

The Melita Adhesives

by Johnny Van Haeften

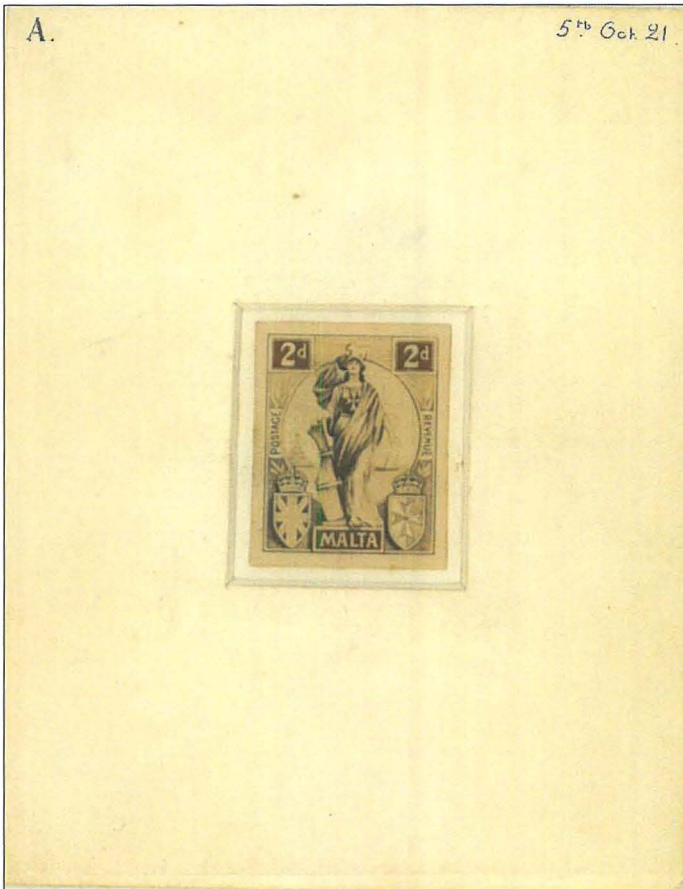
On 17th June 1921, a competition was announced in Malta for designs for a definitive set of postage stamps to commemorate the granting of Self Government. The Crown Agents wrote to De La Rue on 16th September to request that:

You will have suitable drawings made.

They asked for advice on size and printing process.

The **bromide essay** below was sent on 5th October:

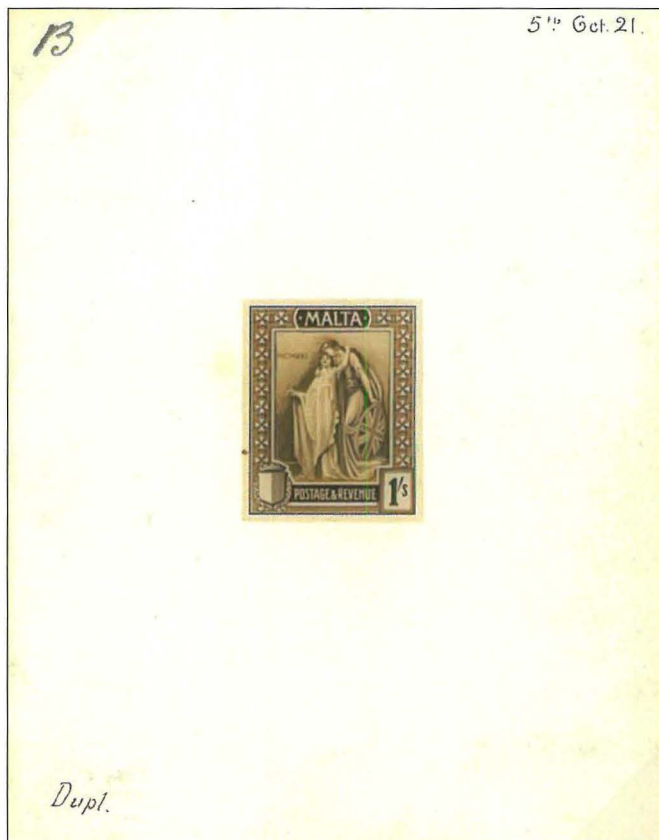
‘for printing by the Surface Process’ in this size.



Bromide essay with hand painted name and value tablets.

These first De La Rue essays closely followed the sketches from Malta, which apparently have not survived.

Bromide essay, marked 'B' and dated 5th October 1921, for the shilling values.



(Dupl.) Denotes De La Rue file duplicate of original.

Bromide essay, marked 'C' and dated 13th October 1921, for the 2d value.

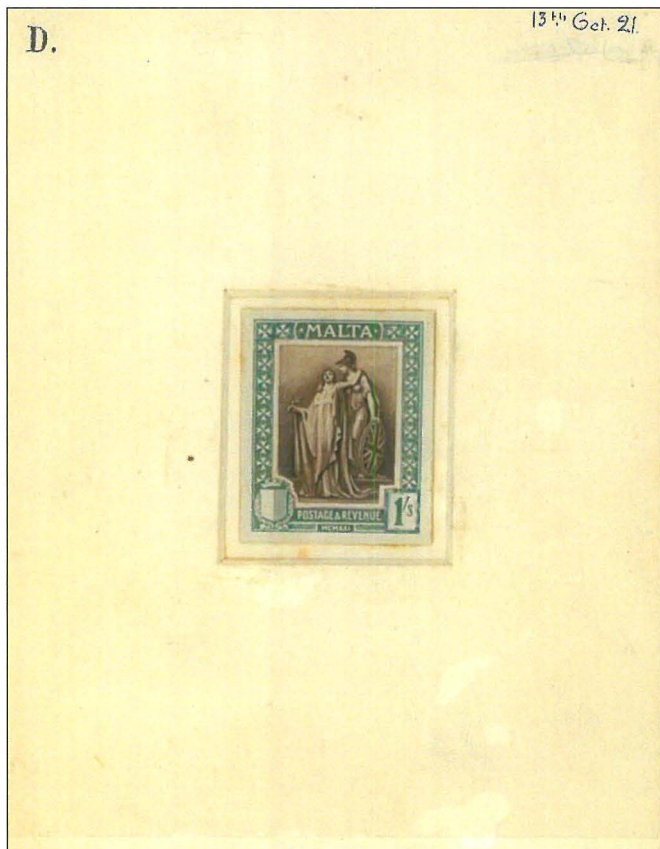


*(Dupl.) Denotes De La Rue file duplicate of original.
(courtesy of the Malta Postal Museum)*

Crown Agents and representatives of De La Rue met on 6th October 1921 to discuss the initial essays, which they requested to be modified.

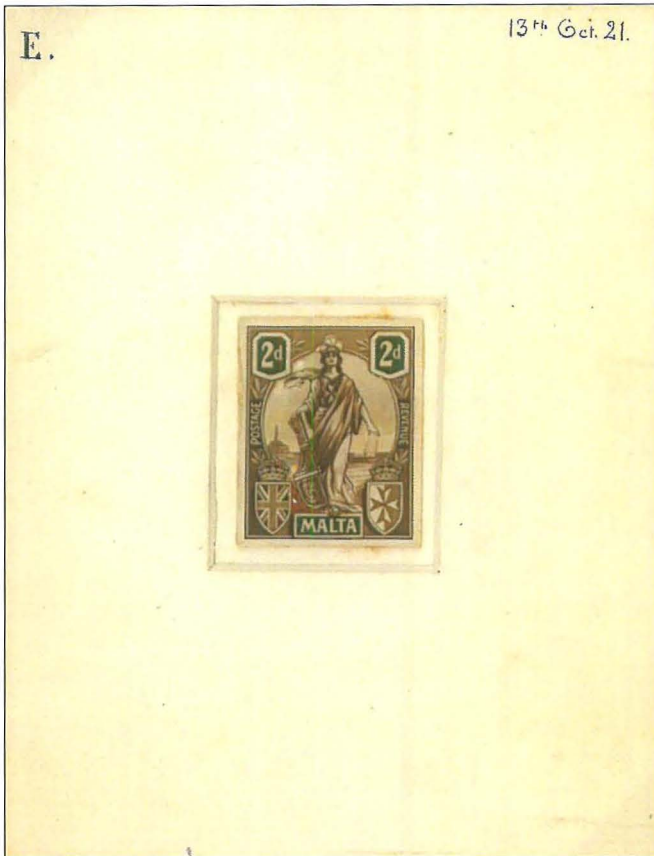
Additional designs resulted from this meeting on 13th October, stating:
'in these designs we have departed somewhat from the sketches sent from the colony.'

Marked 'D' and dated 13th October 1921.



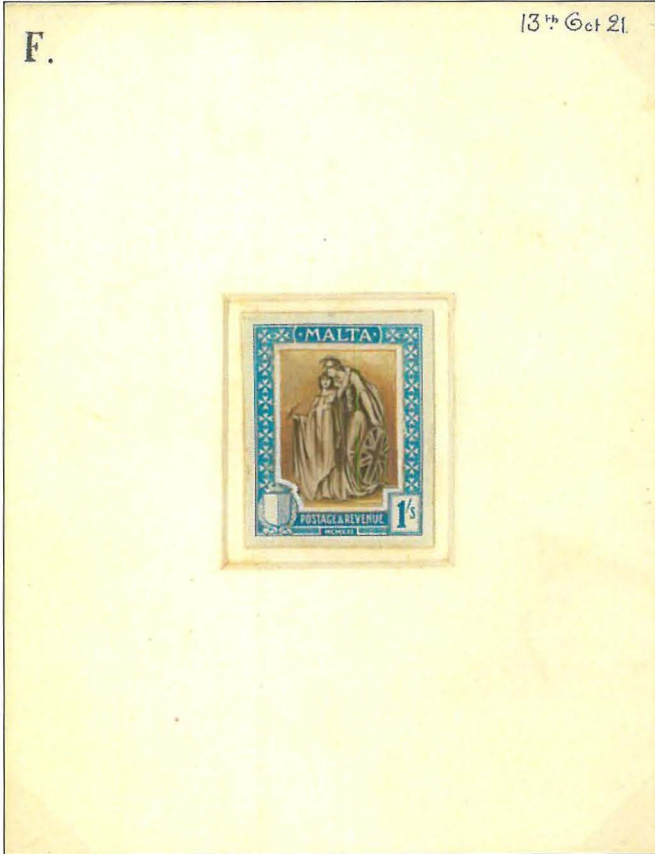
Composite essay, bromide vignette, printed green frame, with Chinese white painting. The figures have been changed, and the date moved to the bottom of the design. The Crown Agents then forwarded the essay to Malta.

As with 'D', essay letters 'E' was appropriately annotated and sent to Malta by the Crown Agents.



*Bromide Essay, name and value tablets handpainted,
handpainting on vignette and below right foot.
The value tablets have been amended and the figure strengthened.*

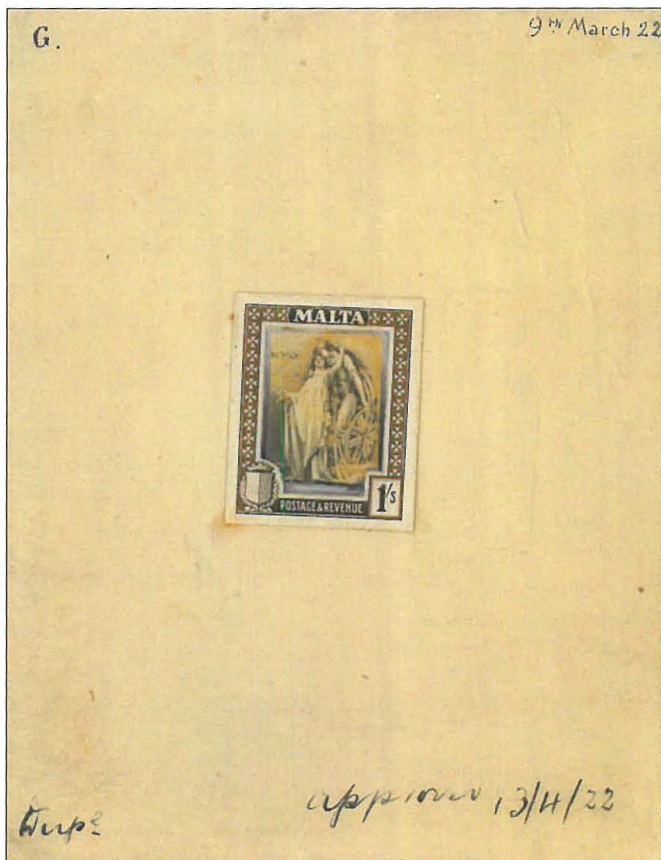
As with 'D', this essay was lettered 'F' and dated 13th October 1921.



The photographic centre has been amended, the frame changed to light blue, with some handpainting in white.

Malta rejected De La Rue's changes in the shilling design. The Crown Agents wrote to De La Rue on 1st March 1922 that Malta preferred **Design B**, but wanted it more like the original. The designer of specimen 'B' suggests that 'the border be narrower as in the original and that the inner white line of the border be removed.'

The amended design lettered 'G' was sent on 9th March, appropriately annotated.



Composite Essay with inset vignette, handpainting throughout, marked Dupl.? and inscribed "approved 13/4/22"

De La Rue wrote that they needed to retain the inner white line as a division between the two operations of printing in different colours by the Surface Process. The Crown Agents sent 'B' and 'G' back to Malta, and advised De La Rue on 13th April that Malta approved 'G' and that a die proof was required before hardening.

De La Rue also prepared an additional essay for the value to be recess-printed. The Malta indent with the Crown Agents in a letter dated 4th March 1922 specified that 'copper Note Process in two colours' for the £1 value to be prepared.

Lettered 'H' and dated 9th March 1922, the essay is inscribed:

'This design is for the copper plate stamp to be printed in two colours.'



Composite essay, inset vignette, handpainting throughout.

The Crown Agents approved design 'H' for the £1 duty 'only' on 24th March, and reminded De La Rue of Malta's request that the 'sky should be more luminous and the middle lighter in the design for the pence values.

"The artistic requirements should be carried out in the engraving of the die and a die proof should be submitted before the die hardened."

Progressive die proofs illustrate the sequence of the engraver's work. De La Rue wrote to the Crown Agents on 19th April 1922 "we are well advanced with the engraving of the dies for the pence series, and hope to submit a proof of the figure die in about a fortnight and to commence delivery of the stamps in five weeks."

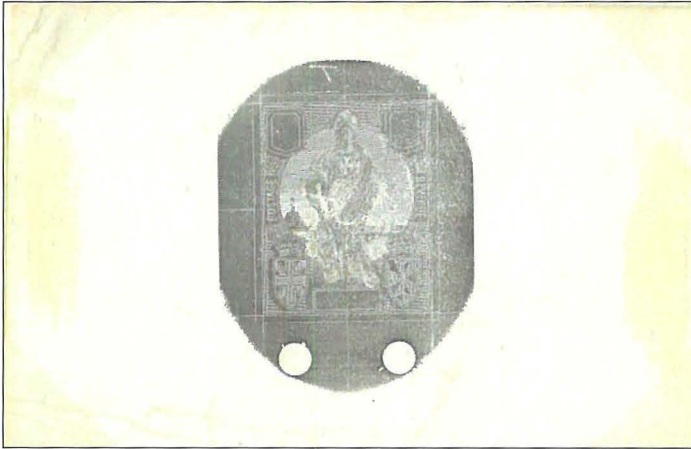
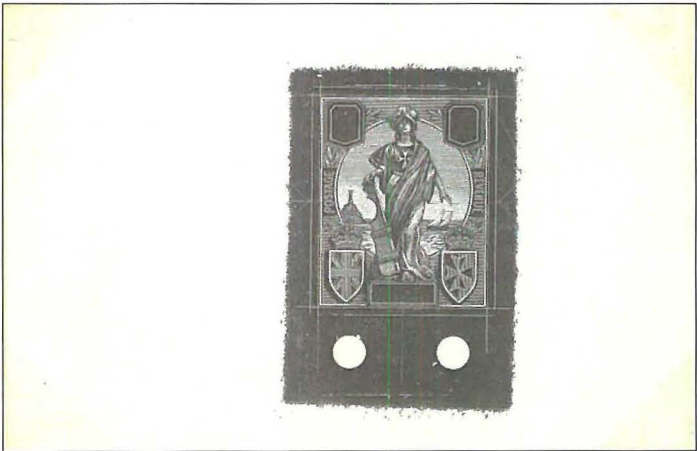


Figure just roughed in



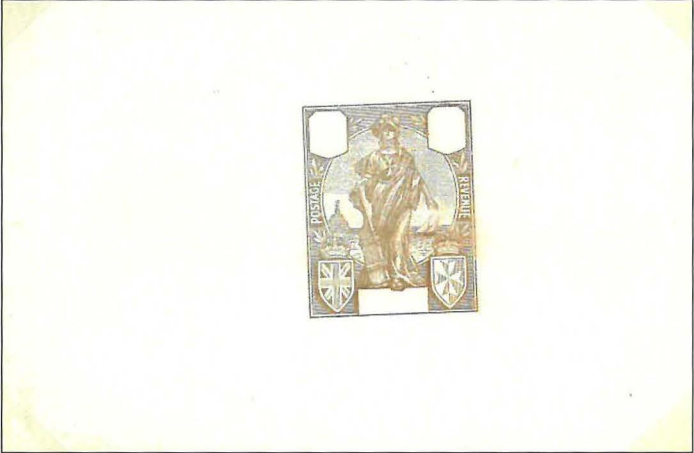
Detail added, Chinese white painted in Maltese Cross on similar proof on right side, on left in larger proof, and both proofs with Chinese white around borders to show appearance when cleared.

Progressive die proofs showing the lower sky lightened, the upper leaves detailed, and the figure strengthened through cutting away metal to add highlights.



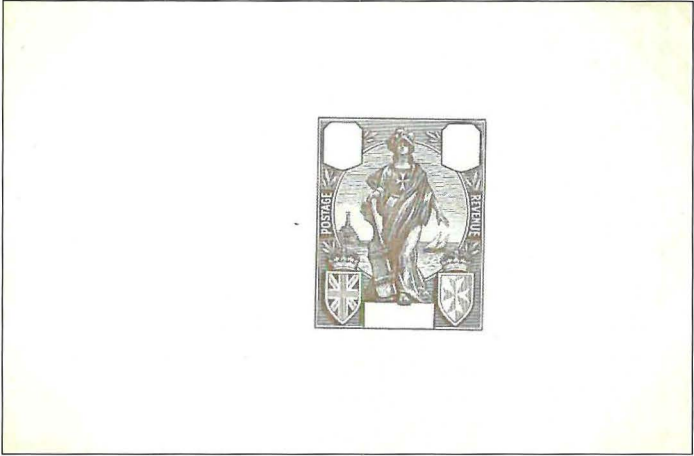
In these proofs, the Maltese Cross reverted to just being dark in the centre.

De La Rue struggled to print a die proof of the right appearance sought by the Maltese artists. To meet the artist's requests that the sky 'be more luminous suggesting dawn', proofs were printed in a variety of ink shades and weights.

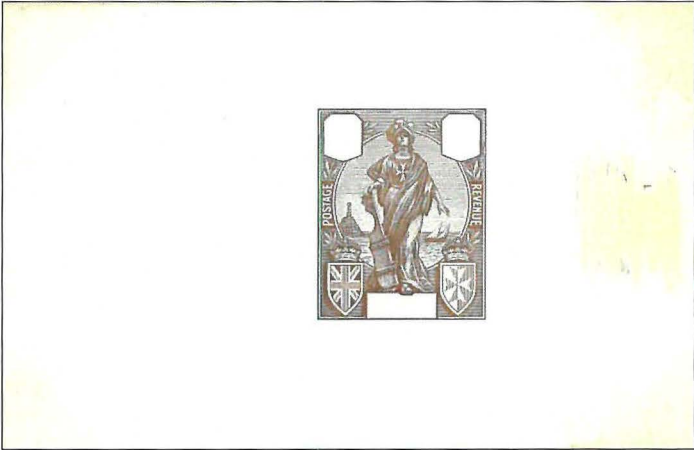
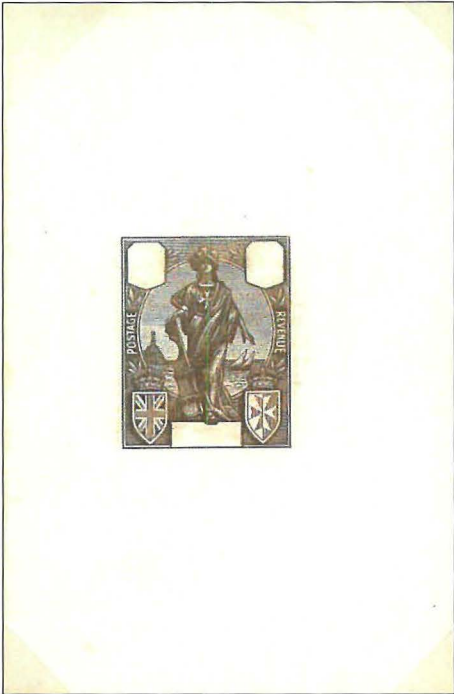


First two attempts

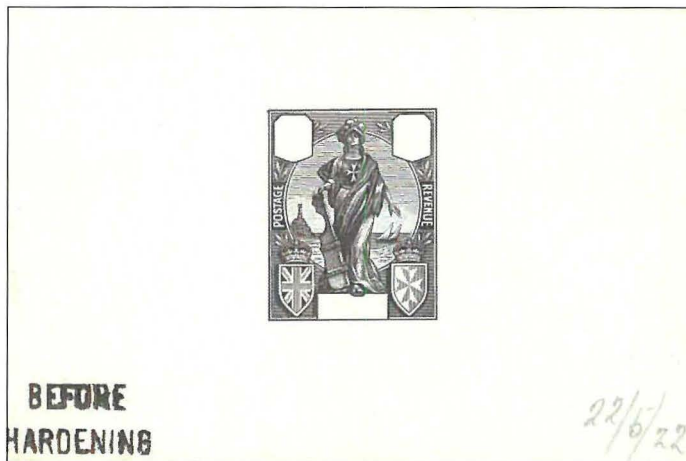
Gradually changing shades and weights to achieve the right results ...



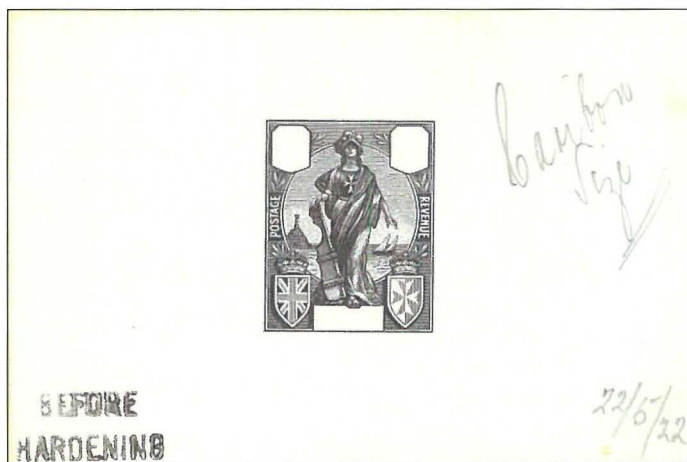
... until the dies were perfected.



The Crown Agents wrote to De La Rue on 18th May 1922 saying that 'The die proofs from the design ... are satisfactory and the work may be proceeded with.' De La Rue then perfected the dies after the Crown Agents' approval.

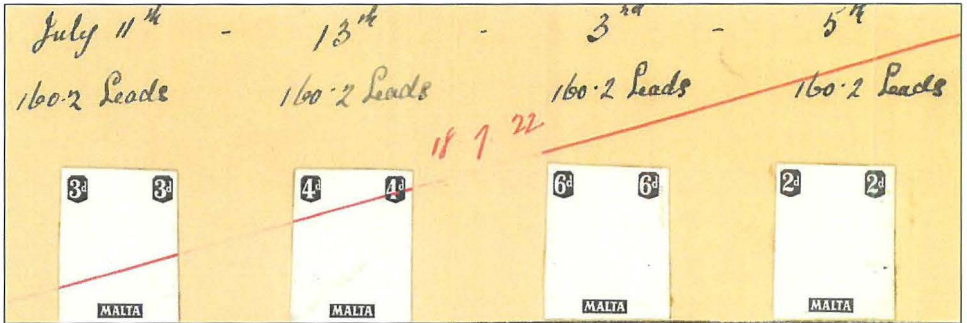
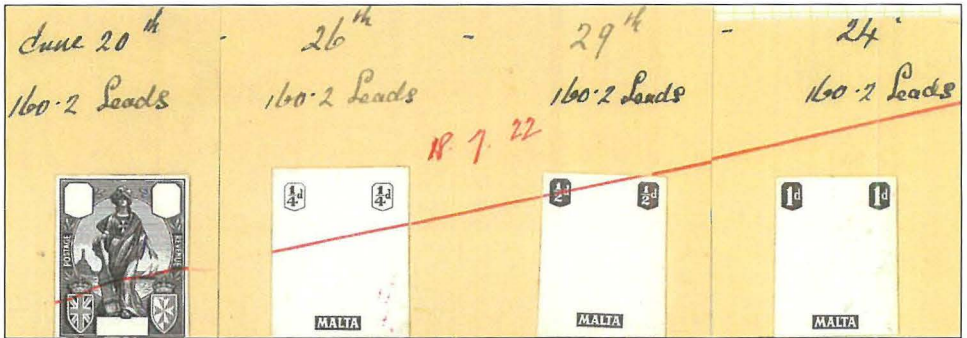


Progressive die proof marked 'BEFORE HARDENING' and dated 22nd May 1922, a few days after the Crown Agents' approval.

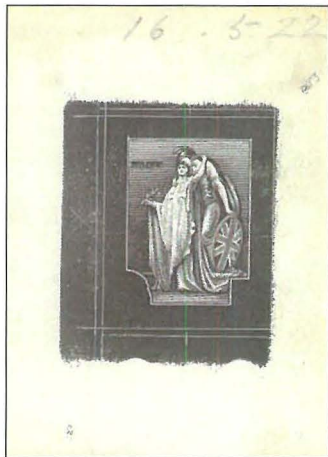


'Caribou size' refers to the 1919 Newfoundland issue, indicating that the Newfoundland stamps set the production model for the Maltese stamps and plates.

Die proofs from the printers record book. 160 plus 2 spare leads struck on dates in black. The red lines and dates confirm the invoicing.



The shilling values, unlike the pence, were produced relatively uneventfully. De La Rue wrote to the Crown Agents on 17th May 1922: 'We beg to enclose for your approval proofs from the soft die to design 'G'.



Uncleared die proof of the vignette one day before approved proof (16th May 1922)

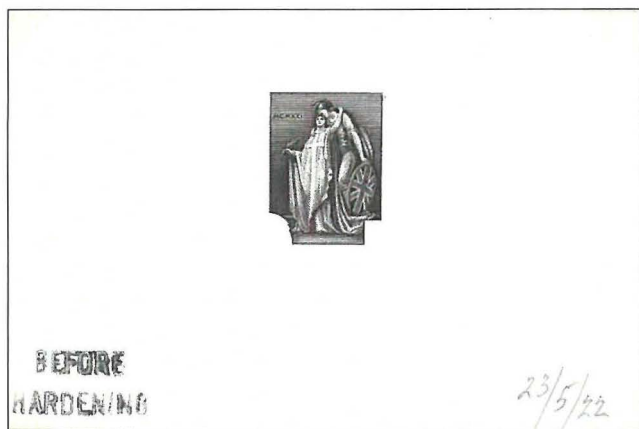


The approved proof contained a strike of the cleared vignette, and master duty dies.

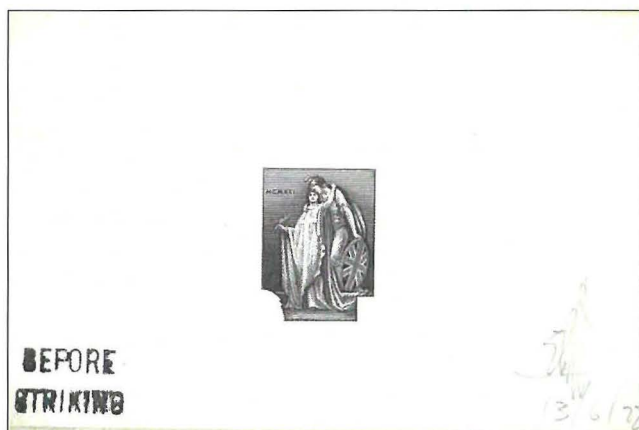


Cleared vignette die proof one day after approval.

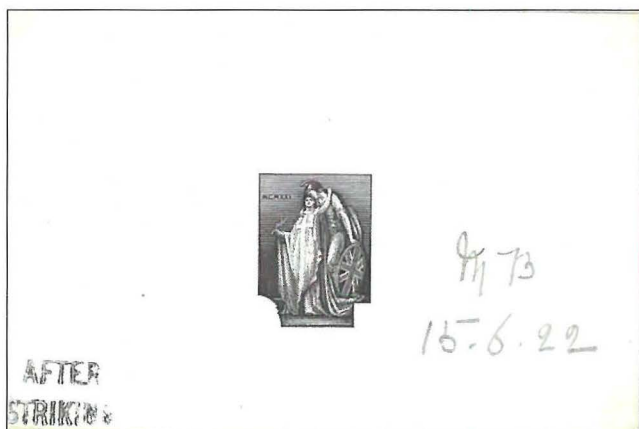
Die proofs of the vignette for the high values.



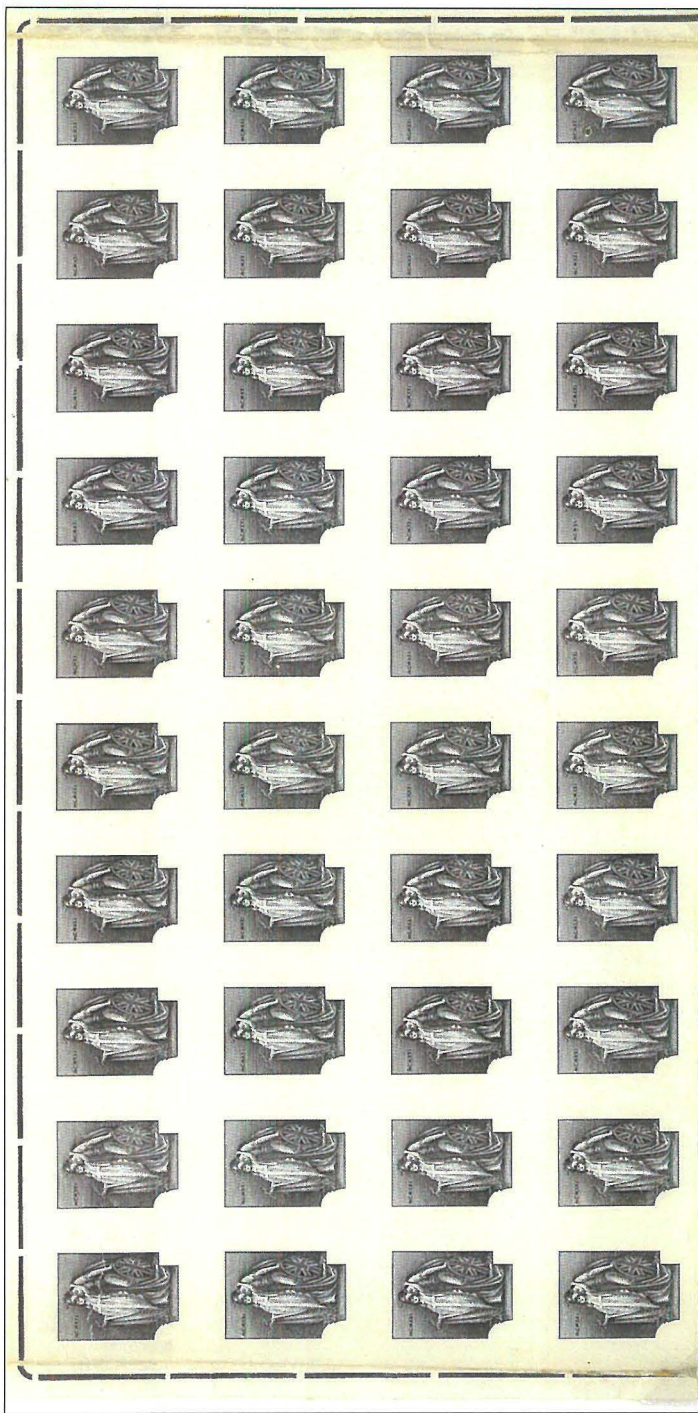
Marked 'BEFORE
HARDENING' and dated 23rd
May 1922.



Marked 'BEFORE STRIKING'
initialled dated 13th June
1922



Marked 'AFTER STRIKING',
initialled MB and dated 15th
June 1922

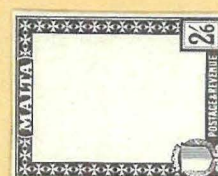
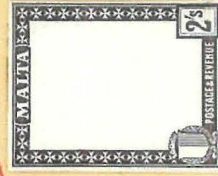
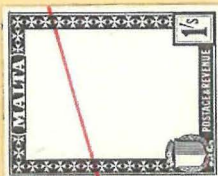



*Proof Sheet of the
vignette for all the
higher values*

The printers record book die proofs show that the shilling values were on 80-set plates.


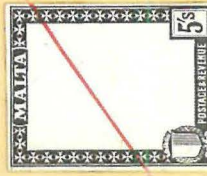
June 16th - 16th - 30th - July 4th
80.2 Leads 80.2 Leads 80.2 Leads

~~18.7.22~~

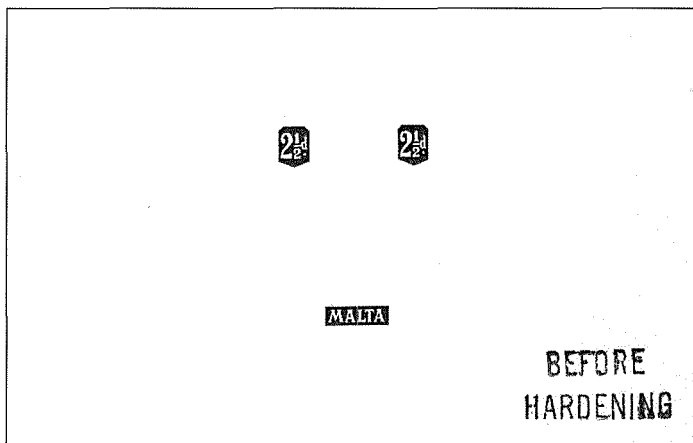


July 8th - 10th
80.2 Leads 80.2 Leads

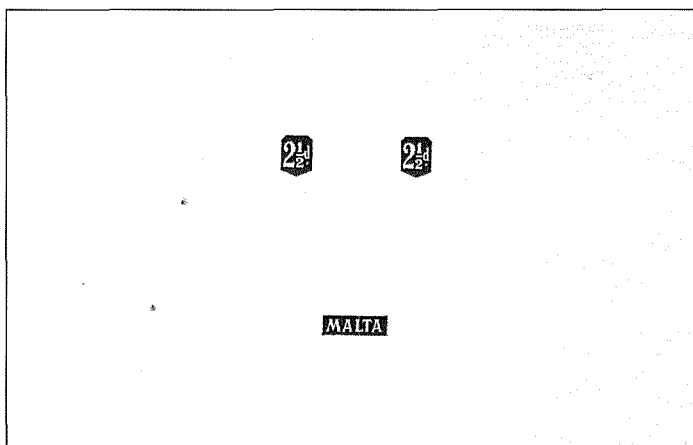
~~18.7.22~~



When the foreign letter rate was reduced to 2½d, to meet the demand a new stamp was ordered to replace the provisional overprint which had been pushed into service. The Malta 25th December 1925 indent for the new 2½d and new colour 3d stated “A proof of the new 2½d overprint die and colour proof of the 3d stamp are to be submitted to the Crown Agents before printing is commenced.”

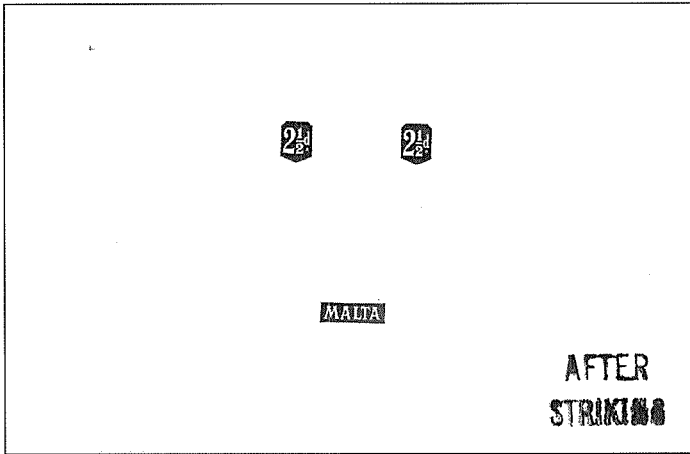


Die proof of the completed die marked 'Before Hardening'

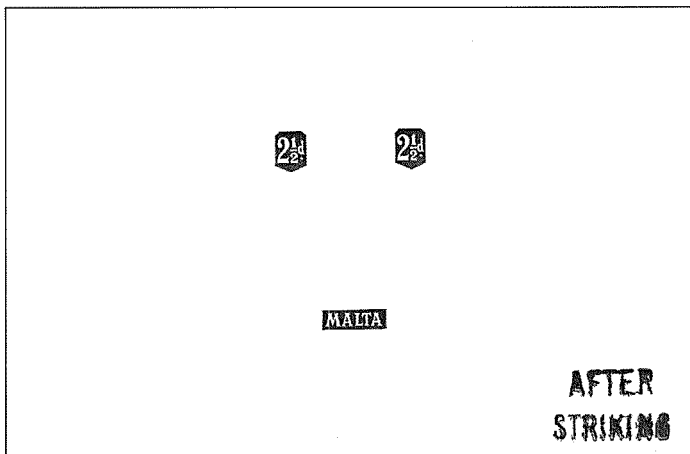


Submittal proof attached to a copy of the letter with a pin (note holes), as Malta had specified 'Delivery is urgently required'.

Die proofs for the 2½d value

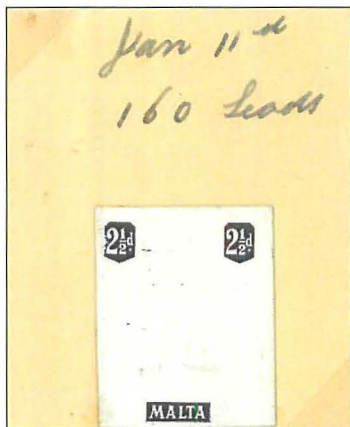


Marked 'After Striking', but undated



Slightly deeper impression

**De La Rue sent a die proof and colour trial on 7th January 1926, claiming
“The preparation of the printing plate for the 2½d entry is in hand”.**

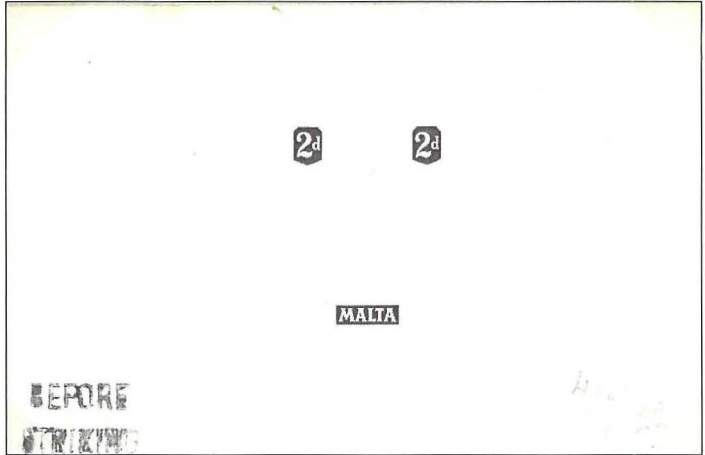


Record book proof - leads were struck 4 days after De La Rue hand written that the plate preparation was in hand”



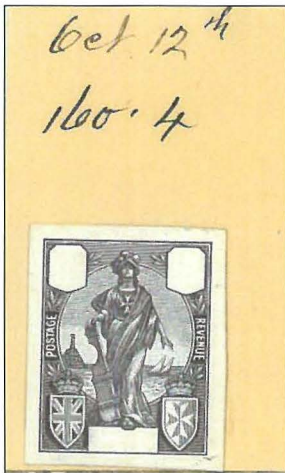
U.P.U. specimen 416 were issued on 16th February 1926

The essay for the duty plate. The value tablets and country name are hand-drawn on the keyplate die proof.



An example of a duty die proof - marked 'BEFORE STRIKING' and dated 4th July 1922. There were no 'AFTER HARDENING' proofs from this issue.

Malta wrote on 8th August 1922 that the alterations they requested had not been sufficiently carried out. De La Rue progressively altered the two replacement key-plates in response.

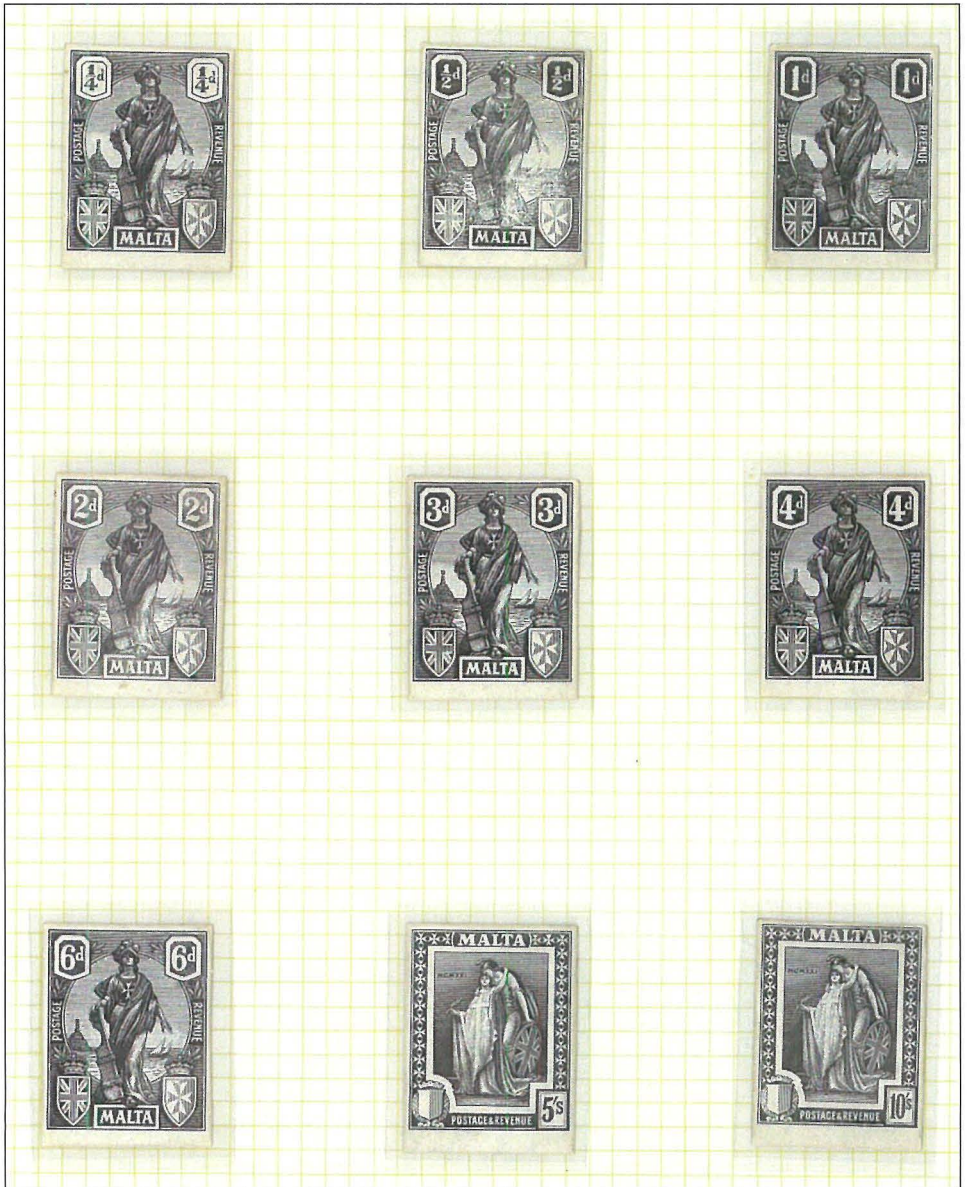


*Plate 2: Record book proof
12th October (1923).*



*Plate 3: Record book proof
29th August (1925)*

Registration proofs. Individual dies for the key and duty plates were printed in register to confirm the position of the value tablets and country name.



Printers samples, handstamped 'SPECIMEN', imperforate.



From printers sample books, showing each stamp randomly stamped 'SPECIMEN'.

Colour trials, printers samples etc., 1/2d brown and blue (bright).



without gum



A pair with gum

Block of 4 numbered 108 from a printers sample book, overprinted 'SPECIMEN'.

Colour trials, printers samples etc., 1/2d blue and brown, overprinted 'SPECIMEN'.



without gum



with gum



In a darker shade, with gum



without gum



without gum

Perforated printers samples and colour trials.



Section from a printer's sample book, with codes A101 - 103 for different colours.



Gummed, but no watermark

Colour trials, printers samples etc.,



without gum



From a printers sample book



with gum



with gum



Heavier type with gum

From the printers' archives, all attached to card and mostly with blue crayon mark. Missing 1/4d brown and 1d violet.



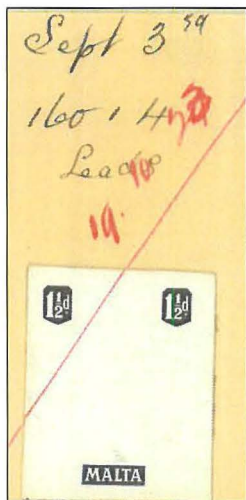
Malta was dissatisfied with the colour of the 1d stamp, and a letter from the Maltese Superintendent of Posts to De La Rue and the Crown Agents dated 15th August 1922 states that it should have been 'orange-brown'.



Imperforate colour trials, watermark upright (sideways on issued stamps), colour trials were sent on 19th and 25th July 1923, but Malta telegraphed the Crown Agents on 27th August to use that colour for a new 1½d stamp and on 7th September ordered 1d in blue-purple.



*New value: 408
UPU Specimen
issued 1st October
1923*



*Record book die proof
leads struck 6 days after
order*



*New 1d colour:
408 UPU Specimen
issued 28th April
1924*

December 1925 two pence half penny surcharge on 3d value printed at the Government Printing Office, Valletta.



GOVERNMENT NOTICE.

NOTIFICAZIONE DI GOVERNO.

[No. 366.]

It is hereby notified that Postage and Revenue stamps formerly of the 3d. value, surcharged "Two pence half-penny" to indicate their new value, are now on sale and are valid for Postage and Revenue purposes.

Si rende noto che francobolli già del valore di 3d. sovracaricati "Two pence half-penny" per indicare il loro nuovo valore di due soldi e mezzo, sono ora in vendita e sono valevoli per affrancazione o diritti di bollo.

December 3, 1925.

3 dicembre, 1925.

ENRICO MIZZI,
Minister for Industry & Commerce.

ENRICO MIZZI,
Ministro d'Industria e Commercio.

3rd December 1925. Original Government Notice announcing the issue of the stamps.



*cobalt
3rd December*



*bright ultramarine
9th December*

The 3d values, colour trials, etc.,



*Colour trial,
with gum. None
recorded for the
original values.*



*De La Rue
file specimen,
handstamped in
blue.*



*Colour trial approved by the Crown Agents 9th
January 1926*



*U.P.U
Specimen
Pair*

Government Notice of 16th February 1926 announcing the issue of 2 ½ d and 3d stamps in new colours.



GOVERNMENT NOTICE.

NOTIFICAZIONE DI GOVERNO.

[No. 58.]

IT is hereby notified that stamps of the values of 2½d. and of 3d. have been issued. The stamps at 2½d. are printed in blue on white paper and those at 3d. in black on yellow paper. The design of each is symbolical of Malta under Responsible Government, to which design reference is made in Government Notice No. 226 of the 5th September, 1922. The said stamps are valid for postage and for fiscal purposes.

SI fa noto con la presente che sono stati emessi francobolli da 2½d. e da 3d. I francobolli da 2½d. sono stampati in colore azzurro su carta bianca, quelli da 3d. in colore nero su carta gialla. Il disegno degli uni e degli altri simboleggia Malta sotto il nuovo Governo Responsabile, al quale disegno si fa riferimento nella Notificazione di Governo No. 226 del 5 Settembre, 1922. I detti francobolli sono valevoli per l'affrancazione delle lettere e per diritti fiscali.

February 16, 1926.

ENRICO MIZZI,
Minister for Industry and Commerce.

16 Febbraio, 1926.

ENRICO MIZZI,
Ministro d'Industria e Commercio.

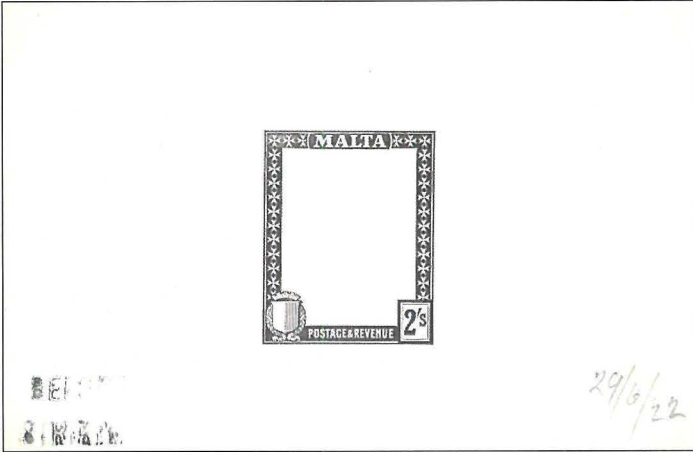


2 ½ d ultramarine

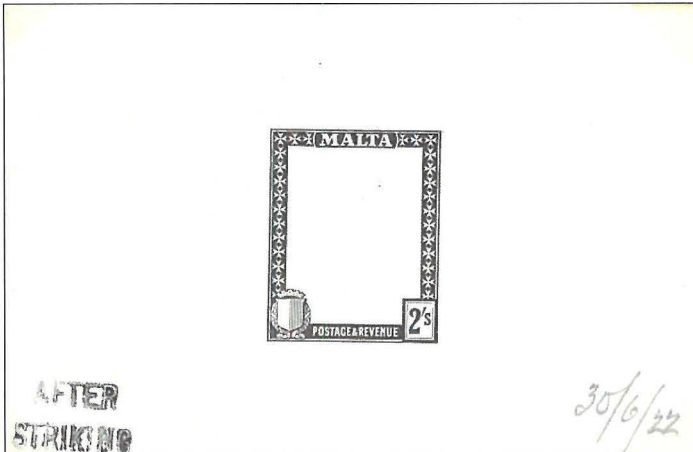


3 d black on yellow

Die proofs for the 2/- value



marked 'Before Striking' and dated 29th June 1922



marked 'After Striking' and dated 30th June 1922

2/- brown and blue, shades



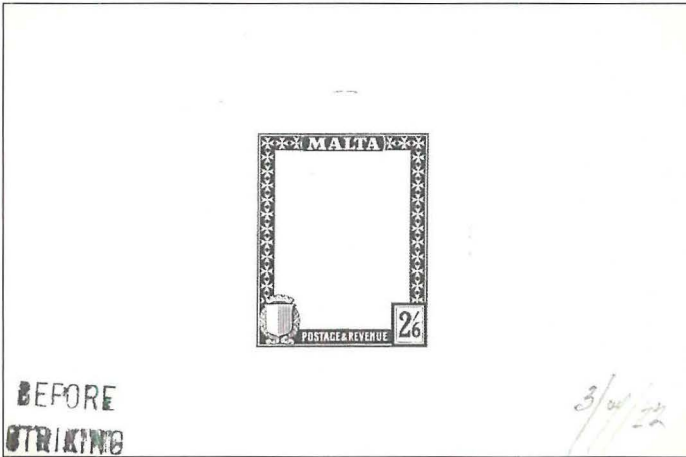
2/- brown and blue, shades, Plate 1 only



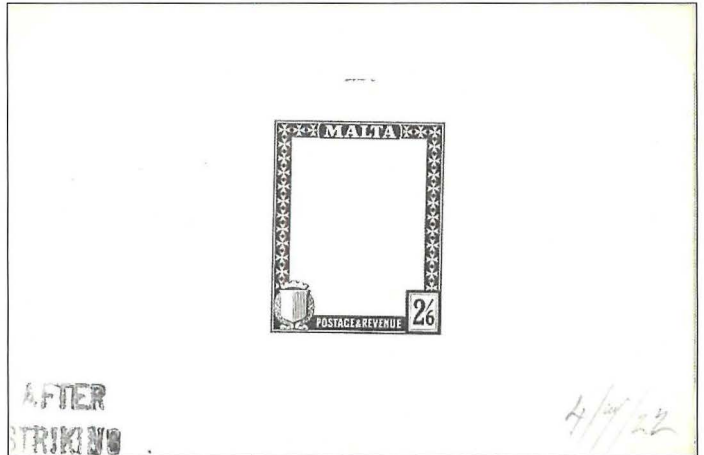
2/- brown and blue, used examples



Die proofs for the 2/6d value



Marked 'Before Striking' and dated 3rd July 1922



Marked 'After Striking' and dated 4th July 1922

2/6d magenta and black, shades, plate 1 only

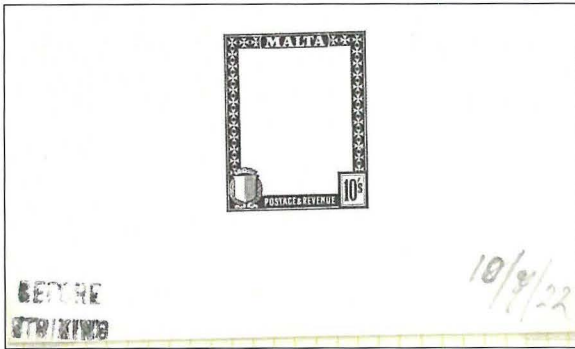


weak upper frame line of vignette

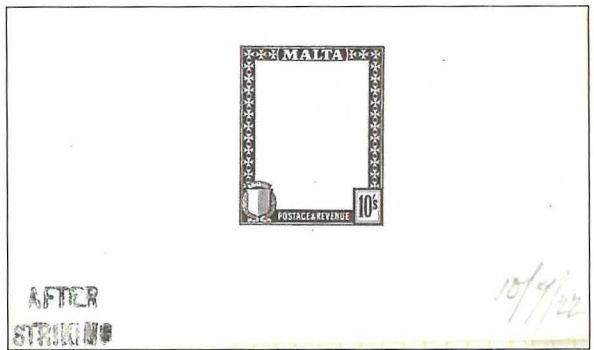
2/6d magenta and black, shades, plate 1 only



Die proofs for the 10/- value

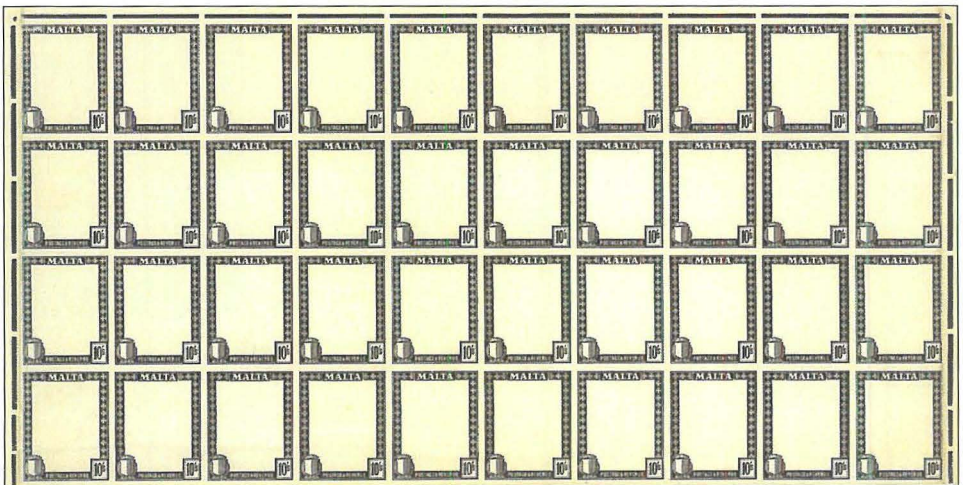


Marked 'BEFORE STRIKING' and dated 10th July 1922



Marked 'AFTER STRIKING' and dated 10th July 1922

Proof sheet of the surround for the 10/- value



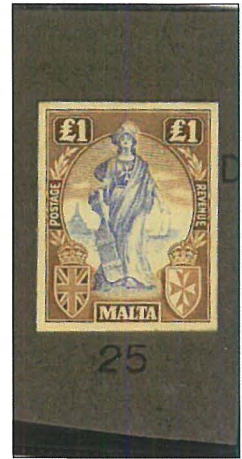
Colour trials and printers samples for the £ 1 value. Brown and blue.



Not overprinted or handstamped



*Handstamped
'SPECIMEN'*



*From a printers sample
book, no. 25*

Colour trials, and printers samples for the £ 1 value. Brown and blue.



*Handstamped
'SPECIMEN'*



*Overprinted
'SPECIMEN'*



*Handstamped
'SPECIMEN'*



*From a printers sample
book, numbered 64*

Colours trials, printers samples etc., for the £ 1 value. Green and blue, without gum or watermark.



Without handstamp or overprint



Handstamped 'SPECIMEN' from a printers sample book, numbered 25.



Without handstamp or overprint



Handstamped 'SPECIMEN'



Overprinted 'SPECIMEN'



From a printers sample book, numbered 25: left leg of 'M' in overprint damaged.



Overprinted 'SPECIMEN'

Bicolour proof of the £ 1 value



Bicolour submitted proof from both dies sent to Crown Agents on 29th May 1922 as annotated.

Overprinted 'SPECIMEN' stamps of the first printing, watermark sideways.



Watermark upright, 3rd printing, issued 14th May 1925

