

XXXV

Air Mail Stamps and Services

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This subject has been treated thoroughly and comprehensively in the book by Sears¹ and much of the information in this chapter can be found there elaborated in greater detail. In this book Air Mail stamps overprinted for use in Palestine are treated in Chapter XLV. Air letters (Aerograms) are treated along with other postal stationery in Chapter XXXIII, and Air Mail Labels are listed in Chapter XXXIX. Air Mail rates are listed in Chapter XXIX. Some aspects of Military Air Mails are mentioned in Chapter XXXI.

The Development Period: 1910 to 1925

Although in the dim, pre-philatelic past government messages were sometimes sent by carrier pigeon, the effective history of the conjunction of aeronautics and the posts in Egypt begins in 1910 with the Heliopolis Air Meeting. The event was held from February 6th to 13th and was essentially a display and demonstration. Although no mail was carried anywhere by air, the connection with the post office was explicit, in the form of a special post office on the grounds with its own date-stamp. This was inscribed HELIOPOLIS AERODROME and the equivalent in Arabic (Fig. 1). It is nearly always found on souvenir postcards, not all of which went through the mails. Examples are moderately scarce and much in demand. Rarer is a multicolored souvenir label inscribed GRANDE SEMAINE / D'AVIATION / D'HELIOPOLIS / LE CAIRE / FEVRIER 1910, printed in sheets of 25, perforated 12, that is found on some of the postcards and envelopes posted at the event.

The date-stamp has been forged, mostly with the date 6 II 10. There are differences in both the Arabic and Latin lettering, the simplest to describe being the A, which is wide on the forgery and has a short right leg.

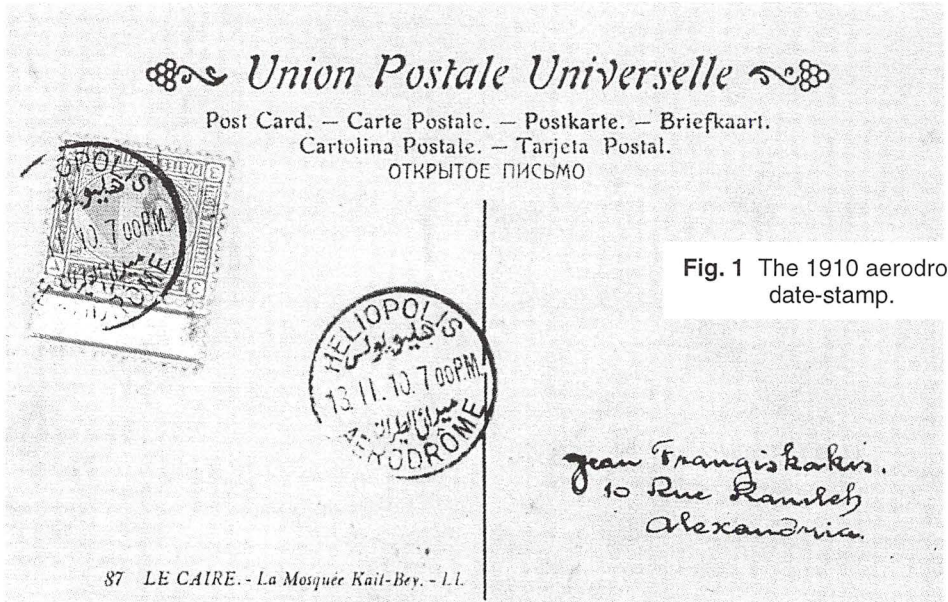


Fig. 1 The 1910 aerodrome date-stamp.

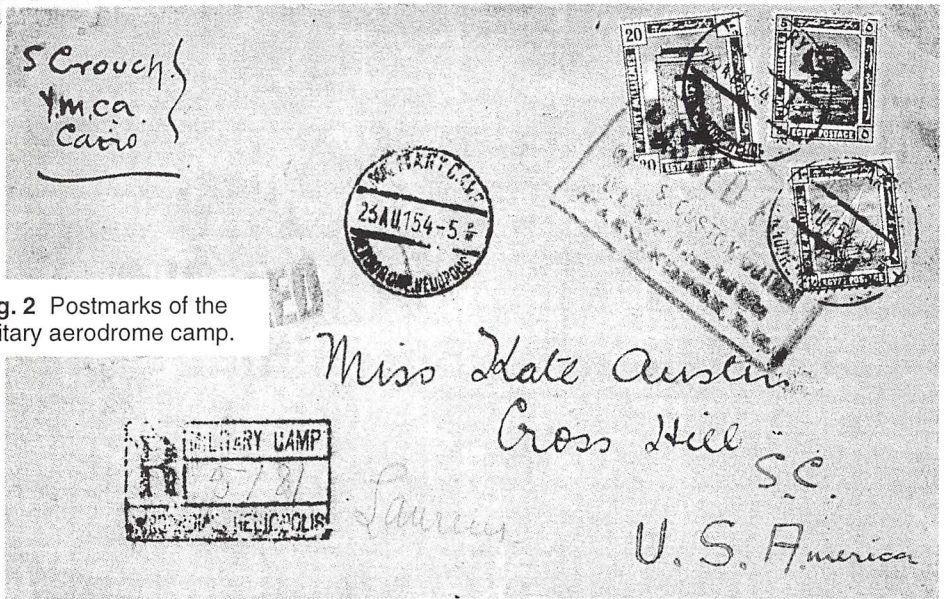


Fig. 2 Postmarks of the military aerodrome camp.

The aerodrome once again had its own post office in 1915, in conjunction with the establishment of a transit camp for the Allied armies. The date-stamp was inscribed MILITARY CAMP / AERODROME HELIOPOLIS (Fig. 2) and has been recorded with dates from 16 FE to 26 NO. Except for the site, it has nothing to do with air mail, and items having this postmark were not flown. A special cachet was provided for registered letters also. The former is fairly scarce, the latter, rare.

Much later, when civil air service became regular, a permanent post office was established; its postmark is most often encountered as a backstamp (Fig. 3).

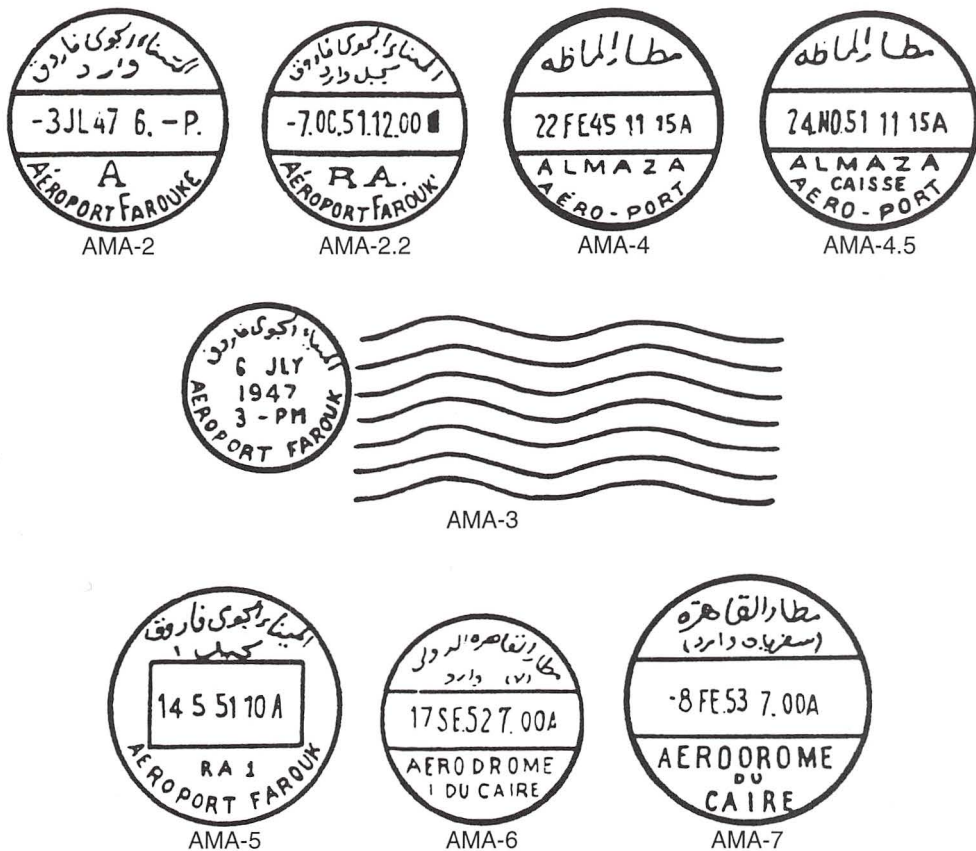


Fig. 3 Later aerodrome postmarks.

The sunny and predictable weather of Egypt and the absence of high mountains made it attractive to pioneer aeronauts. One of them, Marc Pourpe of France, undertook a trail-blazing flight from Cairo (Heliopolis aerodrome) to Khartoum in 1914. The trip began on January 4th 1914 and was completed on the 12th. The return flight began on the 19th and reached Heliopolis on February 3rd; there were many intermediate stops in each direction. It is estimated that 50 letters and postcards were carried on the outward flight and another 35 on the return, but far fewer have survived. All are identifiable by a large cachet in black to violet (Fig. 4). Some items were sent without franking, some were philatelically franked,



Fig. 4 The Marc Pourpe cachet.

and some were franked at the normal rate for the destination, there being no special surcharge. The stamps were mostly cancelled on arrival at Heliopolis. Examples of any kind are rare and command high prices.

It was only eleven years later that crossings of the entire continent of Africa were accomplished. A squadron of three planes crossed southwestwards to Kano, on the west coast, via Khartoum, El Obeid, and Fort Lamy, departing October 27th 1925. A packet of 65 letters was carried, all franked with First Portrait stamps cancelled at Helwan les Bains. There was no special cachet, but only a typed or handwritten endorsement "By special air mail". The return flight carried six OHMS letters and 85 stamped ones. They were postmarked at each stop along the way and bore 5m. stamps which were cancelled on arrival at Helwan.

Less than a month later Alan Cobham left London on November 16th in a De Havilland DH50 for Cape Town via Athens, Sollum, Cairo, Assuan, Wadi Halfa and several subsequent stops, arriving on February 17th. It is supposed that ca. 90 pieces of mail were carried and 18 on the return trip. Specially prepared postcards were dropped off en route, franked locally, and sent by surface mail back to Great Britain. They bore an oval cachet, SPECIAL AIR MAIL / LONDON / CAPE TOWN in purple and an imperforate label. Scheduled service on this route began in 1930.

The Cairo-India route via Palestine and Baghdad saw its survey flight in 1918, leaving Great Britain on August 18th. Letters that were carried were given a cachet on arrival at Karachi: BROUGHT BY FIRST AERIAL / MAIL CAIRO TO KARACHI / 10th DECEMBER 1918, or a circular one, CARRIED BY FIRST AERIAL MAIL / CAIRO-DELHI / DECR. 1918. A second flight began on December 13th, but no covers originating in Egypt are known.

The value of these pioneering flights became apparent in 1919 when a diplomatic snub to Saad Zaghloul, a popular patriot, led to riots and a general strike that interrupted communications of the British armed forces in Egypt. An emergency air mail service for official mail and some bank letters began on March 17th, serving Alexandria, Cairo, Suez, Ismailia, Kantara, and Port Said, with connections to Palestine². Letters were not stamped, but received one of three types of handstamp (and in some cases, a handwritten equivalent) (Fig. 5); they are usually in envelopes overprinted "On His Majesty's Service". In addition, a military date-stamp, BASE ARMY POST OFFICE, was applied. The service lasted for about seven weeks, and only about 120 covers have been recorded.

Three different handstamps, each reading AERIAL POST E.E.F., were all that were known until the 1990s when a single example of a fourth type turned up²; it bears the latest known date, 8/5/19.

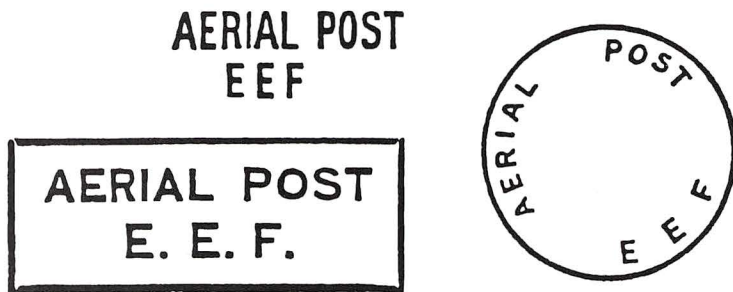


Fig. 5 Postmarks of the 1919 emergency air mail service.

Information on the further development of Air Mail in Egypt and on the history of domestic air services as well as foreign Air Mail flights can be found in a book by Hagopian⁷ and an article by Awadalla⁸. The early air routes were in three directions: Egypt-Europe via Italy; Egypt-India via Baghdad, and Egypt-South Africa via Upper Egypt and Khartoum.

During World War II the air routes across the Mediterranean to Europe were interdicted by the advancing Axis forces and deviations from the direct route had to be adopted. For west-bound mails, the route was diverted in December 1941 via Lagos or Leopoldville, by Pan American Airways or, intermittently, BOAC⁹. A transpacific route was put into effect for North America; this route could also be used for mail to Europe. The time required was, of course, much longer than before and the postage was high. In 1941 with the advance of the Japanese invasion of southeast Asia the transpacific route became perilous.

With the retreat of the Axis forces, direct mails to Britain were eventually resumed, but there was still no UPU agreement for reciprocal carriage of prepaid Air Mail. Internal Air Mail within large countries, such as the USA, could not be prepaid with Egyptian stamps. Some letters were prepaid as far as Britain, from where they were sent by ship, and internal air carriage within USA was paid with US Air Mail stamps in addition¹⁰ (Fig. 7).

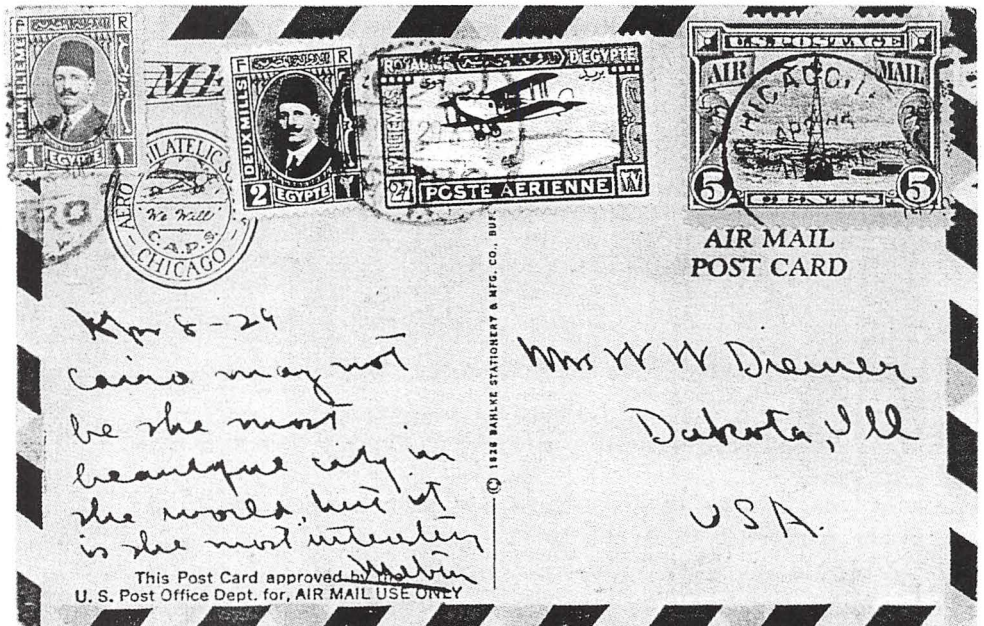


Fig. 7 Air Mail mixed franking for US internal air carriage.

The first direct air flight from New York to Egypt took place on March 31st 1946 by TWA, arriving in Cairo on April 3rd. Covers bear an elliptical pictorial cachet in grey-black inscribed FIRST FLIGHT / U.S. AIR MAIL / F.A.M. 27 / TO / EGYPT / T.W.A.; postage was 70¢. The first return flight covers bear a red-violet cachet inscribed INAUGURAL FLIGHT / CAIRO - EGYPT / TO / NEW YORK - USA / VIA / T.W.A. / APRIL 3 1946,

but the cancellation on the stamps is dated 11 AP 46; postage was 57m. Mixed franking was no longer necessary to obtain internal air carriage.

The development of air mail service to, from and through Egypt was intimately involved with the development of British external air mails. The foregoing account is only a brief overview of a complex subject, a more complete understanding of which is to be found in a comprehensive work by Newall¹¹. His book includes a detailed chronology of all British external flights, related to Egypt and otherwise, up to 1934, with a valuation guide of covers and a succinct description of the circumstances of each flight and of the personnel involved.

Air Mail Stamps

1926: 27m. Violet

On March 10th 1926 Egypt issued its first Air Mail stamp, a 27m. violet (Fig. 8) (some, perhaps 100 copies, are reported to have been cancelled prematurely on March 9th). It was specifically issued for the Cairo to Baghdad service and had no other validity. It was one of the earliest stamp efforts of the Survey Department of Egypt, which printed it by photogravure on paper having the newly adopted watermark, crown and *fe'* in multiple (Chapter XIX). The design shows a De Havilland DH34 airplane over the Nile. The printing process employed a diagonal screen. A total of 101,600 stamps were printed in two panes of 50 which were separated before perforating (13x13½) and delivery to the Postal Administration. Each pane had the control number A/25 below position no. 46. The watermark is normally upright, but stamps with it inverted exist as a scarce variety.



Fig. 8 The 1926 and 1929 design.

There are no essays on the philatelic market, but some may reside in the Cairo Postal Museum. One sheet of 50, possibly of proof status, was printed imperforate but on gummed paper with inverted watermark; it has been broken up. The special "royal proofs" consistently prepared for all other stamps printed by the Survey Department up to the end of the monarchy are not known for this stamp.

1929: 27m. Brown

The color was changed to reddish brown in 1929 (issued July 17th) and the stamps were printed from a new cylinder which was probably prepared from a new die negative, as the definition of the inscriptions is sharper. The watermark and perforation were as before and the control number A/29 was inscribed below position 50. The quantity was 440,000.

Royal proofs, one pane each with obliquely misplaced perforations, and imperforate on thick paper with CANCELLED printed on the back, were prepared for the King.

Some minor plate varieties in the form of spots of color are known. In position 2 of alternate panes there is a spot ("bird") behind the plane; on position 50 of alternate panes a spot below the tail of the aircraft resembles an island in the Nile.

At the time of issue this stamp was valid only for the Cairo-Baghdad service, but in late 1929 air service to Great Britain via Crete (Fig. 9) and Athens was started. The rate to

Britain, 28m., could be paid with the 27m. Air Mail stamp when supplemented with 1m. The Air Mail stamp could also be used on letters using the extension to Persia and India, which required 35m. In 1930 charges were reduced and in 1931 the destinations were greatly increased and included the Straits Settlements and Dutch East Indies, as well as Sudan, Kenya, and Tanganyika. In 1932 service reached South Africa. The 27m. Air Mail stamp could be used for all of these destinations when supplemented according to each rate (to Cape Town, the rate of 80m. could be conveniently paid by three copies, an overpayment of only 1m.) Covers showing the 28m. rate comprise the great majority of those seen, however, and those bearing the Air Mail stamp used for other rates are quite scarce.



Fig. 9 Use of the 27m. on mail to Crete in 1929.

1931: Graf Zeppelin Surcharges

The Mediterranean flight of the Graf Zeppelin caused much excitement in Egypt as well as elsewhere and a special issue of stamps was prepared for mail carried on it¹². The postal history aspects of the event have been recounted in a monograph^{12a}. The stamps were evidently prepared hurriedly, for they consisted of a somewhat crude surcharge, appearing to be hand-drawn, on the 27m. brown Air Mail stamp: 50m. for postcards and 100m. for letters. The work was done by the Government Printing Works in Bulaq using typography from stereotypes; 25,000 of each were printed (2,950 were spoiled and were destroyed). Of the total, 1600 sets were sent to the UPU, according to Blau^{12a}, for the

customary distribution, 2000 were given away as presents, 1000 were given favor cancellations, and 8000 were used on "Zeppelin correspondence". Thus, only 9,450 were left for sale to the public.

With the 50m. surcharge the value designation varies in position and was evidently inserted individually in the setting of 50 stereos. Among the more prominent variations are these: wider spacing between 5 and 0 (positions 1, 11, 13, 17, 23, 26, 43, 47) (Fig. 10); Arabic numeral '5' joined to the inscription above it (position 5). The basic inscription also varies on each subject; among the more prominent varieties are a broken *re'* in the Arabic *graf* (positions 15 and 20), a spur upwards from the upper right point of the 3 (position 12), and an elongated right leg in the letter N (most pronounced on position 35). The second 1 of 1931 also varies in length. The best known variety, however, is the '1951' error, which resulted from clogging of the upper angle of the 3 on some units before insertion and subsequent damage by attempts to clean or repair them, causing 3 to resemble a 5. Some correction of this may have been made on the plate and the effect is variable (Fig. 10). The clogged or altered 3 is clearest in positions 1, 2, 3, 7, 15, 24, 42, 43, and 49; the variety is thus not especially scarce.

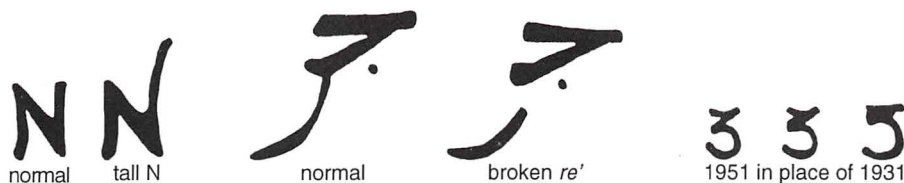


Fig. 10 The major varieties.

The 100m. surcharge varies less and the value may have been included in the original stereos. Prominent plate flaws include a spot below the Arabic year numerals (position 12), a mark resembling additional Arabic to the right of 100 (approximately over the E of POSTE) (position 47), and a dot below the first 1 of 1931 (positions 9 and 43).

There were no major errors, but a few copies of the 100m. show a weak kiss-print doubling. The 100m. exists with inverted watermark. The plate flaws on the basic stamp are, of course, also to be found on the surcharged issue.

Special date-stamps incorporating the words GRAF ZEPPELIN were provided for Alexandria, Cairo, Port Said, and Suez (Fig. 11). The first two are by far the commonest; that of Port Said is much scarcer and that of Suez is truly rare, no more than ten examples being known.



Fig. 11
Special date-stamp for
the Graf Zeppelin mail.

After arrival from Germany the airship made a flight to Jerusalem (April 10th) but did not land mail there. The mail for Jerusalem (1711 letters and 747 postcards) was returned to Cairo, backstamped there, and then made its way by ordinary means. On the return flight to Germany (April 11th) 5908 letters and 4046 postcards were carried. Covers are obviously not scarce, although the majority were overfranked with use of both values; covers and postcards showing the correct rate are scarcer. The mail was embellished with a red cachet showing a pyramid and inscribed LUFTSCHIFF GRAF ZEPPELIN / ÄGYPTENFAHRT 1931.

1933: The Long Bicolored Series

The rapid growth in air routes and the attendant variety of rates led to the issue of a comprehensive set of twenty values, 1m. to 200m., that was put on sale on February 15th 1933. The design shows a Handley Page HP42 aircraft over the pyramids. It was composed from a montage of photographs of the airplane and of the pyramids, from which a line drawing was produced (Fig. 12). The frame and the value tablets were drawn separately.

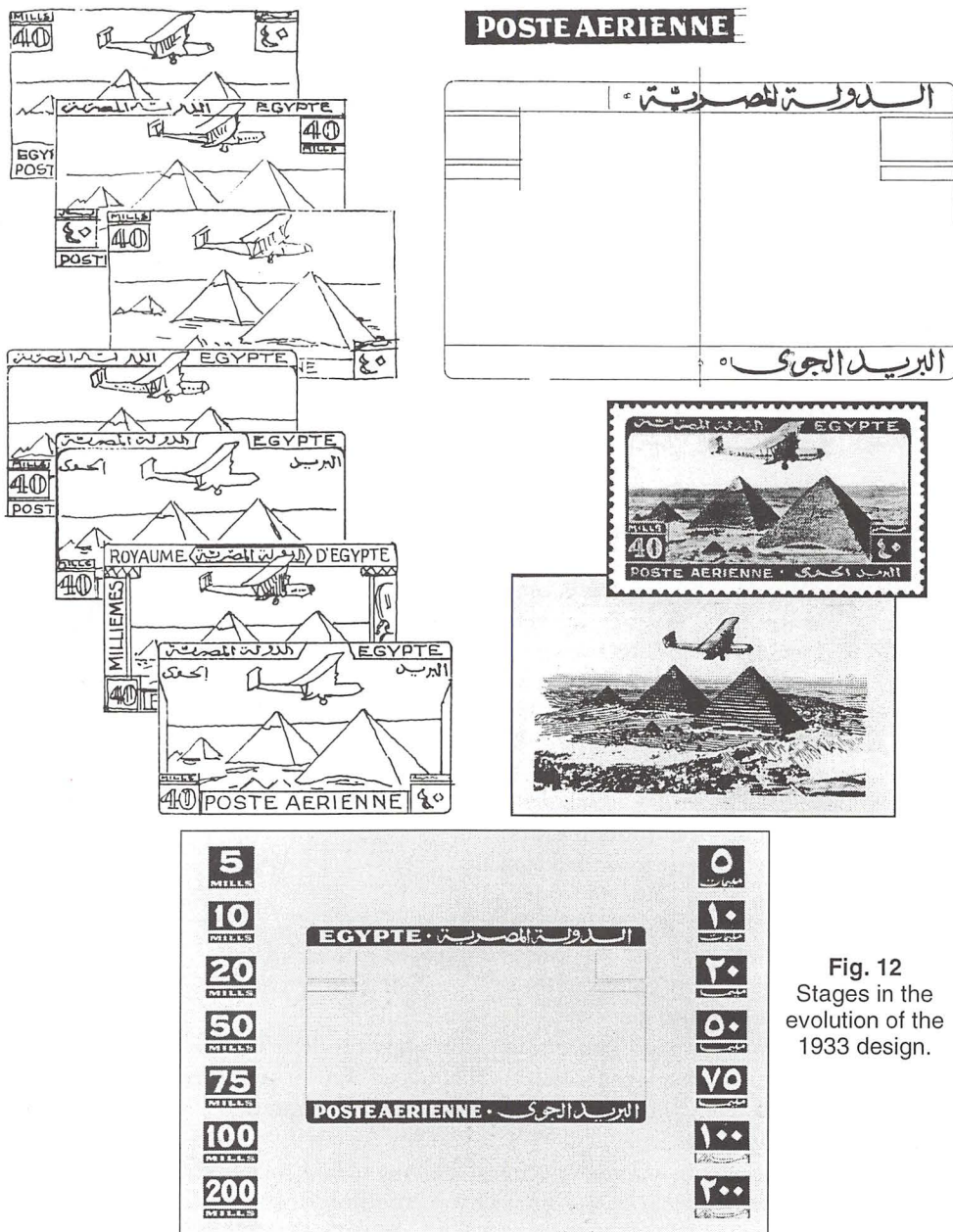


Fig. 12
Stages in the
evolution of the
1933 design.

Printing by photolithography was by the Survey Department, the photogravure facilities of which were fully engaged with printing the ordinary stamps. The watermark and perforation were as before, as was the cylinder format of two panes of 50. The control numbers were printed in the color of the frame on the margin to the right of position 50; Table 1 lists them.

There was some variation in the shade of some values over the years (Table 1). One value, 2m., underwent a complete change from a grey frame to red-orange on May 1st 1938. The practice of assigning control numbers when a cylinder was reused was evidently different from that customary with the photogravure ordinary stamps. No crossed-out control numbers are found, the earlier ones having been erased instead. For example, the 1m. stamps had six printings, each with its own control number, but the records indicate that only two cylinders were used¹³.

Royal proofs of the two customary kinds were prepared for each control number. Those of the values 40m. to 200m., of which there was but one printing, are obviously the keys to a complete set.

No major errors are known, but the 5m. exists with inverted watermark (very scarce) and the varieties due to damaged bits (Chapter XXVI) have been found on the 1, 4, 50, and 90m. and probably exist on all¹⁴. Mis-registrations of the vignette, up to 2.5mm, have been recorded on the 1, 5, 20, and 50m. Plate flaws on the frames of varying prominence, especially in the inscriptions, have been recorded^{1,15,16} on the 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 20, 30, and 50m.; two are pronounced (Fig. 13). Flaws on the vignette plate, all minor, have also been recorded. Four cylinders altogether were used to print the vignettes and it is not known whether these flaws belong to one cylinder or originated with the multipositive.

Fig. 13
Plate flaws on the
1m. and 4m.



The validity of these stamps was at first restricted to external Air Mail (there was no general public internal air mail service until 1945, except for the Cairo-Assuan link of the Imperial Airways route to South Africa, when the Express service began use of air carriage; see Chapter XXVI). From August 1st 1938 that restriction was lifted and the stamps could be used on ordinary mail and were so used extensively. Owing to the great variety of rates it is possible to find most values used alone on cover, although the search can be challenging for some of them. Some values, especially the 30m., were used alone or along with Army Post stamps on British Forces mail to pay the 40m. concessionary air mail rate; stamps so used were cancelled with date-stamps of the military post.

TABLE 1 — THE 1933 ISSUE

Value	Control	Printing	Frame Color	Value	Control	Printing	Frame Color
1m.	A/32	210,000	yellow-orange	9m.	A/32	205,000	deep red
	A/34	70,000	do.		A/37	12,500	do.
	A/35	225,000	do.		A/38	25,000	dull red
	A/36	525,000	red-orange	10m.	A/32	220,000	deep violet
	A/37	65,000	do.		A/36	60,000	do.
	A/38	62,000	do.		A/37	90,000	light violet
2m.	A/32	215,000	grey		A/38	117,500	do.
	A/35	225,000	grey-black	A/39	140,000	do.	
	A/37	130,000	red-orange	B/39	155,000	do.	
	A/38	32,500	do.	20m.	A/32	550,000	blue-green
3m.	A/32	520,000	sepia		A/36	220,000	do.
	A/37	435,000	do.		B/36	550,000	do.
	A/38	62,500	do.		A/37	800,000	green
4m.	A/32	200,000	light green	A/38	275,000	do.	
	A/36	130,000	do.	A/39	220,000	do.	
5m.	A/32	520,000	brown	30m.	A/32	550,000	blue
	A/37	225,000	do.		A/37	220,000	dark blue
	A/38	140,000	do.		A/38	415,000	do.
	B/38	260,000	do.		A/39	225,000	do.
	A/39	165,000	do.	40m.	A/32	545,000	brown-red
	B/39	795,000	do.		50m.	A/32	550,000
6m.	A/32	220,000	blue-green	60m.	A/32	225,000	grey
	A/38	20,000	do.	70m.	A/32	235,000	blue
7m.	A/32	220,000	dark blue	80m.	A/32	230,000	sepia
	A/36	65,000	do.	90m.	A/32	230,000	orange
8m.	A/32	537,000	red-lilac	100m.	A/32	335,000	red-lilac
	A/36	550,000	do.	200m.	A/32	140,000	dull red
	A/37	525,000	deep violet		A/34	70,000	do.
	A/38	117,500	do.				

1941: The Photogravure Version

Four values, one of them a new value, 25m., were issued in single colors, printed by photogravure, using the original photographic material of the previous issue to make the die negatives (Fig. 14). A proof of the 30m. was approved by the King in July 1939. Other physical characteristics were unaltered. The 10m. and 30m. appeared on March 18th, the 25m. in April, and the 5m. not until November 1943, although printing apparently took place in 1940. Control numbers¹⁷ and quantities are listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2 — THE 1941–43 ISSUE

Value Control	Printing Color	Value Control	Printing Color
5m. A/40 A/40 A/45	1,104,000 red-brown ? do.	30m. A/39 A/40 A/39 A/40 A/41	1,157,000 deep green 1,150,000 do.
10m. A/40	535,000		
25m. A/40 A/40 A/41 A/40 A/41 A/44 A/40 A/41 A/44 A/46	540,000 deep violet 165,000 reddish purple 227,000 do. ? slate purple		

Fig. 14
Design of the
photogravure Air Mail
stamps of 1941–43,
with 'cloud' flaw on the
lower right stamp.



The customary proofs with obliquely misplaced perforations or imperforate on thick paper with CANCELLED on the back were prepared in a sheet of 50 of each control number.

The only errors are inverted watermarks on the 5 and 30m. (scarce). Plate flaws, which occur only on alternate panes, include the following:

5m. – broken top bar of the second E of AERIENNE (position 19).
Light sky shading (“sunset” effect) to left of the largest pyramid (position 50).

10m. – a spot below the wheel of the airplane (“bombing the pyramids”) (position 8).

25m. – a “cloud” in the sky below the left value tablet (position 17).

1946: MEAN Congress

Following World War II, international air service using Egypt as a hub developed in many directions. An international conference, “Middle East Air Navigation Conference”, met in Cairo in 1946 and Egypt issued a commemorative Air Mail stamp for the occasion. It was made by overprinting the photogravure 30m. Air Mail stamp in Arabic and French (Fig. 15) at the Government Printing Works, which appears to have set up the overprint from type. The inking was not even and the definition was often unclear. Stamps of two control numbers, A/39 A/40 and ~~A/39~~ ~~A/40~~ A/41, were utilized, with a total quantity reported to have been 928,638, a decidedly odd figure!



Fig. 15 The MEAN overprint.

An apparent essay, drawn with meticulous care on a 5m. stamp, exists. Proofs are not known, but the Palace Collections contained one sheet with inverted overprint, one with it double and one with it misplaced; these may have been specifically prepared for the King. They are, however, generally accepted as issued stamps and their scarcity has led to the manufacture of very deceptive forgeries¹⁸. Fortunately, there is so much variation in the genuine overprint that it is easily plated and full sheets, invaluable for comparison, are reasonably plentiful. Details of the plating characteristics can be found in Sears¹. Although the vertical spacing in the overprint varies somewhat, the length is fairly uniform at 34mm, a measurement from which some forgeries depart.

The stamps were on sale from October 1st 1946 to January 31st 1947. A special cancellation inscribed MEAN CONFERENCE was in use at the Conference site (Heliopolis Palace Hotel).

1947: New Design Incorporating the Portrait of King Farouk



Fig. 16 The 1947 design.

A set of twelve values in a new design was issued bit by bit from February to July 1947. The design depicted a more modern aircraft, a Douglas DC3, flying over the Nile Barrage; a portrait of King Farouk in Air Marshall uniform occupied a medallion at the right (Fig. 16). The watermark and perforation were as before and the stamps were printed from cylinders having two panes that were separated before perforation. The two types of royal proofs were prepared for each control number. However, another type of proof made its appearance:

sheetlets of nine, imperforate on watermarked (inverted) paper, of the 10m. value, one sheetlet in each of the issued colors. In addition, a quantity (probably one pane of 50) of each value except the 20, 40, and 50m. was prepared imperforate on watermarked paper. Curiously, the 10m. is much more difficult to find than the other values.

With this issue, control numbers were inscribed in Arabic as well as European characters. At first, the Arabic ones were at upper left and lower right and the European ones in the other two corners. The pattern changed with cylinders put to press from 1948 onwards; control numbers were inscribed only at the lower right corner, the Arabic being in the lower margin, the European on the right (the 2m. has only the first pattern, however). With the A/46 and A/47 printings the two panes are distinguished by the presence or absence of a dot placed below the A and to the left of the Arabic *alef*. Table 3 lists the control numbers; the quantities printed have not been revealed. Various plate flaws have been described by Sears¹.

1948: S.A.I.D.E. Commemoratives

The newly formed Egyptian airline, Services Aériennes Internationaux d'Egypte, made its first flight, Cairo to Rome direct, on August 23rd 1948 and to Rome via Athens to Cairo on the 25th. Two surcharges were made, 13m. on 100m. and 22m. on 200m., for use on these flights and to commemorate them (Fig. 17). These two denominations were respectively for foreign postcards and foreign letters; no air mail fee was assessed.



Fig. 17
The S.A.I.D.E. surcharge.

TABLE 3 — CONTROL NUMBERS OF THE 1947 AIR MAILS

Value	Color	Date Issued	Controls	Overprints		
				K of E & S	3-bar	both
2m.	vermilion	25 MR 47	A/47		✓	
			A/47 B/47	✓	✓	✓
			A/47 B/47 & A/48	✓		✓
3m.	sepia	25 JN 47	A/47	✓	✓	
			A/47 & A/48	✓	✓	✓
5m.	lake-brown	2 JN 47	A/46	✓	✓	
			A/46 A/47	✓	✓	
			A/48	✓	✓	
7m.	brown-orange	23 AP 47	A/46	✓	✓	
			A/46 A/47	✓		
			A/46 A/47 & A/48	✓		
			A/52	✓	✓	
8m.	green	29 AP 47	A/46	✓		
			A/46 A/47	✓	✓	
			A/46 A/47 & A/48		✓	
10m.	violet	19 FE 47	A/46	✓	✓	
			A/46 A/47	✓	✓	
			A/46 A/47 & A/48	✓		✓
20m.	blue	2 JN 47	A/47	✓		
			A/47 & A/48	✓		✓
			A/52		✓	✓
30m.	Purple	23 AP 47	A/46	✓		✓
			A/46 A/47	✓	✓	
			A/46 A/47 & A/48	✓	✓	✓
			A/52		✓	
40m.	carmine	2 JY 47	A/47	✓		
			A/47 & A/48	✓		✓
			A/52		✓	✓
50m.	blue	25 JN 47	A/47	✓	✓	✓
			A/47 & A/48		✓	✓
100m.	olive	29 AP 47	A/47	✓	✓	✓
			A/47 & A/50		✓	✓
200m.	grey	2 JY 47	A/47	✓	✓	✓
			A/47 & A/50			

NOTE:

Multiple control numbers separated by & are on different corners of the same sheet.
The 30m. with control A/52 is not known without an overprint.

The surcharging was presumably done at the Government Printing Works; the erratic inking and poorly defined lettering were characteristic of their work. The printing was 250,000 of each value according to Sears, but the quantity sold is given by the Zeheri catalogue as 181,174 of the 13m., and 171,160 of the 22m. They were on sale from August 20th to 27th 1948 and were valid for postage until November 22nd. Control numbers were A/47 for each value.

Most, but not all, of the control numbers of the unoverprinted issue exist with overprint, as shown in Table 3.

A number of errors, double and inverted overprints, are listed in the Gibbons Middle East catalog (Fifth Edition, 1996) and in the Zeheri specialized catalog (1972 Edition), but their status remains controversial. The overprint has been forged, even to the extent of full panes, and Sears¹ maintains that the only genuine error is the 7m. double which, curiously, neither Gibbons nor Zeheri lists. However, Kemdjian²⁰ reported that the 20m. with double overprint was bought over the counter by a dealer; the two impressions are spaced apart vertically and one is quite weak (clearest in the upper rows). He also reported that the 2m. with double overprint and the 3, 5, 10, and 50m. with inverted overprints "appeared years after the stamps had been withdrawn" and that although the impressions appeared to be genuine, their origin was not traceable. Subsequently, additional errors appeared; they were promptly branded as forgeries by the Philatelic Society of Egypt. Inverted overprints on the 1m. and 2m. appeared at about the same time, in shades distinct from the genuine; they were thought to have come from abroad and were likewise branded as forgeries.

Although the overprinting was of better quality than the previous overprints, an interesting variety²¹ arising from damage to the plate occurs on position 21 (Fig. 19). In the first state of the plate it is not damaged. In a later state the left end of the first line of Arabic shows damage: the *alef* and *noon* are bent at the top and the *waw* is chipped at its top. In the final state positions 45 and 50 also show damage affecting the right end of the upper line of Arabic (all values). On position 45 the damage amounts to a bend in the flag of the *kaf* and a shaved right side of the *meem*; but on position 50 the flag of the *kaf* is shortened and the *meem* is completely gone in the final state. This position shows progressive deterioration, beginning with simple damage to the letters mentioned and eventually reaching a state in which not only is the flag completely missing, but the entire letters *meem* and *lam* of *malek* are missing as well. The last stages have been seen only on the 7, 20, 30, and 40m., whereas the early stage has been seen only on the 2, 5, and 7m. (uncommon). No example of damage to position 50 has been found on the 3, 50, 100, and 200m. All of these varieties are very scarce to rare.

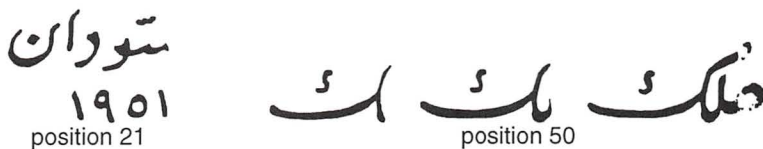


Fig. 19 Damaged overprints: positions 21 and 50.

The prevalence of forgeries requires great caution before accepting any double or inverted overprint as genuine. Some screening can be done on the basis of the ink, which is dense and opaque on many forgeries and not of the correct shade. The forgeries are often more clearly printed than the genuine; the *shedda* (the small w-shaped character standing above *al-sudan* at the left end of the inscription) is usually well defined in the forgeries, but is blotted on the genuine, the little valleys being largely filled in. Stamps that pass these criteria may still be forgeries, which can best be detected by comparison with plating characteristics; some accredited experts have full sheets of the genuine for comparison.

1953: Bar Overprints

Following the overthrow of King Farouk, stamps bearing his portrait became politically undesirable and it was announced in the *Official Journal* of the Postal Administration²² that “modified” stamps were offered for sale from April 20th 1953. The modification consisted of three bars printed in black over the King’s portrait. Since the same announcement stated that “unmodified” stamps would continue to be sold until May 23rd, one can infer that sufficient supplies of the 3-bar overprints were not immediately available. After June 30th the old stamps were declared to be invalid.

The enormous task of overprinting existing stocks of all ordinary and Air Mail stamps on short notice required the efforts of three printing establishments of which the Survey Department undertook the overprinting of the Air Mails. The resulting stamps have been studied in great detail by W.C. Andrews, whose writings should be consulted²³, and a contemporary report in depth was made by Condé²⁴.

A possible trial overprint in the form of a large, heavy X accompanied by the word SPECIMEN is known on the 2m. and 5m., but the circumstances of their appearance on the market suggests that they are fantasies²³.

Overprinting was done typographically from stereotypes locked in a forme. The 3-bar units measure very close to 11x4.5mm, although there was some variation due to inking and wear of the stereotypes, but at least one stereo (position 45 of the second setting) had bars about 1mm shorter, tapered to the right (Fig. 20). The overprints on the Air Mails differ from those on the ordinary stamps; the bars are poorly shaped, having ends that are usually rounded and somewhat splayed, with many small flaws. Andrews was able to study many full sheets, from which he deduced that there were three settings. They consisted mostly of the same stereotypes, but the positions were not the same and a few had been replaced. In the assembling of the stereotypes there were some small variations in the spacing from position to position (but not between the bars, which were fixed). The condition of the bars deteriorated during printing, apparently as a result of the use of soft metal, and eventually, in the third setting, the entire surface was ground down or polished to remove some of the aberrations. The settings and the variations in measurements have been illustrated in detail²³.



Fig. 20

A typical 3-bar overprint, double.

The numerous flaws and varieties make plating relatively easy and they also make it possible to distinguish top from bottom. Inverted overprinting has been seen on the 50m. and 100m.; the bars still fall on the portrait and it is therefore believed that the positioning was deliberate (perhaps to accommodate an abnormally large sheet margin in the press). In other examples unintentional inverted overprints put the bars in the lower left corner of the stamps; in such cases a second overprint was added in the correct position.

The stamps overprinted came from stocks that had not received the “King of Egypt and Sudan” overprint as well as those that had it. All values of the 1947 series were overprinted in substantial quantities except the 10m. and 200m., which are believed not to have been sold over the counter, are unknown used and are extremely scarce (beware of forgeries!). The 40m. exists with inverted watermark. Of the 1952 overprinted series, all but the 7, 20, and 40m.

received 3-bar overprints (these three values are listed in the Gibbons Middle East 1996 and Zeheri (1972 edition) catalogs, but not in the most recent Scott catalog; the best evidence indicates them to exist only as forgeries of either the 3-bar or the Arabic overprint). The quantities overprinted have not been disclosed and perhaps were never recorded. The known control numbers on the overprinted stamps are indicated in Table 3.

Since the primary purpose of the bar overprints was to demonstrate the state's disdain for the deposed King, it is understandable that private obliteration of the portrait was condoned. Such obliteration was sometimes done by hand and was legitimate. However, this practice left a loophole for philatelic exploitation, and privately produced printed bars that closely mimicked the official ones were made in substantial quantities, even using stamps that were never officially overprinted. Contrived covers were manufactured to give them the appearance of legitimacy²⁵.

Errors in the form of double overprints (six bars) have been recorded for all values but it is doubtful that they are all genuine²³. Forgeries are known in which both impressions are forged and in which a forged overprint has been added to a stamp already having one genuine overprint. Genuine examples should show the identical platable characteristics of the overprint in each impression. Generally, a second impression would have been printed only when the first one failed to obliterate the portrait well enough.

It has been said that the Post Office accepted stamps in sheets from private persons, to be overprinted officially, and that this situation may have been abused by arranging to have the identical sheets handed back to the submitter. By this practice varieties not normally issued could have been produced with genuine overprints.

Later Issues

There is little that can be added to the descriptions in the general catalogs about most of the air mail issues subsequent to the bar overprints. The stamps continued to be produced by the Survey Department, with control numbers in the customary form. Some stamps from late printings of the 1958-9 set exist with a new watermark in which UAR is about 1cm. shorter. Other values may yet be discovered (see Chapter XXII). Beginning with the issue of October 1963, printing was taken over by the Postal Authority Press, which no longer included control numbers on the plates. Instead, the date of printing and a serial number were printed in black on the sheet margin (phased out in the 1980s). Some stamps printed by the Survey Department in the 1960s exist imperforate. They are not listed in the catalogs because their origin is suspect. It has been surmised that some of the workmen used waste scraps of watermarked paper to have the imperforates printed clandestinely. Whatever the explanation, it seems certain that they were not sold over the Post Office counters.

A prominent error occurs on the 1994 55p. Air Mail stamp; the gold printing was omitted from the next to the last column of one sheet.

Postmarks

Apart from the early date-stamps used at Heliopolis, which were not truly Air Mail postmarks, various postmarks, service cachets, registration cachets, circular date-stamps, and machine postmarks have been used in connection with the Air Mails (Fig. 21). A meter franking machine has also been in use at Cairo Airport. These postmarks are often found as backstamps applied in transit at an airport and they may bear the name of the

airport (e.g., AEROPORT FAROUK, AERODROME DU CAIRE, CAIRO AIR PORT, AL MAZA AERO-PORT), or the words PAR AVION. The earlier ones have been described by G. Boulad²⁶ and by Ward²⁷. The subject has been brought up to date by Sears¹, who lists date-stamps for Alexandria, Bilbes, Luqсор, and Port Said as well.

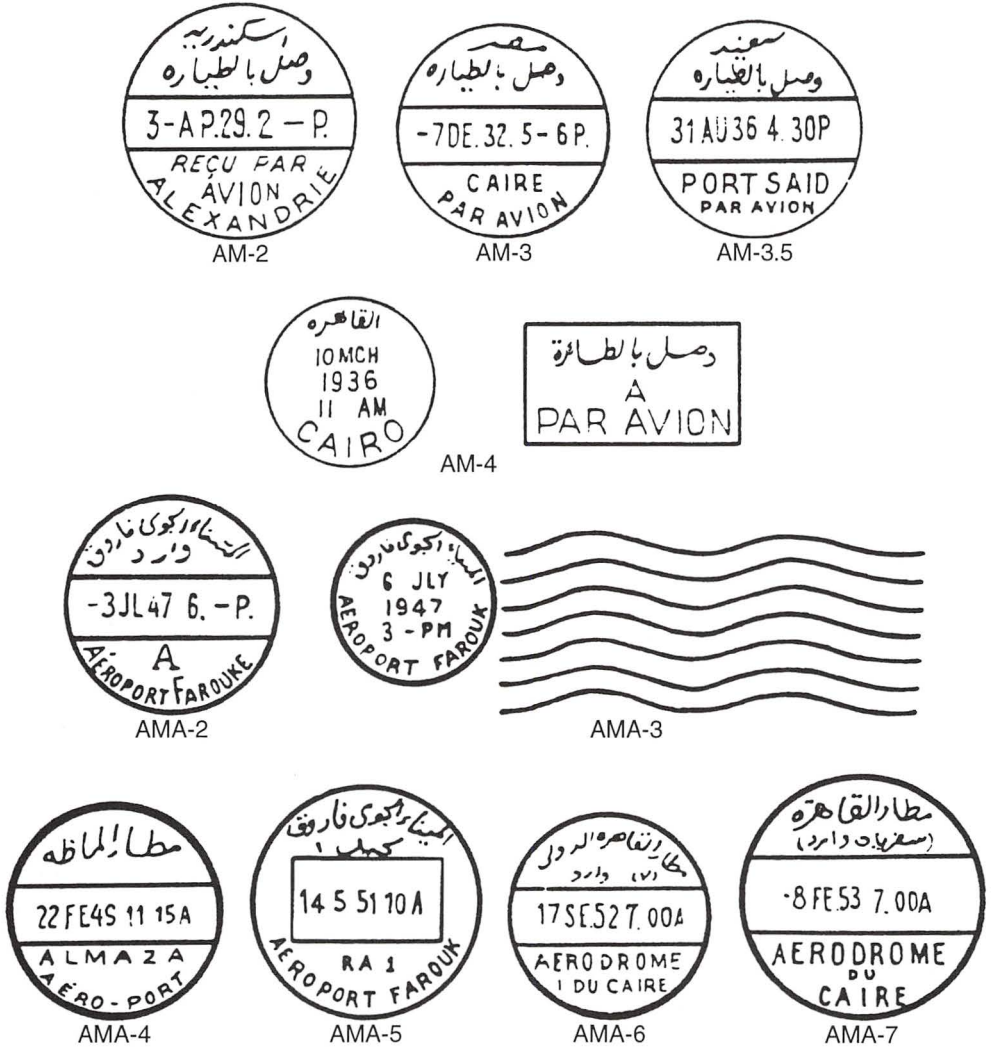


Fig. 21 Airport postmarks.

Three types of postmark often seen on Air Mail covers from Egypt deserve mention, even though they were not applied in Egypt. The legend "Air Mail" or equivalent on the envelope or label was by UPU regulation from 1928 obliterated with two bars, parallel or crossed, usually in red but also in black, on covers that were prepaid for only partial Air Mail service (e.g. air to Great Britain followed by surface to USA)^{28,29}. Such markings were applied at the transfer point where the Air Mail leg ended. In contrast, letters that were prepaid for carriage to destination by air are occasionally found with a

handstamp applied at a transfer point to indicate their status²⁹. The markings were apparently struck only on the top letter of a bundle, and are therefore scarce. One type reads AV. 2 (AV. stands for AVION; it was sometimes erroneously set as A.V. 2). The other type reads O.A.T. (Onward Air Transmission). These handstamps exist in large variety, for they were applied at various transfer points.

Airgraphs (V ●●● - Mail)

When air travel across the Mediterranean was interdicted by the advance of the Axis Powers in 1941, the problem of delivering the mail of the troops in Egypt to their families was only inadequately dealt with by devising alternative air routes via South or West Africa, from where most of it had to go by sea. The volume of mail was too great for the available air equipment to carry with any promptness; the solution was an innovation reminiscent of the use of light-weight photographic negatives carried by pigeons during the siege of Paris in 1870. Special paper forms were provided free of charge at post offices in Egypt (as well as elsewhere) and Great Britain for messages to be written or even for pictorial greetings to be drawn. These were then censored and photographed so as to produce negatives on which each message occupied an area of only 12x16mm. The rolls of film were then flown to destination, where enlarged prints (ca. 10x12.5cm.) were made; these were put into window envelopes and posted. The prints of messages to civilians in Egypt were simply folded so as to expose the address panel and fastened with EGYPTIAN POSTAL ADMINISTRATION seals, or even the long-obsolete MOTOR MAIL labels (Chapter XXXIX). By this means a very large number of messages could be sent with very little weight; the reduced demand on air equipment meant that the mails could be sent much more promptly and entirely by air instead of partly by a slow sea route.

Messages handled in this way are known as Airgraphs; when the service was later extended to include the USA the term 'V ●●● - Mail' was introduced^{30,31,32,33}. The first Airgraphs from the Middle East arrived in Great Britain on May 13th 1941 and the first dispatch to the Middle East took place on August 15th^{1,30}. The service came to an end on July 31st 1945.

Many versions of the forms were used, not only in Great Britain and Egypt, but in countries as far away as Australia, Zanzibar, South Africa, and North America. They have been listed in detail by Stephen³¹. In Egypt, forms¹ were used that included below the address panel the inscription "Military Airgraph Service authorized by Egyptian Postal Administration" (Fig. 22). These were also used widely by Middle East Forces outside of Egypt. When the service was opened to civilian use (May 1942), a form inscribed KINGDOM OF EGYPT POSTAL ADMINISTRATION to the left of the address panel

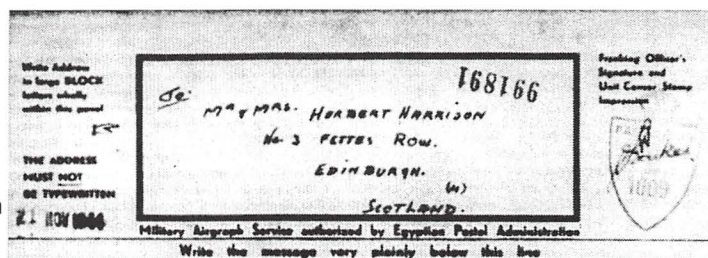


Fig. 22 Military airgraph message.

and the Arabic equivalent to the right was provided (Fig. 23). Forms supplied by the United States Forces had the inscription V... - Mail at the bottom; there was no explicit indication of Egyptian origin unless the sender's address included it.

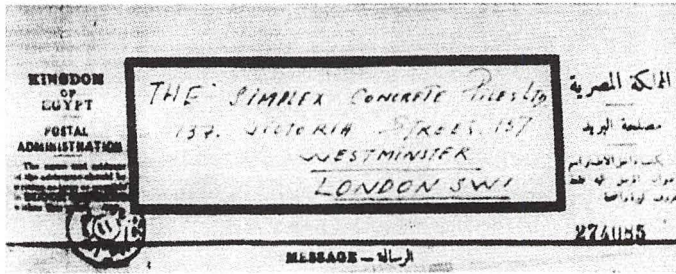


Fig. 23 Form supplied for civilian use.

The original paper forms were retained for a while in Cairo and then were destroyed. Consequently, the items that survive consist mostly of the photographic versions that were delivered or blank forms that were left over and kept by individuals. However, occasionally a message, for various reasons, could not be photographed properly. In such cases the Airgraph form in its original envelope was sent through the ordinary mails (Fig. 24); examples of this sort are very scarce.

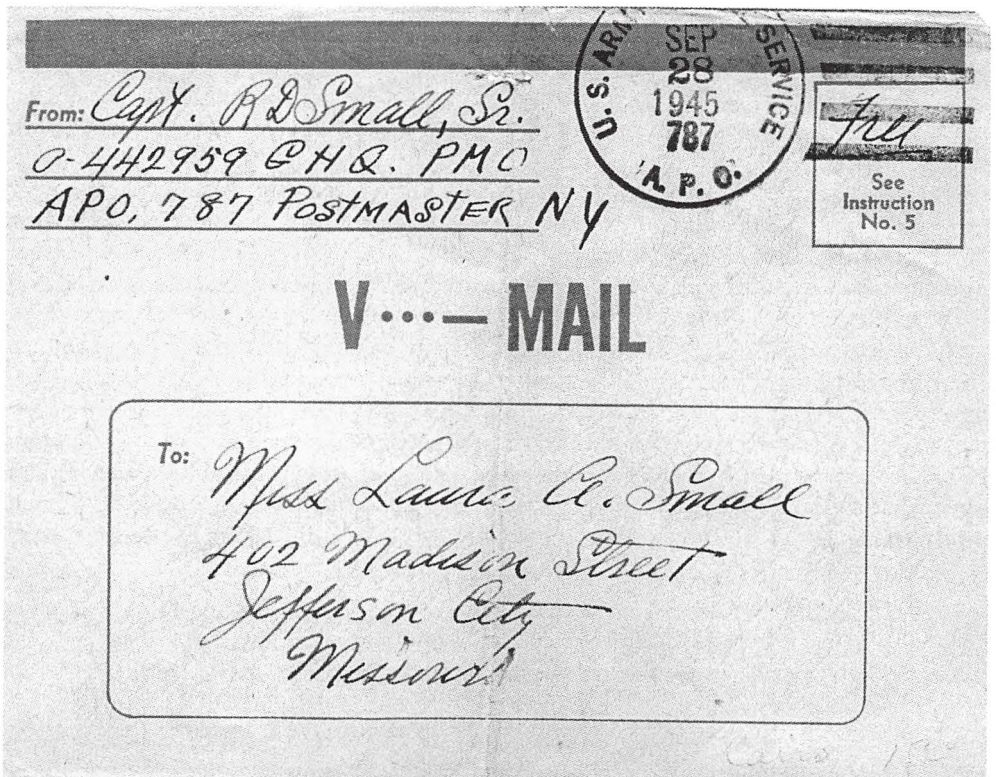


Fig. 24 An airgraph handled as ordinary mail.

Airgraphs from military personnel were charged 3d. (15m.) postage, paid with postage stamps affixed to the back of the form. Civilian Airgraphs from Egypt required 40m. postage, for which the 40m. sepia King Fuad portrait stamp of 1932 was sometimes used. Although the original forms were destroyed, at least some of the stamps from them have survived, recognizable by the cancellation, a circular date-stamp inscribed CAIRO / AIRGRAPH (Fig. 25) (also used as a backstamp on Airgraphs to civilians in Egypt).



Fig. 25
The Airgraph date-stamp.

The Horseshoe Route

Another consequence of the advance of the Axis Powers into the western Mediterranean was the necessity to develop alternate air mail routes. The existing route south from Cairo to Durban became much more important, for it could be linked to Great Britain by sea and by flying boats, which intersected with a route from Kenya via West Africa and Lisbon. The route to Asia and Australasia went through Palestine, Iraq, India, Singapore, and Batavia to Darwin and Sydney. The overall route from Durban to Sydney via Egypt resembled a very distorted horseshoe, hence the name. The story of its development, operation, and changes has been described in a booklet³⁴.

When the Japanese forces captured the entire Malay Peninsula, along with Burma and Dutch East Indies, the horseshoe route was drastically altered. Flying boats took the mails directly from India to Perth, on the west coast of Australia. Another change was anticipated when revolt in Iraq threatened to cut the horseshoe route, and an alternative route via Aden and Oman was introduced in the summer of 1942. These changes affected not only the mails and their rates for Asia and Australasia, but also the transpacific mails, which became a major link between Egypt and the USA. Some of the consequences are reflected in the air mail rate tables in Chapter XXIX.

Related Topics

Air Mail stamps overprinted for use in Palestine are treated in Chapter XLV. Air Letters (Aerograms) are treated along with other postal stationery in Chapter XXXII, and Air Mail Labels are listed in Chapter XXXIX. Air Mail rates are listed in Chapter XXIX. Some aspects of military Air Mails are mentioned in Chapter XXXI.

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