

A personal review of the APEX Stamp Auction No 151

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The APEX auction 151 contained some above average Malta material

and so I thought I'd write a personal review of some of the low lights and high lights of the sale. This is a purely personal view of the auction and does not represent the views of the circle and any assumptions or comments made are personal and should not be considered fact!.

The auction

This was the first time I'd attended an APEX auction and I had intended to be present for the main 'sets and singles' part of the auction but that sadly wasn't to be. The location is easy to get to and has good parking directly opposite the main entrance, the layout of bar, rest area, auction room and viewing was well managed considering the size available, the rest area could have been a bit bigger as it had limited seating but the auction room seating was laid out from the start and so provided additional seating throughout the day once viewing started.

There were plenty of staff on hand throughout the day and sandwiches, teas and coffees are provided during the first interval which was nice. There was a minor glitch getting the computer equipment ready for the registration which caused a minor delay and queue, it was mentioned that this happened before and had caused a considerably longer delay and queue, but at least this appears to be on an upward trend.

Viewing

9 AM to 1.30 PM

A room plan grouped into large box lots, folders,

sets and singles and 'anything est. over £1000' was presented. This did cause some initial confusion and a bit of running around from table to table and but once I realised the catalogue was annotated with groupings it made things a lot easier, preparing a list of lots to view in each group in advance is advised. For those who like to get a chair and stay there for the duration of the viewing this might not appeal!. Desk lamps were provided but lots were only handed one at a time, which for the single small A5 cards I thought cost a bit of time but I am sure there were reasons for this. By moving to the back of the room late arrivals or people needing more time were permitted to continue viewing. With the caveat of Lot 10 (see later) the viewing went well.

The Lots

The main consignment appears to have been an almost complete run of stamps in a mint blocks of four from SG 4 to the 1956 definitive set. I felt the grouping of lots was a little odd. The 1921 script set was split out to separate the 10s high value (SG 104), SG 105 formed another single lot, the Queen Victoria 1885 set, the two Edward sets and the first 1914 George V set all formed individual lots whilst the remainder was split into two high value lots comprising all the halfpenny yellows and a single (considerable) lot spanning the remaining sets 1922 to 1956. In addition to this main assembly there was a nice selection of single items, covers and varieties, it's unclear whether these were from the same vendor or not.



The Lots continued..

There were two suspect listings I wanted to review, **Lot 1018** being a stated SG3a white paper overprinted specimen showing an identical overprint type to the well known SG1 on blued paper. The second **Lot 1036**, an SG30 5s overprinted specimen with inverted watermark. I examined both at the auction and in my opinion the SG3a was definitely an SG1 (on blued paper), I was unable to ascertain the watermark on the 5s but with only 106 being recorded and most likely from an initially single sheet I find it hard to believe this would exist in two watermark states, most likely this was a misinterpreted misplaced watermark. Both these lots were among the unsolds.

A very interesting item for me was **Lot 1033**, described as a Sperati forgery of the 1886 5s Victoria, at the time I was not aware of Sperati forging this stamp although the catalogue described this as being recorded in the Sperati book by "Low and Wolske", I tried to locate this pre auction for reference but couldn't. ** See later



An examination of the stamp has a signature on the back which appears to look correct, there is no gum but has a watermark which is oddly very misplaced with CC above crown and to the right, I say odd only in that if you are going to forge a unique item you'd probably want something as perfect as possible?. I know Sperati left little tell tell signs of his work by way of imperfections, the only one I noticed (at the time!) was a notch in the right frame. All in all I wasn't convinced enough to bid high, someone else clearly was.

As a predominately plate flaw and variety collector the below is an interesting summary of a few more items of interest (to me!).



Lot 1048, Edward set in blocks of four included a lovely 1s Blue-black with missing pearl.



Lot 252, Included a fourth example of a Plate 1 corner positional of 5s SG113 without short F at Row 5-2. I have several single examples of the short F on this stamp so it's unusual not to find any on the known positional examples, does anyone have one? It does show one of the four known positions of the broken O (Row 5-1) variety.

Lot 1076, included a certificated block of four of the POSTAGE inverted with on the reverse the three known signatures additionally numbered 11,12,31,32 - and (probably a bit nerdy for some) has the constant plate flaw above M. I am interested in recording all (genuine) numbered copies.. so if any one can provide copies of others please contact me.



Lot 1052, I was able to put another tick in my table for 'uncatalogued key plate flaws' by recording my first HPF 6A on the 2s SG86, confirmed by frame flaw FF 6 (no HPF 5A noted). If the new owner is reading this and would like to swap this boring block for a lovely marginal block or sell please contact me !



There was not much in the way of postal history, a couple of lots with accumulations of covers, stationery and village cancels, there were however some lovely (most likely philatelic) covers :



Lot 1041



Lot 1030



Lot 1051



Lot 1067

Other notable items included two examples of the 1885 4d imperforate both mint and used



.. a range of die proofs



Lot 1026



18 FEB 84

BEFORE HARDENING

Lot 1032



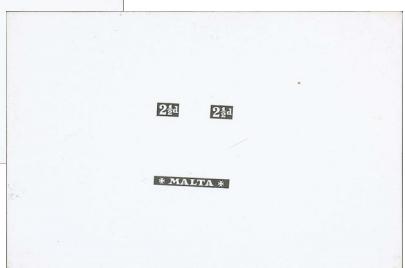
Lot 1027



Lot 1050

BEFORE
HARDENING

Lot 1056



2½d 2½d

* MALTA *

..including a Sperati die proof, **Lot 1020**



..and a series of Nursing MMDNA proofs, **Lot 1083**



The Lots continued..

There were a number of watermark varieties , a poor 1914 1s sideways watermark (SG81ab) failed to sell but a George V 1d red listed as SG73w sold well above estimate, I am not sure this wasn't due to the fact that this was actually an Inverted *and* Reversed example ! Subsequently another member has confirmed his believed inverted copy is actually an inverted and reversed example. So in what states does this watermark variety exist ? it would be good to hear from anyone owning a copy of either variety.



Lot 1055

A new discovery ?



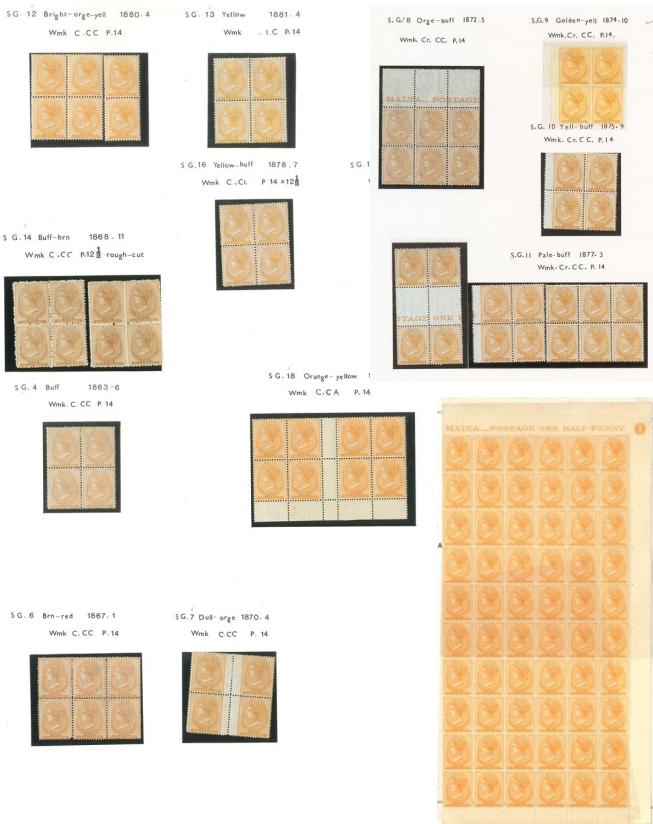
Lot 1058

Unsold

Malta material.. duplicate stock books, large multiples, maybe sheets, covers and more. I did send feedback to the auction that evening which included a question as to why this was not better described.

The bid order like the viewing arrangements followed a similar pattern with the Malta lots being dispersed throughout the day by means of box lots, collections and accumulation's then sets and singles, so it was a couple of hours before the first of the main lots (251 to 260) came up. The first of these, **Lot 251** was the group of halfpenny yellow blocks, estimated at £2500 to £3000 which started in the room at £1850 and went steadily through to £5800 surpassing my best efforts, there was a brief one second of joy when my only room bidder (at the time) dropped out but this was quickly quashed as another bidder promptly took over !

Adding buyers premium and VAT this was probably a fair reflection on the lot as although there were a couple of nice items (Golden Yellow Aniline) quite a few were heavily reinforced and some had no gum - but definitely a lovely reference collection.



Bidding

Bidding started prompt at 1.30 PM and started with lots 1-30, the larger box lots available to room buyers only and were ditto listed in the catalogue with the same description "WORLDWIDE xxx"- herein is where my 'low light' begins. The Malta section contained the material of a very serious collector, I'd diligently covered viewing all the listed lots that were described as being related to Malta and had taken a seat in the auction room and was enjoying munching on a ham roll when the auctioneer unexpectedly announced "Lot 10, the remainder of the Malta collection" .. nearly choking on my roll in surprise and despair I scrambled to find my bid card and stuck it in the air, I bid blind until in my confused state a nagging doubt surfaced as to what was I actually bidding on and in another confused state promptly dropped my card before reaching the £200 mark. This totally ruined the rest of the day for me as I tortured myself with visions of a whole box full of

Bidding Continued..

The other high value **Lot 252** in contrast came in the room at £1850 (Est £2500 to £3000) and left with no room bids, I debated too long in deciding whether to stick my hand up before the hammer came down and potential missed an opportunity of acquiring a bargain. There have been no results issued to date so I am unaware what this lot went for on the books. I was personally disappointed this group wasn't further broken down as I was extremely interested in the 1922 key plate sets, I believe it may have also resulted in a higher total price for the vendor too. If the new owner of this lot is reading this and is interested in selling the high value key plates I'd be more than happy to negotiate another new home !.



All bar an over valued general collection (**Lot 256**) and the Postal Stationery Specimens (**Lot 258**) everything sold in this group. The only listed postal history collection (**Lot 253**) made just above estimate, apart from a noted 'Insufficiently Stamped' the rest seemed (to me) to be basic material? A nice reference collection of SG1 to SG19 halfpenny yellows (**Lot 254**) produced a healthy above estimate return at £1250 (subject final results) considering some of the key items were missing gum and of poorer quality. Unless **Lot 255** had other interest (village destinations?) I was surprised to see the half penny yellow covers sell so well as these seemed in generally poor condition.

The next part of the collection (sets and singles)

was some 750 lot numbers away, expecting to have to pass about three to four hours I preceded to the bar for more lunch and reflection. It must be said bidding seemed exceedingly slow, its an odd complaint as I've been in auctions where they skip through £100 bids in nanno seconds and give no time to reflect how this affects the rest of your bidding before moving onto the next lot, so I would have enjoyed the slower pace were it not for the fact I'd been up since 6AM, been at the auction since 9AM and the only reflection coming to my mind was the missed box lot 10, in the end it became almost torturous and the prospect at 5 PM there was still another hour to hour and half to wait for the Malta lots I decided to leave, which just added to my frustration of day. I was a bit surprised I hadn't seen any fellow Malta collectors I knew there.

Results

To date no results have been posted and requests for when, or if they issue results have been unanswered ? I have an idea of the earlier lots realisations based on room bidding and for a dozen or so sets and single items I personally bid on, but these aren't worth disclosing for this article.

The unsolds are known as they are published on their website for offers and in addition to those already mentioned include **Lot 1024**, 1885 Specimen Set £600-£700 (offers from £510), **Lot 1029**, 4d Imperforate used £3500-£4500 (offers from £2800), **Lot 1090**, 1925 Postage Due missing 2 in block of four (£150-£175 (offers from £120)

*** I did eventually track down and purchase this book after the auction, the catalogue misspelt Lowe as 'Low' and I didn't twig, as soon as I added the e I was able to trace the book. The book clearly shows the 5s and even has a photo plate, there are 6 noted plate references that confirm the forgery, this example had 3 so confirms as genuine for me, Sperati also used original paper.*