The Withdrawn TELECOM EGYPT Stamp: Egypt's Most Common Modern Stamp?

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Many column inches have already been devoted to this stamp - see *QC* 214, September 2005, page 52 [Leon Balian (ESC 251)] and QC 217, June 2006, p138 [Dr Sherif El-Kerdani (ESC 456), Edmund Hall (ESC 239), Leon Balian (ESC 251)] - but while we are looking at the oddities of some of the goings-on in modern Egyptian philately, perhaps a revisit might be in order.

First there was the booklet *Discover the Treasures of Egypt in Stamps* - see "Egypt's new Booklet" [Mike Murphy (ESC 240)] in QC 211, December 2004, p275-277, in which Mike wrote: "Now, after a wait of half a century, there is another (stamp booklet), perhaps amid some controversy, I hope that this article might clarify its status." which appears to accept that this is a genuine philatelic item although he was told "... from postal clerks and from the Philatelic Bureau we were assured that at £E80 (though the face value of the stamps is £51.95), this was a "souvenir issue" intended for tourists, and that the stamps had no postal validity." Covers with stamps from this booklet have certainly been seen, all seemingly accepted as postally valid.

Then came the TELECOM EGYPT stamps, and now the 50th Anniversary of Egypt-China Diplomatic Relations (see page 53, 68 & 71). What all these issues have in common is an initial fanfare of their possible rarity and correspondingly high asking price ... but while the withdrawn Telecom stamp's short life does appear to be genuine there has been some disquiet that maybe things are not quite what they should be. I think, however, that the cock-up theory holds up over manipulative conspirators and it cannot be held against those who accidentally ask highish prices for what initially appears to be a true rarity. All three items are regularly up for sale on eBay, and if the number is declining it is because they are not selling at the high starting prices, which themselves are appreciably lower then a few months ago.

Still, no doubt it's only matter of time before another "rarity" appears - so do we hold off buying, gambling that the prices will fall? It's all a bit like deciding whether or not to buy a house.*

Why do I think the TELECOM EGYPT stamp could be the easiest modern stamp to find? As one who collects some modern Egypt, by which I mean the last decade or two let alone anything post-monarchy, I can assure you that some of them are very elusive, particularly on cover. The Telecom issue, by its very notoriety, has caught the imagination of those who see the opportunity to make the quick piastre or two, and good luck to them, say I. So in the last year what have I managed to accrue all too easily?



A cover of May 8 2008, sent to me using two of the stamps to make up the correct registration rate. There are more stamps on the front. Yes, contrived - but the stamps were accepted for postage.

^{*}For future readers the USA and UK are experiencing falling house prices after two decades of prices rising.



For good measure I shall put this on the website and include a full sheet. It may be fun collecting, but finding items too easily can perhaps take a bit of the fun out of it. So what are those elusive items? Well, that's another story...

