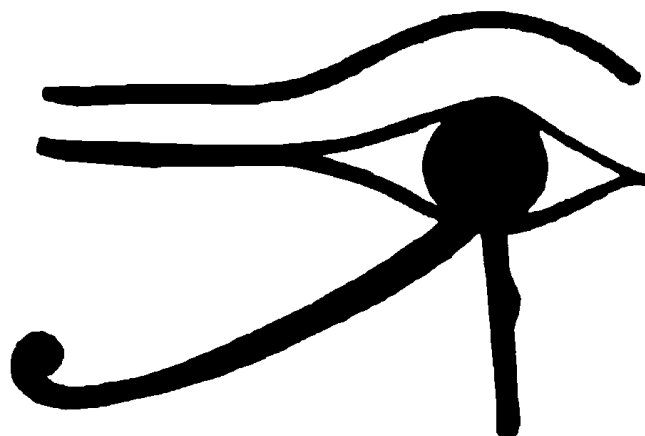


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Cover of the Month: 1877 (Feb 14th): Underpaid cover from Cairo to Constantinople franked by 1874-75 20pa. and 1pi. Overweight and found to be double rate, the cover was taxed at double the postage = 6 piastres, less the amount paid = 1½ piastres, thus handstamped "4" and "½" piastres Postage Due. Remarkable and probably unique usage. SG 37,38.

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Report of the Meeting, September 23 2006

PRESENT: John Sears (President), Peter Andrews (Chairman), Mike Murphy (Secretary), Brian Sedgley (Treasurer), Edmund Hall (Editor/Webmaster), John Davis (Librarian), Dennis Clarke (Committee), Mike Bramwell, John Clarke, Cyril Defriez, Mostafa El-Dars, Peter Grech, Alan Jeyes, Sue McIntosh, Mohamed Nofal, Lewis Said, Tony Schmidt, David Sedgwick, Vahe Varjabedian (Egypt). Guests: Herb Cowley (New Zealand), Bruce Gillham.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were received from: Stanley Horesh (Deputy Chairman), Margaret Chadwick, Ted Fraser-Smith, Greg Todd, Richard Wheatley.

As Peter Andrews, our new Chairman, was unavoidably delayed, the President opened the meeting by welcoming a good number of members, and in particular David Sedgwick, attending his first meeting, and overseas visitors Vahe Varjabedian and Herb Cowley (guest). The good attendance pre-empted any discussion on whether future autumn meetings should be held at Stampex. The President noted the anniversary of the sad death of Robin Bertram and announced that his collection would come under the hammer at Grosvenor in The Strand on December 9: all members will be provided with a catalogue of the sale. He also paid tribute to the sterling work carried out by Richard Wheatley in organising the very successful joint meeting with the Sudan Study Group in August, and there was discussion of further provincial meetings, either in Bradford or Birmingham. More research will be carried out.

Under the guidance of the Chairman, the programme for 2007 was decided, as follows:

January 13 – Victory Services Club – Cyril Defriez, Delta area Postmarks

March 3 – at Stampex – All Members – Ten Sheets

May 5 – Victory Services Club – All Members – AGM and Bourse

July 14 – Victory Services Club – Dennis Clarke, Airgraphs, and David Sedgwick, British Forces

September 22 – at Stampex – All Members – Acquisitions and Queries

November 17 – Victory Services Club – Tony Schmidt and Mike Murphy – Rural Postal Service

The Secretary announced that, according to a poll of members, the Macarthur Award for the best *QC* article had been won for the second successive year by Anatole Ott, of Sweden, for his remarkable work on collating and explaining the workings of the Overseas Parcel Card system. The meeting congratulated Anatole warmly, and wished him all success in overcoming his latest illness. A further six membership applications were submitted, all of which were accepted, taking membership back over the 200 mark, and it was noted that all of the approaches came via the website – two from UK, and one each from Egypt, Australia, USA and Switzerland.

Mohamed Nofal reported that he is well advanced with his catalogue of Egyptian postcards, which will be published in Alexandria, and generously offered the Circle the facility of a full-page advertisement at no cost.

For the meeting proper, a lively affair on the topic of Acquisitions and Queries, there were probably more of the latter than the former, providing a good deal of animated discussion, and much benefit was drawn from the presence of two native Arabic speakers in Mostafa El-Dars and Vahe Varjabedian. A brief listing of topics covered included:

Peter Andrews and John Davis (purely by coincidence), two aspects of the Sonnini correspondence – documents and letters respectively; Brian Sedgley, classic-period postmarks; Mike Bramwell, passports and fiscal stamps; Peter Grech, new discoveries in the Registration labels of the French Offices; John Sears, a mysterious Air Mail card from Port Tewfick to Stockholm (a *QC* article will follow); Alan Jeyes, the Helio Vaugirard tamp reproductions detailed by Vincent Centonze in *QC* 218; and Mike Murphy, the Postage Paid CDS markings of Alexandria and Cairo (again one for the *QC*).

The meeting closed with the hope that next year's autumn Stampex will provide another good turnout and another lively and wide-ranging afternoon of varied topics.

Report of the Meeting, November 11 2006

PRESENT: John Sears (President), Peter Andrews (Chairman), Stanley Horesh (Deputy Chairman), Mike Murphy (Secretary), Brian Sedgley (Treasurer), John Davis (Librarian), Mike Bramwell, John Clarke, Sue McIntosh, Tony Schmidt.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were received from: Edmund Hall (Editor), Yasser Amr, Margaret Chadwick, Cyril Defriez, Mostafa El-Dars, Ted Fraser-Smith, Alan Jeyes, David Sedgwick, Greg Todd.

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all those present, especially those just returned from the trip to Egypt, and noted the difficulty of crossing London on Armistice Day (the Secretary took note that November 11 is not the best day for a meeting).

He echoed the thoughts of all who had made the trip in paying generous thanks to our colleagues in Cairo who had worked so hard in organising both phases of the visit – the mini-exhibition in the club-rooms celebrating 75 years of the Philatelic Society of Egypt, and the social programme intended mainly for family members who were “abandoned” while the menfolk looked at stamps, but in fact proving equally popular to both groups!

He said it would be invidious to name names, but felt that he had to single out for special mention the President of the PSE, Sherif Samra, and the Secretary, Hany Salam, for their immense work in providing such an outstanding display of philatelic material in such congenial surroundings; and to Jeanne Fikry and Aida Salam, who had worked so hard in sometimes difficult conditions not only to provide an outstanding programme of events but also to perform the even more difficult duty of acting as chauffeur and guide. Members greeted the mentions with acclaim; and John Sears was kind enough to propose a vote of thanks to Mike Murphy and Alan Jeyes for having organised various aspects in Cairo and London.

Mike Murphy then mentioned that the possibility of future visits had been raised, perhaps even on an annual basis, and said that the Circle very much welcomed the initiative; more detailed thought would be needed to go into the practicalities. He mentioned the press coverage given in Cairo newspapers, and said that both groups hoped it might lead to wider public attendance than on this visit.

The PSE under its new Board of Directors is keen to expand its membership, and urges as many ESC members as possible to join: Mike Murphy is willing to collect the £15/€25/\$30 subscription and forward it to our colleagues in Cairo. As an innovation, small laminated membership cards are now being produced: the PSE requests a passport-size photograph to be incorporated into these cards for this year onwards.

Various matters of correspondence were mentioned, including an invitation from the American Philatelic Society, to which we are now affiliated, to attend one or more of their forthcoming shows, and including a programme through to 2011. The Committee will discuss these dates.

Members were notified of the sale via Feldman’s in Switzerland of the Samir Fikry Large Gold medal collection (Dec 3, www.davidfeldman.com/PDF_2006/064/064Download_page.htm) and the Robin Bertram collection at Grosvenor Auctions in The Strand in London (December 8, www.grosvenorauctions.com) – for the latter all members have received an outline listing of lots.

Brian Sedgley and John Sears then reported on Auction finances, and welcomed the success of the last two sales, resulting in a larger than usual contribution from the Auction account to the General account. Despite the ten-day hiatus for the visit to Cairo, Auction 42 will be completed in the next day or two. Lists of lots for Auction 43 should reach Mike Murphy by February 15. John Davis reported that the sale of back copies of the *QC* had been successful; and that more were still available.

Stanley Horesh (ESC 118) then opened the meeting proper with the suggestion that there was no need for today’s collectors to shy away from study of classical-era stamps per se on the grounds that they were too expensive, and showed that much pleasure and research challenge could be derived from the 1867 1-piastre, a stamp generally available at under £1. Basing his work on Byam’s report in *L’OP* 114 (p 393 et seq), which details a large number of varieties on the stamp – made, said Byam, with the aid “of a powerful glass and a powerful imagination” – he described the study as “fascinating – there’s no end to it!” He explained

that his collection was based on buying between 200-300 examples, the residue of the Byam sale, and that the stones were laid down as four clearly distinguishable types, each of which had characteristic varieties to be discovered, and some of which were gradually removed by the printers, allowing progress through time to be reviewed. He showed examples of all the varieties in profusion, apart from the version in lake (Stone X), which he said Byam doubted had ever been issued.

Stanley's display was augmented by John Clarke (ESC 497), who showed two copies of the 1pi lake, both with watermarks impressed on the face, as well as some imperf examples.

John's major display, however, was on the 1874 Issue, for which he showed a comprehensive range of stamps in both perforation variants, 12 ½ and 13 ¼ by 12 ½. He concentrated on tête-bêches, of which the issue has a plethora, found on all but the 20pa and the 5pi, and showed a glorious block of nine of the 2 1/2pi with the sole inverted stereo in the pane (position 154) in its centre. The stamps, John explained, were a re-issue of the disastrously produced 1872 Issue, but in many ways proved even less successful, with poor perforation throughout and the crass transposing of the side panels of the 5-para stamp. This could not possibly happen with the 1 piastre, which was the only one produced from a single stereo – all others comprised a frame, the two side panels, and the Sphinx/Pyramid design.

Brian Sedgley (ESC 268) continued the classic-era theme by showing the postmarks of Egypt's overseas offices, augmenting his own extensive collection with several photocopy pages of staggeringly wonderful covers from the outstanding collecting of Professor Peter Smith (ESC 74), to whom he paid suitable tribute. It was noted that while Constantinopoli is a fairly straightforward CDS to find – Brian showed examples of all its variations – such offices as Leros and Tenedos are immensely difficult, and covers are not known from these short-lived and far-flung offices. He was proud to have found a Gedaref (Sudan) intaglio seal cancelling a stamp in a dealer's box for £1, and noted that Mytilene is always a good clean mark. He pointed out that the travelling post office marking Ufficio Natante appears always to be struck at 90-degrees to the stamp when the ALES handstamp is in use; and normally upright on the COSP version. Can members confirm or deny this tendency from their own collections?

The meeting closed with the Chairman welcoming a whole afternoon discussing the basis of our interest – stamps – as opposed to one aspect or another of postal history; and thanked the exhibitors for taking us back to our roots. Members showed their appreciation in the traditional manner.

Notes from a visit to Egypt, November 2006

Mike Murphy (ESC 240)

We were off to something of a bad start ... despite the best attentions of the Kuoni representative, who met us inside the airport on arrival in Cairo, and of Hany Salam, Secretary of the Philatelic Society of Egypt, and Mohamed Yehia, Board member, who greeted us outside, and despite an easy formality with Customs examination of our exhibits, there was nothing anyone could do when two suitcases went missing. Except smile; and that is something David and Ann Sedgwick, first-time visitors to Egypt, did very bravely indeed over the next three or four days until their clothes arrived.

But once at the Sheraton Towers in Giza all started to go well. Our rooms were in the newly restored Cleopatra Tower, and the facilities were soon found – breakfast downstairs, the pool at rooftop level away from the traffic, the Metro a couple of hundred yards away ... it proved an excellent centre from which to help the Philatelic Society of Egypt celebrate its 75th anniversary.

And our welcome from the Egyptian philatelists was warm and promising. The first morning was a flurry of phone calls, followed in the afternoon by what seemed to set the pattern for the next few days – a mad hour-long car ride through the Cairo peak-hour traffic to reach a riverboat ride that was in fact only ten minutes' walk away – a matter of minor misunderstanding taken by everyone in very good heart. And the fact that it wasn't a felucca but a motorboat in no way spoiled the enjoyment – it was a good chance to make new friends in a calm and peaceful sunset atmosphere.

See web site for pictures from the visit – 'news' – 'Visit for the 75th Anniversary of PSE'

This is the moment where it is 100 per cent necessary to pay tribute to two very special ladies – Jeanne Fikry and Aida Salam – who gave up house and home, children and family, to escort us on a series of tours, acting as chauffeur and guide, mentor and haggle-advisor, through what can only be described as a maelstrom of traffic. I would not drive in Cairo if you paid me a pharaoh's ransom – Aida and Jeanne accomplished the task with calm and dignity, never a hair out of place despite the army truck or the 70-seater bus bearing down on us with every indication of wiping out the whole party. Thank you, ladies. And thank you, too, Samir Fikry, who was not supposed to be involved, but was involved, out of the generosity of his heart.

And where did they take us, these intrepid ladies? The programme they organised was supposed to occupy the distaff side while the menfolk busied themselves with little pieces of printed paper – but it was astonishing how many of the “leisure” events attracted the menfolk too! And the first was the most stunning of all ... totally unexpected even to those of us who have been visiting for years.

We were driven up Salah Salem, round behind the Citadel, to visit the *zebeleen*, the garbage-collectors whose little donkey carts do such an invaluable job in keeping Cairo's streets free of rubbish and then recycling it. They have become established in the Moqattam Hills since the time of Nasser, and we expected to see their alfresco workshops and stores. What was totally unforeseen was the series of churches these Christian (Coptic; the descendants of the Ancient Egyptians) workers have literally carved out of the hillside ... the Monastery of Saint Samaan the Tanner and ancillary buildings. The main hall, open to the skies, holds 5,000 worshippers, the second hall, cleared by illegal blasting away of the rock timed to coincide with the cannon announcing the end of a day's Ramadan fasting, can seat 2,000, and both are regularly filled. The hillsides are carved with scenes and inscriptions from the Bible, gaily painted and treated with awe and respect by locals and visitors alike. This astonishing spectacle was the gift of Samir and Jeanne's daughter Nadine, who suggested the idea. This place is not on the tourist track – yet. But it deserves to be, and it will be soon. Thank you, Nadine!

From the sublime to the less unexpected. Next morning we were off to the Khan el-Khalili bazaar to top up on gifts for home, but not before we had stopped off at two of the most spectacular mosques in Cairo – Sultan Hassan and Rifai, at the foot of the Citadel mount, where recent Kings of Egypt are buried, including Ismail and Farouk. We were staggered by the potency of the call to prayer of one *muezzin* who performed it for us in a darkened room, as well as by the sheer magnificence of the Rifai and the extended roles taken on by the Sultan Hassan as court, school, hospital as well as place of worship.

Then it was on to Khan el-Khalili, where all of Jeanne's negotiating skills came to the fore in providing excellent bargains – as well as mint tea and fuul and taamiya sandwiches.

And next morning provided another “first” with a visit to the 74-acre Al-Azhar Garden, a wonderful green lung for Cairo built at the Aga Khan's expense on land reclaimed from derelict – an exercise that revealed to the archaeologists a mile-long 50ft-high city wall built by Salah ed-Din in the 12th century. The park has over 655,000 trees and is designed to catch the breeze among its lakes, rivulets, valleys and façades – an ideal place to relax amid countryside features as well as being well supplied with restaurants and cafeterias.

While we visited the Moqattam churches, Khetcho Hagopian had been hard at work setting up the 20-frame exhibition in the PSE clubrooms in Abdel Khalek Sarwat Street in downtown Cairo – a thankless task when those supposed to provide 16 sheets hand over 32, and those who should provide eight make it nine. But the task was performed with characteristic good humour (and only the occasional sharp tongue for those who are not usually exhibitors!) and the balance of classic to modern, postal history to stamps, was just about right to suit all tastes and interests.

The exhibition ran from Friday lunchtime to Sunday lunchtime and was well attended, with one of the side rooms accommodating local dealers who made good use of their time. As did, naturally, visiting collectors!

The exhibitors were: Khetcho Hagopian (First Issue); Artin Kasperian (Second Issue); Samir Fikry (First Issue postal history); Sherif Samra (1879 Provisionals); Ibrahim Shoukry (1879 De La Rues); Mahmoud Ramadan (OHEMS post); Sherif Hesni (Perfins postal history); Hisham Bassyouny (British Forces in Egypt); Raffat Milad (Egyptian stationery); Hany Salam (Fuad 1923 Issue); Karim Darwaza (Ottoman Offices in Syria); Samir Nabih Attia (Thomas Cook in Egypt); Greg Todd (First Issue); John Sears (Maritime Mail); John Davis (Postal Concession Commemorative Seals); Edmund Hall (Gaza 1900-2000); Mike Murphy (Gabriel Boulad's “test” mails); Peter Andrews (Mail Damaged in Transit); Cyril Defriez

(Egypt Air Mail); David Sedgwick (Egypt and the North of England); Mostafa El-Dars (FDCs of the last Monarchy Commemoratives).

Our welcome in the clubrooms, whether as exhibitor or guest, was overwhelming, with opportunity to make myriad new friends as well as renewing acquaintance with old ones. The atmosphere was of friendly good fellowship, with everyone involved going out of his way to share news, views and opportunities to ask questions. Refreshments were provided by two charming young members of Hany Salam's staff

The official events were crowned by the formal dinner on Sunday evening at the august Automobile & Touring Club of Egypt (once the Royal Automobile Club and a favourite haunt of Farouk), at which we were all treated to a right royal dinner specially selected by Dr Sherif el-Far, Vice-President of the PSE and clearly a man with a wonderful epicurean imagination. All "stamp" members of the UK party were presented with a beautiful bronze commemorative medal (after the style of the 1991 medals), and all exhibitors were given a beautifully ornate certificate of participation. These were presented by Dr Sherif Battisha, Vice Chairman of Egypt Post, who had attended the exhibition the previous day.

There were speeches from Sherif Samra, Hany Salam, Samir Fikry and John Sears which delayed the arrival of the chocolate soufflé – but not by too much! – and there were gifts from the ESC to PSE officials and ladies who had gone particularly out of their way to help ... but at the end of a most enjoyable evening it was impossible to tell which diner was from which side: what we had instead was a meeting of good friends.

The conviviality continued next evening at the home of Vahe Varjabedian in Heliopolis, where he and his wife Hermine (headmistress role abandoned; now she is a homoeopath) made the whole party very welcome indeed with a wonderful display of food that looked so good we were all afraid to touch it!

Quite apart from the full-scale events, there was a whole series of informal meetings, visits and dinners, with John and Pat, our intrepid President and his wife, braving a taxi as far as Suez (but missing out on any major vessel in the Canal!), while others ventured forth to the Museum, the Citadel, American University bookshop, the Railway Museum, the Gayer-Anderson House (Beit el Kritliya), to dealers all over the city, even to have lessons in deciphering Ottoman Turkish Arabic. And some fortunate ones among us were invited to the homes of some of our hosts – thank you so much, Samir, Jeanne and Nadine Fikry, Ibrahim Shoukry (best wishes for Madame's recovery!), Mahmoud Ramadan, Lucien and Jackie Toutounji, Hany and Aida Salam: we could not want for better friends.

There was time on Tuesday – the last day – for catching up, for buying last-minute presents, but then suddenly it was all over and we all – Egyptians and British alike – agreed that the whole visit had been altogether too short. So another is being planned. Probably next year. See you there.

New members:

ESC 606 Jos Strengholt

Road 72 # 24, Maadi, Egypt
(Pre-1914, De La Rue and cancellations, Postal stationery)

ESC 607 Mohamed Soliman

5804 Westchester Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22310, USA
(Stamps of Egypt 1866-to date, Royal misperfs and Cancelled, Colour trials, overprints)

ESC 608 Robert den Hollander

84 Horton Crescent, Livingstone Park, Epsom, Surrey KT19 8AA
(Fourth Issue, French consular stamps, Pictorials)

ESC 609 Marianne Khouzam

Buentstrasse 2, 5430 Wettingen, Switzerland
(Mint complete, Used Abroad, Interpostals, Gaza, Suez, History of Egyptian PO)

ESC 610 Dawn Lucaci

39 Sharon Crescent, Kelso, Queensland 4815, Australia
(Egypt stamps and postal history)

ESC 611 Lisa Bartels

Erika, Office Lane, Clee Hill, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 3PG
(Egypt stamps mint/used, postcards, modern history of Egypt)

Deceased:

ESC 261 Anatole Ott

ESC 499 Frederick Oddy

Egypt - Express Mail

Lucien Toutounji (ESC 264)

I had the pleasure of attending the ESC meeting last January on the Express markings and thought the following would add to the study.

The 15 mills Express rate

The new 20 mills Express stamp (1926) became the preferred franking for all Express mail, but the Express rate was 15 mills for both cards and covers. As the base rate for cards was 3 mills, and not 5m as for covers, the result was an over-franking of at least 2 mills on the very few cards known to have been sent Express.

Figure 5: Three mills 1917 postal stationery card sent from Alexandria 6 OCT 1926 with EXPRESS cds. Same-day Cairo delivery. Franked with additional 20m Express stamp, total 23 mills. Overfranked 5 mills.

Figure 7: Three mills 1932 postal stationery postcard, with red pencil manuscript instructions. Bilingual "EXPRESS" postmark, from Cairo 12 JU 33. Franked: Base 3 mills, express 15 mills, correct total 18 mills. Fewer than five cards correctly franked 18 mills believed to exist.

The 30 mills Express rate: First recording of "Cour d'Appel Mixte" Official Express mail

The Tribunaux Mixtes (Mixed Courts) were set up in Egypt in 1875, part of the Capitulations (concessions) made by the Ottoman Empire to 11 European countries and the US, to judge cases between foreigners only or foreigners and Egyptians. They were located at Mansourah, Cairo and Alexandria, where the only Cour d'Appel Mixte (Mixed Court of Appeal) was also located. The "Conference Des Capitulations" held at Lausanne in April 1937 gave the Mixed Courts a grace period of 12 years to wind down. In Egypt, they were abolished in 1949.

The Mixed Courts enjoyed base rate "free frank" postal privileges, but further services such as Air Mail, Registration or Express, had to be paid. An oval cachet in blue identified the Courts' official mail.

Figure 6: Official cover from the Cour d'Appel Mixte at Alexandria, bearing the oval blue cachet (indicated by arrow), sent Express from Alexandria to Cairo on 14 MR 46. Same-day Cairo delivery backstamp. Franked: Base rate free frank, only Express fee 30 mills paid. This is the first recognised recording of a Cour d'Appel Mixte Official Express mail about 60 years after the event - believed to be unique.

Official inter-governmental administrations Express mail.

Official inter-governmental administrations Express mail was unrecorded until 2000, when three covers bearing a special official pink label inscribed in Arabic "*Moustaagef*" (Express) were recovered from discarded Government archives.

Figure 8: Inter-governmental administrations cover bearing the official pink Express label, sent from a government administration in Roda 5 MR 40 at 5pm. to the Minister of Justice. Cairo transit 6 MR at 9am, and Dawawin delivery backstamp one hour later at 10am. Dawawin was the location of the Ministry of Justice and of most central government administrations. Franking: Sent "free frank", as internal official mail was exempted from all postage, whatever the service provided. First recording of inter-governmental administrations official Express mail, only three covers known.

See page 182 for illustrations.

High-price sales: Seventeen ESC members attended the Robin Bertram sale in London, but most lots went to telephone bidders at high prices: the total realisation was £210,045. Star of the Samir Fikry sale in Switzerland and Monaco was the unique combination cover from the Italian PO to Genoa bearing a First Issue 10pi which went for €65,175. For more details see our website.

Operations Kadesh and Musketeer: the Tripartite Aggression

Edmund Hall (ESC 239)

The war in Egypt in 1956 is more commonly known as the Suez crisis, and the reason for it given as Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal. This is however an over-simplification and the reasons for war predate the nationalisation: all the three invading forces, Israel, France and Great Britain, had each considered and drawn up possible plans for an invasion before the nationalisation.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of one of the most important and puzzling events of the second half of the twentieth century or of the military actions that took place a half century ago. What I have tried to do is to gather and collate what I can on the philatelic aspects of mid-1956 to the evacuation by the British and French Forces.

There were in fact more than the four main participants, with America and the Soviet Union playing decisive roles leading up to the military undertakings.

One of the main players in this tragic event was John Foster Dulles, the American foreign secretary in the Eisenhower administration. Nasser vested his authority in the building of the Aswan High Dam, to which Eugene Black, then President of the World Bank, had "pronounced the project feasible and sound, and both Britain and the United States offered grants to help finance the construction". The Western offer was announced in Washington on December 16, 1955, with the United States offering to contribute \$56 million. Nasser also requested from US Ambassador Henry Byroade a list of arms he required and hoped to buy from the US. When Eisenhower saw the list he called it "peanuts". Nasser, far from wishing to dissociate himself from the West, was unwilling to align himself with the Soviet Union which was the only real alternative.

After negotiations Nasser was under the opinion that the finance for the dam and the arms, albeit with a much reduced list, would be forthcoming. Dulles however recoiled from Nasser's declared "neutrality", calling it an immoral and short-sighted conception. Despite information from the American intelligence services that a refusal of arms to Egypt would give the Soviet Union an open door Dulles went back both on the loan and the arms deal. Late in the morning of July 19 he received Egyptian Ambassador Ahmed Hussein and in what turned out to be a poorly handled talk, on hearing that the Russians were prepared to loan the money for the dam, Dulles retorted: "Well, then, as you already have the money, you have no need of our support. The offer is withdrawn."

Nasser received the news by radio while flying back to Cairo from Brioni where he had been meeting with Tito and Nehru. "This is not a withdrawal," he told his foreign minister. "It is an attack on the Egyptian Government and an invitation to the people of Egypt to bring it down." Exactly one week after Dulles reneged on the Aswan Dam project, Nasser acted, probably by impulse or to maintain his credibility by "nationalising" the Suez Canal. He promised to pay off all the shareholders of the Suez Canal Company, and as the company was registered in Egypt he was acting well within international law. He urged all of the present employees to stay in place - perhaps a little too forcefully in some cases, with the employees being told that the alternative was 15 years in an Egyptian jail. By international treaty the canal, in any case, was due to revert to Egypt in twelve more years. Nasser was simply moving up the timetable.

Since 1945 one of the goals of the Soviet Union had been to become one of the key players in the Middle East and weaken the "imperialist" powers France and Britain. After the Western powers refused to supply Egypt with arms the door began to open for them and when Nasser nationalised the canal Khrushchev saw a further opportunity to advance his cause. Intelligence to the Soviet leadership suggested that war was unlikely, as closure of the canal would lead to a stoppage of oil, paralysing both the French and British economies and any armed conflict could lose them the entire Middle East. They supported Egypt's historic claim to the canal and made clear that Nasser's actions did not breach international law. The Soviet Union was a staunch advocate of freedom of passage though the canal, as this was a benefit to them, and took part in the London conference to reach a new international agreement for control and use of the canal.

Excluded from the various alliances created by the West in the Middle East, Israel felt itself uniquely vulnerable. The situation had taken a turn for the worse in October 1954 with the withdrawal of British troops from the Canal Zone and the loss of the British buffer. In March 1955 a terrorist attack at a wedding outraged Ben-Gurion, then defence minister, who proposed to drive the Egyptians out of the Gaza Strip.

Moshe Dayan, in conversation with the CIA chief Allan Dulles during a visit to the United States in July-August 1954, had said that Israel had very good reasons to seek war - notably its inconvenient boundaries and the Arab countries' rapid military build-up. By 1955 he had become convinced that another all-Arab war against Israel was imminent and that Israel could survive only by initiating war, at a time of its choosing and on its terms.

By the end of February 1955 Ben-Gurion had come to agree with Dayan, but he thought that to be successful Israel needed an alliance with a foreign power. At this time the Israeli air force was far from being the dominant one it is today, with only a few piston-engine planes and a few British Meteors. Ben-Gurion was concerned with Egypt's new IL28 wreaking havoc in bombing Israeli centres of population.

France, which had just lost Indo-China and was determined to retain power in North Africa, was motivated by the belief that Nasser was behind the nationalist-inspired war that was then agitating Algeria.

One thing the three conspirator nations had in common was the conviction that Nasser, who was upsetting the Middle East balance of power by accepting Soviet military and economic assistance, had to go. So by the beginning of 1956 Britain, France and Israel were seeking a reason to attack and remove Nasser, although at this point not in concert.

From 1954 France had become the main source of arms for Israel and the countries became close politically, with Shimon Peres playing a major role. By early 1956 Gurion, Dayan and Peres saw war with Egypt necessary before Egypt had a chance to absorb the new weaponry from the Soviet Union but Ben-Gurion would not agree to an Israeli-initiated war without political and military support by a Western power - preferably the United States, though Britain or France would do.

Only France showed any willingness to listen, and on June 26 signed an agreement in Vermeers which provided for arms supplies to Israel in unprecedented quantity and quality. France also undertook to support Israel politically in its conflict with the Arab states. In return, Israel agreed to help France in its struggle against Nasser, by providing intelligence and carrying out mainly covert operations. Even more important was the issue of operational collaboration and the creation of a liaison apparatus for joint military planning: a joint French-Israeli planning staff was already operating in Paris in July 1956.

France and Britain had already discussed joint action against Egypt but Sir Anthony Eden would not countenance any collaboration with Israel. France realised that it needed the use of British bases in Cyprus and air power and that it needed only some incident to bring the British on board. Nasser duly obliged by nationalising the Canal.

The French were the matchmakers in the Anglo-French-Israeli military pact whose undeclared aim was the overthrow of Nasser. Ever since his nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company on 26 July, 1956, the French and the British had been making plans for military action against Egypt if negotiations failed to achieve their aims. By early October it looked as if these plans might have to be abandoned because no suitable excuse could be found to justify the attack. The French came up with the idea of using an attack by Israel as a pretext for Anglo-French intervention. On 14 October, General Maurice Challe and Albert Gazier visited Eden at Chequers and at the meeting the French general presented a plan, which quickly became known as the Challe scenario, that Israel would be invited to attack the Egyptian army in Sinai and pose a threat to the Suez Canal, thus providing Britain and France with the pretext to activate their military plans and occupy the Suez Canal Zone, ostensibly to separate the combatants and protect the canal.

Eden liked the idea, the only aspect of the Challe scenario that he opposed was the idea of Britain inviting Israel to move against Egypt. He preferred Israel to move of its own accord; he did not want Britain to be implicated in anything that might be construed as collusion in an alliance with Israel against an Arab country. The war was on, with an agreement being made at the Sèvres conference during October 22-24.

Although Nasser only decided on nationalisation after the loans were not forthcoming he still gave some consideration to its ramifications. He thought Dulles would not resort to military means, that the French were too committed to their Algerian problem to have the recourse and never considered Israel would involve itself. His only concern was Eden but reasoned the British troops in Aden, Kenya and Cyprus insufficient and before they could mobilise further forces it would be possible to reach a peaceful solution

The war was played out from October 29 until November 7.

See page 183 for the philatelic aspects.

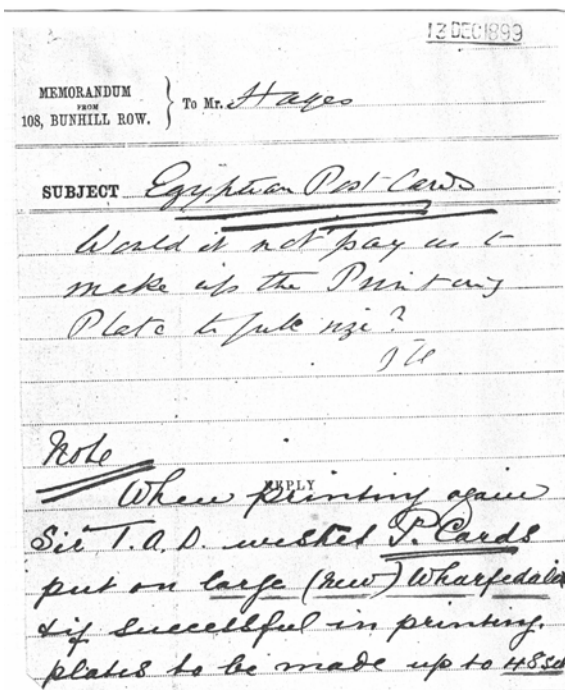
Reply To The Postal Stationery Query QC 217, page 142

Dennis Clarke (ESC 165)

The type of variety as shown in the query is not uncommon on the embossed envelopes of the De La Rue period of postal stationery. It must be remembered that these early printing machines were all hand fed: in consequence, any distraction to the operator feeding the sheets, the “layer on”, might easily lead to a missed revolution of the printing cylinder, leaving an impression on the printing cylinder rather than on the postal stationery sheet. If this occurred for a number of revolutions the intensity of the ink would accumulate.

The first sheet to be fed into the cylinder thereafter would result in a normal printing, but in addition the impression on the cylinder itself would also be transferred to the reverse side of the sheet, meaning a negative impression which on successive sheets of paper would receive the same impressions but with a diminishing quantity of ink, thus appearing weaker until it gradually disappeared (see *Figures 1 to 3* demonstrating my explanation).

In the case of the one piastre blue envelopes, however, the explanation is different: here the image appearing on the reverse (interior) is caused by ink absorption due to the porosity of the paper used (ink bleed: *Fig. 4*).



Page dated 13 Dec 1899. I include this to demonstrate the type of presses in use by De La Rue at this time. Many moons ago I was researching the archives and came across this house “memo”: they had recently purchased this new enlarged Wharfedale, which was first produced in 1898 by William Dawson and Sons.

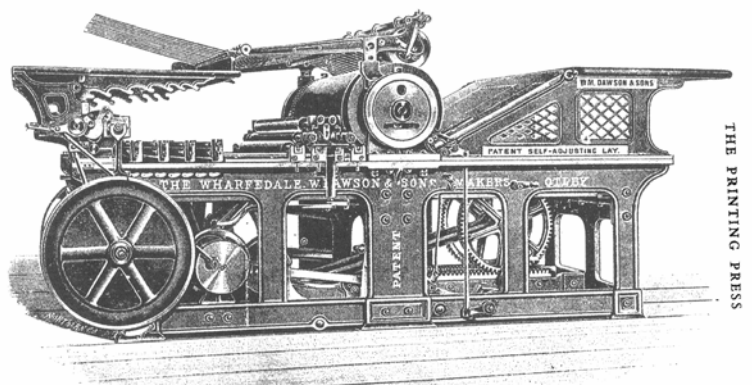
The first wooden board (right) supports the stock of paper of a standard size to suite the nature of the job to hand: this would be fed one sheet at a time on to the angled board, which in turn would be picked up from the “lay” edge by a series of “grippers” on the printing cylinder. The type for printing would then pass below the cylinder, making the impression of the printing form in situ – producing one sheet of printed envelopes (see memo). It refers to “48 set” leads, six of which were probably produced for replacement purposes in case of accident.

These printing plates would not be arranged in solitary fashion, but would be (to the layman) in

alphabetical order: this would be to eliminate paper wastage when being die cut.

This is why watermarks occur in upright or inverted with sideways appearance, the paper being already supplied with the watermark during the paper’s manufacture.

I hope this makes sense to the readers. Continuing with the printing, the small cylinder visible above the impression cylinder transfers the printed matter on to a web belt which carries that sheet on to a series of parallel arms which are used in stacking the printed sheets prior to removal to the die cutters.



A Wharfedale press of 1898



Fig.1-3 Three examples of diminishing colour. Fig.4 Four examples of ink bleed.



Fig.5



CHIOS

Exceptional use of
the 1879 Provisional 10 para.

'SCIO' to CONSTANTINOPOLI

26 January 1879



arrival 3 February

Only four covers with this stamp believed known, regardless of where used,

The block is tied by virtue of an identical strike on the cover (40 paras = 1 piaster,
the correct rate).

The provisionals were only in use in 1879.

UNISSUED STAMPS FOR THE UPU

PROOFS AND ESSAYS BY V. PENASSON, ALEXANDRIA

PROOFS WITH BLANK ARABIC VALUE TABLET



COMPLETED STAMP, IN TWO DESIGNS



ESSAY IN HORIZONTAL FORMAT



THESE STAMPS WERE ORDERED TO MEET THE POSTAL UNION RATES OF JULY, 1875: 60 PARAS FOR LETTERS AND 20 PARAS FOR PRINTED MATTER. A FIRE DESTROYED THE PREMISES OF THE PRINTER, INCLUDING THE NEARLY COMPLETED ORDER, AND THE STAMPS WERE NEVER ISSUED.

I KNOW OF NO MORE THAN 3 EXAMPLES OF THE 20 PARAS, AND NO MORE THAN 5 EACH OF THE 60 PARAS. THE FEW THAT HAVE SURVIVED PRESUMABLY CAME FROM SAMPLES SUBMITTED TO THE POSTAL ADMINISTRATION.

In my report of the Washington exhibition *QC 217 p126* I suggested some may wish to share a part of their exhibit with our members. Needless to say Peter Smith has responded with his usual generosity and shown are two of his pages.



Fig.6



Fig.6

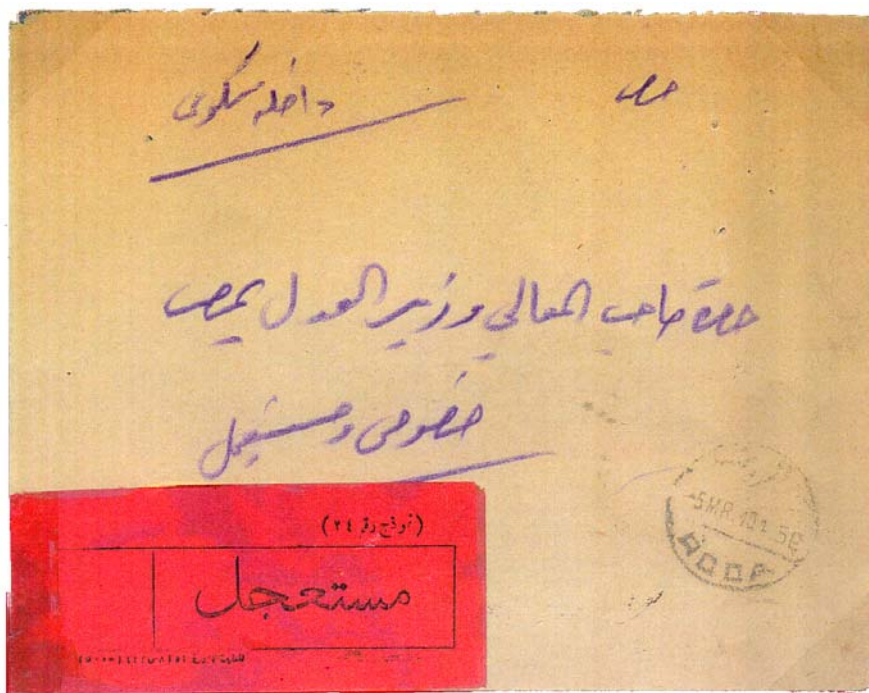


Fig.8

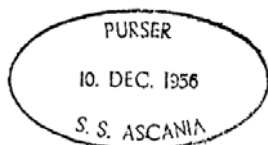
Material for this period is hard to come by and is well sought after by military postal historians. There was a great deal of “philatelic” material produced and I for one am somewhat grateful for this for without it some of the postal markings may never have been recorded.

British Naval Markings

The two operational bases were Malta and Cyprus, with most mail from the British ships initially being routed via British Fleet Mail Office 10 on Malta. Later, as a part of the navel units operated from Cypriot ports, the mail was handed over to the different British Army Post offices there. However, closed mail bags were sent unopened to the Fleet Mail Office in London.

At the London Fleet Mail Office the mail was cancelled with the machine marking “POST OFFICE MARITIME MAIL” or circular handstamps with the same inscription. Covers are also found with the triangular I.S. mark of the London Inland Section to indicate that postage was free and that a postage due fee should not be raised.

Covers can be found with ship’s cachets either of a “philatelic” or an official nature.



COMMANDING OFFICER
16 NOV 1956
H.M.S. "DIAMOND"



British Army Markings

All units which were connected with the invasion of Port Said were assigned the mailing addresses BFPO 200 and BFPO 300, for both staging areas, Malta and Cyprus. Later only BFPO 300 was still in being when all the troops were either in Port Said or on Cyprus. Covers with the return address BFPO 60, for use by 16 Para, are also found, some of them from Post Said.

The Field Post Offices used were already in operation in Malta or Cyprus, with some old ones, as previously used in Egypt, being reissued, together with a couple of new ones. The older ones are of the same pattern as found on mail in WWII whereas the new ones used the newer designs brought in during the early Fifties.

203 Army Postal Unit was an original party of seven Royal Engineers under a second lieutenant which set up the APO for all UK forces stationed in Port Said, including H M Ships. The unit arrived early in November 1956, after the ceasefire, and stayed until about December 18. The remainder of the unit arrived early in December bringing the total personnel to 33.

Censorship

Military censorship was reintroduced for the campaign for the first time by British forces since it was lifted at the end of the Second World War other than for some censorship on POW mail used during the Korean War. The new censor mark comprised a large diamond of 355mm sides with a crown, the words “MILITARY CENSOR” and a censor number. I have not given an exhaustive list of nearly 70 numbers recorded, as most are on mail from Libya, Malta and Cyprus. Only numbers 915, 1001, 1512 and 1513 are found on mail from Port Said. Censorship was imposed only just before the landings and dropped soon afterwards. Covers with such markings are found with postmarks from November 1 to 10.

For naval covers the Second World War “tombstone” markings were put back into use and found on covers covering November 1-6. The Royal Air Force also imposed some censorship in Cyprus, Iraq and Malta with new censor markings.

Few of the covers found with censorship markings appear to have been opened and the one that I have seen has been resealed with an economy resealing label; it is thought that no resealing labels were issued. I can't help wondering for whose benefit censorship was imposed and suspect that the concern was more with what the boys might tell the folks back home that could fuel the anti-war demonstrations than anything that could be of use to the Egyptians.

Malta				
			APO 1040 ? 461 ?	
6.11.56 16.11.56				19.10.56 8.11.56
Cyprus				
15.10.56 22.11.56	2.11.56 21.11.56			22.8.56 18.12.56
Port Said				
6.11.56 18.11.56	12.11.56 10.12.56	22.11.56 18.12.56	4.12.56 19.12.56	

F.P.O. 443 is recorded with the time slugs A, B and C. F.P.O. 938 has only been recorded on registered mail. F.P.O. 1020 was also used on the troopship *SS New Australia* before returning troops to the UK, leaving Port Said on December 21. It has been recorded with both A and B time slugs.

Cover with F.P.O.443 dated 22.NO.56. Manuscript on back from a corporal in A Sqdn. 6th. R.T.R (ROYAL TANK REGIMENT) with return address as B.F.P.O 300. The 6.R.T.R were in Port Said.



F.P.O.353 8.NO.56. with censor mark 1,001 the signature to the left is probably that of the censor. Manuscript on back from corporal in the 3rd.BN.Parachute REGT with return address B.F.P.O 60

French Navel Markings

The French Naval Forces consisted of 40 warships and some hundred chartered merchant ships, auxiliary and “servitude” ships of the French Marine. Eight/six (??) of the larger ships, aircraft carriers, battleships and cruisers had their own onboard post offices - “Agences Postales Navales” (APN). They used hexagonal handstamps with dotted periphery, the name of the ship appearing in the crown and the date (day - month - year) in two lines in its centre. The date is framed with a star above and an anchor below. In addition, the *Georges Leygues* also used a similar handstamp with only the text “POSTE NAVALE”. The list of ships included in the invasion fleet does not match the reported postmarks. This is probably because the aircraft carrier *Bearn* and the battleship *Richelieu* were kept in Toulon as support vessels and perhaps their postmarks may not be considered to be part of the invasion fleet.

Other markings are found on the naval covers: double circular rubber stamps of different size with the inscription MARINE NATIONALE / SERVICE A LA MER and anchor in the centre. Inscription MARINE NATIONALE - (ship’s name) - Le Vaguemestre in the centre (handstamp of the postal orderly). This is generally found on free-mail covers. On official mail a lot of other markings may be found, like “Bureau Administrative”, “Commissaire du Porte Avion Arromanches”, “Officiel”, “Officiel urgent”, “Priorite”, etc

French Inscription	Batiment de Ligne	Porte Avions	Croiseur
Translation	Battleship	Aircraft Carrier	Cruiser

Also in operation was the “Poste Navale” the French postal organisation which, in wartime, is entrusted with the private and official mail to and from ships and administrative buildings of the “Marine Nationale”. The Bureau Navale No. 16 was operating in Cyprus. Opened on September 12 in the English barracks in Famagousta, transferred on November 5 to Limassol, and closed on February 17, 1957.

It was in charge of the postal service of the whole French Naval Forces and used the following markings: A circular datestamp “Poste Navale/ Bureau No. 16; and two linear handstamps - “Bureau Naval No. 16” (length 27 mm, height of letters, 3 mm) in two lines, and “Bureau Naval No. 16” (length 53 mm, height of letters, 4 mm.) in a single line.

In Egypt itself the only naval office was “Bureau Naval No. 24” which opened on November 22, operating in a building of the Suez Canal Company in Port Fouad, and closed on December 22. It was intended for the mail of the ships which had called at a port in Egypt. This mail was transferred by helicopter or “servitude” ships on the large warships. It was then sent on to Cyprus, Algeria, or directly to France. Markings used included two linear handstamps “BUREAU NAVAL No. 24”, of the some sizes as the handstamps described for the Bureau No. 16.

French Army Markings

For the Army campaign the Secteur Postal (Postal Sector) serial numbers 91,000 were used and only covers with these numbers should be considered as part of the invasion force. The French were also fighting a war in Algeria, so some of the covers dated for the same period may come from here. All Army Post Offices were in possession of obliterators with the office numbers at the base, but according to the instruction given they were to be used only for internal services. Sometimes, however, contrary to instructions, they may be found also on ordinary or registered mail.

Army Post Offices seen and/or reported are No. 152, 152A, 168, 169, 412, 618. Some of these have Poste aux Armees in the upper portion, others (mute) carry the three letters A.F.N. (Afrique Française du Nord) at the base of the postmarks. These offices handled all postal matters, including parcels and money orders. The postmarks were used on ordinary as well as on registered mail. The military franchise was in effect August-December 1956. Mail to and from units in Egypt or at sea transited via Cyprus. Mail to France was free, while to all other countries the normal French postal rates were applied.

The date slugs in all obliterators comprise two lines with a star above. Mail can also be found with a machine cancellation, single ring and inscription “Poste aux Armees” and five wavy lines at right. Such an obliterators was used at 412 in Port Fouad, but in some cases the mail was flown uncanceled to the BCM Paris 186 or BCM “B” Marseille (BCM= Bureau Central Militaire), where the same cancellations were in use, thus only the sender’s address with Secteur Postal 91,000 can identify such covers.

The French APOs also had a registration service. The labels used are the same as those of the civil Pos, only with imprinted large R and registration number. The "Secteur Postal" on both the offices was added by rubber stamp, metal stamp or inscribed by hand.

Each postal orderly in the French Army possesses his own rubber stamp to be used on letters bearing the red army marking FM(Franchise militaire), but also on other mail as well as for internal purposes. These handstamps are usually made of rubber and occur in different shapes and sizes. Inscriptions found include "Secteur Postal" (or S.P.) and "Le Vaguemestre" (Postal Orderly). Inks used are black, violet, blue and red. Official mail is stamped with different markings of administrative nature, as Officiel, Courrier Officiel, Urgent etc.

French Censorship.

It appears that there was no censorship imposed upon the mail of the French Forces (Army and Navy) during the whole operation.



French cover sent outside France, hence the stamp from S.P. 91014, then at Cyprus.

Another cover sent outside France from S.P. 91013 at Port Fouad.

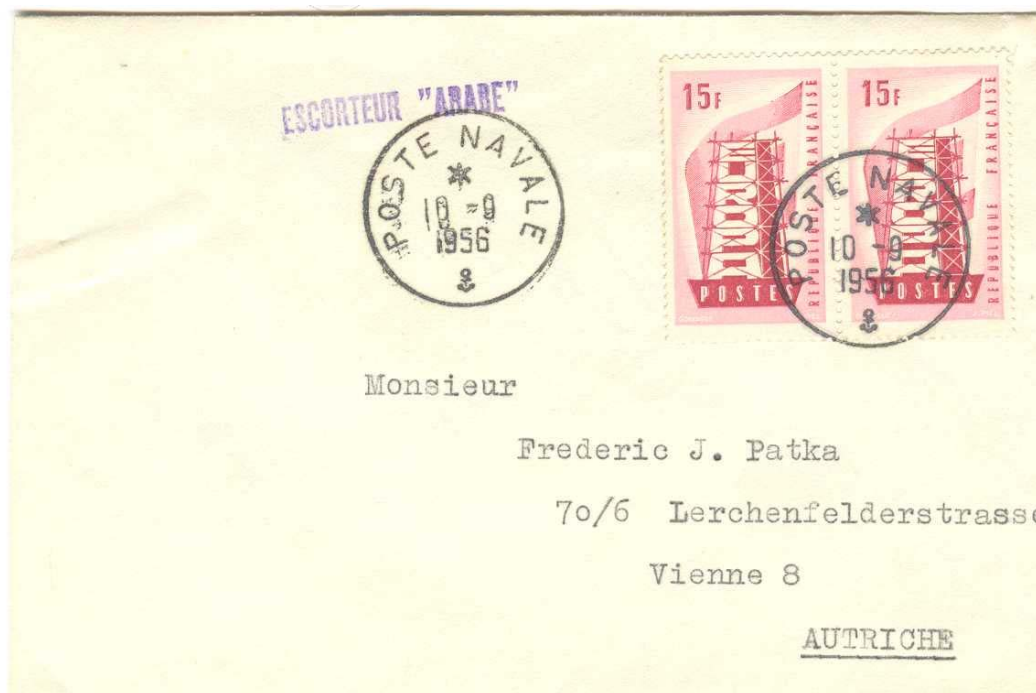


Cyprus				
16.11.56 (.9.56 - .8.57)	14.12.56	6.11.56 (11.56 - .4.57)	26.11.56	(11.56 - .1.57)
B.P.M = Bureau Postal Militaire				
Cyprus. 412 Marseille then Post Fouad 24.11.56 - 18.12.56				
	6.11.56		9.11.56 18.12.56	14.11.56 3.12.56
A.F.N. = Afrique Francaise du Nord				
Cyprus.				
15.11.56				
Bureau No.16 Cyprus (12.9.56 - .17.2.57)				
10.9.56 17.12.56	9.11.56	25.9.56	19.9.56 4.12.56	
No. 24 port Fouad 22.11.56 - 22.12.56				
14.12.56				

Note. Those in grey have been reported but I have not seen strikes so are artists impressions.

6-11-1956	17-9-1956		6-12-1956	2-12-1956
6-11-1956	9-11-1956			
PORTE-AVIONS BEARN &		BATIMENT DE LIGNE RICHELIEU &		
BUREAU NAVAL N°16	BUREAU NAVAL N°16		BUREAU NAVAL N° 24	

French Naval markings



Cover from the Escorteur (Frigate) Arabe during the build up to invasion.

Egyptian Army

Again I am indebted to Major Berest and his article in the BAPIP magazine for most of this information. The Egyptian Army had introduced six- and eight-sided military handstamps in the early Fifties and several were in use in the Sinai. I have no information of any being used in the Canal Zone. These are all in Arabic and have the date in the centre with the number in the lower section and the top section *el-barid el-harbi*.

No.	Location	Units served
1	Presumed in Egypt	
2		
3	Abu Agheila	Gunnery School
4	Cairo Camp	
5	Rafah	87 Bde., 5 Bde., 3rd Btn.
6	Gaza	26 Bde., Security Services, Medical Services
7	El Arish	3rd Div., 4 Bde.; 2nd Tank Btn.
8		
9	Abu Agheila	18 Inf. Btn.
10	Rafa	8th Div., 86 Bde., 3rd Btn.
11	El Arish	No. 2 Light Tank Coy.
12	El Arish	No. 1 Volunteer Unit (Fedayin)
13	Ismailia	Eastern Command HQ (Sinai Area)
14	Port Said	National Guard Command HQ.
15	Ismailia	Southern Command (Sinai)
16	Sharm El Sheikh	21 Inf. Btn.
17	Gaza	24 National Guard Bde.
18	Kuseima	23 Bde., 16 Frontier Force Btn.
19	Rafa	No. 2 Volunteer Unit (Fedayin)
20	Gaza	National Guard HQ (Palestine), 313 Volunteer Btn.
21	Cairo	GHQ Accounts Section



FPO *el-barid el-harbi* البريد الحربي The war post.

The example shown is ٢٠ (20) dated ٥٦-١٠-٣٠ (56-10-30)

٠	١	٢	٣	٤	٥	٦	٧	٨	٩
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Note: Dealers and auction houses make great play that many of the covers offered with these markings are “last day”, being the date the Israeli army overran the position in which they operated. These are no more scarce than those showing earlier dates, and in fact are probably easier to find because they are all “liberated” covers taken by the philatelically-minded Israeli troops.

In fact good clean covers, possibly with additional postmarks of that period, are difficult to find.

Egyptian Censorship

Egyptian covers show the normal violet censor marks, either triangular or a number in a circle. Red resealing labels are also found.

Egyptian Navy



While I know of no Egyptian postal markings, the Navy did play some part in the war. The Egyptian destroyer *Ibrahim al Awal* sailed into Haifa Bay from Port Said, the warship's 4in guns firing 220 rounds at the port and the nearby oil refinery. A French warship anchored in the harbour quickly returned fire, but the *Ibrahim al Awal* was able to slip away under cover of darkness. She sailed northwest towards a group of neutral American ships. At 3.56am, two Israeli naval ships, the *Eilat* and *Yafo*, began searching for the Egyptian intruder, which was well hidden among the American ships.

At 5am, a Dakota pinpointed the enemy ship and the sea battle began in earnest. After taking a few hits, the *Ibrahim al Awal* began running towards Beirut. At 6.38 the IAF entered the fight. Two Dassault Ouragans rocketed and strafed the ship. They knocked out her electrical system, disabled her steering capability and put the munitions elevators out of operation. The warship had no fight left in her. At 7.10, Israeli sailors boarded the destroyer. The *Ibrahim al Awal* was towed back to Haifa, where it was repaired and later entered the Israel Navy as the *I.N.S. Haifa*.



A cover sent to a member of the crew just before the war when she was undergoing a refit in Malta



F.P.O.6 censored with double circle 297.

Israeli Markings

I have no information on naval or air force markings.

Israeli Army

The Israeli Army had introduced triangular markings some time after the 1948 war and as far as I know no additional markings were used during the war beyond those already in use. Each unit had its own number, the mail passing from the military to the civilian post office for delivery. The little information I have comes from BAPIP Magazine No 61 by Major Zvi Breset, and I do not know of any information of which units used which number or where they were used. As some covers used Egyptian “liberated” stationery it is only these that one can, with an appropriate date, be certain they were used by the forces in the Sinai.

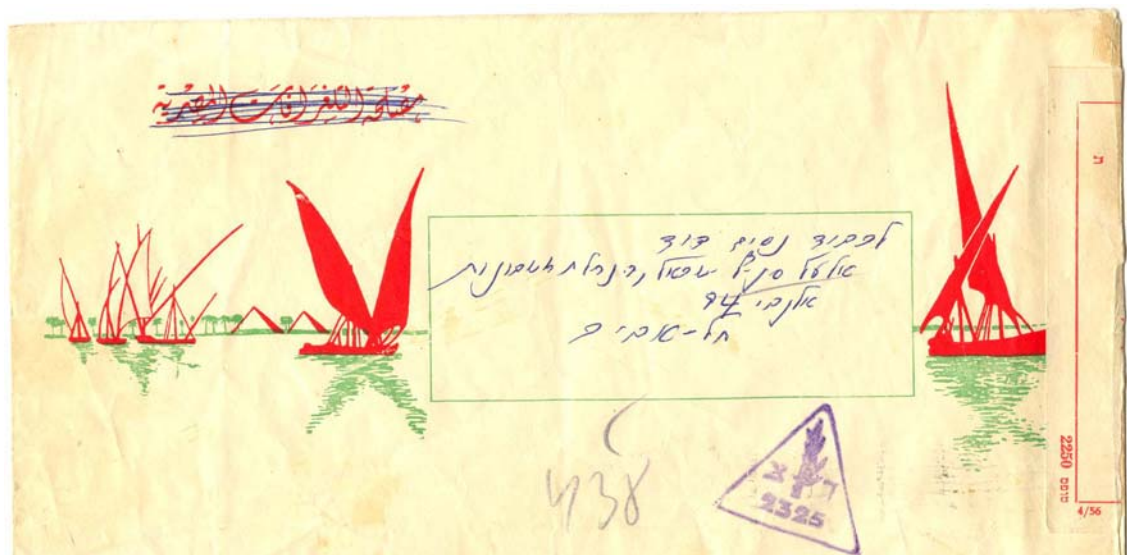
Numbers in the table below may have been used in the Sinai and Gaza, including not only Operation Kadesh but also the subsequent Israeli occupation. Those found on captured Egyptian stationery are in **bold**:



1072	Et Tor	2164		2594	
1151		2213		2662	
2105		2215		2688	Abu Rudeis
2135		2295		2919	
2146		2323		2922	
2149		2325	Et Tor	2940	
2155		2572			



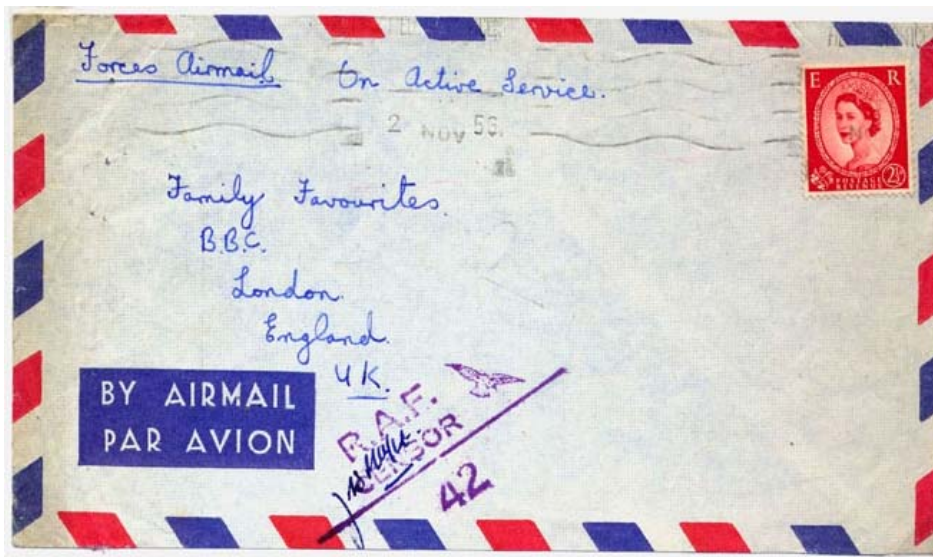
Two covers from Israeli troops using liberated envelopes.



The original plan was to attack Alexandria – the main aim being to remove Nasser – but the attack was switched to Port Said. The ensuing war was a fiasco politically. Other than a few at the highest level, the British and French commanders had no idea of the collusion and thought Israel was also an enemy. The British commander, General Sir Charles Keightley, not knowing he was meant to help the Israelis, postponed the original air raids and Dyan nearly abandoned the Sinai, cursing the British as “*lying bastards who couldn't keep their word*”. Abba Eban, the Israeli Ambassador to the UN, suggested that Israel would agree to the peace plan before the British/French attack, causing Eden to panic. After the first few days the Egyptian air force stayed grounded or flew to safety in Syria and Saudi Arabia, not that the pilots were afraid but Nasser ordered them to stay grounded, reasoning that the aircraft would quickly be replaced but the pilots not so easily so.

While the French had some contact with the Israelis, the British had none and on finding Israeli liaison officers on Cyprus agreed to their remaining “as long as we did not know they were there”. French pilots left Cyprus with sealed orders and after take-off found they had to fly to Israel. On landing they were surprised to find Israeli technicians changing the French roundels to the Star of David. It was French planes flying from Israel that destroyed the feared Ilyushin-28s at Luxor. With a run on the pound partly orchestrated by Eisenhower and Bulganin threatening Britain with atomic retaliation, Eden panicked and stopped the fighting without reference to France. One myth that survives is that if the canal had been taken, Suez would have remained under British and French control. International pressure would still have caused the ignominious withdrawal that followed.

The French were incensed and for many years mistrusted the British: the debacle was partly instrumental in France's withdrawal From Nato. Algeria was lost and both Britain and France accelerated their withdrawal from empire as spent forces. Eisenhower later was to say that Suez was his biggest mistake. Eden resigned and left office a broken man. Khrushchev was soon removed, one reason being given as his almost getting the Soviet Union embroiled in an atomic war over Suez. The Russians had their naval base at Alexandria and influence in Egypt for only a few years. Ben-Gurion's dream of holding the Gaza strip and the eastern Sinai, to ensure passage of shipping into the Red Sea, was thwarted by America and international pressure. Nasser appeared to be realising his pan-Arab dream of a united Arab entity with all the Arab countries behind him, culminating in the 1957 “treaty of Arab solidarity”. But by the end of 1957 King Abd al-'Aziz of Saudi Arabia had become convinced that Nasser's Arab nationalism would become a fatal threat to his family's political survival. By 1958, Jordan and Saudi Arabia had joined Iraq as Egypt's main enemies. There were no winners in this war.



Cover from F.P.O.3 based at RAF Akrotiri with one of the short-lived RAF censor marks.

Tail-piece: at my local stamp club a couple of weeks ago two members were discussing Suez, both having played small parts while serving in Cyprus at the time. One recounted a conversation with an American reporter who was dispatched post-haste to Cairo when the balloon went up. He landed at Cairo just at the British were bombing the airport and suggest to the Egyptians: “Shouldn't the people be evacuated?” “No,” came the response. “They're only bombing the runway”, upon which a Canberra obligingly dropped a few bombs dead centre. The reporter then confronted an Egyptian major in jodhpurs with a small dog on a lead, every inch a Sandhurst product, smoking Players. He pointed out that they were “enemy cigarettes”, to which the major replied, quick as a flash: “Yes, but we are under strict instructions to destroy enemy property by burning.”

In memoriam: Anatole Ott

Members will be saddened to hear of the death on September 27 of Anatole Ott (ESC 261), who passed away as a result of pancreatic cancer within days of receiving his second successive Egypt Study Circle Macarthur Award, for the best QC article of 2005. That article, and all of Anatole's most recent spare time, was devoted to researching the tortuous workings of the Egyptian Foreign Parcels system and illustrating it with evidence from extant parcel cards. The work took him into areas never before explored by Egypt philatelists, and his series of articles earned him deserved respect for his tenacity and unfailing attention to detail. But Parcels were not his only love – Anatole was Study Leader for research and recording of TPO markings, which, while acknowledging his enormous debt to Peter Smith's 1983 monograph, had built enormously on that original basic work; and was also fascinated by the Hotel postal markings and with building up a comprehensive list of the railway services on which TPOs and Rurals were carried. In all of these areas he was a firm and indefatigable friend, always ready to share information via photocopies and long lists of his research findings (though his handwriting left much to be pondered over; Anatole was not a child of the computer age!). Despite the increasing burden of illness in recent years, Anatole, who had been a Circle member for well over 25 years, made every effort to travel from Sweden to attend our more important meetings in London, most often accompanied by his wife Berit, to whom the Circle offers its extreme condolence. We are all diminished by his loss.

Mike Murphy

Annual Subscription 2007 now due!

Members are reminded that the annual subscription of £15 / €25 / \$30 for 2007 is due on January 1. Please help the Circle by paying up on time - to your local Agent where appropriate; by cheque (payable to Egypt Study Circle) to our Treasurer, Brian Sedgley, Greenpeckers, Seven Hills Road, Cobham, Surrey KT11 1ER; or via PayPal to egyptstudycircle@hotmail.com (please add £1/€1.50/\$2 to cover PayPal charges).

I should like to thank Peter Grech (ESC 266) and several members of the Forces Postal History Society for some of the illustrations. Any further information or illustrations would be welcome. The main body of this article was done three years ago from notes gathered over 20 years and while I may not recall all of my sources I believe I list the main ones below.

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The Story Behind the Stamp: Balian 176/177, December 20, 1956, and January 30, 1957



The original stamp was issued while British and French troops were still in Port Said. The picture purports to show the French ship *Jean Bart* sinking and Egyptian troops and civilian resistance devastating the paratroops of Britain and France. Perhaps a little poetic licence has been used, as the *Jean Bart* received no damage during the conflict. Fierce resistance was put up initially against the invasion, but mainly by the regular Egyptian forces. Perhaps for these stamps the information given on the philatelic handout best describes them:

The struggle of Port-Said against Aggressors. December 20th 1956

Britain and France failed in their attempt at internationalising the Suez canal and at compelling Egypt to go back on its decree of nationalisation. This was considered to be a sign that Anglo-French imperialism was coming to an end. On Oct. 29, 1956 Britain, France used force against Egypt by allowing the Israeli forces to invade Egyptian territory under the protection of their forces. They sent an ultimatum to Egypt which was flatly rejected and then began the flagrant intervention against Egyptian territory. The Anglo-French forces bombarded the targets in the big cities of Egypt and Port-Said was invaded by air, sea and land. But valiant and glorious Port-Said struggled against the invaders with crisp determination and caused them great fatal losses.

The Postal Administration has spared no efforts to make immortal the struggles of the courageous people of Port-Said so that every freedom-loving man cherish this memory.

Date of evacuation from the valiant city of Port-Said, January 14 1957

The Anglo-French-Israeli aggression was condemned by all the world and U.N.O. approved a resolution by an overwhelming majority of 65 votes calling for the immediate withdrawal of the invading troops from Egyptian territory.

The 3 aggressor countries refused to withdraw from Egypt but world public opinion and especially the British man in the street, the Russian ultimatum and the heroic bravery shown by the struggling people of Egypt; all these factors were effective in compelling Britain and France to withdraw their forces from Port-Said on Dec 22, 1956. Israel withdrew later from the Sinai Peninsula.

The United Nations recommended, with the consent of Egypt, the formation of an United Nations Emergency Force which was sent to Egypt. This force was stationed in the canal zone until complete evacuation of British and French troops from Port-Said. Later the U.N.E.F, moved into the Gaza and the Sinai peninsula facing the Israeli withdrawal. The U.N.E.F. is now stationed on the Egyptian-Israeli Armistice lines.



France returned this cover partly franked with the overprinted stamp, stating that it contravened the UPU regulations on propaganda.