

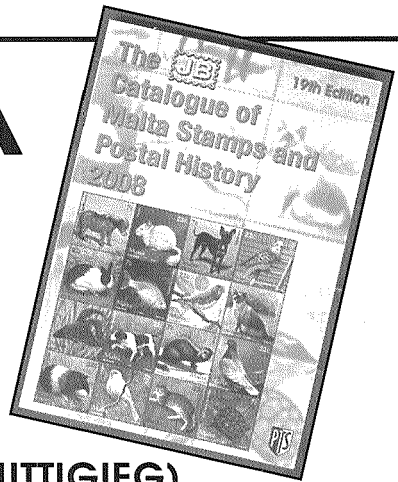
**Journal of**  
**THE MALTA PHILATELIC SOCIETY**

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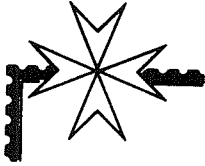


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**Vol. 40/2**

**August, 2011**

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# 1. Migiarrow Branch Post Office

by  
Alan Bannister

Tony Abela Abela Medici raised various questions regarding the use of the first datestamp at this Sub Post Office and from this flowed the questions of when was it opened, when did it become a BRANCH Post Office and when did it close? Incidentally the postage stamp illustrated with his article was actually dated 86 not 85.

There is fairly strong evidence that it was opened as a SUB Post Office on 1 December 1885 in the form of a letter from the Maltese Post Office during the First World War and which was reproduced in an early Malta Study Circle Newsletter (the first Circle - not the current one).

At the time we believed that in 1900 when Victoria became a Branch Post Office it was likely Migiarrow had as well, but this had never been proved and there were strong indications developing to say that it was either some time later or, indeed, that it had never become one. When searching Government Gazettes for postal information I found in the *Report on the Post Office for 1924-25* the following comment:-

“The striking difference between the figures against Migiarrow under headings Money Orders, Postal Order and Sale of Stamps and the corresponding figures for Victoria, Gozo, is due to the fact that until November 1924, the office at Migiarrow was not an authorized office for the issue and payment of money and postal orders. The Migiarrow District includes the villages of Ghainsielem, Kala, Nadur and Xeuchia and until then, holders of money orders residing within the district presented those orders, at the Migiarrow Office only for the Office in charge to transact them to his colleague at Victoria who remitted the relevant amounts for payment to the owners through the office at Migiarrow. As regards stamps the Postmaster at Migiarrow replenished his stock by supplies made to him by the Postmaster at Victoria. It was thus, be seen that the figures for money orders issued and paid and for stamps sold at the Victoria Gozo Branch Post Office, include respective amounts for those services transacted at Migiarrow until November 1924.”

Then:-

“By Government Notice No. 346 of the 27th November 1924 the authority, referred to elsewhere, for money and postal orders to be issued and paid at the Migiarrow District Post Office was legalized. As a consequence, the service of the Postmaster, who was also a Customs Officer and whose salary was paid in halves by this and the Customs Department were done away with and the Post Office at Migiarrow Gozo **was elevated to the status of a Branch Post Office** having the

identical attributions of the Office of Victoria and of the Branch Post Offices in Malta, and was placed under the charge of a regular (sic) appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Postal Clerk.”

Government Notice 346 reads:-

“It is notified that in exercise of the powers conferred on the Minister by article 2 of “The Post Office Act 1924”, the undersigned has directed that postal and money orders be issued and paid also at the Migiarrro Branch Post Office, Gozo, as from the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1924.

November 27, 1924

Enrico Mizzi,

Minister for Industry and Commerce.”

The necessary conclusion is that it became a BRANCH Post Office only in 1924 and the reason was simply to allow it to issue and pay money and postal orders.

An interesting aside to the above concerns a very few covers which show both VICTORIA and MIGIARRO cancellations. Two have been identified so far.

The first is a picture postcard to Firenze franked by a Queen Victoria ½d. value cancelled by VIC-1 dated A/AU 27/00. To the left is a strike of MIG-1 with the same codings and further to the left is a strike of VAG-7 later in the day. This was sold on e-bay in May 2004 and it turned out that the purchaser was none other than Tony Fenech. He had purchased it in the belief that Victoria was a newly created BRANCH PO and therefore Migiarrro, remaining a SUB PO, was required to recognise that they had received the item but had to leave it to the superior office to actually cancel the stamp i.e. the system that was used for a period after both of the offices were first opened when it was left to the General Post Office to actually cancel the stamp. This is the latest recorded date of use of MIG-1 on a complete item.

However, the second item is from a slightly later period being dated 1904 but it is similarly treated. Due to the fact that other items were known from Migiarrro during this extended period the owner, myself, had come up with a totally different theory. I concluded that the item had come from a location that was under the control of Victoria BPO but which had actually sent mail to Migiarrro SPO which then had to forward it to the correct office for normal treatment. As it was addressed outside of Gozo it would then have been returned to Migiarrro, the village, for despatch on the ferry. In looking for a location from which it might have come I concluded that the only candidate was COMINO.

Tony was shown this second item and the theory put to him. Sadly he passed away before he had come to any firmer conclusions and these covers still pose a problem as to why both offices used their datestamp.

## **2. 1885 Definitives. bisected 1d. Value.**

It has been known for a long time that the 1d. value was used in bisected form in December 1900. This was thought to have happened when the local Police Station at MELLIEHA ran out of ½d. value on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1900 during the holding of a military exercise in the area which led to an unexpected increase in local mail being posted there. The only problem with this supposition is that the bisected stamps appear to have been used for REVENUE purposes. It is known that W. Gatt, a local stamp enthusiast was in the Maltese forces at the time and was probably on the exercise. He certainly was the person who, on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1902, datestamped bisected stamps at the MELLIEHA Branch Post Office. It may be that the stories have been mixed up, but it may also be the case that Gatt had tried the same thing earlier when the Police Postal Agency did not have a postal datestamp and so the datestamp for revenue uses was used to meet a need.

An example of a bisected postage stamp with a datestamp tying it and showing the date 8 DEC.OO (it initially looks like a 6 at the front but close inspection shows it to almost certainly be an 8). This is not a postal datestamp and although the top is not visible it has all of the characteristics of the POLICE datestamps used at that time on revenue documents. The reverse of the paper shows no printing to indicate what the whole item might have been. These stamps are extremely rare, this being the only example I have seen in 35 years of collecting such items. What is interesting is that it was purchased from Sliema Stamp Auctions at a time when they were selling various rare items, generally linked to Gatt in some way and this item may have come from the same collection.

As always there is an interesting coincidence with the MELLIEHA bisects. The Postmaster of the Branch Post Office was Joseph Gatt Rutter. Is it possible that Gatt and the Postmaster were related and this led to the misuse of the datestamp by Gatt.

## **3. The 1956 3d. Value with inverted watermark**

Many specialists in Maltese stamps have never seen an example of this variety and the question is regularly asked “does it exist?” The simple answer is that if it is listed in Gibbons then it certainly does exist because the catalogue editor will only list items he knows exist, generally by seeing an example of each.

Personally I can say “YES” because sitting in my collection is an example -

possibly the only one in existence. When I started to collect way back in 1964 I focussed on Malta because the first stamps I purchased were from the GPO whilst I was on a “Sunspot” exercise with four Vulcan bombers at Luqa Airport. About five years later an example in a small auction house, North West Philatelic Auctions, caught my eye simply because I didn’t have the item in my collection. A bid placed and a short while later I became the proud possessor of the stamp.

As the years have gone by I have come to realise that it is very rare and probably unique. Gibbons lists it at £850 but they have never actually sold one in the last forty years and the figure is just one at which they would sell the stamp if they had it. My example is used - Gibbons only list it as used - and I presume it is the item the listing came from. The stamp has a slogan postmark which dates from early 1957 so it must have been used on commercial mail. This almost certainly means that the other examples were used in the same manner and the others have either been lost or not yet identified.

Incidentally the 6d. of the same issue also exists with inverted watermark. This is a different ball game as I was told that Gibbons purchased a complete mint pane many years ago and they were sold over a period of time to collectors. My own example was purchased in the early 1970’s and it regularly comes up for sale in different places.

## 4. “T” Markings

### Waterlow Setting Marks

Waterlow setting or ‘T’ marks are frequently met with. Although small they are intriguing and the reason behind their existence is given in the following letter, published in Stamp Collecting on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1954, from P.A. Waterlow, the Chairman of the Company, to W.T. Williams who had queried their presence on the GB 5 shillings value. The final sentence is of particular importance and relevance.

Dear Sir,

### King George VI High Values

In reply to your query regarding the ‘T’ mark traced in the above stamps, this mark is used by us when transferring printing plates and is used to line up the transfer cylinder with the marked out plate. It is cut into the original die on both sides of the stamp and taken up together with the stamp impression when the transfer cylinder of the die is made.

The method of use is to move the cylinder in the transfer press until such time as

these marks coincide with the marked outline of the plate. This may entail several attempts before correct alignment of the stamp is obtained. When the correct position is found, the cylinder is held in position and the various marks made and the area of the marked outline on the plate are removed by burnishing.

In this particular instance we would imagine that these 'T' marks have not been completely burnished out. It sometimes happens that to the transferor's eye the burnishing is complete, and in the facing of the plate with chromium these marks become able to print due to the building up of the deposited metal around these burnished marks, making them just prominent enough to give a weak impression.

For this reason we try to place these marks in some position of the engraving, where it is either rolled out by transferring or hidden by surrounding work.

All stamps are transferred in this manner and not solely the ones in question.

Yours faithfully,  
WATERLOW & SONS LTD  
P.A. Waterlow, Chairman

At first sight it would appear that these markings are irrelevant to us but in fact they are often the reason for small, or large, varieties appearing on the stamps we collect. Indeed examples are recorded by specialists on the majority of the King George VI definitive stamps of Malta and some of them raise basic questions.

Perhaps the best example of one of these which was not cleared at all is the "semaphore flaw" on the King George VI 5/- value. This has achieved catalogue status as SG. 23a and SG. 247b. What is intriguing about the two stamps is that the first is relatively common whilst the second is extremely rare - but only printing plate is stated to have been used.

I have believed for a long time that when the SELF-GOVERNMENT stamps were created the bulk of the stock held in Malta was returned to Britain, overprinted and then returned. I also believe that when stock of the 1953 set was received in Malta it was simply put on top of the existing stock. The result of this was that the stamps sent to Britain could be from ANY PRIOR printing as well as the latest received although the vast bulk would always be stamps from the latest printing. I personally have corner plate blocks showing plate numbers which can only have been produced had the stamps been originally handled in the manner I believe. I have also seen a report that a block from plate 3 of the ½d. Brown shows the "joined NT" flaw but have not had this confirmed. Plate 3 was last used for the March 1944 printing and there were three later printings from plate 4 before that stamps were overprinted. Of course, for some of the stamps only the latest printing existed and even if earlier printings were returned to Britain they might be from quite early



printings with later ones used up.

In thinking this two things become clear. SG. 247b is rare because only a few sheets were sent for overprinting which came from an early 5/- printing and these were simply used in the normal manner - indeed the stamp is only listed so far in used condition. The other is that at some point another printing plate for the 5/- value was created or the original plate was treated again to remove the "semaphore". If this is the case then the change must have been carried out relatively early because nearly all of the stamps were used BEFORE the overprinting was considered, i.e. only a very few of the early sheets were still there with most stamps overprinted being from a more recent printing.

The new King George VI study paper by Graham Pound gives information on more stamps showing traces of the "T" markings and it may well be that these reveal more apparently new printing plates. A research project for a member who has a large KGVI collection?

By sheer chance I have come across the following in the middle of some papers I kept. It comes from a series of articles written by Dickon Pollard.

"and the 5/- (British 1939 - 48 type) may be found with a "T" guide mark in the hair. The late Gerry Bater, well known as a philatelic photographer and philatelist, wrote a series of articles in Gibbons Stamp Monthly, which were full of new observations on the British "square" high value of 1939 - 48. Gerry was responsible for getting me to understand how "T" guide marks came into being. I quote and paraphrase him, from his book *Waterlow Procedures: King George VI "Arms to Festival high Values; Design to Press:"* For most of the arms high values two "T" guide marks were impressed in the original die, one each some 5-6 mm ABOVE and BELOW the stamp design. (These could) "sometimes be transferred to the printing plate". The "T" guide mark ABOVE would become the lower "T" of the stamp above. Few actually appeared on the plate; most were carefully burrished off and the position re-engraved when necessary. Sometimes partial marks remained. Doubled marks, marks on the neck (from a plate differently set up), marks at the base and even one where there is a clear "T" in the hair as well as another, diagonally placed across the hairline all exist. The assumption by philatelists that ("T" guide marks) must always appear in the King's hair on Great Britian high values is now proven to be unfounded."

This explains to me why the "T" marks on King George VI stamps of Malta are in different positions and why they happened. I hope that it helps you as well.

# **Philatelic Exhibition Commemorative Medals Issued by the Department of Posts (1969 ~ 1980)**

By

John V. De Battista

## **A few introductory words**

From time to time the subject of these commemorative medals comes up in discussions between collectors and surprisingly, it transpires that very little is known about them. In view of this I decided to try and bridge this gap in a very small way. It must be mentioned that the humble aim behind this listing is only to provide a record of the commemorative medals issued. As up to now it looks that no such information has been published yet, all the information provided has been gleaned from official sources in my own personal collection.

Finally, I augur that others would be able to add more details to this listing, especially with regards to the designers of these medals and the firm or firms entrusted with minting them. I also wish to thank Mr. Samuel Parnis for his help in scanning the medals for the illustrations provided.

## **Historic Background**

During Malta's philatelic "*Golden Age*", thanks to the genius of Chevalier Emvin Cremona, interest in Malta stamps was at its highest. The postal administration of the time, under the direction of the newly appointed Postmaster General Mr. Joseph Buttigieg (20.01.1969 – 04.02.1975) thought it would be a wise decision if it were to organise regular philatelic competitive exhibitions to further promote the hobby. Besides the competitors themselves, foreign postal administrations were also invited to participate.

The first such exhibition from a total of eight held took place at St. John's Co-Cathedral that same year. The event was a complete success and besides the exhibits mounted by the competitors; no less than forty-two foreign postal administrations took part.

To mark the exhibition, besides a commemorative card and a special hand stamp, the General Post Office also thought it fit to issue a commemorative medal for the occasion. This medal was to be the first from a series ending in 1980, marking each of the exhibitions held.

# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals

I<sup>st</sup> Malta Philatelic Exhibition

22<sup>nd</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1969

Bronze Gilt; Ø – 42.0 mm

Minting Limit: Not Available (thought to be 500)



## Obverse:

A grouping of stylized figures paying homage to baby Jesus in the manner of the “Christmas” stamp set issued on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1968 is to be found at the centre. Above the group one finds the word MALTA while below is the date 1969. The words WIRJA TA’ BOLOL TAL-MILIED • CHRISTMAS STAMP EXHIBITION \* are to be found encircling the design around the border.

## Reverse:

An outline map of the Maltese Islands in the centre with a stylized rectangular perforated stamp bearing the date 22-31•XII•1969 bordering the south west section of Malta. To the north east of the island the word MALTA is to be found.

# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals

II<sup>nd</sup> Malta Philatelic Exhibition  
28<sup>th</sup> December 1970 to 9<sup>th</sup> January 1971

Designed by: Chev. E.V. Cremona

Bronze Gilt; Ø – 41.9 mm.

Minting Limit: 500 individually numbered and cert. type 1.



## Obverse:

Stylized figure in the manner of the designs used for the “F.A.O. Regional Conference for Europe” stamp set issued on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1968. Leaping dolphin facing left next to figure’s right shoulder and waves to its left. A stylized perforation band with the year 19 to the left and 70 to the right of the central figure separates the whole in two. The border is embossed with the words WIRJA / FILATELIKA / TA’ MALTA.

## Reverse:

Split in three sections by means of a stylized perforation band in which one finds the words MALTA PHILATELIC / EXHIBITION – 1970. Above the band is a galleon of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta while below it is an eight-turreted tower.

# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals

III<sup>rd</sup> Malta Philatelic Exhibition

29<sup>th</sup> December 1971 to 12<sup>th</sup> January 1972

Bronze Gilt; Ø – 42.0 mm.

Minting Limit: 500 individually numbered and cert. type 2



## Obverse:

The Independence Coat of Arms of Malta at the centre with the words WIRJA FILATELIKA TA' MALTA 1971 encircling the design around the border.

## Reverse:

A square in the form of a perforated stamp bearing the words MALTA / PHILATELIC / EXHIBITION / 1971 at the centre, with the post horn placed above it. Two crossed palm fronds are to be found adorning the “stamp”

# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals

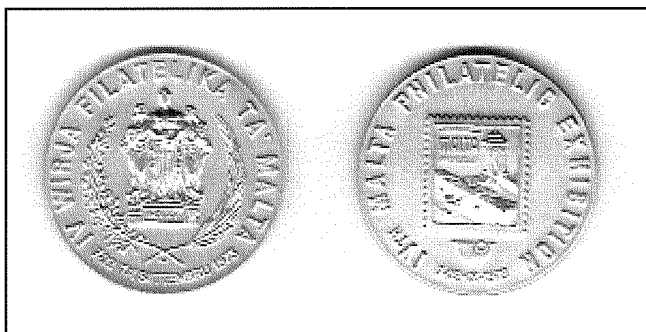
IV<sup>th</sup> Malta Philatelic Exhibition

7<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1973

Designed by: George M. Pace

Bronze Gilt; Ø – 38.0 mm.

Minting Limit: 400 individually numbered and cert. type 2



## Obverse:

The Great Siege monument, a work by Antonio Sciortino, is to be found at the centre; with an olive branch and a palm frond, crossing one another, beneath. The words IV WIRJA FILATELIKA TA' MALTA 7-22 TA' SETTEMBRU 1973 encircle the design around the border.

## Reverse:

Reproduction of the five penny definitive stamp, the subject of which depicts "Fortifications", issued on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1970; with the post horn beneath. The words IV TH MALTA PHILATELIC EXHIBITION 7-22,IX,1973 encircle the design around the border.

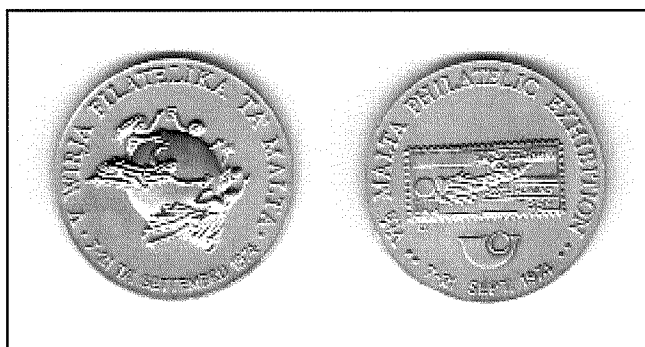
# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals

V<sup>th</sup> Malta Philatelic Exhibition

7<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> September 1974

Bronze Gilt; Ø – 37.5 mm

Minting Limit: 400 individually numbered and cert. type 2



## Obverse:

The UPU emblem which embodies the Universal Postal Union's truly universal mission, depicting five messengers who symbolise the five continents as they pass letters round the globe. The words V WIRJA FILATELIKA TA' MALTA • 7-21 TA' SETTEMBRU 1974 • encircle the design around the border

## Reverse:

Reproduction of the thirty-five cent stamp from the Airmail Definitive set issued on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 1974, with the post horn below. The words Vth MALTA PHILATELIC EXHIBITION •• 7-21 SEPT. 1974 •• encircle the design around the border.

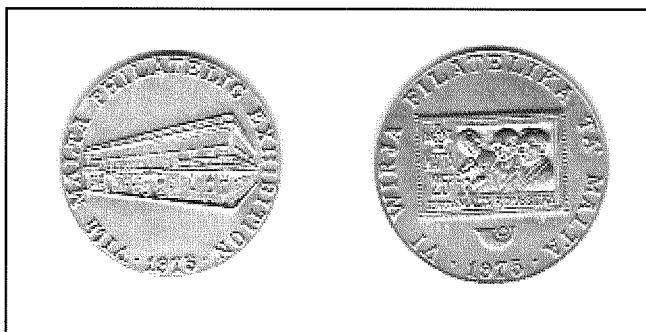
# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals

VI<sup>th</sup> Malta Philatelic Exhibition

11<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> December 1975

Bronze Gilt; Ø – 37.7 mm.

Minting Limit: 400 individually numbered and cert. type 3



## Obverse:

The Grand Master's Palace in Valletta, designed by Maltese architect Gerolamo Cassar and erected between 1572 and 1580 to the order of Grand Master Jean de la Cassiere is shown at the centre, with the words VIth MALTA PHILATELIC EXHIBITION • 1975 • encircling the design around the border.

## Reverse:

Reproduction of the twenty-five cent stamp portraying Malta's first President Sir Anthony Mamo addressing the public, flanked on his right by Dr. Anton Buttigieg and on his left by Prime Minister Duminku Mintoff from the "Birth of the Republic" set issued on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1975 at the centre, with the post horn beneath. The words VI WIRJA FILATELIKA TA' MALTA • 1975 • are to be found encircling the design around the border.



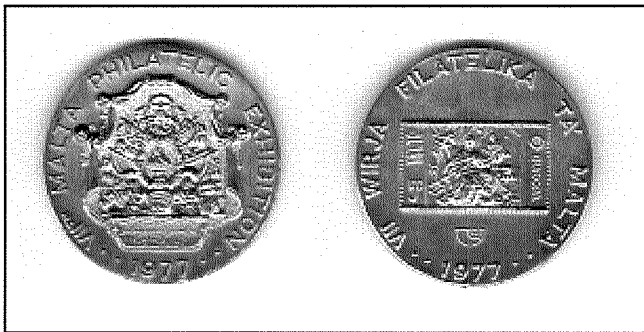
# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals

VII<sup>th</sup> Malta Philatelic Exhibition

12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> December 1977

Gold Plated; Ø – 38.3 mm.

Minting Limit: 400 individually numbered and cert. type 3



## Obverse:

A reproduction of the emblematic and symbolic sculpture to be found above the main entrance leading into the Auberge d' Italie, which housed the G.P.O. in Valletta from 1973 to 1997. The words VII<sup>TH</sup> MALTA PHILATELIC EXHIBITION •• 1977 •• encircle the design around the border.

## Reverse:

Reproduction of the five cent stamp showing an Allegory of Malta from the "Europa" set issued on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1975, with the post horn emblem underneath. The words VII WIRJA FILATELIKA TA' MALTA •• 1977 •• encircle the central design around the border.

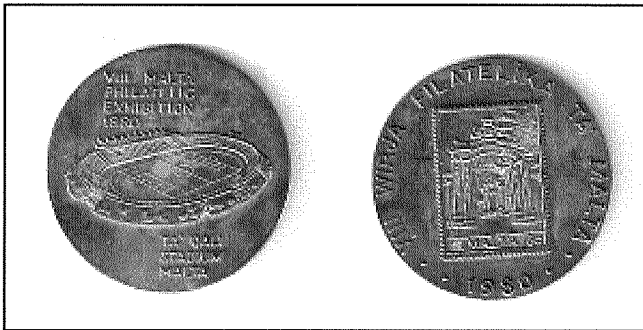
# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals

VIII<sup>th</sup> Malta Philatelic Exhibition

9<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> December 1980

Gold Plated; Ø – 38.0 mm.

Minting Limit: 400 individually numbered and cert. type 3



## Obverse:

The Ta' Qali National Stadium inaugurated in 1980 in the centre, with the words VII / PHILATELIC / EXHIBITION / 1980 above to the left of the design and TA' QALI / STADIUM / MALTA to the right below.

## Reverse:

A reproduction of the six cent stamp from the "Restoration of Monuments" set issued on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 1980, with the words VIII WIRJA FILATELIKA TA' MALTA •• 1980 •• encircling the design around the border.

# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals

## Page from the 1980 Philatelic Exhibition Catalogue

### MIDALJA LI TIKKOMMEMORA T-VIII WIRJA FILATELIKA TA' MALTA

#### VIII MALTA PHILATELIC EXHIBITION COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL

Li Stadium Nazzjonali (Ta' Qafi, li se jesa madwar 30,000 spettatur, jidher fuq il-faccata tal-midalja. Li Stadium, li huwa l-ewwel *sports ground* ta' Malta ta' *standard* internazzjonali, se jigi nawgurat fit-13 ta' Diċembru, 1980. Minbarra *football pitch* bi' haxx, li Stadium għandu madwaru *track* għall-atletika u *facilities* ta' għal avvenimenti b' jkum *stgħu* jsiru fil-*ground*. Li *sports* li jsir ta' *gewwa* jista' jsir *gol-bini* li fuqu hemm li *stands*, b'hekk li Stadium jkun *kumpless* ta' li *Sports* u mhux biss *ground* tal-*football*.



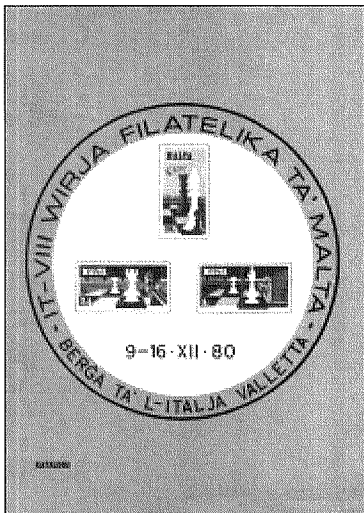
The Ta' Qafi National Stadium, which will seat about 30,000 spectators, is featured on the obverse of the medal. The stadium, which is Malta's first sports ground of international standard, is being inaugurated on the 13 December, 1980. Besides a grass football pitch, the Stadium has a surrounding athletics track and facilities for field events. The structure carrying the stands will accommodate indoor sports, thus making the Stadium a sports complex more than just a football ground.

Il-bolla tas-sitt centezmi (6c) tas-sett tar-Restawr ta' Monumenti mahnega bil-15 ta' Frar, 1980, tidher fuq wara tal-midalja. Il-bolla turi l-Palazz Vilhena u s-Sur Il-Palazz inbena mill-Grand Mastro Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736) b'halha residenza u l-*fejali* tiegħu fl-*Imdina* li qabel kienet il-kapitali ta' Malta.



The six cents (6c) stamp from the Restoration of Monuments set issued on 15 February, 1980 is reproduced on the reverse of the medal. The stamp depicts the Vilhena Palace and Bastion. The Palace was built by Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736) as his official residence in Mdina, the then capital of Malta.

# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals



*Catalogue cover of the last  
Malta Philatelic Exhibition  
held by the Department of Posts*

## Example of Authenticity Certificate Type 1

MALTA PHILATELIC EXHIBITION 1970

**GILT BRONZE MEDAL**  
Published in the Malta Government  
Gazette No. 12,479 dated the 24.11.70  
(Designed by Chev. E.V. Constant)

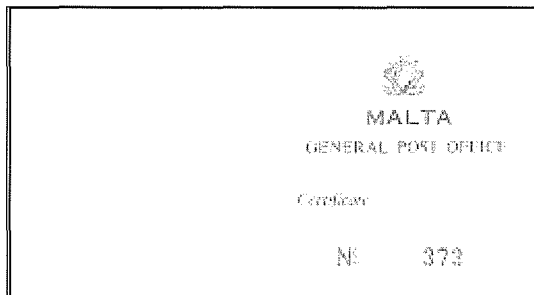
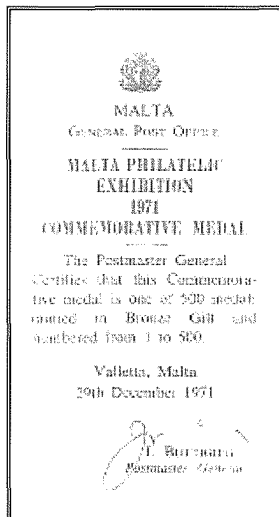
This is to certify that Medal No. 129  
commemorating the Malta Philatelic Exhibition - 1970 is an official one  
out of a number of 500 issued by the General Post Office, Malta.

JOS. BUTTIGIEG  
Postmaster General

*Plain Back*


# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals

## Example of Authenticity Certificate Type 2




# Malta G.P.O. Commemorative Medals


## Example of Authenticity Certificate Type 3

  
MALTA  
GENERAL POST OFFICE

MALTA PHILATELIC EXHIBITION 1975  
COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL

The Postmaster General Certifies that this Commemorative medal is  
one of 400 medals minted in Bronze Gilt and numbered from 1 to 400.  
Valletta, Malta  
11th December, 1975

  
G. W. BRAGG  
*A. Postmaster General*

  
MALTA  
GENERAL POST OFFICE

Certificate No 158

# The story of Tin Can Mail

by  
Mr. Anthony Camilleri

On the remote country of Tonga in the South Pacific, there is a very special island. Its name is Niuafu'ou but is most commonly known as **Tin Can** Island.

The story begins back in 1882 when William Travers, a plantation manager working for the firm Osterman Dervy & Company in Sydney, Australia, found himself 'marooned' on this tiny doughnut-shaped island half way between Fiji and Samoa. It is nothing more than the tip of a volcano jutting out of the vast blue waters of the Pacific. Just a couple of miles out, he could see the passenger liners steaming past, but none ever called because the island had no harbour and no beaches. In fact the steep sides plunge six miles down to the bottom of the Tongan Trench making it impossible to anchor and hard to land even a rowing boat.

The only white man on the island, Travers resented being unable to communicate with the outside world. So when the need to contact his company in Australia became desperate, he came up with an ingenious plan.

He wrote to the Tongan postal authorities asking them to seal his mail in a ship's 40-lb biscuit tin or kerosene can as a form of waterproof mail containers. By soldering them securely tight, the air inside kept them floating so that they could safely be thrown overboard., and then arrange for the captain of one of the Union Steamship Company vessels to throw it overboard as they passed the island on their way between Suva and Fiji. A flag was attached so swimmers could easily locate them. These ships traded regularly between the islands of the Pacific. If it happened to be dark as the ship approached the island the captain would give a hoot on the ship's siren and then wait for a given time. If no one came out the ship would continue and the mail then had to wait till the next trip.

Carefully he wrapped this letter in grease-proof paper and tied it to a short stick. He approached the strongest swimmer on the island and asked him to swim out to the next ship and hand his letter to the captain. In this manner mail was transported from the island to passing steamers or vice versa. Sailor W. Hetting on the TS Opolu worked with a soldering iron to make tins waterproof and when Captain Crosshaw slowed the ship near the island and dropped these cans overboard the Tin Can Mail service was born. It was to become a regular happening after Arthur Tindall set up as a trader on the island some years later.

The island's fishermen were well used to swimming in the dangerous shark-infested waters, which they did clinging to a long buoyant fau pole cut from a type of hibiscus. By putting a pole under one arm they could float and fish for hours on end.

However, the strong currents meant that a swimmer might often struggle for up to six hours to retrieve a mail tin dropped from a ship only a mile off shore. In stormy weather it proved impossible to collect the mail and any number of other methods were tried. In 1902 William Edgar Geil wrote in his book 'Ocean and Isle' that he had watched the captain send letters to the island by rocket. On this occasion the attempt was successful, but often the rocket overshot the island altogether, landed in the lake in the centre, or just got lost in the undergrowth. On a previous occasion the package of letters had burst into flames en route. The arrival of the rocket was an event that caused the entire population to down tools and watch. Then began the mad scramble to retrieve the package and collect the reward.

Charles Stuart Ramsay a copra trader with Morris Hedstrom Ltd, who had been hospitalised for several years after being severely gassed in the First World War, came to Niuafu'ou as a plantation manager in 1921. He too needed to communicate with the outside world and took over the task himself using the Niuafu'ou fishing technique of *fakalukuluku*, swimming with a floating pole, to convey cans of mail. The only white man to do so, he went out 112 times in all weathers. If a ship happened to pass at night it would blow its siren and the swimmers would go out as a group, one carrying a lamp. Back on shore they would build bonfires to guide the swimmers home to the tiny island.

The next phase in the Tin Can Mail saga came when Walter George Quensell, a copra trader from Burns Philips, arrived on the island in 1928. He quickly realised that philatelic interest could be generated by this unique method of delivering the mail and so, with a child's printing set, he produced a rubber stamp which read "TIN CAN MAIL" and applied it to all outgoing letters.

The total eclipse of the sun in 1930 was best viewed from Niuafu'ou and had a major impact on what was now known as Tin Can Island. Paul Diefenderfer, the Director of Education in Suva, accompanied the American expedition as chief photographer. He liked the idea of cachets and the scientists were quick to produce one of their own to commemorate the occasion. Diefenderfer also persuaded Quensell to develop his idea further and have rubber stamps made in New Zealand.

Inevitably one of the 'postmen' was attacked by a shark and died. On his deathbed he confessed that, in a temper, he had opened the tap on one of the huge concrete fresh water tanks. This was a great crime because the island had no fresh water and rain water had to be collected during the hurricane season and stored. The Chief pointed out that what he had done threatened the very existence of the inhabitants and said that the Gods had justly punished him.

As it happened there were no further incidents in which sharks were involved - and no further tampering with the water supply!

Queen Salote Toupou of Tonga and her government however, were very upset



and ordered that in future, mail was to be collected by outrigger canoe. This was much more difficult because the boats had to be thrown from the cliff top. The crew had then to jump into the water and climb aboard.

There were no restrictions on fishing from a fau pole and it is thought that many of the swimming mailmen continued to collect the mail this way when no one was looking. At one stage they threatened to strike and it was only averted by Quensell cutting the word 'canoe' from all his rubber stamps.

Quensell arranged with ships' captains that if passengers mailed their letters 'in the Tin' together with 6d to cover stamps and costs, he would apply his cachets before posting them on. Captains soon applied rubber stamps of their own telling the story of Tin Can Island and the ship which carried the letter. The history of all these cachets has now become a study in itself.

Naturally the passengers loved to watch the 'natives' collecting the mail and soon most of the cruise liners made a point of calling at Tin Can Island. People wrote from many parts of the world enclosing their 6d and a self-addressed envelope. By enclosing £1 one could get the entire set of definitives and registration too!

In later years Quensell developed cachets in a variety of languages. Despite the impression this created that Tin Can Mail was a philatelic gimmick, it was still the only way the islanders could get their letters. For over 100 years, even Government correspondence with officials on the island, came in, and went out, in tin cans and did not escape Quensell's ever-more ornate cachets.

The islanders benefited greatly from the interest that this generated because, instead of a vessel visiting once a year to collect the copra harvest, they now had visits from cruise ships as often as twice a week. These brought not only the mail, newspapers and magazines, but fresh meat and vegetables, as well as news of the outside world.

Being a volcano, Niuafu'ou was subject to constant tremors but in 1946 there was a huge eruption and half the island was buried under lava. Miraculously no lives were lost but within twenty minutes, the recently built radio station and Quensell's house with his entire collection of Tin Can Mail were among the casualties. It was three days before a passing plane saw the eruption and radioed for help.

With Krakatoa very much on their minds, the Government ordered the evacuation of the entire island, and it was to be 12 years before the islanders would be permitted to return and harvest their valuable copra crop. By that time Quensell had died.

In a letter, Quensell told a friend that during his 27 years on the island, he had sent more than one and a half million letters to 148 nations and states. His cachets became ever more elaborate, such as the delicate large map of the island showing its sulphurous lake. He wrote that towards the end, excursion vessels had brought as many as 40,000 letters a visit, mostly from the USA.

By the 1960s the Niuafu'ou viceroy, the Hon Nobel Fusitu'a, unofficial

postmaster, was sending his outrigger canoe, painted green and pink with an outboard motor, to deliver and collect the tin can mail from the Matson passenger liners, Monterey and Mariposa.

It was not until 1962 that the Matson line, responding to pleas from the islanders, resurrected the Tin Can Mail, inviting Quensell's son, now living in Auckland, to sign some commemorative covers.

The islanders really needed the contact with the outside world and the move was a great success. However, the visits proved so popular with the cruise passengers that the genuine mail was swamped; making commercial covers from the period extremely rare.


Tin Can Mail continued for over 100 years, in fact until 1983, when an airfield was built on the island and, sadly, it all came to an end.



TIN CAN - CANOE MAIL : ISLAND

TIN CAN MAIL


TIN CAN MAIL  
NIUAFOOU ISLAND - TONGA




To Mr. Peter Buttigieg,  
33 Porta Burmola St.,  
Cospicua, MALTA,  
Mediterranean Sea.

BLECHDOSEN POST  
ISLAND NIUAFOOU - TONGA

TIN CAN MAIL  
BOITE DE MALLE FER-BLANC  
BLECHDOSEN POST  
NIUAFOOU ISLD. TONGA



ORIGINAL TIN CAN MAIL COVER  
W. G. QUENSELL  
T. C. D. M. MAN  
NIUAFOOU ISLD. TONGAN ISLDS.  
SOUTH SEA



*Walt: Geo Quensell  
T.C.D.M.M.*



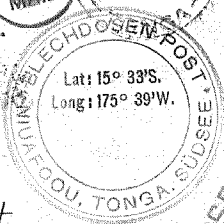
TIN CAN - CANOE MAIL : ISLAND

TIN CAN MAIL

NIUAFOOU ISLAND

The letter enclosed in a water-tight tin was put into the sea from the cruise steamer "Maunganui" off Punguoa or "Tin-Can Island" in the Tongan Group. Lat: 15° 33' South. Long: 175° 39' West on the 6th September, 1937.

G. B. MORGAN, D.S.C.,  
COMMANDER.

Lat: 15° 33'S.  
Long: 175° 39'W.

BLECHDOSEN POST  
ISLAND NIUAFOOU - TONGA

DESPATCHED BY THE TIN CAN MAIL

*Victor Librey  
9 Gafa Street  
Hamrun, Malta*

# Do you know what happened today in history 75 and 100 years ago?

by  
Marc Parren

Well, 75 years ago, on 10 April 1936, LZ-129 HINDENBURG arrived back at Friedrichshafen, the airship was returning from the first South America Flight 1936, the first intercontinental trip of the new airship.



*Bordstempel of airship LZ-8 DEUTSCHLAND from 1911*

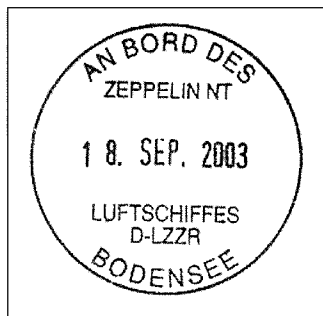
And 100 years ago, on 10 April 1911, airship LZ-8 DEUTSCHLAND was transferred from Baden-Oos to Düsseldorf. Nothing special about this positioning flight, except that this was the first flight with an on-board cachet (Bordstempel).

The design of the Bordstempel from 1911 was used for numerous Bordstempel of other airships as well, like the Bordstempel of LZ-127 GRAF ZEPPELIN. And the 1911 design is even used for Bordstempel of the latest zeppelin NT airships, like the illustrated Bordstempel of airship D-LZZR BODENSEE.

The whole story of “100 years Bordstempel” can be read here: [http://www.ezep.de/article/2011sp\\_100\\_years\\_bordstempel.html](http://www.ezep.de/article/2011sp_100_years_bordstempel.html)

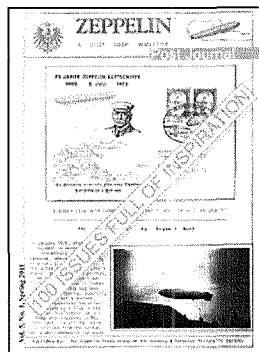
## ZEPPELIN POST JOURNAL - 100th issue

The Spring2011 issue of the ZEPPELIN POST JOURNAL is the 100th issue of this publication. And the topic of this jubilee issue is “100” with interesting and fascinating articles about Count Zeppelin’s 100th birthday, LZ-100, flight number 100, 100 dropped pieces, registration number 100, R100 and 100 years Bordstempel, just to mention a few.



*Bordstempel of airship D-LZZR BODENSEE from 2003*

The jubilee issue will be mailed to subscribers mid of April, for a sneak preview see here: <http://www.ezep.de/zpj/2011sp.html>



## eZEPtalk - FASCINATING STORIES FROM THE ZEPPELIN BOARD

According to an article by Cyril Deighton (“Some New Data on Irish Zeppelin post”, The Airpost Journal, November 1982, page 40-42), there are only 5 Irish covers known to have been flown on the 1st South America Flight 1932 of LZ-127 GRAF ZEPPELIN. Andreas Schlegel started a thread on [www.eZEPtalk.de](http://www.eZEPtalk.de) to find out more about the five covers from Ireland. The counting started and thanks to the help of our great zeppelin mail community, we have now traced 15 covers from Ireland on this first flight.

The whole story can be followed here on [www.eZEPtalk.de](http://www.eZEPtalk.de) and the listing includes also images of all 15 recorded covers from Ireland. If you have another one in your collection, please report it.



*Ireland, 1st South America Flight 1932, one of the 15 recorded covers.*

## NEW AND INTERESTING ZEPPELIN LINKS

- LZ-127 GRAF ZEPPELIN at Boeblingen-Flughafen 1929 and 1931: A very stylish website about airfield Boeblingen with a fascinating section on the two zeppelin landings there.

<http://flughafenbb.wordpress.com/zeppelin-lz-127/>

- LZ-129 HINDENBURG model: German postal service Deutsche Post is selling a zeppelin model of LZ-129: The metal-model is almost 20 cm long and is available for Euro 19.95 here: <http://philatelie.deutschepost.de/philatelie/shop/>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON ZEPPELIN MAIL AND AIRSHIP MEMORABILIA:

- The web portal for zeppelin mail and airship memorabilia: <http://www.eZEP.de/>
- The board for zeppelin mail and airship memorabilia: <http://www.eZEPtalk.de/>
- Find us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/zeppelinpost/116072294222>
- Follow us on twitter: <http://twitter.com/zeppelinpost>

## OPENED BUT UNCENSORED: Difficult times for the censors with the Maltese language at hand

by

Marc Parren and Konrad Morenweiser

A most interesting cover addressed to Malta by a Maltese in India was offered on Ebay at the closing of the year 2010, which at first raised more questions than answers. The cover showed the well known blue/white Egyptian resealing label, but this time with a red overprint OPENED BUT UNCENSORED, and was offered at an

asking price of \$245 and remained unsold. This type of re-sealing label had never been reported (Little 2000) before so most collectors likely believed it concerned a forgery in which the red overprint was added later on. After it remained unsold we had some correspondence on this item and MP decided to acquire the item as it still looked to be genuine. Accordingly the seller was contacted, even he was surprised it had

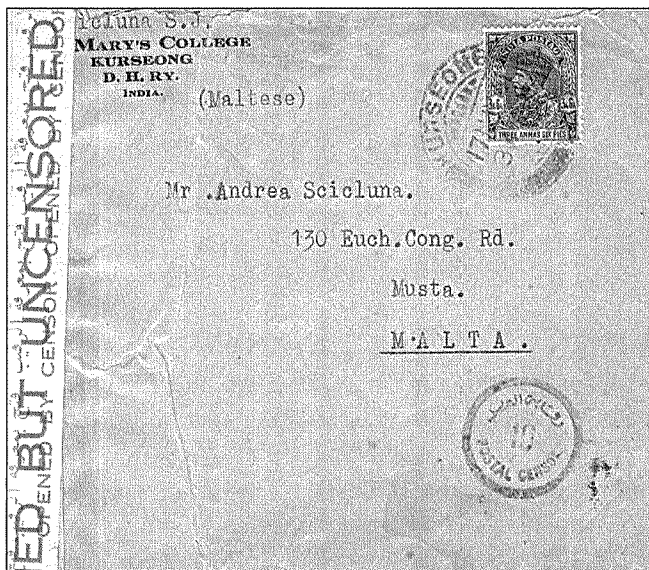


Fig. 1a

remained unsold, so the item was acquired.

Let us now have a closer look at this cover which was franked by an Indian 3a6p stamp and cancelled Kurseong 17 MAY 1941 (Fig. 1). Kurseong forms the southern terminus for the steam-powered trains of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. The cover was written by the Maltese Scicluna residing at St. Mary's College founded in 1889, which concerns a Theological College training

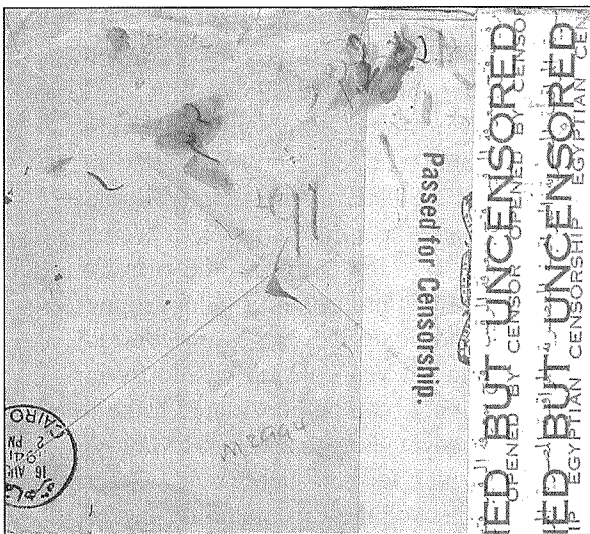


Fig. 1b

Jesuit seminarians to the priesthood. It is not surprising to find a Maltese here, as Maltese Jesuits were trained in Italy too when the war broke out (Galea 2002).

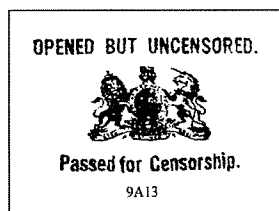


Fig. 2

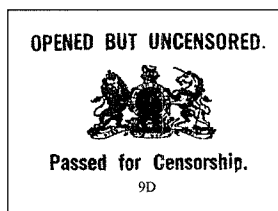


Fig. 3

as was also noted on the front of the cover. The Indian label should be either type 9A13 (Fig. 2) which is known from Calcutta or 9D (Fig. 3) which censor station is still unknown (Morenweiser 2007). So this cover passed through censorship in India uncensored not having a censor mastering this language. Next the letter was forwarded to Malta over Egypt where it arrived three months later in August of that year as the backstamp Cairo 16 AUG 1941 proves. Here the same problem occurred since after opening the cover once more, none of the censors could read the Maltese language. Accordingly the so far unreported blue /white Egyptian resealing label with red overprint OPENED BUT UNCENSORED was applied. Censorship was left over to the Malta censors, but obviously it was no longer opened at Malta. So the application of these labels might have to do with the usage of an unusual language which could not be read in India nor in Egypt.

While checking pages from file DEFE 1/227 of the National Archives, an official

record of this mysterious Egyptian resealing label was found. Specimens of both the normal blue/white Egyptian resealing label and the overprinted blue/white Egyptian resealing label with red overprint OPENED BUT UNCENSORED were presented and signed by the Officer in Charge on 18 March 1941 (Fig. 4). This confirms the official introduction of this resealing label around that date and since it never was reported before in the 70 years which passed by in the meantime, it can be considered to be a great rarity. Most likely thanks to the Maltese language which formed such a rarity that it passed unchecked the censorship offices of India and Egypt while nobody was bothered anymore at arrival in Malta.

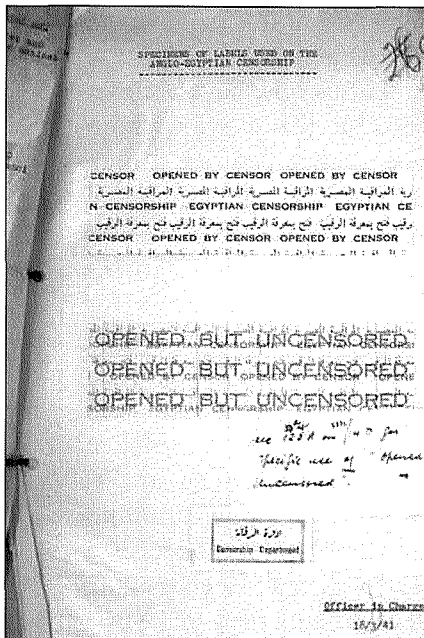


Fig. 4

Galea, Anthony T. (2002). Maltese Jesuits interned in Italy WWII. *Melita* 15(8): 239-245.

Little, D.J. (2000). British Empire Civil Censorship Devices, World War II: Colonies and Occupied Territories - Africa, Section 1. UK: Civil Censorship Study Group.

Morenweiser, Konrad (2007). British Empire Civil Censorship Devices World War II: Colonies and Occupied Territories - British Asia, Section 4. Fifth and revised edition. UK: Civil Censorship Study Group.

# MALTEX 2011

will be held on

**20-23 October 2011**

*Inform Mr H Wood*

*52 St Domnic Str Sliema SLM 1405*

*of your participation by end of August 2011*



# **Engravers of Bills of Health issued by the Order in Malta**

by  
Dr A Bonnici

Bills of health issued by the Castellania or law courts to those embarking from Malta were reproduced as a printed form to be filled manually in large numbers, but only five have come to light so far.

These were printed on a large copper plate engraved cartouche surmounted by the arms of the reigning grandmaster. Within the cartouche was a printed form to be filled with the particulars of the individual for whom the bill was issued. The engraving of these bills, and at times, modifications to the copper plate, were carried out locally by Master Giovanni Lapignani, nicknamed il Genovese, and by a certain Nicola ( AOM 2068, f.231v; 2039. f.63; 2045. f.42).

When Grand Master Ximenes succeeded G.M. Pinto the coat of arms of Pinto was substituted by that of G.M. Ximenes on the plate, with the rest of the plate remaining unchanged.

Shortly after Grand Master De Rohan 's accession, a completely new copper plate was ordered.

This was designed and engraved in Palermo by Francesco di Marino and by Giuseppe Garofalo respectively. This new copper plate was by far, the most refined of the ones known to have been in use by the press.

## **Bills of Health issued by the Order in Malta**

by  
Dr Paul Cassar (1978)

### **Introduction**

When in January 1977 I published an article on an eighteenth-century bill of health of the Order of St John issued from Malta in 1782 (Cassar, 1977), I stated that it was the only one that I had encountered during 23 years of research in Maltese medical history. That statement is no longer valid for I have recently uncovered four other such bills issued by the Knights of the Order of St John from Malta before and after 1782. It is to place my previous report in its proper perspective that the present study has been undertaken.

The earliest of these four bills belongs to September 1713 at the time of the grandmastership of Fra Ramon Perellos y Roccaful; the second and third were issued in February and in October 1766 respectively during the rule of Grand



Master Emanuel Pinto de Fonseca; and the fourth one dates from 1794 at the time of Grand Master Emanuel de Rohan Polduc.

## **The Bills of Health**

### *Bill of 16 September 1713*

The document, with ragged margins and markings of square folding, measures 29.5 cm by 43 cm (Plate 1). The printed Latin text is enclosed within an oblong framed panel. On top of this panel, in the centre, is the escutcheon of Grand Master Ramon Perellos y Roccaful (1697-1720), displaying three (golden) pears on a black background quartered with the white cross on a red field, the emblem of the Order of St John of Jerusalem and Malta. This coat-of-arms is surmounted by an open crown and is flanked by the symbolic female figures of Justice, with scales in her right hand and a sword in her left, and of Fame blowing a trumpet held in her left hand. This ensemble is surmounted by military trophies consisting of banners, lances, drums, etc.

At the left extremity of the top of the frame is the erect figure of St John the Baptist and, at the other end, a representation of St Paul in the act of shaking the viper into the fire. On each side of the panel hangs a vertical festoon of leaves.

In the centre of the bottom part of the panel is affixed, with red wax, a white paper seal embossed with the coat-of-arms of the *Castellano* (President of the Grand Court) Fra. T. Ermanno Baron de Schaden. On each side of the seal is a branch of laurel and a palm frond.

The text is printed in Latin but the description of the identity of the individual to whom the bill of health was issued is handwritten in ink in Italian. It states (translated): ‘Gio Francesco Arbolense... (cannot be deciphered) from Valletta, 36 years of age, ordinary height, bald but wearing a wig, is travelling to Agosta and other parts of the Kingdom of Sicily’. It is dated 16 September 1713 and signed by *Commendatore* E. de Schaden, *Castellano*, and Bartholomew Paschali, Master Notary of the Grand Court.

### *Bill of 28 February 1766*

The sheet of this certificate measures 43.5 cm in height and 60 cm in length. The text is enclosed within an architectural format with baroque trimmings and is embellished with the eight pointed cross of the Order of St John. The head-piece carries the coat-of-arms of Grand Master Manoel Pinto de Fonseca (1714-73). These armorial bearings, consisting of five (silver) crescents on a red field and quartered with the white cross of the Order, are surmounted by a closed crown topped by the eight-pointed Maltese cross. It is surrounded by trophies and is flanked by the allegorical figures of Justice and Prosperity seated on a band of clouds. The upright figures of St John the Baptist and St Paul appear near the edge of a projecting bracket at each end of the headpiece. Set for emphasis in the centre, beneath the escutcheon of

the Grand Master, is a vignette showing shipping in the Grand Harbour of Valletta. A semi-nude male human figure is seated on the ground against a background of banners and armour in each bottom corner of the print. The central of the base of the framework is hidden from view by a white paper seal, affixed with red wax, bearing the faintly embossed coat-of-arms of the *Castellano Commendatore* Fr Giuseppe Provana de Colegno, the President of the court (Plate 2).

The handwritten description of the personal characteristics of the departing master of the vessel reads (translated): ‘The Maltese vessel named St John the Evangelist and Souls of Purgatory, of the skipper Thomas Giordano, aged 35 years, of ordinary stature, with chestnut coloured hair and dark complexion (is sailing) with eleven members of crew whose names appear overleaf. The ship is bound for Mascali in Sicily’. It is dated 28 February 1766 and has the signature of the *Castellano* mentioned above and of the Notary of the Court Peter Paul Gontii (Gonzi).

#### *Bill of 27 October 1766*

Another bill of Pinto’s time and of the same pattern has been found among the records of the Tribunal of the Inquisition of Malta. It is dated 27 October 1766 and is of the same size as that of the 28 February (AIM 128, fol. 301, Cathedral Achives, Mdina).

It was issued to ‘Lorenzo Grech, Maltese, 24 years of age, of ordinary height, with chestnut coloured hair and dark complexion who is leaving with the ship of Captain Giuseppe Vidall for Genova and other ports of transit’. It is signed by the *Castellano Commendatore* Fr. Dn. Carlos Capons and the Court Notary Peter Paul Gontii. The seal of the *Castellano*, embossed on white paper, is affixed with red wax to the centre of the border at the base of the certificate.

This bill was never handed to the applicant as he never called for it at the *Castellania* nor was he present on the ship when the *Gran Visconte* (Chief Executive Police Officer) went on board of the routine muster of the passengers and their identification before the ship’s departure. The bill eventually figured as an exhibit in the criminal Court at the trial for murder of a certain Giuseppe Buttigieg who was suspected of having attempted to escape from the island under the feigned name of Lorenzo Grech.

#### *Bill of the 7 November 1794*

The fourth bill, dated 7 November 1794, is identical in design and size to that of 1782 already published (Cassar 1977). It is in the name of Captain Martino Hernandez, a Spaniard, master of the vessel *Anime del Purgatoria* (Souls of Purgatory), bound for Barcellona. It bears the signatures of the *Castellano Commendatore* Fra Giocomo Compredon and of the Court Notary Emanuel Zarb. The paper seal is missing. On the back of the certificate are written in ink the names of the passengers and crew. There is also the signature of the Captain of the Port of Barcellona to whom it was consigned on arrival there.

## **Procedure of issuing bills of health**

Every person departing from the island had to obtain a bill of health from the Grand Court at the Palace of the Castellania before he was allowed to leave. When applying for the issue of the bill, the intending passenger presented himself to the clerk who was charged with the task of noting and recording the passenger's physical characteristics, age and intended ports of call and arrival. The bill was then signed by the President of the Court of *Castellano* and the Court Notary. When, however, 'contagious diseases' appeared in nearby countries, the bill of health was also signed by the four Sanitary Deputies as an added assurance that the island was free of communicable diseases as was the case in August 1652 (Arch. 259, fols. 46 and 50r, National Library of Malta.)

From the Grand Court the bill was sent with one of the court officials to the *Gran Visconte* or Chief Executive Police Officer who proceeded on board the ship to check the list of passengers and identify them individually. Having done so he handed the bills of the health to the captain of the vessel who in turn delivered them to each passenger (AIM, 128, fol. 301, Cathedral Archives, Mdina).

## **The text and decorative features**

The Latin text had a standard form of wording for at least 81 years i.e. the period covered by the bills so far discovered ranging from 1713 to 1794. Latin was still internationally understood by the intelligentsia in the eighteenth century while Italian was then the administrative language of the Maltese government. A liberal translation of the wording runs as follows: 'We, *Castellano* and President of the Grand Court of the Castellania of Malta, to one and all who see, read or listen to these our present letters wish good health. We bear witness and truthfully declare that the renowned island of Malta is free from epidemic and pestilential diseases and of any suspicion thereof through the grace of Almighty God and of the saints protectors John the Baptist and Paul.' It is of interest to compare the Latin text of a bill of health issued by the sanitary authorities of Rome in 1758. It reproduces almost exactly that part of the text of the certificates of the Order of St John where reference is made to freedom from disease or any suspicion therefore thanks to divine grace (MS. 303, fols. 39/38, National Library of Malta). This seems to indicate that this part of the text had become the established form in the Mediterranean.

While the text underwent no change with each successive Grand Master, the decorative part of the certificate shows modifications not only with regard to the coat-of-arms of each new ruler, but also regarding its ornamental features. In fact all the bills of health examined so far present different designs and patterns with each successive Grand Master.

## Artistic qualities

In all these four bills neither the name of the designer nor that of the engraver appears in the certificate. The design of the Perellos bill is in line engraving with some strokes of shading. The whole is coarsely printed with smudging in places.

The Pinto certificates of 1766 are far more elaborate than that of Perellos' time, their baroque ornamentation here reaching a very high pitch. The composition too, is more involved, the designer having given plenty of rope to his imagination which let itself go with great abandon. However, in spite of their overloaded decoration the Pinto certificates are not without charm and, in contrast to the Perellos' bill, are of better craftsmanship and of a higher standard of printing. The lettering of the text overlaps the ornamental border in some places which indicates that the printing of the text was carried out at a later stage than the printing of the decorative features from the copper plate.

Although the bill of 1794 is identical in design with the bill of 1782 already alluded to, its printing is of a very poor quality. In judging the artistic merits of these certificates, and especially their imperfections of printing, we have to bear in mind that they were not meant to be ornamental pieces but were intended to fulfil a utilitarian function for a very short time, their sole purpose being to certify that the island was free from disease and to identify the bearer.

The Palace of the Castellania in Valletta now houses the Ministry of Health and Environment. The escutcheons of the *Castellani* Fra. E. de Schaden, Fra G. Provana de Colegno, Fra. Dn. Carlos Capons and Fra Giacomo Compridon are still emblazoned in a colourful frieze that runs along the walls of the Great Hall of the edifice. (Nos. 60, 86, 87 and 103).

## Medical significance of these bills

Their medical significance lies in the fact that: (a) the Perellos' bill, the earliest discovered so far, pushes the chronology of these certificates to a more distant point in time (i.e. to 1713) than the De Rohan one of 1782 already published elsewhere; (b) they provide evidence of the existence during the eighteenth century of a continuous flow of information on the state of the public health of the island to various places in the Mediterranean littoral with which Malta was in constant sea communication; (c) they afford proof of how Mediterranean countries were collaborating in checking the spread of epidemic diseases many years before notification of communicable illnesses was centralized through formally constituted international bodies such as the World Health Organization; (d) by their reference to the 'grace of Omnipotent God and the protection of St John the Baptist and of St Paul', the health authorities of Malta showed that they were fully aware of the impotence of the medical science and art of their time in preventing the appearance of epidemic disease. The concept







of infection by bacteria and their transmission by animal vectors to human beings, as in the case of plague, had not yet evolved in the eighteenth century. It is, therefore, scarcely to be wondered at if they relied upon the omnipotence and the mercy of God in a situation where no human aid was of any avail.

I am indebted to the following gentlemen of allowing me to study and publish the certificates in their care: Mr. F. S. Mallia, Director of Museums, and Fr. Marius Zerafa, Curator of the Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta, for the Perrellos and Pinto certificates (Feb. 1766); the Cathedral Museum Committee and the Rev. John Azzopardi, Curator of the Cathedral Archives, Mdina, for the Pinto certificate of October 1766; and the Rev. G. Briffa Brincati for the de Rohan bill of health.

## Reference

CASSAR, P. (1977). An eighteenth-century bill of health of the Order of St John from Malta. *Medical History* **21**, 182-6.

## Explanation of Plates

### PLATE 1

Bill of health dated 16 September 1713 issued by the Order of St John from Malta showing the coat-of-arms of Grand Master Fra Ramon Perellos y Roccaful and declaring that Malta was free of epidemic diseases. (*Courtesy of Fine Arts Museum, Valletta*).

### PLATE 2

This bill of health, dated 28 February 1766, displays the escutcheon of Grand Master Emanuel Pinto de Fonceca and a vignette of the Grand Harbour of Malta (*Courtesy of Fine Arts Museum, Valletta*).

# Postal Diary

## 1 January – 28 March 2011

by  
Joseph Fenech

### 1 January 2011

The Sub-Post Office at 'Emtes Stationery, 18, Triq William Baker, Gudja GDJ 1341, was closed for business from Saturday, 1 January to Tuesday, 4 January 2011, both days included.

### 3 January

In agreement with the Malta Communications Authority, MaltaPost plc was on shut-down, and all MaltaPost branches remained closed, on Monday, 3 January 2011. Normal service resumed on Tuesday, 4 January 2011.

### 5 January

Following agreement with the Malta Communications Authority, the collection from all letter boxes took place at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 5 January 2011.

### 5 January

Following agreement with the Malta Communications Authority, the Parcel Office at the MaltaPost Head Office opened for business between 8.00 am and 4.00 pm on Wednesday, 5 January 2011.

### 5 January

MaltaPost plc published its financial statements for the financial year ended 30 September 2010. These statements were prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1995, approved by the Directors on 5 January 2011, and published in terms of MFSA Listing Rule 5.54. Profit before tax for the year ended 30 September 2010, at €3.2 million, was maintained at last year's level, thus providing Earnings per Share of €0.07. Increased cross-border mail, combined with higher philatelic sales, compensated for lower volumes in traditional mail, resulting in an increase of 1.0% in revenue (from €20.2 million to €20.4 million). Re-engineering of processes provided cost savings so that even though labour costs were higher, overall costs were capped at €17.5 million (compared to €17.3 million in 2009). Cost-to-Income ratio, at 86%, continued to compare well with industry standards. Total assets decreased by 4.7% to €21.0 million, reflecting the application of cash

for better management of trade creditors. Shareholders' funds increased by 18.9%, to €12.9 million. The Board of Directors was proposing a final net dividend of €0.04 per nominal €0.25 share for approval at the Annual General Meeting. The Board was also recommending offering shareholders the option of receiving their dividend in cash or by taking new shares of an equivalent value. The Attribution Price (at which new shares to be issued were to be determined) was set at €0.92 per nominal €0.25 share.

## 8 January

MaltaPost plc notified that 'Golosa', 146, Triq is-Swieqi, Swieqi SWQ 3412, was to cease operating as a Sub-Post Office as from Saturday, 8 January 2011.

## 10 January

MaltaPost plc notified that its branch situated at 95, Triq in-Naxxar, San Ġwann SĠN 9031, was to be relocated for refurbishing purposes, as from Monday, 10 January 2011. Postal services were to be made available from a temporary location situated within the San Ġwann Hub in Triq tal-Mensija, San Ġwann SĠN 1603.

## 22 January

On the occasion of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the St. Publius statue, a special hand postmark was used on Saturday, 22 January 2011, at the MaltaPost Valletta Castille Square Branch. The postmark was inscribed "MaltaPost /Valletta (Castille Sqr.) – Malta" in the outer rim, and "Il-200 sena/(1811-2011)/tal-istatwa/San Publiju/ma' duma minn/ Vincenzo Dimech/(1768-1831)/Jum il-Hruġ/22.01.11" in the centre, which also included an image of St. Publius.



## 31 January

The Annual General Meeting of MaltaPost plc was held on Monday, 31 January 2011. Shareholders were presented with the Audited Financial Statements of the company for the financial year ended 30 September 2010. The results announced on 5 January 2011 were now made official. It was announced that the Board of Directors had approved the purchase of the company's Head Office building, as well as another building in central Valletta intended to host Malta's first postal museum. For the financial year ending 30 September 2010, the Annual General Meeting approved a final net dividend of €0.04 per share. Messrs. David Stellini and Philip Tabone were re-appointed as Directors and together with Joseph Azzopardi, Joseph Said and Aurelio Theuma form the Board of Directors of MaltaPost plc.

## **1 February**

As from Tuesday, 1 February 2011, Social Security cheques could be encashed at the MaltaPost Branch in Balzan. This service was also already available at the MaltaPost branches in Birkirkara, Birżebbuġa, Cospicua, Marsa, Mosta, Naxxar, Paola, Pietà, Qormi, Rabat, St. Julian's, Valletta (Old Bakery Street), Żejtun, Żurrieq, Żabbar and Ġhajnsielem, Gozo.

## **8 February**

MaltaPost plc notified that a number of letters in the letter box in Triq it-Torri, Sliema, had been partly damaged by fire. The last collection from this letter box had been effected on Saturday, 5 February 2011 at 3.37 pm, and MaltaPost officials became aware of the incident on Sunday, 6 February 2011 at about 4.00 pm. All the mail in question, including the damaged mail, was duly delivered to the respective addressees.

## **14 February**

MaltaPost plc announced, in terms of the Listing Rules of the Malta Financial Services Authority, that on 11 February 2011 an additional 1,107,613 Ordinary Shares of €0.25 each were admitted to listing on the Malta Stock Exchange, as approved at the Annual General Meeting held on 31 January 2011. The Issued and Paid Up Share Capital is now therefore made up of 31,678,103 Ordinary Shares of €0.25 each all of which carry the same voting rights.

## **18 February**

The Sub-Post Office at 51, Triq Ġorġ Borg Olivier, Mellieħa MLH 1024, was closed for business between Friday, 18 February and Tuesday, 22 March 2011, both days included.

## **18 February**

The Transfer of Property to MaltaPost plc Order, 2011 appeared as Legal Notice 53 of 2011 as a supplement to Malta Government Gazette No. 18,710 dated 18 February 2011. Through this Order, made by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications in exercise of the powers conferred by article 15(4) of the Postal Services Act (CAP. 254), the premises consisting of the building and land at site 305, Triq Hal Qormi, Marsa, owned by the Government and being used by MaltaPost plc, marked as Site 'A' on the Plan in the Schedule to this Order, was to be transferred by title of sale by the Commissioner of Land to MaltaPost plc under a contract of sale entered into between the Commissioner and MaltaPost plc.

## 21 February

In a company announcement issued pursuant to the Malta Financial Services Authority Listing Rules, MaltaPost plc announced that during the Financial Period commencing 1 October 2010 up to the date of the announcement, no material events and/or transactions had taken place that would have an impact on the financial performance of the company, such that would require specific mention, disclosure or announcement pursuant to the applicable Listing Rules.

## 2 March

On 2 March 2011, the National Statistics Office issued News Release 041/2011 highlighting the post and telecommunications statistics for the fourth quarter (October – December) 2010. According to these statistics, in the quarter under review, total postal traffic stood at around 12.2 million items, a decrease of 4.8% when compared to the corresponding period in 2009. The total number of parcels and other items sent through the national post in the period under review was 19,482, a decrease of 24.1% over the same quarter of 2009 (25,683 parcels/other items sent then).

## 2 March

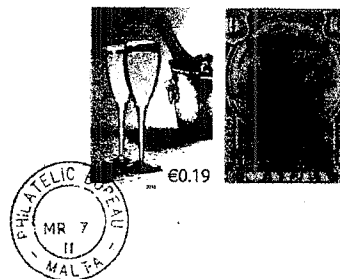
MaltaPost plc announced that, in line with a Malta Communications Authority Notice of September 2009, two new public letter boxes were installed, one at Msida (at the University of Malta, near the Administration Building) and another at Swieqi (in Triq il-Madliena, near the chapel). Service to these letter boxes commenced on Wednesday, 2 March 2011, with the last collection time being after 7.00 pm on weekdays and after 3.00 pm on Saturdays.

## 7 March

The Sub-Post Office at ‘Emtes Stationery, 18, Triq William Baker, Gudja GDJ 1341, was closed for business between Monday, 7 March and Saturday, 19 March 2011, both days included.

## 7 March

On Monday, 7 March 2011, the MaltaPost plc Philatelic Bureau convened the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting for Philatelic Societies at a hotel in Floriana, where a presentation was given on “New Stamp Issues of Malta”. During this meeting, besides giving an outline of the new stamp issues for 2011, the Chairman of MaltaPost, Mr Joseph Said, announced a number of changes that MaltaPost



plc was planning to introduce, and namely: a new company logo; new stationery format, including a First Day Cover album; and the launch of a philatelic website. All philatelists attending this meeting were each given a complimentary special cover commemorating the occasion; this cover included a personalised stamp which was prepared specifically for the event and stamped with the Philatelic Bureau circular date stamp showing the date of the event.

## 9 March

On Wednesday, 9 March 2011, MaltaPost plc issued a set of three stamps in the series of 'Treasures of Malta', featuring Maltese landscapes. The €0.19 stamp features Valletta (oils on panel), the €0.37 stamp shows Manoel Island (oils on paper), while the €1.57 stamp depicts the Cittadella in Gozo (oils on panel). The print run produced 1,200,000 copies of the €0.19 stamp, 500,000 copies of the €0.37 stamp, and 50,000 copies of the €1.57 stamp. These stamps were designed by local artist Edward Said. The size of the stamps is 44.0mm x 31.0mm, with a perforation of 13.9 x 14.0 (comb). The stamps were offset printed on Maltese Crosses watermarked paper by Printex Limited, and are available in sheets of 10. The €0.37 stamp depicting Manoel Island will form part of the third series of the joint stamp issue titled "Beautiful Corners of Europe 3" in the SEPAC (Small European Postal Administrations Cooperation) collection. The SEPAC collection will include a special folder containing the 12 SEPAC stamps issued this year from each member postal administration (namely the Aland Islands, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Guernsey, Iceland, Isle of Man, Jersey, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco and Gibraltar). MaltaPost plc prepared a special commemorative hand-stamp to cancel the stamps on the first day of issue (on FDC No. 1/2011). This was the first FDC in the new format (210 x 115mm in size, and sporting the new MaltaPost logo, and also including an explanatory insert with a brief write-up on the set in five different languages). The hand-stamp was inscribed "MALTAPOST----- - MALTA/"TREASURES OF MALTA"/LANDSCAPES/JUM IL-ĦRUGĠ/09-03-11", and also featured an outline image of the Valletta skyline. The MaltaPost Philatelic Bureau featured these stamps in the stamp bulletin No. 289.



## 10 March

MaltaPost plc announced, pursuant to the Malta Financial Services Authority Listing Rules, that Joseph P. Azzopardi had resigned from his post as Non-Executive Director and Chairman of the Audit Committee of MaltaPost plc with effect from

8 March 2011. Mr Azzopardi was replaced as Non-Executive Director by Julius Bozzino with effect from the same date. Mr Bozzino is currently Chief Officer – Private Banking and Corporate Advisory Services at Lombard Bank Malta plc.

## 15 March

MaltaPost plc informed that ‘Sunny Island Mini Market’ in Pjazza San Ġużepp, Qala QLA 1113, stopped operating as a Sub-Post Office as from Tuesday, 15 March 2011.

## 21 March

MaltaPost plc informed that the letter box numbered 275 situated at Xatt l-Għassara ta’ l-Għeneb, Marsa, was being closed permanently.

## 21 March

MaltaPost plc informed that due to the closure of the Libyan airspace to all traffic, the transfer of mail into Libya had been temporarily suspended. Articles posted to Libya notwithstanding this notification were being returned to the sender with a note/sticker affixed to the envelope stating (in both Maltese and English text) that “This postal article is being returned to sender due to the unavailability of mail transshipment options to Libya”.



Dan l-oġġett postali qed jiġi rritornat lura minħabba nuqqas ta’ meżzi ta’ trasport lejn il-Libja.

This postal article is being returned to sender due to the unavailability of mail transshipment options to Libya.

## 24 March

MaltaPost plc announced that Mr Joseph Gafa`, company CEO, had been re-elected as a member of the PostEurop Management Board (2011-2013 term) in Schaan, Liechtenstein. Mr Gafa` has been on this Board since 2003, and is responsible for supervising and monitoring the implementation of PostEurop’s strategy at the operational level.

## 25 March

On 25 March 2011, the Malta Communications Authority (MCA) issued Decision Notice MCA/D/11-0227 on the Regulatory Direction on Specific Aspects of the Universal Postal Service. The document provides an overview of the responses received and the MCA’s decision with respect to each of the issues that were consulted upon in July 2010. These issues relating to the universal service include: providing a clear definition on how to classify postal services falling within the scope of the universal postal service; defining the priority bulk mail service as

part of the set of specific universal postal services that MaltaPost is obliged to provide; introducing ex-ante tariff regulatory provisions for services to be offered by MaltaPost that fall within the scope of the universal service but which MaltaPost is not obliged to offer (under its universal service obligation); defining what should be considered as an express mail service. This Decision Notice was effective from the date of publication.

## 25 March

MaltaPost plc unveiled its new branding with a new red and black logo, at a press conference at the San Ġwann post office, which was inaugurated on the same occasion after having undergone refurbishment. The new logo was to be introduced gradually over a period of time. The new emblem captures MaltaPost's core values and reflects the intention of entering and developing new markets and services by taking advantage of opportunities as they arise.



MaltaPost was also rebranding its various products and services – ‘post it’, ‘pay it’, ‘buy it’, ‘collect it’, ‘organize it’, ‘courier it’, ‘deliver it’, ‘manage it’ and ‘market it’.

## 26 March

On the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Fontana Parish Church, a special hand postmark – “Fontana 100 Sena Parroċċa/1911-2011/26-03-11/MaltaPost – Victoria – Gozo”, was used on Saturday, 26 March 2011, at the MaltaPost Victoria Gozo Branch. The Fontana Parish Church, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, became a parish on 27



March 1911 during the bishopric of Giovanni Maria Camilleri. The commemorative postmark was designed by Gozitan artist and philatelist George Vella.

## 28 March

MaltaPost plc informed that the mobile van service was to be temporarily suspended from Monday, 28 March to Saturday, 9 April 2011.





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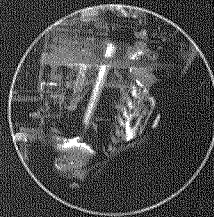
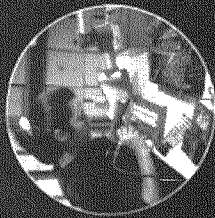
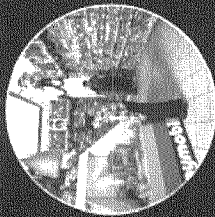
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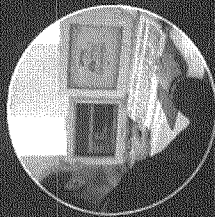
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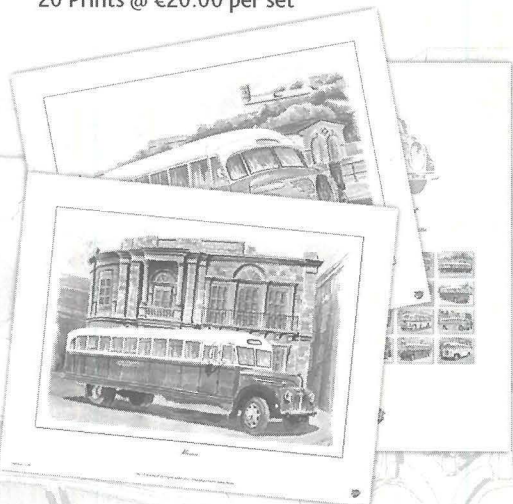
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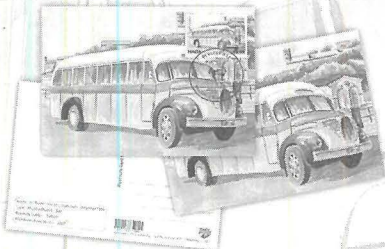
## Malta Buses - Maximum Cards

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@ €15.35 per set



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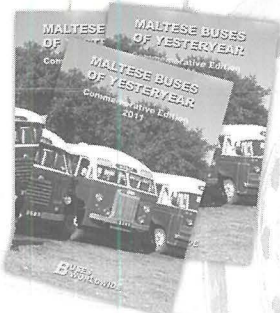
Set of 2 Presentation Packs @ €10.33 per set

Set of 2 Folders @ €9.83 per set



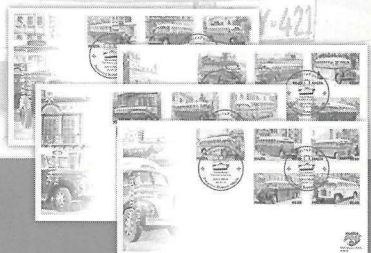
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