

NEW METAL HAND DATE-STAMPS FOR JANUARY 1980

By

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In the Government Gazette of 3st December, 1979, the Postmaster General notified for public information that new metal hand date-stamps were being put in use, in Malta and Gozo, during January 1980. The date, number and place of use were as follows:

On the 8th January, 6 were used at the Central Mail Room and 4 at the Parcel Post Office.

On the 11th January, 4 were used at the Paola Branch Post Office, 3 at the Cospicua B.P.O., and 3 at the Birkirkara B.P.O.

On the 16th January, 1 was used at Hamrun B.P.O., 1 at Gżira B.P.O., 1 at Rabat B.P.O., 2 at Victoria B.P.O. Gozo and 2 at Mgarr B.P.O. Gozo.

In this article, the specific use of the first six, i.e. those used at the Central Mail Room, is being examined. These hand-stamps are similar to those used between 1957 and 1977. They contain the time, day, month and year slugs, with "VALLETTA" and "MALTA" arched in between the double rings. All six were put into use at the Sorting Room of the Central Mail Room, on the 8th January, 1980.

Use in the Sorting Room

The Senior Officer at the Sorting Room was instructed to make use of eight metal hand date-stamps in the Sorting Room for the day-to-day work as was the case before 1977. Besides the six new metal hand date-stamps, the best two of the four introduced on 1st December 1977, were also retained, to make up the eight required.

New System of Use

The eight metal hand date-stamps were put in use as follows:

Three of the new six for the morning duty, with the time codes 7 a.m. — 9 a.m., 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

The other three during the afternoon duty with the time codes, 2.30 p.m., 5 p.m. and 6.30 p.m.

The two hand metal date-stamps retained for use from the 1977 group, were put in use with the time codes, 6 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Sometimes there would be mail incoming during the day, and on these occasions, time codes are changed to meet the situation as required. From the records kept no incoming mail was registered on the first day of the "New System".

Previous use and marks of the two retained hand-stamps

Since some time after their first use on 1st December 1977, and up to the introduction of the "New System" on 8th January 1980, the previous metal hand date-stamps were used at any time during the day. From records and marks of the two retained hand date-stamps, there are strong indications, that generally, they were used with the time codes of 2.30 p.m. and 5 p.m.

The hand-stamp which was generally used at 2.30 p.m. found its place in the "New System" with the new time code of 6 a.m. During the first months of 1979, this hand-stamp suffered a severe blow which caused a break in its outer circle, on the bottom left hand part. This is exactly opposite the lower part of the arc spacer. It was used with the time code 6 a.m. on the first day of the "New System", i.e. on the 8th January, 1980. The other hand-stamp which was generally used with the time code 5 p.m. found its place in the "New System" with the time code 8 p.m. No special marks are visible except those of normal wear and tear from considerable use. It was noticed that this hand-stamp was not used on the 8th January, 1980, as the 8 p.m. mail was cancelled by one of the new six metal hand-stamps.

Withdrawn metal hand-stamps

It is known that four metal hand-stamps were withdrawn from use at 8 a.m.

Two of these were those introduced in 1977.

Another one was from those introduced in 1957/58. The "Indoors Postmen" were responsible for it, up to the time of its withdrawal. It was used by them during the whole day. This hand-stamp has quite a story and I nick-named it "Wide Malta", because of the wider space between the "L" and the "T" of MALTA. This hand-stamp can be seen on the first Air Malta Flights of 1974.

The fourth hand-stamp withdrawn was also introduced in 1957/58 and was generally used for the 6 a.m. time code. It was completely worn out and was not used during the last few days before its withdrawal. The hand-stamp I have nick-named "Wide Malta" was used in its place.

Still in use

The only metal hand date-stamp still in use out of the twelve introduced in 1957, is the one on the counter of the Registered Letter Branch. An article, "The Mysterious Hand-Stamp", tracing the movements of this hand-stamp, was published in the "Spring 1980" issue of our magazine.