

The following article has been compiled by Colin Searle from scans and information provided very kindly by Martin Lloyd

## The M Cancel and its associated handstamps. (Part 1 1857)

British stamps were used on mail sent from Malta to overseas destinations (but not on mail to addresses within the Malted islands) from September 1857 until the end of 1884. Initially, stamps were cancelled by the letter 'M' in a barred oval (MK-1)\*. The earliest recorded date of use of this cancellation is 6th September 1857 and the last day of normal up was 12th February 1859., however, a few stamps issued after this date are known with 'M' cancels. This handstand only cancelled the stamp and it gave no indication of the date of posting. The date was applied by means of a second handstamp applied to the back of the letter. Various datestamps were used and examples of those include in the display are shown below.

Some of these datestamps were used prior to the introduction of British stamps and dates in the illustrations are from examples struck on earlier dates.

References in brackets (MK-1) etc are the references allocated to the various handstamps by the MSC in the handbook "MALTA Postal History and postage Stamps 1576-19560 published in 1980.



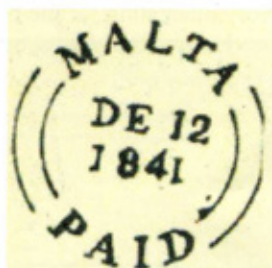
MK-1



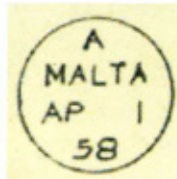
24.5mm, MLC-1c



30mm, MLC-1c



30mm, MPC-1



19mm, MAL-11



The first known cover from Malta using British Stamps cancelled by the 'M' cancel on 6th September 1857. Sent to Genoa on 6th September 1857. Note that the back stamp has 1875 with the 5 and 7 reversed. It is definitely 1857 due to the arrival handstamp applied in Genoa. Addressed per Piroscafi Postali Francesi





Envelope to Devonport (Now part of Plymouth) with an 1857 1d rose-red from plate 27 and a pair of 1857 4d rose with large gater watermark cancelled by the 'M' (MK-1) handstamp. The date is given on the back by the 30mm double ring handstamp 'MALA/OC 15/1857 (MLC-1c) The 5 is missing from the year in the datestamp as it reads 18 7

*Editor* This cover is very interesting for me because I was born 2 streets away from Donegal Terrace - 93 years later!



Front from Malta to Palermo. 3d rate paid the rate via French steamer via Messina.

Wrapper from Malta to Shanghai China. The postage of 1/5d was paid with an 1857 1d rose-red, an 1857 4d rose and a 1856 1/- green cancelled by the 'M' (MK-1) handstamp. The date is given on the back by the 30mm double ring handstamp 'MALTA/DE 30/1857 (MLC-1c). There is a black circular datestamp on the back 'HONG KONG/11

FE/58' but no indication of when it reached Shanghai. The rout taken is not known but was probably by sea to Alexandria, overland to Suez and then by sea to Hong Kong. It is endorsed 'p English Steamer' in manuscript.

This is one of only 2 covers from Malta to China with British stamps with M cancels recorded by the MSC. The other has the same rate of 1/5d but is made up of 1d, 4d and 2 x 1856 6d stamps





1858 and 1859 'M' cancels will be in the Autumn 2011 issue of Melita

**Malta to Marseilles 11th September 1857**

An entire letter to Marseille with an 1857 4d Rose with Large garter watermark cancelled by the 'M' (MK-1) handstamp. The date given on the back by the 30mm double ring datestamp 'MALTA/SP 11/1857' (MLC-1c) The red P-D indicates that the letter was paid to its destination. There is a red illegible Marseille datestamp on the front

**Malta to Colchester 21st October 1857**

Double rate envelope with 2 x 1856 6d Lilacs cancelled by the 'M' (MK-1) handstamp. The date is given on the back by the 30mm double ring handstamp MALTA/ OC 21/1857PAID (MPC-1) instead of the more usual MPC-1c. This is the only recorded example of this datestamp in black ink.



**Malta to Ireland 25th September 1857**

The date is given on the back by the 24.5 mm double ring handstamp 'MALTA/SP 25/1857 (MLC-1e) and not the more usual 30mm version. This is the only recorded example of this datestamp using British stamps on a cover from Malta.

