



July—September 2014

No. 57—2014

www.stamps-gozo.org



GOZO PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Newsletter



NEWSPAPER POST

50TH ANNIVERSARY INDEPENDENCE OF MALTA



Price:
€115
inc. VAT



BANK CENTRALI TA' MALTA
CENTRAL BANK OF MALTA



This year marks the 50th anniversary since Malta became an independent state.

The Central Bank of Malta and MaltaPost are commemorating this milestone by the issue of a silver coin and a silver stamp ingot set.

Available from the Central Bank of Malta and all MaltaPost Offices

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Philatelic Bureau, MaltaPost p.l.c., 305, Qormi Road, Marsa MTP 1001, Malta
(+356) 2596 1740 | info@maltaphilately.com | www.maltaphilately.com

The subject chosen for this year's Annual
Gozo Philatelic Society Exhibition is
MALTESE ANNIVERSARIES & CELEBRATIONS

**TO ALL MEMBERS
PLEASE ENCOURAGE A FRIEND OR A
RELATIVE TO JOIN OUR SOCIETY**

GOZO PHILATELIC SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

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I enclose €5.00 membership fee. (Overseas €12, including Newsletter)

(Fee for Junior membership, under 16 years, is €2.00.

Date of birth _____)

.....
Signature

.....
Date

Introduced by _____ Member No. _____

GPS NEWSLETTER
Quarterly Organ of
THE GOZO PHILATELIC SOCIETY

First issued on the 12th February 2000. Editor: Austin Masini

Opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the Committee's official policy.

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GOZO PIHLATELIC SOCIETY

Founded on 3 September 1999 for the promotion of the hobby,
the provision of a point of reference and co-ordination.

(54) *G.P.S. Diary*

Antoine Vassallo
Gozo Philatelic Society Secretary
VO/0546



21 June 2014 Public Lecture (see p?)

3 July Committee finalizes preparation for the personalized stamp set designed by Anthony Grech for the Diocese's 150th anniversary.

7 July 12th "Prime Minister" personalized stamp

13 July The Sunday Times of Malta features our 21 June lecture (see also <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20140713/gozo/Philatelic-lecture.527508>)

19 July Anthony Grech prepares Cover for St George's Relic Handstamp.

26 July Anthony Grech prepares Cover for Xaghra Plague Handstamp

29 July GPS Secretary records a programme (focussing mainly on Covers and Personalised stamps we produce) to be broadcast on ZZZ ethic community radio (Melbourne)

4 August 13th and 14th (final) "Prime Minister" personalized stamps

10 August Diocesan *Bulletin* announces the Bishops personalized stamps

11 August Anthony Grech prepares Cover for Gozo Cathedral sesquicentenary Handstamp

16 September Anthony Grech prepares set of ten covers for the personalized stamps honouring Gozo's bishops on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of a separate Diocese.

ERRATA

A goblin ran amok in issue 56! page 3: serious = series. page 16: Columbia = Colombia and Perah / Parak = Perak. Please note also that the reference on page 23 is to Charles Dalli MPhil (Cantab)

Malta and Gozo are in full swing celebrating feasts of several saints, but did you know that one particular saint was never celebrated in our islands? This is

A "Postal" Saint

Antoine Vassallo



Flavius Julius Valens

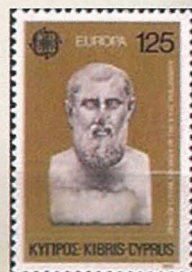
There are several saints named Zeno (or Zenon), but one is strongly associated with philately and postal administration.

St. Zeno "the Courier" was born in the mid fourth century in Asia Minor of noble and rich parents, enlisting in the army as a special courier of Flavius Julius Valens - the governor ("Emperor") of the Roman Empire's eastern provinces. Zenon's main responsibility was the continuous transmission of imperial messages requiring at times non-stop gallops across dangerous routes - because of Flavius's constant relocation necessitated by war. It seems that he succeeded in converting his emperor to Christianity and then - not long after his death on the battlefield - Zenon resigned his postal and military duties and retired to a life of prayer in a cave in the hills of Antioch, subsisting the last years of his life on bread (brought to him by a friend) and spring water.



So Zeno can well be described as a postal administrator. Actually, the Romans did not have a real public postal service and often had to employ messengers (called *tabellarii*) to have letters delivered.

Portugal featured him on the 1962 VIII Stamp Day set of three. More attention to detail was given by Greece in 1969 for their Post Office Festival. A neighbour, Cyprus, dedicated a miniature sheet to "St Zenonas the Postman" in 2007.



MALTA OVERSEAS

local connections on foreign stamps (19)

Antoine Vassallo

local connections on foreign stamps



The Gambia Flag

Pope Benedict XVI's all-too-short visit to Malta - obviously - received philatelic commemoration by our MaltaPost; but another country (with no obvious connection with us) did likewise: **The Gambia**. This African issuer has at least two characteristics: the varied (and innumerable!) assortment of themes and the fact that its official name includes the definite article - which creates havoc with computer Auto-correct functions! In August 2010 - just four months after the April visit - two stamps appeared in an interesting format: five of each value on a separate sheetlet in a "cross" structure. However the designs themselves were not really all that inventive!

One of the stamps shows the Pope in Mass vestments with the Maltese flag as background (which I have seen described simply as "white and red"!). This sheetlet uses a photo as a complete illustrated margin. What I assume is the same scene serves as background on the other stamp where Benedict is in *mozzetta* and stole.

The place shown is the "Valletta Waterfront" where one of the Papal events was held: for youths. The name may actually be described as incorrect since an area under the administrative responsibility of Floriana Council is seemingly included. In any case, this part of the Grand Harbour - restored substantially quite recently as a major project - now offers a mix of retail, dining and leisure experiences, attractive for both locals and tourists (many of whom disembark there from cruise liners). An increasing gamut of events - aimed at all ages and interests - are held here.

Moreover the centuries-old structures possess substantial socio-historical importance. They include warehouses built by Grand Master Pinto at the height of the Maltese Baroque period; the "Quay Wall" where European merchants unloaded their wares; the Old Power Station; the Forni Stores constructed in the early seventeenth century by Grand Master de Vilhena.

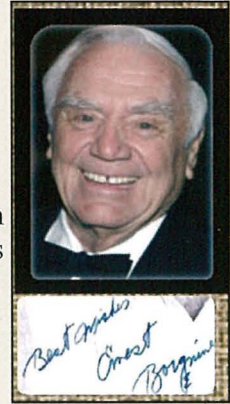


CELEBRITY PHILATELISTS

Antoine Vassallo highlights famous stamp collectors

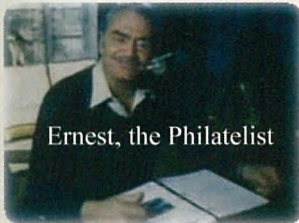
3 = Popular - if unconventional - actor

Ernest Borgnine was an American film and television actor whose career spanned more than six decades. He was an unconventional lead in many films of the 1950s, winning an Oscar. On television, beginning in 1951, he played assorted roles - and even earned an Emmy Award nomination at 92!



He was born Ermes Effron Borgnino in 1917 in Connecticut, the son of two immigrants from Italy. As a toddler he lived for some time back there - and remained a fluent Italian speaker. He described himself: "Yes, I'm a hot tempered Italian, but I don't think I am ever unfair or unjust."

Borgnine took to sports while growing up, but showed no interest in acting! He joined the United States Navy in 1935, serving until 1945 and acquiring various military decorations. In 2004 he received the honorary rank of chief petty officer in recognition of support of the Navy and naval families worldwide.



After World War II, Borgnine returned to his parents' home with no job and no direction. As he was unwilling to settle for a dead-end factory job (after trying a variety), his mother suggested that his personality would be well suited for the stage. "You always like getting in front of people and making a fool of yourself, why don't you give it a try?" He surprised her by going for it! Anna in fact died in 1949,

just days before his first wedding, in time to know her intuition was correct.

After graduation from acting studies, Borgnine was accepted as a theatre intern and landed his first stage role in 1947: though only a short role, he won over the audience - and never looked back! By 1949 he had his Broadway debut which led to decades as a dependable character actor. His big break arrived in 1953, alongside Frank Sinatra. He then gained an Academy Award for Best Actor (over Sinatra, James Dean, Spencer Tracy and James Cagney) for his 1955 Marty starring role - Grace Kelly handing it over. Borgnine completed his last film in late 2011. He once declared: "I don't care whether a part

is 10 minutes long, or two hours; and I don't care whether my name is up there on top, either."



There is obviously not the place to list his roles but, interestingly, he provided his voice talent to an animated sitcom - and continued to appear on TV. In 2007, at 90, he became the oldest Golden Globe nominee.

Borgnine toured the United States on a bus in 1996 to meet his fans and see the country - the subject of a documentary. He also served one year as the Chairman of the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans, visiting patients in many medical centres. In 2007, he received California's highest civilian honour: the Commendation Medal.

He died on July 8, 2012 in Los Angeles, with his family at his side. The attendance at his funeral showed how much he was respected and loved. The number of those who claimed to be very good friends with him was in fact enormous! His hometown named a street in his honour.

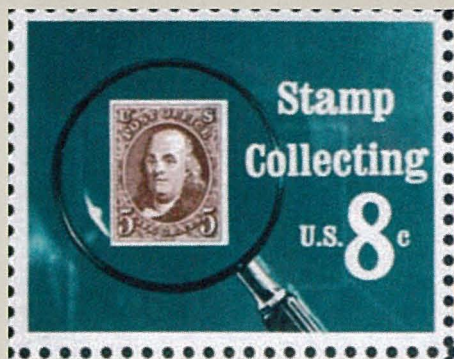
His autobiography *Ernie* was published in 2008 - a conversational recollection of highlights from his acting career and notable events from his personal life. For 30 years, Borgnine had marched in Milwaukee's annual Great Circus Parade as the "Grand Clown". He received an honorary doctorate in humane letters in recognition of his distinguished acting career. For his contribution to the motion picture industry, Ernest Borgnine received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and was inducted into the Western Performers Hall of Fame at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma. He was honoured with the Screen Actors Guild Life Achievement Award in 2011. As can be expected, he got awards at many Festivals.



Franco Zaffarelli's 1970 T.V. film 'Jesus of Nazareth' Ernest Borgnine as the Roman Centurion who comes to Jesus to ask that his servant be healed. Matt. 8: 5-13 and Luke 7: 1-10

He was involved in an air crash and also had both knees replaced. While on location in Mexico, he and Charles Bronson decided to go to the nearest town to get some cigarettes. Still in full costume, they mounted their horses and headed out but were spotted by Mexican federal police who mistook them for bandits and held them at gunpoint until their identities could be verified.

As a celebrity stamp collector, Ernest Borgnine was chosen a member of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee which evaluates potential subjects for U.S. postage stamps and reports its recommendations to the Postmaster General (who then makes the final decision).



- Stamp collecting is quite a hobby
- A glance into world history
- Researching another country
- Uncovers so many mysteries



It's not just the understanding
Of what a culture is about
But learning to speak the language
Will be a challenge without a doubt



It's a wonderful undertaking
And one that is well worth while
Each stamp from all over the world
Has an interesting and unique style

I enjoy the stories they tell
With description on every one
They go way back in time
When stamps had first begun



So if you'd like a hobby
You might give this a chance
Yes, stamps hold fascination
With their mystery and yes, romance!



Marilyn Lott

THE STATES OF GERMANY

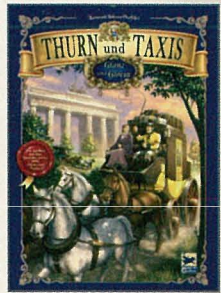
Anthony Grech



The German territory has always been an important centre for culture, technology, science and trade. Maltese firms have made good business with German firms. This is evident from numerous postal items from before World War II that Mr. & Mrs Juncker donated to the Gozo Philatelic Society. Germany was unified quite late: during the nineteenth century it was made up of more than a dozen states. In 1849 Bavaria became the first among them in issuing adhesive stamps, followed by Hanover, Prussia, Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein who issued their first postage stamps a year later in 1850. The stamp designs of this era are superb, consisting of Coats of Arms, Numerals and Portraits.

Baden offered its first stamp in 1851. This issue is well-known to philatelists due to a colour error: a few copies of the 9 kreuzer value were printed on green paper instead of rose. Brunswick was next with its first stamp featuring 'the prancing horse', followed by Oldenburg and Wurttemberg who issued their first stamps between 1851 and 1852.

Thurn & Taxis also issued stamps during the same period. For several years this Austrian princely house had a monopoly for postal services in Central Europe, providing postal services for states that had no such services. Franz von Taxis was the first Postmaster General of this firm which was acquired by Prussia in 1867.



Bergedorf, Bremen, Hamburg, Lubeck and Schwerin and Strelitz issued their own stamps between 1855 and 1864.

In 1868 most of the German states joined the political federation and postal union of the North German Confederation which issued its own stamps, Baden also joining at the last moment. In 1871 The North German Federation was

proclaimed by Bismarck as the New German Empire with King William I of Prussia as its monarch. The first stamps of the German Empire were issued in 1872, depicting the embossed coat of arms and the German Eagle.



Bavaria issued the First stamp featuring Our Lady



Otto von Bismarck

POSTMASTER COURT-MARTIALED

Antoine Vassallo



WWI
'Aussie'
Soldier

It has happened on numerous occasions that stamps appeared in court, as theft exhibits for example - or in some fraud case with falsified items. I know of only one instance where stamps were the object of an actual courtmartial - and we have to go "down under"!

It was opened in Sydney on 12th May 1915 to try members of the small volunteer Australian naval and military expeditionary force which went to Rabaul on the island of New Britain (now forming two provinces of Papua New Guinea) at the outbreak of World War I to destroy German wireless stations. The Governor-General had set down five separate cases, only one of which interests us.

Second-Lieutenant George William Moore was charged that, in spite of an order by the Administrator (Colonel Holmes) that no person was to be allowed to purchase surcharged New Guinea stamps from the post office in excess of ten shillings worth of each denomination, the accused - while acting as chief postmaster at Rabaul - sold stamps to a Captain Ravenscroft and also to himself. The prosecution began by stating that this was a very serious breach of discipline and that, if undetected, the accused may have had an opportunity of putting into his pocket sums of money ranging from £1,000 to £2,000.



WWI
Australian propaganda poster

Why were these stamps so special? When the Australians occupied the German territory, the accused was made postmaster and the German New Guinea stamps (and later others) were collected and surcharged G.R.I. (= *Georgius Rex Imperator*, in reference to King George V) for the use of the forces. Requests began arriving from collectors around the world for these provisionals and their value was thus immediately appreciated by everyone. The restricting order was considered essential since limited quantities were available at first.

The second part of the charge was based upon a packet that Moore brought with him from New Guinea when on a visit to Sydney. A customs officer noticed a sealed packet in his luggage and Moore replied that it contained “Confidential documents sent by the Commander-in-Chief in New Guinea to the Commander-in-



Chief in Australia.” The officer tore off the corner and saw that the packet contained sheets of stamps, the accused explaining that he was bringing them to the Postmaster General. Later he said he had bought the stamps himself and had paid £100 for them, adding that he had a certificate from the Treasury that his accounts were all right.

After quite a few hours of witnesses and arguments (which showed substantial philatelic ignorance), Moore was found guilty: reduced to the ranks and dismissed from the defense forces.



It transpired that he had enlisted in the Expeditionary Force for New Guinea as a private in the Infantry. He was promoted sergeant three weeks after being appointed to the post office - when there were no stamps yet! Three months later he was promoted a second lieutenant. It was noted that he had served as an Imperial Bushman in the South African War for 168 days, receiving a “Conduct very good” discharge.

A final comment: if the intention of the administration was to provide stamps for postal purposes and they did not want the supply to run out, a simpler - obvious - system was possible. Soldiers who wanted letters sent outside the territory could have handed them in at the post office and paid the postage; the stamps attached to the letter would then be cancelled and put into the mail bag. But that would have been less interesting for us!

proofing & designing

Alfred Caruana Ruggier



Proposed designs



Stamps issued



Detail 37c stamp



Detail 16c stamp

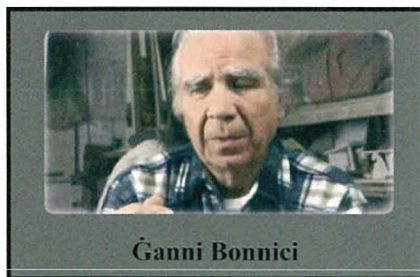


MALTA STAMPS DESIGNES.

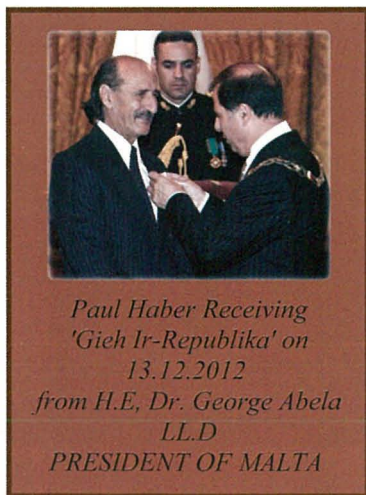
Alfred Caruana Ruggier.

Gozo features on the four sets of postage stamps commissioned to me by Maltapost, twenty stamps in all. A George V wall letter-box and a Queen Elizabeth II pillar box feature on the 2004 Letter Boxes set. The Gozo and Comino Map by Padre Luigi Bartolo from De Soldanis manuscript work Gozo Antico e Moderno, Sacro e Profano is shown on the 2005 Maps Set while two marvellous balconies, one in Gharb and one in Victoria, are depicted on the 2007 Balconies stamps. The Letter Boxes and the Balconies stamps are from my original paintings. The Maps and Ceramics stamps are from photographs.

My first design for the 2006 Ceramics set of five stamps was originally planned as square stamps with each stamp showing two objects, as illustrated here. Of the ten items, three were related to Gozo. These were the Mnara from the Archaeological Museum, Victoria, a stewing pot, “Baqra” from the collection at the Augustinian Convent, Victoria and a ceramic work glazed in white and red by the Gozitan artist Paul Haber, who was born in Xewkija.



Haber's work on this artwork accompanies a ceramic figure by the artist Ganni Bonnici. Both artists paid a most valid contribution to the promulgation of ceramics in the Maltese Islands and not only by producing their own works. Bonnici and Haber had various experiences including studying abroad, mainly in Italy and the United Kingdom. To this, one must add their experience in teaching the subject, Bonnici in the late 50s and Haber, the younger artist, later on. While always active on the art scene, since 1980 Paul Haber has been running his own ceramics factory, Alka Ceramics at Ta' Qali.



However, on the insistence of the Stamp Advisory Board, I had to show only one ceramic object on each stamp, even though I explained that multiple images can be seen on many local and foreign stamps. Consequently only the “Mnara” from Gozo remained on this set.



A most successful lecture

Antoine Vassallu GPS Secretary

Following the very positive experience with Notary Dr Michael Refalo (at the *Banca Giuratale*) in April last year, the Committee discussed how to continue this series of lectures open to the general public. There were three points: subject, lecturer and location. All three were finally decided very positively!

The subject was a “natural” result of our initiative to celebrate the special anniversaries of various national constitutional developments through a personalized-stamp series showing Malta’s Prime Ministers. Having agreed about that, we were very honoured to have - through the Debrincats’ personal contact - an established authority such as expert philatelist and historian H.E. Chev. Dr. Alfred Bonnici KM, MD, B.Pharm., Cert(GAM.UK), FRSM, F.R.S.H., F.R.A.E.S., U.O.M. Speaker Emeritus and President of the Malta

Philatelic Society! On hearing that Il-Ħaġar - Heart of Gozo was willing to host cultural events, we asked - and our request was immediately accepted.

While anxiously waiting for the set date, Dr Bonnici was



contacted numerous times to confirm what facilities he required - actually nothing special! Finally on Saturday 21st June, he was brought by Antoine Debrincat, accompanied by Mrs Bonnici and some MPS members who crossed over specifically.



Dr. Bonnici, Mr Vassallo and Mr. Anton Said GPS President

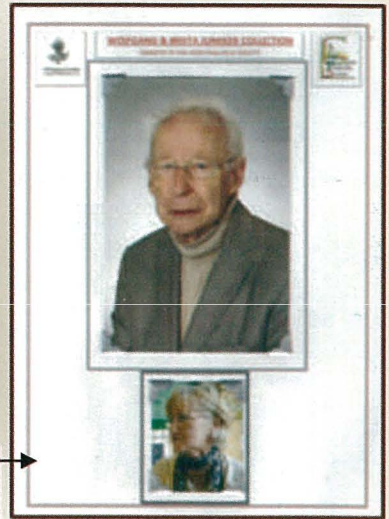
They were treated to a hurried tour of the museum and then were led to the chosen hall. While Dr Bonnici set out some philatelic exhibits illustrating the topics to be treated, others filed in so that a good audience was present. In fact the occasion had been advertised widely - not just to stamp collectors.

GPS Secretary Antoine Vassallo introduced simply the distinguished lecturer who immediately began reminiscing about his personal experiences connected with the period from just before the granting of Independence in 1964. He continued with the other events: the 1974 Republican constitution (when he was still a Member of Parliament) and later developments, concluding with EU membership in 2004.

Copies of the latest GPS Newsletter (#56) were made available, “luckily” featuring the site in the regular Promoting Gozo series. Antoine Vassallo (this time as chair of *Fondazzjoni Belt Victoria* which is responsible for the museum-cum-cultural centre in St George’s Square) also offered Dr Bonnici a copy of the deluxe FBV-published edition of Mgr Farrugia Gioioso’s Maltese adaption of the De Soldanis *Gozo*, auguring that the occasion will not be a first-and-last!

Anthony Grech took the opportunity to display items from the Juncker collection. Ideas discussed after will hopefully result in an important development towards its continuing availability.

Front title page of the Wolfgang & Krista Juncker collection donated to the Gozo Philatelic Society

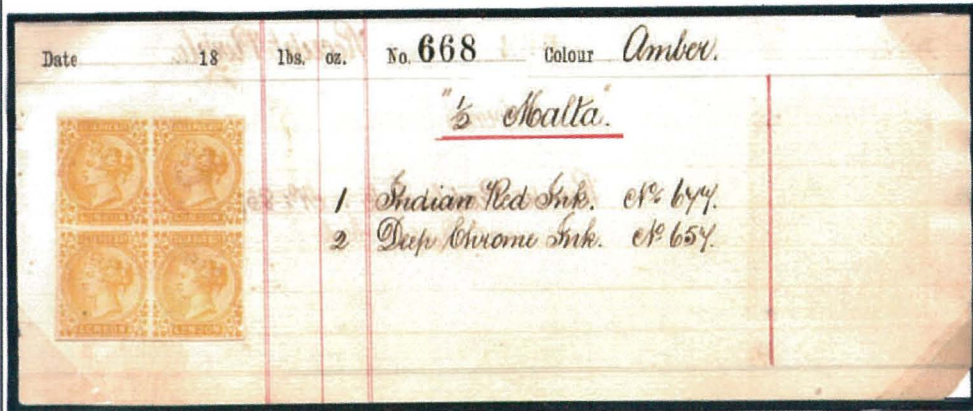


Australian MALTA (23) *another glimpse at the prize-winning collection**built up by John Vassallo, GPS member in Australia. Due to a printing error, installment 22 is being repeated here too.***1859 HALF PENNY LOCAL POSTAGE****Ink Recipe**

In the early months of 1859, the Malta Government decided to abolish the then system of free postage for local letters. On 30th April 1859, an order was sent to the Crown agents for Halfpenny postage stamps. The Halfpenny Inland Post was introduced on 1st December 1860. There were 29 printings of this 'Amber' stamp – and a further printing with the colour changed to Green. The Plate consisted of 4 panes of 60 stamps arranged in 10 horizontal rows of 6 stamps. They were printed by Thomas De La Rue & Co by letterpress.

Ink Recipe

The recipe for the number 668 "Amber" ink used for this stamp was contained in the second of 3 handwritten volumes of recipes, used consecutively between 1854 and the early days of KE VII. The first volume was a weekly Departmental cost summary and gives scant information concerning inks. Volume 2 was produced in duplicate around 1870, listing the inks then in use. Inks introduced after this date are entered chronologically. The piece below has been cut from one of these books. Although the other duplicate book has not been broken up, the block of 4 sample stamps presented below is from this second duplicate! The recipes in the 2 volumes were not identical. The bottom block is identical to the more orange shade of the later printings. The mixing of the inks according to one or the other version of this recipe may well account for the differences between the various printings. (There is a third recipe book prepared around 1900. It does not refer to colour 668 'Amber'.)



↑
Recipe for the colour used for the Malta Halfpenny Local Postage Stamp.

→
The more orange shade shown for 668 'Amber' in the duplicate recipe book.





Queen Victoria

24 May 1891

Victorally

22 January 1901



Use of 'One Penny' overprint and Some Minor Flaws



Undivided back Picture Postcard sent to England using the One Penny overprint dated October 1902. Postcard to Britain was 1d up to 1906 when it was then reduced to 1/2d.



Thin Top of 'n' in One
Row 3 Number 4



Broken 'O' at bottom left
Row 6 Number 4



Broken 'e' in Penny
Row 7 Number 1



Short left leg of first 'n' of Penny
Row 8 Number 6



Closed 'e' in One
Not been reported – position unknown

E & O not E (35)

*glances at stamps with design or printing mistakes.
(well-known or obscure) Antoine Vassallo.*

Printed by the Ottawa-based Canadian Bank Note Co Ltd, these stamps issued for Stamp Month by the Canada Post Corporation were something to behold! Designed to celebrate the achievements of the Canadian Space Programme, this 1992 *se-tenant* set included a stamp which combined innovative production with striking images of the Earth taken from space to create an instant favourite among collectors.

Designer Debbie Adams incorporated a hologram to create a 'space age' stamp. Unfortunately - or luckily, for those who acquired a copy - a handful of the stamps were produced without the hologram. The two middle stamps at the bottom of this complete pane are obviously missing something!

They still show an electro-cardiogram reading from a human heart (symbolizing experiments astronauts perform on themselves while "up there") but the commemoration of the first three Canadian astronauts (Marc Garneau, Roberta Bondar and Steve MacLean) may not be obvious.

The other stamps have an overlay of *ANIK E2* (Canadian communication satellite) and a remote sensing photo of the area near Quebec.

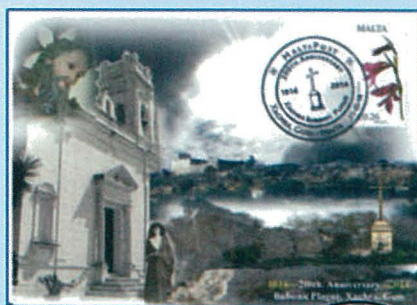


Though Canada is a "space nonentity" compared with its neighbour, Sir Edward Sabine established her first observatory as far back as 1939 - to study the earth's magnetic field. Canada in fact became involved in the NASA space satellite programme in the 1950s, designing and constructing her own satellites. *Alouette I* was launched in 1962, a philatelically commemorated event.



Please note that the instalment in issue 56 should have been numbered 34.

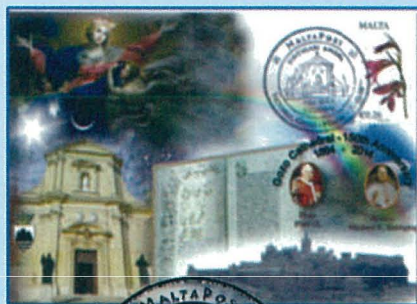
GOZO PHILATELIC SOCIETY LATEST CARDS ISSUED. *John Luke Debrincat*



Postmark & Card designed by Anthony



Postmark & Card designed by Anthony



Postmark designed by Paul Falzon. Card by Anthony Grech

This was a good summer for Special Commemorative Postmarks, the majority of which were connected to Gozitan events. Furthermore the Gozo Philatelic Society concluded the Prime Ministers of Malta series of cards and personalised stamps. Encouraged by this issue success the G.P.S. is now presenting its second series issue, that commemorating

BISHOPS OF GOZO ON THE OCCASION OF THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CREATION OF A SEPARATE DIOCESE.

The set will be available in two *se-tenant* sheets of five each or/and on ten Cards on 16 September 2014.

Is it really true that...

(1) Stamps decided about the Panama Canal?!

Antoine Vassallo



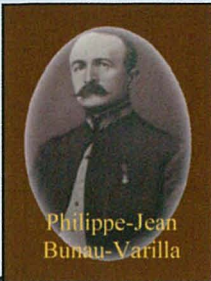
A set of 1900 Nicaraguan stamps has often been credited with influencing the United States Congress to choose Panama over Nicaragua for the route of the new canal. It seems that Nicaragua's postal display of one of its natural wonders backfired!

Mount Momotombo is a towering conical volcano near the city of Leon in the North West; it is built up of layers of hardened lava, ash and other detritus from multiple eruptions along the centuries - 1524 being the date of the first recorded.

Momotombo has always been one of the famed and beloved symbols of this Central American country. Thus it made a reasonable subject for a set (recess printed by the American Bank Note Co of New York City), consisting of thirteen mono-coloured values (from 1 centavo to 5 pesos). There were also an additional three changed colours - and surcharged too. In fact this design (showing smoke and possibly fire and lava spewing from the cone - to make it perfectly clear what this mountain is!) has appeared some fifty times within a few years.

This periodical is not the place to describe the long and complex history of efforts to link the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by creating a water passage across the Isthmus of Panama in Central America. By the late 19th century, technology made it feasible - albeit expensive and complicated - to build a canal and the French (in the wake of their success with the 1869 Suez Canal) set up a project in 1881: the *Compagnie Nouvelle du Canal de Panama*.





In May 1900, the US House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved a bill for the construction on a Nicaraguan route - but the Senate offered obstacles and it was not before June 1902 that debate began there. Those against this route displayed maps showing active and extinct volcanoes: numerous in Nicaragua and none in Panama.



Just a few weeks before, an eruption on the Caribbean Martinique killed thousands; and news arrived that Momotombo had erupted too! Instead of explaining the distance - over one hundred miles - from the projected route, the Nicaraguan President decided to declare that the news was in fact false. French engineer and canal promoter Philippe-Jean Bunau-Varilla, according to his memoirs, decided to quickly visit stamp dealers to buy every Momotombo stamp of the 1900 set that he could find. He affixed each to a sheet of paper, typewriting "An official witness of the volcanic activity on the Isthmus of Nicaragua" and further invented details such as that the foreground locomotive was "thrown into the lake". These circulars were sent to all members of Senate and House. Both branches of Congress approved the discounted purchase of the French syndicate's assets, President Roosevelt signing before the end of June.

Bunau-Varilla repeatedly gave complete credit to his stamp campaign for this success. More balanced historians tend to give more importance to the comparative cheapness of the Panama route - and the President was "pro Panama". He actually declared a few years later: "The Panama Canal wouldn't have been started if I hadn't taken hold of it ... I took the Isthmus, started the canal, and then left Congress not to debate the canal, but to debate me."

It should be noted that, by the time the Canal was inaugurated in 1914, Momotombo did erupt again! And Nicaragua now seems interested in constructing its own canal (between the Pacific and the Caribbean).



MORE ITEMS FROM THE JUNCKER COLLECTION.

Donated to
The Gozo Philatelic Society
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MALTA SPECIMEN STAMPS
By Anthony Grech





COMPLETE SPECIMEN
'POSTAGE & REVENUE'
SET ISSUED 20 OCTOBER 1930

THIS PRESTIGIOUS COLLECTION IS ON SHOW DURING OUR MONTHLY MEMBERS MEETING.
All members are invited to view the entire collection generously donated by Mr. Wolfgang and Mrs. Krista Juncker, to the Gozo Philatelic Society.
More items will be displayed in future GPS News Letters

Not just PAPER (9)

examples of unusual stamp production

Antoine Vassallo

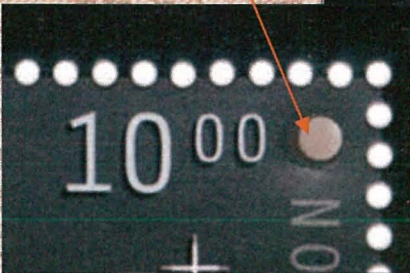
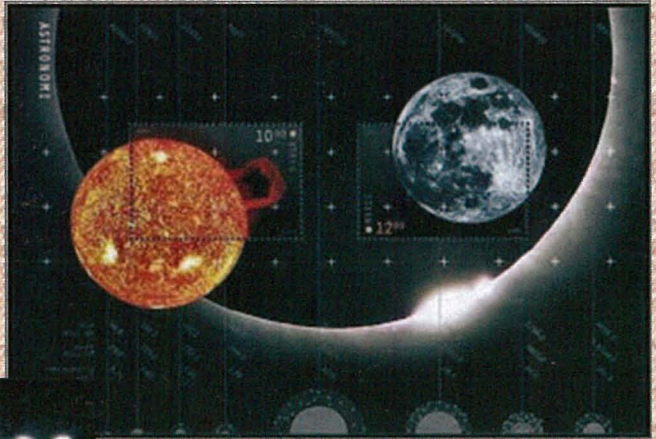


Fixed themes (such as the annual EUROPA) offer ideal opportunities for postal authorities - and artists - to show how innovative they really are.

Norway - and designer Jørn Jønvedt - surely passed the test in 2009! The Europa subject was Astronomy and the photograph chosen was striking enough: an explosion on the sun's surface on one side and the moon on the other, with an eclipse background.

But additionally, with the help of printers Enschedè, stamps - both on the miniature sheets and in the ordinary format - had particles of meteor dust embossed on the surface.

The close-up shows the location: between the face value and the country name.

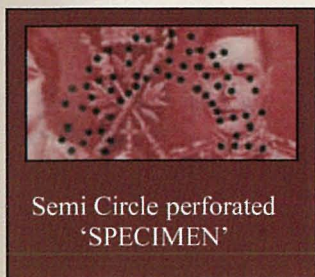


as always, readers are invited to send comments or even contributions

Specimen Stamps.

Anthony Grech

A **specimen stamp** is a postage stamp or postal stationery item sent to postmasters and postal administrations so that they are able to identify valid stamps and to avoid forgeries. The word 'SPECIMEN' is usually either over-printed in black or in red or perforated across the stamp, making it invalid to be used as postage. In countries where English is not the common language, instead of SPECIMEN, words such as *Muestra* (Spanish), *Monster* (Dutch), *Muster* (German) or *Образец* (Russian) have been used.



Specimen stamps were used since the beginning of the first postage stamp issue in 1840 but the Penny Black and Two penny blue were not marked in any way as specimen. The first known stamp marked as Specimen was the first British one shilling stamp issued in 1847.

The Universal Postal Union UPU was created in 1874 and since 1879 its members have supplied stamps to each other through the UPU's *International Bureau*. These have frequently found their way on to the philatelic market. Since Specimen stamps have no postal validity postal administrations were and are free to distribute them as they like. In this way many Specimen Stamps found their way in philatelists' collections, stamp dealers, philatelic magazines, government bodies and embassies. The idea was to promote the new stamps to be issued. Another reason for distributing Specimen Stamps and Postal stationery served as a survey to learn what the public thought of the new item.



Specimen Malta pre-paid envelope.

For more examples of Specimen stamps see pages 24 & 25.
For interesting examples of Specimen Postal Stationery see
News Letter No.55/2014, pages 26 and 27.

Promoting Gozo through philately

Dwejra

Antoine Vassallo



Various stamps have featured corners of our rich natural birthright; appropriately enough, Dwejra has not been forgotten!

Dwejra Bay (administratively part of the village of San Lawrenz) is recognized locally and internationally for its ecological and scenic aspects. It has rare geological features (both on land and under the sea), rich and diverse wildlife and habitats, fossils galore, dramatic seascapes dominated by a rocky shore line and a general feeling of wilderness. It has also been found ideal for camping outings, by scout groups among others. The name itself refers to a small house in the Maltese language and this is actually not the only locality so called around our islands.



This area is made up of marine tertiary sedimentary rocks deposited around 24 million years ago: one can find Globigerina limestone, Lower Caroline limestone and even some blue clay. Major soft stone quarries here produce the normal raw material for our houses. Underwater caverns and interesting marine fauna in the crystal-clear waters make Dwejra a paradise for scuba divers.

Dwejra Bay has from the fifties been chosen as a filming site by producers and directors of international fame for full-length feature films, TV series, documentaries and marketing footage.

A pair of "cart ruts" climb all the way up from behind the chapel dedicated to Saint Anne to the towering cliffs north of the Inland Sea. Their purpose is still unclear, so-called ruts remaining one of the most discussed enigmas among archaeological aspects in both Gozo and Malta.





This small church, sponsored by Salesian father Alwiġ Mizzi, was built in 1963 and is quite modern in style and structure. It offers regular services - and even festas and festivities, including a Grandmothers celebration. As the Virgin Mary's mother, St Anne was of course Jesus Christ's grannie!

Dwejra Watchtower started to be constructed by Grand Master Antoine de Paul in 1651, but it was during Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris de Castillar's reign that the project was completed a year later. Its function was to keep a lookout for Turkish raiders.

After 1873 the tower ceased to act as a coast guard and was deserted but from 1744 it had served to guard the 65-metre high islet *Ħaġret il-Ġeneral* (better known internationally as Fungus Rock) where the supposedly medical fungus grew. The *Ġeneral* refers to an Order of St. John commander who discovered there the plant locally known as *Għerq is-Sinjur*, for long years believed to possess thaumaturgic properties. This was supposedly also the habitat of a two-tailed lizard, probably just freaks! In 1992 this rock was declared a nature reserve and climbing on it is not allowed without permission - only given for educational and scientific purposes.

Dwejra attracts diving tourism due to interesting characteristics both above and below the surface of the sea. Divers can explore underwater caverns, cliffs and plateaux - and admire the marine fauna in the crystal-clear waters. Favourite locations are the *Hofra tal-Bedwin* (or Blue Hole - an impressively deep indentation in the seabed just in front of the Azure Window), the Coral Cave not far from the Fungus Rock and the area around the Rock itself.

The Inland Sea, locally known as *Il-Qawra*, constitutes the lowest spot in Gozo. It is an almost circular expanse of shallow sea water set in a deep recess in the rocky

Continued on page 30



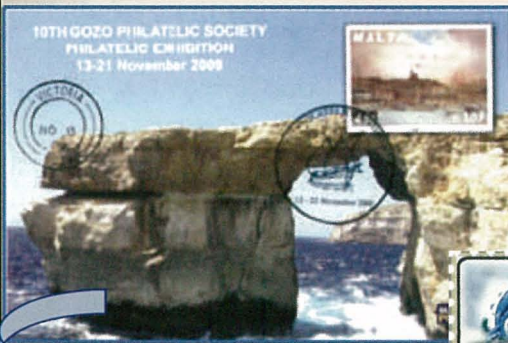
DWEJRA cont from page29

coastline produced by the caving in of the surface above subterranean caves. This “pool” with a diameter of some 400 metres is connected to the outside sea by means of a narrow, sixty-metre natural tunnel in the cliffs. This only entrance to this pebbly lake is called *Għar iż-Żenqa* (= the Blue Cave) because of the colour of the water within and around it. You can travel out to sea through it on small fishing boats - and possibly go around the Fungus Rock.

Another prominent feature is the Azure Window: the result of nature’s erosive powers. The majestic window - towering one hundred metres - thus created (two almost perpendicularly-cut vertical rocks and a huge horizontal mass over them) will obviously disappear in the foreseeable future since the process is continuing! Because of its unique and majestic look, this natural phenomenon remains favourite site - and sight - for professional photographers and artists, as well as tourists and locals.

It is interesting to note that the Window has featured twice on Malta stamps: one of the experimental Postage Labels set issued from 2002 and the 37c among the 2010 “Treasures”, designed by Cedric Galea Pirota.

This landmark also appeared on the Occasion Card issued by MaltaPost for the Gozo Philatelic Society’s 10th Annual Exhibition in November 2009.



(with acknowledgements to San Lawrenz Local Council)



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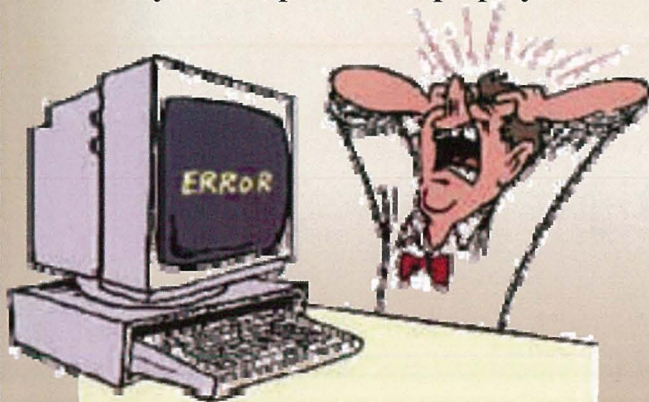
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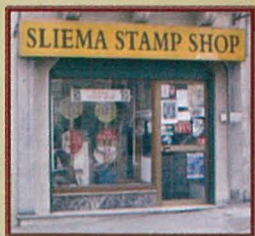
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