



The Eye of Horus - Beginners' Corner 4 - with David Ogden. Our column giving newcomers to Egypt collecting an insight into its wide philatelic history today looks at special arrangements that were made for a lower-priced postal contact between British troops serving there and their families at home

British Forces in Egypt: Have you come across the strange looking stamps issued in the 1930s for British troops to use? Some collectors don't see them as genuine stamps, but they are listed in SG and other catalogues. Postal rates increased between 1932 and 1943, and Egypt issued special stamps (or "seals") for



British military use. Inscribed "British Forces in Egypt" or "Army Post", they were stuck on the back of the mail (like old wax seals on letters) and cancelled by a "retta" handstamp.



Egypt gained independence from Great Britain in 1922, but thousands of British Forces stayed to defend the crucial Suez Canal trade route. In 1932 Egypt lifted its internal postal rate from 10 millièmes (about 2

1/2d at the time) to 15 millièmes. The increase met strong opposition from the troops, because it would cost more to send mail from Egypt to the UK. So an arrangement was agreed, with British military personnel given a postal concession that allowed them to write home at the old rate of 1 piastre (10 millièmes). In November 1932 the special stamps were made available for British troops to buy at NAAFI (Navy, Army, and Air Force Institute) canteens. The first "postal seal" was replaced in 1933 by one inscribed "letter seal" with the NAAFI seal on the left and the inscription "British Forces in Egypt" at the right. It was designed by Lt Col C. Fraser.

For Christmas and New Year mail special Xmas Seal 3 millieme stamps were produced in various colours between 1932 and 1935. A distinctive design showing a local figure with his camel in front of the Pyramids was prepared by Sgt. W. F. Lait, of the Service Corps. with the phrase "Xmas Seal" in the centre. These seals were valid only on unsealed holiday correspondence.



In 1934 Egypt released a carmine 1-piastre letter stamp designed by Miss Waugh showing a sphinx. "British Forces in Egypt" is written in gradient font with "letter stamp" outlined in black letters. The same design was issued in green later that year. The sphinx series was issued in blue in May 1935, diagonally over-printed "Jubilee Commemoration 1935" for the Silver Jubilee of King George V; and in red with "Xmas 1935 / 3 milliemes" overprint as a Christmas commemorative issue. Cancellations of military post offices most often seen on Christmas seals are those of Cairo,

Abu Suweir, Abuqir, Alexandria, Moascar, Port Said and Mersa Matruh.

Postal seals and stamps were discontinued after the introduction of Egyptian-produced Army Post stamps, first released in March 1936. They feature a portrait of King Fuad I, and were followed by a second Army Post series in December 1939 with the image of his son and successor, King Farouk. These stamps were withdrawn in 1941 but the concession, without the necessity for using special stamps, continued until 1951 when Egypt revoked the postal agreement.

