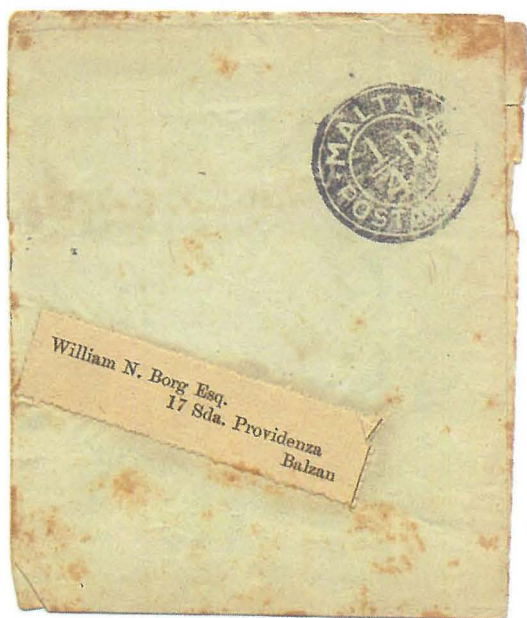


The farthing negative mark of the 1920s

by
Albert Ganado

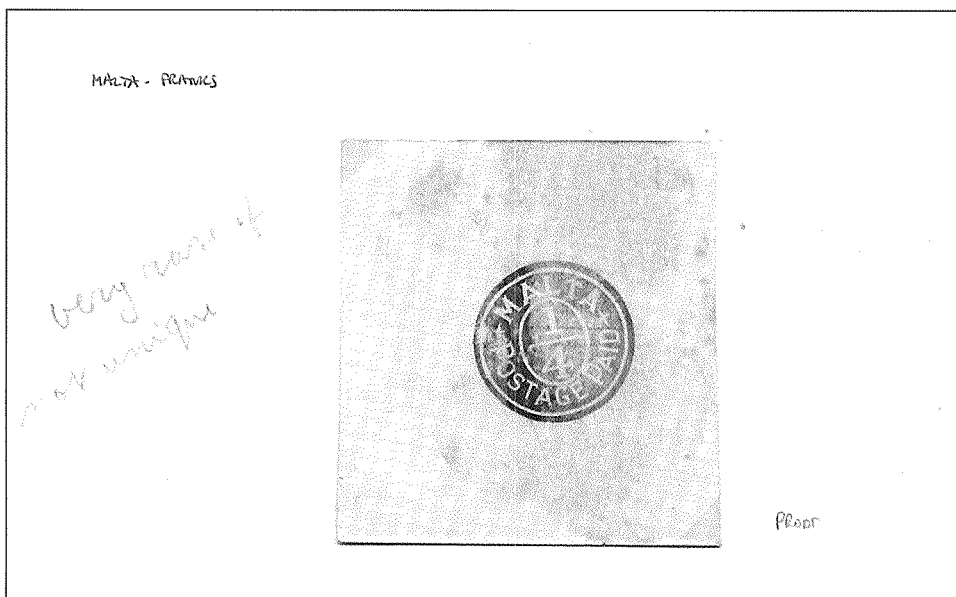


In the 20th century the General Post Office used standard types of handstamps for cancelling and backstamping normal daily mail. These handstamps varied from time to time. The first 'POSTAGE PAID' marks since the appearance of adhesive stamps were two ¼d (farthing) so-called 'negative' marks with white lettering on a double round circle in black ink.

It was held at one time that they were used at the end of the nineteenth century before the introduction of the ¼d stamps, the evidence shows that they were used in 1924 and shortly after. There were two types of this mark. One had a round inner circle with the 'D' on the right alongside the full ¼, while the other type had the ¼D in a vertical oval, but with the 'D' alongside the top part of the ¼ next to '1'.

The author has seen a collection of the weekly newspaper *L'Eco di Malta e Gozo* on which the marks were used for a short period, presumably when there was a shortage of the ¼d adhesive stamp. The first issue of this newspaper was dated 15 July 1921 and all the numbers until that of June 6, 1924, carried the adhesive stamp. Nothing is shown on the issue dated 14 June. Perhaps, it was

delivered postage free. The negative mark of both types was again used on issues between 27 June and 27 December 1924, on which date this newspaper stopped



publication, although it appeared again in 1933. It was the *Organo Democratico Nazionale*, edited by Dr Enrico Mizzi, leader of the Democratic Nationalist Party. On 24 August 1924 his political party entered into a coalition with the *Panzavecchian Unione Politica Maltese*. They joined hands to form one party on 23 January 1926.

The author has also seen a collection of *Il Patria* which was issued as a nationalist newspaper between 1922 and 1926. The negative marks were used on all the issues between March 19 and 15 October 1925. Apparently, from this latter date until the end of 1926 this newspaper was not delivered by post but by hand delivery. The two collections referred to above are preserved at the Malta National Library.

The author has a proof of the farthing negative mark. There is in an oval centre $\frac{1}{4}$, but no 'D'. The outer circle measures 30mm and the glossy card on which it is struck measures 80 x 70.5mm. The mark actually used measured also 30mm. The oval proof measures 16 x 14mm.

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