

A LOCKED ‘MAP LETTER’¹

Joseph Schirò

A cartographic curio which has a lot of philatelic interest has recently appeared on the market and is now in the collection of the author. The letter is written on the back of a *carte à bordure* map of Malta which was produced by one of the Brocktorffs, probably by Federico Brocktorff (1811-1877 or later).²

The earliest known *carte à bordure* or *carte à figures* map of Malta which was produced for the visitor market was issued by Luigi Brocktorff (1814-1857) in 1843. It was a detailed lithographic map of Malta, titled *Map of Malta and its Dependencies*, printed in black ink surrounded by 13 vignettes illustrating views and costumed figures (Fig. 1).³

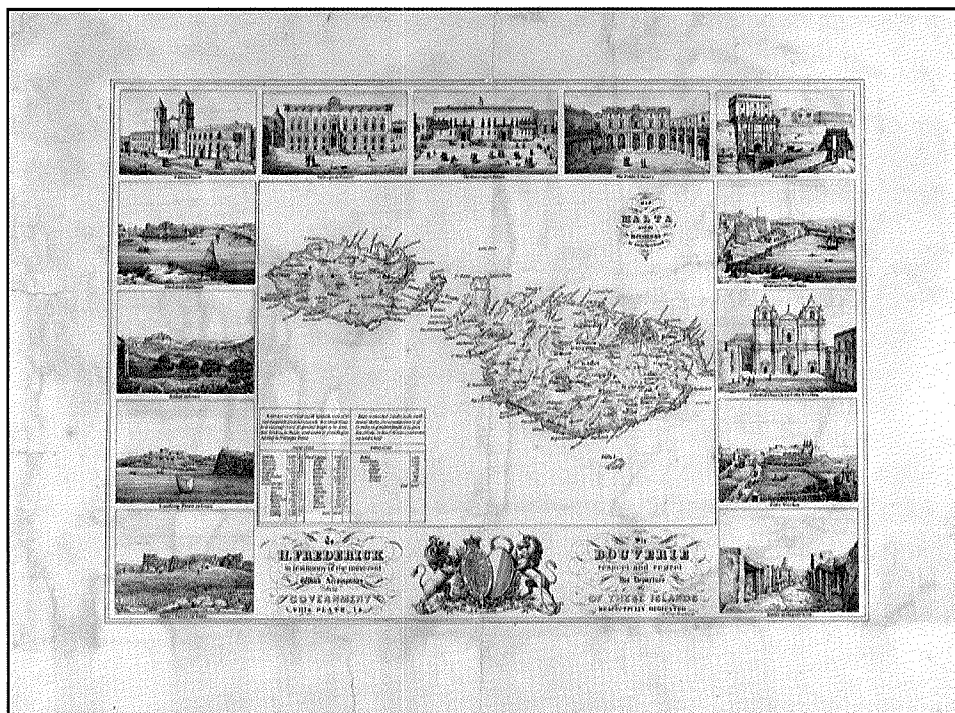


Fig. 1 Brocktorff, Luigi, *Map of Malta and its Dependencies*, 1843. AGMMC. MUŽA⁴

The map seems to have sold well as in 1847 Luigi Brocktorff issued another map of Malta, but this time the map was flanked by 15 vignettes and he had decided to introduce colour, by printing the scale bar and the road network in red ink (Fig. 2).⁵ This particular exemplar being shown, has been cut into 18 sections and glued on to linen to make it easier to fold and carry while touring the Maltese archipelago.

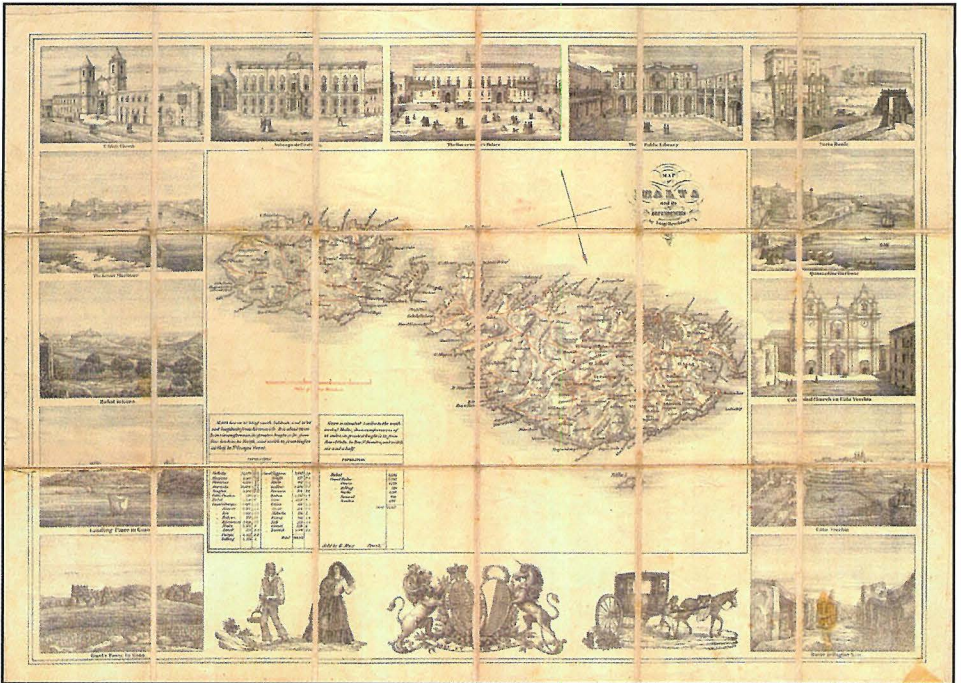


Fig. 2 Brocktorff, Luigi, *Map of Malta and its Dependencies*, 1847. AGMMC. MUŽA

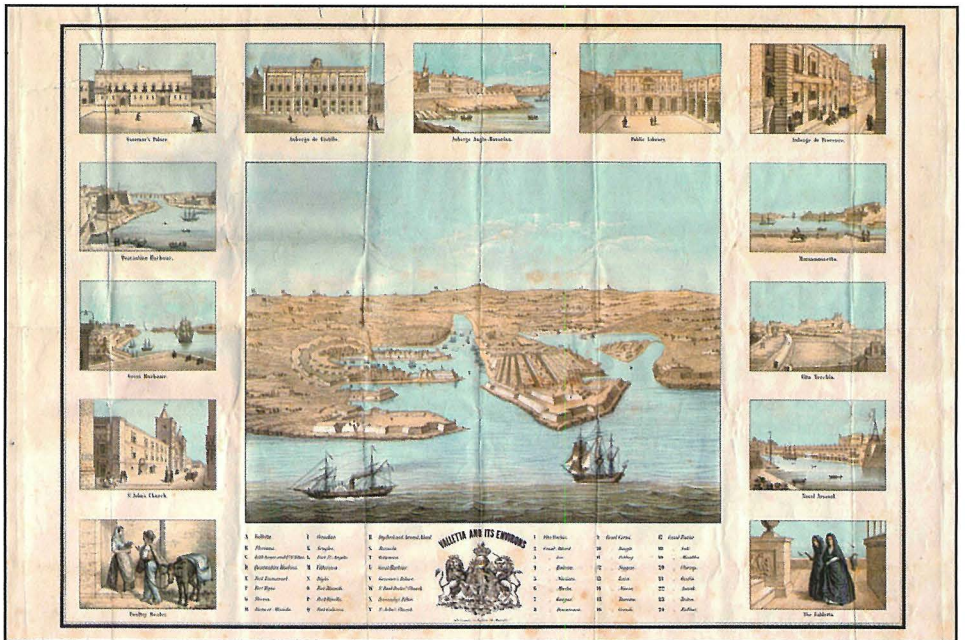


Fig. 3 Brocktorff, Federico *Valletta and its Environs*, 1854. Joseph Schirò Collection

A newly-discovered imprint

The map being described, titled *Valletta and its Environs*, is possibly the first *carte à bordure* bird's-eye view of Valletta which was issued in full colour to render it even more attractive to tourists (Fig. 3).⁶ A legend had also been added with number- and letter-keys on each side of the Arms of England. It also has an interesting imprint found at the centre below the Arms of England which reads: *Lith-Canquoin, Rue Napoléon, 18, Marseille.*

This is a discovery as it has never been seen before on any of the Brocktorffs' work.⁷ Why was the map printed in Marseille when the Brocktorffs had a very busy and successful lithographic press in Malta? Since the *terminus post quem* of the map is 1858, a search in the records of all the departures from Malta was done in the Malta maritime gazette, *Lloyd Maltese*, before 1858 to check if any of the Brocktorffs travelled to Marseille. On 9 December 1854, an entry was found for 'F. Brocktorff' who had left Malta for Marseille on board the ship *Lycargue*.⁸ Possibly Federico had gone to Marseille to perfect his techniques on chromolithography at the Conquoin lithographic printing establishment and a short run of this chromolithographed map was printed at the Conquoin press. He must have brought the lithographic stones with him when he came back to Malta as there are copies of the same map without the Conquoin imprint, meaning that they must have been printed at the Brocktorff press in Malta. Since it has no date and no maker on the map, it can now be dated to 1854 and be attributed to Federico Brocktorff.

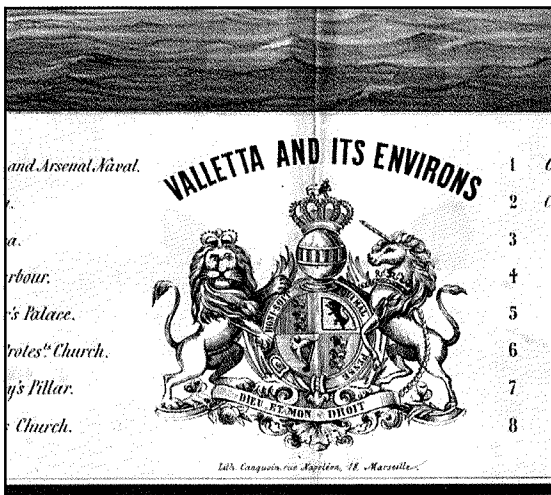


Fig. 4 Close-up of imprint showing *Lith-Canquoin, Rue Napoléon, 18, Marseille*

After 1866, Federico Brocktorff, issued two other chromolithographed bird's-eye views of Valletta (Fig. 4).⁹ with completely new vignettes including the one at the top right corner showing the newly-built Royal Theatre which was inaugurated in 1866 (Fig. 5).

The locked 'map letter'

The 'map letter' was folded once horizontally, then gate folded, turned 90 degrees and gate folded again to finally form a locked letter of 11 x 18cm.

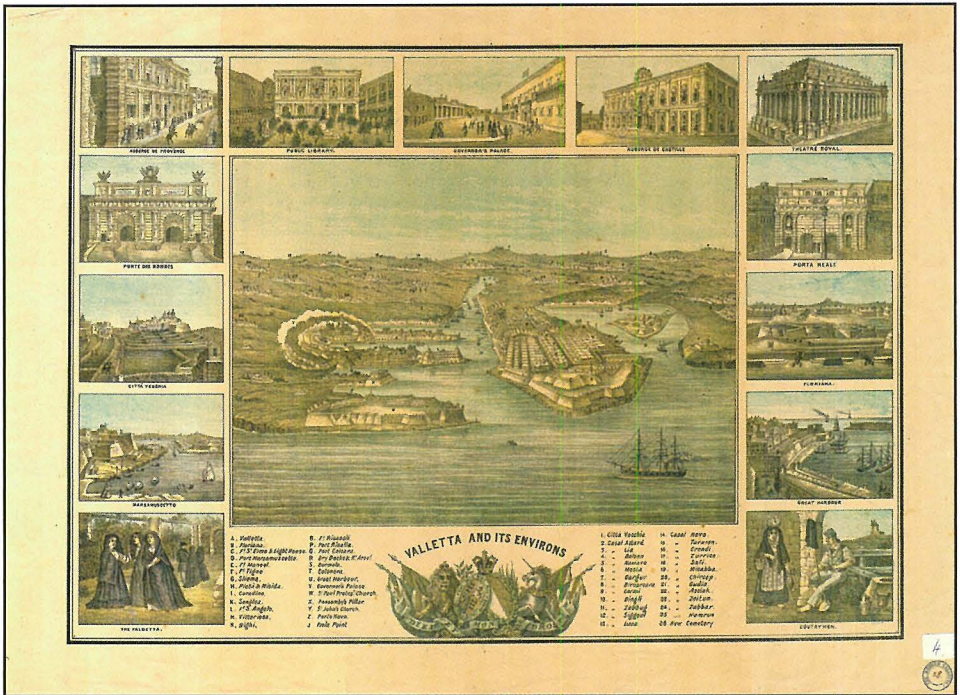


Fig. 5 Brocktorff, Federico *Valletta and its Environs*, post 1866. MUŽA Collection

It was then locked with red sealing wax and probably stamped with the signet ring of the sender carrying the coat of arms of the Barnard family which consists of the motto *BEAR AND FORBEAR* encircling a statant bear (Figs. 6, 7).

Inside the ‘map letter’ there was the following very short note written in pencil:
A few flowers from Malta. / The best things I can get here. / I have [been] tucking into grapes at / 1½^d p.[er] lb. Very hot but very / pleasant.
GEB

Malta 13th Sept^r.

In the letter packet he had put some flowers which he might have picked from the wild. The stains left by the flowers can still be seen on the writing and on the left hand side, which are mirror image stains, since the map was folded over (Fig. 8).

Given that the letter was sealed with the Barnard coat of arms, another search in the records of the *Lloyd Maltese*, showed that a ‘G. Barnard’ had arrived in Malta on Monday 13 September, 1858 on the P.O. *Salsette* from Southampton to Malta.¹⁰ This means that he had bought the Brocktorff map, had written the short letter in pencil, and inserted the flowers inside the map on the very same day of his arrival. He stayed in Malta for 17 days and departed again for Gibraltar and Southampton on Wednesday 29 September¹¹ on the same steamer which had proceeded with its

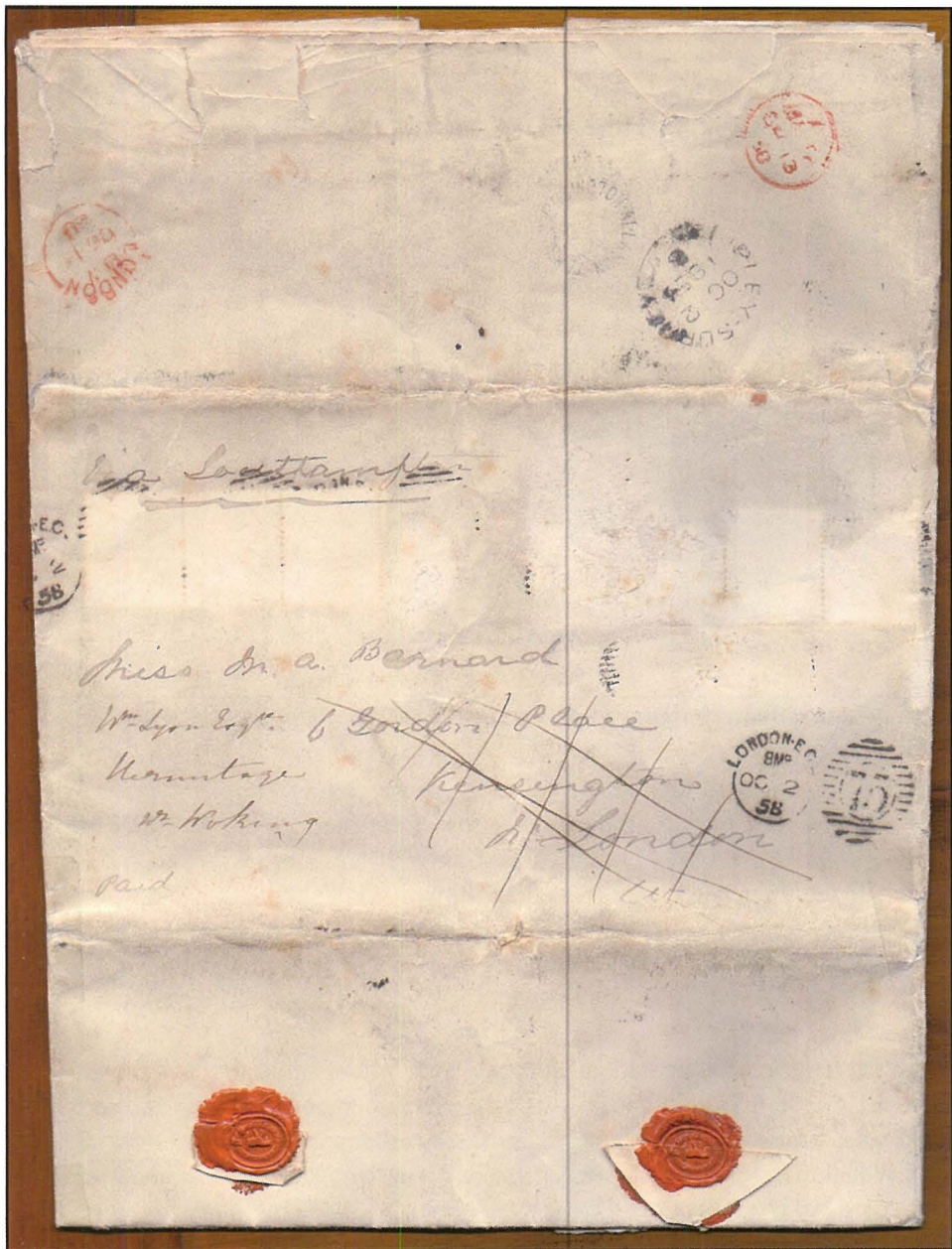


Fig. 6 Map letter locked with two wax seals with the coat of arms of the Barnard family



Fig. 7 Close-up of wax seal showing the the motto
BEAR AND FORBEAR

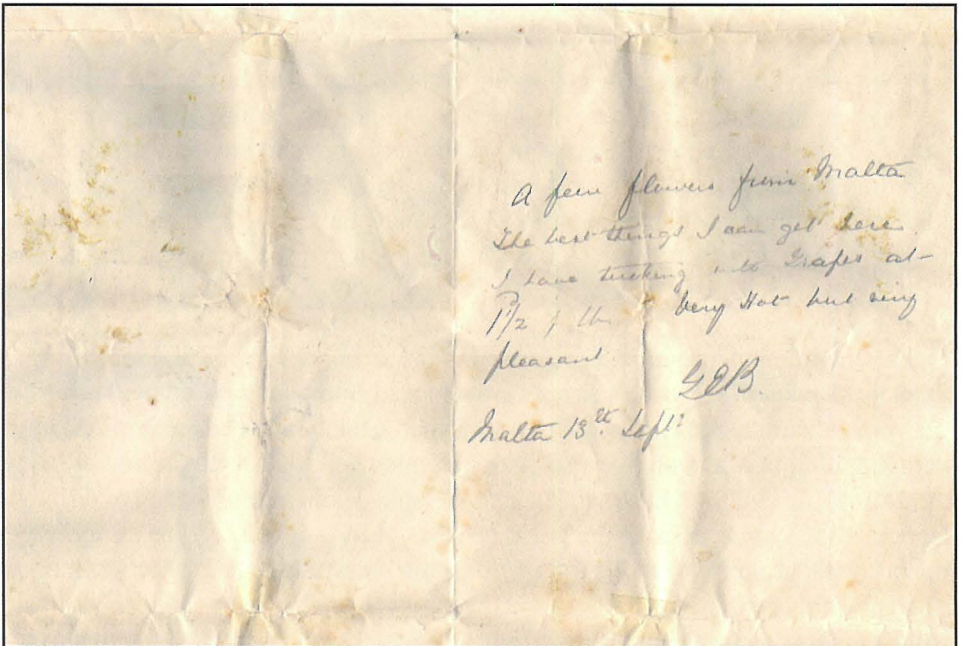


Fig. 8 The short letter handwritten in pencil and signed GEB.

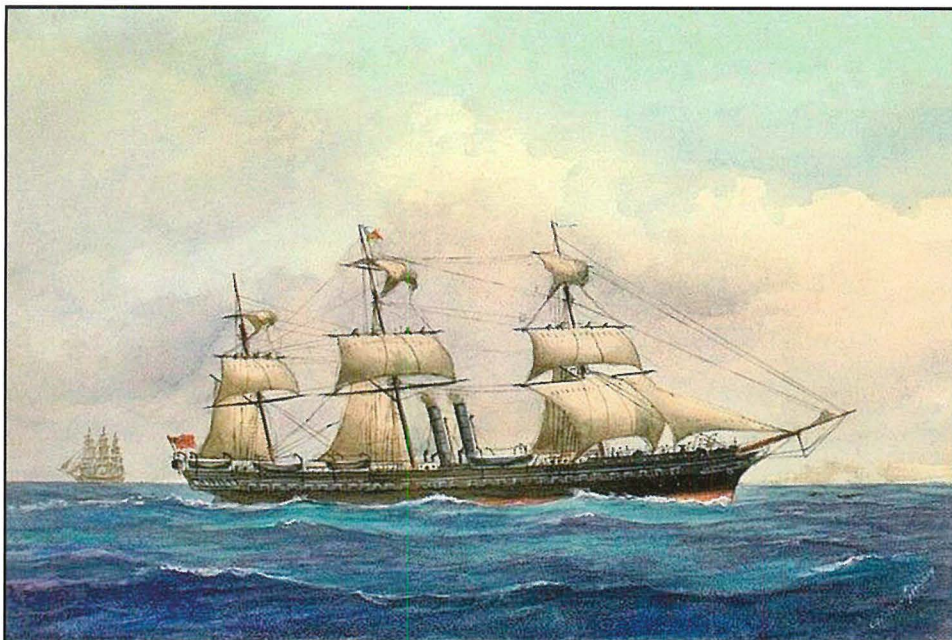


Fig. 9 The screw steamer *Salsette*. Watercolour drawn by Charles Dickson Gregory (c.1871-1947)

journey, after its stop in Malta, to Alexandria and was on its way back to England (Fig. 9).¹²

It would not be preposterous to assume that Barnard had bought the map from the English bookseller G. Muir who operated at the very centre of Valletta at 247 Strada Reale, now Republic Street, and who, very conveniently and strategically, shared the building with the Island Post Office and the British Packet Office (Fig. 10). On the Luigi Brocktorff map of 1847, shown above (fig. 2), there is a note on the map which says that it was sold by G. Muir and that the price was 2 shillings.

The philatelic aspect

The 'map letter' was sent via Southampton to London. Unfortunately, from a philatelist's point of view, the stamps were removed from the 'map letter'. The postal rate via Southampton to Great Britain was 6d. per ½ ounce at the time. British stamps were first used in Malta on overseas mail in September 1857, with the values being 1d., 2d., 4d., 6d. and 1s. This 'map letter' was franked with a combination of different denomination stamps to make up 2s., since it has been weighed at 1.7637 ounces (50 grams), without the flowers. High magnification showed that the stamps affixed in Malta probably consisted of a row of 4 at the top right, with 3 stamps below. It is likely that the top row consisted of a strip of three 4d. stamps, and a single 6d. stamp to the left. Below there might have been a strip of three 2d. stamps to make up the 2s.rate.

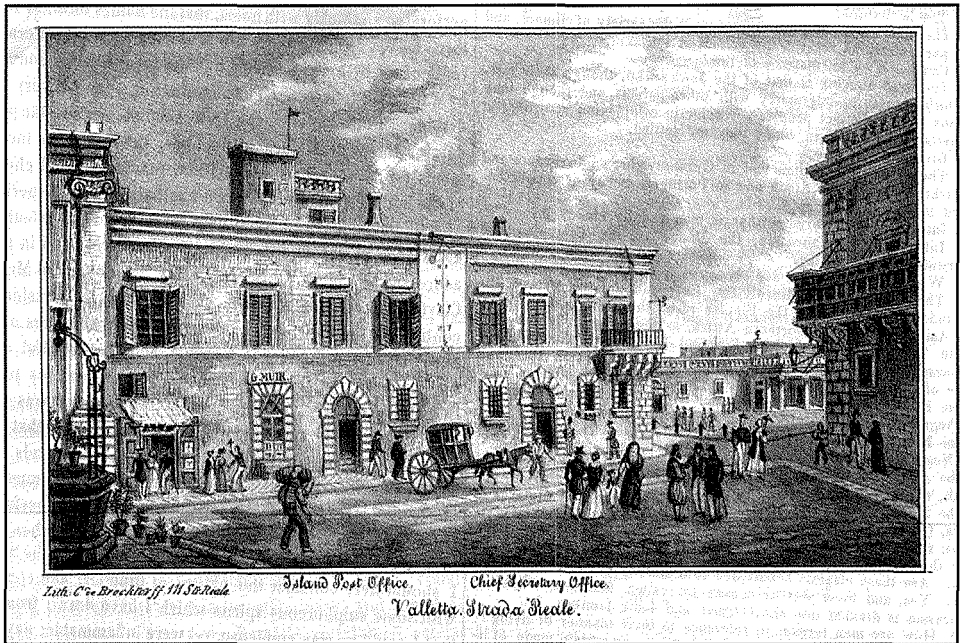


Fig. 10 Lithograph by Charles de Brocktorff which appeared in *The Mediterranean Magazine*, 26 November 1842. Courtesy of the National Library of Malta

The stamps would have been cancelled with an “M” in bars handstamp. One can just make out at the left of the top row, and also at the right, the bars of the “M” in bars cancellation which would have “tied” the stamps to the cover. Similarly on the second row.

It was normal practice at the Malta Post Office to make up frankings with a number of stamps rather than simply use two 1s. values.

To the left of the cover would have been a strip of four 1d. stamps for the redirection, cancelled by the London EC 75 duplex (a full example of that handstamp can be seen at the bottom right of the cover), which one can also partially see at the left of the stamps, as well as a trace at the right. The cancellation date was 2 October 1858.¹³

The ‘map letter’ had been addressed to:

Miss M. A. Barnard
 6 Gordon Place
 Kensington
 N[ea] London
 UK

However, the person to whom it was delivered, was not found at the written address because it was crossed out and the new name and address of:

W[illia]^m Lyon Esq.

Hermitage

W[es]t Woking

were added. Underneath the new address, there is written in pencil 'Paid'.

We find a second cancellation stamp on the back for Ripley, Surrey showing the same date '2 October' when the 'map letter' was redirected. Lying on the main road from London to Portsmouth, Ripley was the post town for the whole area including Woking from 1813 to 1865. Near the cancellation stamp is another round blind stamp 'ALLASON TERRACE KENSINGTON'.

The dramatis personae

Intrigued by who could be the *dramatis personae* of this 'map letter', research was first conducted on the Barnard family without achieving real concrete results, until attention was concentrated on the Lyon family¹⁴ where the scene suddenly moved to faraway Valparaiso in Chile. From the study of the Lyon family, it was established that the sender was George Edward Barnard who was born on 27 February 1836.¹⁵ He was the son of William Barnard (1801-1848), a silversmith,¹⁶ who had married Martha née Lyon on 24 October 1832. He had a younger brother William, born 9 September 1833 and a younger sister, Mary Anne born on 9 April 1838. The letter was addressed to his sister Mary Anne Barnard, then only 20 years old.¹⁷

William Lyon, to whom the 'map letter' was forwarded to, was Martha Lyon's brother, George Edward's uncle from his mother's side. William Lyon was born on 30 September 1813. In 1827 he sailed together with his brother George for Chile. After being wrecked off Monte Video, he arrived at Valparaiso, where he remained in business with his brother George until 1845, when he returned to continue his business in England. In 1851 he retired and settled at the Hermitage, Woking, Surrey. He became one of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the county of Surrey. In 1861 he moved to Jersey, and in 1872 to South Norwood, near London, where he died, on 16 January 1892.¹⁸

His brother George however remained in Valparaiso and his business in commercial trade and shipping grew so much that the Lyon family became very influential. On behalf of the Chilean government, his firm, Messrs Lyon Brothers, had sent a letter on 14 June 1852 from Valparaiso to Perkins, Bacon & co. containing the first order of postage stamps, the Colon issues of Chile, with the aim of speeding up the postal system in Chile, making it the third country in America to implement advanced payment for postal services.¹⁹

The map had been carefully opened from the seals with scissors not to ruin it when it finally reached its destination in Woking. Who knows through how many hands this map must have passed over the years, but it is so extraordinary that it somehow managed to find its way back to Malta.²⁰

References

- ¹ The term ‘map letter’ is being assigned for want of an exact term. I thank Bernadine Scicluna, curator of the Albert Ganado Malta Map Collection, with whom I discussed this conundrum, until we found the best way to describe the special map being discussed. Letterlocking is the folding and securing of a writing substrate to function as its own envelope.
- ² The founder of the Brocktorff family of artists was Charles Frederick who came to Malta from Schleswig-Holstein, Germany in 1804. His children Federico, Luigi, Giuseppe and Leopoldo were all artists and lithographers.
- ³ See Albert Ganado, Joseph Schirò, Claude Micallef Attard, *The Brocktorff Mapmakers*, Malta, BDL, 2012, 132-135.
- ⁴ Albert Ganado Malta Map Collection. MUŻA is the new National Museum of Art in Malta.
- ⁵ Albert Ganado et al., op.cit, 136-137.
- ⁶ For a full description of the map, see Albert Ganado et al., op.cit, 150-151.
- ⁷ This was confirmed by Dr Albert Ganado, who is a keen collector of Melitensia, including books and manuscripts, maps and prints, portraits, autographs, postcards and philatelic items and who has written extensively on Maltese history, art, legislation, politics and philately.
- ⁸ *Lloyd Maltese*, Anno XIV, No. 4154, 2.
- ⁹ Albert Ganado et al., op.cit, 190-194.
- ¹⁰ *Lloyd Maltese*, 13 September, 1858, 3.
- ¹¹ *Lloyd Maltese*, 29 September, 1858, 3.
- ¹² The *Salsette* was a brand new iron screw steamer built by Tod & MacGregor, Glasgow for the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. It was launched on the 30th March 1858. See <http://www.clydeships.co.uk/view.php?ref=22578#v>, accessed on 11 December 2019.
- ¹³ I thank John Birkett Allan for supplying me with his expert philatelic advice, and for freely giving me all the information on the type of stamps used and how they were franked, and to Dr Alfred Bonnici, the President of the Malta Philatelic Society, who kindly forwarded my query to John.
- ¹⁴ I thank Rod Lyon, a member on the Committee of the Malta Map Society, who suggested that I concentrated more on the Lyon family, rather than on the Barnard family.
- ¹⁵ He died on 21st July 1907, at 36 Kingswood Avenue, described as Assistant Manager of the Mercantile Bank of India. Downloaded from the British Newspaper Archive, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001652/19070723/078/0009> from the Globe, published 23 July 1907.
- ¹⁶ The Barnards were a family of silversmiths in London. Trading as Edward Barnard and Sons, they are known for having created the Lily font, a large silver gilt baptismal font commissioned especially for the occasion of the christening of Victoria, Princess Royal, in 1841 and still used in the christening services of members of the British Royal family.
- ¹⁷ Andrews Ross, *The Lyons of Cossins and Wester Ogil Cadets of Glamis*, Edinburgh, George Waterston & Sons, 1901, 85.
- ¹⁸ Andrews Ross, op.cit, 91.
- ¹⁹ https://www.mhnv.gob.cl/articles-23334_archivo_01. ‘Nota sobre los orígenes de la Familia Lyon en Chile’. accessed 30/10/2019.
- ²⁰ It has recently been discovered that the map was bought on eBay UK in 2013 by a Maltese collector. Unfortunately he did not keep a record of the seller in England.