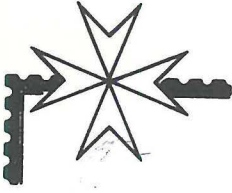




THE PHILATELIC SOCIETY (Malta)

# THE PSM JOURNAL



# THE PSM JOURNAL

Silver-Bronze ESPANA '84 & AUSIPEX '84  
Silver-Bronze ISRAPHIL '85 & PHILTEMA '85  
Silver STOCKHOLMIA '86  
Editor: Dr A Bonnici, K.M., M.D. MRPSL

Vol. 31/3

December, 2002

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**PHILATELY and PIONEER AVIATION in MALTA.**  
**ROYAL NAVAL AIR STATION**  
**KALAFRANA – MARSAXLOKK BAY.**

*By Dr A Bonnici. KM. MD. MRPSL.*

Malta's fortunes, or misfortunes, have always had, an intimate connection with wars, especially in the Mediterranean.

In 1904, the **Royal Engineers Balloon Unit**, after serving in the Boer war in South Africa, visited Malta, and an exhibition together with a demonstration, was carried out.

Unfortunately, as far as I know, there is no evidence, that this First Balloon show over Malta, was commemorated by a special issue, of a commemorative hand stamp, Card, or Aerogramme.

**9<sup>th</sup> September 1911- The UK Coronation Aerial Post.**  
**First Acceptance Mail from the UK to other destinations, one of which was MALTA.**

**NOTICE.**

***Aerial Post.***

BY SANCTION OF HIS MAJESTY'S  
POSTMASTER-GENERAL.

In Commemoration of the  
Coronation of their Majesties  
the King and Queen.

*The Net Profits derived  
will be devoted to a Public  
Charity to be approved by  
the Postmaster-General.*

An Aerial Post between London and Windsor will be in operation daily for a limited period only, commencing Saturday, the 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1911, and it will be available for use by the public under the regulations of the General Post Office in connection with the ordinary Inland and Foreign Mail Services.

**DONATIONS TO CHARITY.**—Lloyds Bank, Limited, St. James' Street, London, S.W., has consented to receive, on behalf of the Honorary Organising Committee, donations in sums of One Shilling and upwards, which will be acknowledged by the Committee by Aerial Post Cards.

Persons resident in the country and abroad will thereby be enabled to secure an Aerial postal souvenir of unique interest and, at the same time, benefit the Charity to which the net profits will be devoted.

Remittances must be made by cheque or postal order made payable to the "Coronation Aerial Post," crossed "Lloyds Bank, Ltd." *Stamps cannot be accepted.*

Subscribers when sending their remittances should give the names and addresses to which the Post Card receipts are to be sent.

**ORDERS BY POST.**—Orders for small quantities of the Post Cards and Envelopes may be sent to the Secretary, Aerial Post, General Buildings, Aldwych, London, W.C. The cost of postage, at the rate of 1d. for each dozen or less ordered, must be included in remittance.

**WHOLESALE ORDERS.**—Messrs. P. C. BURTON & CO., General Buildings, Aldwych, London, W.C., have been appointed Sole Wholesale Agents for the sale of the Post Cards and Envelopes.

Only the special pictorial Post Cards and Envelopes issued by the Honorary Organising Committee, by sanction of the Postmaster-General, will be conveyed by the Aerial Service, and they must be posted only in the special boxes placed in the following establishments in London [where the Post Cards and Envelopes are on sale] on and from Friday, September 8th, 1911 :—

Arding & Hobbs, Ltd., Clapham Junction, S.W.  
 John Barker & Co., Ltd., Kensington High Street, W.  
 John Barnes & Co., Ltd., 191-217, Finchley Road, N.W.  
 Benetink & Co., Ltd., 107, Cheapside, E.C.  
 D. H. Evans & Co., Ltd., Oxford Street, W.  
 A. W. Gamage & Co., Ltd., Holborn, E.C.  
 Harrods, Ltd., Brompton Road, S.W.  
 Selfridge & Co., Ltd., Oxford Street, W.  
 William Whiteley, Ltd., Westbourne Grove, W.  
 London Aerodrome, Hendon, N.W.  
 Offices of the Aerial Post, General Buildings, Aldwych, W.C.

The Post Cards and Envelopes, which bear a copyright design of Windsor Castle, printed in brown, green or red, are issued stamped.

Postcards, stamped for Inland postage, price 6½d. each.  
 Envelopes, do. do. do. 1/1 each.  
 A sheet of Notepaper with special heading is supplied with each envelope.

Adhesive stamps must be affixed to make up the fee required for postage abroad.

Post Cards and Letters conveyed by Aerial Post will bear over the ordinary postage stamp a special post-mark "First United Kingdom Aerial Post," and the date. They will be collected from the special boxes referred to above, and conveyed to a central Post Office, and then be taken to the London Aerodrome for conveyance by aeroplane from London to Windsor, and thence will be despatched in the ordinary course to their destination in any part of the world to which they are addressed.

NO RESPONSIBILITY in respect of loss, damage, or delay will be undertaken by the Postmaster-General nor by the Honorary Organising Committee.

**CAUTION.**—Letters by Aerial Post cannot be registered. They must not contain coins or other valuables.

If the special Post Cards or Envelopes be posted in any other than the *Special Boxes* referred to in this notice, they will not be carried by the Aerial Service.

*(courtesy Edward Proud – British Air-Mails)*

Here is the story.

Commander Sir Walter Windham in 1911 had organised the first Official Air Service in the world, which took place in Allahabad in India.

That same year "1911" on his return to England he petitioned the Postmaster-General to let him run the first British Air Mail.

After considerable legal difficulties, it was agreed that envelopes and post cards, were to be sold at a fixed price of 1/1d, and 6 1/2d respectively, with postage rates remaining in accordance with the rates stipulated at that time, which was 1d for a letter and 1/2d for post card.

Additional stamps had to be put on for mail going overseas, as was the case with mail to MALTA – extra 1/2d.

An agreement was drawn up, that gave him the sole authority to carry the scheme into effect.

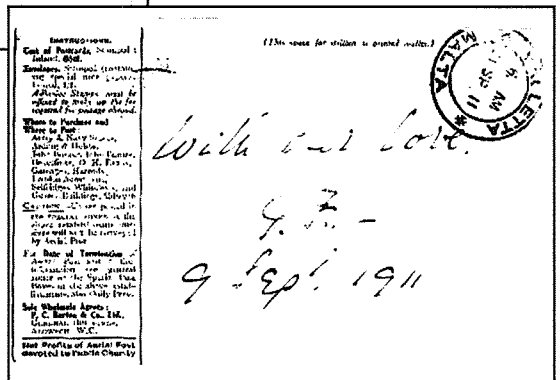
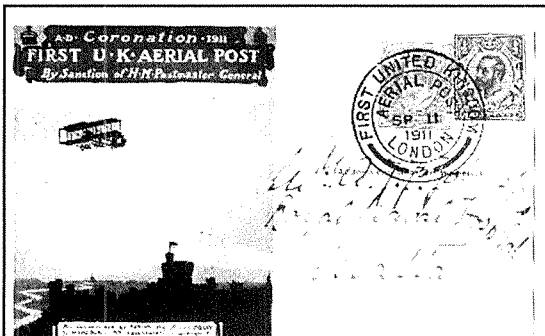
The purchaser could take these envelopes away, put on the accurate postage stamps, and post them in the special post boxes, which were constructed. The GPO could then collect the letters from these boxes and convey them, as they did to the Western Branch of the GPO, and there impress them with the double ring postmark

“**THE FIRST UNITED KINGDOM / AERIAL POST**”. From there, they could be taken from the GPO, to the flying ground at Hendon, and flown to Windsor Castle, where he had permission from His Majesty to land the mails.

The inaugural flight from London to Windsor, took place on **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September**, when Gustav Hamel, bravely took off, in a very high wind, carrying one bag of privileged mail weighing 23 1/2 lbs.

The first return flight from Windsor to London, was scheduled for Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September, but a very strong wind prevented this, and the first flight took place the next day the 17<sup>th</sup>, Clement Greswell in a Bleriot monoplane, carrying bag No 1 containing 21lbs of mail.

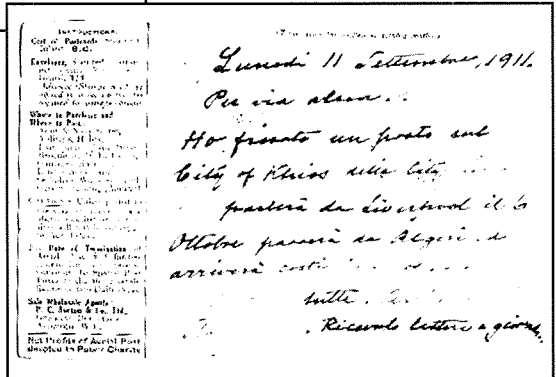
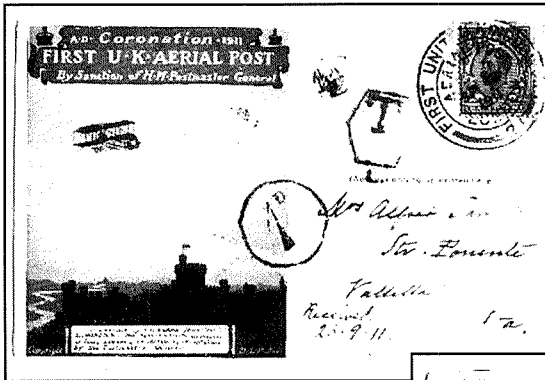
Sixteen flights from London to Windsor took place, in which 37 bags of mail were carried, and four flights, carrying a total of four bags from Windsor to London, the last flight from London to Windsor taking place on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 1911.



(courtesy T. Camilleri)

Card addressed to Malta, with additional 1/2d postage being extra rate for Malta, both stamps being tied with the commemorative hand stamp, the **First United Kingdom Aerial Post 11Sep 1911** arriving in Malta on the 21st September 1911.

The 1/2d stamps are from different UK Reigns, one is that of King Edward, and the other the recently issued Harrison printing of KGV, which became quite rare.



(courtesy T. Camilleri)

This Card addressed to Malta should have had an extra 1/2d stamp, so 1d tax was applied. Posted in the UK on the 12th September, arrived in Malta on the 23rd September.

## First recorded aeroplane take off from Malta, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1915.



First take off from Malta, Short Folder Type 135 sea plane with No. 136. (photo R. Caruana)

During the 1914-18 war, the Ark Royal, which had been quickly converted from a cargo ship to one carrying seaplanes, called at Malta, mooring in Bighi Creek, on the 12th February 1915, so that, before she continued her voyage to the Dardanelles, the seaplanes on board, could carry out sea trials in Malta.

So the first recorded aeroplane taking off from Malta, was a **Short Folder Type sea plane, Type 135, that bore No. 136 on its tail**, in the afternoon, of the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1915, piloted by **Capt C.F. Kilner**, taking off from Grand Harbour, flying for thirty five minutes. On returning back to the Ark Royal, while being hoisted on board, the aeroplane slipped back into the sea. The Pilot was not injured and the plane eventually lifted.

The next day a **Sopwith Folder Type 607, (No. 808)**, at 8.45 in the morning, took off for ten min, and on returning back to the Ark Royal, was hit by a heavy wave tilting the aeroplane to one side.

The Pilot and the plane were saved, the operation lasting over an hour.

The Ark Royal left Malta with its precious aeroplane cargo, that evening, arriving at its destination, the Dardanelles on the 16<sup>th</sup> February

This was the period, when the heroic New Zealand regiment, the ANZACS, suffered heavy casualties at Gallipoli, the wounded being transferred to Malta; Malta becoming the nurse of the Mediterranean.

The wounded were hospitalised all over the Island, but the main Hospitals for the Army were, Bruce Military Hospital at Mtarfa, and St Georges Hospital at Pembroke; and for the Navy - Bighi Hospital.

## **Kalafrana - Royal Navy (RN)**

### **– SEA PLANE STATION**

During this period the German U Boats, were gaining supremacy in the Mediterranean, laying mines, and sinking allied naval ships.

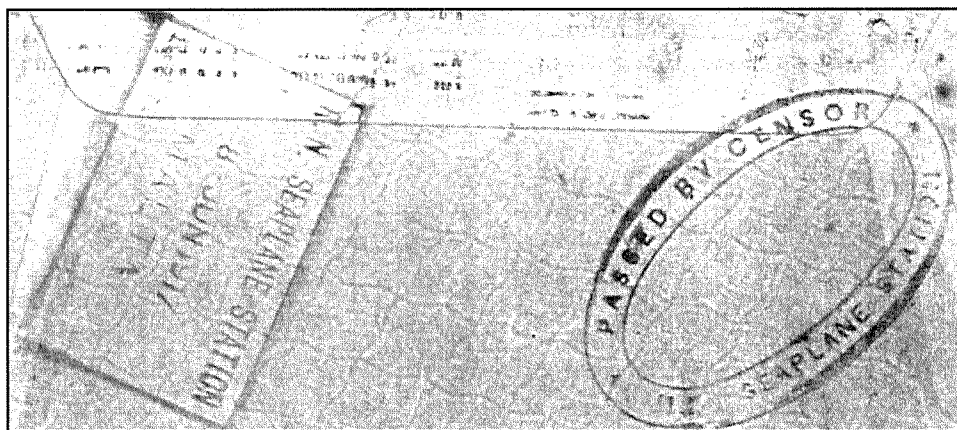
HMS Inflexible hit a mine, and HMS Majestic, Triumph, and Russell sunk

The Admiralty faced with such heavy loses in such a short time, authorised Squadron Commander Bowhill, to identify a place in Malta for the setting up of a reconnaissance anti submarine flying boat locality, and Kalafrana in Marsaxlokk Bay, being already used as a torpedo depot by the Admiralty, started operating as a **Royal Navy Sea Plane Base** in May 1916.

During July, five **Curtiss H-4** planes, arrived from Felixstowe, U.K., for the much needed reconnaissance, and anti submarine patrols, accompanied with nine Officers, two Warrant Officers, a considerable number of Engineers, all under the command of Flight Commander J.D. Maude.

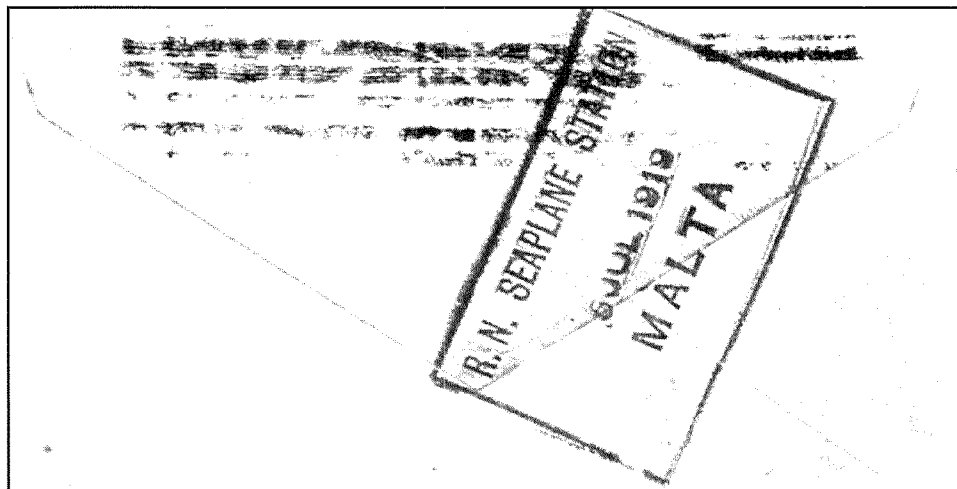
By now from the original five Curtiss, only three remained, and these were in March 1917, replaced by *float planes* **Short 164** which were transferred to Malta

from the Naval Air Station Dundee, and on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 1917, two *flying boats* FBAA arrived in Malta on board the “SS Isonzo” from Italy.



*R.N. sea plane station 8th June 1917, and passed by censor sea plane station hand stamps.*

This cover addressed to the UK bearing a penny stamp, cancelled “RECEIVED FROM H.M.SHIP/ NO CHARGE TO BE RAISED”, bearing the rectangular cachet “R.N. SEA PLANE STATION/8 JUN 1917/ MALTA/ Ref.No.”, and PASSED BY CENSOR/ R.N. SEA PLANE STATION.

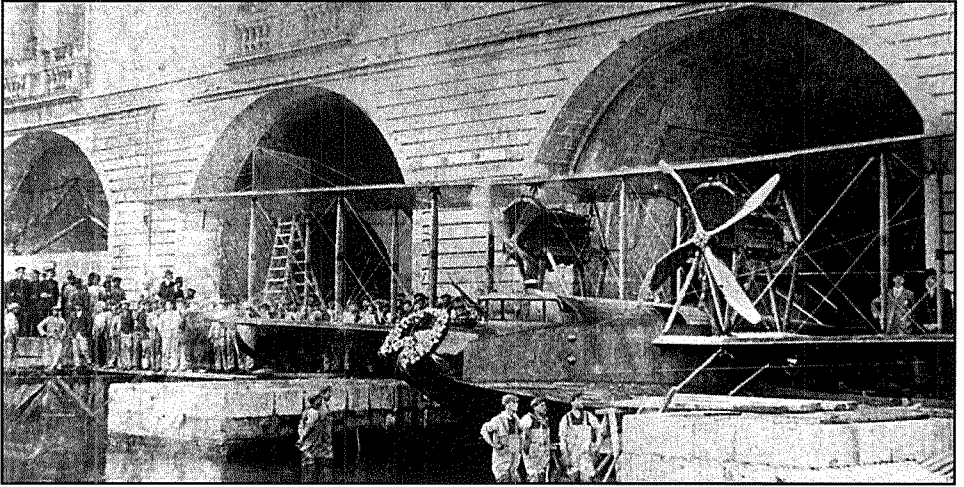


*R.N. sea plane station 6th July 1917 hand stamp. (courtesy T. Camilleri)*

All the covers I have seen bearing the “SEA PLANE STATION” cachet are addressed to the UK and the time taken to arrive there, suggest that they went there directly. However a cover is reputed to exist which went to Hong Kong, presumably via Egypt.



## Felixstowe F 3, assembled at MALTA DRY DOCKS



*First Felixstowe F3 built at Malta Dry Docks, November 1917. (photo R. Caruana)*

The demand for more planes for the Central Mediterranean Station, operating from Kalafrana, was so great, that the U.K. could not meet with the demand, and so on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1917, it was decided to build twelve **Felixstowe F 3 Planes** at Malta Dry Docks.

The first **Felixstowe F 3 (N 4310)**, operating with Rolls Royce Eagle VIII engines, was completed in November 1917, moved to outside French Creek in Grand Harbour, from where it took off for Kalafrana.

Eventually twenty three of such aeroplanes were built in Malta Dry Docks.

Mr Carmelo Giuliano BEM, Departmental Manager Malta Dry-docks, passed the following information to Mr Karmenu Ellul, author of “The History of the Dry Docks”, written in Maltese, saying,

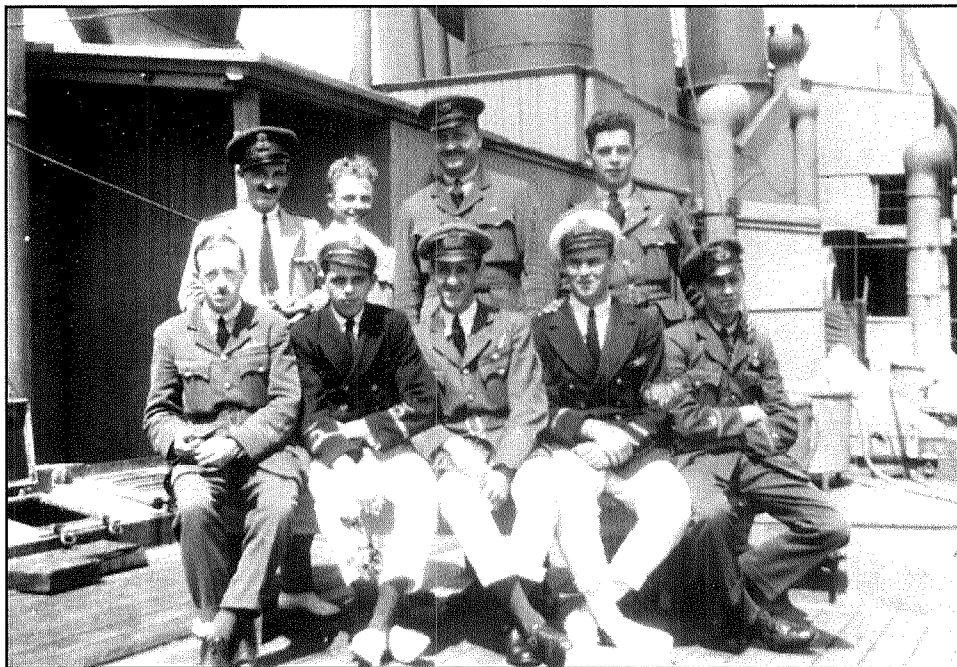
“ xoghol iehor li kien isir u li ghadu jissemma sal-lum hu dak tal-bini tas “sea planes”.

Dan ix-xoghol kien isir fil “Boat House”, kien isir mill injam, u strixxa ma’ ohra kienu jigu kklincjati. Il- bini ta dawn baqa’ sejjer sas-sena 1920.”

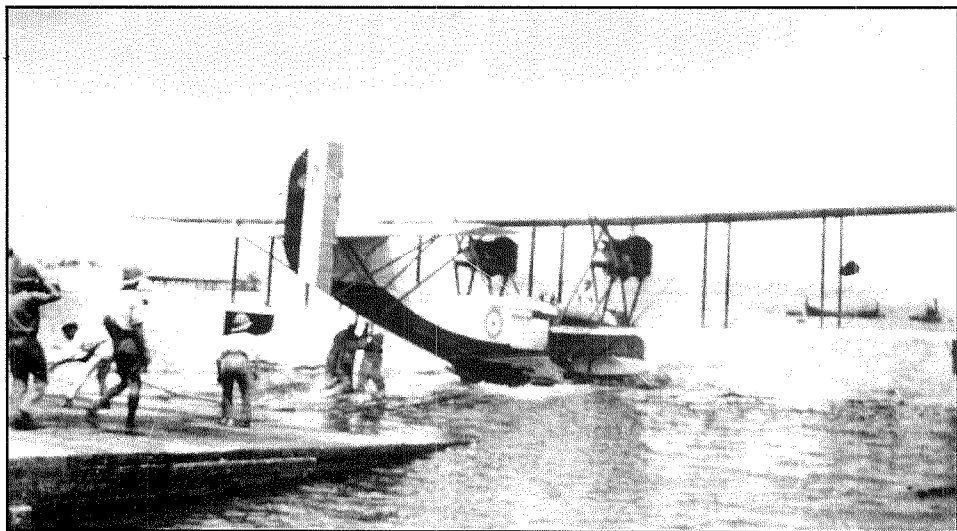
*(Other work that used to be done, and is still being mentioned to-day, is that of the building of sea-planes. This work used to be carried out in the “Boat House”, until 1920, from wood, and the strips held together by stapling.”*

My friend, Mr Michael Hull’s father, from Exeter, served at the Kalafrana station

in Malta during this period, and he has kindly sent me the following photos, which are being reproduced.



*1917-1919 Naval and Air Force Officers who served in the Kalafrana base.  
(courtesy Mr. M. Hull)*



*One of the Felexstone F3 Flying boats built at Malta Dry Docks, going down the slip way in Kalafrana. (courtesy Mr. M. Hull)*

Originally the command of the Kalafrana station, at Marsaxlokk bay, together with that of Otranto, was under the direction of Commander Murray Seuter RN, and when the Air Force Constitution Bill was passed in the British Parliament on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 1917, and the RAF becoming effective on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1918, the RAF Malta station was set up, Malta became the RAF Head Quarters, in the Mediterranean, passing into the hands of Wing Commander HM Cave – Brown and a Royal Air Force Sea Plane Base hand stamp was used together with the previously used RN hand stamp.

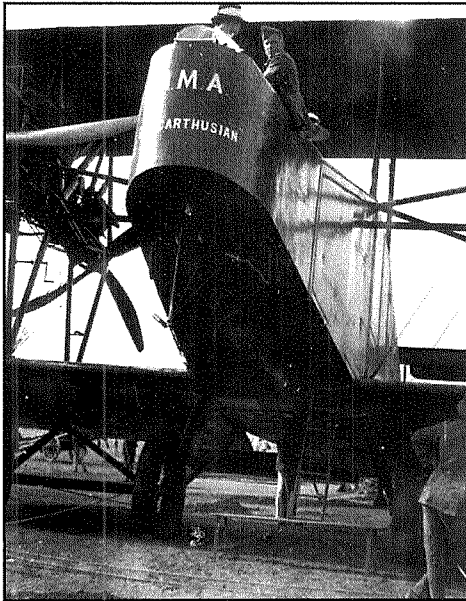
ROYAL AIR FORCE  
SEAPLANE BASE  
MALTA

A number of former Naval facilities were transferred to the newly-formed service, including the seaplane base at Kalafrana, the dockyard construction facility, and a balloon hanger unit on Manoel Island, behind the Lazaretto, known as the “Kite Balloon Base No 1”, which had been set up, under the direction of Wing Commander. H. Delacombe, fully equipped to house, maintain, and fill with gas.

These balloons were called by the Maltese *balloon barrages*, did not carry observers or passengers, and were moored in such a way, as to be on top of strategic places, or ships, as a defence from aerial bombardment.

A Metrological Office, attached to the already existing observatory facilities at the Royal University of Malta in Valletta, was set up, and the Kalafrana command passed into the hands of Colonel Randall.

## First Temporary land landing strip – MARSALA



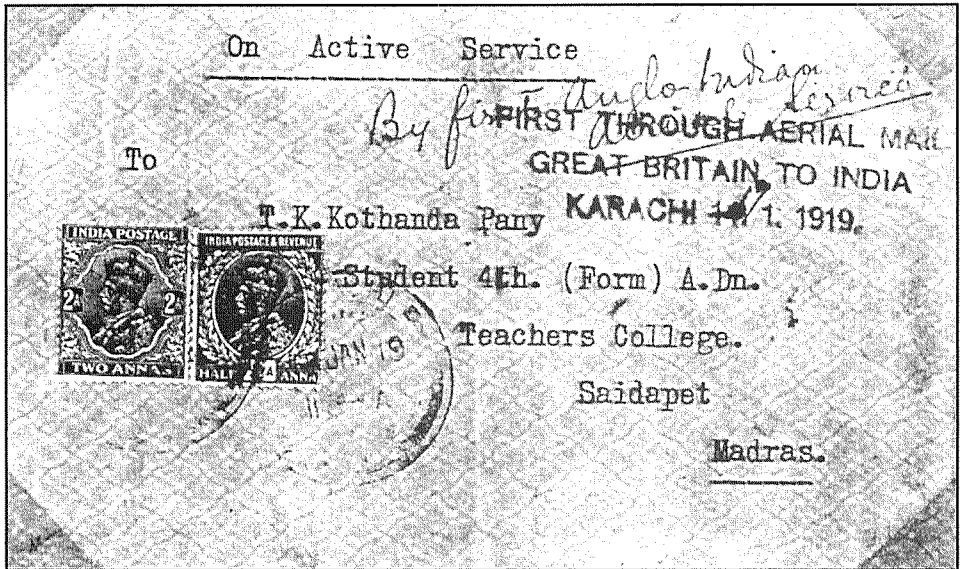
*Old Carthusian (J1936)*  
*(photo R. Caruana)*

The base at Kalafrana had the disadvantage that it could not operate when the sea was rough, and so Marsa sports grounds, at that time in the hands of the Services, became the First temporary land, landing strip, to be used, by aeroplanes using wheels.

It is recorded that on the 21<sup>st</sup> December 1918, a **Handley Page V/15000** under the command of Major A.S. Maclaren, named **OLD CARTHUSIAN**, (J1936) and nicknamed the “*MONSTER*” by the Maltese, as reported in the Daily Malta Chronicle, of the 23<sup>rd</sup> December, landed at Marsa, on its way to Karachi, via Mersa Metruh, Helipolis, Baghdad, El Amara, Bandar Abbas, Jask Ormara,

arriving in Karachi on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1919.

Mail from the UK, and mail from other localities was on board, but no mail from Malta, has been recorded so far, as having been picked up, a special hand stamp was applied at Karachi.



*Mail from UK carried on this flight. (courtesy T. Camilleri)*

According to the Manager of the Aviation Dept of Vickers Ltd, a Vickers Vimy commercial aeroplane with passengers on board, arrived at Marsa on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 1920, Piloted by Capt S. Cockerell, and Capt C. Broom. D.F.C..

This was the Times Africa Aerial Exploration Expedition flight, and as far as I know, there are no records that mail was picked up on this flight.

## HAL FAR Airport

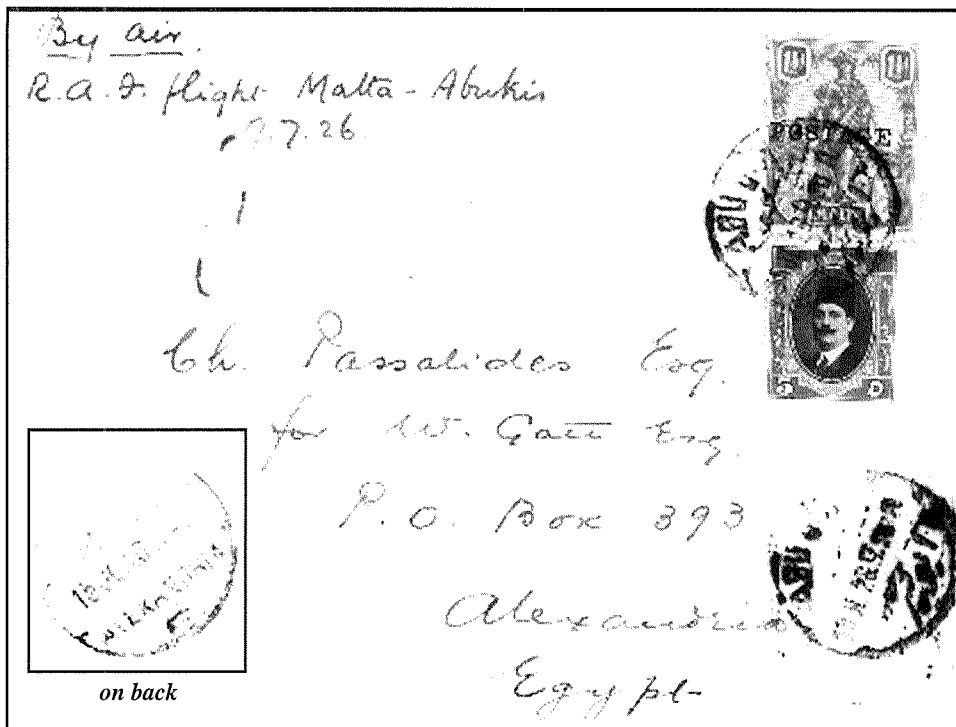
The next Official First Air Port constructed in this period was that of **Hal Far**, inaugurated by Governor Field Marshall Lord Plumer, Commander in Chief of Malta's Armed Forces, on the 11th January 1923.

From here, all aerial training manoeuvres were organised.

Every year air shows were held and Hal Far became the Military as well as Civilian Air Field, at that time, for both private and commercial aircraft.

## First recorded mail from MALTA

The first recorded mail carried by air was that carried on one of a **Supermarine Southampton flying boat**, leaving Plymouth on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1926, for Abukir Egypt via Kalafrana Malta, arriving on the 6<sup>th</sup> July, and leaving on the 9<sup>th</sup>, via Benghazi Sollum, arriving in Abukir in Egypt on the 10<sup>th</sup> July.



RAF flight Malta - Abukir 9.7.26. (courtesy T. Camilleri)

Mail was picked up from Malta, and a surviving letter has the manuscript information, "By Air/RAF Flight Malta-Abukir/9.7.26" and bearing a 1 1/2d Melita Malta stamp, but not cancelled in Malta. It was posted when it arrived in Abukir on the 10<sup>th</sup> July, and an additional 5mil Egyptian stamp added, for onward transmission to Alexandria, arriving on the 15<sup>th</sup> July.

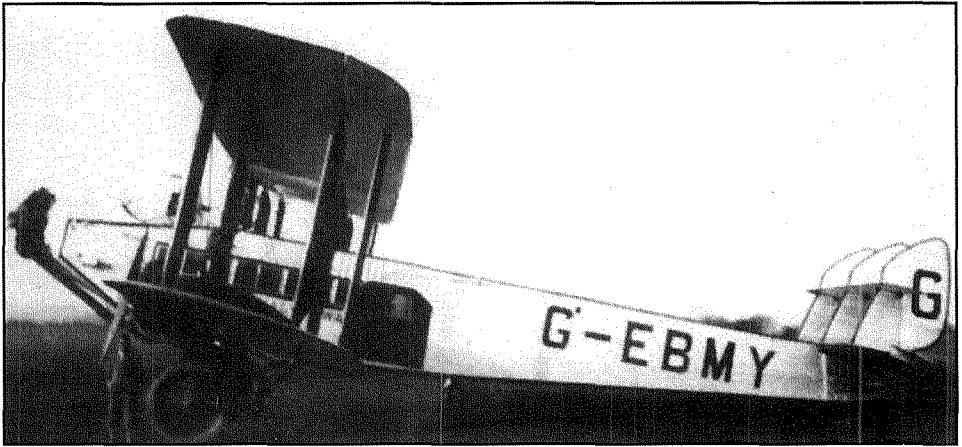
## First Private Pilots to land in Malta - 1926

1926 Hal Far - Malta, saw the landing of the First Private Pilots, T.N. Stack, and B.S. Leete, belonging to the Lancashire Aero Club, UK, each piloting a **De Havilland D.H. Moth aircraft**, on their way to Iraq.

As far as I am aware no commemorative flight covers were carried on this flight, or have come to light so far.

## First Commercial Flight UK MALTA - 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1926

The first commercial flight, from UK to Malta, took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1926, when two **DeHavilland DH66 Hercules (G-EBMY and G-EBMW)** of



*First commercial flight UK - Malta DeHavilland DH66 Hercules (G-EBMY) (photo R. Caruana)*

Imperial Airways with paying passengers on board, including Air Vice Marshal Sir Sefton Brackmer, the Director of the UK Civil Aviation, landed at Hal Far Airport, on its way to Cairo, Egypt, from where the extension to Karachi had to take place.

**In fact G-EMBW** had been named *City of Cairo*.

A week later, another aeroplane (**G-EMBX**), having on board the UK Prime Minister Sir Samuel Hoare, also on its way to Cairo, landed at Hal Far

No commemorative covers have been recorded so far, as coming to Malta, or from Malta, on these flights.

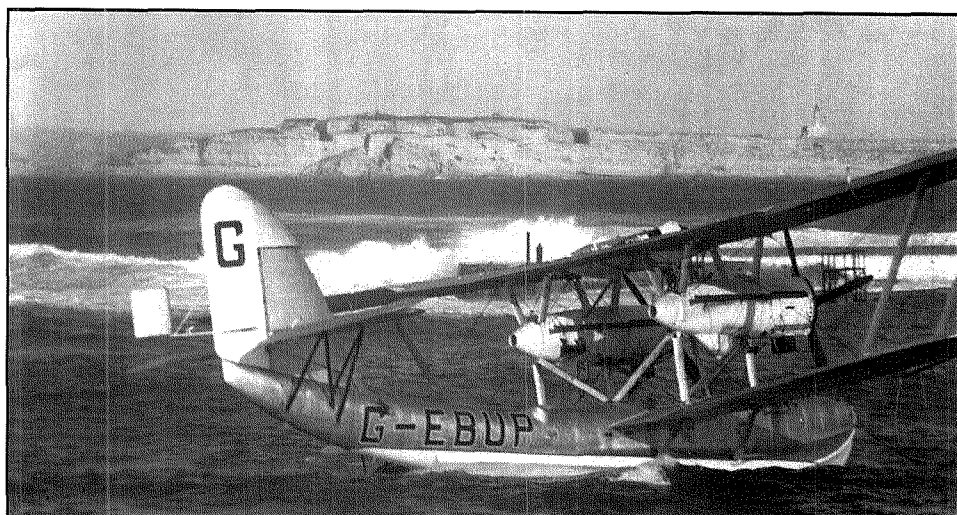
## Sir Alan Cobham



No doubt Sir Alan Cobham's "**SHORT SINGAPORE**" stop at Malta on his way to Africa, on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 1927, deserves special mention, as it was indeed a historical event.

Sir Alan accompanied by his wife Lady Cobham, Capt Worrall, as assistant Pilot, Green a Rolls Royce Engineer, Conway assistant Engineer, and Bonnett as Cine Photographer, left Rochester, UK, on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 1927, arriving in Malta from Ajaccio in a storm, at 5pm of the 24<sup>th</sup> November 1927.

Waiting for him at Kalafrana, were journalists, and the Hon. Minister for Industry and Commerce, Judge Alfred Parnis, with instructions from the UK Secretary of State, to give Cobham all assistance possible.



*Sir Alan Cobham's "Short Singapore". (photo R. Caruana)*

They waited up to 8.30pm, for the arrival of "*Short Singapore*" in vain, as Cobham at 5.15 pm in darkness, spotting, HMS Queen Elizabeth's lights in St Paul's Bay, landed next to it, and he and his colleagues spent the night on HMS Elizabeth, flying to Marsaxlokk the next morning, where because of bad weather the aeroplane, had to be towed to Kalafrana. On its way there, near the Delimara lighthouse, a big wave caused considerable damage to the right float, and they had to seek shelter under the cliffs of Delimara, waiting until the 29<sup>th</sup> November, when it could be towed to Kalafrana.

Damage caused was severe and spare parts had to be brought to Malta from the UK.

During his enforced stay in Malta, Sir Cobham was requested by the Malta Government under Prime Minister Sir Gerald Strickland (1927-30) to draw up proposals for the construction of a proper Air Port.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> November 1927, Sir Gerald proposed the suspension of the standing orders, of the Legislative Assembly, so that a Committee of the House could be set up, to debate Civil Aviation in Malta, with the financial help of the Services, so that Malta could become a staging post for Air Traffic originating from the UK to other destinations, namely India and Africa.

Sir Ugo Mifsud, spokesmen for the Opposition, did not agree with the idea of involving the military, as they already had the experience of Hal Far which had existed since 1923 where Military Aviation matters were given priority. The time he said, "had come for the separation of Military from Civilian Aviation, and it was their duty to promote Civilian Aviation to help Malta's economy."

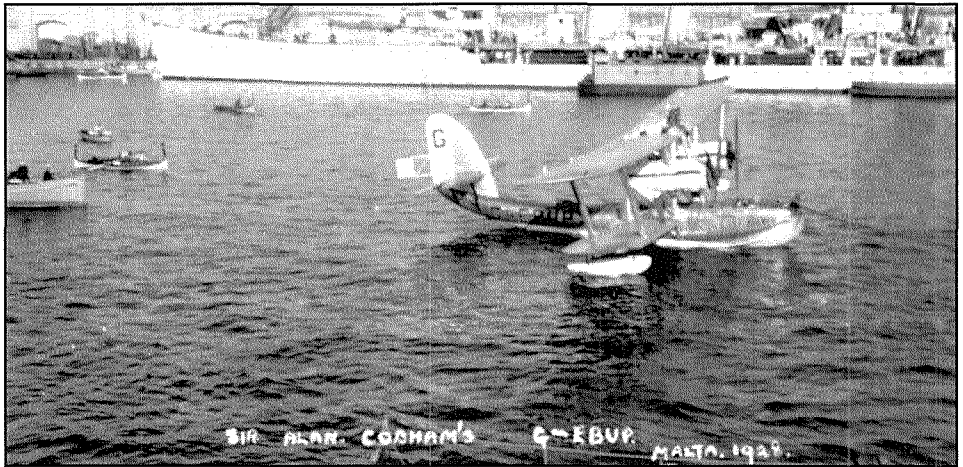
He suggested that as Sir Alan Cobham, one of the foremost pioneers of Civil Aviation was in Malta at that time, he should be requested to draw up a report for such a purpose, and submit it, to the Malta Legislative Assembly, for its consideration

On the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1927 Sir Alan Cobham met Members of both the Legislative assembly and the Senate together, in a historic meeting in the Tapestry Chamber.

Sir Gerald Strickland Prime Minister introduced Sir Cobham to them, who presented a detailed review of the great future that Civil Aviation had, the cost, and the possibility of Malta becoming the centre of Air Traffic between the UK and other promising destinations. He offered to tour the Island and come up with definite proposals. His final report bearing the date of the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1928 was published in the Government Gazette, and the Daily Malta Chronicle of the 23/24<sup>th</sup> January 1928.

It is pertinent to point out the great foresight that Cobham had in 1927, as when Official Aerodromes were constructed in Malta years later, both military and Civilian, they were all constructed on sites that Cobham had indicated.

Sir Alan Cobham and his crew, left Malta on Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1928, at 8am, from Grand Harbour, the bastions being full of Maltese waving him good bye, for Benghasi, and onwards round Africa.



*Sir Alan Cobham taking off from Grand Harbour in 1928. (courtesy A. Fenech)*

He had liked his first Malta visit so much that he returned again on the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1931 on his plane which he named “VALETTA”

In the Malta Government Gazette of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March 1928, it was announced that Official Post from Malta was to begin on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1928

A DH 66 Hercules, aeroplane was used. But this is another Chapter and I will talk about it in a future chapter.



# Third Maltex Philatelic Exhibition

8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2002

by T. Grech

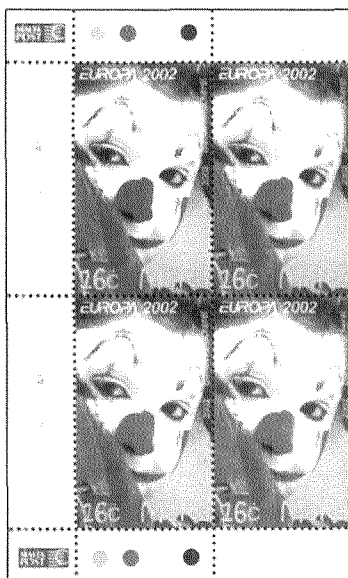


Malta Philatelic Society

**Philatelic Exhibition**

**8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2002**

*Under the patronage of  
the Hon. Ċensu Galea, BE & A. A & CE, MP.  
Minister for Transport and Communication*



## Philately for Youngsters

Friday, 8 November (9 am – 7pm)  
Saturday, 9 November (9am – 6 pm)  
Sunday, 10 November (9 am – 1 pm)

at  
St. Publius Hall, 50,  
St. Publius Street, Floriana

*A block of four of Malta Europa 2002, Circus Stamp voted as the best Europa stamp by POSTEUROP. during the annual Plenary Assembly held at Heronissos, on the Greek island of Crete on October 16.*

The inauguration ceremony of the Third Maltex Philatelic Exhibition took place in Floriana – Malta on the 7th November 2002 in the presence of the Hon. Dr. G. Hyzler LL.D., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary for economic services and Mr. A. Pavia Chairman Stamp Design Advisory Board.

The exhibition was blessed by Father Anthony Galea S.J.

In his address of welcome Dr. A. Bonnici stressed that the printing of too many issues, and the issue of high values, was harmful to philately at large.

This year's slogan was *Philately for Youngsters*, as the society wanted to encourage youngsters to take up the hobby.

Mr. Anthony Pavia congratulated the society for its efforts in promoting philately and for organising the third successive exhibition.

The exhibition was open for the public on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> November and several U.K., and local dealers were kept busy by the satisfactory attendance.

For the first time in our exhibitions, one of our young philatelists Mathew Zahra, aged 7 years, participated.

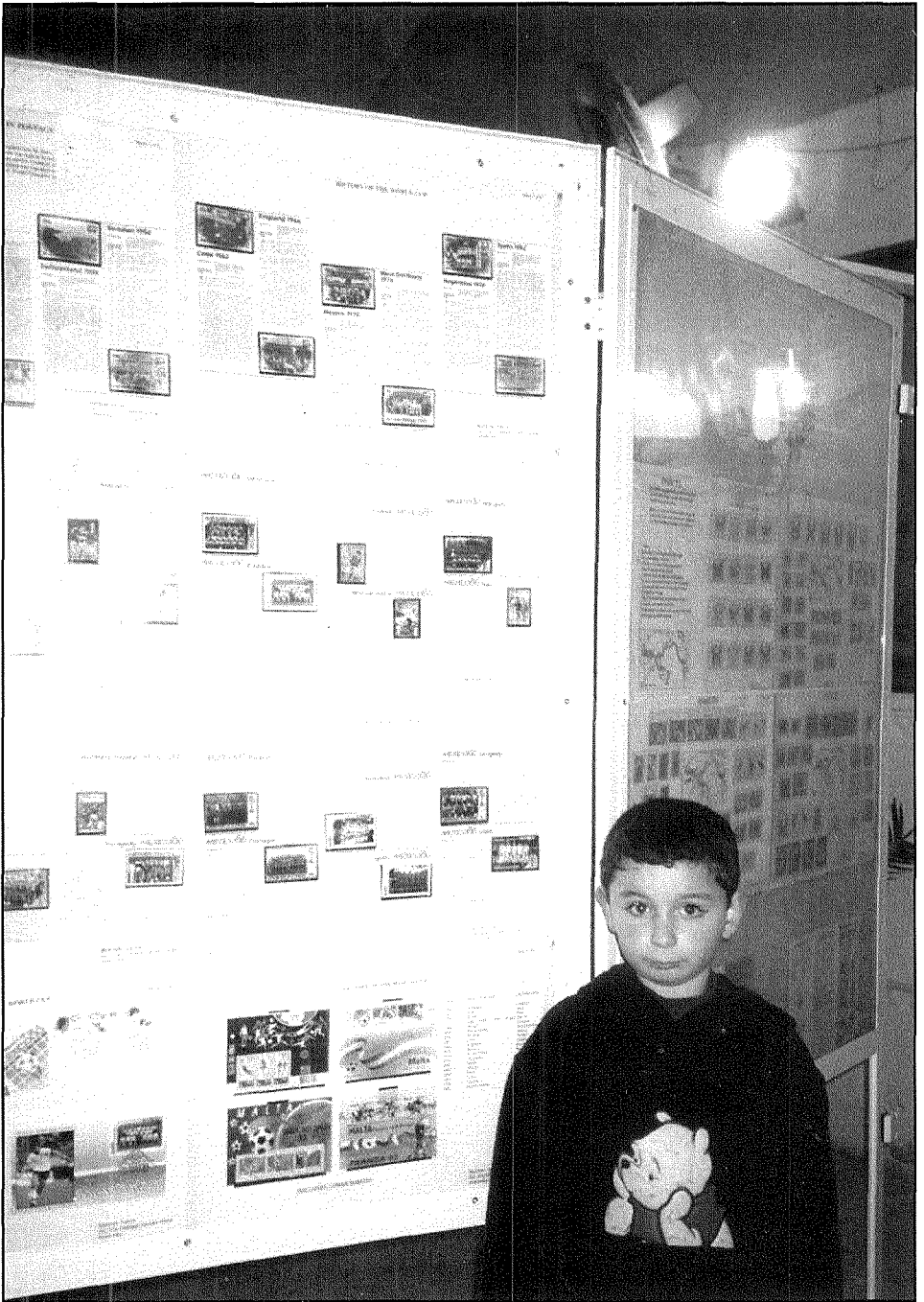
A special postal card and hand stamps commemorating the event were available at the Maltapost Stand.

The full program is being enclosed with this journal in order that it be kept as a souvenir by those who were unable to attend.

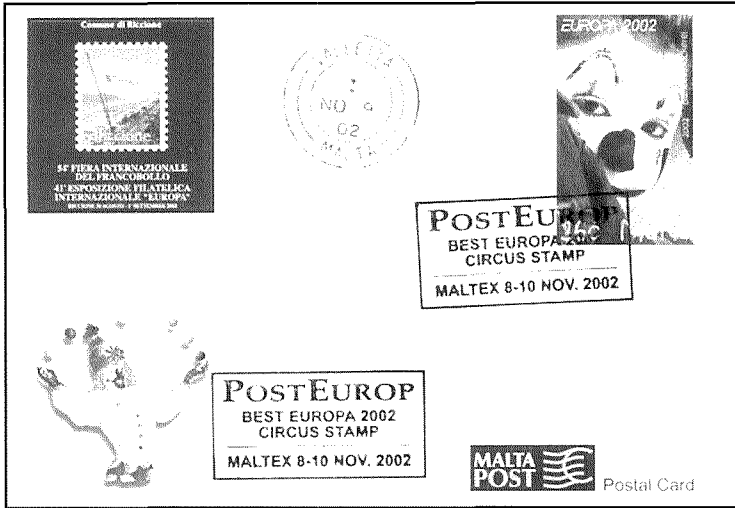
The following photo shows foreign participating dealers with some committee members.



*Mr. Phil Dodds, Mr. Anthony Cassar, Mr. John Curtin, Mr. Derek Fulluck, Mr. Jeff Milson, Mr. John Gauci, Dr. Luciano Cruciani, Mr. Hadrian Wood, Mr. Remi Said, Mr. Joe Buttigieg, Mr. Anthony Camilleri, Dr. A. Bonnici and Mr. Anthony Fenech*

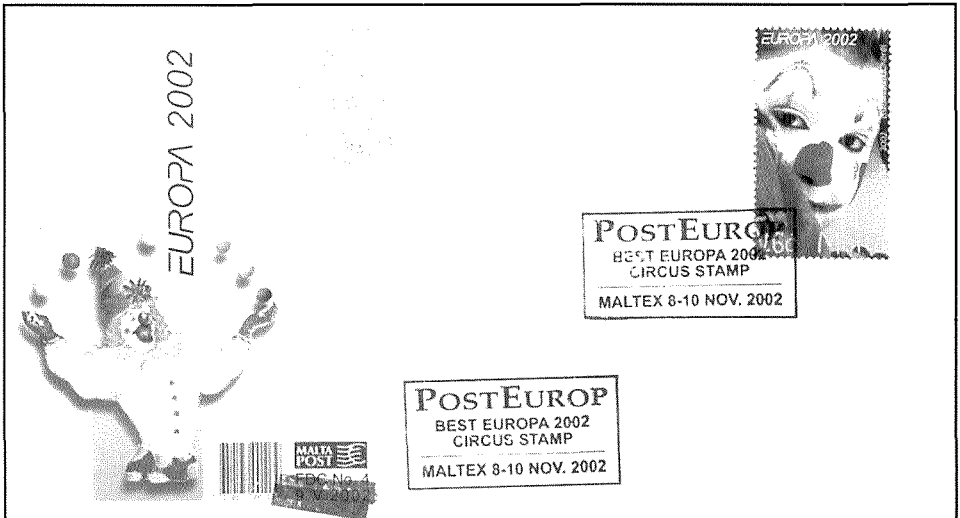


*Master Matthew Zahra with his exhibit.*

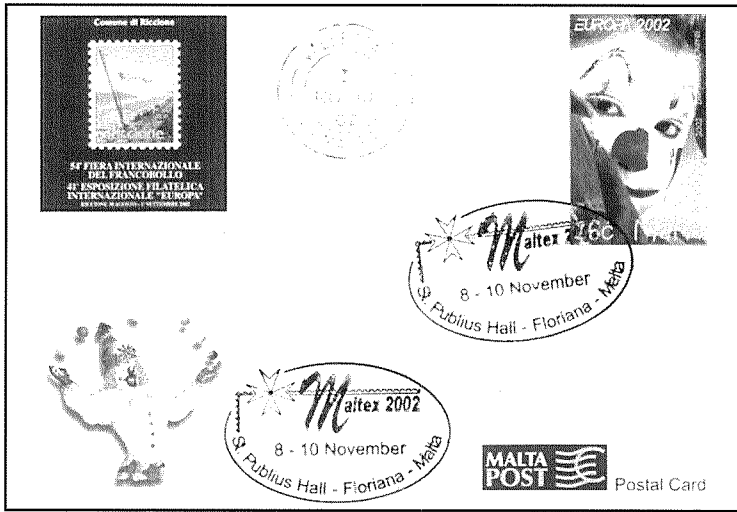


*Postal Card No. 23.*

*This postal card commemorating the participation of Maltapost plc through its Philatelic Agent in the 54th International Stamp Fair held at Riccione, Italy from 30th August to 1st September 2002 was hand stamped with the special POSTEUROP - Maltex hand stamp during Maltex 2002.*

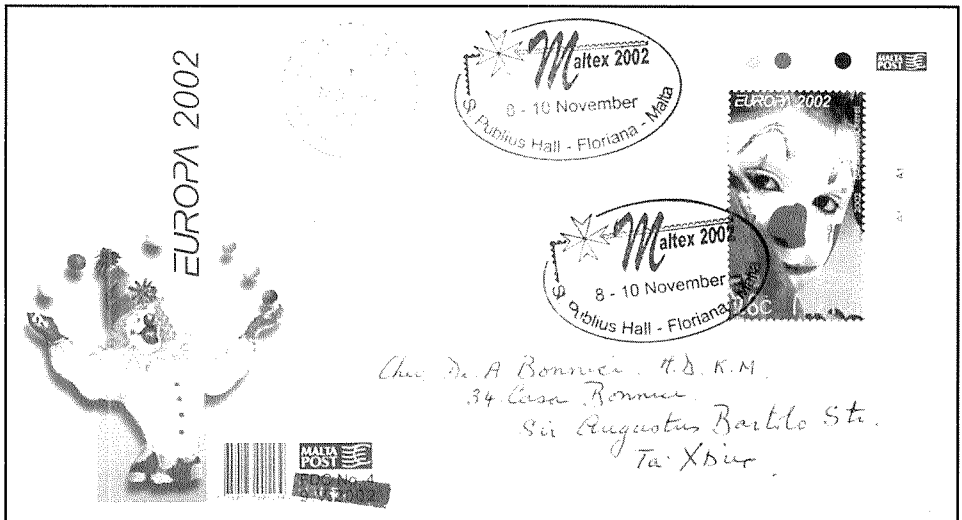


*Commemorative Envelope with POSTEUROP hand stamp.*



**Postal Card No.23.**

*This postal card commemorating the participation of Maltapost plc through its Philatelic Agent in the 54th International Stamp Fair held at Riccione, Italy from 30th August to 1st September 2002 was hand stamped with the special MALTEX - Maltex hand stamp during Maltex 2002.*



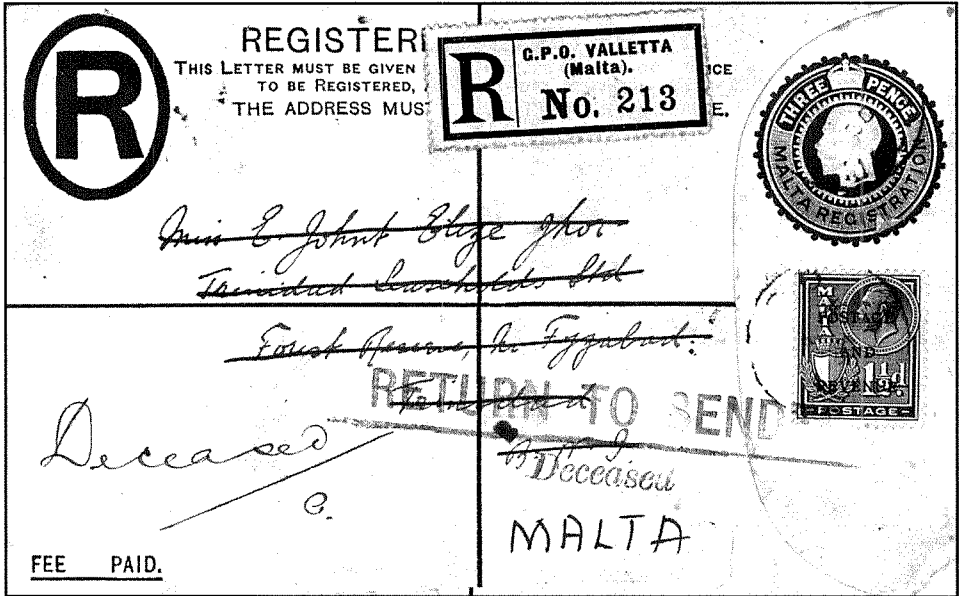
**Commemorative Envelope with Maltex 2002 hand stamp.**

# Unusual TRINIDAD B.W.I. Hand stamp

By Dr A Bonnici. KM. MD. MRPSL

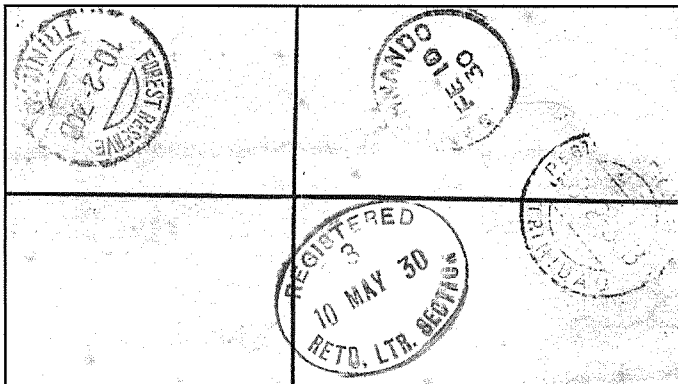
## RETURN TO SENDER

*Deceased*



This Malta 1930 George V, Registered Letter Envelope, was sent to Miss. E. Johnt Elize Jhor at Trinidad Leasehold Ltd, Forest Reserve, Nr Fyzabad, Trinidad. B.W.I. It bears the following BWI – HAND STAMPS.

On the front a Violet **RETURN TO SENDER / Deceased**, hand stamp, together with a manuscript “Deceased” / G., in red ink.



At the back; A double ring REGISTERED / 8 - 2 - 30 B / TRINIDAD; Single ring San FERNARDO / FE 10 / 30; Double ring FOREST RESERVE / 10 - 2 - 30D 5 TRINIDAD.

This Registered letter remained in Trinidad up to the 10<sup>th</sup> May 30, as per “**VIOLET Single oval ring REGISTERED / 3 / 10 MAY 30 / RETD. LTR. SECTION.**”, hand stamp at the back.

The combination of this **Violet Returned Letter Section hand stamp**, with the **Returned to sender /Deceased hand stamp**, on a Registration letter envelope originating from Malta, makes this Registration envelope unique.

It would indeed be interesting, to have comments about such BWI hand stamps, from my friends of the BWI study circle, both in the UK, and in the BWI.

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## **DAMAGED CROWN FLAW ON THE EDWARD VII MALTA ISSUE**

*By Dr A Bonnici KM, MD, MRPSL.*

Doing a spring cleaning job recently through my numerous box files, I came across the following observations, which were sent to me by a UK Malta Study Circle member.

Unfortunately I do not have a record of his name, and so apologise for not being able to mention him personally. The note reads as follows;

“In addition to the well known “CROWN” Flaw of the George V High Value Key plate issue of 1914 there is also a “Damaged Crown flaw” on the Edward VII issue.

Unfortunately one of the major omissions in the DeLa Rue printing plates that were discovered some years ago, was the Edward VII head issues. However from a study of these stamps a “Damaged Crown”, has been found that is constant on all values printed after 1907, with the exception of the single plate printings of the ½d., and 1d (SG 47A & 49).

Following the purchase of a block of 4 (SG63) of the 5/- value (SG63) at Stampex, I found that one stamp had what appeared to be a missing pearl and a broken mount on the right hand side of the crown. This led me to examine the rest of my collection of 5/- stamps, and I discovered a further copy on a used example.

From here I went to the MSC Study Paper 31, which deals with this issue. The diagram on page 31-8, now made more sense to me, and following a study of the 1d value (SG48) I found a similar flaw.

Not only so, but one was on the mint pane that I have, and so a position can be established. The flaw is to be found in Row 7 No 3, on the left hand lower pane.

Since then I have found that it appears on the other values after 1907, that is, on all the Mult CA Watermarked issue, with the exception of the ½d., & 1d single plate printings.



*crown flaw*



*crown flaw*



# Postal Diary (2002)

## 1st January - 30th June 2002

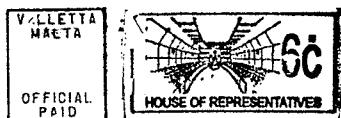
by Anthony Fenech MRPSL

### 02 January

A new type of pictorial International Reply Coupon 150 × 102mm has been issued today. The new pictorial design features a young girl in the foreground with mountain scenery behind her. The familiar Universal Postal Union globe logo is positioned at top left. As with its predecessor the new IRC bears the code CN 01 at top right. On the front of the IRC, there is *Malte* in black and 50c value in red.

### 02 January

With effect from today, an *Official Paid* slogan consisting of a square boxed *Valletta/Malta/Official/Paid* followed by a rectangular design incorporating the Parliament Chamber and the 6c value tablet has started to be used in black or red ink, on all correspondence emanating from the Malta House of Representatives.



### 03 January

A limited number of Maltapost desk calendars are available to philatelists on request. These can be acquired by contacting the Customer Care Department at Maltapost on telephone 0800772244. This offer is available until stocks last.

### 05 January

With effect from today a Postage Paid slogan showing *POSTAGE/PAID* amid seven wavy lines, with the die *D.M.S./arcs/Malta* has started to be used at the outside Services Department of Maltapost.



### 09 January

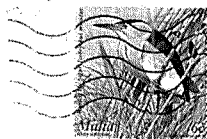
Maltapost introduces postage stamp labels at its first dispensing machine installed at Malta International Airport today. The labels show:

- i) Valletta by night;
- ii) The Azure Window (Id-Dwejra) in Gozo;
- iii) Mdina Gate;
- iv) The Blue Lagoon (Comino).

First Day Covers are available from all Maltapost Branches. These bear the date 09.01.02 which is the date on which the vending machine was first launched.

### 15 January

A new stamping machine has been installed at Naxxar B.P.O. today. The datestamp used on this machine is a 29mm single ring inscribed *NAXXAR B.P.O./arc spacers/Malta* with the day, month, year and time appearing in a straight line in the middle. The die is followed by 5 wavy lines measuring 52mm.



### 21 January

Today, Maltapost plc. has issued the 2001 Year Pack, this being the fourteenth in the series. The front and back covers show a selection from the Birds of Malta issue. Included in the year pack is Postcard No. 14 showing the Lapwing "Il-Vennewwa" one of the Birds of Malta stamps in the set issued in June 2001. This postcard is sold separately over the philatelic counters, mint or cancelled, on the first day, with the January 21, 2002 datestamp.

### 30 January

A new postage stamp set *WWF Sea Horses* is issued today. The set designed by Martin Bonavia consists of 4 stamps (values 6c, 6c, 16c, 16c). The stamps issued in sheets of 10 have been offset printed by Bundesdruckerei GmbH. The withdrawal date of the stamps is the 29 January 2003. A special handstamp has been provided by Maltapost to cancel the stamps issued today. The Malta Philatelic Bureau has issued the Stamp Bulletin No. 194 featuring the *Sea Horses* stamps. The bulletin has an inset on its front for the 6c stamp to be affixed thereon and cancelled by the special First Day of Issue handstamp.



### 31 January

Maltapost plc. notifies that a special hand postmark *MALTA-ĊINA/RELAZZJONIJIET DIPLOMATIČI* will be in use at the Counter Hall, Valletta today, Thursday 31st January 2002, during office hours.

The handstamp is inscribed: *Malta-Ċina/1972 - 2002/30 Anniversarju/Relazzjonijiet/Diplomatiči/Valletta - Malta - 31.01.02.*



A similar datestamp, but in Chinese Script, was used in China. A special commemorative cover was prepared by the Chinese Embassy twinned with the two handstamps.

### 01 February

Transend Worldwide Limited, a subsidiary of New Zealand Post has bought 35% shareholding in Maltapost and will manage the Company for two years under two separate agreements signed yesterday. The agreements come into effect immediately.

### 02 February

A Philatelic Bureau Card carrying a handstamp dated 02.02.02 is being issued today. This year's Philatelic Bureau Card will be the second in a series with similar dates to be issued over successive years.



The card, which includes a 19c stamp from the Carnival Issue, stamped with this date, can be sent through the post at no extra charge, provided it is posted by not later than Saturday 9th February 2002. Cards similarly cancelled and posted after this date are to carry stamps affixed thereon to cover the required postage.

### 07 February

The *Malta Film Facilities* postage stamp set scheduled to be issued today has been delayed until a later date due to technical details. The Philatelic Bulletin No. 195 (February 2002) has been withdrawn from the Post Offices counters.

### 04 March

As from today a new stamp cancelling machine will be in use at the Cospicua B.P.O. A 28mm single ring datestamp inscribed *Cospicua B.P.O. arc spacers/Malta* followed by 5 evenly spaced wavy lines is being used on this stamping machine. The date appears in a single line in the middle of the postmark.



### 09 March

The public is advised that Maltapost Branch Post Offices at:

Old Bakery Street in Valletta;  
Main Street in Balzan;

New Mill Street in Mellieħa;  
Sciortino Street in Żebbuġ, Malta;  
J.F. de Chambray Street in Ġħajnsielem, Gozo;  
North Street in Nadur, Gozo;

will be kept closed on Saturday 9th March, because of their proximity to polling booths in these localities. This closure will not effect distribution of mail, but counter service will not be provided. The public is advised to refer to the nearest Branch or Sub-Post Office.

### 11 March

Maltapost plc. notifies that a machine stamp cancelling slogan reading *Patrimonju 11th Exhibition/Antique Furniture in Malta/16.III - 14.IV.2002* will be used from the 11th March to the 23rd March 2002 at the Central Mail Room, Qormi Road, Marsa.

### 18 March

With effect from Monday 18th March, the new opening hours at Victoria Branch Post Office in Gozo will be as follows:

Monday to Friday	8.15am to 4.30pm
Saturday	8.15am to 12.30pm

These new opening hours are effective throughout the year.

### 25 March

A machine stamp cancelling slogan reading: *Kinnie/celebrating 50 years/of great taste/since 1952* will be used from the 25th March to the 1st June 2002 at the Central Mail Room, Qormi Road, Marsa.

### 27 March

A new postage stamp set *Antique Maltese Furniture* designed by Francis X. Ancilleri and printed by Bundesdruckerei GmbH is being issued today. The values in the set are: 2c, 4c, 11c, 26c, and 60c. The set will be withdrawn from the counters on the 26th March 2003. The *Malta Stamp* No. 196 issued by the Malta Philatelic Bureau features the stamps in this set. On its front there is an insert for the 2c stamp to be affixed thereon and cancelled by the First Day special handstamp inscribed *Ġħamara Antika Maltija/---/Malta/Jum il-Ħruġ/27.03.02* provided by Maltapost plc. to cancel the new stamps being issued today.



## 01 April

The Sub-Post Office at Just Jase, Islets Promenade, Buġibba, will be closed between Monday 1st and Saturday 13th April, both days inclusive.

During this period, the public may avail itself of services at St. Paul's Bay Branch Post Office in Main Street.

## 27 April

The Christmas 2001 stamp issue is to be withdrawn from sale at the close of business of Saturday 27th April 2002.

## 09 May

The 2002 Europa set of postage stamps is being issued today. There is only one Europa stamp in this year's issue and it features a clown. This 16c stamp is designed by Roberta Zahra and offset printed by Bundesdruckerei GmbH in sheets of 10 stamps. Maltapost has provided a special handstamp for its First Day of Issue cancellations. The Malta Philatelic Bureau features the Europa stamp in its *Malta Stamp Bulletin* No. 197.



## 27 May

The public is being notified that with effect from today, the collection of mail from street letter boxes in Malta and Gozo, will be carried out at the following times:

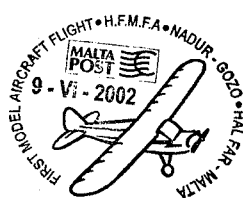
Mondays to Fridays	11.00am and 7.00pm
Saturdays	11.00am and 3.00pm

## 06 June

The Sub-Post Office at the Globe Stationery, Main Street, Attard, will be closed between Thursday 6th and Tuesday 11th June 2002, both days inclusive. During this period, the public may avail itself of services at Balzan Branch Post Office in Main Street.

## 09 June

A special handstamp marking today's first model aircraft flight from Gozo to Hal Far has been applied on properly addressed covers flown on this flight. In spite of the fact that today is Sunday, all covers have been back stamped with the Birzebbugia B.P.O./Malta/JU 9/02 datestamp, Hal Far being in the postal district operated by the Birzebbugia Branch Post Office.



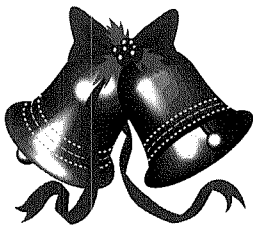
## 17 June

Post Office administrators have been advised that it was no longer considered necessary for ordinary letters to be back stamped prior to their being delivered to the addressees. So back stamping on ordinary letters will be discontinued with effect from today.

## 26 June

A new postage stamp sheetlet of 16 stamps – Moths and Butterflies – has been issued today. The sheetlet of 16 (6c) stamps designed by Maurice Tanti Burlò depicts moths and butterflies endemic to the Maltese Islands. The stamps are offset printed by Bundesdruckerei GmbH. A special handstamp inscribed *bahrijiet u friefet/Jum il-ħruġ/26.VI.2002/-----* has been provided to cancel all the philatelic mail franked with the moths and butterflies stamps used on the first day of issue.

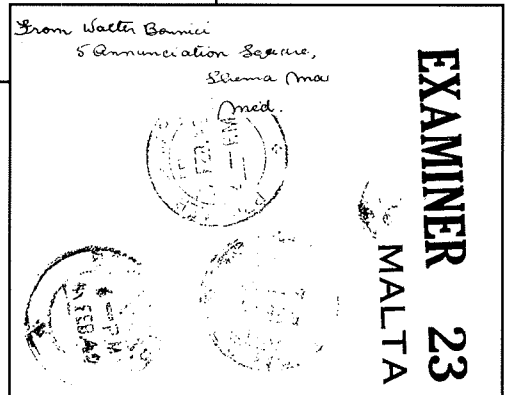
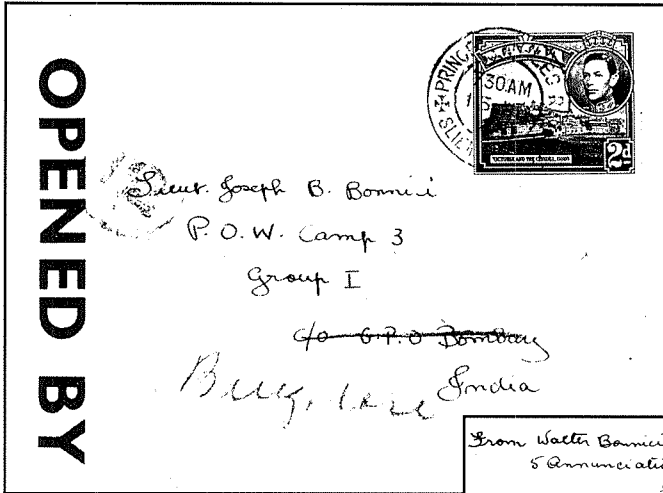
The *Malta Stamp* bulletin No. 198 featuring these stamps has been issued by the Malta Philatelic Bureau.



*The Malta Philatelic Society*  
*wishes all our members*  
*a Merry Christmas*  
*and a*  
*Happy New Year*

# MALTA CENSORED COVER OPENED BY/ EXAMINER 23/ MALTA

By Dr A BONNICI KM, MD, MRPSL



This letter was sent to;  
Lieut Joseph Bonnici at;  
POW camp 3. Group 1...  
Bangalore India.

Posted at Prince of Wales Rd,  
Sliema P.O., on the 16 th Jan 1942,  
arriving in Bombay on the 4<sup>th</sup> Feb,  
when it was redirected on the 5<sup>th</sup> to  
Bangalore, arriving at the  
**PRISONER OF WAR CAMP** on the 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 1942.

This letter was written,

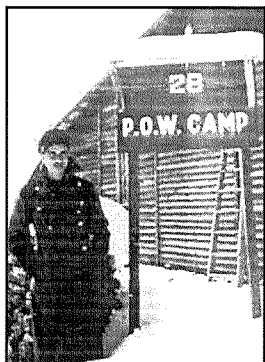
By his brother **Walter Bonnici**, who in 1943, was living in **No 5, Annunciation Sqr., Sliema**; was still a Medical Student at our Royal University in MALTA, graduating in 1946, when he proceeded to the UK to specialise in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, graduating as Fellow of The Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, returning to Malta in 1956, becoming one of the leading Consultants in this speciality.

A UK friend of mine picked this interesting **MALTA—OPENED BY**

**EXAMINER 23/MALTA, CENSOR COVER**, in stampex, and seeing it addressed to **Lieut Joseph Bonnici**, thought that he was a relative of mine, and so sent me a photocopy of it.

Well, I do not mind in the least to have such a prominent family as my relatives, but for the record, as far as I know, we are not related, they belong to a different clan.

A great coincidence however exists between me and his other brother, whose name is like mine **ALFRED**, both our wives also unrelated, come from **Floriana**, having the same maiden surname **MICALLEF**. We both married on the same day, which was on the **18<sup>th</sup> June 1961**, and for the past twenty five years he worked in a Senior capacity with Air Malta, whilst I have been the Chief Medical Officer of Air Malta.”



*Lieut Bonnici at POW Camp*

*The story behind this cover is as follows;*

Lieut Bonnici was one of ten children, and joined the British army in 1940, serving in the Middle East, when in 1941 he was attached, as an *Intelligence Officer* to the first established POW Camp No 3 in South India, in Bangalore, soon becoming Captain.

When the war was over, and in recognition for his work done in the POW Camp in India, before obtaining his discharge, he received a personal letter signed by the late King George VI, bestowing on him, the rank of honorary **Captain** for life.

**Capt Bonnici says,**

*“This camp housed the major part of Italian Prisoners of War, being a dispersal camp, by which I mean, it was a camp where the Italian prisoners were first sent awaiting their subsequent identification by regiment, rank, group (Medical, transport, cavalry, artillery etc.) before they could be posted to their proper camps. For example No 28 Camp where I spent most of my time, became the Fascist Camp.*

*Prisoners of War India were mainly Italian except for one small group of Japanese who were housed in a small camp somewhere in a remote part of India.*

*There is a humourous anecdote connected with*



*Captain Bonnici today*



*this camp worthy of mention. Since most of the Japanese were of small frame they used to escape quite easily especially during the night, so to prevent this the Authorities attached thousands of empty tin cans to the perimeter wire, which were partly filled with tiny stones and pebbles giving out a loud noise in the still and quiet tropical nights thus foiling their planned escape. Not so with the Italians who did not try to escape. Very few did but most of them preferred to remain in Camp where good food, clean showers and warm beds were available.*

*A few escaped in search of women but soon returned to camp. It was recorded that out of the thousands of P.O.W. only one person never made it back to camp; he either fell into one of the ravines along mountains he would have encountered along the way or eaten by wild animals. The truth was never known.*

*There were approximately 35 camps in India, each holding approximately 3,000 men or more. These camps were set up by the British Government to house large numbers of Italian soldiers captured in North Africa and the environs who were being pushed into the front lines by the German Army. These soldiers had no food for days, were very thirsty living in the North African desert climate, had no ammunition. Most of them gave themselves up preferring to become prisoners of war under the safety of the British Authorities.*

*Most of the camps in India were strategically placed on high ground such as on hills and mountains in order to prevent illnesses befalling P.O.W. These illnesses are normally found in low lying areas. A small group of camps were located in a low area at a place called Mhow in the Central Provinces ostensibly to house diehard fascist elements who were a constant source of trouble. I spent a few days there where I found everywhere to be extremely damp because Mhow is situated below sea level consequently one finds many residents suffer from Malaria and kindred diseases.*

*My rank was that of Captain in the British Intelligence Corps and when performing duty at a Camp I was ably assisted by two Lieutenants and four Sergeants who also belonged to the Intelligence Corps.*

*My duty was to interpret, translate and prepare monthly intelligence reports and to solicit over and convert intelligence. The broad scope of the whole exercise was to convince prisoners that Italy was fighting a losing cause and that Mussolini wrongly threw his hand in with Hitler when he should have been fighting along – side Britain as Italy did during the First World War.*

*The prisoners were continually being assessed into three distinct categories known as Black, Grey and White, i.e. from a black shirt into one who became more cooperative (grey) to one who eventually became pro British or anti Fascist (white). Some whites could gain for themselves a Freedom of Movement pass which ultimately permitted them to work outside camp, in the homes of British Officers, in administration, or gardening etc., gain real money as opposed to Camp money and obtain for themselves limited freedom which otherwise was denied them. Of course, they had to return to Camp at dusk.*

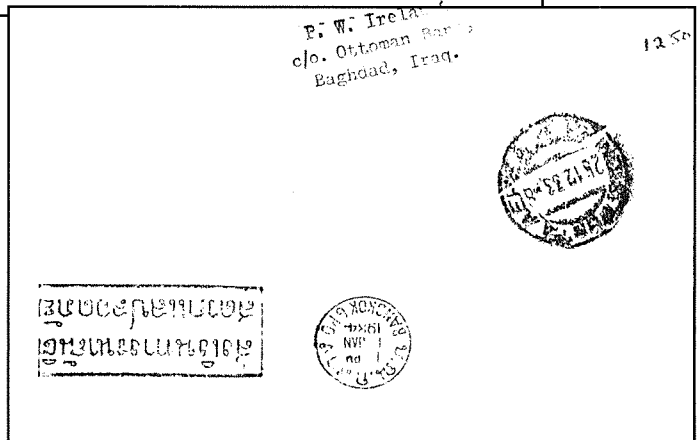
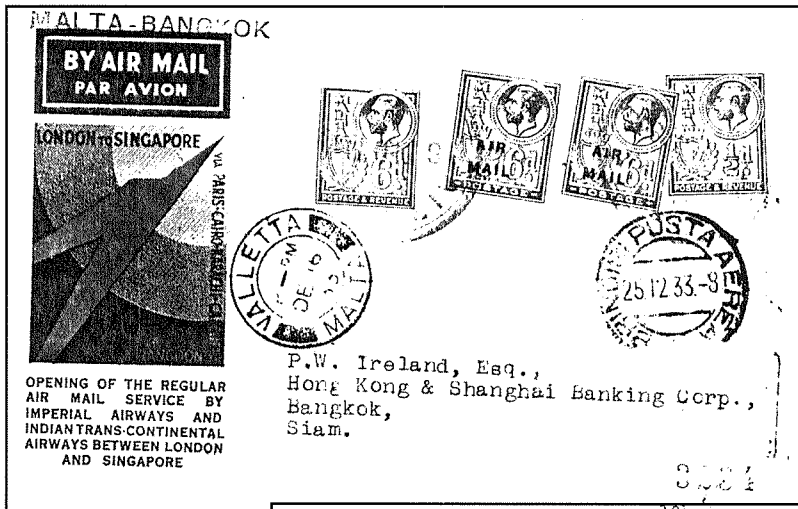
*During 1944, I was given the task of escorting 5,000 selected men, obviously whites,*

to be transferred to Australia to work alongside Australians, in the canning and sheep farming industry. This was a great success and became the forerunner of other groups to follow.

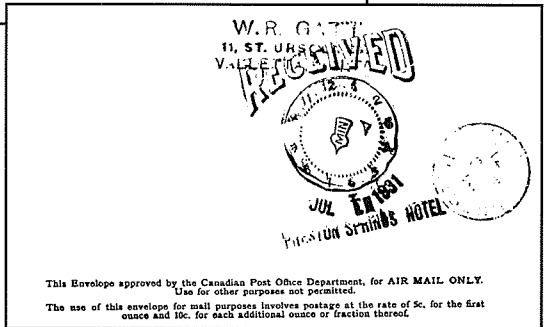
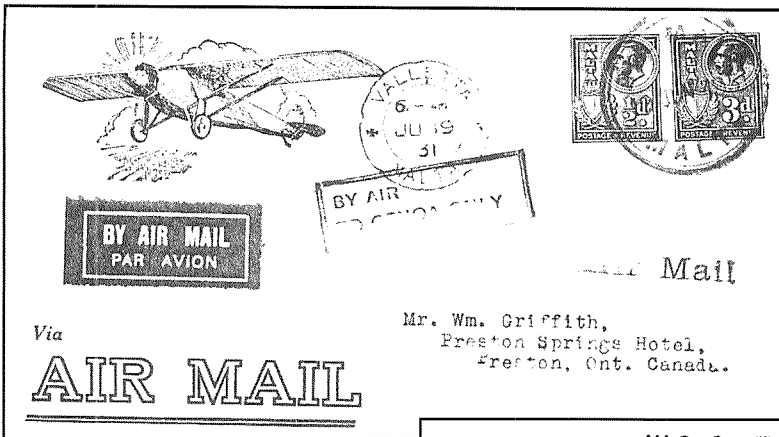
When the war was over and in recognition for work done with P.O.W. in India, and before I obtained my discharge, I received a personal letter signed by the late King George VI who bestowed on me the rank of honorary Captain for life."

## Interesting AIR MAIL COVERS

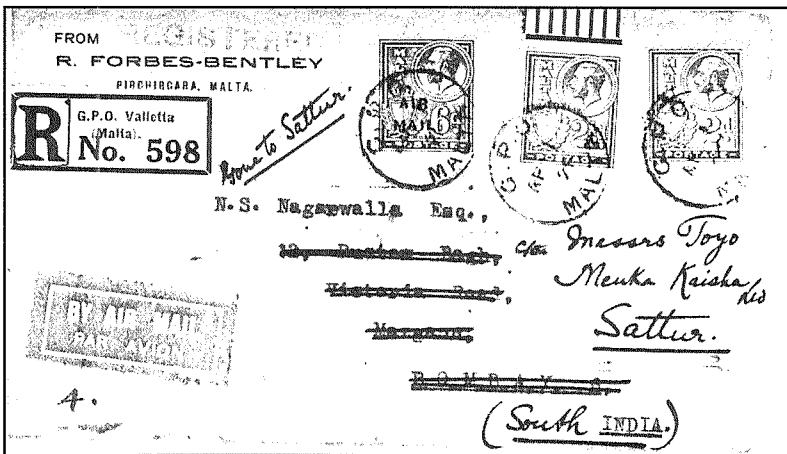
By Dr A Bonnici.KM.,MD.

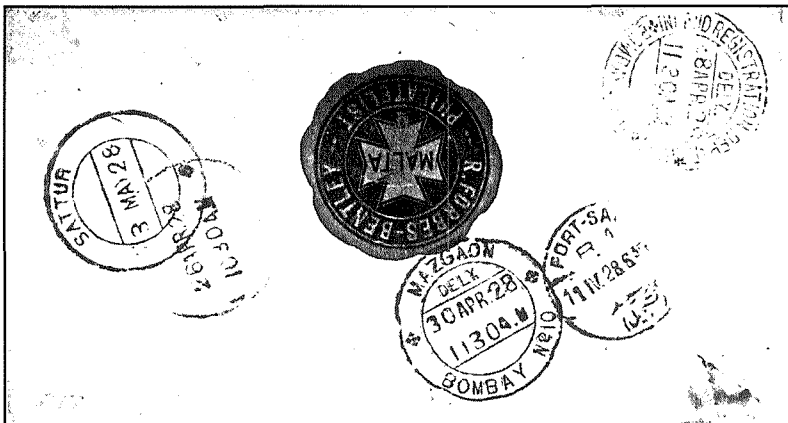


Unrecorded Speed Bird cover to Bangkok leaving Malta on the 16 Dec 33 picked up by Speed Bird at Brindisi on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and arriving in Bangkok on the 1 Jan 34.

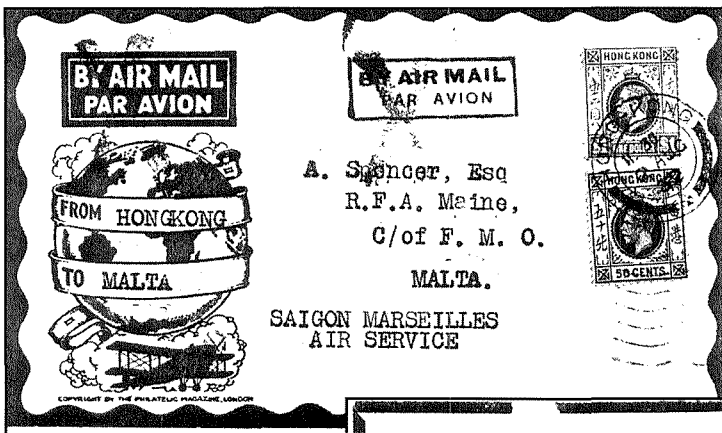


Unusual "CANADA Air", to Canada, sent by Mr W.R.GATT, on the 19 JU 31., to Mr Griffith, in Ont Canada.

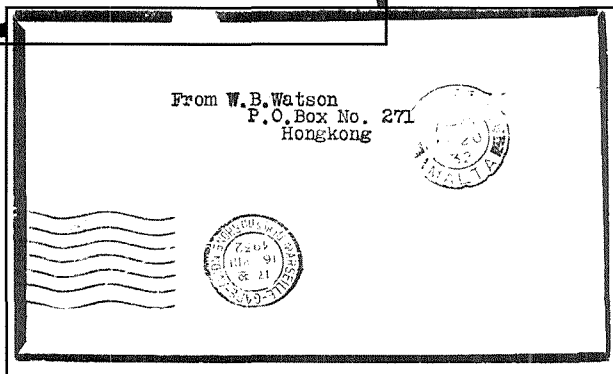




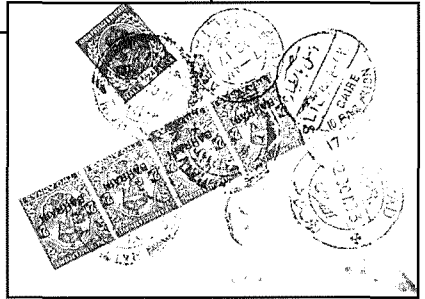
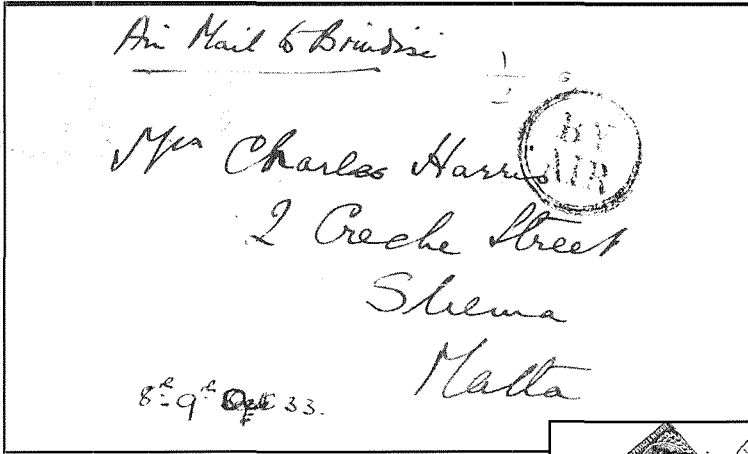
*Unrecorded cover sent by Mr Forbes Bentley, on the 1 Ap 28, to Mr Nagarwalla in Bombay, redirected to SATTUR. South India. It arrived in Port Said on the 11th, 28<sup>th</sup> Bombay, and finally 3<sup>rd</sup> May in SATTUR.*



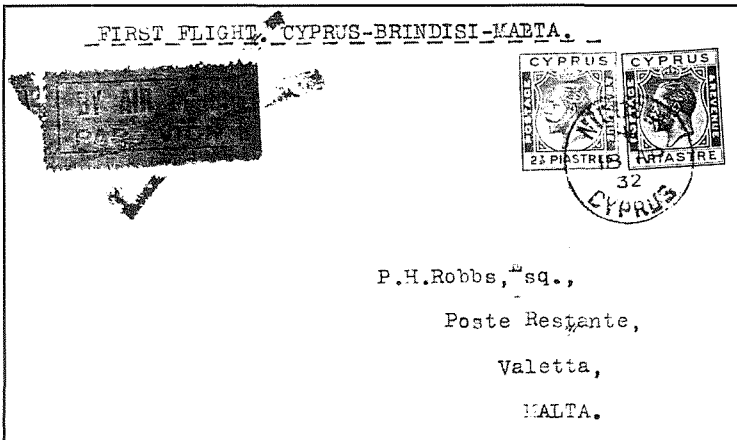
*Hong Kong — Malta.*



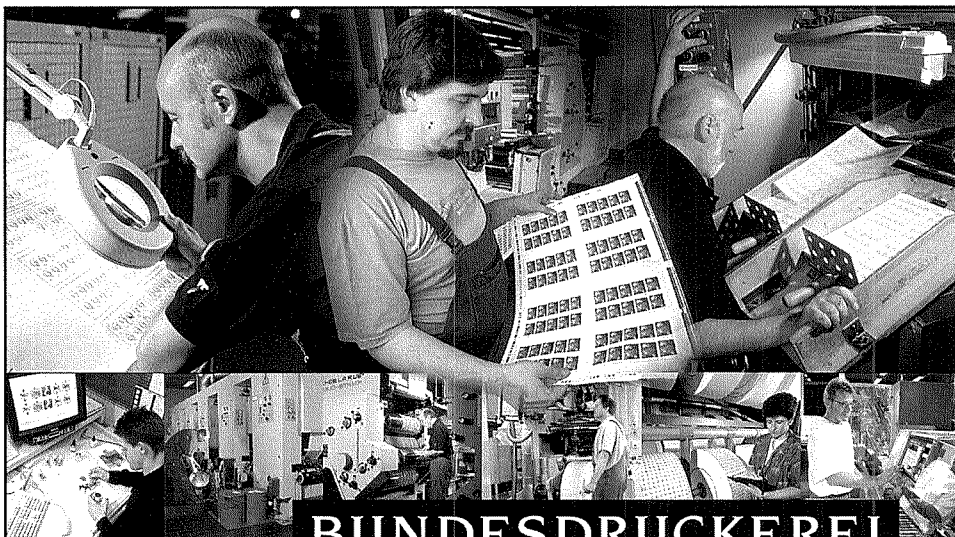
*This cover travelled initially from Hong Kong on the 2 Aug 32 to SAIGON by sea. Then by AIR ORIENT the sector SAIGON / MARSEILLES arriving in Marseilles on the 16, arriving in Malta on the 20 th August.*



*In coming Air Mail leaving BAHRAIN on the 11 Oct 33, to Baghdad on the 12<sup>th</sup>, Cairo on the 13, via Brindisi, arriving in Malta on the 17<sup>th</sup>.  
 It has an unusual "BY AIR" in a circle in black, probably applied in Bahrain.*



*Return First Flight CYPRUS- BRINDISI-MALTA.  
 Leaving Cyprus on the 18 April 1932, arriving Malta 27 April 1932.  
 This Imperial Airways new service had left Malta on the 13 Apr 1932, arriving Cyprus 26 Apr 1932.*



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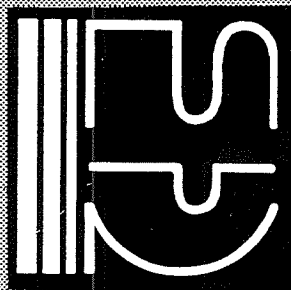
From photogravure, offset and indirect letterpress printing to fine intaglio printing or the combination of offset and intaglio, Bundesdruckerei GmbH supplies outstanding quality in all printing techniques.

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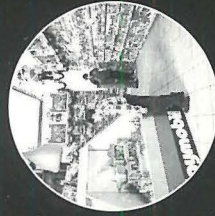
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# Christmas 2002



**Date of Issue:**

20 . XI . 2002

**Design:**

Debbie Caruana Dingli

**Date of Withdrawal:**

12 . IV . 2003

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