

# Three Unrecorded Disinfection Seals

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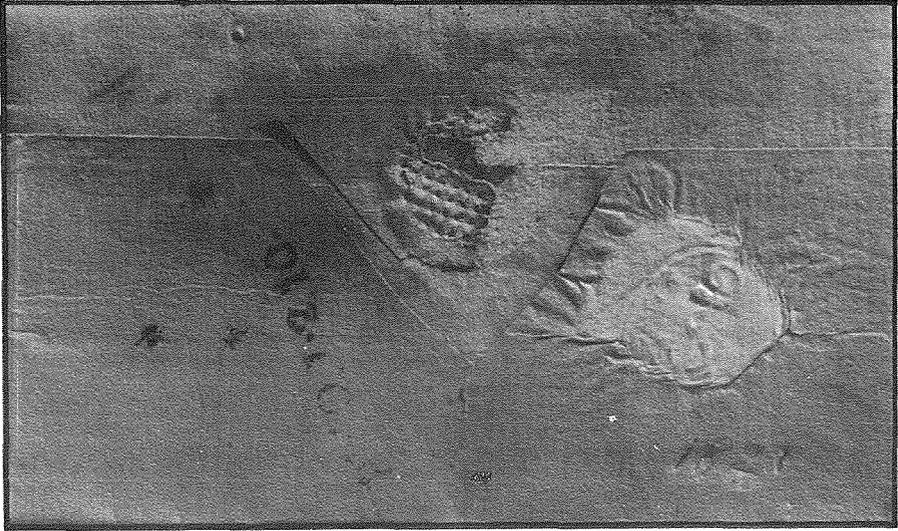


Fig. 1 (LAZ - E1)

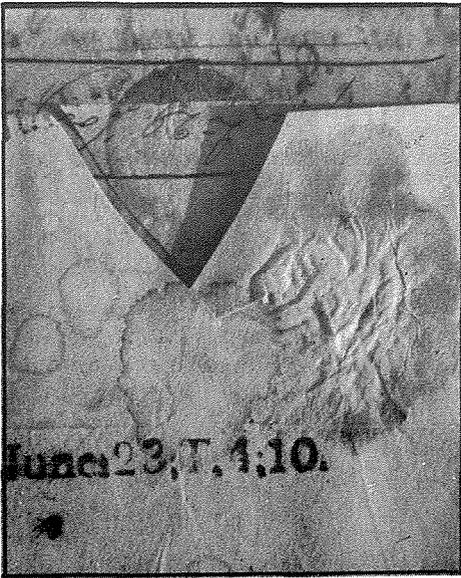


Fig. 2 (LAZ - E2)

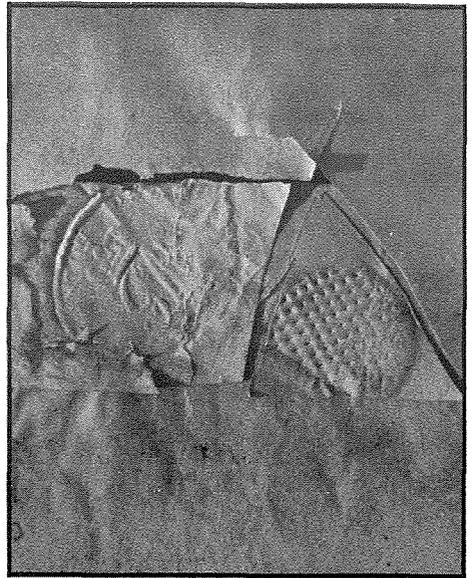


Fig. 3 (LAZ - E3)



Fig. 1A (LAZ - E1 enlarged)



Fig. 2A (LAZ - E2 enlarged)



Fig. 3A (LAZ - E3 enlarged)

Two types of disinfection markings on mail were known to date. In the early period of British occupation, an official seal, on special sealing wax, usually red, was used. This seal served a dual purpose: to close the letter after treatment, and to certify that it had been disinfected. Later, around 1830, these wax seals were replaced by inked handstamps which printed a cachet on the disinfected letter.

A third method, hitherto unrecorded, consisted in embossing in relief the letter itself. After being opened and treated, a gluing wafer was placed between the overlaps at the back of the letter, and an engraved die, presumably metal, was firmly pressed over the paper surface. This produced a raised impression of the engraved die.

I am here illustrating three of these embossed impressions which I propose to identify as follows:

(LAZ = Lazzaretto E = Embossed)

LAZ - E1: On a letter from Alexandria, Egypt, which arrived in Malta on the 10th August, 1821. This shows an upright oval impression (25x22mm) with a fouled anchor, surrounded by the letters SANITA (DI MALTA) (Fig. 1 and 1A).

LAZ - E2 On a letter from Greece which arrived in Malta on the 23rd June, 1823. This shows an upright oval impression (approx. 25 x 22mm) with a fouled anchor of a different design. No legend is visible round the seal. (Fig. 2 and 2A).

LAZ - E3 On a letter from Greece which arrived in Malta on the 2nd August, 1827. This shows a horizontal oval impression (32 x 26mm) with a crown and the Royal Cypher "G.R." surrounded by the inscription quARANTINE OFFice (malta?) Fig. 3 and 3A).

Embossed disinfection markings are to be found on other letters of the period, but usually the impression is so faint that it escapes notice.

Two of these Lazzaretto markings relate quite closely to the known red wax seals. LAZ - E1 is similar to LAZ - S1 on page 51 of the Malta Handbook, and LAZ - S3 resembles LAZ - E3 here published. Possibly they were produced by the same dies, but while an impression by a seal on wax can be, and usually is, produced manually, a levered or threaded mechanical press is indispensable to produce embossing on paper.

These Lazzaretto markings should not be confused with other embossed markings on the back of folded letters, normally the sender's seal. It is usually easy to distinguish one from the other. The sender's personal seal is always at the centre of the overlap. The Lazzaretto resealing, generally appears to the left, or right, of the original sender's seal.

Embossed disinfection markings have also been observed on letters passing through various other lazzaretti. Those, however, are "dry" embossing, produced by pressing the letter between a male and a female die, and only served to certify its disinfection. The Maltese markings were produced by only one female die pressed over the letter and a sealing wafer, and served both to reseal the letter and to confirm its disinfection.