

# Printed Matter Wrappers of Malta

by

Dr John K. Courtis FRPSL  
(acapjajc@friends.cityu.edu.hk)

The post office postal stationery wrappers of Malta were of three types: the 1885 ½d green QV, the 1902 or 1903 ½d green KEVII and the more elusive 1913 ½d green KGV. The author has maintained a database of used copies of worldwide post office postal stationery wrappers that have been listed for sale on the internet site eBay. These have been hand-collected daily since September 2003 and the database has approximately 48,000 different images worldwide. Of these, 108 copies are of the post office wrappers of Malta: 84 copies of the QV issue, 16 copies of the KEVII issue and eight copies of the KGV issue. Specimen overprinted copies exist of each of these issues.

There are no recorded cases of post office postal stationery wrappers with additional private printing. The post office wrappers of Malta ceased after the 1913 KGV issue. A story about the wrappers of Malta would be incomplete without an understanding of those that showed the addition of private printing. Further insights may be gained by looking at non post office wrappers used for mailing printed matter.

Another database developed by the author since March 2006 is used non-post office wrappers. During the past decade this database stands at almost 6,000 images of worldwide printed matter wrappers. Of these there are 11 from Malta, and some of these are discussed and illustrated here. More specifically, this paper examines postally used wrappers of Malta that are of a private or commercial nature that have not been purchased at a post office.

## The Times

Founded on 7 August 1935 by Lady and Lord Strickland and daughter Mabel, *The Times of Malta*, was initially an English language supplement to *Il Progress*. It became a weekly and then a daily newspaper. *The Times of Malta* is the oldest daily newspaper still in existence in Malta. The history of *The Times of Malta* is linked with its publishing house, Allied Newspapers Limited. This institution has a history going back to the 1920s, when it pioneered journalism and the printing industry in Malta. It started with the publication by Gerald Strickland of Malta's first evening newspaper in Maltese, *Il-Progress*. This was a four-page daily with its own printing offices.

On 6 August 1960, the 25th anniversary of *The Times of Malta*, Mabel Strickland wrote that while originally a party paper it had become a national newspaper. It won

a reputation for objective reporting while upholding its own strongly held editorial opinion. The newspaper never missed an issue even when political arsonists burned the building down on October 15, 1979. That date came to be known as “Black Monday”. In the face of serious danger, the editor and his staff had to abandon the building. Printing of the following day’s paper continued at another printing press.

The wrapper shown as Illustration 1 has the masthead *THE TIMES* and the George Cross. The George Cross was added to the masthead on 18 April 1942 three days after it was bestowed on the people of Malta by the Queen and it has featured there for 70 years. The return address in the event of non-delivery is shown as P.O. Box 328, Valetta, Malta.

The meter franking has a double-ring VALETTA 12 VIII 89 MALTA and a stamp-like indicium =020 above a boxed P.B. [Pitney Bowes], Maltese Cross and boxed meter number. The international postage rate for printed papers from 28 March 1951 was 2d for the first weight step and 1d per additional step. While addressee details of the wrapper cannot be read except for the typewritten M. A. Attard, the .02 payment on the meter implies an overseas usage. It is also possible that copies of this newspaper may have been mailed to subscribers within Malta.

### Illustration 1: The Times newspaper

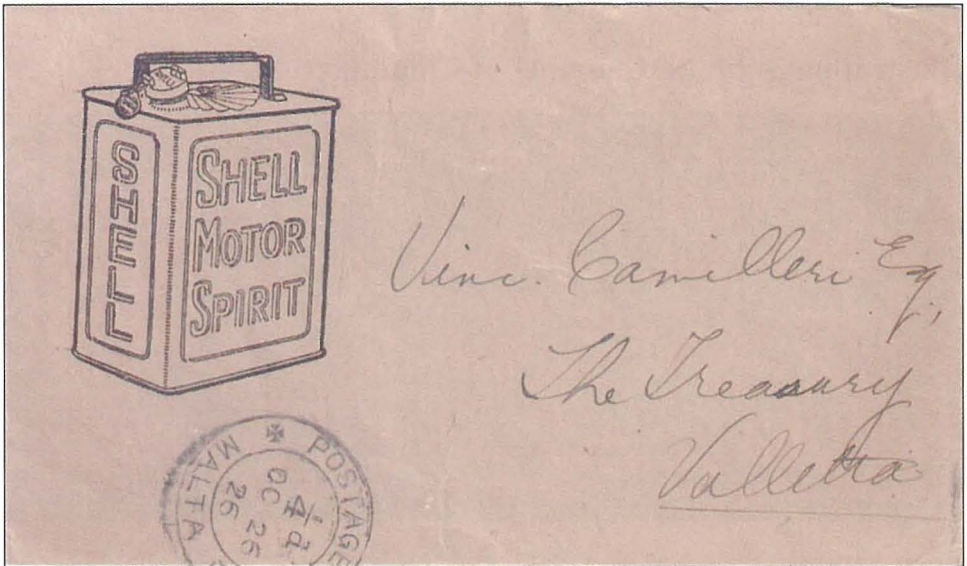


## Shell Motor Spirit

An attractive wrapper used 26 October 1926 with a 'Shell' container drawing is shown as Illustration 2. At that time the can was green and the writing was in yellow. In 1914 Messrs. Degiorgio and Azzopardi were appointed as managing agents for the Asiatic Petroleum Co. Ltd. (now the Royal Dutch Shell Group) and made responsible for the distribution of all Shell products in Malta. A large storage bulk oil installation was opened in 1921 in Birzebuggia with a combined storage capacity of 6½ million gallons of fuel oil. In 1924 the first lorries were used to replace slow-moving horse drawn carts. The postmark year on the wrapper is 1926, so the history underlying the wrapper stops at this point. Shell went on to bituminize the roads and build the runways for the Air Ministry and store Malta's commercial oil stocks. Milestones in the history Shell Co. (Malta) Ltd. can be found at [www.asl-shell.com/about-us/history](http://www.asl-shell.com/about-us/history).

The double-ring black postmark reads POSTAGE PAID ¼d OC 26 26 MALTA. In 1926 the internal rate for printed papers was ¼d for the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 oz. The wrapper is addressed locally to Mr. Vinc. Camilleri, the Treasury, Valletta. What was contained within the wrapper addressed to the Treasury?

### Illustration 2: Shell Motor Spirit



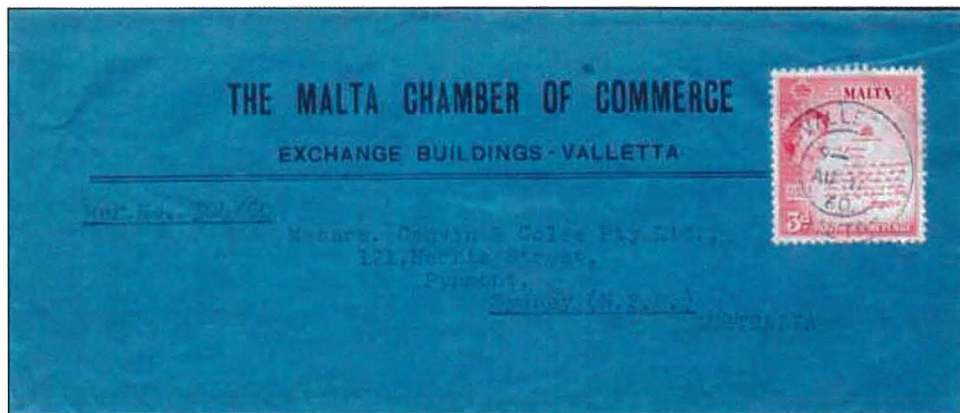
There is a second ¼d postage paid wrapper in the database addressed to Birchircara but without sender details. The double-ring postmark reads POSTAGE PAID ¼d FE 24 26 MALTA.

## Malta Chamber of Commerce

The Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise was established as a voluntary constituted body and officially recognized in 1848. It was established on the private law status model, independent from government or the public sector, with voluntary membership. In 1848, the Governor of the island, Sir Richard More O’Ferrall, took a keen interest in commerce. It was due to his strong desire to make Malta a spearhead of British trade in the Mediterranean that the re-organization of the commercial community arose and the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise was born. The Chamber was represented by nomination in the various Councils of Government. The first self-governing Constitution in 1921 gave the Chamber the right to elect two senators. In 1857, the Exchange Buildings that were constructed on its present site in Republic Street, Valletta were inaugurated. The Chamber celebrated its 160th Anniversary in 2008.

The wide blue paper wrapper is headed THE MALTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE in sans-serif upper casing. The address is EXCHANGE BUILDINGS – VALLETTA above double underlining. A socked-on-the-nose double circle cancellation VALLETTE AU 1 60 MALTA cancels a 1956 3d rose red King’s Scroll (Sc252). The 3d paid the 2<sup>nd</sup> weight scale in 1956 of between 2 oz. and 4 oz. The wrapper is addressed to Canvin & Coles Pty. Ltd., 121 Harris St., Pyrmont, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

### Illustration 3: Malta Chamber of Commerce

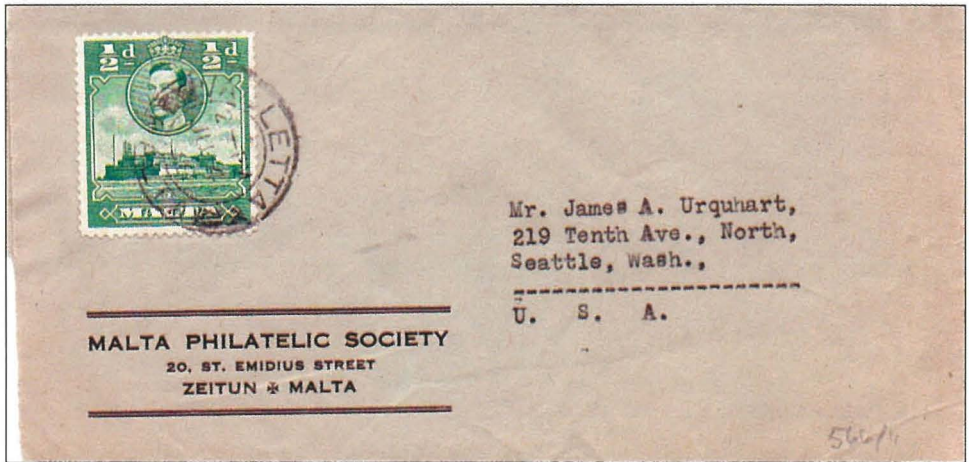


## Malta Philatelic Society

The Malta Philatelic Society is a not-for-profit-organization set up on 7th March 1966. It specifically promotes the specialized study of the stamps, postal history and related areas of Malta.

The wrapper shows MALTA PHILATELIC SOCIETY and street address, Zeiton, Malta between two double lines. The 1938 ½d green Fort St. Angelo stamp (Sc192) is positioned on the left upper corner in contrast to UPU regulations that specify that normally the position of the stamp is to be on the upper right corner. The international printed papers rate in 1938 was ½d per 2 oz. The stamp is cancelled with a double-ring VALLETTA 2-PM JU 14 38 MALTA. The wrapper is addressed to Mr. James A. Urquhart, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.

#### Illustration 4: Malta Philatelic Society



#### Official O.H.M.S.

Strictly speaking, the item shown as Illustration 5 is more in the nature of a lettersheet; printed wording can be seen on the reverse. It is included in this survey of printed matter material for the record. Headed O.H.M.S. ON POSTAL SERVICE it is from the PHILATELIC BUREAU G.P.O. MALTA and addressed to Corporal Watts. There is a RAF adhesive paper form 1674 pasted beneath with address details in pen to RAF Stanbridge, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire. The form is cancelled with an arrival date stamp RAF POST 23 OC 69 BERKS. The lettersheet is cancelled from VALLETTA 11.30AM 23 AUG 1969 MALTA and boxed slogan Winter in//MALTA. The item was sent AIR MAIL; a red transit cancel is R.A.F. POST OFFICE TOBRUK B.F.P.O. 56 [British Field Post Office, Libya]. (There is an extant airmail cover sent from the Philatelic Bureau Port Moresby, Papua-New Guinea to the same recipient and forwarded to him at Stanbridge).

At first glance there appears to be a two-month discrepancy between the Valletta mailing date of 23 August 1969 and the arrival date in Stanbridge 23 October 1969.

The mailing clerk has recorded 23-10-69 with initials so the Valletta data stamp is likely to have the incorrect slug for the month.

On 1 September 1969 the Libyan Army staged a successful coup against the administration of King Idris of the sovereign state of the United Kingdom of Libya. In early December it was announced in London that Britain had agreed to withdraw all British Forces from Libya by 31 March 1970. The RAF organized the withdrawal by sea and the last ship left Tobruk on 28 March 1970 and sailed for Cyprus ([www.historicalrfa.org/archived](http://www.historicalrfa.org/archived)).

### Illustration 5: Philatelic Bureau G.P.O. Malta (O.H.M.S.)fitt



There is a second lettersheet from the same sender to the same recipient in Stanbridge dated VALETTA 6 JUN 1969 and boxed slogan COUNCIL OF EUROPE// 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY, arriving Field Post Office 1051 17 JUN 69. The Form 1674 is dated 23/6/69.

### The Key Klub

A four-line handstamp on the wrapper’s reverse reads: ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO// THE KEY KLUB INC.// KINGSWAY// VALLETTA, MALTA. There is no information about the Key Klub, Malta from Internet searching. However, an airmail cover dated 13 JU 1950 confirms its existence and address: Original European Exchange, Columbia Building, Kingsway, Valletta, Malta, Europe.

The wrapper shown as Illustration 6 is addressed to Den Haag, Holland and has 2d postage stamps – a horizontal strip of four 1938 1 farthing brown Valletta Harbour + 1943 1d green Verdala Palace (Sc191,193A). The 2d postage indicates the 2<sup>nd</sup> weight step of between 2oz and 4 oz. Postage is cancelled with three strikes of a double-ring VALLETTA OCT 25 44? MALTA.

## Illustration 6: The Key Klub Inc.



### High Value Stamps

There is no identification of the sender of the wrapper shown as Illustration 7. The address is a company in Fittingswerk, Mettmann, Germany. The wrapper has paid postage of 2/8. The stamps are the 1948 2d rose-red Victoria and Citidal, Gozo with black SELF-GOVERNMENT 1947 on diagonal reading down (Sc212) + horizontal pair of 3d blue St. John's Co-Cathedral all with carmine SELF-GOVERNMENT 1947 on diagonal reading down (Sc214) + 1951 horizontal pair of 1/- slate-black Madonna and Child (Sc234) cancelled with two strikes of double-ring PRINCE OF WALES RD 7.15AM 22 MR 52 SLIEMA MALTA. The 2/8 postage paid needs explanation.

## Illustration 7: Use of High Value Stamps to Germany



## Unsolicited Gift WITH CARE

A brown paper wrapper shown as Illustration 8 has been used to send an “unsolicited gift” in green manuscript and “gift under \$10” in blue manuscript both written on the white label with borders of small black squares. WITH CARE in red appears within the rectangle at the top of the address label. There are two ‘By Air Mail’ etiquettes. The wrapper is addressed to Larchmont, New York. USA. The total postage paid was 3/9+ comprising three in the set of QEII Coronation issue: a 1956 3d rose red Kings Scroll + 1/- purple Mdina Gate + 2/6 copper brown Monument of Nicolas Cottner (Sc252,256,259). There is a stamp missing in the upper right region its absence noticeable because of the partial postmark.

The auxiliary marking is a purple rectangular handstamp reading PASSED FREE// U.S. CUSTOMS// NEW YORK. The stamps are cancelled with four strikes of double-ring VALLETTA DE 10 56 MALTA. The airmail parcel rate for 1956 is needed to explain the postage.

### Illustration 8: Unsolicited Gift – With Care



## Conclusion

The printed matter non-post office wrappers of Malta include an example of the newspaper *The Times*. There could be examples of at least 20 other newspapers that have been published in Malta. The illustrated Shell wrapper suggests a role played



by that company in the development of Malta's road and air infrastructure. The Malta Chamber of Commerce and the Philatelic Bureau played their roles too in the development of commerce and philatelic awareness, while high-value stamps used to pay a high weight step and a home-made wrapper to send a gift overseas reveal aspects of commercial and social activity. The set of items analyzed and illustrated add more to our knowledge of the role of the postal service in disseminating knowledge, commercial opportunities and social contact.

### **Acknowledgement**

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