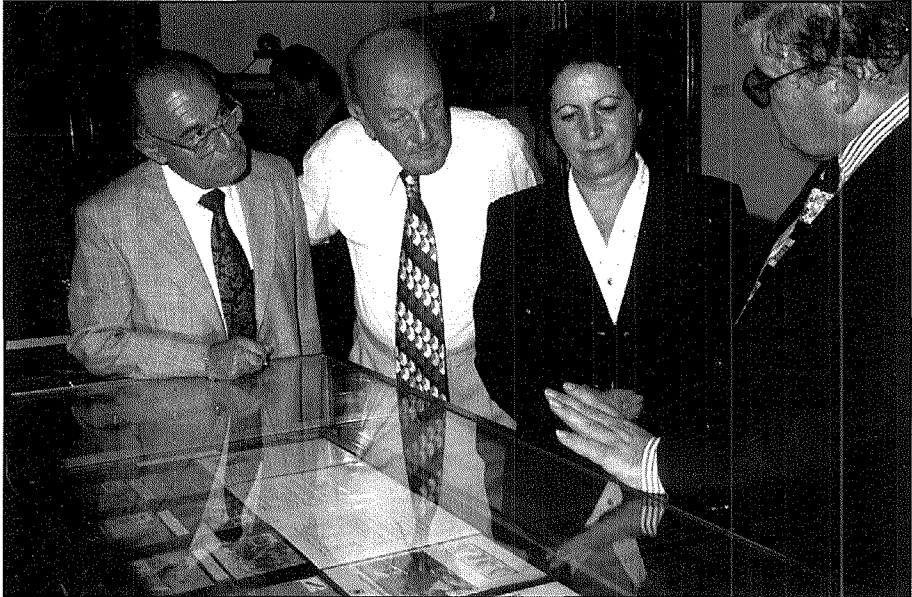


“A Rare Feast for Philatelists”

“MALTEX 2000”

by Anthony Fenech



The Hon. Minister for Gozo, Mrs. Giovanna Debono MP, being shown round the various exhibits by Mr. A. Fenech in the presence of Dr. J. Mercieca and Mr. J. Cardona during the exhibition in the Gozo Exhibition Hall, Victoria Gozo on Sunday 22nd October 2000

October 17 and 18, as well as October 21 and 22, 2000, were red-letter days in the annals of the Malta Philatelic Society's glorious achievements. For the first time ever, a Philatelic Exhibition, "MALTEX 2000" was organised at Le Meridien Phoenicia, in Malta (17-18th October) and at the Ministry for Gozo Exhibition Halls, Victoria, Gozo (21-22nd October). The endeavours of the Organising Committee were supported by the active participation of Maltapost plc, Maltacom plc and an encouraging number of local and foreign dealers. Heartfelt thanks to the patrons, dealers, exhibitors and visitors who contributed towards the success of our first "MALTEX" Philatelic Exhibition. I am sure that such a manifestation would provide a major stimulus to the long tradition of stamp collecting in the Maltese Islands.

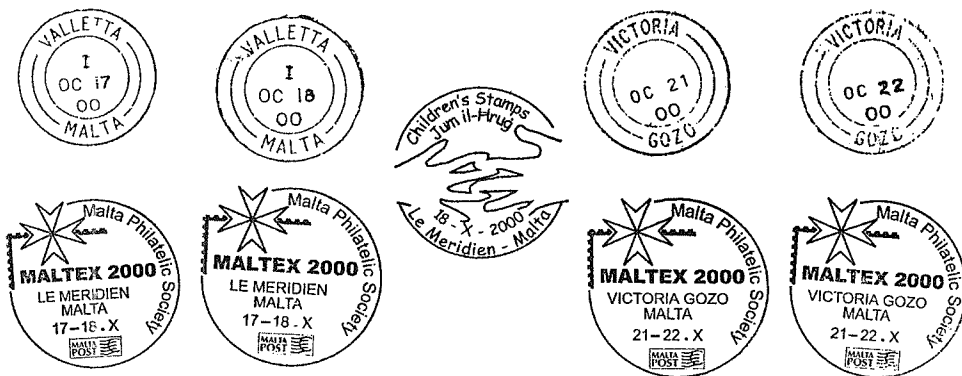
An Organising Committee was set up months before the Exhibition was due. The

Members - Dr. Alfred Bonnici, Joseph Buttigieg, Anthony Fenech and John Gauci have put in many hours of detailed work to ensure the success of this exhibition. As is so often the case, it is the finer detail, often perhaps unnoticed by the visitor, that can make or break an event. The Committee has been supported by many others, very often working behind the scenes who have striven to ensure that everything runs smoothly throughout the exhibition. May I recall the meetings on the very warm July and August evenings held by the refreshing pool in a Ta' Xbiex Villa or on the stifling humid September evenings held in the air-conditioned Board Room of an esteemed Stamp Shop in Sliema. To my fellow Members on The Organising Committee, as well as to all those who have volunteered their services, may I extend a very big, well deserved and sincere "Thank You".

It is worth noting that Maltapost plc supported our request for Temporary Branch Post Offices to be opened at Le Meridien Phoenicia on the 17 and 18 October, as well as at St. Francis Exhibition Hall, Victoria, Gozo on the 21 and 22 October. All the postal transactions normally effected at a normal Branch Post Office were rendered at both T.P.O.'s, where a special postmark was used on all the mail posted in the letter boxes provided. The postal services included:

- Sale of Stamps and Postal Stationery;
- Posting of letters and letter packets;
- Registration of Postal articles;
- Parcel Post Service;
- Issue and encashment of Money and Postal Orders;
- Encashment of Postal Cheques;
- Payment of Telephone Bills;
- Sale of Telecards;
- E.M.S. Datapost.

The handstamp used at Le Meridien T.P.O. bore the logo of the Philatelic Society of Malta, the title of The Exhibition "MALTEX 2000", Maltapost plc logo, the dates 17-18.



Hand stamps used during 'Maltex 2000'



**Part of Mr. Carmelo Bonavia's exhibit featuring Mattia Preti (1613-1699)
– Reproduction of his Paintings on Malta and S.M.O.M. Stamps and Telecards**

X. and the Legend “Le Meridien, Malta”. The handstamp used at the Temporary Branch Post Office in Gozo was very similar to that used at “Le Meridien”, but with the locality “Victoria Gozo, Malta” replacing “Le Meridien, Malta”, and the dates shifted to 21-22. X.

As it happened that on the 18th October there was the Stamp Issue - “Children’s Designs”, Maltapost plc provided a First Day of Issue cancellor inscribed “Children’s Stamps/Jum il-Hruġ/18-X-2000/Le Meridien - Malta”. In fact two different handstamps could be used at the T.P.O. in Le Meridien on that day. Many visitors to the Exhibition cancelled their First Day of Issue Covers with this particular handstamp.

On each of the four days the Exhibition was open to visitors, the special handstamp had a metal datestamp being struck in conjunction with it, namely, “Valletta I/Mal:a” on the 17th and 18th at “Le Meridien” T.P.O., and “Victoria/Gozo” at The Ministry for Gozo Exhibition Hall T.P.O. An attraction to visitors to the Exhibition on the 22nd October was the use of the metal datestamp “Victoria/Gozo” used with a Sunday mark. Sunday postmarks hardly ever occur, as all the Branch Post Offices are closed on a Sunday.

The Exhibition was kept open from 10.00am to 7.00pm on Tuesday (17th), Wednesday (18th), Saturday (21st) and from 10.00am to 1.00pm on Sunday (22nd). Entrance on each day was free. Besides, free valuation of stamp collections was offered by a foreign dealer to visitors to his stand. John A. Mizzi, the Sunday Times Philatelic correspondent has penned “Maltex 2000” as “A Rare Feast for Philatelists” - Vide Sunday Times No 1148 - dated October 15, 2000.

The main contributors to this “rare feast” were the exhibitors, namely:

- Carmel G. Bonavia – “Reproduction of Paintings by Mattia Preti (1613-1699) on Malta and S.M.O.M. Stamps and Telecards”
- Dr. Alfred Bonnici – Malta Air Mails
- Anthony Camilleri – Malta Zeppelin Flights
- John Cardona – World Wild Fund stamps, Covers and Maximum Cards
- Alfred Cauchi – Pope John Paul II visit to Malta (1990)
- Anthony Fenech – Crash and Wreck Covers (Malta connection)
- Dr. John Mercieca – Art on French Stamps
- Hadrian Wood – Old Malta Picture Postcards
- Gozo Philatelic Society – Display of interesting Philatelic items (in Gozo only)

A Certificate of participation was awarded to all the Members exhibiting in the “Maltex 2000” Show. The aim of the exhibition was “the involvement of people in the fine hobby of philately which is still relevant to life in the third millennium.” (Recommended by Knud Mohr – President FIP - Federation Internationale de Philatelie - The Stamp Show 2000.)

The Philatelic Society of Malta is most grateful to Maltapost plc, Maltacom plc, The Sliema Stamp Shop, Fryent Stamps - Malta, Pizzi Club, Filatelia Inter Hobby, John Curtin, Geoff Milsom, Phil Dodds and Chris Bonnet for patronising the Exhibition. Hats off to George Vella, the P.R.O. of The Gozo Philatelic Society who designed and printed the Participation Certificates to the Exhibitors, without charging our Society a single cent. We are very thankful to the Director of Culture in Gozo, Mr John Cremona, who provided us with the Ministry for Gozo Exhibition Hall where we could hold “Maltex 2000” Philatelic Exhibition in Victoria, Gozo. The Director of Culture in Gozo took every possible measure for safeguarding the exhibits during the days of the Exhibition.

It was an honour for The Philatelic Society of Malta to have the Minister for Communications, the Hon. Censu Galea, opening “Maltex 2000” at Le Meridien on Tuesday. It was also a pleasure having The Minister for Gozo, the Hon. Giovanna Debono and the Speaker, the Hon. Anton Tabone, as the main visitors to “Maltex 2000” at the Ministry for Gozo Exhibition Hall in Victoria on Saturday.

Besides the commitment of the Organizing Committee, “Maltex 2000” owes its success to the support of the President of The Malta Philatelic Society, Dr John Mercieca, who despite his venerable age, left no stone unturned to see that the Show, the first of its kind, becomes a reality. The Society is privileged to have him at its helm. He was present at Le Meridien on Monday evening when we were mounting the exhibits and seeing to the final touches. He stayed on until we were ready. I was so much impressed by his last few words before we left the Green Lounge, “I can go home with my mind at ease, now, that everything is in order, ready for to-morrow’s opening!”

Dr Mercieca spent long hours at the Exhibition welcoming visitors; he was on top of the world hearing favourable remarks from those who had gone round the exhibits and visited the dealers’ tables. His last words to them were: “Next year’s Show would be better still!” We will not let him down; we promise better planning and more dedication on our part in “MALTEX...” to come!