



THE EVOLUTION OF THE ONE HALF PENNY QUEEN VICTORIA YELLOW STAMP

by

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The principal aim of this study is to establish with documented proof the number of printings in chronological order, and record the known Philatelic Gems of the controversial $\frac{1}{2}$ d Malta Queen Victoria Yellow.

It is nearly impossible to be dogmatic on the interpretation of the various shades, as no two persons will see these difficult shades alike. In differentiating between shades, one has to remember that:

1. the ink was 'fugitive',
2. dirt and over inking accumulated on the rollers, giving the impression of muddy appearance,
3. with used copies, bleaching has taken place, especially when one remembers that the Malta water contains a very high percentage of calcium and chlorine, and this must have faded the colour considerably.

However, in spite of the shade, in the great majority of the stamps, the true nature of the ink mixture can best be understood by examining the solid value tablet with a strong magnifying glass.

In the past various studies were attempted, but in spite of this, there has ranged a tremendous amount of doubt and controversy over the number of printings, and their dates of issue. Among the pioneers who established such material were: Mr. Sefi; Lt. W.R. Gatt (1920); R.B. Yardley (1921); Sir E.D. Bacon (1929) in 'The London Philatelist'; and Major P. Orme (paper in 1960).

In 1958 John Eastman published "The De La Rue History of British and Foreign Postage Stamps 1885-1901", on behalf of the Royal Philatelic Society, and devoted two full pages, pages 250 and 360, to the Queen Victoria $\frac{1}{2}$ d Yellow. Eastman missed the 30th printing. There were actually twenty nine yellow printings, and one green printing, and not twenty eight yellow printings as claimed by Eastman, and that between the 28th and 30th, there was a $\frac{1}{2}$ d Green printing, which De La Rue delivered in two instalments, one on the 20th June 1884, and the other on the 5th July 1884.

On the 1st December, 1960, Major Fred Orme, T.D., published his paper "Malta Half Penny Centenary" and my reproduction of the Invoices and correspondence, from the Archives of the British Postal Museum, hope to establish once and for all the number of printings, and to allay the fears of those who doubt Major Orme's classification. In order to achieve this, I wanted to find concrete proof, and record it. With nothing less than such detail will the ever doubting minds of philatelists be once and for all be satisfied.

My research commenced among the Archives of the House of Representatives in Malta, the Malta Postal Authorities, and the National Postal Museum, London, who are now in possession of the Day Books, Invoices and Correspondence Books of the De La Rue Company. The printers were always conscious of the importance of keeping meticulous correspondence records, which were carefully collected and mounted by their Archivist, the later Mr. G. Leslie Newman, in 83 volumes. These, together with some 450 volumes of correspondence etc., have now been lent on long loan to the British Postal Museum, and my thanks go to the Curator, Mr. A.G. Rigo de Rigi, for allowing me access to their archives, and supplying me with photo-copies and slides of these interesting documents.

CHAPTER I

1st PRINTING (21st JULY 1859) UNWATERMARKED BLUE PAPER, PERF. 14 — BUFF

Up till 1860 letters for inland distribution were delivered privately and by mail contractors. The church Authorities and Business organizations had their own organized deliveries.

In 1853 an important change occurred at the sitting of the Council of Government on 31st March 1853: the Chief Secretary announced the intention of the Government to establish a daily local post to serve Valletta, the Three Cities (Senglea, Vittoriosa and Cospicua) and all the Casals (villages) of Malta and Gozo within the near future. This service, being experimental, was to be Gratuitous, no postage being required for the transit of letters between one locality and another in the Islands. The letters were dispatched to and from the various localities by a mail contractor, who hired a number of boys to carry the letters to and from the Police Stations, where they were held and displayed in glass boxes and handed over when claimed. A sum of £42 was voted to defray the expenses. So on the 10th June 1853, the Free Internal Post was inaugurated. This state of affairs although experimental lasted up till 1860, and as British stamps were being used for overseas mail, a special stamp for inland use was felt to be appropriate.

This was fully explained in the Council of Government of March 1859, by the Crown Advocate General after the Chief Secretary had moved the resolution, which was agreed, and His Excellency reported progress (Minutes, p. 283). In page 231 of the Minutes Book of the Council of Government, under "Seventh Supplementary Estimate", we find the following entry:

(Council of Government of Malta) Committee of Supply. Services exclusive of establishments. Notice given March 9/3/59. Resolution No. 85, in sitting No. 64 March 12/59.

Resolved:

That it is the opinion of this Committee that a sum not exceeding £110 chargeable upon the revenue of the year 1859, be applied, under the head of Miscellaneous Services for cost of a die and other articles for making stamps for a half penny postage for the transmission of letters by the inland post.

Proposed by Victor Hamilton

Seconded by

Passed

G. B. Trapani
Clerk to the Council.

Accordingly on the 30th April 1859, an order was sent to the "Crown Agents for the Colonies", who in turn commissioned Messrs. Thomas De La Rue (now the De La Rue Co.,) to go ahead with the engraving of the die, which was executed by J.F. Poubert de la Forte.

PROOFS Proofs in black from the die were struck on white glazed card; one dated in pencil "21.6. 9" appeared in the Frank Basil's sale by Robson Lowe on the 13th October 1972, item 1103, and another die proof inscribed in pencil "after hardening, June 28/59" in Harmer's June sale of 1970, item 118.

Similar but "cut down" proofs in black having 2mm margins, and another in yellow on white paper having 1mm margins, appeared in Harmer's June sale of 1970, items 119 & 120.

SPECIMEN A cut down die proof in yellow on white paper overprinted "SPECIMEN" in black appeared at Harmer's 15th & 16th June sale, as item 121.

IMPERFORATE Major Fred Orme mentions that plate proofs taken in Buff on Blued paper, the issued colour, and imperforate do exist. Although few in number, one appeared on the market as item 147 P in Harmer's June 1970

sale, and was described as "½d. buff, imperf. S.G. 1a, unused margins all round, fine, very scarce only a few examples exist. With B.P.A. certificate". Lately this re-appeared in Stanley Gibbons "Classics of the British Empire" sale of the 4th October, 1973, as item 39, and was described as "1860, ½d. buff, variety, imperf, S.G. 1a, unused, a great rarity, only two or three other examples known with B.P.A. certificate 1949". It created considerable competition and fetched the the record price (for a Malta stamp) of £1750.

The plate formed was an electro type one, the engraving being in relief or in Cameo, consisting of four panes, two above and two below, each containing sixty stamps in ten horizontal rows of six. In the side margins, near the upper right and lower left corner of the sheet, are plate numbers — the numeral "1" in white on a small circular coloured disc, with an inner white concentric circle; and above the upper panes and also between the two upper and the two lower panes, is the inscription "MALTA POSTAGE ONE HALPENNY". There is also a perforation cross in the upper margin and from 1863, the horizontal space between the panes was watermarked Crown Colonies.

This die was used throughout the 29 printings as well as the ½d green printings.

From 1st December 1860 it was decided to impose a local letter rate of ½d. per ½ ounce as detailed in the following Government Notice:—

His Excellency the Governor having been pleased to order a daily delivery of Inland letters and newspapers in the towns of Valletta, Floriana, and Sliema, and the erection of letter boxes at different parts of Valletta, for the greater convenience of the public, notice is hereby given that on-after the 1st of December, 1860, properly and clearly addressed letters placed in such boxes will be treated in every respect as if posted at the General Post Office (British Post Office), provided such letters if destined for the Inland Post, bear the Malta Halfpenny Stamp, in proportion to their weight, and if destined for other countries, be properly stamped, according to the regulations laid down in the Malta Postal Guide.

The Island deliveries will be as follows:—

The Letters or newspapers for other places in Malta and for Gozo will continue to be dispatched as at present, and will be exhibited at the respective Police Station. A rate of one halfpenny for every letter of a weight not exceeding half-an-ounce and an additional halfpenny for every

additional half-ounce or fraction of a half-ounce will be chargeable on letters so delivered, and this postage must in all cases be paid in advance by means of local postage stamps of the value of one halfpenny each, which may be purchased at the Post Office, at the Police Stations, and at the principal stationers' shops in the town.

No charge will be made for newspapers.

It should, however, be particularly borne in mind that these local postage stamps will not be available for prepaying ANY letters intended to be forwarded to any place beyond the Islands of GOZO and MALTA, and that letters, not intended for either of these Islands, which may be found to have such local stamps affixed to them, will be considered Unpaid and treated accordingly.

Palace, Va'letta
Nov. 16th, 1860

By Command
(Signed)
V. Houlton
Chief Secretary
To the Governor.

In spite of the above, Major Cole has an Entire with a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. buff dated "SP 16/63" Duplex, addressed to Philipville, Algires.

1860 1st Printing (S.G. 1 & Said No. 1).

In page 41 of "Day Book A", of Thomas De La Rue, for the period 30th November 1857 to 30th June 1864, we find the following invoice:

FIRST INVOICE

1859
July 21st
100
1 2
7 6
101 9 6

Agents General Crown Colonies
One form containing 240 stamps
Malta-Duty. "One Half Penny"
ordered April 30th 1859
100 sheets of stamps in fugitive
perforated = 24000 stamps @ 11d per 1000
Packing in tin lined cases

Printed on paper bought from W. Turner
(part of three reams)

Signed E.M.M.

From this invoice we can draw the following conclusions:

- a. Delivery date: 21st July 1859.
- b. 24000 stamps were printed on 100 sheets, "Each sheet consisting of four panes, each pane consisting of ten rows by six."
- c. The ink was fugitive which accounts for the shades within a printing (buff and bistre-brown, Orme).
- d. In this particular printing the picture is quite clear at first, — buff, but as the ink dirt accumulated on the rollers we begin to have a muddy appearance — bistre brown, which is scarcer.
- d. Paper was bought from M. Turner, of Chafford Mill, Kent: Unwatermarked, blued paper, and perforation 14.

So although from the above we know that the first $\frac{1}{2}$ d yellow printing was despatched from London on 21st July 1859, for some unknown reason, although badly needed in Malta, it was not put on the market before the 1st December 1860.

SPECIMENT S.G. 1, no watermark, blued paper, per. 14 exist overprinted "SPECIMEN" in black bold capital letters.

DATED The following covers have been recorded:

COPIES Kit Sloan — 3.1.61 and 2.10.61;
Mrs. P. Turnbull — 22.3.61;
Robson Lowe (1st & 14th April 1966 Sale) — Cover addressed to Gozo, dated 15.1.61;
Dr. E. Aquilina — 16.1.61;
Harmer 1971 Sale — Pair on cover dated 28.1.61;
Sefi — 21.1.61;
Wardley — 3.4.61 and 17.7.61.

Postmarks Used — The First Cancellation Used.

The "M" obliteration in a horizontal oval of bars measuring $7\frac{1}{2}$ mm in width, and $9\frac{1}{2}$ mm in height, was used to frank British stamps used in Malta (for overseas mail) and for franking the $\frac{1}{2}$ d Queen Victoria, on blued paper, during the month of December 1860 only. Stamps franked in this manner either as a single or on entire are quite rare. A pair S.G. 1. with the "M" cancellation appeared in Harmer's 15th & 16th June 1970 sale as item 146, addressed to Zejtun-Malta.

The second cancellation used to frank the first $\frac{1}{2}$ d yellow was the 1.9 cm single ring, which was already in use to register the arrival of a letter from overseas. It is usually found at the back together with other transit cancellations. This type of cancellation was used for a relatively short time, the earliest recorded date being 3rd Jan. 1861 (Harmer June 1970, item 141). The ones I have examined have the following characteristics:

Slug A/Malta (In a straight line in block letters),
Month (abbreviated) & date/Last two digits of the year.

This type of cancellation was followed by the circular ring having the above characteristics, combined with the "A 25" in an oval of bars. This A25 duplex circular cancellation, exists with thick and thin bars, the thin bar type being the rarer. So far I have only been able to record A, B, C, and D slugs on the circular ring of the A25 thick bar duplex. The latest date known is 13.11.62 (Orme, Robson Lowe, 1965 Sale, item 541).

CHAPTER '2'

1861 — 1863 Unwatermarked, White Paper, Perf. 14

A rather controversial issue in the unwatermarked white paper — Perf. 14, series, is whether there were three printings as listed by Messrs. Stanley Gibbons and Said as S.G./Said Nos 2, 3, 4, or in actual fact only two as claimed by Major F. Orme.

From the Invoices of Private Day Book AA of Messrs De La Rue, it results that the following printings were executed on the dates specified below.

2nd Printing	17th August 1861	Private Day Book AA Page	92
3rd Printing	11th September 1862	Private Day Book AA Page	134
4th Printing	17th April 1863	Private Day Book AA Page	168
5th Printing	11th January 1864	Private Day Book AA Page	233

The earliest recorded date of a Watermarked, Crown CC, Perf. 14 stamp is 4th June 1863 and a cover addressed to "Il Conti A. Sant, Commandante del Forte Chambray" — Gozo, having one watermarked Crown CC white paper — perf 14 stamp has the date 29th November 1863. (C. Smith). This proves that the watermarked Crown CC white paper perf. 14, belongs to the 4th Printing of the 17th April 1863, as the 5th Printing was Invoiced on the 11th January 1864, and so like Orme, we are quite correct in assuming that there were only two Unwatermarked — white paper, perf. 14 printings; namely the 2nd printing of the 17th August 1861 and the 3rd Printing of the 11th September 1862.

The 2nd Printing — 17th August 1861 (S.G. & Said Nos. 2 & 4)

Buff (variation: stone colour); white paper; no watermark: perf. 14.

Invoice from Private Day Book AA Page 92

17th Aug. 61. The Agents General for Crown Colonies
106 Sheets of Postage Labels
for Malta, duty $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

240 on sheets = 25,440 labels @ 11d	1	3	4
Packed in tin lined case		7	6

Delivered to Mr. Winckley	1	10	10
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The 3rd Printing — 11th September 1862

Brown Orange; white paper; no watermark; per. 14.

Invoice from Private Day Book AA Page 134

1862 Agents General for Crown Colonies

Sept. 11th Malta Postage Stamp

109 Sheets Malta Stamp Duty one half penny			
240 on sheet = 26,160 @ 11d	1	4	-
Making ready the form (less than 1 Reem)		10	-
Packing		7	6

Delivered this day to Mr. Winckley receipt left	2	1	6
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The 2nd printing of 17th August 1861 is a Buff shade — a blurred and muddy printing which has not been seen used after 1862. The so called pale-buff, or clear stone shade listed by S.G. & Said as No. 2, did not comprise a complete printing, as very few copies have been recorded. The only copies recorded are dated "MAR 28/62" and "APR 2/62" — (F. Orme). Of all the famous collections that have been sold on the market over the past ten years, there was not one single mint block of four, the last recorded being in the Damsell collection, which makes such a mint block of four numerically rarer than S.G. 1, whereas from the above quoted Invoices we know that the 2nd printing of the 17th August 1861 consisted of 106 sheets, a total of 25,440 stamps, and the third printing of the 11th September 1862 (S.G. & Said No. 4) consisted of 109 sheets, a total of 26,160 stamps. This printing is the Brown Orange shade which is not recorded as used prior to 1863.

From the above it is therefore clear that the pale buff (S.G. & Said No. 2) is a variation of the 2nd printing of the 17th August 1861, and that S.G. & Said Nos. 2 & 4 are really the 2nd printing of the 17th August 1861.

We may therefore safely conclude that the period 1861-63, (what S.G. and Said list as Nos. 2, 3, 4, Unwatermarked, white paper, perf. 14), really consist of the:—

2nd Printing 17th August 1861 — Buff shade — variation pale buff
(S.G. & Said Nos. 2 & 4) and the

3rd Printing 11th September 1862 — Brown Orange
(S.G. & Said No. 3).

The 2nd printing of the 17th August 1861 was issued in Malta in November 1861, and the earliest and latest recorded dates are 24.1.62 (Orme) and 16.12.62 respectively. One dated the 8th Dec. 1862 is on entire addressed to H.Sig.Dr.Av. Guseppi Xuereb, Gozo, (Bonnici, Malta), while one on piece has the date 16.12.62 (Bonnici, Malta).

The 3rd printing of the 11th September 1862 was issued in Malta in 1863 and the earliest and latest recorded dates are 11.1.63 and 12.12.63 respectively, (Orme).

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Anthony Fenech

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