

MALTA STUDY CIRCLE

(A Society for those interested in the postal history and postage stamps of Malta)

London 1980 Meeting Report

The first event in the Circle programme at London 1980 Exhibition was the Dinner held in conjunction with the Gibraltar Study Circle, on Thursday 8th May, at the Royal Automobile Club in Pall Mall, London S.W.1.

Fifty members, friends and guests from both organisations sat down to a most enjoyable meal followed by some entertaining speakers.

Mr. Wally Jackson (G.S.C.) introduced the principle guests and remarked that at the last moment the Gibraltar Minister of Postal Services and the Malta High Commissioner had both been forced to withdraw on medical grounds, so good wishes for speedy recoveries were expressed on behalf of all those present. Wally then introduced Dr. Alfred Bonnici from Malta, and he proceeded to relate the similarities of the two countries of study also the fact that in the past Malta had exported to Gibraltar not only workers but also means of transport in the form of the karrozzin, a horse drawn cab, also much of the early mail service to Malta from the U.K. was via Gibraltar. He continued by giving a reminiscent review of the Malta Study Circle's history and the recent work on the Handbook project which had reached fruition in time for the Exhibition.

A surprise visitor to the dinner was

Mr. Robson Lowe, accompanied by Mr. & Mrs. H. Cumming, they made a brief stop between other engagements and with the usual warm typical 'Robby' humour he explained the call was only to receive a little sustenance before journeying to their next appointment! Dr. Bonnici then thanked both Mr. Lowe and Mr. Cumming for their enthusiastic support and technical advice in helping the Malta Study Circle publish the Handbook, these remarks were heartily applauded by all those present.

The second speaker to be introduced was Mr. R.B. Pitaluga, Director of Postal Services, Gibraltar, and in a very forthright manner described himself as a non-stamp collector, but he was interested to see how the hobby operated and concluded his remarks by wishing both organisations every success in their activities.

To conclude the formal proceedings and propose a vote of thanks on behalf of the overseas visitors Mr. G.A. Osborn from Bermuda had the diners chuckling over his anecdotes on postal history and stamps, but also he deviated to more humorous tales so as not to bore the non-collectors present. This all received enthusiastic applause.

The second major event in the programme was the International meeting held during the morning of Saturday 10th May, at Earls Court, when

several members from overseas presented displays of varied and unusual items.

The chairman, Arthur Moyles introduced Mr. J.W. Turnbull from Australia, saying that many members knew the name as his late wife Phyllis had been a founder member and enthusiastic contributor of articles and information to Circle publications. Jim, to all his friends, modestly admitted that all the items he was showing were from his wife's collection and he related how he was the initiator of her interest in Malta as in his job he associated with Maltese migrants and saw some envelopes bearing Malta stamps being thrown away asked for them to be saved for his wife. From this small beginning the collection grew into fifty volumes.

The display included: a Knight's letter dated 1655 with embossed seal, covers carried by Falmouth Packets in the early 1800's, several examples of the first curved boxed Malta handstamp struck in red and in black, examples of various styles of the straight line h/s MALTA POST OFFICE, forwarding agents cachets, the 1857 circular Malta paid, with strikes in red and black, a Malta Ship Letter used in 1860, another maritime item was a cover from Alexandria to France with the Malta MB (mobile box) mark dated 1867, a very unusual MALTA struck in black on a cover from Malta to Guernsey having a manuscript charge of 3/3 was dated 1817.

There was also a selection of postage due markings and several W.W.I

prisoner of war items, one having the only recorded example of FREE FROM PRISONER OF WAR in oval having a number 5, this was on a card written in Turkish and addressed to Rome, dated 1921, and to conclude the varied display was a K.G.V. 1d. postal stationery card used from COSPICUA MY 28 23 having the earliest recorded date of use of the Wembley Exhibition handstamp.

After members had closely examined this wonderful array of items, the Circle's Malta representative Mr. Hadrian Wood was introduced, he shyly described his collection of postage due marks as being well written up and he knew members preferred to look rather than hear him speak. The wide range of postage due items displayed was the biggest selection the Circle had ever seen at a meeting, it commenced with manuscript markings, some of which may not have been applied in Malta, several examples of the straight line INSUFFICIENTLY PAID, also a wide selection of most values known of the circular handstamps indicating charge, and T marks; also as a bonus many cards delivered in Malta had postman's personal handstamps as well, so many aspects could be studied from one item. An almost complete series of charge values from ½d. to 1/- were displayed, a most unusual combination was threepence struck alongside ½d. These circular marks were mostly on postcards and mainly covered the period 1867 to 1922. Examples of the upright oval handstamp with charge

and A25 were shown, dated 1893 and 1895 respectively, handstamps in the U.P.U. centimes, five centimes used in 1896, and ten centimes used in 1924. Several examples of the large unframed 2d. were included, as well as some items where the charge had been altered or cancelled, and the different methods used gave another small study in itself; e.g. three pence in circle cancelled and the unframed 2d. applied, a 4d. in circle cancelled by an A25 ibliterator alongside the Delivery Branch c.d.s. dated 1904, and a curiosity, a 4d. in circle cancelled by part of the registered h/s Malta amid bars and the revised charge of 3d. in circle applied nearby. A good range of the box charge marks of the 1924-26 period were also shown and to conclude this wonderful display were official paid items of mail where the boxed charge marks were applied in red with the Official Paid c.d.s. these were dated 1933.

Mr. Cecil Diamantino from Malta then showed a few examples from a recent 'find' of pre-adhesive material. This included disinfected cachets, and seals, straight line charge marks in various styles of lettering, also a cover dated JU 26 82 bearing a block of four Q.V. ½d. yellows, and to complete his contribution a couple of censored covers, one from W.W.I dated 1916, the other W.W.II dated 1940 with a very large cachet reading Deputy Chief Censor.

Mr. Hymie Mervis from South Africa was then introduced to members, and he commenced by apologising for not showing any material but

had problems in customs in his country. He did offer to do a revue of the Handbook for the publication "The South Africa Philatelist" and hoped to put Malta on the collecting map in his part of the world.

As there was still some time available the chairman, Arthur Moyles showed a few items of general interest including a registered cover dated 1938 which was plastered with ¼d. adhesives and tied up by pink tape sealed by G.P.O. red wax seals. Two examples of the Tower Road registration label used at Prince of Wales Road, but only one being altered in manuscript to show the correct place of use, and a returned picture postcard, also a wartime German propaganda picture postcard showing the Luftwaffe bombing Valletta, also a couple of P.O.W. cards sent to Malta in W.W.II.

Mr. George Coates then showed a few of his recent acquisitions. These included Malta Paid c.d.s. in red, also an example in black, forwarding agents cachets, and an airmail cover dated 1934 with a cachet in Greek, a Zeppelin cover to Malta dated 1929 with a query as to the route it used to Malta, but he commented it was probably dropped in Italy as that had been a practice although there were no backstamps to prove it.

Mr. John Lander then followed up with another couple of air mail items, to U.K. and asked for assistance in determining the routes as the rates varied so much during the 1930-1940 period, and to conclude the morning's

Continued on page 32

Continued from page 28

displays Mr. Graham Smeed showed examples of the recently issued new style registered envelopes used from the newly opened Qormi Branch Post Office.

Arthur Moyles thanked all the overseas members for bringing so much interesting and varied material; he remarked that Hadrian's postage due collection was the finest he had seen and the example of the 9d. in circle handstamp the first recorded and was not mentioned in the Handbook.

Many members and friends then retired to the various lounges or bars to continue the 'meeting'; all agreed it had been a very interesting and seen and the example of the 9d. in examples of the recently issued new memorable event.

| |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>The Editor will be pleased to discuss with members articles they would like to contribute to the PSM Magazine. Please write in the first instance to the Editor.</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|