The Republic of Malta has an area of only 121 square miles and a population of 420,000, making it one of the smallest and most densely populated states of Europe. Today a member of the European Union, Malta has a long and complex history.

Malta is an archipelago, where three of the islands, Malta itself, Gozo and Comino are inhabited.

Malta joined the Roman Empire 264BC. It became part of the Eastern Roman, or Byzantine Empire 395-870 AD. Then followed Arab and Muslim rule, until the Norman took Malta in 1091. In the following centuries, different dynasties were in control of Malta, until Charles I of Spain in 1530 gave the island to the Order of St. John, today better known as the Order of Malta. The Knights ruled Malta until Napoleon invaded the islands in 1798, on his way to Egypt.
After a popular rebellion against the French, and with Italian and British aid, the French surrendered to the British in 1800. The 1814 Treaty of Paris confirmed British possession of Malta.

Malta withstood intensive German and Italian air attacks during WWII, and the entire island was in 1942 awarded the George Cross for its bravery.

Malta got a degree of self-government in 1921 (stamps were overprinted SELF-GOVERNMENT in 1922), but was suspended in 1933, only to be re-established 1949 under the new 1947 Constitution, when stamps overprinted SELF-GOVERNMENT/1947 were issued (in 1949).

After the war, it was considered to integrate Malta into the UK, and a referendum in 1956 confirmed that the majority of the voters agreed to this. But because of boycott from the opposition, the proposal came to nothing.

Instead, in 1964, Malta achieved independence as a Dominion, and in 1974, Malta decided to become a Republic (see page 3). Malta joined the European Union 2004 (page 3) and adopted the Euro currency in 2008.
A postal service has existed on Malta for a long time, and in 1857, British stamps were officially made available for prepayment of overseas mail, being first cancelled by an “M” obliterator, later by “A25” oblitters, often with a Malta datestamp beside it. (See page 4.)

The first stamp of Malta (Sc. 2) was issued 1860 and was intended for local mail only, overseas mail still be-

The 1964 Independence commemorative issues, a special print from a brochure entitled “Malta Independence Stamps” issued by the Government of Malta in commemoration of independence

A postal service has existed on Malta for a long time, and in 1857, British stamps were officially made available for prepayment of overseas mail, being first cancelled by an “M” obliterator, later by “A25” oblitters, often with a Malta datestamp beside it. (See page 4.)

The first stamp of Malta (Sc. 2) was issued 1860 and was intended for local mail only, overseas mail still be-
ing handled by the British Post-Office on the island and using British stamps. Therefore, only ½ p stamps for the local rate were issued 1860-84, all in the same design portraying Queen Victoria. From January 1, 1885, the local authorities took over responsibility for all mails, and a new range of stamps was issued.

These portrayed Queen Victoria in various frames. Pictorial stamps were introduced 1899-01, some of the de-
signs stayed in use until the 1950s.

In 1903, stamps with the portrait of King Edward VII were issued, and in 1914, stamps with the portrait of King George V. In 1922, current stamps were overprinted “SELF-GOVERNMENT” to celebrate the introduction of a bi-cameral Parliament.

Stamps showing the allegory of “Malta” and “Malta and Britannia” were issued 1922-26. These were inscribed “Postage and Revenue” and were re-issued 1925 with a “POST-AGE” overprint.

A completely new “postage” series was introduced 1926-27, a series which partly consisted of small stamps showing King George V and the arms of Malta and partly large pictorial designs.
In 1928, these stamps again were overprinted “POST-AGE/AND/REVENUE”. The 1926-27 series was then re-issued 1930 with a “Postage & Revenue” inscription.

The new King George VI definitives, introduced 1938, had no service inscriptions. It contained a number of stamps with the King’s portrait in a medallion and various pictorial designs. The same designs, and some additional ones, were also used for the Queen Elizabeth II definitives of 1956-58.

In the meantime, Malta participated in the colonial omnibus issues for the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935 and the Coronation of King George VI in 1937, as well as the 1946 Victory issue.

These were followed by the 1949 Royal Silver Wedding and Universal Postal Union issues (page 7), and the 1953 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II single (page 7).
In 1948, the King George VI definitives had also been overprinted SELF-GOVERNMENT/1947 (see page 2) to mark the re-introduction of self-government and the new unicameral Parliament. In 1950, three stamps were also issued to celebrate the visit of the then Princess Elizabeth to Malta, and in 1951, three stamps were issued for the seventh centenary of the presentation of the scapular to St. Simon Stock (he is believed to have received it from the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1251).

A single stamp was also issued for the 1954 Royal Visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Malta, and also in 1954, three stamps were issued to mark the centenary of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

In 1957, the first three stamps designed by famed Maltese designer Emvin Cremona were issued, commemorating the awarding of the George Cross to Malta (see page 8).

Cremona dominated Maltese stamp design during the
1957 First George’s Cross Issue, Sc. 263-265

1958 Awarding of George’s Cross (Sc. 271)

1960 1900th anniversary of St. Paul’s shipwreck on Malta (Sc. 275)

1965 Great Siege, 400th anniversary (Sc. 334)

1965 400th anniversary of Valletta (Sc. 348)

1965 definitives (Sc. 318, 321)

1967 1900th anniversary of martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul (Sc. 365)

1968 400th death anniversary of Grand Master La Valette (Sc. 388)

1960s and 70s. He also designed 1958 - 59 sets devoted to the awarding of the George Cross, the 1960 set commemorating the 19th centenary of the shipwreck of St. Paul on Malta, the 1960 independence issue, the 1965 definitives, the 1965 set for the 400th anniversary of the Great Siege, the 1966 set for the 400th anniversary of the founding of Valetta, the 1967 set for the 25th anniversary of the awarding of the George Cross to Malta (see page 2) and the
set for the 1900th anniversary of the martyrdoms of Saints Peter and Paul (page 8) and the 1968 set for the 400th death anniversary of Grand Master La Valette (page 8), amongst several others during that period. Other notable stamps designed by Cremona include the 1969 5th anniversary of independence set, the 1970 Council of Europe Art Exhibition set, the 1973-76 definitives, the 1975 Proclamation of the Republic set, not to forget a large number of Christmas stamps and Europa stamps.

In 1972, Malta replaced its old pre-decimal coinage with a decimal one, consisting of 10 mils to a cent, and
100 cents to a Maltese pound. A definitive series depicting the new coins was issued and some older issues were also surcharged in decimal currency.

A new definitive series was introduced 1981, telling the story of Maltese industry, and in 1984, three stamps celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Republic.

Already in 1960, three stamps had been issued for the centenary of the first Maltese stamps, and in 1985, four stamps celebrated the centenary of the establishment of the independent Maltese post-office.

The 25th anniversary of independence was marked with six 1989 stamps, and the same year, the new state arms was featured on a single stamp.

The same year, the important USA-USSR summit took place on Malta, and a single stamp with the portraits of Presidents Bush...
and Gorbachev was issued for this event that really had great implications on modern world history.

A series showing the cultural heritage of Malta was issued 1991.

Modern commemoratives include 1999 for the bicentenary of the uprising against the French, 1992 for the 50th anniversary of the George Cross Award, 1993 for the 5th Small States Games of Europe, held on Malta, 1998 for the bicentenary of Napoleon’s capture of Malta, 1999 for the 900th anniversary of the Order of Malta, and another for the 25th anniversary of the Republic, 2003 for the Small States of Europe Games, 2005 Old maps of Malta (see page 1), 2005 60th anniversary of end of WWII, and 2008 for 2000th birth anniversary of St.Paul.
As of January 1, 2008, Malta joined the Euro zone and from then on, the Euro has been the official coinage of Malta. For a while, stamps bore double denominations, in Maltese pounds and in Euros.

A definitive issue featuring flowers was introduced 1999, replaced by a new series featuring historic artifacts in 2009.

Malta has issued postage due stamps since 1925, the first issue being simple type-set labels, later, different designs have been used, between 1925 and 1972, the design displayed a Maltese cross, later designs have been ornamental.

Stamp booklets have been issued since 1970, in recent years, the annual Europa stamps have also been issued in a booklet.
Naturally, Malta has also issued a number of postal stationery items, and pre-stamped postal cards are still being issued, now normally supplementing commemorative issues.

Top to bottom:
- 2002 postage prepaid envelope for Zone A;
- 1884 postal card (H&G Sc. 1);
- 1989 postal card, reproducing 1989 stamp commemorating 25th anniversary of independence (stamp is Sc. 735)

If you enjoyed this article, and are not already a subscriber, for $12 a year you can enjoy 60+ pages a month. To subscribe, email subs@stampnewsnow.com