

THE TRADE FAIRS

Part I

by

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History

The International Fair of Malta originated in 1949, with an Exhibition of Maltese Goods and Products organised by the Malta Chamber of Commerce, held in the Courtyard of The Exchange Buildings, Valletta, on the occasion of the visit of Her Royal Highness, the Princess Elizabeth, now Queen Elizabeth II, to Malta. On the initiative of the General Retailers and Traders Union, the First Trade Fair was held between the 2nd and 5th October, 1952, in San Anton Gardens. The Second and Third Trade Fairs were also held in San Anton Gardens in 1953 and 1955. The organisation of such Fairs became much of a burden on the Union. Thus the responsibility, organisation and running of Trade Fairs, were transferred, in April 1955, to the Malta Trade Fair Corporation. In fact, the 1955 Trade Fair held in September was organised by this new organisation.

The Malta Trade Fair Corporation aimed at the furtherance of Maltese industry and international trade. It was soon realised that the site at San Anton Gardens had become too small. It took the Corporation almost five years to find a suitable location. However, during this period, a Trade and Industry Exhibition (Expo 59) was held at The Empire Stadium, Gżira, in July and August 1959, and a Trade and Industry Festival was organised by The Nuns of St. Joseph at Blata l-Bajda from the 3rd to the 13th September 1959.

With the cooperation of a public-spirited gentleman, the late Marquis John Scicluna, the fourth edition of the Malta Trade Fair opened, in 1960, in the gardens adjoining Palazzo Parisio, Naxxar. Since then, the Fair has become a very popular event in the Maltese Calendar.

In October 1967, the Malta Trade Fair was accorded international status. The 34th Congress of the Union des Foires Internationales, meeting at Vienna, accepted it as a full and active member of the Union. In 1971, the Malta Trade Fair Corporation was host to the 38th Congress of the Union, which was held at the Grand Hotel Verdala. Another important event was the holding of the First Council Meeting of the Association of Fairs Organisations in Third World Countries. This First Council Meeting was held in February, 1977, at the Corinthia Palace Hotel.

The Malta International Fair, as it is now called, attracts thousands of visitors to the Trade Fair each year, amongst whom is a considerable number from overseas.

From time to time the General Post Office has advertised these Trade Fairs by means of slogans which may be summarised as follows:

ADVERTISING SLOGANS

	Advertising Slogan	Date
1.	VISIT TRADE AND INDUSTRY — EXHIBITION — EMPIRE STADIUM 18th JULY — 2nd AUGUST	13th June — 2nd August 1959
2.	VISIT/2nd TRADE AND INDUSTRY/ FESTIVAL/ BLATA L-BAJDA 3rd — 13th SEPTEMBER 1959	3rd to 13th September 1959
3.	MALTA/FOURTH TRADE FAIR/ 30th JUNE — 10th JULY 1960 A Mediterranean/SHOW WINDOW/WORTH VISITING	2nd March 1960 — 10th July 1960
4.	EXHIBIT — VISIT/THE MALTA/TRADE FAIR	10th — 30th June 1961 7th March — 2nd July 1962 15th June — 9th July 1963 5th — 10th July 1972

SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE POSTMARKS

1. British Empire Exhibition 1924



30mm circular handstamp used on Mail, in Malta, on the occasion of the preliminary showing of the Wembley Empire Exhibition Exhibits in 1924.

In fact 2 handstamps were used on local mail; the two handstamps differ in three clearly visible respects:

- (i) One has the two bars under the lion much closer — $\frac{1}{2}$ mm instead of 1mm;
- (ii) the vertical and horizontal of the "4" are at right angles;
- (iii) the dot is nearer the mid-point between "E" and "4".

2. XIX Centenary of St. Paul's Shipwreck Commemorative Cancellation
30th June — 11th July 1960
33mm circular handstamp with time and date slugs used in conjunction with the 27mm double ring with arcs as spacers Malta Trade Fair Post Office (without time), elsewhere on the front of the Cover.
3. International Fairs Union
38 Congress
20/22 Oct 1971
A Sub Post Office (a Temporary One) was opened in the Grand Hotel, Verdala where the 38th Congress of The International Fairs Union was held between the 20th and 22nd October 1971.
4. Europa '75
L-Ewwel Jum tal-Hruġ 17-7-1975
Fiera Internazzjonali
Naxxar — Malta
Cept Emblem
31.5mm rubber handstamp used on the last day of the 1975 Fair to cancel First Day Covers and other Covers franked with the newly issued stamps (Europa '75).
5. Europa '76
L-Ewwel Jum tal-Hruġ
8.VII.76
Fiera Internazzjonali
Naxxar — Malta
Cept Emblem
An oblong with rounded corners type of rubber handstamp used to cancel First Day Covers posted at the International Fair on the 8th July, being the first day of issue of the 1976 Europa stamps.
6. Europa '77
L-Ewwel Jum tal-Hruġ
5-VII-77
Fiera Internazzjonali Naxxar
Cept Emblem
MALTA with arcs
A 28.5mm circular rubber handstamp cancelled First Day Covers and all other philatelic material franked with the Europa 1977 stamps on the first day (5-7-77) only.

TRADE FAIR STAMP ISSUES

1. 1966 — 16th June on the occasion of the X Malta Trade Fair.
Designer: Chev. E.V. Cremona.
Printers: Thomas de la Rue and Co. Ltd. (The machine used to print these stamps was a "Palatia" Model O Single Colour plate manufactured by Albert Und Cia of Frankenthal, Germany. The press has an output from 1500 to 2000 sheets per hour).

Process: Photogravure.

Paper: Maltese Cross Watermark. Perforation: 13 by 13.5 comb.

Stamps per Sheet: 60 (29mm by 29mm square). Gum: Arabic.

Design: Impressionist design symbolising The Trade Fair.

Denominations and Colours: 2d (Pale lilac, ultramarine, light brown, black and gold);

8d (light-grey, reddish violet, purple, black and gold);

2/6d (light drab, vermilion, grey, black and gold).

Pane make up: Twelve rows of five stamps.

Plate Numbers 1A1A1A1A1A and 1B1B1B1B1B on all values.

Marginal Markings: 3mm square and 2mm circle on 1A plate; Registration crosses 1A, 1B plates.

Varieties: 2d Pane 1A Row 7 No. 5 — Colour weakness under "Fair";
Pane 1B Row 10 No. 1 — White dot on upright of "t" of "Malta".

8d Pane 1B Row 12 No. 2 — Background retouch at top left design.

2/6d Pane 1B Row 8 No. 1 — Large retouch on grey motif.

Quantities sold: 2d — 752,750; 8d — 188,705; 2/6d — 166,907.

This Issue was placed on sale two weeks before the Fair opened, but the Post Offices in Malta and Gozo sold out of the 2/6d value on the date of issue (Thursday 16th June) and of the 8d on Saturday 19th June. It was reported in "The Sunday Times of Malta" of that week that a spokesman from the G.P.O. confirmed reports that an Italian-backed syndicate bought as much of the Post Offices' Counter stocks and the G.P.O. reserve stock as possible. The Crown Agents' sales of this set in London were also higher than would be expected for such an Issue. That same week dealers in Malta were asking about five times the face value, and in Rome eight times as much.

There must have been few used copies of the 8d or 2/6d with appropriate dates, a few First Day Covers and exceedingly few 8d and 2/6d stamps on mail from the Trade Fair Post Office.

The Minister of Trade, Industry and Agriculture, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 17 of the Post Office Act soon made rules relating to sales of postage stamps taking effect from 16th September 1966, thus permitting the Postmaster General to:

- "require demands for abnormal quantities of stamps to be made in writing";
- "reserve commemorative postage stamps for the normal demands of customers before meeting demands for abnormal quantities";
- "determine the maximum quantity of each denomination of commemorative postage stamps which may be sold to any one person at

any one time”;

— “supply reduced quantities against abnormal demands.”

Some philatelists were disappointed; in fact a letter had appeared in “The Times of Malta” asking the Post Office whether they could arrange a reprint of the stamps so that they could be kept in circulation until the Fair came to an end. It is worth noting that a few local dealers persisted in franking their commercial covers with the 2d value of this set until The International Fair of 1973.

2. **g668 — 1st June — XII International Trade Fair.**



Designer: Chev. E.V. Cremona.

Printers: Harrison and Sons (The Printer's name appears across the bottom selvedge in black capital letters 3mm high).

Process: Photogravure.

Paper: Maltese Cross watermark (sideways).

Gum: P.V.A.

Perforation: 14 by 14.5 (comb). Dimensions: 24.3 x 30mm.

Stamps per Sheet: 60 (10 rows x 6).

Denominations and Colours: Common — black, brown, yellow, orange and grey;

4d only — black; 8d only — turquoise; 3/- only — mauve.

Plate Numbers: 1A1A1A1A1A1A and 1B1B1B1B1B1B for all values.

Varieties: All apply to the three values:

1A — Row 4 No. 4 Dot in spoke of wheel at top right hand corner.

Row 5 No. 1 Bulge at top of “L” in white “MALTA”.

Row 5 No. 1 Broken line to right of Maltese Cross.

Row 5 No. 1 Deformed base of “T” in “TRADE”.

Row 7 No. 3 Grey smudge, shaped like a bracket on sign above value.

Row 8 No. 1 Weak entry between “A” and “L” of white “MALTA”.

Row 8 No. 3 A dark retouch to nose, mouth and chin of face in the top right-hand corner.

1B — Row 3 No. 2 Retouch or weak entry at base of green figure left centre.

Row 4 No. 4 Break in colour below “A” in white “MALTA”.

Row 4 No. 6 Weak entry below 2nd “A” in white “MALTA”.

Row 6 No. 2 Black spot in white “M” of “MALTA”.

Row 6 No. 3 White spot in left centre.

Row 7 No. 2 Black dot in first “A” of white “MALTA”.