

# TIME IN CODE LETTER FORM

by

ANTHONY FENECH

PART III

## GENERAL POST OFFICE BRANCHES

Code letters appear also on handstamps used by the various branches of the General Post Office. Here is a detailed study of the Code letters and their meaning on handstamps employed in different departments:

The Returned Letter Branch, G.P.O., Malta, 24 mm single ring was used on mail that could not be delivered before it was returned to the sender. Code letters "A" to "E" were used; the "A" coded handstamp as the early morning and the "E" as the late evening handstamp with code letters "B", "C" and "D", in between times. The Malta Study Circle (Malta Newsletter, Vol. 5 No. 3, March 1966), reports a late 1957 use of this handstamp but without code letter, as it was accompanied by a Valletta c.d.s. A double ring 27 mm Returned Letter Office, Malta, superseded this handstamp and is known to have been used with Code Letters "A" and "B", with an asterisk or without anything at all.

Three datestamps 'Parcel Post Service, Malta', all with code letters "A" to "K" above the date were used on parcels from 1880 to the early 1930's. Most of the Queen Victoria, Edward VII and George V High values are known to be cancelled with these stamps. Two other handstamps 'Parcel Post, Malta', with asterisks above the date appear to have replaced the former for a time, but the old handstamps have again been in use lately, with code letters "A" and "B" until early 1974, and then with an asterisk or none. On November 17th, 1977, two of the old type Parcel Post Service handstamps were replaced by a double ring 27 mm Parcel Post Service without any form of coding.

The Accounts Branch, G.P.O., Malta, used a dated 19 mm single ring with the code number "5" above the date. Other code numbers have not been recorded. This Accounts Branch had been using eight pointed cross handstamps with Accounts/Code Letter/Date/G.P.O., Malta, to frank mail from the Accounts Branch of the G.P.O. and the Cashier, and to date Money Order Advice and Postal Orders when issued at the G.P.O. Until recently, Code Letters "A" to "I" were used. The Code Letters had no time meaning, but each counter clerk was responsible for a datestamp with a particular letter corresponding to her or his Account with the G.P.O. But on the 1st June, 1976, the code letters on these handstamps were replaced by numbers which correspond to the clerk's Account Number at the G.P.O. Accounts Section. The code letters "A" and "I" have been retained, "A" at the Cashier's Office, whilst "I" at the A.C.D.; the code letters "B" to "H" have now been replaced by the following code numbers namely "1", "9", "13", "19", "25", "27" whilst one had been withdrawn.

The Delivery Branch, G.P.O., Malta, had been using its stamps — the early type 27 mm single ring with code letters and its successor, the 23 mm single ring with an asterisk above the date, but never with code letters, as there was no scope for them.

#### FORCES MAIL, MALTA

The Army Post Office SZ 7 can be seen on mail from Malta between 18 OC 15 and 27 JU 17, with code letters "A", "B", "C", "D" and "X", presumably "A" and "B" for the forenoon duties, "C" and "D" for the afternoon duties and "X" for counter duties.

The Army Post Office HD 1 was introduced early in 1917 and was used concurrently with, but soon replaced Army Post Office SZ 7 handstamp. It is presumed that "H.D." indicates Home Depot. The code letters used on these handstamps were "A" for the morning strikes, "B" for the afternoon strikes and "+" for counter duties.

The Fleet Mail Office used in mid 1940's a double ring circular date stamp with the wording British Fleet Mail with killer blocks each side of the figure '10' known with a star, with "AM" as well as with "PM" above the date.

All the Field Post Office handstamps — double ring with killer blocks on each side of the F.P.O. number metal handstamp; single ring with FPO steel handstamp; single ring metal handstamp with Field Post Office in full; double ring metal handstamp with Field Post Office with thin arcs on either side of the number — use the code letter "A" for the morning and "B" for the afternoon cancelling. The asterisk is used for the counter cancels. Code letters "A", "B", "C" also appear on machine cancellations on Forces' Mail from Malta.

"AM" or "PM" are noted on US ship cancellations, whilst 'a six ray star' appears on the single ring handstamp Postes Navales — Medit. C.

#### NEW POSTMARKS

Towards the end of 1977, the handstamps used at the Valletta General Post Office Mailing Room, on the counters at the G.P.O., Parcel Post Office, at the Philatelic Bureau, and in many Branch Post Offices were changed. None of these except the two handstamps employed at the Philatelic Bureau bear code letters. These were issued to the Philatelic Bureau officials on the 1st December, 1977 and bear code letters "A" and "B". These code letters do not tell time, but it is intended that they will be used alternately on bulk mail from the Philatelic Bureau.

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