

The Postal Concession - Christmas Seals of 1935

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Whilst in Egypt on the recent ESC visit to Cairo I had the opportunity to examine the Postal Concession collection of the newly elected President of the Philatelic Society of Egypt, Mr Hisham Bassyouny - hi Hisham if you're reading this, and many thanks!

In what was, I must say, a superb collection, we came to the Christmas NAAFI seals; in particular the first of the three printings of 1935 - these are what Hobbs¹ describes on page 54 of his second edition, published 1984, as the Fourth Issue (SG² A6; H11). Of the three printings the third is of course the overprint and can be discarded from what follows: we are here concerned only with the first two printings, Gibbons A6 or Hobbs' H11, issued 23 November 1935 (Balian 6) and Gibbons A6a or Hobbs' H12, issued 19 December 1935 (Balian 7).

The first of these is obviously darker than the other and it is also fair to point out that, since the second printing was much smaller in quantity, and many of those actually printed were subsequently destroyed, A6a or H12 is much more scarce unused than A6 or H11. Unused it is also priced at more than four times the first printing, so one tends to examine these in dealers' stocks in case they have wrongly identified them and priced them accordingly! As a result I have found them reasonably easy to differentiate, in particular since A6 or H11 is on white paper whilst A6a or H12 is on slightly toned (creamy coloured) paper. This is obvious when you look at the selvedge of a pane.

Hobbs himself states of A6 or H11: "It is also known printed on toned paper and in a red-orange shade". I cannot say that I have ever come across these before myself, so just how scarce are they and how many sheets were printed?

However in Hisham's collection were a pair and two singles of what I can only describe as carmine. He very generously gave me one of the singles and I have now had a chance to study it. Comparing it with both A6 and A6a, which Gibbons describe, correctly in my view, as vermilion and pale vermilion respectively, this is carmine according to the Stanley Gibbons Colour Guide³. There is certainly no trace of orange in this colour, so is this the colour Hobbs referred to as being "in a red-orange shade" or is there yet another printing out there? I simply do not believe so, but I would suggest that collectors keep their eyes open for carmine rather than red-orange when looking for this unlisted shade.



Fig.1 A6



Fig. 2 A6 carmine



Fig. 3 A6a

Illustrated are the three shades, which I do hope will show up different from one another when printed.

References:

1. J.E.O. Hobbs, *British Forces in Egypt Postal Services 1932-1940*
2. Stanley Gibbons, *Gibbons Stamp Catalogue Part 19* (5th edn, 1996)
3. Stanley Gibbons, *Gibbons Colour Guide for Stamp Collectors* (1973)