

THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREEK STAMP

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On 1st October 2011 Greece celebrated the 150th anniversary since the issue of the first Greek stamp on 1st October 1861.

The Hellenic Philatelic Society (HPS) organised during the weekend of 30 September - 2 October, in collaboration with the auction houses Collectio of Athens and A. Karamitsos of Thessaloniki, a series of festivities which attracted several friends of the Hellenic philately from abroad. At the same time, the Hellenic Post organised between 1-9 October an exhibition of philatelic material kept in the Postal and Philatelic Museum.



One of the four halls of the exhibition

In addition to the above, *Philotelia*, the official organ of the HPS, dedicated two of its numbers (nos. 668 May-June and 669 July-August) to studies on the large Hermes heads, the first Greek issue. The two numbers published in total ten original research articles by leading experts of this very interesting field. Copies were sent electronically to more than 150 recipients all over the world attracting enthusiastic critics.

One would believe that the occupation with and the study of the first Greek issue, the large Hermes heads, for so many years and by so many researchers - Greeks as well as foreigners- would have saturated the thirst for study of all those who occupy their time with it; that the publication of thousands of pages of important studies and articles throughout so



many years would have established the basic parameters of approach, and the collector and student would be able to find the immediate solution to any issues that would arise from the study of the material within the necessary bibliographical tools. Nothing could be further from the truth!

After so many years of research and study, Greece must be the only country in the worldwide philatelic community whose stamps cause such constructive discord amongst scholars over their classification. Therein lies the blessing and the beauty of the accompanying scientific research, which continues to imaginatively produce wondrous results.

In recent years there has been a great bloom in the study of the large Hermes heads. Matters are being considered from the very start; there are loud calls for tearing away from the conventions which had been prescribed for commercial purposes; schools of thought are being formed with few or many devotees; and, thus far, three Symposia with specific themes have set new concerns.

As every era possesses its own interpretative tools and has the right to interpret the past and the material with new criteria, the Hellenic Philatelic Society organised the fourth Symposium on the large Hermes heads, under the title "New approaches to the study of the large Hermes heads stamps".

The Symposium commenced Friday morning 30 September at the HPS premises. Theodore Papaeliou, President of HPS, welcomed the seventy or so participants. I had the honour to act as the moderator in the Symposium, talk in short on the program of the three-day festivities and present the three brand new books on large Hermes heads, i.e. Constantin Mattheos' *Introduction to the large Hermes heads of Greece 1861-1886*, published by the Royal Philatelic Society London, John Coundouros' *Large hermes heads, Characteristic marks of all positions of the plate*, published by A. Karamitsos and Stephan Calligas', *Large Hermes head, Early Athens period 1861-63*, published by the author.

First speaker was Athanasse Spanos (Athens) with a paper on a simplified way of classification. He also exhibited his thirty-years work on the reconstruction of the last row of the sheet of 10 lepta, 1871-76 issue on meshed paper without control numbers, impressing the audience. Second speaker was Michael Tseriotis AIEP (Limassol) whose paper was published in the

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first commemorative number of *Philotelia*. With his paper he discussed additions and reviews of the first issue's classification, causing a vivid discussion.



M. Tseriotis

Third speaker was Stephan Calligas (Athens) on the early Athens period 1862-63 and the four printing methods applied. His views were followed with great interest by the participants. At noon the organisers offered a lunch to the speakers and approximately forty participants.

The afternoon session took place in Collectio auction house rooms.

First speaker was John Peristanoglou (Athens) on the postal cancellations accompanying the first issue.



Second speaker was Louis Fan-chini of French Philatelic Academy (Paris) whose paper on the dies and proofs of the large Hermes head was published in the second commemorative number of *Philotelia*.

Third and final speaker in the evening session was Mrs. Michèle Chauvet of French Philatelic Academy, RDP (Paris) on the Greek-French postal treaty of 1838.

In both sessions during the intervals of each paper there was a ten-minute break where coffee and cookies were offered.

On Saturday morning, 1st October, the participants visited the Zappeion Hall, where the Hellenic Post exhibition opened its doors and admired the treasures of dies, matrices, essays, proofs, maquettes, drawings, not issued stamps etc, which are kept in the Postal Museum, most of which was displayed to the public for the first time.

In the afternoon, A. Karamitsos, in the Athens Hilton hotel rooms, held a successful auction dedicated to the large Hermes head stamps

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attended by eighty local and foreign collectors, followed by the official presentation of the new John Coundouros' book.



Karamitsos presenting J. Coundouros' book

The Symposium continued with the presentation of Stavros Andreadis' exhibit of the large Hermes head stamps and postal history from Thessaloniki, two times candidate for the Grand Prix at FIP exhibitions, where it was exhibited as the "Kassandra collection".

The last speaker was Wolfgang Bauer FRPSL (Berlin), President of the Berliner Philatelisten Klub 1888, presenting the Greek-German postal relations up to 1875.

In the evening, A. Karamitsos offered to speakers and guests a dinner at Benaki Museum roof restaurant, attended by fifty participants.



*Medal Ceremony Panel – From left:
T. Papaeliou, HPS President Stephania Gaulioti,
A. Virvilis HPS Past President.*

On Sunday morning, in the Athens Hilton, the official Medal award ceremony for the years 2005-2010 of the HPS took place. Since 1984, each year, the Society honours those who have offered significant services to Hellenic philately with the Society's highest distinction, the HPS Medal, a prestigious medal of silver. However, the actual award ceremony is taking place every

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five years, usually in parallel to an exhibition or a Symposium.



HPS Medal

During the first part of this year's Medal award ceremony, the European Academy of Philately (AEP) took the opportunity to hand officially the AEP Philatelic Press Award for 2010 to *Philotelia* journal, which was first announced last year during the AEP General Meeting held in Lisbon.



AEP Medal

Henk Slabbink, AEP President, came to Athens for this reason and handed himself the medal to Costas Chazapis, *Philotelia* Editor.



H. Slabbink, President of AEP, handing over the medal to C. Chazapis, editor of Philotelia

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In the second part, the public commendation for each awardee was solemnly read by Stefania Goulioti, famous young actress of the National Theatre of Greece and the Medal was handed over by Theodore Papaeliou. The recipients this time were Alexander Calligas (2005), Louis Basel, USA (2006), Petros Tiberius (Germany) (2007), Andreas Zeis (2008), John Daes (2009) and George Dolianitis (2010). In between the awards, mezzo soprano Eleni Voudouraki and tenor Demetri Paktsoglou, both of the National Opera of Greece, performed various arias from well known operas, spirituals and songs of Greek composers as well as the "Hymn to the Stamp", written and composed by Pandelis Leoussis, General Secretary of the Hellenic Philatelic Federation.

The ceremony was followed by a reception where the attendants congratulated the medal recipients the artists for their performance and the organisers.



From left: J.F. Brun RDP, G. Sotiropoulos HPS, H. Slabbink and M. Chauvert RDP-

The three days festivities were closed with a great auction of stamps and postal history of Hellenic interest by A. Karamitsos auction house. The Symposium and the Medal ceremony were attended by collectors from Athens area, several cities of Greece as well as from Cyprus, France, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and USA.

The very complimentary remarks by the attendants of the festivities for the high standards of the papers presented, the friendship shown and hospitality extended, was a rightful justification for the efforts paid by the organisers for a successful and commendable celebration marking the 150th anniversary of the Greek stamp and the ongoing research of the first Greek issue.

Readers may ask for free electronic copies of the commemorative numbers of *Philotelia* from anvirvilis@yahoo.gr