

VIII

The British Post Offices

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This subject was first treated comprehensively by Rawson¹; it was later expanded by Boulad in two articles in French². More recently, the subject has been expanded further by Smith³ and critically reviewed by Bertram⁴.

There were three British post offices in Egypt in the nineteenth century: Alexandria, Cairo, and Suez. Their importance was greatly diminished by the formation of the Universal Postal Union in July 1875, and they were closed by April 1st 1878 (the Cairo office was closed in 1873 for a different reason). Later, army post offices were opened in connection with the campaign against Arabi Pasha in 1882, but that is another story (Chapter XXXI). British postal activity in Egypt began with Lt. Waghorn's persistent efforts to shorten the time required for the mails for India and the Far East by utilizing overland routes (Chapter V). Travel by ship was (and remains to this day) much slower than travel by land, even before the building of railways, and the extremely long route around the southern tip of Africa, which was heavily dependent on sail because of the lack of coaling stations, could take six months. A vital link for Waghorn's route across Egypt from Alexandria to the Red Sea was service between Malta, which was served by the Admiralty steam packets from Southampton or Falmouth, and Alexandria. Waghorn's agitations led to the extension of the packet service to Alexandria in 1835 (the P&O Co. took over the Malta-Alexandria route in 1840), and an official packet agency was opened in August 1839. This date can be taken as the beginning of British postal services in Egypt.

The symbols used in this chapter for the various types of postal markings differ from those of Rawson. A change was necessary in order to be able to insert newly discovered markings into the system, while keeping those of similar function together. I have used D for Date-stamp, T for Tax (postage due) markings, R for Registered, RD for Registered Date-stamp, L for Late markings, and OB for Obliterator.

Alexandria

The packet agency at Alexandria was soon, if not immediately, provided with a circular date-stamp (Fig. 1). It was normally struck in black and on the backs of letters, a procedure that identified a letter as unpaid (prepayment was not customary in those

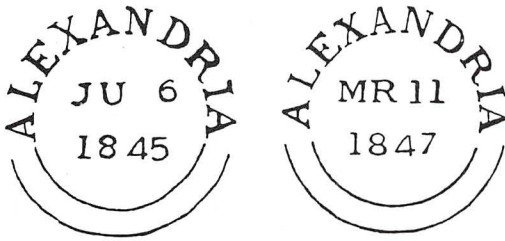


Fig. 1 Date-stamps D-1-I and D-1-II.

stamp was introduced at least as early as January 1st, if not concurrently with the opening of the agency.

At least two date-stamp devices were in use (D-1-I and D-1-II). The D-1-I device has a narrow N, a longer name (ca. 202° of arc), and a gap of only 1mm between the serifs of the terminal A's and the ends of the inner arc. Type D-1-II has a noticeably wider N, a shorter name (ca. 198° of arc), and a gap of 2mm between the serifs of the A's and the ends of the inner arc. There are also differences in the spacing between the two date lines. The length of the name can be checked by means of a protractor, or a transparent overlay, which one can make with a photocopier by replacing the customary paper supply with transparent film designed for the purpose and obtainable from office-supply firms. I state 'at least two' only because it is very difficult to distinguish small variations, which are easily obscured by differences in inking and impression. Both devices appear to have been used indiscriminately with red or black (and in the 1850s, blue) ink, and contemporaneously. However, black strikes never show a trace of red, and red strikes (more nearly vermilion) never show a trace of black. A possible explanation is that each date-stamp was allotted to a specific ink pad, but they were probably cleaned regularly, after which they would have been returned to the respective ink pads without distinguishing one device from the other.

Black ink appears to have given way to blue in the early 1850s without involving any change in function. Type D-1 probably continued in use until the packet agency was upgraded to a full post office, although the latest date recorded is November 6th 1857.

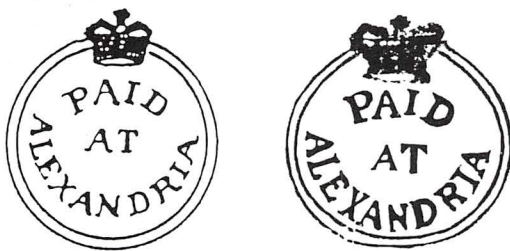


Fig. 2 Crowned circle: drawing and retouched photocopy.

In addition to the use of the date-stamp in red, there was another prepayment device, the crowned circle (Fig. 2). It is actually a slightly flattened circle. It was always struck in orange-red, accompanied by the D-1 date-stamp (in black or blue, never red), and a manuscript rate marking. It is reported that it was inventoried by the British Post Office on November 13th 1841, but was not put into use until May 1843. The earliest date I know of is October 22nd 1845, and examples are known with dates as late as 1860 (thus after the introduction of postage stamps). Examples are quite scarce, and I have been able to record only 20 covers⁵.

It is not clear under what circumstances prepayment was to be indicated by using the crowned circle rather than the date-stamp in red. The recorded dates of use of the two

years). In contrast, when the date-stamp was struck in red, and on the face of the letter, prepayment was indicated (and the manuscript rate marking, black on unpaid letters, was written in red also). The earliest date I have seen for this date-stamp is January 21st 1840, struck in red, and I have seen it in black as early as May 25th 1840, so it is probable that the date-

methods overlap substantially. An opinion that the crowned circle was to be used on letters to foreign destinations where there was no British post office is refuted by the fact that most of the recorded examples are addressed to the British Isles. Another opinion, that the red date-stamps were used in error, is hard to credit, for the red date-stamps are at least as frequently seen as the crowned circle. It is probably significant that nearly all the letters franked with the crowned circle (including those from Cairo and Suez) are addressed to the British Isles or the USA (one is addressed to Malta, one to Batavia), whereas those franked with the date-stamp in red are addressed to Malta (most), Gibraltar, or Beyrout.

A plausible hypothesis is that the red date-stamp was used to show prepayment of letters handled throughout by British mail packets, whereas letters that might have to pass through foreign territory for some part of the journey were more explicitly shown to be prepaid by the crowned circle. Most letters from Egypt to Great Britain before 1870 were routed overland through France via Marseille, a fact that could account for the use of the crowned circle (the mail for the USA was transshipped in Britain). The lone exception, an 1861 cover from Cairo to Malta, might be the actual error.

In the packet agency period the mails were at first monthly, in 1852 the schedule became twice a month, and in 1857 there were three mails a month⁶. Two routes were used: an all-sea route to Falmouth or Southampton via Gibraltar and Malta, and an overland route via Marseille and Calais. The former required 14 days. The overland route initially took ten days, but by 1854 it was reduced to nine days, and in 1855 to eight days, as roads and railways across France were improved.

On March 17th 1858 the packet agency was converted to a post office authorized to handle registered letters and to sell stamps. Stamps were put on sale, and therefore an obliterator was required to cancel stamps. A device having B01 in a horizontal oval of bars (Fig. 3, OB-1) was introduced. Along with it came a new, smaller date-stamp (Fig. 4). The first version, D-2-I, was characterized by letters 2.5mm high, and narrow A's in ALEXANDRIA, which began and ended at about the midpoint of the month-day date-line. The date when these devices came into use is stated² to be August 2nd 1859, but the earliest observed date is May 19th 1858. The obliterator is always accompanied by the new date-stamp, and never by the old type D-1.

The type D-2 date-stamp has several variants, not necessarily corresponding to different devices. A code letter, A or B, may be present just above the date; a code letter E has been claimed to exist, but neither Rawson nor Boulad was able to record a single date for it, and I doubt that it exists. It would be easy for a B to look like E if it were imperfectly struck. This date-stamp also comes without a code letter. The recorded dates of use (Table 1) suggest that code letter B came into use later, as the volume of mail to be worked increased. The code letters were probably changeable, and indeed, they were often omitted.

There were apparently several basic devices corresponding to D-2. D-2-I and D-2-II correspond to Rawson's II-2 and II-3. Type D-2-I has been described above; type D-2-II has wider A's in ALEXANDRIA (the E may also be slightly wider), slightly taller letters



Fig. 3 OB-1: early and late states.



Fig. 4 Date-stamp D-2, variants.

TABLE 1 — ALEXANDRIA DATE-STAMPS
Earliest and Latest Dates of Use

Type	Color	Earliest	Latest
D-1	red	21 JA 40	6 NO 57
	black	25 MY 40	24 MR 56
	blue	21 OC 51	3 DE 57
D-2, A	red	5 OC 58	29 JA 64
	black	— MR 59	17 MR 78
D-2, B	red	17 JA 65	3 AP 65
	black	13 FE 66	— OC 72
D-2, —	black	24 JY 56	2 DE 77

Owing to ambiguity in many of the reports on which this table is based, no distinction is made between types D-1-I and D-1-II, nor between types of D-2.

accurately. The variables to look for are the heights of the letters (2.5 to 3mm), the height of the cross-bars of the A's, the width of X, and the position of the terminal A's with respect to the date-line. Trying to sort them out does not impress me as a rewarding occupation!

D-2 was nearly always struck in black, but a few examples are known in red, on unstamped but prepaid letters. There is a single report⁷ of a strike in green, dated 19 MY 58, on an unstamped cover.

Obliterator OB-1 remained in use at least until 1872, but became so worn that early and late impressions look like different devices. It was supplemented successively by three other obliterations, having the same B01 inscription, but arranged vertically, with ten, eight, and six horizontal bars, respectively (Fig. 5). Recorded dates are shown in Table 2. One of these, OB-2, can be found used in duplex,

TABLE 2 — ALEXANDRIA OBLITERATORS
Earliest and Latest Dates of Use

Device	Earliest	Latest
OB-1	9 SE 60	23 FE 72
OB-2	16 MY 66	10 OC 69
OB-3	1 JE 71	6 JA 78
OB-4	11 MY 73	10 FE 78

(ca. 3mm), and a longer name, such that it begins and ends near the base of the month-day date-line. Type D-2-I is rarely seen, if at all, after 1868, and the earliest reports of D-2-II are of 1869. The latter usually has no code letter. Rawson reported a third variant of D-2 (designated II-4 by him), although it may be an adventitious result of differing strikes of D-2-I. By means of transparent overlays, I think I can identify a total of four sub-types of D-2, but the differences are so small that identification is uncertain unless the strike is perfect, and the distinguishing features are difficult to describe or illustrate

in a device holding the obliterator and date-stamp together (Fig. 6), or independently. Presumably the duplex devices were easily disassembled. OB-2 was almost always used in duplex format. OB-3 has been reported used as a duplex, but I have not seen a convincing example. The date-stamp used in duplex usually had code letter B, but examples with no code letter are not rare. I know of no example of code letter A used in duplex.

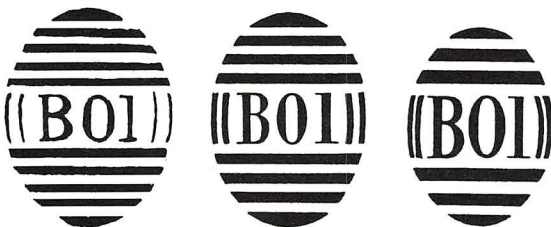


Fig. 5 Alexandria obliterations
OB-2, OB-3, and OB-4.

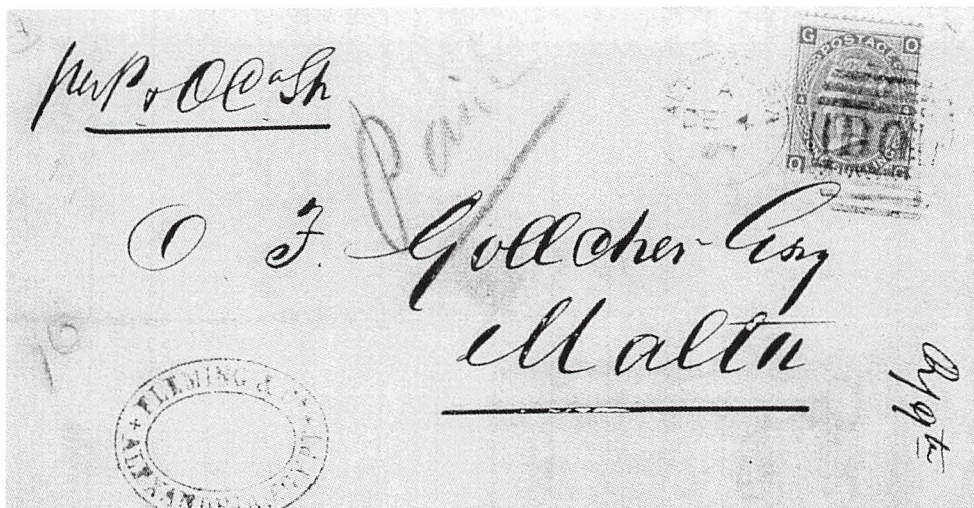


Fig. 6 Use of OB-2 in duplex with date-stamp.

When stamps were introduced at the British post offices in Egypt, prepayment of postage became the norm, and was encouraged by imposition of a fine on underpaid letters. The actual stamps (and their plate numbers) used comprised all stamps issued in Great Britain from 1858 up to 1877, except for the 1½d. and 8d. values (but see Suez), including the 1d. rose-red 'stars' of 1857. They are listed in detail, with valuations, in the Gibbons catalogs, and it would be redundant to repeat the list here. However, the Gibbons listing of the 3d. of 1881 (SG no. Z14) must be a mistake, because the Alexandria office was closed before that stamp was issued. The 9d. and 10d. values, and the values above 2½d. issued after 1875, seem to be the scarcest. Of postal stationery, I know of only the QV penny-farthing postal card used at Alexandria.

The heavy volume of mail posted in Alexandria probably resulted in occasional shortages of stamps. In order to avoid the penalty rate, prepayment in cash was resorted to, indicated either by the crowned circle, or the date-stamp D-2, struck in red (Fig. 8), as in the packet agency period. Red strikes of D-2 show no trace of contamination with black.

Registered letters from the British post office in Alexandria (as well as Cairo and Suez) are scarce. Special REGISTERED date-stamps were provided for them (Fig. 7). The earlier one (RD-1) has been reported with dates from AU 20 70 to JU 15 74; the oval RD-2 that followed it has been reported from AP 30 76 to MR 1 78. The former had no code letter; the latter has code letter A. A straight-line REGISTERED handstamp, R-1, has also



RD-1



RD-2

REGISTERED

R-1

Fig. 7 Alexandria handstamps for registered letters.

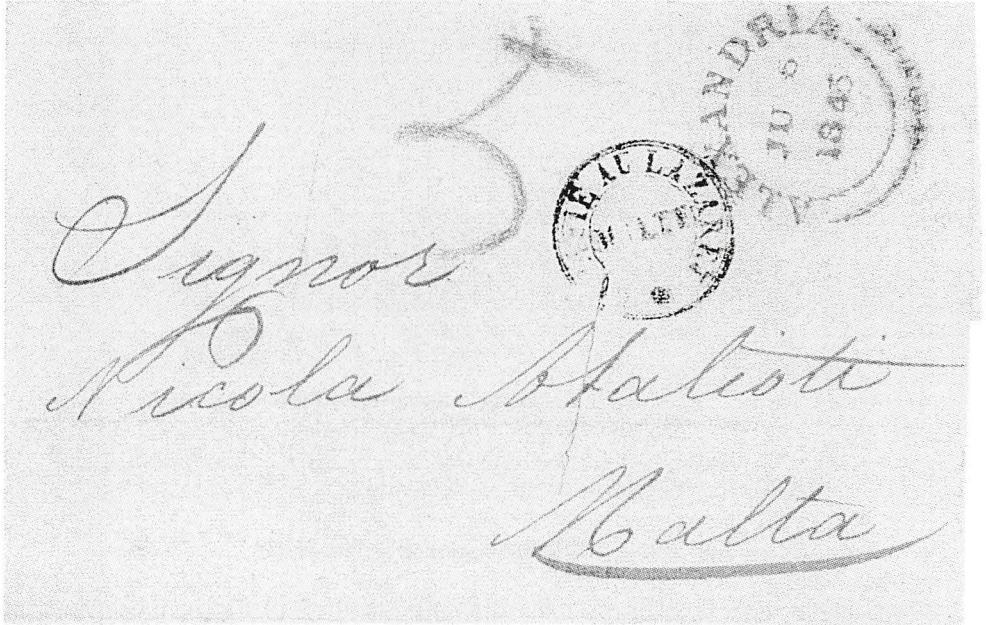


Fig. 8 A cover showing date-stamp and manuscript "5" in red, indicating prepayment of 5d. in cash.

been reported⁸ on a cover originating in Cairo, dated OC 1 64, struck in the same red as the Alexandria transit date-stamp, and on a cover dated DE 4 67, to Malta.



Fig. 9 Date-stamp and obliterator for the maritime movable box.

A special date-stamp was provided for use on letters posted in the movable box provided on British packets. It is a chamfered rectangle including the letters MB (Fig. 9). Although it was inventoried on October 15th 1857, only one example has been reported (AP 19 58). An obliterator, inscribed A17 in a horizontal oval of bars, was inventoried on the same date, and was presumably intended for use along with the date-stamp, but no example on cover has yet been reported.

Seven auxiliary markings are known to have been used on letters from Alexandria. Five of them were to indicate postage due (Fig. 11). They appear to have been used concurrently. Dates recorded are FE 24 65 to JU 24 73 for T-1, OC 3 64 to SP 3 67 for T-2, DE 30 66 to NO 6 73 for T-3, 1873 for T-4, and NO 6 73 to JA 2 75 for T-5. The MORE TO PAY marks were commonly struck in addition to one of the INSUFFICIENTLY PREPAID devices (Fig. 12). There is no proof that T-3 and T-4 were used in Egypt, and they were probably applied in London (apparently identical handstamps are known on covers from Malta and Cyprus). T-5 (or a nearly identical handstamp) has also been seen on a cover from Suez dated 19 JY 73.

The other two auxiliary markings (Fig. 10) were used to explain unduly long transit times; there was no 'late fee' system for adding late letters to the mails after the bags were closed. The two-line handstamp L-1 is known from 1866 to 1870; L-2 has been seen from AU 31 73 to JU 17 76 (the G.P.O. proof book inventoried L-2 in June 1871)⁹. The G.P.O.

proof books record two similar framed UNCLAIMED handstamps (September 1867 and March 1869). An example in red has been seen on a cover returned from Alexandria to Malta, March 1877.

POSTED AFTER
DEPARTURE OF PACKET
L-1

POSTED AFTER CLOSING
L-2

Fig. 10 Handstamps indicating late posting.

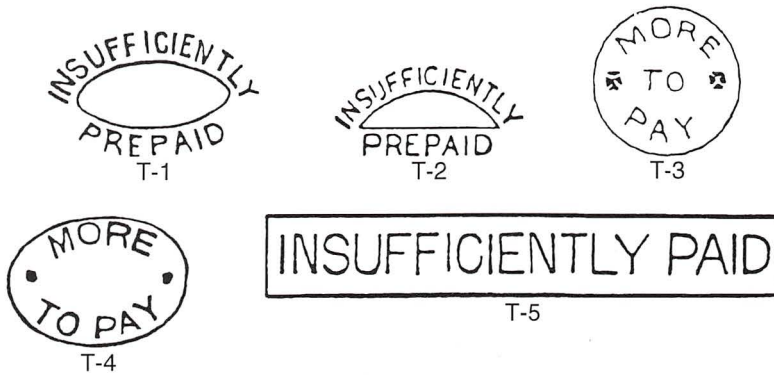


Fig. 11 Postage due handstamps.



Fig. 12 Insufficiently paid (SP 367): weight over ¼oz., 6d. short, plus 2x3d. fine, total due 1/-.

Suez

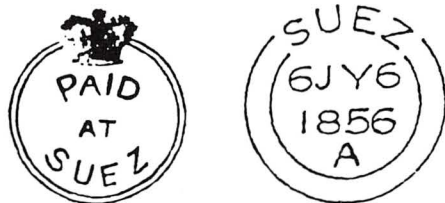


Fig. 13 The crowned circle frank of Suez and date-stamp D-1.

former was smaller than that of Alexandria, and quite circular; the latter resembled D-1 of Alexandria in style, but contained the code letter A below the date.

The crowned circle has been reported with dates from OC 20 54 to JY 19 65, with a revival, apparently due to military needs, in July 1882, four years after the office had been closed for public use. It is known struck in blue in 1854 and 1865, otherwise in black (never in red, unlike Alexandria). The D-1 date-stamp appears to have been struck only in black (see Table 3 for dates).

TABLE 3 — SUEZ POSTAL MARKINGS

Type	Color	Earliest	Latest
crowned circle:	black	OC 20 54	JY 19 65 (JY 82)
	blue	— — 54	— — 65
D-1		OC 20 54	JA 19 58
D-2	black	— JN 58	MR 30 78
	blue	DE 27 63	FE 15 66



Fig. 14 Suez: obliterator OB-1, date-stamp D-2, and registration handstamp R-1.

As the route across Egypt for the India mails became well established, a British postal facility at Suez to exchange the mails with steamers serving Bombay and the Far East became needed. A packet agency was established on January 1st 1847 in the private house of Mr. H. Levick. Handstamps were not immediately provided, but on July 16th a crowned circle handstamp and a circular date-stamp were supplied (Fig. 13). The

A new date-stamp, this time with a complete circular frame, and the name SUEZ horizontal and inside, replaced D-1, apparently in 1858 (Fig. 14). It was usually struck in black, but blue is not uncommon. No other code letter than A is known. A single example of a registered letter from Suez has been reported. It is addressed to Aden, dated DE 12 73, and is struck with a straight-line device: REGISTERED in a rectangular frame (Fig. 14).

The packet agency was upgraded to a full post office on January 1st 1861, it is stated, but stamps were apparently put on sale as early as August 1859, and an obliterater, inscribed B02, was provided for use on them. This single obliterater was sufficient to serve the needs of the office for its entire lifetime; the impressions became coarse in the later years, owing to wear or dirt. The Suez date-stamp was used occasionally to cancel stamps, in contrast to Cairo and Alexandria.

Two other handstamped markings can be attributed to Suez. One is a large PD in a circle (Fig. 15). It is commonly found applied to letters to India, especially in the period

of the Anglo-Egyptian postal convention (1873 to 1875), but it is known as late as 1877. One example of a handstamp denoting postage due from Suez is known, used on a cover to London, dated 19 JY 73. It appears to be identical to Alexandria T-5: INSUFFICIENTLY PAID. Prior to the use of stamps, handstamps for postage due were not used at offices of origin, but the many unfranked letters from Suez or Cairo to India in the 1860s were usually struck with Indian markings to indicate the amount to be collected (Fig. 15) (generally 8 annas, the equivalent of one shilling). The cryptic inscription "Sr Bg" stood for Steamletter Bearing.

After the Suez office was closed as a public post office on April 1st 1878, it continued to function as a sorting office for mails to the east. Its date-stamp was sometimes used as a transit mark on letters originating elsewhere in Egypt.

The stamps used at Suez comprise essentially the same selection recorded for Alexandria, with two exceptions. Gibbons does not list the 9d. of 1865 for Suez, but does list the 8d. of 1876, a value not so far recorded for Alexandria. At the time the latter was issued it corresponded to no simple letter rate in force in Egypt and there must have been little use for it. The Queen Victoria 10d. with inverted watermark has been found used at Suez.

In postal stationery, the 1¼d. (penny farthing) postal card and the 1d. pink impressed envelope are known used at Suez, although I have heard only of the former being used at Alexandria. They may have been brought along by travelers passing through the Suez Canal.

Cairo

A postal agency was opened in the British Consulate in Cairo at an uncertain date, believed² to be earlier than 1856. Some mail was forwarded by a service operated by Samuel Shephard, of hotel fame, from Cairo to Alexandria. No postal handstamp is known from the agency period. The agency was upgraded to a full post office on February 23rd 1859.

A crowned circle frank was put into use on March 23rd, along with a circular date-stamp of the same style as the contemporary D-2 of Suez (Fig. 16). It was nearly always struck in red, but at least one example in black is known (Table 4).

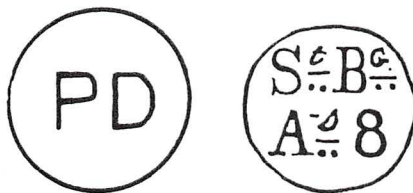


Fig. 15 Suez: the PD handstamp and the Indian postage-due handstamp.



Fig. 16 The crowned circle frank of Cairo (drawing and retouched photocopy), and the date-stamp.

There were two date-stamp devices, having code letters A and C, respectively. Curiously, the C date-stamp appears to have been put into use first. The last reported date of use is MR 13 64, and it is known only in black. The A date-stamp is known in black and in blue (Table 4). In transition periods, the impressions were dull bluish black. The Cairo office was closed in 1873; Boulad² suggested June 30th. Closure probably coincided with the inauguration of the Anglo-Egyptian postal treaty (see section on Rates).

Stamped letters from Cairo were cancelled with a B01 obliterator that so closely resembled OB-1 of Alexandria (Fig. 3) that it was assumed in philatelic circles, without other evidence, that the mail from Cairo was sent to Alexandria for cancellation. Some writers have even stated that the stamps were also applied there, but that was an ill-considered assumption; there would have been no way for the Alexandria office to know what stamps had been paid for since covers from Cairo did not bear any notation as to the amount of postage to be applied. Furthermore, covers are known posted from Cairo to India (thus exiting Egypt via Suez) with the stamps cancelled B01. The matter seems to be settled now on the basis of official correspondence¹⁰ stating explicitly that an obliterator was sent from Alexandria to Cairo on September 26th 1859. Although the Cairo obliterator is almost identical to OB-1 of Alexandria, it appears to be thinner and sharper (that may be the result of its seeing much less use, thus remaining clean and unworn).

No REGISTERED date-stamp nor auxiliary markings have been reported for Cairo, but three registered covers are known⁸. None has a registered handstamp from that office, but one of them, dated OC 1 64, has the Cairo date-stamp in black, and an Alexandria date-stamp of transit, plus a straight-line REGISTERED, both in red. The 6d. registry fee was paid in cash. The other covers have manuscript "Registered" in red, and the combined postage and registry fee are paid by two 6d. stamps or a 1/- stamp.

I have not seen a partially paid cover from Cairo. However, as in the case of Suez, totally unfranked covers from Cairo to India are known. They bear only the date-stamp of Cairo, usually accompanied by a manuscript rate marking (commonly 1/-). The usual Indian postage-due handstamp, "Sr Bg / As.8" in a circle, was applied to such letters.

Presumably the same selection of stamps that was used at Alexandria and Suez was also used at Cairo, with allowance for the earlier date of closure of the Cairo office. However, the difficulty of distinguishing the Cairo obliterator from that of Alexandria makes it impractical to try to identify loose stamps as having been used at Cairo.

TABLE 4 — CAIRO POSTAL MARKINGS

Type	Color	Earliest	Latest
crowned circle:	red	— — 59	DE 10 63
	black	FE 7 61	
date-stamp:			
C	black	— — 59	MR 13 64
A	black	AP 26 66	AP 24 73
	blue	— JN 71	AP 14 73

Miscellany

There were circumstances other than the functioning of British consular post offices that led to cancellation of British stamps in Egypt. One has already been alluded to: military postal services. The campaigns of 1882 and 1885 led to British stamps being cancelled with a circular date-stamp inscribed BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICE / EGYPT (Chapter XXXI), or by an obliterator in a vertical oval of bars, inscribed BA / E (very rare)¹¹.

However, soldier's letters were sometimes put into the civil post and cancelled there with either the retta (Fig. 17), or the normal civil date-stamp. British stamps were used in Egypt again during World War I, but they were required mostly for registered mail and the cancellations were those of army or field post offices without explicitly Egyptian geographical designation. In World War II British stamps were once again used in Egypt, generally on air mail, this time being cancelled for the most part with the EGYPT/POSTAGE PREPAID date-stamps (Chapter XXXI).

Another circumstance was the use of British stamps on mail from ships (paquebot usage), according to Article IX, adopted at the 1892 convention of the UPU (Chapter XXXII). Stamps of Queen Victoria from the 1890s, and later reigns, can thus be found with cancellations of Egyptian ports in the form of civil date-stamps accompanied by the words PLEINE MER, PAQUEBOT or equivalent. Those of Port Said are most commonly encountered, but Alexandria and Port Tewfik can also be found.

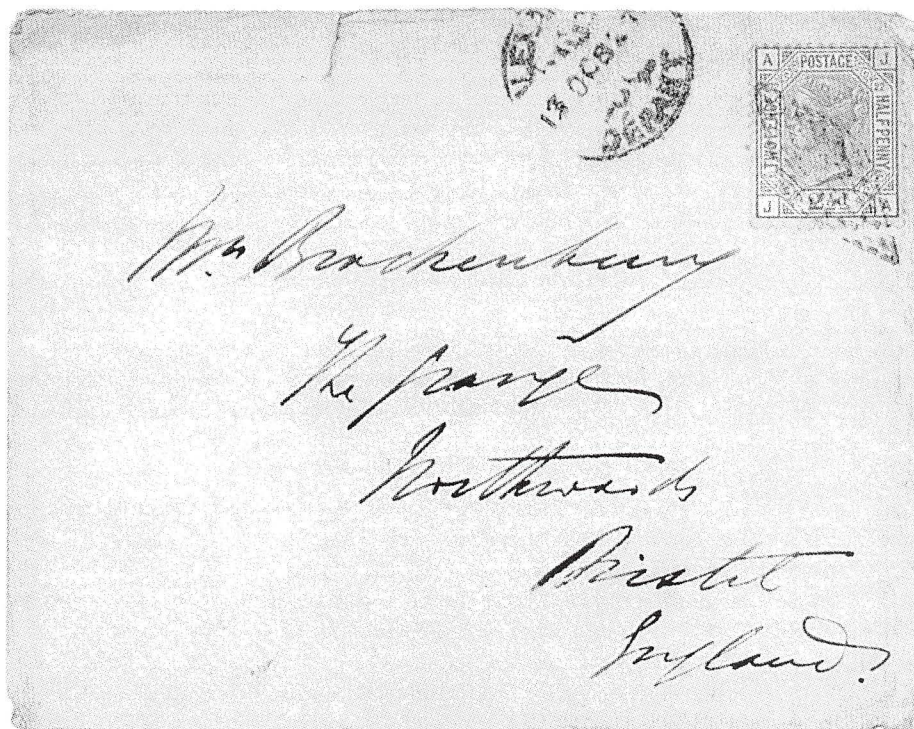


Fig. 17 Use of a British stamp at a civil post office during the 1882 campaign. The date-stamp is Egyptian, ALEXANDRIE / 13 OC 82, and the stamp is cancelled with the Egyptian retta.

There are pitfalls in identifying British stamps as having been used at one of the British consular post offices in Egypt. The most well known is confusion with the office of Alexandria in Scotland. Its date-stamp is very like that of Alexandria in Egypt, but the diameter is only 18mm. Another pitfall is confusion with incompletely struck British domestic numeral cancellations: "801" in an oval of bars can look very much like B01, especially if the left edge of the 8 falls off the stamp, and an inverted "108" can also cause confusion.

Rates

The rates of postage on mail from the British post offices in Egypt form a surprisingly complicated matrix. Before the formation of the General Postal Union (later, UPU), the variables were: the route used, the destination, the date period, the weight scale (determined by date and route), and the shipping line. The most important destination was the British Isles, principally London, which accounted for the majority of the letters, and it will therefore be taken up first.

When mail service between Egypt and England was first established, the all-sea route through the Straits of Gibraltar was foremost in mind. However, even then, an alternative route, overland via Marseille and Calais, using horse-drawn diligences, was available. Use of it could save two or more days and it was looked upon as a form of 'express' service for those willing to pay the rather high price. There was an important difference in weight scale: the all-sea route used half-ounce stages from 1840, whereas the French computed postage by the quarter ounce (actually, 7.5 grams).

The overland route gained in importance as the efficiency of land transport improved and the cost was reduced, and by 1850 the majority of the mails were directed via Marseille. Connection to Marseille from Egypt was made by both British and French packets operating on different schedules and requiring different postal charges. The sender of a letter would usually endorse it "via Southampton", "via Marseille by British Packet", etc. The choice would not necessarily be based on cost; probably more often than not, the sender would select the service whose ship was scheduled to leave first (a factor that might save a week or more).

A further improvement in the speed of the mails occurred with the opening of a rail route over the Mont Cenis Pass, connecting Piedmont and Savoy, in 1869, which made a land route possible all the way from the southern tip of Italy, at Brindisi. Completion of the Mont Cenis tunnel in 1870 further improved this route which soon took over virtually completely from the slower route via Marseille.

There was a temporary interruption of the routes through France, resulting from the Franco-Prussian War. In mid-1870 the mails were diverted to the Brenner Pass into Austria, passing through Bavaria and on to Belgium (or Bremen) for trans-shipment to England. This route took somewhat longer, and the mails were returned to the Mont Cenis route in 1872. All of these changes affected the cost of transporting the mails, and were reflected in adjustments to the postage rates. For a more detailed discussion of changes in routes and services, Moubray and Moubray⁶ should be consulted.

The rates from British post offices in Egypt to the British Isles are summarized in Table 5. The figures given were obtained by integrating information from archival records, as quoted by Tabcart¹² and by Moubray and Moubray⁶, with that provided by actual covers, of which a plentiful supply has survived. A rate confirmed by examples of

actual use is bold-faced in the table. In most cases, the rates are confirmed many times over. The only apparent discrepancy with the official dates is that the actual starting date of a new rate on letters from Egypt may have been a week or two later than the dates given in the table, which are the dates when the new rates went into effect officially in Britain.

Table 5 gives the charges only for letters of $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. or $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Letters up to 1oz. were charged twice the half-ounce rate, logically enough, but letters between $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. and $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. that went through France, and thus were rated according to $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. increments, were not charged in simple proportion. As an example, in 1856, a letter just over $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. sent via Marseille by British packet, was charged 2/3d. whereas the charge for $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. was 1/4d., and that for $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. was 2/8d. Even less logically, letters over 1oz. by the same route were charged as much as twice the rate for 1oz., so that it was cheaper to send two letters, one of $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. and one of just under 1oz., than to combine them as one letter of just under $1\frac{1}{4}$ oz. For complete details of the charges, for multiple-weight letters, the tables given by Moubray and Moubray should be consulted.

The rates in Table 5 apply to letters from any of the three British post offices that were open at a given date. Letters from other places in Egypt were subject to supplementary Egyptian (or *Posta Europea*) charges, if not hand-carried to a British post office.

Underpaid letters were treated in different ways over the years. In the pre-stamp period, letters were usually sent unpaid, the charge to be collected being written in black in ink on the front. The hurried penmanship takes some getting used to and can be quite enigmatic to the uninitiated; some examples are shown in Figure 18. There was no difference in rate for unpaid and prepaid letters. With the introduction of stamps, prepayment was expected. Although the regulations stipulated that British post offices send letters to the Returned Letter Office if they were not prepaid to at least one full rate, such a regulation was not feasible for letters mailed at Alexandria, for the R.L.O. was in London. Instead, unpaid and underpaid letters were subjected to a fine, which varied according to the route and the date-period, in addition to the deficiency. I have seen a cover dated NO 30 65, sent unpaid, and bearing the Alexandria date-stamp in black, rated 1/6d. due (1/- for a $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. letter plus 6d. fine: see following paragraph).

Generally, from 1858 the charge for underpaid letters was the deficiency plus a fine of 6d. per item. The exceptions were as follows: letters via Marseille by British packet were

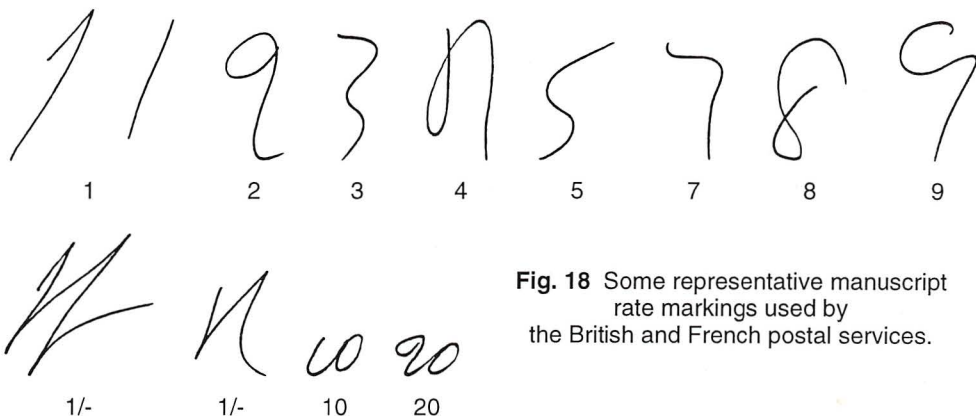


Fig. 18 Some representative manuscript rate markings used by the British and French postal services.

subject to a fine of 3d. per $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. instead of 6d. per item, during the period July 1st 1863 to July 1st 1870; letters by French packet were charged the deficiency plus a fine of 3d. per $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. from 1857 until July 1st 1870. The fine was computed at 6d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. from July 1st 1875 until France joined the GPU six months later, at which time the charge was reduced to the deficiency plus $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. The same charge went into effect for the Brindisi route on July 1st 1875 when the GPU (later UPU) came into effect for most signatories.

Official letters were not necessarily free of postage, judging from a single example, a letter of 1861 from Suez to Southampton via Marseille, endorsed "On Her Majesty's Service". It is an evidently heavy letter, franked 1/5d., which is 1d. short of the 1/6d. rate for a triple-weight letter (i.e., over $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.) by French packet. The official status appears only to have exempted the letter from 1d. for internal delivery.

Table 5 applies only to letters. Printed matter was of two categories: periodicals (newspapers and prices current) published at least monthly, and non-periodical printed matter. The rate was higher for the latter. Examples are very scarce, and it may be difficult to determine to which category a given item belongs. I have seen only the examples cited at the foot of Table 5. The rates prevailing in 1873 were 1d. per 4oz. for periodicals, 3d. per 4oz. for prints and samples.

When the Anglo-Egyptian Postal Treaty came into effect on July 1st 1873, letters from interior Egypt could be franked to Britain entirely with Egyptian stamps. The rate was 4pi.5pa. (computed as 8d. = 3pi.5pa. + 1pi.) via Brindisi and 3pi.10pa. by the all-sea route.

Rates to the United States were apparently computed as the sum of the rates from Egypt to Britain and from Britain to the USA. However, these components included an unneeded amount (generally 1d.) for British internal postage; if this amount is subtracted from the sum, the resulting figure corresponds to the rates seen on covers, in the limited selection that I have been able to examine. The rates shown in Table 6 were obtained in this way; those that are bold-faced have been confirmed on covers.

All that has been said about the variables that affected the rates from Egypt to Britain applies to those from Egypt to the USA. However, there was but one route across the Atlantic, albeit with different landing points (New York, Boston, Baltimore), and except for a very brief interval known as the "retaliatory rate episode", letters were charged the same, regardless of which country's ship carried them. On the other hand, there were some changes (all reductions) in the transatlantic charges over the years. Since these changes did not coincide with the changes in the Egypt-Britain rates, the variety of overall rates is larger. Some rates appear to have been in effect for less than a year, and it is not surprising that not all of them have yet been seen on covers.

Covers from Egypt to the USA are very much scarcer than those to Britain, and examples from the pre-stamp period are especially difficult to find. I have yet to see an example of printed matter sent from Egypt to the USA. (However, the British G.P.O. records quote rates of 3d. for newspapers, and 5d. per 4oz. for "book packets" via Southampton, and 4d. and 6d., respectively, via Marseille, in June 1868. In July 1871 rates of 2d. and 5d. via Southampton, and 4d. (or 3d.?) and 7d. via Brindisi, are recorded; these are repeated in July 1873.) The rate from interior Lower Egypt under the Anglo-Egyptian Postal Treaty was 4pi.35pa. via Brindisi, sometimes rounded up to an even 5pi.; from Upper Egypt, the rate was higher by 1pi. (Fig. 19). It should be noted that mail to the Far West (California and Oregon) required additional postage until the trans-continental railroad was completed. The supplement was 5d. in 1857 and 7d. in 1863, but by 1868 the rate was the same for all the USA (11d.).



Fig. 19 A letter from Upper Egypt to USA franked according to the Anglo-Egyptian Postal Treaty: 10d. from Alexandria + 2pi. internal postage = 5pi.35pa.

The fee for registration of letters to destinations beyond the UK appears to have been computed cumulatively: a fee for each leg. Thus, when the fee was 4d. for letters from Egypt to the UK, it was 8d. to the USA.

The rates to Malta and Gibraltar are relatively simple, for these destinations generally involved only sea passage on British ships. The rate to Malta was 5d. per ½oz. from the middle 1840s up to 1866, but I have seen an unpaid cover dated MY 25 1840 and a prepaid one dated FE 1843, both rated 1/-. From the latter part of 1866 to at least December 1869 covers frequently show a rate of 6d., although examples of 5d. in 1867 and 1869 also exist. The rate was reduced to 4d. in 1870 (as evidenced by covers). The final rate was the UPU rate of 2½d., effective July 1st 1875. The reason for the 6d. rate may have been the interruption of direct steamer service when the packets for Marseille were routed through the Strait of Messina to save time. Mails for Malta would have had to be sent via Italian packet to Messina or Brindisi, and then transhipped via Sicily. Alternatively, 6d. may be an overpayment of convenience (there was no 5d. stamp) because of shortage of 1d. or 3d. stamps. For Gibraltar, a prepaid rate of 10d. (2 x 5d.?) has been seen for November 1857. Under the Anglo-Egyptian Postal Treaty, the rate to Gibraltar or Malta became 2pi.20pa. on July 1st 1873.

The rate to India was 1/- per oz. at least from 1845 and probably much earlier. This rate was equivalent to 8 annas, the rate charged from India to Egypt, and the amount collected in India on unpaid letters from Egypt. This charge applied to letters delivered to Bombay; inland postage, if required, was extra. An 1871 cover prepaid 6d. has been seen and may indicate a reduction in that year or earlier. The 6d. rate was in effect with the the Anglo-Egyptian Postal Treaty of 1873 which applied to letters to India, allowing them to be franked from interior Egypt to India, Australasia, and the Far East entirely with Egyptian stamps (Fig. 20). The rate was 3pi.10pa., computed as 1pt. for inland postage, plus the equivalent of 6d, rounded off to reflect the fact that Egyptian postage

stamps included only 5pa., 10pa., and 20pa. values below 1pi. There is some lingering uncertainty about Egypt-to-India rates, for the rates in the reverse direction are reported¹³ to have been 4 annas 8 pies (7d.) from 1 MR 68, 5 annas 4 pies (8d.) from AU 68, 8 annas (1/-) from OC 70, 8 annas 8 pies (1/1d.) from 14 AP 71, and 6 annas (9d.) from AP 73, continuing into 1875. It would seem that the rates from India were not always the same as the rates to India.

Other destinations are seldom encountered. The rate by British packet to Constantinople was 4d. per ½oz. in 1865. The rate to Beirut was 6d. in the early 1840s, and was probably reduced later. To Marseille, a rate of 10d. (= 10 decimes) has been seen for 1840, 1844, 1853, 1854, and 1856. A rate of 30 decimes (2/6d.) has been seen on a letter of unknown weight to Paris in 1851. A letter to Bordeaux carried by British packet to Marseille was charged 10d. in 1850. Covers are occasionally seen addressed to Italian ports (Genoa, Leghorn). The rate seems to have been lower when service was direct, higher if the mails went via Marseille, requiring trans-shipment. I have seen rates of 9d. to Leghorn in 1854, and 17d. (1/5d.) to Genoa in 1852.

A host of other destinations is in principle possible for letters sent from Egypt to the United Kingdom for onward transmission. The British G.P.O. records list these in detail, although many of them may never have been used. The rates to Canada were the same as for USA in 1857, but 1d. cheaper in 1858, and 3d. cheaper in 1863; for the Maritime Provinces, the rates were 2d. lower than for Canada in 1857 and 1858, but became the same in 1863. To the east coast of South America the rates were 1/9d. per ¼oz. via Marseille, and 1/6d. via Southampton in 1857. In 1858, the rate was 1/8d. by either route, and in 1863 it was reduced to 1/5d., where it remained until the GPU rate came into force. The west coast of South America was more expensive: 2/5d. in 1868, and 1/11d. in 1871. I have not heard of an actual example of any of these rates, but a cover is known¹⁴ sent to Brazil in November 1875, when Brazil had not yet joined the UPU.



Fig. 20 A cover from Cairo to Singapore, franked 3pi.10pa. (6d. from Suez + 1pi. internal Egyptian postage) according to the Anglo-Egyptian Postal Treaty.

The postage paid was 2/3d., but the explanation is not clear, especially since the weight of the letter is not known. Anglo-Egyptian treaty rates ranged up to 11pi.

Scarcity and Value

Covers of any kind are much commoner from Alexandria than from Cairo or Suez. The ratio is probably between 5:1 and 10:1, which would give Cairo and Suez covers about twice the market value of an equivalent Alexandria cover (Cairo crowned circles are commoner than Suez). Covers from Alexandria to Britain in the pre-stamp period are plentiful, and are less in demand than stamped covers. Covers franked with crowned circles, however, are strongly in demand, and are among the most expensive items from the British post offices in Egypt (Waghorn covers excepted). They are priced in the Gibbons catalogs. Covers franked with Egyptian stamps under the Anglo-Egyptian Postal Treaty, in effect for just two years, are scarce and especially in demand, in part because the franking on them is usually multicolored and involves high denominations. Before the operation of this treaty, British stamps can be found in mixed franking with the *Posta Europea* handstamped franks, and later with Egyptian stamps of the First, Second, and Third issues¹⁵. All mixed frankings are rare, but those with Egyptian stamps have a stronger demand than those with *Posta Europea* franks, and are, along with the crowned circles, among the most expensive manifestations of the British postal service in Egypt. Mixed frankings with the adhesive stamps of some other countries in the pre-UPU period also exist. They arose when letters originating in another country were consigned to the British postal service for onward transport from Alexandria or Suez. Examples are known with stamps of Austria, German States, France, or Italy. All such are rare and expensive.

Loose stamps cancelled at Alexandria and Suez are comprehensively valued in the Gibbons catalogs, but without differentiation as to the type of obliterator, which, however, has been given by Bertram⁴. The periods of known use, as given in Table 2, give some guidance about their relative scarcity. As a loose generalization, one can say that the same stamp used in Suez is worth almost twice what one used in Alexandria is worth.

Table 5				
RATES OF POSTAGE FROM EGYPT (ALEXANDRIA) TO GREAT BRITAIN				
Date	sea route	via Marseille		via Brindisi
	Falmouth or Southampton	British Packet	French Packet	

LETTERS

FE 1835	3/2*			
18 AU 1837	2/6*	2/8½		
1840	2/5*	(1/8) 2/6*	(2/8½) 4/7*	
1 JN 1843	1/6*	(1/8) 2/1*	(1/3) 2/1*	
1 JA 1855	1/-*	(1/-) 2/-	(1/-) 2/-	
1 JY 1856	6d.	(11d) 1/4		
1 JA 1857		(9d.) 1/-	(6d.) 1/-	
1 JY 1863		(6d.) 1/-		
2 OC 1869				1/-
1 JY 1870		8d.	8d.	
16 DE 1870				8d.
14 AU 1874 stopped				
1 JY 1875		2½d.	6d	2½d.
1 JA 1876			2½d.	

Rates are for a single letter (up to half oz.). Rates in parentheses are for quarter oz.

* Per sheet, to London.

* Charges for weights over 1oz. were not in simple proportion until 1866.

* Charges for weights over half oz. were not yet in simple proportion.

Boldfaced rates are those for which examples have been seen.

REGISTRATION

1 JA 1855	6d.		1/- per ¼ oz.
1 JA 1857			6d. per ¼ oz.
1 FE 1866	4d.	4d.	4d.
1 JY 1873		7d.♦	
1 JA 1878			2d.

♦ From Cairo and internal Egypt.

PRINTED CIRCULARS: 2d seen 4 JY 66, 3d seen JA 68

POSTAL CARDS: 1¼d seen NO 75.

Table 6
RATES OF POSTAGE FROM EGYPT TO THE USA

Date	Sea Route Falmouth or Southampton	Via Marseille		Via Brindisi
		British Packet	French Packet	
1840	3/4★	(2/7) 3/5*	(3/7½) 5/6*	
1 JN 1843	2/5★	(2/7) 3/-*	(2/2) 3/-*	
1 JA 1855	1/11★	(1/11) 2/11*	(1/11) 2/11*	
1 JY 1856	1/5★	(1/10) 2/3*		
1 JA 1857	1/2♦	(1/8) 2/11	(1/5) 1/8♦	
1 JY 1863		(1/5) 1/11	(1/2) 1/8*	
1 JA 1868	11d.	(11d) 1/5	(11d) 1/5	
1 JA 1869				1/5
1 JA 1870	8d.	10d.	10d.	1/2
16 DE 1870				10d.
14 AU 1874	stopped			
1 JY 1875		2½d.		2½d.
1 JA 1876			2½d.	

Rates are for a single letter (up to half oz.). Rates in parentheses are for quarter oz.

★ Charges for weights over 1oz. were not in simple proportion until 1866.

* Charges for weights over half oz. were not yet in simple proportion.

♦ GPO Rates Tables, 29 May 1857.

* GPO Rate Tables, 1 July 1863.

Boldfaced rates are those for which examples have been seen.

REGISTRATION

1856	Anglo-American Postal Treaty permitted registration.			
1 JA 1857	1/- per item?	1/-?	1/- per ¼oz.?	
1 FE 1866	8d per item	8d.	8d.	8d.
1 JA 1878				2d.

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