

The  
Quarterly Circular  
of  
**THE  
EGYPT**



# STUDY CIRCLE

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**Carmichael  
& Todd**  
**PHILATELISTS**  
PTS  
GREGORY C.G. TODD

**EGYPT.**

**De La Rue Ipi. ultramarine used on Advice of Receipt form #39, cancelled at Alexandria (June 8, 1886) with 'Tripoli/Syrie/Turquie' confirmation of arrival datestamp below (June 11, 1886). Reverse showing further Alexandria datestamp of distribution to sender (June 17, 1886). Rare.**

(نمبر ٣٩ ٨٩)  
ADMINISTRATION DES POSTES D'ÉGYPTE  
مصلحة البوستة المصرية

**AVIS DE RÉCEPTION** علم التسليم

L'Expéditeur de l'objet suivant (1) *Lettre recommandée*  
موسل لارسالية الاتي بيانها وهي (١)

portant le N<sup>o</sup> *24489* et l'adresse de M. *Ch. Saporio*  
*à Tripoli*  
بوسم جناب روضو عليها نمرة

désire savoir s'il a été reçu. يوجب الاستعلام عما اذا كانت تسلمت ام كيف

L'Employé des Postes.  
مستخدم البوستة

*J. Saporio*

L'envoi ci-dessus désigné m'a été remis contre reçu le *11 Juin 86*  
لارسالية الوصحة اعلاه تسلمت بالاىصال اللازم بتاريخ  
1886 سنة ١٨٨٠

Signature,  
لاعضا  
*صبر*  
*صبر*

(1) Indiquer la nature de l'envoi, si c'est un objet recommandé, une lettre de valeur déclarée, ou un colis postal avec ou sans valeur déclarée.  
Cet avis doit être renvoyé, sous recommandation d'office, au bureau d'origine, muni de la signature du destinataire; si ce dernier ne consent pas à le signer son refus et la remise de l'envoi doivent être attestés par l'employé du bureau de destination, lequel utilise à cet effet la formule ci-dessus en la modifiant. Le bureau d'origine se charge, ensuite, de le faire tenir à l'expéditeur, comme objet recommandé.  
Au moment de l'expédition on doit attacher cette formule à l'envoi avec une épingle, excepté pour les colis postaux, pour lesquels elle doit être attachée au bulletin d'expédition.

(١) يتوضه نوع الارسالية اذا كانت مسجلة او خطاب ذا قيمة مقررة او طرد بوستة مؤمن او غير مؤمن عليه  
يصبر رد هذا العلم مسجلا رسميا للمكتب المرسل الاصلى بعد امضائه من المرسل اليه فان لم يقبل امضاه يتوضه من مستخدم المكتب المرسل اليه عن ذلك وعن تسليم الارسالية على هذا المطبوع بعد اجرا تعديله به ثم على المكتب المرسل الاصلى ان يسلم هذا مسجلا للمرسل منه  
يحال تصدير الارسالية يرفق بها هذا المطبوع مشمورا بدبوس انما تستثنى من ذلك طرود البوستة اذ يقتضى ارفاق المطبوع المذكور بحافظة ارسال

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### Meetings dates for 2015

We regret that for operational reasons we have had to dispense with the January meeting in 2015. The Europhilex meeting will be held at the **Premier Inn** just across from the Design Centre. Two meetings will be held at 2pm in the **Victory Services Club**, Marble Arch, London. The February and September meetings are at 2.30pm at **Stampex** (Feb 18-21 and Sept 16-19)

For meetings at the Services Club, members usually meet in the ground-floor bar from 1pm.

<b>Feb 21</b> 2.30-4.30pm	Stampex <i>Stampex Feb 18-21</i>	Live Auction	All members
<b>May 16</b> 2-4.30pm	Europhilex <i>Europhilex May 13-16</i>	AGM, Ten Sheets, informal meeting	All members
<b>July 18</b> 2-5pm	Services Club	Egypt Postage Rates Egypt Air Mail Rates	Edmund Hall John Sears
<b>Sep 19</b> 2.30-4.30pm	Stampex <i>Stampex Sept 16-19</i>	New Issues collection Revenues etc	Cyril Defriez Richard Wheatley
<b>Nov 14</b> 2-5pm	Services Club	Consular Posts	John Davis

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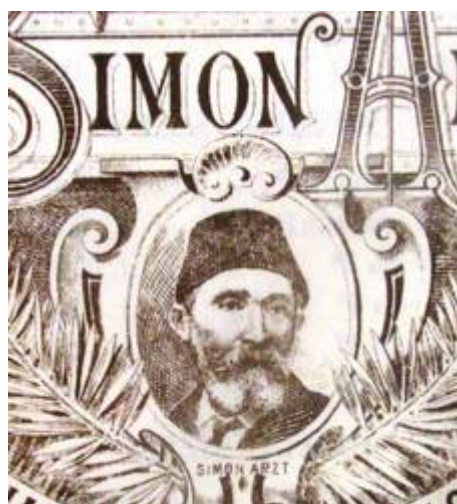
### Report of the Meeting, September 20

PRESENT: John Sears (President), Peter Andrews (Chairman), John Davis (Deputy Chairman/Librarian), Mike Murphy (Secretary), Jon Aitchison, Pietro Bajocchi (Egypt), Mike Bramwell, John Clarke, Cyril Defriez, Sami Fereig (Canada), Peter Grech, Paul Green, Martin Lovegrove, Armen Varjabedian (Egypt), Vahe Varjabedian (Egypt), Richard Wheatley. Guest: Raoul Bajocchi (Egypt)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Brian Sedgley (Treasurer), Sami Sadek (Committee), Angela Child, Mostafa El-Dars, Ted Fraser-Smith, Pauline Gittoes, Alan Jeyes, Ole-Fredrik Olsen, Tony Schmidt, Andrew Titley, Lucien Toutounji, Ronny Van Pellecom.

Back in familiar surroundings at Stampex, the Chairman was pleased to welcome several overseas visitors, including for the first time Pietro Bajocchi from Cairo, who was accompanied by his son Raoul as a guest. On a more sombre note however, he had to announce the death after a short illness of David Worrollo (ESC 659) and to sympathise with Pauline Gittoes (ESC 662) on the recent loss of her husband.

The Secretary announced that all three 2014 issues of the *QC* so far were up on the website for members to review, and thanked Edmund Hall for all his hard work in making them available. He reminded members that by choosing to forgo the printed version at the end of the year they will save £5 off their 2015 subscription – and the Circle more than that in postage costs. He announced a message of good wishes from Ole-Fredrik Olsen (ESC 530, Norway) describing “I love The Quarterly Circular, the information in it from our members, and the board members voluntary work to keep the Circle going..”



*Simon Arzt is clearly identified on the early tobacco price list (left) – but is that the man himself photographed in 1890 on the balcony of his first store in Main Street, Port Said?*

The Secretary reported that the autumn Auction was nearly ready for publication, and that the 2015 meetings list was virtually complete, though seeking a venue for the period of Europhilex (May 13-16) was proving a headache.

We then were entertained to the first half of the afternoon's displays, Richard Wheatley on Simon Arzt. He produced a fascinating glimpse into the life of the Port Said entrepreneur, ranging from tobacco imports through to the massive store on the waterfront that catered to travellers' needs of each and every type.

Showing a wide range of material including photographs and printed ephemera from the company and the store, he was able to confirm (probably!) that Simon and his brother Mayer (whose autograph he displayed) were originally Polish Jews – but the question of whether it is actually Simon Arzt's photograph on a depiction of his earlier store was left open.

Richard showed the development of the store's characteristic advertising cachets ("Now open on the Quay Front") as well as an astonishing pair of covers with Arzt datestamps that survived the crash of the Imperial Airways flying boat *Cygnus* at Brindisi on December 3, 1937 – and received different "Damaged by Sea Water" cachets. Overall, a quite remarkably wide-ranging display of fascinating material.



We then moved on to the second display, by Armen Varjabedian on the 1933 Railways Exhibition issue, giving his very first exhibition. With only four stamps to consider, he kept members' attention with a personalised and thoroughly-researched talk.



He was able to show the "Royal" misperforates, though admitted that he was still seeking the rare Cancelled-back stamps (there are only 50 of each), but displayed the full sets properly cancelled on a tiny business card – surely unique – and a fabricated postcard on which an already used stamp had been affixed OVER the exhibition cachet.

*Two covers saved from the *Cygnus**

He showed the 13 mills value properly paying the overseas postcard rate with Hotel cancels, and the 15 mills properly used for Air Mail as well as the 20 mills on an official cover on the last day of permitted use, April 18 1933.



Perhaps most remarkable was an internal Express cover (*left*) franked with a block of four of the 5 mills stamp, making up the 20 mills rate from Port Said to Alexandria.

In discussion afterwards Armen admitted that he had intended to say much more, but that nerves got the better of him. Members assured him that his initial toe in the water of displaying was both entertaining and instructive: clearly he has a promising future.

While the displays were being made the mini-auction was ticking away in the background, with a few more lots provided than at the July meeting. The upshot, thanks to the hard work of Jon Aitchison and John Clarke, was a commission profit to the Circle of £19.80, equivalent to an extra membership!

*Armen (blue shirt) looks on as members admire his display*

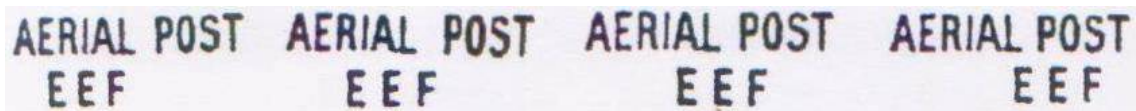


### Report of the Meeting, November 1

PRESENT: John Sears (President), Peter Andrews (Chairman), John Davis (Deputy Chairman/Librarian), Mike Murphy (Secretary), Edmund Hall (Editor/Webmaster), Mike Bramwell, John Clarke, Paul Green, Nabil Guirguis, Alan Jeyes, Atef Sarian, Lucien Toutounji (Egypt/France).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Brian Sedgley (Treasurer), Sami Sadek (Committee), Jon Aitchison, Angela Child, Pauline Gittoes, Peter Grech, Ole-Fredrik Olsen, Tony Schmidt,

Our November meeting occurred in close proximity to Guy Fawkes' Night, and there were certainly fireworks aplenty from our two speakers – Lucien Toutounji (ESC 264) on the EEF Aerial Posts of 1919, and Peter Andrews (ESC 122) on the intriguing Cassette Envelopes postal stationery.



*The four unframed Aerial Post cachets identified by Lucien Toutounji*

We were delighted to see Lucien's display, a section of his international Gold medal exhibition of Egyptian Early Airmails from 1910-36, which opened with a tiny history lesson, on the exile to Malta of Saad Zaghloul, revolutionary leader of the Wafd Party, the consequent increase in violence against the British, and consequent on that, a major influx of British troops into Egypt and Palestine at a time before efficient postal services had been fixed.



The RAF established an airmail service between Alexandria, Cairo, Suez and the Canal Zone and Palestine which started on March 17, 1919, and ended on May 3 the same year, when Zaghloul was released. Lucien is proud of the fact that he it was who established the four different types of unframed Aerial Post cachet as used from Alexandria from March 20 to April 3: he estimates that about 45 covers are believed to exist, about 15 of them addressed to Palestine.



Others went to centres within Egypt, and to India – and Lucien showed an astonishing cover addressed to Mombasa, which was misdirected to Palestine, readdressed, and finally returned from Dar es-Salaam (left).

At the same time Cairo was using a large circular cachet datestamp, of which only 15 covers are known. Lucien showed a first-day cover (March 18) to Jerusalem, as well as another sent from Alexandria to Cairo and returned, thus receiving both air cachets on the same cover (right).

On April 5 Alexandria switched to a cachet set inside a bold black rectangle, in use until May 1 – we were able to see the only example recorded to Beirut – and Cairo used the same cachet but in violet. Here we were shown the only "civilian" usage, on a cover





The varieties of value, colour, flap type, placing of address lines in relation to the vignette, reverse text, under-flap text etc etc are mind-boggling. Peter showed a letter from the National Postal Organisation informing Michael Barker that the first envelopes were issued in 1991; but we have FDCs (of the £E2 value) for December 1 1989. There is little information and no consistency. What is consistent is that early types show vertical stamp vignettes of mosques, then short mosques, and later ones with ancient Egyptian figures.

It seems that the service was discontinued probably in about 2000, and surplus covers – it is difficult to gauge the actual use for the purpose intended – were given rough overprints of the Arabic words for “Cancelled” and “Official”, and these are now found used between post offices presumably on official business.

Pater’s gargantuan task of following this flurry of issues was much appreciated by an audience many of whom were seeing such items for the first time. The speaker was thanked for his patience and members showed their grateful appreciation.

John Davis (ESC 213) then took a moment to explain that the first volume of his three-part book on the Postal Concessionary period was close to completion; details can be had direct from John.

Earlier members had welcomed Nabil Guirguis (ESC 670) to his first meeting, and the Secretary had reminded members that all will be asked to make a choice of receiving a printed version of the *QC* or reading it (and printing out if need be) online. Those who choose the latter option will pay a reduced subscription of £15 for 2015; those who do not choose will stay at the £20 rate.

The meetings list for 2015 was published, with one meeting off-site (just) at the May Europhillex exhibition in Islington – it was impossible to hire a room, so we have accepted the kind offer of a room in the Premier Inn just across the road.

John Clarke (ESC 497) ran the mini-auction in the absence of Jon Aitchison, and successful bidding led to a commission for the Circle of £17.20. Thank you to all those who contributed.

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### Membership changes

#### **New member:**

**ESC 687 Neil Prior**, 20 Heol-y-Sheet, North Cornelly, Bridgend, CF33 4EY  
(Welsh postal history, Austria, Canada, Klondyke Gold Rush postal history)

#### **Change of Address:**

**ESC 658 Dr Robert Pinet**, 400 Slater, #1605, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1R 7S7

**ESC 668 Andrew Titley**, 350 N Saint Paul Street, Apt 1509, Dallas, Texas 75201, United States

**Deceased:** ESC 74 Peter A S Smith    **Resigned:** ESC 225 Hermann Kleinstück    **ESC 629** Chris Barton

---

#### **Query 119 – Traffic CDS – reply from Edmund Hall (ESC 239)**



Peter Heim poses an interesting question about the Traffic postmarks in QC 250. The Arabic سفريات probable stems from the root سفر “journey” and to translate it as “travelling” is probably correct. I have however been caught several times using the dictionary definition, with Egyptian members correcting me by pointing out use of the words in a colloquial manner. In any case it is a rather strange indicator, since ALL letters travel! A quick look at the Blomfield

data sheets gives a few examples of the marking, of which I illustrate two. It would appear that there could be two types: the one for Alexandria, used alone to cancel stamps, is intended for letters overseas. The other type, as demonstrated by the Ismailia example, is usually found in the reverse of a letter passing through the post office in transit. It seems likely that a review of more material might give a much clearer view of the use of the markings. This could however be somewhat problematic, because postal workers were often thought to be lax in their use of handstamps, perhaps even grabbing the one closest to hand to mark the postal item.



## French Navy in Alexandria 1940-43.

**Edmund Hall (ESC 239)**

On April 25, 1940, a squadron of the French Navy under the command of left Toulon and steamed to Alexandria, where it arrived on May 24. It was given the name Force X and stationed at Alexandria in order to counter any intervention of the Italian navy in the Eastern Mediterranean. Soon after, on May 10, the German Army invaded France making rapid progress with the collapse of the British and French forces resulting in an armistice being signed between France and Germany on June 22.



*Admiral René-Émile Godfroy*

The virtually unscathed French Navy was the fourth largest in the world. This concerned Churchill greatly: he feared it would fall into German hands, giving the Axis powers of Germany and Italy superiority over the Royal Navy. This would have made the invasion of Britain a certainty with the probable outcome victory to Germany.

The terms of the German-France armistice stated however that the French Navy would remain under the control of the new Vichy government, effectively neutralising it from further combat. Churchill doubted Admiral François Darlan's promise not to allow the French fleet at Toulon to fall into German hands and feared that the Germans would seize the French fleet, docked at ports in Vichy France and North Africa, and use them in an invasion of Britain.

With this in mind the British launched Operation Catapult, and gave the French an ultimatum: to sail their ships to British ports to continue the fight against Germany, or place them under British control with the crews being repatriated as soon as possible. The warships were to be restored to France at the conclusion of the war. Alternatively they could be sailed, with reduced crews, to a French port in the West Indies, Martinique for instance, where they could be demilitarised. Failing to comply with any of these conditions, the British threatened, "reluctantly", to "to use whatever force may be necessary" if the ships had not been scuttled within six hours.

Operation Grasp commenced on July 3, 1940. Early in the day all French warships in British territorial waters were boarded and impounded by the Royal Navy. This was carried out with little mishap; there were four deaths due to some resistance.

Outside France the two most powerful fleets were at Mers-el-Kebir, in what was then French Algeria, under Admiral Gensoul, and Force X in Alexandria. Operation Catapult at Mers-el-Kebir started on the same day: Gensoul chose to fight, resulting in the British sinking several ships and damaging others, effectively neutralising the French squadron.

Further along the coast, at Alexandria, a second British battle force had assembled to confront Force X. The Royal Navy in the Mediterranean was under the command of Admiral Sir Andrew Browne Cunningham, who was told to deliver the ultimatum to Godfroy. Early on June 24, 1940 Admiral Godfrey received a message from French Admiralty *If Armistice is signed between France on one side and Germany and Italy on the other; you are to cease all operations or hostilities and return to French ports, to which I shall order you probably Bizerta. You are to embark KLQ/s and disembark B.LO.'s Acknowledge.* He requested to be allowed to sail for Beyrouth which was denied by Cunningham and signalled the admiralty that his intention that French ships shall not leave Alexandria. He requested that *the intention with regard to these ships may be made known to me as soon as possible as Godfrey may have trouble with ships companies.* Cunningham received orders on June 30 from the First Sea Lord to seize Force X simultaneously with the operation at Mers-el-Kebir.

Godfroy was an Anglophile, whose wife was Scottish, and was on cordial terms socially with Cunningham. So the British commander was able to open a successful dialogue with his friend. Despite orders from Churchill for results to be achieved by nightfall, he held the negotiations over till the next day, July 4.

Cunningham's views were based on the best approach to avoid bloodshed, and he responded robustly against forcible seizure. He pointed out that ships were already beyond falling into enemy hands and thought the French would resist strongly. This could lead to the fleet being scuttled at its moorings, blocking the vital harbour and causing unnecessary British and French casualties.

He thought the long game a better bet, with the strong possibility that the ships may fall in to British hands under pressure of lack of pay and food.

Cunningham invited Godfroy aboard the British flagship HMS *Warspite*, where he was greeted warmly and presented with the various options but not in a form appearing as an ultimatum. The preferred option was that Force X joined the British fleet but loyalty to the French Government prevented this. Cunningham's other alternatives were for Godfroy to immobilise his ships and reduce their crews or sink them at sea. The French admiral felt honour-bound not to do this without French admiralty authority, but his signals to France were ignored. Cunningham, loath to see their working relationship end disastrously, sought further alternatives. He then suggested that Godfroy retain his crews but discharge the bulk of their oil and remove the main ammunition; this was seen as an acceptable compromise by the French admiral.

The British Government thought otherwise and sent a strongly worded communiqué to Cunningham to ensure that the French crews were disembarked immediately. The message ended "Do not fail (R) NOT fail". But with a touch of Nelson's blind eye Cunningham simply ignored the message. Godfroy had started the discharge of fuel when he heard news of Mers-el-Kebir on July 4 and immediately stopped and started to raise steam.

Throughout the morning the situation deteriorated to the point that the Admiralty asked Cunningham to take his fleet to sea and sink the French ships in his own harbour stating "the vital necessity of an early solution if necessary by force".

The message was communicated to Force X but Cunningham took a different approach by sending signals in French to Godfroy's whole squadron. He also sent boats with placards to sail round the harbour imploring it not to do anything that could result in a tragic loss of life. The French response was to train their guns on the British ships. In a masterly move Cunningham sent "chummy ships" (Royal Navy ships assigned as hosts to their French counterparts when they were first integrated into the Mediterranean fleet) to the French ships.

Unease at the thought of hostilities by the ships' captains was reinforced by visits of their recent friends. Soon the French captains were seen boarding Godfroy's flagship en masse. Godfroy bowed before force majeure and began demilitarising his vessels. Oil was discharged, the bunkers retaining only enough to power essential services, gun breeches and warheads were removed and crews reduced. Cunningham and Godfroy formally signed an agreement on July 7 reiterating their gentleman's agreement of a week before.

Pistols were placed in the custody of the French consulate-general and arrangements for the disembarkment of French reservists with the agreement that the ships' complements would be reduced to a quarter. Cunningham promised to repatriate the ships' crews: 2,000 men left Alexandria on July 10 and a further 1,000 on July 13, sailing to Vichy-held Beirut. The remaining 140 officers and 1,700 men became the responsibility of the British Government for the next three years.

With Operation Torch and the German occupation of Vichy France in November 1942 the France-German armistice agreement was effectively broken. The German occupation included the French naval port of Toulon, where a large portion of the surviving French fleet lay. This resulted in French sailors sinking their own ships to save them from falling into German hands on Darlan's order. He later reminded Churchill that he had promised him that "No French ship will ever come into the hands of the Germans".

Godfroy decided to join with the Free French and the French squadron finally left Alexandria for Dakar by way of Suez and the Cape in May 1943. He was not trusted by De Gaulle, however, and was stripped of his command and retired from office by decree of December 10, 1943. This decree was cancelled by the State Council in April 1955 and he died at Fréjus, southern France, in January 1981, aged 96.

For the French sailors at Alexandria the enemy was not British or Axis forces but the Gaullists and there were frequent fights between the Free French soldiers in the streets of Alexandria.

The French squadron consisted of a battleship, four cruisers, three destroyers and a submarine. The battleship *Lorraine*, the cruisers *Duquesne* (flagship), *Tourville*, *Suffren*, the light cruiser *Duguay-Trouin*, the small destroyers *Basque*, *Forbin*, *Fortuné* and the net layer *Gladiateur*. This managed to leave Alexandria and sailed to Beirut on June 25, 1940. The day after, a submarine, the *Protee*, joined the other ships on station at Alexandria.

### Postal Arrangements

The French Navy had a postal agency on ships carrying 500 or more crew, each with a hexagonal cancel with two parallel sides of 26 mm. The name of the ship was included. For Force X only five ships met this criteria: the battleship *Lorraine*, the cruisers *Duquesne*, *Tourville*, *Duguay-Trouin* and *Suffren*. The agency was managed by a postman, who had been a probationer in a civil post office.

A signed agreement on July 7, 1940, between Godfroy and Cunningham included freedom for French sailors to go ashore and correspond by letter, without prejudice of the censorship rules. Mail home to France used different routes with varying success. Initially they were sent by small boat from Alexandria to Beirut, which was controlled by Vichy French until the British invasion of June 1941. Sometimes, and subsequently, mail went by road to Beirut, then by rail through Turkey, the Balkans, and Austria. These may have several censorship markings from Egyptian, English, French and German censors. This tenuous route was long, often meaning that a reply might take three months.

Late, delays were increased when the invasion of Syria in 1941 made this route unusable: letters were then sent via the Cape of Good Hope, Great Britain, Portugal and Spain. On this route South African censorship markings have been reported; now the reply time was lengthened to six months.

By the beginning of 1942 mail went by air to London, being dropped off at a stop over at Lisbon. Mail was passed to a Vichy representative who forwarded it to France by pouch to the French Admiralty. Covers were frequently backstamped with five lines and a number comprising six figures with the instruction "Pour parvenir par même voie/ votre reponse doit poser moins de 5 gr. et reproduire/ avant l'adresse le numéro de/ 6 chiffres qui l'accompagne" ("To be transmitted by the same way/ your answer must weigh less than 5g and indicate/ before the address the number/ of 6 figures which go with it).

### Incoming mail

Letters from France were postage free and addressed to the recipient, the ship's name with the inscription "Marine Beyrouth Marseille Gare Etranger". To signify free postage they had a manuscript F.M. marking, "Marine Nationale (anchor) S.L.O.M. Marseille" or by the more usual stamp "Marine Nationale (anchor) Service à la mer".

On route the letters may have accrued various censor markings and on arrival in Egypt some received the two-line handstamp "Bâtiments français stationnés/ a ALEXANDRIE". Letters sent airmail may have also received a large "FRENCH NAVY" cachet struck in purple.

**FRENCH NAVY**

Bâtiments Français stationnés  
à ALEXANDRIE

Some of these letters, unfortunately, never reached their destination and were stopped in Beirut (stamp: "Poste aux Armées" with or without the number 600 and often the civil date stamp Beirut R.P.), then returned to the sender. The German post often used a two-line red cachet reading "ZURUCK/Retour".

### Wireless communication.

Once a week a wireless link was established between the cruiser *Duquesne* and the French Navy in Toulon. Sailors were allowed to send and receive short messages transmitted by night in the form of a long text. Upon receipt, they were copied on to postcards and posted to their destination. To date none of these postcards have been found.

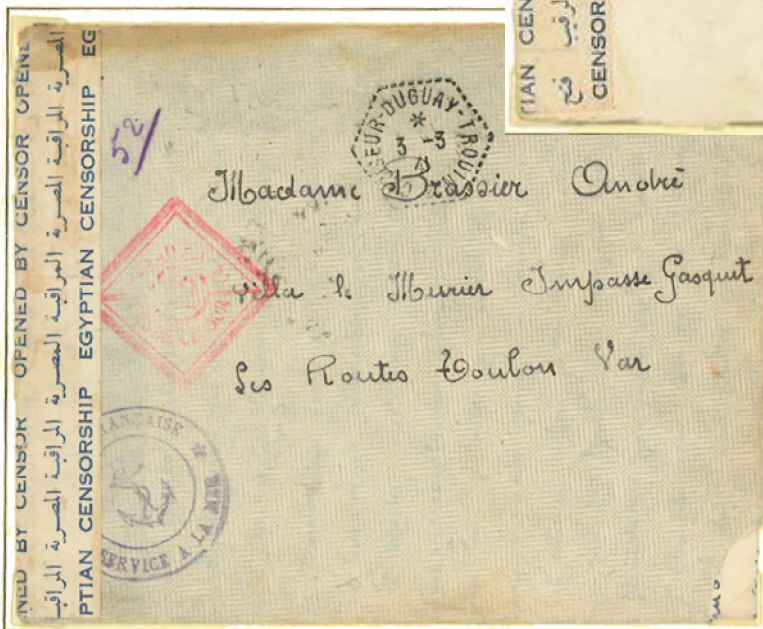
For Force X only five ships met the criteria to qualify for a postal agency - the battleship *Lorraine* and the cruisers *Duquesne*, *Tourville*, *Duguay-Trouin* and *Suffren*.

Lorraine	Duquesne	Tourville	Duguay-Trouin	Suffren



Cover from the Duquesne

Cover from the Tourville



Duguay-Trouin with French cachet Française Service a la Mer



Two incoming letters with the British struck FRENCH NAVY and Bâtiments français stationnés/ a ALEXANDRIE

Both have French and Egyptian censor resealing tape. The upper cover has Zuruck/retour, perhaps the intended recipient had already been repatriated.



Cover censored by the Germans and routed via Beirut



## Rural Cover with Two Cartouches

Mike Murphy (ESC 240)

One of the principal features and safeguards of the Egyptian Rural Postal service is its use of the name of the village, or rural “station”, expressed bilingually and stamped on to an outgoing envelope by the rural postman on his daily round.

The handstamp, or “cartouche”, is kept locked inside the rural station’s postbox, and only the rural postman has a key to that box. Villagers may place mail in the box if they have stamps available, or await the postman’s arrival to buy stamps if they have not. Either way, the postman alone has access to the handstamp, and it is his duty to stamp each outgoing piece of mail with the village name.

He carries on his route any mail that is addressed to the village, and announces his presence with a blast on his horn, probably outside the home of the village headman rather than at the postbox itself. Villagers then gather to collect their mail – but, crucially, those letters are never placed in the postbox, and so receive no incoming village marking.

Only outgoing mail receives a cartouche, and that is the cartouche locked with the mail inside the village box. So how could a letter receive cartouches of two different villages? No postman should have access to two different cartouches at any given time.

I have recently come across just such an example, however, and am intrigued by it. The cover is properly franked 5 millièmes, the internal rate, for transmission to Zagazig, and has received the Rural Service / Bilqas-Minshat Ragheb CDS for 23 NO 22. Not surprisingly, it has a transit mark of Bilqas (properly called Bilqas Qism Auwal - Bilqas First District) and a Zagazig arrival (next day) on the reverse.

What is surprising, however, is that the cover carries two cartouches – of Kafr el Garaida and Maassara, the former struck rather faintly, the latter more positively and clearly over Kafr el Garaida. Bilqas-Minshat Ragheb is one of the more common rural markings, with no fewer than 62 covers recorded between 24 AU 17 and -4 JL 38. Eighteen have Kafr el Garaida cartouches, and 12 are Maassara.

This rural line, set in the central Delta, on the border between the provinces of Gharbiya and Daqahliya, due north of Mansoura and west of Shirbin, is first mentioned to my knowledge only five years after the start of the service, in the *Postal Bulletin* of April 1, 1894. It is a very short route, originally of only four stops, described as Belcas-Massaara-Kafr el Garaida-Biala. The latter rural station was promoted to a post office



proper on January 1, 1895, and so the rural line stopped short. The covers we have recorded are all from the shorter successor line.

There is no early mention of Minshat Ragheb, and no further mention of the line at all that I can find in the *Postal Bulletins* archive. But the three rural stations are all on a main road, with no rail connection. Just to the south on my 1930s map, however, is a railway station named Manshiyet el Badrawi, just outside Bilqas. My bet would be that this station was also (perhaps unofficially?) or at another time called Minshat Ragheb. Surprisingly, neither name appears in the 1932 *Survey of Egypt Index to Place Names*.

A glance at the map shows what an easy route the rural postman had, even after it became a one-day operation (ie, he travelled out and back to Bilqas in the one day, rather than stopping at a remote terminus and travelling back on the same route the next day). According to my approximate measurements he will have had to walk or be carried by donkey for only about 25km to cut back from Kafr el Garaida to Manshiyet Badrawi – or indeed he could have carried on to Biyala and got the train back!

Two other rural routes are recorded from Bilqas – one to Kardud, and another to Shutout, which seems to have replaced completely the Bilqas-Minshat Ragheb route in mid to late 1938, with many Maassara cartouches recorded: the latest cover noted is 1951. Neither of these places has yet been properly identified.

So back to the question of the two cartouches, one apparently struck at Maassara, the other at Kafr el Garaida. Regulation allowed material picked up en route between rural stations to be marked with the cartouche of the village next reached, that is, it was never in the village postbox but had to be cancelled after the postman had left the previous village.

But that theory would still allow for only a single cartouche strike. I can only think that the rural postman forgot on arriving in Maassara that he had already cancelled the cover in Kafr el Garaida (how is that possible?); or perhaps he was carrying one cartouche back to Bilqas for cleaning and thought he would give it a trial stamp. Or perhaps he spotted that the Kafr el Garaida strike was not clear and added a stronger Maassara when he had the opportunity in the next village. Or ... what?

What possible explanation could there be for two cartouches from separate villages being marked on the same cover? Each was locked in its own box until withdrawn for specific immediate use. This should not have happened. If anyone has a theory about how it did, I should be delighted indeed to hear it.



*The original route continued west to Biyala, which was promoted to a regular post office in 1895, leaving only four rural stations including the head office at Bilqas*

**Editor's Note:** A glance at the index on the front cover might suggest that this whole magazine was the work of only two authors. The suggestion is correct. Articles required, please!

## Sinai & Gaza - Part 4: 1917 to 1948

### Edmund Hall (ESC 239)

At the end of the First World War Sinai and Gaza became politically unimportant. Although the border was returned to that of 1906 it was of little matter because Britain was in control of Palestine under the Mandate and also in control of Egypt, although nominally an independent kingdom under King Fouad. Both areas were consigned to becoming neglected backwaters.

For several years after the war Sinai formed a separate British administrative unit, under Major C.S. Jarvis, neither Palestine nor Egypt, although the Egyptian Government liked to believe it a part of Egypt.



*Major C.S. Jarvis*

Jarvis's interest in Arabs and the Arabic language grew from wartime army service in Palestine and Egypt, which was then a British protectorate. A real character, he was seconded to the new Egyptian Frontiers Administration by the British High Commissioner, Sir Reginald Wingate, serving first in the Western Desert and then in Sinai. His Arabic and knowledge of Bedouin customs allowed him as Governor of Sinai (from 1923) to intercede successfully in local disputes and to clamp down on banditry and drug trafficking. He also traced the remains of a Roman and Byzantine settlement in northern Sinai, and by damming the local Wadi Gedeirat and restoring the stone channels succeeded in recreating an oasis.

In 1931 King Fouad awarded him the Insignia of the Third Class of the Order of the Nile and in 1933 he was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. Jarvis took early retirement in 1936 and returned to his prewar occupation as a journalist. He wrote several charming books on the Middle East based on his time there, often with a humorous slant.

One important aspect of Sinai from the British perspective was the rail line from Haifa to Kantara built for the British advance across northern Sinai during the war. Palestine lacked a deep-water seaport until 1933 when one was built at Haifa. Until then, cargo unable to be handled by Palestinian ports was sent by rail to Port Said by way of Kantara.

In October 1920 the railway administration was transferred from the military to a new company, Palestine Railways, owned by the British Mandate government. It took responsibility for the rail network in Palestine and the line to Kantara. The route from the Egypt/Palestine border at Rafa was:

Gabr Amir, El Arish, Mazar, Abu Tilul, Bir Al Abd, Khirba, Romani, Gilban, and Kantara East

I suspect, however that the halts along the line were more vestiges of their use in the First World War and that the train was essentially a land bridge between Palestine and Egypt.

A 120km line was laid down in 1941 between Kantara East and El Shatt, together with restoration of the old El Ferdan swing bridge to serve the needs of the military in World War Two. There had been a bridge built in 1918 but just after the war this was removed as a danger to shipping. Before the bridge freight was ferried across the canal between East Kantara to the Egyptian State Railway station on the opposite banks at El Kantara. The new bridge was hit by a ship in 1947 and replaced by a new double swing edifice in 1954.

From 1920 trains ran a daily service, and three days a week there was a luxury service with restaurant and sleeping cars. In 1923 this luxury service became daily. Palestine Railways passenger traffic declined significantly in the 1920s and '30s. The competition from increasing numbers of private cars reduced first-class and then second-class passenger traffic, such that by 1934 95 per cent of passengers went third class. The 1929 depression led to a drop in first-and second class travel on account of a much reduced number of tourists.



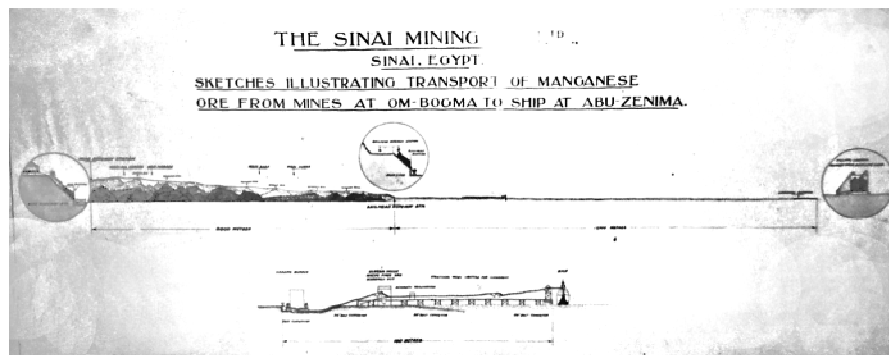
Anti-British sentiment in Palestine with the 1936–39 Arab revolt increased in violence with attacks on the rail system. In September 1938 first the Jerusalem line and then the El Kantara line were closed by extensive sabotage. After the latter was reopened in October, Haifa-El Kantara trains ran only three days a week.

One result of the declining use of the rail network in Palestine was the abandonment of some of the TPO services: the Haifa-Kantara TPO was shortened to Haifa-Rafa, and the Rafa-Kantara section was taken over by Egypt.

The other major change in Sinai was the advent of mining at Um Bogma. Mining was not new to Sinai, with traces going back 8,000 years and the great turquoise veins of Serabit el-Khadim discovered in about 3500BC. Copper was also mined in ancient times, but I know of no such activity in more recent years **before the First World War**.

Manganese was first mined at Um Bogma in 1918, possibly by the Sinai Manganese Company, and in 1930 a Sinai Mining Company is mentioned. Manganese is essential to iron and steel production and as an alloying agent for aluminium. Steel with 12 per cent manganese was used in British steel helmet manufacture during the war. The ore was shipped from Abu Zenima, which had a port with a deep-water wharf .

On one of the ESC's trips to Egypt I visited the wonderful Railway Museum in Cairo and took a photograph of a diagram, no doubt put up in the 1930s, of the aerial bucket system used to transport the ore from Um Bogma to Abu Zenima. Apologies if the picture taken does not reproduce very well here but to my mind it is far too precious to ignore. I think the length of the overhead rail from Um Bogma to Abu Zenima was 9,000 metres. Both had small post offices.



For the rest of the Sinai, as far as I know only El Arish and El Tor had post offices, both having operated before the war. As the Turks never took El Tor I assume it continued to operate throughout. El Arish was retaken by the British on December 20, 1916, and the post office reopened on April 1, 1917.

So the only postmarks for the Sinai for this period are the TPOs of the railway, El Arish, El Tor and the two new offices of Um Bogma and Abu Zenima. I don't believe there was a TPO for the El Shatt-Kantara branch line. El Shatt was a complex of Second World War refugee camps in the desert and used from the summer of 1944 to the beginning of 1946. Most of its inhabitants were Croatian (See *QC* 214). The only reference I have of its use is from an inmate who tells of disembarkation at Port Said: then "we got into a long train composed of freight wagons..." not the normal type of train to operate a TPO service.

For what was to become the Gaza Strip area, this is strictly Palestine philately but included here only as the story is Gaza and Sinai.

The Gaza part consists of the two post offices, Gaza and Khan Yunis (Younis) and for a short period Rafa which initially had a postal service operated by the British. By 1921 the last of the British had left and it was not considered worthwhile to replace the office with a civilian office for a small Arab village. The post was handled by the Kantara-Haifa TPO.

After the British occupation of the Turkish provinces of the Middle East a military government was set up known as the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA), of which Palestine was one part. Post offices set up by the military initially used SZ series date stamps but soon after the war these were replaced

with date stamps with OETA EEF and the name of the place served. During mid 1920 the OETA EEF was removed and replaced by civilian date stamps. Later these were in turn replaced by the double-ring Mandate type, which continued to be used until the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel in 1948.

Only Gaza and Khan Yunis had post offices in the Gaza Strip:



EDR	3.MA.19	19.JL.20	8.2.21	24.10.21	3.JU.1919	18.3.27	26.10.26	12.FE.20	17.AU.20
LDR	24.JU.20	21.AP.21	30.4.48	25.2.41	15.MY.1948	30.7.38	30.4.48	17.JU.20	23.FE.21

The TPOs as used by Palestine Railways up to 1935.



EDR	8.12.20	17.8.20	10.9.20	7.OCT.24	20.12.24	3.OCT.24	11.MAR.27
LDR	22.12.20	29.9.24	29.9.24	20.MR.31	7.4.28	30.10.28	10.JUN.28

These postmarks have been well researched and reported in Holy Land philatelic magazines and books, notably Dorfman (1985) and Proud (1985, 2001). They report more than shown above, going into more detail with minor variations. The early Gaza marks with and without OETA are quite rare. The two markings with the black crosses at the bottom are reasonably common, the others are seldom seen. The larger TPOs are rare and the smaller ones less so.

Less well documented are the handstamps used by the route Rafa-Kantara after the Egyptians took over responsibility. I can find only a few isolated references to them: Sacher (1963) and Smith (1999). I suspect these are quite rare.



EDR	1.JA.34	19.DE.38	1.MA.43
LRD	16.AU.37	7.DE.40	

The first two drawings are taken from a proof sheet at Kantara. The third is from Smith. I have seen only a couple of the Kantara-Rafa TPO, on piece or cover, and a photocopy of an auction lot obtained some 25 years ago. Either I did not bid or was unsuccessful, but the cover is a registered letter to Haifa from El Arish with an Arish Cash handstamp registration cachet. It has a Rafa-Haifa TPO of the Palestine postal system and a registered Haifa marking. The Palestine TPO is a day later than the Egyptian one, which poses the question: was the mail actually taken from the Egyptian-run train at Rafa and transferred the Palestine-operated service? For Rafa-Kantara I have seen two copies on cover, one illustrated by Sacher and the other on a cover I have. The third, as reported by Smith, I worry about: is it actually a "filled in one" for the lower half of a poor strike of the second.

As for the Sinai postmarks, I don't believe any research for this period has been carried out other than by myself. El Arish is not particularly rare Tor and Gebel el-Tor are somewhat rare, but the other two, Um Bogma and Abu Zenima, I have come across only a few strikes of each.



EDR		14.JA.21	13.OC.37	20.JU.29	1.JA.34	29.JU.35
LRD	3.FE.19	15.JL.22		1.JA.34		4.MA.41



EDR	1.JA.34		9.JU.19*	3.DE.30	4.SE.25	7.MA.39
LRD			25.JU.19	19.JU.49		?.?.56



Both Gebel el Tor camp marks use the Arabic *mahjr* (quarantine camp). The second one I have seen on cover as late as 1956, including the bent centre bar.



16.JA.30	17.III.23
9.AP.40	13.JU.30

Covers to Abu Zenima are addressed to Mr Serge Fediaevsky, whom I believe was a Russian emigré from the Russian Revolution.

Continued from:

- Sinai & Gaza Part 1 QC 198 p256-269 (2001) pre World War I
- Sinai & Gaza - Part 2 QC 240 p110-120 (2012)
- World War I, Turkish, German and Forces
- Sinai & Gaza - Part 3 QC242 p156-165 (2012)
- World War I, British Empire and Allies

References:

Sacher, Michael M. - *The Travelling Post Offices of Palestine (The BAPIP Bulletin. No. 43, 1963, p.13-18)*  
 Dorfman, David - *Palestine Mandate Postmarks* (Tower of David, Sarasota, Florida, 1985)  
 Proud, Edward B - *The Postal History of Palestine and Transjordan* (Heathfield, ISBN 1-872465-89-7, 2006; first edition 1985)  
 Firebrace, John - *British Empire Campaigns & Occupations in the Near East, 1914-1924 A Postal History.* (CRL 1991)  
 El Shatt Yugoslav Refugees Camp QC 214 p59-62 September Quarter 2005



Postcard Gaza with OTEF EEF removed.

Dated 9.SP.20.

Registered Cover Kantara Haifa T.P.O

Dated 14.JY.23

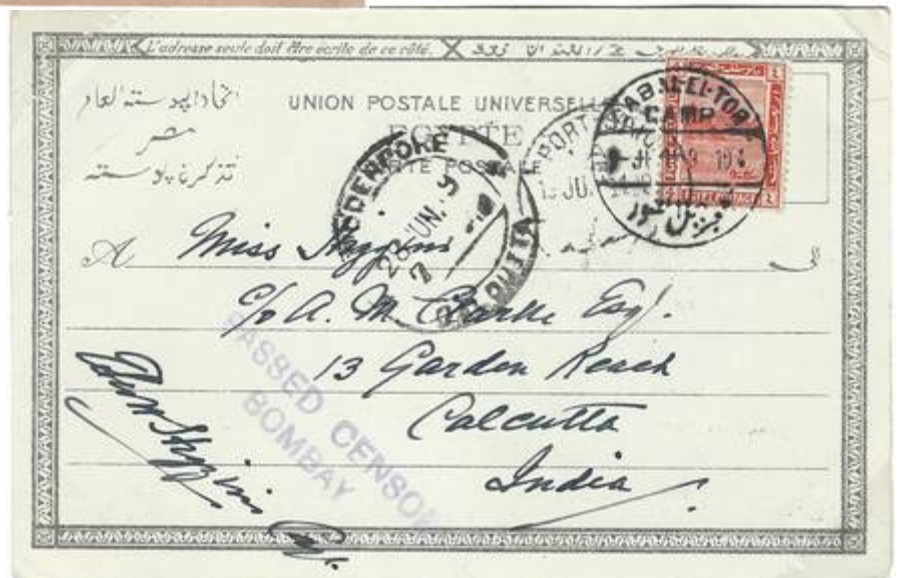


Cover Haifa-Kantara T.P.O South

Dated 29.OCT.24

Postcard Gabal-El-Tor

Camp dated 9.JU.119



Cover Rafa Kantara T.P.O  
Dated 19.DE.38



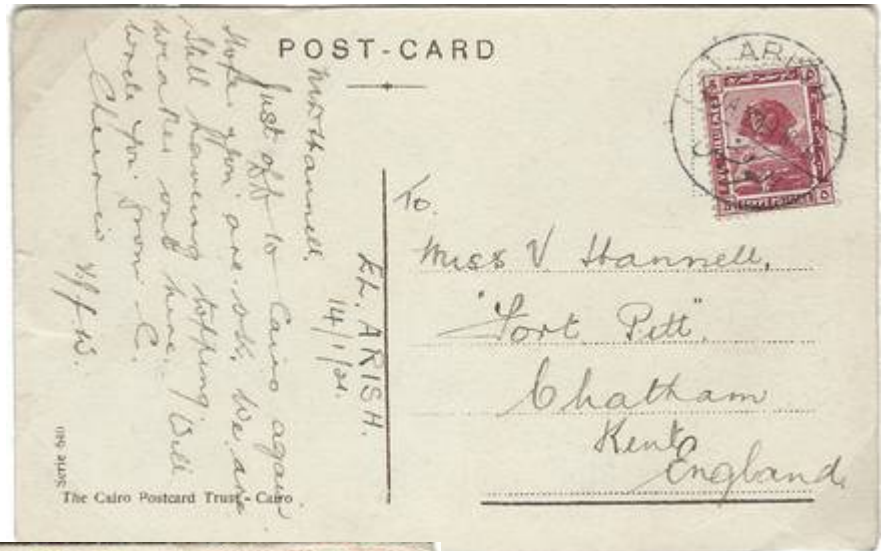
Arish (Cash) 29.JU.35  
'Misuse of a cash handstamp'

Cover Arish 20.JU.29



Gebel El Tor 23.DE.30. with registration box.

Early post WWI card from El-Arish  
 Dated 14.JA.21



Cover from Um Bogma 24.VI.24

Cover from Abu Zenima 13.AU.35  
 Backstamped Port Taufiq F.T. 13.AU.36  
 Camp Cesare Traffic 14.AU.35.  
 Cairo-Alexandria 18.AU.35  
 The Sidi Gaber (T) was acquired on the  
 letter being returned. -2.SE.35



Incoming to Abu Zenima  
 Alexandria 15.AU.35  
 Backstamped Port Taufiq 16.AU.35  
 Abu Zenima 16.AU.35



### Obituary: Peter A.S. Smith (ESC 74), 1920-2014

The Study Circle is almost immeasurably sad to have to record the death on November 29, peacefully in his sleep at home in Michigan, of Peter Smith, truly a giant of Egyptian philately. Universally recognised as *the* worldwide authority on the stamps and postal history of Egypt, he will best be remembered for his magnum opus, *Egypt – Stamps and Postal History: A Philatelic Treatise*. Though published in 1999, this magisterial volume remains, and will long remain, the “bible” of Egyptian stamp collectors worldwide. The number of countries whose philatelic history has been so comprehensively dealt with is very few and far between, and the book remains a fitting tribute to a man who loved research and in equal measure loved sharing the fruits of his labours with like-minded colleagues.



Peter undoubtedly concentrated on the classical period of the late nineteenth century but delved into every aspect of the subject, as evidenced by the breadth of coverage of his articles in the *Quarterly Circular*. He was an immaculate correspondent, even before the advent of electronic mail, and always willing to share his encyclopaedic knowledge with any member who sought guidance. Typically his very last article, in the September 2014 issue entitled *Egyptian Offices Abroad: Genuine or Forged Cancellation?*, offered “to share my knowledge with members of the Circle: I would be glad to examine items that can be scanned to me”.

Needless to say, he collected a large number of Gold and Large Gold when he exhibited sections of his enormously wide-ranging Egypt collection at international philatelic events. Since his first international entry, at SIPEX (Washington) in 1966, he has exhibited his collections of Egyptian classics, Egyptian consular and territorial offices, and the Fourth Issue at various internationals, winning a series of medals as well as the Grand Award at CAIRO’91. As recently as October he took a trip to New York (for a stamp show, naturally), and was pleased to add another medal to his collection. Egypt aside, another area of interest was his collection of worldwide postage due stamps on cover: again the source of a number of medals.

Born in Erskine Hill in northwest London in 1920, Peter emigrated with his family to the USA when he was three, first to Guemeville, California, and then to San Francisco. In 1926 an uncle gave him a Scott catalogue and two sets of Luxembourg semi-postal stamps. Luckily for all of us, the catalogue contained Egypt’s recently issued Geographical Congress stamps, and their size and exotic subject appealed to the budding collector. Trips to the Stamp Den in Chinatown followed, and the collection began to grow. Peter’s English grandmother visited in 1932 with the latest Stanley Gibbons catalogue - and a £5 note. The latter, well over the average week’s wage at the time, was happily exchanged for a block of nine of the 1874 2½pi with tête-bêche cliché in the centre.



A long career in chemistry started with a degree from the University of California in 1941, followed by work at the University of Michigan on the penicillin project, where he achieved a doctorate in 1944. He became an instructor, then assistant professor in 1948, associate in 1953, and full professor in 1959.

A dedicated teacher, advisor, and investigator of the chemistry of compounds containing organic nitrogen, Peter served as book review editor for the *Journal of the American Chemical Society* since 1971 and since 1988 as chairman of the nomenclature commission for the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry. His work involved many trips to Europe, allowing him to visit Egypt collectors and attend meetings of the Egypt and Sudan study groups. On one such trip in the late 1970s our editor bumped into him in the London

Stamp Shop - not seeking out rare Egyptian items but thematic stamps of motor cycles, which he rode enthusiastically for many years. He authored the two-volume work *Open-Chain Organic Nitrogen Compounds*,

published in 1965-66, which holds a respected position in the literature, and retired from active faculty duties on May 31, 1990, after a career of more than 40 years at Michigan, becoming a chemistry Professor Emeritus.

A few years after he moved to Michigan the collection of G. Seymour Thompson (ESC 1) was auctioned by H.R. Harmer in New York. Peter borrowed \$100 from a friend and managed to obtain such mouth-watering items as the 1872 10pa bisect on a complete newspaper for \$14, a bargain price even then! The stamp collecting boy had become an enthusiastic and serious senior collector, a role he was to hold for the next 69 years.

When William Byam founded the Egypt Study Circle in 1935 one of its primary aims was publication of a book to cover all aspects of Egyptian philately, and members were asked (and sometimes instructed) to adopt a particular subject to study, and so to produce a chapter for "The Book". The war interrupted this work, and it soon became clear that members were unable to maintain their interest as the major collections were gradually broken up. After retiring from university, and unannounced, in 1992 Peter took on the gigantic task himself. A few years later the result was *Egypt - Stamps and Postal History*, a book running to 850 pages, covering every aspect of the topic, even the most esoteric, and essential reading for anyone collecting Egypt.

The volume was immediately and deservedly honoured by the world's most prestigious philatelic society, the Royal Philatelic Society of London (of which Peter was a Fellow), with the award of the Crawford Medal, presented annually for the most valuable and original contribution to the study and knowledge of philately published in book form. His previous book, *The Travelling Post Offices of Egypt*, published by the Mobile Post Office Society in 1983 contains details of all Egyptian TPO types then known, with routes and dates of use. An essential guide for the TPO collector, it is now being updated by our members.

Peter was a Life Member of the American Philatelic Society, serving on its Expert Committee, and has long been a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society, London, and an Honorary Life Member of the Philatelic Society of Egypt. He joined the Egypt Study Circle in September 1949, and was elected President in 1977, a role he fulfilled with tact and diplomacy for almost precisely 20 years. He was a founder member of the Sudan Study Group, with a particular interest in the Egyptian period of Sudanese philately, and in its early days was one of the main contributors to *The Camel Post*, with article in all of the first eight issues.

He was a member of the Ottoman and Near East Philatelic Society and OPAL among other societies, all of their journals graced by his articles, including *Egyptian Topics* in the 1980s and the *Collectors Club Philatelist*. For the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Philatelic Congress, he presented a paper of 15 pages entitled *The Egyptian Post Office Abroad in the Turkish Empire*, one of his particular interests.

His first *QC* offering, in January 1955, was a simple extraction of *US APOs in Egypt in WWII*, from the War Cover Club book by A.J. Tripp: something of a departure from the usual fare, still wedded to the early/classical period. He returned to the subject several times, the last in September 2013 with *Rates at the US Army Post Offices in WWII*. His June article, *US. Navy at Alexandria 1885*, is possibly the only reference to the subject.

Peter's second article also followed a military theme, in December 1955: *Some Markings on Soldier's Letters from the Egyptian Army in the Arab-Israeli war 1948-9*, a subject hardly touched upon but showing his willingness to open up new aspects. *Forged Covers of the Sudan Campaign* (November 1957) is still the best reference on the Nahman fabrications, and his first major article was on the *Imperforate and Part-imperforated in Egyptian Philately* (March 1968). A torrent of articles followed over the next 50 years, his final piece being *Austro-Egyptian Postal Agreement* (June 2014). As by far our longest-serving member, he stayed in close touch with the Circle in London, even attending the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary luncheon in 1910 at the ripe old age of 90.

We have lost a true friend, whose breadth and depth of knowledge has not been, and will not be, equalled.

**John Sears** (ESC 188), **Edmund Hall** (ESC239) & **Mike Murphy** (ESC 240)

**\* Members wishing to pay their personal tributes to Peter Smith should submit brief notes to the Editor**



## Military Matters – The Czech Legions Return through the Suez Canal.

Edmund Hall (ESC 239)



*Czech troops passing through the Suez Canal*

At the outbreak of war in 1914 the Czech people, living mainly in Bohemia Moravia, were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Austro-Hungarian regiments were based on region, so some comprised as much as 90 per cent Czechs or were dominated by another ethnic group.

Calls for more autonomy or even independence arose at the end of the 19th. century. At the start of the 20th century, the idea of a “Czecho-Slovak” gained support for the shared aspirations of the two peoples for independence from the Habsburg state. In early 1915, after

the outbreak of World War I, Tomáš Masaryk made his way to Western Europe, where he was recognised as the representative of the underground Czech liberation movement and conducted a vigorous campaign against Austria-Hungary and Germany. In 1916 Edvard Beneš, Milan Štefánik (a Slovak ) and Masaryk created the Czechoslovak National Council. Masaryk in the United States, Štefánik in France, and Beneš in France and Britain worked tirelessly to gain Allied recognition. They helped to form Czech legions for the French and Italian fronts.

At the turn of the century, some 100,000 Czechs had emigrated to Russia, settling mainly in and around the Ukrainian capital, Kiev. At the start of the war, anxious to prove their loyalty to their new homeland (and to avoid internment), these expatriate Czechs asked the government of Czar Nicholas II – who spoke often of pan-slavic brotherhood and had hinted at support for an independent Czechoslovakia - to allow them to form their own army units to fight the Austrians.. These units are normally thought of as the Czech Legion.

The majority of the Czech regiments of the Austrian Army fought on the eastern front with many deserting to Russia, in a couple of case nearly whole regiments. By 1917 the total number of Czech soldiers in Russia exceeded 130,000.

After the February revolution of 1917 the Czechs organised an executive council and appointed their own officers to rule their army, instead of submitting to Russian generals. With the ensuing chaos of the Russian Revolution resulting in the collapse of any central authority, the Czechs found themselves entirely free to do as they wished.

They set off for Vladivostok in order to be shipped to France where they would serve with the French. This immeasurably lengthy route was considered safer in avoiding the main warring factions of the civil war.

The Allies began to realise that the Czechs could be of use to stop the Bolshevik revolution: they promised the Czechs independence in return for their maintaining control of the Trans-Siberian railway and supporting the anti-Bolshevik White Russian forces. The Allies sent their own forces to northern Siberia, comprising troops from various countries including a large Japanese contingent. Not until February 7, 1920, when a truce with the Bolsheviks was signed at Kujtun Station did the Allies agree to transport the legion home from Vladivostok. The last detachment left in September 1920.



together with two stamps produced for the Legion's use.

The sea route, in most cases, included a passage through the Suez Canal. Whether there were opportunities for sightseeing is doubtful but I have an Egyptian postcard, of Medinet Abou, written in Czech and properly franked with a four millième stamp, sent to the new republic of Czechoslovakia. It's 'cancelled' with one of the field post office handstamps used in Siberia,

### Russian Office cover goes for €8,500

Mike Murphy (ESC 240)

There are not many items that can truly be said to be unique – but if the Russian Office cover presented among the “Rarities of the World” at Feldman's in Geneva on the evening of December 4 does not qualify, then I do not know what does.

This truly beautiful and fascinating postal history item from the Russian Office in Alexandria is a folded letter that started out in 1864 from Haleb (Aleppo) in Syria, with a sender's blue oval handstamp of Joseph E Hava / Aleb, Syrie. Addressed presumably to a relative in Marseille, it is endorsed in manuscript “voie d'Alexandrie”, and received the Russian Office stamp PORT ALEXANDRIA in blue on both back and front on arrival in April 28.



Transferred to the French Post Office, it had two Napoleon 10 centimes and two more of 40 centimes added and tied by the French '5080' in a diamond of dots on May 12. Alongside is the Alexandrie Egypte doubling CDS, with an ornate boxed P.P. in blue together with a boxed P.P. in black. The Paq. Ang. Marseille arrival CDS in red is May 24(?).

**Set in auction with an estimate of €6,000 - €9,000, it went for €8,500. And why not?**

## Suez Canal – or Panama?

Mike Murphy (ESC 240)



There are slips, there are mistakes, there are errors, gaffes, blunders - and then there are disasters like the one Egypt Post recently published with new stamps marking the multibillion-dollar widening of the Suez Canal.

A major problem has been that the Canal is a narrow waterway, with one-way traffic, either southbound or northbound, leading to long queues of massive vessels – and only a couple of months ago a collision between two supertankers in the Canal. To double capacity from 49 to 97 vessels a day, Egypt decided to build a “parallel” canal, 45 miles long from Lake Timsah to the Bitter Lakes, about half the length of the original. It will cut waiting time from 11 to three hours – and increases in toll income for the Egyptian coffers.

Egypt Post decided to issue three stamps to mark the venture – and a se-tenant strip was issued to great fanfare (*above*) on August 5, the day the project was signed off. On closer examination, however, it was realised that researchers seeking an illustration of a “double canal” had placed an image of the Panama Canal – apparently found in Google images and properly labelled - at the heart of the strip in place of the Port Said-Suez version. The post office made a frantic effort to withdraw the stamps, and seems to have hoovered up many of them, but stamps and FDCs escaped to the market and are commanding good prices. [Dr Sherif Samra of the Philatelic Society of Egypt will publish precise figures of those destroyed in the next issue]

To their great credit, Egypt Post hurried to Cairo University graphic designers, who prepared an alternative – and more attractive and significant – design (*below*), and in a rush job the new stamps were issued very quickly – within three days of the error being spotted, so it is said. Cheekily, the reprint has the same FDC handstamp – and date – as the original, though it clearly cannot have been issued on the same day.

Even internet research can slip in inexperienced hands. What a bloomer! And what a lovely “collectible”!



## Members

### Trent Ruebush ‘best in 19th century’

Congratulations to our North American Agent Trent Ruebush (ESC 179), whose five-frame exhibit on "Egypt's Fourth Issue 1879-1913" not only took Gold at the Palmares 100th anniversary ASDA stamp show in New York (Oct 23-26) but in addition won the award for the "best in show international 19th century". Peter Smith (ESC 74), who took a new tack with eight frames of "Egyptian Postal Stationery to the end of the Monarchy", was awarded a large vermeil.

### Lucien Toutounji soars to two Golds



Lucien Toutounji (ESC 249) admits he was flabbergasted with the judges' evaluation of his five-frame exhibit "Lebanon Air Mail 1919-1939" at Aerophilately 2014, an event sponsored by the American Philatelic Society (APS) and the Federation Internationale de Philatelie (FIP). Very little information has been published on his topic, and the exhibit was mainly personal research, a facet recognised by the award of no fewer than two Gold medal, one each from the APS and FIP, and a third APS medal for personal research. Normally a Gold is awarded for eight-frame exhibits, so wining one with five frames at an FIP international event is extraordinary. Lucien's problem of what to do with his extra material, however, is easily resolved: next time he will show eight frames!

### Members on the mend

We are none of us getting any younger, so it is good to be able to report that three of our stalwarts have recently overcome several sessions with the medics and are now well on the way back to fitness. Keith Pogson (ESC 130) has been suffering serious neck and back restrictions, Bill Johns (ESC 297) has gone through a quintuple heart bypass; and Pierre Meniaud (ESC 446) has had an extensive operation on his spine. We wish them all well, for Christmas, and for a speedy recovery.

## Subscriptions.



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As a result of a decision taken to cut postage costs at the 2014 Annual General Meeting, the Quarterly Circular is now available to members to read and download if they wish, within this section. At the end of 2014 members will be asked to let the Secretary know whether they are content to receive their QC in this form, those choosing to give up the printed version will pay a reduced subscription of £15 from 2015.

Members are reminded – again – of a momentous decision reported in the June QC (page 26) that the QC can be read in electronic form in the members' section of the website in just the same form as the printed version – those electing to view the magazine online only will have their subscription cut by £5 to £15 for 2015. The subscription for those choosing the printed version will remain at £20 (see green sheet enclosed). Future subscriptions, for 2016 and thereafter, could see a dramatic rise purely to meet the

substantial recent postage increases. It is envisioned that the £15 "online" rate will remain for some years. To "go electronic" for 2015 **YOU MUST** let the Secretary know by the end of January at **THE LATEST**. If we have not heard from you by then we will assume that you are sticking with the printed version. You will have the opportunity each year to decide which subscription level you want.