day. Address....Address....Speech.....Speech.....Refreshment

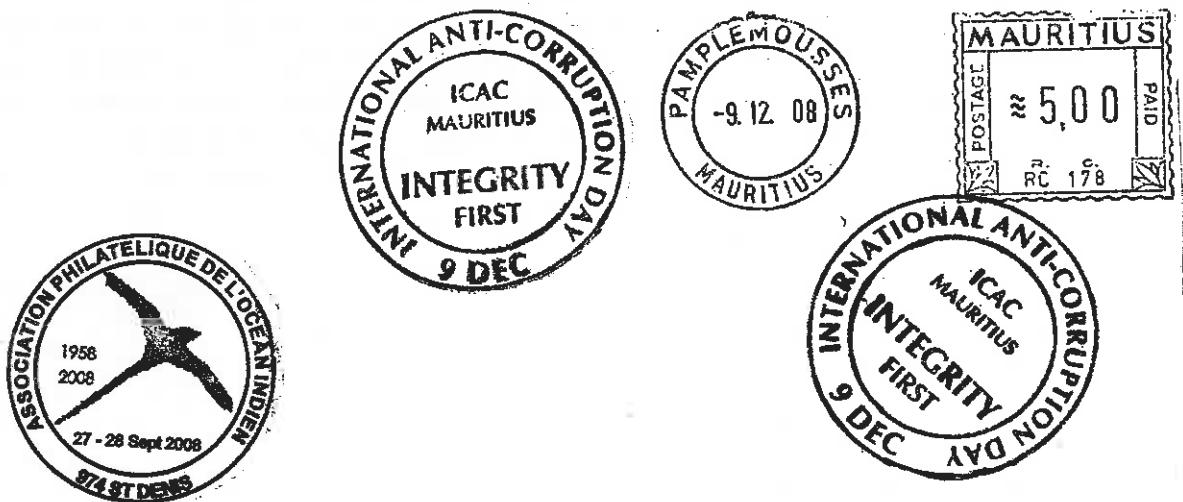
### WORLD POST DAY III

The World Post Day activities organized by Mauritius Post in 2008 began on 9<sup>th</sup> October and ended on 22<sup>nd</sup> November. Events ranged from football, launches, walk throughs, radio talk shows, blood donations, open houses, lunches, philatelic promotions, talks on health programmes and culminated in a grand finale.... the closure of all post offices on 22<sup>nd</sup> November for a celebration.

### INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY

The Independent Commission Against Corruption ( ICAC) awareness campaign about the problem of corruption with its annual rubber stamped “impressions” on items of correspondence impresses the very few. The 25 devices were not extensively used during the period 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> December resulting in poor visibility. Out of 450 inland covers handled in December 2008 only 9 items were cacheted with the “Anti-Corruption / Integrity” mark; 2 from Vacoas, 1 from Pamplemousses, 1 from Quatre Bornes, 1 from Forest Side, 1 from Curepipe and 1 from Eau Coulée. Two cannot be identified because of illegible postmarks. All were struck in red.

3 devices were issued to the Central Mail Office (CMO) Sorting, 2 to (CMO) Delivery, 2 to the Office of Exchange and 1 each to Quatre Bornes, Rose Hill, Beau Bassin, Vacoas, Phoenix, Triolet, Central Flacq, Mahebourg, Chemin Grenier, Petite Rivière, Saint Pierre, Rivière du Rempart, Goodlands, Réduit, Floréal, Eau Coulée, Forest Side and Bambous.



### L'APOI – UPDATE

*Les Rencontres Philatéliques de l'Océan Indien* was held from 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> september 2008 at Saint Denis, Réunion to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of L'APOI. 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary cachets reading *50<sup>e</sup> Anniversaire de L'APOI* were used for the *Comores, Madagascar, Maurice, Mayotte, Réunion & T.A.A.F.* in addition to other L'APOI cachets used to commemorate the event. Impressions of all the cachets have been seen on a single commemorative cover produced on 25/26 September 08. The various cachets have also been seen applied individually on six separate FDCs issued by Madagascar on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003 featuring six *Flore* stamps (see page 8).

## UPDATE

In News Items 2007.4 of December 2007 the Society referred to the December 2007 annal of Mauritius Post with respect to the mangled rubrique in French viz: *Le transfert de notre succursale de Quatre Bornes*. On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008 the Quatre Bornes post office is still firmly implanted in its rented *bâtiment de Quatre Bornes*. It has not moved anywhere which move incidentally would have been the fourth after it lost its own property when the original Quatre Bornes post office was demolished to make way for today's Railway Square Taxi Stand kiosk. Mauritius Post has failed to add *un autre fleuron* to its promised *grands axes du développement pour 2008!!*

## TAIL PIECE

For the record be it known that on two separate occasions press notices were posted in two dailies to inform the valued customers of Mauritius Post that "all Post Offices will be closed on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008 at noon and on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2009". Postal historians take note and take care that the items and the bits and pieces you collect and examine conform to the times and dates of the notice... you never know!

## THE BLUE PENNY PROJECT

According to "Blue Penny News", the annal of Mauritius Post for 2008, the Escher Group Webriposte counter automation/computerization Blue Penny Project has at December 2008 been completed at 50 post offices out of a total of 93 post offices and the corporation's target is to computerize "all our Post Offices by the end of 2009." This project started in 2004 when on 8<sup>th</sup> November five counters at Curepipe post office were computerized.

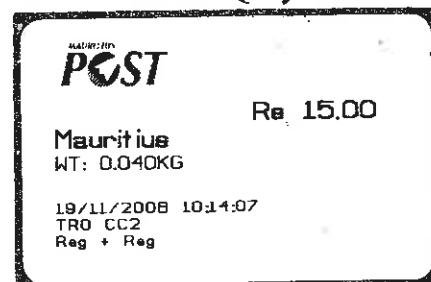
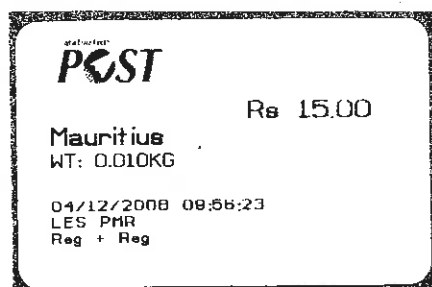
At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008 the Society can confirm that 39 post offices had been computerized by proving covers seen and verified by a member of the Management Committee.

Abbreviated identifications seen on proving covers at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008

BAI	Bel Air	GPOC	G.P.O. Counter	QMI	Quartier Militaire
BBA	Beau Bassin	LAL	Lalmatie	RDA	Rivière des Anguilles
BRIT	Britannia	LES	L'Escalier	RED	Reduit
CDM	Camp de Masque	MES	Mesnil	RNO	Roches Noire
CGE	Chemin Grenier	MHI	Monneron Hill	SOU	Souillac
CMA	Cap Malheureux	MLO	Montagne Longue	STA	Stanley
COM	Coromandel	NFR	Nouvelle France	SUR	Surinam
CUR	Curepipe	PDO	Poudre D'Or	TAM	Tamarin
ECO	Eau Coulee	PLC	Port Louis Centre	TDO	Trou d'Eau Douce
FEF	Forest Side	PLW	Port Louis Western	TRI	Triolet
FLO	Flic-en-Fiac	PRA	Petit Raffray	TRO	Terre Rouge
GBAC	Grand Bay Counter	PRI	Petite Rivière	VACC	Vacoas Counter
GOO	Goodlands	QBO	Quatre Bornes	WTF	Waterfront

N.B. The FEF and FLO (mis)identifications remain unchanged at December 2008.

GPOC and WTF are located in Port Louis (respectively) at Dumas Street and Quay Street.







(l'APOI cachets ex. page 6)

### THE PRESS

Le Matinal	6.10.2008	Un secteur postal plus écologique
Scope	8.10.2008	· Se réinventer continuellement · Le facteur. L'ami de la communauté · De 1638 à ce jour
L'express	9.10.2008	Un homme de ....lettres
Le Matinal	9.10.2008	Mauritius Post en fête
L'express	12.10.2008	La campagne de Giandev Moteea
Week-End	9.11.2008	Un Senior Postal Executive poursuivi pour vol de Rs665 060
L'express	10.11.2008	Détournement de Rs665 060
Le Matinal	10.11.2008	Un Postmaster arrêté pour détournement de fonds
Le Matinal	12.11.2008	Les enfants racontent une histoire au Père Noël
Le Défi-Plus	22.11.2008	Où se soulager ?
Le Matinal	5.12.2008	... Rs18 millions non réclamées à la Poste
Le Matinal	8.12.2008	La Poste lance "Mauritius in World Literature"
L'express	8.12.2008	Les thèmes de prochaines séries de timbres finalisés
Le Matinal	10.12.2008	Braquages : les bureaux de poste ciblés
Le Défi-Plus	13.12.2008	Hold-up : Rs600 000 emportés en une semaine
L'express	14.12.2008	La littérature timbrée !
Le Défi-Plus	20.12.2008	Throwing stones
L'express	29.12.2008	La Poste confirme : lettres ouvertes et SSS en son grenier

**MAURITIUS POSTAL HISTORY = MAURITIUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY**

NEWS ITEMS is a publication of the Mauritius Philatelic Society

Edited by Mico W. Antoine

P.O. Box 89, Quatre Bornes, MAURITIUS

© Mauritius Philatelic Society 2009