

VILLAGE POSTMARKS

(Malta Study Circle, Study Paper No. 25; 41 pp, illustrated)

Study Paper 25 'The Postal History of The Villages and Small Towns of Malta and The Village Marks' written by Mr. R.S.C. Stewart and edited by Mr. A.B. Bannister is the result of research work by some of the M.S.C. Members and deals with the relative scarcity, earliest and latest dates of use and errors and abnormalities of the 'Village Marks'. It includes also illustrations, including The Proof Book illustrations on page 14, reproduced by courtesy of the British Post Office. The Front Cover illustration shows the Wignacourt Tower at St. Paul's Bay built in 1613 which was a Postal Agency between the years 1891 - 1921.

Regarding the Early Posts, the editor admits that they are "handicapped by a scarcity of records." In fact members are invited to try to research an further information of the Free Postage of 1853, the omnibus company taking over the conveyance of the rural mails, and the Mail contractors until 1893, and the establishment of the Branch Post Offices between 1885 - 1902. Before the establishment of the Police Postal Agencies in 1891, letters posted at the time, had no identifying postmark, as they were all passed to the Central Post Office in Valletta.

Members of the Philatelic Society of Malta had already been favoured by two articles regarding the subject. These were extracted from The Postal History Bulletin No. 85 and published in Vol. 1. No.2 (Summer 1967) pp. 14 and 15 and in Vol. No.3 (Autumn 1967) pp. 15 and 16. Their contributor was W.L. Freshwater whose work is acknowledged by The Editor of this Study.

Enriching this study in question are relevant illustrations of the strikes, the Police Stations and strikes on Covers and Card on pp. 25 and 26. Very enlightening are the 'lists' based entirely on the research carried out by the members of the M.S.C. which compare closely with individual listings by Messrs. Buttigieg, Freshwater and Lander over a period of years. These 'lists' deal with the relative scarcity of the strikes irrespective of Times Coda or stamp, as well as of the strikes including Time Code, but irrespective of stamp.

Two facts that have been established by this study are that village marks "undoubtedly form the rarest group of Maltese marks on Cover" and that there are "probably fewer examples of the 21 mm Victoria marks used on Cover up until 1921 than there are of the Boite Mobile strike" shown recently on the Miniature Sheet of the U.P.U. ably designed by George and Sandra Ellul Sullivan.

Hats off to the Editor and contributors of this Study Paper which I am sure was welcomed by many philatelists who have the study of The Postal History of Malta at heart.

A. F.