

Stamp Collecting December 5 to 26, 1952

FORCES POST OFFICES & POSTMARKS

IN EGYPT 1939-1947 By E. JAGGER

AT the outbreak of war in 1939 the postmarks in use were inscribed M.P.O. across top with date across centre with town name at foot, and were in operation at the following locations where British garrisons were stationed: Abu Qir, Abu Sueir, Alexandria, Cairo, Mersa Mutrah, Moascar, Port Said.

Several types of the Cairo datestamps were in use. The type which had been in operation from March, 1936, was soon replaced by a somewhat similar type of datestamp inscribed M.P.O., B.P.O. or F.P.O., with number at foot prefixed by letter E and numbered 601 to 615, the initials representing :-

F.P.O.-Field Post Office.

M.P.O.-Military Post Office.

B.P.O.--Base Post Office.

These handstamps are definitely of Egyptian type and were originally used in Egypt but later on are even found used in Palestine, Syria, Eritrea and India.

M.P.O. E. 601 March 1940 ? Mersa Mutruli (three types exist)

B.P.O. E. 602 June 1940 Cairo

M.P.O. E. 603 April 1940 ? Isrnailia

M.P.O. E. 604 September 1940

F.P.O. E. 605 March 194U

F.P.O. E. 606 July 1940 Suez

M.P.O. E. 607 July 1940 Australian Base P.O. Cairo

M.P.O. E. 608 Cairo later KANTARA

M.P.O. E. 609

F.P.O. E. 611

F.P.O. E. 615

M.P.O. E.603 in October, 1941, was used in Syria and is found cancelling British stamps and later on, in March, 1942, used in India. This is apparently a similar instance as when E.608 was carried to Australia in 1942 by the "Aussies" who returned there to meet the threatened Japanese invasion.

E.604 is also to be found in April, 1944, cancelling Indian stamps and was in use at Agordat (Eritrea).

It is not known what numbers were issued to the seven "garrison" towns listed above with the exception of Cairo, which was the Base P.O. Possibly there were two more post-marks for Cairo on account of the various barracks in the vicinity of the city: Kasr el Nil Barracks, the Abbassia garrison and the R.A.F. at Heliopolis, all of which later on possessed their own Field Post Office.

I have been informed that E.601 was used at Mersa Mutrah and E.603 at Ismailia but I give these with reserve as I am unable to either prove or disprove this statement. There exist three distinct types of the E.601 datestamp : (a) M.P.O. in straight line in upper segment with large E.601; (b) similar to above but With E.601 smaller and close together ; (c) M.P.O. across circumference. Ismailia and Moascar are adjoining, so it is likely that E.603 was used at Moascar rather than Ismailia. Prior to 1939 there was no Military P.O. at Suez or Port Tewfik and mail from the garrison there was postmarked with ordinary Port Tewfik datestamp but this would be remedied by the opening of an M.P.O.



From June, 1940, until the end of 1943, most of the parcel mail and ordinary sea mail was shipped through Port Tewfik, Ataka and Adabiyah, all of which are situated in Suez Bay.

After the latter date when the Mediterranean had been opened, it was possible to utilize Port Said in addition to Port Tewfik.

New Zealand A.P.O.

A similar type of handstamp lettered N.Z. F.P.O. or M.P.O. K.W. were in use by the N.Z. F.P.O.'s in Egypt.

B.P.O. K.W. N.Z. Base P.O. Cairo

M.P.O. K.W.

M.P.O. K.W. 1

M.P.O. K.W. 2

M.P.O. K.W. 3

M.P.O. K.W.4

M.P.O. K.W. 5

M.P.O. K.W.6

M.P.O. K.W.7

N.Z. P.P.O. 4

N.Z. F.P.O. 6

Chief Post Office 2 N.Z.E.F.



Used in Egypt and Middle East until the summer of 1943 later used in Italy

Above postmark of a single ring type, measuring from 26 mm. to 30 mm., with date across centre and K.W. below. Several types of most of the datestamps are known, with dates between lines and without lines, also different size of lettering and numbers.

Larger sized datestamps measuring 34 mm., and the following are known: N.Z. F.P.O.1 and F.P.O. K.W.2 ; also N.Z. type inscribed N.Z. Army Base Post, and was in use in June, 1940. The N.Z. A.P.O. in Cairo was situated in Sharia Tira el Balaqiya (near to British Base P.O. N.4). There existed a N.Z. A.P.O. detachment at Port Tewfik whose main function was the shipping of mail to and from New Zealand but I am unable to say which datestamp was in use there.

Some time ago it was announced in the philatelic press that the initials K.W. did not represent Kiwi and that the use of these letters K.W. was just coincidental. Nevertheless the New Zealanders out there were referred to as "Kiwis".

I remember seeing a report in the newspaper early in January, 1946, that from February, 1946, there would only be one N.Z. soldier in Egypt, a N.Z. Officer at G.H.Q., so most of the N.Z. A.P.O. would have been closed down prior to that date.

Polish Army Post Office

Polish post offices were operating in Egypt as early as December, 1941, and the datestamps used by the Field Post Offices were inscribed POCZTA POLOWA. The Base Post Office used a datestamp lettered GLOWNA POCZTA POLOWA:-

Glowna Poczta Polowa 101 December 1941/1946 Polish B.A.P.O. Cairo

Poczta Polowa 102 1945 Cairo Sharia Malika Farida

Poczta Polowa 103

Poczta Polowa 115 1943/1946 Alexandria

Poczta Polowa 116

Poczta Polowa 131

British F.P.O. datestamps were used by these Polish A.P.O.'s for the purpose of datestamping British Postal Orders and F.P.O. 26 is known to have been used by Glowna Poczta Polowa 101. F.P.O. datestamps 28, 33, 122, 132 and 221 were also loaned to the Poles for the same purpose.

Egypt Postage Prepaid No. 32 was used by Poczta Polowa 102 during 1946. As there were some Polish troops stationed at Gilbana near Kantara, it is possible that one of these Field Post Offices was located there.

On February 2nd, 1942, the first detachment of United States forces arrived in Egypt. I think that it was mainly a case of showing the Stars and Stripes. The command was designated U.S.A. FIME, i.e. United States Army Forces in Middle East, but early in 1945 was changed to U.S.A.M.E.T. or A.M.E.T. United States African and Middle East Theater. At the same time the postal address of the H.Q. Russell B. Huckstep Camp was changed from A.P.O. No. 678 to A.P.O. 787.

A handbook on the subject of U.S. A.P.O. Published in the U.S.A., lists quite a few U.S. A.P.O. numbers as having been used in Cairo. These are 523, 535, 680, 795, 797, 799 and 816-and to my own personal knowledge these postmarks were used only in the Persian Gulf.

The only establishments in the vicinity of Cairo were Camp Russell B. Huckstep (H.Q., U.S.A. F.I.M.E.) and John Payne Field, both of which were situated on the desert railway line between Cairo to Suez and actually near to Heliopolis. U.S.A. Military Provost Corps had their H.Q. in one of the hotels in Cairo, whilst the American Red Cross centre was situate in the Grand Hotel. Mail from these places would be despatched to the U.S. H.Q. at Camp Russell B. Huckstep.

I have seen mail from U.S. establishments in Alexandria which bore return address as A.P.O. 684 and which had actually passed through the British Field Post Office at Alexandria. Probably this was done to avoid delay which may have ensued through posting in the U.S. A.P.O.

The Americans also had camps at Ataka, situated on Suez Bay, but the A.P.O. address was the same number as Cairo. At Deversoir (situate several miles below Ismailia) were the United States Air Force. It is quite possible that A.P.O. 788 may have been in use there, at all events both these camps were closed down in 1945.

The U.S. A.P.O. datestamps exist in many types, handstamps bearing A.P.O. number round circumference and above or below the dater block.

U.S. Army Postal Service

A.P.O.616 October 1943 lamp Russell B. Huckstep Heliopolis
678 Camp Russell 13. Huckstep Heliopolis
681 this A.P.O. was located in the Middle East in 1943 but later proceeded to Italy
666 ?
683 1942 to 1943 Abu Suier
684 Alexandria
787 Camp Russell B. Huckstep Heliopolis
788

British Fleet Mail Offices

These were operated at Alexandria, Port Said, Port Tewfik and Cairo and the following datestamps inscribed British Fleet Mail with number at foot were reputed to have been used as follows :-

No. 4 Port Said
No. 18 Port Tewfik
No. 36 Alexandria
No. 39 Cairo
The writer has only seen number 4 and 36.

The Fleet Mail Office at Port Tewfik was situated in Navy House, which in peace time had been a school and was in a street behind Quay Hellene, and the only handstamp that they possessed was an oval rubber handstamp with Fleet Mail Office around the upper portion, date across centre, and Egypt in lower portion; presumably the name Port Tewfik had been erased.

In 1946 the British Fleet Mail datestamp had apparently been withdrawn from the F.M.O., Alexandria, and letters marked with seal type impression showing flag and inscription -- Majesty's Ships. The cover I possess bears the above marking and in addition the Egypt Postage Prepaid No. 48, 21 August 1946.

Whilst on this subject I may mention that I have seen a cover which bears an oval rubber stamp with inscription "K.G.L. Norske" across top, and below "Marine", with date 20 April 1942 across centre. The cover was addressed to Alexandria and additionally bears the Egypt Postage Prepaid datestamp No. 56 April 21 1942. The Censor marking is a type which was used by the Naval authorities in Egypt, and as Norwegian ships, both Naval and Merchant, possessed the special hand-stamp with number after date (which was an indication of a particular ship), it is likely that the marking was from a shore office in Egypt, possibly situated in one of the Norwegian Consulates.

South African A.P.O.'s

After the end of the East African Campaign, in 1941, South African forces began to arrive in Egypt accompanied by their A. P.O., whose datestamps were inscribed A.P.O. U.M.P.K., which denoted Army Post Office Union or Unie Militar Post Kantoor. The following is a list of numbers and dates of usage in Egypt based on Dr. J. H. Harvey Pirie's work. Some of these datestamps were previously used in East Africa and afterwards in Italy.

A.P.O. 3 June 6 1941 until January 1913
5. June 1912 until April 1944
6 March 1942 until June 1942
7 June 1912 until January 1943
8 December 1941 until March 1944
9 January 1942 until June 1942
10 November 1942 until January 1943
11 January 1944 until April 194-1
12 January 1944 until April 1944
13 May 1941 until April 1944 14 May 1942 until November 1942 16 May 1 4 until June n-3
17 May 1941 until November 1941
28 May 1941 until June 1944
29 May 1941 until February 1946 Cairo
29A May 1941 until February 1946
30 May 1941 to June 1942 TOBRUK
31 July 1941 until December 1945
32 July 1941 to December 1945
33 June 1941 to June 1942
34 May 1941 to June 1942 TOB1tUK
35 May 1941 to January 1946
36 June 1941 to June 1942 TOBRUK
37 November 1941 to September 1942
38 March 1944 to January 1946
40 September 1941 to 12th February 1946
41 September 1944 to July 1945

The only conclusion that I can come to in regard to the scarcity of some of the cancellations used in Egypt is that whilst there, they mainly utilised the Egypt Postage Paid datestamps on ordinary and air mails, whilst their A.P.O. datestamps were used to datestamp postal orders and registered mail.

Regarding the South African Army Post Offices, it is rather difficult to differentiate between when a postmark was used in Egypt or in Libya on account of the numerous movements due to the advances and retirements, that is in regard to A.P.O.'s attached to units. This is equally true of the British and other Forces' postmarks, but with stationary or fixed A.P.O.'s it is not quite so complicated.

From Dr. Harvey Pirie's list it could be assumed that numbers 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 30, 34, 36 and 37 were attached to mobile units, whilst the following numbers, 29, 29A, 31, 32, 33, 35, 38 and 40, would appear to be stationary A.P.O.'s.

The South African A.P.O. in Cairo was situated in Sharia Lady Cromer and postmark used would be A.P.O. No. 29, possibly No. 29A also. It is likely that S.A. A.P.O.'s were in use at Helwan and Maadi. I have seen a S.A. A.P.O. in Alexandria, but unfortunately I am unable to state which particular number was in use there.

Australian

The same considerations which apply to the South African A.P.O.'s are also applicable here and to those of other countries. The following Field Post Offices are known to have been used in Egypt :-

Australian Base Post Office 1 July 1941 October 1941 Cairo Oct 41 TEL EL KEBIR
Australian Base Post Office 2 July 1941 October 1941 Cairo October 1941
Australian Base Post Office 3
Australian Base Post Office 4 July 1941 October 1941 Cairo October 1941
A.I.F. FIELD 1'.O. 16 October 1941 Cairo
Base Post Office B.W. 1. November 1940 July 1941 Cairo
Army Post Office A.M.I. December 1940 July 1941 Cairo
Div. H.Q. DMI October 1940 Egypt
3rd Bde. II.Q. P.O. M. 3. May 1941 Egypt
2nd Bde. H.Q. 1'.O. M. 2. October 1940 Egypt
1st Bde. H.Q. P.O. M. 1. October 1940 Egypt
2nd Bde. H. Q. P.O P.2. January 1941 Sollum
DIV. SUPPLY. II.Q. P.O. S.P.I. January 1941 Egypt

Skeleton type datestamps with AUS F.P.O. and numbered from 31 to 37 were in use both in Syria early in 1942, but from July, 1942 to November, 1942 would be used at Alamein and the Western Desert.

These datestamps were loaned by the Palestine Postal Authorities to the "Aussies" and were most likely the identical datestamps which were used in 1914-18 by Allenby in his campaign against the Turks ; these skeleton or travelling handstamps could be adjusted to fit any lettering and were later used when civil P.O.'s were opened in Palestine.

As these Australian F.P.O. markings were used in a good many countries in the Middle East, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Libya and Greece, it is a question of dates, and I would refer readers to an article on the postal history of the 2nd A.I.F. which appeared in the Australian Stamp Monthly in 1947 by H. S. Porter, M.C., F.R.P.S.L., to whom I am indebted for the details of the Australian markings.

When I arrived in the Middle East the Australian troops had left but there were still traces that they had been there. Cafes bore titles such as "Anzac Cafe", "Digger", "Kangaroo" and other "Aussie" names, whilst "out-of-bounds" areas were marked thus : "Out of Bounds to British and Australian Troops". I expect that if they hadn't been specifically mentioned they would have ignored the warning notices.

I must also mention an Egyptian-type postmark used by the Australian Air Force, 1945 with "R.A.A.F. Base P.O. No. 5" in upper segment, date across centre and "M.E." in lower. A Free French A.P.O. was established in Cairo and utilised datestamp inscribed "Post Aux Armees" with Cross of Lorraine in upper segment, date across centre, and below "F.F.L. B.C.M.4"; the initials F.F.L. denote Forces Francaise Libre, whilst B.C.M. 4 denotes Bureau Centrale Militaire 4. Another A.P.O. was attached to the Free French Brigade in the 8th Army and used a similar datestamp but inscribed "B.P.M. 5", i.e. Bureau Poste Militaire 5; the latter A.P.O. operated from El Alamein and on to Tripoli.

The Egypt "Postage Prepaid" datestamps were used by all field and Army post offices in addition to their own field post office datestamp and were used for cancelling ordinary and airmail letters and should be regarded just as much an Army postmark as those lettered "Field" or "Army Post Office": the F.P.O. datestamps were mainly used for counter work, i.e. datestamping postal orders, registered letters, etc.

The above refers to the British F.P.O.'s and probably is equally true of the South African, New Zealand, Australian, Indian, and other A.P.O.'s and is one of the reasons why these postmarks are not often met with.

The use of Egypt "Postage Prepaid" datestamps would appear to have been solely by A.P.O.'s within the confines of Egypt itself. I have seen letter cards and covers which have emanated from places outside Egypt such as Habbaniya Iraq which bore the prepaid marking which would have been applied on arrival in Egypt.

Datestamps numbering to 154 have been seen with few exceptions and appear to have been utilised from May, 1941 until some time in 1947 when they were probably withdrawn, as no postmarks have been seen bearing dates after 1947.

These datestamp are found in two sizes :--

EGYPT POSTAGE PREPAID

1. July 1941
- 2.
3. October 1941 used by Indian F.P.O. 11)
4. 1946 G.H.Q. Cairo
5. February 1944 QASSASSIN
6. February 1942 ALEXANDRIA
7. August 1941 TEL EL KEBIR. September 1943 R.A.F. H.Q
8. 1941 AUST. BASE CAIRO
- 9.
- 10.
11. 1944/1945 PORT TE W FI K
- 12.
13. March 1942 INDIAN F.P.O. 13
14. April 1945 CAIRO
15. 1942 INDIAN F.P.O.25, March 1947 GENEIFA
16. January 1944 EL BALLAH
17. March 1943 R.A.F. H.Q. HELIOPOLIS
19. December 1942 INDIAN BASE OFFICE CAIRO
20. October 1941 INDIAN F.P.O. 28
21. November 1943 El. BA LLAH
- 22.
- 23.
24. 1942 ISMAILIA
- 25.
26. July 1943 H.Q. R.A.F.
27. April 1942 British F.P.O. 170
- 28.
29. January 1946 CAIRO August 1942 Base Depot Royal Armoured Corps
30. May 1941
31. R.A.F. P.O. Cairo Sharia Ibrahim Pasha
32. Polish A.P.O. 102 Cairo
- 33.
34. March 1943 KANTARA, January 1946 FAYID
35. S.A.A.P.O.
- 36.
37. S.A.A.P.O.
- 38.
39. May 1943 Indian F.P.O. Port Tewflk
40. ALMAZA
41. IKINGI MARYUT

42. N.Z. F.P.O.
43. British F.P.O. 191.
- 44.
45. MOASCAR
- 46.
47. 5th S.A. Inf, Bde.
48. 1946 ALEXANDRIA
- 49.
- 50.
- 51.
52. 1944 MOASCAR,
- 53.
- 54.
55. January 1944 H Q R A F.
- 56.
- 57.
58. CAIRO
59. S.A. A.P.O.
60. ALEXANDRIA
61. 1944 ALEXANDRIA, 1944/46 Port Tewflk
- 62.
63. January 1946 H.Q. R.A.F.
- 61.
- 65.
66. February 1944 H.Q. R.A.F.
- 67.
- 68.
69. August 1944 Fanara
70. January 1943 S.A. A.P.O.
71. October 1945 Helwan
- 72.
73. January 1942 S.A. A.P.O.
- 74.
- 75.
76. Moascar
77. British F.P.O. 138
- 78.
79. S.A.A.P.O.
80. Base Depot Royal Artillery
- 81.
- 82.
- 83.
- 84.
- 85.
86. January 1944 H.Q. R.A.F.
87. N.Z. F.P.O.
88. January 1946 Sidi Bishr
89. Cairo
90. August 1944 Tel el Kebir
- 91.
- 92.
93. January 1946 Abbassia.
- 94.
- 95.
- 96.
97. 1942
- 98.

- 99.
- 100. March 1942 S.A. A.P'.0.
- 101.
- 102.
- 103. September 1943 Kantara
- 104.
- 105.
- 106.
- 109.
- 112. December 1944 Cairo
- 113. March 1943 Alexandria
- 114.
- 118. October 1943 KASR EL N11. CAI Ito
- 121. Cairo
- 127.
- 129. January 1946 Sidi Bishr
- 131.
- 132.
- 137.
- 138. October 1942
- 141.
- 142.
- 144.
- 149. April 1944 Alexandria
- 151.
- 154. May 1944 Q.H.Q. Cairo



Base A.P.O. 4 at Cairo possessed machine cancellation with star in lieu of number; in 1943 a slogan was incorporated reading “It Pays to Lend” instead of the five wavy lines. This marking is probably found more often as a backstamp and impressions from it are invariably blurred.

Base A.P.O. 4 was situated in Sharia Maspero and also used double-ring handstamp inscribed “Base Army Post Office “with figure “4 “between bars.

Registered covers from B.A.P.O. 4 are found with registration labels which were rubber-stamped with “4 Base A. P.O. /I “enclosed in rectangle ; these exist in different colours of ink -black, purple and blue. Letters bearing F.P.O. 445 datestamps are also found with this particular registration label.

Other registered items from B.A.P.O.4 have been found with registration labels bearing “B.P. 14” in two lines enclosed in rectangular frame, what the BY. 14 represents I am unable to say.

No registration labels would appear to have been used by F.P.O. 167 in 1942 and a rubber-stamped impression appears on letters ; this is rectangular in shape With two upper compartments. The left-hand one encloses the letter “R” with “R.A.F.”, “H.Q.M.E.”, with “No.” in lower part.

BRITISH FIELD POST OFFICES

No. 30 after early 1941 was used in India
33 July 1943 Egypt
38 January 1942 Egypt
40 after early 1941 was used in Ceylon
67 January 1945 Moscar
68 March 1943
69 November 1942 'Western Desert
76 February 1945 Cairo
137 February 1942 Egypt
138 February 1942 Egypt
140 December 1942 Alexandria
147 April 1942 Heliopolis
156 December 1945 Cairo
167 December 1942 Heliopolis
168 November 1940 Egypt
169 January 1941 Egypt
170 November 1942 Port Tewilk
171 October 1940 later Greece until evacuation
172 February 1941 Alexandria
173 October 1940/April 1943 Egypt
174 July 1943 Kantara later Tel el Kebir
177 November 1942 Alexandria
178
186 August 1943 Alexandria
187 1948 E. Ballah
188 Prior to 1943 was in Egypt
189 Prior to 194; was in Egypt
190 1946/1946 Port Tewfik
1.91
196
197
201 1945 Daaba
220 April 1943 Alexandria
235 January 1945 Geneifa
242
243 April 1943 Heliopolis
244
245 December 1944 Alexandria
246 1945 Cairo Kasr el X Nil
266 1948 Geneifa
290 February 1943
293 March 1912 Ismailia, November 1944 Quassassin
309 August 1945 Cairo Kasr el Nil
368 January 1941 Egypt
370 February 1943 Egypt
372, February 1941. Egypt
375 July 1948 Fayid
443 January 1941 Alexandria
444 May 1941 1 king! Maryout
445 1945 Cairo
461 1947 Port Fuad
517 October 1943 Alexandria
519 June 1945 Almaza

532 February 1946 Sidi Bishr, (No.1 Military Collecting Centre)
 544 January 1946 R.A.F.P.O. Cairo (Shari Ibrahim Pacha)
 551 1945 Moascar
 556 June 1945 Geneifa
 569 November 1942 Western Desert
 572 1944/1947 Alexandria
 576 June 1945 Fort Said
 655 1945/1946 Abbassia
 720 1942 Egypt



INDIAN FIELD POST OFFICES

Egyptian-type M.P.O. datestamps were originally used by the Indian Base Post Office in Cairo. I have seen a couple of types of this marking which are usually found on the Egyptian Military stamps (10 milliemes); the inscription in upper segment reads "IND. B.P.O." with date across centre and "Egypt" in lower segment ; the other type was inscribed "IND. B.P.O." Curved in upper segment with "R" below (i.e. Registered). Later on the Indian-type handstamp was brought into use and many different types of this exist:

"Base Office 1 "in upper segment Base Office 1 "in upper segment with "Reg." at foot" No. 1 Indian Base P.O. SOR "in upper segment possibly other types of handstamp with letters "DEL", etc. in upper segment.

Indian Field Post Offices were operating in Egypt in 1939 and F.P.O. 17 and 25 are found cancelling the 10 Milliemes Egyptian military stamps :-

F.P.O. 13	December 1940 Egypt, March 1942 Egypt
F.P. O. 17	1939-Nov. 1940 Egypt
F.P.O. 19	January 1941 Egypt
F. P.O. 25	October 1939-April 1940, Egypt later Sudan and again in May 1942 Used in Egypt
F.P.O. 28	November 1941 Egypt
F.P.O. 87	1945 Moascar
F.P.O. 93	1945/46 Port Tewilk
F.P.O. 48	November 1942 Egypt
F.P.O. 55	June 1943
F.P.O. R15	1942 Egypt
F.P.O. R4	1942 Egypt

Some of the smaller numbers-12, 13 and 15, 17, 19, 23, 24 and 25-would appear to have been used by the 4th and 5th Indian Divisions, and as these divisions operated at one period or another in Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia then back to Egypt and Cyrenaica, whilst the 5th Indian Division at one period made an appearance in Iraq, thence to Egypt (Alamein), Libya, Italy and Greece, it is always a question of a particular date indicating where a particular postmark Was used (it must not be misconstrued that the eight F.P.O.'s Were used in all the above-mentioned countries-whilst it is applicable to some of them there are always exceptions).

EXPRESS LETTER SERVICE

or "E.L.S." was organised and run by the Royal Corps of Signals and previously Was designated "D.R.L.S."(i.e. Despatch Rider Letter Service).

It is a service for official documents only, catering for anything not sufficiently urgent for telegraphy but necessitating a quicker means of conveyance than Army Postal Service.

It is rarely found on private correspondence. Such covers, when they have come into collectors' possession, have usually been addressed to banks, municipal authorities or railway administrations, etc.

Each Signal Office has its own particular code letter and the Army Signals datestamp impressed on the letter bears this code followed by the date.

A regular D.R.L.S. was in operation prior to 1939 between Kasr el Nil Barracks, Cairo and Abbassia Garrison. The H.Q. of the Express Letter Service was situated at G.H.Q. Cairo and used a rectangular rubber stamp which was impressed on such letters.

Towards the end of the war the name of the service was altered to "S.D.S." (i.e. Special Delivery Service).

Letters are found bearing rubber-stamped impression "Sent by M.P.O. Incorrectly endorsed D.R.L.S. not available ". Presumably these were letters not sufficiently urgent to warrant despatch by E.L.S.

Other markings found bear rubber-stamped "Express Letter Office N.R. General Headquarters Middle East Force". Presumably the "N.R." would indicate "Not Registered ".

I have come across a letter written by an Italian soldier on captured New Zealand stationery with Y.M.C.A. crest and "National Patriotic Fund Board" heading, enclosed in another captured envelope-this time a South African item with red triangle and initials "Y.M.C.A. C.V.J. M."--this was post-marked by Posta Militare 109, 27th July 1942, and also one in the reverse direction written by a South African soldier to a South African address ; the envelope bears marking of the VII Gruppo Sahariano and is postmarked by Egypt postage prepaid No. 55 July 9th 1941--sort of reverse "lend-lease", or "loot-lease", whichever you prefer.

Italian Military Post Offices have also been used in Egypt but owing to these mainly having been attached to mobile units it is difficult to pin-point them.

The following are known, at the dates stated, to have been in Egypt :-

POSTA MILITARE N.34 September 4th 1942 Mersa Mutruh POSTA MILITARE N.109 June 21st 1941 Egypt. On the Sinai side of the Suez Canal near El Shatt were U.N.R.R.A. camps which accommodated refugees from Yugoslavia and other places. I understand that no special post offices were provided but registered mail was conveyed to and from the Field Post Office in Port Tewfik whilst ordinary mail passed through the Egyptian civil post.

I have seen mail from Greek soldiers in Egypt which passed through the Egyptian civil post without stamps but bore no indication of its military origin. Mail from Greek troops and Yugoslav forces would generally be dealt with by the British F.P.O.'s.

Whilst the Egyptian military stamps were used from 1939 until about 1941 it is occasionally possible to come across covers bearing ordinary Egyptian stamps in lieu of military stamps and in addition to them; some of these covers are found bearing addresses in Egypt as it was necessary to pay postage in the early days.

On airmail letters the postage could be prepaid with either British or Egyptian stamps but mixed franking was not allowed.

After the liberation of France it was possible to despatch letters to civilians there, but letters had to be franked with Egyptian stamps; the only exception was air letter cards which could be franked with British, Dominion, Indian or Colonial stamps of equivalent value. Even today letters to most foreign countries from A.P.O.'s in Egypt have to be franked with Egyptian stamps.

Postage rates from the forces in Egypt and Middle East to France in 1945 were as follows:-

SURFACE MAIL LETTERS

If posted at A.P. O.'s in Egypt

22 Milliemes per 20 grammes and an additional 13 Mills. for each 20 grammes payable with Egyptian postage stamps.

If posted at A.P.O.'s outside Egypt 3d. per ounce and 1½d. for each additional ounce, payable with British, Dominion, Indian or Colonial stamps of equivalent value.

AIR MAIL LETTERS

If posted at A.P. O.'s in Egypt

52 Mills. for 10 grammes

82 Mills. for 20 grammes

125 Mills. for 30 grammes

and each additional 10 grammes : 30 Mills., payable with Egyptian postage stamps.

If posted outside Egypt

10d. per 10 grammes inclusive charge payable with British stamps or Dominion, Indian or Colonial stamps of equivalent value.

AIR LETTER CARDS

3d. each letter, payable with British stamps or Dominion, Indian or Colonial stamps of equal value. Outside the Dock Gates at Port Tewfik in a Nissen hut was situated a British A.P.O. which used Field Post Office datestamp 190 at least from 1944 to 1946, whilst alongside the British A.P.O. was Indian F.P.O. 93.

No doubt the British A.P.O. will have found a fresh location before this, whilst the Indian F.P.O. would most certainly have closed down prior to 1947.

After the cessation of hostilities in 1945 the large prisoner-of-war camps at Sidi Bishr were opened up as collecting camps for personnel due for release and Sidi Bishr was known as "Military Collecting Centre No. 1", whilst postal facilities were provided for that happy (or otherwise) band of pilgrims who were at last wending their way home and could inform their fond relatives that they would shortly be shaking the dust of the land of the Pharaohs from their feet; these letters would bear the following postmarks: Egypt Postage Prepaid 88 and 129 or Field Post Office No. 532.

Whilst these notes give a listing of postmarks known to have been used in Egypt at one time or another, there is no doubt that these are only a fraction of those that have been used there. The Editor and the writer would be grateful for any further information that readers may be able to supply.

THE END