

XXXI

Military Mail

<i>Chronology</i>	593	<i>World War II: 1939–1945</i>	614
<i>The 1882 Campaign</i>	594	<i>Egypt Postage Prepaid (EPP)</i>	616
<i>The 1884–85 Campaign (Sudan)</i>	598	<i>Army Signals</i>	617
<i>1896–97: Reconquest of the Sudan</i>	601	<i>British Forces</i>	617
<i>World War I: 1914–18</i>	605	<i>Australian Forces</i>	618
<i>British Forces</i>	605	<i>New Zealand Forces</i>	618
<i>Australian Forces</i>	607	<i>Indian Forces</i>	619
<i>New Zealand Forces</i>	608	<i>South African Forces</i>	619
<i>South African Forces</i>	609	<i>Canadian Forces</i>	621
<i>Indian Forces</i>	610	<i>Other Stamps</i>	621
<i>Canadian Forces</i>	611	<i>Free French Forces</i>	621
<i>French Forces</i>	611	<i>Polish Forces</i>	622
<i>United States Forces</i>	613	<i>Belgian Forces</i>	623
<i>Italian Forces</i>	614	<i>Italian and German Forces</i>	623
<i>Belgian Forces</i>	614	<i>United States Forces</i>	623
<i>Western Frontier Force</i>	614	<i>Military Posts of the Egyptian Army</i>	625
<i>Between the Wars</i>	614	<i>United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF)</i>	628
		<i>References</i>	634

In this chapter, indications of rarity or scarcity are given, but they should be regarded with caution, for no searching census has been made of the various rare items. The estimates are therefore based on what I have seen or about which I have reliable reports, without having made a special search, and therefore have a largely subjective basis.

Chronology

In its long history Egypt has been involved in almost countless wars and military campaigns, but this account will be concerned only with those that have had philatelic consequences. The Napoleonic occupation of Egypt and its demise have been dealt with in Chapter II. Before looking at the many subsequent occasions for military mails, it may be helpful to survey their chronology.

1803: The British fleet landed troops at Alexandria on March 17th and proceeded to Rosetta where it met with defeat. Alexandria was evacuated on September 14th.

1863–67: Egyptian Battalion with the French forces supporting Emperor Maximilian in Mexico (no philatelic material has yet been reported).

1882: British forces landed at Alexandria on July 12th in reaction to xenophobic riots and a nationalist uprising led by Arabi Pasha. A Post Office Detachment landed on August 21st. An Indian contingent arrived at Suez on August 23rd.

- Resistance ended on September 24th. P.O. Detachment left Egypt on October 7th.
- 1884-85: British troops left for the Sudan frontier on February 16th in a campaign to relieve General Charles Gordon. Dongola evacuated on July 5th 1885 and the last British troops left Alexandria on September 9th.
- 1896-98: Troops left Cairo bound for Assuan and Halfa for the reconquest of the Sudan on March 21st 1896. Most British troops left the Sudan for Cairo in September 1898.
- 1914-18: Britain declared war on Turkey, which invaded the Sinai in 1915. British forces began reoccupation of the Sinai on August 5th 1916 and completed it at the battle of Rafah on January 9th 1917. Armistice with Turkey was declared on October 31st 1918.
- 1915: Senussi uprising in the Western Desert.
- 1919: General strike and national uprising in Egypt.
- 1932: Concessionary postage rate granted to British Forces in Egypt (Chapter XXXVI).
- 1939-45: Britain declared war on Germany on September 3rd 1939 and Egypt broke off diplomatic relations. Italy declared war on Britain and France on June 10th 1940. British troops crossed into Libya on June 11th 1940. Italian troops invaded Egypt on September 13th 1940. British forces again invaded Libya on December 9th 1940. Axis forces crossed into the Egyptian Western Desert on April 14th 1941. Egypt was cleared of Axis forces on November 11th 1942. Egypt declared war on Germany and Japan on February 24th 1945. Germany surrendered on May 7th 1945.
- 1946: British troops evacuated Cairo Citadel.
- 1947: British evacuated Kasr el Nil Barracks on March 30th and concentrated in the Suez Canal Zone.
- 1948: Egypt invaded Palestine upon the withdrawal of the British in June.
- 1951: Anglo-Egyptian Treaty abrogated on October 16th.
- 1954: Suez Agreement on October 19th to withdraw British troops from the Canal Zone within 20 months; last troops withdrawn on November 30th.
- 1956: British-French-Israeli campaign to secure the Suez Canal. Last British air field (Abu Sueir) evacuated on April 14th.
- 1962: Egyptian forces entered Yemen on the Republican side in October; they withdrew on December 7th 1967.
- 1967: Egyptian forces at war with Israel over Sinai (Six Day War) June 5th-12th.
- 1973: October War; Egypt crossed Suez Canal on October 6th; cease fire on November 11th.

The 1882 Campaign

When the Post Office Detachment arrived at Alexandria on August 21st 1882 it brought with it circular date-stamps inscribed BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICE / EGYPT and obliterations having BA/E in a vertical oval of bars (Fig. 1). The Post Office Record Books show six of each, differing in small detail only; they have been illustrated by Proud¹ and by Minett². Not all of the date-stamps appear to have been put in service and the obliterations had extremely little use, the date-stamps being used to cancel stamps instead.

The date-stamps exist with the code letters A, B, or C above the date, or with no code letter. The proof strikes show the letter C for all six devices and therefore the letters must have been removable and interchangeable. No evidence is available that allows the code letters to be identified with place of use, time of day, or anything else.

Fig. 1 Postal markings prepared for Egypt.



A postal notice³, "EGYPT / Postal Arrangements for British / Forces", dated August 11th, specifies that letters were to be charged 2½d. per half ounce, postcards 1d., and newspapers, prints, and books ½d. per 2oz. However, non-commissioned officers, soldiers, and seamen were allowed a concessionary rate of 1d. for letters not exceeding a half ounce. British stamps were available for sale when needed; most of the examples of use of the date-stamps are on the then current 2½d. blue of 1880, loose or on cover. Covers showing the concessionary rate are much scarcer. The ½d. green and 1d. lilac of 1881 were also regularly used. The Gibbons catalog also lists the ½d. rose-red of 1870 and the 1d. Venetian red of 1880, without prices, and the 2½d. rose-lilac of 1876 has been reported with the British APO date-stamp, but there is some doubt that they were regularly sold in Egypt. Letters sent without stamps were charged to the recipient at the single rate rather than the normal double rate (Fig. 2). It is not mentioned in the postal notice, but registered letters were also accepted; the fee was 2½d. and there was no special handstamp.



Fig. 2 A cover sent unfranked and charged at the single rate.

Egyptian postage was sometimes used, presumably contrary to regulations, but tolerated, from the evidence of covers. I know of only the 1pi. rose of 1879 and the 20pa. brown postal card cancelled with the British Army Post Office date-stamp. Before the arrival of the Post Office Detachment, however, all mail had to be posted in the Egyptian civil post offices or brought to a British ship. The Egyptian 20pa. postal card and covers with Egyptian stamps (generally 1pi. rose) are known with cancellations of arrival at the Foreign Branch of the London post office. The usual cancellation was "10" in an oval of bars. Conversely, covers are known franked with British stamps cancelled either with an Egyptian civil date-stamp or a retta.

Although it may not be possible to assign a particular date-stamp to a location, the sites of the Army Post Offices are known: Ismailia 26 AU-9 OC; Alexandria Tribunal; Ramleh; Port Said 25 AU-4 SE; Tel el Makuta 27 AU-2 SE; Kassassin 3 SE-14 SE; Tel el Kebir 14 SE; Cairo 16 SE-4 OC. Most of these were stationary, but one post office moved with the army from Tel el Makuta, ending up at Cairo.

Much information on this campaign and its postal arrangements has been given by Thompson⁴, who reported August 29th for the earliest date seen of the British APO date-stamp, and October 4th for the latest (these dates can probably be extended somewhat). The number of known covers is small but substantial; I would estimate

twenty or more (but I know of only one registered). Of the much rarer B.A./E. obliterator, only one example on a loose stamp and two on fragment have been recorded⁵. However, another version of B.A./E. obliterator (Fig. 3), having only seven bars rather than 13, was used in England in 1890 as a demonstration by the General Post



Fig. 3 The obliterator used at an exhibition in London, 1890.

Office at an exhibition in London on the occasion of the Jubilee of Penny Postage. It should not be mistaken for the one sent to Egypt (however, it is nearly as rare as the legitimate one). Impressions of the seven-bar obliterator are in the GPO Record Book, dated in February 1885, prepared for the 1885 campaign, but not used then.

There were Indian army post offices in this campaign as well as British^{4,6}. The Indian Army contingent was sent to Suez in July, but a "postal establishment" did not arrive until September 3rd. It was supplied with five date-stamps and the standard obliterator for offices in the Bombay administrative circle, a B in a circular arrangement of bars (Fig. 4). Only two of the date-stamps, No. 1 and No. 2, are known to have been used; No. 1 is believed to have been assigned to Suez and No. 2 to the HQ at Zagazig. The post office personnel returned to Bombay on October 31st. FPO No. 1 is recorded dated SEP 8 and SEP 23, and No. 2 with dates from SEP 8 to OCT 1. They were used on Indian stamps



Fig. 4 Postal Markings of the Indian forces in the 1882 campaign.

(½ anna, 9 pies, 2 as., and 3 as.) and the 1½ as. blue UPU postal card; examples are rare even on loose stamps. Three covers have been recorded bearing Indian stamps, two Indian postal cards and two covers backstamped with the Indian FPO of origin (one franked with a British stamp cancelled with the British APO date-stamp, the other franked with Egypt 1 piaster cancelled at the Cairo civil post office, but also bearing a strike of the British APO date-stamp). Indian stamps and postal cards were sometimes cancelled with the British APO date-stamp.

Following the general withdrawal of most British and Indian forces on October 21st, some British troops and an Indian contingent remained in Cairo (Abbassia, Abdin, Citadel, Kasr el Nil), Alexandria (Mex, Ras el Tin, Ramleh, Adda, Pharos), Port Said, and Ismailia. They used the civil post office and Egyptian (mostly) or British stamps. Examples can be recognized only by the message content or the use of stationery with a regimental or similar imprint on the flap of the envelope.

Letters from seamen on ships participating in the campaign are scarcer than those from troops and most of the known examples are from the Sullivan correspondence. M. Sullivan was a "Skilled Carpenter" aboard *HMS Euryalus* which was at Suez from May to October 1882. Most of his letters are franked with a British 2d. stamp, fewer with 1d., cancelled in London at the Foreign Branch with a barred oval obliterator with number 10 or 26 (Fig. 5).

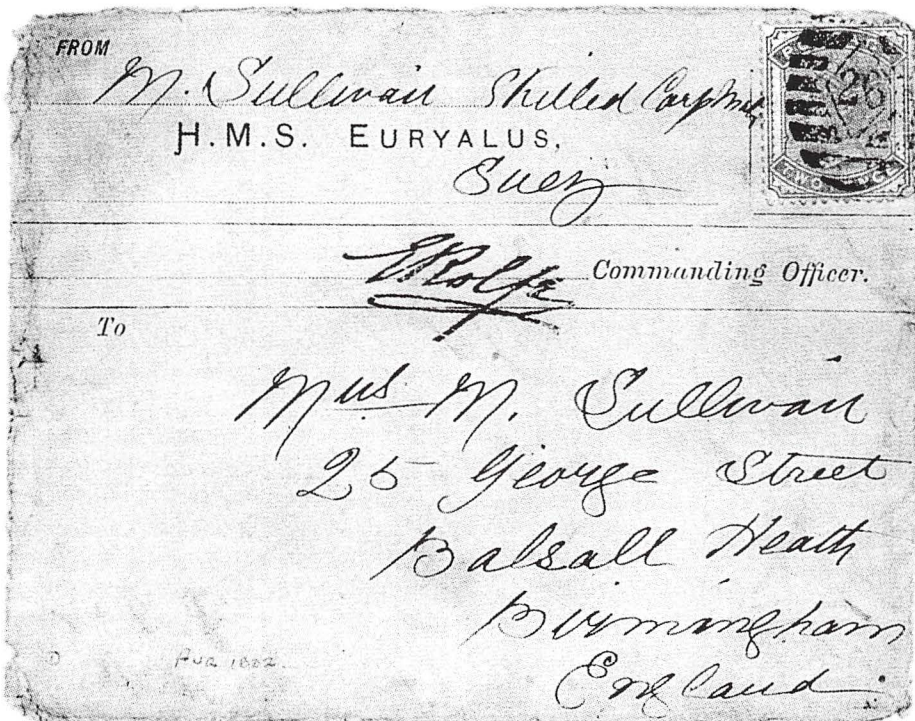


Fig. 5 A cover from a seaman at Suez.

The 1884–85 Campaign (Sudan)

The campaign to relieve the siege of Khartoum consisted of two separate operations: one pressing westwards from Suakin (Souakin, Sawakin, Suakim) and the other pressing south along the Nile from Wadi Halfa. The postal arrangements for the two were different.

On February 16th 1884 troops started southwards for the Sudan, gathering at Assuan and Wadi Halfa. They eventually pushed south to Korti and Dongola and succeeded in sending a small gun-boat as far as Khartoum, only to observe that they arrived too late and that Khartoum had already fallen to the Mahdi. The Suakin arm of the campaign did not get much farther than 20 miles inland. There were important battles during the campaign and much detail is to be found in the letters of the Sandbach⁷, Anley, and Burn-Murdoch correspondence, which was saved by the families and eventually came on the philatelic market in the 1970s and 1980s. The political background and the story of the heroism, disappointment, and subsequent retreat have been well treated in non-philatelic books⁸.

No postal detachment is known to have been sent and no army or field post office date-stamps were supplied. Instead, the military and associated civilians alike used the Egyptian civil post offices, and when the need arose, additional nominally civil post offices were opened. Covers from this branch of the expedition can be recognized in several ways: endorsements by the sender, docketing notes by the recipients, letters enclosed, and in rare cases by the postmark (Tani appears to have been used only by the expedition forces, and Korti mostly by them). When reinforcements were sent from Britain in August 1884, they sent some letters home from Malta and from Alexandria or Cairo on the way. Mail was also posted in towns in Upper Egypt, especially Assuan (Assouan, Aswan), where Headquarters were located. Wadi Halfa, just south of the political border with Sudan, and Korti and Dongola in the Sudan were the origin of most of the mail from the military front.

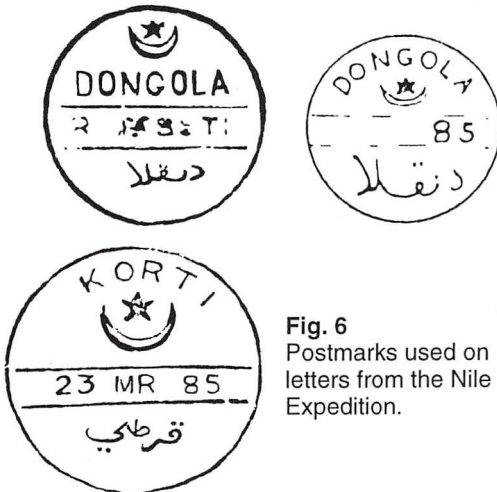


Fig. 6
Postmarks used on
letters from the Nile
Expedition.

The Egyptian civil date-stamps used from Assuan south were of the star-and-crescent style⁹ (Type X) (Fig. 6). That for Dongola had been in use well before the campaign (Chapter XXX) but that for Korti, which is of larger diameter, is known only with dates from 26 JA 85 to 23 MR 85 (Bowyer records 15 covers, but more probably exist). For Dongola and Assuan, a variant peculiar to them was briefly in use in which the office name is in a horizontal line with the crescent and star above. Examples are rare, even on loose stamps, and so few are known that it is risky to draw conclusions about them, but the short period of use suggests that they were

reserve date-stamps put in use only when large numbers of troops were present. For Dongola, only four examples have been reported by Bowyer (25 DE 84–8 JA 85), but it is very probable that several more exist. Examples from Assuan seem to be nearly as scarce

(Bowyer records seven: 23 OC 84 - 16 NO 84), but since Assuan is in Egypt proper, whereas Dongola is in the Sudan, it is in less demand. The office at Tani requires special comment. Only two covers, one loose stamp and one cut-out, are known of it and all are dated March 29th 1885. A number of covers with letters written at Tani are known with dates in April and May, but all are postmarked at Dongola. It has been suggested that the Tani handstamp was either lost or damaged after one day of use. Building of the camp, located 7 miles downstream from Korti, started only on March 6th. Since the latest date seen for Korti is March 23rd, it may be that the Tani office was opened when the Korti office closed.

Most of the covers from the Nile Expedition are franked with two copies of the 1884 provisional 20pa./5pi. stamp, but the 20pa. rose-red, 1pi. rose, 1pi. blue, and 10pa. grey, as well as the 20pa. rose postal card, were also used. The rate on letters is invariably 1 piaster, whether the destination is Egypt or elsewhere (the majority of the known covers are addressed to Britain).

A special aspect of the Nile Expedition was the inclusion of a small contingent of Canadian Voyageurs¹⁰, whose skill was needed in handling the supply boats through the First Cataract at Assuan. The contingent had no special postal arrangements, but it did bring with it Dr. Neilson as the officially assigned surgeon. Some covers addressed to him have survived and are of great postal and historical interest (Fig. 7). Covers and postcards from the Canadian Contingent are mostly postmarked at Wadi Halfa and are very rare.

The other arm of the campaign effectively started in February 1885 with the formation of a Field Force to advance from Suakin to the Nile¹. A contingent of 3000 men of the Indian Army arrived at Suakin on March 2nd 1885. This was accompanied by a substantial number of civilian camel drivers, muleteers, bearers, and laborers, many of whom were employed in constructing the railway¹¹ that was projected to reach Berber (but was not built beyond Otao, 18 miles from Suakin). An Indian postal detachment⁶ arrived on March 7th and a British one on March 25th. Mails to India were at first weekly via Aden, but in July were reduced to fortnightly. The British office closed on May 30th and the Indian detachment was disbanded in November 1885, although a small number of Indian troops remained in garrison.

Initially only the Egyptian civil post office in Suakin was available to handle the mails from the troops and associated civilians. Letters were necessarily franked with Egyptian stamps or were sent unfranked until the arrival of the postal detachments, whereupon a Base Post Office was established in the cramped quarters of the civil post office. A branch office was set up on Quarantine Island, adjacent to Suakin, and Field Post Offices at Headquarters camp and with the 2nd Brigade, which took the office with it in the advance to Handub. Date-stamps virtually the same as had been used in the 1882 campaign were supplied along with B.A./E. obliterators. The latter were never placed in use. The GPO Record Books have proof strikes of several, almost identical, date-stamps and six obliterators; Proud illustrates some of these, which are dated February 24th with code letter C. Examples on stamps or covers have been recorded from April 6th to May 6th, but the range can surely be extended.

The rates from the British post office were the same as for the 1882 campaign, but the stamps available were different: ½d. slate blue; 1d. lilac; 2½d. lilac, and 5d. green (the first is not listed by Gibbons, but it is known on cover). Examples are markedly rarer than those of the 1882 campaign; the stamp much the most frequently seen is the 2½d. Unfranked covers endorsed "No stamps available" and charged the single rate on arrival also exist. Most of the mail was addressed to Britain and went up the Red Sea to Suez; the



Fig. 7 A cover to the surgeon to the Canadian Voyageurs, forwarded from Cairo (postage due stamps voided); forwarded again to Gemai (second postage due stamps cancelled at Wadi Halfa).

trip took about ten days altogether. The records show that 924 registered letters were sent and 678 received, apart from the very much larger number of ordinary letters.

The British Army date-stamps of this and the 1882 campaign have been forged. Those that I have seen are crudely made and should not deceive a collector alerted to their existence. Some of them are on stamps not known to have been used at the date shown, but most of them are on the 1d lilac and some on the 1d Venetian red, the only two

stamps of low enough value unused to be profitable material for the faker. (Note: the illustration in Stanley Gibbons Part 1 catalogs is not a good example for comparison; in fact, it appears to have been copied from a forgery.)

The Indian postal detachment brought with it circular date-stamps inscribed simply FIELD P.O. and the date, and the standard **B** obliterator which appears to have been in duplex with the date-stamp in some cases. The date-stamp without a code letter or number is stated officially to have been used from March 25th 1885 to May 4th 1886. Another date-stamp had “No. 1” above the date; an example has been reported dated March 8th. Indian 2 anna stamps, and 9 pie and 1 anna postal stationery envelopes are known to have been used. The concession rate of 9 pies for NCOs and enlisted men was extended to civilian “followers”; the normal rate was 3 annas to India. Parcels could be sent for 8 annas per pound.

A little-known aspect of the Indian contingent in the campaign is the use of a handstamp EGYPT EXPEDITION / 1885 on Indian telegraph stamps¹² (Fig. 8). The handstamp was struck in violet on stamps that had been affixed on telegraph forms from Bombay, Meerut, Peshawar, and Rawalpindi. It appears that only one handstamp and one ink pad were used, and it is presumed that the handstamping took place at a central location (probably Bombay) to facilitate accounting of the costs of the contingent (which presumably would have been billed to the British Parliament).

British telegraph stamps were used at Suakin on telegraph forms from the Expedition. They can be identified with the Expedition by the cancellations, which include code-letter designations¹³: SK for Suakin and QI for Quarantine Island (Fig. 9).

A small (735 men) contingent of Australian troops from New South Wales was also sent to Suakin (the first use of Australian troops overseas)¹⁴. The contingent left Sydney on March 3rd 1885 on two transports, the *Australasian* and the *Iberia*, and arrived on March 29th. It was withdrawn on May 17th. The troops required no special postal facilities and the few known covers are postmarked at the British APO. They can be recognized by the Australian addresses (mostly to Sydney) and confirmed by reference to the recorded roster of the contingent. A cover that was sent unstamped is known with a postage due charge of 2½d.; another is a British 1d. embossed envelope.

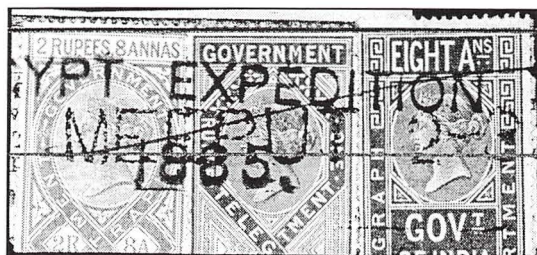


Fig. 8 Indian telegraph stamps handstamped EGYPT EXPEDITION / 1885.



Fig. 9 British telegraph stamps used in the Suakin region.

1896–97: Reconquest of the Sudan

The campaign to reconquer the Sudan that began in 1896 had the purposes of removing the constant threat by the Mahdist regime on Egypt's southern border, providing a diversion to relieve Ethiopian pressure on the Italians in Eritrea, and perhaps most

important of all, forestalling French imperial ambitions in the upper regions of the Nile. Today it would have found strong motivation for ending the cruelties of an oppressive and religiously fanatic government. Like the campaign of 1884-85, it had two arms, one pressing up the Nile from Wadi Halfa, the other thrusting inland from Suakin. Also like the earlier campaign, composition of the two arms and the postal arrangements for them were different. The "Dongola Expedition" up the Nile was composed of British and Egyptian troops, whereas the "Suakin Field Force" consisted of an Indian contingent about 3000 strong as well as British and Egyptian troops.

On March 21st 1896 troops left Cairo bound for Assuan and Halfa. A base camp was established just north of Wadi Halfa and a post office with the name Wadi Halfa Camp was opened (the earliest dated postmark that I know of is 3 JU 96 - presumably June, since JL was usually used for July). This event exemplifies the way postal facilities were arranged: Egyptian civil post offices were opened when and where needed and there was no special army postal service. Military mail was required to use Egyptian stamps if it was not official; however, letters could be sent without stamps if endorsed "No stamps available" and the single rate was then charged to the addressee. A concession rate of 5 milliemmes was granted to enlisted soldiers and NCOs for letters to Britain bearing an authorized officer's endorsement. Covers from the expedition can be recognized by such endorsements and related ones, such as "Nile Expedition" or "Dongola Expedition" (Fig. 10).

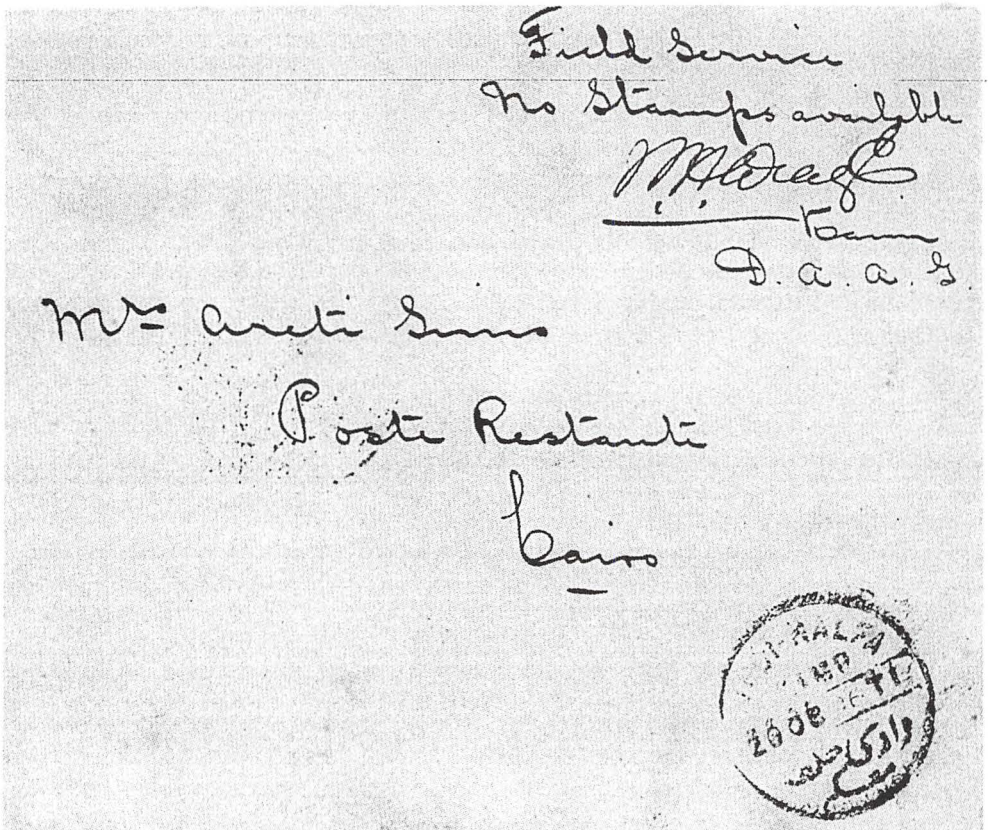


Fig. 10 An unfranked cover from the Dongola Expedition, Wadi Halfa Camp.

In May 1896 the expedition proceeded south from Wadi Halfa and captured Dongola, its original goal, on September 13th. At that point the decision was made to attempt the reconquest of all of the Sudan; a railway was built across the desert to by-pass the great loop of the Nile known as the Dongola Reach and Berber was occupied in August. At this point, however, resistance increased and the expedition halted to await reinforcements. Meanwhile, a separate postal system for the Sudan was established and the first Sudanese stamps were issued on March 1st 1897. The further stages of the campaign¹³ are a part of Sudanese rather than Egyptian philately and will not be treated here.

The other arm, the Suakin Field Force, became effective in May 1896 with the arrival of the Indian contingent. It was used to garrison Suakin and Tokar, thereby freeing the British and Egyptian troops to push across the desert to link up with the Dongola Expedition. An Indian postal officer and staff arrived on June 1st and opened a Base Office at Suakin⁶. A week later No. 1 Field Post Office was established at Tokar. The latter returned to Suakin on November 9th, the Base Office was closed on December 8th, and the postal staff left for India the next day.

Two Indian date-stamps were used along with the ubiquitous B obliterator (Fig. 11). The concession rate to India was 1 anna and officers' and civilians' letters were charged 2½ annas. Postal cards and newspapers were charged at the normal foreign rate, 1 anna, but there was no

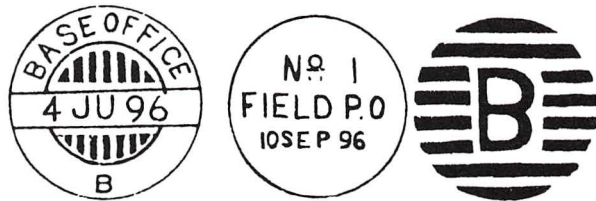


Fig. 11 Postmarks of the 1896 Indian detachment.

registered mail or parcel service from the Sudan. A surprisingly large number of covers, mostly surcharged 1 anna postal stationery "Soldiers' and seamen's envelopes", have survived from this short-lived campaign (Fig. 12). The postcards used were "one and a

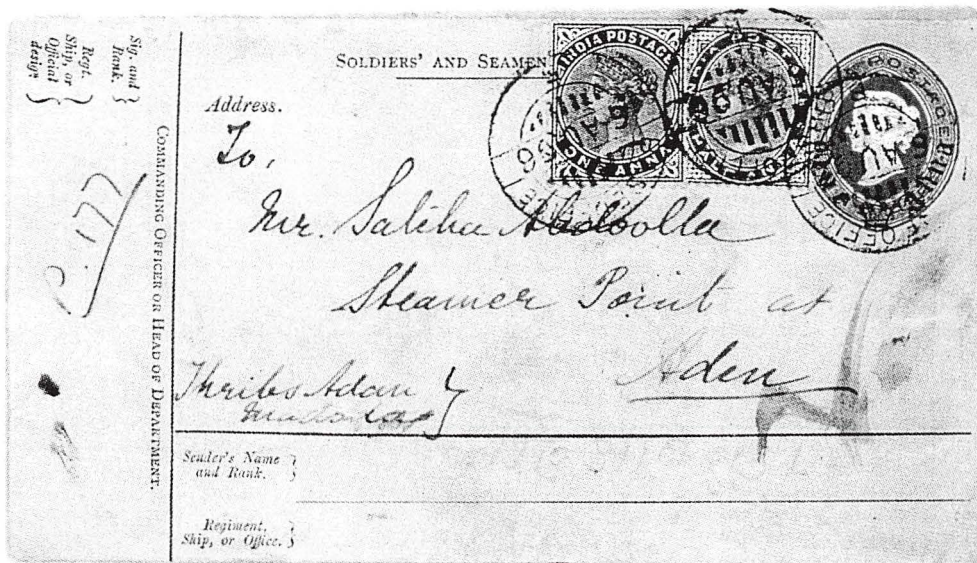


Fig. 12 A cover from the Indian forces of the Suakin Field Force.

half anna" UPU ones surcharged ONE ANNA. Stamps seen used are ½ anna and 1 anna. Supplies of envelopes and stamps were apparently made available before the Indian post offices were ready to handle mail as it is not uncommon to find them cancelled with the Suakin civil post office date-stamp in the first month.

Covers bearing Indian stamps cancelled with a date-stamp of F.P.O. 11 with dates in 1896 were once thought to be from the Suakin Field Force. In fact, they are from the Northwest frontier Campaign in India and have nothing to do with the Sudan (some are dated before the Indian contingent left India for Suakin)¹⁵.

The British and Egyptian troops used the Egyptian civil post office at Suakin. At this date internal Egyptian postage was 5m. per 15g and overseas postage (thus to Britain) was 1pi. Letters from military personnel, identifiable by external endorsement or the internal message, were cancelled with the normal civil date-stamp or in some cases with the retta (the retta would have been appropriate for letters received from the front or those put on board a boat in Suakin Harbor) (Fig. 13).

The use of bisected and of provisionally surcharged postage due stamps on internal letters from soldiers in 1898 is described in Chapter XXIV.

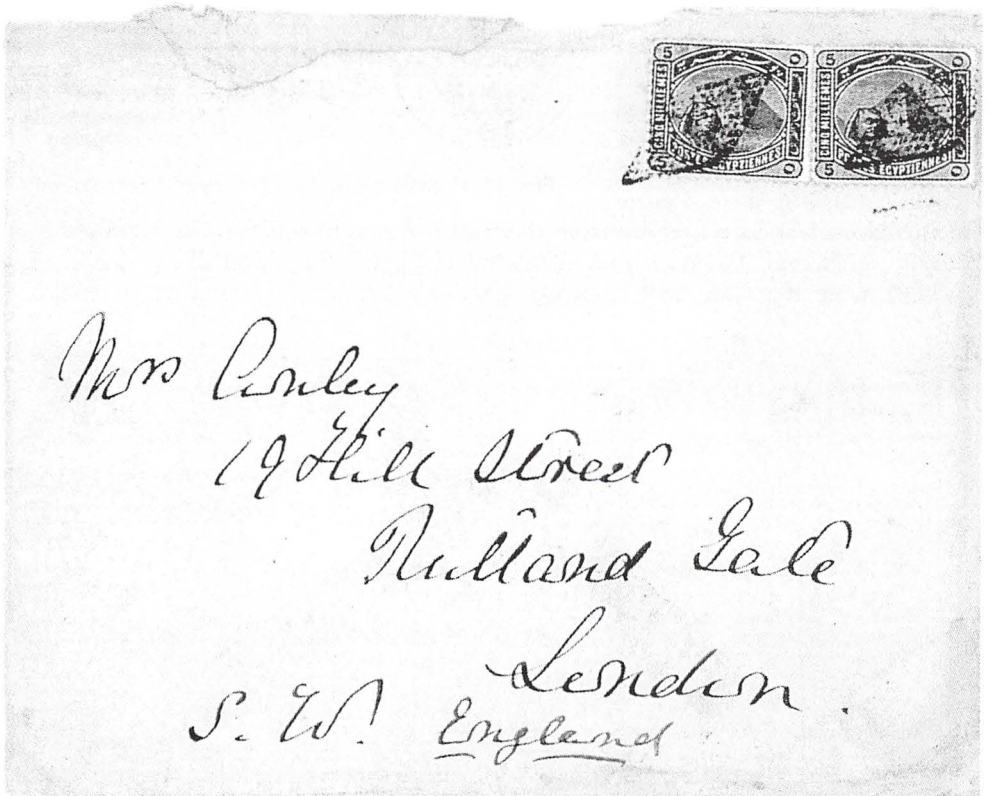


Fig. 13 A cover from a British officer with the Suakin Field Force, cancelled with a retta at Suakin.

World War I: 1914–18

Limited garrisons of British troops remained in Egypt in the 1897–1914 interim period and base military post offices with location names, such as Alexandria or Cairo, served their postal needs with their own date-stamps¹⁶. These arrangements provided a base for the rapid expansion required upon the outbreak of war with Turkey in November 1914 and the consequent influx of large numbers of troops from Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as some from India, South Africa, France, and Italy. The named date-stamps were eventually replaced and a large number of field post offices, provided with appropriate date-stamps, were established. The subject of military posts in Egypt from 1914 to 1918 is so large and complicated that it is not feasible to try to treat it in detail in this book. Instead, the reader should consult the several books, especially Firebrace, that are devoted to the period: Australian Forces (Emery¹⁷, Firebrace¹⁸); British Forces (Kennedy and Crabb¹⁹, Proud²⁰, Sacher²¹, Firebrace¹⁸); Indian Forces (Virk^{6b,22}, Firebrace¹⁸, Tomkins²³); New Zealand Forces (Collins and Watt²⁴, Firebrace¹⁸); French Forces (Deloste²⁵). These books give many citations to articles in the primary journals as well.

British Forces

In the following presentation, the postal markings are illustrated from tracings by John Firebrace, with his kind permission.

The largest of the armed forces in Egypt was British and it therefore accounts for the majority of the many covers that exist. Since officers and soldiers on active service were granted free postage, covers are generally without stamps (exceptions are registered letters, letters from civilians, and some letters addressed to places served by the Egyptian civil post). The most concise treatment of the postmarks and where they were used is that of Sacher because its focus is the narrowest (the other sources cited above are concerned with a wider theater, although specific chapters are devoted to Egypt in some of them). He has illustrated 22 different types of postal handstamps plus eight examples of date-stamps for the military traveling post offices (some of the illustrations are somewhat crudely drawn, however). Firebrace goes into greater detail and gives more information on military units and movement of troops, as well as censorship.

The date-stamps can be divided into groups according to the inscriptions: ARMY POST OFFICE (Fig. 14); BASE ARMY POST OFFICE (or BAPO) (Fig. 15); FIELD POST OFFICE (or FPO) (Fig. 16); and BARRACKS or CAMP (Fig. 17). The Base Army Post Offices carry identification in the form of code letters or letters plus numbers, as follows: K (Kantara); T (Port Said); Z (Alexandria); Z/LOD (Alexandria, Local Delivery); Y (Cairo?). Alexandria is by far the commonest.

The Army Post Offices moved along with military operations and their code identifications were not at all times (in certain cases, never) associated with Egypt. Most of them were coded with SZ and a number which varies from 1 to 62. Those that were used nearly exclusively in Egypt during the war include SZ3 (Western Desert, Moascar), SZ4 (Ismailia), SZ10 (Cairo), SZ11 (Alexandria, Mustafa Barracks, Mena Camp), SZ12 (Abukir), SZ15 (Suez, Sinai), SZ16, SZ21 (Cairo), SZ22 (Port Said), SZ24 (Alexandria, Suez), and SZ26. However, most of the numbers below 40 were in use in Egypt part of the time, when not used in Palestine, Syria, Salonika, or the Gallipoli expedition. Handstamps without date were provided for use on parcels (and printed matter?), but date-stamps

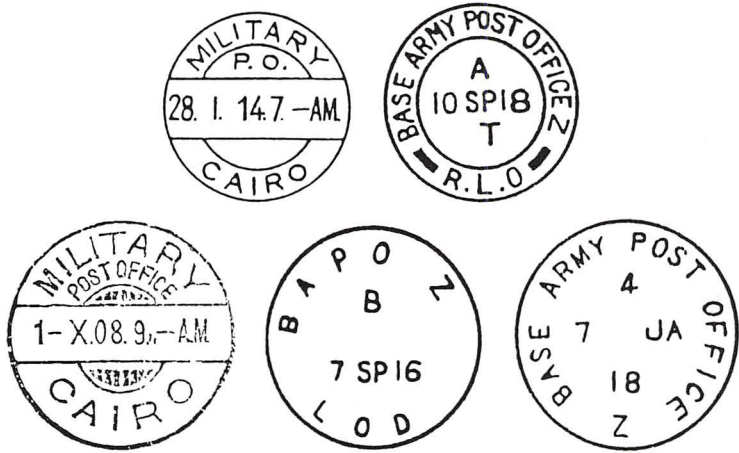


Fig. 14 Types of Base Army Post Office date-stamps.

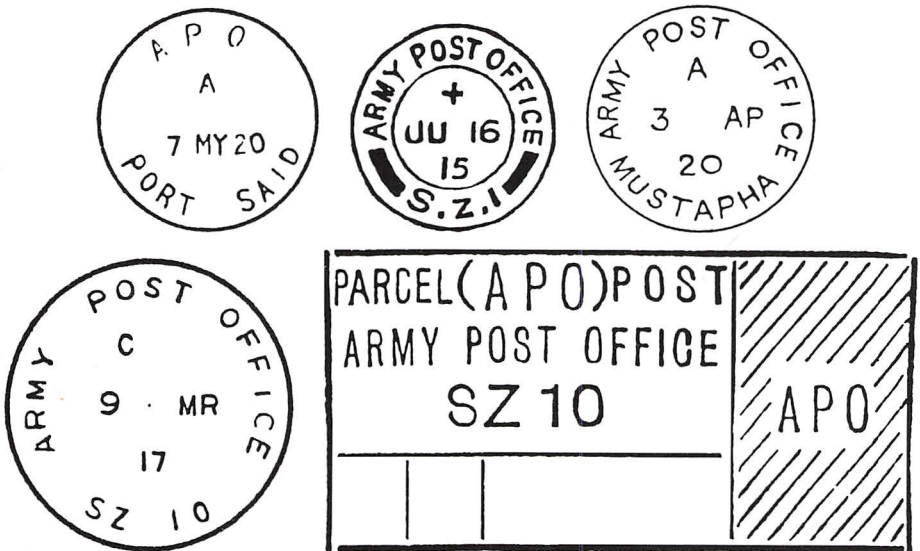


Fig. 15 Types of Army Post Office date-stamps and parcel cancellations.

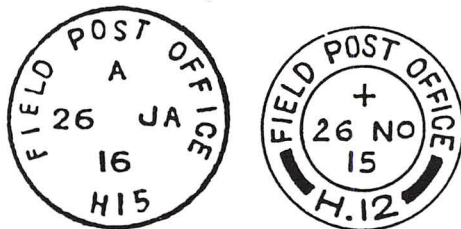


Fig. 16 Types of Field Post Office date-stamps.



Fig. 17 Types of Barracks and Camp date-stamps.

were also used to cancel such mail. The Field Post Offices were mostly identified by number, in some cases supplemented with letters. These offices were by nature very mobile and were mostly present near the fighting front; consequently, they were located in Egypt only for quite limited periods. Apart from the books cited, additional information can be found in the Newsletters of the Forces Postal History Society, mostly in the 1950s and 1960s. The military traveling post offices are dealt with in Chapter XXXVII.

Most mail was sent without stamps, but registered letters required that the fee of 2d. be paid; either the British 2d. orange or the special registration envelope having a 2d. black embossed stamp was usually used, but I have also seen multiples of the ½d. green and combinations with the 1d. red. On heavier letters and parcels the 3d. violet, 9d. agate, and 1/- bister have been seen. Some simple letters and postcards are franked with the 1d red, which may indicate that they were from civilians not eligible for the Active Service franchise. On some occasions British stamps seem to have been accepted at civil post offices and cancelled there.

E.E.F. (Palestine) stamps were apparently valid for use by military post offices in Egypt, although not regularly sold there.

The Barracks and Camp post offices also operated after the war was over and the date-stamps, with additions as required, continued to be used. Examples of the Barracks cancellations of Abbassia, Cairo, Heliopolis, and Ismailia are not uncommon on covers or loose stamps (Egyptian stamps were required in peace time).

Australian Forces

The first convoy of Australian troops disembarked at Alexandria on December 3rd 1914. They brought with them five date-stamps (Fig. 18) and post offices were opened on December 5th. Letters posted at the camps were sent to the Brigade FPO or to an Intermediate Base PO, then to the Australian Base PO at Alexandria. Egyptian stamps were required (5m. for letters, 4m. for post cards) before February 1915 according to one source and until May 24th according to another, but letters mailed at the camps went free if endorsed "on active service" and "no stamps available". Some mail was posted in the

civil post offices in order to avoid censorship. As the number of troops increased, additional date-stamps were manufactured in Egypt (Fig. 19).



Fig. 18 Military date-stamps brought from Australia.

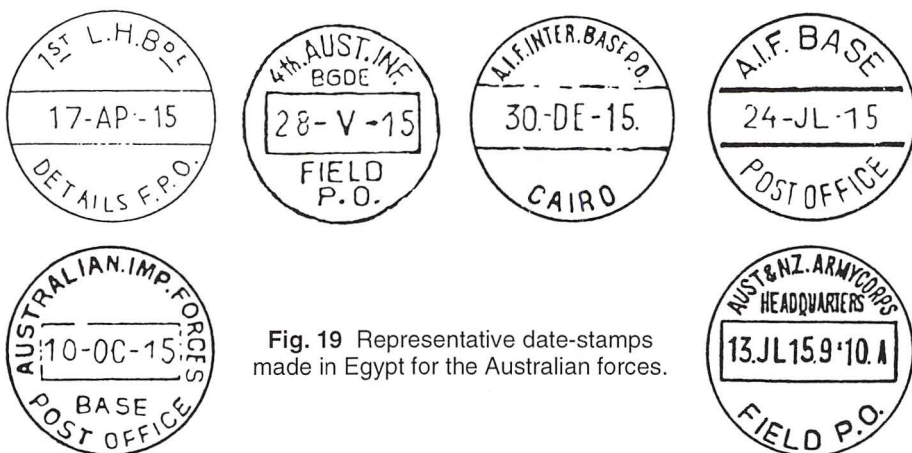


Fig. 19 Representative date-stamps made in Egypt for the Australian forces.

Most Australian troops left Egypt in the spring of 1915 for the Gallipoli campaign. After returning to Egypt later in that year, some took part in the Western Frontier Force against the incursions by the Senussi tribes, but no Australian date-stamps were taken along and mail went through the British army postal system (see ahead). In 1916 Australian troops took part in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and the campaign to drive the Turkish forces from Sinai, eventually following them into Palestine. The Suez Canal was crossed on April 24th, the decisive Battle of Romani was fought in August 1916, and in early 1917 the forces were in Gaza. For the most part the Australian troops used the British APO's: SZ3 was used by the Base PO which moved from Alexandria to Moascar and then to Kantara; SZ4A was used as the army advanced.

New Zealand Forces

The New Zealand Expeditionary Force accompanied the Australian in the first convoy. They carried with them rubber date-stamps intended for use on the troopships, but when the need was seen to be immediate after disembarking, the same date-stamps were used in Egypt after removing the inscription "Troopship No. -". These distinctive postmarks (Fig. 20) were rectangular or oval and were struck in purple (mostly), green, or blue. They were used to cancel Egyptian stamps (rarely British stamps) until May 24th 1915,

but they were supplemented by metal circular date-stamps in January (Fig. 21). Some rubber date-stamps are known used as late as January 1917, however. Other rectangular date-stamps, especially for registered mail, came into use later.

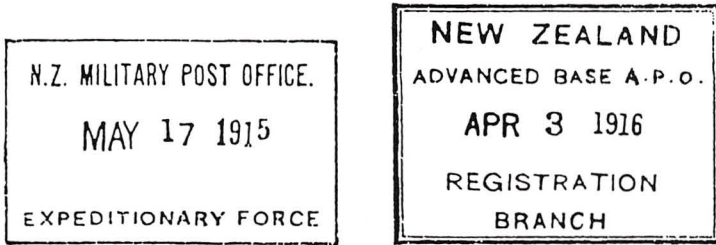


Fig. 20
Representative rubber date-stamps
of the New Zealand forces.

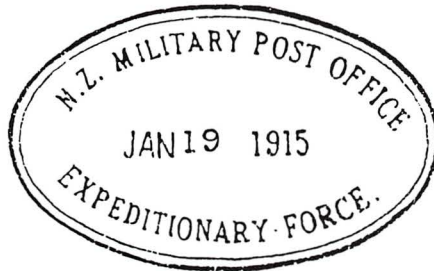


Fig. 21
Representative metal
date-stamps of the New
Zealand forces.



The ANZAC force (Australia-New Zealand Army Corps) was formed on January 13th 1915, but the postal facilities for the two Dominions were mostly separate. The New Zealand troops joined with the Australian in the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign in the spring of 1915 and returned to Egypt later in the year, eventually participating in the Western Frontier Force and the EEF campaign in Sinai. However, a large part of the New Zealand troops was sent to France, leaving Alexandria on April 24th 1916.

South African Forces

Although there were troops from the Union of South Africa in Egypt, they are not known to have had their own military postal service. They would have used the British service, although use of the others would have been permitted.

Indian Forces²⁶

A small detachment of Indian troops arrived in Suez in early September 1914 and the main body (the 10th and 11th Divisions) came in November. They brought their own postal service which in general used Indian-style date-stamps (Fig. 22). Most of them were either Base Offices or FPOs. Their use in Egypt can usually be identified by means of the number or code letter, but many of them were used outside Egypt (e.g., Salonika, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, Palestine/Syria) and it is therefore necessary to pay attention to the date of use. However, certain of the offices were more or less stationary and were

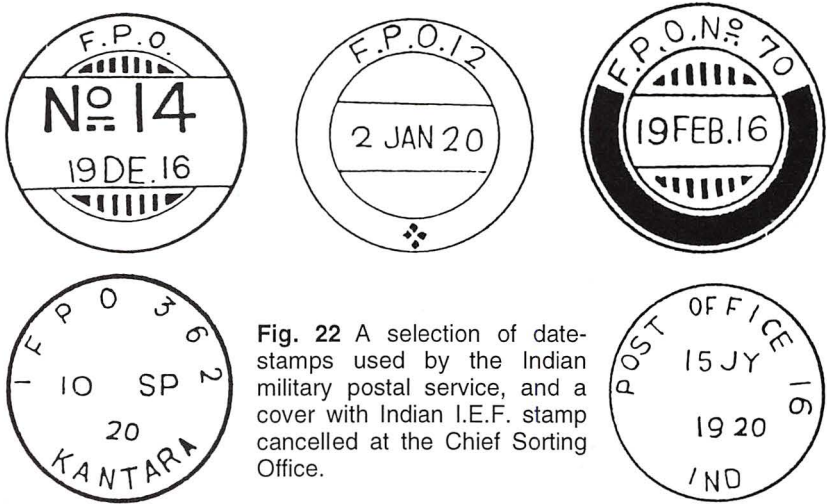


Fig. 22 A selection of date-stamps used by the Indian military postal service, and a cover with Indian I.E.F. stamp cancelled at the Chief Sorting Office.



located in Egypt for all, or nearly all, of the wartime period: FPO 28 (Ismailia, Cairo); FPO 29 (Suez); FPO 35 (Alexandria); FPO 70 (Suez); FPO 99 (Suez Canal, Tanta); FPO 310 (Ismailia, to Rafah in MR 1917); FPO 311 (Suez); FPO 312 (Zagazig, to Jerusalem in 1918?). Base Office G was located at Port Said, and Base Office H at Ismailia. In a category to itself is the date-stamp inscribed "C.S. Office" (Chief Sorting Office); it was in use at Suez.

Much of the mail sent through the Indian post offices was without stamps, but stamps with the overprint I.E.F. were provided when required (Fig. 23). I have seen denominations from ½ anna to 12 annas used in Egypt. However, it is not clear under what circumstances stamps were required; it may have been that they were needed only on officers' letters. The rates are not clear; I have seen covers franked with 1 anna and with 2½ annas as well as deliberately overpaid covers. The date-stamps on letters sent without stamps are usually on the back of the envelope.

Canadian Forces

Although there was no Canadian contingent in Egypt, there were some chaplains and hospital personnel and some officers loaned to the British forces. The only postal evidence I have seen is in the form of covers posted to Canada without stamps, postmarked with Australian or Indian army date-stamps in use in Egypt. They were treated on arrival in the same way as unstamped mail from Canadian troops in Britain and Europe; a Canadian 2¢ stamp was applied gratis by the Post Office in Canada to guarantee that no postage due would be assessed (Fig. 23).

French Forces

French troops arrived at Alexandria on March 28th 1915 for co-ordination with the other forces to take part in the Gallipoli campaign. Less than a month later (April 15th)



Fig. 23 A cover from the Canadian forces in Egypt, through the Australian F.P.O., with Canadian stamp applied and cancelled in Canada.



Fig. 24 Date-stamps on mail of the French forces.

most of them had left Egypt; some remained until April 25th. In that period their mail was postmarked with a double-circle TRESOR ET POSTES date-stamp (Fig. 24) with number 40 (number 194 is also said to have been used). Examples of legitimate use in Egypt are rare, but covers made to order by local stamp dealers are much commoner. Stamps of the French offices, commonly in blocks of four, were also cancelled by favor with various French, British, and Indian military handstamps. French troop mail also made use of date-stamps held at the French post offices in Alexandria and Port Said inscribed CORR. D'ARMEES / ALEXANDRIE FR. (or PORT SAID FR.); the latter was used principally on naval correspondence.

Small numbers of French troops remained in Egypt to maintain the bases. Later (1917) a French contingent, "Mission B", was involved in the advance into Palestine. A single-circle date-stamp inscribed TRESOR ET POSTES was used at some periods in Egypt: number 507 at the Alexandria base; 601B at Port Said; 601 at Suez (from January 19th 1917) and later in 1917 at Port Said (Fig. 25), and 600 at Suez. Identification with use in

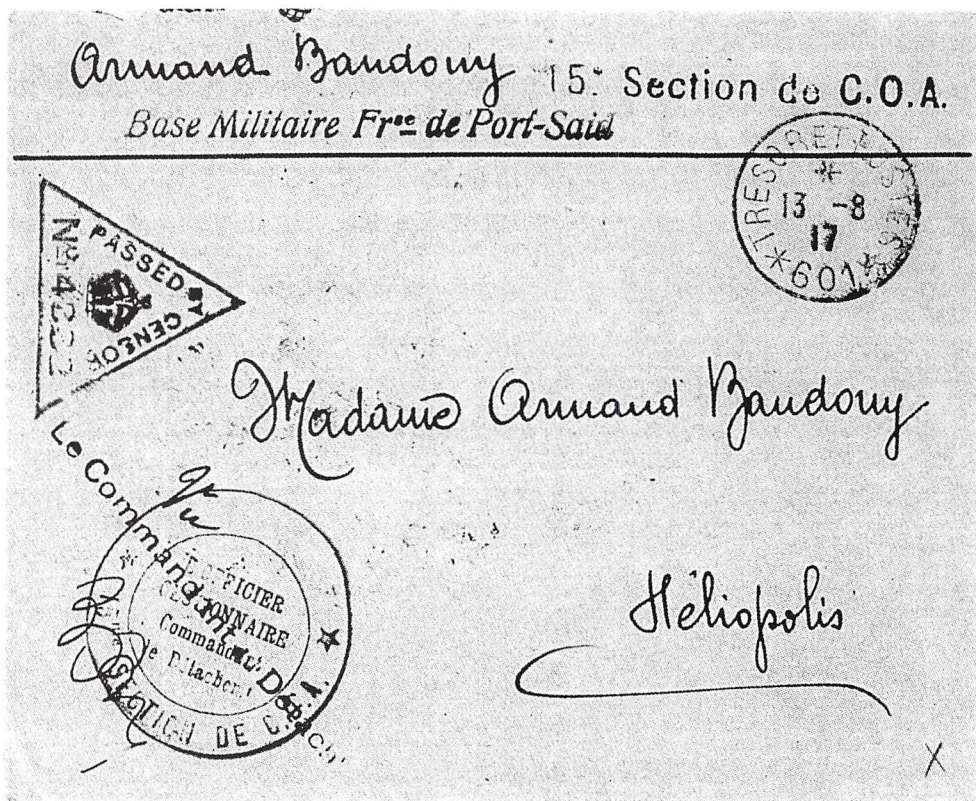


Fig. 25 An internal cover from T. et P. 601 at Port Said (backstamped Base Army Post Office T, Cairo, and Heliopolis).

Egypt depends on the date and a knowledge of troop movements. (The TRESOR ET POSTES date-stamps in all parts and dependencies of the French Republic were replaced by ones reading POSTES aux ARMÉES on April 1st 1924.)

French troops were granted free franking, but in order to avoid misunderstandings letters to countries other than France were supplied with a 25c. stamp gratis by the Post Office. Papers, heavy letters, parcels, and registration fees had to be paid for with stamps. The registration fee was at first 35c., subsequently raised to 40c. Some letters have a handstamped F, said to identify French mail; it is not known if it had postal or censorship significance.

United States Forces

Although there were no US military units sent to Egypt, warships were sent in March 1915 (thus before the United States had entered the war) presumably to look after the needs of US citizens at a time when there was a threat from Turkey, which had just crossed the Suez Canal. Mail was posted on board the ships and received a circular, dated, rubber-stamped cancellation containing the name of the ship, in duplex with an obliterator of three bars between which was ALEXANDRIA / EGYPT (Fig. 26). Postage was paid with US stamps. Examples are rare.

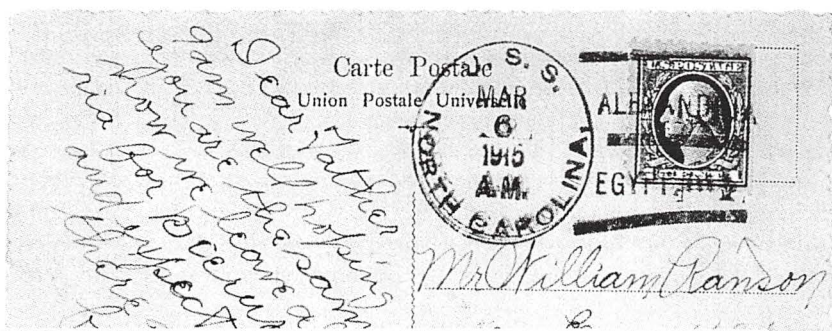
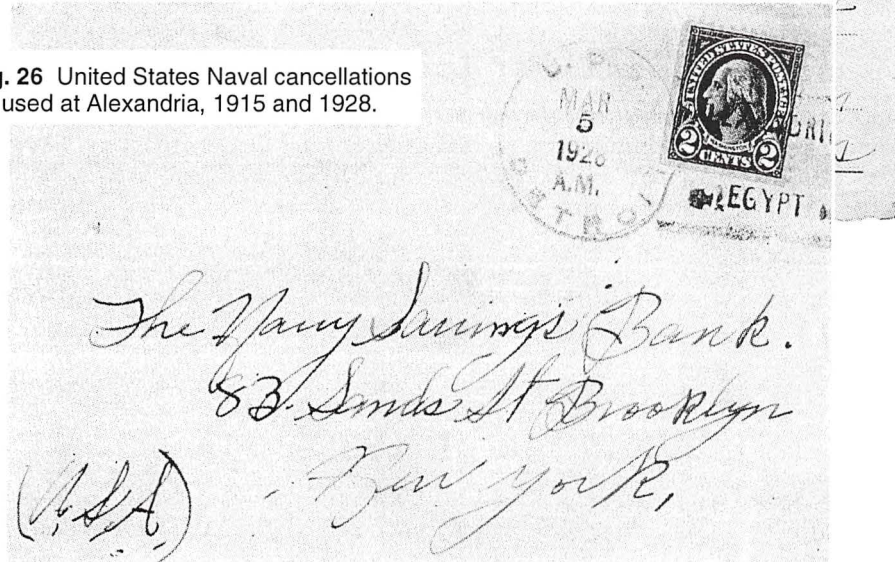


Fig. 26 United States Naval cancellations used at Alexandria, 1915 and 1928.



Italian Forces

Only a very small number of Italian troops must have been in Egypt during the war and the only cover I have seen is dated afterwards (April 1919). It is without stamps and postmarked with the British Army Post Office SZ22, supported by the circular administrative cachet COMANDO BASE ITALIANO / PORT SAID and addressed to Italy. A small Italian detachment accompanied the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in the Palestine Campaign in 1917. It was in Egypt for a short time on its way to the front. The force used Italian stamps, but I know of no cancellation that would identify presence in Egypt. Mail was struck with a circular cachet reading "Distaccamento Italiano di Palestina / COMANDO", with the coat of arms of the House of Savoy in the center; Italian censorship handstamps were also applied.

Belgian Forces

Egyptian stamps exist cancelled with a circular date-stamp inscribed POSTES MILITAIRES / BELGIQUE BELGIE / LEGERPOSTERIJ (date 4 VII 17 seen²⁷); they seem to be of philatelic origin.

Western Frontier Force

In 1915, at an awkward time for the Allied Forces, the Senussi tribes in Libya began raiding into western Egypt on a substantial scale. Few troops could be spared from the Gallipoli campaign and a serious effort to defeat the Senussis was not mounted until November. Although ANZAC and Indian forces were involved as well as British, the mails were handled only through the British military postal system. The date-stamps known are Army Post Office RW and SZ3, and Field Post Office W1, W2, and 159, with dates between December 1915 and August 1916. However, some troops had to be kept at the border after the defeat of the Senussis in order to combat marauding. The railway west from Alexandria to El Dabaa carried a traveling post office, designated "Z and W", on which the military mails were sorted (Chapter XXXVII); it continued to serve the troops at the frontier until at least February 1917.

Between the Wars

During the twenty years following the end of the hostilities of World War I there remained substantial garrisons of British troops. At first they used the various APOs and FPOs that continued in operation until at least 1920. The mail service was then taken over by the Egyptian civil post and letters were commonly posted in the several British Barracks post offices that had already been established. Egyptian stamps had to be used; the letter rate was 5m. until 1921, thereafter 10m. until 1932, when the rate was increased to 15m.. At that point the special postal concession for the British Forces in Egypt was established (described in full in Chapter XXXVI). United States Naval vessels also visited Egypt in the 1920s; mail was treated as before (Fig. 26).

World War II: 1939–1945

When Italy joined with Germany and declared war on Britain and France in June 1940, Egypt and the Suez Canal came under immediate threat. Libya on the western border was under Italian control and Italian East Africa (Eritrea and Ethiopia) lay at the southern border

of the Sudan. A see-sawing war in the Western Desert began with British troops entering Libya in June 1940, followed by an Italian invasion into Egypt in September, and the British again entering Libya in December. In April 1941 the combined Axis forces were on the Egyptian frontier and mounted an all-out campaign to take Alexandria. It was not until November 1942 that all Axis forces were cleared from Egypt and were chased back across Libya.

Military forces of Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States were in Egypt during the war, as well as expatriate army groups of Free French and Polish allegiance, and even some Belgian and Greek troops. Each of these (except possibly the last) had its own army post offices with distinctive postmarks. The postal markings and locations of the British army post have been covered by Crouch and Hill^{28a} and more completely and in detail by Gould and Proud^{28b}. British Naval Mails have been surveyed by Goldup²⁹. Such mail was generally cancelled on arrival in Great Britain, but double-ring circular date-stamps (Fig. 27) inscribed BRITISH FLEET MAIL and a number were in use in 1944–49. Number 4 was assigned to Port Said, 18 to Port Tewfik (later to Minden, Germany), 36 to Alexandria, and 39 to Cairo. A volume by Benians³⁰ devoted to the EGYPT / POSTAGE PREPAID date-stamps introduced in 1941 contains much information on the army postal services of all the Empire. Much information on the New Zealand forces is to be found in the books by Startup and Proud and by Collins and

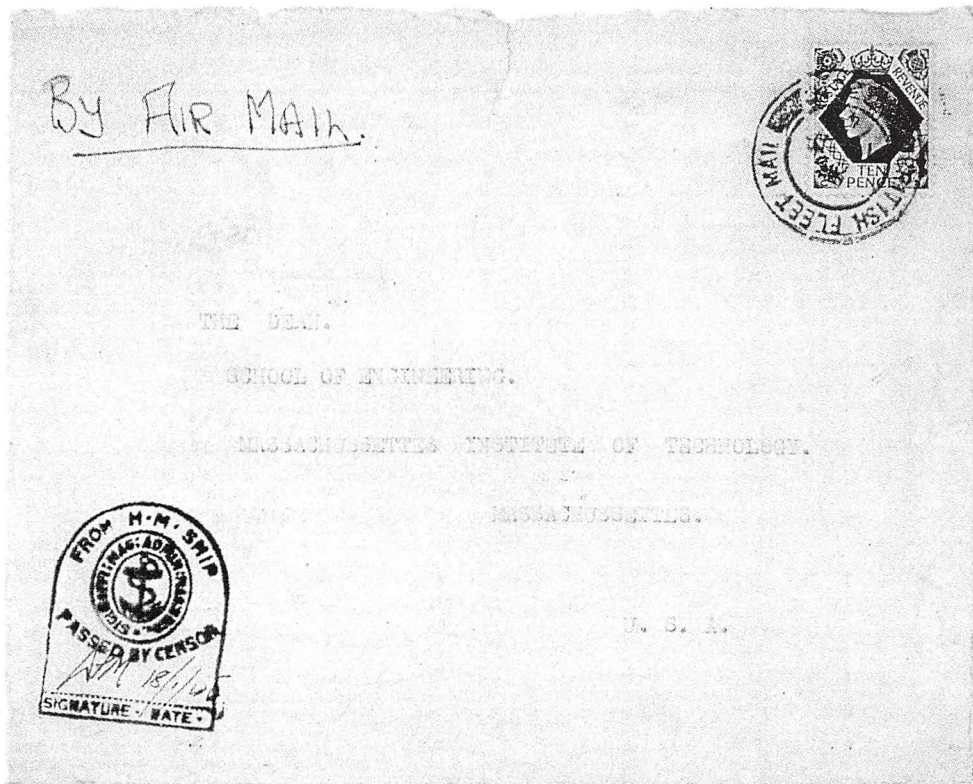


Fig. 27 Cover cancelled BRITISH FLEET MAIL.

Watt, already cited²⁴. The US APOs in Egypt have been described in articles³¹ and are listed in books³². The postal service of the Indian Army has been thoroughly described by Virk³³ and by Proud³⁴. A general survey of the military postal markings used by the Empire forces in Egypt has been published by G. Boulad³⁵, and an account of the Polish field post office in Egypt by Markoff³⁶. Information on the Free French military post offices in Egypt is included in a book by Deloste³⁷ and an article by G. Boulad³⁸. The subject is enormous, the published literature is massive, and it is not feasible to cover the subject in any detail in just a part of one chapter. The following notes therefore provide only a superficial glimpse and the cited works should be consulted for more complete and precise information.

Egypt Postage Prepaid (EPP)

Date-stamps with this inscription were used from May 1st 1941 to as late as 1945 by the military forces of Britain and the Dominions, with numbers that were randomly assigned and did not correspond to any identifying number of a military unit. These date-stamps were adopted in an agreement with the Egyptian Government, according to which troops could use the stamps of their own countries and the respective forces would assume the task of handling the military mails. There were four sub-types of handstamp and two major types of machine cancellation, one having wavy lines, the other having a slogan, IT PAYS TO LEND, with cog-wheels (Fig. 28). The numbers were sometimes moved from one unit to another, although the post offices were essentially stationary. A large amount of information associating particular numbers with military units at different dates can be found in the books cited, which also illustrate the different types.

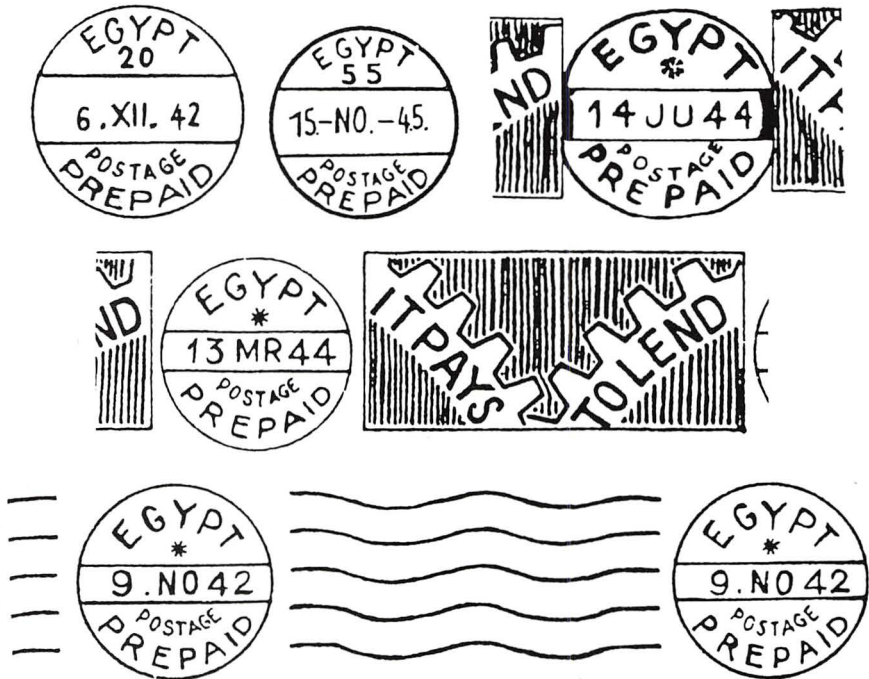


Fig. 28 "Egypt Postage Prepaid" cancellations.

Army Signals

Large, double-circle date-stamps inscribed ARMY SIGNALS around the top are occasionally seen on covers not only of World War II, but also of earlier conflicts back as far as the reconquest of the Sudan. Large letters (usually severe abbreviations) at the ends of the date bands identify the place of use (if one is clever!). These date-stamps were used in an official courier service, outside the regular mails, for urgent official communications³⁹ (for example, across Cairo from, say, Maadi to Heliopolis, but in some cases for much longer distances), and were not intended to be used for personal correspondence (Fig. 29). Nevertheless, the date-stamps are sometimes seen on personal mail, as a rare exception. I have not seen an Army Signals date-stamp cancelling Egyptian stamps, but I have seen it on Sudanese stamps. Stamps would have been required only if the letter was to be handed over to a regular army post office for onward transmission.

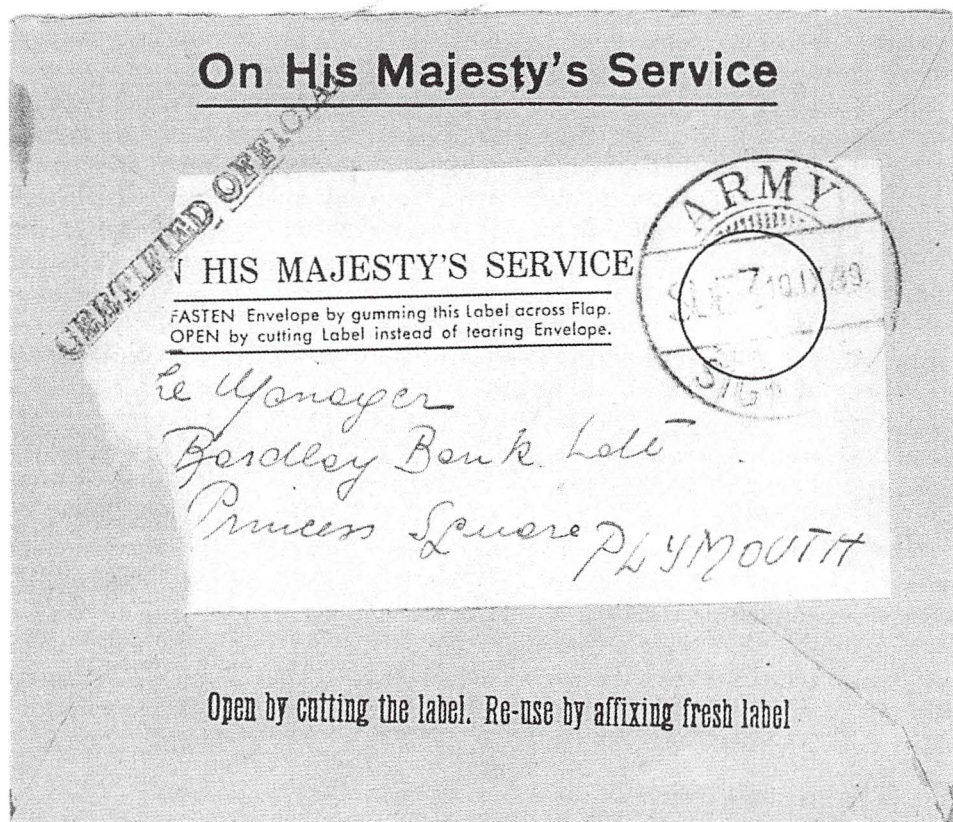


Fig. 29 An official cover sent by Army Signals at Suez.

British Forces

The various named APOs, FPOs and BPOs in use prior to the war were changed to numbers in the 600 series in 1939 (E. 601 to E. 615) (Fig. 30). In the first part of 1941 these date-stamps were transferred to Indian or Australian FPOs. During most of 1940 letters were franked with the 10m. ARMY POST stamps (almost exclusively that of King

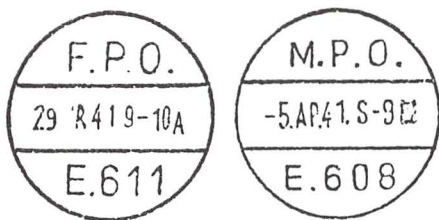


Fig. 30 W.W.II British cancellations.

mobile FPOs at the front, which used the standard type of FIELD POST OFFICE / number date-stamps. These date-stamps were used extensively to cancel Egyptian stamps when they were required on letters, for the most part to pay for air mail and especially to countries other than Britain and the Dominions. Their use continued into the 1950s.

The Royal Air Force developed its own postal service, but it was little used in Egypt. A circular date-stamp inscribed RAAF / BASE P.O. No. 5 / 3 JY 43 / M.E. has been seen on a cover apparently originating in Cairo (RAF censor no. 560).

Until November 1940 postage to Britain was paid either with Army Post stamps alone, or in combination with Egyptian stamps. After that date letters by surface mail were postage free, but air mail and registration charges had to be paid with stamps. From May 1st 1941 postage was paid with British stamps, although residual Army Post stamps were occasionally used (they are rare with EPP cancellations). British stamps used included the ½d. and 1d. King Edward VIII and all values of the King George VI series up to 10/-, including both the light and dark colors of the low values. Values above 1/- are quite scarce with EPP cancellations. The 2d. vermilion postal card is also found with EPP cancellations.

Registration cost 3d. Letters over 2oz. cost 3½d. up to 3oz., thereafter 1d. per ounce. Air mail letters were charged 10d. for the first half ounce to Britain or South Africa and 9d. to Australia and New Zealand; each additional half ounce cost 1/8d. Air letter sheets cost 3d. The air mail concession rate of 40m. (= 10d.) had actually been in effect from October 28th 1939.

Australian Forces

The first contingent of Australian troops arrived in Egypt in February 1940. Their mail was handled in essentially the same way as that of the British forces, utilizing the kinds of date-stamps then in use. With the introduction of the EPP date-stamps, Australian stamps could be used, although Australian troops also used British stamps extensively. Perhaps for that reason Australian stamps are not so easy to find with EPP cancellations. The stamps that have been seen are of the 1937 series: 1d., 2d., 3d., 6d., 9d., 1/-, the 9d. being the commonest.

New Zealand Forces

The first New Zealand troops disembarked at Port Tewfiq on February 12th 1940 and promptly proceeded to Cairo and Alexandria; military post offices were opened at Maadi (Cairo) and Alexandria. A variety of date-stamps with explicit indication N.Z., or the easily recognized code K.W., were used (Fig. 31). (The explanation of K.W. as derived from 'Kiwi' is not confirmed in official records and it has been stated that the choice was more or less arbitrary, the letters being chosen because they were composed of straight lines and were thus easier to cut.) When the EPP date-stamps were put in use, New Zealand stamps began to be used in Egypt in substantial quantities and next to those of Great Britain are the easiest to

Farouk), used alone for surface letters, or in multiple or combination with Egyptian stamps for air mail. The cancellations were the 600-series date-stamps or the standard FIELD POST OFFICE date-stamps with curved bars and number. When the Egypt Postage Prepaid date-stamps were introduced they became the principal means of cancelling the mail of the British Forces, except for the

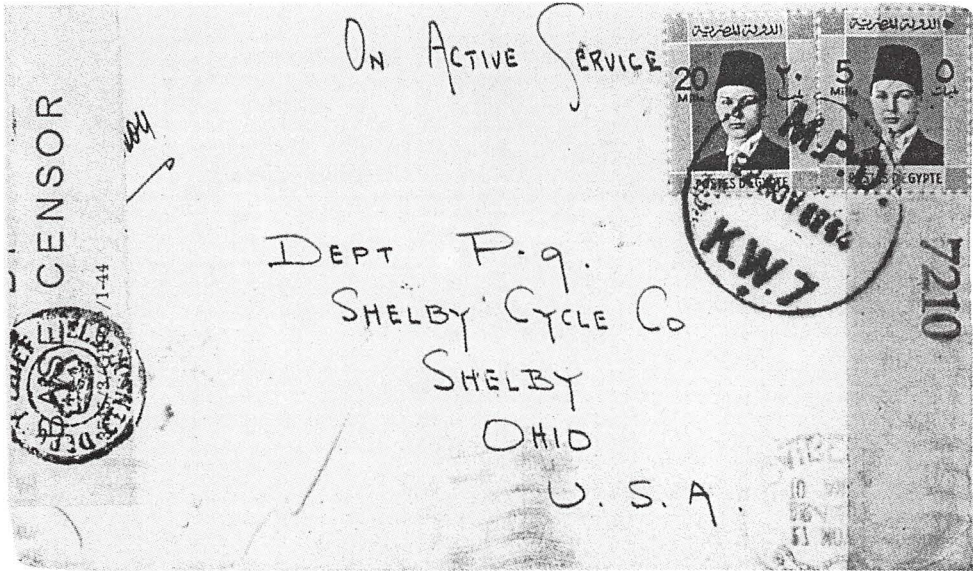


Fig. 31 New Zealand forces date-stamp K.W.7 used in November 1944.

find. The variety of stamps was much larger than the Australian and included the second pictorial series (2d., 2½d., 3d., 4d., 5d., 6d., 8d., 9d., 1/-, 2/-, 3/-), the King George VI portrait stamps (½d. green or brown, 1d. red or green, 1½d. red or brown, 3d., 1d. on ½d. green, 2d. on 1½d. brown), and the Centennial set (½d. to 1/-). Official records state that small quantities of the arms-design postal-fiscal stamps were also sent. The 9d. values are the commonest, but combinations of other values were frequently used to make up the rate. Some New Zealand postal stationery has been seen used in Egypt, but it was probably brought privately and not actually sold in Egypt.

Indian Forces

The first of the Indian troops arrived at Port Tewfiq on August 17th 1939 and quickly moved up the Canal to settle in at Fayid, bringing with them the date-stamp for FPO 19, of typical Indian design (Fig. 32). In October the contingent moved to Mena Camp. Army Post stamps were used until the arrangement of May 1st 1941 permitted Indian stamps to be used. However, by that time, a large part of the Indian contingent had been sent to the Sudan along with the several FPO date-stamps ((see Fig. 22) that had eventually been put into use⁴⁰. When used in Egypt, Indian stamps were generally cancelled with EPP date-stamps. The stamps that have been seen are: King George VI (1937, 1a., 3as.; 1941–43 3as., 4as., 8as.); Officials (KGV 1a.3p.; KGV 3p., 1a., 2as., 4as.). The most common is the 8as., which paid the air mail rate.

South African Forces

Troops from southern Africa included those from Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa and probably some individuals from colonial entities such as Swaziland or Nyasaland. South African stamps with EPP cancellations are nearly as plentiful as those of New Zealand and include a wide variety: 1933–37 pictorials (1d., 2d., 3d., 4d., 6d., 2/6);



Fig. 32 Indian F.P.O. 19 date-stamp.

1941-42 large War Effort series (all values); 1942-43 bantam War Effort series (all values); 1945 Victory. Combinations with British stamps to make up the commonest rate, 10d., are not exceptional (Fig. 33).

A few stamps of Southern Rhodesia have been recorded with EPP cancellations (1935-41 2d., 3d. 'Falls'; 1937 KGV 1/2d., 1d., 1 1/2d., 4d., 9d., 10d.).

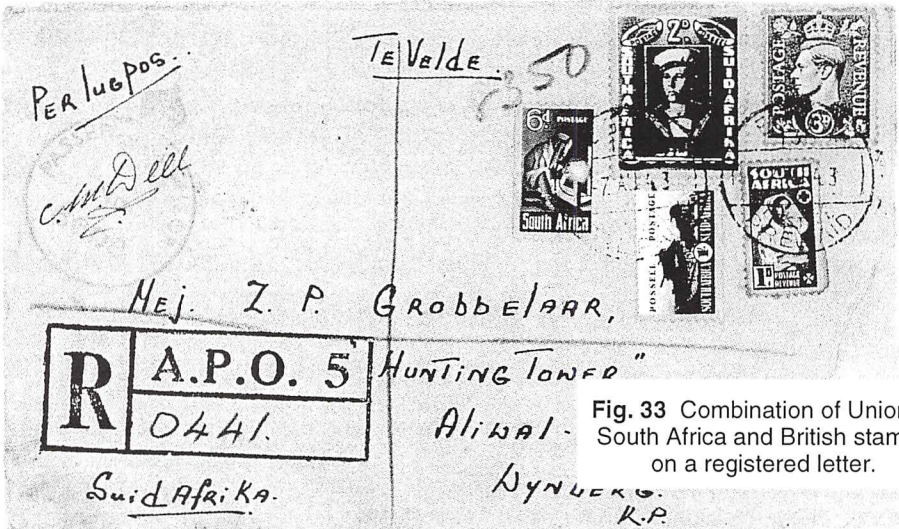


Fig. 33 Combination of Union of South Africa and British stamps on a registered letter.

Canadian Forces

A drawing of a mysterious date-stamp inscribed CANADIAN ARMY / IN EGYPT / 11/JU-43 / B.V.H., without explanation, has been illustrated⁴¹. There appears to be no official record of a Canadian contingent in Egypt, but there may have been some Canadian officers loaned to the British Army.

Other Stamps

Troops moving from one theater to another often brought a few stamps with them and in some cases stamps were sent to them from home (occasionally, without doubt, with philatelic inspiration). Among the stamps that have been seen with EPP cancellations are: Aden (1939 KGVI 1a., 3as., 4as., 8as.); Bahrain (1938–41 overprints 3as., 8as.); Malta (1938–46 1d., 2d., 4½d.); Palestine (15m.); M.E.F. overprint on GB 5d. (Harrison); and, curiously, Lebanon (1940 5pi. green), and United States (6¢ red air mail, 6¢ orange air mail envelope).

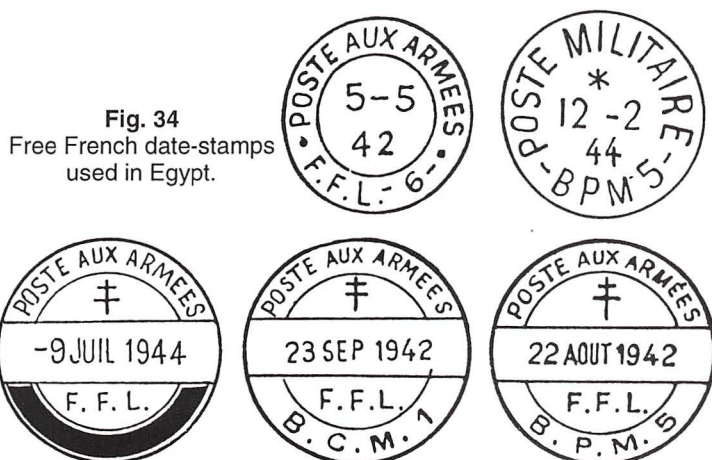
Egyptian stamps used with EPP cancellations could in principle include all of those current at the time, but some of them would have been of little use. Those actually recorded include: King Fuad (4m., 13m., 40m., 100m.); Farouk Boy King (1 to 10m., 15m., 20m.); 1939 high values (30m., 40m., 100m.); Farouk Marshal 10m., Air Mails (8m., 10m., 20m., 30m. blue & brown, 30m. green, 100m.); Express 20m.; Official 5m.; Princess Ferial 5m. Some additional Egyptian stamps are known used with FPO cancellations in the periods before and after the duration of the EPP date-stamps.

There is little doubt that additions to the foregoing lists of stamps of other countries used in Egypt during World War II can be made; those that are listed here are those that have been reported by Benians and those that I have seen.

Free French Forces

A small number of Free French troops, derived from expatriates and French army units stationed outside France prior to the German occupation, were in Egypt³⁸, and were provided with their own date-stamps⁴² (Fig. 34). Number 4 was assigned to Cairo and number 5 to Alexandria, but one device has the identification blacked out, presumably for security. There were two distinct types, one of which shows the cross of Lorraine above the date band and F.F.L. below it, and the other is smaller, has no date band (the date is in two lines),

no cross of Lorraine, and has F.F.L. within the curve at the bottom. The latter may have been used in Lebanon and Syria; I have seen it on cover addressed to Port Said additionally struck with the first type dated four days afterwards. I have seen only Egyptian stamps cancelled with these hand-



stamps. There is also a small rectangular handstamp, F.F.L. / POSTE aux ARMÉES / VE 17, struck on the face of a stampless cover, which may be an authorization for free franking and may not have been applied in Egypt. The Free French mails appear to have been handled through the British postal services; they were subject to Free French censorship (cross of Lorraine handstamp) as well as British.

Covers are also known from the French warships detained at Alexandria in 1940-43⁴³.

Polish Forces

A Polish Corps was formed in Kazakhstan and later moved to Libya via Iran and Egypt. A Polish Brigade was also raised in Syria. The Polish forces had their own date-stamps, POCZTA POLOWA (Field Post), which saw some use in Egypt (Fig. 35); I have seen numbers 103 and 115 cancelling Egyptian stamps, and Bureau 101 is stated to have been assigned to Egypt also³⁶. Covers from Polish troops have also been seen with the stamps

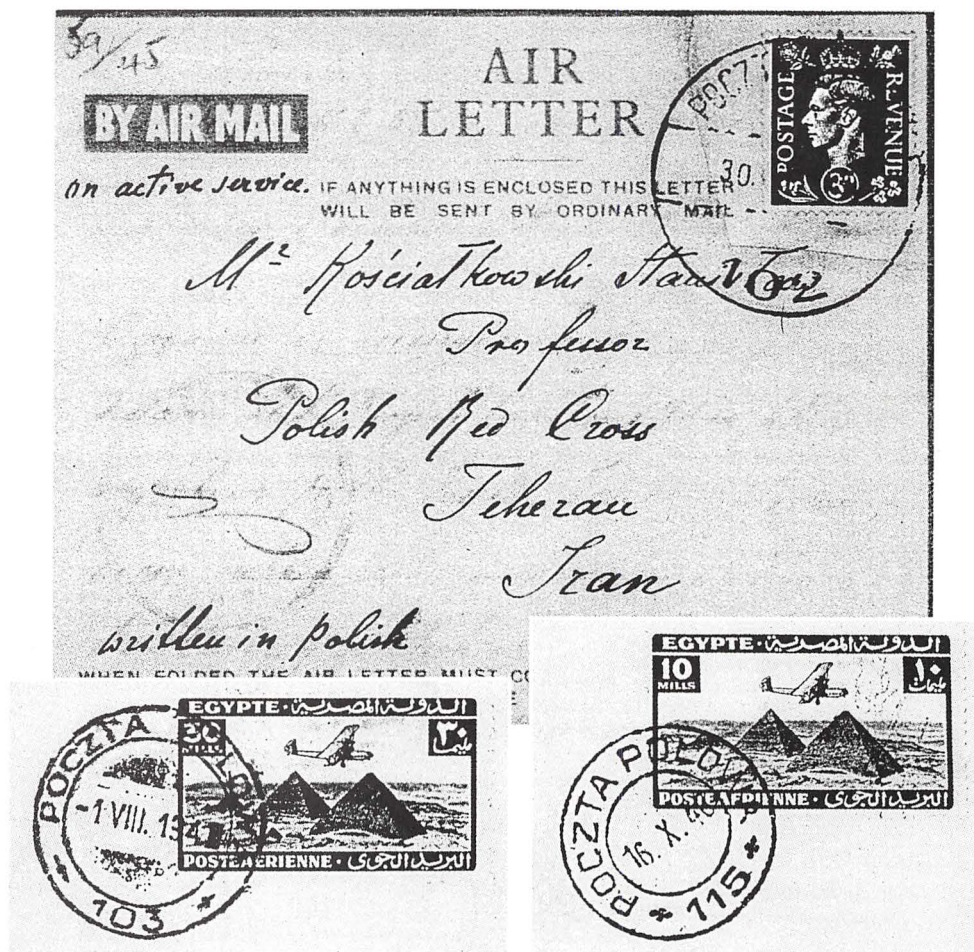


Fig. 35 Use of Polish Field Post cancellations in Egypt (the Polish censor mark, OCENSUROWANO / EXAMINED BY CENSOR, is faintly struck at lower left of the cover).

cancelled by an EPP date-stamp (no. 21 seen). The censor mark and sealing label used by the Polish Forces are described in Chapter XL.

Belgian Forces

Covers exist with a rectangular date-stamp inscribed POSTE MILITAIRE / CONGO BELGE (1943), addressed to Alexandria and censored only in Egypt, endorsed “on active service” and backstamped with the EPP date-stamp of a date too close to the date of dispatch to have come from Congo. It may have been that the Congo date-stamp was brought to Egypt and pressed into service for use by a small Belgian corps. (Belgian forces participated in the campaign in the Sudan.)

Italian and German Forces

At the end of November 1940 there was a brief incursion by Italian troops into the region of Buqbuq (northwest coast), withdrawn by mid-December (U.P.M. nos. 303, 304) The major invasion of Egypt from Libya began at the end of June 1942, leading to a push to El Alamein. Several Italian *Uffizio Postale Militare* operated in the region from Sollum, at the Libyan border, to El Dab’aa. They were withdrawn to Libya in the first week of November 1942. The Italian Division of General DiNisio invested Siwa Oasis in July 1942 (Chapter XLI). U.P.M. 58 has been cited, but Cecchi^{44b} cites U.P.M. 136. Neither Italian nor Egyptian stamps are known used by this force; the troops sent their letters without stamps^{44a}. Cecchi^{44b} lists the following U.P.M.s as having been seen involved in the El Alamein campaign: 31, 54, 56, 58, 96, 109, 132, 133, 221, 260, 600.

Information about the German Feldpost locations and postmarks may be found in *Projekt Himmelblau*^{44c} and publications by Gericke^{44d} and by Kesselstatt^{44e}. *Feldpostnummer 06677, Kenn-Nr. 538*, is listed as having been used at Mersa Matruh July–October 1942.

United States Forces³²

The United States Army Air Force 98th Bombardment Group was sent to Egypt in November 1942 and was engaged in supply and air support as well as bombing missions as far afield as Ploesti, Romania; the Group later moved to Libya and then Italy. Army Post Offices operated independently of the other postal services in Egypt and used distinctive date-stamps (Fig. 35). Surface mail was free to military personnel, but attached civilians were required to pay postage of 5¢ per ounce with United States stamps. Air mail was at the domestic rate of 6¢ per half ounce for all and was paid either with US stamps, usually the 6¢ red air mail stamp, or the 6¢ orange embossed air mail envelope (small size with and without red and blue border, no. 10 size with border). By custom, the date-stamp part was struck on the envelope and only the obliterating bars on the stamp (Fig. 36). The stamps seen used in Egypt are: Presidential 1½¢, 2¢, 3¢, 5¢, 6¢; War Effort 1¢, 2¢, 3¢; air mail 6¢ red; Northwest Territory Sesquicentennial 3¢; Kentucky Statehood Sesquicentennial 3¢. The Egypt Boy King 6m. is known used from APO 683 on a cover to Palestine, an address to which US stamps would not have been valid.

Identification of a cover as having been sent from Egypt depends on the APO number and the date. Although the date-stamps usually have the APO number at the bottom or inside the dial, at some times the number was deleted for short-sighted security reasons (the APO number generally appeared in the return address in the upper left corner anyway). The return-address APO number does not always correspond to that of the



Fig. 36 United States postmarks used in Egypt, and a cover posted at US APO 678, Heliopolis, charged 6¢ postage due because the weight exceeded ½oz.

date-stamp because mailing addresses were independent of the office of dispatch. The port of embarkation for mail to APOs in Egypt was New York. The list that follows gives known locations and dates (mostly from official records). Some of the APOs listed for Cairo probably never actually functioned in Egypt, but were kept there in reserve.

APO 485	Kabrit	12 JA 43–JN 43	APO 616	Cairo	20 NO 42
APO 486	Deversoir	12 JA 43		Camp Huckstep	1 OC 43
	Heliopolis	1 MR 45		Cairo	DE 46
		(ceased 31 OC 45)	APO 626	Heliopolis	19 JA 43–MY 43
APO 498	Camp Huckstep	14 OC 43–1MY 44	APO 678	Heliopolis	7 NO 42–22 OC 45
APO 523	Cairo	JA 46–15 MY 46		Camp Huckstep	1943
APO 535	Cairo	JA 46–15 MY 46		HQ, ME Service Command	

APO 680	same as 535	APO 786	Alexandria	5 DE 42
APO 681	20 NO 42—AP 43		Gambut	4 JA 43—MY 43
	376th Bomber Group	APC 787	Cairo*	21 JA 43—6 OC 45
APO 683	20 NO 42—31 JA 43		HQ, Africa-ME Theater	
APO 684	Camp Ataka	APO 788	Heliopolis★	3 OC 43—10 OC 45
	Camp Huckstep	APO 795, 797, 799		same as 535
	Alexandria	APO 814	Cairo	25 JN 42—12 AU 42
	(ceased DE 46)	APO 816	Cairo	JA —MR 46
APO 685	Cairo	APO 1222		10 NO 42—30 JA 43
	1081st Engineer Utility Detachment		343rd Bomber Squadron	
APO 686	Suez	APO 1223		1 FE 43—10 FE 43
	Port Tewfik		24th Station Hospital	
	Camp Ataka	APO 1224		1 NO 42—1 NO 43
	Cairo	APO 3405	Cairo?	Camp Huckstep, Cairo
APO 696	Cairo			(return address only)
APO 785	Alexandria			no date-stamp seen)
	Gambut	8th Base Post Office		-- 43 -- NO 45
	4 JA 43—21 AP 43			(no identifiable postmark known)

◆ Heliopolis (Camp Russell Huckstep). ✱ Deversoir Field? ★ John Payne Field.

Forte and Helbock^{32c} rate all United States World War II APO covers according to scarcity and demand and suggest retail prices. On a scarcity scale of 1 to 10, the ratings assigned are: 2 – 696, 788; 4 – 616, 785; 5 – 678, 683, 786, 787; 6 – 486, 681; 7 – 485, 498, 626, 684, 686, 1222, 1223, 1224; 8 – 685, 814. The demand factor for Egypt, 2, is surprisingly low.

The use of other APO numbers and U.S. Navy FPO date-stamps at the United States Embassy in the post-war years is described in Chapter XLII.

Military Posts of the Egyptian Army

The Egyptian Army had its own postal service, but examples of its use are seldom seen. Since Egypt was not officially at war with the Axis Powers until 1945, its army did not take part in the military activities of the Allies in World War II. The earliest type of postal marking I can trace is on an undated cover bearing a strike of the machine cancellation of Cairo with the slogan YOU ARE WANTED ON THE TELEPHONE, and therefore may be as early as the 1920s. The military postmark is a diamond, inscribed entirely in Arabic except for the letters A.S. (Army Service?). The Arabic part reads “ministry of national defense field service”. There are two different censor labels and two kinds of censor handstamps, one a small double-lined triangle and the other a large double-lined square (violet). The same type of military postmark and censor handstamps occur on a cover of August 1940 (Fig. 37); the diamond-shaped postmark exists in black or violet and the censorship triangle in blue or violet.

In the war with Israel that began in 1948 and in the conflicts that followed, including the war in Yemen, the Egyptian Army operated a field post⁴⁵. The postal markings are inscribed entirely in Arabic and read *wahidat barid al maidan* (field post unit) in an upper panel, the date in the Gregorian calendar but written in Arabic in a central band, and *raqm* (number) and a numeral in the lower panel, all in an elongated octagon (Fig. 38). The same triangular censor handstamp as before appears on most such covers.

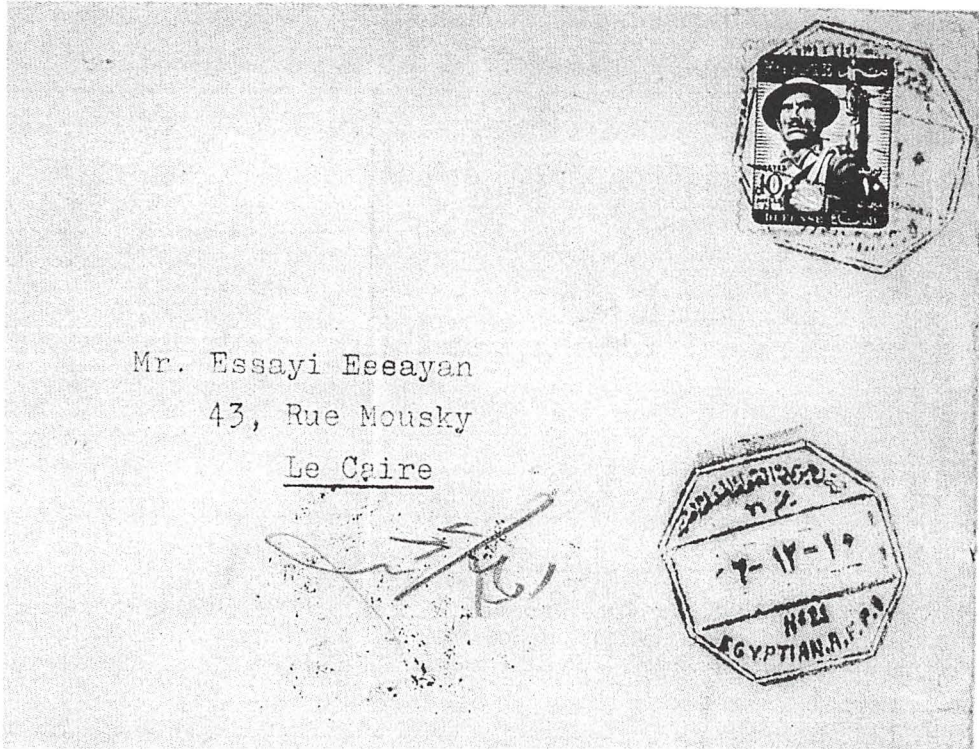


Fig. 39 Egyptian military date-stamps of 1956–57.

In order to encourage families to write letters to soldiers, a special stamp was issued on April 15th 1971 inscribed in Arabic only *barid 'askariy* (soldiers' mail). The face value, 10m., was half that of normal letter postage and the stamp was only valid on letters to military personnel (Fig. 40) at first. It thus differs from the earlier Army Post stamps, which were for use on letters from military personnel. The stamp is thus always cancelled at a civil post office. Examples on cover are very scarce as soldiers seldom retained them. At a later date these stamps were admitted for ordinary, general correspondence, which required two of the stamps for a single-weight letter. A postal stationery letter-sheet was also issued having an imprinted stamp in the same design, in green, with simulated perforations (Chapter XXXIII). Later the excess stock was cut up and used to make forms for postal accounting.

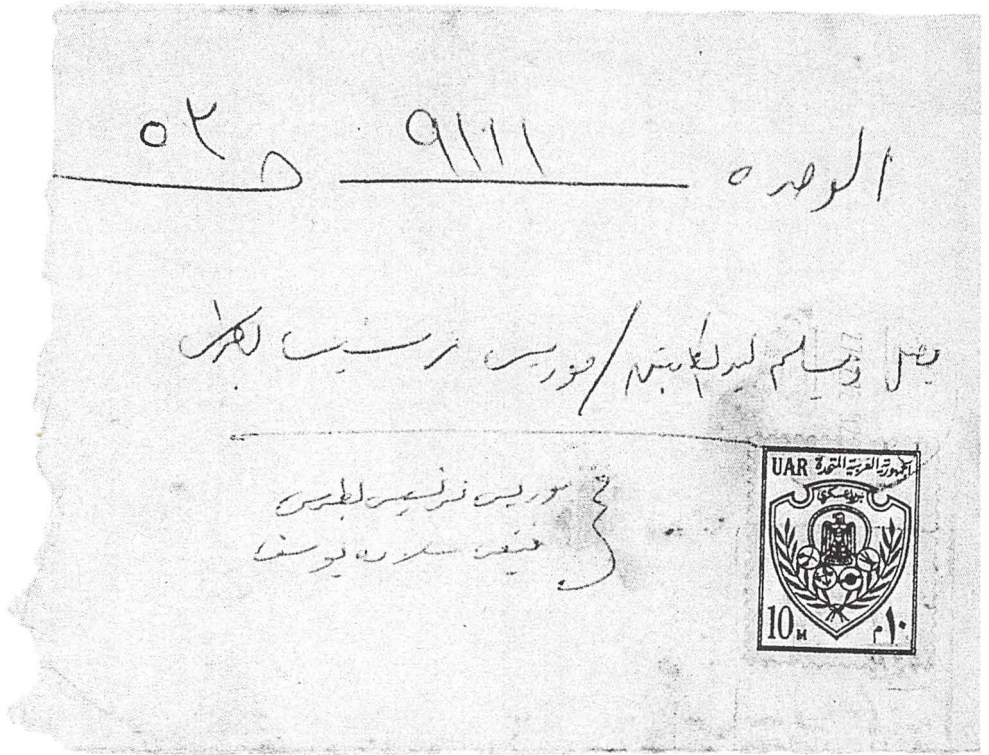


Fig. 40 The "soldiers' mail" stamp properly used.

United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF)^{46,47}

On the 24th of July 1956 President Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal, following disappointment with proposals to finance the construction of the Assuan High Dam. This act poked a stick into a hornets nest, for many countries depended on free access to the Canal, and there were doubts, founded or unfounded, about what Nasser's future intentions might be. The situation became worse, and on October 29th Israel attacked across the Sinai.

The next day Great Britain and France asked the opposing forces to withdraw ten miles from the Canal, and to allow an Anglo-French Force to move in between temporarily. This proposal was refused, and parachute landing by the British and French Forces began on November 6th; they rapidly occupied the northern 23 miles of the Canal, in an operation known as Operation Musketeer. Mail used British stamps, canceled by the standard FIELD POST OFFICE c.d.s. (no. 443, among others).

Meanwhile, the Egyptians blocked the remainder of the Canal by sinking ships, and a vote to send UNEF troops took place on November 4th (there were already troops of the UNEF on the northern border of Israel). By December 5th the first phase of Anglo-French withdrawal took place. The occupied part of the Canal had been cleared, and the salvage vessels were turned over to the UNEF, which began clearance of the remainder of the Canal on December 27th. On April 4th 1957 the Suez Canal was declared open for traffic again.

Many ships had been stranded in the Great Bitter Lakes since November 1956; to while away the time many of them set up "post offices" and issued a variety of fanciful stamps for use on letters among the ships⁴⁸. Although these were strictly for amusement, they are part of the philatelic picture and have a following among some collectors. The Israeli Forces withdrew, and the UNEF moved in to keep the belligerents apart. The UNEF troops were mostly located in Sinai. They were recruited from a variety of countries; Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Yugoslavia, Canada, Brazil, Colombia, India and Indonesia were the principal ones. The postal arrangements varied among them.

Sweden prepared special date-stamps reading SVENSKA FN-BATALJONEN EGYPTEN, and supplied the standard MILITÄRBREV envelopes for use in sending letters back to Sweden (Fig. 41). Registered letters and letters to other countries used Swedish stamps (Fig. 42). Denmark used Danish stamps, canceled with the general-purpose large

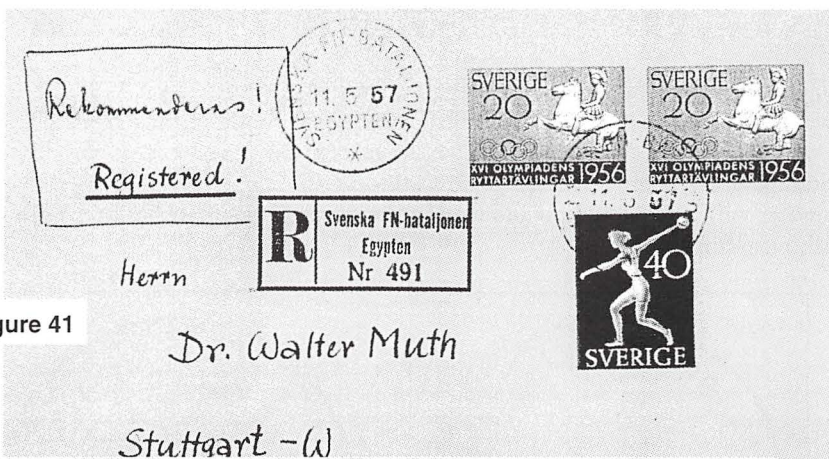


Figure 41



Figure 42

date-stamp reading UNITED NATIONS / EMERGENCY FORCE with the date and UN emblem in the center (Fig. 43), or sent letters to the United Nations administrative center

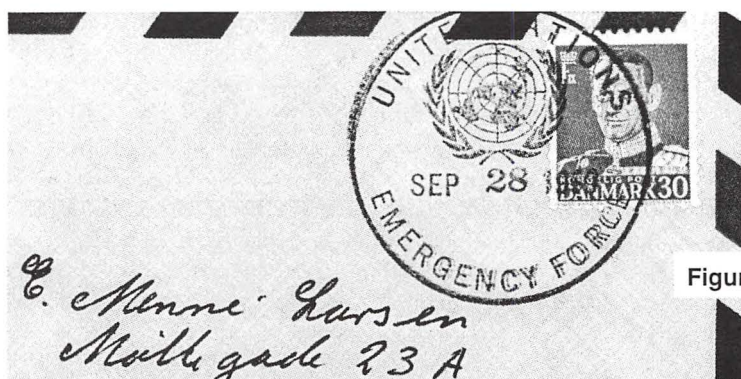


Figure 43

in Naples, franked with Italian stamps canceled NAPOLI C.P./ SEZIONE AFSOUTH. Norway also used the general-purpose UN date-stamp, but sent the letters to Oslo, where they were handstamped OSLO BETALT PAID in concentric squares. Finland had its own date-stamp, a large circle inscribed SUOMEN KOMPPANIA YK - NU - COMPAGNIE DE FINLANDE, with a heraldic lion and date in the center (Fig. 44); it has been seen used with or without stamps.

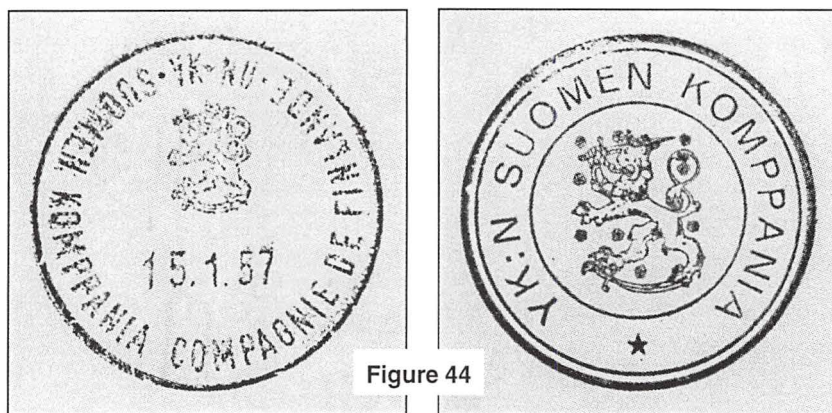


Figure 44

Yugoslavia sent letters unstamped to the home country, but used its own date-stamps, inscribed POSTA ODREDA JNA / EGIPAT-UNEF or POSTA ODREDA JNA-U.A.R. (EGIPATSKA OBLAST UNEF) (seen dated XI 1960). Curiously, the date was expressed as the years only; e.g., 1956-1958. Stamps were supplied for other purposes. A handstamp in the form of a large circle, inscribed JUGOSLAVIAN U.N. CONTINGENT / UNITED NATIONS FORCES and the equivalent in Serbo-Croat was sometimes struck as well. On arrival in Beograd, another handstamp, VOJNA POSTA Br. 6000, with central coat of arms also went through Beograd) (Fig. 45).

The Canadian contingent sent mail through the United Nations Base Post Office, which used a machine cancellation inscribed UNITED NATIONS / EMERGENCY FORCE in



Figure 45

the banner, plus the UN emblem (Fig. 46). When stamps were required, date-stamps inscribed CAPO or CFPO were used (Fig. 47).

The Brazilian and Colombian contingents did not have their own field post offices, to my knowledge; letters were sent to the home countries without stamps through the UN Base Office (Fig. 46), franked with Italian stamps if necessary, canceled at Naples. Two different backstamps have been seen on letters to Brazil: a double circle inscribed SV POSTAL / BIL SUEZ with 2° RI in the center (Fig. 48), and I EXERCITO / QUARTEL GENERAL



Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48

/ SERVO DO CORREIO in a large rectangle. A double-circle handstamp COLOMBIA-BATALION / N. 2 was applied elsewhere on envelopes to Colombia (Fig. 49).

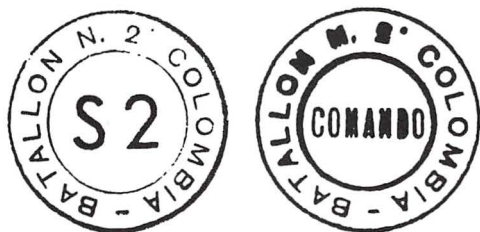


Figure 49



Figure 51

Although India issued overprinted stamps for the UN Forces, these stamps are scarce on cover and appear not to have been generally used. Instead, ordinary Indian stamps were used, canceled F.P.O. No.- in a double circle (Fig. 50). Various numbers have been seen (711, 712, 747, 748).

The Indonesian Forces also sent mail through Naples, but a large purple handstamp BATALJON / GARUDA, with KOMANDAN / INDONESIA inside appears elsewhere on the envelopes (Fig. 51).

Much of the mail from the UNEF on the market is philatelic, usually addressed to Austria or England, but nevertheless properly franked and carried. Some of the contingents had a short life (nine months for the Colombian), whereas others had extensive use; covers from the Swedish contingent are perhaps the commonest. The UNEF contingents had various

locations, which might be on either side of the border at the time.

On May 1st 1967 Egypt requested that the UNEF be withdrawn. After political posturing on both sides, war again broke out again on June 5th with an Israeli attack by air that destroyed most of the Egyptian Air Force; on June 9th Syria was invaded. The United States also became a victim in this event, for the USS *Liberty* was stationed off El Arish as an observer⁴⁹. It was heavily shot up and torpedoed by the Israelis on June 8th, apparently to prevent it from observing the start of the attack on the Golan Heights. The events immediately involved the Soviet Union, which favored Syria, and confrontation between the superpowers was only avoided after frantic discussions at the highest level. Israel at first vigorously denied fault in the action, but later, when incontrovertible evidence was produced that the identity as an American vessel had been known, quietly paid compensation for the ship. I have not yet seen a cover from the USS *Liberty*. The war with Egypt has become known as the Six-Day War, for it ended with a cease-fire on June 9th, leaving the Sinai under Israeli control (see Chapter XLV).

On October 6th 1973 Egypt began war with a crossing of the Suez Canal on Yom Kippur to recapture the Sinai. After see-sawing military actions, an emergency supply of armaments by the United States to Israel, and furious diplomatic activity, a cease-fire was declared on November 11th. By this time Israeli Forces had occupied part of Suez, and had surrounded the Egyptian Third Army. Subsequently the UNEF was re-instituted, and a disengagement with phased withdrawal of the Israeli Forces from Sinai followed (see Chapter XLV for further information).

In 1960 Egypt (then the U.A.R.) sent a United Nations contingent to Congo. Mail went through the civil post office, but a circular handstamp in purple inscribed "R.A.U. Cont." around the bottom and with the United Nations emblem in the center was also applied to the envelopes (Fig. 52).

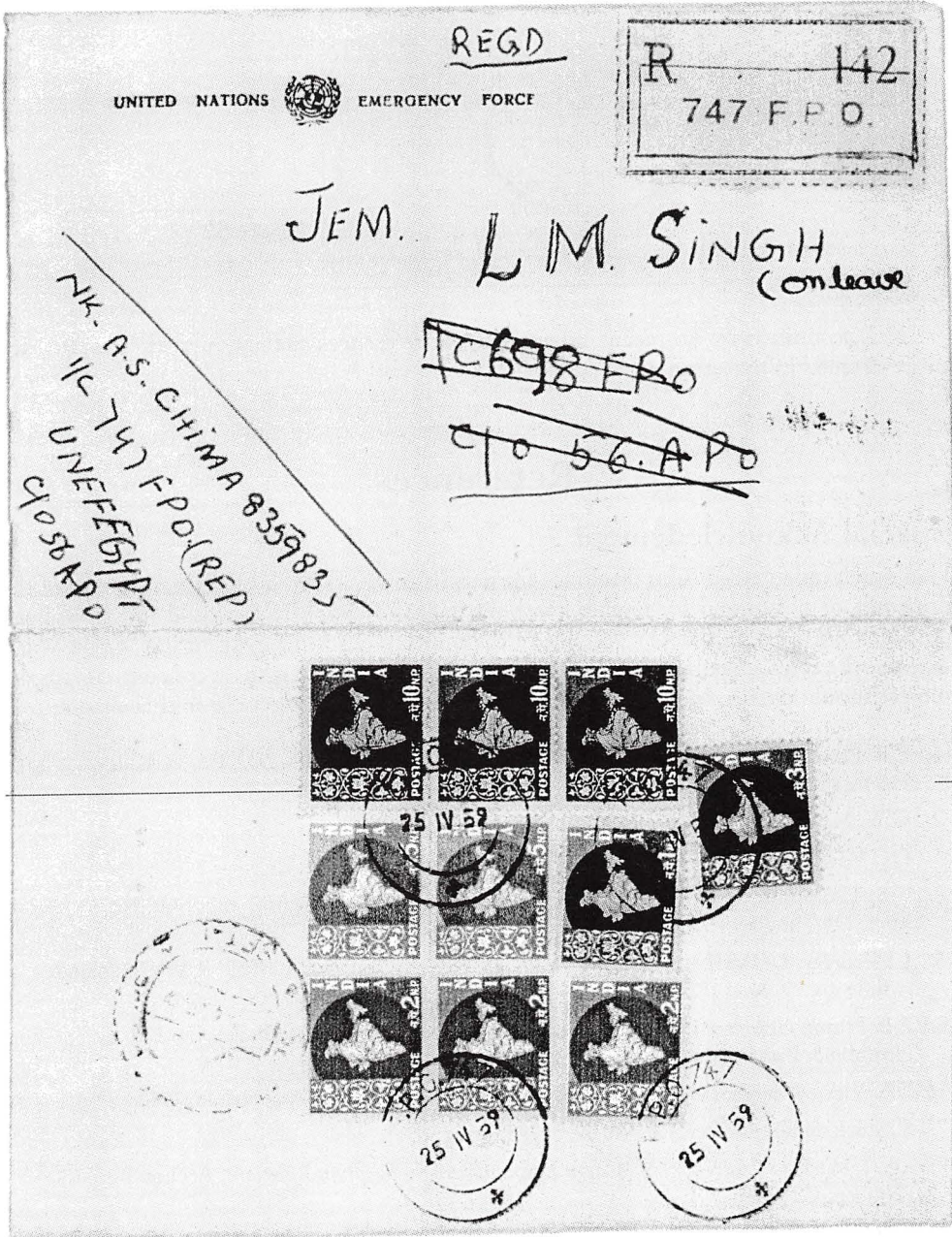


Figure 50

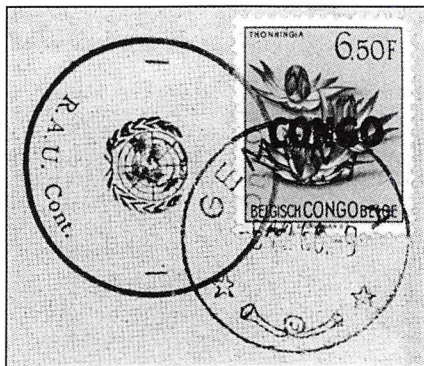


Figure 52

This account is by no means exhaustive; the references cited should be consulted for more detailed information.

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Special Acknowledgment

I am much indebted to John Firebrace for permission to reproduce a large number of the drawings of postal and censorship markings from his book¹⁸. It would not have been possible to write a satisfactory account of the military posts in Egypt during World War I without the research collected therein. Any collector who is seriously concerned with the subject should obtain a personal copy and not rely on the brief review in this chapter.

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