

# MIXED FRANKINGS ON PRE-WAR MALTA MAIL

By Giovanni Bonello, LL.D.

The 19th century witnessed an irreversible shift to pre-payment of postage by the sender, as opposed to the previous system which favoured the total or partial taxing of the mailing costs to the receiver of the mail. Pre-payment provoked a certain uniformity in the appearance of postal items; the adhesives almost invariably belong to the postal administration of the country in which the postal object was first inserted in the mail stream. Letters originating from Malta are franked by Maltese stamps, those originating in Mexico, by Mexican ones.

This is the rule; like most rules it suffers from some exceptions. Postal objects which carry the stamps of two (or more) postal administrations are occasionally, if rarely, met with. These are known as "mixed frankings", though sometimes one finds them referred to as "composite", "combined", "combination" or "compound" frankings. I here adopt the more generally accepted "mixed frankings" description.

This short feature deals with mail originating from, passing through, or addressed finally to Malta, on which mixed frankings appear. This means current **postage** stamps of more than one postal administration, and excludes adhesives specifically intended as postage **dues**.

How does it come to pass that a postal article should display the stamps of more than one country? The reasons are varied. A close examination of the rather scarce items of Malta mail with mixed frankings, discloses at least **eight** circumstances in which mixed frankings came about.

- 1 The postage stamps of the receiving country are added to those of the originating country, to serve as postage dues. More than one reason may account for this. The receiving country may not have issued special stamps as postage dues, or may have temporarily run out of the special postage due

labels, and have used ordinary postage stamps instead.

- 2 Mail sent via a third country, and additionally franked a second time with the stamps of the intermediate country.
- 3 **Paquebot One.** Mail originating from a foreign country addressed to a postal ship, c/o GPO Malta. I suspect most of these colourful covers to be philatelic mail.
- 4 **Paquebot Two.** Mail posted on board a postal ship franked with a Maltese stamp and another of the receiving country.
- 5 "Around the World" post cards (or letters). The same card was sent from one country to the next, to form a human chain, each addressee re-franking it with the stamps of his own country, and readdressing it to a person overseas. Such cards sometimes ended with stamps of six or more different countries stuck on them.
- 6 Zeppelin Flights. Special mail was posted in Malta under cover to the Postmaster General, to connect with a Zeppelin Flight. The mail was franked again with adhesives of the country in which the balloon took on the incoming mail.
- 7 Philatelic mail. The ingenuity of philatelists in constructing unusual mail knows few limits. Some covers, with the stamps of more than one postal administration, betray the fantasy and experience of a persevering philatelist.
- 8 Mystery covers. Some items remain, to me, totally baffling. I could not decipher their whys and wherefores. Assistance from readers in solving these minor puzzles would be welcome.

This classification in no way claims to be exhaustive. It brings together those classes of mixed frankings I am aware of; others, no doubt, exist, although I must stress again that, on Malta mail, mixed frankings seem to be particularly scarce.

I am illustrating 14 items, in chronological order, to demonstrate the various classes of mixed frankings.

As usual, Mr Cecil Diamantino and Mr Hadrian Wood have gone far beyond the call of duty in assisting me through this little feature.

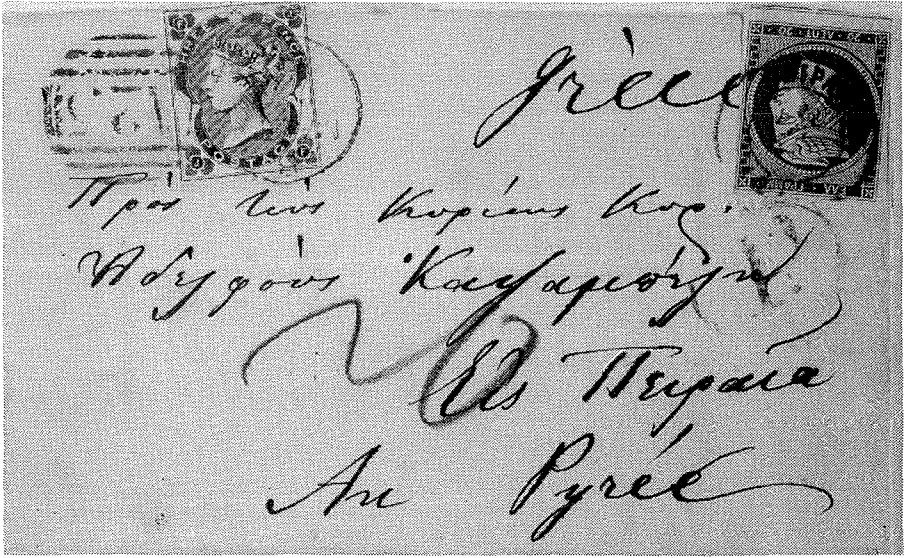


Fig 1 Letter dated July 10 (?) 1864 from Malta to Greece, franked by GB 3d cancelled by A25 duplex, and by one Greek 20 Lepta postage stamp, applied on arrival as postage due (Class 1). Mr Tony Eastgate has recorded a similar, 1862 cover, but claims that the Greek stamps were probably applied at Zante uncanceled, to prepay postage to Sira. I believe this explanation may not be correct.

Fig 2 Letter from Santa Pola (near Alicante, on the South-East coast of Spain), dated March 13, 1874, addressed to Malta. It was originally franked by four 1873 Spanish Republican Stamps (two torn out). At first marked 'via Spain and Italy', the latter was later cancelled out and re-directed in pencil 'via Gibraltar', where four GB 1d reds were applied and cancelled by the Gibraltar A26 on May 25. Backstamped with a Spanish Cds May 16, and Malta May 30 (Class 2). An extremely rare and interesting cover, unfortunately damaged.



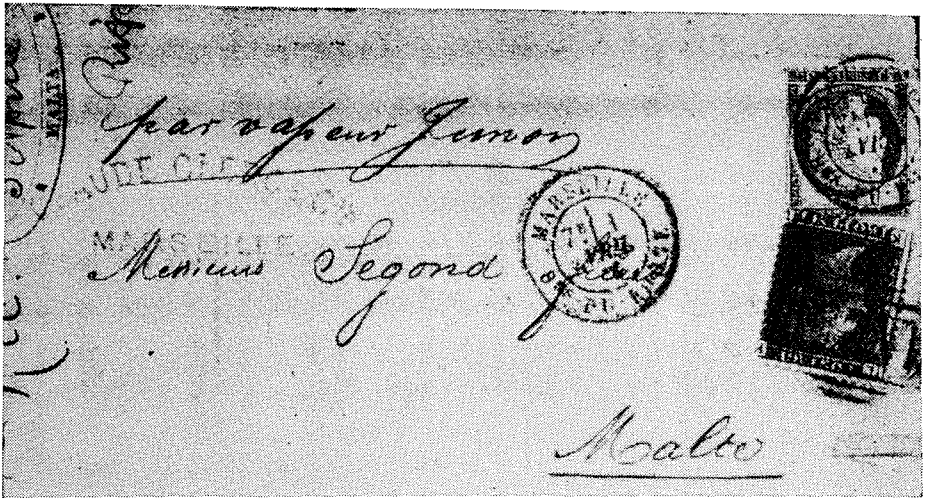


Fig 3 Part of a 1875 wrapper from Marseilles to Malta, bearing French 1871 30c cancelled by Marseilles Cds, and franked again on arrival by 1858 GB 2d, cancelled by A25. Quite difficult to explain. Malta stamp possibly added as postage due (Class 1?).

Fig 4 "Around the World" postcard (1905-06) bearing stamps of six different countries, including Malta 1d EVII (Class 5).

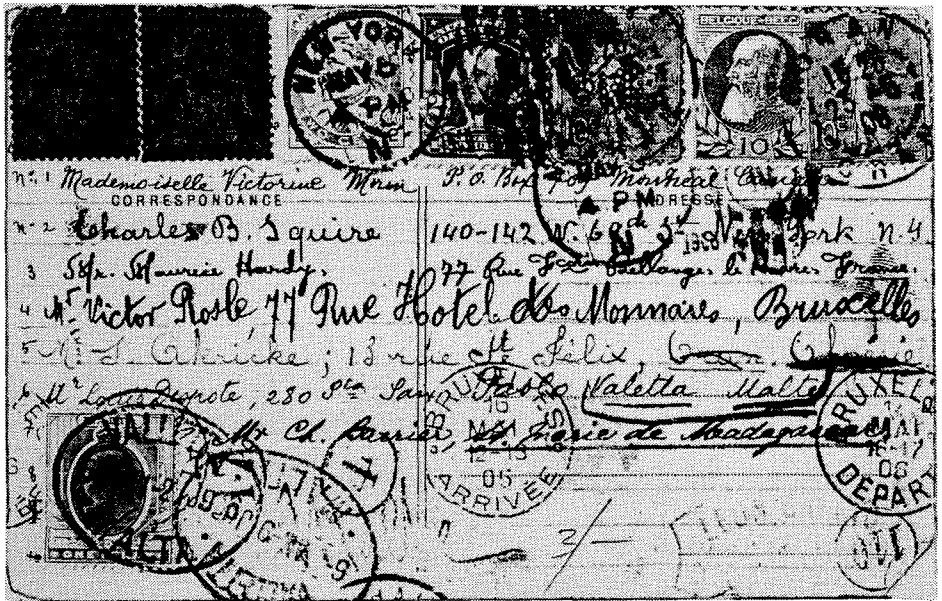




Fig 5 1915 letter from Birkirkara to Australia, with request to "please forward". On arrival, it was franked again with an Australia 1d, and forwarded to the addressee, Surgeon Victor J Mifsud, serving with a military transport unit (Class 2).

Fig 6 1926 air letter from Malta to Egypt, for RAF flight Malta-Aboukir of July 7. Franked by a Malta and an Egypt postage stamp, cancelled together on arrival by Aboukir Cds. Why? (Class 8).

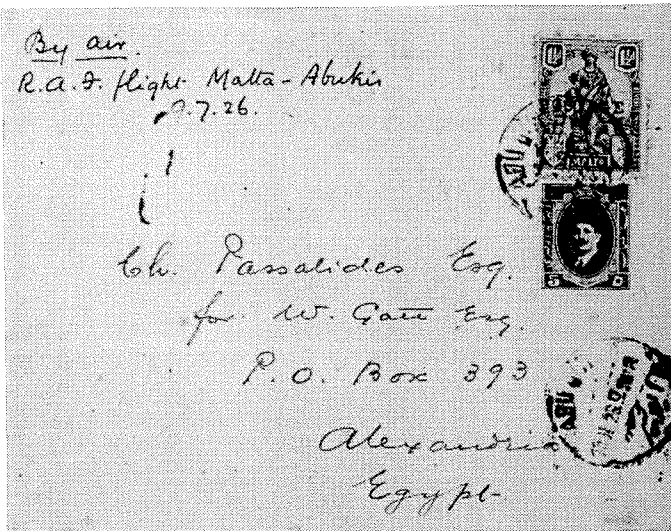




Fig 7 1928 express letter from Camberly, Surrey, franked by six GB stamps and a Malta 1 1/2d stamp. Although the Malta stamp was duly cancelled (and not annulled) the letter was marked "short paid" and taxed 1d postage due. (Class 8).

Fig 8 1930, March 30, envelope, addressed to England, carried by SS Italia, stamped concurrently by GB 1d and Malta 1/2d, and handstamped by ship's canceller (Class 4).



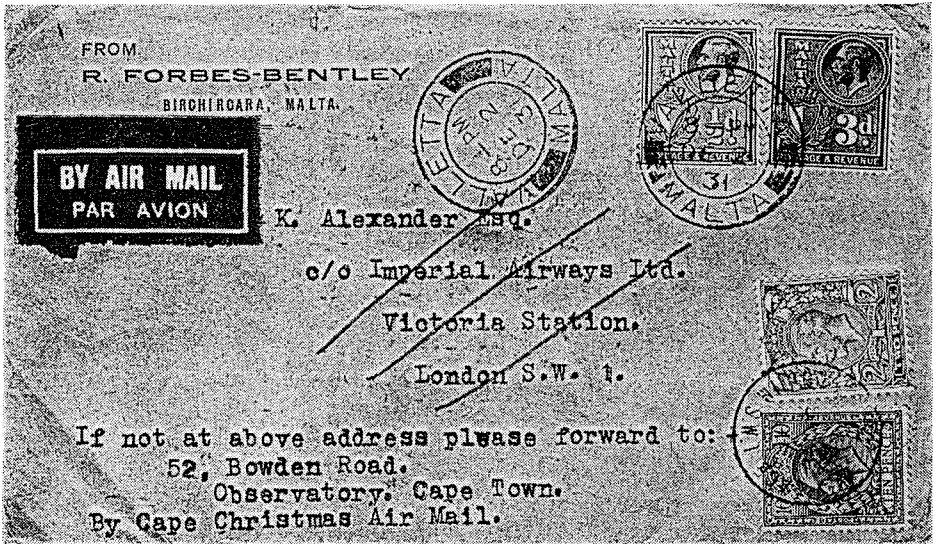


Fig 9 1931 letter from Malta to UK franked with 3 1/2d stamps, cancelled Valletta December 2, 1931, with request to forward to Cape Town. Two GB stamps cancelled in London December 12. The GB stamps may have been stuck in Malta uncanceled. Philatelic cover (Class 7).

Fig 10 1932 letter from Malta to the Cayman Islands, insufficiently franked by two 1/4d Malta stamps. On arrival it was taxed 1/20c and two 1921 Cayman postage stamps stuck as postage dues (Class 1).





Fig 11 1933 registered letter to Pernambuco, Brazil, bearing three 1925 Melita stamps cancelled April 19, and three German stamps cancelled May 6. Posted under cover to the Postmaster General to coincide with the Zeppelin First South America flight (Class 6).

Fig 12 1936 February 20 registered cover from Malta to UK, franked by two Silver Jubilee stamps: a Gibraltar 1/- and a Malta 6d, both cancelled by the Malta Registration oval handstamp. Mysterious franking, well in the Class 8 bracket.

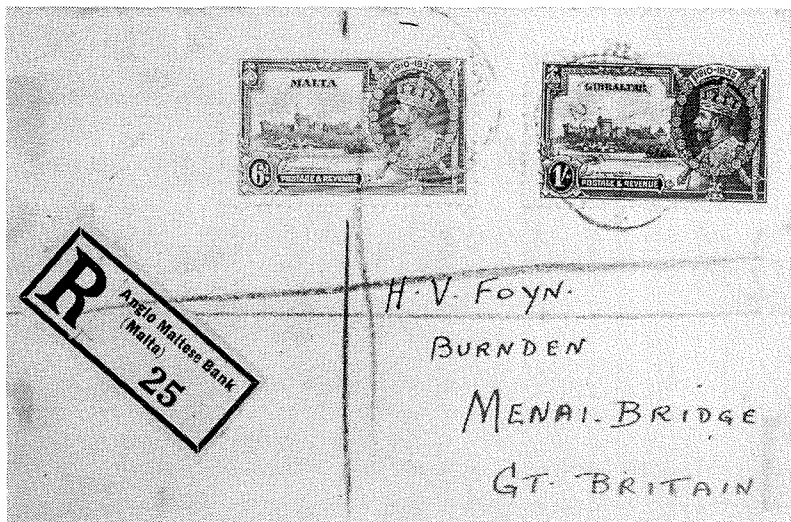






Fig 13 1937, December 8 envelope from Green Turtle Cay, Bahamas, to Mail Ship Knight of Malta, c/o GPO Malta. Backstamped GPO December 27, and Paquebot Knight of Malta Dec 28. Similar envelopes exist from the Falkland Islands (Class 3 with philatelic undertones).

Fig 14 1938 Postcard from Switzerland to Malta, bearing Malta 2/- stamp and two Swiss stamps, cancelled Lausanne May 22, handstamped Bellinzona May 31, and backstamped GPO oval registration June 8 (?).

