

Great Britain Stamps Used in Malta

Continued Part 3

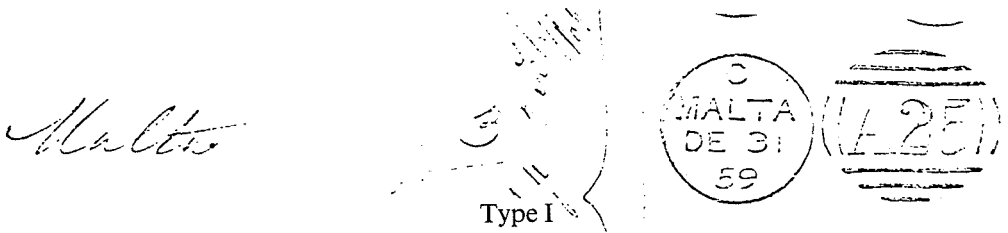
By Anthony Fenech

The A 25 Circular Duplex Obliterator

As has been detailed in my previous articles in Vol. 12 Nos. 2 and 4 of the P.S.M. Magazine, 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 article, as well as in subsequent series.

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 2nd February 1859. Lieut. Gatt of the Royal Malta Artillery, on "The Post Office and Stamps of Malta" (1) gives the earliest date of use as the 16th of that month, though The Handbook (2) compiled by The Malta Study Circle, records February 13th 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 last year, in The André Bollen Collection by Heinrich Kohler and later featured on the front page of The Study Paper No. 35 (1983) - "G.B. Used in Malta" (3) and captioned 'very early use of "A 25" duplex handstamp, 24 days after its strike in the G.P.O. London Proof Book - 2nd 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 25th October 1859. (4) Then "A" appeared (earliest date recorded...12th 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

Malta

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Type II

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To what Place

Date when sent

Stamps

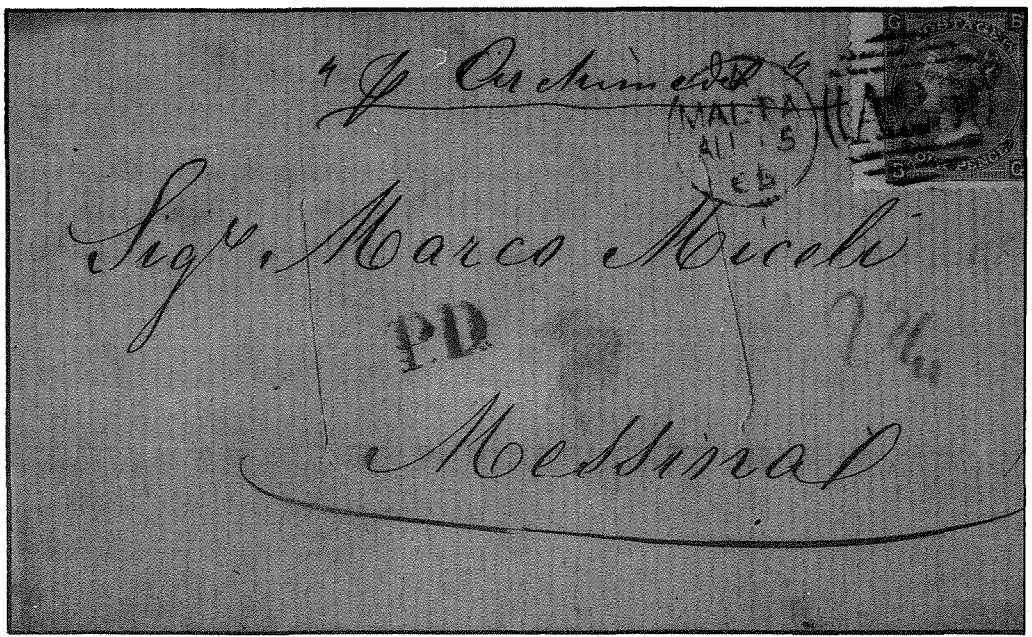
Malta
No 71068
400

Nov-18th
1861



Type III

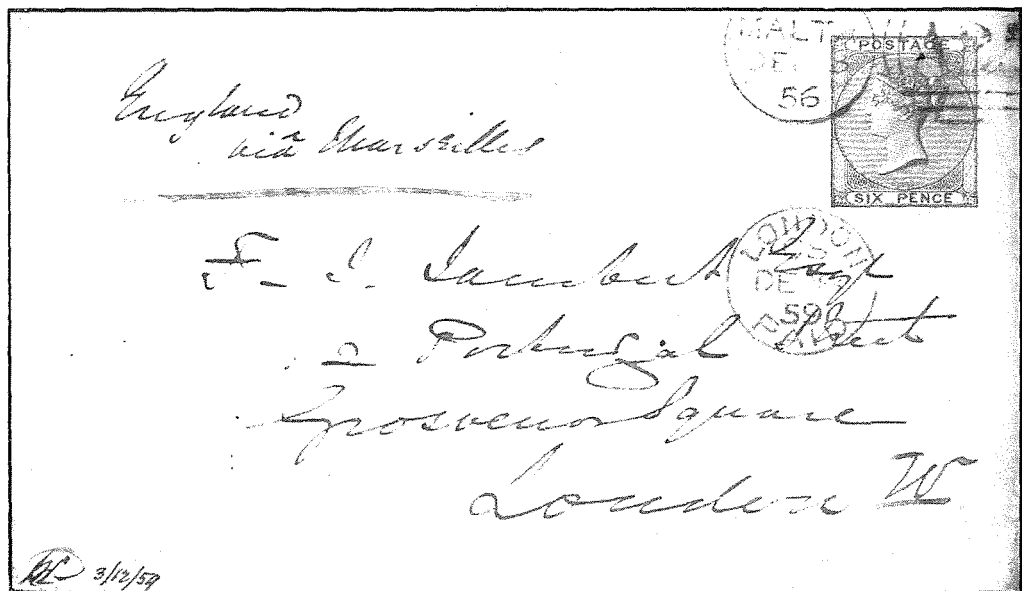
appearance and the three codes, probably to indicate different times during the day, were used until October 1861 (5) when Type II came into use. Type I is not much seen after 1862. It was used concurrently with Types II and III in September 1868, and December 1873. Finally it was brought again into use temporarily in August and September 1876.



Type II



Type III



Type I (Error in the date)

Between September 30th and September 3rd 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 "A 25" duplex handstamp is shown in the G.P.O. London Proof Book in Vol. 8 (2) Page 181, and dated October 11th, 1861.

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...29th 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 4th December, 1874. Code letter 'E' is very rare; in fact the two examples known are on:

- (i) a Cover franked with a Malta ½d yellow buff (14 x 12½) and is dated 19th October 1878, and
- (ii) on a G.B. 2½d, plate 17, blue dated 29th April 1880.

It is worth mentioning here that a certified copy of an 1862 1d Rose-red from 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 reserve plates during some plate manufacturing sequences and these would be stored for use should a sudden demand for new plates occur. (6) 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 despatch 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 despatched from London to Malta.

1. Gibbons Stamp Weekly; Vol. IX Page 429.
2. The Malta Study Circle, Malta - The Stamps and Postal History 1567-1960 Handbook, compiled by The Malta Study Circle, Edited by R.E. Martin. pp. 66-68.
3. Malta Study Circle, Study Paper 35 (1983) originally written by R.G.W. Malim, revised and edited by R.E. Martin. Front Page.
4. Malta Postmarks on British Stamps by Bertram McGowan - The British Philatelist Vol. XXIII No. 2 - April 1930.
5. *ibid.*
6. The Postal Markings of Malta 1857-1902 by Major F. Orme T.D. - Postal History Society Bulletin No. 80 (May/June 1955).