

The Italian contribution to space discovery and exploration

In an article first published in the July-September 2010 edition of our Italian sister journal the on-line *AdAstra*, its editor **Umberto Cavallaro** reviews Italy's earliest contribution to Space Exploration.

The Centenary of the Death of **Giovanni Schiaparelli** in July has offered the opportunity for issuing a stamp honouring the great Italian astronomer who, after a short period in Russia and Germany worked for over forty years at Brera Observatory, in Milan (Italy). His studies on classical astronomy and his novel theories on shooting stars and the origin of meteor showers and on free movements of celestial bodies, driven only by their gravity interaction are well known.



The best known Schiaparelli's contributions are his telescopic observations of Mars. During the planet's "Great Opposition" of 1877, he observed a dense network of linear structures on the surface of Mars which he called "canali" in Italian, meaning "channels" but the term was mistranslated into English as "canals". While the latter term indicates an artificial construction, the former indicates that it can also be a natural configuration of the land. From this incorrect translation, various assumptions about life on Mars derived, giving rise to waves of speculation about the possibility of intelligent life on Mars, using canals – in the absence of rain – as conduits by which the water can spread on the dry surface of the planet.

The stamp represents the portrait of Schiaparelli and one of his Mars surface maps. The official "First Day of Issue" postmark, used by Poste Italiane in Savigliano (where Schiaparelli was born) reproduces the drawing of the stamp.



cartography and astronomy.

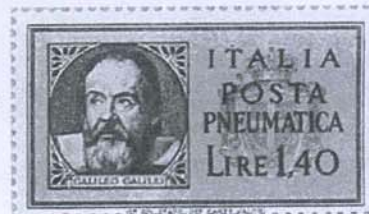


Other stamps have recently commemorated astronomers on Italian stamps. In 2002 **Matteo Ricci** was commemorated; during the 16th century he introduced into Chinese culture Euclidean geometry, western

In the last century several stamps were produced commemorating **Galileo Galilei**. The first of these was issued by the Kingdom of Italy in 1933. It's a stamp for pneumatic mail, and

reproduces the 1636 portrait by Justus Sustermans, when Galileo was 72. Considered in the first half of the Twentieth Century as a marvel of the time, pneumatic tube transport (PTT) consists of systems in which cylindrical containers are propelled through a network of tubes by compressed air to transmit telegraph messages, small parcels and documents (as opposed to conventional pipelines, which only transport fluids). PTT was largely used in the United States, and in Europe: e.g. in London, Paris, Prague. Indeed at Prague, in the Czech Republic, a network of tubes extending approximately 60 kilometres in length still exists for delivering mail and parcels, although – following the 2002 floods – the Prague system sustained damage, and operation was mothballed indefinitely.

Italy was the only country to issue, between 1913 and 1966, specific stamps for pneumatic mail. PTT were in use in several town: Milan, Rome, Naples. The same Galileo drawing and stamp design was adopted for the 1948 issue, with updated face value, by the Italian Republic.



The three hundredth anniversary of death of Galileo (1564-1642) was celebrated in 1942 by the next-to-last commemorative issue with a set of four stamps, representing respectively: Galileo teaching mathematics at the University of Padua (10c), Galileo



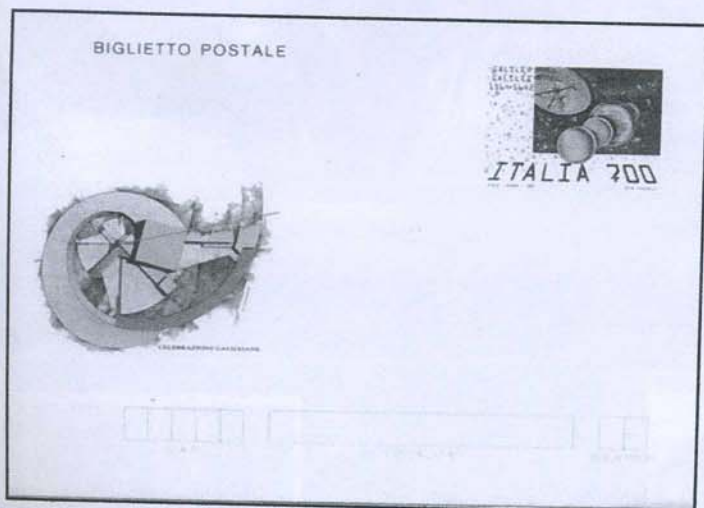
demonstrating the use of the new telescope in Venice in 1609 (25c), Galileo pensive, holding his monocular (50c), Galileo under house arrest in Arcetri, where he spent the remainder of his life (L1,25).

Poste Italiane used again the portrait by Sustermans in the two stamps issued in 1964 to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of Galileo's birth.



The 1983 Europe CEPT stamp reproduces the portrait by the painter and engraver Ottavio Mario Leoni, a contemporary of Galileo. One of his well known telescopes, today in the Galileo Museum in Florence, is also reproduced.

A postal stationery item (*shown below*) was produced by Poste Italiane for the Galileo Year 1992, the cachet representing the stone "Spirale per Galileo" carved by the abstract artist Giò Pomodoro.



One more stamp reproduced the portrait of Galileo in 1995, for the celebration of the 14th World Meeting on "General Relativity and Gravitation Physics" held in Florence. The principle of relativity was first assumed by Galileo. In 1915 Einstein generalized special relativity providing a unified description of gravity as a geometric property of space and time. The stamp represents the picture of Galileo and Einstein and the cupola of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence; in the background of a starry sky, the equation of the general relativity is referenced.

In 1979, the centenary of his birth, one Italian stamp had already commemorated Albert Einstein who lived and studied for a few years in Italy.



editor has articles on Yuri Gagarin in the April issues of *STAMP* and of *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*, a review of Major Milestones in Manned Spaceflight in the June edition of *Themescene* and China in Space / Space Tourism in *Spaceflight* for June.

ASTEROIDS

Some Bits and Pieces

Congratulations

To our Russian member **Igor Rodin** (see page 29) who has become a member of the prestigious RPSL, The Royal Philatelic Society (London).

Website Address

This has been changed by webmaster Derek Clarke since our last issue and is now..

www.astrospacestampsociety.com/
With the related new email address
astrospacestampsociety@gmail.com

Articles Published

Our Chairman **Margaret Morris** has an article on The Hubble Space telescope in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* for May and **your**

Giving *Orbit* a complete Run

One of our newest members has managed to purchase issues 1—86 from a stamp dealer and with his latest new copies on joining now has a complete set. which very few members will have. Interesting that a dealer should have them for sale ! Have you thought about selling yours—or are they too cherished !

Jürgen returns to Belgium

Jurgen P. Esders, whom many members rely on for covers for spaceflight events has returned to his old stomping ground. His new address is Rue Paul Devigne 21-27, Boite 6, 1030 Bruxelles, but his email remains the same : JPEsders@web.de

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