

Great Britain Stamps Used in Malta

By:- Anthony Fenech

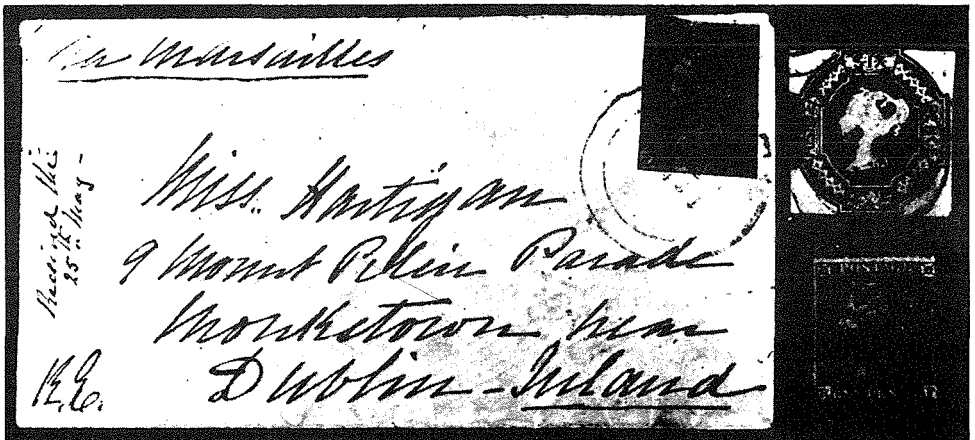
The study of Great Britain Stamps used with Postmarks of Malta has always been fascinating. Interesting articles on the subject have been written by eminent philatelists such as H. L'Estrange Ewen, Bertram Mc Gowan, Major Fred Orme, and Andrè Bollen.

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 found it preferable to restrict their efforts to obtain 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, make them an integral part of our philatelic history.

Transit Postmarks:

A) The 30mm "Double Ring Malta".

B) The "Wavy Line Grid" Postmarks.



A) THE 30mm DOUBLE RING — MALTA

A.

B.

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 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" (G.S.W. Vol. 1X, 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. XX111, N°2, dated April 1930, mentions his example, in black, on the 6d octagonal embossed stamp of 1854, and is dated 5th April, 1855. Also Major Fred Orme, at a Meeting of The Royal Philatelic Society London, on March 14th, 1959, mentions a cover 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. Another G.B. stamp known obliterated by this hand-stamp is the 1841 1d red-brown imperforate.

B) THE "WAVY LINE GRID"



At Plumridges's Auction on 1st 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. 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 or 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 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 1885 until 3rd September 1856, Besides the 1d red-brown Die II (small crown, perf. 16.) and the 1s 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 Alph. 11)
- 1d red-brown Die II (large crown, perf. 16) and
- 2d blue (Plate 5) Wmk; Large Crown, perf. 14).

(to be continued.)