

THE NEW MALTA POSTAGE DUES

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On November 9th, 1967, the Malta Post Office issued a set of four Postage Dues with the new "Malta Cross" watermark. Bradbury Wilkinson, the printers of such stamps since 1925, were again entrusted with the job of printing the four values in photogravure keeping, however, to the old designs and, maintaining more or less, the former colours for the corresponding denominations.

Thus, the $\frac{1}{2}$ d green, 1d violet, 2d grey and 4d olive-brown, all perforated 12 by a line machine (as were their predecessors) came into being. This type of perforation, rendered very rough at the angles, is easily prone to damage, let alone the fact that some of the holes along the perforated margin were not even present, giving the impression of an imperforate variety!

Then quite abruptly, a few days later, the 4d value ran out of stock, and collectors and dealers were gently advised to wait patiently for a new reprint which was to be forthcoming in the near future.

The "near future" became over six months, and on May 30th, 1968, another series of Postage Dues was put on sale. The date here is rather important, as it was the reason of some controversy. The Crown Agents Trade Circular No. 13/68 dated 28th May 1968, had stated that the $\frac{1}{2}$ d, 1d, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d, 3d and 4d were released on the 21st of the same month, while the 6d, 1s, 1/6 were to follow on June the 4th.

May 30th, therefore, saw the the $\frac{1}{2}$ d green, 1d violet, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d brown, 2d grey, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d orange, 3d blue, 4d olive-green, 6d purple, 1s black and 1/6 carmine repeating approximately the colours for their corresponding denominations. The printers were again the same, and the photogravure product on the "Malta Cross" water-marked paper looked rather attractive.

The only different feature, and this carries a considerable amount of weight, was the perforation. As has been stated before, all the other previous issues had been perforated 12; this time the printers made use of a comb perforator changing the gauge to 12 $\frac{1}{2}$, thus creating a major variety for the $\frac{1}{2}$ d, 1d, 2d, and 4d. Postage Dues on "Malta Cross" paper now exist with two differing perforations.

To a certain extent, history was repeating itself. Last November, we were also presented with the 2d Postage Due, Block CA issued unheralded. Fantastic prices were charged by dealers for this stamp, rightly so as, when the change came to light, stocks of the mint Block CA were nearly exhausted; hence the reason for the new "Malta Cross" consignment. A rough calculation based on records of sale, suggests that there are only 5,000 mint copies in existence.