

# The Quarterly Circular of THE EGYPT STUDY CIRCLE



September Quarter 2025 – Vol XXV No 11 – Whole Series No 294 – Pages 241-264

## CONTENTS

Officers 241, Appreciation Sue Claridge 243, Book reviews 243-245

## ARTICLES

Printing tests and experiments	Scott Van Horn	pp.246-250
Story of the stamp 3: Philatelic Society of Egypt	David Ogden	p.251
Siwa	Ronny Van Pellecom & Alain Stragier	pp.252-259
Mail from the wreck of the <i>Atlantique</i> 1918	Adam Hafez	pp.260-261
Beginners' Corner 5: Posta Europea	David Ogden	p.262
Letter to Algeria – A puzzler for the ESC	Pierre Louis Grech	pp.263-264
Postmark mystery resolved	John Davis	pp.264-iii
Alexandria single-transit TPO variant	Sami Sadek	p.iii
Why I collect Egypt	John Davis	p.iv

**Transition changes will affect YOU!**

It's good news on the way for the QC and your  
subscription fee. See page 242





# ***Egypt and Sudan***

**Thinking of buying? Nothing but the best, specialist material always available at the most competitive prices from these two fascinating sources. Retail for proofs, classic stamps and postal history of the world.**

**Thinking of selling? Quality stamps, proofs and rare postal history always required for stock or on a confidential private treaty basis.**

**CLONFADDA, MACROOM, P12 RV08, Co. Cork, IRELAND  
Telephone +44 7771 731733 [toddytripzinc@gmail.com](mailto:toddytripzinc@gmail.com)**

## **Meetings Programme 2025-26**

<b>Thur-Sat Sept 11-13 2025</b>	<b>Egy-Phila 2025 international exhibition</b>	<b>Sultan Hussein Kamel Palace, Heliopolis, Cairo</b>	<b>All members</b>
<b>Wed-Sat Oct 22-25 2025</b>	<b>Autumn Stampex</b>	<b>Building Design Centre, Islington</b>	<b>All members</b>
<b>Sat 25 Oct 10.30-12.30</b>	<b>Autumn Stampex</b>	<b>ESC meeting, Room C Gallery level – detail TBC</b>	<b>All members</b>
<b>Fri-Sun March 6-8 2026</b>	<b>Virtual Stampex</b>	<b>Interactive, organised by PTS and Stampex</b>	<b>All members</b>
<b>May 23-30 2026</b>	<b>Boston 2026 World Expo – 12<sup>th</sup> international</b>	<b>Boston Convention and Exhibition Centre, Massachusetts</b>	<b>All members</b>
<b>Zoom meetings will be announced to all members as information becomes available</b>			

## **EGYPT STUDY CIRCLE OFFICERS**

<b>President</b>	<b>John Davis</b> , Church View Cottage, Church Rd, Upton Snodsbury, Worcs WR7 4NH <b>john.davis2@btinternet.com</b>
<b>Chairman/Meetings Secretary</b>	<b>David Ogden</b> 6 Golding Close, Rochester, Kent ME1 2QY <b>davidogden58@yahoo.com</b>
<b>Webmaster/Librarian</b>	<b>Neil Hitchens</b> 46 Rosslyn Park, Oatlands Village, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 9QZ <b>n.hitchens@btopenworld.com</b>
<b>Secretary/Editor</b>	<b>Mike Murphy</b> 11 Waterbank Road, Bellingham, London SE6 3DJ <b>egyptstudycircle@hotmail.com</b>
<b>Treasurer/Auctioneer</b>	<b>Dr Sami Sadek</b> The Oaks, 19 Sinah Lane, Hayling Island, Hants PO11 0EY <b>sami.sadek@ntlworld.com</b>
<b>Facebook co-ordinator</b>	<b>Hani Sharestan</b> 33 Monrovia, Irvine, CA 92602, USA <b>me3alem@aol.com</b>
<b>North America Agent</b>	<b>Trenton Ruebush</b> 324 Sunset Creek Circle, Chapel Hill, N Carolina 27516, USA <b>tkruebush@gmail.com</b>
<b>Marketing/Committee</b>	<b>Tammie Aaron-Barrada</b> 106 Valley Hi Lane, Ruffs Dale, PA 15679, USA <b>aaronassoc@aol.com</b>
<b>Antipodean Agent</b>	<b>Tony Cakebread</b> 82A Messines Road, Karori, Wellington 6012, New Zealand <b>cakebread@xtra.co.nz</b>
<b>Egypt Liaison</b>	<b>Ali Abdelmegeid</b> 19 Said Zulficar St, Flat 4, Manial el-Roda, Old Cairo, Egypt <b>abdelmegeid2400@yahoo.com</b>
<b>Committee</b>	<b>Jon Aitchison</b> Old Tithe Hall, Start Hill, Nr Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM22 7TF <b>jonaitchison.uk@outlook.com</b>
<b>Hon Life Members</b>	<b>Stephen Bunce</b>

### **Members' Matters**

#### **New Member:**

**ESC 773 Nick Webb**, Rochester House, 55a Trinity Street, Belle View, Shrewsbury SY3 7PQ  
(Overland Mail, especially private carriers and forwarding agents 1830-40, Waghorn era)

All contents © copyright Egypt Study Circle, London, and the contributors

**Facebook:** facebook.com/groups/EgyptStudyCircle      **Website:** egyptstudycircle.org.uk



## **Important transition changes that will affect YOU!**

**Mike Murphy**, Hon Secretary

Members' overwhelming vote to make the Egypt Study Circle more digital-based, more modern and more efficient will carry with it at least two crucially critical changes that will affect every one of you. These involve the *QC* and your subscription.

The December *QC* will be the **final issue to be printed on paper**, bringing to a close a tradition that has lasted since February 1938. Instead, in March 2026 all members will receive an email enclosing a digital compilation of articles that have been published on our website at [egyptstudycircle.org.uk](http://egyptstudycircle.org.uk) in the previous three months (that is, quarterly). If required, this version can easily be printed out on your home computer.

That change will save a great deal of administrative time and effort, as well as allowing contributors to see their articles on screen as they are received by the Editor at irregular intervals instead of having to wait three months for a printed *QC*.

The decision will also save money in printing and distribution costs. The Committee has decided to use some of the saving to **reduce the annual subscription fee**. So from 1 January 2026 the amount will be reduced from £20.00 to £15.00, the same as is now paid by members receiving the *QC* by email. Facebook members pay no subscription. We have high hopes that the reduced fee will play a part in attracting less experienced and perhaps younger members – for whom the website will include a devoted “beginners” section – to join the Circle. We urge all full members to join our vibrant Facebook page, which is fast approaching 1,000 members, at [www.facebook.com/groups/EgyptStudyCircle](http://www.facebook.com/groups/EgyptStudyCircle)

If you pay by bank transfer or cheque, the fee will be £15. Paying via PayPal will require a little more to cover their fees – in sterling, £16 (equivalent in dollars \$22; in euro €19). For accounting purposes we urge you to pay in sterling. However you pay, remember to add your name and/or ESC number as a reference. And if direct debit is your choice, thank you very much(!), and don't forget to alter the amount.

More pointers to transition changes will appear in the December *QC* – the last to be published on paper.

### **WANTED! – The Circle seeks a membership secretary**

The Circle is looking for a volunteer to join the Committee as Membership Secretary. We hope that the transition might bring in a number of new members to join our ranks, and are seeking to appoint a member devoted to looking after their interests – and those of current members – entirely by digital means from anywhere in the world.

Changes mentioned above mean that full membership will now involve all members classified equally, with the need to keep lists of many separate groups swept away. Duties will involve receiving application forms, a mild vetting of the applicant, writing to accept his/her application and welcome the new member, providing a copy of the rules, and generally communicating to help the newcomer find a path through the website.

The membership secretary will need to keep a database of all members' details (address/phone/email) and to liaise with the Secretary and Treasurer when new members are added (or leave, for whatever reason).

If interested, please contact the Hon Sec, who will provide all information required.



## Sue E Claridge (ESC 356): An Appreciation

Sue Claridge inherited her love of stamp collecting from her father, who reflected his love of trains by building a formidable collection of Travelling Post Office material which, with her nursing career that developed after her family moved to Christchurch in New Zealand's South Island, inspired her own collecting.



She joined the ESC in 1988, no doubt prompted by the late Tony Chisholm (ESC 288). Never one to seek the limelight, she was nevertheless willing to be encouraged into leadership roles both in her profession and in philately and postcard collecting. Sue was secretary of the NZ Nurses Association and retired only relatively recently as a senior theatre nurse at St George's Hospital.

On her "Overseas Experience" working in the UK after the millennium, Sue agreed to become the Circle's publicity officer, and also served on the Christchurch Philatelic Society (CPS), twice as president. Later work as an international philatelic judge allowed her to travel widely.

Sue formed impressive exhibits, on Nurse Edith Cavell, Revenues of the Medical Profession (including those of Egypt) and Italian Prisoner of War Mail in Egypt, plus others relating to Egyptian philately, including TPOs and British Forces. She assembled a fine collection of NZ hospital postcards and postmarks and an international thematic display on nursing. Two collections were shown at her commemorative service held at the premises of the CPS in July.

Sue will be remembered as a warm, giving person willing to share her knowledge, best exemplified by her organising youth camps for young collectors in both islands of New Zealand. She will be especially missed by members of the ESC New Zealand chapter in Wellington and at Matarangi Beach on the Coromandel peninsula, travelling to be with members from around the world to attending the adult "stamp camp" at the holiday property of Tony Chisholm and his wife, Jenny.

It was a shock to learn that Sue had passed away unexpectedly in her sleep. She will indeed be missed by all who knew her.

**Tony Cakebread (ESC 536), Herb Cowley (ESC 709)**

---

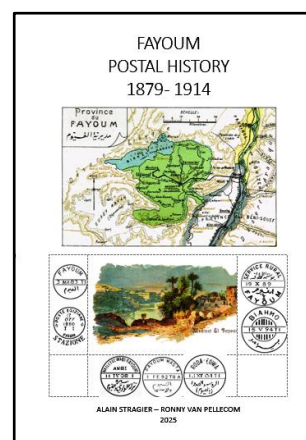
### Book Review: *Fayoum Postal History 1879-1914* by **Alain Stragier** (ESC 241) and **Ronny Van Pellecom** (ESC 618)

For those who collect the first De La Rue issue this book is a must. During the period of issue the postal system in the Fayoum Oasis is explored in detail and illustrated with many maps and copious examples of usage – all in colour! The book was printed in Germany to a high standard on heavy glossy paper and is hardbound. The text is in English. All postmarks have been digitised and reproduced to near full size, with earliest and latest dates recorded alongside.

Also listed are the registration marks, interpostal seals, railway station markings, Travelling Post Offices and telegraph office marks. Followed by, in a stroke of genius, lists of the villages which had post offices along each railway route. In addition, there are eight pages dealing with the Rural Postal service in the Fayoum.

A section is devoted to the history of the various railway companies that operated in the Fayoum, including the Anglo-Belgian Company of Egypt. Much of the information is drawn from the official Egyptian Postal Guides and Bulletins issued over the years 1889 to 1914 and these are listed in the extensive bibliography.

**Richard Wheatley FRPSL (ESC 168)**



- A4 hardbound, 168 pages, £25 plus £20 carriage to UK (1 or 2 copies). Order from [ronny.van.pellecom@telenet.be](mailto:ronny.van.pellecom@telenet.be)

## Book Reviews: *The Nile Post* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn by Joseph H Chalhoub (2025)

**Hany Salam (ESC 580):** It is with great pleasure that I introduce Joseph Chalhoub's second philatelic catalogue, *The Nile Post*, 2025, a much anticipated addition to our philatelic literature. After his first catalogue, which has rightfully earned its place as a collectors' "bible", the new work promises to be another crucial reference for collectors, researchers and enthusiasts alike.

Mr Chalhoub's dedication to precision, historical accuracy, and detail is again evident in this meticulously compiled catalogue. Building on the foundation of his first edition, this new reference carries refined valuations and updated

listing across all sections. The clear presentation and logical organisation make it an accessible yet scholarly resource, catering to both seasoned philatelists and newcomers.

What truly sets this catalogue apart is its full-colour printing, which brings stamps to life with clarity. The catalogue breaks new ground by

introducing entirely new sections such as interpostal seals and postage meters. Lovers of essays and proofs will find *The Nile Post* in its new edition to be the most comprehensive and visually captivating reference.

In a gracious tribute to our shared philatelic heritage, Mr Chalhoub pays tribute to our society by documenting our 1946 Gold medal at the 1946 philatelic exhibition.

The Philatelic Society of Egypt proudly endorses this catalogue as a vital addition to any philatelic library. It is a testament to its author's passion and professionalism, and we have no doubt it will become as revered as his first work. We extend our gratitude to him for continued contributions to the hobby and look forward to future endeavours.

**President, Philatelic Society of Egypt**

**Mike Murphy (ESC 240):** Ever since it burst on to the world of philately in 2003, *The Nile Post* has been the go-to catalogue for all collectors of Egypt in all its myriad aspects. Now, from our member Joe Chalhoub (ESC 385), we have a second edition, in two volumes, bigger, better, more colourful and more comprehensive than the first, but retaining all the expertise and integrity that made the original volume such a spectacular success.

There are clear steps forward particularly in stamp illustrations – newly issued stamps from 2003 to 2023 are listed, all stamps and

varieties are in full colour, and there is a clear intention to place stamps at the top of a page with the catalogue listings below, making identification so much more straightforward. And there's also a real advance for such a heavy volume (4.6kg/10lb) and its postage costs - it is also available online. To buy the books or access the digital version register at [nilepostcatalogue.com](http://nilepostcatalogue.com)

As if the books were not detailed enough, two new sections have been added, with 30 pages each on Interpostals, their issue, pricing and usage, and the sadly neglected meter cancellations. This publication should make both better understood and more attractive.

Sensibly, the author takes a pragmatic approach to the Survey of Egypt "archive" proof sheets that were suddenly revealed recently after being concealed for at least 60 years. Regardless of their clandestine origin, they are on the market, they have a story to tell, so how could a comprehensive catalogue ignore them and pretend they don't exist?

Final word on this indispensable catalogue? Get one. It will provide insights you never imagined, and delight in turning its pages.

**Hon Secretary, Egypt Study Circle**





### Hand-picked illustrations from the new volumes





## Printing Tests and Experiments

Scott Van Horn (ESC 619)



A recent purchase of a group of essays/unadopted stamps, led me to do some research on these often overlooked stamps. Both Smith and *The Nile Post* briefly mention some of them, but little other information documented. A quick search of literature at my disposal, did however find three articles concerning mainly the often-seen United Arab States (UAR plus Yemen) “PRINTING EXPERIMENT” stamp, but nothing on the other designs. I reproduce these references as follows:

**How are control blocks of stamps printed by the new press to be collected? By Mehanny Eid** *L'Orient Philatelique* No. 106, Jan 1962, page 22

*Stamps of Egypt and the UAR have been printed by the Survey Department Press, since 1925, but recently the Postal Authority established a modern printing press, the building of which is depicted on the commemorative Post Day stamp issued on 2 January 1962. The first production of stamps by this press was the commemorative stamp issued on 26 July 1961 to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Suez Canal Company nationalization, but in fact, it did print before this stamp a trial printing, using the design of the United Arab States commemorative stamp of 1959, after substituting the date and value of the stamp by the text “PRINTING EXPERIMENT” in English and Arabic.*

*The Survey Department Press continued in the meantime, and will continue for some other time, to print some of the commemorative issues (but not the regular stamps), till such a time when the new press is furnished with all the equipment necessary to do the whole work solely. This will by no means exceed the current year.*

He went on to argue that collectors of control blocks of four (with A/40 indicating both first plate printed and year of printing) would be badly served by the introduction of the new press. This has “the date of printing in full (27 VIII 61) on the margin, and also the consecutive sheet number, far away up”, thus requiring the enthusiast to purchase blocks of eight or ten stamps if he wanted both date and number.

**Printing Experiment, Egyptian Topics** 23, Jul-Aug 1972, page 83

*Since 1925 the Survey Department has printed the stamps of Egypt but in 1960 new arrangements were made with the feeling then that the printing of postage stamps should be the responsibility of the Post Office Department. Accordingly a new building was erected in*

*Nasser City, a suburb of Cairo, for the express purpose of housing the new Government Printing Plant for the printing of postal paper of all varieties.*

*Two WIFAG presses were ordered from the Graphicart Co. of Berne, Switzerland, and a staff was trained in their use. This training included such tasks as feeding, inking and perforating, while waiting for the balance of the equipment to arrive.*

*They utilized the format of the “First Anniversary of the Proclamation of United Arab States (U.A.R. and YEMEN)” for this experimental program. They were printed in four colours, blue, green, purple and vermillion, on specially prepared paper, watermarked with intertwined wavy lines. While in monocolour, they closely resembled the original stamp which was bi-coloured. The words “PRINTING EXPERIMENT” appeared in place of the date and the value in each lower corner, originally in Arabic and English was omitted.*

*When the sheets were completed and their work was done, they were run through a shredding machine and completely destroyed to prevent “leakage” from the plant. A few became available through the donation of ten sheets to the American Branch of the Egyptian Philatelic Society.*

**Report of ESC provincial meeting, QC 122, June 1982, page 142**

*Mr. Cyril Defriez mentioned the time in 1959 when stamp printing was being sought by the Postal Authority Press. They claimed competence by producing the 1959 1st Anniversary of U.A.R. design, but with wording as a “Printing Experiment”. He showed several examples in different colours, with different gum, etc.*

**Mosaic Essay: Rainbow Production Discovery, Mike Murphy, QC 235, Dec 2010, pages 296-7**

This article presented the astonishing discovery (*see below*) by Vahe Varjabedian (ESC 311) of a group of no fewer than 13 coloured examples of the “mosaic” experiment (NP E548). Each one has Arabic coding on the reverse, presumably co-ordinating with a particular sheet or position. According to the finder, there were no more than three sheets of each colour printed.

After auction house and stamp board searches, it is difficult to find more than six designs attributed to these printing tests. Is new information available? Glenn H. Morgan FRPSL, in his 2012 *A Supplement to Dummy Stamps* #27, had some answers after assuming that the stamps produced were part of the commissioning process of the new presses prior to shipment (along with the plates). He also speculated that the stamps were perhaps produced after delivery of the presses to test and duplicate the original results. Besides the UAR “Printing Experiment” stamp (NP C219), he attributed five other “dummy” stamps to this testing, three of which are listed as essays in *The Nile Post* (NP E548, E548a, and E549), and two others unlisted.

WIFAG (Winkler Fallert & Co. AG) was a manufacturer of printing machinery in Berne, Switzerland. Established in 1904 by Karl Winkler, the company was originally a distributor of other companies’ presses, but soon began producing its own stereotype and rotary presses. One of the two rotary presses two received by the Egyptian Postal Authority Press had three

photogravure printing units, and the other contained one intaglio unit and three photogravure units. These configurations enabled the presses to print multicoloured stock in a single pass.

The following is my listing of current information about these test stamps, with some of the dates established based on printed sheet marginal information.

### Establishment of United Arab States (NP C219, SG 593)



**Dates:** 1959-1962

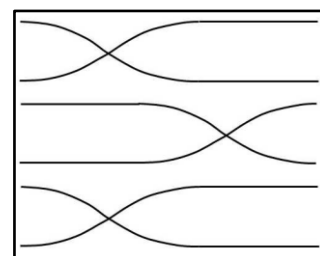
**Sheet format:** ten rows of five columns

**Watermark:** wavy lines

**Perforation:** 11 ½ x 11, and imperforate

**Text:** “UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC”, “UAR”, “PRINTING EXPERIMENT”

**Colours:** Perforated and unwatermarked: yellow-green, purple, deep rose-red, olive, blue, light blue, vermillion. Perforated and watermarked: vermillion, bright blue, steel blue, purple, rose-red, olive. Imperforate and unwatermarked: light blue, vermillion, yellow, pink



### Flowers (NP unlisted)



**Dates:** 1960s

**Sheet format:** seven rows of five columns

**Watermark:** unwatermarked

**Perforation:** 11 ½, and imperforate

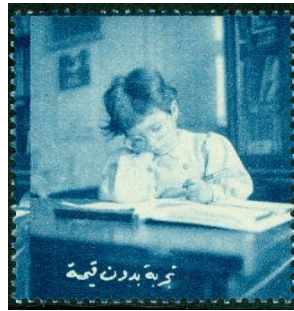
**Text:** None

**Colours:** multicolored, red, and blue.

*Note: At least seven printing/colour-shifted varieties are recorded.*



**School Child (NP E548a)**



**Date:** 1962

**Sheet format:** Unknown

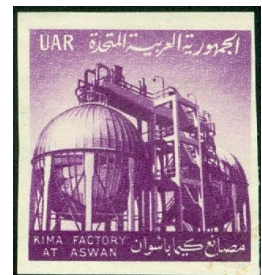
**Watermark:** unwatermarked (some authorities say that wavy line watermark recorded)

**Perforation:** 11 ½

**Text:** “Experiment without value” (in Arabic)

**Colour:** Blue (at least four shades)

**Kima Factory (NP unlisted)**



**Dates:** 1963, 1971

**Sheet format:** five rows of seven columns

**Watermark:** unwatermarked

**Perforation:** 11 ½ and imperforate

**Text:** “UAR”, “KIMA FACTORY AT ASWAN”

**Colours:**

Perforated: purple (shades), brown, orange, green (shades), blue, slate, black

Imperforate: purple, slate-purple

*Note: At least 12 varieties recorded (colour, perforate/imperforate, and/or printing offset).*

### Face Mosaic (NP E548)



**Date:** 1970 (NP E548) **Sheet format:** Unknown **Watermark:** Unwatermarked  
**Perforation:** 11 x 11 ½ and imperforate **Text:** “Experiment without value” (in Arabic)  
**Colour:** Blue mainly seen, but this impressive selection of 13 colours recorded. See *QC* 235 (December 2010, pages 296-97)

### President Mubarak (NP E549)



**Date:** 1980s **Sheet format:** five rows of ten columns **Watermark:** unwatermarked  
**Perforation:** 11 x 11 ½, and imperforate **Text:** None **Colours:** Perforated: multicoloured, orange, blue, blue and black, blue and yellow Imperforate: multicoloured, yellow. At least 12 varieties recorded (colour, perforate/imperforate, and/or printing offset).

● *Note. For more on this topic please see Yasser Mansour on our Facebook page*



## Story of a Stamp 5: Philatelic Society of Egypt

David Ogden (ESC 480)

The Philatelic Society of Egypt (PSE) is one of the oldest of Egyptian civil

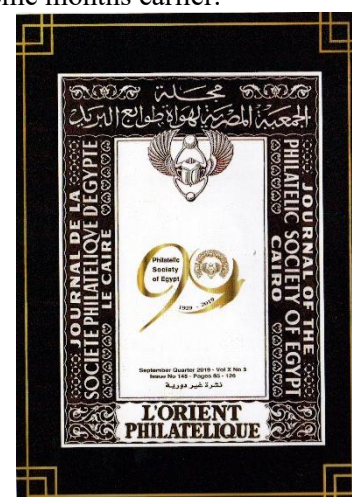
societies, established in 1929, and an important member of both the European philatelic union (FEPA) and the International federation (FIP). It is currently headquartered downtown at 16 Abdel Khalek Tharwat Street, Cairo.



Behind its establishment was a group of Egyptians and foreigners united by their love for stamps. Their first publication was the *Journal of the Egyptian Philatelic Society*. It organised the first international stamp exhibition in Egypt in 1946, inaugurated by King Farouk, and in 1964 was officially registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs. It has about 300 members.

An attractive 20 millièmes stamp (SG 1389, *left*) was issued in 1979 to celebrate the 50th anniversary. The collector portrayed is examining an Egypt-Israel peace treaty stamp, issued some months earlier.

PSE is one of the most highly regarded philatelic organisations in the Arab world. For nearly a century it has been a hub for collectors, historians and enthusiasts dedicated to the study and preservation of Egypt's rich postal history. The society was established during a golden age of philately, when stamp collecting was gaining popularity worldwide. Egypt's unique blend of ancient civilisation and modern reform offered a fascinating narrative—from the early *Posta Europea* service to the stamps of the Khedivate, Kingdom and Republic. Its founding members envisioned a society to promote research and education, organise exhibitions and events, publish authoritative catalogues and journals and foster international collaboration.



Over the decades it has been led by many distinguished philatelists, including: • Ibrahim Chaftar Bey, the first Egyptian to sign the Roll of

Distinguished Philatelists. He organised the 1946 exhibition, which was attended by King Farouk, a passionate collector; • Ahmed Mazloum Pasha, a judge and editor of *L'Orient Philatélique*, the society's journal (*above*), which continues to this day; • Mehanny Eid: A postal official who compiled classic but now outdated Zeheri catalogues of Egypt, UAR and Sudan, including the last in 1972.

In recent years, Hany Salam, a respected researcher and collector, has served as President, bringing renewed energy and scholarship to the society. The society has hosted numerous exhibitions, both national and international, showcasing Egypt's postal treasures, attracting collectors worldwide and helping to position Egypt as a key player in the philatelic world.



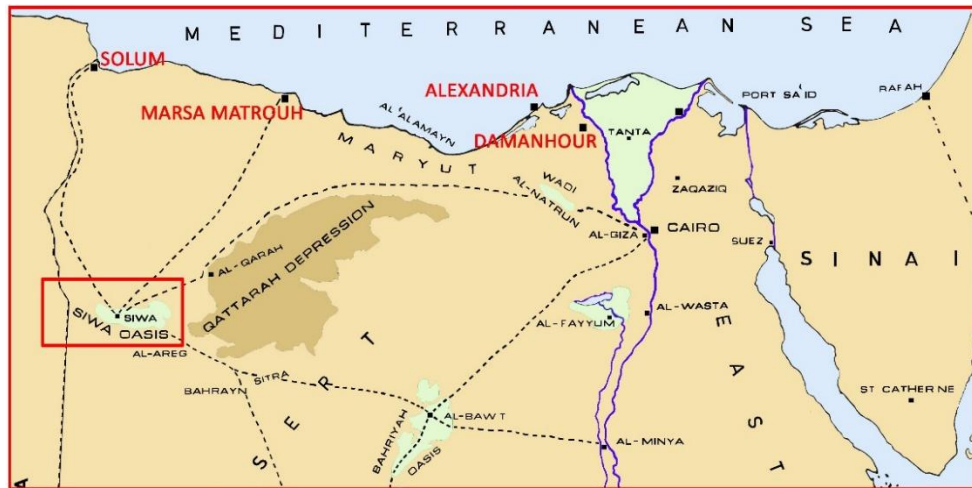
In 2019 the PSE celebrated its 90th anniversary, marked by a £E5 stamp (*left*) and an exhibition highlighting its enduring legacy. Last year I was privileged to attend a Saturday auction at the Cairo HQ. Whether you're a seasoned collector or a curious newcomer, the PSE offers a welcoming space to explore the stories behind Egypt's stamps. See its Facebook page at [facebook.com/groups/412941905431721](https://facebook.com/groups/412941905431721)



## Siwa

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

A post office was opened at Siwa on 1 July 1898. The Oasis, part of the province of Beheira, was postally dependent on Damanhour, Beheira's capital city, until 28 April 1899; afterwards mail was transferred from Alexandria via Mersa Matrouh.



From *The Oases of Egypt* – Ahmed Fakhry

### **The Oases of Egypt – Ahmed Fakhry**

*The ancient city of Siwa was originally at Aghurmi, where the remains of two principal temples of the oasis still stand, the temple of the Oracle which stood on a huge rock in the middle of the plain, and the temple of Umm Ubaydah which is about one kilometer to the east.*

*In the local history of Siwa (generally called the Siwan Manuscript) which is kept by one of the families of the oasis, we find interesting details concerning the origin of the different families and some of their ancient laws and customs. The number of men of the original inhabitants of the oasis diminished to forty, belonging to seven families. They decided to leave their ancient village and choose a new settlement; there they built a new fortified village on a hill. The new settlement is the present-day town of Siwa, founded, according to the Siwan Manuscript, in the year 600 A.H. (A.D. 1203); they called it “Shali”, which means in the Siwan language “the town”.*

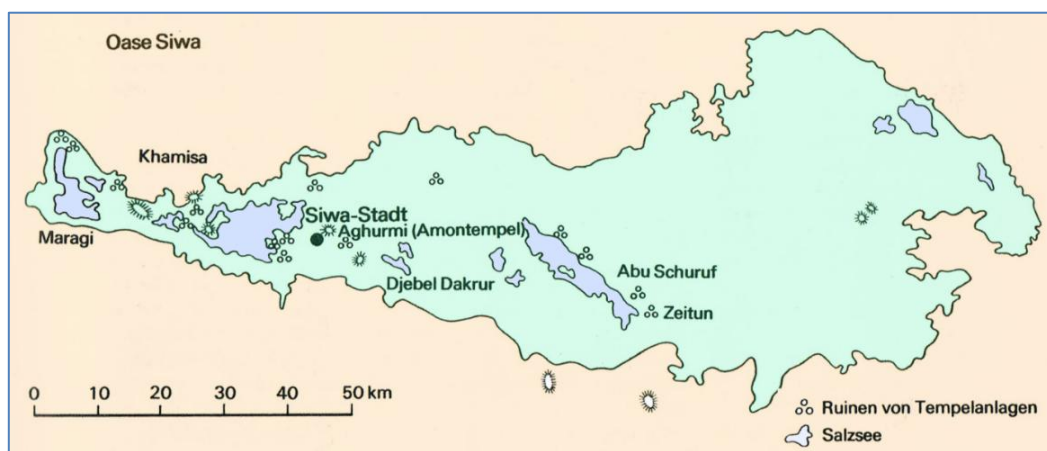
*Siwa was conquered by the troops of Muhammed Ali, led by Hasan Bey al-Shamashirgi (Governor of the Bihirah province) in 1820. The army was accompanied by Drovetti, the French Consul-General in Egypt and collector of antiquities.*



The town of Siwa in 1820 by von Minutoli (From *The Oases of Egypt*)

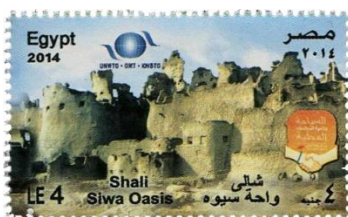
*This remarkable city is in a fertile valley of an oasis of the same name, in the great desert of Africa, called Sahara. The ground of the valley is sandy and argillaceous (clay) and mixed with salt, with twenty sweet and as many salty sources flowing all the year round. Furthermore, it often rains during the two winter months. People compare this city with a beehive because of its shape and the many people who live in it. It consists of two parts: the higher one is inhabited by the married men with their women and children, and the lower one by widowers and young men of marriageable age. The houses, which are mostly built of salt bricks, brought from the nearby mountains, seem as they are very close to each other, to form a single large building. The roads are so narrow that one often sees people going with a lantern during the daytime. The houses have few and very small windows. The city walls are very high, at some places 60 feet high, with 15 gates. Three wells are in the city, two salty and one sweet, that provides water in such quantity that all inhabitants are well supplied. On a fenced-in space on the foot of the rock, on which the city is located is a space provided for the passing caravans. Here is a small mosque and three large warehouses in which the inhabitants keep their dates for sale.*

*The language "Siwan" is a dialect of Berber. In earlier times, Arabic was a second language and many local people even today do not understand it.*



**Die Oase Siwa - Lothar Stein/Walter Rusch (Brockhaus Verlag Leipzig)**

As well as the town of Siwa, in which most of the inhabitants live, there are other villages with small population: Al-Maraqi, Khamisah, Abu Shuruf and Al-Zaytun. The population of the Oasis was 7,200 in 1899 (*Dictionnaire Géographique de l'Égypte* 1899). There were 3.884 inhabitants in 1913 (*Egyptian Directory – L'Annuaire Egyptien* 1913)



**Sywah – Bertuch, around 1800**

Left, the remains of the old city, built of salt and mud-brick (kershif). Photo by the author 2017

**4. — Ouverture d'un bureau à l'oasis de Siwa.**  
 A partir du 1<sup>er</sup> Juillet prochain un bureau de poste admis à l'échange des correspondances ordinaires, recommandées et gouvernementales, sera ouvert à l'oasis de Siwa.  
 Les correspondances à destination de cette oasis devront être acheminées en transit à découvert sur le bureau de Damanhour.  
 Les communications entre Damanhour et Siwa sont fixées comme suit:

DÉPART		ARRIVÉE	
Damanhour	le 4 de chaque mois	Siwa	le 21 de chaque mois
Siwa	le 10 " "	Damanhour	le 27 " "

*Postal Bulletin 28 June 1898*

The post office was opened on 1 July 1898 as Category 4, able to service only ordinary and registered mail.

**POST OFFICE.  
NOTICE.**

New Offices will be opened in the following places on 1st July next: At *Oasis Siwa*, an Office for correspondence only; at *Edcham and Mit Faris*, Offices for correspondence and parcels; at *Ras el-Bar*, near Damiatta, during the bathing season, a temporary Office for correspondence and parcels.

Alexandria, 29.h June 1898. 16 536-1

*The Egyptian Gazette 30 June 1898*

### *Bulletin Postal Égyptien 6 February 1899*

#### **Modifying the route between Damanhour and Siwa**

Postal communications between Damanhour and Siwa (see item 4 of the Bulletin of 28 June 1898, N°14, above) were amended as follows:

Departure from Damanhour and Siwa	Arrivals at Siwa and Damanhour
1 February	16 February
21 February	6 March
11 March	26 March
1 April	16 April
21 April	6 Mai
11 May	26 May
1 June	16 June
21 June	6 July
11 July	26 July
1 August	16 August
21 August	6 September
11 September	26 September
1 October	16 October
21 October	6 November
11 November	26 November
1 December	16 December
21 December	6 January

### *Bulletin Postal Égyptien 28 April 1899*

#### **Communications with the oasis of Siwa**

From now on the postal communications with Siwa Oasis will no longer be via the way of Damanhour as it had been indicated in the *Postal Bulletin* of 6 February last as and also in the *Bulletin Postal* of June 28, 1898: Mail will be exchanged by sea through a cruiser of the Coast Guard, making a fortnightly service between Alexandria and the port of Matrooh, and the transport between this port and the Oasis will take place by courier. This new route is faster than the route between Damanhour and Siwa.





**Bulletin Postal Égyptien 5 June 1899**

**Communications with the oasis of Siwa**

Since the delivery of mails to Siwa via Mersa Matrooh the correspondence to and from this Oasis take no longer than 10 days to reach its destination, instead of 15 days via Damanhour.

**Postal Guide of 1904**

Office category 4, open to ordinary and registered mail. Distribution of mail via Mersa Matrooh.

**Bulletin Postal Égyptien 14 August 1907**

**Mailings to go in transit via Sidi-Gaber**

From September 1 the following measures should be in force for ordinary mail and parcels in exchange with the railway lines of Ramleh, Idfina and Mariout and also for Mersa Matrooh and the Siwa Oasis.

1. All offices will dispatch in transit to Sidi Gaber, instead to Alexandria, except correspondence and parcels to the post offices of the railway line Alexandria – San Stefano, Alexandria – Idfina, Ibrahimia (Ramleh) and Hadra.
2. Correspondence and parcels for the Mariout, Mersa Matrooh and Siwa Oasis shall continue to be forwarded in transit to Alexandria.

**Bulletin Postal Égyptien 8 March 1910**

**Mariout railway line**

The departure of the mail to the Siwa Oasis is now via Foka instead of Dabaa. The timetable thus has been changed as follows:

Departure from Foka Tuesday morning Arrive at Siwa Sunday evening  
Departure from Siwa Tuesday morning Arrive at Foka Sunday evening

**Bulletin Postal Égyptien 30 March 1910**

**Correspondence and parcels addressed to Siwa**

The Dabaa office, instead of Mersa, is currently the transit office for Siwa. Ordinary and registered mail as well as parcels to Siwa should not be sent to Mersa Matrooh.

**Bulletin Postal Égyptien 28 October 1910**

**Exchange of parcels with Siwa**

From 1 November next ordinary parcels whose weight does not exceed 3 kg can be exchanged with Siwa. The transmission of these parcels will be made via Alexandria and Foka.

**Postal Guide of 1911**

Office category 3, able to provide service for ordinary and registered mail and ordinary postal parcels. Distribution of mail via Foka.

**Postal Circular 12 December 1915**

**Siwa**

The office of Siwa having been temporarily closed, postal matter of any kind should no longer be accepted for that locality.



*The Senussi uprising started in Siwa and all connections were broken from December 1915 onwards.*

**Balkans War Scenery : On the successful attacks by the Senussi on the British in Egypt (Kriegsfürsorgeamt Wien)**

## **OBLITERATION - CANCELLER**

Type **MAR SW 01**

	OASIS-SIWA	Double ring 27/13mm Date band 5mm
	25 III 08 TI	First date 3 II 07
	WAHED SIWA	Last date 27 I 14

Month recorded in Roman and Arabic lettering. Also seen in blue.

Day, month and year indicators are inconsistent. The following are recorded:

“17 VI 13”, without “T”  
 “4 3 9 12”  
 “ III XII”



Note: Although the post office was opened as early as 1898, the earliest date of this cancellation recorded by the authors is 3 February 1907.

## **REGISTRATION MARKING**

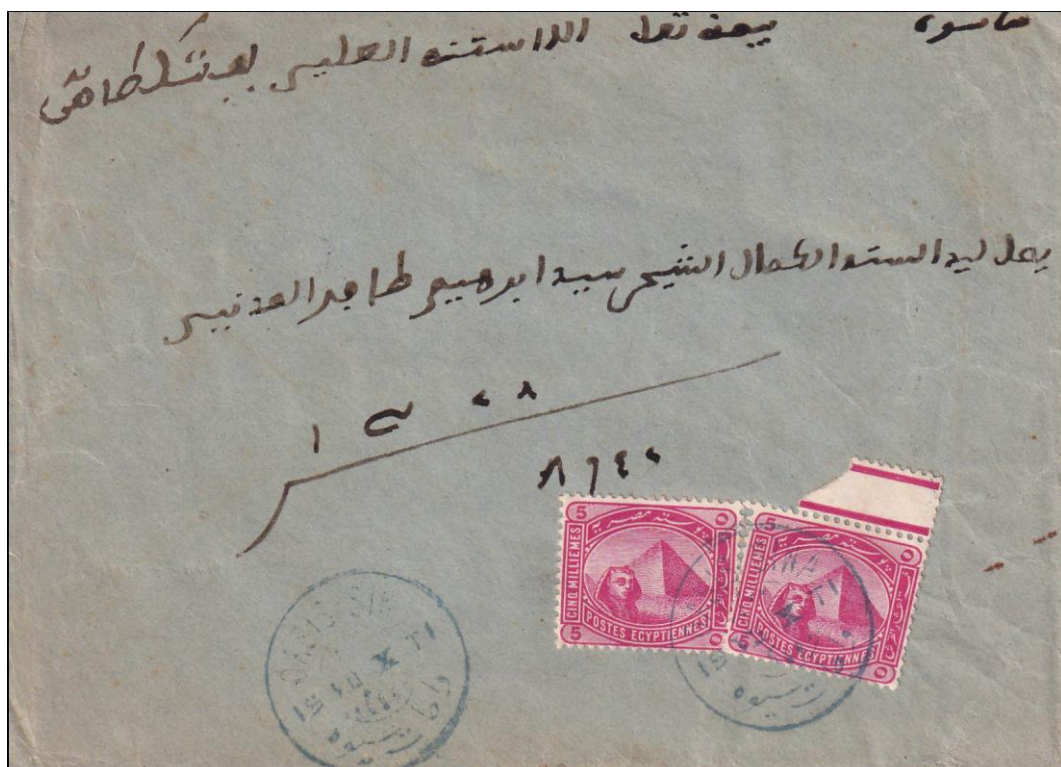


Recorded 1907 - 1913

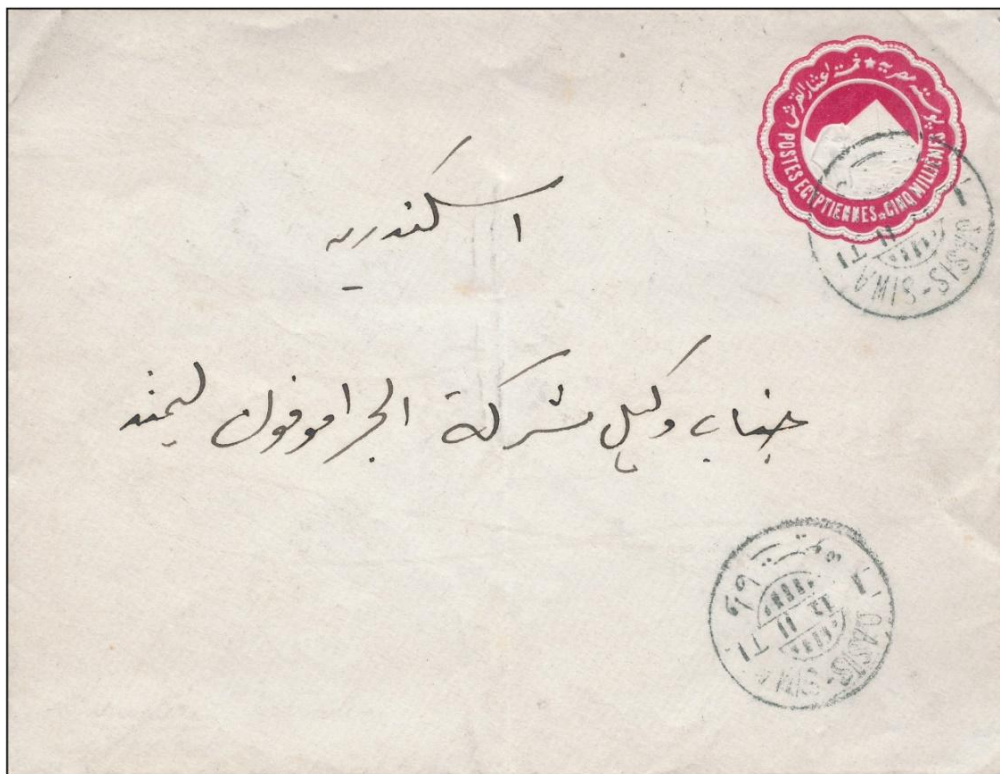




Registered letter from OASIS-SIWA 25 III 08 (MAR\_SW\_01) to BESIKTAS/ISTANBOUL  
via ALEXANDRIE R7 6 IV 08 and GALATZ ARRIVEE 12 AVRIL 1908



OASIS-SIWA 19 VII X TI (MAR\_SW\_01) via ALEXANDRIA 28 VII 10  
and STAMBOUL ARRIVÉE 1 AOU 1910 to BÉCHIK TACHE 1 August 1910

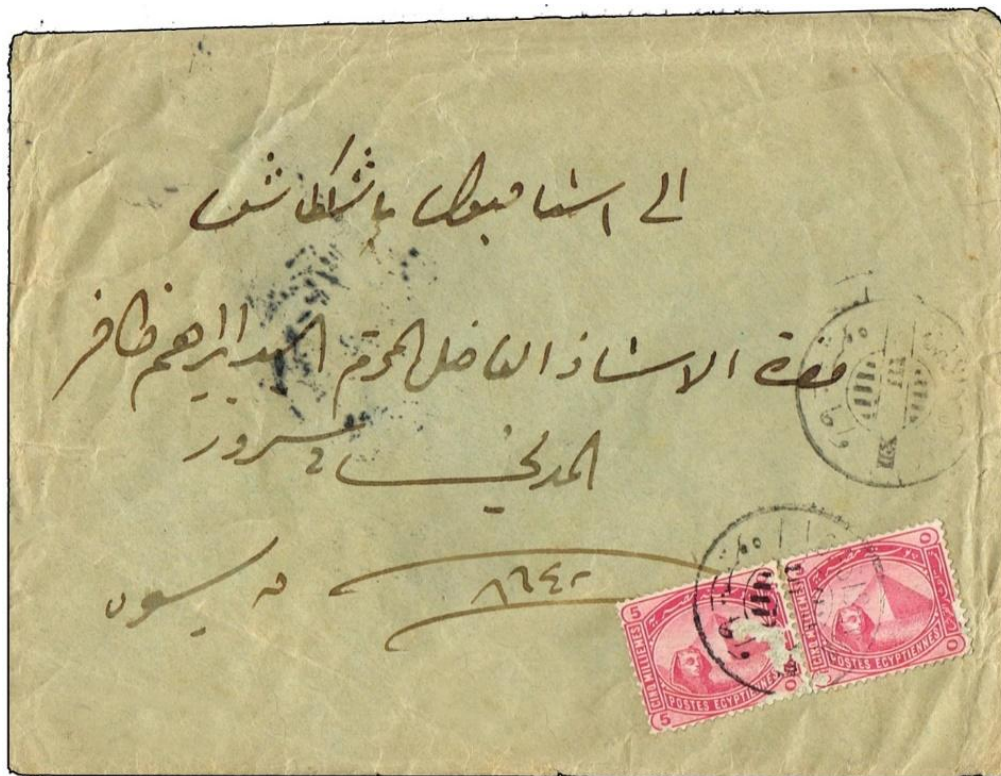


OASIS-SIWA 1 II 11 (MAR\_SW\_01) to ALEXANDRIA 8 II 11



Registered letter from OASIS-SIWA 4 3 9 12 (MAR\_SW\_01) to BESIKTAS/ISTANBUL  
via ALEXANDRIA R 8 12 III 12 and arrival STAMBOUL 18 MAR 1912





OASIS-SIWA III XII (MAR\_SW\_01) to BESIKTAS/ISTANBOUL  
via ALEXANDRIA 29 III 12



Registered letter OASIS-SIWA 17 VI 13 (MAR\_SW\_01)  
via ALEXANDRIA R.8 25 VI 13 to STAMBOUL 2 JUL 13

*These pages are from the book Alexandria II, by Alain Stragier and  
Ronny Van Pellecom, of which a few copies are still available.*



## Mail from the wreck of the *Atlantique* 1918

Adam Hafez (ESC 747)

In 1918, while the world lived under the shadow of the First World War, the seas had become fierce battlegrounds between military surface vessels and submarines, the underwater hunters. Amid those perilous days, the French paquebot *S.S. Atlantique*, operated by the Messageries Maritimes company, sailed from Port Said, heavily laden with passengers, cargo and vast amounts of mail bound for Europe. The journey was anything but easy. Because of the lurking threat of German submarines, every maritime voyage – especially in the Mediterranean – had to proceed as convoys within the protection of fighting ships.

On 9 May 1918, close to the Tunisian coast, the convoy was ambushed by a German submarine, which launched a torpedo that struck the *Atlantique* on her starboard side. The explosion was violent, and as seawater flooded into the ship's hull both passengers and crew faced terrifying moments of panic.



**Postcard: The *Atlantique* on the Mediterranean high seas near Port Said**

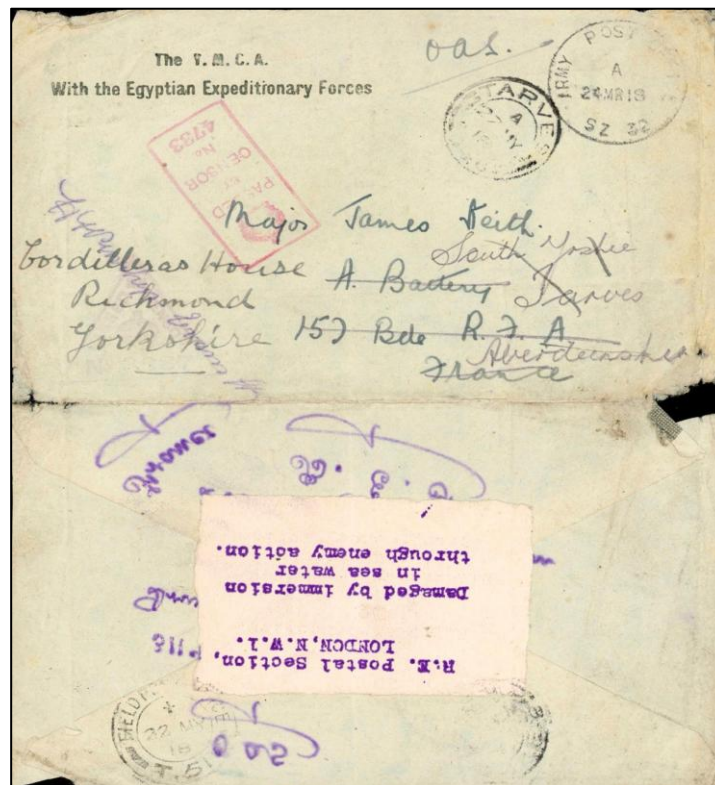
Despite the scale of the disaster, the French crew displayed extraordinary bravery. With help from three British destroyers, they managed to save the ship from sinking and towed her slowly towards the port of Bizerte in Tunisia, while she barely stayed afloat. The passengers were evacuated safely, but the ship's mail had been completely immersed in seawater.

After safety in the port was reached, the exhausting work of attempting to salvage the mail began. Letters and parcels were extracted from the hold, drenched, torn and badly damaged. Most stamps had floated off, inks had diluted out of all significance, and texts had faded into near-illegibility. Nonetheless, the postal workers were determined not to abandon these valuable shipments to the waves. The rescued letters were transported from North Africa to the French port of Marseille, where an important decision was made: every surviving piece of mail would bear a special mark to testify to its remarkable story of survival.

**BATEAU NAUFRAGE MARSEILLE**

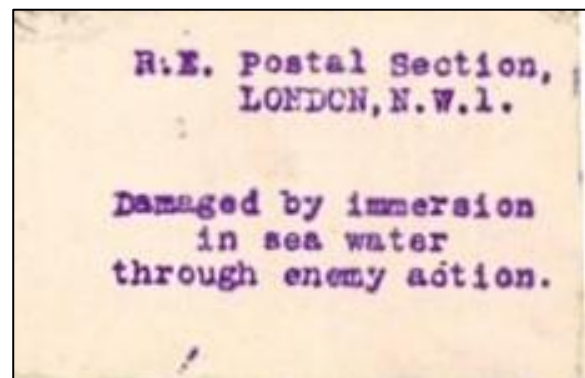
Thus appeared the now-famous handstamp: “**BATEAU NAUFRAGÉ MARSEILLE**” (meaning “Shipwreck – Marseille”). This simple mark, now recognized by all maritime postal historians and collectors, quietly told every reader: this letter endured the inferno of war at sea and survived against all odds.

Among these surviving artifacts, one cover stands out vividly. It was a YMCA printed envelope sent “On Active Service” (and so free postage) from a member of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force stationed in Egypt, dated March 24, 1918, and addressed to an artillery officer, Major James Keith, in France.



*Cover from Egyptian Expeditionary Forces on 24 March 1918 showing signs of water damage from enemy action. Below, the typed label of the Royal Engineers London NW1 postal section*

On its back, a typed label was affixed stating: “**Damaged by immersion / in sea water / through enemy action.**” On close examination, the effects of the seawater, the torn folds and the dissolved ink are clear. Many of the faint and indistinct markings on the back have leached from other covers during their period in the sea. It has no “Bateau Naufrage Marseille” but bears two military postmarks, for unit T51 of March 22 and SZ32 of March 34, a red military censor mark No 4733, and was readdressed to Tavers in Aberdeenshire before finding its recipient in Richmond, North Yorkshire.



Despite all that it endured, this single envelope stands as a silent witness to one of the most powerful moments of war. Wreck mail, as it is known among philatelists, represents a rare and fascinating branch of philately. Its value lies not only in its beauty or completeness but in the story it carries. Every such piece of mail is a living testimony to natural or human disasters, narrating tales of hope, struggle and survival.

Covers such as this are treasures that combine postal history with military chronicles, telling stories not only of battles and storms but also of human resilience and the spirit of communication in times of chaos.

Regarded as rare pieces of humanity’s collective memory, they are valued among philatelists and historians. The story of this cover teaches us that letters are not just ink and paper. They are living souls traveling across nations, carrying dreams, hopes and voices. Even the mightiest storms of war could not silence a letter that was destined to arrive.

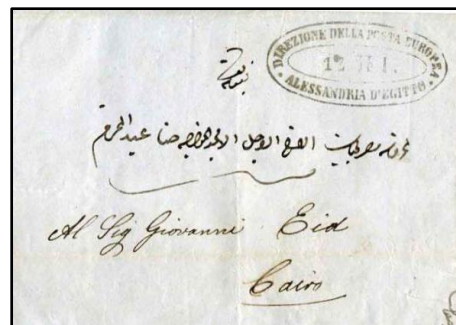




**The Eye of Horus - Beginners' Corner 5 - with David Ogden.** Our column giving newcomers to Egypt collecting a glimpse of its philatelic history looks at the dawn of the postal service, when an Italian businessman used trains to expand his forwarding service for merchants and diplomats



*Posta Europea covers with their distinctive handstamps: Mansura to Alexandria, and Alexandria to Cairo*



### Posta Europea: Egypt's gateway to modern postal services in the 19th century

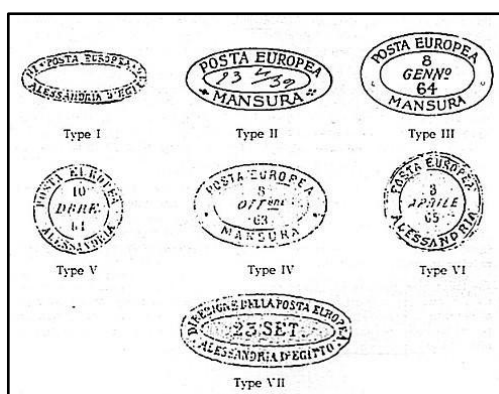
You may have wondered why early Egyptian stamps and cancellations feature Italian words? Let's go back to the early 19th century, when the country was undergoing a rapid transformation under the rule of Muhammad Ali Pasha (1769-1849, *right*), who modernised its infrastructure and administration. Among his many reforms was development of a postal system that would evolve into the Posta Europea, a landmark institution in Egypt's communication history.



Roots of the Posta Europea trace back to 1821, when Carlo Meratti, an Italian entrepreneur, established a rudimentary mail forwarding service in Alexandria. Initially serving European merchants and diplomats, his operation developed in scope and efficiency throughout the Nile Delta and eventually outside Egypt's borders.

By 1842 the service was formally named Posta Europea, reflecting its role in bridging Egypt with Europe. When Meratti died the following year his nephew, Tito Chini, took over running the service. Chini was joined by fellow Italians Giacomo Muzzi in 1848 and Vittorio Chioffi in 1862. The business was so successful that it gradually connected to all the major towns of Lower (northern) Egypt.

Competition with the government post was so successful that Posta Europea was granted a ten-year postal monopoly from 1862, and, in the period before stamps, began issuing its own distinctive oval and circular handstamps.



**Handstamps are recorded from 1844**

Most Posta Europea letters were written and addressed in Arabic. To assist the mainly Italian clerical staff, a part-transliteration of the name of the receiving office was often written in crayon on the front; for Alessandria, it might be "Alessa" or even simply "A".

Shortly after Chini's death in 1864, Muzzi and Chioffi proposed a uniform postage rate for any destination in Egypt, intended to be pre-paid by the issuing of postage stamps. The Viceroy, Ismail Pasha, was so taken by the idea that he bought back the postal monopoly, and ownership passed to the State Administration on

2 January 1865. Posta Europea ceased to exist and Muzzi was appointed the first postmaster general of the Viceroyal Post (Poste Vice-reali Egiziane).

Collectors today regard covers with the distinctive Posta Europea town handstamps as valuable items. They reflect a unique period when Egypt was navigating modernisation, and foreign expertise played a pivotal role in shaping its institutions.

## Letter to Algeria - A Puzzler for the ESC

### **Pierre Louis Grech (ESC 266) and the Editor**

*The Editor writes:* As Secretary of the Study Circle I often receive queries from non-members who would like clarification on an Egypt item. I usually deal with these, but when it comes to the French Post Offices I refer them to Pierre Louis Grech. One such was received recently from a French collector and seemed a real puzzle. Not so for Pierre Louis (Peter), our own Sherlock of French POs. Here is his response.

#### Enquiry from France:

"As a collector of old envelopes, I received the attached envelope as a gift.

Having left British Egypt in 1930 from the French office in Alexandria, it was bound for Algiers, France at that date. It went through 3 different offices in Italy.

On the back, I was able to decipher:

AMB. LECCE BRINDISI PE???? - 13.1.30

AMB. MILANO GEN???? - 14.1.30

BRINDISI TRANSITI - 13.1.30 - RACCOMAN.

GENOVA-VEN??? (Ventim?) ??? - 14.1.3?

and the rectangular stamp:

BRINDISI TRANSITI - (5752) ? (X?2?) ? (?PP95A) ? (OJA?T?) ? 58 R Anal 5

On the front, I read:

7 JA ?0 - 1 - 19A - ALEXANDRIA C (11)

I would be grateful if you could inform me, why a letter from a French office in Egypt to a French city transited through Italy, what's more 3 cities and these three and no others? Also what is the symbol of wax seals? And also, the meaning of C (11)? I guess 1-19A is the time (A = afternoon), but maybe I'm wrong. With thanks, etc."



#### Peter's reply for the ESC:

This letter has nothing to do with the French PO in Alexandria. It is all through the Egyptian Post on departure and the Italian Post thereafter:

It is an **Insured Letter** (Egyptian boxed cachet: ASSURÉ top left). The amount being the Valeur Déclarée (top right). Stated in local currency and referred to the Gold Franc as per UPU regulation. (... *soit francs or trois cent* ...). Egyptian postmark: Alexandria 7 January 1930 - C.11. = Cashdesk reference. 12 A is AM - Manuscript indication of weight: 58 grams.

There was no direct postal communication between Egypt and Algeria. From Algeria mail went to Marseille and then by French ship to Alexandria, and vice-versa. By 1930 almost all mail traffic from Egypt went via Brindisi, then by rail through Italy.

To answer the questions raised:

- The 5 wax seals were compulsory by UPU for Insured letters, to demonstrate that the amounts contained had not been accessed and tampered with.
- These are not three transit cities, they are railway travelling post offices carrying the letter at speed up the length of Italy to Milan, and from there by the Western route to France via Genova. An Italian map helps.

Postmarks on the reverse:

Boxed Italian equivalent to *Descriptif des Chargements*, indicating Italian Post's takeover of responsibility for the item: BRINDISI TRANSITO.

PESO: 58 (grams) // X ??? (illegible) but it is the colour of the seals: R (red, rosso) //

IMPRONTA: ARAB - usually this is the sender's imprint in the seal but here it was in Arabic, baffling the Italian postman. // QUANTITÀ: 5 (the number of seals).

with "BRINDISI TRANSITO - RACCOMAN(DATE)". 13 January. Registered date stamp.

On to the TPO: "AMB. LECCE-BRINDISI-PESCARA" 13/1.

On to TPO: "AMB. MILANO-GENOVA" 14/1

On to TPO: "GENOVA-VENTIMIGLIA" 14/1, into France, then to Marseille and over to Algeria. No French transit marks, having entered the French Post.

POSTAGE; King Fuad stamps.

50 Mills: UPU letter first 20g = 15 Mills, additional 10 Mills per 20g = 20 mills (58g, treble weight letter), Registration 15 mills = Total 50 mills.

Insurance: 2 x 20 Mills. This subject is very complex and is avoided by most authors. Even Peter Smith makes no attempt at quantifying it. All I know is that it was 1 Mill per 100 piastres; 15 Mills here, since the letter is valued £E15. After that I am applying the French Post method, since they are both in the UPU. Additional insurance amount if a second postal administration is involved, so 15 Mills extra for the Italian Post, and then 10 Mills more for the maritime transit of values to Algeria, Total = 40 Mills.

And I should very much like to be disproved on this.

- *A version of this article appeared in the June 2025 issue of Le Petit Timbré, journal of the Association Philatélique des Baies du Soleil, Six Fours les Plages, Var, southeastern France.*

---

### **Postmark mystery resolved – John Davis (ESC 213)**

For many years I have wondered about this postmark ... was it an early form of retta, or even a damaged form of the retta, but my thoughts were to no avail. I could find no information, so my write-up looked like this:

However, looking through an old auction catalogue from Harmers dated 5 November 2009, before throwing it out, I noticed a picture of a very expensive cover with an Italian stamp but with the same cancellation! Not quite as exciting was the realisation that it was cancelled on arrival at Livorno. But the final comment "Very rare", made up for it just a little.



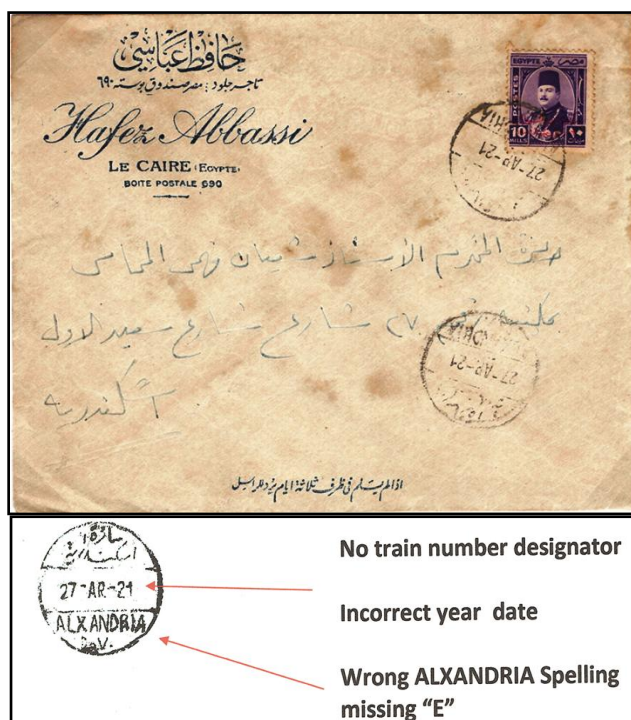
The description of the cover, dated 16 March 1865 to Livorno, advises that the Kingdom of Italy 60c stamp (Sass. L21) was left uncanceled at Alexandria on departure, and cancelled only upon arrival with "griglia pontificia" [the "papal grid" handstamp] of Ancona. The cover is described as very rare and the sale estimate is £5,000.





It's nice to have something that is described as unique! But, sadly, it's not my cover! My stamp was issued only two years later. Hey ho, such is stamp collecting!

### Alexandria single-transit TPO variant – Sami Sadek (ESC 559)



A recent discovery in the wonderful world of travelling post office markings is a single-town TPO cancel with various details that do not conform to the normal and make me consider whether it might be a forgery –The printed cover, addressed to Cairo, is franked with a Marechal 10 mills with KES overprint, the local letter rate, and cancelled with a TPO type 7A3.4 cancel variant.

But there are several oddities with the V.V. datestamp, which admittedly is not absolutely clear on the cover. These include its date, apparently 27 AP 21, 50 years before the stamp was issued on 16 January 1951, its lack of a train number, and the mis-spelling of Alexandria.

A handwritten date in Arabic on the reverse, 17/12/51, simply adds to the confusion - but to return to the original question: why forge a marking on a common stamp? Can anyone show another example of this cds?

**Swapping Germany for Egypt with a school friend and falling in love with the 1867 20 para led to a fascination with the myriad alternatives offered by Egypt collecting – and he still has 3,500 pages to enjoy**



### **Why I collect Egypt – John Davis (ESC 213) – Worcestershire, UK**

Years ago, when I was ten or eleven and away at boarding school, I discussed a problem with a fellow stamp collector – we all had pre-printed albums for the whole world. He was German and his father ran what was then British Nylon Spinners at Pontypool. He could not get German stamps after the war, but every stamp shop (remember them?) had packets of them for sale, so my German pages were quite full.

He offered to swap any country from his collection for my pages of Germany, so I looked through his collection and came across an Egyptian Second Issue stamp among the Fouads and Farouks, and decided that I liked it very much. We did the swap, - I had never seen that stamp favourite colour, green. I now of this stamp, together with a although my German friend deal financially, I benefited

That's how I got started, but countries in favour of stamp and particularly postal everything. For instance, countries' stamps through the Britain, France, Greece, before Italy was unified, Italy itself. Alternatively, passes through the Suez his nation's stamps from the them cancelled with Ismailia or Port Said or the boat drops off mail.



***One of the highlights of John's collection: a part cover with an ESC Type 3 cancel (V.R. Poste Egiziane / Roda 26 GEN 1872) alongside an otherwise unrecorded Mohamed Aly Post intaglio seal for the town. And all topped off by being addressed to Emil Brugsch, the German archaeologist, at the time deputy director of the Egyptian Museum in Boulaq.***

and I have never regretted it before and it was in my own one of the largest blocks Charlie Hass certificate, so probably did better in the from a lifetime's interest.

eventually I sold all my other collecting just Egypt. For history collectors, Egypt has you can collect other consular post offices of Austria, Russia, and even Sicily and Sardinia as well as when a non-Egyptian ship Canal a passenger can buy purser on board and have Egyptian postmarks at Suez, anywhere in between where

As my collection is mainly about giving displays to other societies, I find that many listening to me are also interested in ancient Egypt, and that eventually encouraged me to take a degree in Ancient History and Egyptology during my fifties. This enables me to make my talks interesting even when nobody in the audience collects Egypt.

I have visited the country more than once, and even won a first class Nile boat trip from Cairo to Aswan in which we continued by coach to Abu Simbel. Several years ago I went with our Hon. Sec. Mike Murphy, to Fayid on the Suez Canal with a group of military veterans who had been there at the time of the Suez crisis. It is forbidden territory nowadays unless you have special permission from Egypt's Second Army.

Finally, although our conventional meetings are held in London, our New Zealand members are rather too far away to attend unless they are visiting Stampex, so they formed a "chapter" at Matarangi, a place opposite Auckland on the Coromandel Coast of the North Island, where the hot springs come up through the beach facing the Pacific. These conferences - there were seven in all - were so popular that some UK members made the long trip, and my wife and I enjoyed a six-week holiday in New Zealand, meeting several members, and even non-members, with whom we are still in touch. *See page 243.*

I am now in my eighties and, having sold my British Forces in Egypt collection, I still have something like 3,500 pages of Egypt to keep me busy. So that's why!

**● We welcome all members' stories to make this column a regular feature of the QC**