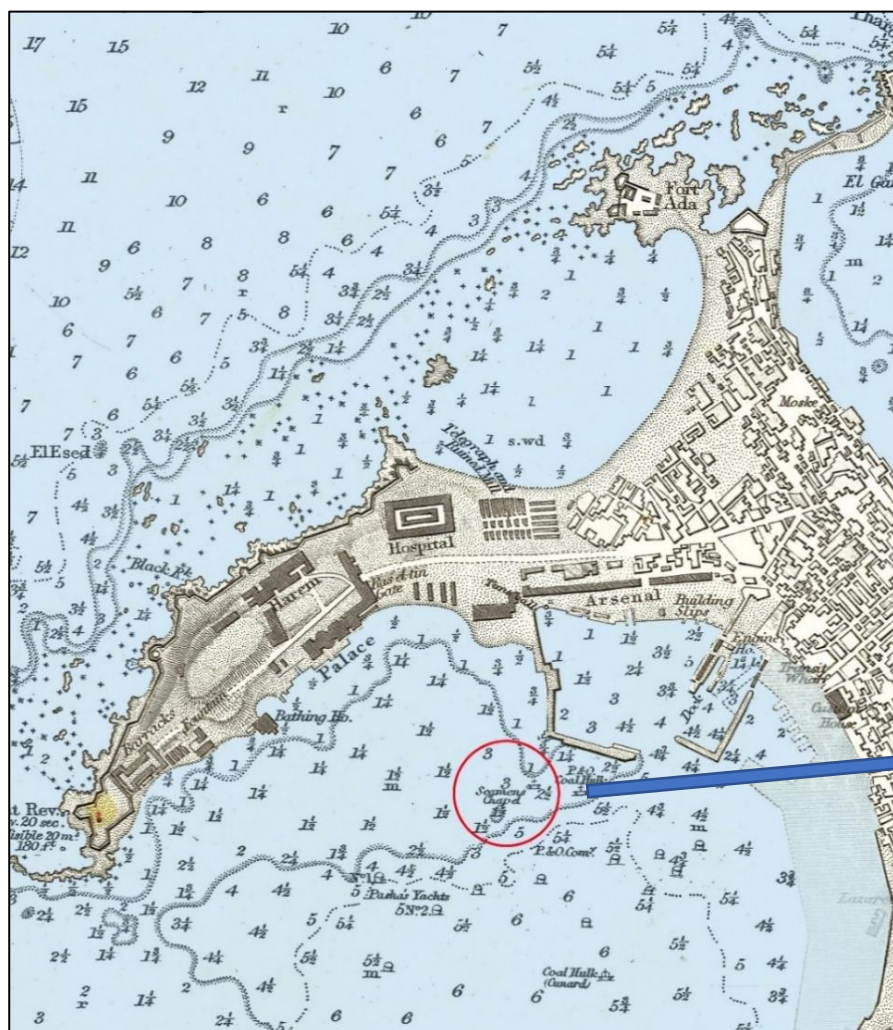
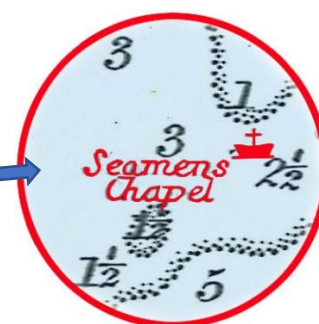


The Seamen's Home, Alexandria

Ronny Van Pellecom (ESC 618) and Alain Stragier (ESC 241)



The story of the Seamen's Home started when a Scottish religious mission established a Seamen's Chapel in an old hospital ship¹. An image of this vessel can be seen on a map of 1857 by Commander A.L. Mansell. Little is known of the further history of this ship or its relations with seamen, except that the organisers certainly provided church services.



The Port of Alexandria,
Mansell 1857

Several *Egyptian Gazette* articles give more information about the history of this organization.

The first Seamen's Home was founded in February 1881 by R.J. Moss, Rev. E.J. Davies (Chaplain of St. Mark's), Sir John Scott (Judge of the Court of Appeal of the Mixed Tribunals), Rev. W.F. Scott (Minister of the Scotch Church), Admiral Sir R. Massie Blomfield and Father Rudolf (head of the Rudolf Home). They rented a large house in the street of the Old Custom House, say, Shareh Gumrok el Adeem, in 1881. In the very next year of their tenancy, in July 1882, a stray shell mysteriously found its way into their "Seamen's drawing room" and the subsequent events necessitated the closing of the Home for some months. Further quarters were found for the Home on that side of the Harbour in a house belonging to Messrs. Stagni until, on January 15th 1901, the new Merchants Seamen's Home was formally opened by Mr. Gould, H.B.M's Consul-General in Alexandria.

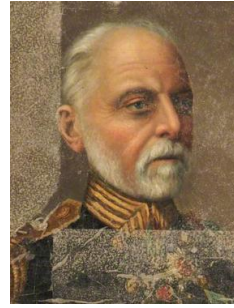
The Egyptian Gazette 20 January 1912

¹ F.W. Benians (ESC 123) Egypt Study Circle, *The Quarterly Circular* 121, March 1982, page 119



Sir John Scott (1841 – 1904)

Arrived in 1872 in Alexandria, where he had a practice at the British Consular Court. British judge for the new international Courts of Appeal in 1874, he became vice-president in 1881. At the end of 1882 Scott was appointed a judge of the Bombay Supreme Court, returning to Egypt in 1891 to become judicial advisor to the Khedive.



Rear Admiral Sir Richard Blomfield (1835 – 1921)
by H. Pouzette (Grosvenor Museum)

Served in the Royal Navy from 1848 to 1872, and from 1879 to 1908 was in the service of the Egyptian Government, retiring in 1908 as Director-General of Ports and Lighthouses.

He was one of the Home's founders in 1881.

NEW SEAMEN'S HOME AT ALEXANDRIA FORMAL OPENING CEREMONY

The Egyptian Gazette 16 January 1901

The formal inauguration of the new Merchant Seamen's Home that has been built on Quay E took place yesterday afternoon in the presence of a fairly large gathering of residents. Mr. E.B. Gould, H.B.M.'s Consul General for Alexandria, was in the chair, and he was assisted on the platform by the gentlemen who form the committee of the institution, Mr. G.B. Alderson, to whose munificence the realization of the scheme is mainly due, was also on the platform. The Rev. E.J. Davis, M.A. opened the proceedings with a very appropriate prayer, after which Mr. R.C. Crafton, Secretary of the Home, said that on the auspicious occasion of formally declaring the new building of the Merchant Seamen's Home open, the following brief summary of the salient points in the history of the institution might not be without interest.

The Alexandria Merchant Seamen's Home was established in the year 1881. The necessity of such an institution had however, been recognized for many years prior to that date. The project had the support of the leading merchants and residents, and a committee was elected with Mr. R.J. Moss as Treasurer and Mr., now Sir, John Scott as Secretary, and included several other well-known names, as those of the Rev. E.J. Davis, Admiral Blomfield, H.E. Morice Pasha, Mr. Barker, Mr. James Hewat, and Mr. E.D. Carver. An appeal was made by which £ 590 was obtained, and the project became an established fact.

In 1885, merchant shipping owners connected with the trade of Alexandria consented to pay a voluntary tax of 5s. per voyage on ships calling at the port, as a contribution towards the Home's expenses. Many others gave their adhesion later, forming one source of income. In 1894 it was decided, in view of the financial position, to arrange for the working of the Home under a joint Committee of the Sailors' Home and the Harbor Mission of the Church of Scotland, which had been in existence over thirty years, and Sir Charles A. Cookson, Her Majesty's Consul General, was elected the first President ex-officio.

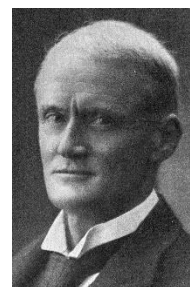


Sir Charles Alfred Cookson (1829 – 1906)

After serving in Constantinople as Law Secretary to the Consular Court, he went to Egypt as Consul and judge. He was made Consul General in 1888 and retired in 1897.

This arrangement has been continued to the present time with eminently successful results, both as to economy and efficiency. On the retirement of Sir Chas. Cookson in 1897, the presidency of the Home devolved upon and was accepted by his successor, Mr. E.B. Gould, Her Majesty's present Consul General at Alexandria. The hired premises, which had for some years served as a Home, having become wholly inadequate for the growing requirements of the work carried on, application was made in 1898 to the authorities for the grant of the site on the quay for the purpose of building a new Home. The lease of a suitable site was readily accorded on most liberal terms, and an appeal was issued, with the result that in September, 1899, the Committee were able to sign the building contract, and a new Home, though only now about to be formally opened, had been in occupation since May last year. For the successful and early completion of their undertaking, the Committee were indebted to the generosity of Mr. G.B. Alderson, without whose munificent aid the spacious and comfortable premises in which they now met could not have been erected. The Committee were also indebted to the kindness of Mr. J.F. Elsworth in supplying plans and in supervising the building operations. It only remained for him to add, he said, that the seafaring classes, for whose benefit this institution exists, highly appreciate the admirable qualities of the new building.

On the conclusion of Mr. Crafton's speech, Mr. E.B. Gould said that there was little left to say, but he would like to speak a few words in his Consular capacity. He spoke of the immense use the Home had always been to him, and asserted that without it he did not know how really he could get on with seamen coming to his port. Previous to the institution of the Home, seamen, who for some reason or other were left on land, experienced great difficulty in obtaining shelter. The Home was therefore of enormous value, not only as a boarding house, but as a place of healthy entertainment. He remarked that the British Government was generally a paternal government, but somehow it had singularly left the Alexandria Seamen's Home to private enterprises, and they were therefore, specially indebted to those who, by their aid and liberality, had kept the institution going. He singled out for special mention the names of Admiral and Mrs. Blomfield and the Rev. W. Cowan, the latter of whose services, he was sorry to say, they would lose some time this year. He remarked that the reverend gentleman would be much missed in Alexandria, and nowhere more than at the Home, in which he had taken a cheerful and active interest. Mr. Gould finally referred to the munificent liberality of Mr. G.B. Alderson, without which, he said, it would have been impossible to realize the project for many years to come. Thanks to that gentleman, it had now been started on a solid basis, free of debt. He wished him many happy years of prosperity to see the fruits of the work he had accomplished. Mr. Gould then formally declared the Home open.



Edward Blencowe Gould
(1847 – 1916)

Consul General in Alexandria
on 1 November 1897.

Before he was Consul in Siam
and brought from there the first
Siamese cats to Europe

Rear Admiral Blomfield then rose and said he wished to thank Mr. Gould for his kind references to his wife's and his own efforts on behalf of the institution, but remarked that there were two names which should not be omitted in this connection; and those were Sir John and Lady Scott, who were the prime movers in instituting the Home, which, since its opening, had never been closed for a single day. He likewise referred to Mr. Alderson's great liberality and added that thanks were also due to the Government and the Railway Administration, as well as to Lord Cromer, who had materially assisted in pushing matters. He concluded by proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Gould for taking the chair.

The Rev. W. Cowan, who next spoke, said that one word more was due to the memory of Sir Charles Cookson, the former Consul General, who had the deepest interest in the Home and had had the welfare of our seamen very much at heart. Mr. Alderson's munificence again came in for more eulogy at the hands of Mr. Cowan, who referred to that gentleman's untiring energy. He said that, unlike most benefactors, Mr. Alderson had given not only his money but his time to the Home. He had taken a great personal interest in its building and had closely watched its gradual erection. There was one lady, he said, who was not present

but who should have been. That was Mrs. Charteris, who had been one of the initiators of the Home and one of its most active supporters. He wished to thank the ladies in general, and Mrs. Blomfield and Mrs. Moss in particular, for their kind help, which had always been cheerfully extended, and in the words of Mark Twain, he would simply say, "God bless them all."

This concluded the ceremonial part of the proceedings, and at this stage those invited adjourned to the rooms upstairs, where tea and other refreshments were provided. In the meanwhile the large hall on the basement was being prepared for the reception of the seamen bidden to the feast provided by the Ramleh ladies. In a short space of time, the hall was transformed into a banqueting hall, the tables being invitingly laid out with all manner of good things. In front of each plate was likewise placed a tiny bouquet of flowers for the men to carry with them as a pleasant memento of the occasion. Soon the place was invaded by men who had braved the wretched climatic conditions that prevailed, and the many willing hands that had volunteered were busy at work making Jack as happy as they could. Each man, on entering, was presented with a packet of tobacco, bearing on the cover the compliments of the season, from Mr. and Mrs. R.J. Moss. These were graciously distributed by Miss Phyllis Moss and Miss Kathleen Charteris. Altogether about 200 men sat down to the splendid repast, prepared for them, and one and all must have felt well pleased with themselves and all the world at the finish. When all had had their fill, the men adjourned upstairs while the hall again underwent a transformation, this time for the concert that was to follow. The concert lasted continuously for over two hours, the pouring rain not admitting of the usual interval, and was unanimously regarded as a brilliant success. It would have been strange had it been otherwise with the large amount of musical and dramatic talent that had been gathered together by Mr. Robin Moss, whose capabilities as organizer never showed to better advantage. Mr. G.B. Alderson made a most genial chairman, and never seemed in happier mood than in presiding over the assembly, which, in spite of bad weather, crowded the hall to its almost limits, and completely demonstrated the success of the enterprise in which he has taken so big a share. Where everything was first-rate it is invidious to particularize and every one of the singers was cheered to the echo, while the demand for encores was only restricted by time limitations. Mrs. Birch, Mrs. F. Haselden, Miss Haselden, Miss Hewat, and Miss Charteris, in their pretty violin duet, Miss Kilpack and Miss Smithes, Mrs. Birley and Mrs. Crafton, as accompanists, Messrs. Allen, W. Birch, Chataway, F. and H. Moss, R. Moss, and Rev. Pulling, each won and deserved to win vociferous applause. What "brought down the house," however, was the duet from "Ruddigore" by Mr. and Mrs. Chataway, in character, which had to be repeated in toto.

An addition to his song by one performer must be given on account of its local colour. It ran as follows:

Seamen's Home – used to be
Much too small – now we see
Nice big hall – rooms galore
Generous friends – gave the ore
We've now got something to play with,
A new Seamen's Home to the fore,
Something commodious and spacious,
In which we can sing, jangle and jaw,
This is a home to be proud of,
There's billiards upon the next floor,
So now my song ends,
With three cheers for the friends,
I've mentioned before



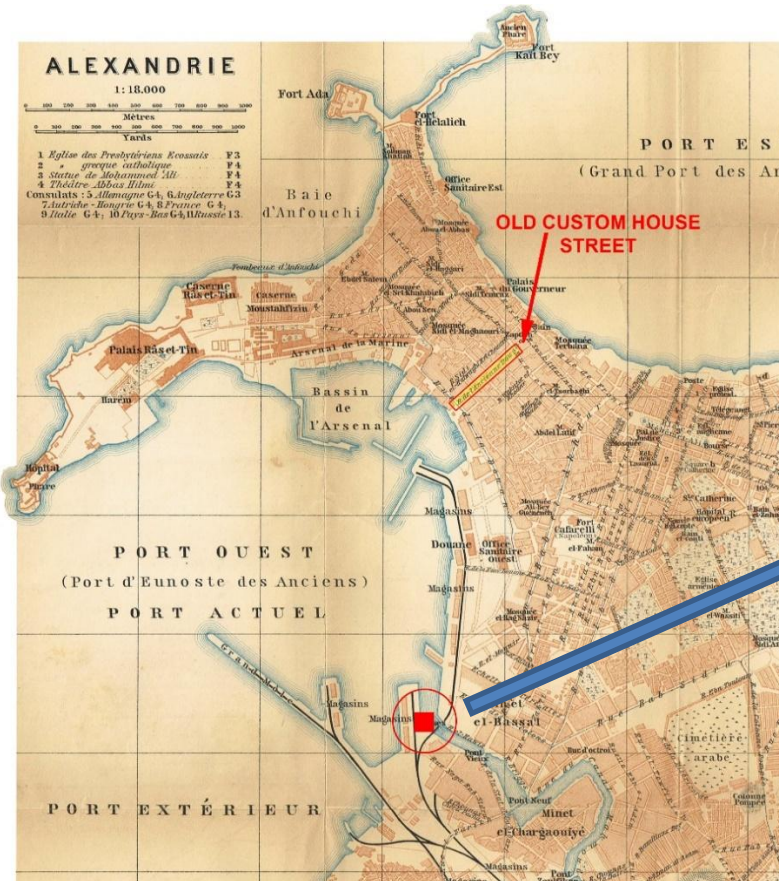
Parceval Chataway

Local Director of
Customs in Alexandria

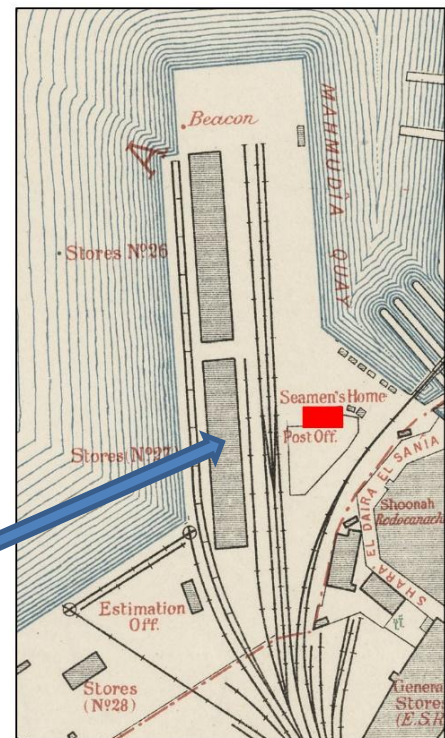
Altogether, this New Year's Tea and Concert beat the records, and was in every way worthy of the auspicious occasion of the opening of the new premises. Captain Rolfe, of H.M.S. Cockatrice, on behalf of the masters, officers, and men of the ships in port, in well-chosen words, expressed their thanks and

appreciation of all that had been done for their welfare and comfort, and called for three cheers for their hosts and hostesses. A snatch of "Home sweet Home" and the singing of the National Anthem brought to a close the most enthusiastic proceedings of the evening. It should be mentioned that the greatest regret was expressed for the enforced absence through colds of Mrs. W.S. Charteris and Mrs. R.J. Moss. A list of the contributors had to be held over till tomorrow.

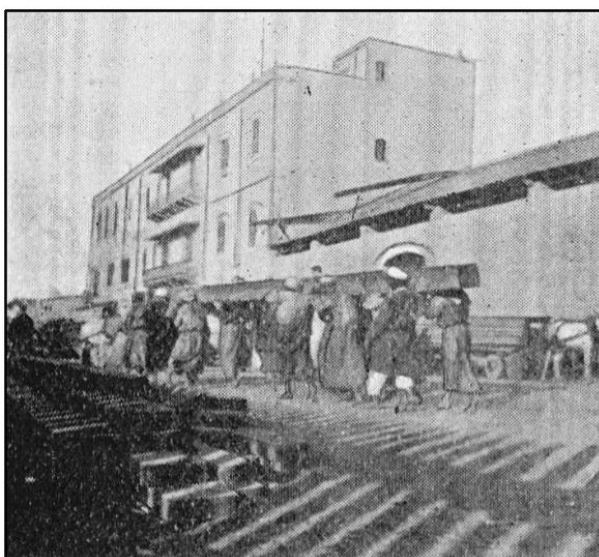
The Egyptian Gazette 16 January 1901



Baedeker 1902



Alexandria (Western Harbour)
Survey Dept. Egypt 1912
W.F. Albright Institute
of Archaeological Research



ALEXANDRIAN DOCKERS,
heavy baulks of timber are carried cheerfully by
gangs of Arabs, chanting as they march. The
building behind is the Seamen's mission
From the Egyptian Ramleh, A. Boddy (1901)

Purpose of the organization:

- Absorbing and helping shipwrecked or seamen out of employment¹
- Providing the accommodation of reading and recreation rooms
- Religious services and entertainment (the first by the Harbour Mission and the second by the Ramleh Ladies who organize concerts and “teas”).

POST OFFICE

Situated in the customs area of the harbour and open for the crews of departing or arriving ships. The customs area was a restricted one and open only to people with a special permission.

A_SH_01a

	ALEXANDRIE BOPHAZ	Single ring 26mm Date band 4mm
	I JU 82 T II	First date 12 JA 82
	EL ISKANDERIYA PORT	Last date 12 FE 85

The first Seamen’s Home was opened in 1881 and moved to a building belonging to Messrs. Stagni after it was partially destroyed in 1882. The post office was probably closed in 1885: there is no information found about this closure but we have seen no cancellations after February 1885.

The Egyptian Gazette of 1 December 1894 mentions that there will in future be a branch postal service in the Merchant Seamen’s Home.

Among the improvements about to be introduced into the Merchant Seamen’s Home of Alexandria is a branch postal service, whereby English sailors can receive their letters by calling for them. Official sanction has been given to the plan, which it is expected will materially tend to the convenience of officers and seamen belonging to our mercantile marine.

The Egyptian Gazette, 1 December 1894

Peter Feltus² confirmed that a post office was open in 1897 and *An Egyptian Post Office List in the Egyptian Language* of 1898 carries the post office classification of “*El Myne*” (Egyptian for PORT) under the general heading of Alexandria Government (*See below*).

¹ The disastrous shipwrecks of the British vessels *Regal*, *Highbury* and *Teviot* taxed the resources of the Merchant Sailors Home to their fullest extent. Their efforts were, however, warmly seconded by H.B.M.’s Consulate General and the Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Institute. The result was that the 64 shipwrecked seamen were able to alleviate their distress and send them home (*The Egyptian Gazette* 25 July 1894).

² Extracts from the *Egyptian Postal Guide* of 1897, showing some changes.

iskenderyje; 319. 766; *1.
 el ibrahymyje; 3.
 bâḥuş (er ramle); *2.
 bulkely (er ramle); 3.
 el ḥaḍra; *3.
 râs et tyn; 2.
 san istefano (er ramle).
 el lôkanda; *2.
 el maḥaṭṭa; 3.

sydy gâber (er ramle); *3.
 şuts (er ramle); 3.
 el maks; *2.
 el myne; 2.
 mynet el başal; 2.
 en nuzha; *3.


1. There is a first period of use between 1882 and 1885.
2. There is a reopening of the post office somewhere between 1895 and 1897, but the reuse of the first cancellation has been seen only after the opening of the new building in 1901.

A_SH_01b

	ALEXANDRIE BOPHAZ	Single ring 26mm Date band 4mm	
	1 JU 02	First date 14 XI 01	
	EL ISKANDERIYA PORT	Last date 1 JU 02	

Interesting detail, on the first known stamp the year “19 01” is written in full, and no hour indication.

A_SH_02

	ALEXANDRIE PORT	Single ring 28mm Date band 4mm
	9 X 02	First date 9 X 02
	EL ISKANDERIYA (EL MINA'E)	Last date 27 IV 06

In *Postal Guide 27* of January 1904 (Nomenclature of post offices) the post office PORT is listed together with “SEAMEN’S HOME” between parentheses.

Alexandrie	1	Gouvernorat.	Ch. de fer Alexandrie-Caire.
Id. Douane.....	2	Alexandrie ..	Dans la ville d’Alexandrie.
Id. Mina el Basal	2	Id. ..	Id.
Id. Muharram Bey.....	2	Id. ..	Id.
Id. Ras el Tin.....	2	Id. ..	Id.
Id. Port (Seamen's Home)....	2	Id. ..	Id.


The cancellations “ALEXANDRIA PORT”, “ALEXANDRIA (PORT) SEAMEN’S HOME” and “ALEXANDRIA SEAMEN’S HOME” are simply name amendments for the same post office.

The cancel A_SH_02 runs until 1906 and from then on the name SEAMEN’S HOME appears in combination with PORT (A_SH_03).

A_SH_03

	ALEXANDRIE (PORT) (SEAMEN’S HOME)	Single ring 28mm Date band 4mm
	9 XII 07 TI	First date 29 IV 06*
	EL ISKANDERIYA (EL MINA'E) (SIMNS HOOM)	Last date 20 XII 08

A_SH_04

	ALEXANDRIE SEAMEN'S HOME	Single ring 26mm Date band 6mm
	19. VI. 13. 1 – P.M.	First date 14 V 09
	EL ISKANDERIYA (EL MINA'E) (SIMNS HOOM)	Last date 16 III 20*

* John Firebrace, *British Empire Campaigns and Occupations in the Near East, 1914-1924*

REGISTRATION MARKS



Recorded from 4 May 1917¹ to beyond 1918

The registration number being added by hand in red ink. (Benians, QC 121)

INTERPOSTAL

Interpostal Type VIII (Kehr)



POSTES EGYPTIENNES
BOSTA
KHEDEVIEH
EL ISKANDERIYA (BAHARIA)
ALEXANDRIE (MARINE)

Coll. A. Schmidt

Number of letters received and sent between 1900 and 1911²:

	1900-01	1901	1902	1904-05	1905-06
Letters received	8.002	10.432	13.198	18.987	20.963
Letters dispatched	9.587	9.046	12.585	15.295	22.898

	1904-05	1905-06
Visits to the Home by officers and men	19.326	23.797
Letters written	1.983	2.459
Money sent through the Post Office	£ 504	£ 732
Letters received	18.987	20.963
Letters dispatched	15.295	22.839

The Egyptian Gazette 3 June 1902 – 20 May 1903 – 30 June 1906

¹ F.W. Benians, Egypt Study Circle, *The Quarterly Circular* 121 of March 1982, page 119

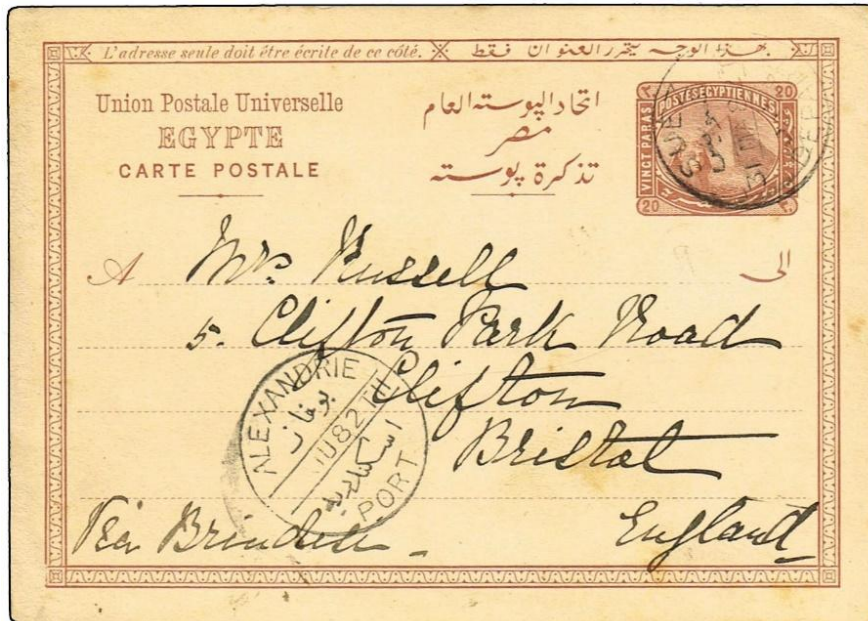
² *The annual Report of the Committee of the Alexandria Merchant Sailors' Home*, 1 April until 31 March 1911.

Post Office statistics from 1910-1911

	1909-10	1910-11
Visits to the Home by officers and men	24.587	23.603
Letters written in the Home	3.170	3.100
Letters received and dispatched	60.046	56.000
Money sent through the Post Office	£ 1.097	£ 690 17Sh
Postal Orders issued	£ 200,18	£ 314,60

The Egyptian Gazette 31 May 1911

The post office was admitted to the postal money order service in 1905.



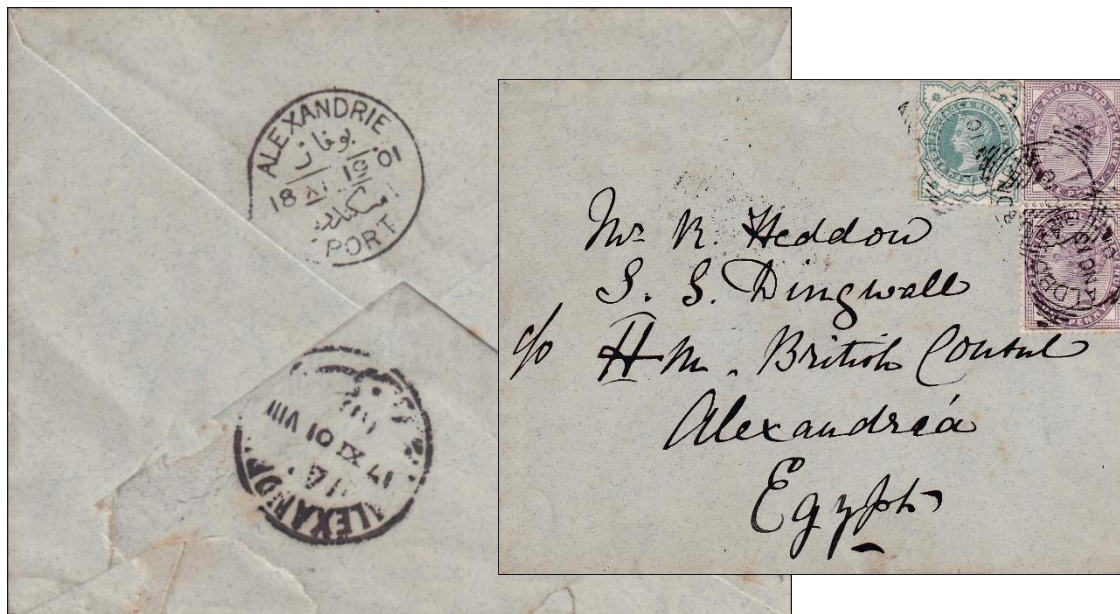
Postcard written from
S.S. Luetta in the
Suez Canal on 30 May
1882.

Given in the post office
SUEZ 31 MA 82 DEPART
and in transit
ALEXANDRIE JU 82 PORT
(A_SH_01a)
to Bristol, UK.



Postal stationery
(H&G 1)

ALEXANDRIE
26 AV 83
PORT
(A_SH_01a)
to Erfurt, Germany



Letter from ALDBOURNE NO 10 01 to a person aboard the S.S. *DINGWALL* via the main post office ALEXANDRIE A 17 XI 01 and ALEXANDRIE 18 XI 10 01 PORT (A_SH_01b)



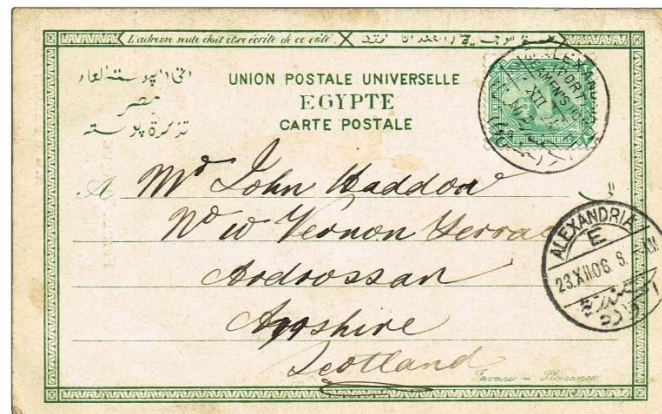
Postcard sent from
ALEXANDRIE
18 OC 02
PORT
(A_SH_01b)
to Cardiff
via the main post office
ALEXANDRIE A 18 X 02



ALEXANDRIA
PORT
(14) VI 05
(A_SH_02)
via
ALEXANDRIE 14 VI 05
to Sweden



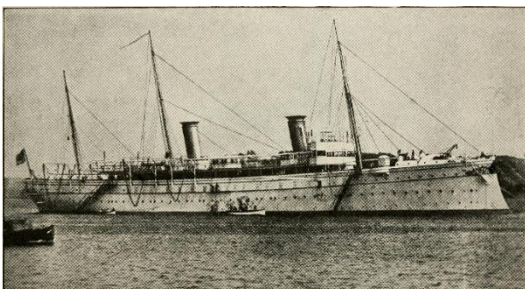
Postcard from LEEDS MR 14 06 to the *MERCHANT SEAMEN'S HOME* via the TPO PORT-SAID – ALEXANDRIA 21 III 06 and arrival ALEXANDRIA PORT 21 III 06 (A_SH_02)



Postcard from ALEXANDRIA (PORT) (*SEAMEN'S HOME*) 23 XII 06 (A_SH_03) via ALEXANDRIA 23 XII 06 to Scotland



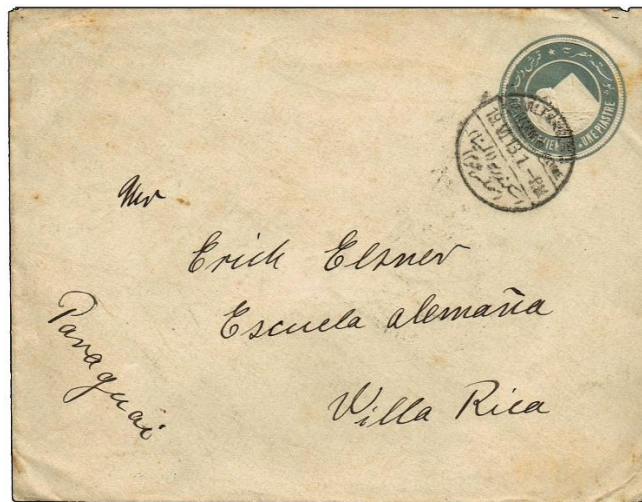
Postal stationary ALEXANDRIA (PORT) (*SEAMEN'S HOME*) 9 I 07 (A_SH_03) to traveller on the steamer *S.S. HOHENZOLLERN*



S.S. Hohenzollern was the name given to several yachts used by the German emperors between 1878 and 1918, named after their House of Hohenzollern and was launched on 27 June 1892, the build completed the same year by AG Vulcan Stettin. She was 120 metres (390 ft) long, with a beam of 14 metres (46 ft) and drew 5.6 metres (18 ft), with 9,588 indicated horsepower (7,150 kW). Used as the Imperial Yacht and *aviso* (despatch boat) from 1893 to July 1914.



Unfranked card to a resident of Nebi Daniel Street from
ALEXANDRIA SEAMEN'S HOME 7 IX 09 7AM (A_SH_04) with arrival in the main post office
ALEXANDRIA E 7 IX 09 8AM and taxed with 4 milliemes ALEXANDRIA 7 IX 09 10AM
The entire processing took only three hours.



ALEXANDRIE SEAMEN'S HOME 19 VI 13 (A_SH_04) via ALEXANDRIA 19 VI 13
to Paraguay. Arrival on 8 AGO 13.

Other nationalities also have their own "seamen's home". These photographs illustrate the "Deutsches Christliches Seemannsheim" (German Christian Seaman's Home) in Alexandria



Postcard of DEUTSCHES CHRIST. SEEMANNS HEIM
ALEXANDRIA DOUANE 4 IX 07
via ALEXANDRIA E 4 IX 07
to Dresden, Germany