



October – December 2011

No. 46- 4/2011

www.stamps-gozo.org



*Season's
Greetings*


**GOZO
PHILATELIC
SOCIETY**

Newsletter




NEWSPAPER POST

Lombard Quay - Palazzo Episcopo Avenue, Valletta



Dip L-Art Mhwa
Award for
Architectural Heritage



Head Office: 67 Republic Street, Valletta Malta • PO Box 384 Valletta VLT 1000 Malta
Tel: +356 23311117 • Fax: +356 23311131 • e-mail: mail@lombardmalta.com • www.lombardmalta.com • SWIFT Code: LHMAMTMT
Licensed to conduct Investment Services Business by the Malta Financial Services Authority
Registered by the Malta Financial Services Authority & listed on the Malta Stock Exchange

Front Cover: GPS Commemorative Card - Latest Issue



Merry Christmas

Call MANWEL Tel: 21566777; Mob: 99206525



ISLANDTECH

Triq il-Municipju Ruman,
corner with Rabat Road, Victoria, Gozo.

THE BEST ON THE ISLAND FOR



E-mail: mangrech@maltanet.net

WE OFFER A VARIETY OF COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND LAPTOPS



NETWORK & ACCESSORIES



CARTRIDGE & TONER REFILL.

COMPUTER PROBLEMS???

DON'T WORRY, WE WILL FIND A SOLUTION.



Members' Meetings

are held regularly on the **1st Sunday** of the month

4 December , 5 February & 4 March

from 9.00am to 11 .00am

at Victoria Scouts HQ (Triq Santa Dminka).

exchange, purchase, information etc.

Entrance Free!

All Juniors will receive a gift of free stamps

N.B. January Members' Meeting will be cancelled as there will be the Annual General Meeting instead.

for your **ATTENTION !!**

Mr Louis Attard - a GPS member would like to buy First Day Covers dating back before 1964 i.e. *before Independence*. Anyone interested can contact the above mentioned directly on Mobile No 79055012



Merry Christmas

GPS NEWSLETTER
Quarterly Organ
of
THE GOZO PHILATELIC SOCIETY

First issued on 12 February 2000

Editor: Austin Masini

Opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the Committee's official policy.

Correspondence (and material for publication) should be addressed to: Editor, GPS, PO Box 10, VCT 1000, Gozo, Malta.

© All rights reserved. Requests for reproduction of contents should be addressed to the Secretary.

CONTENTS

No. 46 - 4/2011

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| GPS Diary (46) | <i>Antoine Vassallo</i> | 2 |
| Maltese Lizards | <i>Nathaniel Refalo</i> | 3 |
| Immaculate Conception Varieties | <i>Anthony Grech</i> | 7 |
| Posthaste (15) | <i>Antoine Vassallo</i> | 10 |
| Promoting Gozo through Philately | <i>Giovanni N Zammit</i> | 12 |
| Stamp Terms (36) | <i>Emanuel Vella</i> | 14 |
| Philatelic Centennials (4) | <i>Antoine Vassallo</i> | 16 |
| E & O not E (26) | <i>Antoine Vassallo</i> | 18 |
| Malta Overseas (12) | <i>Antoine Vassallo</i> | 20 |

GOZO PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Founded on 3 September 1999

For "the promotion of the hobby"

"the provision of a point of reference" and "co-ordination"

Postal address: PO Box 10, VCT 1000, Gozo, Malta.

email address: editor@stamps-gozo.org

Happy New Year



GPS DIARY (45)

Antoine Vassallo (Secretary)

28 June 2011: The Gozo Philatelic Society is enrolled as a Voluntary Organization (VO/0546) in the "Culture, Arts and National Heritage Advancement" class.

29 July 2011: EcoGozo subcommittee begins editing of material for book.

4 August 2011: Eco-Gozo subcommittee begins finalizing material.

10 August 2011: Anthony Grech prepares Cover for *Ta' Pinu* Maritime stamp.

13 August 2011: We partnered the parish for the Ghajnsielem bells handstamp Cover.

24 August 2011: Philately sessions at Don Bosco *Skola Sajf* concluded.

26 August 2011: Committee meeting discusses Exhibition and Eco-Gozo book.

4 September 2011: Members' Meetings on the first Sunday of the month resume at the Victoria Scouts HQ (Santa Dminka Street).

15 September 2011: Anthony Grech prepares Cover for Mgarr MS.

28 September 2011: Committee meeting discusses Exhibition and finalizes draft of Eco-Gozo book.

2 October 2011: Members' Meeting at the Victoria Scouts HQ.

21- 23 October 2011: Anthony Grech participates at Maltex.

26 October 2011: Committee meeting finalizes preparations for Exhibition and Eco-Gozo book launch.

A GPS cover is again featured in *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Malta eV's Il-Maltija* (page18)

"The Isle of Joy on Stamps"

The launch at the Exhibition opening of this A4 bound full colour 64-pager (including 500 illustrations and sporting a most attractive cover emphasizing Nature & Culture) guarantees a further red-letter date in the GPS's history.

We are also sure that everyone acknowledges the exceptional level of both contents (one cannot go wrong with Gozo!) and presentation (left to Anthony Grech's experienced hands - and ideas!). Yes, our proposal in the "Funding Scheme for Projects by NGOs contributing towards the implementation of eco-Gozo short-term measures (2010-2012)" has really borne excellent fruits - even if we say so!



MALTESE LIZARDS

(Nathaniel Refalo - sixth form student)

The Maltese Islands, besides snakes, are also home to several other reptiles, including five main species of lizards. The lizard families found in the Maltese Islands include the *Chamaeleontidae*, the *Gekkonidae*, the *Lacertiliae* and the *Scinidae*. Maltese philately has featured most of these lizards in a variety of issues, most likely due to their unique colours and forms.

Chamaleo *chamaleon* Mediterranean Chameleon Kamaleonte

Chameleons form one of the imported species of the Maltese Islands. They are not indigenous and were likely introduced from North Africa by Jesuit priests at St Julians, in 1855. According to popular talk, chameleons were introduced into what were later to become the gardens of St. Ignatius College. From St Julians, they seem to have flourished and spread across the Maltese archipelago. The first record of such species dates back to 1890. Chameleons can grow up to thirty centimetres long and are arboreal lizards, preferring to live on trees, where prey and shelter are easily available. However, chameleons have also been sighted in garigue environments. It is not easy to observe chameleons in their natural habitats due to their camouflage. Their colour may vary depending upon several factors, but due to their habitat, it is usually greyish green or brown with several dark specks and brown patches on their sides. Maltese chameleons also tend to have a white stripe on their belly. Such colours can darken or lighten depending upon processes such as



thermoregulation or due to dangerous situations. Being basking heliotherms, chameleons are able to darken their skin colour to absorb more heat from the sun, or lighten their skin



colours to reflect more heat from the sun. Such changes are essential for the thermoregulation of such ectotherms. Despite its apparent sluggishness, the chameleon captures a variety of arthropods, such as spiders, flies, cockroaches,

grasshoppers and butterflies, using its sticky extensive tongue, which it launches at prey. When, threatened, besides changing colour, the chameleon also puffs itself up and widens its mouth so as to intimidate any potential predator. There are several reasons why the chameleon has enjoyed apparent flourishing in the Maltese Islands. Besides being difficult to see, chameleons also seem to have a changing diet. After mating in early spring, the female lays a clutch of as much as forty eggs, in a hole near the base of the trunk of its tree. The eggs laid in this hole are then covered with soil. Since the chameleon does not have many predators here, most of these eggs will hatch in autumn and the offspring easily grow into mature adults.

Hemidactylus turcicus turcicus Turkish Gecko "*Wiżgha tad-djar*"

Being one of the two species of geckos found in Malta, this lizard has also spread widely across the Maltese Islands. Its name shows that it used to be quite common in houses, but nowadays due to



widespread persecution, is much rarer. In fact, along with other geckos, it used to be blamed for spreading leprosy around, since old geckos acquire a black warty skin. It is quite small, growing up to twelve centimetres long. Its skin is quite warty, but still soft, like that of the Wall Gecko. Unlike the Wall Gecko however, the Turkish Gecko has claws on its toes. Like other geckos, its toes are lined with a ventral covering of short hook-like hairs, which allow it to cling to most surfaces, no matter how smooth. Dorsally, it may be grey, reddish or light brown, marbled with white. Its belly is also white. Like the chameleon, it is able to change colour, but this ability is more limited. This animal has a nocturnal lifestyle and generally spends the day under rocks and fallen branches. Like other lizards, it feeds on a variety of insects and spiders. However, it also has a wide variety of predators, including snakes, frogs, weasels, hedgehogs, and even the Large Orb-Web Spider (*Agriope lobata*). If in danger, it is able to detach its tail and grow a new one. This practice is known as autotomy. If disturbed, it runs with its tail raised high off the ground in order to fool any predator, once the tail falls off, into thinking that the gecko has been captured. Some individuals are able to produce sounds. For effective thermoregulation, the Turkish Gecko is mostly found in warm places throughout the Maltese Islands. Although this lizard is quite solitary, it mates in late spring or early summer. Females lay two eggs inside cracks in summer, and after three months, these hatch.

Tarentola mauritanica mauritanica
Wall Gecko, Moorish Gecko “Wizgha
tal-Widien, Wizgha tal-Kampanja”

The Wall Gecko, like other lizards, has been despised and victimised due to several superstitions, or for just being relatively ugly. It has



soft warty skin and can grow larger than the Turkish Gecko, growing up to sixteen centimetres long. It also resembles the other gecko in its coloration, which is dorsally gray or brown, with several dark and light markings. Due to its limited ability to change colour, there sometimes appears to be two main colour forms. Its colour may often darken with age, and as with regards to the Turkish Gecko, this might be one of the reasons why years ago, such geckos were rumoured to cause leprosy. Its toes, unlike those of the Turkish Gecko, only bear claws on its third and fourth toes.

Like the Turkish Gecko, the Wall Gecko is generally nocturnal, but in contrast, it spends the day sunning itself on rocks. It is also quite territorial and will frequent the same places and hunting grounds for long periods of time. In human habitation, it tends to be more common near powerful light sources such as street lamps, around which several of its prey accumulate. It feeds on most arthropods. Being large, this gecko can face off against most of its predators except the larger ones, but it can also detach its own tail. Sometimes, if this detachment is incomplete, another one will grow in such a way that the Wall Gecko will be left in a two-tailed condition. Like other reptiles, this gecko lays its eggs in spring and summer inside rock cracks and crevices. Being cleidoic, or hard shelled, they are quite protected, and hatch after about four months.



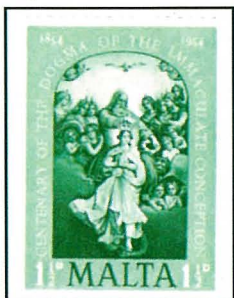
(to be continued in next issue)



Common Varieties on Centenary of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception Set

(Anthony Grech)

A common variety on stamps is a flaw visible to the naked eye; it must be constant and repeated on all sheets printed.



This set of 3 stamps was issued on 8 September 1954, designed by Harrison and Sons, adapting a painting by P.P. Caruana found in the Collegiate Church of Cospicua.

J.B. Stamp Catalogue numbers 243 (1½d), 244 (3d) and 245 (1/-).

Varieties on Stamp No 244 (3d) Colour Blue

There are 3 different varieties of this stamp.



1. Row 2, no.7. Flaw in F of OF

2. Row 6, no. 6. Dot over O of Conception.

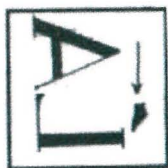


3. Row 4, no. 2. Flow over O in OF.



Varieties on Stamp No 243 (1½d) Colour Green

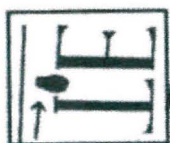
There are at least 6 different varieties of this stamp.



1. Row 9 Stamp 6. Hyphen in right hand value - 1½d.



2. Row 5 Stamp 2. Shadow above M of Malta.



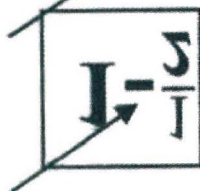
3. Row 4, Stamp 5. Flaw on first 'M' of Immaculate.



4. Row 2, Stamp 3. Comma between T and E of Im-



5. Row 1, Stamp 4. Spot below the first 'N' of Conception.



6. Row 1, Stamp 5. Spot over 'L' of Immaculate.



Varieties on Stamp No 245 (1/-) Colour Grey/Black

There are at least 6 different varieties of this stamp.



1. Row 1 no. 1. Retouch above 1 of 1854.



2. Row 1 no 10. Small pale re touch after 2nd THE.



3. Row 4 no. 6. Tail like to C of Centenary.



4. Row 2 no 6. Retouch below CE of Conception.



5. Row 4 no 2. Accent like over E of the first THE.



6. Row 2 no. 4. Halo over Angles at top left.



POST HASTE (15)

*continuing an irregular series about the interesting
story of the Post*

(Antoine Vassallo)

The largest (?)

"The United States Postal Service delivers more mail to more addresses in a larger geographical area than any other post in the world." (usps.com 2010)

(C) To War

In the **United States** prepayment of postage became compulsory in 1855; from the next year this had to be made through postage stamps.

Between 1849 and 1861, carriers in eight other cities followed New York's example and provided local delivery, issuing stamps for prepayment. By 1861 the total number of POs was nearing thirty thousand, supported by settlers moving to the mid-west.

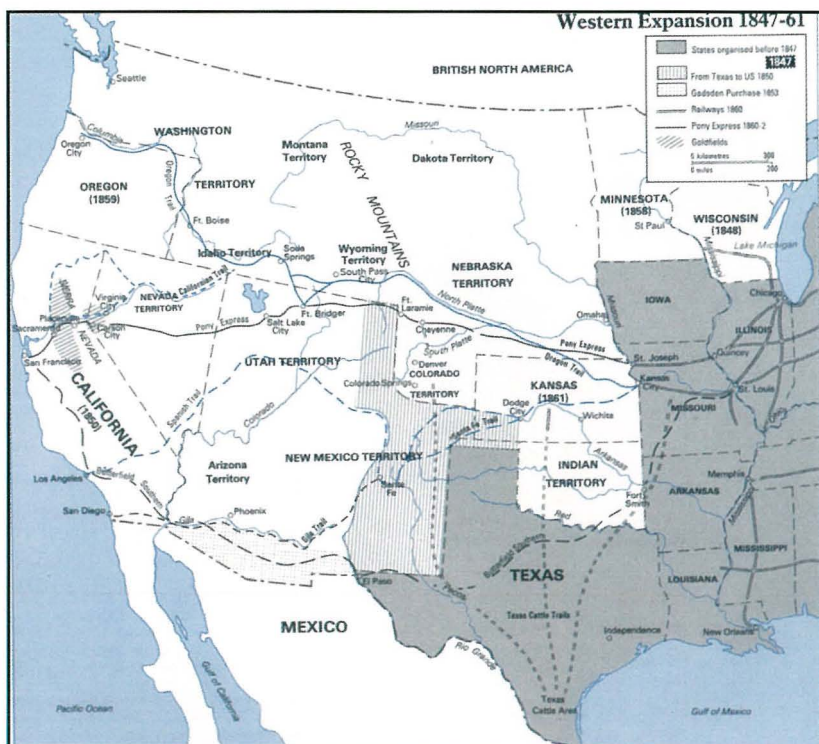
In the mid-nineteenth century, the fastest route between New York and San Francisco was provided by boat via Panama (with the help of the Panama Railroad, a total of three weeks). Overland stage-coach took longer, with private "express" companies a feature of the gold rushes and other westwards pioneering. Most of these used handstamps on envelopes already embossed with the obligatory US postage. By 1858 a weekly mail had been established between Missouri (St Joseph) and California (Placerville) and others inaugurated, under government contract.



The famous Pony Express, though short-lived (under twenty months) and expensive (even \$5 a half ounce), showed the way through the epic exploits of its riders! It carried mails for Wells Fargo & Co, a security express organization which specialized in transporting dust from the gold rushes – and which practically acquired a western monopoly.

But progress was obviously disrupted by the Confederate States' secession and ensuing Civil War.

with acknowledgements to Rossiter & Flower's Stamp Atlas



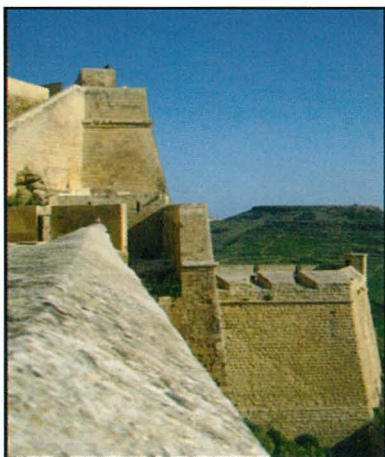
PROMOTING GOZO THROUGH PHILATELY an important *Cittadella* highlight:

St John Demi-Bastion and Gunpowder Magazine
(Giovanni N Zammit - Executive Secretary Wirt Għawdex)



The *Gran Castello* (now more frequently called “*Cittadella*” or the Citadel) has often been featured on our stamps, the latest being the top value in the 2011 “Sepac” set issued on 9 March 2011.. So the GPS Newsletter

has had related articles in the past (eg in issue 26); but there are numerous other aspects which merit highlighting.



Restorations

This four-century old fortification network is still surviving in a fairly good state of preservation since successive administrations have been investing in its restoration and rehabilitation throughout the past decades. Works on the modernization of the Citadel were commenced as early as 1599 under the direction of

Giovanni Rinaldini, an engineer from Ancona. The fundamental rebuilding of the fortifications, possibly on a plan by Laparelli modified by Rinaldini, was in an advanced stage by 1603. Its construction was supervised by the Maltese military engineer Vittorio Cassar.¹



More recently, one of the most ambitious and successful projects was the restoration and reconstruction of the gunpowder magazine (*polvrsta*) and protruding battery adjoining the demi-bastion of St John. In 1994 major restoration works were carried out by the Restoration Unit of the Ministry for Gozo. The gunpowder magazine was in a dilapidated state; in fact the roof had caved in. The sentry box and parts of the south wall of the battery and its embrasures had collapsed and had to be reconstructed as well. However, the site was never made accessible to the general public.

In 2006 the local specialized NGO *Wirt Għawdex* (= Gozo's Heritage) entered into a management agreement with the Gozo Ministry to open this site for the public by its volunteers. A year later, this project entered another phase whereby access was obtained to three large silos behind the tunnel, leading to the St John's demi-bastion, through another management agreement - this time with the Water Services Corporation.

Gunpowder Magazine (17th Century)

The storage of gunpowder was a risky undertaking that required adequate and safe spaces free from the risk of fire and bombardment and adequate protection against spoilage from dampness or rain water. Up until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there were no established forms of structures designed to serve solely as gunpowder magazines. Any ordinary and available building, preferably dry, was put to use as a storage area when the need arose. The gunpowder was generally kept in wooden barrels stacked horizontally in rows on wooden skids, or *tavolate*. The walls were sometimes padded (*infoderate*) to help reduce the effects of rising dampness through the walls. Blind ventilation shafts - known as *sfiatatori* - ensured that no material could be introduced into the interior of the magazine from outside. The external or internal openings were fitted with wooden apertures.

(continued on page 23)



stamp terms used in PHILATELY (36)

(Emanuel Vella)



Nieu: One of the Cook Island group in the South Pacific, a dependency of New Zealand since 1901. Stamps of Cook's Island were used in Nieu from 1892 until New Zealand stamps overprinted for Nieu were introduced in 1902. The first definitives followed in 1920.

Niwin: Initials of National Inspanning Welzjnszorgin Nederlandsch Indie: overprinted and surcharged on stamps of Netherlands Antilles in 1947 in aid of the Social Welfare Fund.

No Hay Estampillas: (Spanish) Having no stamps. Overprinted on typeset emergency issue of Barkacaos, Colombia 1903.

Norddeutscher: North German (Confederation).

Norge: Norway.

North China Government: A temporary stamp issuing authority as a Japanese puppet state prior to and during 1941-45.

North German Confederation: Combined in its postal union and political federation the former stamp-issuing authorities of Bremen, Hamburg, Hanover, Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Strelitz, Oldenburg, Prussia, Saxony, Schleswig and Holstein. In 1868 it made its own stamp issue and in 1871 it merged with Germany.



North Mongolia: Touva.

Northern (Russian) Army: The O.K.C.A. (Special Corps, Northern Army) commanded by General Rodzinko issued an imperforated set of somewhat dubious stamps in 1919, of which there are many forgeries extant.



Northern Nigeria: Former British protectorate of West Africa, now part of Nigeria, set up on the revocation of the charter of the Royal Niger Company in 1900. The protectorate had its own stamps from 1900 to 1914, when it was incorporated into Nigeria.

Northern Rhodesia: Former British protectorate of Central Africa, under the administration of the British South African Company until 1924. Its first stamps appeared in 1925, prior to which the issues of Rhodesia were in use. In 1953, Northern Rhodesia was incorporated into the Central African Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and used federation issue from 1954. On the dissolution of the federation, stamps of Northern Rhodesia alone were again issued in December 1963. In the following year the country became independent and was renamed Zambia.

North Western (Russian) Army: Russian 'arms' types were overprinted at Pskov by General Yudanitch Army in 1919 provisional government. It is stated that they have been available for two days only.

(to be continued)



PHILATELIC CENTENNIALS

*glances – and longer looks – at
events from a hundred years ago*

(Antoine Vassallo)

4 – Machin creator born (1911)

Arnold Machin was born (the ninth of twelve) on 30 September 1911. From boyhood, he was interested in drawing – and his family tried to provide him with a steady supply of pencils, colours and paper. After leaving school, he entered into an apprenticeship (decorating china) – and later succeeded in making a name as a sculptor, becoming Professor of Sculpture at the Royal College of Art.

Machin was involved in the design of the new British decimal currency in the 1960s. Probably because the committee included a couple of members who had official contacts with Royal Mail, he was among those invited to submit ideas for the new definitives to replace the Wildings. He in fact produced a range of designs before the simple “Machin heads” evolved. The process involved modelling three plaster casts of Queen Elizabeth II, working from photos taken by Lord Snowdon: one was eventually chosen to be photographed for photogravure printing.

The first values appeared on 5 June 1967. Innumerable colours and hundreds of different stamps later, there is no sign of the end of life for this “modern classic”. These stamps in fact signified a return to simplicity and dignity. The artist remained proud of his design until his demise in 1999, by when he had been awarded the OBE (for his coinage work).



It is said that Professor Machin was a somewhat eccentric character but had a great attention to detail. Those who worked with him were really impressed with his efforts to try to ensure perfection: he supervised things even until the presses began to roll to print the sheets!

Various countries and territories (including Antigua, Fiji, Gibraltar, Grenada, Guernsey and Kenya – to mention just half a dozen) have used Queen Elizabeth II's head as depicted by him. It was also used on numerous items of UK postal stationery.



Royal Mail marked the fortieth anniversary of the introduction of this long-running series with a set of two stamps (in a range of formats). One of the special postmarks quoted critic-novelist AN Wilson's description of this head as the most familiar piece of 20th century British sculpture. Another was autobiographical: I think I was born a terracotta modeler.



E & O not E (26)

*glances at stamps with design or printing mistakes
(well-known or obscure)*

(Antoine Vassallo)

New Zealand began issuing Christmas stamps in 1960, this becoming one of its more popular themes. Most of the earlier designs were simple reproductions of “classic” paintings, the artist chosen for 1968 being Gerrit van Honthorst.

This Dutch baroque painter was born in Utrecht in 1590 – where he died in 1656 – and is known under various names, the most established being Gherardo delle Notti (because he is especially celebrated for scenes with a night setting or illuminated by a single candle). He was the son of a textile painter – and his brother Willem, who was also an accomplished painter, sometimes worked with him. He went to Italy in the 1610s (to study the works of Caravaggio, Guido



Reni and Bassano) and soon made a name for himself, receiving commissions from numerous distinguished patrons; in fact he left quite a few notable works there. On his return he got married and was later appointed dean of the Guild of St Luke. He bought a large house, using part as his workshop. Van Honthorst was much sought after as a teacher (with up to twenty-five students: as much as Rubens who even paid a visit). He also worked at the court of King Charles I (London) and for the House of Orange (The Hague). It is said that Rembrandt's use of Caravaggesque devices in his early works derives in large part from his knowledge of Gherardo's paintings.



New Zealand's 2½c stamp shows his "Adoration" (or, more fully, "Adoration of the Child"), an oil on canvas (96 x 131 cm) now at Florence's Uffizi Gallery. A joyous sweetness suffuses the scene, presented

in intimate close-up; the white linen foretells the shroud of the crucified Christ and the straw beneath the babe presages the Eucharist. Printed by England's Harrison & Sons and designed by the Post Office itself, this chalk-surfaced stamp is clearly inscribed "Adoration of the Shepherds". This is in fact the name of a similar oil of his (just later – 1622), now housed in Cologne's Wallraf-Richartz Museum. Bigger (164 x 190 cm), it had previously hung in the Carthusian church of St Barbara in the same German city.



MALTA OVERSEAS

local connections on foreign stamps (12)

As promised, the “**Knights of Malta**” are featured again – and this will surely not be the last occasion!

On 4 December 1972 the Order offered a 1 scudo stamp (both in sheets of twenty and as a numbered miniature sheet, described as a Christmas issue) showing the icon of Our Lady “of Damascus” (or *ta’ Damaxxena*) venerated in Valletta’s Greek-Catholic church. Further philatelic information is that the printers (Rome’s *Carte Valori Staderini*) used multiple Maltese Cross watermarked paper.



The Damascene icon was transported from Rhodes when the Knights were forced to flee the island, while the church was built between 1576 and 1587 by the Rhodian John Kalamias on the site donated by Grand Master del Monte (1565–1572); unfortunately it was destroyed on 24 March 1942 (World War II) but rebuilt (consecrated on 15 August 1951 by bishop Georgios Halavazis).

The Damascene icon (crowned in 1931, on the 15th Centenary of the Council of Ephesus) is not the only treasure in this church (in Archbishop Street). Although over thirty icons were lost under the WWII ruins, there still is that of the Virgin Eleimonitria, modern replacements (mostly Gregorio Malzteff), a precious Depositon from the Cross, a Crucified Christ (local painter Anton Inglott) and a Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (contemporary Ukrainian artist Giovenale). This unique neo-Byzantine church (and the attached Papas’s residence) was scheduled as a Grade 1 national monument in 2008 (among the “most significant buildings of Valletta”). The portico has three arches with the central being the highest and supported on two columns with cushion capital having stylised floral decorations. There is an arch at each side of the portico, while a cornice runs along the entire façade and sides and is of the same level as the impost. The main door is of



bronze veneer and has an arched light window above; there is a panelled window on each side of the door. The roof is slanted and higher at centre making the nave higher, resulting in a broken pediment effect on the façade. There are iron rails and gates across the entire front.

Reverting to the icon, it became known as Our Lady of Damascus simply because some knights thought that they had seen it before in that city. It was brought in Malta in 1530 with the treasure of the Order, Grand Master Villers De L'Isle Adam placing it in the church of St. Catherine (*Borgo del Castello*, later Vittoriosa). Grand Master Jean De La Valette was a fervent devotee of this Madonna and left his helmet and sword at the altar as a votive offering. In 1587 the *Damassena* was solemnly transported across the harbour, in the most glorious galley of the Order, to the new city of Valletta with its own church. In the 1960s it was restored in Rome at the expense of the Italian government, bringing the picture back to its original beauty.

Its size (almost 150 centimetres by over 100) is exceptional – possibly the biggest existing. The style can be described as Monastic, with unusual aspects (including the life-size angels). As so often in these cases, for centuries the icon remained covered with a silver screen – leaving visible just the heads of the Madonna and of baby Jesus. Edinburgh University's David Talbot Rice calls it "a thing of great beauty and historical beauty and importance", dating it as even earlier than the Virgin of Vladimir (twelfth century). According to researcher Prof Vincent Borg, this icon has even been attributed to St Luke – with numerous legendary facts. The feast was held on the 15 August (Our Lady's Assumption).

The *Theotokos Damaskinis* (to give it its Melkite Greek "liturgical" name) has been studied minutely as to its composition and symbolic meaning. In this "sacred geometry", the square shape represents the earth, the triangle the Trinity and the circle Divine Unity. The circle is noticed as prominent, with the figures intersecting to open up spaces for connection with both the cosmos and the spiritual world.

According to Professor Peter Serracino Inglott in his "Meditation", the Child's "outer contours seem to fit as if in a



jigsaw into hers, tremulously as if he were thrilled at the perception that he had just grown out of her, but in the outward relation between the two bodies, traces seem to be still visible of their precious intra-bodily communion. The Incarnation is celebrated through the way they are connected to each other, one beholding the divinity, the other humanity; one making possible the humanization of the divine, the other enabling the divinization of humanity. The geometrical structure of the icon leads us to this proper understanding of the mystery portrayed". The whole of creation becomes the seat of God's presence while the former is now enabled to transcend towards the supernatural order. The lower and upper circles, extended beyond the rectangular parameters of the icon, seem to be pointing to this. The intersection of the circular geometrical shapes in the upper part, especially those encircling the faces of the Mother and the Child, point to the humanization-divinization process.



Various symbols in the icon remind us of the Cross. Mary's penetrative look is one of sadness, piercing us through her eyes. The Child clings to her, staring at her as if frightened. Her deep glance invites us to behold the mystery, while at the same time she points Jesus to us with her hand: "she who shows the Way". One can also argue that Caravaggio (who worked a few meters away) may have been influenced too.

A copy is venerated in a church dedicated to Our Lady of Damascus in Kosour (Syria) on the initiative of the Patriarch. Other copies have also been produced to rekindle the devotion in Malta.

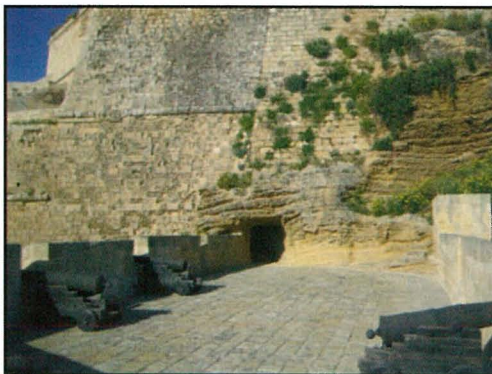
A final note: a SMOM 2009 set featuring medals included two stamps showing the Madonna under different "titles": Damascene and Filermo.

You are invited to send write-ups (or even just suggestions) about other foreign stamps with themes or designs related to Malta.



(from page 13)

It was also necessary for the powder magazines to be located away from built-up areas, whether civilian or military, as a safety precaution. Gunpowder magazines needed to be inspected regularly by the commander of artillery or his subordinate to ensure that they remained capable of housing gunpowder in suitable conditions.²



Battery

The east end of the ditch is closed by a low battery projecting at right angles from the walls. It is reached from the platform of the demi-bastion through a tunnel cut in the rock and it was served by a powder magazine.

The Battery is built with very thick masonry able to withstand shots from an eighteen-pounder gun. It has a sentry box towards the east and six embrasures, three of which overlook the ditch. Through these, the gun could be swung round to fire in an arc. The stonework is in part embossed with a stringcourse.

Silos

A whole complex of around 100 silos appears to have existed within the Citadel. Some of these were discovered in 1860 when the present road to the Citadel was being remodelled. Three fairly large silos (approx. 13 metres deep) in this area were originally built by the Knights for storing grain in order to have enough staple food in store for the people of Gozo in times of siege. But, since 1877, they were converted into water reservoirs. Entrance to these silo pits is

(continued on page 24)

through the tunnel leading to the Low Battery, on the left-hand side of the Gunpowder Magazine.

World War II Shelters

The five cells dug out in the rock-face along the corridor leading to the Battery at the Citadel were intended to be private shelters. These were dug according to the official rules for the digging of shelters, published in March and April 1941, but would definitely not have been approved by the Protection Officer or the Gozo Commissioner as required by the Emergency Powers (Defence) Regulations. The first two cells were dug out in late 1941 and were utilized only by their owners as they sought shelter for the evening and night. They would take with them whatever was required such as mattresses, candles or lanterns, stools, and the inevitable flask of coffee.

The last cell (that closest to the battery) was also privately owned and was dug out by Felic Cassar and his son George between February and April of 1943. Felic's wife, Marija Concetta and the rest of the family made use of this shelter for about four months. It is to be noted that George Cassar was a member of the RAF Observer Corps which was established in Gozo in February 1943, and their quarters were on the actual St John Cavalier.

It is interesting to note that, since there was a huge water reservoir situated right behind them, these shelters were actually far from safe. If a bomb had fallen nearby and burst the reservoir walls, the people sheltering in the cells would all have doubtlessly been drowned! For this reason, Architect Ġużeppi Savona, the architect responsible for all shelters in Rabat, condemned these shelters. However, they still remained being used.³

¹Information provided by Rev. Dr Joseph Bezzina, author of several articles and books about Gozo.

²Stephen C. Spiteri, *The Art of Fortress Building in Hospitaller Malta*, Malta, 2008, pp. 489, 498, 501, and 502.

³Information provided by Charles Bezzina, author of several books and articles about Gozo.



FOR SALE

- Capitulation of the French Special hand stamp cards (set of 2).
Limited Edition of 500 cards. € 2.50
- A commemorative Registered Cover from Victoria Gozo Post Office to commemorate two Gozitan Patriots namely:-Sir Adrian Dingli & Arch Saverio Cassar.
Limited Edition of 100 covers. **(Less than 10 left).** € 4.50
- A Commemorative Card showing Guzeppi Grech known as Zeppu Kola, the last owner of the Xaghra Windmill doing maintenance work. Limited edition of 200 cards. € 2.50
- Card to commemorate the 7th Gozo Philatelic Exhibition (3 to 12 November 2006) including the 8c Christmas stamp and cancelled with the Christmas First Day of Issue hand stamp
Limited Edition of 100 cards. **(Less than 10 left).** € 1.50
- Special card issued on the occasion of the TOY STAMP issue. Cancelled on the first day of issue at Xaghra Post Office featuring the “POMSKIZILLIOUS MUSEUM OF TOYS” found in Xaghra Gozo.
Limited Edition of 75 cards. € 1.75
- Special “In Memory” card hand stamped at Gharb Sub Post Office on the occasion of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist held at Ta’ Pinu Shrine, for the repose of the soul and in memory of Mr Anthony Fenech, a great philatelist and a sincere friend of the Gozo Philatelic Society.
Limited edition of 160 cards. € 1.75
- Card in the form of a First Day Cover on the issue of the re-printed 1c stamp depicting the *Sempreviva* of Gozo. This stamp was officially issued in Gozo later than in Malta. (19.10.2006).
Limited edition of 160 cards. € 0.50
- Registered cover commemorating the issue of the Comino Tower stamp. Postmarked with the First day of issue handstamp from Ghajnsielem S.P.O.
Limited edition of 75 covers. **(Less than 10 left).** € 2.50



FOR SALE

- Cover issued on the occasion of the 2005 Christmas set stamp issue with a personalized stamp of Chev. Paul Camilleri Cauchi - the stamp set designer. These covers are individually signed by the artist himself. Limited Edition of 130 covers. **€ 2.50**
- Card to commemorate the 50 years of Europe. Cancelled with the special handstamp issued for the occasion during the festivities held at Nadur Gozo. Limited edition of 75 cards. **€ 2.50**
- Registered Hand Coloured cover to commemorate the issue of two stamps depicting Gozo Balconies (one at Victoria and the other at Gharb). The covers were hand stamped with the First Day of issue Post-Mark. Limited edition of 75 covers. **€ 2.50**
- Card commemorating the GPS 8th Annual Exh. 2007 and the launching of the GPS website. Limited edition of 100 cards. **€ 1.50**
- Set of two cards with first day of operation hand-stamp of the new Post Offices at Xlendi and St Lawrence. Limited edition of 75 cards each. **€ 2.50**
- Card commemorating the 125 Anniv from the Call of Our Lady of Ta' Pinu to Karmni Grima and Frangisk Portelli. Each card is cancelled with a special handstamp issued by MaltaPost and stamped at the National shrine on Sunday 22 June 2008. The card has an embossed metal image of Our Lady of Ta' Pinu. Limited edition of 1000. **(Only 10 left).** **€ 3.00**
- Card commemorating 5th Gozo Philatelic Exhibition and 5th Anniversary of the GPS. Limited edition of 400 cards. **(Less than 10 left).** **€ 1.50**
- Set of 2 registered covers commemorating Karolina Cauchi and Patri Manwel Magri (Gozo Benefactors). Limited edition of 30 covers. **(Less than 5 left).** **€ 5.00**
- Card commemorating the 9th GPS Exhibition. Limited edition of 100 cards. **(Less than 10 left).** **€ 1.50**
- Card commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Gozo Tourism Association. Limited edition of 75 cards. **€ 2.00**

NB: Each Card or Cover is individually numbered.

- Malta stamps in mint condition are also available at 2/3 catalogue price.

Those interested may contact:
Mr Anthony Grech on Tel No. 21553338



CIRCULAR TO ALL GPS MEMBERS

I have pleasure to invite you to our twelfth

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

to be held at Scouts HQ (*trig Santa Dminka* Victoria) on
Sunday **15 January** 2012 at **9.30 am** with this AGENDA:

1. Minutes of eleventh AGM
2. Financial Statement
3. Secretary's Report
4. President's Address
5. Election of Members for Committee
6. Motions
7. Other Matters

I thus invite paid-up members to:
nominate themselves (or others) for the new **Committee** and
submit notice of **Motions** (regarding amendments to our statute
- copies of which are available from the Secretary or
downloadable from our Website) - or otherwise.

The AGM concludes with the
Distribution of Prizes and Certificates
to all **12th GPS Exhibition** participants.

A **Members' Meeting** continues after
(acquire additions and information etc).

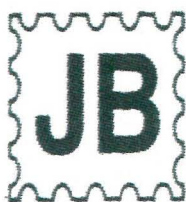
Junior exhibitors can invite their family too
Members are encouraged to offer themselves for nomination to
the Committee

Members can propose Statute amendments or other Motions

All members
are heartily encouraged to attend.

Secretary





The JB Catalogue of Malta Stamps and Postal History

Published by Sliema Stamp Shop

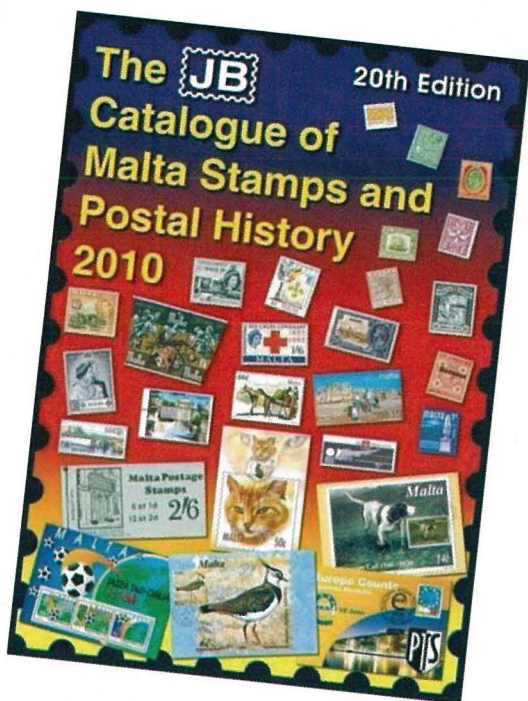
91 Manwel Dimech Street

Sliema - Malta

**20th Edition
in Colour
is now
on sale**

**Price
€16.00**

**Tel: 21342189
Fax: 21346069**



**www.sliemastampshop.com.mt
e-mail: sales@sliemastampshop.com.mt**

