

CLOSURE OF THE B.F.P.O. — MALTA

The end of the Military Facilities Agreement between Great Britain and Malta on March 31, 1979, brought to an end an important chapter in local philately, namely the closure of the British Forces Post Office — Malta. For historical records, we are publishing the official notices relevant to the closure of the BFPO.

LAST "FIRST DAY OF ISSUE" FACILITIES

(Extract from Orders — Serial Number 11, Dated 19 Feb. 79).

New Issue Stamps — 7 Feb. 79

2. The British Post Office have announced the following details concerning the special issue "BRITISH DOGS" stamps to go on sale on the 7 Feb. 79:
9p — Old English Sheepdog; 10½p — Welsh Springer Spaniel;
11p — West Highland Terrier; 13p — Irish Setter.
3. Presentation Packs containing the above stamps will also be available.
4. These stamps, together with the special British Forces Post Office First Day Cover, will be available from the Forces Post Office, Luqa.
5. This will be the last special issue of stamps available from the British Forces Post Office before the closure.

CLOSURE OF B.F.P.O. MALTA

(Extracted from Orders — Serial Number 11, Dated 19 Feb. 79).

Order No. 9 Closure of British Forces Post Office Malta

20. The following details regarding the closure of BFPO Facilities in Malta are published for the information of all.

Counter Services

21. The sale of stamps, postal orders etc. will continue to operate as normal until 1000 hrs on 26 March 1979. No service will be available after this date. It may be necessary to reduce the counter opening hours during March although every effort will be made to avoid this.

Mail Services

22. a. Surface Mail. Incoming and outgoing surface mail is normally carried on RAF aircraft. The latest dates for surface mail are:
 - (1) Incoming Surface Mail* — 28 February 1979.
 - (2) Outgoing Surface Mail — 5 March 1979.*Arrival date in Malta.
- b. Air Mail. Incoming and outgoing air mail is carried on civilian aircraft on a daily basis. The last dates for air mail are:
 - (1) Incoming Air Mail* — 26 March 1979.
 - (2) Outgoing Air Mail — 27 March 1979.*Arrival date in Malta.

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PHILATELIC ASPECT

The standard double-ring cancellor inscribed in the upper part of the ring "FIELD POST OFFICE" with F.P.O. NO. "1001" in the lower part was the last British Forces Post Office handstamp used on the 27th March, 1979 day of the closure of the Office, applied on all out-going mail. Both registered and normal covers, posted almost entirely by philatelists on that date bear this cancellor with an asterisk above the date "27 MR/79".

The registration label, in standard size and colour (blue) had the letters "FPO DS" printed in the right-hand upper section and the "No" underneath. A manuscript "1001" was added in black next to "FPO DS".

Has anybody seen the handstamp dated "27 MR 79" with code letters?