

***Postal Markings on the Tuck's Oilette postcards
illustrated in Vol. 31, Nos. 1 and 2 of The PSM Journal***

by Joseph Geraci

Mr Geraci thinks that the above mentioned cards were prepared by someone who perhaps had some unused Malta cards in his possession and wanted to dress them up.

His reasons are as follows:

1. As you point out in your article in Vol. 31, No. 1, there were at least three different applications of the “postmark” – the word “Malta”, the circle frame and finally the date. There may have been another application necessary as well, as there seems to be a horizontal line below the date in most of the strikes, which extends quite far to the right. At first I thought it might be associated with the date, but there is no line below the date struck in the lower left corner of the card illustrated in Vol. 31, No. 1. It may either be associated with the word “Malta”, or an entirely separate application. This all means that each application of this “postmark” was rather labour intensive, taking a lot of time to apply each facet. In addition, each card illustrated has three strikes of the “postmark”! Even if each application was struck three times in a row, before the next application, it still took more time than normal to apply these markings. Each facet is applied quite neatly and carefully, and not as though the individual was in a hurry to complete his task, as would be the case with a busy purser aboard a vessel. Would a purser aboard a vessel have that much free time to apply his markings so carefully?
2. I am unable to find a record of a vessel “Malta” operating in the Mediterranean Sea in 1906. Reg. Kirk, in his *British Maritime Postal History, Vol. 2, The P.*

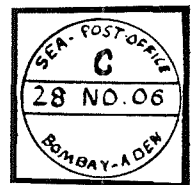
& *O. Lines to the Far East*, page 149, records the inward and outward bound vessels on the Colombo-London run during 1906. None of the vessels are named “Malta”. However, there is a record of a vessel “Malta”, which ran between Colombo and Shanghai, but not in the Mediterranean. I cannot trace where this “Malta” was on 2 October 1906, the date on the cards, but on 21 October, this “Malta” was at Colombo.

Could the cards have been posted aboard this vessel in Far Eastern waters? It is possible, but I do not see any transit or arrival markings on either of these cards, as would normally be the case at this date. One would think the French postal administration would have postmarked the cards upon receipt, or at least upon return, when they entered the post again. But then, where would the cards be returned to? There is no return address on either card. In that case, normally, they would have gone to the Dead Letter Office, and surely a postmark, or some notation, would be applied there.

3. The use of Indian official stamps for postage is highly unusual. These overprinted stamps were for use exclusively by Indian Government agencies. It was illegal for them to be used for other than public purposes, and especially by private individuals.
4. Jal Cooper’s book, *Indian Used Abroad*, Bombay, 1950, page 100, illustrated several different types of maritime markings normally associated with Indian mail. The earlier type, (Type 3c), is merely inscribed “Sea Post Office” with the date. (A review of *T.P.O.*, the Magazine of the T.P.O. & Seapost Society (Vol. 3, No. 5, page 101), reveals Type 3c was employed from 1905 through November 1907.) A later type, (Type 4), dated November 1906, is inscribed “Sea Post Office/C/ (date)/Bombay-Aden.” Neither type mentions the name of the vessel on which it was used.



Type 3c.



Type 4

5. The rate for a postcard from India to France at this time was 1 anna, so the denomination of the stamp is correct.

For these various reasons, I suspect that the two cards are privately prepared fantasies. That the perpetrator got the postal rate correct is a bit of luck!