

Alexandria has changed much since one collector/researcher's first visit 40 years ago, but his attraction for Egypt, its stunning history and its way of life, has lost none of its power after a surprising start in a Cairo toy shop



### **Why I collect Egypt – Ronny Van Pellecom (ESC 618) – Wilrijk, Belgium**

My fascination for the country had been there since my childhood ... the pyramids, the pharaohs ... and when I saw and was able to buy an exchange booklet at a swap meet in Kassel, Germany, filled with complete sets of the first three Egyptian stamp issues, that was the introduction to philatelic fascination too.

On my first visit to Egypt, in 1981, I happened to pass a Cairo toy store that also had stamps in the display case. The store was in the name of Hagopian. The owner, Khetcho, showed several letters from his First Issue collection. That's where I bought my first Posta Europea – and that's when the collection began in earnest.

I visited the city of Alexandria as well as the usual tourist sites, and was immediately fascinated by it. The beautiful beaches bordering the city, the easygoing way of life of the local people as well as the beachgoers. The harbour. The Corniche, especially in the evening. The food: bamia, tameya, kochary ... all built on my passion for Egypt and its history.

Unfortunately, a good deal has changed since that early visit. The beaches are gone, the Corniche is dangerous to cross, and the old buildings have almost all disappeared.



***A Rosetta street fish-seller shares a moment with his cat***



***A stop on the line from Alexandria to Mersa Matrouh***

The very special Alexandria atmosphere of yester-year no longer fills the city. But it has a very rich and fascinating history, traces of which can still be found in many places. Thanks to organisations such as CEAlex, the Centre for Alexandrian Studies (<https://www.cealex.org>), historic elements of the gradually disappearing city are recorded and kept alive.

This Mediterranean metropolis also sparked my interest in postal history. Historical development of the city and its postal history are intertwined hand in hand, and researching and documenting this engrossing network is part of the fascination.

The country itself is so appealing, together with its charming people ... as soon as you can speak a few words of Egyptian Arabic, just to say Hello and How are you, the ice is broken.



***No fuss or bother about a visa to visit Egypt – just buy one at the airport***

And it is so easy to travel to Egypt, especially as Europeans. Unlike the UK, you don't need a passport. An ID card and two photos are enough and nor is there any need to apply for a visa in advance: you just pay the fee and receive it at the airport. Such a straightforward country, just the way I like it.

● We welcome all members' stories to this enlightening regular feature of the *Quarterly Circular*