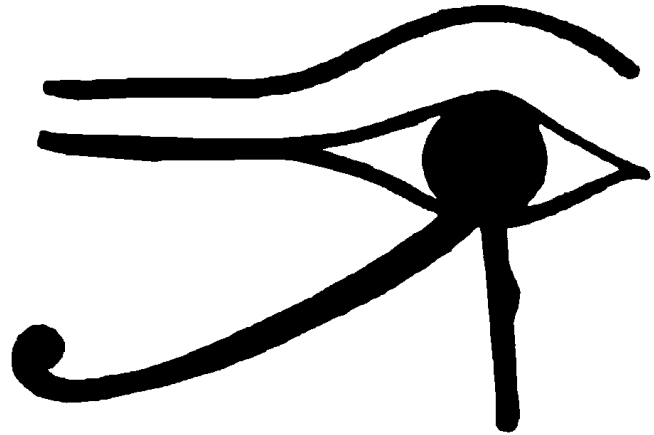


The
Quarterly Circular
of

THE
EGYPT

STUDY CIRCLE



September Quarter 2008

Whole Series No. 226

Volume XX No. 3

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Egypt Meeting 2008
Will now take place in Sharm el-Sheikh
16-17-19 November

For further information please see the web site or
contact Mike Murphy ASAP as details need to be
finalised by September 30. For those who wish to
exhibit a 16 sheet entry is required.



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Forthcoming Meetings 2008-2009

September 20*	(Stampex) Acquisitions/Queries	All Members
November 22	Postal Stationery	Peter Andrews/John Davis
January 10	TBD	
February 28*	(Stampex) Ten sheets	All Members
May 2	AGM & Bourse	
July 18	July 18 (In York) TBD	
September 19*	(Stampex) Acquisitions/Queries	All Members
November 7	TBD	

Stampex September 17-20 2008, February 25-28 2009, Philatex February 26-28 and November 5-7 2009

Meetings are normally held at the Victory Services Club, Seymour Street, Marble Arch, London. Members usually congregate in the ground floor bar from 1pm onwards and meetings commence at 2pm.

* These meetings will be at Stampex at the Design Centre, Islington, North London.

Meeting of July 12, 2008

PRESENT: Those present were: John Sears (President), Stanley Horesh (Deputy Chairman), Edmund Hall (Editor/Webmaster), Brian Sedgley (Treasurer), John Davis (Librarian), David Sedgwick (Publicity Officer), Mike Bramwell, Dennis Clarke, John Clarke, Pierre Grech, Paul Green, Mohamed Nofal, Lewis Said, Sami Sadek with guest Mrs. Ann Sedgwick.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies were received from Peter Andrews, Mike Murphy (in North America with his family - a poor excuse!), Mostafa El-Dars, Cyril Defriez, Alan Jeyes, Bill Johns and Adelene Simmers.

The Chairman, Peter Andrews, being away in Australia with his family, the chair was taken by the Deputy Chairman, Stanley Horesh, who welcomed thirteen members and guest on a warm and sultry afternoon. Edmund Hall was Acting Secretary for the afternoon; these notes were taken by John Davis.

Two new membership applications had been received from: Christopher Barton, of the Isle of Skye, and Peter Gargett, of Leeds. They were proposed by Mike Murphy, seconded by Edmund Hall and elected unanimously. A warm welcome is extended to you both!

The venues for meetings in 2009 were discussed at some length and it was agreed to move the July meeting from the Victory Services Club in London (currently £178 for the afternoon), to July 18 near York Racecourse, where a two-day Stamp Fair, with many northern and overseas dealers, will take place on Friday 17 and Saturday 18 July. It was suggested that members could consider attending both Friday and Saturday sessions, and accommodation information will be made available soon. The Circle meeting will take place in a nearby church hall (£12 per hour), and we are grateful to Keith Pogson of York (ESC 130) for making the arrangements. A meeting room at the Racecourse Fair itself would cost £235. See www.visityork.org or telephone 01904 550099 to obtain information from the York Tourist Board. Several members indicated their intention to stay overnight, perhaps at the Railway Station Hotel or De Grey Rooms in Exhibition Square, so the meeting could well turn into a social event too!

A list of dates and locations for 2009 is as follows:

January 10	Services Club
February 28	at Stampex – Ten sheets (Stampex Feb 25-28; Philatex Feb 26-28)
May 2	Services Club – AGM & Bourse
July 18	York
September 19	at Stampex – Acquisitions/Queries (Stampex Sept 16-19)
November 7	Services Club (Philatex Nov 5-7)

The Sharm el-Sheikh event is scheduled for November 16-18 and will definitely take place in conjunction with the UPU-related PosTech international conference on postal technology at the Jolie Ville Maritim Congress Centre and Hotel in Naama Bay, Sharm. The Conference itself is to be organised by the British exhibition experts Triangle of Bourne End, Bucks, and the Philatelic Society of Egypt is hoping to mount an extensive series of frames for competition to be judged with (unofficial) awards, similar to Cairo 1991. Exhibits of five frames of 16 sheets (80 sheets in all) will be welcomed, as well as the attendance of as many ESC members as possible. Security of material in the frames and insurance will be guaranteed by the PSE, which is hoping for at least half a dozen entries from the UK.

A problem was envisaged with the location - Sharm is some five-plus hours by road from Cairo (even with Sami Sadek's brother driving!) and there outside philately the choice of activity is somewhat limited – to sun-bathing, snorkelling, etc, so the meeting considered a two-location holiday package to include Cairo, and hoped for a volunteer to investigate the possibilities and report back to Mike Murphy on his return from Canada on August 8. Sami Sadek recommended Suliman Travel. A return fare London-Sharm was mentioned at the meeting at £239, but this entails a week in Egypt, hence the two-location suggestion. Hands were raised by five possible attendees, and response to an email message has garnered three more British "possibles" as well as potential exhibitors from Germany and the United States.

The possible New Zealand conference in February 2009 was discussed but, sadly, there seemed little interest - perhaps it is just too far away? Anyone interested should contact Tony Chisholm as soon as possible.

The international exhibition London 2010 was discussed - this is the big one that happens every ten years. A table at the show, to be held at The Design Centre, Islington, North London, from May 8-15, will cost £250 but the Sudan Study Group has offered to share such a table (so fewer of us would be required to man the table) and to split the costs. It was agreed to accept this offer.

It was also agreed that a meeting place should be sought (a room at the exhibition would cost £200), possibly directly through the management of the Design Centre or in a nearby pub. The question of frames arose and was postponed for discussion at the next meeting or in committee, depending upon finding a room. Two members actually offered to make frames!

The ABPS was holding its annual meeting at the same time as our meeting, and the time is fast approaching when we should decide whether or not to consider our continuing affiliation. What do we get for the fee? The Secretary has a mass of material from them should anyone wish to see it.

John Sears reported that the spring auction, No 46, had a turnover of more than £7,000 and a cheque for £750 would be passed to the general account. He expects some auction in the future to be a complete flop, but it has not happened yet. While on his feet he also mentioned a new and updated version of his book *The Airmails of Egypt*, which is now available at £25 (£18 to ESC members).

Mohamed Nofal also had brought along his new book, *Postcard Collectors Guide Part II: Raphael Tuck & Sons and Other Publishers of Humour, Egypt 1902-1952* written and published by him. This volume is available for £25, €40 or \$50 with a 20 per cent discount for ESC members (see pages 60-61). The next in the series will be on Louis Levy postcards

Brian Sedgley mentioned that we had lost some ten members over the past 12 months, in part because of the increase in subscriptions, but that had been partly balanced by the acquisition of six new members. The books in the Library and the stamp collections are insured for a total of £5,000, an amount which will be increased since the acquisition of the Postal Bulletins, on the subject of which Sami Sadek announced that he had bought those published in Arabic only, and offered help to members should they wish to consult him.

As well as books recently acquired from the Grosvenor sale for the Library, including Peter Smith's book, John Davis mentioned that he had received two new items: 1. *Whatever Happened to the Egyptians? Changes in Egyptian Society from 1950 to the Present*, by Galal Amin (American University in Cairo Press, Cairo 2000): This book was kindly donated by Peter Grech (ESC 266). 2. *Postcard Collectors Guide Part II: Raphael Tuck & Sons and Other Publishers of Humour, Egypt 1902-1952* written and published by our member Mohamed Aly Nofal (2008).

The Grosvenor auction in November (date not yet known) will contain material from the collections of two prominent members: John Sears' First Fuad collection (medal winner at Stampex) and an unspecified part of the collection of Dennis Clarke. Members may contact Grosvenor for a free catalogue (postage to be paid).

That concluded the business section of the meeting and there followed an erudite and learned exposé of Airgraphs by Dennis Clarke.

He introduced the subject by saying that Airgraphs should really be studied as a subject in their own right rather than as an aspect of Egyptian philately or postal history. In passing, I understand from the book *Airgraphs*, edited and published by F.H. Kearton and produced by the Forces Postal History Society in January 1981, that: "The late John Davis published the one and only catalogue under his trading name of 'J. Stephen' in 1948 with a reprint in 1952 and this was in effect his own price-list". As I was eight years old in 1948 I do assure the membership that the abovementioned 'late John Davis' was not a reference to me!

However, not to detract from the very informative talk given by Dennis, it is fair to say that much of the material he displayed had Egyptian connections, most of it emanating from British or other soldiers, sailors and airmen. It was commented on that although many Airgraphs sent by combatants have survived, replies

from their wives and girl friends seem conspicuous by their absence. Perhaps the women kept their correspondence while the men were unable to do so within a war situation.

Later the Airgraph system was open to members of the Merchant Navy and to other civilians, but the 40 millièmes charge was more expensive than the 3d charged to members of the Armed Forces. I have a small number of Boy King 40mill values cancelled with the Airgraph Service postmark and had always wondered how this came about.

The 40mill payment for civilians was attached to the back of the form and cancelled. As these forms were destroyed once photographed and confirmation of delivery had been received, in theory no 40mill values cancelled with the Airgraph Service postmark should have survived.

The Airgraph form, shown unused in Dennis's display, was approximately A4 in size and, when completed by the sender, was taken to civilian or military post office, censored, and then sent to the processing centre. Bundles of 1600 were microfilmed on to spools of film that were run through enlargers exposing around 3000 prints an hour on a long paper strip 4 ¼ in wide. Fed through paper processing machines, the paper was dried on a heated drum and rolled up for checking. Each individual print, measuring about 5 ¼ in long, was then chopped from the roll and folded so that the address appeared in the window of the envelope. If no delivery confirmation was received because of transmission problems, the form could be photographed again and the resulting Airgraph was then delivered with a handstamp REPRINT struck on the reverse. Many addresses, however, particularly in the East End of London, had been destroyed during the Blitz.

Introduction of the Airgraph had followed the loss of air control over the Mediterranean when French resistance collapsed and Italy joined the Axis powers in 1940. Cargo carrying flights across Europe and the Mediterranean to Cairo virtually ceased, so a new form of mail became essential

A subsidiary company of Eastman-Kodak, with shareholders including Imperial Airways (and its successors), and Pan-American Airways, had been set up and named "Airgraphs Ltd" during 1939 with a view to utilising a system of photographing King letters for transmission by airmail, and it was this idea that was taken up. The machinery was illustrated by Dennis in the form of photographs and, as a retired printer, he was able to explain all the details of production.

Kodak handled all the photographic work and the Post Office was responsible for distribution of the forms (they could be obtained from post offices), publicity, transmission and delivery. The forms themselves, printed in the UK, Egypt, East and South Africa, originally had the address panel at the bottom but it was moved to the top of the form for "operational reasons" early on and that is where it stayed, although many versions, including illustrated and greetings types, became available.

Once on photographic paper the correspondence was cut from rolls, folded, and delivered in special window envelopes direct to the addressee. Originally, before envelopes had been provided in Cairo, early Airgraphs were merely folded and sealed with postal sealing tape bearing the legend EGYPTIAN POSTAL ADMINISTRATION in English and Arabic. Dennis was able to show some of these together with examples of the very many types issued.

The first batch of films left Cairo – which had a Kodak factory - for England on April 21, 1941; the first return journey took place on August 15 the same year but had to travel via Khartoum and across the southern Sahara to Takoradi in the Gold Coast, thence via Portugal to England.

The war rumbled on into 1945 when many fewer problems were encountered over the Mediterranean and, as a result, the system and its use began to tail off. Despite this, over 300 million Airgraphs were transmitted until the Postmaster-General announced that the service would cease on Tuesday July 21, 1945.

A splendid, comprehensive and informative display was enjoyed by all present.

50th Anniversary of Egypt-China Diplomatic Relations Issue

Edmund Hall (ESC 239)

On pages 69 and 72, among the New Issues, is the miniature sheet for the joint commemorative issue between China and Egypt of July 13 2006. When it was issued Leon Balian and Cyril Defriez spoke at the January meeting 2007 of their suspicions about this issue (see *QC* 220 p194), and speculated on its authenticity because it appeared that it could not be bought at the post office.

Since then it has been noted on the UPU-related authenticity website WNS as a genuine Egyptian issue and has been issued on the stuck-down year sheets issued by the Egyptian post office so there is no doubt that it should be classified as a genuine Egyptian item.

The official Chinese *Peoples Daily* newspaper stated at the time of issue:

Egypt, China issue commemorative stamps for golden jubilee of ties.

Egypt and China on Thursday jointly issued a collection of commemorative stamps and envelopes to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Sino-Egyptian diplomatic ties. Chinese Ambassador to Egypt Wu Sike, Board Chairman of Egypt Post Alaa Fahmy and Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister for Asia Affairs Aly Houssam el-Hefny attended a ceremony held in the Egyptian capital Cairo to mark the issue of the stamps.

The Chinese and Egyptian officials exchanged their commemorative stamps and envelopes. Ambassador Wu, on behalf of the Chinese government, presented Egyptian officials with 200 commemorative envelopes and 210,000 stamps, which were designed by Egypt and made in China, while Fahmy presented Wu with 1,000 commemorative envelopes and other souvenirs. Wu said that issuing these stamps and envelopes was another evidence of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. "Since the two nations established the diplomatic ties 50 years ago, bilateral relations have developed smoothly and steadily and the Sino-Egyptian ties have become a model for relations among developing countries," said Wu.

He added that a successful visit to Egypt by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao on June 17-18, during which the two sides signed 11 agreements and MOUs [memorandums of understanding – Ed], was set to help deepen the two countries' strategic relations of cooperation.

For his part, Fahmy said that a joint issue of commemorative stamps and envelopes was of great significance, which would be conducive to the development of the Egyptian-Sino relations. On May 30, 1956, China and Egypt officially declared the establishment of diplomatic relations, which made Egypt the first Arab and African country to have diplomatic ties with China.

An official Chinese Peoples Republic website also gives further information:

On May 30, 1956, the Arab Republic of Egypt established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.

With a view to promote friendship between China and Egypt, the postal administrations of the two countries have decided to conduct the joint issue of a set of two-piece stamps featuring Ancient Gilded and Gold Masks on Oct. 12, 2001.

On Oct. 16, 2000, the two countries signed the memorandum of understanding on the joint issue in Cairo (capital of Egypt) and, on Feb. 27, 2001, signed the agreement on the jointly issue and decided on the best stamp design in Cairo. On Oct.12, 2001, the first-day issue ceremony was held in De Yang, Sichuan Province of China. Both China and Egypt are ancient civilized countries.

One piece of the joint-issue set of stamps shows the San Xingdui Ancient Gilded Mask of China and the other shows the Gold Mask of Tutankhamen of Egypt. Both are ancient valuable cultural relics of the two countries. The jointly issue is co-designed by Wang Huming, a Chinese stamp designer, and Saeid El-Badrawy, an Egyptian stamp designer.

The Sanxingdui Site is located in Guanghan, Sichuan Province. Since 1986, a great number of bronze, jade and gold articles, which belonged to the ancient Shu Kingdom in the Yangtze River valley 3,000 years ago were unearthed. The gilded mask showed in the stamp is one piece of curiosa among them. It is made of gold leaf with eyes and brows pierced. The bronze head wearing the golden mask takes on a quite vivid look.

This miniature sheet soon appeared on several websites, being offered as a great Egyptian rarity. Mention is made of the presentation ceremony and that these sheets were printed in China with a very limited print run of only 5,000 pieces. Attention is also drawn to the spelling of Abu Simple for the Abu Simbel temple and one cannot help wondering if the Chinese printers ran the wording through an over-helpful spell-checker. It is suggested that 3000-3500 pieces were used up, fulfilling UPU obligations, in supplying regular new issue customers and in making up the year sheets so that international dealers were issued only one miniature sheet for each ten sets of stamps. Some remaining stock was eventually sold to Egyptian dealers, who showed some alacrity in putting them on the internet for sale.

A few months ago a holographic plastic miniature sheet began to be offered by dealers in Egypt and Europe at quite a high price with suggestions that perhaps only 50 such items existed, but then in about May they were also offered by sources in China stating that 600-800 pieces were made in the Henan province - and soon these were being offered in lots of 10 at a lower price than previously asked for one.

Pretty as they may be, I don't see them as genuine Egyptian philatelic items although one Chinese seller quotes "this is the rarest Egyptian stamp s/s issue".

China also issued stamps and a miniature sheet similar in design and a holographic miniature has also been produced.

On the Awards Rostrum.

Congratulations to our distinguished former President **Peter Smith** (ESC 74) on winning a Large Gold with special prize awarded at the World Stamp Championship in Tel Aviv (May 14-21) for his exhibit on Egypt: The Classic Period, 1866-1879, which received 96 marks.

In the same event **Dick Wilson** (ESC 230) was awarded a Large Vermeil (86 marks) for his exhibit British Forces in Egypt and Sudan 1882-1898; and **Leon Balian's** second volume, *Stamps of Egypt Book Two*, won Vermeil with 80 marks in the Literature class.

A non-member, Panayotis Cangelaris of Greece, took Vermeil for his Kingdom of Egypt (1922-1953) exhibit in the traditional class.

In the Salon du Timbre international in Paris (June 14-22), **Mordecai Kremener** (ESC 291) was awarded a Gold for his eight-frame exhibit Postal Services in Beyrouth, Lebanon, until 1918. Large Vermeils were won by the Egyptian Commissioner, **Ibrahim Shoukry** (ESC 423) for his five frames on the Crown Overprints (86 points) and **Mohamed Adel Farid** (ESC 495) for Egyptian Air Mail 1910-1944 (88 points).

Another non-member, Bernard Rabussier, also scored 88 and a Large Vermeil for his French Post Offices in Egypt, 1857-1931.

Membership changes

New Members:

ESC 629 Chris Barton, 20 Lochbay, Waternish, Isle of Skye, IV55 8GD
(Suez Canal, 1967-75 ships trapped in Canal, modern paquebot covers through Canal)

ESC 630 Peter Gargett, 5 Holt Park Rise, Leeds, LS16 7QZ
(Early Egypt, Penny Blacks with Leeds postmarks)

Change of address:

ESC 579 Adelene Simmers, 6 Peat Way, Portlethen, Aberdeen AB12 4XN

Resigned:

ESC 560 Tony Adams

Lapsed:

ESC 368 Kenneth Doig

ESC 576 Mona El-Difrawi

ESC 602 Gordon Bonnett

31 Poynders Road, Clapham Park, London

John Davis (ESC 213)

Does anyone recognise this address? Do you have covers addressed to 31 Poynders Road, Clapham Park, London? Please check and advise me.

I am intrigued because I have several items and they are addressed to different people during the 1930s, all at the same address. I have only really checked my Postal Concession collection because the covers are mostly emanating from the Military Post Office at Abu Qir or the civilian post office at Aboukir.

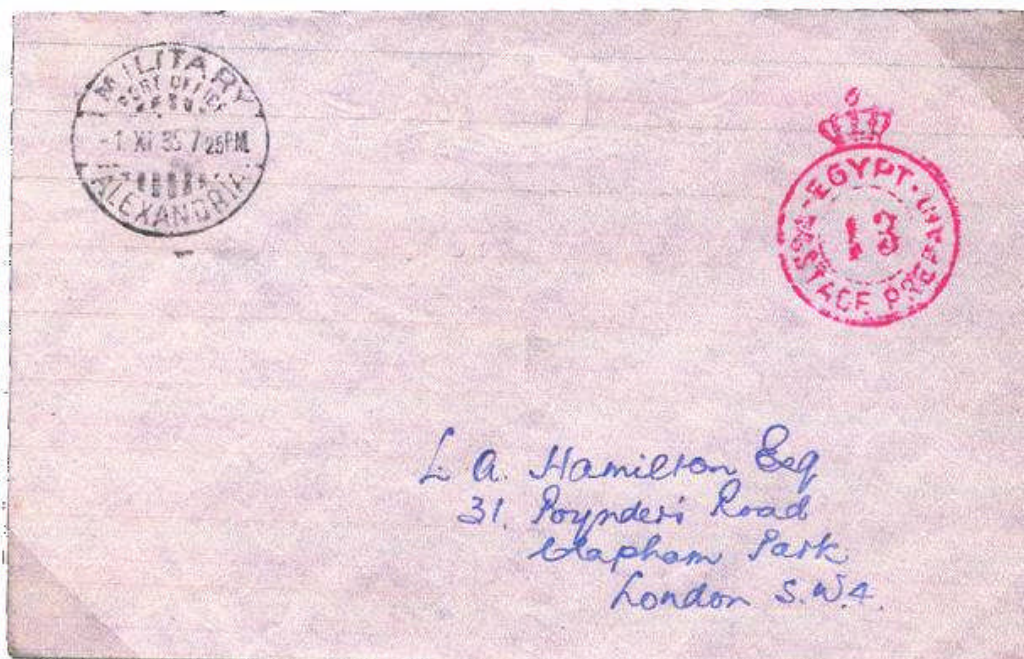
Let me explain: the earliest items bear on the reverse the 1935 provisional Christmas seal and there are two, both are first day covers, the first was illustrated in John Hobbs's book addressed to L.A. Hamilton Esq. and was posted at M.P.O. Alexandria, whereas the one in my collection is addressed to a Mrs Adolf Adler, also at 31 Poynders Road.

The following year, after the change of system whereby the Letter Stamps were replaced by the King Fuad Army Post stamps, the first day of issue of the ten millièmes is listed as 1st March, 1936, and of the three millièmes as 1st December, 1936. This may not seem important, but Gibbons have only fairly recently changed this latter date from 6th November, 1936.

After a recent ESC meeting Bill Johns very kindly sent me a scan of his cover with the Fuad three millièmes clearly cancelled at M.P.O. Abu Qir and clearly dated 12th November, 1936, one day before the official notice - which gave the date of issue as 1st December, 1936 - was promulgated! The stamp is a bottom left-hand corner copy with the A/36 control still attached and the addressee is again L.A. Hamilton Esq. Clearly we are dealing with a philatelist who was sending the letters, but why more than one addressee's name at the Poynders Road address?

In addition to the above I have evidence that one L.A. MacIntosh Esq. also lived at the address because I also have a cover addressed to him there. It is also a first day cover of the 3 millièmes Fuad Army Post stamp but this time with no control and dated 1st December, 1936, the origin in this case being M.P.O. Port Said.

So, we have a Mr. L.A. Hamilton (no, not Lewis!), a Mr. L.A. MacIntosh, and a Mrs Adolf Adler all living at the Poynders Road address, all receiving mail from a philatelist in the military who was dodging around in 1936 between the military post offices at Abu Qir and Port Said. Very odd!



New Hotel, Cairo

Lucien Toutounji (ESC 264)

I have been fortunate recently to acquire what must be one of the earliest pieces of Egyptian hotel mail, a wonderful cover mailed from the "New Hotel" to New York with the hotel's name handstamped in blue in a lozenge with trimmed corners at lower left.



The British Office at Cairo thimble datestamp carries a clear December 28 1872, and the GB 2d and pair of 4d stamps are all clearly struck with the B01 handstamp of the British office in Alexandria. There is a red transit London Paid of 6 JA 73, and New York arrival of January 21.



One of the oldest hotels, in Cairo built at about the time of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the New Hotel was located in the centre of the city across the street from the Opera House and on the edge of the Ezbekiya Gardens. Renamed in the 1880s the Grand New Hotel, it was later remodelled and modernised and became first the Grand Continental Hotel and then in the 1920s the Continental Savoy after

the closure of the Savoy Hotel. Damaged during the riots of January 26 1952, it closed its doors soon after, though the building remains. The hotel post office was opened in 1891 and closed in 1952.

Another early piece of correspondence from the hotel is shown at right, a beautifully engraved cover of the Grand New Hotel, sent on March 14, 1883, to Alexandria. The cover is addressed to L. Barkhausen, who was closely involved with the printing by V. Penasson of the Second Issue of Egyptian definitive stamps in 1867. There is a same-day arrival backstamp.



Unusually, the cover is franked with a British stamp (plate 2) issued in 1875 of 2½d, about the equivalent to one piastre, the internal letter rate for 15gm from May 1 1879 to the end of 1887. The cancel is the Caire-Alexandria (TPO Type 8A1) of 14 MA 83 showing the unusual variety of CARIE for Caire.

The New Hotel created a good deal of interest when it was first built (Mike Murphy adds). This engraving from the Illustrated London News is dated February 4, 1871, and the caption describes the hotel as having been built by the Oriental Hotels Company.



A photograph from a similar angle, and showing to advantage the characteristic peaked arch over the entrance, was taken by the famous Turkish photographer Pascal Sebah (1823-1886), who opened a branch of his Istanbul photography studio in Cairo in 1873. This photograph is signed P. Sebah, but a rather closer version of the entrance (*below*) carries the signature J.P. Sebah: this was taken by Sebah's son, Johannes (Jean), who became involved in the business in 1890, when he was only 16 years old: see how the trees have grown in the intervening years.



Entrance by Johannes Sebah ...



... and the hotel peering over the Ezbekieh greenery

Fantasy or Reality? - It's Reality

On the back page of the last *QC*, No 225, a question was raised about the existence of the 3 millième Fuad Army Post stamp with oblique perforations. Well, without a doubt it DOES exist! No sooner had the *QC* had time to wing its way to the corners of the globe than the Editor's phone start ringing and emails arriving from members who had one or more in their collection. My apologies for not naming you all, but suffice to say that the replies did come from all corners of the Earth, from some eight or nine members old and new, with most of the emails complete with excellent scans of singles, pairs and one block of four.

Call me suspicious, but it was odd to notice that in just the time it takes for the *QC* to reach round the world then precisely this item had appeared on eBay, as a couple of members pointed out. As the original query had been raised by a long-standing member keen to enhance his collection for competition purposes, this news was passed on. And with the help of one of his children he successfully secured the item at a price not that much beyond the \$60 as quoted in *The Nile Post*. It is of interest that the angle of perforation was virtually identical in all cases, suggesting that they came from the same sheet or one cut in an identical manner.



It was very encouraging to see so many members respond; it gives real meaning to being a member of the ESC and also makes the Editor's job more worthwhile! Thanks again. What is also very encouraging is the thought that in time children can actually become useful rather than just a drain on one's stamp budget!

In the same *QC* (page 32) I mentioned the East German stamp overprinted for the support of Hungary in 1956. Again I had quick replies from two members, Andreas Birken (ESC 416) and Jürgen Fricke (ESC 557), both of whom put me right that the stamp, MICHEL 557, reads HELFT DEM SOZIALISTISCHEN

UNGARN, the intension apparently being that peace-loving, democratic German stamp-collectors are called upon to help the peace-loving, socialist armies of Hungary and the USSR in their struggle against the counter revolutionary bourgeois US-paid rioters. My thanks to you both, and for the accompanying catalogue cuttings. Since the article was published I have come across a couple of covers with the Help Egypt stamp actually sent to Egypt itself.



Andreas Birken also draws attention to the reference to Burgau, advising our collector-friends when using different atlases to look not only at the index but at the maps too, because Burgau in Schwaben is the same as Burgau in Bavaria, since Schwaben is a district (Regierungsbezirk) of the Freestate of Bavaria. Jena-Burgau, however, is part of the city of Jena in Thuringia.

Having some experience in this field, he would be glad to help members having difficulties in identifying place names. Just write to A.Birken@t-online.de. Oh, and by the way, there is no Swiss version of Italian.

Returning to the Royal misperforations, Lucien Toutounji (ESC 264) points out that not only postage stamps were given this treatment: for instance, the Airmail labels for special flights 'IMABA' Switzerland, 'CITEX' France and 'BEPITEC' Belgium.

To celebrate the centenary of the first Swiss stamp, an international stamp show 'IMABA', was held in Basel in August 1948. A special flight was organised from Cairo and an airmail label was issued by Egypt, to be affixed on the back of mail flown. The misperforated label is from the two sheets prepared for King Farouk.



At left is a block of four, imperforate between, of the green airmail label issued for the flight from Cairo to the stamp show, 'CITEX', held in Paris in June 1949 on the occasion of the centenary of the first French stamp.

And at right is a very similar block, issued for the special flight in connection with 'BEPITEC', the stamp show held in Brussels in July 1949 on the occasion of the centenary of the first Belgian stamp.

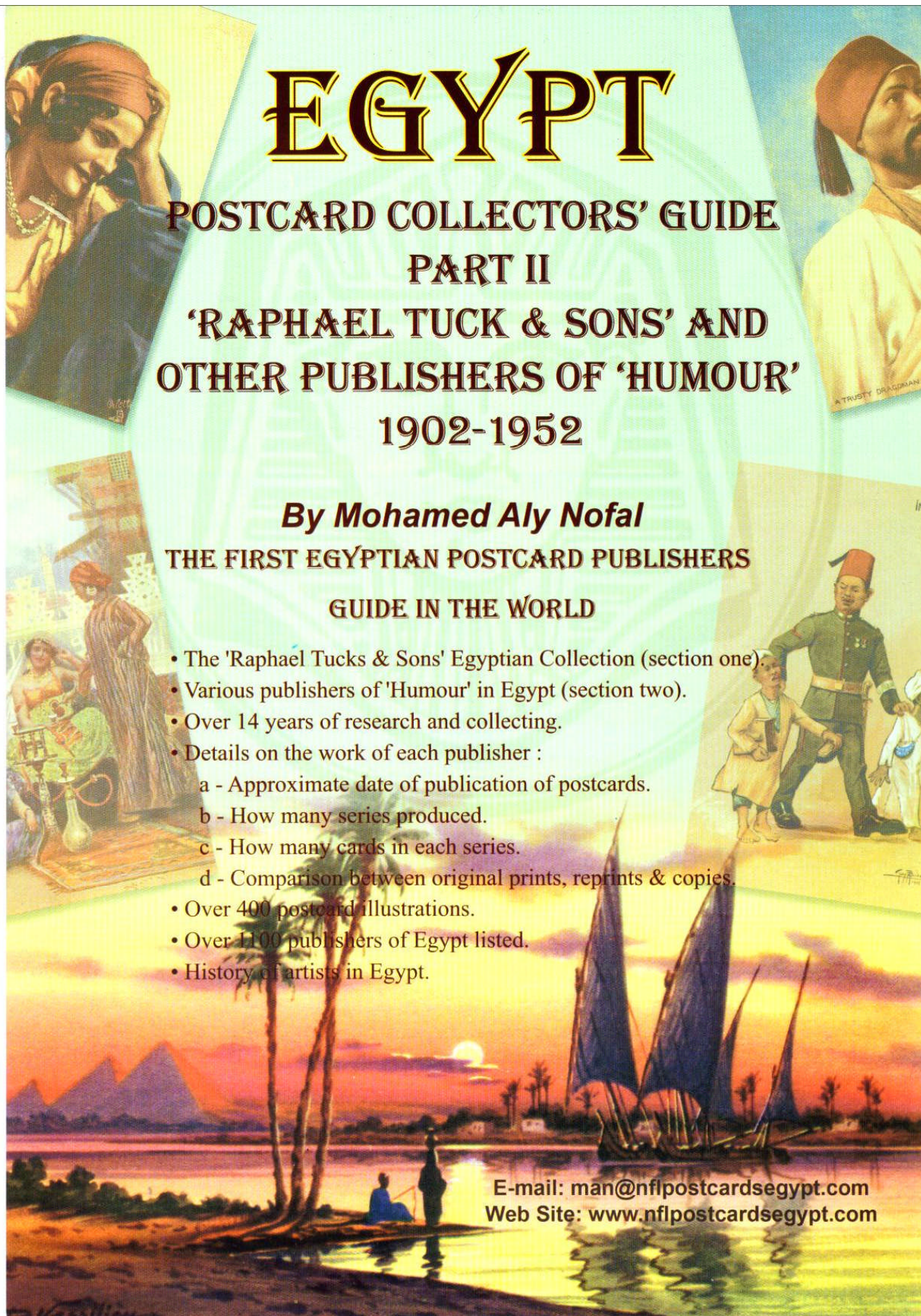


Lucien suggests that the really rare Royal misperforate is the 17 mills Marechal with King of Egypt and Sudan overprint. Scan supplied.



Lucien also sent in this gorgeous cover using the Army stamps from Military Post Office E 603 located at Suez on 30 March 1940, addressed to England, with a naval censor handstamp and signature. On the reverse is a same day transit backstamp of M.P.O. 602 at Alexandria; it will have travelled by BOAC to destination. The cover is franked at 44 mills, using eight copies of the 3 mills stamp, including a block of six, as well as two of the 10 mills Farouk Army stamps.

The military airmail rate was 40 mills, while the civilian rate was a 15 mills base rate to the Empire.



EGYPT

POSTCARD COLLECTORS' GUIDE PART II 'RAPHAEL TUCK & SONS' AND OTHER PUBLISHERS OF 'HUMOUR' 1902-1952

By Mohamed Aly Nofal

**THE FIRST EGYPTIAN POSTCARD PUBLISHERS
GUIDE IN THE WORLD**

- The 'Raphael Tucks & Sons' Egyptian Collection (section one).
- Various publishers of 'Humour' in Egypt (section two).
- Over 14 years of research and collecting.
- Details on the work of each publisher :
 - a - Approximate date of publication of postcards.
 - b - How many series produced.
 - c - How many cards in each series.
 - d - Comparison between original prints, reprints & copies.
- Over 400 postcard illustrations.
- Over 1100 publishers of Egypt listed.
- History of artists in Egypt.

E-mail: man@nflpostcardsegypt.com
Web Site: www.nflpostcardsegypt.com

- *Postcard Collectors' Guide: Part II – Raphael Tuck & Sons and other publishers of Humour, Egypt, 1902-1952*, by Mohamed Aly Nofal, A4 size, paperback, 171pp, lavishly illustrated in colour. Price £25 / €40 / \$50 – 20 per cent discount for ESC members, plus postage and packing, from 137 Gunnersbury Avenue, Acton, London W3 8LE, or visit www.nflpostcardsegypt.com or email man@nflpostcardsegypt.com. (See also page iii for your help)

Postcard Collectors' Guide Part II – Book Review

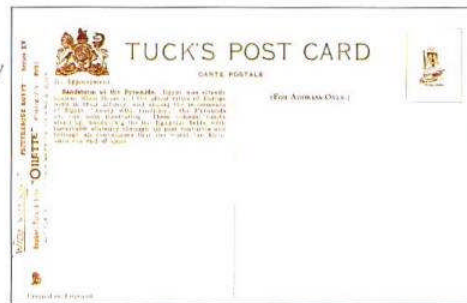
Hot on the heels of the publication by Mohamed Nofal (ESC 489) of his ground-breaking *Alexandria Postcard Guide* (see *QC* 222, page 247) comes the second volume on his series – this time covering the cards of Raphael Tuck & Sons and other publishers of humorous cards in the half century from 1902 to the demise of the monarchy.

As with the first volume, the labour of love that has led him to sort, sift and annotate for the first time literally thousands of cards cannot be faulted – at last there is a comprehensive listing of two of the favourite areas of

RAPHAEL TUCK & SONS AND HUMOUR - EGYPT

058

Publisher's Name : Raphael Tuck & Sons
Wide - Wide - World
Set Title and No. : Picturesque Egypt No:8941 Series: XV
Printed in : England
Earliest Dating : 1917
Artist : Tony A. Binder
Rarity : *****
Remarks : This set is also published in 'Photogravure' in card No:4338, series XVI. Card 04 is also published as "A Happy Easter" and "Christmas Greetings" card. Set was also published for the "Orient Line" by "Raphael Tuck & Sons Ltd. London. "Oilette" appears on the card, but not at the back as is usual.

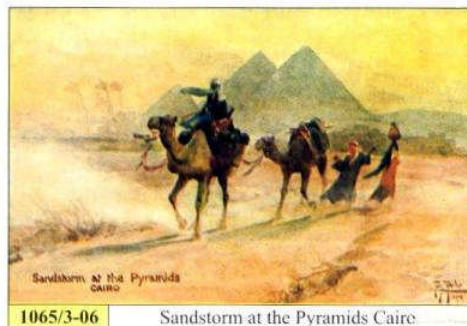
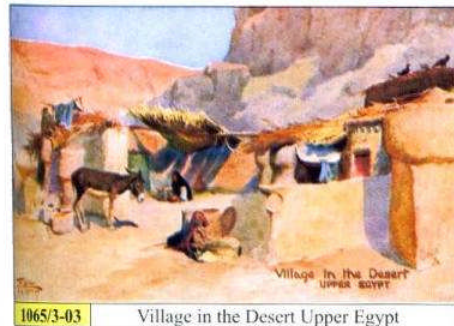
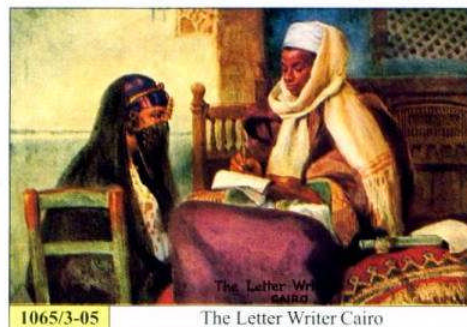
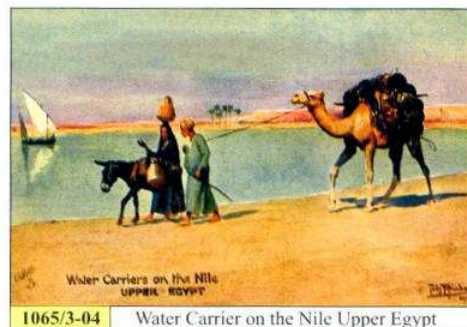
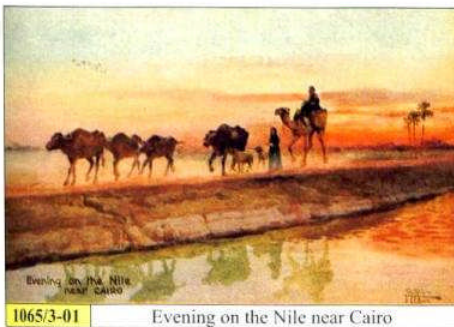


collecting, and a guide to their publishers, artists and, not least important, their comparative values.

The standard of printing and illustration reproduction is also faultless: Dar el Ketab, El-Saleh printing and Perfect Graphic have done an excellent job.

Mohamed introduces the volume with a series of pen-portraits of publishers and artists and an exhaustive and useful history of the Tuck company, followed by a 12-page analysis of Tuck's Egypt cards and a further 50 pages of series examples. The pattern is then followed by 40 pages of humorous series, and a comprehensive list, updated from the first volume with 1190 instead of 1038 entries, of publishers of Egyptian cards.

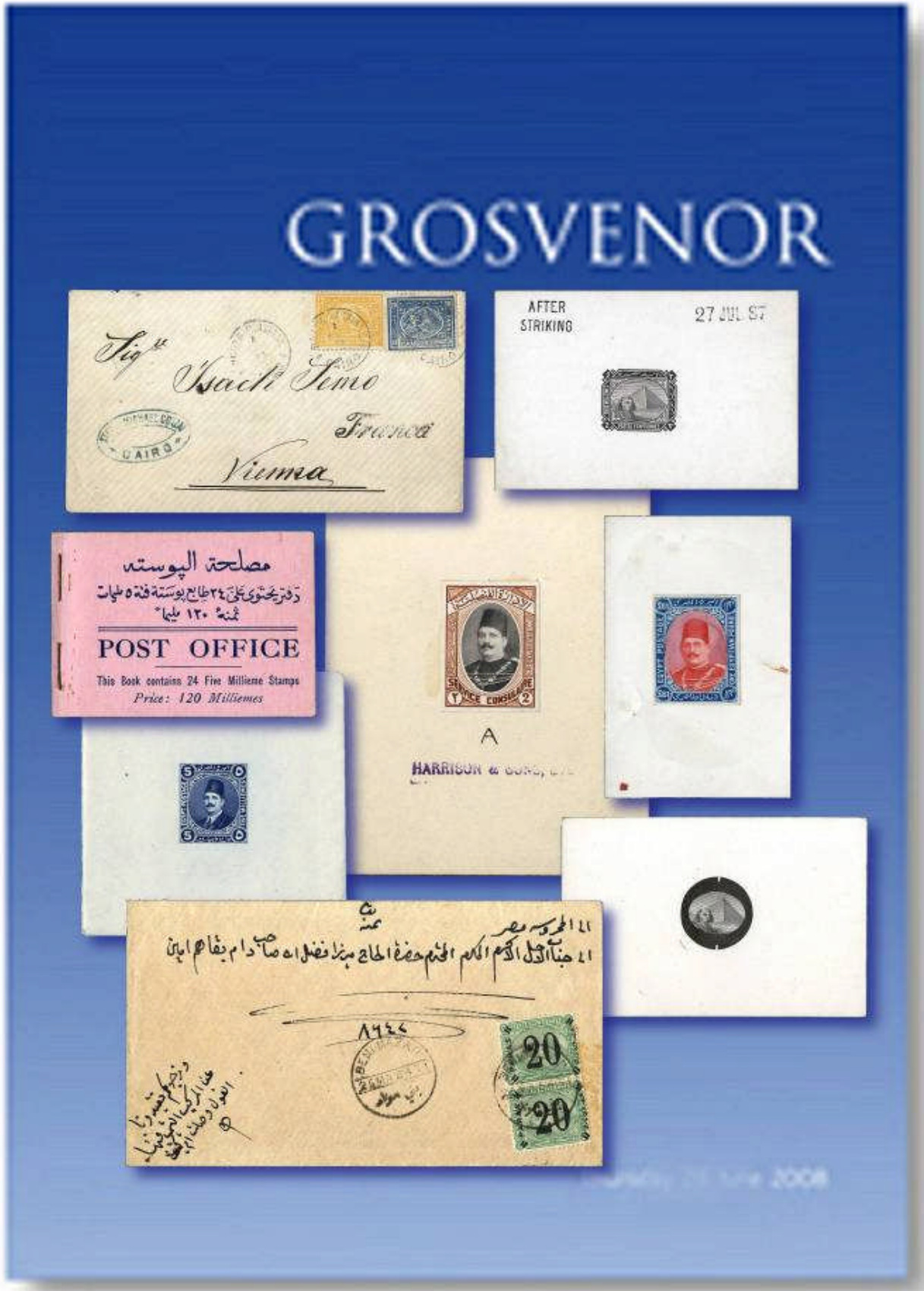
The comprehensive and complicated Index to the list could usefully have been placed at its head rather than tail, and I am not alone in wondering why the strikingly beautiful Lance Thackeray series of People of Egypt has been placed under "Humour", but in general the mistakes and infelicities of English that detracted somewhat from the first volume have been



virtually eliminated.

This is a useful volume. Both the Tucks and the Humour cards are attractive and eminently collectable, and the author's attention to detail gives them full credit. I only wish that the series page layouts allowed a little more space for Remarks, so that the content, weight and importance of each series and its place in the publisher's output could properly be explained.

Mike Murphy (ESC 240)



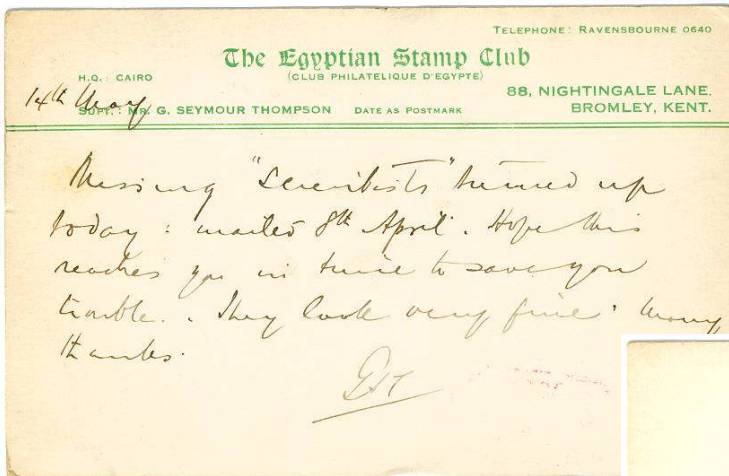
Two of our long serving members, Dennis Clarke and John Sears, are putting into auction parts of their collections, of which some items are shown above. The auction will take place sometime in November and Grosvenor are happy to supply catalogue copies to our members free of charge. Apply by letter or email to Grosvenor Auctions mentioning that you are an ESC member. Further news will be placed on our website.

Grosvenor Auctions, 399-401 Strand, Third Floor, London WC2R 0LT

e mail to - info@grosvenor-auctions.co.uk. Their website is - www.grosvenorauctions.com

A Blast from the Past

Edmund Hall (ESC 239)



Recently a philatelist friend of many years (non ESC member) passed this item to me, suggesting that it would dwell better in my collection. G. Seymour Thompson was a founding member of the Circle and, I think, the first agent for Club Philatélique d’Egypt for the UK. The card is addressed to Mr. Shaffer, who I assume was “Tex” Shaffer’s husband, both long-time members of the Circle. What is poignant about this is that my friend died soon after and I was

helping him, in a small way, write a philatelic book with strong Egypt connections and had earmarked the first week in August to go through his almost complete draft when the sad news reached me. The thought struck me that here is another case of much information lost that never quite made it into the philatelic world. More so that although papers may be passed by relatives to philatelic friends, these days in many case most of our “research” lies on computer disks and stands an even bigger chance of being lost. One hardly likes to say to the bereaved: “Can we go through the deceased’s computer files?” I shall be adding this note to the letter that one day I intend(ed)! to write for my wife and children on such matters.



On a more cheery note, and hoping not to tempt Providence, here very much in the present is a photo, taken last summer, showing many of the names that appear regularly in the *QC* – so now you can put a face to the name. All are active or past committee members without whom the Circle could not exist.

Back row, left to right

Mike Murphy, Mike Bramwell, Dennis Clarke, Peter Andrews, John Davis, Alan Jeyes, Pierre Grech

Front row, left to right

Stanley Horesh, Edmund Hall, John Sears, John Purchase (non-member), Brian Sedgley

The Withdrawn TELECOM EGYPT Stamp: Egypt's Most Common Modern Stamp?

Edmund Hall (ESC 239)

Many column inches have already been devoted to this stamp - see *QC* 214, September 2005, page 52 [Leon Balian (ESC 251)] and *QC* 217, June 2006, p138 [Dr Sherif El-Kerdani (ESC 456), Edmund Hall (ESC 239), Leon Balian (ESC 251)] - but while we are looking at the oddities of some of the goings-on in modern Egyptian philately, perhaps a revisit might be in order.

First there was the booklet *Discover the Treasures of Egypt in Stamps* - see "Egypt's new Booklet" [Mike Murphy (ESC 240)] in *QC* 211, December 2004, p275-277, in which Mike wrote: "Now, after a wait of half a century, there is another (stamp booklet), perhaps amid some controversy, I hope that this article might clarify its status." which appears to accept that this is a genuine philatelic item although he was told "... from postal clerks and from the Philatelic Bureau we were assured that at £E80 (though the face value of the stamps is £51.95), this was a "souvenir issue" intended for tourists, and that the stamps had no postal validity." Covers with stamps from this booklet have certainly been seen, all seemingly accepted as postally valid.

Then came the TELECOM EGYPT stamps, and now the 50th Anniversary of Egypt-China Diplomatic Relations (see page 53, 68 & 71). What all these issues have in common is an initial fanfare of their possible rarity and correspondingly high asking price ... but while the withdrawn Telecom stamp's short life does appear to be genuine there has been some disquiet that maybe things are not quite what they should be. I think, however, that the cock-up theory holds up over manipulative conspirators and it cannot be held against those who accidentally ask highish prices for what initially appears to be a true rarity. All three items are regularly up for sale on eBay, and if the number is declining it is because they are not selling at the high starting prices, which themselves are appreciably lower than a few months ago.

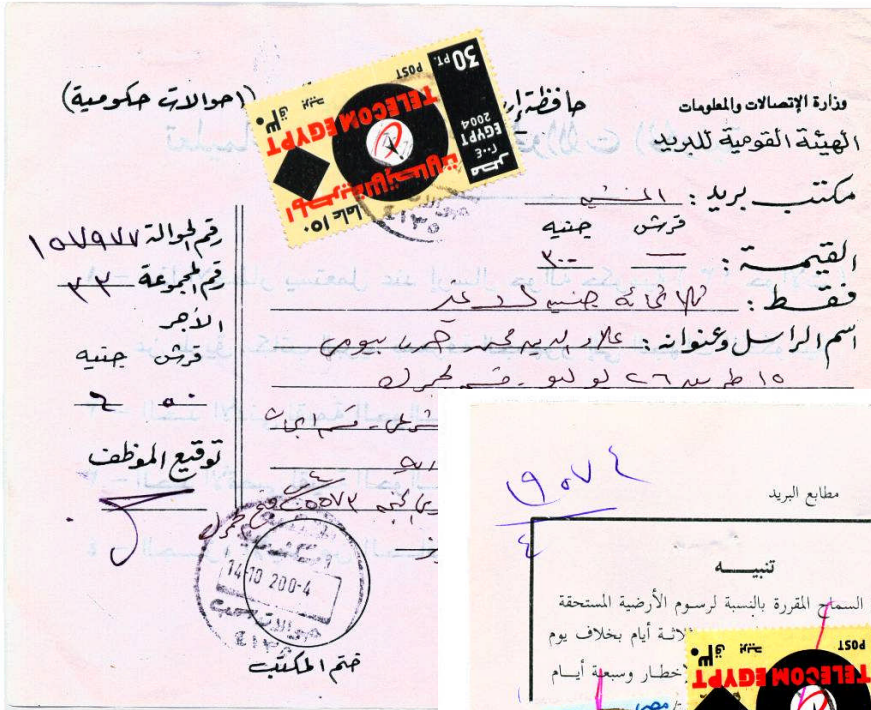
Still, no doubt it's only matter of time before another "rarity" appears - so do we hold off buying, gambling that the prices will fall? It's all a bit like deciding whether or not to buy a house.*

Why do I think the TELECOM EGYPT stamp could be the easiest modern stamp to find? As one who collects some modern Egypt, by which I mean the last decade or two let alone anything post-monarchy, I can assure you that some of them are very elusive, particularly on cover. The Telecom issue, by its very notoriety, has caught the imagination of those who see the opportunity to make the quick piastre or two, and good luck to them, say I. So in the last year what have I managed to accrue all too easily?



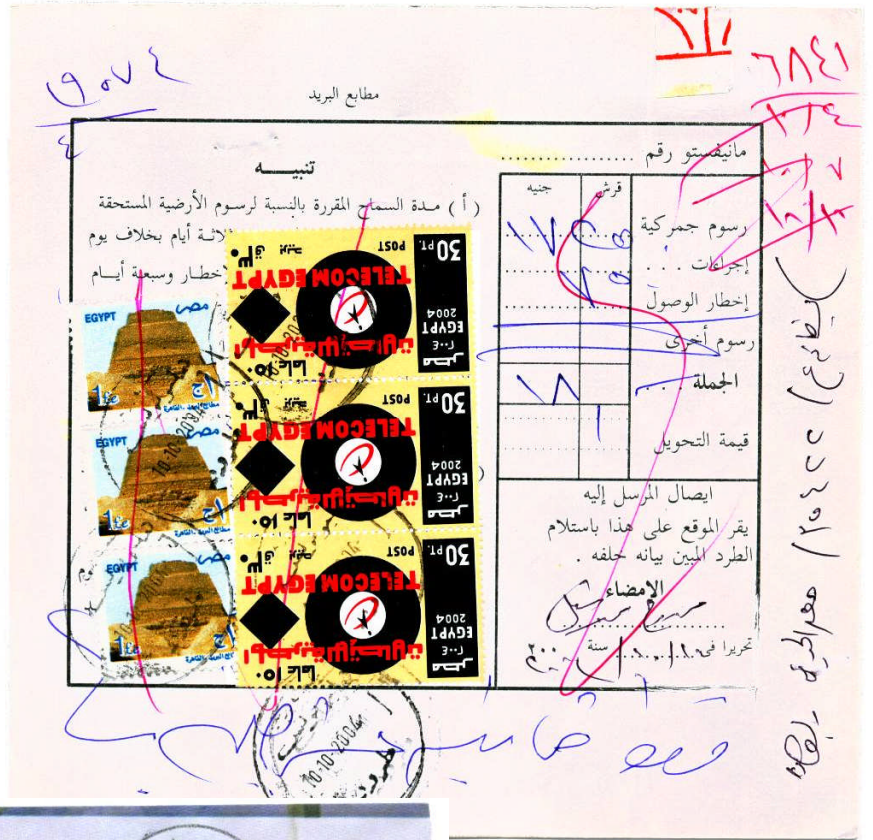
A cover of May 8 2008, sent to me using two of the stamps to make up the correct registration rate. There are more stamps on the front. Yes, contrived - but the stamps were accepted for postage.

*For future readers the USA and UK are experiencing falling house prices after two decades of prices rising.



Used on a postal form during its legal period.

Used on a parcel postal form during its legal period.



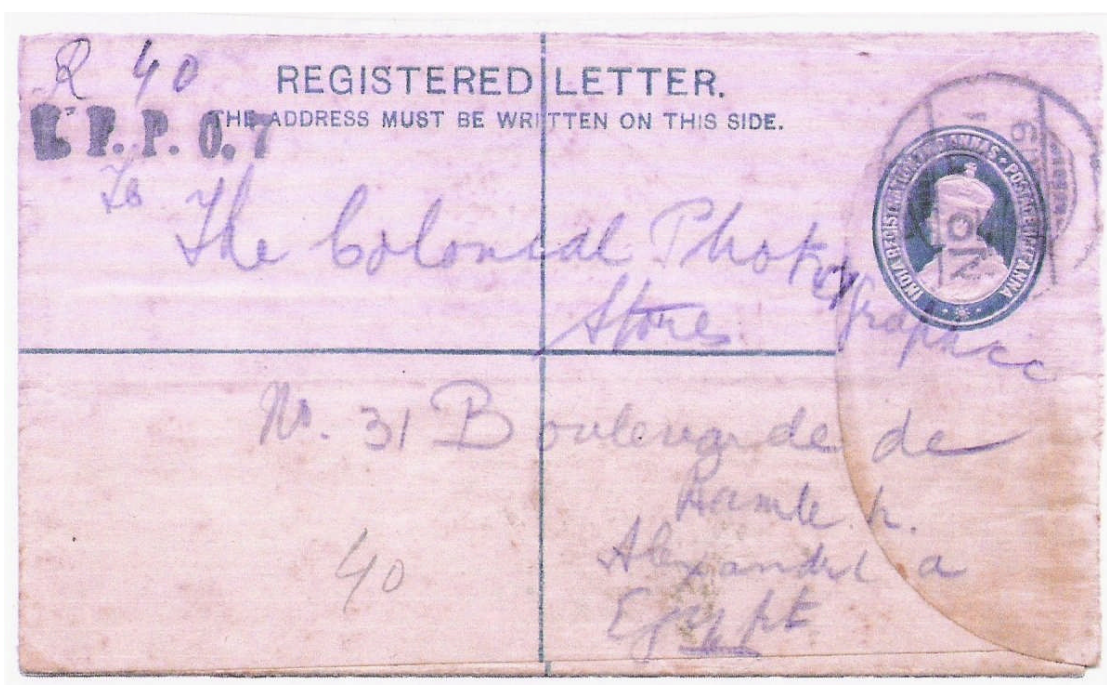
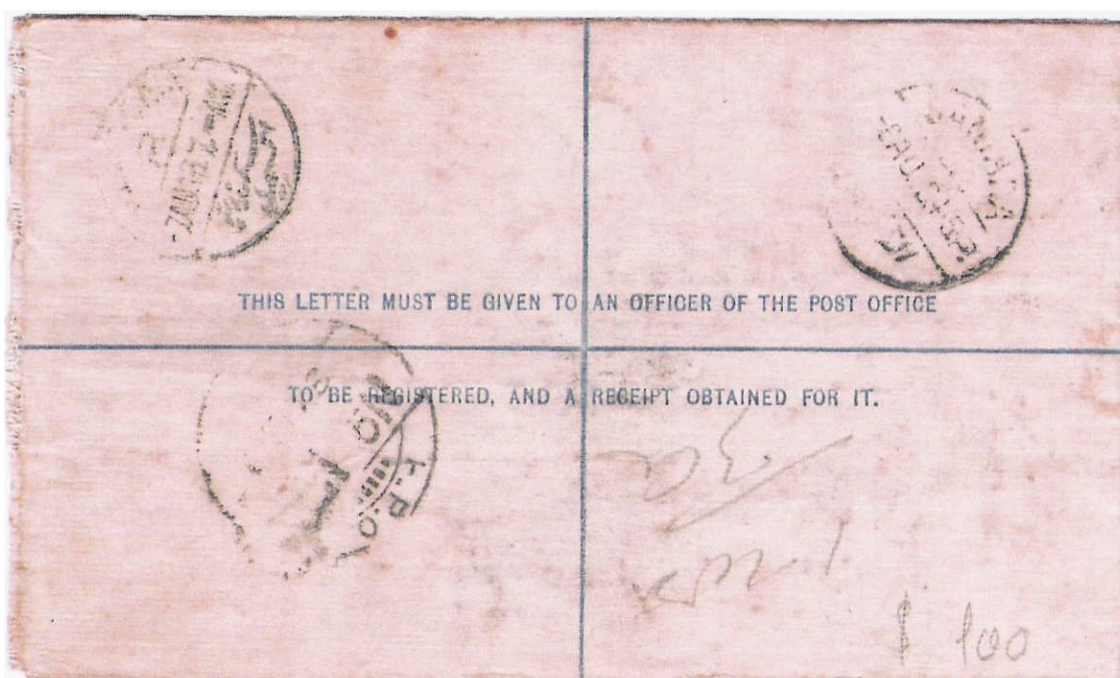
Used on cover to pay normal letter rate during its legal period.

For good measure I shall put this on the website and include a full sheet. It may be fun collecting, but finding items too easily can perhaps take a bit of the fun out of it. So what are those elusive items? Well, that's another story...

1919 - Unrecorded R.A.F. Military Flight Aleppo (Syria) to Qantara (Egypt)**Lucien Toutounji (ESC 264)**

This 1919 Registered cover, mailed from Indian Field Post Office 7 at Ain Tab in Turkey, about 100km (60 miles) north of Aleppo in Syria, represents an unrecorded RAF military flight: there is no other way it could have reached its destination at the Colonial Photo Stores in Alexandria only six days later. The original postmark of August 1, 1919, is followed by a transit mark of Indian Field Post Office 17, at Aleppo, dated August 3, and the cover must then have been flown to the RAF base at Qantara, in Sinai, on the eastern shore of the Suez Canal. Its arrival is proved by a Qantara civilian arrival CDS of August 6, and the cover could not possibly have been carried by surface in three days. The Alexandria delivery postmark is August 7.

Mail from Syria to Egypt was normally carried by sea mail to Alexandria, with a transit time about 10/14 days. Furthermore, had the cover been carried by road from Syria to Egypt, it would have crossed Syria southward to Damascus, then through Palestine via Jerusalem and Gaza, and would have reached Egypt at Port Said and not much further to the south at Qantara in Sinai.



New Issues: December 31, 2005 to November 26, 2006f

Cyril E. H. Defriez (ESC 172)

All stamps are printed in lithography by the Postal Printing House, A.R.Egypt, without watermark, unless otherwise shown. The catalogue numbers are from the Stanley Gibbons and Balian supplements.

Date/Catalogue	Denomination	Size	Perforation	Number printed
Dec 31 2005				
Personalities (Egyptian Artists)				
SG 2420/Bal 1802	Mohamed Rouchdi 30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	20,000 opaque gum
SG 2421/Bal 1803	Mohamed el Mogy 30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	20,000 opaque gum
SG 2422/Bal 1804	Ali Ismail 30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	20,000 opaque gum
SG 2423/Bal 1805	Sayed Mekawi 30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	20,000 opaque gum
SG 2424/Bal 1806	Kamal El Tawil 30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	20,000 opaque gum
Designers: S. el Badrawi & A. Makhoulouf		Five stamps issued se-tenant within the sheet		
Jan 2 2006				
Post Day				
SG 2425/Bal 1807	30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	100,000 opaque gum
Designer: M. Kamal el Din		New logo over Pyramid		
Jan 20 2006				
25th African Nations Cup				
SG 2426/Bal 1808	30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	100,000 opaque gum
Designers: A. Ahmed & R. Zonkoli		Games mascot		
Feb 4 2006				
Arab Universities Week				
SG 2427/Bal 1809	30PT	50 x 30mm	12.8 x 13.25	100,000 opaque gum
Designers: S. el Badrawi & M. Yousri		Logo around the Arab world		
Feb 5 2006				
10th ICT Exhibition and Forum				
SG 2428/Bal 1810	30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	100,000 opaque gum
Designers: S. el Badrawi & N A Fattah		Exhibition logo		
Feb 10 2006				
Egypt - Winner of African Nations Football Cup				
SG 2429/Bal 1811	30PT	50 x 30mm	12.8 x 13.25	100,000 opaque gum
SG MS 2430/Bal 1812	150PT	80 x 60mm	Imperf. Min. Sheet	40,000 opaque gum
Designer: S. el Serwy		President Mubarak holding Cup		
Mar 27 2006				
20th Anniversary of Information Support Centre				
SG 2431/Bal 1813	30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	100,000 opaque gum
Designer: H. Mohamed		Republican Eagle over logo		
Mar 29 2006				
Solar Eclipse 2006				
SG 2432/Bal 1814	30PT	50 x 30mm	12.8 x 13.25	100,000 opaque gum
SG MS 2433/Bal 1815	150PT	80 x 60mm	Imperf. Min. Sheet	40,000 opaque gum
Designer: A. Abdalla		Eclipse over seascape at Matruh		
Apr 2 2006				
Orphans Day				
SG 2434/Bal 1816	30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	100,000 glossy gum
Designers: A. Amani & R. el Zonkoli		Boy and lotus flower		
Apr 16 2006				
Gamal Hamdan (Geographical historian) Commemoration				
SG 2435/Bal 1817	30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	100,000 opaque gum
Designer: S. el Badrawi		Gamal Hamdan		

May 27 2006	600th Death Anniversary of Abd El-Ramman Ibn Khaldoun (Philosopher)			
SG 2436/Bal 1818	30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	100,000 glossy gum
Designers: S. el Badrawi & N. A. Fattah		Ibn Khaldoun		
Jun 5 2006	World Environment Day			
SG 2437/Bal 1819	30PT	50 x 30mm	12.8 x 13.25	100,000 glossy gum
Designer: Lydia Farid		White Desert		
SG 2438/Bal 1820	150PT	50 x 30mm	12.8 x 13.25	100,000 glossy gum
Designer: S. el Serwy		Tree in Desert		
Jul 13 2006	50th Anniversary of Egypt-China Diplomatic Relations Designed and lithographed in China			
SG 2439/Bal 1821	150PT	50 x 30mm	12	50,000? opaque gum
		Abu Simbel Temple, Egypt		
SG 2440/Bal 1822	150PT	50 x 30mm	12	50,000? opaque gum
		South Gate Pavilion, China		
The two stamps issued se-tenant with an un-denominated label in between				
SG ?/Bal 1823	150PT + 150PT	160 x 100mm	12	? opaque gum
The two stamps as above within a miniature sheet with border of The Great Wall China and the Pyramids of Egypt				
Jul 19 2006	50th Anniversary of Military Academy HQ			
SG 2441/Bal 1824	30PT	50 x 30mm	12.8 x 13.25	100,000 glossy gum
Designer: N. A. Fattah		HQ and Military Parade		
Jul 26 2006	50th Anniversary of Suez Canal Nationalization			
SG 2442/Bal 1825	30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	100,000 glossy gum
Designer: L. Farid		Map, HQ and ship		
Oct 9 2006	World Post Day			
SG 2443/Bal 1826	30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	50,000 glossy gum
SG 2444/Bal 1827	150PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	50,000 glossy gum
Designer: A. A. Ali & R. el Zonkoli		UPU logo and envelope		
Nov 5 2006	China-Africa Forum			
SG 2445/Bal 1828	150PT Chinese Mask	60 x 40mm	12	?50,000 opaque gum
SG 2446/Bal 1829	150PT African Mask	60 x 40mm	12	?50,000 opaque gum
The two stamps were designed & lithographed in China		Se-tenant with a non-denominated label between		
Nov 21 2006	General Census in Egypt			
SG 2447/Bal 1830	30PT	30 x 50mm	13.25 x 12.8	100,000 opaque gum
Designer: M. A. Abdalla		Globe, houses and people		
Nov 26 2006	130th Anniversary of Al Ahram Newspaper			
SG 2448/Bal 1831	30PT	50 x 30mm	12.8 x 13.25	50,000 glossy gum
		Modern Al Ahram HQ		
SG 2449/Bal 1832	30PT	50 x 30mm	12.8 x 13.25	50,000 glossy gum
		Original Al Ahram logo. The two stamps were issued se-tenant with a non-denominated label between		
SG MS 2450/Bal 1833	150PT	80 x 60mm	Imperf.	40,000 glossy gum
Designers: H. A. Kerim & R. Joseph		Designs as above		

Members may be interested to know of a new volume utilising the wonderful British Army in Egypt collection of our North America Agent, Dick Wilson (ESC 230): *British Military Operations in Egypt and the Sudan: A Selected Bibliography*, by Harold Raugh, covers in its 378 pages the years 1882-1889. The "Postal Operations" section has 73 entries on eight pages, including ten articles written (or co-written) by Richard Stock (Sudan Study Group). Members can receive a 15 per cent discount on the \$80 price by contacting <http://www.scarecrowpress.com> or <http://hraugh.com/books.html>



SG 2420-4
BAL 1802-6



SG 2425 BAL 1807



SG 2426 BAL 1808



SG 2427 BAL 1809



SG 2428 BAL 1810



SG 2429 BAL 1811



SG(MS) 2430 BAL 1812



SG 2431 BAL 1813



SG 2432 BAL 1814
SG(MS) 2433 BAL 1815



SG 2434 BAL 1816



SG 2435 BAL 1817



SG 2436 BAL 1818



SG 2437 BAL 1819



SG 2438 BAL 1820



SG 2439 BAL 1821

SG 24340 BAL 1822



SG(MS) ? BAL 1823



SG 2441 BAL 1824



SG 2442 BAL 1825



SG 2443 BAL 1826



SG 2444 BAL 1827



SG 2445 BAL 1828

SG 2446 BAL 1829



SG 2447 BAL 1830



SG 24468 BAL 1831

SG 2449 BAL 1832



SG(MS) 2450 BAL 1833



Q47 reply Peter Andrews (ESC 122)

In answer to query Q47 in the March issue of the *QC*. censorship of mail in Egypt was re - imposed in 1948 by decree signed on 13th May by King Farouk. This was reported in the 'Journal Officiel Numero Extrordinaire' (49) and repeated in the 'Journal des Tribunaux Mixte' of 26/27th May 1948.

Space here does not allow for details but these may be found in an article 'Civil Censorship in Egypt 1946 to date' (which also gives translations of the relevant decrees) in *QC* Vol. VIII No.8. Whole No.92. December 1974. Several updates follow at various times, the last of which appeared in *QC* Vol. XVIII No.4. Whole No.203. December 2002.

Q50 Richard Weatley (ESC 533)

In the auction catalogue of Philangles dated 11 August 2008 there are quite a number of Egypt lots. The description of one lot had me puzzled, it reads "Lot 747 1866 First Issue Zopara compound perf VFU with red CDS SG 3d (ex SG) £50/£55". Can any member enlighten me as to the meaning of the word "Zopara" I have not come across it before. I might add that I have looked in all the books that mention the First Issue and I have drawn a blank.

Q51 Poste Restante rates. Peter Smith (ESC 74)

The fee charged for poste restante letters (i.e., those left at the post office for collection), collected with fiscal stamps, was 5 mills for the long period in which the letter rate was fixed at 5 mills. With the rise in letter rates, in many steps, beginning in 1940, one would expect the charge for poste restante letters to increase accordingly, but until recently I had not seen any examples. Through the courtesy of Mr. Rida Bazzi I have now seen covers with a charge of 10 piasters in November, 1990, when the internal letter rate was also 10 piasters, and one charged 15 piasters in March, 1991, a date when I had understood the letter rate still to be 10 pi. (believed to have risen to 15 pi. in January, 1993). It is not necessary that the letter rate and the poste restante charge to be locked in tandem, although that is a reasonable supposition.

Two questions arise. Did the letter rate of 15 pi. begin earlier than January, 1993? What were the poste restante charges in the interim period 1940 to 1989, during which the letter rate became successively 6 mills (1940), 10 mills (1943), 20 mills (1967), 3 piasters (1981). 5 piasters (1985), and 10 piasters (1989) ? The answers could come from covers in the hands of members, or from those who have access to postal regulations (members in Egypt?). Let us hear from any members with any information, however partial!

Postcard Collectors' Guide.

Mohamed Nofal (see pages 60-61) is working hard on his next volume, the LL (Louis Levy) postcard of Egypt, and appeals to members who might have the following cards (missing from his collection) to make contact at 137 Gunnersbury Avenue, Acton, London W3 8LE or at lafons@aol.com:

Alexandria: cards 19-20-31-51-56-65-66-85-90-96-126-129-130, 132-133-136-137, 139-143, 147 to 152, 154, 158 to 165, 167-168-172-176, 178 to 180. **Aswan:** 8-10-13-19-20, 37 to 50. **Cairo:** 1-6-21-48-58-79-90-95-98-105-106-122-126-127-128-145-154-156-166-170-171-179-181-187-190-192-204-207-209-210-211-212-213-218-220-221-225-226-228-229-230-231-237-240-243-244-247-249 to 261, 264-265.

Dendera: 2 to 10 and any card in colour. **Edfou:** 1 to 24 and any in colour. **Egypt:** 1-21-39-44-48-49-50-54-55-56-57-60-61-62-70 to 74, 79-80-83, 86 to 130 and so on (he has 205). **Heliopolis:** 1 and 5 to 24 (except 15 and 20), and any in colour/sepia. **Helwan:** all except 48-49-50, 55, 57 and any colour/sepia. **Ismailia:** 4 to 24 and any colour. **Karnak:** 2-13-16-19-20-26-27-30, 32 to 50. **Luxor:** 1-19-27-29-30, 33 to 50 except 36, 40 and 42. **Mansura:** 1-2-11, 13 to 24 and any colour/sepia. **Memphis:** 5 to 12 and any colour/sepia. **Philae:** 6 to 12 and colour/sepia. **Port Said:** 17-25-26-28-29-30-46-55-56, 59 to 63, 80, 85 to 94, 96-100. **Port Tewfik:** 1 to 12 and colour/sepia.

Suez and Canal: 6-13-14-17, 21 to 25, 28 to 48, 50 to 52, 55 to 64, 66 to 79, 82 to 84, 86 to 100. **Thebes:** 4-6-9-11-12-14-19-21, 26 to 50. **Zagazig:** 1-2-4-5-6-10, 15 to 24 and colour/sepia. **Egyptian Types & Scenes:** 18-42-57-62-71-83-96-101, 105 to 107, 116-123-133-134-137-138-186-188-200-202-203-206-217-219-220, 222 to 230.

The Story Behind the Stamp:

Balian 763, March 13, 1975, and 1550, March 11, 2000, Om Kolthoum*



Om Kolthoum was perhaps the most famous singer of the century in the Arab world. She recorded some 300 songs. She was born in 1908 to a humble *fellah* family in Tamayet el-Zahayra, a tiny village near Sinbillawein in the Nile Delta. She began her singing career as a poor peasant girl dressed as a boy because it was thought that virtuous maidens did not sing in public. At the same time, she studied the Qur'an and mastered its language. During weddings and family feasts she recited in traditional style parts of this Holy Book and from the as-Sirah ballads which tell the story of the Prophet Muhammad and his family. Even at an early age her voice had an unequalled emotional range and spread her fame throughout the Nile Valley.

In 1924 she moved to Cairo, where during the following years she developed a cult following. People from North Africa and the Middle East, especially from the Arabian Peninsula, would fly to Cairo on the first Thursday of every month for the sole purpose of attending her legendary concerts as she extended a single song to last an hour or more, and the concert extended from 9.30 pm. until 2, 3 or even 4 in the morning.

Tall, with pitch-black hair, Om Kolthoum was of striking appearance and with her words and voice she could create a magical atmosphere and enchant her listeners as no other Arab singer past or present. She had a uniquely expressive tone which could make her listeners laugh or even bring them to tears. During the Second World War her lyrics had such a sway over the Arabs that both the Allies and the Axis, in their programmes broadcast to the Middle East, utilised her records. Late in the 1940s she became the acknowledged leader of Arabic song and her life thereafter became the story of modern Egypt.

After taking power, Nasser established a close relationship with Om Kolthoum and her songs became almost as important as his speeches. To ensure an Arab worldwide audience, important political news items were broadcast before Om Kolthoum's concerts. Hence, the saying that, "in the 1950s two leaders emerged in the Middle East, Gamal Abd al-Nasser and Om Kolthoum". A dedicated humanist, she distributed much of the money she made to the poor. It is said that during her lifetime she supported at least 200 peasant families.

Om Kolthoum died in February 1975. Her funeral was led by the presidential court and followed by over a mile-long procession of loving worshippers. Film stars, poets, businessmen, ambassadors and ministers walked shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of thousands of her ordinary fans. From the front of the mass column to the last, the chant, "Good-bye! Good-bye our beloved songstress!" echoed amid the sobs of the mourners. The massive turnout of grieving people was second only to Nasser's farewell

Her phenomenally powerful and captivatingly beautiful voice still stirs the hearts of millions. Over 30 years after her death the legend of Om Kolthoum lives on among the peoples of North Africa and the Middle East. Over 300,000 of her tapes are still sold annually in Egypt alone. It appears that the magic of the voice, which made her audience euphoric, begging her to repeat the same words again and again, will not diminish with the years. At least two of the ESC party who visited in 2006 were at times seen clutching CDs of her work, in one instance to replace well-worn vinyls of *Sona Cairo*.

The saying in Egypt that two things never change - "the Pyramids and the voice of Om Kolthoum" - is perhaps more true today than when this nightingale of Egypt sang.

*Note: the spelling used is taken from that used on the stamps.

