

MANUSCRIPT FORWARDING AGENTS' MARKINGS ON MALTA MAIL

By Giovanni Bonello LL.D.

Postal historians seem to disagree on an all-embracing definition of a "Forwarding Agent". Of all those that have been proposed, none appears to have received universal acceptance.

Rowe defines a Forwarding Agent as a person (or organisation) who undertook the forwarding of mail without carrying it personally. **De Zanche** adds that Forwarding Agents can only be considered such when they intervened in the carriage of mail between different countries. The Postal History Com-

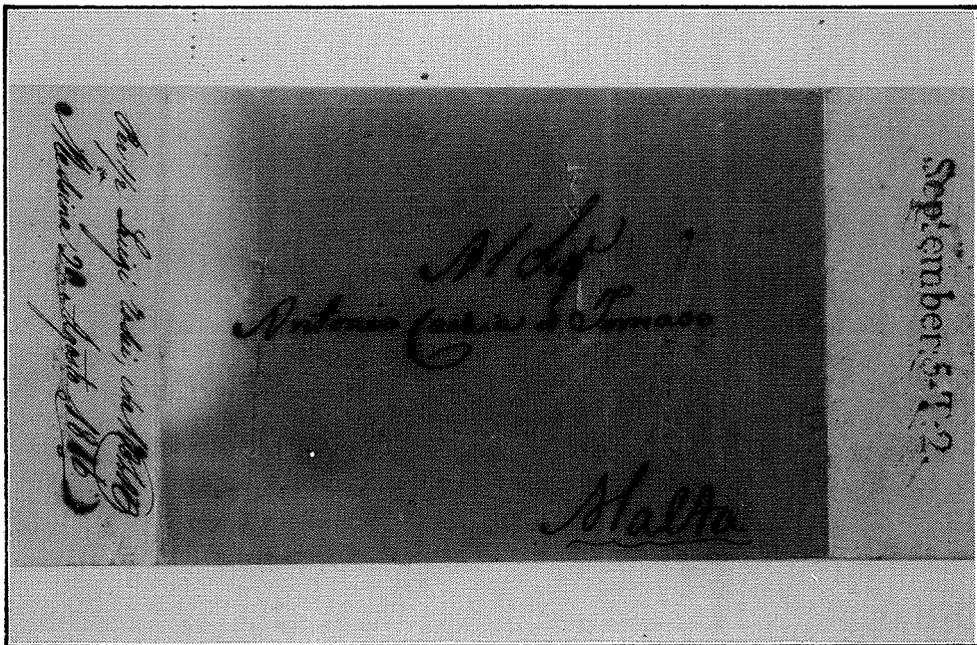


Fig. 1 A letter from Fratelli Levi Mondolfo (?) in Trieste to Antonio Cachia di Tomaso in Malta dated June 12, 1816. LUIGI ROSSI the Forwarding Agent carried it from Trieste, applying his manuscript marking in Messina on August 29, 1816 with the inscription "Per 1/2 Luigi Rossi che VBLM". This implies that one half of the mailing costs were borne by him. V.B.L.M. is an abbreviation of Vi Bacia le Mani (who kisses your hands).

In Malta the letter was heavily disinfected both by scorching and by slitting. The local delivery charge, unusually spelt out in full: "September 5 - T:2": is an early date of use. It is curious that the charge was not augmented by the 10 grani levied for disinfection.

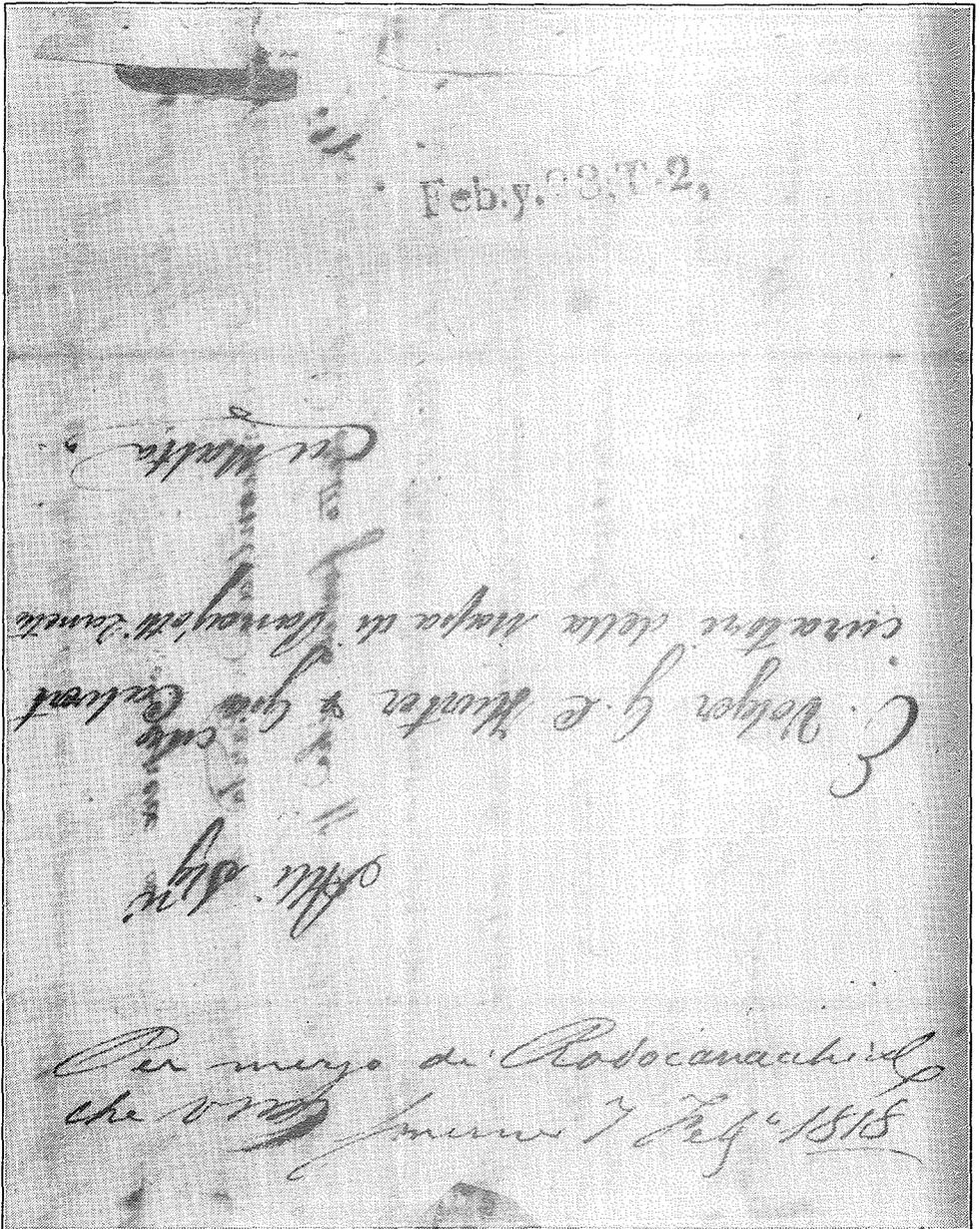


Fig. 2 A letter from Salonico (Greece) to Malta dated December 29, 1817. RODOCANACHI & C. carried it to (or from?) Smyrna (Izmir, Turkey) where they placed their mark on February 7, 1818. It arrived in Malta, where it was duly charged, on February 23.

This letter is noteworthy because it is the earliest evidence that Rodocanachi were handling Malta mail. The Rodocanachis were busy Forwarding Agents, recorded active in Leghorn, Marseilles and Constantinople.

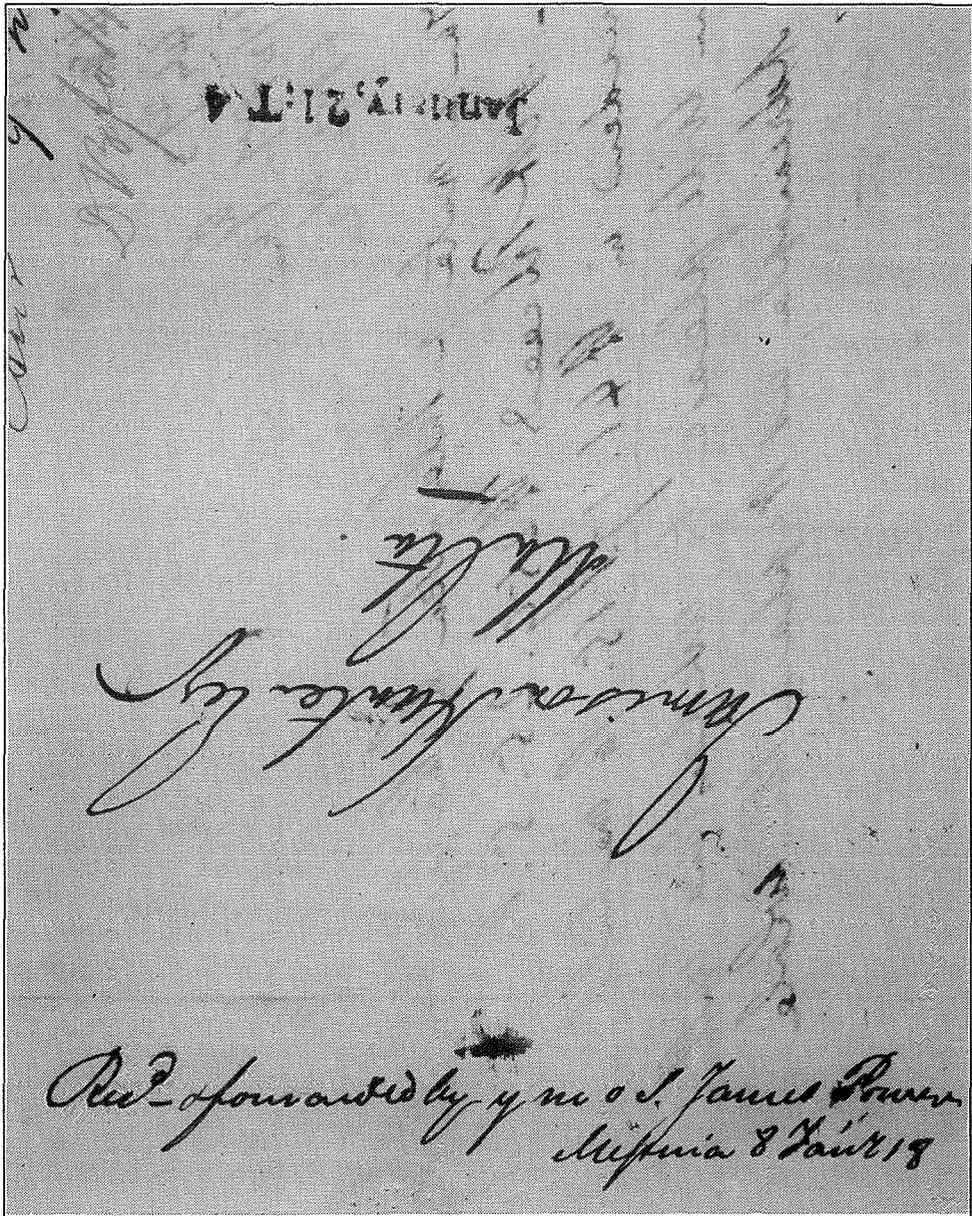


Fig. 3 A double letter from George Wood & Co in Palermo to Jameson Hunter in Malta, dated January 5, 1818.

In Messina JAMES POWERS applied his marking "Received and Forwarded by Y(our) M(ost) O(bidient) S(ervant), James Powers, Messina 8 January, 1818".

It was delivered and handstamped in Malta on January 21, and charged with the double rate of 4 Tari.

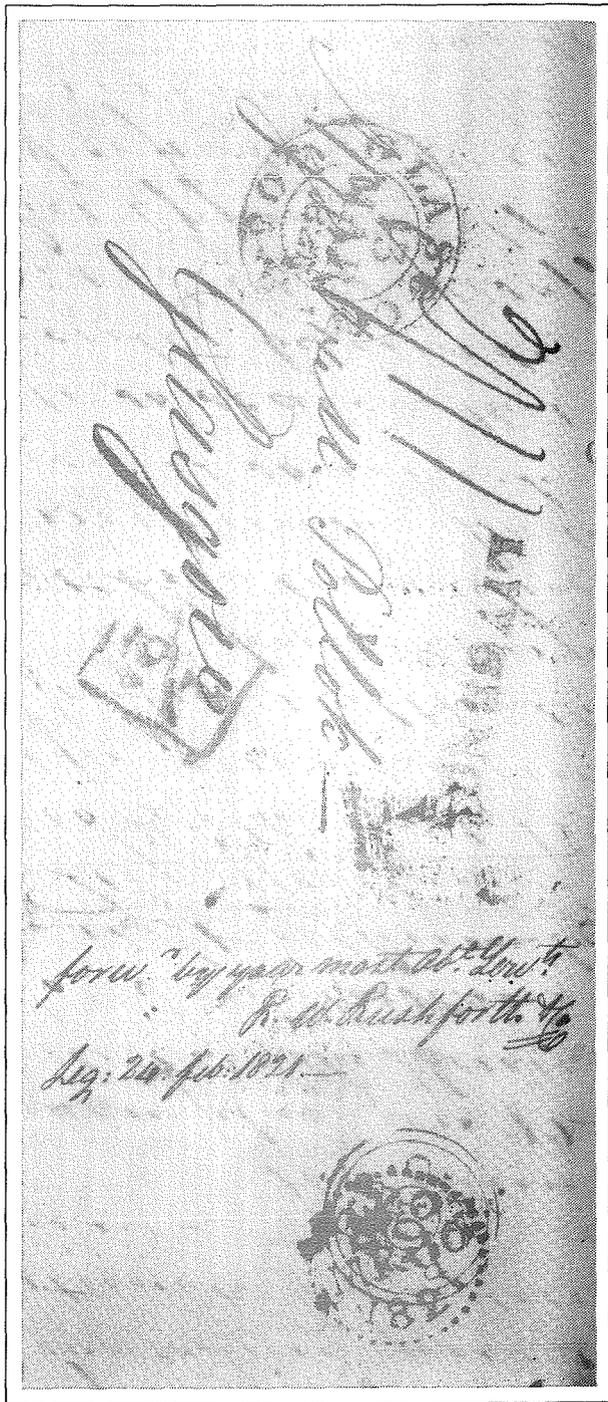
mission in its draft definition describes a Forwarding Agent's mark as "a cachet impressed upon, or a manuscript mark made on an item of mail which at some stage of its journey (usually between countries) has been handled by a person or organisation (a Forwarding Agent) other than the Post Office."

The need for a private intervention in a mail service came about for various reasons. De Zanche identifies three principal situations in which Forwarding Agents operated:

1 When part of the route was not covered by state or international postal services. The Forwarding Agent intervened to introduce the mail at some place into an official postal system, or to take charge of it where it left the system, to ensure its delivery to the addressee.

Fig. 4 A letter from John Watson in Malta to James Pollock in Glasgow, dated February 12, 1821. On February 24 it passed through the Forwarding Agents R.W. RUSHFORTH & Co who endorsed it "Forwarded by your most ob.t Serv.t".

This letter bears a disinfection seal, probably from the Leghorn Lazzaretto. It is handstamped Livorno and has ample sprinklings of disinfecting fluid. It reached Glasgow on March 13, 1821.



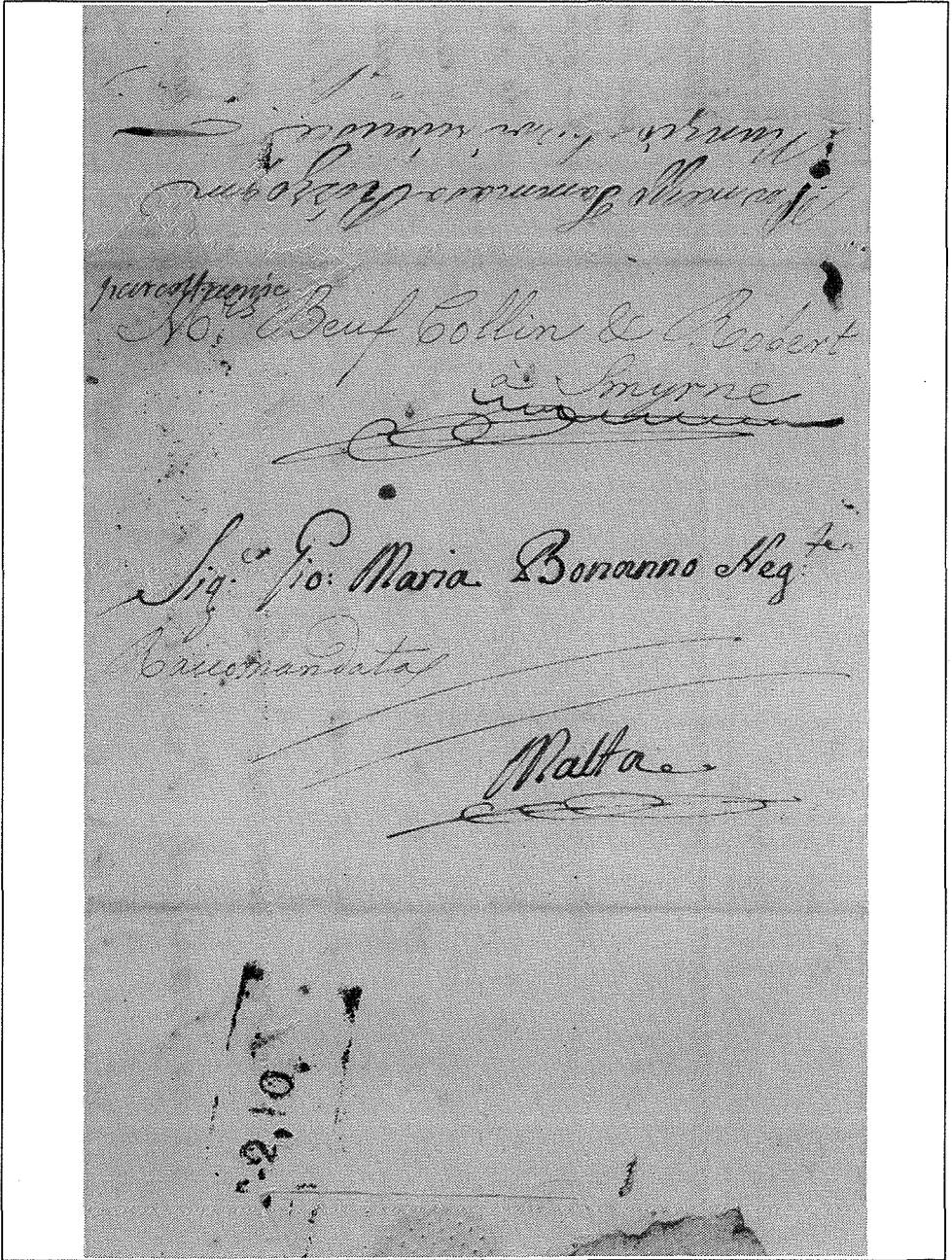


Fig. 5 A letter from Agostino Depasquale in Constantinople to Gio Maria Bonanno in Malta dated July 9, 1822. This letter passed through the hands of two Forwarding Agents: Messrs BEUF COLLIN & ROBERT in Smyrne (Izmir, Turkey) and TOMMASO RIZZO qm (quondam = son of the late) NUNZIO che vi riverisce in Costa... (? part torn). On reaching Malta it was disinfected and charged T2.10.

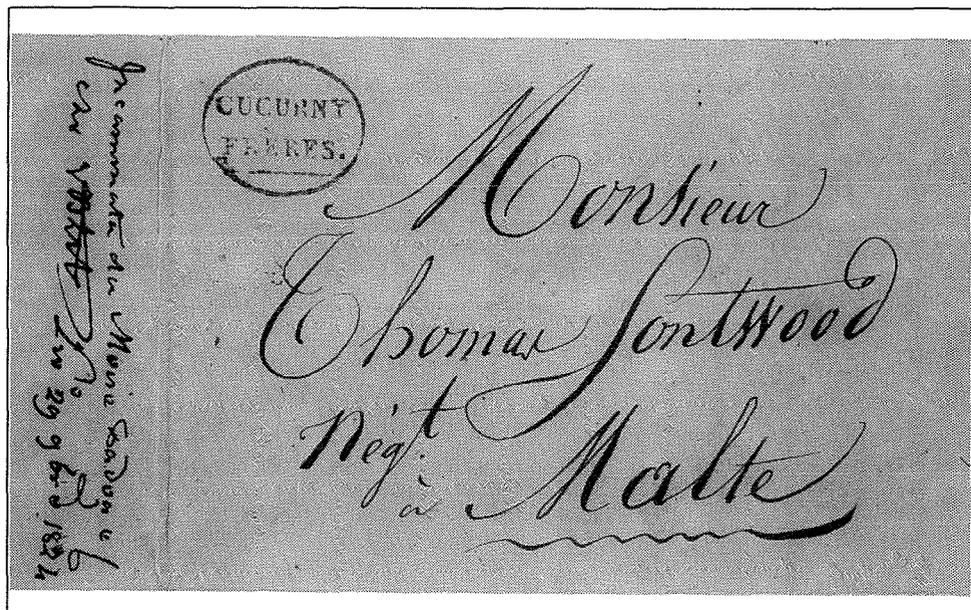


Fig. 6 Letter from Cucurny Freres in Marseilles to Thomas Sontwood in Malta, dated November 20, 1824.

In Leghorn, on November 29, MOISE BADON (?) & C inscribed their Forwarding Agent's mark: Incamminata da Moise Badon che V.B.L.M. Arriving in Malta it was charged by the Post Office.

It is not clear whether the Forwarding Agent carried this letter on the first leg of its journey (Marseilles/Leghorn) or on its final part (Leghorn/Malta).

2 When the postal route crossed countries which did not have an agreement for the mutual exchange of transit mail.

3 In times of war. De Zanche lists seven situations in which a Forwarding Agent intervened in times of war. When the normal mail systems between the belligerents were interrupted, Forwarding Agents operating in one of the belligerent countries, or from a neutral state, took over the carriage of the correspondence.

The first evidence of the existence of Forwarding Agents dates back to the 14th Century, though the manuscript markings recording the intervention of a Forwarding Agent seem to make their first appearance during the latter part of the 16th Century, when states organised their internal and international postal services to carry also private mail. Forwarding Agents' handstamps appear towards the end of the 18th Century.

De Zanche lists 40 Forwarding Agents who applied a **handstamp** cachet on

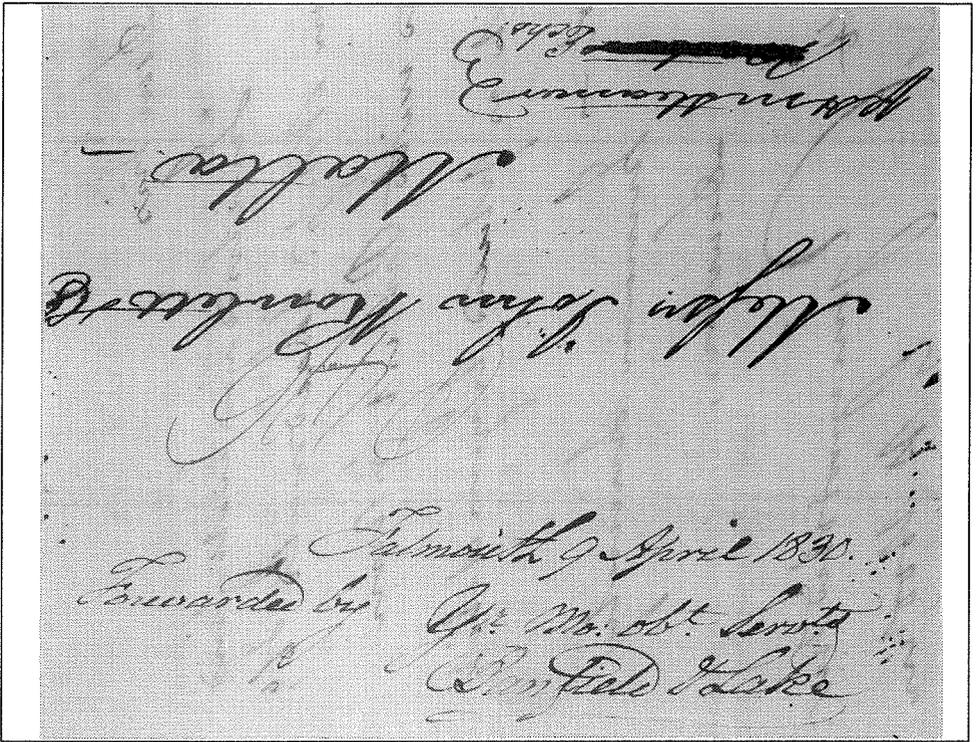


Fig. 7 Letter from G.M. Hooper in London to John Rowlett & C in Malta, dated April 7, 1830. In Falmouth, on April 9, Yr. Mo: Ob.t Serv.ts BANFIELD & LAKE placed their forwarding Agent's mark. The letter is charged 4/6 and is backstamped Falmouth. There is no evidence that it passed through the Malta Post Office.

Malta mail. The earliest was the Consolato Generale Sardo in 1824/38, and the latest R. Soler in 1873.

Turning to **manuscript** annotations by Forwarding Agents on Malta mail, the earliest recorded to date is by J.L. Olivier, on a 1707 letter from Cairo to Leghorn.

While Malta Forwarding Agents' handstamps have been quite extensively studied and published, manuscript annotations have not, to date, been investigated in depth. The present feature is meant to start filling in part of that void. A considerable number — 30 — of hitherto unknown Forwarding Agents are here recorded. No doubt, many more still remain to be identified.

A manuscript annotation by a Forwarding Agent is usually in the following terms: "Received and forwarded by..." or "By favour of..." or "Care of..." if in English. Corresponding indications in Italian and French are also to be found on Malta mail.

It is not always easy to distinguish a "professional" Forwarding Agent from a "one-off" carrier of mail who gave his services by favour of the sender or the addressee. If the intervention of the carrier is recorded on the letter, I will assume, saving clear evidence to the contrary, that the mail was carried by a "professional" forwarding agent.

The assertion that only the carriage of mail **between two countries** qualifies the carrier as a Forwarding Agent may need to be reconsidered. It appears that occasionally even internal correspondence benefited from the services of a regular agency which was not part of the official postal services. A case in point is mail to or from Austrian subjects confined to quarantine in the Lazzaretto. It would seem that the Austrian Consulate in Malta regularly took care to collect and forward this mail (Fig. 9). I see little reason why the intervention of the Austrian Consulate to collect and forward mail internally in Malta should not qualify it as a local Forwarding Agent, all the more so when that same Austrian Consulate is

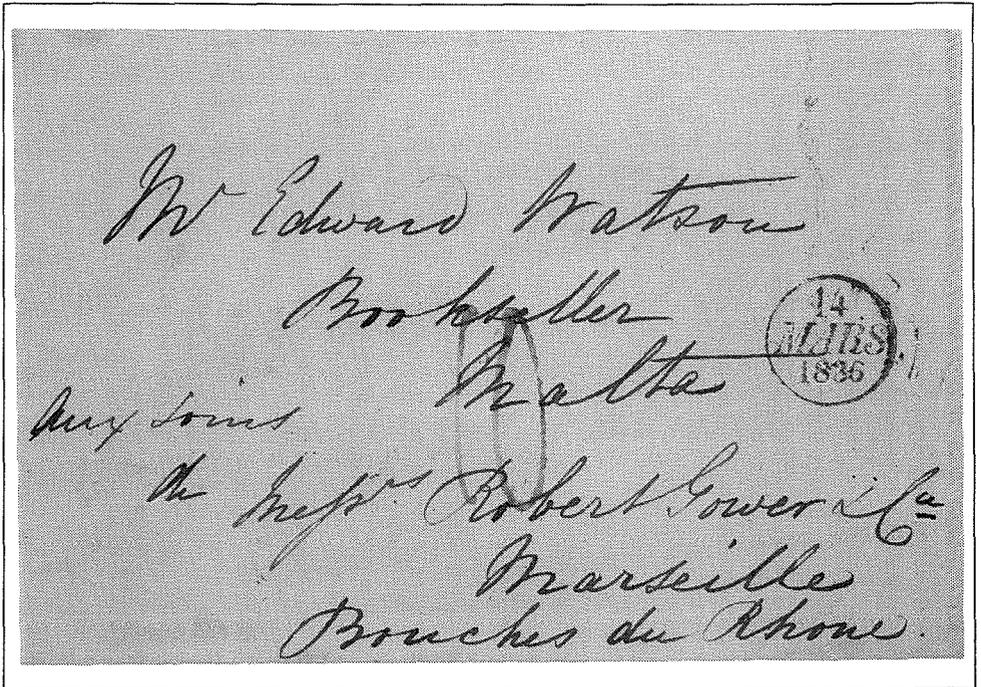


Fig. 8 A letter from A.W. Gagliani & Co in Paris to Edward Watson in Malta, dated March 14, 1836.

The sender addressed it to the Forwarding Agents Messrs ROBERT GOWER & CIE Marseilles, where the letter was received through the French mail and backstamped on March 17. Messrs Gower then forwarded it to the addressee in Malta.

The French inscription "Aux soins de..." (entrusted to the diligence of...) is not recorded by De Zanche.

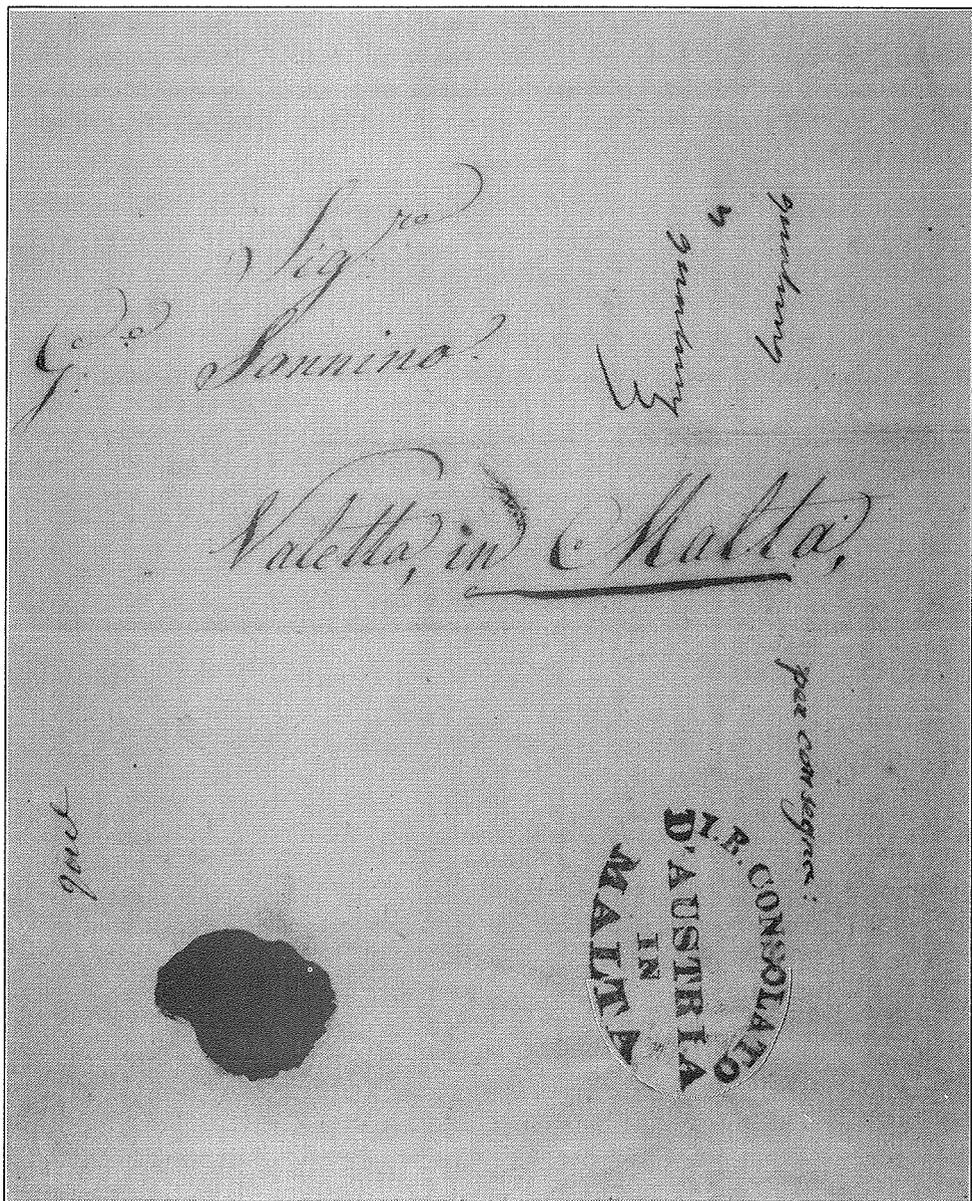


Fig. 9 Letter from G.S. Vidulich who was quarantined in the Lazzaretto in the Brigantino Austriaco il Dromedario dated February 21, 1842, to Giuseppe Sonnino in Valletta. This letter was collected and delivered to the addressee by the IMPERIALE REGIO CONSOLATO D'AUSTRIA IN MALTA, which recorded its intervention on the back by applying its oval seal across the fold and adding per consegna in manuscript.

Incidentally, the addressee Giuseppe Sonnino (not Sennino as in the Handbook) was himself active as a Forwarding Agent in Malta.

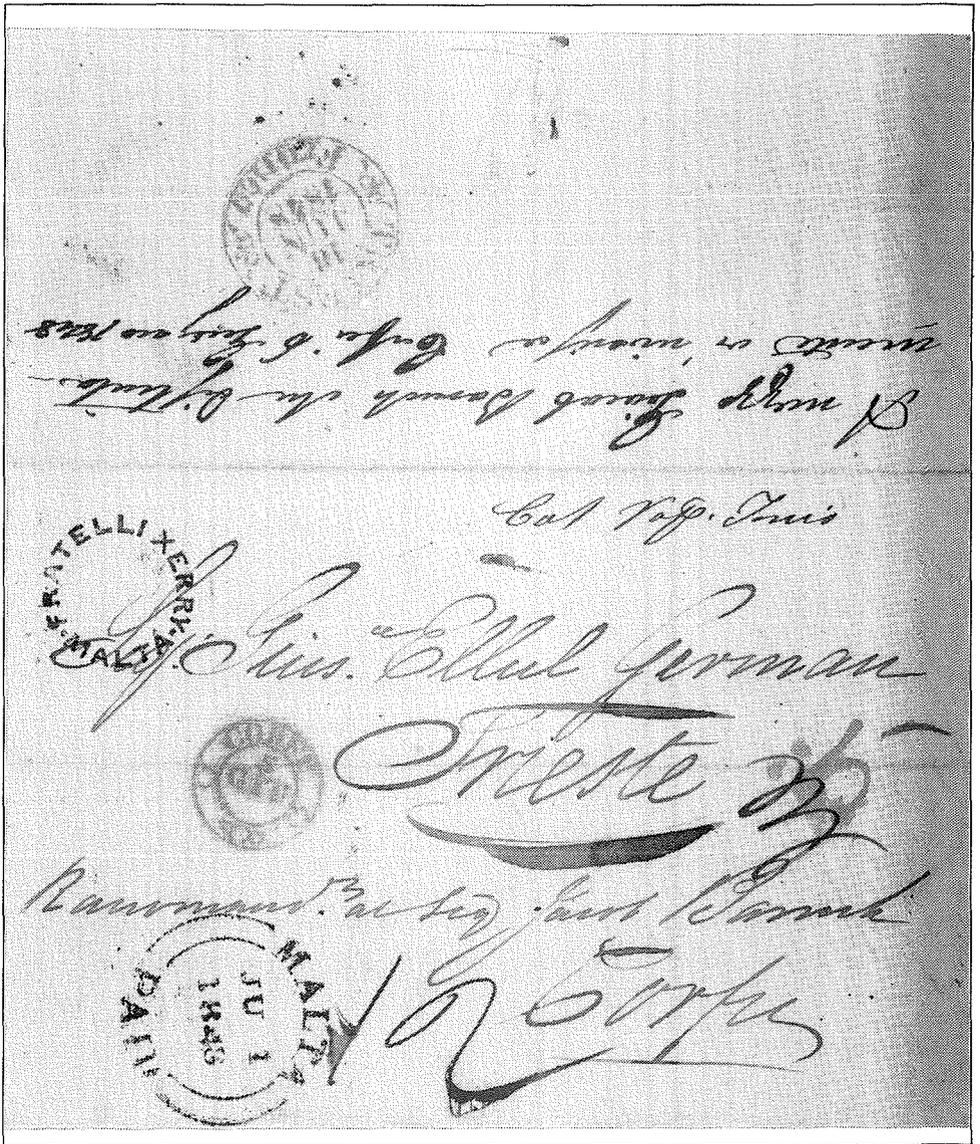


Fig. 10 A letter from Fratelli Xerry in Malta dated June 1, 1848 to Giuseppe Ellul German in Trieste.

Messrs Xerry sent the letter through the Malta Post Office to the Forwarding Agent in Corfu, Sig. JACOB BARUCH who took care to have it delivered in Trieste on June 18. From Malta the letter reached Corfu on June 5 (Corfu CDS). The Forwarding Agent's inscription reads "A mezzo Giacob Baruch che distintamente vi riverisce, Corfu 6 Giugno, 1848".



Fig. 11 Letter from Lorenzo Caruana in Trieste handstamped November 13, 1860, to Giovanni Semini in Malta.

The sender however, addressed it Alle gentili cure del Signor GIUSEPPE SACKER, Livorno. The letter went through the official postal services from Trieste to Gemona (?) Milano and Livorno, each of which applied their CDS on the back. In Livorno it was picked up by the Forwarding Agent on November 17, and carried privately to Malta where it arrived on November 28.

Giuseppe Sacker was well known as a Forwarding Agent in Livorno, but it was not hitherto known that he operated to Malta.

recognised as a Forwarding Agent when it provided the same service to, from or through Malta and other countries.

One generally accepted characteristic of Forwarding Agents' markings is that this intervention should have been recorded on the letter by the Forwarding Agent himself. De Zanche gives the impression that it is only in some cases that the inscription was written by the sender. From my modest research, it would appear that these were hardly isolated instances. Quite often the sender addressed the letter explicitly to the Forwarding Agent, with instructions to him to forward it to the addressee. (Fig.8, 10, 11, 12)

Although originally it was believed that Forwarding Agents operated underhandedly or that they violated the state's mail monopoly, it has been established

that, far from being proscribed, Forwarding Agents were recognised, if not actually encouraged, by the official postal authorities.

I propose to publish a number of Forwarding Agents' markings on Malta mail, to illustrate some of the most representative features. I am not limiting myself only to Forwarding Agents who operated from Malta, but will include also those Agents whose intervention helped to carry a letter to, from, or through Malta.

The illustrations refer to items which, to the best of my knowledge, have not hitherto been published, except, occasionally, in auction and dealers' catalogues. They record mostly previously unknown Forwarding Agents, or Agents not known to have handled Malta mail.

In an Appendix, I am listing in alphabetical order all the Forwarding Agents with Manuscript markings on Malta mail recorded to date, with some updates on the period of use in the case of Agents previously recorded.

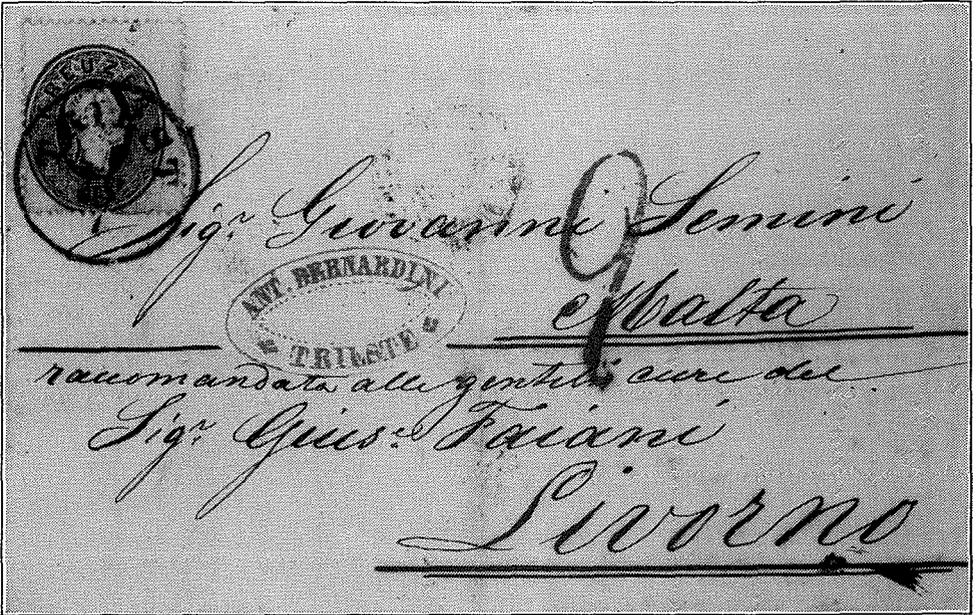


Fig. 12 A letter from Antonio Bernardini in Trieste dated July 16, 1861, to Giovanni Semini in Malta.

The sender addressed it by ordinary mail to GIUSEPPE FAIANI in Leghorn, instructing him to forward it to the addressee in Malta. On the way from Trieste the letter received three handstamps on the back, finally showing its arrival in Livorno on July 19. There the Forwarding Agent carried it privately to Malta where it was received on the 24th.

Bibliography:

The most authoritative and comprehensive study of Mediterranean Forwarding Agents is the handsome volume by Luciano De Zanche *I Corrispondenti Postali: Italia e Aerea Mediterranea* (1988). Reference has also been made to K. Rowe's *The Forwarding Agents* Vol. I and II (1966 and 1974); *Malta—A Postal History and Postage Stamps* (1980) and its Supplement (1985) published by the Malta Study Circle; and the *Malta Newsletter* published by the same, particularly Volume II pp 8, 18, 38; Volume 12, pp 5, 21 where the contributions by J. Birkett-Allan are particularly noteworthy.

APPENDIX

FORWARDING AGENTS ON MALTA MAIL (MANUSCRIPT MARKINGS)

Tancred Agius	1861	(iii)
Filippo Agustina	1841	(iii)
Moise Badon & Co.....	1824	(iv)
Banfield & Lake	1830	(iv)
L. Barber	1842	(i)
Giacob Baruch	1848	(iv)
James Bell & Co.....	1840/59	(i)
Beuf Collin & Robert	1822	(iv)
J. Borges da Silva	1839	(i)
G. Buttigieg	1843/49	(i)
G.S. Buttigieg.....	1844	(iii)
Salvatore Camilleri.....	1819	(iv)
James Chabot.....	1809	(i)
Consolato d'Austria.....	1842	(iv)
Consolato Generale Sardo	1824/38	(ii)
Demarco & Sammut	1875	(iii)
Luigi Eynaud.....	1849	(iv)
P. Eynaud & Co.....	1839/49	(iii)
Eynaud & Pariente	1848	(iv)
Giuseppe Faiani	1861/64	(iv)
Antonio Farrugia	1843/46	(ii)
Matteo Gauci	1843	(iv)
Cap. Guatier & Cie	1824	(iv)
Robert Gower & Cie	1832/36	(iv)
David Grant & Co	1823	(i)

Grant Pillans (?) & Co	1816	(iv)
Salvatore Grech	1817	(iv)
Denison Higgins & Co	1808/18	(ii)
W.H. Holton	1850	(ii)
Lee & Sons.....	1811/19	(ii)
D.K. MacDowell	1835	(iii)
J. MacKenzee	1868	(iv)
Luigi Mallia	1827	(iv)
Mich & Weniger	1815	(iv)
Moore & Wilkinson	1809	(ii)
J.L. Olivier	1707	(ii)
James Powers.....	1818	(iv)
R.C. Puslow	1815	(i)
Richardson & Mecklenburg.....	1836	(iv)
Tommaso Rizzo qm Nunzio	1822	(iv)
Rodocanachi & C	1818	(iv)
J.C. Ross	1820	(ii)
Luigi Rossi.....	1816	(iv)
R.W. Rushforth	1811	(iv)
Giuseppe Sacker	1860	(iv)
T.W. Sartorio	1809	(i)
Giuseppe Scicluna & Figli	1854/57	(i)
Giovanni Semini	1850/52	(i)
Capn Mrio Sirovich Imperiale.....	1825	(iv)
G. Sonnino	1842/52	(i)
Thos. Southerwood.....	1816	(iii)
Struthers Stenhardt & Co	1813	(iv)
G.S. Sturlese	1863	(iv)
E. Sturn	1819	(iv)
R. Stych	1835	(i)
Cens di Sunesina (?)	1840	(i)
E. Tagliaferro e Figli.....	1836/45	(i)
Rev. Temple.....	1824	(ii)
G.mo Tessi.....	1841/52	(i)
Francesco Vella	1847	(iv)
Vilar	1814	(iv)

First published by:

- (i) Malta Study Circle's Handbook and its Supplement.
- (ii) L. De Zanche.
- (iii) J. Birkett-Allan, Malta Newsletter, Vol. 12, No 2.
- (iv) G. Bonello.