

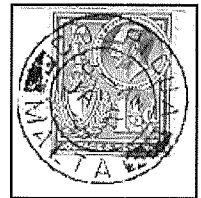
# The use of the “Cospicua” [COS-4] datestamp before 1940

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COS-4 was a handstamp having a double circle with killer block spacers. COS-4 was originally thought to have been used only after the transfer of Cospicua Branch Post Office to Pawla Sub Post Office in June 1940. It has been reported<sup>1</sup> that this handstamp was sent to Malta in the 1930's, “but only five strikes of it are recorded prior to the office being bombed (in 1940)”. It was further suggested<sup>2</sup> that “all strikes of the COS-4 datestamp prior to 1940 were backdated strikes” and that the fact that all strikes recorded were reportedly used internally within Malta indicated that these strikes were probably philatelic. The additional find of a First Day Cover of the Coronation posted on 12 May 1937 with four strikes of the COS-4 and a postman's personal handstamp PHS-15 was also reported. This suggestion was not shared by some prominent overseas Postal Historians of Malta.

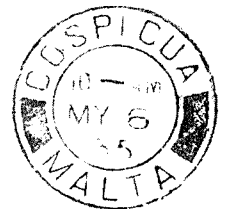
There is no doubt that COS-4 was used very rarely before 1940 mainly because the Cospicua Branch Post Office was adequately served with two other cancellations namely the two COS-22 single ring datestamps which remained in use till 12 June 1940. However, the existence of several more copies of the COS-4 handstamp used prior to 1940 is hereby being reported:

- a) a strike of COS-4 on SG196 1½d red dated “8.-AM, JA 2, 35” - the earliest date recorded of this handstamp.
- b) A strike of COS-4 on SG194 ½d green dated “8.-AM, JA ?, 35”



8.-AM JA 2, 35

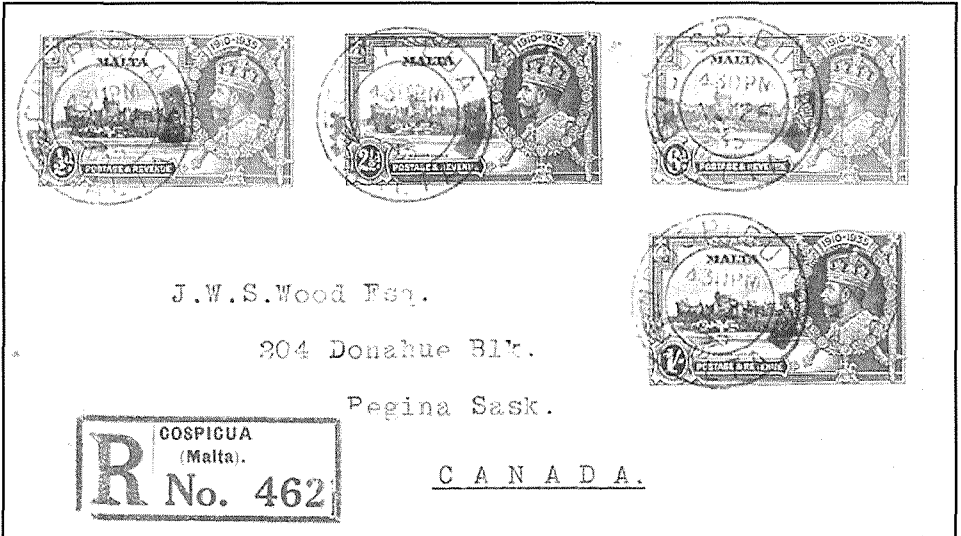
- c) A strike of COS-4 on SG212 6d light blue and olive green dated “10.-AM, MY 6, 35” – the first day of issue of the stamp
- d) A strike of COS-4 on SG213 1/- slate and purple dated “10.-AM, MY 6, 35” – the first day of issue of the stamp



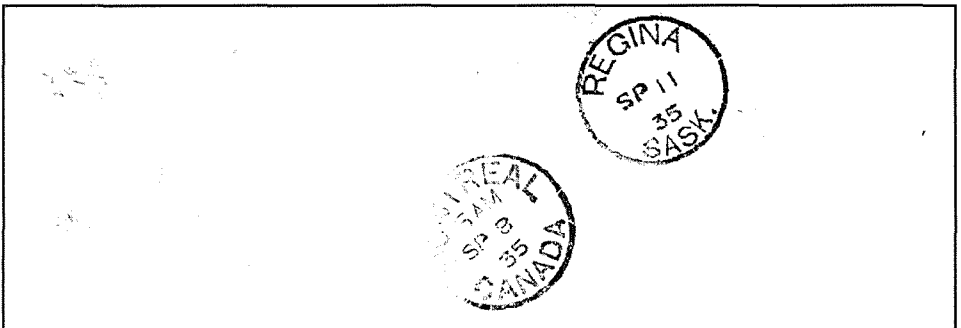
10.-AM MY 6, 35

<sup>1</sup> Bannister A., The Branch and Sub Post Offices of Malta & Gozo. - UK: Malta Study Circle, 1999.  
<sup>2</sup> Bannister A., Query Replies: Query No. N/L 14-4 : Use of COS-4 prior to 1940. - Melita Vol. 15-2. UK: Malta Study Circle, 2000.

- e) Three strikes of COS-4 on a Silver Jubilee First Day cover bearing SG210 and SG211 dated "10.-AM, MY 6, 35"
- f) Three strikes of COS-4 on a Silver Jubilee First Day cover bearing SG212 and SG213 dated "10.-AM, MY 6, 35"
- g) Two strikes of COS-4 on a Silver Jubilee First Day cover bearing SG210 dated "10.-AM, MY 6, 35"
- h) Four strikes of COS-4 on a complete set of the Silver Jubilee issue on registered cover addressed to J.W.S. Wood Esq., 204 Donahue Blk., Regina, Sask. Canada dated "4.30 PM, AU 26, 35" and bearing Registration Label [RL-COS-32b]. The cover is backstamped "MONTREAL"– CANADA" dated "5AM, SP 8, 35" and "REGINA – SASK." Dated " SP 11, 35" (*illustrated below*)



*Registered Cover addressed to Regina, Sask., Canada bearing the COS-4 cancellation on all the four Silver Jubilee stamps and dated "4.30PM, AU 26, 35"*



*Backstamping of the Montreal – Canada handstamp dated "5 AM, SP 8, 35" and the Regina – Sask. hndstamp dated " SP 11, 35"*

- i) A strike of COS-4 on SG218 ½d green dated “4.30PM, JY 20, 38”



*4.30 PM JY 20, 38*

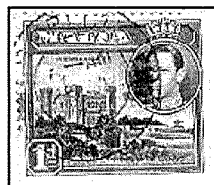
- j) A strike of COS-4 on SG219 1d red-brown dated “7.-AM, FE 4, 40”



*7.-AM FE 4, 40*

The few more strikes of COS-4 used before 1940 prove conclusively that COS-4 was in fact received with the other Type 4 circular datestamps and may even have been used before the others!. Despite the suggestions reported earlier, the evidence being presented here of a genuine registered letter addressed to Canada and with the Canadian receiving marks in the correct period prove beyond doubt that the use of COS-4 before 1940 certainly did not arise from any back dating of the material but was **genuinely used**. The evidence of cancellations other than on first day covers would suggest that use of the COS-4 handstamp was genuine at least on several occasions. Its use may have been restricted to the Postmaster of the Branch Post Office who used it on special occasions of heavy postal traffic and maybe even on specific requests.

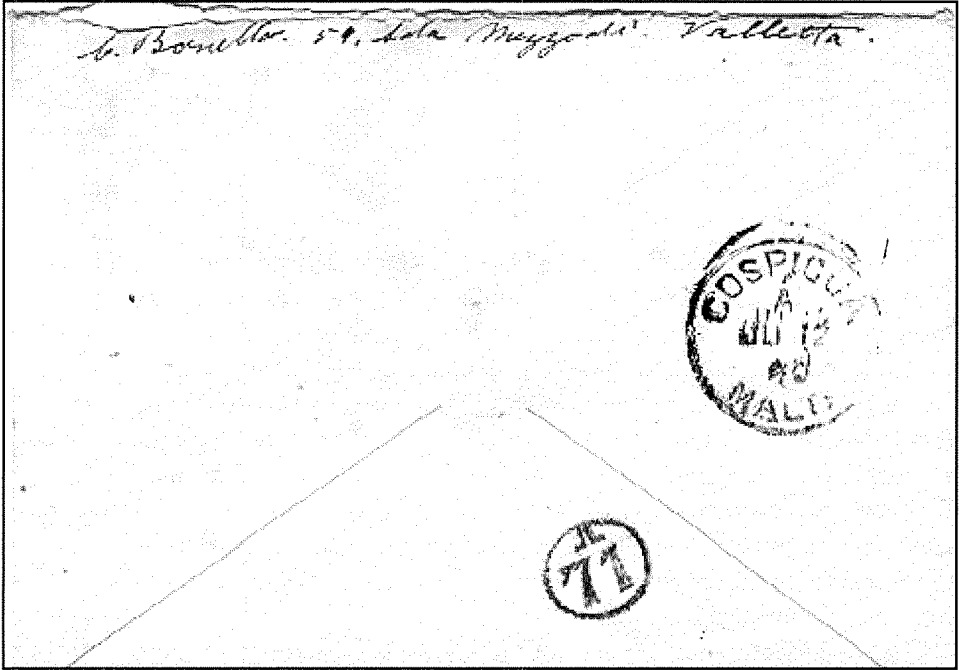
The earliest recorded use of the COS-4 datestamp **after** the transfer of the Cospicua Branch Post Office to the Pawla Sub Post Office is also being here reported. It is on a stamp SG219 dated “7.-AM, 25 SP, 40”. This predates the published date<sup>1</sup> of 12<sup>th</sup> November 1940 by almost 2 months. Other earlier recordings of this datestamp within this period are “7.-AM, 24 OC, 40” and “7.-AM 11 NO, 40”.



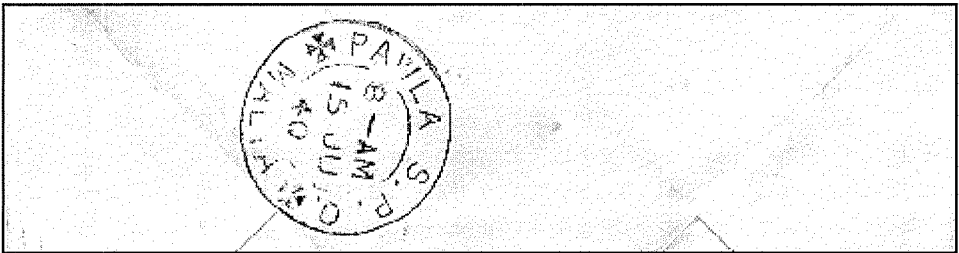
*7.-AM 25 SP, 40*

It is noteworthy to mention that the Cospicua Branch Post Office was bombed on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1940 and the Branch was temporarily housed at the Pawla Sub Post Office up to July 1940, all postal transactions, including collections and deliveries of mail being effected from there. Around July 1940 the postal area was divided into two, the Pawla Postmen remaining stationed at Pawla Sub Post Office, making use of the PAL-3 datestamp while the others were transferred to a temporary Zejtun Branch Post Office which was opened around August 1940 at St. Catherine

Band Club in Zejtun making use of the COS-4 datestamp. When the Pawla Sub Post Office was bombed on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 1942, the Pawla postmen were also transferred to the Zejtun Temporary Branch Post Office and made sole use of the COS-4 datestamp. On the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1943 the Zejtun Branch Post Office was finally transferred to 10/11 Britannia Square, Zejtun and remained there until its closure on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1946 from which date no further use of the COS-4 datestamp was made.



Letter sent to Prof. Vincenzo Bonello, internee at Fort Salvatore Internee Camp, Kalkara showing COS-22 used on JU 12, 40 – the latest date recorded.



Letter sent to Prof. Vincenzo Bonello, internee at Fort Salvatore Internee Camp, Kalkara showing PAL-4 used on JU 15, 40 – the earliest date recorded used at the Temporary Cospicua Branch Post Office at Pawla Sub Post Office.