



# Gozo Philatelic Society

NEWSLETTER No. 1 - 2000

## Why the Gozo Philatelic Society

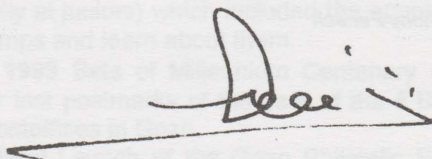
The Gozo Philatelic Society, formed only 5 months ago is working hard to promote the hobby on the island of Gozo. This first issue of our newsletter is proof of the dedication of the members of the Society as well as of their initiative and enthusiasm.

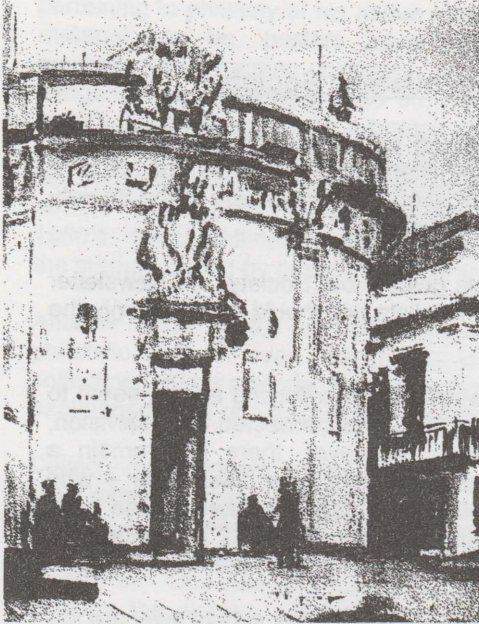
In line with the general principles guiding our Society, the Newsletter should prove of interest to all philatelists but should attract mainly the younger members.

Today "traditional" hobbies, of which stamp collecting is one, seem to have lost ground to the more "modern" ones connected with television, video games and the computer. However, there still remain a considerable number of persons – and not only older ones – who interest themselves in stamp collecting. Indeed, a few of these have managed to reconcile the modern and the traditional by making full use of the computer and the Internet to further their interest in stamps.

Even at a basic level, some children at secondary school level are still fascinated by the little pieces of colourful paper which are affixed to the post. Stamps still are a source of fascination to young and old alike. It is this fascination which should be the spur for a more deep appreciation of the hobby. Stamp collecting is not only a harmless pastime – it can be the source of education for young and old alike. Stamps can be seen as a window to the world around us. They provide useful information not only on the countries issuing them but also on various other topics. Indeed, stamp collecting can supplement the education which the young receive through the school and through books.

It is with this aim in mind that the Gozo Philatelic Society has been founded. And in particular, this Newsletter may serve the important function of keeping collectors informed about matters of interest connected with this hobby and more importantly, in contact with each other.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. De...', with a long horizontal line underneath it.



***THE  
BANCA GIURATALE,  
VICTORIA, GOZO***

Gozo's first Branch Post Office was to be found at the Banca Giuratale at It-Tokk, now Independence Square, in Victoria Gozo. Before, this was a Sub-Post Office but it became a Branch Post Office on 1st May 1900. This year it will celebrate the 100th anniversary. The Gozo Philatelic Society will be celebrating this event.

*Source: Anthony Fenech*

*Watercolour: Bryan Day*



## G P S DIARY (1) beginnings

**3<sup>rd</sup> September 1999** Following efforts by promoters Frank Masini and George Vella, among others, eleven stamp collectors met for a Foundation Meeting at *Dar il-Lunzjata* (Victoria outskirts) which has become our normal meetingplace. The Media have generally been cooperative for this and later occasions. A special cover was postmarked on the 1<sup>st</sup> to commemorate this philatelic development. During this and a further meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup>, these and other members discussed the setting up of the Gozo Philatelic Society and its objectives.

**9<sup>th</sup> October 1999** At this third General Meeting, the final draft of the statute was approved and the first Committee elected.

**15<sup>th</sup> October 1999** A copy of our Statute was presented to the Gozo Public Library and Archives during the opening of a Preti Tercentenary Exhibition.

**23<sup>rd</sup> October 1999** At this first Committee meeting, posts began being allocated by consensus till the present formation was reached:

Notary Michael Refalo	President
Frank Masini	Vice President
Antoine Vassallo	Secretary
Anthony Grech	Assistant Secretary
John Muscat	Treasurer
Ronnie Grech	Assistant Treasurer
Anton Said	Auditor
George Vella	Public Relations Officer
Saviour Grech	Newsletter Editor
Canon George Farrugia	Chaplain

Five other official committee meetings were also held, during which the Society began being given a sound basis.

**28<sup>th</sup> December 1999** With the kind permission of the Archpriest, the Cathedral Parish Public Library was the setting for our first public activity (directed especially at juniors) which included the opportunity for visitors to acquire stamps and learn about them.

**30<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> December 1999** Sets of Millennium Centenary Cards were prepared with their last postmarks of the year at the 5 Branch Offices and the 3 Sub Postoffices in Gozo.

**12<sup>th</sup> February 2000** Official Launch of the Gozo Philatelic Society and first issue of the GPS Newsletter.

*Antoine Vassallo (Secretary)*

## *ADVERTS*

The Editor is pleased to inform members and the general public that a page in this newsletter shall be reserved to adverts pertaining philately. Any advert in against a payment of from Lm 1.00 to Lm 2.00. Anyone who wishes to use this page may please contact the Editor. Other prices for quarter, half or full page adverts pertaining to other subjects will be given on demand.

### ADVERT 1

The Gozo Philatelic Society has for sale a limited number of a set of 8 cards [out of 100], bearing the last postmarks of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium taken in Gozo at all Branch Post Offices and Sub Post Offices. The price is at Lm 2.50 for members and Lm 4.00 for non-members per set.

### ADVERT 2

The Gozo Philatelic Society has also for sale a limited number of a set of 2 cards in colour [out of 250]. These bear the special rubber hand postmark, dated 28<sup>th</sup> October 1998 taken in Victoria Gozo, to commemorate the 200 years since the French surrendered in Gozo after 141 days of occupation. The price is at Lm 1.00 for members and Lm 2.00 for non-members.



# THE HOBBY OF PHILATELY

GEORGE VELLA

## **INTRODUCTION**

Defining the word hobby one can say that it is an activity, interest, subject or occupation pursued at one's leisure for enjoyment, while this is not one's main business. In our case it is the hobby of philately. This is not man's oldest hobby. The pursuit of collecting archaeological artefacts can be considered as one of the oldest hobbies. Painting was also an old pastime. Yet members of the high society could only reach these two hobbies. With the advent of the postage stamp around the mid-nineteen century a new hobby was presented to every class of society. Common people foresaw the beauty of these 'little pictures' that reached their homes from distant places and different countries at no cost, and started collecting them. Thus how stamp collecting started.

Stamps may be defined as gummed labels placed on letters or parcels to indicate payments for delivery. These postage stamps are usually issued by a sovereign nation, by a national post office, or by a single postal monopoly. The collecting of postage stamps and related material, such as first-day of issue postmarked postage stamps, is known as **philately**. This is a coined Greek word meaning, literally, "the love of what is free of further tax". This hobby is international and one of the most popular in the world. Though one might consider it as an expensive hobby, this is not true ...for one can collect what others discard, which in future might turn valuable!

Philately is a hobby that appeals to the younger generation and should be encouraged. All the other hobbies do bestow an element of culture, but philately is the 'king' of them all for it breaks down international barriers and brings the human race closer. The advent of electronics, computers, e-mail and internet have made the world smaller and people from distant places came closer to each other in a very fast way. Yet there is nothing more worth treasuring than a hand written letter with a postage stamp affixed to it and the postmark from where it was posted!

## **HISTORY**

Rowland Hill, an English headmaster and a civil servant, was the one who suggested the use of the adhesive postage stamp. This was one of the postal reforms in Great Britain in 1837. Hill's conception cropped up from the use of similar labels that had been used almost a century earlier

in many parts of Europe to collect tax on newspapers. At that time the postage stamp was still not in conception. For example in Malta during that period, when stamps were still not 'invented', His Excellency the Governor issued a minute through his Chief Secretary to Government, H.Greig, dated 24<sup>th</sup> December 1839, to declare the new postage rates that should come into effect as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1840. These were quite high for that time: on letters not exceeding half ounce one penny, then up to one ounce two pence, up to two ounces four pence, up to three ounces six pence, up to four ounces eight pence and so on in proportion.

Hill's efforts were not in vain, for on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1840 Great Britain issued the first adhesive postage stamp. This was the famous Penny Black. This first stamp features a portrait of Queen Victoria, and here it is worth to note that since then all British stamps portray the reigning monarch and the name of the country is never inscribed on stamps. On May 8<sup>th</sup> of the same year a two-pence blue, also with the portrait of Queen Victoria, was released for sale. Here it is worth to note that the first Maltese stamp was issued on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1860. This was the half-penny yellow and also portrayed Queen Victoria. Since then and up to February 4<sup>th</sup> 1899 all Maltese stamps portrayed the reigning Queen. Then the Malta Post Office issued a definitive set featuring the Gozo Boat, a Maltese Galley, Figure of Malta and St. Paul's Shipwreck.

As postage stamps proved successful in Great Britain, by 1860 many nations had adopted the use of these stamps as revenue for mailing. At first many nations imitated the stamps of Great Britain portraying heads of state, but by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century stamps started to commemorate important events or featured pictorial designs.

With the adoption of the new system of the postage stamps by many nations, various governments felt the need to improve and simplify their relations with other countries as regards mailing services. For that reason the 1863 Paris conference was convened by fifteen nations. This established the International Postal Commission and held its first meeting on May 11<sup>th</sup> 1863.

After the success of this conference, in 1874 various nations met again to sign the Treaty of Berne, through which the General Postal Union was born. This was also a successful Treaty, and because of the rapid growth of the Union, in 1878 it was decided to change the name to Universal Postal Union, [UPU]. Malta was the first British colony to join the Union and had been member since July 1<sup>st</sup> 1875. On July 1<sup>st</sup> 1948 the UPU became a specialised agency of the United Nations.



It is worth mentioning that Brazil was one of the first nations to adopt the new British system of postage stamps when at that time it was still an empire. Its first stamps of 30, 60, and 90 reis black on white stamps were released in 1843. The U.S.A. was also quick to follow suit, and in 1847 the first two stamps were issued. These featured Benjamin Franklin on the five cents brown stamps and George Washington on the ten cents black stamps. Here one is to note that at that time the Union was still not in existence and the various States were composed of emigrants mostly coming from Europe. The need of a reliable postal system was felt. This has helped much in adopting and in circulating the 'gummed labels', those what we now call postage stamps. Also worth noting is that portraits of Presidents and other persons who have made significant contributions to American life feature on U.S. stamps, but however portraits of living people are forbidden.

The most famous stamp is the 1856 British Guiana one cent black on magenta coloured paper. This is so because no other copy has ever been found. A young schoolboy, Vernon Vaughan, discovered this stamp in 1872 while looking through some old family letters. He sold it for six shillings to a local collector who later sold his entire collection to a dealer for 110 pounds sterling. This dealer sold this sole stamp to Count Ferrary for 125 pound sterling. Auctioned in Paris in 1922, the American Arthur Hind acquired this stamp for a small fortune of 7,325 pound sterling. After Hind's death the stamp was sold to an unknown American collector for 10,000 pounds sterling. In 1980 this stamp sold for \$ 935,000.

Coming to stamp collecting one has to mention and know about the omnibus issues, also referred to as commemorative issues. These are sets of stamps, generally with the same design, released by a number of different nations to mark the same event or occasion. Britain and the Commonwealth were the first to issue these stamps. In fact the first series was that to mark the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935. Malta was a British colony and so was one of the first to issue this set of four stamps on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1935 to mark the occasion.

### **STAMP COLLECTING**

In philately the first question to be asked is what to collect. The new enthusiastic, being young or old, is bound to ask this. Since their conception, the stamps issued amount to millions as regards both to form, size and quantity. So a few suggestions can be made here, and an advice to a new collector is that he must first decide what to collect. For example the individual may start collecting stamps and first day covers of his native country. Here the collector will find these easy to get or buy, and local philatelic clubs and dealers are always ready to help. Anyone may specialise in obtaining national postmarks or any other material



pertaining to philately of his native country or others. For example such material can be, posters advertising stamp issues, cuttings from newspapers regarding philately, old stamp catalogues, postmen's badges, hats, uniforms and so on. One can do hand-painted first day covers or can specialise in a branch of collecting stamps by subject, for example, Olympics, Christmas, art, sports, transport, birds, animals, flowers, music, ships, famous people, buildings, special occasions and so on. This is called topical collecting and has come in fashion in the 1950's. Some philatelists do collect by country, that is trying to acquire the stamps issued by one or more particular country.

Another good advice is that a collector should never discard any philatelic material even though this is not in line with his branch of collecting. Such material should be put in a 'box' and by time may be exchanged, sold or may even turn out to be valuable.

Collecting procedures are simple. First of all try to collect stamps in the most possible good condition. Then you must find a home for your stamps, this is usually the album. There are various types of albums; one has to opt for the ones that take hinges or the others that stamps are slipped in. One has to be very careful when using hinges; they may damage the stamps. In fact mint gummed stamps always lose their value when hinges are affixed to them. The slip-in albums are now more preferred. Other inexpensive accessories to stamp collecting are hinges [if preferred], a pair of tweezers or tongs to handle stamps, a magnifying glass and a perforation gauge to measure the number of perforation at the side of a stamp. A stamp catalogue is always a great help to any collector. Some collectors also do keep an inventory.

Nowadays a collector has the benefit to belong to a national or international philatelic organisation and stamp dealers are to be found all over the world.

Philatelists continue to increase every year and amount to millions. Apart from the aesthetic appeal of stamps, they help to record history in just a picture. The postage stamp also serves as an instructor to increase the spread of world culture and to bring human civilisation closer to a better understanding and mutual living.

*References:*

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The JB Catalogue of Malta Stamps and Postal History

Published by Sliema Stamp Shop Publishers

91 Manwel Dimech Str - Sliema - Malta

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