

The Quarterly Circular of THE EGYPT STUDY CIRCLE



December Quarter 2025 – Vol XXV No 12 – Whole Series No 295 – Pages 265-288

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End of an era for your paper QC

Read our plans for transforming the Study Circle
as we take a double digital step into the future



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Meetings Programme 2026

February-March	AGM	Date and Venue to be decided	All members
Fri-Sun March 6-8 2026	Virtual Stampex	Interactive, organised by PTS and Stampex	All members
May 23-30 2026	Boston 2026 World Expo – 12th international	Boston Convention and Exhibition Centre, Massachusetts	All members
June-July	Members-only Auction 71	Online only	Start getting your illustrated lists of lots ready
Irregular Zoom meetings will be held, including Cairo as hosts. Members will be informed			

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

EDITORIAL: Looking forward to the digital future....

....well, almost! A vast amount of effort has gone into re-tuning the Study Circle and its communication with members over recent months, and we are proud of the results so far (*Mike Murphy writes*). But we are not yet finished. Much remains to be revealed after Webmaster Neil Hitchens and others of the Committee painstakingly take care of the fine detail to ensure that we have a bright and fresh website experience to present early in the New Year, when much more information will be sent to all members.

Two most important and positive things have happened already: first, you hold in your hand the last *Quarterly Circular* to be printed on paper (its history goes back to the 1930s), which will continue in digital form. Second, that decision means we have been able to cut the annual subscription to £15.00 all round.

But there is much yet to be announced, and especially on the internet, where we will acknowledge the website and the Facebook page as the Circle's twin arms, allowing for different levels of enthusiasm and inclusion. On the site's entry page readers are invited initially to choose one or the other. But both can be fully explored before a choice is made between "full" membership, with access to all, and Facebook membership, with some items restricted.

We urge members of each branch to join the other, and to comment on Facebook posts so that our common knowledge can be more widely shared. Items most suitable to beginners in Egypt collecting will be open to all and given prominence on the website.

The site will have a new look and new content, will have a new address (URL) and will be greatly improved in performance and efficiency. There is much more detail to follow. So for the moment it is a half-completed welcome to the future. The best is yet to come....

● **The Editor has back copies of (paper) QCs available. Let us know your needs: £1 each plus postage.**

Welcome to the new ESC era on Facebook

Hani Sharestan, ESC Facebook Co-ordinator

John F. Kennedy, the late US President, once said: "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

Until 2015 the Egypt Study Circle existed only in its traditional face-to-face meetings, the quarterly magazine, and its website. It had no social media presence, due largely to resistance from members who feared change, feared the unknown, feared revealing hard-won research secrets to the wider world. Most were not familiar with Facebook, which at the time was still quite new.

Seeing an opportunity, I took it upon myself to educate and encourage the Circle to expand into the new media. I was visiting London in late 2015 and arranged a meeting with two long-time influential members, Mike Murphy and the late Edmund Hall, creator of the website. It was a fruitful meeting where Mike and Edmund agreed that a large part of the Circle's future must include social meeting. By welcoming the future, the rest is history.



Facebook flashback 2015 – Edmund, Hani and Mike

In November 2015 the official Facebook page was born, with an introduction drafted by Edmund greeting all visitors at the top of the page and design contributions by Mike and myself. It was a modest beginning with a dozen or so members but grew quickly to become an important extension of our discussions, questions and research, eventually replacing the antiquated "queries" column and its slow responses.

Facebook offered quick answers from knowledgeable members and ignited much discussion from those wanting to share knowledge, questions and new discoveries.

Ten years on, the page is approaching 1,000 members with a fair number of them active daily or weekly. This is an impressive number. But it means nothing without active participation and your involvement.

This article is part of the last printed *Quarterly Circular*. Moving forward, ESC discussions, queries, discoveries, and other matters typically mentioned in the printed magazine will move to the Facebook page.

The future is with us. I hope to see you all continuing to help fuel the passion for Egyptian philately for generations to come. It cannot succeed without you. If you are not yet part of the page, please join right away. Here's the address: www.facebook.com/groups/EgyptStudyCircle

Printer who minded our p's and q's

If there is one particularly sad aspect to the change to digitisation (*Mike Murphy writes*), it is that it brings to an abrupt end a first-class working relationship with our *QC* printer of almost 14 years, Sarsen Press, of 22 Hyde Street, Winchester SO23 7DR (sarsenpress.com; 01962 854281). Edmund Hall was delighted in 2011 to find Tony Hill and his independent and friendly family-run printing company, founded 1979, which helped to ease us into the benefit of colour illustrations and picked up every juvenile error by Ed or his successor, yours truly. Always willing to help with tricky layout or to suggest an alternative, Sarsen Press have over and over again been the experts we needed. Tony and his team will be very much missed.

Report of a meeting at Stampex, North London, on 25 October 2025

There was a small but enthusiastic turnout, with four Officers unable to attend for various reasons. One visitor did attend – we hope he will decide to join the Circle, encouraged by the display of Jon Aitchison's fascinating Egyptian printed advertising envelopes.

David Ogden, Chairman, welcomed members and especially our visitor but also regretted to have to inform the meeting of the passing of Sue Claridge (ESC 256) of New Zealand, a former ESC Publicity Officer. He reminded members that the December issue of the *QC* will be the last printed copy before it is available only online. The full 2026 subscription, however, will be cut to £15. He described the thriving Facebook page, now approaching 1,000 members without subscription fee, as a wonderful resource especially for newer collectors with the great advantage that queries can receive expert responses very quickly. The Circle was still seeking, he said, a Committee member to take up the reins of Membership Secretary.

He reported that the previous day he had visited the British Library, in conjunction with Stampex. Richard Morel, Curator of the Philatelic Collections, was very welcoming, and Egypt material from the Tapling collection is currently available to view at any time. The group was taken into the vast archives to see an astonishing range of material including Egyptian postal items. Appointments can be booked and material ordered to view. He reminded members of the Postal Museum's extensive collections, which can also be freely visited. A discussion point was that collectors are generally not so interested in items they cannot buy.

Looking to the future, the meeting heard that now Customs problems are solved the ESC will make every effort to hold a meeting at the Boston 2026 World Expo, the world's major international, from May 23-30. We had excellent attendances at similar top-level meetings in Washington in 2006 and New York in 2016.

The Exposition will take place at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, which is some 15 minutes by road from Boston airport and the same from Boston railway station. We hope to see many overseas visitors, as well as North Americans, for the top show of the year: <https://tinyurl.com/bdd6swjw>

Egypt stamps echo Grand Museum opening

At last on November 1 Egypt opened its Grand Egyptian Museum – largest in the world based on a single civilisation and at a vast cost over the many years of building, selecting and conserving the spectacular displays finally on view a couple of kilometres north of the Pyramids Plateau (*Mike Murphy writes*).

President El-Sisi welcomed 80 heads of delegations and guests of honour, including kings and presidents, to an event featuring music, dance and a drone display high-lighting creativity from the Step Pyramid to modern architecture. The opening, he said, marked a new chapter in Egypt's civilization, with the museum and its 60,000 artefacts – 5,000 from Tutankhamun's tomb alone – a global beacon of knowledge and peace.

Egypt Post released new commemorative stamps to mark the opening, a souvenir sheet (14x23cm) with a miniature sheet and five stamps featuring massive monumental architecture, and another set (5x9cm) with three se-tenant stamps featuring the museum façade and its Arabic logo *al-mathaf al-masrie al-kebir*. All have QR codes offering collectors an interactive digital experience with the museum.



The souvenir sheet with four statue groups and the museum façade, all of face value LE20; and, below, the November 1 FDC handstamp on the three LE 10 stamps



Dalia El Baz, Chair of Egypt Post, noted that the stamps were designed to capture the museum's architectural splendour and its priceless artefacts and reaffirmed Egypt Post's commitment to supporting Egyptian culture and history through special editions.

For a personal view, I have always worried about placing major architecture inside a modern building, for fear of losing what Lawrence Durrell called its "spirit of place", its original context. To reproduce them even further, by displaying them at stamp size, diminishes them more, I feel. But Egypt Post redeems itself with a 16-page souvenir booklet with single sheets illustrating 30 more stamps (*above*) from the new displays, including Khufu's inestimable boat.

Study Circle Gold at Egy-Phila

We congratulate Circle members on the Gold-medal list at the Egy-Phila exhibition in Cairo in October:

Lucien **Toutounji** (ESC 264, Hotel Posts, Grand Prix) and **Sami Sadek** (ESC 559, TPOs), scored 91 for their 8-frame exhibits. There was more gold for **Hisham Bassyouny** (ESC 391, British Forces, 90) and **Samuel Khela** (ESC 759, Egypt's first airline), both 90, and Gold for the new *Nile Post* (**Joe Chalhoub**, ESC 391, 91). To help in planning, the PSE assures us that future events will be in September/October.

Story of a Stamp 6: You're my life: the Om Kolthoum philatelic story

David Ogden (ESC 480)

Om Kolthoum (also Oum Kalthum or Umm Kalthoum), 1904-1975, was the Egyptian singer who mesmerized Arab audiences from the Gulf to Morocco for half a century. One of the most famous Arab singers and public personalities of the 20th century, she was born Fatima Ibrahim as-Sayed El-Beltagi in Tummay al Zahayrah, north of Cairo in Dakahlia governorate.

She began singing in her father's religious ensemble and quickly captivated audiences with her powerful voice and emotive delivery. Her career spanned the 1920s to the 1970s, during which she recorded hundreds of songs blending classical Arabic poetry, romantic ballads and patriotic anthems. Known for her unmatched vocal control and improvisational skill, she earned titles like *Kawkab el-Sharq* (Star of the Orient), Daughter of the Nile and Egypt's Fourth Pyramid.

In 1936 she made her first film, *Weddad* (Song of Hope), playing the title role. The film's success turned Misr Studios into the top film studio in Egypt.

Oum Kolthoum's monthly live radio concerts became a cultural ritual across the Arab world, with streets emptying as people gathered to listen. Her music was deeply intertwined with Egypt's national identity, especially during times of political change. Her funeral in 1975 drew over four million mourners, making it the largest public gathering in Egyptian history.



A visit to Giza, and the 1975 stamp adorning a CD case



The first stamp to honour her was a 20 mills value (SG 1251) when she died in 1975, using the spelling Om Kolthoum. More were to follow: in 2000, 25th anniversary of her death, a 20pi stamp (SG 2148) was issued, and this year, the 50th anniversary, a LE20 miniature sheet, now using the spelling Om Kulthum.

Enta Omri (You're my Life), released in March 1965, is one of Om Kolthoum's best known hits, immersing the audience in a tale of true love. Listen to it (with a contemporary photograph and translation) here. Oum Kulthum // أم كلثوم - You're My Life // أنت عمري

The Egyptian film director Marwan Hamed, best known internationally for the groundbreaking epic *The Yacoubian Building*, more recently filmed an Om Kolthoum biopic, *El Set* (The Lady).

If you're in Cairo, visit the Om Kolthoum museum on Roda Island, which is in the Monastirli Palace, dating from 1851. Among the displays are two of Om Kolthoum's glamorous trademarks, the scarf she held in her left hand during performances and a pair of diamond-studded cat-eye sunglasses. People say you can sometimes hear the ghostly voice of Om Kolthoum even when her records aren't being played!

2468... Hoping the Djinni ensures safe delivery

Jos Strengtholt (ESC 606)



Figure 1: *B'douh* 2468 placed between the stamp and the Rural CDS Zagazig-Hiyya 23 JL 29, with a palm tree, symbol of wellbeing, between the 4 and 6. Below, the name of Allah twice. Addressed to Pension Yildiz, opposite the Bahri entrance of Ezbekiya Gardens, to its owner Abbas Effendem Morsi. Wellbeing and special peace be with your presence.

On many Egyptian postal items between 1875 and 1935 I have found the mysterious number 2468, written in Arabic numerals, from right to left: ٨٦٤٢. It is often accompanied by an elegant flourish, drawn around or beneath it. In some cases the sender went further and added the Arabic word *B'douh* (بدوح, sometimes transliterated as *bduh*) beside the number. The curl of the final letter *h* (ح) sometimes encircles the digits.

Occasionally an envelope carries only the word *B'douh*, and in rarer cases only the single letter *b* (ب), a subtle allusion to the full formula. A particularly striking cover even shows a sketched palm tree between the 24 and 68, with the word *Allah* (الله) written twice beneath the numbers.

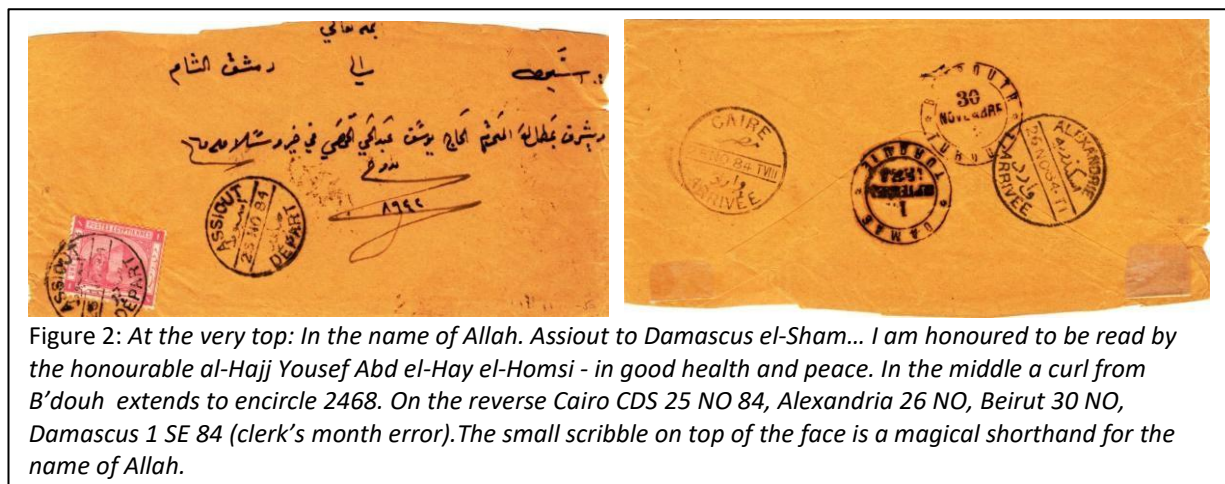


Figure 2: At the very top: In the name of Allah. Assiut to Damascus el-Sham... I am honoured to be read by the honourable al-Hajj Yousef Abd el-Hay el-Homsy - in good health and peace. In the middle a curl from *B'douh* extends to encircle 2468. On the reverse Cairo CDS 25 NO 84, Alexandria 26 NO, Beirut 30 NO, Damascus 1 SE 84 (clerk's month error). The small scribble on top of the face is a magical shorthand for the name of Allah.

I suspect that the scribbled circle we sometimes find below an envelope's address in this period was shorthand for the number 2468 and the word *B'douh*.

These mysterious markings served a very specific purpose: to ensure that the envelope reached its recipient safely and quickly. A remarkable example of belief - superstition, if you will - in the magical power of symbols, and perhaps also a way of nudging postal workers to treat the letters with more care. After all, who would dare to defy such magic? I own many of these remarkable envelopes from Egypt, though it is said that the magical symbols also appear on covers from Sudan and other Arab countries.



Figure 3: CDS Heliopolis CDS of 12 January 1919, script at top right is Zytoun. Addressed to the honourable (etc) Mr Iskander Luka, clearly a Christian based on his name. There are no talismanic figures, but the scribble in the center of the cover is thought to be a reference to the B'douh.

Major E.C.W. Stagg, a British authority on Sudanese postal history, devoted an article to the markings in 1977, in the first issue of *Camel Post*,¹ and described several theories about the origin of *B'douh* as a talisman. He had, for instance, heard that *B'douh* was the name of an influential Indian merchant who traded in Egypt and the Hejaz. His goods and letters were always handled with care, and people came to believe that writing his name on an envelope would guarantee the same privileged treatment. Stagg also reported hearing that *B'douh* was the name of a swift and powerful Egyptian courier during the Mamluke era; by invoking his name, one hoped for equally fast and reliable delivery.

Yet Stagg realised this was not the true explanation. *B'douh*, he wrote, was one of the many *djinn* - and of course, in this he was correct. According to Islam, the *djinn* are spiritual beings created from fire. They exist in a spiritual dimension that surrounds us. They

can also eat and even marry humans. Much of Islamic "magic" concerns the manipulation of these *djinn*. Numerology often plays a role, and the number 2468 on postal items is one such example.²

One particular djinni, *B'douh*, was known for assisting in the swift and safe delivery of letters. Writing his name - or its numerical equivalent, 2468 - on an envelope invoked his help for successful postal service.

Many Muslims are reluctant to discuss with Western *kuffār* [disbelievers] the vast body of magical thought in the Islamic world. My experience in Egypt is that this magical worldview remains very much alive. It certainly was alive and kicking in the period when the envelopes under discussion were in use.

In the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1933) we read: "Today books on the binding of djinn to talismanic means form an important part of popular literature. Everyone knows and reads them."³ Very orthodox Muslims, especially those influenced by Saudi Wahhabism, firmly



Figure 4: CDS Kena, 4 January 1893 to Cairo the Protected, to be delivered in the hand of His Excellency Nasr, Ministry of Interior. Sent Registered, but to be on the safe side the services of the B'douh were also invoked with 2468 encircled. Arrival date January 7 added by recipient (by hand, lower left).

reject such beliefs and practices. Umar Sulaiman al-Ashqar, a Salafist scholar of the Muslim Brotherhood, called it “serious deception and evil that must not be taken lightly.”⁴ Yet life is often stronger than doctrine - at least in Egypt.

The Origin of 2468: The most common explanation for 2468 as a talisman traces it to the teachings of the Islamic philosopher and theologian Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (1058-1111). He is often associated with a magic square, known as *B’douh*, which was said to have been revealed directly by God. Some even claimed that Adam himself had knowledge of it.

Whether God personally spoke to Ghazālī, or whether Adam truly possessed this knowledge, I leave aside. What is certain is that the alchemist Jābir ibn Ḥayyān (721-815) of Baghdad was familiar with the concept long before Ghazālī wrote of it. The square seems to have originated in China, where it is known as the *Luoshu* square, and equally regarded as magical.⁵ It looks as follows:

The sum of the numbers in each row, column and diagonal is always 15. The corner digits – 2468 - when converted into letters of the old Arabic alphabet, spell the word *B’douh* (بدوح).

ب	ط	د
ز	٠	ج
و	ا	ح

d	t	b
j	h	z
h	a	w

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

Ghazālī wrote extensively about magical formulas, often based on Qur’anic verses or the names of God. He popularized belief in the power of 2468 or *B’douh* as a source of protection and good fortune. Harmony and the beauty of numbers were highly valued in the medieval Islamic world, making this square specially potent.

B’douh as Protective Power: Over time, *B’douh* became widely used throughout the Islamic world as a general talisman. The Dutch-American missionary Samuel Zwemer (1867-1952) wrote a book on Ghazālī in 1920 and described the use and meaning of *B’douh* in his day. Egyptian peasants, he said, regarded *B’douh* as a kind of guardian spirit. Zwemer, who lived in Cairo from 1913 to 1929, wrote:

“In popular belief, *B’douh* became a djinni whose services could be invoked by writing his name in numbers or letters. The applications were highly varied: it was used against excessive menstrual bleeding, stomach pains, to become invisible, against impotence, and so forth. [...] It was engraved on jewelry, metal plates, or rings and worn as a permanent talisman. It was also written on the first page of books to preserve them in good condition. But the most widespread use was to ensure the safe and rapid delivery of letters.

No letter between two devout Muslims in the Near East, it was said, was ever sent without 2468 written in Arabic numerals on the envelope.”⁶

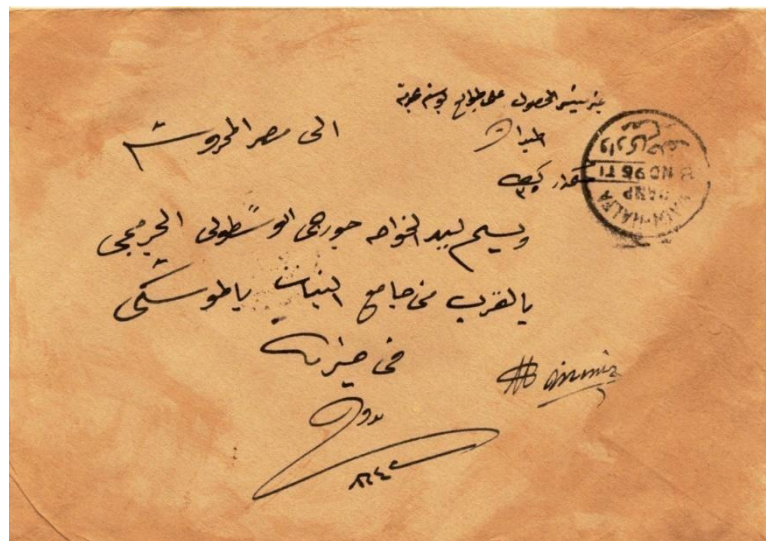


Figure 5: CDS Wadi Halfa Camp 18 November 1896. Written on the cover: It is difficult to get stamps in the field of operations. Addressed from the field, to Cairo the Protected and the Hikmadar [Commanding Officer] of the 35th Battalion. To be delivered to the hands of the khawaga [foreigner, or Christian] Georgi Apostoli, shoemaker, near the Girls' Mosque in el-Muski, in goodness. Signature of the Hikmadar [probably to ensure that the mail would proceed without postage] *B'douh* is spelled out, with the curl of the last letter extending to the first number of 2468.

That last statement seems exaggerated to me. I suspect that among the Copts *B'douh* was also used occasionally, for it was essentially a matter of folk belief rather than strictly Islamic practice. To test the idea, I examined a number of letters marked with *B'douh*, studying the addressees and other features.

The first problem is that in those days senders of envelopes were not used to writing their name on the cover. Of the 50 postal items I checked, two were postal cards, both mailed by a Mohammed. The other 48 were envelopes with no sender evidence. So it was impossible to check whether Copts in Egypt also used the *B'douh* to protect their mail.

What we can check, however, is the recipient's religious background, because Muslims and Christians in Egypt can usually be known by their name. Of the 50 covers, 28 were addressed to Muslims, ten to Christians. Of the others I am not sure. So Zwemer's suggestion that the *B'douh* was used between pious Muslims may be true, but not to the exclusion of others.

Only 13 of the covers I have began their magical journey in Cairo or Alexandria, so Zwemer may have been right to think that the habit was mainly one of peasants, occurring in the small cities and villages of the Delta and of Upper Egypt.

In the 1930s the magical habit seems to have disappeared from envelopes in Egypt. I suspect that people had become so used to mail, and the perfect administration of the postal authorities, that they no longer felt the need to invoke the world of the spirits for the safe and speedy delivery of mail.



Figure 6: CDS Shibin el-Kom, 13 June 1882, to Cairo el-mahroussah (the Protected). Addressed to the honourable (etc) Mirza Fadlallah Abde el-Gawaad, the well-known businessman in el-Sikka el-Gadida in Cairo the Protected. Only the number 2468 is used to invoke the *B'douh* help. It worked. The cover arrived in Cairo: CDS Caire Arrivee, 13 June [82].

References:

1. Stagg, Major E.C.W., "The Sacred Talismanic Number B'duh", in *Camel Post* No 1, 1977, pp.8-9.
2. Laurence Galian, *The Sun at Midnight: The Revealed Mysteries of the Ahlul Baayt Sufis* (2003), pp.392-3.
3. *Djinn*, in H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers (eds.), *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* (E.J. Brill, Leiden 1933, 1974), pp.90-1.
4. Umar Sulaiman Al-Ashqar, *The World of the Jinn & Devils in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah* (Riyadh 2005), p.161.
5. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lo_Shu_Square (seen 27 August 2025).
6. *Buduh the Arabic Magic Square*, at <http://hypernumber.blogspot.com/2015/01/buduh-magic-square-in-islamic.html> (seen 27 August 2025).



The Eye of Horus - Beginners' Corner 6 - with David Ogden. Memories of a sad, lonely and forgotten space have been swept away in a magnificent renovation of the postal museum, which now displays its once overlooked treasures in a bright area full of past glories waiting to shine once more

Postal Museum of Egypt: If you're lucky enough to visit Cairo, be sure to visit the wonderful Postal Museum, dedicated to the history of Egypt's postal service. It is in Al-Ataba Square, on the second floor of the Central Post Office building and easily walkable from Tahrir Square or via the Metro (Attaba station).

The neo-Baroque building (*below*) was established during the Khedivate period, in the late nineteenth century. The museum inside was founded by King Fuad I and officially opened in February 1934, but revealed to the public only in 1940. It reopened in 2022 after a highly successful full-scale renovation.

The multi-room museum has extensive displays of postal artifacts, pictures and documents showing the various ways of delivering messages (*Rural Post right above*) in Egypt over the centuries. Visitors can see postage stamps issued by the Egyptian authority since 1866, employee uniforms, postal equipment, models of post offices, miniature figurines of services over the centuries and a historical section.



Highlights among ancient artefacts include clay tablets, Pharaonic courier relics and early communication tools. The Ancient Egyptians were probably the first to send messages through an organized postal service. Diplomatic correspondence exchanged nearly 3,500 years ago between the pharaohs and rulers of Babylon, Assyria, Syria and Palestine were inscribed in cuneiform writing on square clay tablets.

Postal paraphernalia includes displays of leather mailbags, vintage letterboxes, postal uniforms and badges, and seals spanning Roman to modern times. Among philatelic treasures are Egyptian and international stamp collections, including – behind the massive desk of the first postmaster-general, Giacomo Muzzi Bey – a giant mosaic of the Pyramids and Sphinx made from 15,000 used stamps (*right*).



Dioramas and models include miniature post offices, distribution scenes, transport models, postal aircraft and the first airmail letter that was sent from Cairo to Karachi. Letters, telegrams and official correspondence (*left*) illuminate Egypt's social and political history, and there are busts and portraits of influential figures like King Fouad, King Farouk and Muhammad Ali Pasha.

Most exhibits are in English and Arabic. The highly qualified staff will gladly point out some of the lesser known but fascinating items. And don't miss the excellent gift shop. I'd recommend the Egypt Post branded items.

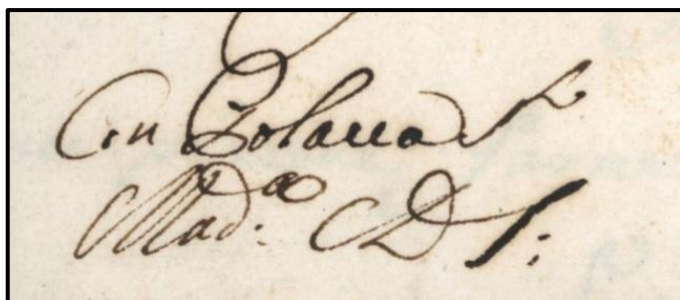


Whether you're an Egypt Study Circle veteran or new to philately, the museum offers a memorable and educational journey through Egypt's glorious postal story.

Deciphering early maritime mail

Antoine Winter (ESC 149)

The mystery and the pleasure of Egyptian postal history sometimes appear in a mere detail. Certainly that is the case with the 1711 cover illustrated. Early maritime mail between Egypt and Venice is well documented and covers, although rare, sometimes appear at auction. This one was sold by David Feldman in Geneva last year, and several more examples can be seen on the Circle's website under the title [The Venetian Post](#)



Close examination reveals that at bottom left of these covers (*see inset*) is a short manuscript notation in Italian, generally in two lines, reading “With Captain so-and-so / May God Protect”. Invariably the captain of the vessel carrying the mail was known to the sender, and equally invariably his name was used.

But not on this cover. The text is abbreviated to “Con Polacca S / Mad^{na} C D S”, but reads in full “Con Polacca Santa / Maddalena, Che Dio Salve”, meaning With Polacca Saint Magdalena May God Save. The script indicated

that the cover, addressed from Cairo to Venice, was to travel aboard a vessel named after the saint and known as a *polacca*. This Italian word simply means Polish (feminine), though the link with Poland is not clear.



This rigging enabled the vessel to sail with good speed in even light winds and to manoeuvre easily in downwind and crosswind conditions. For that reason *polaccas* were also used to fight off Dalmatian pirates and protect Venetian trade.

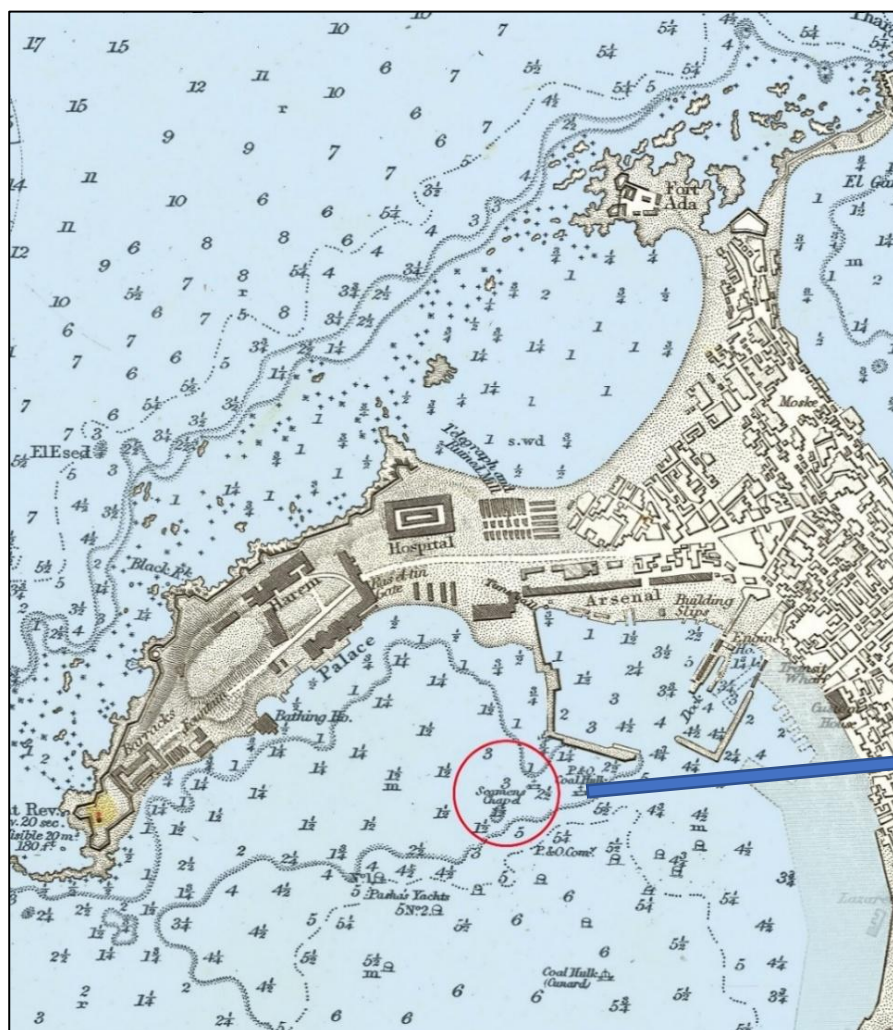
The *polacca* was a sturdy type of sailing vessel with a capacity of 500 tons used in the Mediterranean at that time for trading or as an escort ship for lighter trade vessels. They appear at the beginning of the seventeenth century in several different types with either two or three masts. One characteristic of the *polacca* was its rigging: a combination of square and lateen (triangular) sails. On a typical Venetian *polacca* the foremast leaned forward but on our illustration it has three straight masts in a more Greco-Ottoman style.

She also has three jib sails before the foremast and a trapezoidal sail on the mizzenmast at the rear.

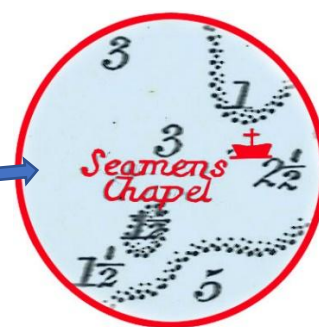
Covers mailed across the Mediterranean at this time travelled in dangerous conditions, and it is easy to understand the sender's invocation for a safe voyage.

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.

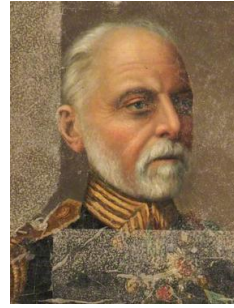
The Egyptian Gazette 20 January 1912

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.

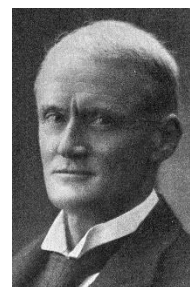


Sir Charles Alfred Cookson (1829 – 1906)

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

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.
 bâhuş (er ramle); *2.
 bulkely (er ramle); 3.
 el haðra; *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

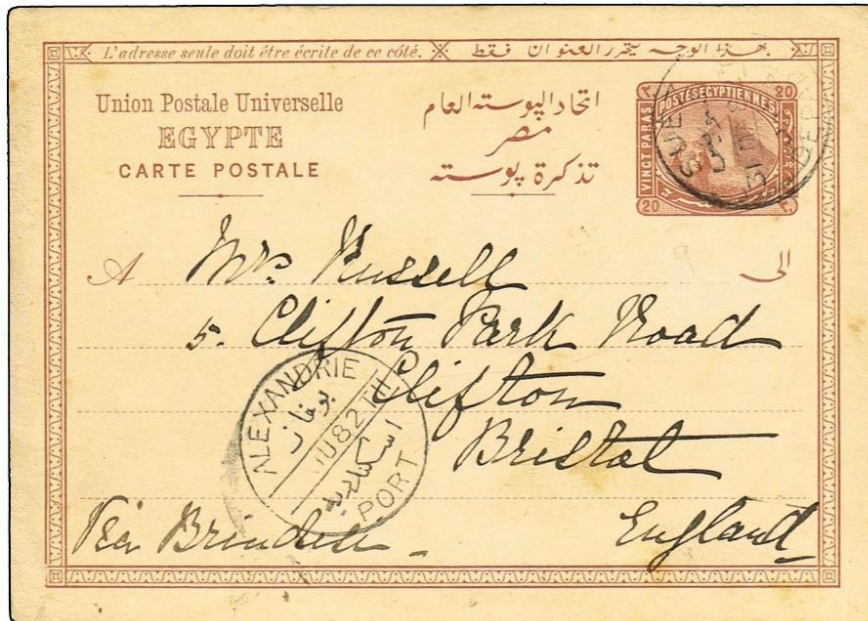
² *The annual Report of the Committee of the Alexandria Merchant Sailors' Home*, 1 April until 31 March 1911.

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 stationary
(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)



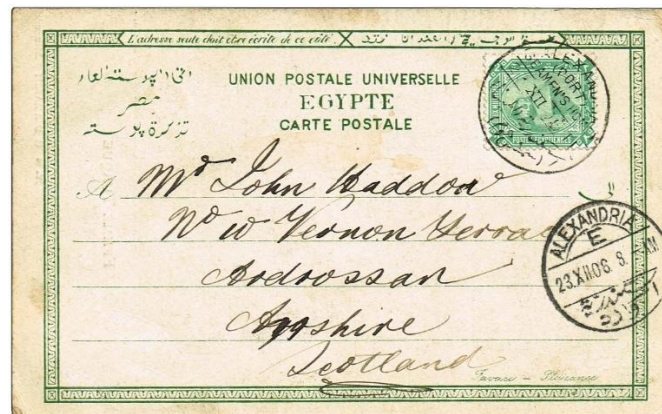
Postcard sent from
ALEXANDRIE
18 OC 02
PORT
(A_SH_01b)
to Cardiff
via the main post office
ALEXANDRIE A 18 X 02



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



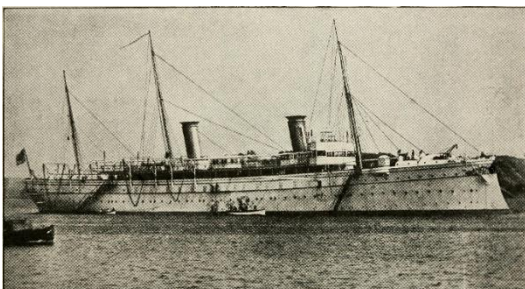
Postcard from LEEDS MR 14 06 to the *MERCHANT SEAMEN'S HOME* via the TPO PORT-SAID – ALEXANDRIA 21 III 06 and arrival ALEXANDRIA PORT 21 III 06 (A_SH_02)



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



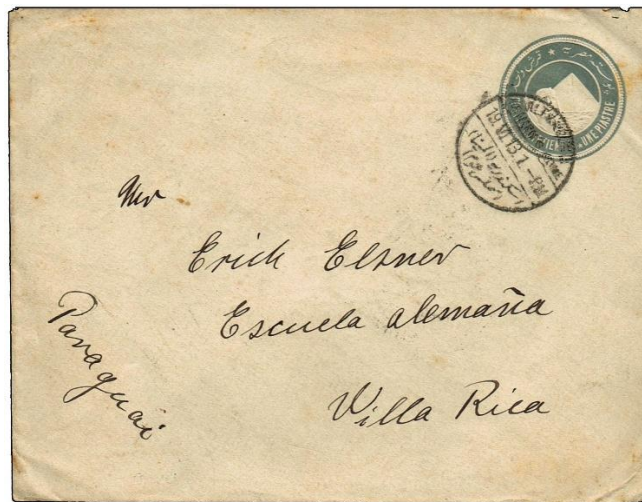
Postal stationary ALEXANDRIA (PORT) (*SEAMEN'S HOME*) 9 I 07 (A_SH_03) to traveller on the steamer *S.S. HOHENZOLLERN*



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

Morning coffee with the postmaster provided an ideal opportunity to find new issues and varieties. The collection grew so large that family travellers had to carry it across the world as a legacy for the children



Why I collect Egypt – Tammie Aaron-Barrada (ESC 643) – Pennsylvania, USA

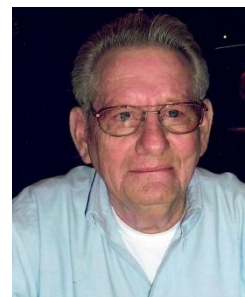
Mohamed Bahaa El Din Barrada (*right above*), who was born in Cairo in 1910, started collecting at nine years old, acquiring a wide-ranging world stamp collection. This comprised whole sheets, souvenir sheets, the Palace Collection, forgeries including Sharjah and Ras al Khaima “dune” stamps, first day covers, postal stationery and history, revenue stamps and overprints. Printing errors and production flaws intrigued him most, and his collection spread to stamps from various regions as well as postcards, movie star cards and coins.



Baha and his wife, Makarem Madkour, lived in Zamalek. He befriended the local postmaster and would go to the post office every morning to have his coffee and look over all the stamps. If he found an error on a sheet, he would buy all the sheets available that day



Ahmed Mohamed Barrada inherited his father’s collection in 1994. He was told that it was recognised as the most extensive and said that because of its vast size he would take it to Sotheby’s if ever there came a time to sell. Sadly, in 2001 Ahmed passed away, leaving his wife Tammie and their children Omar Ahmed Barrada, aged 3, and Laila Ahmad Barrada, just a year younger, to inherit the collection. Egypt being Egypt ... the water pipes in the apartment above ours sprang a leak and for several hours water poured into the room where the stamps were stored. Thankfully, not a single one



was damaged.

I tried to ship the collection out of Egypt in small batches via UPS, but the carrier opened the package and returned it, stating it was illegal to mail the collection: I was tagged a smuggler! To add a touch of humour, my brother was at the time Vice President of UPS. It took eight years of family and friends filling their suitcases with stamps to transfer the two rooms of stamps to the USA.

My father, Edward Thomas Aaron Jr (*right, below*), spent 13 years of his retirement identifying, dividing, valuing, documenting and organizing the stamps with notations on stock sheets (*see above for a few examples*). He passed away in December 2023, leaving a detailed collection for Omar and Laila.



*Philatelic family:
Makarem, Ahmed,
Tammie, Omar
and Laila*

Egypt is a biblical country with a golden history of tales and mystery wrapped up in gods and mythology. I shall never forget being completely awestruck the first time I saw the Pyramids. The sound and light show makes you fall in love with the Sphinx. the Grand Museum with King Tut and the mummies at the Civilisation Museum with the whole world of Ancient Egypt.

Ever since he was young we nicknamed Omar “King Tut” since he was the child who ruled the nation just as he ruled our house. We learned to scuba dive in the Red Sea; the world’s largest underwater national park, in Sharm el-Sheikh. Nothing compares to shopping at Khan el-Khalili (which I know better than most Egyptians).

Egypt is in my heart and now our blood. So, we honour the heritage and love the stamps collected there.

● **We welcome all members’ stories in making this column a regular feature of the QC**



The Royal Philatelic Society London

Austrian Maritime Rivals

The Danube Steam Navigation Company and the Austrian Lloyd
in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea 1834 to 1849

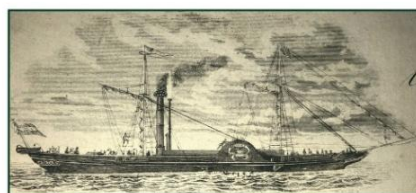
by Christopher C. Smith

A new publication from the RPSL

The latest book to be published by The Royal Philatelic Society London (RPSL) details the history and postal history of these two Austrian steamship companies operating in the eastern Mediterranean Sea over a period of fifteen years. It follows the rivalry of the two companies amid important historical events of the period and provides detailed information on the rates, routes and individual voyages of the steamships. The author has made extensive use of primary sources and in doing so has been able to both correct errors in the existing literature and present much new information for postal historians.

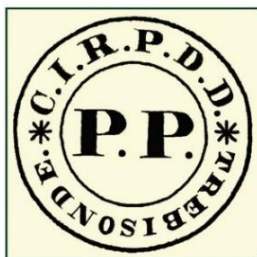
The first chapter focuses on the Austrian Lloyd's Egypt line and the five known postal uses of the handstamp of that company used in Alexandria. The Danube Steam Navigation Company (DDSG) briefly ran its own line to Egypt, and this is the subject of the second chapter.

There follow two chapters containing detailed information on the DDSG's history and operations in the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean, including extensive tables documenting the individual voyages. The research contained in these chapters comprises essential data for the final chapter which is built around the analysis of 13 selected letters carried on the maritime lines of the DDSG.



About the author

Christopher Smith has been a philatelist and postal historian for nearly six decades. His collecting interests include Austrian offices abroad, the consular post offices of Egypt, the Bordeaux issue of France, local posts of Sweden and Denmark, and classic United States.



Further information

This 345-page hardback was published in November 2025 and costs £58 for members of the RPSL and £65 for non-members. It can be ordered through the RPSL website (www.rpsl.org.uk).

ISBN 978-1-913015-33-6.

The Royal Philatelic Society London
15 Abchurch Lane, London EC4N 7BW

Austrian Maritime Rivals

The Danube Steam Navigation Company and The Austrian Lloyd

in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea 1834 to 1849



Christopher C. Smith



The Royal Philatelic Society London
2025

The worldwide home of stamp collecting and postal history, since 1869



Time to renew: reduced £15 subscription

It is that time of year when ESC subscriptions are due – and this year the switch to digital has allowed us to reduce the annual fee – which is due on January 1 – to £15 or equivalent (\$22, €17) if you are paying by cheque, BACS or standing order.

If PayPal is your choice, we should much prefer a sterling payment, and adding GBP to your account is an easy switch. In all cases please use your member number as a reference, and don't forget to add £1, \$2 or 1 euro if paying by PayPal to cover their fees.

If payment is not received by the AGM (mid-February), you stand a real risk of losing your member status. If you would prefer to resign, we very much regret your decision, but please be kind enough to let the Secretary know.



Who will win the 2025 MacArthur Award?

Whether in digital or paper form, the *Quarterly Circular* depends entirely on the goodwill of members sending in their own research and interests. Happily, members can support these efforts by nominating the best and most interesting article of the year. Please vote now – an email to the Secretary will do – with your choice. Below are some you might like:

QC 292 – March: Ramez Atiya – *Proofs and Dies of the Second Issue*; Michael Knaubert – *A postcard's place in the hunt for Emin Bey*; Pierre Louis Grech – *Postmarks of the French POs in Egypt 1837-1931*

QC 293 – June: Hon Secretary – *Countdown to the Study Circle's transition*; Scott Van Horn – *The 1953 Queen Nefertiti issue*; Ramez Atiya – *1872 20 para lithographs*; Ronny Van Pellecom / Alain Stragier – *The Fayoum Light Railways Company*

QC 294 – September: Scott Van Horn – *Printing tests and experiments*; Ronny Van Pellecom / Alain Stragier – *Siwa*; Adam Hafez – *Mail from the wreck of the Atlantique 1918*; Pierre Louis Grech – *Letter to Algeria – A puzzle for the ESC*

QC 295 – December: Hon Secretary – *Welcome to the new world*; Mike Murphy – *New stamps greet Egypt's Grand Museum*; Jos Strengholt – *2468... Hoping the Djinni ensures safe delivery*; Ronny Van Pellecom / Alain Stragier – *The Seamen's Home, Alexandria*