

Annus Paulinus 2008–2009 Saint Paul – A Protagonist in Maltese Philately

by Carmel G. Bonavia

The figure of St. Paul has permeated in nearly all aspects of Maltese life since centuries ago. His providential landing in Malta in the year 60 A.D, after a shipwreck, has left an indelible mark on the character of the whole Island. This influence is even clearly reflected on Maltese stamps. Not less than 30 stamps in Maltese philately feature prominently St. Paul and 23 other stamps depict biblical personages, places or works of art closely connected with him. In this respect, Malta was the first country to issue a stamp commemorating St. Paul as early as 1899. (S.G. 35. J.B.21)



On July 7, 1896, the Postmaster General (Malta), Mr. Salvatore Camilleri (PMG 1895-1903) presented rough sketches for a new set of five Definitive pictorial stamps, including one featuring St. Paul's Shipwreck at Malta, to the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson. This first sketch was an adaptation of the titular painting by Matteo Perez d'Aleccio found at St. Paul Shipwrecked Parish Church in Valletta. (see page 21 Fig. B) The Lieutenant Governor forwarded the sketches, signed by P.M.G. Camilleri, to Crown Agents in London, asking for an estimate cost for the production of the set. The Crown Agents in their turn passed on the letter and sketches to De La Rue printers for the requested estimate.

On September 30, 1896, the printers returned the sketches and six *finished designs prepared in accordance with the sketches* to the Crown Agents (see page 21 Fig.A) and proposed to produce these stamps by the copper plate process which was considered an efficient and less expensive way of production. At that time De La Rue were experimenting and improving on this new technology at their plant in Bunhill Road in London. Their new process was far easier, more efficient and faster than the previous process of engraving on a steel roller. An estimate of £180, which included the engraving of five original and six working plates, was quoted.

For some unknown reason, De La Rue did not fully agree with the original Malta Government suggestion of the D'Aleccio's titular painting in St. Paul's

Church in Valletta (see page 21 Fig. B) and suggested an alternative design of the Shipwreck of St. Paul adapted from *The Illustrated Bible* by Gustav Doré. (page 13) However they did not reproduce faithfully the original engraving, as they inserted “the serpent”, and in the forefront women, among the survivors, a detail which is not mentioned in the shipwreck account in Chapters 27 and 28 of *The Acts of the Apostles*.

Doré’s Engravings

Gustav Doré (1832-1883), although a French artist was also well known in England, for his paintings, engravings and book illustrations. He illustrated works by Lord Byron, Rabelais, Balzac, Milton, Dante and Cervantes and contributed pictures to the *Illustrated London News*. He even received commissions from English Publishers, including one for a new illustrated Bible which eventually was published in 1866 and which proved to be a great success. Doré held major exhibitions of his work which led to the foundation of the Doré Gallery in London.

The new St. Paul design based on Doré’s engraving was forwarded by De La Rue to the Crown Agents on June 8, 1897 described as *Design F*. After two days the Crown Agents replied “*we think Design F would be improved by making the serpent falling into the fire more distinct*”. Ten days later, all designs were approved by the Malta Government who reminded De La Rue that the 2/6 and the 10/- stamps should be the same size as the current large 5/- stamp, whilst the others in the ordinary size.

In the meantime, De La Rue submitted fifteen trials of the approved design, in the following colours: (see page 22 Fig. E)

Dark blue	Red-brown	Deep bottle green
Blue-black	Sepia	Vermilion
Violet	Blue	Orange yellow
Lilac	Blue green	Red
Mauve	Olive grey	Sage green

Some of the above colour trials are sometimes described differently, depending on the editors of the auction catalogues. Colour description is very subjective.

Vol XLVI *Appendix D, Malta Reqⁿ 61/1896* in the De La Rue Archives showed only 15 (5 rows of 3) colour proofs (see page 22 Fig. E). Other shades may refer to one these.

The blue-black specimen was preferred and approved on September 9, 1899 by the Malta Government and it was circled in blue as shown in *Appendix D- Malta Reqⁿ 61/1896* in the De La Rue Archives. (see page 22 Fig. E). These colours may vary as the auction catalogue compilers may have not seen the originals before the breaking up of this series. They may have seen single proofs and relied only on earlier auctioneers’ description or printed colour reproduction.



From the Illustrated Bible by Gustav Doré

In his letter of June 10, 1897, the Lieutenant Governor also asked when these stamps would be made available. The printers soon replied that within the last two years, owing to the success of the recess printing process, on which they had long experimented, they found themselves overloaded with orders and could not specify any date for the consignment. In the meantime the printing plates for the 10/- and 2/6 consisting of 60 stamps each were prepared, whilst for the other values each sheet was made up of 240 examples and later cut into four with 60 stamps each pane. 60,000 10/- and 2/6 stamps were printed; 120,000 4½d and 119,040 5d stamps. Finally after more than two years, Malta's First Definitive Pictorial Set was issued on February 4, 1899. (See page 21 Fig. C)

As the higher values were also required for revenue purposes, the 10/- stamp was also printed in red, overprinted **REVENUE** and re-valued 5/-. (page 23 Fig. D). Likewise the 2/6 was printed olive-grey, keeping to its original 2/6 face value and in orange-yellow re-valued 2/-, both overprinted **REVENUE**.

At first glance this request for pictorial stamps, not including the Queen's Head, giving more importance to local features including the religious theme of St. Paul, may seem normal, but it was a very bold step in stamp designs to promote national identity. In 1885, for the Five shilling stamp, Malta requested *a distinguishable design which should be a good deal larger than those already supplied, clearly exhibiting the Eight-pointed Cross of Malta (Crown Agents request to De La Rue, March 24, 1885)*. The 1886 stamp showed Queen Victoria's Head in a medallion within a large Maltese Cross and another four small similar crosses between the arms of the larger one.

First Commemoratives

For about a century after the issue of the first adhesive stamp in 1840 in England, many people and authorities regarded this *printed label* as a money token just like a coin. In fact some high-valued stamps were used as a remittance of money. On this criteria, it required security and had to carry the image of the reigning monarch just as the realm's coinage did. This is clearly seen if one notices the early stamps, not only British, but also those of Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg, Spain, France, Tuscany and Sicily. The United States naturally included the portraits of Presidents George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Soon the British North American colonies followed suit. By 1869 the U.S. gave the first cue for pictorial and commemorative stamps with the inclusion of subjects like the post rider, a locomotive and a steamer. In 1892 the landing of Columbus, reproduced from a painting in the Rotunda of the Capitol in Washington D.C., formed part of a 16 stamp issue, bearing the dates 1492-1892. The British territories in North America, Western Australia and New Zealand between 1854 and 1898, also asked to issue pictorial stamps. This was the scenario when Malta also requested to issue her

first definitive pictorial set in 1896. This *pictorial mania*, as a philatelic journalist put it in *Stanley Gibbons Monthly* of February 1899, *had also reached Malta*. For Malta, the desire for pictorial stamps was not just to follow others, but it was a genuine desire to show its individuality and peculiar characteristics, historical and otherwise.

Many Postal Authorities soon realised what great publicity their country might gain by just a colourful attractive stamp. The post has no frontiers and a letter could reach the remotest parts of the globe. All this, plus the rising demand by philatelists, made pictorial stamps feasible to produce, reaping good financial returns. All these factors encouraged the British Government not to object to the request for pictorial stamps by its colonies. In the case of Malta, probably because of bureaucracy, the finished designs sent by De La Rue on September 30, 1896, took months to be studied and approved by the Malta Government. On May 28, 1897, the Crown Agents informed De La Rue that the designs for the Four Pence Halfpenny (Gozo Boat), the Five Pence (Maltese Galley) and the Two Shillings and Sixpence (Allegorical Figure of Malta) were being returned approved. There was no decision yet regarding the size of the Farthing (Grand Harbour).

Postage/Revenue

To avoid all this double work and expense the Lieutenant Governor in 1912, started the procedure to issue the St. Paul stamp of 1899, inscribed **POSTAGE REVENUE** and make it valid for both purposes. (see page 23 Fig. F & G).

Later on November 15, 1912, De La Rue provided a photographic design in sepia, retouched by hand showing the requested alterations which the Lieutenant Governor approved on the following December 9, 1912. After taking proofs in black, the die was sent for hardening on February 13, 1913. (see page 23 Fig F). After hardening, plate proofs (see page 23 Fig. G) were taken in orange-brown, orange vermilion and black whilst colour proofs were printed in orange-vermilion, vermilion, red-brown and carmine on green paper after a telephoned request by the Lieutenant Governor. The result proved to be unsatisfactory. Black on white paper was preferred and approved on June 30, 1913 (see page 23 Fig. H).

Printing was started during October 1913 using the recently introduced Multiple Crown CA perf.14 (SG 96. JB 65), instead of the older Crown CC type. As the Malta Post Office still held a considerable stock of the 1899 10/- (S.G. 35 JB21) stamp, only a small number of sheets of the *POSTAGE - REVENUE* stamps (S.G. 96 J.B. 65) were ordered, some say just 51 sheets of 60 stamps each (see page 23 Fig. I). The new stamp



was put on sale in March 1919 (earliest recorded date is March 6), but it was soon withdrawn and the old 1899 10/- stamp was put on sale again. It is believed that only 1530 *POSTAGE-REVENUE* (S.G. 96 J.B. 65) stamps were sold and this makes it the rarest Malta stamp and naturally the most expensive to be acquired. This stamp soon became the symbol for Maltese philately. It began to appear on Malta stamp catalogue covers as a distinctive detail. It was also reproduced on the 10cent stamp issued on March 6, 1991, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Malta Philatelic Society

With the second King George V Definitive Issue of 1921-22, the St. Paul 10/-, black, was again printed but on Multiple Crown *Script CA* (SG 104 JB 73) watermarked paper and issued on January 19, 1922.

The year 1921 was a very important milestone in our Constitutional history.

On April 14, the Letters Patent on the grant of Self-Government to Malta by Britain were announced simultaneously in London and Malta. Lord Plumer, then Governor of Malta, proclaimed this privilege from the Palace balcony on April 30

to the large cheering crowd on the Palace Square. H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, Edward, later King Edward VIII, deputising for his father King George V, inaugurated the first Self-Government the following November 1. Such an important national event surely merited to be marked by a special stamp issue. A competition for the designs of the *MELITA* set was launched on June 17 and the selected ones were those submitted by Edward Caruana Dingli and Gianni Vella, both well known for their artistic talent. On September 16, the Crown Agents had already sent designs to De La Rue but time was too



short to print the stamp for the inauguration of Parliament on November 1. The only solution for the Government was to overprint *Self-Government* some stamps from the existing stock of King George V definitive set at the Government Printing Office in Valletta. For the highest value, 10/-, (S.G. 105 JB 74) 7,860 of the 1899 St. Paul stamp were over-printed and were on sale on January 12, 1922 together with 12,690 of the 1921-22 set on Multiple *Script CA* paper issued on March 9, 1922, (S.G. 121 JB 90)

After the *Melita* issue marking the grant of Self-Government in 1921, the Malta Postal Department continued with the preparation for a new definitive set designed by John Harrison, the chief engraver of Waterlow and Sons. It was issued in parts between April 6, 1926 and April 1, 1927. The set of 17 stamps consisted of 10 low-value stamps (¼d to 6d) having a common design consisting of the King's head enclosed in a circular frame placed in the top right corner of the stamp whilst the bottom left corner was occupied by the coat-of arms of Malta in a shield. The

7 pictorials (1/- to 10/-) in a larger format, featured a view of the Grand Harbour (1/-), a Gozo boat in full sails (2/6), the bronze statue of Neptune on the Valletta sea-front (3/-) and Mnajdra Temples (5/-). The other three had a Pauline theme. The 1/6 (black and green) showed the St. Publius statue at Floriana Parish Church with the phrase *S. Publius, Primus Episcopus Melitæ – AD LVIII* (St. Publius, the first Bishop of Malta AD 58) around the vignette. (SG 167 JB 136). He was the *protos* (prince) of the Island who welcomed St. Paul and his companions and it is believed to have been left as first bishop when



St. Paul departed for Rome. The statue is the work of Vincenzo Dimech (1768-1831) which he finished in 1811. The 2/- stamp (violet and black) depicted the old capital *Melita*, later *Notabile* or *Mdina*, where Publius had his palace and where S. Paul healed Publius's father. (SG 168 JB 137).

The highest value (10/-) was issued later on February 9, 1927, the eve of St. Paul's feast, portraying Cafà's statue in black within a carmine elaborated

frame with the words *Patronus Melitæ, Sanctus Paulus* (St. Paul Patron of Malta) (SG 172 JB 141). This set showed John Harrison's uncommon mastery of the art by cutting the dies for the entire set, in relief for the pence values and in a totally opposite technique called *intaglio*, for the shilling stamps.

However, in August 1928, it was announced that the Government was reverting to the use of combined *Postage and Revenue* stamps and as a temporary measure the current set was being overprinted accordingly at the Government Printing Office in Valletta. The pence values were overprinted in black and the shilling ones in red, valid for both postage as well as revenue. These overprinted stamps were issued on October 1, 1928. (SG 174/192 JB 142/160).



In the meantime the preparation for the double-purpose set continued and on October 20, 1930 the original design appeared suitably inscribed *POSTAGE AND REVENUE*. In contrast to its two previous sets, this issue remained in circulation till its replacement by the King George VI Definitive in 1938 (SG 193-209 JB 161-177).

Soon after the celebrations of King George's Silver Jubilee in 1935, the Maltese Government took up again the preparations for a new 15 stamp definitive set held up



by the rapid succession of Kings in Great Britain in 1936 and 1937. A new definitive set based on photographs supplied by the Malta Government had already been with the Crown Agents who issued the usual call for tenders before the death of King George V, on January 20, 1936. Three security printers, Harrison and Sons, Waterlow and Sons and De La Rue submitted designs and estimates. A note in De La Rue Archives states that the *Company on December 30, 1936, submitted*

10 designs and the Waterlow tender, however, was accepted. The three sets of essays submitted, obviously, had many similarities since the subject and the angle of view were taken from the same original. The De La Rue designs, the only ones I succeeded to see, included a white disc for the portrait of the eventual Sovereign. Finally, this set was issued on February 17, 1938, bearing King George VI portrait by Bertram Park and depicted a wide range of Malta's artistic and architectural heritage. The usual three *pauline* themes, 1/6 the statue of St. Publius (green and black), (SG 227 JB 195), the 2/- Mdina Cathedral (SG 228 JB 196), and 10/- St. Paul by Cafà (black and carmine), (SG 231 JB 199), were again included. The



2/- however, proved to be a very attractive design as it depicted, in blue with a tinge of green, the Cathedral as it was floodlit during the Silver Jubilee celebrations three years before.



Self-Government-1947

A year after, on September 1, 1939, the Second World War broke out and Malta became a forefront theatre of war. Our sufferings and heroic acts were duly recognised by the grant of the George Cross on April 15, 1942. Not very long afterwards, the Secretary of State on July 7, 1943, made a statement in the House of Commons promising Self-Government to the Island soon after the end of the war. The promise was honoured and on September 5, 1947 the Malta Constitution Letters Patent 1947 were issued and proclaimed the following September 22. The elected Maltese Government soon made arrangements to mark this important event by suitable stamps as soon as possible. Time to go through the



process to fulfill this project was considered too long. So it was decided to resort to the previous solution and overprint the current stamps *SELF-GOVERNMENT 1947* in black. The stamps were overprinted by Waterlow and Sons in red (1½d, 2½, 3d, 2/-, 5/-) and in black (¼d, ½d, 1d, 2d, 4½d, 6d, 1/-, 1/6, 2/6, 10/-). The set was issued on November 25, 1948, and included the three *pauline* stamps: Mdina Cathedral, St. Publius and St. Paul statues. (SG 234/248 JB 208/222)

The demise of King George VI on February 6, 1952, the accession of Princess Elizabeth to the throne and her Coronation on June 2, 1953, created great activity both for the designers and security printers to cope with the demands by the various Commonwealth Territories. As Malta had just issued six low value stamps, in new colours mostly in use, on January 8, 1953, the Island's request for a new definitive was given a low priority. To cope with the situation, the printers adopted a system whereby each country would receive the most required stamps first, the others were to be printed later. Three printers, Harrison and Sons, Bradbury Wilkinson and Co. and Waterlow & Sons submitted their designs for Malta, based on photographs featuring monuments, works of art and the two citations of King George VI and President F. D. Roosevelt. Bradbury Wilkinson and Co. were chosen to print the 13 lower values (½d to 2/-) and Waterlow and Sons the remaining high values. Although these stamps were printed in one colour yet by using the latest technique in the recess process, the results were really impressive. This set was issued in 6 parts between January 23, 1956, and January 5, 1957. The St. Paul statue by Cafà issued on November 19, 1956, was again the subject of the 10/- stamp in carmine-red. (SG 281 JB 261)

For the British Philatelic Exhibition 1972, held in London between November 1 and 4, this stamp was printed in black on small glazed souvenir cards by John Waddington of Kirkstall Ltd by what was known as the Kirketch process. This appears to be a typographical rendering of recess printing which gave an even better final result. Each visitor was given one of these numbered cards, back-stamped with the day's date in different colour. The Kirketch process could be well appreciated for the clean sharp, crisp lines and the background screen to Cafà's statue.



Shipwreck's Centenary

In the post-war years, the trend to issue commemorative stamps became very popular in nearly all countries and proved to be a publicity stunt for the respective country. Malta was no exception and since 1949 we see commemoratives being issued more frequently and in a totally new style created by Chev. Emmanuel Vincent Cremona (1919-1987). His first design in 1957 on the XXV anniversary of the George Cross set was an eye opener for his talents. (SG 295/300 JB 275/280), (page 24 FigM). Soon his new style found its fulfilment in 1960 when he designed the set for the XIX Centenary of the Shipwreck of St. Paul. His style was innovative both in the design itself as well as in the treatment of the colours chosen and in the format of the stamp. Cremona was no longer only a church decorator, a book cover designer but also a stamp designer of high calibre.

The St. Paul commemorative set consisted of 6 stamps, three vertical and another three diamond format introducing a new shape for Malta stamps. Although he adapted existing works for the three low values, while keeping to the original, yet the rendering was so innovative that his design and treatment of colours made the stamps so different from all others. The 1½d stamp, blue and yellow-brown, showed St. Paul landing on the shores of Malta after the tragic storm; the 3d, bright purple and blue, pictured the consecration of St. Publius while the 6d, carmine and pale grey, featured the Apostle's departure to Rome while in a sign of gratitude the Maltese are offering gifts and all necessities. These stamps were adapted from frescoes which Prof. Attilio Palombi (1860-1913) painted in the lateral transepts of St. Paul Parish Church, Valletta, at the turn of the 20th century. (see page 24 Fig M)

For the 8d stamp, Cremona wanted a new statue of St. Paul and his choice fell on the one in St. Paul's Grotto at Rabat, Malta, which had never appeared on stamps before. This marble statue by an unknown Roman artist, was donated by Grandmaster Emanuel Pinto (Grand Master 1741-1773). Cremona designed this diamond shaped stamp to be printed in pitch black to create a strong contrast with the white marble statue. The other two diamond shaped stamps are a total creation by Cremona and reveal his original style to the full. The 1/- maroon stamp shows an angel holding a wide open book of the *Acts of the Apostles* on Chapters 27 and 28 where St. Luke describes the saga of the Shipwreck through his personal experience. The highest valued stamp, 2/6, in blue and deep blueish green, Cremona, in my opinion, created his best portrait of St. Paul, interpreting a dynamic personality with a far reaching vision and steadfast in his mission in face of all difficulties. St. Paul holds the New Testament open on his Second Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12, where he speaks of his sufferings on land and sea, summarized by the phrase in gold *Naufragium Pertuli Pro Christi Nomine* (I suffered shipwreck for Christ's sake). Each stamp carried the date *A.D.LX-MCMLX* in gold.

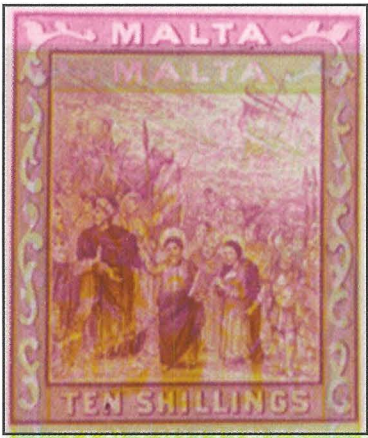


Fig. A

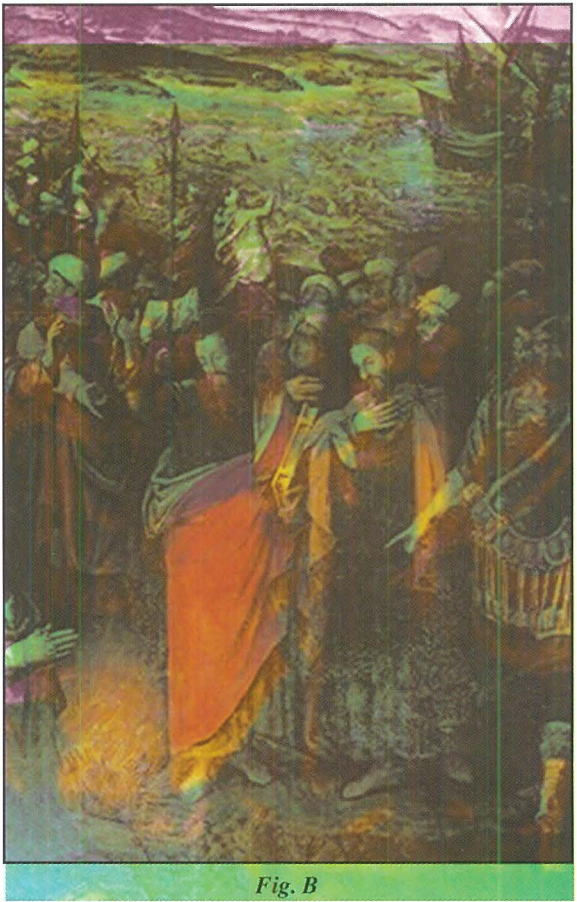


Fig. B



Fig. C



Fig. D



Sept 9th 1898
Sept 4th 1898

Appendix D
Malta Regⁿ 61/1896.
Malta Regⁿ 61/1896.



Fig. E



Fig. F



Fig. G



Fig. H



Fig. I



Fig. J



Fig. K



Fig. L



Fig. M



Fig. N

This beautiful set was favourably received in artistic and philatelic circles. The *World Union of St. Gabriel*, promoting and rewarding outstanding religious aspects in philately, awarded the much coveted Diploma to the Postmaster of Malta for the stamps' artistic presentation and good taste, for the nominal value within reach of the general public, a sufficient large issue and affords all philatelists the possibility to obtain these stamps. This Diploma was issued in Vienna on March 24, 1961, signed by Cardinal Franz Köning and Mr Joseph Franz Aumonn, Patron and President of the Union respectively. This Diploma was even reproduced in the Malta Government Gazette of November 10, 1961, a very rare insertion of such an item in the official publication.



During the first week of September 1964, Malta hosted the European Congress of Catholic Doctors which after long preparations was inaugurated on the September 5. The event was marked by a special stamp issue designed by Chev Emvin Cremona in which he succeeded to depict the medical services in Malta since

the arrival of the Knights Hospitalers of St. John. The 6d stamp, red, black, gold and bistre reproduced an exterior view of St. Luke's Hospital in the background of a wooden statue of the Saint Luke (SG 319 JB 299), patron of doctors, which was at the Hospital's Chapel. It is a wooden replica of the original by Pietro Papaleo (1697-1717) once in the Grotto at Rabat. To day in the Grotto we find a 1930 cement copy while the original is at the National Museum of Fine Arts for better conservation.

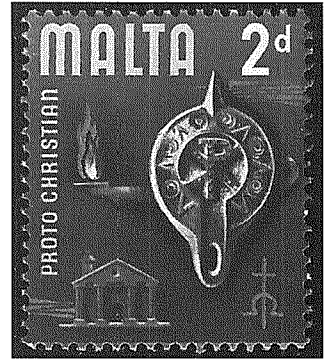
When Malta's claim for Independence was accepted by Great Britain, the Postmaster General began to take steps to commemorate this national event not only by a special set of stamps but also by a definitive set to substitute Queen Elizabeth II 1956 issue. Chev Cremona was commissioned to prepare the designs for this set as well. The Government also felt that even the watermarked Crown CC for Crown Colony or Crown CA, for Crown Agents, made no sense for an Independent Sovereign State. Accordingly, an order was placed for the provision of adequate paper watermarked Maltese Crosses. On Independence Day, exactly at one minute past midnight 20-21 September 1964, a set of 6 stamps, designed by Cremona, was issued printed on Maltese Crosses watermarked paper to mark this unique event. The definitive of 19 stamps depicting the most significant periods and events in our national history, from pre-history to the present times, was issued on January 7, 1965. Later, on August 7, 1970, two more values, 5d and 10d, were added to fit into the new Postal Rates. Cremona succeeded to project each subject by a significant design, reproducing, in his own style, the salient features of each

period. His creations for this set are considered as real works of art in miniature and these stamps are regarded as his masterpiece in stamp designing.

Cremona's Achievements

Harrison and Sons faced a challenge in using the photogravure process to achieve the high standard demanded by Cremona's designs. His shades of the same colour created some difficulty for the printers. To satisfy his expectations, the stamps had to be printed in a studied succession of various colours, not just by the normal four-colour system commonly referred to as the *CMYB*, *Magenta, Yellow and Black*. Some of these stamps were printed in three colours but others even in seven colours including a double run in gold to get the desired density. The printers had even to study the best order in which to print the specific colours, but the efforts were worthwhile and this set proved a great success both for the designer as well as for the printers and Malta.

In this set two stamps are closely connected with St. Paul in Malta. The 2d (SG 333 JB 213) stamp printed in ultramarine, gold and pink, represented the proto-Christian period in our history. It shows two terracotta oil-lamps, one with the *Chi Rho* monogram, letter X superimposed on letter P for the name of Christ and the other has a burning flame symbolising our living Christian Faith. On the lower level a simple sketch representing probably the way the first cathedral looked like. On the other side the greek letter z (Omega) is surmounted by a Latin cross, another sign for Christ. On the 6d stamp (SG 338 JB 319) appears the Mdina Cathedral and on the £1 stamp Cremona represented the three major patron Saints of the Maltese Islands: St. Paul in the centre as Father of the Maltese, *Paulus In Christo Pater*, flanked by St. Publius Prince of Malta, *Publius Melitae Princeps*, and St. Agatha, Saviour of our City, *Civitatis Servatrix* (SG 348 JB 330). This is a clear reference to the liberation



of Mdina in 1551 from the invading Turks. It is believed that as soon as her white marble statue was placed on the ramparts of Mdina on Monday July 20, 1551, the Turks retreated and fled away. This is one of the stamps printed in six colours in this order: gold, grey, red, black, amber and flesh red.

The 19th Centenary of the Martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul was commemorated by three stamps issued





on June 28, 1967, also designed by Cremona. The 2d stamp (SG 382 JB 364) featured St. Peter being crucified head downwards while the 3/- (SG 384 JB 366) one showed St. Paul being beheaded. The third one symbolised the primacy of St. Peter by the keys and the papal tiara and St. Paul by an open book of his Epistles and sword as the instrument of his martyrdom. Chev. Cremona continued with his successful designs up to 1980, after producing the beautiful sets on the Great Siege (1965), the foundation of Valletta (1966), IV Centenary of

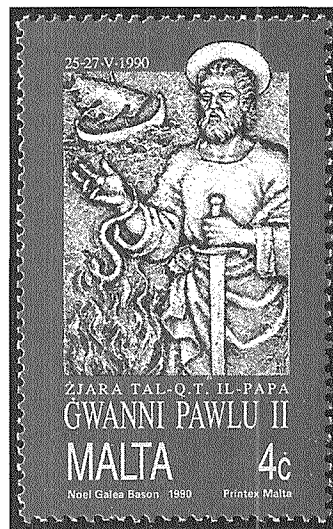
La Valette's Death (1968), the XIII European Art Exhibition (1970) and the first Decimal Definitives of 1973. During his career as a stamp designer from 1957 to 1980, Cremona produced not less than 63 sets of 225 stamps. In view of the standard reached, together with these figures, this was no common achievement.

Papal Visits

St. Paul was next figured on a Maltese stamp in 1990 in a two-stamp set (4c and 25c) issued on May 25, for the Pastoral Visit of Pope John Paul II. (SG 874/875 JB 831/832). Noel Galea Bason, a medal and coin engraver, produced two bronze bas-reliefs as originals for these stamps, St. Paul shaking the viper into the fire and the Pope in his full Pontifical vestments, blessing the crowd. These stamps were strikingly different from past issues. The brown, ochre shades and strong black strokes made these stamps stand out so effectively.

One of the 1994 commemorations was the 150th anniversary of the consecration of St. Paul Anglican Pro-Cathedral in Valletta, built through the generosity of the Dowager Queen Adelaide, widow of William IV of England. The Pro-Cathedral was consecrated by Lord Bishop of Gibraltar on November 1, 1844. The stamp, designed by Frank Ancilleri, showed the façade of the Pro-Cathedral with its gothic spire, a landmark in Valletta. (SG 964 JB 923)

Pope John Paul II marked the start of the new millenium by a pilgrimage *On the Footsteps of St. Paul* and visited Syria, Greece and Malta. For this occasion a set of two stamps and a miniature sheet, designed by Joe Mizzi, was issued on May 4, 2001. The 16c stamp showed a close-up of the Pope with the large stone statue





of the Apostle by Sigismondo Dimech (1780-1853) set up in 1845 on the Islet of Selmunett (or St. Paul's Island), in the background (SG 1210-JB 1155).

Five important works of art in Malta featured in a set of four stamps and a miniature sheet, designed by Joseph Casha, were issued on October 15, 2004. The polyptych *St. Paul Enthroned* was given due importance on the miniature sheet. (SG MS 1211-JB 527). This early Mdina Cathedral titular painting on wood is attributed to Luis Borassa (1360-1426), a Catalan artist of high calibre. A cycle of eight episodes from the life of St. Paul surround the imposing figure of the enthroned Apostle, holding a sword, not as a weapon but as an instrument for his martyrdom, and a gem-encrusted codex of his Epistles. Half of the panels refer to St. Paul's stay in Malta: the shipwreck, the incident of the viper, the healing of the father of Publius's and the departure of St. Paul to Rome. This important retable is now at the Mdina Cathedral Museum (see page 16).

Two stamps in the series of Maltese Ships issued between 1982 and 1987 feature two sea vessels named after St. Paul. The XAMBEKK (Chebec) *San Paolo*, built in 1743, was one of the three such vessels owned by the Order of St John. These were mainly used on guard duties all year round, winter and summer. They were also useful in carrying provisions from Sicily and Italy. The other stamp, issued on November 19, 1986, shows the steamship *S/S San Pawl* built in 1901 in UK and acquired by Mifsud Brothers in 1921.

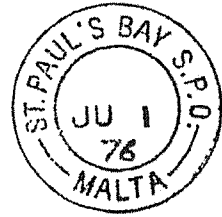
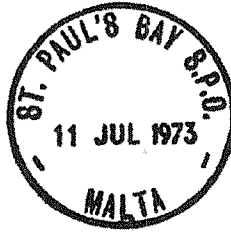
To mark the current *Annus Paulinus 2008-2009*, on June 28, Maltapost issued a set of 3 stamps, designed by Paul Psaila, featuring the processional statues of the Parishes of Munxar (Gozo), Rabat and Hal Safi. An accompanying miniature sheet included Cafà's statue of St Paul in Valletta, superimposed on a detail from D'Aleccio's titular painting. A commemorative booklet with these stamps and a silver replica of the Valletta statue were also issued later. (see page 24 Fig. N).

The popularity of the story of the Shipwreck attracted also the attention of early cartographers. In the Old Maps of Malta stamp set issued on January 19, 2005, the



1cent value reproduced the first printed map of the Maltese Islands, commonly referred to as the Quintinus map. It formed part of the first printed description of Malta, published in Lyon in 1536, written by Abbé Jean Quintin (1500-1561) who was a chaplain of the Order of St. John. Among the important localities indicated in this map is the probable site of the Shipwreck, St. Paul's Bay.

This locality, closely related to the event, features also in postmark collecting. The first St. Paul's Bay datestamp was one of the 27 handstamps despatched from London on July 10, 1900 to be used at the local Police Stations when these became postal agencies. This *St. Paul's Bay* date-stamp was used between 1901 and 1921 at Wignacourt Tower where the police station was situated. It re-appeared on July 11, 1973, when a sub-post office was opened in the area, using a suitably inscribed rubber date-stamp. On June 1, 1976, it was substituted by a double ring with arc spacers metal date-stamp. To-day the office at St. Paul's Bay is a Branch Post Office and uses the special First Day of Issue cancellations as well.



Stamps are works of art in miniature which are still a means of paying for a very important means of communication between millions of people of various races, colours and beliefs. They may have lost some of their original importance in this electronic age but their message still reaches millions around the globe. For us in Malta and Gozo they bear witness not only to our rich heritage and natural beauty but also to our Christian roots and close attachment to our *Melitensium Pater, Father of the Maltese*, an important factor which has moulded and sustained our Maltese way of life for almost twenty centuries

Further Reading

This study is mainly based on research in the De La Rue Archives at the British Postal Museum during 1969 and 1970 before some items were auctioned. Thanks are due to the Museum Directors and staff.

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The PSM Magazine published by The Malta Philatelic Society, various issues.

Further philatelic details may be found in the various study papers of the Malta Study Circle

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