

EGYPT THE "JUBILEE COMMEMORATIVES" FOR THE BRITISH FORCES IN EGYPT



Probably all our readers have seen the oblong stamps which in various colours and with altered designs have been in use on letters sent from the British Forces in Egypt since November 1932. These, from the fact that they must be affixed at the back of the envelope, are commonly called "seals." Actually this is a misnomer. The face value of these stamps is 1 piastre, the special rate conceded to H.M. Forces and their families in Egypt when the Egyptian Postal Rates were increased. This rate, being lower than that charged to the public, necessitated the use of the special stamp and the regulations were that it was to be used on the reverse of the envelope for all letters, as defined in Postal Regulations, provided that they were from Egypt to the British Isles, including the Irish Free State, and contained no valuables. 1 piastre=10 mils and the new rates for the British Forces were 10 mils for every 20 grammes or part thereof.

This special stamp is used instead of the Egyptian postage stamp and is purchasable at the N.A.A.F.I. Institutes and Canteens and the letters so franked have to be posted in the Regimental post boxes.

The fourth issue in this type was made in January 1935, the stamp being in green. Quite unexpectedly and without any previous warning a special issue in deep blue, overprinted "JUBILEE COMMEMORATION 1935" in red, obliquely in three lines, appeared in May perforated 14. Only 27,000 of these were printed. They were made up into booklets in panes of 20 from broken sheets of 80. They were issued to the Canteens and Institutes in this form and four stamps only were to be sold to any one buyer at a time, not to civilians. With so small an issue no speculation was possible at the time and, owing to lack of notice, none of these were obtained by those interested in the British "Jubilees", nor were they therefore included in the sets of these stamps. It was only after the distribution of the jubilee issues for the Colonies that any of these "Egypt Army Commemoratives" came on the market and the restricted issue meant that there was no supply for the dealers. Collectors demanded these as soon as they became known but they were practically unobtainable. As the demand increased prices soared 20/- was soon asked for a mint stamp and very few used copies have been seen, these being even scarcer than the mint, while copies used on letters that have passed through philatelic channels could probably be counted on the fingers.

By June a new regular issue of the Army stamp, in crimson, was needed for postal use. By August no copies of the jubilee Commemorative could be found anywhere in Egypt. One of the catalogue publishers listed these but by the time of publication in September, could not supply used copies and had already raised the price mint by 50%, "subject unsold."

We are not in the habit of giving tips, but in this case we can seriously advise collectors to pick up any copies they can find as pieces of interest and as a speculation as we are firmly of the opinion that in a few months time this "Jubilee" will be a £2 stamp mint. How much higher the rarer used copies and covers will go it is impossible to predict.

On some sheets of 20 there was a variety with a short "U" in Jubilee. This apparently occurred once on one pane and twice on another. In other words the variety, occurring 3 times on the original sheet of 60 is 20 times as rare as the normal and was being sold at £2 a copy in August last.