

Introduction

Malta's first stamp, the Queen Victoria Half Penny Yellow, engraved by Jean de la Ferte, always had a special attraction for me, and my collection was awarded at F.I.P. Exhibitions, Large Gold in Vienna, Gold in Milan, Tokyo, Barcelona, and Large Vermeil with special prizes in nine other European countries, including London 1980.

This stamp was issued on the 1st December 1860, and remained in use up to the 1st January 1885, when the first definitive set of Malta was issued.

Mr Rigo de Rigi, curator of De La Rue granted me permission to do research in their archive, and in August 1972, my wife Elda and I spent six days locked in the vaults of the Company, going through their meticulously kept volumes, page by page.

It was there that I discovered that the ½d green, Invoice No. 29, which was to have been used when the Post Office was to be handed locally in July 1884, was not used as the transfer happened on the 1st January 1885, so another quick supply of the ½d yellow Invoice No. 30 was provided to bridge this period.

This research was published in serial form in our Society's Journal Vol. 6, 7, 8, between 1976 and 1978, and in Stamp Collecting Weekly Vol. 129 of 10th November 1977.

Following this publication Messrs Stanley Gibbons acknowledged my work in their 1979 Catalogue of British Commonwealth Stamp Catalogue, stating;

“MALTA. The section covering the 1860-84 ½d, value has been completely revised, based on the articles published by Dr. A. Bonnici in the Journal of the Malta Philatelic Society. Notes now show the relationship of the listed items to the various printings of this design.”

After these publications appeared, Mr George Coats, a prominent Malta collector and member of the UK Malta Study Circle, approached me asking for my permission to reproduce in the Malta Study Circle Hand Book, my researched work. Permission was gladly given.

The Hand Book edited by Mr R. E. Martin, was published in 1980, but there was no reference that Chapter 9, “The Queen Victoria Half Penny Yellow Stamp”, was totally my researched work, and my name only appeared amongst a list of others, who had contributed in some manner in the production of the hand book. However in a special reception following London 1980, hosted by Messrs Robson Lowe, (who had published the Hand Book), I was presented by a special Leather bound edition with an inscription, which read:

“Presented to Alfred Bonnici by the Malta Study Circle for an outstanding exhibit of Malta at the International Stamp Exhibition London 1980. Signed J.G.C. Lander. President.”

Being the 150 anniversary of this classical stamp, the Malta Philatelic Society thought that the publication of the story as a whole was desirable, and we are grateful to MaltaPost for sponsoring this publication.

Chev. Dr A. Bonnici. MD. KM. FRPSL
President, Malta Philatelic Society