



THE PHILATELIC SOCIETY

OF MALTA

1968 Vol 2 No 1



# THE PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF MALTA

NEWSLETTER

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Address all Correspondence to:

The Editor,

P.S.M. (Newsletter),

c/o Catholic Institute,

Floriana,

Malta G.C.

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT.

A Happy New Year to you all. Apologies are extended for the delay in sending out this issue.

But in fact I wonder how many people bothered to ask themselves why they had not received their Philately Society Newsletter. There was a socialized hint in the last issue that belonging to a society entailed some kind of real interest in its activities.

The extraordinary thing about belonging to a society is that more often than not members are the busiest people in the community. Yes..... you will agree..... that is true.

It is the contention of the editor that not only is attending a meeting the activity of the Society. If it has a newsletter or any kind of publication then the members likewise have a duty to offer, at least once in a while, material for that publication. With the exception of those whose work is obvious in this newsletter, there has been a marked lack of cooperation in this respect.

This newsletter finds its way to the four corners of the globe and what we want is up-to-date, bright, live articles. But those who are not gifted with the ability to write should certainly not fear. A list of comments or facts can be easily given some article of dress by the editor.

As you will see, we have this time the beginning of a Junior View Column. Youngsters who would like to ask questions or who have anything interesting philately-wise to say are encouraged to send their contributions.

Letters to the editor are also very welcome. Let us hear from you in any shape or form.

If you want a newsletter, then the onus is on you to keep its contents flowing.

*With best wishes to you all.*

# THE PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF MALTA.

## Constitution

1. The Society shall be known as The Philatelic Society of Malta.
2. The Objects of the Society shall be:
  - (a) To promote philately and the study of postage stamps and postal history;
  - (b) To facilitate the exchange of stamps among members;
  - (c) To promote the intensive study of stamps and postal history; by the formation of study circles within the Society;
  - (d) To form and/or co-operate with kindred bodies in the formation of a reference library for the use of members;
  - (e) To hold regular meetings of the members and to arrange exhibitions, competitions, displays, reading and discussions of papers on philatelic subjects and to undertake and contribute to the increase of the study and practice of philately in general.

## Membership

4. All persons whose name appears on the Society's Register of members at the date of the adoption of these Rules shall be deemed to be duly elected members of the Society.

4. All nominations for membership of the Society shall be in writing in the form prescribed by the Committee and shall be signed by the nominee and two members of the Society. Such nominations shall be placed before the Committee who may require such other informations, references or recommendations at it shall deem fit. The Committee may elect to membership any person so nominated.

## Junior Members

5. Candidates for membership under the age of twenty-one years may be admitted to membership subject to the written guarantee of parents or guardians to accept responsibility for the safe-keeping of any of the Subject's exchange books or other property which may come in the possession of such member during minority. A Junior Member shall not be entitled to hold office during minority.

## Management

6. The business and affairs of the Society shall be governed and managed by the Committee.

## Committee

7. The Committee shall consist of:  
President  
Treasurer  
Secretary, and  
four other members.

A member may hold more than one office but he may not thereby hold a plurality of votes.

8. The officers and members of the Committee shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Society and shall hold office for one year or until their successors are duly elected, but they shall all be eligible for re-election. Such elections shall be, by secret ballot, conducted at the Annual General Meeting. All nominations for officers and members of the Committee shall be done at the meeting.

## Vacancies in the Committee

9. Any vacancy in the Committee occurring between an election and another of the Committee shall be filled by the member who at the last election polled the highest number of votes among those who failed to get elected. If any member of the Committee fails to attend three consecutive meetings (unless reasonable excuse has been furnished), he may be removed from the Committee and another member elected in his place by general meeting.

## Quorum

10. (a) At all Committee meetings four shall form a quorum.  
(b) At Annual or Special General Meetings one-third of the members shall form a quorum; provided that, if no quorum be present within fifteen minutes from when the meeting was due to start, there shall be a second convocation after another fifteen minutes at which the members present shall form a quorum.

## Honorary Members

11. The Society may at any General Meeting, on the recommendation of the Committee, elect as an Honorary Life Member any person who, in the opinion of the Committee, has rendered meritorious services to philately. Provided, however, that there shall not at any time be more than five honorary life members. Upon election, an honorary life member shall enjoy all the rights, powers and privileges of membership, including the right to election as an officer or member of the Committee.

## Duties of Officers

12. *The President*, and, in his absence, the Vice-President, shall preside over all meetings of the Society. If both are absent, the meeting shall choose one of those present to preside. The person presiding at a meeting shall have a casting vote, in addition to his own original vote.

*The Secretary* shall conduct the correspondence of the Society, keep a detailed Minute Book of proceedings and read minutes at every meeting. He shall also prepare, under instructions of the Committee, a full report of the year's activities for presentation at the Annual General Meeting. He shall also keep an up-to-date Register of Members and shall keep the Treasurer fully informed of the names and addresses of new members as they enrol. He shall hand all subscriptions and other monies received by him to the Treasurer at the earliest opportunity.

*The Treasurer* shall have control of the funds of the Society, pay promptly all accounts passed by the Committee and submit at the Annual General Meeting a duly audited Statement of Receipts and Expenditure and Balance Sheet for the information of members. He shall arrange for all receipts to be regularly banked to the credit of an account opened in the name of the Society with a Bank appointed from time to time by the Committee. He shall also present an Interim Statement of the Society's financial position at each Committee Meeting and produce the Bank Passbook for inspection as and when required.

## Auditors

13. (a) The Committee shall annually appoint two honorary Auditors who shall audit the Books of Account and the Statement of Receipts and Expenditure and Balance Sheet kept or prepared by the Officers of the Society. The Auditors shall report on such books of account, financial statements and balance sheets at the Annual General Meeting.
- (b) Every Officer of the Society shall, on demand, produce to the Auditors any records, books or statements of account kept or required to be kept by him and shall furnish all explanations or informations which the Auditors may require.

## Subscriptions

14. The Annual subscription for membership shall be ten shillings, but for Junior Members the subscription shall be two shillings and six pence. All subscriptions shall be paid in advance on the foundation of the Society and thenceforth on the first day of January in each year.



### **Termination of Membership**

15. The Committee may accept the resignation of any member who shall give notice of such intention in writing.

16. Any member who fails to pay the annual subscription fee within three months of its falling due shall cease to be a member of the Society.

17. The Committee may by a two-thirds majority terminate the membership of any member who, in the opinion of the Committee, has been guilty of conduct unbecoming a member of the Society. Notice of the charge and an opportunity of being heard before the Committee shall be given to a member before any decision to terminate his membership is taken. Provided that a General Meeting may, at the request in writing of the member whose membership has been terminated, appoint a Committee consisting of nine members to review his case. The decision of this Committee shall in all cases be final.

### **Alteration of Rules**

18. A Special Meeting held in accordance with Rule 20 or the Annual General Meeting may deal with any special business, including suspension or alteration of any of these Rules, subject to notice of motion in writing signed by five or more members being furnished to the Secretary prior to the previous monthly meeting. No motion submitted in pursuance of any such notice shall have any effect unless passed by simple majority of the members present in person.

### **Monthly Meetings**

19. Regular Monthly Meetings of the members of the Society shall be held only from October to June on the day, at the hour and at the place appointed by the Committee from time to time.

### **Special Meetings**

20. The Committee may from time to time call Special General Meetings and may submit to members such business or motions as it may deem fit. Upon a requisition signed by not less than one-third of the members, the Committee shall call a Special Meeting to deal with such other motion or business which the Committee may determine. The Committee shall determine the time and place when and where such meetings shall be held, provided, however, that such meetings shall not be held earlier than one calendar month nor later than three calendar months following the notification to members at a General Meeting of the Society.

### **Bye-Laws**

21. The Committee shall have the power to frame, alter or repeal bye-laws when deemed necessary, provided they are not inconsistent with any of these Rules.

## **Dissolution**

22. The Society shall not be dissolved unless determined by a two-thirds majority of the total membership at a Special General Meeting of which not less than one month's notice must be given to all members. In the event of the Society being wound up at any time, the Committee shall have full power to dispose of the assets at its discretion and divide the proceeds, after payment of all just debts, equally among the existing members.

## **Disposal of deceased members' collection**

23. The Committee shall, when requested to do so, advise persons deriving title from a deceased member upon the advantageous disposal of such member's collection of stamps or other philatelic material.

## **Patrons**

24. The Committee may seek for the Society the patronage of any distinguished person or persons.

## **Annual General Meetings**

25. The Annual General Meeting shall be held not later than the thirty-first January in each year. The business of the Annual General Meeting shall be dealt with in the following order:

- (a) Reading and adoption of the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting;
- (b) Presentation of the Annual Report of the Secretary, financial statements and the Auditor's Report;
- (c) Election of Committee;
- (d) The making or alteration of Rules of which due notice has been given;
- (e) Any other business of which due notice has been given.

## **Judicial representation**

26. The President and the Secretary shall represent the Company in judicial proceedings.

## **Editor and staff**

27. For the purpose of issuing any periodical publication, the Committee shall appoint an Editor and staff, who shall perform the functions assigned to them by the Committee. The Editor shall "ex officio" be a member of the Committee, in addition to the members elected in accordance with Rule 7 hereof.

(N.B.) The above Rules were approved at the Foundation Meeting of the Society held on the 7th March, 1966, and they incorporate amendments made by General Meeting on the 8th July, 1966, and 3rd October, 1966.

# MALTA STAMPS

A fine selection of Mint, Used, First Day Covers, Village Postmarks  
and Varieties is available at:

**E. SAID**

MEMBERS B.P.A., P.T.S.,

32, Britannia Street,

Valletta,

Malta G.C.

A handy descriptive price list is offered free on request.

Accessories such as Stockbooks, Albums, Tweezers, etc., plus literature  
about the Malta Postage Stamp, may also be obtained.

*Advertisement*

1967 XMAS ISSUE:

## ARE YOU FOR OR AGAINST?

The latest issue of Christmas stamps has given rise to some controversy both in Malta and abroad. The subject was discussed at the monthly meeting of the Society held on the 6th November, 1967, and views both in favour and against were put forward. Criticism centred mainly on the shape of the stamps which makes them unwieldy to manage. Some of the speakers expressed their disapproval of the printing of twenty complete sets (with different values) on one and the same sheet and maintained that a miniature sheet would have served a better purpose. Those in favour praised the originality of both design and shape and saw no reason why Malta should not break away from tradition.

We have thought to publish two varying opinions which have been expressed abroad and we invite the views of our readers for future publication.

Lt. Com. Burns (64, Beacon Down Avenue, Beacon Park, Plymouth) wrote to the President of the Society in these terms:

*"I do not think that the stamps are up to the usual high standard of design that we expect from Malta, nor do I like the unusual shape. I hope Malta will not sink to the level of some of the African countries who issue all sorts of 'labels' for any reason at all".*

Reaction in Italy appears to have run counter to this trend. The philatelic correspondent of a Florentine newspaper "La Nazione" (The Nation) wrote as follows in the issue of the 1st November, 1967:

*"In regard to Christmas issues, the success scored among collectors by the lovely issue of the Malta Post Office should be underlined: it consists of a triptych designed by E. V. Cremona, the values being of 1d., 8d., and 1s. 4d. It is a philatelic execution of great merit, worthy of the magnificent issues with which in recent times Malta has enriched the collections of Italian philatelists with a soft spot for Maltese stamps."*

## JUNIOR VIEW.

### WITH THE BEGINNERS.

(By J.D. CAMPBELL)

I intend to devote some space to the subject of arranging and "writing up" of collections in loose-leaf albums. I suggest that those of my readers who have not yet reached the loose-leaf stage may find the subject useful to remember as all serious collectors reach this stage eventually.

Under the sub-title of "arranging," we may consider the choosing of an album. The main points to be noticed are the mechanism, the paper, and the covers. While I fully appreciate the fact that few beginners care to spend much on accessories (for every penny spent on accessories is a penny less for stamps) I must say I consider a good album to be quite essential. A cheap one may be a suitable home for a small collection, but as that collection grows — in value as in size — the album ceases to be worthy of it, and the collector is in danger of "spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar."

The mechanism of the album is important, but one can rely on getting a good strong article if one buys an album made by one of the well-known British firms. Avoid all books not made for stamps — such as old loose-leaf folders or ledgers. These are quite unsuitable and may easily spoil the stamps. The three best-known types of mechanism are the peg-fitting, slot-fitting and spring-back. Rather than expend space on describing these mechanisms, I would advise the collector to see each for himself before choosing any particular one. All are satisfactory and the last-named is perhaps the easiest to handle. For myself I prefer the slot fitting as being likely to last longer than the spring-back, and also because the leaves are more firmly held. However, the spring-back type will be found to outlast its covers in most cases.

The covers should be as strong as possible, and should have reinforced corners if the pocket will allow such a luxury. It will be found that an album with a good mechanism always has a good cover, but a good cover does not necessarily mean a good mechanism.

My own choice (finances permitting) of paper would be for an album having hand-made paper of a light cream shade, fairly thick, and linen-hinged, faintly ruled, and with transparent interleaving. This would be expensive, but with a good machine-made paper it would be quite cheap and within the reach of most collectors. The linen-hinging I consider to be not a luxury but a necessity. It allows the book to lie flat when opened — a great advantage. The transparent interleaving is cheap, and also essential for the protection of the stamps. Some albums have the backs of the

leaves covered with "Japan-tissue," this is an expensive refinement which does away with the need for interleaving.

Black leaves are becoming very popular, but are entirely a matter of taste. I do not think they will ever oust the white or cream leaves from their present position of first favourites.

## THE CHARM OF STAMP COLLECTING.

(By E.W.B.)

Stamp collecting is a delightful hobby, simple enough for the simplest Simon, technical enough for the keenest scientist. Anyone can collect stamps. Therein lies the chief of its charms. Boys and girls, old men and women, rich and poor, wise and foolish — anyone and everyone at or between these extremes can find some point of interest in the King of Hobbies. Stamps are about the easiest things in the world to collect, and they can be about the most difficult. A showy and pleasureable collection can be gotten together without any expense at all to the collector, and at the same time, a king's ransom may be paid to secure some elusive specimen scarcely one inch square! Yes, the charm of stamp collecting lies partly in the fact that it is a hobby that appeals "to all sorts and conditions of men."

There is a tendency to-day, to replace "specialised" collecting with "subject" collecting. So varied are the designs of modern stamps that it is possible, for instance, to illustrate in the album the evolution of the aeroplane. Beginning with stamps illustrative of mythological flights, of Daedalus, the Sun Chariot of the Greeks and others, the story of the conquest of the air is progressively shown. There are miniature engravings of Leonardi de Vinci's quaint flying machine, of Wilbur Wright's plane, of Bleriot's crossing of the Channel and of the "Southern Cross." There is wonderful interest in a collection of this kind, for there are all sorts of side lines — pictures of aeroplanes over famous cities, over the Wall of China, over smoking volcanoes and so on. Then there are the epics of the air. Polar rescues, strathosphere attempts, famous air routes, to say nothing of those historic souvenirs of pioneer flights — autographed covers.

NOTES ON:

**OLD PHILATELIC PERIODICALS.**

By CHARLES G. CASSAR, M.D., M.A.C.G.P. (Lond.)

It is really a difficult assignment that befell on me to write on philatelic magazines and journals that were published in Malta in the past. Unfortunately, before 1925, there was no law imposing a duty on the author of a work printed and published in Malta to deliver a copy of such work to the Royal Malta Library and another to the Gozo Public Library. Besides, no bibliography of philatelic periodicals published in Malta is known to exist. From time to time, I have been told of periodicals supposed to have been printed in Malta in former days, but the data given me was seldom accurate and therefore I consider this information too unreliable and of little value. I am therefore in no position to give a complete list of these publications.

I can, however, write a few notes on "The Melita Philatelic Chronicle and Advertiser" and quote some extracts from this periodical which may be of interest to our readers.

This publication was started by Mr. Alfred Muscat, a very enterprising gentleman, towards the end of the last century. The journal seems to have originated as an advertising medium on stamps, but in the 5th issue (1st May, 1899) a short article on "Errors of Malta Stamps" was published.

In the issue of the 1st December, 1889, Edmund Rizzo published the first instalment of an interesting article entitled "Stamps of Malta." At the end of these notes I am reproducing this article and I intend publishing its continuation in subsequent issues of the "Newsletter."

The last issue of this journal bears the date 1st December, 1890. This was the twelfth number that had seen the light of day, although the journal was intended as a monthly publication. It appears that, before this journal was started other attempts were made to publish a periodical of philatelic interest but they never came to fruition as the venture was considered too risky.

In this century a number of philatelic journals are known. I am giving a list of those I have come across in the hope that others will come forward to add the names of other philatelic magazines they may know of:

1. Malta Philatelic Monthly Journal (1916-1917);
2. The Malta International Friendship (Philatelic Exchange Club) (1935);
3. The Melita Post (Edited by Dr. L. Grech) (1937-1938);
4. The Melita Post (Malta Philatelic Society, Zejtun) (1937-1939);
5. Invicta Magazine (A quarterly edited by C.J. Mhelo'da'e) (1946-1948);
6. Malta and Gozo Courier (incorporating the Advertiser (Edited by G. Xicluna) (1946).

## "STAMPS OF MALTA".

By EDMUND RIZZO

(Mentioned in the preceding article)

"Our  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. yellow local stamp was first made use of in 1861. Although all catalogues state the Malta  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. yellow stamp dates from 1860, yet from reliable information which I will quote later on, I am led to the conclusion that the above-mentioned stamp was not made use of before the subsequent year. Some months ago, a friend of mine acquired from a Maltese merchant his old correspondence since 1824. This friend of mine being himself an ardent collector, invited me to help him in classifying this correspondence.

"Among the whole lot there was a good number of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. yellow Malta on the original cover.

"We classified these Malta stamps according to date but on going back to 1860 we found that in that year no stamps were to be found on the letters and that only a Post Mark bearing the date was to be seen.

"At first I thought that the local stamp was first brought into use towards the middle or even the end of that year and I continued my researches with greater diligence. At last I found a letter bearing the date of 25th Dec. 1860, such letter had no stamp on and since by the 25th December letters were posted without being stamped, of course we may with certainty conclude that this stamp was not used before 1861.

"The first order sent by the Post Office to the Crown Agents for the manufacture of this stamp was of £40.

"As these stamps were only used locally (letters sent abroad were stamped with stamps of Great Britain), more than five years had elapsed before this first stock was exhausted.

"In classifying the above-mentioned stamp of Malta we met with several  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. yellow on bluish ground used in 1861 and '62 and at the same period we also met with  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. yellow on white. The first stock of these stamps was therefore printed on a different kind of paper and the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. yellow on blued paper and that on white paper were contemporaneously printed and used. To be more correct we may point out that the white paper one, although met with obliterated in the same year viz:— 1861, yet the post mark bore the date of November but the circumstance may be attributed to the fact that the sheets of those on bluish were placed above while those on white were placed among the lower row of sheets but that was only a mere chance.

"Calculating the number of stamps on bluish found in the correspondence in question and those on white paper I dare say that the difference of price between those two stamps is not adequate to their respective rarity.

"In proportion we found four times on white paper more than on bluish whilst the former is catalogued as £2 which is a fair and reasonable price. The latter ought to be catalogued not more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  that price."

(TO BE CONTINUED)



## THE BACKS OF STAMPS

(By R.K.D.)

Who would think of looking on the back of a stamp for anything at all interesting? Yet, on some stamps there are odd things printed on the back. Who, for example, would expect to find a Latin prayer on the back of a stamp? Yet on the 1895 issue of Portugal — which was issued to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the birth of St. Anthony of Padua — there is such a prayer on the back of every stamp. The most curious picture of this series shows the saint preaching to the fishes.

Then again a glance at the back of some stamps will reveal the fact that they have been printed on strange materials. Particularly is this the case with the stamps of Latvia, one of the nations formed from the old Russian Empire. The first issue was printed on the backs of maps taken from the general staff of the German army, after the war, and on each stamp may be found a tiny portion of one of these maps, with towns, rivers, roads, etc., all marked. After the stamp maps had been used up, cigarette paper was used for one issue, and blue ruled exercise paper for the next. Later on, some Bolshevik bank notes were captured, and Red Cross stamps, showing a nurse and wounded soldier, were printed on these, the bank note design appearing in blue on the back of the stamp. At about the same time Lithuania, another new State, one part of the Russian Empire, was similarly short of printing paper, and used up some greyish paper, on which her war-time bread tickets had until then been printed.

During revolutionary warfare in Mexico in 1915, paper became so scarce that the Government printed stamps on the backs of post-office forms, so that each stamp shows part of a printed form.

Several other schemes have been put forward at various times for printing advertisements on the backs of stamps. Early British stamps may be found with words printed on the backs in various colours, but these were experimental. New Zealand, however, put such a scheme into operation, and on the backs of stamps of the 1882 issue there may be found advertisements for pills, soap, and other commodities.

There is also an issue of Russian stamps with an inscription on the back of each stamp, stating they may be used as money.

— (Reprinted from N.Z. Stamp Monthly)

## THE QUEEN OF MALTA STAMPS.

The 13th of November, 1967 saw yet another Malta Postal Administration. First i.e. the official use of the words "Elizabeth II — Queen of Malta" in lieu of "Royal Visit" which hitherto invariably appeared in Commonwealth countries commemorating such an event. The use of the phrase which is appearing on the new stamps gives rise to the following questions, some of which have already appeared in the local Press:— Is Queen Elizabeth going to be crowned Queen of Malta on her arrival here?..... or was she already Queen of Malta? Is not Queen Elizabeth the Queen of England? Is it an error on the part of the Postal Authorities? and a host of others.

I have had the opportunity to discuss the matter with a learned legal friend of mine and the following deductions emerged during our discourse: However, a brief outline of the constitutional position of the Crown in Malta appears necessary in order that the use of the words "Queen of Malta" be viewed in their proper perspective, and against the local constitutional background.

Malta's relationship with the Queen is twofold: Firstly Malta is a member of the Commonwealth and as such recognizes the Queen as the symbol of the association which collectively forms the Commonwealth; secondly Malta is a monarchy and her monarch is the Queen. The latter relationship is more important vis-a-vis the matter under consideration for it establishes the constitutional relationship with Her Majesty The Queen.

One of the most important acts in the Constitutional developments of Commonwealth relationship during recent years was the undermentioned declaration which was issued in the communiqué of the 1952 Commonwealth Conference relating to the Queen's Style and Title, ".....there is need for a new form of title which will, in particular, reflect the special position of the Sovereign as Head of the Commonwealth..... it would be in accord with the established constitutional position that each member country shall use for its own purposes a form of title which suits its own particular circumstances but retains a substantial element which is common to all."

The Parliament at Westminster passed the Royal Titles Act in 1953 and some Commonwealth countries followed suit, which in plain language means that the Queen enjoys a separate title for each Commonwealth country. By Proclamation dated 1st January, 1965, Malta adopted the following Style and Title:

**"Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, Queen of Malta and of Her Other Realms and Territories, Head of the Commonwealth."**

Of significance is the fact that no explicit mention is made to the United Kingdom, which country is included in the phrase "Her other Realms." This emphasises the fact that the Queen is Queen of Malta in a distinct and separate capacity and not by virtue of Her being Queen of the United Kingdom. Malta's Style and Title follows that of South Africa, Jamaica, Malawi, Guyana but differs from that adopted by Canada, Australia and New Zealand who follow this pattern:

**"Queen Elizabeth the Second by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom, Canada, (Australia/New Zealand) and Her Other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth."**

In conclusion, similarly as in Sierra Leone, where the Queen enjoys her own personal standard depicting the Royal Crown, Malta's Queen has her own personal standard, which is based on the Maltese flag with a roundel in royal blue wreathed in gold and bearing in gold the Queen's Monogram (E). It will be used by the Queen in her capacity as Queen of Malta the same way the Royal Standard is used in Britain. The official design appeared in the Government Gazette dated 31st October, 1967.

It is hoped that the above observations somewhat help our philatelists, some of whom, perhaps already knew the facts, constitutionally-wise, of the appropriateness of the words "Elizabeth II — Queen of Malta" which are appearing in the set of stamps commemorating the Royal Visit.

*P.S. A word of thanks is in order to my legal pundit, who desires to remain anonymous, without whose knowledge the above article could not have accurately been written.*

J. D. Hamilton  
10th November, 1967.

"Valeview"  
St. Francis Street,  
PAOLA.

## MALTA "SERVICES WEEK" CANCELLATION.

### APPROVED "COMBINATION" COVERS.

A Souvenir Cover with the Maltese Cross and the badges of the British Army, the R.A.F. and the Royal Navy, and inscribed Visit of H.M. THE QUEEN/MALTA SERVICES WEEK/NOVEMBER 1967 at the top and POSTAL & COURIER/COMMUNICATIONS R.E. at the foot was issued by the Services Post Office on November 17th, during the recent Royal Visit, and sold for the Services Benevolent Fund.

On the Occasion of the visit, the Services in Malta held a "Malta Services Week" in the Independence Arena at Floriana and among the various Services stands a temporary Services Post Office was set up on November 17th.

A special cancellation was in use on November 17th, 18th and 19th, and only British stamps, which incidentally, were on sale at this temporary Post Office, were normally cancelled with this special hand-stamp. This read:—

BRITISH FORCES POSTAL SERVICES within a double circle enclosing a crown, the date and the "Combined Operation" symbol with "1000" at foot of circle.

By an arrangement with the G.P.O., Malta, current Maltese stamps, including the newly-issued Royal Visit set and the 1967 Christmas set, were also on sale on a separate counter manned by local G.P.O. clerks. A rubber cancellation specially issued by the G.P.O. Malta was used to cancel Maltese stamps on the covers, or on other envelopes. The cancellation was inscribed:

"MALTA SERVICES WEEK — 1967", in a double-lined circle and the date across the centre.

It was also permissible to have the covers franked with both local and British stamps, the former being cancelled with the "local" handstamp, and the latter by the Services Post Office one; thus, if so desired, covers on which both local and British stamps had been affixed could have both the local as well as the Services cancellations.

This temporary Post Office consisted of one room, very neatly laid out, and manned simultaneously by Services and civilian personnel. Frames displaying British stamp issues included blocks of phosphor-graphite stamps and colour proofs of the new British definitive issue were hung on the wall on the side of the Services counter, while on the wall on the side of the Malta G.P.O. counter frames displaying blocks of four of some modern Malta sets and the different stages of production of some sets were hung.

On November 17th, the first day of the servicing of these covers, this post office was open to the public from 2 p.m. to 5.45 p.m., and both counters were kept very busy indeed, the response to this new venture from both local and British Services and civilian philatelists being excellent.

Surg. Captain J.H. Mercieca.

## DISINFECTED LETTERS.

Adapted and translated from "La Settimana Filatelica" by

SURG. CAPT. J.H. MERCIEGA

In our times no one is at all surprised to see that many countries demand a vaccination certificate from travellers who reach their frontiers, be they tourists, immigrants or even only in transit; and no one would ever dream of evading the duty of immunizing oneself against small-pox, typhus, cholera or yellow fever when undertaking an international voyage. On the other hand the World Health Organization carefully insists on the strict adherence of this measure in the interests of the health of the nations. The risk of contamination from one country to another is real and it is in the best interests of individuals as well as that of populations to protect themselves from such a danger, which in the course of past centuries assumed proportions of a veritable national calamity.

Let us for a moment go back to, say, the last two centuries and we shall undoubtedly find that the history of these times has some very dark pages dealing with the frightful and deadly epidemics of plague, cholera, small-pox and other infectious diseases which during these times afflicted humanity to a very great extent. In those days Medicine was still in its infancy and prophylaxis — preventive treatment — was totally unknown to man. The treatment of infectious diseases was yet unknown and immunization was impracticable and one or two cases were enough to start off an epidemic of unpredictable magnitude which could easily be responsible for the dissemination of these infectious diseases throughout entire towns and even provinces.

We find that epidemics of plague raged in Montpellier in 1629 and in Marseilles the Great Plague of 1720 was propagated by a ship which had arrived from the East. The cities of Messina in Sicily and Lisbon were hit in 1753 and 1754 respectively. Thirty years later an epidemic of plague in North Africa was responsible for the death of 250 persons a day. In 1804 Malaga was struck by an epidemic of yellow-fever and another epidemic of this disease in 1821 decimated the population of the Mediterranean littoral.

Very scarce evidence is at our disposal about the epidemics which struck many overseas countries during the 16th and 17th centuries but it is known that from such times sanitary organizations united their efforts with the common scope of limiting these dreaded scourges.

Every harbour which had connections with the Middle East provided a locality for isolation, if not a hospital, wherein passengers, crews and merchandise suspected of being carriers of the virus had to go into quarantine. These precautionary measures, which were supposed to last for forty days and during which appropriate treatment — or at least as such considered —

were applied, lasted in reality often longer. If on board a ship a case of plague had been discovered she immediately went into quarantine for eighty days. The fear of contagious disease being imported from Turkey or from countries under her domain was so great that practically every ship arriving from Turkish ports had to undergo this strict sanitary measure.

Yet another method of control was established. This was what was known as the "certificate of health." Before leaving for a European port every captain of a ship had to obtain a sort of sanitary release known as "certificate" which was granted by the consular authorities.

On being in possession of a "clear certificate", indicating that no contagious disease was prevalent in the country from which the ship had arrived, passengers and merchandise were allowed to come down without any formality. If on the other hand, the captain could not produce to the satisfaction of the authorities of the port of destination but a "certificate of suspicion" (which meant that the country from which the ship had arrived was suspected of having cases of infectious disease amongst its population) the ship was immediately placed in quarantine.

During the latter centuries the Sanitary Authorities became deeply concerned by the arrival of the mail. Although at the time the existence of bacilli was still unknown, yet it had already been assumed that letters could be good carriers of contagious disease. In some instances the Authorities went so far as to stop altogether the circulation of letters. Later it had been decided to disinfect the flaps or as it was then called to purify them. In order to be in a position to do this without opening the letters, incisions or holes were made in the letters with the help of a gadget, invented by the Austrians, called "rastel." The letters so treated were exposed to the fumes of cannon powder. Starting from the 18th Century vinegar baths and chlorine or sulphuric acid vapours were generally used for disinfection and on letters treated in this way, a cachet attesting that the letters had been purified, was applied.

Various types of cachets were used in different ports. In Marseilles a cachet "Purifie Lazaret Marseille" and "Purifiee a Marseille" was used; while at Toulon, which at that time was an important base in the campaign for the conquest of Algeria, an oval as well as a linear cachet "Purifiee a Toulon" was used. The Atlantic ports purified letters too, but some of them did not apply any cachet at all and the only means of knowing that a letter had undergone such precautionary treatment was solely by the razor cuts it had in the flaps.

Malta, of course was no exception, and letters were treated in a similar way by the then sanitary authorities. On account of its geographical position, Malta constituted in some way a bridge between the Ottoman empire and the western Mediterranean countries. In fact she played the important rôle of a platform of the Mediterranean. Ships returning both from Alexandria as well as from the East stopped at Malta before reaching the Italian and French

ports. The cachets applied in Malta were in the shape of small round circles. A cachet of sealing wax, indicating the opening and closing of a letter, is also known, but such cachets are rare as they were generally broken by the recipient.

Some letters dispatched from the East to the U.S.A. were first disinfected at the Greek lazaretto of Ciro's and again re-disinfected at Malta whose authorities had not enough faith in their Greek counterpart, it seems.

In addition, practically all the Italian ports and some cities too, including the Papal States, treated letters in a similar way to avoid their being a possible cause of the spread of contagious disease.

The relative scarcity of these disinfected letters is obvious enough in that recipients of such letters undoubtedly preferred, after having noted the contents, to proceed with their destruction and thus calm their minds against the possible risk of contagion.

In our times all isolation hospitals proceed to disinfect letters sent by their inmates, surely by more effective and safe measures, but these no longer bear any cachets or other evidence of such disinfection. Thus this page in the history of disinfected mail, a subject which has interested and been deeply studied by some philatelic specialists, is now closed.

## **DIPLOMA OF HONOUR FOR MALTA STAMPS.**

On the 7th September, 1962, a set of four stamps was issued to commemorate the Great Siege.

The World Union of Christian Philately St. Gabriel awarded its Diploma of Honour to the Malta Postal Administration for the issue of one of the Great Siege stamps, namely the 2d, value depicting the Madonna of Damascena. This Diploma is only awarded to those postal administrations which issue stamps bearing Christian motifs of an artistic presentation of very good taste and which afford all philatelists the possibility of obtaining the stamps at a value which is within the reach of the general public.

In 1530 the Holy Icon was brought to Malta with other treasures of the Order of the Knights of St. and it was placed in the Church of St. Catherine at Vittoriosa where it remained until 1578 when it was solemnly carried to the Greek Church built in its honour in Valletta. Abundant restorations have completely transformed the image, which was solemnly crowned in 1931 by Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, later a Sovereign Pontiff of the Catholic Church during the years 1939/1958.

(Condensed by J.D. Hamilton from "Malta Review," August, 1963).

## PHILATELISTS AND STAMP COLLECTORS.

Wherein lies the difference between a philatelist and a stamp collector? To many people the names are synonymous. If we had been asked to define the terms we should have suggested that "a stamp collector" belongs to that great body of people who are actuated by the acquisitive instinct, while "a philatelist" is he who possesses also the inquisitive instinct. In other words, we imagine that the "stamp collector" is concerned more with the actual collecting than with the study of matters pertaining to the production, issue and use of stamps.

"The Australian Stamp Monthly" offers another definition. In commenting upon the recent Sydney Philatelic Exhibition our contemporary remarks: "A stamp collector is not necessarily a philatelist and, apparently, according to some standards, a "philatelist" is one who places self-interest before the welfare of philately."

Though we are not fully cognisant of the reasons for the strictures passed upon the philatelists of New South Wales, it seems to us that this statement is rather too sweeping to be applied generally.

It is unfortunately true that in the ranks of philately there are many — whether we call them philatelists or stamp collectors does not matter — who either through diffidence or selfishness are adverse to assisting others who are interested in our hobby.

Some years ago that excellent and regrettably short-lived publication, "The Stamp Collector's Monthly Circular", attributed the partial failure of philately to the canker of commercialism, and the condemnation that was then passed is applicable equally to-day.

Equally obnoxious and harmful is the superior individual whose real knowledge may be redimentary, but who views with thinly-veiled contempt and condescension the enthusiasm of the young or the inexperienced members. When the opportunity is offered to him to assist by reading a paper, by contributing a display or by the loan of material that might be useful in research, he is too busy to participate. And yet it is this same individual who is loudest in his criticism of errors that he might have obviated.

Philatelic societies invariably incorporate among their objects one relating to the general advancement and encouragement of philately by the mutual exchange of ideas, and it is to be assumed that when a new member is admitted he is subscribing to this commendable ideal. The conduct of regular meetings and the institution of an exchange branch are too often considered the sole duties of a society, and such projects as the publication of hand-books and the organisation of exhibitions, which entail combined effort and a possible inroad into the accumulated funds, are evaded.

Fortunately, in most philatelic hives there are workers who refuse to be discouraged by the loud buzzing of the drones!

— (Reprinted from New Zealand Stamp Collector)



## ARCHER'S PERFORATION. AN INTERESTING DISCOVERY.

(By H. F. JOHNSON)

An unused pair of 1d. reds printed from the original die, watermarked small crown and perforated 16, recently came into the writer's possession. Examination proved them to be printed from Plate 8.

This plate was finished and registered on the 31st July, 1840, and was employed for printing stamps both in black and red. On the 8th Sept., 1841, the plate was destroyed as no longer fit for use.

On Dec. 4th, 1840, Rowland Hill wrote to Mr. J. B. Bacon, of Messrs. Perkins, Bacon & Petch, "asking him to make an immediate trial with the steel plates and crown paper of two blue colours (A) a plain, and (B) Prussian blue plain, and of red No. 16 G." On Dec. 15th, 1840, twelve sheets, four in each colour, were forwarded. These twelve sheets Mr. E. D. Bacon has almost conclusively proved to have been printed from Plate 8.

Archer's experiments were made during 1847-53. His original invention was for separating the stamps by means of rouletting, two machines on different principles being constructed for this purpose. Both machines were abandoned as of no practical use, and they are merely mentioned here inasmuch as they were the initial efforts that led to the invention and perfecting of the perforating machine.

His so-called "perfected machine" was tried about the end of July, 1849, but proved to be unsuccessful. Further alterations were made, and on May 16th, 1850, it was about to be brought into use. It is recorded that about 5000 to 6000 sheets of stamps were experimented on.

The stamps known to have been perforated by Archer were generally well perforated and evenly centred. Stamps from Plates 90 and 92 to 101 have been identified as having been perforated by him. Records show that these plates were in use while Archer was making his perforating experiments. It is therefore safe to assume that stamps printed from plates in use during this time would be drawn upon, thus accounting for the many different plates known.

One of the difficulties with which Archer had to contend was the difference in the length of the sheets, caused either by the shrinkage of the paper or by the varying lengths of the plates. This difficulty was obviated by alterations in the adjusting power of the machine, and the making of new plates to produce sheets of stamps of uniform length. Prior to this difficulty being overcome, old stock may well have been examined and measured with a view to getting sheets adaptable to the machine, thus accounting for the possible use of sheets from Plate 8. Stamps from other early plates may also have been used by Archer, and if so, have yet to be discovered.

That old stock was in existence and presumably in store was proved by Mr. J. B. Bacon's evidence given before the Select Committee on Postage Label Stamps on April 20th, 1852. In the course of his examination he pro-

duced two sheets of stamps, one "gummed," which he stated was "taken" ten years previously, and one ungummed freshly "taken", in order to show the extreme variation in the length of the plates. This ten years interval would bring the production of the earlier sheet very near to the period of use of Plate 8.

It will be noticed that all "Archer's" are from plates prior to Plate 132, i.e., with the first type of check letters. Several examples of perforated stamps printed from plates with the second type of check letters are known used late in 1853 and early in January, 1854, prior to the Government issue on the 28th Jan., 1854. It is assumed that these were probably from trial sheets perforated for testing the Government machines.

It has been stated that some of the sheets perforated by Archer were gummed after perforation, the argument used in favour of this contention being that unused specimens shown gum on the face of the stamp round the edges of the holes. In the case of Plate 96 (of which a large block existed) the writer has examined a number of specimens, all of which have this appearance, due, in his opinion, to their having been "stuck down" at some time and afterwards having been "damped off." The "damping off" would probably account for the gum penetrating through the holes to the face of the stamp, and also for the many frail and broken perforations which were common to this block before it was separated into smaller blocks.

Archer in his evidence before the Select Committee of 1852 stated that the machine clogged when the sheets were put in on the first day of the trial, owing to the gum on the sheets being wet. He also stated that the difficulty of the machines clogging with the gum was overcome at a later date. This question of gumming has been dealt with rather fully here, in order to disprove the erroneous statement frequently put forward that a genuine unused "Archer perforation" must show traces of the gum on the face of the stamp, the effect produced by gumming after perforating.

Ample proof is given in the evidence before the Select Committee that perforating took place after gumming, and there is not even a suggestion of a contrary practice.

To return to our discovery; the writer is satisfied that the pair of stamps here illustrated was perforated by a comb machine gauging 16, and that it was printed from Plate 8. He is further of the opinion that the perforation was done by Archer, inasmuch as its characteristics are identical with Archer's work on stamps printed from Plate 96, with which they have been compared.

The question now arises — how to account for the use of stamps from Plate 8 about ten years previously.

It is contended that one (or more) of the four experimental sheets printed in red from this plate, referred to above, was by some chance ordered to be further experimented upon to the extent of being perforated; or that one sheet (or more) from Plate 8 was taken from old stock, found to be of suitable length for Archer's machine, and duly perforated.

It may be mentioned that, before coming into the writer's possession, the pair of stamps was purchased a few years since in an old curio shop in Mecclesfield for a trifling amount. (Reprinted from *The Stamp Lover*).



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