

Essay – The 1922/26 ‘Melita’ Issue

By Dr. A. Bonnici



To commemorate the granting of Self-Government in 1921, a new set of stamps was issued. A design competition had been called for, and the design submitted by E. Caruana Dingli was accepted for the ¼d to 6d and £1 value and that by G. Vella for the 1/- to 10/- values.

However E. Caruana Dingli was not happy with the engraving of his design and protested in no uncertain manner in the "Popolo di Malta" of August 1922 stating "The execution leaves much to be desired my original was copied by hand, and alterations were introduced resulting in a totally different effect from that originally intended. For instance the following portion of the mantle behind the figure has been suppressed the luminous sky meant to symbolize the dawn of a new era, and at the same time to put the figure in semi-silhouette is short of the required intensity, the St. Elmo lighthouse looks like a beehive on the Mosta dome by the sea shore. If the original had been reported by photographs and then engraved the effect would have been more artistic and the personal technique would have been preserved". "As regards the size and colouring of the stamps, I have not been consulted on the subject".

The above "photographic Essay 2d value", is sunk into a card (89 × 114mm) bearing the letter E on the top right hand corner and manuscript date 13th October 1921 on the top left hand corner. It is one of eight essays lettered A to H. The approved ones being C, G, and H. It is in Sepia, with some hand painting of the central vignette in chinese white.