

# G.B. USED IN MALTA

## A Study On Great Britain Stamps Used In The Maltese Islands

by *Anthony Fenech*

The study of Great Britain Stamps used with Postmarks of Malta has always been fascinating. Emirent philatelists such as H. L'Estrange Ewen, Bertram McGowan, Major Fred Orme, and André Bollen have all written interesting articles on the subject.

Some collectors, however, do not try to make a complete collection of Great Britain stamps used in Malta, not because of pecuniary considerations but because they have found it preferable to restrict their efforts to obtaining two or three examples, at most, of such postmarks. I am of the opinion that *G.B. Used in Malta* have now become accepted by philatelists forming a Malta Collection, as the evolution of the postmark concerned, makes them an integral part of our philatelic history.

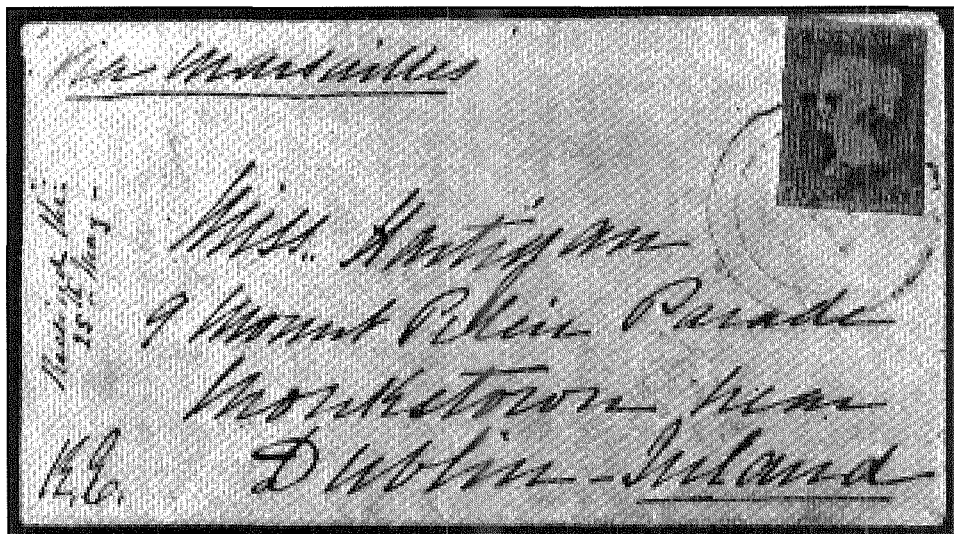
*Postmarks referred to in this Study:*

- A) *The 30mm "Double Ring Malta"*
- B) *The "Wavy Line Grid" Postmarks*
- C) *The "M" Cancellation*
- D) *The "A 25" Circular Duplex Obliterator*
- E) *The "A 25" Single Horizontal Oval Handstamps*
- F) *The "A 25" Duplex Vertical Oval Handstamps*
- G) *The "A 25" Single Vertical Oval Handstamps*
- H) *Great Britain Stamps bearing cancellations of the Malta Post Office*

### A) THE 30mm DOUBLE RING — MALTA

British adhesive postage stamps were made available at the British Post Office, which was established in Malta in September 1857. These were intended to frank letters posted in Malta for overseas destinations.

However, before 1857, a few Great Britain stamps may be found cancelled with the 30mm "Double Ring Malta" datestamp, perhaps without authorisation. According to John A. Trory, in his very informative Malta Stamp Catalogue, these letters bearing stamps of Great Britain originated "from seamen, or soldiers on board ship, who were carrying their own stamps", and it is probably for this reason, "that they were accepted as properly franked".



*The 30mm "Double Ring Malta" cancelling the Great Britain 1841  
1d red-brown imperforate stamp (Cann Sale 1970)*

The Malta Handbook, compiled by the Malta Study Circle, states that these cancellations with the 30mm "Double Ring Malta" were applied to mail which had originated outside Malta. It was erroneously stated by Lieut. Gatt of The Royal Malta Artillery, in "The Post Office Stamps of Malta" (Gibbons Stamp Weekly Vol. IX, page 429) that this particular handstamp, that is, the 30mm "Double Ring Malta" was never struck on the stamp. However, Bertram Mc Gowan, in "The British Philatelist," Vol. XXIII, No. 2, dated April 1930, mentions his example, in black, on the 6d octagonal embossed stamp of 1854, and is dated 5<sup>th</sup> April 1855. Also, Major Fred Orme, at a meeting of The Royal Philatelic Society London, on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1959, mentions a large piece in his possession, franked by the 1d red-brown Die I (1854) Small Crown, Perf. 16, and the 2d blue (also 1854) Plate 4, Perf. 16, inscribed "From Capt. Franklin, R.N., Black Sea Fleet (Crimean War) and cancelled with the 30mm "Double Ring Malta" dated MR 16 1855. A cover to Gibraltar (ex Damsell) bearing the embossed 6d stamp (crudely cut to shape) and tied by the Malta double ring datestamp (dated 21<sup>st</sup> March 1856) was sold by Christie's Robson Lowe in the Grabfield Malta Sale held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1987. Another G.B. stamp known obliterated by this hand-stamp is the 1841 red-brown imperforate.

The "Double Ring Malta" has also appeared on a cover dated June 20, 1883 sent to Sicily, franked with the 1881 2 ½d blue (plate 23) most **unusually** cancelled with the sans serif Malta 25.5mm diameter double ring handstamp.

## B) THE “WAVY LINE GRID”

At the Plumridges’ Auction held on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1917, there was for sale, an interesting cover addressed to England, endorsed “England pre-paid” and franked with two Great Britain stamps namely the 1/- octagonal of 1847, and a 1d red-brown Die II, small crown, perf. 16.

This is how the delighted successful bidder describes his purchase on acquisition:

*“The stamps are separately cancelled with a postmark in black, consisting of parallel curved lines joined at each end by two vertical curved, shorter lines; on the back of the envelope there is struck also in black, the 30mm “Double Ring Malta” dated JY 3, 1855.”*



*Great Britain 1/- embossed stamp and 1854-7 1d red, both cancelled by the rare grid type marks (The Francisco Sale – March 1989)*

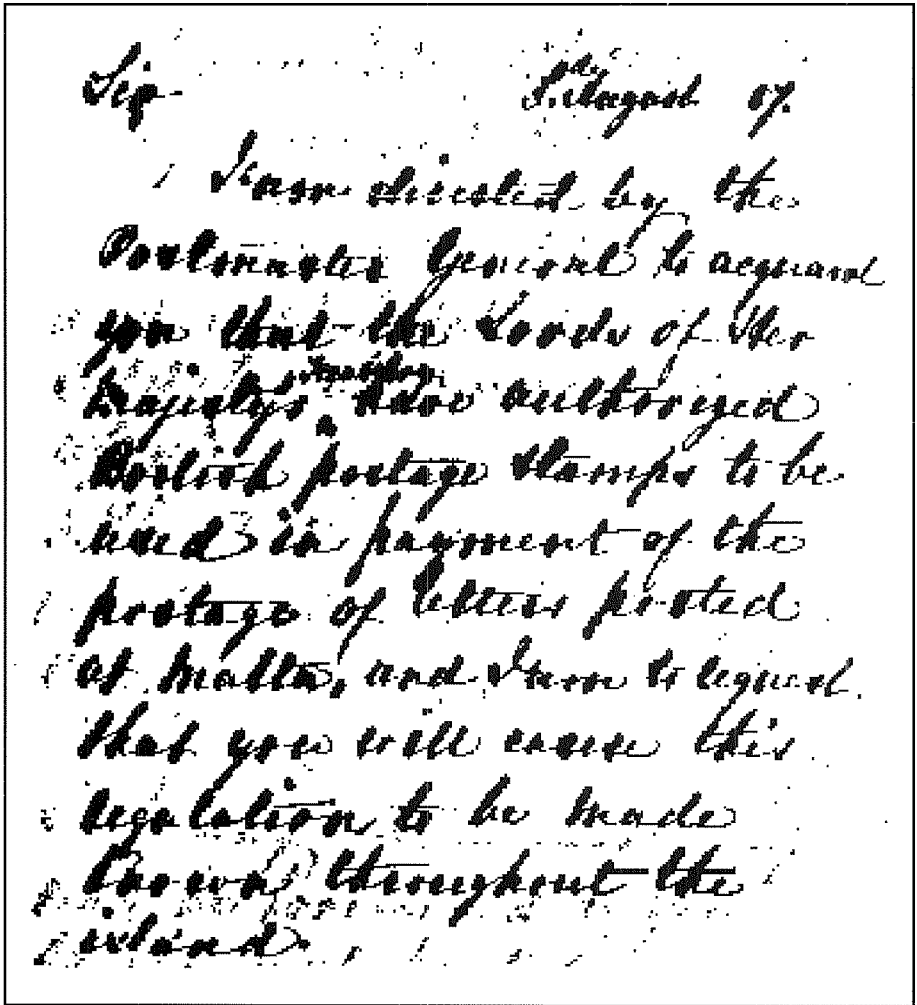
This, undoubtedly, is nothing but a faithful description of the transit cancellation better known as the “Wavy Line Grid” applied in Malta to cancel the stamps on letters emanating from the Crimea, in transit to respective destinations, mainly in the United Kingdom; and those of seamen serving on H.M. Ships stationed in Malta, as shown by this cover. (The G.P.O. Proof Books record a Wavy Line Cancellation on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1855 to cancel stamps of Great Britain during 1855-6, in Malta). It is relevant to point out that the “Wavy Line Grid” cancelling the Great Britain stamps on the front, necessitated the application of the 30mm “Double Ring Malta” on the back, in order to date the envelope, as was done with the “M” cancelling the G. B. Stamp and the circular date stamp at the back, in red or black.

It is generally believed that the “Wavy Line Grid” cancelled adhesives on letters posted by service personnel on their way to, or from, the Crimea. The M.S.C. Handbook records its dates of use from April 1855 until 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1856. Besides the 1d red-brown Die II (small crown, perf. 14) and the 1/- green embossed (octagonal) mentioned earlier in the previous paragraph, the following stamps are known so cancelled:-

- 1d red-brown Die I (small crown, perf. 16);
- 1d red-brown Die II (large crown, perf. 14 A1ph. 11);
- 1d red-brown Die II (large crown, perf. 16);
- 2d blue (Plate 5) Wmk (Large Crown, perf. 14) and
- 6d (1854) embossed.

## C) THE "M" CANCELLATION

A British Post office was established in Malta in September 1857.



Sir  
I have directed by the  
Postmaster General to acquaint  
you that the Lords of Her  
Majesty's Council have authorized  
British postage stamps to be  
used in payment of the  
postage of letters posted  
at Malta, and I am to request  
that you will cause this  
regulation to be made  
known throughout the  
island.

A supply of current British Stamps was sent to Malta in August, but was not made available to the public prior to the first few days of September 1857. Previously, foreign correspondence was prepaid in money, or postage collected on delivery. (H. L'Estrange Ewen, Standard Priced Catalogue of the Stamps and Postcards of The United Kingdom - No. 6 Edition - 1898 p.175). Although adhesive postage stamps were introduced at that time, it was not until the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1858, that the prepayment of postage on letters was made compulsory, as notified in The

Circular.

Agents:

Post 48

No-9

11/7/87

GENERAL POST OFFICE,

31st July, 1887

SIR,

I AM directed by the Postmaster General to acquaint you, that the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury have authorized British Postage Stamps to be used in payment of the postage of Letters posted at Malta.

Letters, therefore, despatched from Malta, bearing British Postage Stamps of an amount equal to the postage with which such Letters are chargeable, should henceforth be treated in the same manner as if the postage had been prepaid in money.

I am,

SIR,

Your obedient Servant,

**ROWLAND HILL,**  
*Secretary.*


Post Office Notice, dated 1<sup>st</sup> February 1858 by Order of the Postmaster-General John S. Coxon, H.M. Packet Agent.

The first type of the three "M" handstamps known to exist, was sent out to Malta from London in September 1857. The earliest recorded use of Great Britain adhesives cancelled with the "M" Cancellation is September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1857. Two entires, one to Naples and the other to Genoa, both franked with 1d red-brown (plate 44), perf. 14, strip of three, cancelled "M" and dated SP 12 1857, with the Malta cds 30-mm double-ring on the reverse, were sold by Messrs. Köhler, in the André Bollen Gold Medal Collection in 1983. Ewen, in the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of his "Standard Priced

THE "M" CANCELLATIONS

Sept 1857

Vol ( 85 ) p 134



1st Type      2nd Type      3rd Type

*' g use postage stamps affixed to letters posted at your Office must be carefully obliterated by means of the official stamp with the black composition supplied for the purpose. The stock of this composition must never be allowed to become low, and the composition must be limited to this sole use*

The "M" Cancellations

Catalogue of the Stamps and Postmarks of the United Kingdom”, page 143, records that Malta cds on the back of covers dated 18<sup>th</sup> September 1857 had the figures “57” reversed, reading as “75”. It seems that the error remained uncorrected for a few days, as is known on the M.S.C. Handbook, page 67, featuring the “M” Cancellation on a wrapper from Malta to Genoa, dated the 20<sup>th</sup> September 1857, but with the figures “57” reversed. The “M” canceller consists of the letter ‘M’ which on the first type is 6.5mm wide and 9.7mm high, surrounded by twelve horizontal lines, all broken except the two above and the two below the dominant letter ‘M’ for Malta.

The letter ‘M’ of the second type of the “M” handstamp measures 7.0mm in width and 9.2mm in height with all the other features of Type one.

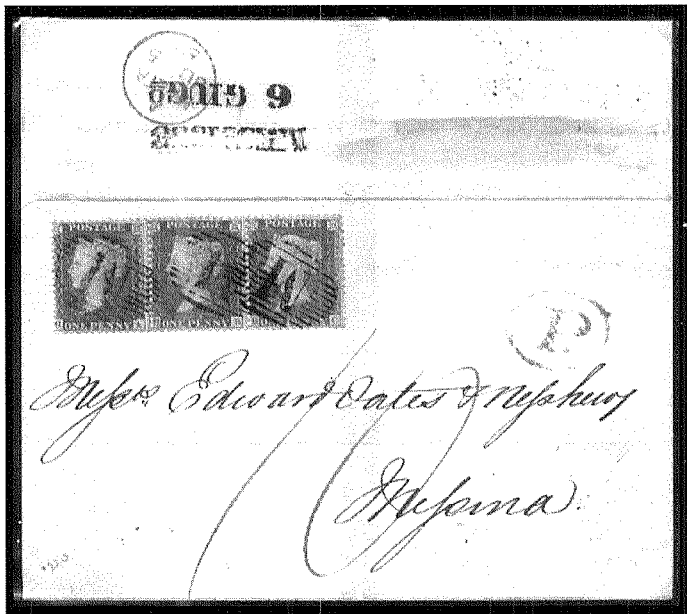
This second type of the “M” canceller did not come into use till April 1858, after which both types were used concurrently. (McGowan Bertram, The British Philatelist No. 2 - Vol. XXIII, April 1930 “Malta Postmarks on British Stamps” pp. 11-14).

The third type of the ‘M’ canceller can be detected even with the naked eye, as the surround size of the “M” is about 1.5mm wider than in the other cancellers. The size of “M” is about 7.5mm in width and 9.2mm in height. Otherwise, the canceller has the same features as the other two types.

The above G.P.O. Proof Book entry (Vol. 8 (2), page 134) is undated, but these marks, illustrated in this article, are amongst other entries, which are dated September 1852. From these marks, it is evident that there were in fact THREE ‘M’ cancellers sent to Malta from London.

The “M” canceller was always used to obliterate the stamp or stamps, in conjunction with a circular date stamp on the reverse of the wrapper or cover. Three types of dater handstamps are known to have been used together with the “M” cancellation, naturally on the back of the entire. I have seen:-

- (a) the 30mm Double Ring MALTA in black and red, with the date in two lines within, the red being extremely rare. The latest dates recorded of this type on the reverse of a cover in conjunction with the “M” cancellation are “RED” April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1858; and “BLACK” 14<sup>th</sup> March 1858.
- (b) the 30mm Double circle broken with MALTA/PAID in serif letters in red. It was used for a short time, probably before 20<sup>th</sup> March until 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1858. (Mc Gowan Bertram, The British Philatelist No. 2 - Vol. XXIII, April 1930 “Malta Postmarks on British Stamps” p.11-14; dates extended by John Birkett Allan in his reply to Gillian Hodge’s query in the M.S.C. “Melita” Vol. 15 No. 6).
- (c) the 25mm MALTA Double Ring in black or in red very rarely used in 1857 and 1858. The latest recorded date of use is probably the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1858 which appears on a cover from the ‘Ewart’ correspondence in the Francisco Sale (22<sup>nd</sup> March 1989).



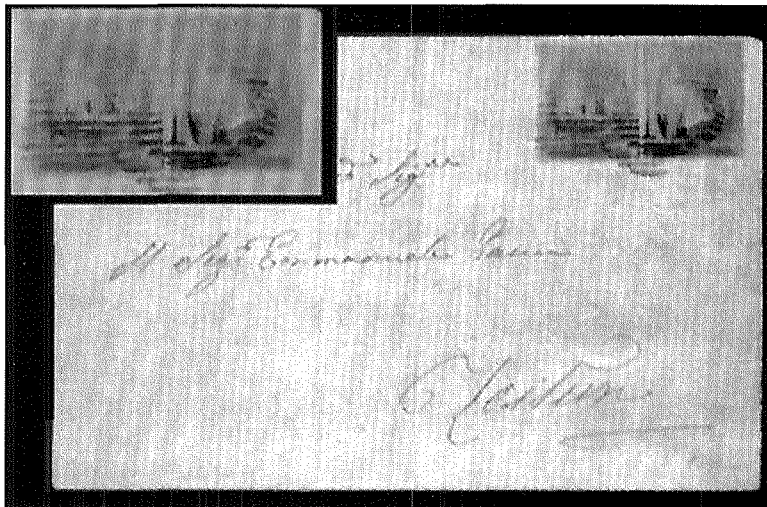
(d) the 19mm circular date stamp, always in red, with an “A/MALTA” in a straight line, and the date in two lines.

The “M” canceller was superseded, in February 1859, by the dated Malta and “A 25” duplex canceller, as it was felt that the obliterator and dater should be incorporated into one handstamp. Thus the idea of using the obliterator on the front and the dater on the reverse of the entire, was temporarily abandoned.

The official use of the “M” cancellation came to an end about 1860 (Robson Lowe – The Encyclopedia of British Empire Postage Stamps – Vol. I). However, “emergency duty” of this canceller necessitated its re-use. (John A. Trory, The John A. Trory Specialised Catalogue of Malta 1979, 4th Edition p.2). As a matter of fact the “M” canceller was used again. Examples of the “M” strike on the first Malta 1/2d yellows, issued on 1st December, 1860, are known to exist. Remarkable is the cover bearing the horizontal pair of half penny buff, well tied to the envelope, to Zeitun, old spelling of Zejtun, with “M” type (Type Three) cancellations, highlighting Harmers’ Cann outstanding Collection, put to auction on Monday and Tuesday, June 15th and 16th, 1970, and again re-auctioned by Messrs. Feldman International in Zurich, on Friday, May 21st, 1982. The M.S.C. Handbook records the use of this type of “M” Cancellation on 2d stamps, plates 8 and 9, of Great Britain, some time in 1861, and on the 6d, plate 9, also of Great Britain, on the 3rd May, 1870.

The following Great Britain stamps are known to exist with the “M” cancellation:  
 1d 1841 Red-brown (Imperforate)





*½d Buff (unwatermarked) horizontal pair well tied to envelope to  
Zeitun with "M" Type cancellation – Cann Sale 15<sup>th</sup> June 1970.  
Re-auctioned by Messrs. Feldman International in Zurich, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1982.*

1d 1854 (Feb.) Red-brown Die I, Small Crown, Perf. 16

1d 1855 (Feb.) Red-brown Die II, Small Crown, Perf. 14 - plate 7 (1d Plate 7 also exists with Inverted Wmk. John Birkett Allan reports a strip of three of this stamp with inverted watermark in his collection).

1d 1855 (Mar.) Red-brown Die II, Small Crown. Perf. 14

1d 1855-57 Red-brown Die II, Large Crown, Perf. 14:

(i) Alph. II on blued paper - plates 15 and 16

(ii) Alph. III on blued paper - plates 26, 27, 33, 34, 35, 36, and 37

1d 1856 (Dec.) - 1862 (Jan.) Rose-red Die II, Large Crown, Perf. 14 - Plates 27 (also the 'Gothic K' variety), 34, 36, 37, 38, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 52, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, and 60.

At the M.S.C. Meeting in Derby (21<sup>st</sup> June 1996) John Birkett Allan displayed amongst many other interesting items, a 1d star with "M" cancellation applied in red.

2d 1841 Blue (Imperforate)

2d 1854 Blue Small Crown, Perf. 16 - plate 4

2d 1855-57 Blue Large Crown, Perf. 14 - plates 5 and 6

2d 1858 (Feb.) Large Crown, Perf. 14 - plate 6; - also exists with watermark inverted

2d 1858-61 Blue Large Crown, Perf. 16-plates 7, 8 and 9

4d 1857 Rose Large Garter

4d 1857 Rose Large Garter (on thick glazed paper); also with watermark inverted

6d 1854 Violet (embossed)

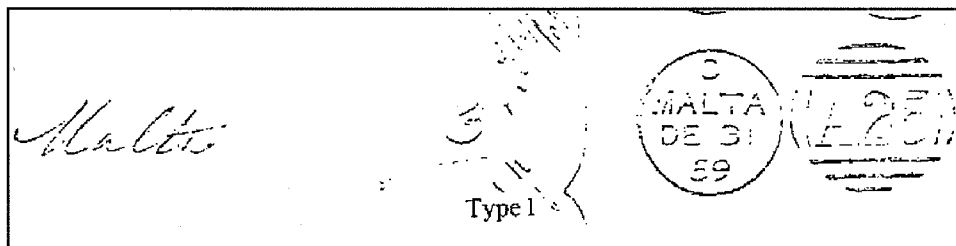
- 6d 1856 Lilac Wmk. Emblems
- 6d 1856 Lilac (on thick paper); – also with watermark inverted
- 6d 1856 Lilac Wmk. Emblems (on blued paper)
- 6d 1870 Mauve Wmk. Spray of Rose – plate 9
- 1/- 1854 Pale Green (Embossed)
- 1/- 1856 Green Wmk. Emblems
- 1/- 1856 Green Wmk. Emblems (on azure paper)
- 1/- 1856 – Green Wmk. Emblems (on thick paper).

## D) THE “A 25” CIRCULAR DUPLEX OBLITERATOR

As has been detailed earlier, the use of the “Wavy Grid” as well as of the “M” cancellations, necessitated a date mark on the back of the entire or letter. There was a vast increase of business at the Malta Post Office, so it was considered necessary that in the near future the canceller and dater be incorporated in one handstamp, thus saving valuable time. In February 1859, a new duplex type was introduced, consisting of postmark and obliteration combined...dated MALTA and “A 25” double stamp.

The duplex obliterator thus introduced, consisted of a circular date stamp and a circular barred obliterator, containing the “A 25” cancellation, both in the horizontal oval, and vertical oval type, which is being examined in this study.

A strike of the combined date-mark with the obliterator “A 25” is recorded in the General Post Office Proof Book, in London, the entry being dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1859. Lieut. Gatt of the Royal Malta Artillery, on “The Post Office and Stamps of Malta” (Gibbons Stamp Weekly; Vol. IX Page 429) gives the earliest date of use as the 16<sup>th</sup> of that month, though The Handbook compiled by The Malta Study Circle, records February 13<sup>th</sup> as the earliest date of its use. An entire to Catania, franked with 6d lilac, cancelled with this duplex canceller (C MALTA FE 26 59) was sold at Auction in **The André Bollen Collection** by Heinrich Köhler and later featured on the front page of The Study Paper No. 35 (1983) – “G.B. Used in Malta” and captioned ‘very early use of “A 25” duplex handstamp’, 24 days after its strike in the G.P.O. London Proof Book – 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1859

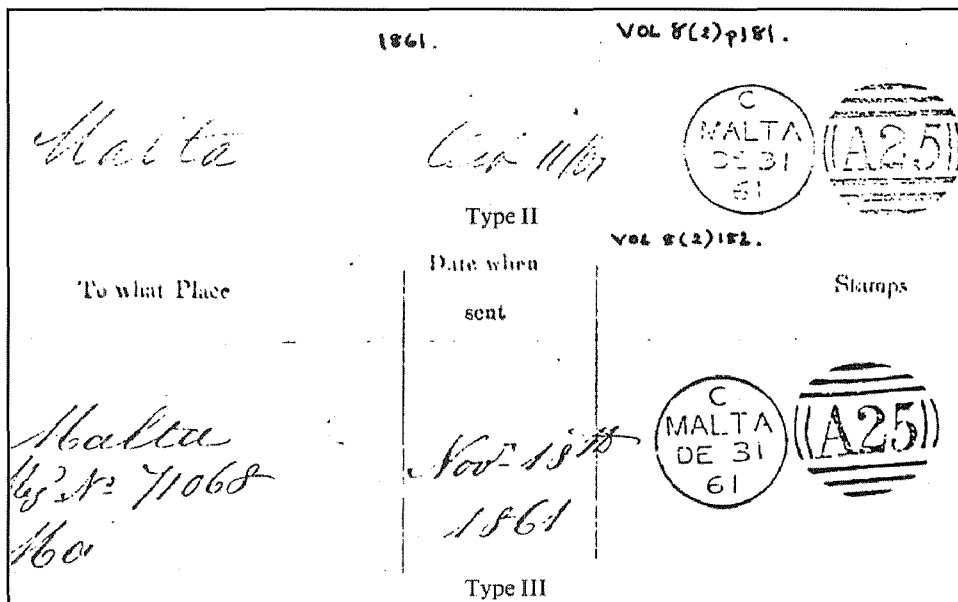


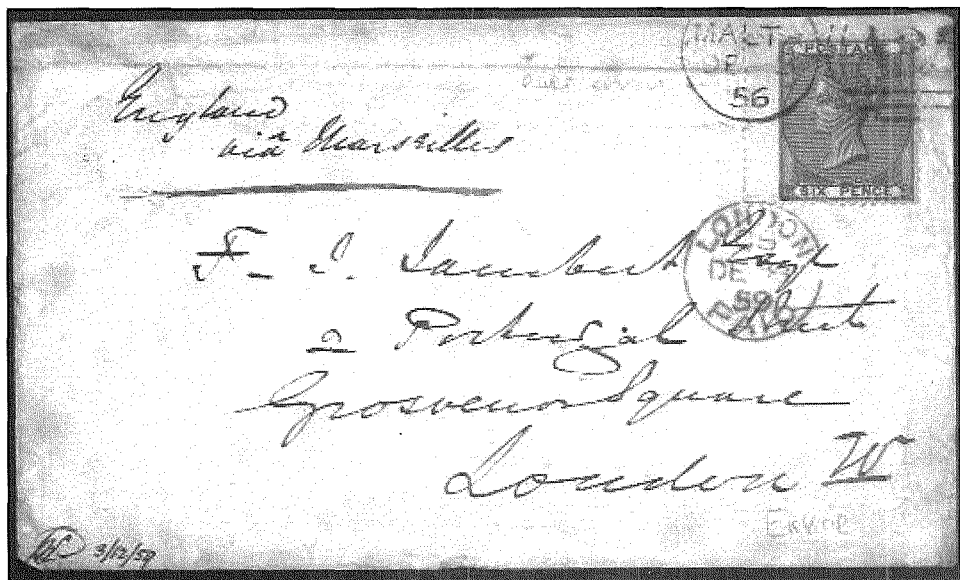
The "A 25" circular type has three bars above and below the numbers "A 25" and two curved lines on either side. The date mark is 20mm in diameter and is in four lines with MALTA in a straight line. It was always struck in black. The date-mark of Type I is found with the Code Letters "A", "B" and "C". "O" has been recorded, but the examples I have seen appear to be reversed "C". That with Code "C" appears first and was used exclusively until at least the 25<sup>th</sup> October 1859. Then "A" appeared (earliest date recorded - 12<sup>th</sup> November 1859).

Code letter "C" was dropped for a time, when "A" was used exclusively until about May, 1861, when "B" along with "C" again put in an appearance and the three codes, probably to indicate different times during the day, were used until October 1861 when Type II came into use. Type I is not much seen after 1862. It was used concurrently with Types II and III in September 1868, and December 1873. Finally it was brought again into use temporarily in August and September 1876.

Between September 30<sup>th</sup> and December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1859, there is an interesting error in the date of the postmark as well, as all letters posted in Malta, during this period were postmarked 1856 in error, the "9" of the year being inverted making it read "56". Many philatelic covers exist with this date error, some of them having the arrival London mark struck in red on the front to make the error stand out more evidently.

Type II "A 25" duplex handstamp is shown in the G.P.O. London Proof Book in Vol. 8(2) Page 181, and dated October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1861.





*The "A 25" Duplex on this cover shows the date error when the year 'slugs' were wrongly inserted to show '1856' instead of '1859'*

The date-mark of Type II is half a mm. wider in diameter, with the 'M' of Malta, a little further from the outer ring. The obliterator, which measures 21 x 20mm has a few features which distinguish it from that of Type I. The size of the letter "A" is distinctly smaller in Type II and the figure "5" has a shorter and more sloping neck, so that the top of the "5" appears to be much further away from the top of the "2".

The second type of the "A 25" duplex canceller was brought into use on the first few days of November 1861. It appears to have been used alone up to the beginning of 1864, and thereafter for a considerable period along with Type III. It remained in use until 1881 (latest date recorded....29<sup>th</sup> September) when it was superseded by the vertical oval types. It is found with the Code letters "A", "B", "C", "D" and "E".

Code letter "D" did not appear before 4<sup>th</sup> December 1874. Code letter "E" is seldom found.

Among the examples known with the "E" Code letter are:

- (i) a Cover franked with a Malta ½d yellow buff (14 x 12 ½) and dated 19<sup>th</sup> October 1878,  
and
- (ii) a G.B. 2 ½d, plate 17, blue, dated 29<sup>th</sup> April 1880.

It is worth mentioning here that a certified copy of an 1862 1d Rose-red from



A25 (Type II) cover showing the Crown Registered handstamp applied in red. A cover dated 13<sup>th</sup> July 1869 is known with two Crown Registered handstamps, one applied in red and the other in black. This seems to be the only example of the Crown Registered handstamp struck in black.

Reserve Plate 16 is found used in Malta with this Type II “A 25” cancellation. It was customary for Perkins Bacon & Co., to construct a small number of reserve plates during some plate manufacturing sequences and these would be stored for use should a sudden demand for new plates occur. (The Postal Markings of Malta 1857-1902 by Major F. Orme T.D. - Postal History Society Bulletin No. 80 (May/June 1955)).

This copy from Reserve Plate 16 which was cancelled by the “A 25” duplex Type II canceller is lettered “OE” clearly showing the smaller Alphabet 2 lettering and high positioning of the letters in the corner squares which was a characteristic of the plate on nearly all letterings.

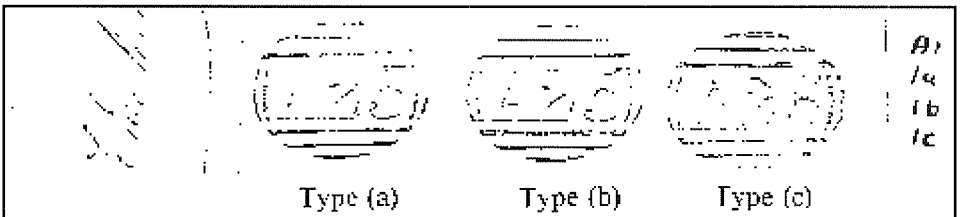
Type III is very similar to Type I, almost indistinguishable from it. However, the obliterator part is 22 x 20mm. The G.P.O. London Proof Book features it in Vol. 8 (2) on Page 182 with the dispatch date shown as November 18th, 1861. This type is not seen much until 1864. It is found used until 1868, with Code letters “A”, “B” and “C”. It is seen used during the summer of 1876 and in the following years until the end of 1880, when the first of the Oval Duplex was dispatched from London to Malta.



*Type III "A 25" Duplex with Code letter "B"*

## E) THE "A 25" SINGLE HORIZONTAL OVAL HANDSTAMPS

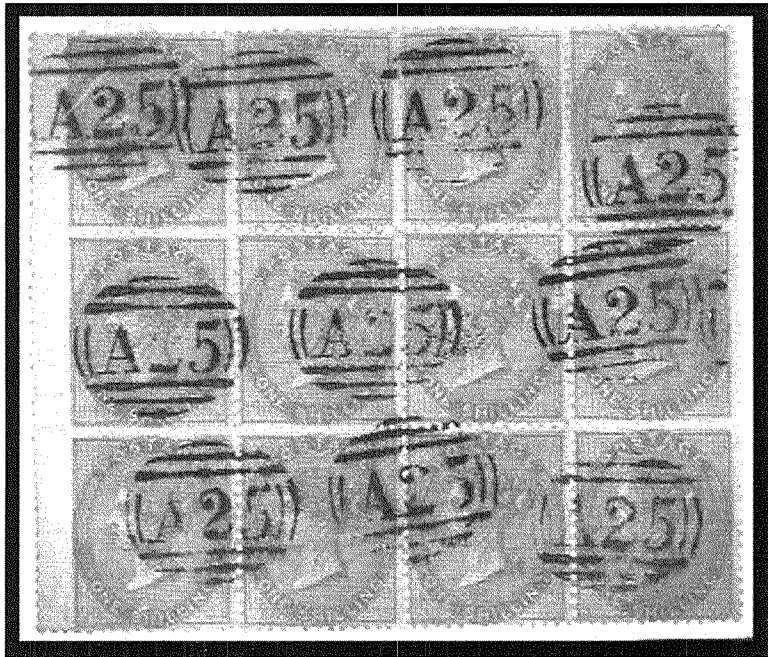
Three such cancellers are recorded in the General Post Office Proof Book (Vol. 8 (2) - Page 156), the entry being dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1859.



The above types 'a', 'b' and 'c' as shown on the Impression Proof Book at the General Post Office, London (22 ½ mm x 17 mm) have identical features and are indistinguishable.

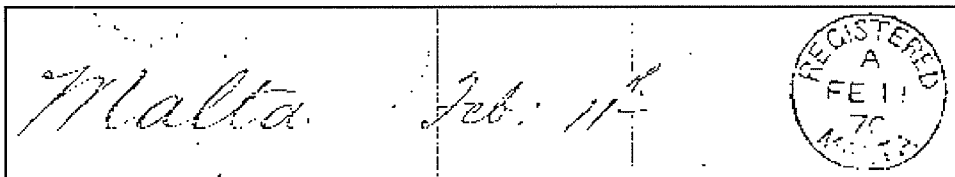
Initially, these cancellers appear to have been used as general purpose cancellers at the Sorting Room, along with other circular datestamps or the duplex "A 25" cancellers.

From April 1870 and up to the end of 1882, these single horizontal oval handstamps were assigned a very important duty, namely to cancel stamps on



*1/- green marginal block of twelve (4x3) stamps with multiple "A25" single horizontal oval handstamps ex. Dr. Clough sold by Cavendish on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1998; presently enhancing John Birkett Allan's collection.*

registered covers and entires. The earliest date recorded being the 5<sup>th</sup> April. On such covers, one finds this handstamp in conjunction with a registered datestamp inscribed "REGISTERED / MALTA" with code letters A, B, or C and date.

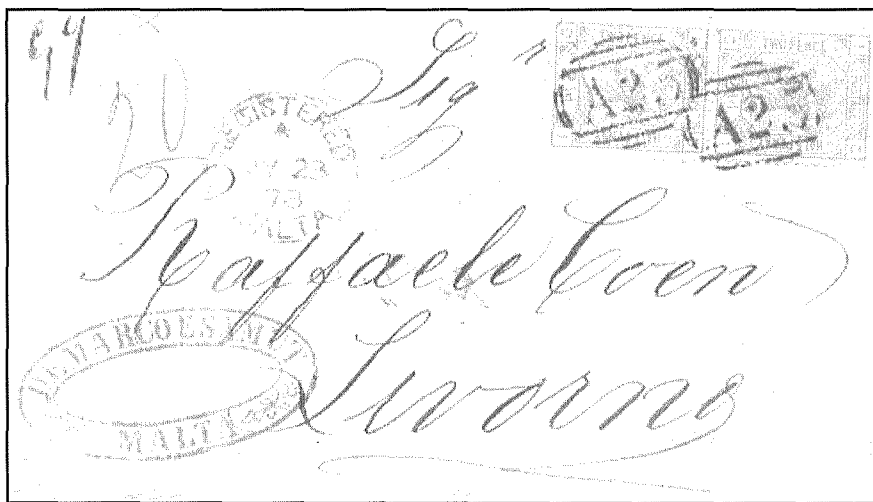


This 23 mm single Registration datestamp was sent to Malta some time in 1870; in fact its strike is recorded in the General Post Office Proof Book in London (Vol. 22 page 76) and dated February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1870. It has been noted on Covers and entires always applied in red (except on one occasion when it was struck in black and dated 10 FE 79). (The Malta Study Circle M.S.C. Study Paper No. 46 "Malta Registered" - Edited by John C. Lander in February 1978). This handstamp had to be used together with the single "A 25" horizontal oval, as it was necessary to record the DATE of dispatch of the registered letters. (This was one of the

requirements to be fulfilled in the dispatch of registered mails - Sir Rowland Hill's letter to the Packet Agents - 5th February 1855).

The single horizontal oval cancellers were normally struck in black. However, a strike in red on a registered cover of 1882 is referred to in the "Cann" Sale Catalogue (Cann Sale Catalogue - Harmers Ltd. - June 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 1970. pp. 14, 15.) thus:

*"Lot No. 102 - 2 ½d blue and 1881 1d lilac (pair) on Registered Cover to Liverpool, tied by "A 25" strikes in red....."*



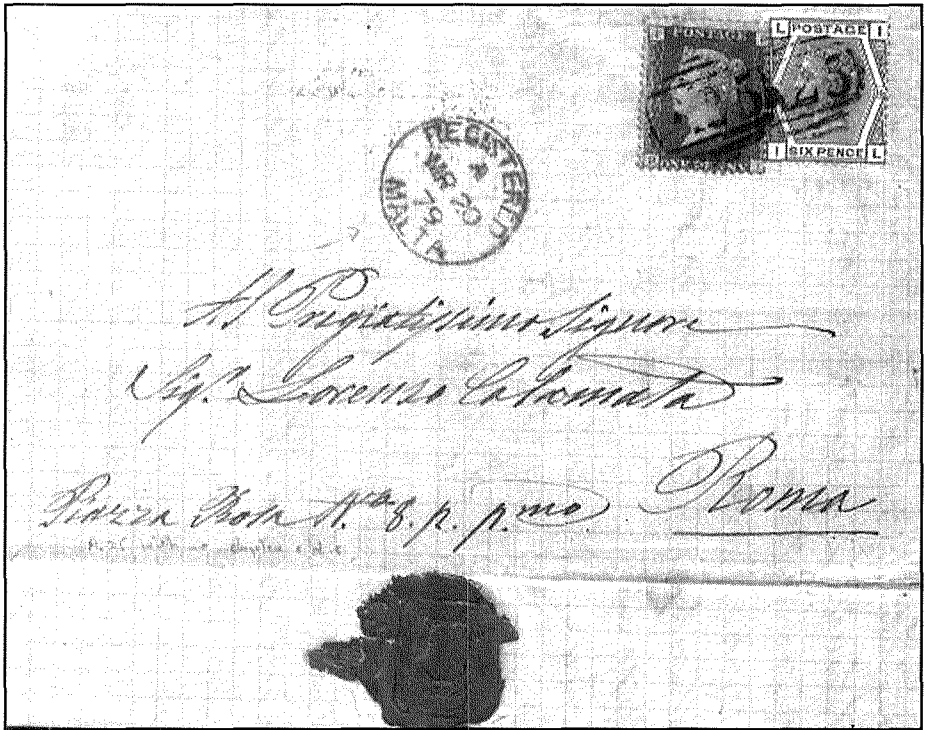
*The 23mm single Registration date stamp "REGISTERED/MALTA (JY23/78), on Registered Cover franked with a pair of 2 ½d mauve cancelled by two strikes of the "A/25" horizontal oval canceller.*

The strikes of these cancellers on stamps or covers are not usually clear, sometimes signs of bad wear or of not having been cleaned for quite some time are shown.

A fourth type 'd' appears in the years 1879-82. It is quite distinctive from the other three. It is about 2 mm narrower (19 ½ mm x 17 mm) with the 'A' of "A 25" visibly smaller than the '25'. Its strikes are poor and sometimes smudgy. I think that it was introduced on the Counter Registered Mail as a subsidiary handstamp. Strikes from this handstamp were at one time thought to be forgeries, but this handstamp is known genuinely used on quite a few registered covers.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1880 the oval registered postmark was dispatched from London to Malta to replace the single ring Registered canceller. The new Registered canceller in Red began to be used in Malta in early 1881 having the same function as the previous one.



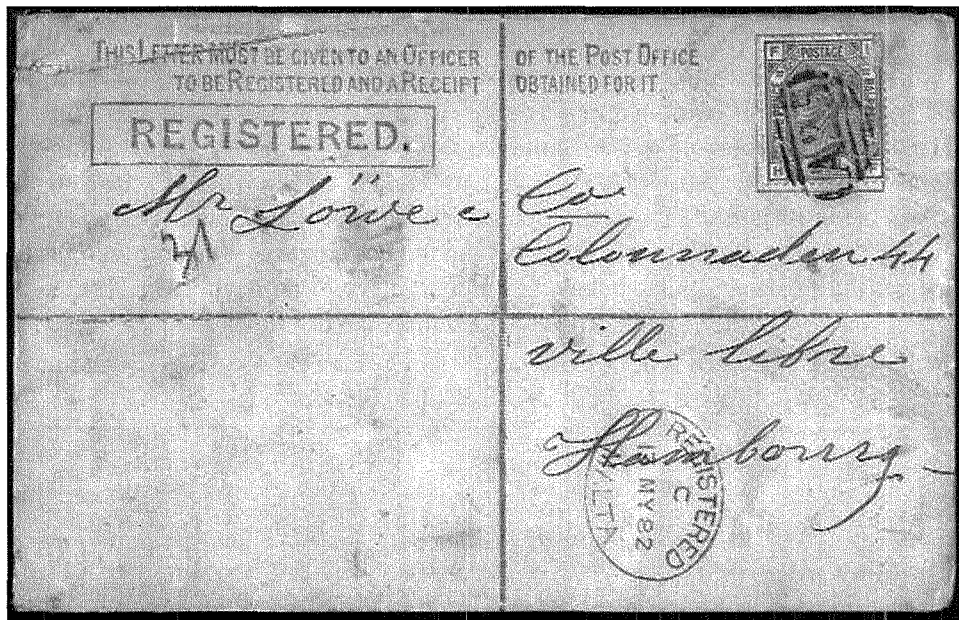


*Double strike of the "A/25" single horizontal oval type (Type "d")  
on a Registered cover to Rome.*

Mr. R. G. W. Malim in his M.S.C. Study Paper No. 35 "GB Used in Malta" lists ten different types of Registered envelopes on sale in Great Britain being used in Malta (GBR1-GBR10). The embossed stamp, printed in blue was a twopenny value and covered the registration fee only. Additional adhesive stamps were necessary to prepay the postage. The size of Registration Envelopes usually recorded as being used in Malta is size G (93x154mm).

It is worth noting that the Great Britain High Values used contemporarily are obliterated by these four types of the "A 25" horizontal oval handstamp. Among these one finds:

- 1876 - 4d sage green;
- 1872/73 - 6d chestnut and buff and later the 6d buff and grey;
- 1876 - 8d orange;
- 1867 - 10d red-brown;
- 1873 -80 - 1/- green;
- 1880 - 1/- orange-brown (Plates 13-14)
- 1867 -2/- pale and dark blue;
- 1880 - 2/- brown;



*GB Q.V. Registration Cover showing the oval registered canceller in red*

1867-74 - 5/- rose (Plate Nos. 1,2);

1882 - 5/- rose (Plate 4) (on white and blue papers); and

1878 - 10/- grey-green.

This does not exclude several lower denominations, even the ½d struck with the “A 25” single horizontal oval handstamp. As a matter of fact an 1880 (AU 19) Registered Cover to Livorno is known franked with ½d (Plate 8) and 4d (Plate 16) and cancelled with this type of “A 25” cancellation. (The André Bollen Collection of Great Britain Used Abroad (Feb 8<sup>th</sup>, 1983 - Köhler Auction Catalogue) The use of the lower values on Registered envelopes gives rise to many strips (of three, four, or more), as well as to blocks (of four, six, and even more), nicely cancelled with the “A 25” single horizontal oval handstamps.

The inclusion of these strips and blocks in one’s *G.B. Used in Malta Collection* render it most fascinating.



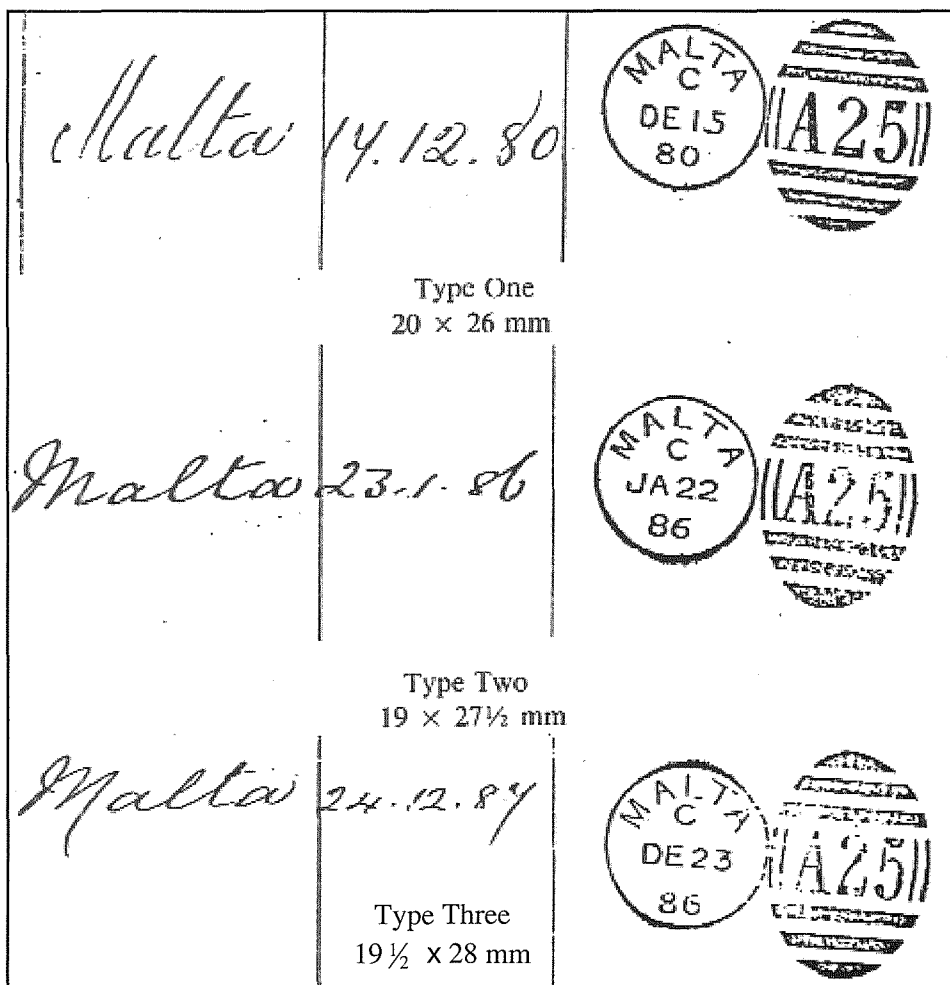
*“A 25” Horizontal Oval handstamp on 10/- grey-green*

## F) THE "A 25" DUPLEX VERTICAL OVAL HANDSTAMPS

The first of this type of cancellers was dispatched from London on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1880. It consisted of a combined date-stamp and obliterator "A 25". The date mark shows 'MALTA' round the rim, instead of across, as in the circular duplex types. Code letters 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'E' are known used. Code letter 'E' on Great Britain stamps is very scarce and only very few examples are known.

The date stamp is 20 mm in diameter and the obliterator is 20 x 26 mm. The "A 25" has three bars above and below the numbers and two curved lines on either side.

The earliest date recorded of Type One duplex handstamp is January 1st, 1881, on the 1880 2 ½d blue (Wmk. Orb) Plate 20 (S.G. Z23 Said No. 53), the code letter on the postmark being a 'C'. (Cdr. Nigel Bush Collection).

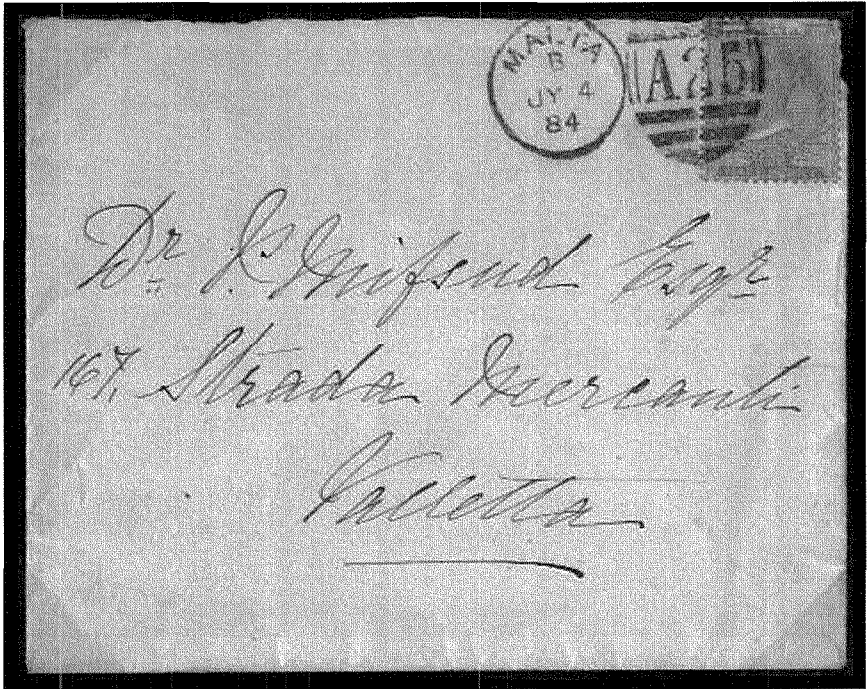




The "A 25" Duplex Vertical Oval (Type One) in use a few weeks after it had been introduced



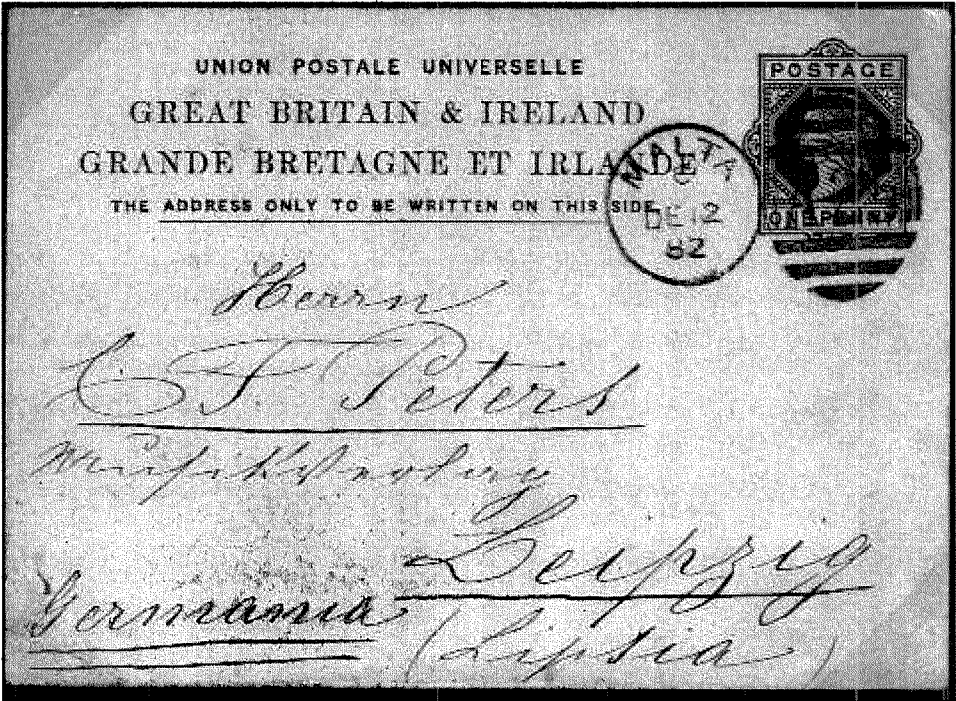
Type One "A 25" Duplex Vertical Oval (20 x 26 mm)



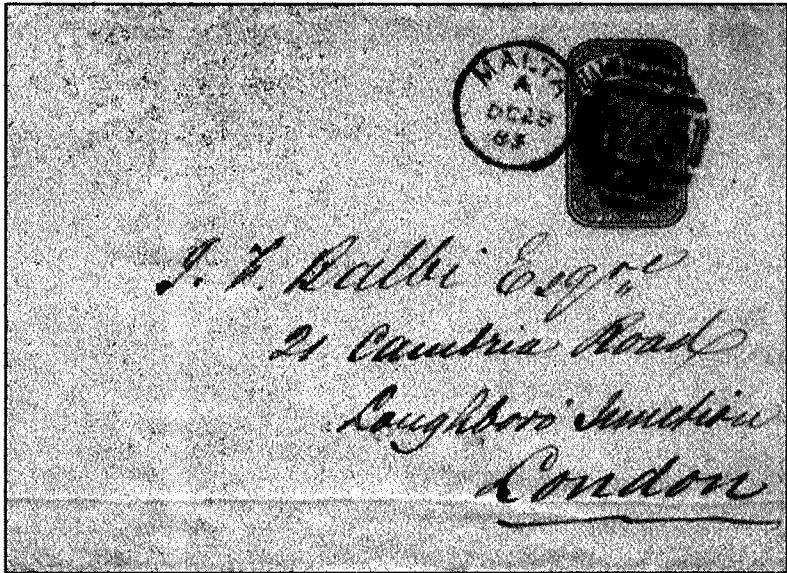
The "A 25" Duplex Vertical Oval cancelling S.G. 19 (J.B. 9a) used on cover to Valletta



1884 Mourning Cover to Palermo with a scarce franking - 2 1/2d single rate formed by a pair of 1d lilac (16 dots) and a 1/2d deep green tied to the cover by two strikes of the "A 25" Duplex Vertical Oval. Date Error: "JL" instead of "JU" Backstamp: 03/07/84 date confirms.



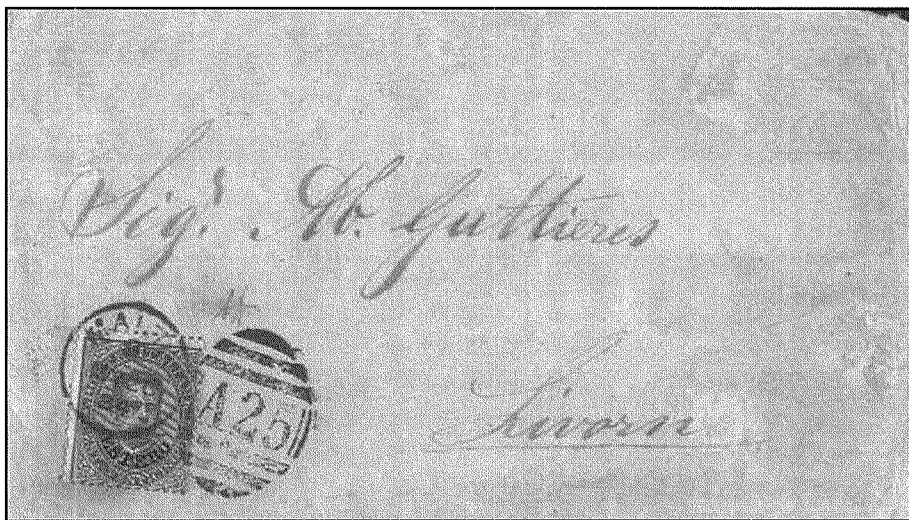
1d Postcard (GBS3) Malta–Leipzig  
 “A 25” Vertical Oval Duplex “C” code DE 12 82



GB 1/2d Brown Wrapper (RL WP9) issued in June 1883 and used in Malta on OC 28 83

However, the 'A 25' Circular duplex cancellers continued to be used concurrently with this Oval type until the 29th September 1881 (The Malta Study Circle, Malta - The Stamps and Postal History 1576-1960 Handbook compiled by The Malta Study Circle, Edited by R. E. Martin p. 33 (The 'A 25' Handstamps — AD2 canceller). Besides Great Britain stamps, the Malta Half-Penny Yellows, since the 23rd printing, are known obliterated by this duplex handstamp (The Philatelic Society, Malta The P.S.M. Magazine — Vol. 7 No. 2, Chapter 6, p. 7 — The Queen Victoria Halfpenny Yellow Stamp (23<sup>rd</sup> printing) by Dr. Alfred Bonnici).

From 1882 to 1885 different types of official printed Great Britain postcards can be found obliterated by the 'A 25' Oval type canceller. GBS3 (1d — 1879), GBS4 (1d — 1883) and GBS5 (2d 1883), all Brown Post Cards with the superscription — UNION POSTALE UNIVERSELLE/GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND/GRANDE BRETAGNE ET IRLANDE — are known cancelled with this type of canceller (The Malta Study Circle - Study Paper 35 — 1983 — 'G.B. Used in Malta' pp. 10, 11).



*Italian Levant Cover with the "A 25" Duplex Vertical Oval addressed to Livorno*



*Sailors' Concessionary Rate of 1d – ex "Sullivan" correspondence, cover endorsed by the Commanding Officer*

Very recently, I was shown a GB ½d Brown Wrapper used in Malta on OC 28 83. It is RL WP 9 issued in the U.K. in June 1883. This is the first example of a GB wrapper used in Malta. Most probably this wrapper was carried to Malta by a traveller as it is not likely that GB wrappers were ever issued in Malta. It is a very scarce item housed in John Birkett Allan's exhaustive study of Great Britain stamps used in Malta.

The other two entries of this type of 'A 25' canceller are recorded in the General Post Office Proof Book, both in Volume 22; the first on Page 128, and dated 23.1.86, and the other on Page 130, and dated 24.12.87 (Arthur Moyles, London — Malta Postal History Notes and Documents). The latter two cancellers vary in size from the one sent to Malta in December 1880, the dimensions being 19 x 27 ½ mm and 19 ½ x 28 mm respectively (Types Two and Three). Obviously these were used on Malta stamps, until 1905, as well as on foreign stamps which franked letters and postcards, posted on High Seas and endorsed with the PAQUEBOT cachets. On these cancellers, Code letters A — Q (except L) have been employed.

## **G) THE "A 25" SINGLE VERTICAL OVAL HANDSTAMPS**

The last type of A25 cancellers used in Malta on Great Britain, on Foreign, as well as on Malta stamps, is an upright single obliterator, size 18 x 25mm (Type One) and size 18.5 x 25mm (Type Two), with three bars above and below the numbers and with two curved lines on either side. It is worth mentioning that there is a full stop separating the "A" from the "25" on both cancellers which were dispatched from London to Malta on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1883.

These cancellers were sent to the Central Office, Malta, purposely to cancel the stamps on registered letters. A duplex handstamp was no longer required since the introduction of the circular registration dater in 1870 and the oval registration dater in 1880.

However, we find these "A 25" Single Vertical Oval obliterations doing other duties in the Mail Room. Mail posted on High Seas franked with foreign stamps is known cancelled by one or both types of this canceller.

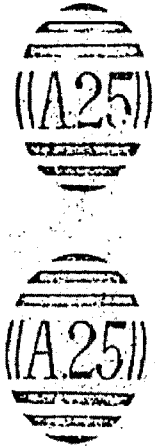
Examples are also known of this obliterator cancelling the Postage Due Charge when the letter or postcard had been refused by the addressee and returned to the country of origin, to the sender, if this could be traced.

The "A 25" upright single handstamp continued to be used to obliterate stamps issued by the Malta General Post Office, after Great Britain stamps ceased to be legal, in accordance with the Notice reproduced.

We know of only two impressions of the "A 25" Single Vertical Oval Handstamps in the G.P.O. Proof books — those found in Vol. 22, Page 122, and dated 1<sup>st</sup> January 1883.



Jan 22 1883

To what place	Date when sent	Stamps
Malta	1. 1. 83	



REGISTERED  
THIS LETTER IS GIVEN TO AN OFFICE  
 OF THE REGISTER AND A RECEIPT OF

REGISTERED  
 J  
 11 NO 03  
 MALTA



*Messieurs*  
**J. Comar & Fils & Co**

20, Rue des <sup>14</sup>Loisirs St. Jacques  
*Paris*  
 (Vienna)

The Single Vertical Oval used on Registration Envelope to Paris. Alongside is the oval registration dater in black.



The Single Vertical Oval used in conjunction with the Oval Registration dater in red.



Cover franked by Italy 1879 20c orange posted on High Seas cancelled by the A25 Single Vertical Oval Handstamp at G.P.O. Mail Room



*Cover showing obliterator cancelling the 4d Postage Due Charge*

However, at least two other different cancellers seem to have been used. It is true that the strikes of this obliterator are rarely clear and this makes it somewhat difficult to measure them accurately.

It is surprising that no mention of these types of cancellers is made in the “List of Dating Stamps in use in this Office”, drawn up by Mr. Gaetano Izzo, a Second Class Clerk, dated 14<sup>th</sup> January 1887, and kept in the Post Office Records at the General Post Office, Malta.

## **H) GREAT BRITAIN STAMPS BEARING CANCELLATIONS OF THE MALTA POST OFFICE**

A Notice “Discontinuance of Use at Malta of Postage Stamps of The United Kingdom” was released by Roger Duke, H.M. Postmaster, at The General Post Office, Valletta, on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1884. In fact Great Britain stamps ceased to be used in Malta, after 31<sup>st</sup> December 1884, when all postal matters of the Island passed under the control of the local authorities. It was stressed in this Notice that all letters bearing “Imperial stamps” posted after the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1884, would be treated as unpaid and charged on delivery. However, a piece is known dated 1 JA 85 showing GB 2 ½d with Malta 1885 ½d green and 1d rose. (M.S.C. Study Paper 35 – 1983 “G.B. Stamps Used in Malta” pp. 35-38).

However, on some occasions after 1884, postage stamps of the United Kingdom

# NOTICE.

## Discontinuance of use at Malta of Postage Stamps of the United Kingdom.

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NOTICE is hereby given that, on and from the 1st. January 1885, postage stamps of the United Kingdom will be USELESS for the prepayment of postage on correspondence posted in Malta or Gozo, and that all letters, etc. bearing Imperial Stamps posted after the 31st. December 1884, will be treated as UNPAID and charged on delivery.

Malta postage stamps, to be used on and from the 1st. of January, may be purchased at the General Post Office, Valletta, on and after the 27th of December.

Imperial postage stamps, if unused, clean, and in saleable condition, will be purchased at the General Post Office up to the 24th of December, inclusive, at par; but, between that date and the 31st of December, a charge will be made of the commission indicated at page 16 of the current edition of the Imperial Post Office Guide.

ROGER DUKE,

H. M. Postmaster.

GENERAL POST OFFICE.

Valletta, 8th December 1884

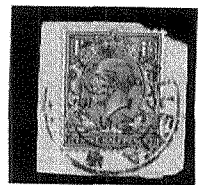
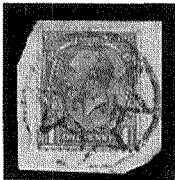
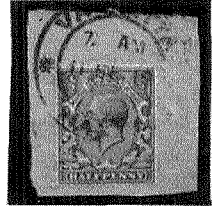
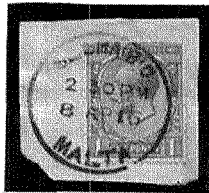
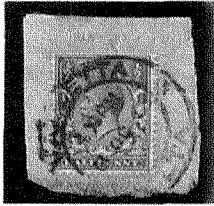
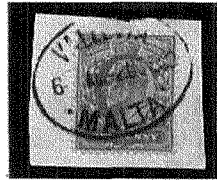
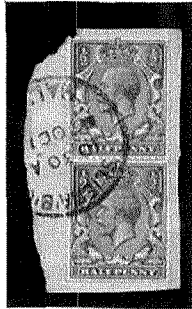
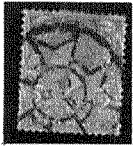
did not prove “useless” for the prepayment of postage on correspondence posted in Malta or Gozo. In fact some Great Britain stamps may be found bearing cancellations of The Malta Post Office. These British stamps fall mainly under two categories — Maritime and Military Mail.

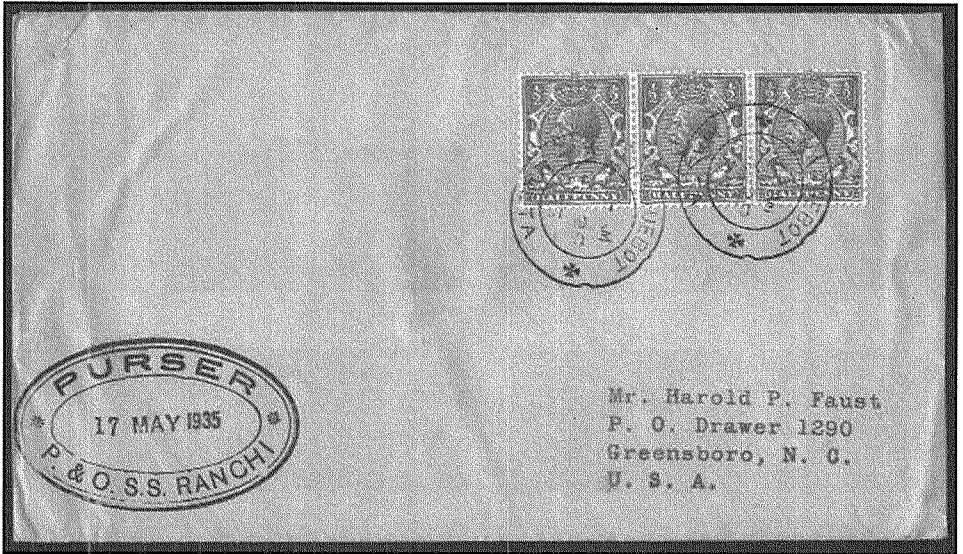
Mail posted on “High Seas” or on board ships at the Grand Harbour was franked with Great Britain or other foreign stamps from countries such as Algeria, Austria, Egypt, France, Gibraltar, Italy, the Italian Levant and Colonies, and Turkey, which were cancelled with a Malta or Valletta or G.P.O. or Sliema handstamp. Besides, until the 1930s, the straight line handstamp PAQUEBOT was also applied on the Cover or Postcard to identify its being posted on board the ships. Great Britain stamps such as:

Queen Victoria 1887—92	2 ½d purple/blue Jubilee Issue 5d dull purple and blue (Duty Plate 1)
King Edward VII 1902	½d dull blue green Wmk Imperial Crown ½d pale yellowish green Wmk Imperial Crown 1d scarlet Wmk Imperial Crown
King George V 1912	1d bright red (scarlet) Wmk Imperial Crown ½d green Wmk Royal Cypher 1d vermilion (pale rose-red) Wmk Royal Cypher 'Simple' 1d scarlet Wmk Royal Cypher 'Multiple' 1 ½d red-brown Wmk Royal Cypher 2d orange-yellow and bright orange Die I Wmk Royal Cypher

are known cancelled by any of the following Valletta or Sliema cancellations:

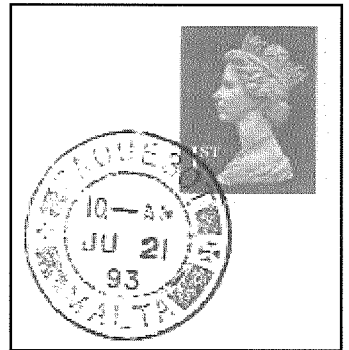
- a) The single ring VALLETTA (C.O.)/MALTA with time and date in one line – diameter 29mm;
- b) The single oval VALLETTA/MALTA (both types) with time and date in one line and measuring 32mm x 24mm;
- c) The Double ring VALLETTA/MALTA with Maltese crosses as spacers, time above date at centre and diameter 30mm;
- d) The single ring with arched MALTA and code letters A to R and diameter 20mm;
- e) The single ring with arched MALTA, with code letters but diameter 22mm;
- f) The single ring with arched MALTA, no code letters, diameter 24mm;
- g) The Maltese Cross in single ring with G.P.O. in the inner circle with no date — diameter 27mm;
- h) The Bar Cancellation with MALTA in between five horizontal bars;
- i) The Bar Cancellation with the central bar across MALTA;





- j) The Sliema B.O. / Malta single ring with time and date in two lines and diameter 27mm.

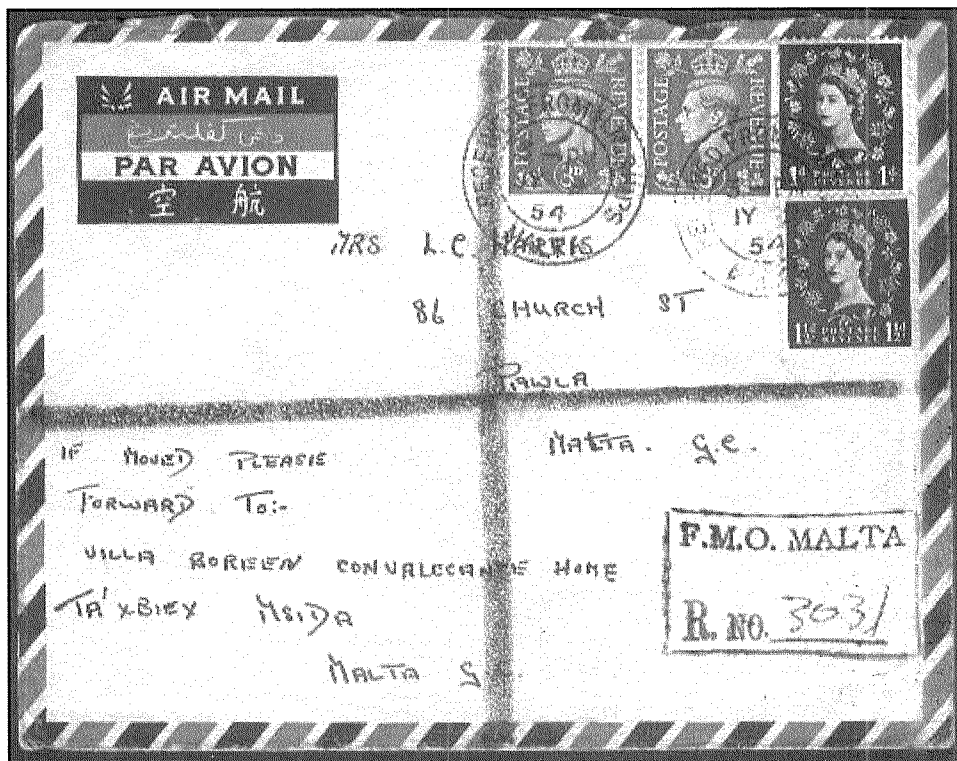
After the 1930s, until very recently, Great Britain stamps, mostly King George VI Definitives, as well as Queen Elizabeth, Wildings and Machins, and other foreign stamps are known cancelled with PAQUEBOT, MALTA circular date stamps. Two types of this canceller are known, one with Maltese crosses, used in the 1930s, and the other with Maltese crosses and killer blocks used after 1936.



Military Mail from the H.M. Forces in Malta, was dealt mostly by the Army, Naval or Forces Post Offices, and mainly received their cancellations. Occasionally, such mail was handled by the Malta Post Office, and the Great Britain stamps would of course, be cancelled by The Malta Post Office cancellers.

In 1931, two cancellers inscribed "RECEIVED FROM H.M. SHIPS/MALTA" with time and date slugs were used at the G.P.O., Valletta, to cancel Malta as well as Great Britain stamps on mail from the Fleet Mail Office, at St. Angelo, and which had not been cancelled previously or on mail that had been received from H.M. Ships. Letters from British naval personnel, bearing Great Britain stamps, may be found with strikes of these handstamps, if not previously cancelled by the British Fleet Mail "10" double ring circular date stamp.

One finds of course, odd occasions when Great Britain stamps or postal stationery



*A 1954 Airmail Cover franked with G.B. Stamps cancelled by the "Received from H.M. Ships/Malta" duly registered on board the H.M.S. Forth berthed at Pietà*

did inadvertently pass through The Malta Post Office, but very often such items were noticed and consequently not cancelled, but taxed accordingly.

Earlier on in this study, a full list of Great Britain stamps known to exist with the "M" Cancellation was given. I thought it would be fitting to give a complete list of Great Britain Stamps known obliterated with the various types of the "A 25" series.

Here's the comprehensive List that I had contributed to Said's *Great Britain Stamps Used in Malta Section*, as published in Said's Catalogue of MALTA - Postage Stamps and Postal History, in 1982. This list has since been updated and features in the JB Catalogue of Malta Stamps and Postal History – 2002 (16<sup>th</sup> Edition) published by the Sliema Stamp Shop Publishers.

The following Great Britain stamps are known to exist with the "A 25" cancellation:



- 1870-79 ½d rose-red (Plates 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20)
- 1880 ½d deep green Wmk Imperial Crown
- 1880 ½d pale green Wmk Imperial Crown
- 1884 ½d slate blue Wmk Imperial Crown
- 1841 1d red-brown (Imperforate)
- 1854 1d red-brown Die I (blued paper) Wmk Small crown Perf. 16 Plates 1, 8.
- 1855 1d red-brown Die II (blued paper) Wmk Large crown Perf. 14
- 1857 1d rose-red Wmk Large Crown Perf 14
- 1861 1d rose-red Alphabet IV Plates 50, 51
- 1862 1d rose-red Alphabet II Reserve Plate 16
- 1864-79 1d rose-red (Plate Numbers 71 - 224, with the exception of Plates Nos. 75, 77, 126, 128, 211; whilst Plates 112, 133, 221 to 224 are very rare).
- 1880 1d venetian red
- 1881 1d lilac/pale lilac (14 dots)
- 1881 1d lilac/shades (16 dots)
- 1887-79 1½d lake-red (Plates 1, 3)
- 1880 1½d venetian red
- 1884 1½d lilac
- 1841 2d blue (Imperforate)
- 1855 2d blue Wmk. Large Crown Plate 5 Perf. 14
- 1858-69 2d blue (Plates 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15)
- 1880 2d pale rose
- 1880 2d deep rose
- 1884 2d lilac
- 1875 2½d rosy mauve (blued paper) Plates 1 and 2
- 1875-76 2½d rosy mauve (Plates 1, 2, 3)
- 2½d rosy mauve (error of lettering LH-FL for LH-HL - Plate 2)
- 1876-79 2½d rosy mauve (Plates 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17)
- 1880-81 2½ blue (Plates 17, 18, 19, 20)
- 1881 2½d blue (Plates 21, 22, 23, 25)
- 1884 2½d lilac
- 1862 3d carmine-rose (Plates 2 and 3)
- 1865 3d rose Plate 4
- 1867-73 3d rose (Plates 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
- 1873-76 3d rose (Plates 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20)
- 1881 3d rose (Plates 20, 21)
- 1883 3d lilac (3d on 3d)
- 1884 3d lilac
- 1857 4d rose/rose-carmine
- 1857 4d rose/rose-carmine with thick glazed paper
- 1862 4d red (Plates 3 and 4)
- 1865-73 4d vermilion (Plates 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14)
- 1876 4d vermilion (Plate 15)
- 1877 4d sage-green (Plates 15, 16)
- 1880 4d grey-brown (Wmk. Large Garter Plate 17)
- 1880 4d grey-brown (Wmk. Crown Plates 17, 18)
- 1884 4d dull green
- 1880 5d indigo
- 1884 5d dull green
- 1854 6d violet (Embossed)
- 1856 6d lilac (Plates 3 and 4)
- 1862 6d lilac
- 1865-67 6d lilac (Wmk. Emblems Plates 5 and 6)
- 1865-67 6d lilac (Wmk. error - three roses and shamrock) Plate 6
- 1867 6d lilac Wmk. Spray Plate 6
- 1867-70 6d violet (Plates 6, 8 and 9)
- 1872-73 6d buff (Plates 11, 12)
- 1872 6d chestnut Plate 11

- 1873 6d grey (Plate 12)  
 1873 – 80 6d grey (Plates 13, 14, 15, 16, 17)  
 1881 – 82 6d grey (Plates 17, 18)  
 1883 6d lilac (6d on 6d)  
 1884 6d dull green  
 1876 8d orange  
 1862 9d straw (Plate 2)  
 1862 9d bistre (Plate 2)  
 1865 9d straw (Wmk. emblems; Plate 4)  
 1867 9d straw (Wmk. spray; Plate 4)  
 1883 9d dull green  
 1867 10d red-brown (Plate 1)  
 1847 1/- (Embossed)  
 1856 1/- green  
 1856 1/- green (thick paper)  
 1862 1/- green  
 1862 1/- green “K” Variety in lower left corner in white circle (stamp KD)  
 1865 1/- green Wmk. emblems (Plate 4)  
 1865 1/- green Wmk. Error (three roses and shamrock) Plate 4  
 1867 – 73 1/- green (Plates 4, 5, 6, 7)  
 1873 – 77 1/- green (Plates 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 – large coloured letters in the corner)  
 1880 1/- orange-brown (Wmk. spray; Plate 13)  
 1881 1/- orange-brown (Wmk. Crown; Plates 13, 14)  
 1884 1/- dull green  
 1867 2/- blue (dull, deep or pale blue; Plate 1)  
 1867 2/- cobalt (Plate 1)  
 1867 2/- milky blue (Plate 1)  
 1880 2/- brown (Plate 1)  
 1867 – 74 5/- rose or pale rose (Plates 1 and 2)  
 1882 5/- rose or pale rose (blued paper)  
 1882 5/- rose (white paper) (Plate 4)  
 1883 – 84 5/- rose (blued paper)  
 1883 – 84 5/- rose (white paper)  
 1878 10/- grey-green (white paper Wmk. Malt. Cross)

#### POSTAL FISCALS

- 1871 1d purple Wmk. Anchor  
 1881 1d purple Wmk. Orb

#### UPDATE 2001

- 1879 1d rose-red (Plate 225) (Leslie Wheeler Sale – Christie’s Robson Lowe)  
 1865 In the Cann Sale (15 June 1970) an 1865 1/- green (Pl 4) Wmk:Emblems was described cancelled with the “A25” obliteration struck in “reddish ink”

#### POSTAL FISCALS

- 1867 1d reddish lilac Wmk. Anchor

## “A 25” DUPLEX ABNORMALITIES

- a. In 1857, for a few days in September, the year on the “A 25” dater was shown as 1875.
- b. Between September 30<sup>th</sup> and December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1859, the “A 25” Duplex showed the year 1856 in error, the “9” of the year being inverted making it to read “56”.

- c. The 1862 1/- green “K” variety in the lower left corner, in white circle (stamp KD) is known cancelled with the “A 25” Duplex canceller.
  - d. In 1865 the year ‘slugs’ were wrongly inserted to show 1856.
  - e. Both the 1865 6d lilac (Plate 6) and the 1/- green (Plate 4) with the Wmk Error – three roses and a shamrock are known cancelled with the “A 25” Duplex canceller.
  - f. The 1875 2 ½d rosy mauve (Plate 2) – White Paper, showing the Error of Lettering LH-FL for LH-HL is also known cancelled with the “A 25” canceller.
- A few G.B. stamps with inverted watermark are known used in Malta. R.G.W.

Malim in his Study Paper lists the following:

1862	3d rose (Wmk. Emblems)
1865	4d vermilion (Plate 8)
1877	4d sage green (Plate 16)
1856	6d lilac (no letters in corners)
1865	6d lilac (large letters) Plate 5

In the Cann Sale, an 1857 1d rose-red (Perf. 14) was described as having an inverted watermark.

Forged cancellations of the “A 25” postmark also exist.



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- Dr. Ken Clough Sale Cavendish (Derby) 11<sup>th</sup> September 1998
- Malta Study Circle Paper No. 46 “Malta Registered” edited by John C. Lander (February 1978)
- Cdr. Nigel Bush Collection – Type One Duplex Vertical Oval used on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1881 (earliest recorded date)
- The Queen Victoria Halfpenny Yellow Stamp (23<sup>rd</sup> Printing) P.S.M. Magazine Vol. 7 No. 2 Chapter 6 – Alfred Bonnici M.D.
- Leslie Wheeler Sale – Christie’s Robson Lowe 25/26 March 1986
- Col. D. G. N. Lloyd – Lowles Sale by Harmer’s 24/25 January 1978
- Malta Study Circle Malta Newsletter Vol. 14 No. 2, Page 27
- <http://www.maltaphilately.org> administered by Walter Rizzo, the PSM Website Administrator.