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THE MALTA PHILATELIC SOCIETY

70TH ANNIVERSARY
OPERATION PEDESTAL
1942-2012

CONVOYTA' SANTA MARIJA

OPERATION PEDESTAL

15TH AUGUST 1944

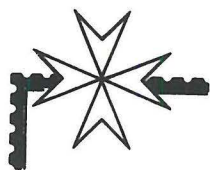
OPERATION PEDESTAL

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MALTA - 1914 - 1918

NURSING DEPOT and POSTAL HUB

by
Nicholas A Cutajar

Introduction: The scope of this article is to make known the great efforts of Malta and its people during the most difficult time of World War 1, when the island became the ad hoc medical centre of the Mediterranean Sea for Eastern Europe's battlegrounds. As a result Malta became known as the "Nurse of the Mediterranean". A natural consequence of this role was the additional postal service rendered by Malta, through the Army Post Office, the staff of which was recruited from the the local G.P.O. as well as the G.P.O. itself, to the ANZACs, British soldiers and soldiers of many other Expeditionary forces from several countries that temporarily called Malta home.

Private Roy Howard Denning was born at Marulan, New South Wales joined the AIF on 7 September 1914 and soon sent to Gallipoli where he was severely wounded, evacuated and operated on at the Pembroke Camp, Malta, writing at least two letters to his family. He recovered and went on to fight on the Western Front until the end of the war. He was indeed a lucky man to have survived.

John Walker, while in Gallipoli was transferred by hospital ship to Lemnos suffering from severe septic sores and was admitted at St. Andrews Hospital, Malta, on 8 September 1915 suffering from dysentery and died.

"The Malta Independent" newspaper of Sunday, 8 May 2011, under the banner "Malta and the ANZACs" claimed that the ANZACs suffered a great loss of 2,000 killed on the first day of the Gallipoli campaign and one of the first to be killed was Private Charles Bonavista, a Maltese who joined the 11th Battalion in Perth. "At least six other Maltese were killed in action serving with the Australians and a much higher number serving with British contingents." The paper also states that: "A little known fact about the Gallipoli campaign is the Maltese Labour Corps. This consisted of 1,000 workers under the direction of Maltese officers who unloaded ships and performed other activities at Anzac Cove. Most of the provisions for the 24,000 men in Anzac Cove came from Malta, including the water that was towed in water barges."

Military Hospitals

From the spring of 1915, hospitals and convalescent depots were established on the islands of Malta and Gozo which dealt with over 135,000 sick and wounded, chiefly from the campaigns in Gallipoli (*Gelibolu*), the peninsula on the Dardanelles



British, Australian and New Zealand sick and wounded treated at Bighi Naval Hospital, Malta



The Holy Infirmary's facade and the limestone balcony and balustrades depicted on the 11c value of the set commemorating the Third Centenary of the School of Anatomy and Surgery"

and Salonika, although increased submarine activity in the Mediterranean meant that fewer hospital ships were sent to the island from May 1917.

The indication that Malta might be required to take an active part in providing medical assistance during the campaign was a cable from the G.O.C. Egypt dated 24 February 1915 enquiring the number of hospital beds available over and above normal requirements. Five hundred beds were offered immediately. Though the offer was not taken up, the Island Governor took immediate steps to expand the existing military hospitals and identify suitable buildings to establish new ones in anticipation. This initiative resulted in extending the capacity to 3,000 beds for the sick and wounded in Malta and a further 500 beds for convalescents at Fort Chambray in Gozo, Malta's sister island. Civil medical practitioners and civil hospital orderlies of the local St. John's Ambulance Brigade were also enrolled.

The main receiving hospital station at the time was located at the Sacra Infermeria or Holy Infirmary, a state-of-the-art hospital at the time when it was established by the Order of the Knights of Malta in 1574. It had a capacity for about 600 beds. Their skills in the field of Medicine were the most advanced in Europe at the time and this continued over many years after their departure. Situated very close to the Grand Harbour, where the Hospital ships brought the sick and wounded, it became the receiving and sorting base as well as where dangerously ill or wounded patients were treated.

By the end of March, the first 500 sick (venereal cases) personnel arrived; they were accommodated partly at Forrest Hospital (already designated for such cases) and the rest at Imtarfa Barracks (hastily evacuated by troops). On the April 29, the G.O.C. Egypt cabled a request for 1,000 sick and wounded, and on the 30th a request for a further 600, and then later a further 1,000 cases. The foresight of the Maltese authorities in preparing much more hospital accommodation than requested was rewarded. By June 6, the number of sick and wounded reached 1962, and 2593 on June 12th and by the end of the month, over 4,000, distributed among 14 hospitals. By now Imtarfa hospital (the venereal cases discharged on June 13, cleaned and colour washed) and St. Andrews hospital (expanded later to 1,158

beds), both splendidly located, as well as other hospitals at Valletta, Cottonera, St. Andrew's, Tigné, Floriana, Bavière and Hamrun were opened in June. At the same time a few privately run hospitals, offered beds and their services, and Naval and military beds were polled too. One must also mention the offer of many private individuals to accept minor sickness and convalescents in their own houses. There is anecdotal evidence that suggests a few who were hospitalised and recovered in Malta, in later years made a return trip to thank the nurses and visit the graves of those they left behind.

Medical staff (doctors, nurses and orderlies) was scarce in April 1915, adequate for peace requirements: 9 Medical Officers, 14 Nurses and 220 R.A.M.C. rank and file. This compliment was obviously unable to cope with the demand and rush in May. By the middle of May, 27 local doctors, 11 nurses and 65 nursing orderlies volunteered their services providing invaluable assistance to the cause. By June the numbers rose to 117 Medical Officers, 300 Nurses (a number of nurses were sent to assist from Egypt) and 752 rank and file.



Bighi Hospital had quite large corridors ideal for shielding patients from the summer midday sun and inclement weather while the wards had high ceilings. Due to the huge numbers of patients, at one point, they were bedded in corridors and ditches.



Floriana Hospital had a compliment of 600 beds and its location was extremely convenient being close to the Grand Harbour as well as Marsamxetto Harbours where all sick wounded were disembarked.



HMHS Rewa was a steamship that was originally built for the British-India Steam Navigation Company. It was requisitioned for use as a British hospital ship during World War 1. It was hit and sunk by a torpedo fired by the German U-boat U-55. It was carrying 279 wounded soldiers.

This set was issued on 7 November 2014 to commemorate W.W.I

While sick and wounded continued to be landed in Malta, various initiatives were launched to assist in the convalescence of the several hundreds of soldiers. In October the Committee of the Soldiers' and Sailor' Institute, with the assistance of a private donation of £200, a Gymnasium in Valletta was converted into an institute for convalescents for the Navy, Army and Allied Forces. It included a library, reading/writing room, a refreshment bar, a billiard table and a fully equipped stage. It has been estimated that some 80,000 men benefitted from the venue, which had

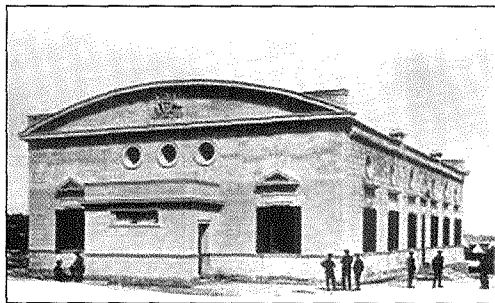
become one of the most popular places of entertainment in Malta. (After the war, it became the Vernon Institute). One must also recognise and salute the valuable assistance rendered by the ladies of Malta (providing voluntary aid) and the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society (organising all the voluntary aid) and the St. John's Ambulance Association of Malta (donating gifts and medical comforts for the wounded). In addition voluntary nurses and orderlies were trained and gave valuable assistance in hospitals.

During the third quarter of 1915, more hospitals were established, namely: St. Davis's and St. Patrick's (both camps), St. Elmo and St. John (both schools) St. Paul's (partly), St. George's became fully dietic, and the Ghajn Tuffieha as a large convalescent camp hospital. During the second half of 1915, apart wounded and sick servicemen, there were several cases of dysentery and other diseases. By then, the number of beds increased from over 6,000 to just under 13,100. One must remember that July, August and September witnessed some of the fiercest fighting on the peninsula, such as the landing at Suvla (see above) and the onset of diseases and sickness. 2,000 sick and wounded were disembarked in Malta to build the hospitalised population in Maltese hospitals to around 10,160 by the end of September. On a positive note, one must record that 3,500 fit personnel were returned to theatre of war.

Malta at the time offered few places on entertainment, except a few bars in the capital city, Valletta and in the town of Sliema and outlying areas which accommodated many of the British residents, mostly servicemen, at the time. So the need was felt for some place of amusement for the thousands of convalescent Australian and New Zealander servicemen from around the St. Andrew's Hospital and other convalescent camps in the vicinity.

Accordingly, £2,000 out of an Australian Red Cross donation were used to erect a fine stone building on a site located between St. Andrew's and St. Paul's Hospitals. The edifice was designed and erected under the supervision of the Royal Engineers; it was capable of seating 2,000 persons and officially opened in January 1916 as the "Australia Hall"(*). In May 1916, it was managed by the British Red Cross Society and the Australia Hall Committee for the first few months, and later, entirely by the latter. (**The property eventually passed over ownership to the Government of Malta, and later sold to a private entity*).

The Gallipoli campaign was in its last days in March 1916 but hostilities



AUSTRALIA HALL

were brewing in Salonika, which meant that the requirements for beds was not abating but ever more in demand. The number of operational beds had been steadily increasing, the availability rising from 13,000 at the end of September 1915 to 20,400 in March 1916. These extra beds were provided in the newly established hospitals at Manoel Island, Spinola, Ricasoli, and convalescent camps at Ghajn Tuffieha, Mellieha and Fort Chamray in Gozo, and convalescent centres for officers at the Governor's Palace at Verdala and San Antonio.

The K. O. M. R. M.

Before closing the military aspect, it is only appropriate to mention that Malta provided also military as well as logistical support. The King's Own Malta Regiment of Militia (KOMRM) was embodied by a proclamation issued on Sunday, 2 August 1914, by the then Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Sir Leslie Rundle. Their assignment was to man the various war stations on the coasts of Malta and Gozo, as well stations dotted around the centre of the Island. This included guarding some 4,000 German, Austrian and Turkish prisoners of war. (Prince von Hohenzollern, nephew of the Kaiser, rescued from the *Emden* was among those prisoners). The KOMRM battalions provided assistance in several of the military hospitals.

On 14 January 1915, a contingent of 560 officers and men from both battalions left the Island to render garrison duties in Cyprus. Later in September, following a call for volunteers, 864 men volunteered for service in Gallipoli. About the same time the half-battalion on service in Cyprus returned and most volunteered for service in Gallipoli attached to British line regiments. On 5 December a second labour battalion was sent to Salonika. A number of Maltese officers were decorated for bravery while quite a few officers and men were mentioned in despatches. The KOMRM was eventually disembodied on 31 December 1921, to be resurrected again as the KOMR before World War Two. In addition to military action, a group of some 1000 Maltese were formed as the Malta Labour Battalion and served with honour and valour in the day to day strenuous task of assisting with carrying the wounded and sick people to various stations for processing.



1910 Maltese Uniforms (4th Issue) featured the Malta Labour Corps on the 10c stamp and the KOMRM on the 25c value. Both establishments contributed in the Gallipoli and Dardanelles campaigns

Postal Arrangements in Malta

During the first world war, British armed services mail was handled by the Army Post Office, a section of the Royal Engineers, Special Reserve. Staff was recruited from the staff of the civil post office. The General Base Post Office in the UK collected all mail from civilian Post Office including all letters and parcels intended for the Expeditionary Forces. After sorting into separate bags for every unit overseas and organised their conveyance to the nearest and appropriate port overseas, mail bags were delivered to the appropriate Base, Stationery or Field Post Offices which were responsible for handling all mail delivery and collection in the field.

Malta was regarded as a home station during the First World War. While British army soldiers based in Malta were required to prepay postage, servicemen (including allied forces, such as the Australian and New Zealand forces) in hospitals were entitled to mail free of postage. During the Dardanelles Campaign, there were three stages of the Postal Services:

1. The initial arrangements which included the early services via Malta, from February to 10 June 1915.
2. Postal Services through Alexandria from 10 June to mid November.
3. Attempts to accelerate the carriage of mail in November and December through direct sailings between Marseilles and Mudros (on the island of Lemnos in the Aegean Sea near Gallipoli).

Following a refusal by the French to carry parcel mails for the British (and Allied) Forces, an alternative route to Mudros was organised coming into effect on December 9 1915. All mail was to be directed to Malta. Two small Royal Engineers Postal Section parties were dispatched on the 24 February and 20 March with great secrecy to two un-named base camps ("Base Z" and "Base Y"). 'Z' arrived at Mudros in early March, but was moved to Alexandria due to military activity preventing the setting up of the postal facilities there. Base 'Y' went straight to Alexandria but was later moved to Mudros where it was set up in April. The Postal Unit from the Royal Engineers (UK) arrived in Alexandria on April 23.

All Mail from home (UK) as well as Australia including New Zealand, for the Mediterranean Expeditionary Forces in the Dardanelles and Egypt was sent to Malta from where it proceeded in bulk to Mudros. Following complaints from the Egyptian end, mails were made up in two bundles, one to Malta for the Dardanelles and the other to Egypt. A small detachment of Royal Engineers Postal Service was stationed on the Island of Malta to process (check and load) mail to the Dardanelles. However, due to irregularity in the availability of transport between Mudros and Malta, it was decided that all mail was to be sent to Egypt and vice-versa. The first mail under this new system reached Alexandria on June 10.

Homeward bound mails, including Australia and New Zealand were at first processed at Mudros from bundles and bags received from the stationery “beach” field post offices. From Mudros, they were usually forwarded by sea transport to Malta, from where they proceeded on their onward shipment by the regular mail steamers to Marseilles, or elsewhere as required, but also sometimes by a direct route to England. In September 1915, the few staff of the R.E.P.S. took over the work of addressing letters from the hundreds of wounded in the M. E. F. hospitals in Malta and transferring them to the local R.E.P.S. for processing. In later years, Malta became an important mail processing station for Mudros and Salonika and the work was taken over by the regular Army Post Office on the Island of Malta. Mails from British servicemen recovering in Malta were sent by the next available mail ship while mail from French personnel was processed generally by the French army post office usually on board ships in port or the Mediterranean sea. Indeed one comes across interesting postal markings from French military authorities.

“ON ACTIVE SERVICE MEDT^N” Handstamp

Since all the wounded and sick hospitalised in Malta and Gozo from the Dardanelles campaign were military personnel, they were allowed to post letters and postcards free of charge. Such covers carry a mandatory manuscript declaration “On Active Service” at the top. The postal markings on these missives included the single ring dated and coded “ARMY POST OFFICE” postmark and generally a circular undated double or triple ring handstamp inscribed “ON ACTIVE SERVICE” at the top and “MEDT^N” or “MEDT” at the bottom. The London G.P.O. Proof Book shows ten versions of this handstamps, eight of which have been recorded. Most had a (solid, outline, crude or none) cross in the centre, while at least one handstamp is known without the “MEDT^N” at the bottom. Some of the handstamps have the superscript “^N” missing. There seems to be some doubts whether only sick and wounded in hospitals personnel were allowed to use this service. The earliest known date of this handstamp is 15 JU 15 (Type 2), which coincides with the arrival of the first sick and wounded from the arena of war. There is no doubt that the “On Active Service” handstamp was used on mail written in the various hospitals; the cross in the centre implies that this was the case, the latest on 17 DE 18 (Type 1).

Various colours of these handstamps have been recorded, some individual handstamps known in at least three different colours used at the same location. For example, Type OAS-3 is known in violet, blue and red-mauve and was used on mail from the Imtarfa Hospital between 26 AU 15 and 18 NO 17. Although all (incoming and outgoing) mail was censored, mail from the hospitals in Malta, though it may have been censored, generally did not receive censorship markings. It has been proposed that since in many cases military personnel had been involved



OAS-1



OAS-2



OAS-3



OAS-4



OAS-5



OAS-6



OAS-7



OAS-8



OAS-9



OAS-5

in writing letters for the sick and wounded, there was no need for a further delay in processing mail by applying a censorship mark.

The “ARMY POST OFFICE” Postmarks

Two Army Post Office postmarks were used during the duration of World War One.

The first, “**ARMY POST OFFICE S Z 7**”, APO SZ7, was a 28mm single postmark which included a code (*, A, B or D) and the date, shown below. The “S” is an indication that it was a “Stationery” Office rather than a “Railhead” Office; “Z” indicates its “Headquarters” area while the “7” stands for the individual office. Up to July 1916, no code letter was used; after this date, codes “A”, “B”, “D” and “X” have been reported to have been used. The earliest recorded date is 22 DE 15 (no code) and the latest 27 JY 17 (Code A). Examples have surfaced



with the use any code, but from around mid July, the codes mentioned above. Anecdotal evidence claims this handstamp moved to Egypt in the summer of 1917. The Malta handbook “The Stamps and Postal History 1576 –1960”, published by the Malta Study Circle (UK) reports the use of the “**ARMY POST OFFICE SZ6**” on a “Malta Souvenir Post Card” dated 26 Oct 15. Malta stamps have also been recorded cancelled “**BASE ARMY POST OFFICE**” (14 JU 15 and 10 FE 18) and

although the Army Post Office number is not known it is thought that it may be “Z” (at least after mid 1917) which was located at Alexandria after its term in Malta

The other type of Army Post Office handstamp, APO H.D.1. was introduced early in 1917. It was used concurrently with APO SZ7 and eventually replaced it.

It has been suggested that the “H.D.” stands for “Home Depot”. Three handstamps of this particular postmark were sent from London on 17 JA 17., and they can be differentiated perusing a table of 5 different dimensions. The earliest recorded date of use is 11 AP 17 and the latest use recorded on 17 JA 19. Codes “A”, “B” and “+” have been recorded, and the significance of the “+” code remains unknown. Generally the “On Active Service” and the “Army Post Office” (H.D.I. / S Z 7) handstamps were applied together on the cover, but this was not always the case.

All sorts of combination of these postmarks and handstamps may be found on mail posted through the hospitals and convalescent camps, but



generally the “OAS” handstamp is found in violet as well as other colours as mentioned earlier. In addition other marks may be applied depending on the route and/or channel the postal item goes through, such as Hospital Ships, or base camp. For example, some covers, with regulatory manuscript identification of the individual (generally lower left hand corner of the missive) have

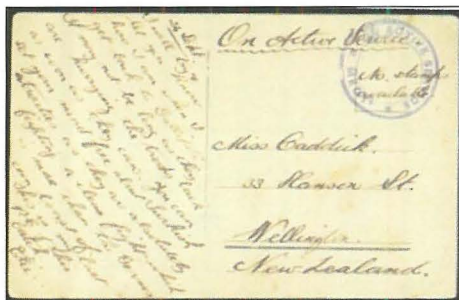
been locally posted and received a Valletta G.P.O. (civilian) postmark. Where was the postal item handed in? Was it handed in at a base camp (hospital or convalescent camp) or at the G.P.O. which was relatively centrally located in Valletta, or posted into a pillar box in the streets of Valletta? If it was not handed in at the camp, were there any processes in place that such mail, after receiving a Valletta postmark, is then passed on to the Army Post Office? If so, the missive next page, bottom left, must have been missed or was processed through the normal channels as for civilian mail. Some covers, particularly from non-British military personnel, were processed through the censorship channels (see second cover from top left next page). Other covers received either the “On Active Service” hospital handstamp and no other mark, others serviced through the local postal channels after processing through the normal hospital channels (see first item next page). For students of this interesting phase of postal history, of course, such variations provide the much sought after challenge and point of discussion, which makes this pastime of ours such an exciting and interesting pastime.

The “WOUNDED POST OFFICE - MALTA” Handstamp

This particular handstamp is relatively rare and not much has been recorded in the annals of Malta postal history. Indeed few covers are known bearing this handstamp, often applied in violet ink. A handful of covers have appeared in philatelic auctions over the last 5 years or so, and all fetched quite high prices. Two examples of this handstamp were on offer at Grosvenor Philatelic Auctions Sale 60 of the “Victory” Collection of Malta held on Thursday 21 October 2010. Lot 3405, estimated at



Headed "Valletta Hospital"(*), dated "16-6-15" (the earliest known date for any OAS handstamp is 15 JU 15) he was among the first to land in Malta, postmarked at the "Valletta " G.P.O. (Army Post Office not yet set up?), m/s "On Active Service" at the top and OAS handstamp in violet.



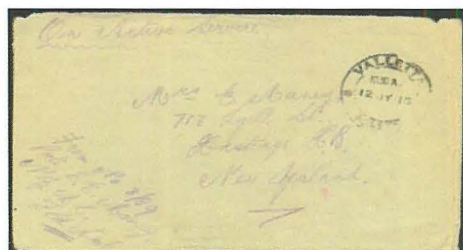
Dated 24 Sept (presumably 1915) with "OAS-7. to Wellington, New Zealand. "I will try to let you know how I am when I get back to Gallipoli. It may not be long because they are hurrying the troops." and ... "they (Turks) are absolutely fighting a clean fight"



Cover endorsed (trans) Expeditionary French Troops of Palestine, and (trans) French Military Hospital in Malta", postmarked by the APO-HD1 (21 JU 18) and OAS-Med handstamp and Passed by Censor No 4182 in green-blue. It also bears an "Opened Under Martial Law" label.



"Am leaving hospital this morning to go to the convalescent Camp, but keep on writing to hospital till you receive word from me am in splendid health hope you are the same, Always yours Herbert" written Dec 7/15. M/s "On Active Service" a fine strike of OAS-10 in cherry red



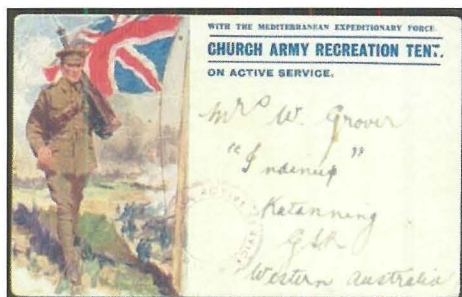
M/s "On Active Service", "From No 3/89 Pvtte C E Nancy, NZ A C/ Field Amb." to family back in N.Z.

No field postmark or OAS handstamp but a fair strike of the 30mm double ring Valletta * Malta postmark dated 12 JY 15

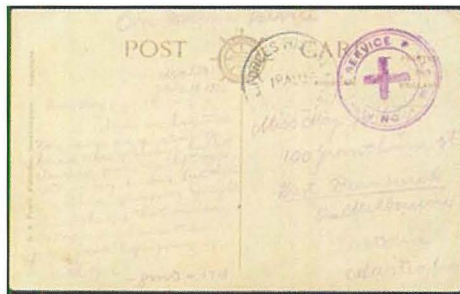


M/s "On Active Service" to the same address from the same C. Mancy to family back home, this time with a strike of OAS-7 and no other local postal marking.

This hospital referred to here is most likely the "Holy Infirmary" Hospital (see earlier), which was the receiving station. In fact the date (16.6.15) is close to the date when the first wave of sick and wounded were being disembarked.



Undated "official" postcard (view of the Grand Harbour, Valletta, Malta at back, thus identifying where he was) to Western Australia, with a strike of OAS-7 (no cross in centre) to Mrs. W Grover in Katanning, Western Australia. "On Active Service" in print.



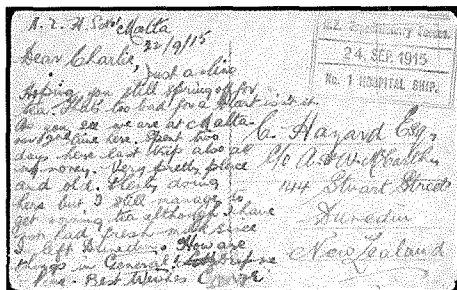
1915 from Hospital Ship "Dongola" with OAS-9 (most likely); the "A1 FORCES POSTAGE FREE/" Vic" c.d.s. applied on arrival at Melbourne. Message: "I am in hospital to undergo an operation to have a piece of Turkish bullet removed from my left eye"

£600-£800, consisted of a picture post card dated June 26. 15 with manuscript "On Active Service" across the top, addressed to Yorkshire, England with a fine strike of the circular framed "WOUNDED POST OFFICE - MALTA" handstamp in violet, and a faint double ring "ON ACTIVE SERVICE - MEDT^N". The next lot, No. 3406 featured an incoming picture post card from Scotland, addressed to St. Andrew's Hospital, Malta, bearing 1d stamp cancelled by the Prestonkirk circular date stamp, struck on arrival with the circular framed "WOUNDED POST OFFICE - MALTA" in violet; in addition it was also hand stamped "REJOINED UNIT" and "CASE ALEXANDRIA". The postal item had a few creases but still it was estimated as the previous lot.



The Maoris in Malta

The Maori contingent, numbering just under 500 men, under Lieut.-Col. Herbert spent several weeks in camp on Malta before embarking to join the New Zealand Expeditionary Force at Anzac cove. They spent their time in rigorous training at various camps on the Island and participating in field days. At the time there were some two hundred different units of the British Empire and Allies, along with a very large number of troops from the U.K. The order for departure to the battlefields arrived in June 1915. According to author James Cowan, "The Maoris' home letters were often phrased in poetic and touching language: Private Huirua Rewha wrote from Malta to his parents "Come to me, go from me, my letter of love to my parents, Rewha and Mae..."



Postcard from a New Zealander to Dunedin from a soldier on board the hospital ship, in Malta, dated 22/9/15. The rectangular "N. Z. Expeditionary Force/24. SEP 1915 / No. 1 Hospital Ship." cachet applied on board. Malta described as: "pretty place and old".

1 FORCES POSTAGE FREE — VIC—"which was often applied to letters on arrival in Melbourne from Australian warships overseas. The use of foreign postage stamp was unnecessary as postage was free to Australian naval personnel, but apparently they used them to give their relatives an indication of their whereabouts,...". Postcards and letters and other postal items sent from Malta by army personnel (there has also been a suggestion that nurses too) were mostly unstamped, as they were entitled to. It may also be possible that after the Armistice of 1918, the use of the APO was not necessary anymore.

Acknowledgements

“Gallipoli and the Australian Home Front”, (<http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/5environment/homefront.html>)

“Malta Military Hospitals 1915-1917” by G. R. Bruce, M.A., M.D., D.P.H., Capt. R.A.M.C. (S.R.),
Specialist Sanitary Officer, Malta.

"The Maoris in the Great War", Ch. 3, (1926) by James Cowan

“Malta and the ANZACS”, article, ‘Malta Independent’, Sunday 8 May 2011

“Gallipoli and the Australian Home Front”

“Malta - The Nurse of the Mediterranean”, by Albert G. Mackinnon, M.A. (re-published 2010)

Prestige Philately Auction, No. 162, "The World at War", Mar 05 2011

Grosvenor Philatelic Auctions Sale No. 60 - The "Victory" Collection of Malta, 21 October 2010

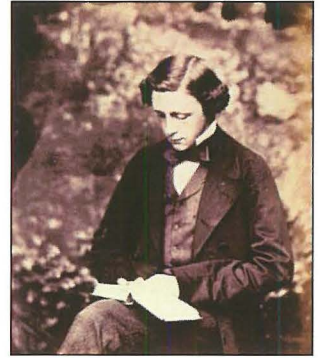
“MALTA - The The Stamps and Postal History, 576 - 1960”. Handbook, Malta Study Circle, edited by R E Martin, 1980

Alice for all...

by
Dane Garrod

The early story

Fantasy, memorable, thought provoking, and many other descriptions have been attributed to the story generally called *Alice in Wonderland*. 150 years since publication, it continues to charm younger readers who hear it for the first time, and also those who recall it from their lost childhood days. Like you and me, actually! It all began with a boat trip that started at Folly Bridge near the centre of Oxford, England, and finished five miles away at Godstow. Two Church of England Reverends rowed the boat taking the three daughters of the University Vice-Chancellor out for the afternoon. During the trip, believed to have been on Friday 4th July 1862, the Reverend Charles Dodgson told the girls a story he devised concerning a girl called Alice who was looking for an adventure. They loved it, especially 10 year old Alice Pleasance Liddell, who asked Dodgson to write it down for her. He began the very next day, although that earliest version no longer exists. During the next two years he undertook a great deal of research to add realism concerning the animals in the story, and in late November 1864 he gave Alice the handwritten manuscript of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*.

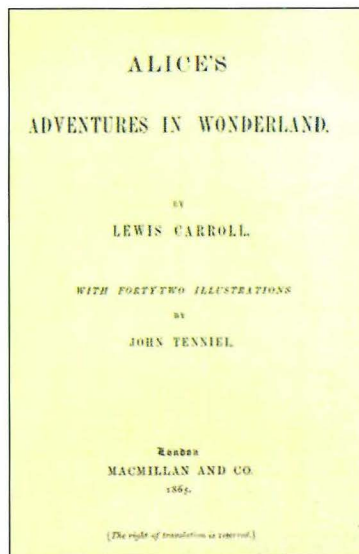


From small beginnings

By this time, 16 months after the initial manuscript was written, Dodgson had doubled the length of the story in preparation for publication. Comprising 12 separate chapters and 21 main characters, many being known and remembered by the readers through the years since – the Cheshire Cat, the White Rabbit, the

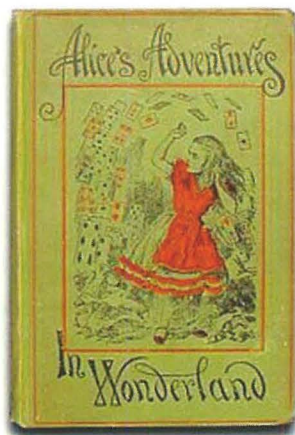


Dormouse, and of course, the Queen of Hearts. The manuscript was illustrated by the author himself, with 42 additional illustrations by John Tenniel, and a revised title of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The sequel in 1871 was *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*. It has been published in a multitude of languages since that time, as well as used for card games, and a Wonderland Postage-Stamp Case. This was devised by Dodgson (known to us by his pen name of Lewis Carroll) and was one of the few Alice gifts he created. Housed in a leather case, the cardboard slip case had a printed picture of Alice with the baby on the outside and the Cheshire Cat on the reverse. Naturally, it was published in Oxford, the home of the author, Alice Liddell and her sisters.



How good is the story?

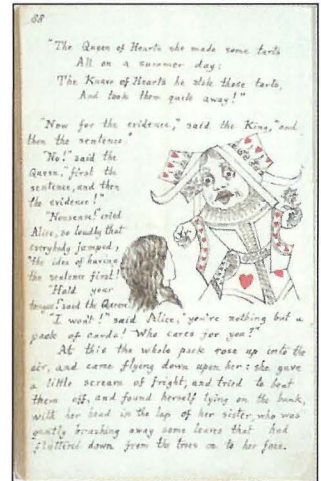
Perhaps that's for each reader to judge, but the immense number of printed copies and language translations that have occurred over the 150 years speaks volumes, literally. The story is a picaresque fantasy concerning a young girl with burning curiosity who follows a white rabbit with a pocket watch down a hole into an underground world. The story is characterised by sudden, dreamlike shifts of place and time and unexpected transformations, as well as a pervasive sense of inverted logic. Splendid satiric rhymes and word play abound. No synopsis of the disjointed plot can capture the book's air of ingenious absurdity or the brilliance of its character sketches. The unreality of the tale only gives, perhaps surprisingly, a satisfying sense of familiarity. Have we not all had odd and absurd encounters with unusual people, or found ourselves in circumstances in which nothing seemed to go as planned?



The eccentric characters

In Wonderland under ground, Alice encounters many humourous and strange characters, most of them very opinionated. The White Rabbit sends her on an errand to his house, where she changes size, gets stuck inside, and scuffles with a lizard named Bill. A haughty

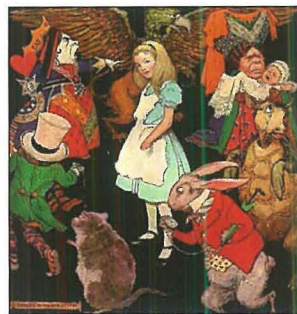
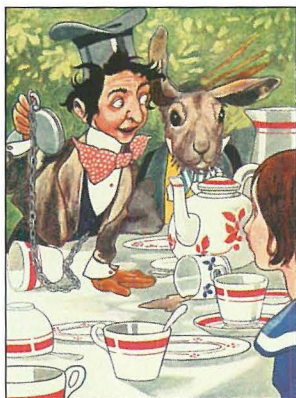
Caterpillar offhandedly teaches her how to control her dimensions by eating mushrooms. A main thread of the whole story is that Alice becomes entangled in a series of odd, comical situations in which she is generally more reasonable and sensible than everyone else – a clear heroine for all time. Later, she meets the sitters at the tea party – Mad Hatter, narcoleptic Dormouse and the March Hare. They talk at length, telling riddles, squabbling, and making very little sense. The story then proceeds to characters such as the Mock Turtle, and the frightening Queen of Hearts. So are children petrified by all of this? Not a bit of it, for they enjoy the absurdity as generally they have not gathered the checks and balances that come with experience and age.



The magic of the story

Critics have pondered the book's magic and tried to explain it. What is it all about, they ask, and why is it so universally successful? What is the key to its enchantment, why is it so entertaining and yet so enigmatic? What charm enables it to transcend language as well as national and temporal differences and win its way into the hearts of young and old everywhere? We have to realise that Wonderland is a mysterious place where characters do not live by conventional rules and that meaning does not play a conventional role. The laws of nature and of gravity, for example, do not work. The words have a role to play in themselves – *'We called him tortoise because he taught us'*. The child reader experiences a sense of satisfaction unparalleled elsewhere, and shares a private joke with the author. Although the characters take themselves seriously, no child reader is meant to. The White Rabbit, the Duchess, the Queen of Hearts, and the Mad Hatter are all figures of fun. These are the differences between this story and more conventional children's stories written in mid-Victorian Britain. Charles Dodgson's acceptance of the child as an equal, sharing jokes with them, and in so-doing giving them self-confidence, takes them another step forward towards adulthood.





What became of Alice's gift?

Regrettably, the author seems to have destroyed all of his notes and drafts for the book. However, the original longhand manuscript given to Alice Liddell by Charles Dodgson of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* has had a lively and interesting history. Before reaching its present home in the British Library in London, it had some adventures of its own. In 1926, Mrs Alice Hargreaves, the former Miss Liddell, sold it. By 1928 an American book dealer had purchased it at Sotheby's auction house for a then-record price of £15,400. Re-sold in 1946 for \$50,000, a group of Americans bought it in 1948, and the librarian of Congress brought it to England on the *RMS Queen Elizabeth* and presented it as a gift to the British people in appreciation for their gallantry in the Second World War. The real Alice died in 1934 as Mrs Reginald Hargreaves, and her ashes are buried at Lyndhurst, Hampshire, with a suitably inscribed gravestone in the churchyard there. As for Godstow, the destination of the rowing boat trip, nothing appears to have altered since that time long ago. The ruined abbey beside the river is unchanged – still a place of splendour and solitude.

The legacy

Numerous television and cinema films have been made since the first silent film about Alice in 1903. Recently, the theme has developed with a film about a grown-up Alice returning to the Wonderland. As for postage stamps, there's a treasure of characters and scenes to enlighten and charm us all. In 1979, the British Royal Mail's Year of the Child issue featured Alice on the 13p stamp, with her looking at the Mad Hatter with his 10/6 labelled top hat, and an ever grinning Cheshire Cat. Twenty years ago in 1994, a first class postage stamp showed Alice reading a manuscript. Now, in 2015, the British Royal Mail has embraced the story with some distinction by releasing an issue entirely devoted to this memorable work. Why now? Well, it's the 150th anniversary of the first publication, so what better time!

Map Stamps of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

by

David Wolfersberger

The New Carto Philatelist – No. 21, April 2008



When Mark Honig recently made me aware of the map stamps issued by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, I thought it might be useful to examine how these stamps relate to the Order.

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta is a religious and lay order of the Catholic Church, which can trace its roots to men who founded a hospital in Jerusalem about 1048 to care for pilgrims to the Holy Land. It evolved over the centuries to include armed ground and naval forces charged with protecting Christians and Christian properties in the Holy Land and Mediterranean area.

There are two questions to be addressed prior to looking at the stamps issued by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (henceforth abbreviated SMOM, or the Order). First, is SMOM a country? Some may recall this issue was mentioned in my article on Vatican map stamps (*The New CartoPhilatelist*, Whole Number 15, October 2006).

SMOM has some characteristics of a country: It has territory, albeit small, in their two offices in Rome that have extraterritoriality, that is they are sovereign territory within the boundaries of Italy. This is similar to the status of Vatican City, or a country's diplomatic missions in a host country. SMOM issues stamps (more below), has a currency that is of little use, has diplomatic relations with some 99 countries, and has observer status, but not full membership, in many international organizations such as the United Nations, World Health Organization, UN's Food and Agricultural Organization, and the European Commission and others. It also issues passports and I suppose the members who reside in Rome can be considered citizens.¹

However, as one on-line source says:

“While the Knights of Malta (another synonym for SMOM) was once an independent country, today it is no more an independent country than any other organization such as the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The Knights of Malta are a religious organization that provides humanitarian and medical assistance worldwide ... and issues “passports” to its diplomats for diplomatic business but it does not meet the criteria for being an

independent country. It lacks territory, a permanent population, police power, and has no economy.”²

It seems to me that SMOM is not a country, but neither are the United Nations or the Vatican.

The second question has to do with the validity of the postage stamps issued. SMOM started issuing stamps in 1966.³ It now has agreements with 52 countries to deliver mail that is posted at the Magistral Post Office in Rome.⁴ But it is not part of the UPU, which does not recognize the validity of SMOM stamps. Recently, the Italian Post reached an agreement with SMOM to deliver most classes of mail internationally except for Registered, Insured and Express Mail.⁵

This presents a bit of a dilemma. Since the stamps are valid for postage to at least the 52 countries with which the SMOM has signed agreements, and perhaps other countries via Italy, it seems they are really postage stamps and not cinderellas or poster stamps. Yet the UPU does not recognize the validity of these stamps.

Stamps issued by SMOM are not listed in the Scott, Michel, Stanley Gibbons or Yvert & Tellier catalogues. They are listed in the Italian catalogues *Unificato* and *Sassone*, and in two dealer catalogues published in Malta. Numbering schemes in these catalogues are all slightly different. In this article, *Unificato* numbers are used, signified by the notation *U*.

SMOM has issued stamps with the Coat of Arms of each country with which it has a postal agreement. Two of these have small maps. Figure 1 (From *UBF25*) is part of a minisheet of 9 with the Coats of Arms for countries signing agreements between 1986 and 1988. The stamp illustrated is the Coat of Arms of Cameroun featuring a small outline map in the center. The stamp issued when the agreement with Madagascar was signed is shown in Figure 2 (*U A49*). It too has a small map of that country.



Fig. 1 - *UBF25*

As mentioned, the SMOM was founded in Jerusalem about 1048.⁶ Originally, the Order

established a hospital to treat pilgrims to the Holy Land.

Then around 1100 when the Crusades began, they also began to treat Crusaders who arrived in large numbers. After the Crusaders claimed the Holy Land for Christians, the Order built other hospitals in the area. However, this was not a peaceful time and soon the Order became armed to help defend its properties, Jerusalem and pilgrims. Eventually, in 1187, Muslims under Saladin retook Jerusalem.

Figure 3 (*U 23*) shows the eastern Mediterranean Sea and surrounding areas. Jerusalem, with the Order's flag planted



Fig. 2 - *U49*

there. The date of 1099 is noted, which is recognized as the official date of the Order's founding. Figure 4 (U575) is a 1733 map of the same area by Sebastiano Paoli. While more detailed than the map in Figure 3, it does not specifically note the Order's locations or dates.

After the Muslims regained Jerusalem, the Order moved north into Syria, establishing strongholds at Margat and Acre. They stayed there, again with much warfare with the Muslims, until 1291 when the Muslims laid siege to the fortress St. John d'Acre. Figure 5 (U BF31) has nice layout plan of the fortress at Acre.

Figure 6 (U BF29), while not really a map, shows the fortress at Margat.



Fig. 5 - BF31



Fig. 6 - UBF29

Figure 3 also shows these locations with the year the settlements were established, 1186 for Margat, and 1282 for Acre.

Figure 4 also shows this area.

Finally, unable to continue the battle, the remaining Knights of the Order left by sea and finally settled in Cyprus. They remained there



Fig. 3 - U23



Fig. 4 - U575

for only a few years. Figure 3 shows Cyprus with the Order's flag planted and the year of their arrival, 1291. Cyprus is also shown on the stamp in Figure 4. This stay was short and apparently not considered important by the Order as the name Cyprus does not appear in the Order's official name.

In 1305, they moved their base of operations to Rhodes but it was not until 1310 that they completed the takeover. From this island they were able to use their navy to fight and disrupt the sea trade of Muslims.

While the Order conducted raids on shipping by eastern countries, the Turks attacked Rhodes on numerous occasions. The Order held off all of the attacks until a 6-month siege in 1522, led by Sultan Suleiman II, finally forced the Order to abandon Rhodes in early 1523.



Fig. 7 - U24

Several stamps feature maps of Rhodes. Figure 7 (U24). Figure 8 (U576) shows the fortifications at Rhodes.

Figure 9 (U184) is more of a view than a map but it does show the Siege of Rhodes. Similarly, Figure 10 (U BF41) shows the fortress at Rhodes.

For the next seven years the knights of the Order were left without a homeland. Finally in 1530 the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V gave Malta to the Order to be their home. Over the years, fortifications were constructed because there was concern that Suleiman would take Malta and use it as a stepping-stone to conquer Italy.

This concern became reality in 1565 when the Turks began a siege of Malta that would last from May until September. In the end, however, the larger Turkish



Fig. 8 - U576



Fig. 9 - U184



Fig. 10 - UBF41

force had to retreat without taking Malta. In 1571, a combined navy from various Christian countries, including three ships from SMOM, defeated the Turkish navy in the Battle of Lepanto.

Figure 11 (U494-97) A nice map stamp was issued commemorating the history of the SMOM Navy of 1731. This map shows the islands of Malta, Sardinia, Corsica, Sicily, part of Italy and Africa, and other Mediterranean islands.

Over the years, while some fighting continued, the Order turned more and more toward its role of administrating to the sick and those in need.

On Malta, a large hospital was built, followed by a medical school. The Order continued to have Malta as its home until Napoleon, concerned about a treaty the Order signed with Russia, occupied the island in 1798. Thus ended the SMOM's possession of a true homeland.

SMOM has issued several stamps featuring maps of Malta. Figure 12 (U25), continuing the first set of stamps showing the Order's movements, has maps of Malta and Gozo, along with the year of occupation, 1530.

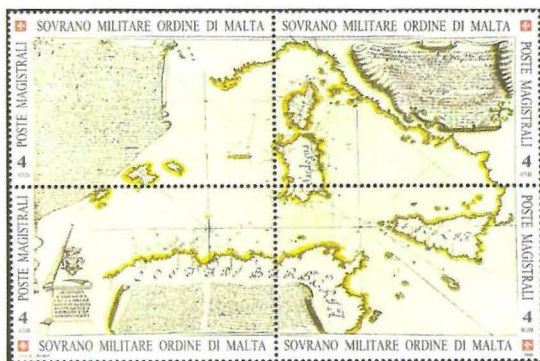


Fig. 11 - U494-97

Figure 13 (U577) is again a more detailed 1718 map of the islands by Michelot and Bremond and is interesting in that it is oriented with south at the top. The inset has a detailed map of Valletta, the capital of Malta.

SMOM issued two additional historic maps of Malta. Figure 14 (696-99) is a

detailed 1723 map of Valletta and the adjoining bays, including “new fortifications.” Figure 15 (U742-45) is a map from 1696. It has the islands of Malta, Gozo, Comino and Cominotto, the later two being small islands between Malta and Gozo. This map also has an inset map of the Valletta area.

A final map of Malta from SMOM is shown in Figure 16 (U314). This stamp was issued to commemorate the first meeting of the Order on Malta, in 1989, since leaving in 1798.



Fig. 12 - U25



Fig. 13 - U577

After being forced out of Malta, the Order established three locations in Italy: Messina, Ferrara, and Cantania. Figure 17 (U26) shows these locations as well as others in Italy and Sicily. Figures 18 (U731), 19 (U 732) and 20 (U 733) are plan views of three other locations in Italy, Fassano, Putignano, and Monopoli.

The Order’s website indicates that these are from 1712 so they probably do not reflect when they were trying to find a new permanent headquarters. Finally, in 1834, the Order established the headquarters in Rome, where it remains today. This is noted on the map in Figure 17.

The SMOM now has about 12,500 members worldwide. There are three classes of members: First Class, religious who take vows of obedience, poverty



Fig. 14 - U696-699

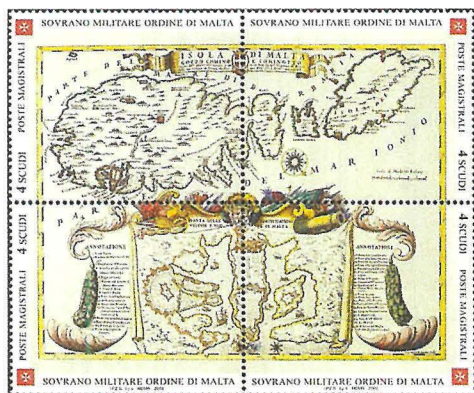


Fig. 15 - U472-5



Fig. 16 - U314

and chastity; Second Class, who take a vow of obedience; and Third Class, or lay members. Operating in 120 countries, the Order provides a number of medical and assistance programs including disaster relief, emergency services, first aid, help to the elderly, medical treatment, and assistance to refugees.

To accomplish this, the Order relies on 80,000 volunteers and 13,000 employees in addition to the members.



Fig. 17 - U26



Fig. 18 - U731



Fig. 19 - U732

Several map stamps reflect these activities. Figure 21 (U55) is a world map showing the countries where the Order has or assists at hospitals. Figure 22 (U197) has a globe and commemorates World Food Day. A nice world map appears on the stamp illustrated in Figure 23 (U406), UN Conference on Nutrition. Finally, Figure 24 (U727) has a map of Lebanon showing the locations of refugee assistance centers.



Fig. 20 - U733



Fig. 21 - U55



Fig. 22 - U197



Fig. 23 - U407

One excellent map from SMOM does not relate to any of the above categories. This stamp, Figure 25 (U BF35), shows the routes of Columbus's four journeys to the New World. According to information in the catalogues, this map was first published in Washington Irving's 1828 book, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta has been in existence for over 900 years. It continues to provide care to the sick, poor, elderly and others in need of help. It has also been an armed force fighting on land and sea. While its status as a country can be debated, it has a long and interesting history, and has provided help to many. The validity of its stamps can also be discussed but without question they provide an interesting way to look at the history and works of the Order.



Fig. 24 - U727

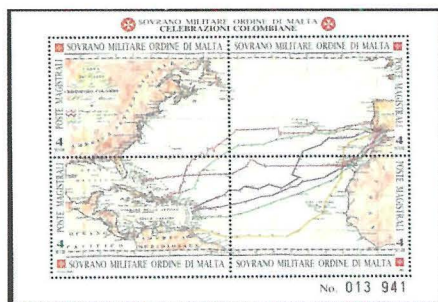


Fig. 25 - U BF35

Notes and references:

¹ From the Sovereign Military Order of Malta website, <http://www.orderofmalta.org/index.asp?idlingua=5>

² Matt Rosenberg, <http://geography.about.com/od/politicalgeography/a/knightsmalta.htm>

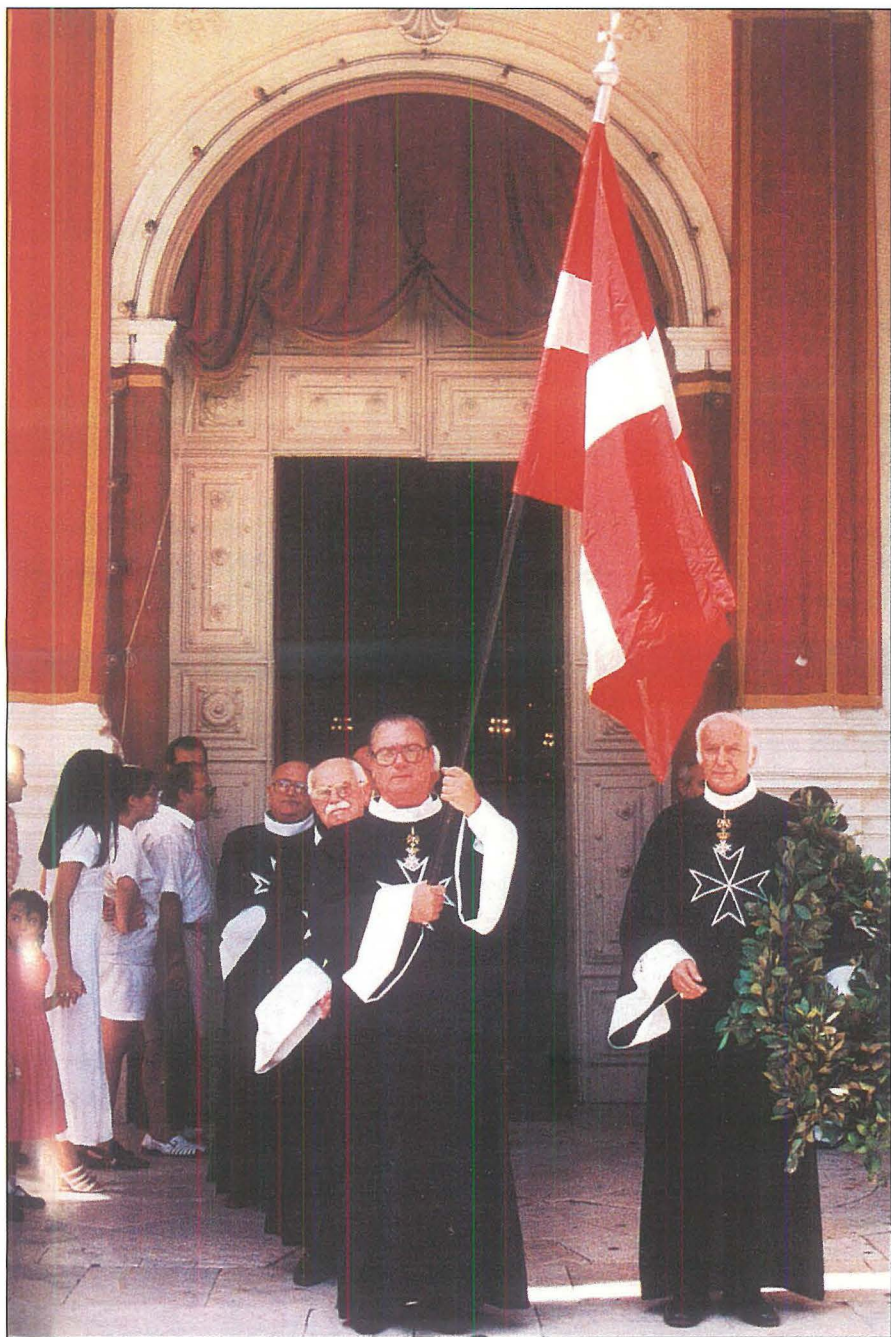
³ From the Sovereign Military Order of Malta website, <http://www.orderofmalta.org/pcfila.asp?idlingua=5>

⁴ The complete list of countries is found at the web page mentioned in reference 3.

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovereign_Military_Order_of_Malta

⁶ The following sources were consulted for the history of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta: "The Knights of Malta: A Legend Towards the Future", by Marcello Maria Marrocco Trischitta, (<http://www.orderofmalta.org/pdf/History.pdf>) – an excellent history written by a member of the SMOM. "Hospitaliers," Encyclopædia Britannica. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 15 Jan. 2008 <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9045799>>.

Acknowledgement: All stamps are from the author's collection except Figures 5, 6 and 14 which are from the collection of Mark Honig, and Figures 9, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 24 which are images from the Sovereign Military Order of Malta website, <http://www.orderofmalta.org/filatelica.asp?idlingua=5>. This website contains images and information about all the Order's postage stamps.



Chev. Dr. Alfred Bonnici KM leading his confreres at an official ceremony in the church of Our Lady of Grace, Zabbar in 2010.

SMOM and Malta issues

by

Carmel G. Bonavia

(*Sunday Times*, 24th November 1996 with additions by Dr. A. Bonnici)

By a decree of May 20, 1966, the Grand Magistracy of SMOM revived its own postal service under the name of *Poste Magistrali del Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta* with Comm. Remo Cappelli as its head. A central post office at Palazzo Malta in Rome was opened through the entrance in Via Bocca del Leone. Another post office was inaugurated at Villa Malta on the Aventine Hill. Both properties of the Order enjoy extraterritorial rights recognised by Italy.

For the inauguration of the *Poste Magistrale* a set of nine stamps, printed by the world-known security printers Thomas de la Rue of London and Carte Valori Staderini of Rome. To emphasise its independence of any other entity, SMOM expressed the value of each stamp in the old denomination of *scudo*, *tari* and *grano*. One *scudo* equals 12 *tari* or 24 *grani*, the currency used by the Order during its stay in Malta (1530-1798).

Postage stamps are still regarded as a symbol of independence and places a country at par with others.

SMOM showed its intention to issue stamps years before 1966. Sixteen years earlier, in 1950, the Order issued a set of nine letter seals (*chiudilettere*) designed by E. Pizzi and printed by the *Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato* of Rome. They featured a cross-section of the Order its foundation and seats in Rhodes, Tripoli, Malta and Rome. They were made available at the minimal cost of one Italian lira.¹ These *chiudilettere* were so identical to “stamps” that in 1975 the remaining stock of 75,000 were overprinted “*SEGNATASSE*” and used as postage due labels (stamps).

First day of issue

The first set of nine stamps was issued on November 15, 1966. They were printed by De La Rue and Carte Valori Staderini. These stamps featured a view of St. Peter's Basilica as seen through the keyhole of the main gate of the Order's Villa Malta on the Aventine Hill, Rome (2 *grani*); the old seal of the Order (4 *grani*); a symbolic design of two hands signifying the friendship between SMOM and Malta (6 *grani*); the old icon of Our Lady of Philermos (10 *grani*); map of Valletta and a medal of Grand Master La Valette; St. John presenting the Order's banner to the Grand Master (20 *grani*); St John the Baptist, patron of the Order (40 *grani*); the coat-of-arms of the then Grand Master De Mojana (1962-88) (3 *tari*) and a crowned eight-pointed cross within a rosary (*half-scudo*).

Philatelists literally stormed both SMOM post offices on the first day of sale of these stamps. The complete stock, nearly 200,000 sets, was sold in a short time.

A heated controversy arose in the philatelic world and much space was taken up in philatelic publications. Many saw the mushrooming of new “states” issuing stamps for the sole reason of exploiting philatelists. The small states of San Marino, Liechtenstein and the Vatican were already very popular with philatelists. So the addition of SMOM was hardly welcomed enthusiastically in international stamp business circles.

As expected, there was some speculation on the first issue. Within six days the highest value of the series (half-*scudo*) was sold out and complete sets were only available from stamp dealers. Soon the mass media raised the question whether SMOM was right, or at least premature, in issuing these stamps.

The Order argued that as a sovereign state, recognised by more than 40 states, including Italy and the Vatican, according to international law, it had every right to issue stamps. However, some accused the Grand Magistracy of SMOM of being impatient and said it should have waited until Italy sanctioned certain agreements with SMOM on the matter. Another argument was that until SMOM’s application for the membership of the Universal Postal Union was accepted, these stamps were to be treated as *local*. Despite the debate, philatelists continued to show great interest in stamps of the Order and new sets were issued.

Agreements

Notes Verbale were exchanged between Italy and SMOM on January 11, 1960 in which it was agreed that SMOM mail would be linked to the national and international postal network. Following the recommendations of a Standing Committee of the Italian Chamber of Deputies on relations between Italy and SMOM, the 1960 agreement was ratified on March 13, 1979. This agreement was to come into effect on April 1, 1979 and renewed after 10 years. It was approved by the Italian Cabinet and signed by President Sandro Pertini on December 3, 1979. However, because of the long and complex procedures required, this agreement has not yet been published in the official gazette, and thus, according to Italian law, is not yet in effect.

This agreement is similar to the one between Italy and the Vatican and SMOM mail would have taken the same course as Vatican mail.

It was also pointed out that the United Nations Postal Authority issues stamps which are universally accepted as valid for postage. The UN has no territory except its headquarters in New York with seats in Geneva and Vienna. The three UN offices issue stamps in different currencies which are accepted everywhere, although these are not sovereign states.

The Order found itself in a very unpleasant situation and something had to be done to bypass this difficulty. Bilateral agreements with different countries were the only solution.

SMOM-Malta agreement

The first of these bilateral agreements was signed by Malta and SMOM on March 4, 1975. Diplomatic relations between the two states had been established at ambassadorial level on June 27, 1966.

According to the agreement, the Malta Postal Authority undertakes to carry to destinations in Malta correspondence originating from SMOM and franked with stamps of the Order. The *Poste Magistrali* reciprocated by delivering all correspondence originating from Malta franked with Maltese stamps. Both postal authorities under-took to abide by Universal Postal Union regulations. Any correspondence to Malta franked with SMOM stamps would be backstamped in Malta and forwarded to addressee. *Figure 1, 2.*

Two subsidiary arrangements, describing the whole procedure in carrying out this agreement, were annexed to the main document. The Order agreed to place in a special bank account the sum of Lm70,000 or 25% of the value of SMOM stamps sold during the previous year, whichever was the higher. The sum deposited was to be at the disposal of the Malta Government and was to be used for the restoration of historic buildings and monuments erected during the period of the Knights in Malta. SMOM also bound itself to send to the Malta Post Office specimens of all stamps issued by the Order.

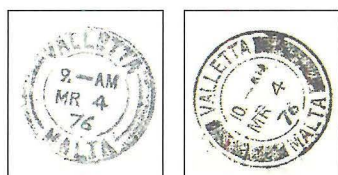
To avoid any confusion with local stamps and postmarks, SMOM could not use the word "Malta" but its full title of "*Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta*". It was also agreed that future issues of SMOM stamps were to be printed in Malta as long as the standard of stamp production was as high as the previous issues produced by Thomas de la Rue (London) and Carte Valori Staderini (Rome).



Figure 1



Figure 3 - 1975



Back Stamp



Back Stamp



Figure 4 - 1976



Figure 5 - 1977

Back Stamp

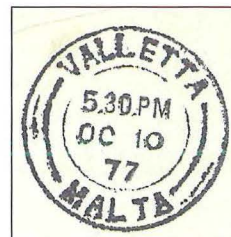


Figure 1, the first SMOM stamps following this agreement were issued on June 9, 1975, to commemorate the foundation of the Malta Blood Bank, and Figure 2 delivery date stamp in Malta.

The stamps were printed by Printex Ltd. Qormi which have been printing Malta stamps since 1973.

A second subsidiary arrangement laid down in detail the steps to be taken in processing incoming mail from SMOM. Every posted item or letter had to be inserted by SMOM in a red-coloured envelope addressed to the Postmaster General, General Post Office, Valletta, Malta. Such envelope was to be sealed and regularly franked with Italian stamps. On the top left corner the envelope was to indicate clearly "*Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta*". The Postmaster General in Malta would make arrangements for the opening of such envelopes on arrival, back-stamp the enclosed item and deliver it to the individual addressee in Malta, *Figure 3, 4, 5*. This arrangement lasted up to 1977.

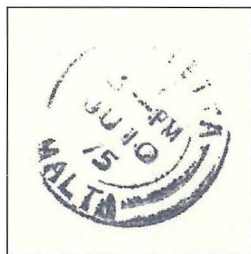


Figure 2 - 1978

In Parliament

This agreement was announced in Parliament on March 4, 1975 by the Minister of Posts and Electricity, Dr Daniel Piscopo. A debate followed the announcement and the Opposition regretted it had not been given a chance to see the text and study it. Dr Vincent Tabone asked for more details on the whole procedure in treating SMOM mail reaching Malta. Dr Alfred Bonnici, *Present Editor*, an expert philatelist in his own right, asked whether this was a recognition of SMOM stamps.

The Prime Minister, Mr Mintoff, explained the agreement and promised to lay a copy on the Table at the next sitting. He emphasised the benefits Malta stood to gain from this agreement with SMOM.

The Opposition expressed great concern over the opening of mail at the GPO, but the Prime Minister made it clear that only the outer cover was to be opened².

Inauguration

The postal service between Malta and SMOM, according to this agreement, was officially inaugurated on April 1, 1975. A few trial despatches to test the new arrangements were forwarded from Rome to Malta between March 23 and 31.

On inauguration day, a considerable number of envelopes, printed for the occasion, were posted from the SMOM post office in Rome to Malta. Maltese members of SMOM received a complimentary cover marking the occasion.

On this inauguration day, the *Poste Magistrali* launched its express delivery service and released a special stamp to pay for the service and at the same time distinguish such postal item. All SMOM mail as soon as it arrived at the Central

Mail Room in Valletta, was backstamped to indicate the date and time of arrival. Letters to addressees living in other postal zones received a second backstamping at the branch post office making the delivery. This is the normal course foreign mail takes from arrival in Malta to actual delivery, and SMOM mail was treated accordingly.

The office of the *Poste Magistrali* offers all postal services, including the sale of stamps, postal stationery, postal cards and aerogrammes. It also affords registration of letters which are given individual attention at all stages until it is delivered to addressee. Such letters are given a number in a red cachet with a large R on the right. This is what the UPU regulations demand for registered items.

Postmarks

Poste Magistrali used different postmarks all inscribed “*Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta*” both for cancelling stamps as well as for backstamping. After



Figure 6 - 1978



Back Stamp

the 1975 Malta-SMOM agreement these handstamps were restricted to untravelled envelopes to Malta. For all other covers travelling to foreign destinations, the Order introduced a new handstamp inscribed *Poste Magistrali* only. This was important to avoid any ambiguity and confusion with Malta Post Office, as stipulated by the Malta agreement.

On travelled First Day Covers an additional postmark, *Primo Giorno d'Emissione*, with the Order's coat-of-arms in the centre, was also applied. In 1983 a new bilingual

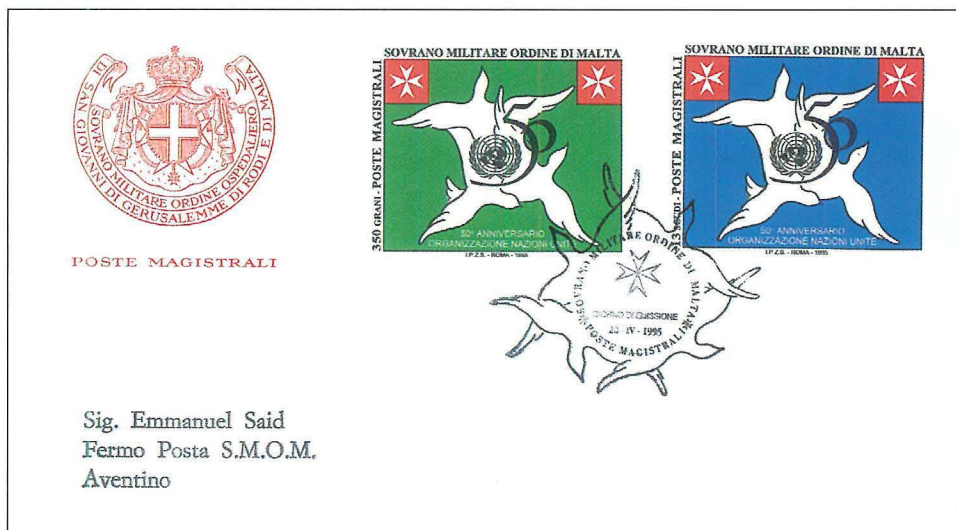


Figure 7 - 1995



Back Stamp

handstamp *Primo Giorno d'Emissione* – First Day of Issue was introduced.

The Malta-SMOM agreement lapsed on February 28, 1978, but was never renewed. During its three years of smooth running, this agreement served as a prototype for other similar treaties with other countries. The first one was signed with Nicaragua on June 27, 1977. Several others followed on the same pattern and today SMOM has similar postal agreements with 45 countries. Through such agreements SMOM makes considerable grants and contributions towards hospitals, medical services and other humanitarian activities.

From 1978 onwards personalised addressed envelopes were directed to:

Fermo Posta SMOM / Aventino. Figure 6, 7.

SMOM stamps have a special attraction to us Maltese as they feature many aspects of our social, cultural and artistic heritage so closely connected with the Knights.

History is the dominant feature covering the annals of the Order from its foundation to its present-day activities throughout the world. Various sets portray the complete series of Grand Masters, their coats-of-arms and the different uniforms of ranks within the Order. Naval battles and victories, maritime, vividly depicted on various sets, and famous artists like Mattia Preti and Caravaggio are strongly represented.

From 1996 envelopes were no longer personally addressed but directed:
Alla Direzione della Zecca / Palazzo Magistrale. Figure 8.



Figure 8 - 1995



Back Stamp

These art masterpieces are so vividly reproduced that SMOM stamps are artistic miniatures in themselves. They create interest even in those who are not philatelists. This is perhaps why so many philatelists around the world are collecting SMOM stamps.

In Germany, USA, Canada, France and Italy, interest in them is so great that there are special societies and circles specialising in SMOM stamps, while there is a good demand for special albums and catalogues for SMOM stamps.

Local dealers Emanuel Said's *SMOM Stamp and Coin Catalogue* not only lists the stamps but also gives full details on the subject. It describes each stamp, provenance, location and other details which render the collection and the catalogue a source of general information.

In this way the SMOM collection which has grown into 475 ordinary postage stamps, 56 airmail, five express and 48 miniature sheets, has become meaningful, cultural and interesting – three aspects which keep philatelists collecting these stamps issued by the *Poste Magistrali* which is celebrating 30 years of service this month.

References

¹ *Rivista Illustrata SMOM, Aprile-Giugno, 1950, p. 21.*

² Malta Parliamentary Debates, Sitting 384, March 4, 1975, pp. 329-342; Sitting 385, March 5, 1975, p. 449.

Year end Accounts

by
Mr. J. Cardona

MALTA PHILATELIC SOCIETY

BALANCE SHEET

31 December 2014


	<u>Page</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
FIXED ASSETS	7	€	€
At Cost	4,304		
Less Depreciation	<u>4,304</u>	0	0
CURRENT ASSETS			
Fixed Deposit Account	8	4,000	4,000
Current Account	9	<u>4,031</u>	<u>4,859</u>
		8,031	8,859
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Subscriptions paid in Advance		<u>(541)</u>	<u>(573)</u>
TOTAL NET ASSETS		<u><u>7,490</u></u>	<u><u>8,286</u></u>


REPRESENTED BY

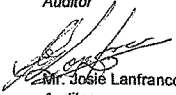
Excess of Revenue over Expenses
(Brought Forward from Page 2)

7,490

8,286


John A. Cardona.
Hon. Secretary & Treasurer.


Mr. Joseph Fenech.
Auditor


Mr. Josie Lanfranco.
Auditor.

Page 1

NOTE: Published above are the confirmed accounts for the year which ended on 31st December, 2014 and which were approved and adopted at the Annual General Meeting held on 28th January 2015. It will be noted that reference is made to a number of pages on the Balance Sheet and a series of notes on the Income & Expenditure Account. These are not enclosed to save space. However, if any member would wish to receive these documents please contact us and we will be delighted to furnish a copy.

MALTA PHILATELIC SOCIETY

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

31 December 2014

<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>
€ INCOME	Notes	€
1,695 Subscription receivable	(1)	1,633
76 Interest received	(2)	75
108 Donations	(3)	110
1,879 Total Income		1,818
EXPENDITURE		
(312) <i>Maltes X/IV</i> Philatelic Exhibition	(4)	97
782 Journal distribution costs	(5)	874
477 Newsletter distribution costs	(6)	417
715 Sundry administrative expenses	(7)	460
293 F.I.P. affiliation fee	(8)	293
224 Capuchin Friary - rental contribution	(9)	224
240 Christmas "get together"	(10)	235
9 Bank charges	(11)	14
150 Move from St. Publius to Capuchin Friary		0
(2,578) Total expenditure		(2,614)
(699) (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR		(796)
8,985 EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES B/F		8,286
8,286 FUND BALANCE AT YEAR END		7,490
<small>(c/f to the Balance Sheet at Page 1)</small>		

Postal Diary

2nd December 2014 – 17th March 2015

by
John V. De Battista

5th December

As announced on the 28th November, MaltaPost issued an occasion hand stamp “Milied f’Ghawdex” at the Victoria P.O. The hand stamp was inscribed “* MALTAPOST * VICTORIA, GOZO - MALTA 05-12-14” in the outer ring, and “MILIED F’GHAWDEX” in the inner ring above an outline image of the Holy Family with three hills and a star in the background.



For this occasion, the Gozo Philatelic Society issued a limited edition of one hundred commemorative cards (No. 99) franked by the Christmas 2014 €0.26 value stamp and cancelled with this hand stamp.

9th December

Pursuant to the Malta Financial Services Authority Listing Rules, MaltaPost issued a Company Announcement which reads as follows:

“The Board of Directors of MaltaPost (the Company) has approved the attached Preliminary Statement of Annual Results as extracted from the Company’s Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2014 that were audited by Pricewaterhouse Coopers and approved by the Board of Directors on 9 December 2014. The Board resolved that these audited Financial Statements be submitted for approval of the shareholders at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting scheduled for 16 January 2015.

The Board of Directors further resolved to recommend for the approval of the Annual General Meeting:

- 1. The payment of a final ordinary net dividend of €0.04 per nominal €0.25 share.*
- 2. The option to shareholders of receiving the dividend either in cash or by the issue of new shares. The Attribution Price, at which the number of new shares to be issued will be determined, has been established at €1.16 per nominal €0.25 share.*

Shareholders on the Company’s share register at the Central Securities Depository of the Malta Stock Exchange as at close of business on the 17 December 2014 will

receive notice of the Annual General Meeting together with the Financial Statements for the financial year ended 30 September 2014.

The final dividend, if approved at the Annual General Meeting, will be paid on 30 January 2015 to shareholders on the Company's share register at the Central Securities Depository of the Malta Stock Exchange as at close of business on 17 December 2014.

Graham A. Fairclough

Company Secretary

15th December

The *Malta Philately Newsletter* issue 20/2014 released by the Philatelic Bureau informed that The Malta Study Circle and MaltaPost have jointly published a revised and enhanced edition of the book titled "*Malta in World War I – Photographic Postcards*".

The publication records the life of Allied Forces and Prisoners of War in Malta during World War I.

This edition coincides with a set of commemorative postage stamps issued on 7th November, depicting Bighi and Floriana hospitals as well as HMHS Rewa, which transported to Malta thousands of wounded from the battlefields of Gallipoli. The three hundred sixty-eight page publication, which is in hardback format and includes contributions by experts in the field of Malta postal history, was to be available for sale as from the 16th December 2014.

17th December

MaltaPost informed the public that the Sub Post Office at 'Step in', Misraħ ir-Rebħa, Birgu BRG 1300 was to be closed for business between the 20th December and 7th January 2015, both days included. The public was advised that if it so wishes, it may avail itself of postal services provided from the Bormla Post Office situated in Block No 14, Flat No. 12, Fuq San Pawl, Bormla BML 1910.

19th December

MaltaPost informed the public that the Sub Post Office at 'Fleet Stationers', Triq Testaferata, Ta' Xbiex XBX 1402 was to be temporarily closed for business on the 26th December 2014. The public was advised that if it so wishes, it may avail itself of postal services provided from the Gżira Sub Post Office situated at 'Squire Stationery', 85, Triq Manoel De Vilhena, Gżira, GZR 1016.

It also informed the public that the Sub Post Office at 'C@C Stationery', Trejjet

Fleur de Lys, Santa Venera SVR 1580 will also be temporarily closed for business between the 2nd and 6th January 2015, both days included. In this instance the public was directed that it so wishes it may avail itself of the services provided from the Birkirkara Post Office situated at 58, Triq il-Wied, Birkirkara BKR 9013 or from the following Sub Post Offices:

‘Landau Stationery’ - 84, Triq Dun Gejtano Mannarino, Birkirkara BKR 9085.

‘Oreana Stationery’ - 94, Triq L. Casolani, Birkirkara BKR 4532.

‘D Spiral’ - Triq il-Vitorja, Birkirkara BKR 2691.

Another temporary closure advised was that of the Sub Post Office located at 6, ‘Welcome Bazaar’, Misraħ Frenċ Abela, Dingli DGL 1081 which MaltaPost informed that it will be closed for business on the 26th December 2014, 2nd and 3rd January 2015. With regards to this Sub Post Office, the public was advised that if it so wishes it may avail itself of postal services provided from the Rabat Post Office situated at Ċentru Ċiviku, Misraħ il-Parroċċa, Rabat RBT 1230.

The final Press Release issued on this day concerned the Sub Post Office situated at ‘D Spiral’, Triq il-Vitorja, Birkirkara BKR 2691, which MaltaPost informed that it will be temporarily closed for business between the 26th December 2014 and the 3rd January 2015, both days included.

The public was advised that in this instance it may wish to avail itself of postal services provided from the Birkirkara Post Office situated at 58, Triq il-Wied, Birkirkara BKR 9013 or from the following Sub Post Offices:

‘Landau Stationery’ - 84, Triq Dun Gejtano Mannarino, Birkirkara BKR 9085.

‘Oreana Stationery’ - 94, Triq L. Casolani, Birkirkara BKR 4532.

22nd December

Today MaltaPost issued four Press Releases. In its first press release it encouraged the public to vote for the most attractive stamp in the Small European Postal Administration Cooperation (SEPAC) competition which closes on the 31st December 2014. The theme chosen for this year’s SEPAC issues is ‘Flowers’ and the participating states have presented beautiful stamps illustrating flowers from their respective country. Malta’s entry carries a denomination of €0.59 and illustrates the Wavy Leaf Mullein. This flower grows in the Maltese countryside particularly on disturbed ground and flowers in late May and early June.

The stamp illustrating the Wavy Leaf Mullein bears the official SEPAC logo and forms part of the SEPAC joint postal administrations stamp issue folder for the year. SEPAC members include Aland Post, Faroe Islands Post, Gibraltar Philatelic

Bureau, Post Greenland, Guernsey Post, Iceland Post, Isle of Man Post, Jersey Post, Liechtenstein Post Corporation, MaltaPost, Monaco Post, San Marino Post, Luxembourg Post and Vatican Post.

The second press release informed the public that by agreement with the Malta Communications Authority, the St. Julians Post Office will open between 08.30 and 13.00 on the 24th and 31st December 2014. The public was informed that if it so wishes it can avail itself of postal services provided from:

“Malton”, 7, Triq Censu Scerri, Tas-Sliema, SLM 3062.

“S.G.S. Stationery”, 2, Triq Felice Borg, San Gwann SGN 2040.

MaltaPost also informed the general public that, by agreement with the Malta Communications Authority, the Parcel Office at the MaltaPost Head Office in Marsa will be open between 08.00 and 16.00 on the 24th and 31st December 2014 and that the last collection of mail from all letter boxes was to be effected at 13.00.

In the fourth and final press release, MaltaPost informed the general public that by agreement with the Malta Communications Authority, all Post offices will be closed, and there will be no collection or delivery of mail on Friday 26th December 2014 and 2nd January 2015. Normal service was to resume on Saturday 27th December 2014 and 3rd January 2015 respectively.

24th December

MaltaPost announced the winners of its student competition held during the University of Malta Freshers' Week 2014. The lucky winners are Yanika Stafrace, Dylan Camilleri, Bernice Camilleri, Naomi Brincat, Hannah Flynn, Vanessa Vella and Nicole Sammut. Ms Stafrace won the HP ElitePad 900 which was kindly presented to her by Kinetix. Mr Camilleri was awarded a €100 SendOn voucher while each of the other five won a €10 SendOn voucher.

The gifts were awarded during an event which was held at the Post Office which is located on the University Campus; a Post Office which also offers a range of other services apart from the traditional postal services one is accustomed to receiving at a Post Office.

08th January

MaltaPost p.l.c informed the public that the Sub Post Office at 'Midas', 34, Triq Ix-Xatt, Marsascala MSK 2113 was to be temporarily closed for business on Saturday 10th January 2015. The public was advised that if so wishes it may avail itself of postal services provided from the following Post Offices:

Żabbar Post Office - Ċentru Ċiviku, Triq il-Kunvent, Haż-Żabbar ŻBR 1351.

Żejtun Post Office - 37, Triq San Luċjan, Iż-Żejtun ŻTN 1834.

In another press release the general public was informed that, by agreement with the Malta Communications Authority, the Parcel Office at the MaltaPost Head Office in Marsa was to be open between 08.00 and 16.00 on Friday 16th January 2015, and that the last collection of mail from all letter boxes was to be effected at 13.00.

16th January

Pursuant to the Malta Financial Services Authority Listing Rules, MaltaPost issued the following Company Announcement under the signature of the company's secretary G.A. Fairclough:

MaltaPost (the Company) announces that the Annual General Meeting of the Company held on Friday 16 January 2015, approved all the resolutions on the Agenda viz:-

ORDINARY RESOLUTIONS

- 1. To receive and approve the Audited Financial Statements and consider the Report of the Directors and of the Auditors, for the year ended 30 September 2014.*
- 2. To declare a final ordinary net dividend of €0.04 per nominal €0.25 share, representing a final net payment of €1,411,216 either in cash or by the issue of new shares at the option of each individual shareholder.*
- 3. To re-appoint as auditors Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 78 Mill Street Qormi QRM 3101 and to authorise the Board of Directors to fix their remuneration.*
- 4. To appoint Directors in accordance with the Articles of Association of the Company.*
- 5. To establish at €30,000 the maximum annual aggregate Directors' remuneration for the holding of their office.*

Following the above Annual General Meeting the Board of Directors of MaltaPost is made up as follows:

Mr. J. Said (Chairman); Mr. J. Bozzino; Mr. D. Stellini; Mr. A. Theuma; Mr. D. Attard

19th January

In recognition of the importance that internet shopping has taken in its customers' life, as well as to offer added convenience and flexibility; MaltaPost announced that as from today it will be increasing its collection points to forty-one outlets. Customers will now be able to pick up mail items from an additional five Sub Post Offices, namely:

Dingli - Welcome Bazaar, 6, Frenč Abela Square, Dingli DGL 1081.

Ghaxaq - Marchams Stationery, 4, Wesgħa Bir id-Deheb, Ghaxaq GXQ 1651.

Kalkara - Troy DVD Rentals, 4A, Arcisqof Gonzi Square, Kalkara KKR 1513.

St Venera - C&C Stationery, Fleur-De Lys Junction, Santa Venera SVR 1582.

Ta' Xbiex - Fleet Stationers, Testaferrata Street, Ta' Xbiex XBX 1402.

Previous to the addition of these new Sub Post Offices, customers within these localities would have had to visit a Post Office outside their locality to collect their mail items. The decision to add the five Sub Post Offices follows a successful pilot with the Sub Post Office in Gharghur. Customers living in these localities can now benefit from an increase in convenience and flexibility while others living in other localities may also choose to transfer any mail items that would have been previously undelivered to one of these Sub Post Offices.

27th January

MaltaPost announced that on 4th February it was issuing a set of three stamps to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Yalta conference held in the Crimea in 1945. The meeting, which brought together the heads of government of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union represented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Premier Joseph Stalin was intended to discuss Europe's reorganisation following the end of World War II.



Prior to the conference, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to meet in Malta for preliminary discussions, and as Churchill famously declared in his message to the U.S President "No more let us falter! From Malta to Yalta! Let nobody alter!" This was voiced in the light of the many options put forward prior to the final decision being made for the meeting to be held in Yalta.

The stamps carry a face value of €1.00 each and reproduce photographs taken previous to and at the end of this important event. The designs are by Joseph Said and the stamps were issued in *tete beche* format in sheets of nine, composed of three identical rows each bearing a stamp from each design. The stamps measure 35mm x 35mm, and have a perforation of 13.75 x 13.75 (comb). The print run, executed by Printex Ltd on Maltese Crosses watermarked paper, consists of 27,000 stamps of each design. MaltaPost prepared an occasion hand postmark to cancel the stamps on the first day of issue (on FDC No. 1/2015). The hand stamp was inscribed "* MALTAPOST * ----- - MALTA/70TH ANNIVERSARY/YALTA CONFERENCE/JUM IL-HRUĠ/04-02-15" and also included an outline

image of Montgomery House. In addition to the standard philatelic material format issues, the set was also issued in a “Special” folder format. Besides a complete sheet in mint format, the folder included a special commemorative MaltaPost cover franked by a personalized stamp with the label being a picture of Churchill accompanied by high ranking officials on board ship, cancelled with the above occasion hand stamp. The MaltaPost Philatelic Bureau featured these stamps in Stamp Bulletin No. 329.

2nd February

MaltaPost p.l.c informed the public that the Sub Post Office at C&C, Fleur-De-Lys Junction Santa Venera SVR 1582, was to be temporarily closed for business between the 6th and the 9th February. The public was advised that if so wishes it may avail itself of postal services provided from the following Post Offices:

Hamrun Post Office -18, Triq il-Ferrovija HMR 1900.

Birkirkara Post Office - 58, Triq il-Wied BKR 9013.

4th February

MaltaPost announced that it had been informed by Ukrposhta, the national postal operator of Ukraine, that owing to the current situation in Ukraine there are difficulties in delivering mail to addressees residing in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. This follows previous instructions which had suspended mail delivery to Crimea and Sevastapol (*see entry for 7th May 2014*).

It was also announced that customers wishing to send mail items to these regions can still do so by sending them as general mail (Poste Restante) addressed to post offices in localities controlled by Ukrainian government authorities. Poste Restante is a service where post offices within an area, in this case within the area controlled by Ukrainian government authorities, hold mail until the addressee calls for it. It was highlighted that it is important customers wishing to send mail through this method should include details with regards to the addressee’s full name (last name, first name, patronymic); name of locality controlled by Ukrainian government authorities; name of district; name of region; name of postal facility of destination (post office receiving mail); postcode; country of destination and addressee’s landline or mobile telephone number on the cover of postal items to facilitate notice to the addressee of the item’s arrival. It was also recommended that senders pre-inform addressees about the dispatch of such items and also agree on the post office which will be receiving the mail. MaltaPost informed that it will be keeping the public updated with any developments and communications that it receives from Ukrposhta related to this issue.

9th February

MaltaPost announced that on 14th February it was issuing the second set in the Maltese Flora series.

The set, which consists of three stamps, shows reproductions lifted from photographs taken by Guido Bonnet. The €0.26 value illustrates the Smooth Goatsbeard, the €0.59 the Crown Anemone while the €1.16 the Friar's Cowl. The stamps were issued in sheets of ten which also included a tab showing a photo of the flower represented in the sheet. They all measure 20mm x 38mm, and have a perforation of 13.6 x 14.0 (comb). The print run, executed by Printex Ltd on Maltese Crosses watermarked paper, consists of 2,520,000 stamps of the €0.26 value, 504,000 of the €0.59 and 27,000 of the €1.16. MaltaPost prepared an occasion hand postmark to cancel the stamps on the first day of issue (on FDC No. 2/2015). The hand stamp was inscribed “* MALTAPOST * ----- - MALTA / MALTESE FLORA/SERIES II/ JUM IL-HRUĠ/14-02-15” below an outline image of a Crown Anemone flower. The MaltaPost Philatelic Bureau featured these stamps in Stamp Bulletin No. 330.



11th February

Pursuant to the Malta Financial Services Authority Listing Rules, MaltaPost issued a Company Announcement covering the period 1st October 2014 to 11th February 2015. Of particular importance is the following extract:

“For the period under review, MaltaPost registered an improvement in its financial performance when compared to that of the corresponding period last year and which is in line with expectations. The Company’s turnover registered an increase which was, in the main, due to new service offerings and the revision of certain tariffs, which came into effect on 1st January 2014. However, the impact of this increase on profitability was partially offset by higher staff costs and inflationary pressures on operating costs. Letter Mail volumes continued on their long-term downward trend while parcels and packets registered growth, especially over the Christmas period.”

25th February

MaltaPost informed the public that the letterbox situated in Triq F. Ximenes, Salina, Naxxar has been temporary removed for an indefinite period due to road works in the area. The nearest letterbox is situated at Triq il-Wileġ, San Pawl il-Baħar.

26th February

MaltaPost announced that it was to participate in the Munich International Stamp Exhibition

to be held between the 5th and 7th March 2015. The public was informed that an Occasion Card (Number 38), a Personalised Stamp / Cover and a Special Occasion hand stamp will be issued to mark this event.



The Occasion Card shows a picture of the Crown Anemone and also bears an **imprinted** image of the €0.59 stamp from the Maltese Flora 2015 set, while the Personalised Stamp Cover is illustrated with an image of the same flower next to which is the Munich stamp exhibition logo. It is to be noted that the date printed on some of the official covers, released before the error was spotted, incorrectly shows the event as being held on 8-10 May 2014. The personalized stamp label bears the official logo of the fair, superimposed on a background composed of Maltese Crosses in shades of light grey. The occasion commemorative hand stamp was inscribed “* MALTAPOST * PHILATELIC BUREAU - MALTA 5-7.03.15” in the outer ring, and “INTERNATIONALE/BRIEFMARKEN-BÖRSE/MÜNCHEN/2015” in the inner ring below an image of the exhibition logo. The Occasion Card was available for sale in mint and cancelled condition as from Thursday 5th March 2015 from all Post Offices, while the Personalized Stamp / Cover and occasion hand stamp could be purchased only from the Philatelic Bureau.

3rd March

MaltaPost announced that the Hon. Prime Minister, Dr Joseph Muscat accompanied by the Minister for Education and Employment, the Hon. Mr. Evarist Bartolo, and the ETC Chairman, Mr. Clyde Caruana the day before had paid a visit to the MaltaPost Head Office in Marsa in connection with the Youth Guarantee Programme in which MaltaPost had agreed to participate. This programme offers employers the opportunity to evaluate potential employees prior to their engagement, thus facilitating prospective recruitment. MaltaPost gave sixteen young workers the opportunity to experience work within the company for a period of twelve consecutive weeks and subsequently retained a number of these workers at the end of their work exposure, for a further traineeship period of six months.

6th March

MaltaPost informed the public that it will be undertaking an IT infrastructural upgrade on Sunday 8th March 2015 between 08:00am and 11:00am; in view of which the company's website (including all online data) would temporarily not be accessible for the public.

In another Press Release, MaltaPost informed the public that the letterbox situated in Triq in-Naxxar, Ħal Lija has been closed for an indefinite period due to road works in the area. The nearest letterbox is situated in Triq il-Mużika, Iklin.

In the final Press Release issued on this day, MaltaPost informed the public that the letterbox situated in Triq F. Ximenes, Salina, Naxxar which had been temporarily removed due to construction works (*see entry of 25th February*) is now back in service after having been relocated next to the Coastline Hotel gate.

13th March

MaltaPost held a blood donation event at the Blood Donation Unit in Gwardamangia. This was a first time experience for most of the staff participating in this event. The activity formed part of MaltaPost's Corporate Social Responsibility programme. "Donating blood makes you feel great knowing you are making a difference. The National Blood Transfusion Service continuously appeals to the general public as there is a great demand for blood of all types. Being an active part of the Maltese community, MaltaPost feels duty bound to lend a helping hand and contribute where possible. I would therefore like to thank all our members of staff who contributed towards this good cause." said Stefania Camilleri, Head of HR at MaltaPost.

17th March

MaltaPost notified that for the occasion of 'L-Imsallab fi Triqatna', the play re-enacting the passion of Christ through the streets of Victoria, Gozo, a special occasion hand postmark will be used on Saturday 21st March 2015 at the Victoria Post Office. The hand stamp was inscribed "* MALTAPOST * VICTORIA, GOZO - MALTA 21-03-15" in the outer ring, and "L-IMSALLAB FI TRIQATNA/2000 2015" in the inner ring, encircling an outline image of the Holy Cross.



Needed information for research purposes
any entires in possesion of members
of mail from Sicily to Malta
January 1859 to January 1863.

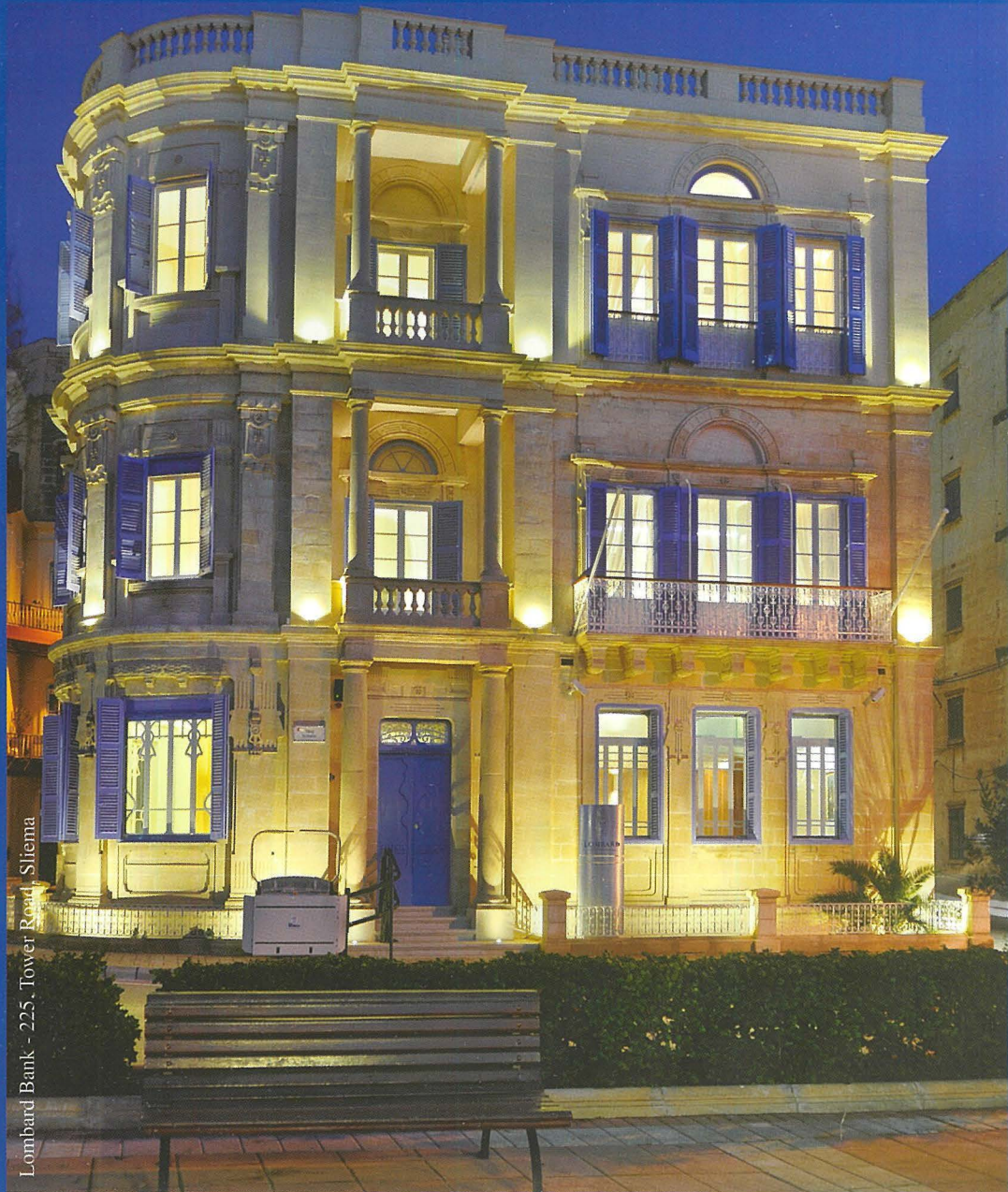
Anybody wanting to sell such material please contact

Dr. A. Bonnici

on email: abonnici@maltanet.net



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70th Anniversary of the Yalta Conference Stamp Set

This year marks the 70th
anniversary of the Yalta
Conference.

MaltaPost commemorated this
milestone with the issue of a
stamp set showing photographs
taken during this important event.



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