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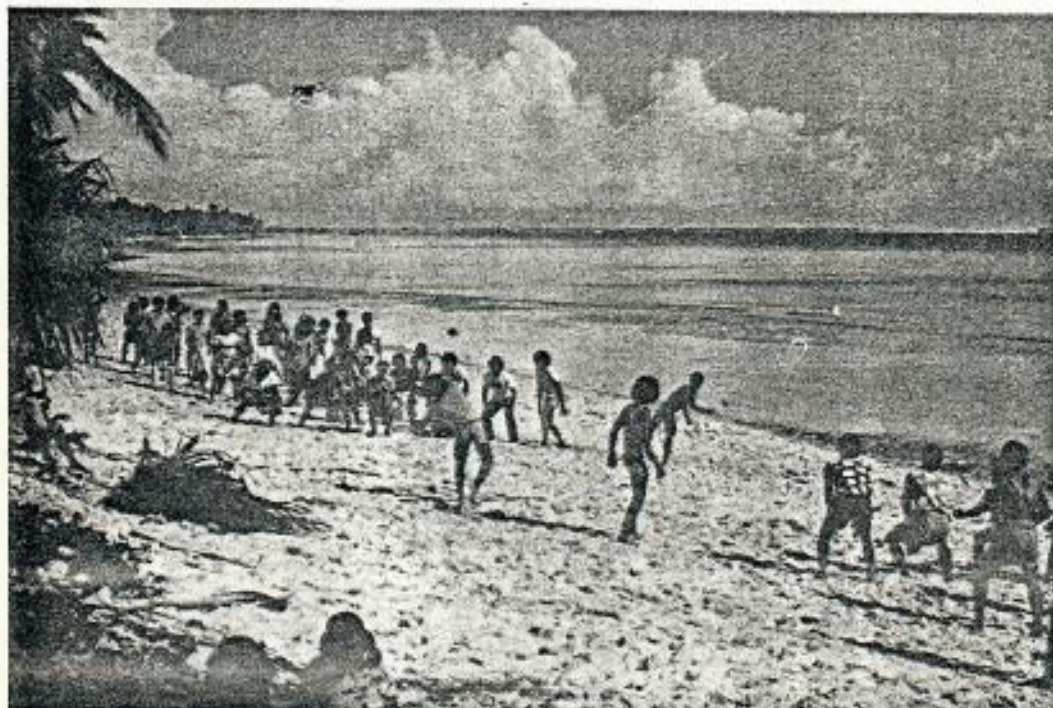
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The stamps of Tuvalu

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Tuvaluans playing Te Ano on a beach; this is the game featured on the 35c definitive stamp.



What sort of a country is Tuvalu, one of the most recently arisen stars in the philatelic galaxy? Tuvalu is a group of nine atolls in the central Pacific stretching more than 560 km from Nanumea north to Niulakita. These nine islands spread over an area of more than a million square miles, yet there is just on 30 square kilometres of land, most of it no more than three metres above sea level.

On January 1, 1976, Tuvalu became a Crown Colony in its own right. Formerly the Ellice Islands, with a Polynesian population, it was legally separated from the Gilbert Islands (with which it formed the Gilbert & Ellice Islands Colony) on 1 October, 1975. The final break came in January 1976 when Tuvalu was empowered to negotiate with London direct and not through Tarawa. The capital, Funafuti, is 1,200 km north of Suva; it was almost entirely destroyed by hurricane in 1972.

There are some 7,500 Tuvaluans, many of whom go to other countries to find work. The country's only industry is a modest copra production: it exports about 500 tonnes a year to Suva. A delegation of members of government and church, led by the Hon. Chief Minister, Toalipi Lauti, was in London early this year negotiating the terms of their independence from Britain.

This is the small, determined country which established as one of its first activities (in Decem-

ber 1975) a philatelic bureau. Stamps are a valuable earner of foreign exchange and if the issuing country maintains a careful policy on the number of issues and pays particular attention to design and subject matter, stamps can provide a continuing source of revenue. With just over two years of stamp production behind it, Tuvalu has an excellent worldwide reputation due to its conservative issuing policy and a very helpful staff at the Bureau in Funafuti managed originally by Anthony Kennett and, since June 1977, by Frank Hoy.

Right from the beginning, the Tuvalu Philatelic Bureau produced a roneoed publication titled *News and Views* (first issue dated March 1976) which not only gives details of current and forthcoming issues, but also information on aspects of Tuvaluan culture and chatty biographies of Bureau staff members. There are at least 20 local staff regularly employed and, when the pressure is on, this rises to 40.

The first stamps issued by Tuvalu appeared on the day it officially separated from the Gilbert Islands; 1 January, 1976. There were two groups of stamps; 15 provisional definitives with 'TUVALU' overprinted on the old 'Gilbert & Ellice Islands' name; and a set of three new Separation commemoratives. A limited number of the definitives was issued and all unsold copies



Tuvalu's first stamps, issued on Separation Day, 1 January, 1976: three new stamps and an overprint of the existing Gilbert & Ellice Islands definitives; values not shown here are on the front cover.

terested in the quantities sold; they were:

1c — 80,429; 2c — 64,613; 3c — 68,773; 4c — 56,163; 5c — 66,024; 6c — 52,994; 8c — 52,651; 10c — 54,753; 15c — 53,017; 20c — 53,920; 25c — 57,551; 35c — 51,882; 50c — 55,447; \$1 — 54,273; \$2 — 57,091.

The separation issues were designed by Iakopo Niuatui and J.E. Cooter and printed litho by Questa Colour in sheets of 50 with gutter pairs CA watermarked. This special issue was withdrawn after three months on 31 March, 1976 with the following quantities being sold:

4c — heads of a Gilbertese and a Tuvaluan (39,662);

10c — a map of the islands (44,992);

35c — Gilbertese and Tuvaluan canoes (51,642).

Each stamp was divided in half by a black strip with the words, 'SEPARATION January 1st 1976', in reverse running the full length of the band.

The British Royal Mint had been instructed to produce a series of nine new coins for Tuvalu and



withdrawn when the new pictorial definitives appeared a few months later.

The designer of the overprinted definitives was G. Drummond and the printers Walsall Security; they were issued in sheets of 50 with gutter pairs and CA watermarked. Philatelists may be in-

terested in the quantities sold; they were: this new coinage became the subject of the next issue, on April 21. Four excellent designs by G. Drummond were handsomely printed by Walsall Security; all multicoloured verticals. The 5c stamp showed an octopus and a 50c coin; the 10c stamp had a Red Eyed Crab and a 10c coin; the



Four stamps were issued on April 21, 1976, to commemorate Tuvalu's new coinage.

15c stamp had a flying fish on both stamp and 20c coin featured; the 35c stamp also had the same design on the \$1 coin it featured — a green turtle. When withdrawn on 20 July 1976, the

following had been sold:

5c — 42,652; 10c — 38,733; 15c — 39,425;
35c — 44,541.



The first set of definitives, replacing the overprinted GEIC stamps, was issued on July 1, 1976.

On June 30, 1976, the provisional definitives were withdrawn and on the first of July, 14 (the 3c stamp was dropped) new pictorial definitives were issued. Designed by J.E. Cooter and printed by Questa, these are current. Ten values all show the islands of Tuvalu with either some animal plant or cultural object: 1c - Niulakita and a Leathery Turtle; 2c - Nukulaelae and a sleeping mat; 4c - Nui and a Talo vegetable; 5c - Nanumanga and a grass dancing skirt; 6c - Nukufetau and a coconut crab; 8c - Funafuti, the capital, and a banana tree; 10c - a general map of the group of islands; 15c - Niutao and a flying fish; 20c - Vaitupu and a Maneapa house; 25c - Nanumea and a palu fish hook.

The 35c value shows men playing the Te Ano game; the 50c stamp, canoe pole fishing; the \$1 stamp, reef fishing by flare; the \$2 stamp, a living house.

Postage rates had increased earlier in the year and it became apparent that a higher denomination than \$2 was required. So, on 1 Sep-

plus two labels. The values, subjects and numbers sold were:

5c - titlepage of the New Testament recently translated into Tuvaluan (39,821);

20c - the Lotolelei church, Nanumea (39,742);

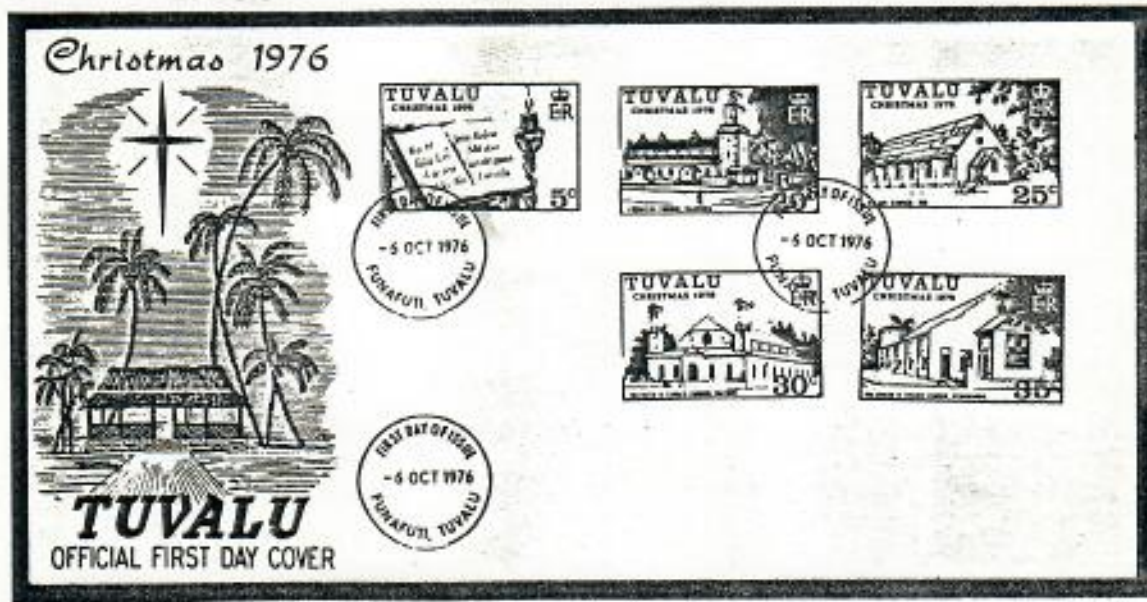
25c - the Kelupi church, Nui (39,950);

30c - the Mataloa O Tuvalu church, Vaitupu (39,800);

35c - the Palataiso O Keliso church, Nanumanga (39,060).

The first issue for 1977 came in February with three stamps to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

They were designed by Julian Vasarhelyi and printed by Format International in sheets of 50 with gutter pairs and no watermark. A miniature sheet containing all three values was also issued. The stamps, and numbers sold, were a record for Tuvalu:



First day cover of Tuvalu's first Christmas issue.

tember, 1976, a \$5 stamp featuring the Tuvalu Colony ship, *MV Nivanga*, was issued. This ship was built in Hong Kong in 1962 for the GEIC government and given as a deed of gift to Tuvalu on 8 December, 1975. It gives the only regular sea service to the islands. The stamp was designed by Cooter and printed by Questa on CA watermarked sheets of 50.

The last issue for 1976 was the Christmas issue of five stamps which appeared on October 6, and colourful stamps they were. G. Drummond was the designer and Harrison & Sons the printers; the stamps came in CA watermarked sheets of ten

15c - the Queen and the Duke on the balcony of Buckingham Palace after the coronation (123,448);

35c - the Duke of Edinburgh being carried ashore by canoe at Vaitupu (114,334);

50c - the Queen leaving the Palace for the coronation (119,851); Miniature sheets (74,405).

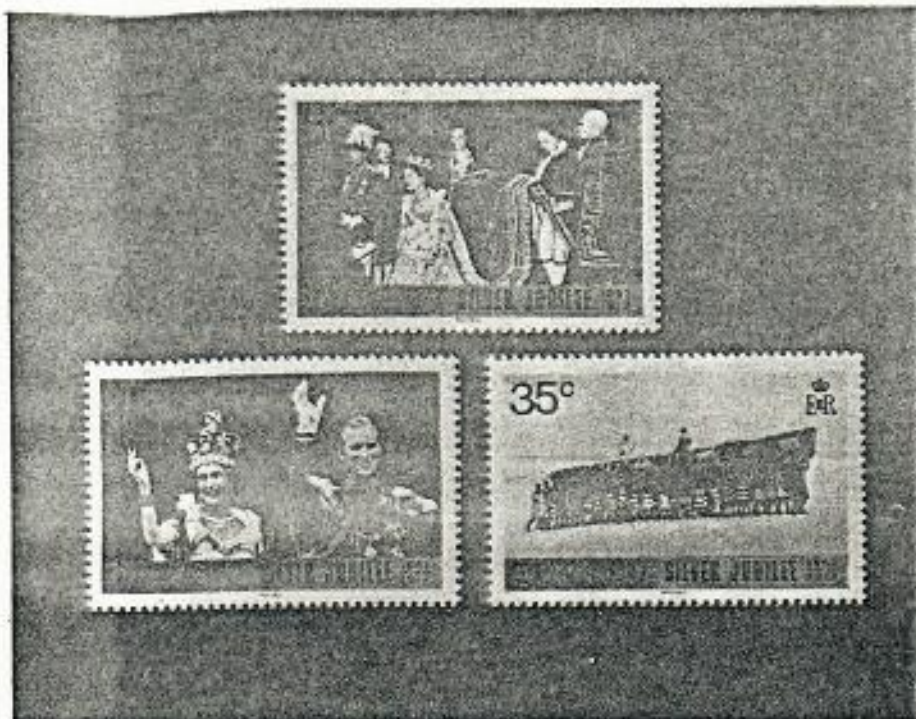
This issue was an unexpected bonanza! As can be seen, the totals far exceeded anything sold before and the Bureau had to recruit an additional 24 part-time workers to help process the orders. The stamps sold out

several weeks before the three-month period normally allowed the special issues.

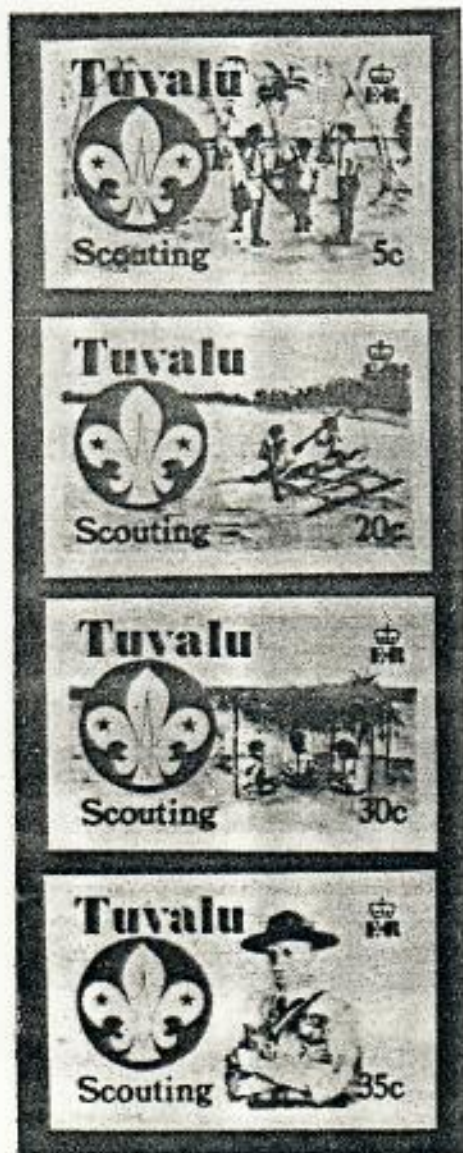
Tuvalu was one of the Pacific countries which honoured the South Pacific Commission by issuing a set of commemoratives on its thirtieth anniversary. The March 1977 issue of *News and Views* carried a long article on the SPC and its work to let philatelists know why Tuvalu was making this particular issue. The set was designed by Ian Oliver and printed by Format International multicoloured in sheets of 25 with no watermark. The subjects and numbers sold were:
 5c - Health (288,266); 20c - Education (28,125); 30c - Fruit Growing (28,262); and 35c - SPC territory (28,106).

This set was issued on May 4, withdrawn on August 3.

Towards June 1977, the Funafuti Post Office began reprinting some denominations of the new



By far the most popular issue to date was the commemoration of Queen Elizabeth's jubilee. The stamps came out on February 9, 1977 and each of the three values sold well over 110,000.



The 50th anniversary of Scouting in the Central Pacific was commemorated.

definitives to cope with demand and collectors noted some variations in shades. The new definitive printing was, on unwatermarked paper where the original had been CA watermarked. The \$5 stamp was also reprinted at this time and it, too, switched to unwatermarked paper.

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Scouting in the Central Pacific, four stamps were issued on 10 August, 1977. As with the SPC set, these were designed by Ian Oliver and printed by Format in sheets of 25 on unwatermarked paper. Values and quantities sold were:

- 5c - investiture of a new recruit (35,146);
- 20c - two scouts in a Tuvaluan canoe (35,341);
- 30c - three scouts in a shelter (35,154);
- 35c - Baden Powell, the founder of Scouting (35,242).

Included in these totals were 2,040 first day covers. The issue was withdrawn on September 9.

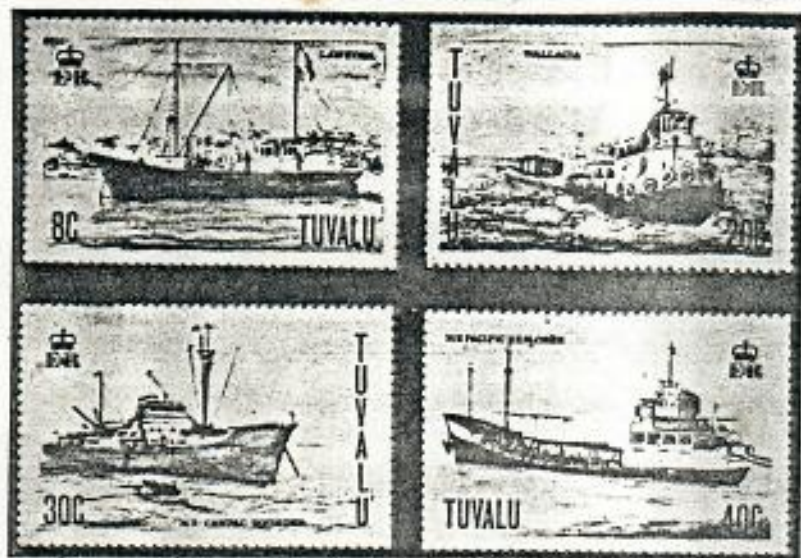
The last issue for 1977 commemorated the Royal Society Expeditions of 1896-97, which we described in our 4th October, 1977 issue, page 48. Quantities sold were: 5c (Hurricane Beach) - 36,852; 20c (*HMS Porpoise*) - 35,341; 30c (Dredging chart) - 36,801; 35c (Charles Darwin) - 69,465.

New postal rates came into effect on 1 January, 1978 and a new set of stamps, a special issue of the wild birds of Tuvalu, came out on 25 January; the values and subjects were:

- 8c - Pacific Pigeon (or *Lupe*);



New postal rates in January 1978 saw a new special issue on wild birds.



The sea is a vital link with the outside world and on April 5, 1978, four stamps commemorated ships which regularly call at Funafuti.



Two new definitives were issued on April 19 this year to meet demands caused by new postal rates.

- 20c — Reef Heron (*Matuku*);
- 30c — Fairy Tern (*Matapula*); and
- 40c — Lesser Frigate Bird (*Katokula*).

This series was designed by G. Drummond and printed by Format in multicoloured sheets of 20, no watermark. The *Katokula* and *Lupe* are con-

sidered delicacies in Tuvalu. There was a remarkably strong demand for this issue and it completely sold out, with sales around 39,000 sets.

April 5, 1978 was the release date of an attractive set of four stamps depicting ships which regularly visit Funafuti with cargoes of mainly food and raw materials. Designed by Ian Oliver and printed by Format in multicoloured sheets of 16 with horizontal and vertical gutters, the values and subjects are:

- 8c — *SMV Lavedua*; 20c — *Tug MV Wallacia*;
- 30c — *MV Cenpac Rounder*; 40c — *MV Pacific Explorer*.

The Philatelic Bureau expects sales to exceed 50,000 sets.

The new postal rates made it necessary to provide two new definitives and these were issued on April 19:

- 30c — Pandanus tree; 40c — the Fatele dance.

J.E. Cooter designed them and Questa printed in sheets of 50 with no watermark.

To mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's coronation a set was issued on June 2, four values showing British cathedrals, the Royal Cypher and inscribed 'Defender of the Faith'. Gordon Drummond is again the designer and Format the printer; the stamps are printed in sheetlets of 12-ten stamps and two labels — and a miniature sheet has also been printed. The cathedrals are:

- 8c — Canterbury; 30c — Salisbury; 40c — Wells;
- \$1 — Hereford.

Advance orders were heavy and, some two months before issue date, sales exceeded 150,000 sets.

The final issues schedules for 1978 will appear in October.



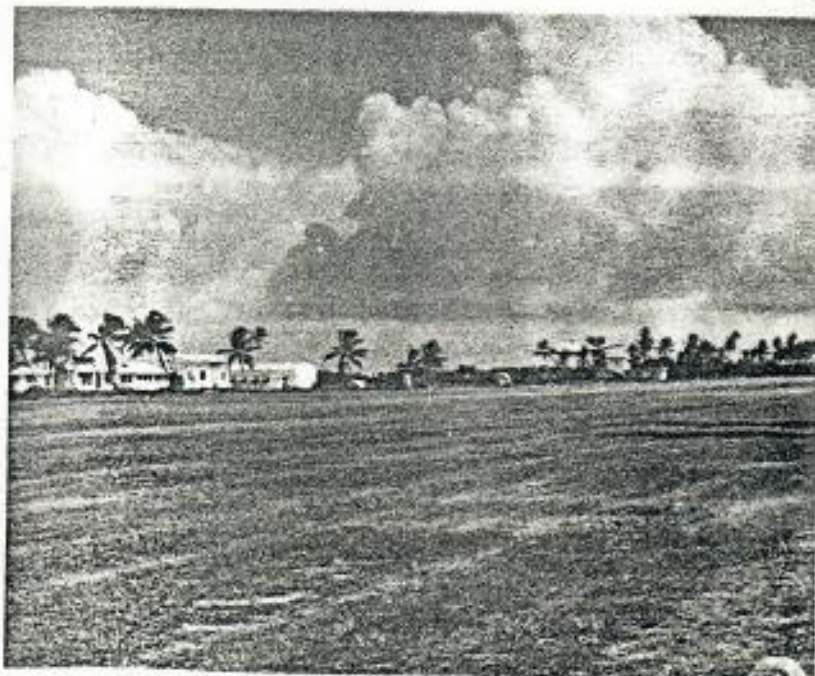
A set of four Tuvalu flowers will appear on October 4, designed by John Cooter and printed by Format in sheets of 16, the 8c, 20c, 30c and 40c stamps depict Puafiti, Tiale, Inato and Susana.

On October 1, to mark the occasion of Tuvalu's independence, seven low value definitives will be overprinted by Questa. The values will be 8c, 10c, 15c, 20c, 30c, 35c and 40c.

Philatelists Ltd., a subsidiary of Urch Harris Ltd of Bristol (UK), run the Bureau for the Tuvalu government; Frank Hoy, their manager, for many years managed the Philatelic Bureau in Southampton for the British Post Office. Urch Harris are the largest dealers in modern stamps in the world and have managed bureaux in the West Indies for years; this is their first Pacific venture. Their John King, with more than 30 years' experience, commutes between Bristol, the Caribbean and the Pacific, visiting Tuvalu twice a year to meet with government on subjects, artwork, printing, publicity, promotion and shipping of stamps.

The brief history of Tuvalu's philatelic activities indicates not only the international popularity of stamp collecting, but shows how a carefully planned policy of stamp issues can help a developing economy. Business is increasing for the Bureau with each mail, when more than 500 letters are received and it is not uncommon for 2,000 orders to be despatched at a time. This year, Tuvalu will earn more than \$750,000 in foreign exchange

from postage stamps; when extensions to the existing building are added, ten new staff will be recruited. It is obvious that a well conducted Bureau should be seriously considered by any Pacific territory wanting to increase employment and add to revenue. □



The airport at Funafuti.