

The Quarterly Circular

of

THE EGYPT

STUDY CIRCLE

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Pages 1-24

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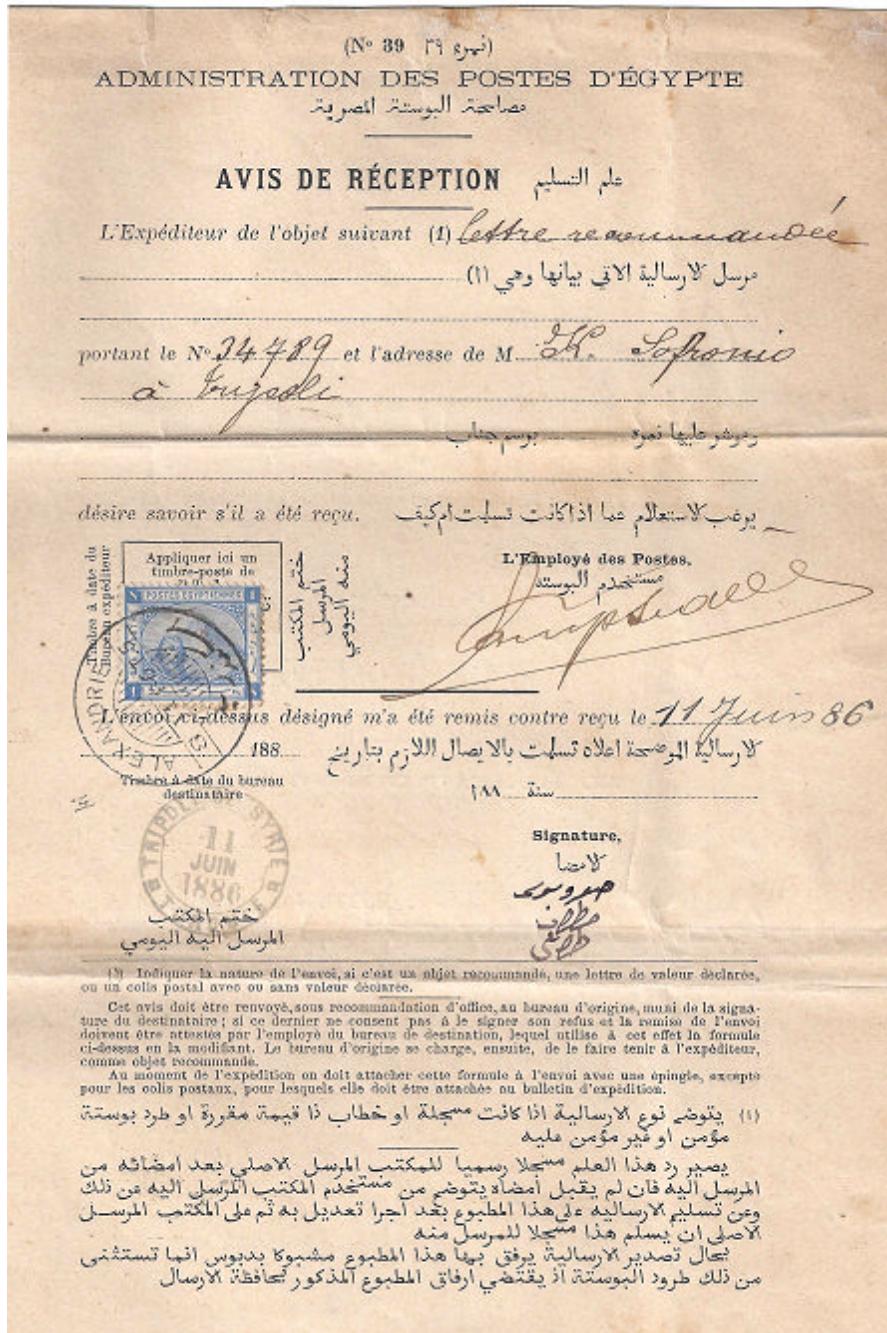
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De La Rue 1pi. ultramarine used on Advice of Receipt form #39, cancelled at Alexandria (June 8, 1886) with 'Tripoli/Syrie/Turquie' confirmation of arrival datestamp below (June 11, 1886). Reverse showing further Alexandria datestamp of distribution to sender (June 17, 1886). Rare.



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Meetings dates for 2014

We regret that for operational reasons we have had to dispense with the January meeting in 2014. Two meetings will be held at 2pm in the Allenby Room at the **Victory Services Club**, Seymour Street, Marble Arch, London. The February and September meetings are at 2.30pm at **Stampex** (Feb 19-22 and Sept 17-20). The July meeting is from 1-5pm at the **Royal Philatelic Society**, 41 Devonshire Place, London.

May 10, 2pm	Services Club	AGM, Ten sheets and mini room auction	All members
July 19, 1pm	Royal Phil Soc	Egypt First Issue	Greg Todd
Sept 20, 2.30pm	Stampex	(1933 Railway Congress	Armen Varjabedian
	Stampex Sept 17-20	(Simon Arzt	Richard Wheatley
Nov 1, 2pm	Services Club	Cassette Envelopes	Peter Andrews

EGYPT STUDY CIRCLE OFFICERS

President:	John. Sears, FRPSL, 496 Uxbridge Road, Pinner, Middlesex HAS 4SL. john.sears@btinternet.com
Chairman:	Peter Andrews, 10 Hatches Mews, Braintree, Essex CM7 9FZ. ancientone@btintemet.com
Deputy Chairman/:	John Davis, Church View Cottage, Church Rd, Upton Snodsbury, Worcs WR7 4NH
Librarian:	john.davis2@btinternet.com
Secretary:	Mike Murphy, 109 Chadwick Road, Peckham, London SE15 4PY egyptstudycircle@hotmail.com
Treasurer:	Brian Sedgley, 6 Mullberry Way, Ashtead, Surrey KT21 2 FE brian.sedgley@talktalk.net
Editor/Webmaster:	Edmund Hall, 6 Bedford Avenue,, Amersham, Bucks HP6 6PT edmundhall@chalfont.eclipse.co.uk
Publicity Officer:	David Sedgwick, 9 Eastlands, High Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7YD -ann.david_@tiscali.co.uk
North America Agent:	Trent Ruebush, 6704 Donegan Court, Alexandria, Virginia 22315, USA trenton_ruebush@hotmail.com
Egypt Agent:	Dr Ibrahim Shoukry, Apt 1, 10 Kamal El-Tawil St (Ex-Montaza), Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt ishoukry@link.net
Antipodean Agent:	Tony Chisholm, 13 Arden Way, Wilton, Wellington 6005, New Zealand j_t_chis@clear.net.nz
Committee:	Dr Sami Sadek, The Oaks, 19 Sinah Lane, Hayling Island, Hants PO11 0EY sami.sadek@ntlworld.com
	Vahe Varjabedian, 6 Mohammed Galal St, Apt 61, Heliopolis 11341, Cairo, Egypt vahev@hotmail.com

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Website: egyptstudycircle.org.uk

Report of the Meeting, February 22, Live Auction 2014

PRESENT: Peter Andrews (Chairman), John Davis (Deputy Chairman/Librarian), Mike Murphy (Secretary), Brian Sedgley (Treasurer), Edmund Hall (Editor/Webmaster), Sami Sadek (Committee), Jon Aitchison, Mike Bramwell, John Clarke, Cyril Defriez, Adel Eskander (France), Pauline Gittoes, Peter Grech, Paul Green, Alan Jeyes, Costas Kelemenis (Greece), Martin Lovegrove, Sherif Samra (Egypt), Ronny Van Pellecom (Belgium), Armen Varjabedian (Egypt), Vahe Varjabedian (Egypt), David Worollo.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: John Sears (President), Angela Child, Mostafa El-Dars, Atef Sarian, Tony Schmidt.

The Chairman welcomed an encouragingly large turnout of 22 members to our annual Live Auction meeting at Stampex, including no fewer than six from overseas, most of them old friends but also including a new member, Adel Eskander from France, attending his first meeting. As it was also our first meeting of 2014, the Chairman hoped it was not too late to wish all members and happy and successful New Year!



Mike Murphy and Edmund Hall keeping a sharp lookout for bidders

Given that Stampex gives us only two hours these days, admin was rushed through, but not without welcoming two more new members in Khalid Omaira of the Emirates and Yasser Elshamy of Alexandria: we hope both will enjoy their membership and find it useful. There was also notice of a new and apparently fascinating book, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: No Service, Returned and Captured Mail* by Daryl Kibble of Australia. Printed to order, this will cost approx £75 from www.vividpublishing.com.au/darylkibble. We hope to have a review in a future issue.

The Secretary looked forward to a good attendance at our next meeting, the AGM on May 10, when we shall have much to discuss in terms of subscription and QC publishing in light of recent massive increases in UK postal rates. Jon Aitchison (ESC 661) reminded us that the meeting will include a mini-auction for which members are asked to bring up to five items for sale during the course of the meeting. Further details soon.

Auctioneer Edmund Hall raced through the sale details – helped to a certain degree by members' apparent reluctance to bid on “stamps” as such; the postal history sold immeasurably better – and we dealt very quickly indeed with the sale of 119 of 205 lots. As ever, they were closely shared between email/postal



Circle members keeping a sharp lookout for bargains

bidders (65 lots sold for £1112.50), and room sales (54 lots, £1156.50). Commissions, together with the sale of material kindly donated for Circle funds by André Navari (ESC 534) and a recently resigned member, Hilary Shaw (ESC 594), meant a total of over £500 for the Circle. The Prices Realised list is on the website.

The Statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps

Pierre Louis Grech (ESC 266)

In the book *The French Post Offices in Egypt* I gave an outline of the life of Ferdinand de Lesseps, his work and the misadventures of the statue erected in his memory. As not all the ESC membership would consult that study, it was suggested that edited parts of that information might be of interest to some of the other members, since de Lesseps and his Suez Canal played such a major part in the history and philately of Egypt. This article is supplemented by several illustrations omitted from the book due to space considerations

Ferdinand de Lesseps (born at Versailles on 19 November 1805), had been French Vice-Consul in Alexandria in 1832 and Consul in Cairo from 1833 to 1837. Being a very good horseman, he was asked by Mohamed Ali to teach his young son Saïd to ride. The diplomat and the prince got on very well.

(As the story goes, 11 year old Saïd would sneak into the kitchen of the French Consulate where de Lesseps provided him in secret with plates of macaroni and pastries, which Mohamed Ali prevented his son from eating as he was very overweight).

De Lesseps left Egypt in 1837, but took away with him the idea of a canal across the Isthmus of Suez, having discovered during his tenure the various earlier studies about such an undertaking.

Figure 1 - Ferdinand de Lesseps, c. 1835.

In September 1854, Abbas Pacha died and was succeeded by Saïd Pacha. On learning of this, de Lesseps rushed back to Egypt, arriving at Alexandria on 7 November on board the paquebot *Lycurgue*. After delicate lobbying on 30 November 1854 he was granted by his old friend a Firman (concession) to cut a maritime canal across the Isthmus of Suez. It would run for 100 miles across the desert, from the small town of Suez in the south to a new harbour in the north, which would be named Port-Saïd, after Saïd Pacha.

Britain, fearing French supremacy over Egypt, fiercely opposed the scheme, so work did not start until five years later. On Easter Monday, 25 April 1859, the first shovel-full of sandy mud was dug-up by de Lesseps at the spot where the Canal would begin. Initially the excavation was done by hand, with up to 20,000 Egyptians working under the *Corvée* or forced labour.

Saïd died in 1863. De Lesseps rushed from the isthmus to Alexandria when he heard Saïd was not well, but arrived just too late. Officials reported he spent one hour alone in silent prayer near the body of his friend.

Saïd's successor was Ismaïl Pacha (elevated to Khedive in 1867). The new city of Timsah, situated about mid-point along the length of the Canal, was renamed Ismailia on 19 May 1863, in his honour.

In 1864 the Sultan in Constantinople ordered Ismaïl to withdraw the Egyptian workforce, thus stopping the excavation. The situation was resolved by Napoleon III, who was asked to arbitrate. In exchange for that loss of labour Egypt would have to pay compensation. With this money de Lesseps acquired new state-of-the-art steam powered excavating equipment from France and work resumed at an accelerated pace in 1866. The progress had been further halted by the terrible cholera epidemic of 1865 which ravaged Egypt (and in which Ferdinand lost a grandson).

De Lesseps encountered many difficulties throughout his endeavour. It was a cousin's daughter, Eugénie de Montijo, married to Emperor Napoleon III in 1853, who through her influence, provided him with invaluable support at critical times and helped the project to advance.

After 10 years of work, the Suez Canal was effectively opened on 15 August 1869 with a ceremony at the northern end of the Great Bitter Lake, when the Khedive broke a dyke, allowing the two seas to merge. The Canal was officially opened to navigation on 17 November 1869, at an inauguration ceremony attended by Khedive Ismaïl and Empress Eugénie, in the presence of numerous royal guests.



Setting off from Port-Saïd, the inaugural procession sailed south, comprising more than 40 ships. It was led by the French imperial yacht *Aigle*, on which stood the Empress, the Khedive and a proud de Lesseps, in his finest hour. The directors and administrators of the Canal Company were on board the paquebot *Péluse*, which had been leased for the occasion.

Figure 2 - Eugénie, Empress of the French.

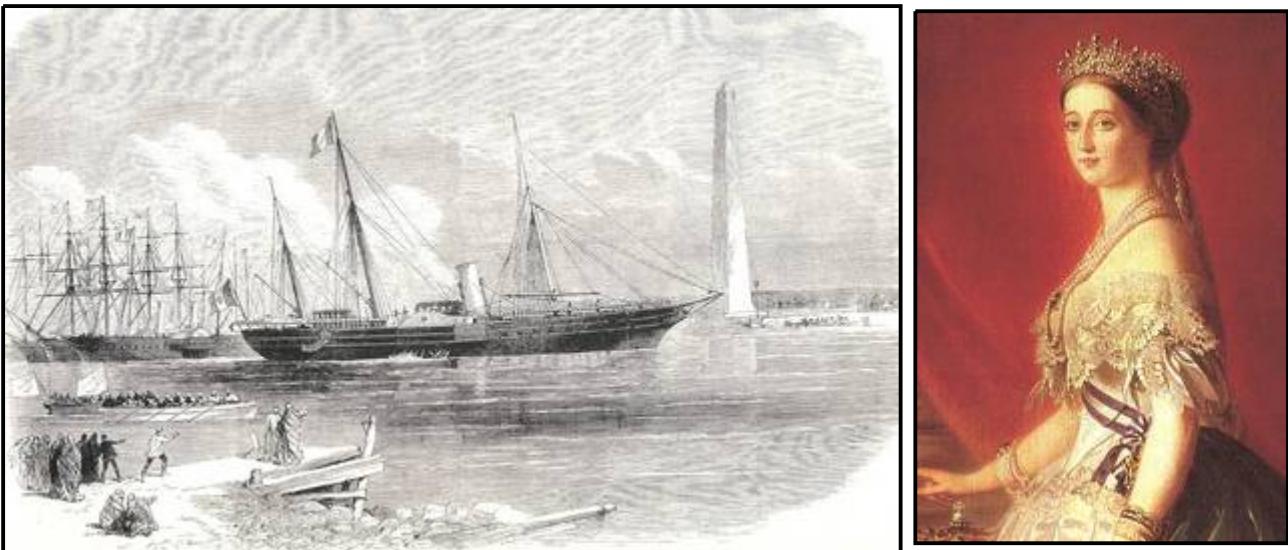


Figure 3 - The imperial yacht *Aigle* leading the inaugural convoy into the canal. The temporary obelisks, one either side of the canal, were made of plywood and painted red; they indicated the official entrance.

Empress Eugénie had sailed from Marseilles at the beginning of October, visited the Sultan in Constantinople and arrived at Alexandria on 19 October. She enjoyed a month's holiday in Egypt, going to Upper Egypt and being regally entertained (the *Avenue des Pyramides* was laid down for her visit), before rejoining the *Aigle* at Alexandria and taking part in the Canal opening ceremonies. In years to come she would describe this visit as her last happy memory. It was less than a year to the débâcle at Sedan!

Ferdinand de Lesseps was to be trapped in Paris during the 1870-71 siege in the Franco-Prussian war. As the Suez Canal settled into regular operation (albeit with continuing political and economical disagreements) in 1874 he next embarked on the disastrous adventure of digging the Panama Canal. The work officially began on 1 January 1880, but yellow fever, the rains and the difficulty of the terrain (this was jungle, not desert) conspired to make the enterprise fail. By 1887 the need for locks to raise and lower ships, previously negated by de Lesseps, became inevitable. The Compagnie de Panama was going bankrupt, and in 1889 a liquidator was appointed. In 1891 Ferdinand and other directors were indicted for fraud. His son Charles and several members of the French Government were implicated, and arrested. After much controversy and lengthy litigation, in 1893 Ferdinand and Charles were condemned to 5 years in prison. Six months later Charles was freed on appeal and exiled himself in England. In view of his age (87) Ferdinand was not arrested but was confined to his home. Sad, ill and discredited, he died on 7 December 1894, at his residence of La Chênaie, in the Berry. It would be the Americans who would take up the Concession and complete the Panama Canal.

France has never issued a stamp to commemorate the achievement of de Lesseps. Approaches made by eminent philatelists in the 1980s to the French Ministry of Posts, requesting such a stamp, were rebuffed. Perhaps the distant memory of the Panama scandal, or the embarrassment of the more recent Suez war of 1956, are at the root of this. The fact remains that, to my knowledge, the only postage stamp ever issued in his honour was by Panama, on the 150th anniversary of Ferdinand's birth (a 3 cents, brown, issued 16 November 1955; depicting him aged about 70).

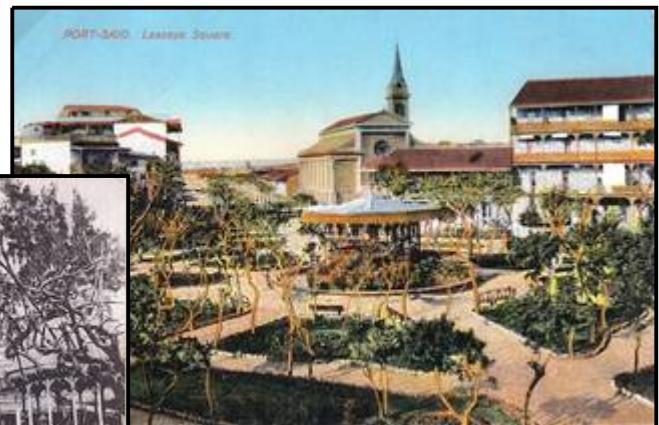
Figure 4 - Ferdinand had 5 children from his first wife and twelve from the second! On 21 May 1910, Jacques de Lesseps became the second aviator after Blériot to fly across the English Channel. That son of Ferdinand was killed in a sea-plane accident off Newfoundland in December 1927.



Ferdinand de Lesseps died in 1894, aged 89, ruined and disgraced by the failure of his attempts to pierce a trans-oceanic canal through the Isthmus of Panama. In his memory, a modest bust by the sculptor Mantovani was

erected at the centre of Port-Saïd in the gardens of the Place de Lesseps. Resting on a short column, it was inaugurated in June 1895 and was still there in 1950.

Figure 5 - Place de Lesseps: **right**, c. 1885, and **below** c. 1900. The monument to de Lesseps can be seen in front of the bandstand; the Asile Couvreux for orphans (built 1893) now hides the church.



62 PORT-SAID - Ancien Jardin Public - Old Public garden

But the sad end of this remarkable man was one factor which led the Suez Canal Company to decide on a grander monument, "in honour and gratitude to the founder of the Suez Canal". At the general assembly of shareholders, on 9 June 1897, it was agreed to fund a statue of de Lesseps, which would stand at the entrance to the Suez Canal at Port-

Saïd. The French sculptor Emmanuel Frémiet (Paris, 1824-1910) was commissioned and produced a bronze statue, 6 ¾ metres high (22 ½ feet) and weighing 17 tonnes. It was erected on the west jetty, at the harbour entrance, about 300 metres from the shore at that time.

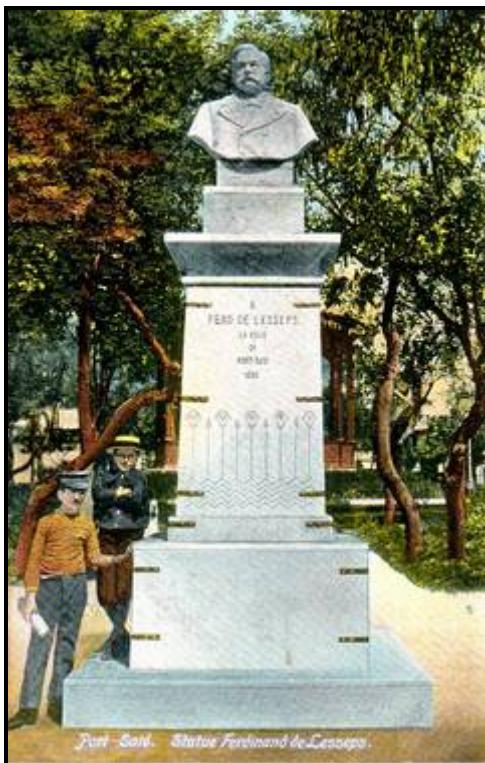


Figure 6 - Statue to Ferdinand de Lesseps, erected in 1895 by the City of Port-Saïd after his death.

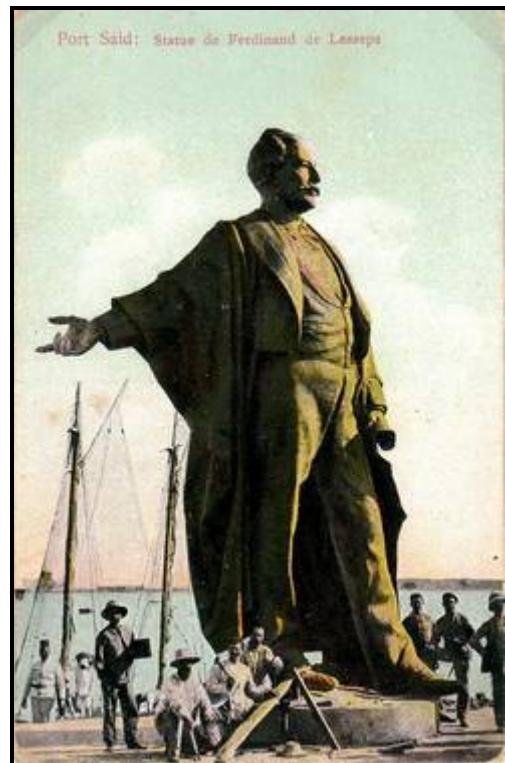


Figure 7 - Monumental statue to de Lesseps, erected by the Suez Canal Co. in November 1899.

The statue depicted de Lesseps proudly standing, pointing with his right hand towards the Canal's entrance, and holding a map of the Canal route in his left hand. On the stone pedestal (10 ½ metres high), was inscribed Ferdinand de Lesseps' name, and a Latin inscription: *APERIRE TERRAM GENTIBUS* (To open up the Earth to

all Nations), a phrase he had uttered himself, many years earlier. The statue was cast in France by the company Barbedienne. Manufactured in large segments, the monument was transported to Port-Saïd by the British ship *Duke of Buckingham*, no French ship being prepared to transport the huge bronze parts.

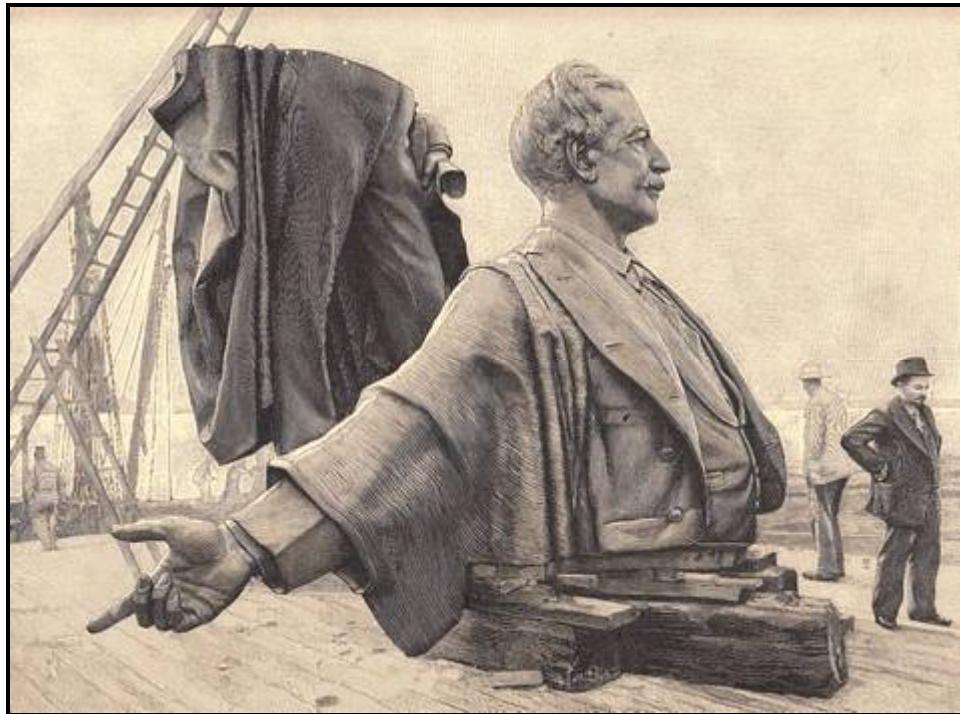


Figure 8 - The statue awaiting assembly at Port-Saïd.



Figure 9 - The 2 m "maquette" by Frémiet, on commemorative postcard.

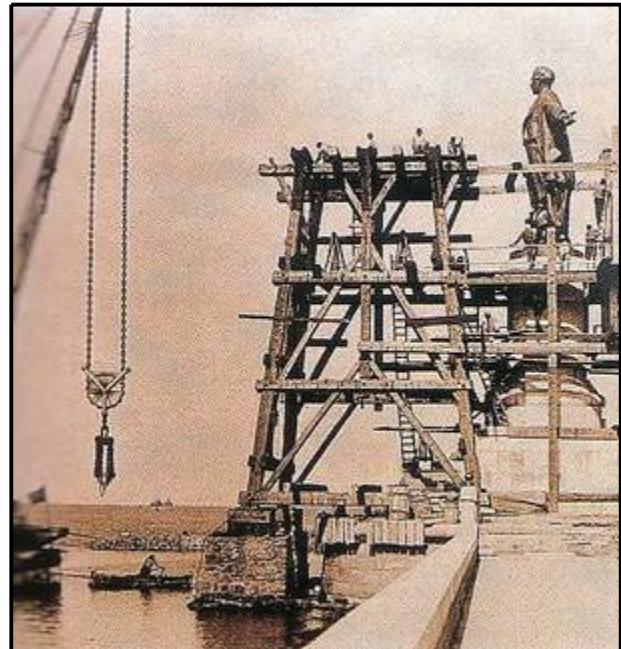


Figure 10 - The installation of the statue on its pedestal.

The sculptor Frémiet prepared several initial sketches and mock-ups. One scale model of the completed monument (about 3 metres tall - *Figure 11*) today sits on a table in the Suez Canal Room of the Museum of the Egyptian Geographical Society in Cairo (Shareh Qasr El Aini, behind the new Shepheard's Hotel). That same room also contains superb dioramas of the Suez Canal, including a mobile diorama of the Canal's inauguration which was first presented at the Paris Colonial Exhibition of 1931. Frémiet also made a *maquette*, a life-size bronze model of the statue (*Figure 9*), before casting the 4-times larger final product. For years this model stood in the entrance hall of the Canal Company's offices at 1, Rue d'Astorg, Paris.

Further to the transition of the Suez Canal Company to a financial institution, this 2 metres high statue was gifted on 31 May 1978 to the City of Versailles, where today it stands, ignored by passers-by, at the junction of Avenue de la République and Boulevard de Lesseps (*Figure 19*).

The inscription on the plinth reads: "Ferdinand de Lesseps / Creator of the Suez Canal / born at Versailles, 19 November 1805 / died on 7 December 1894 at La Chesnaye, Indre. (In the Berry when he died - *author*). Reduction of the monumental statue / work of Frémiet / erected on 17 November 1899 / at the entrance to the Suez Canal / with the motto / *Aperire Terram Gentibus*".

It is that *maquette* of the statue which was pictured on the commemorative postcards sold at the monument's inauguration, bearing pre-cancelled French Sage stamps locally overprinted **PORT-SAID** (Figure 14).



Figure 11 - Cairo Geographical Museum: the scale model of the complete monument.

Figure 12 - The inauguration: a) the veiled statue; b) the uncovered monument and the temporary grandstands on pontoons, tied on one side to the jetty, and c) backing up onto the paquebot Indus behind them (position of grandstands marked in yellow)



The official unveiling of the monumental statue was set for **17 November 1899**, the 30th anniversary of the Suez Canal's inauguration.

Numerous personalities were invited, special ships and trains were chartered. The Messageries Maritimes' fine paquebot *Indus* was hired to transport and house the Administrators and VIP guests of the Canal Company (over 150 people). It left Marseille on 11 November, arriving Port-Saïd on the 16th and moored in front of the monument.

Other guests were lodged on board the P&O steamer *Isis*, made available for the occasion, since the few Port-Saïd hotels were full. For the inauguration, multi-coloured tents had been stretched over pontoons opposite the statue, attached between the jetty and the *Indus*, providing grandstands accommodating 4,000 people. The unveiling took place at 9 am, in the presence of the Khedive Abbas Hilmi.

Figure 13 - Newspaper “l’Echo de Port-Saïd” : Souvenir of the Inauguration of the Ferdinand de Lesseps Statue, at Port-Saïd on 17 November 1899. Thirtieth Anniversary of the Inauguration of the Suez Maritime Canal. French printing works V. Colomb Fils & Cie, 1899. (12 pages, 338 x 245 mm).

The printer of that newspaper and supplement, Colomb, Sons & Co, was the one who carried out all the local overprinting and surcharging of French Sage stamps used at the inauguration (see below), under the direction of the French postmaster, Mr Gustave Broquedis, and with the approval of the French Consul at Port-Saïd, Mr Summaripa.

Many dignitaries and a large number of visitors milled around Port-Saïd during the several days of festivities surrounding the inauguration. This led to a drastic increase in the volume of mail posted; the special commemorative postcard for the event, depicting the *maquette* of the statue, was particularly popular (Figure 9). Additionally, there was also much demand from collectors and souvenir seekers.

The result was that the French P.O. (the last foreign P.O. left at Port-Saïd) was driven to release two locally printed special issues of stamps:

- one consisted of **overprinting** with the name **PORT-SAID** most of the existing stock of all values of French stamps (that was before the inauguration); Figure 14.
- the other consisted of several attempts to apply a **25c surcharge** on the new 10c Port-Saïd stamp from Paris, since 25c stamps had run out (that was a couple of days after the inauguration); Figure 15.

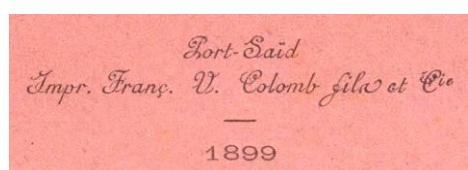


Figure 14 - The **PORT-SAID** local overprint (on the right-hand stamp) which was applied to French stamps did not match correctly the shape and size of the Paris overprint. It was also applied to the 5c dark green Sage still in stock at Port-Saïd, whereas Paris issued only a yellow-green 5c (left-hand stamp).

Figure 15 - The 25c surcharge was tried in red, then in black, but gave almost illegible results. It was then decided to write the value in letters, **VINGT-CINQ**. There are two varieties produced by the surcharging block, they are shown here se-tenant: the hyphen is a square (left-hand stamp) or a dash (right-hand stamp).

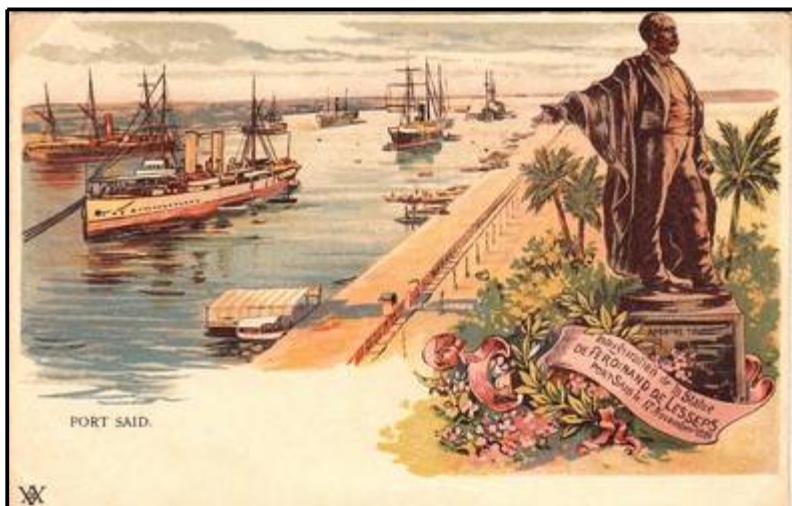
For the extended version of these events concerning the Suez Canal, and details of the Port-Saïd local stamp issues, see *The French Post Offices in Egypt* by P.L. Grech, chapters 15, 17 and 29. These stamps are listed in the French Maury catalogue Part 5, The Nile Post, Balian Egypt Book 2 and Moukhtar Egypt Volume 1.



Figure 16 - Three postcards commemorating the inauguration of the statue. Several different designs were printed, all issued after the event. The lower blue postcard is quite scarce. Designed by F. Frigenti, published by Frigenti & Bigazzi, Port-Saïd.

The de Lesseps statue would stand little more than half a century at the entrance to the Canal.

In July 1956 President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal, triggering the Suez Crisis. In October, French, British and Israeli troops attacked Egypt in a short war, but with immense consequences. They were made to withdraw as UN peacekeepers arrived. On 24 December 1956, after the last French and British troops had left Port-Saïd, an Egyptian crowd gathered at the de Lesseps' statue and blew it up with explosive charges. It was considered a symbol of foreign oppression. A member of the Egyptian Resistance, Yahia El Shaer, performed the operation. An order from Cairo, to prohibit the destruction of the statue, arrived too late that afternoon.



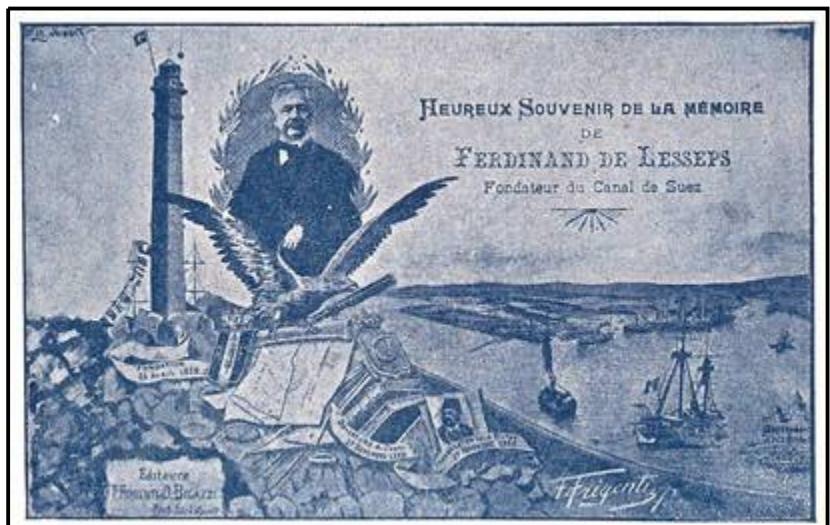
Some time later, on the initiative of an Egyptian employee of the Canal Co., the broken pieces of the statue were recovered and stored in a warehouse at Port-Fouad.

In 1995 these sections were welded back together and displayed as a goodwill gesture to a French delegation (the Association du Souvenir de Ferdinand de Lesseps); *Figure 18*. However, for Port-Saïd's local authorities, it was out of the question to re-install the statue on its pedestal.

In 2000, Yahia El Shaer wrote a full (and sympathetic) account of his participation in the events surrounding the demise of the statue.

This can be found at www.britains-smallwars.com/Yahia2/DeLeSepp.htm: "The Destruction of the statue of De Le Sepp's" (sic).

In 2005 there was still no official decision as to the future of the bruised giant statue. As Mr El Shaer states : "The statue lays in peace in the courtyard of the shipyard in Port-Fouad, where the former offices of La Compagnie du Canal Maritime de Suez had been".



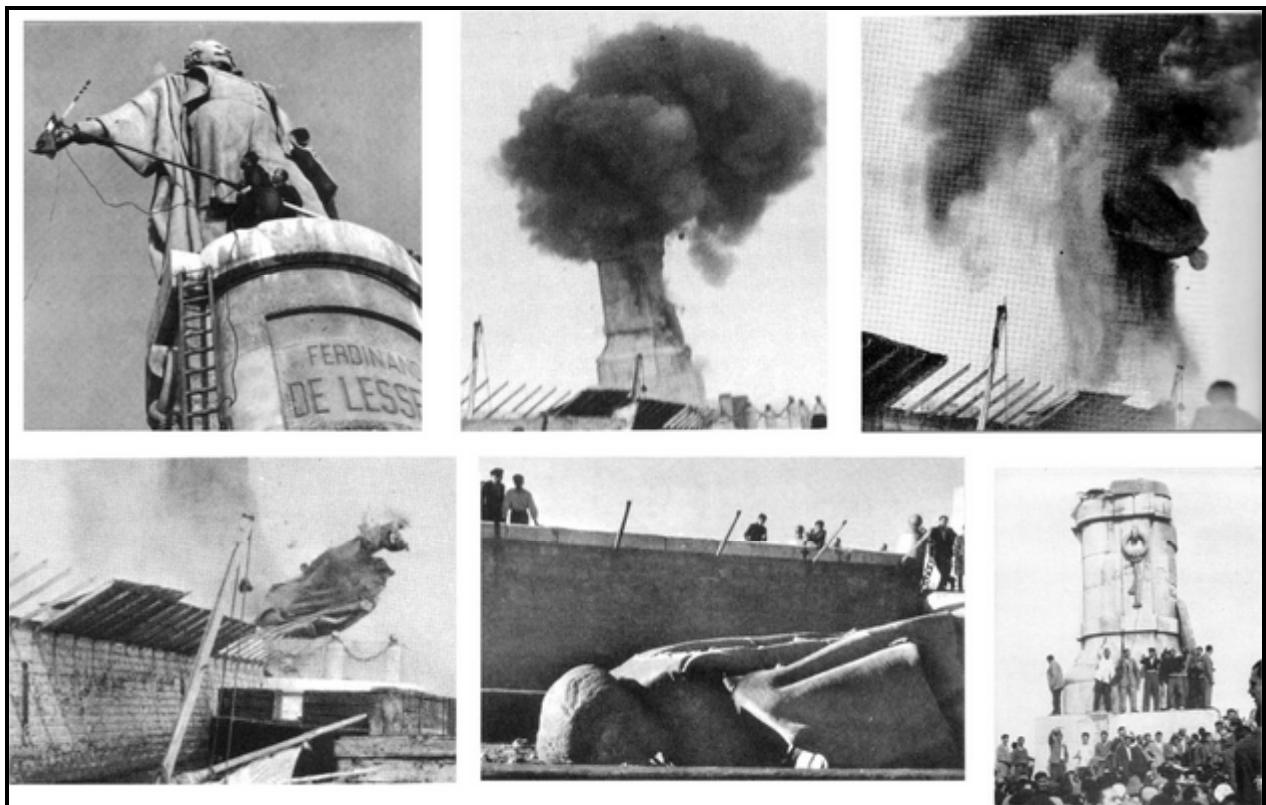


Figure 17 - Destruction of the statue to de Lesseps at Port-Saïd by an angry crowd, on 24 December 1956. It took three attempts before sufficient explosives were found to topple the statue (its hollow bronze lower legs had been filled with cement when it was erected). It fell face down on a pontoon anchored near the jetty. The parts of the statue were later retrieved. Reassembled years later, it is presently stored at Port-Fouad.



*Left : Figure 18 - The re-assembled monumental statue, as it stands today in a Port-Fouad shipyard.
Figure 19 - Frémiet's 2m scale model of the de Lesseps statue, as it stands today in the city of Versailles.*

Two Previously Unseen Cachets of Mena House Hotel?

John Davis (ESC 213)

“I don’t do eBay” – which is perhaps why I have missed a number of hotel-based items over the last year or so. However, a friend of mine, also called John, collects early hotel mail worldwide, and that now includes an extensive selection of Egyptian hotel post. A few weeks ago he showed me the cover illustrated as Fig. 1, with, to me at least, a never-before-seen cachet of Mena House Hotel.

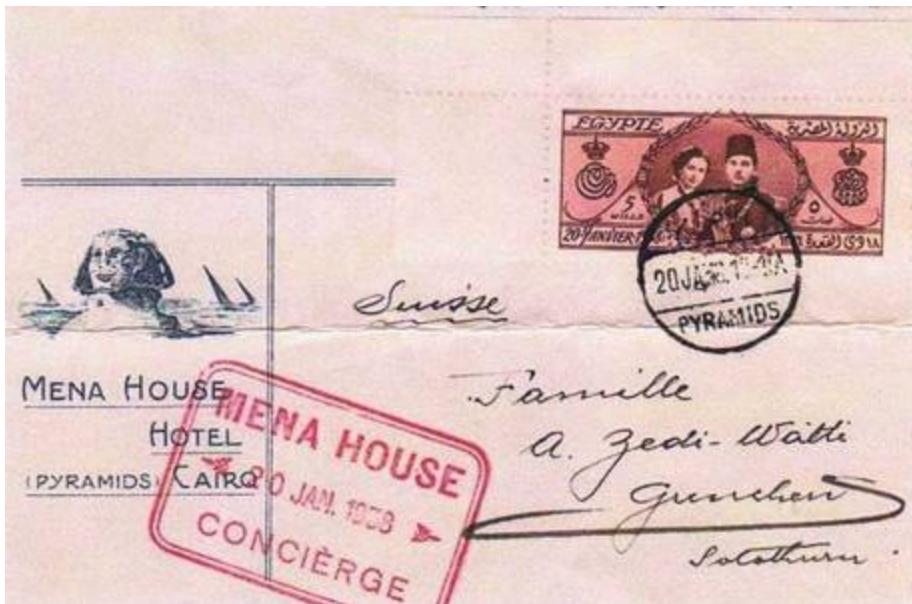
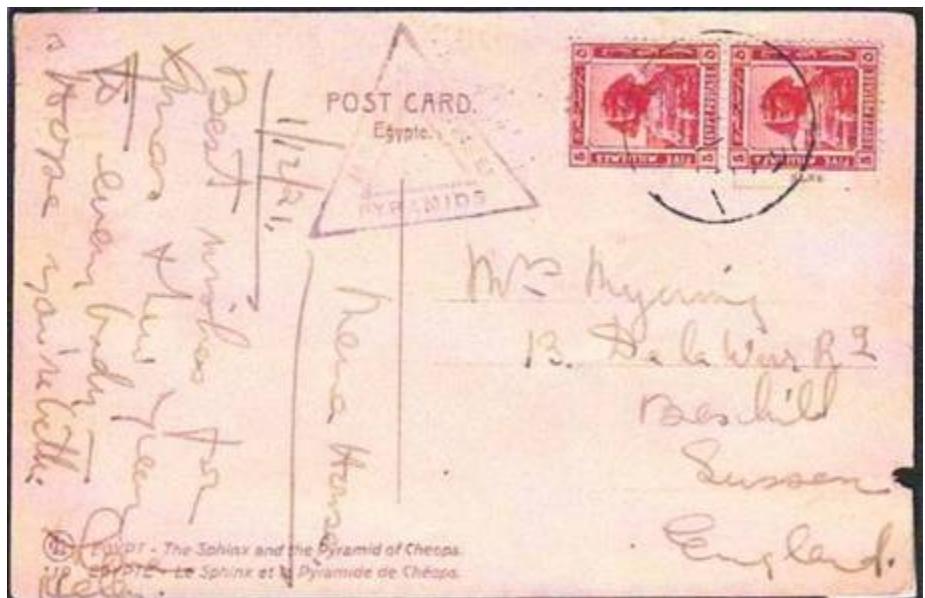
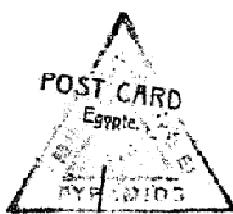


Fig. 1. Mena House Concierge 20 JAN 1938 cachet in the form of a double oblong with rounded corners struck in cerise

As may be seen from the illustration, it is a hotel stationery cover franked with the Farouk-Narriman wedding stamp, cancelled PYRAMIDS on 20 JA 38, and addressed to Switzerland. But the cachet MENA HOUSE CONCIERGE with the same date is what drew my attention. Has anyone seen another?

Almost at the same time, I came across another Mena House cachet myself, here illustrated as Fig. 2, and this one is rather earlier, and nothing like as clear.

Fig 2. Mena House Pyramids cachet in double purple triangle



Dating from December 1, 1921, from the manuscript, the cachet is a double triangle without date but reading MENA HOUSE PYRAMIDS, and the cancellation of the two five-millièmes Harrisons depicting the Great Sphinx (or are they late use DLR?) is also unclear. But, once again, has anyone seen another?

New Discoveries of M.P.O. El Daba on Cover

Richard S. Wilson (ESC 230)

M.P.O. El Daba is one of the scarcer of the Named Military Post Office datestamps, but it is now somewhat less so with the recent discovery of the fourth and fifth examples (*Figs. 1 and 2*), of which four are on cover and one is on a piece. The cover postmarked 6 June 1939 and backstamped Alexandria 7 June 1939 appeared on eBay last autumn. I thought that I would have to bid an arm and a leg to obtain it but fortunately I was the only bidder and am pleased to add it to my collection at a very reasonable price. The other newly discovered El Daba cover, postmarked 31 August 1939, showed up in Argyll Etkin's Auction number 33, February 2014, and was immediately snapped up by our Librarian, John Davis (ESC 213). This is the second cover known with that date.

John Firebrace and Charles Minett in the *QC*, Vol. 5, Nos. 7 & 8, whole series 55 & 56 (1960), *Circular Datestamps of the Military Post Offices during the Postal Concession Period*, knew of two examples. One was a pair of the ten millièmes large Army Post on piece dated 5 August 1939 owned by Firebrace and the other a cover postmarked 31 August 1939 owned by the late John Revell. The latter was displayed at the London International Stamp Exhibition in 2010. I have heard of another cover postmarked 2 April 1939 but have not seen it. The M.P.O. El Daba datestamp has a diameter of 26 mm with the date bars 9 mm apart and the M.P.O. 15 mm wide. Shortly after the war started M.P.O. Daba was replaced with F.P.O. E.606.

El Daba, a small village on the Mediterranean some 180 kilometers west of Alexandria, was home to one of the Royal Air Force's Desert Landing Grounds set up after the 1938 Munich Crisis. On the airbase were an ammunition depot, a bomb dump, and a petroleum storage facility. A railroad running from Alexandria to Sidi Barrani passed near by. RAF and military exercises were held in the area in March 1939 and at the beginning of August the base became operational. During the North Africa Campaign the United States Army Air Corps and the German Luftwaffe also used the base. Later in the war a camp for German prisoners of war was located there.



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2

Membership changes

New Members:

ESC 681 **Amr Salah Laithy**, PO Box 94, Zamalek 11211, Cairo, Egypt
(Egypt stamps)

ESC 682 **Darrel Flint**, 211/9 Morton Avenue, Carnegie, Victoria 3163, Australia
(Egypt postal history and postmarks, Australian postal history)

ESC 683 **Adel Eskander**, 11 Allée de la Limite, 93340 Le Raincy, France
(Egypt stamps, essays, postmarks, Gaza, Suez Canal, British Forces)

ESC 684 **Khalid Omaira**, PO Box 28622, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
(Aiming to build a philatelic library of Egypt stamps; postal history, etc)

ESC 685 **Yasser Elshamy**, 27 Riad Pacha Street, Appt 7, Bacos, Alexandria, Egypt
(Egypt aero-philately, postal history pre-1900, blocks of four stamps)

Change of Address:

ESC 272 **Stephen Bunce**, Grenville House, Main Road, Farthinghoe, Northants NN13 5PA

ESC 654 **Gerald Barron**, PO Box 1285, Londonderry, NH 03053-1285, United States

Change of Email Address:

Please note that our member Alaa Massoud (ESC 561), President of the Philatelic Society of Alexandria, has two new alternative email addresses: alaaymi@yahoo.com; and amassoud07@gmail.com

Resigned:

ESC 475 **Jim Bourne** **ESC 594** **Hilary Shaw**

Congratulations to: **ESC 264 Lucien Toutounji** for his gold medal for a single frame on the UPU Tenth Congress Cairo 1934 stamps exhibited at a Northern Virginia regional stamp show.

Egypt: The 1879 Provisional Surcharge with Guide Marks

Richard Wheatley (ESC 168)

Following on from Peter Smith's article in the December 2013 issue of the *QC* (No 247), it would seem that I am one of the fortunate few who have one of the rare 5 PARA surcharge on 2½ piastre stamp with guide marks in all four corners (*Fig. 1*). This example has 12½ perforation and, just like Peter's example, the guide marks do not line up.

I am a little more fortunate with the 10 PARA surcharge, for according to Peter's book there are 12 stamps in each sheet with guide marks, so far more to go round. I have one used block of four which has a guide mark in the lower left corner. The faint postmark is a Type III of Magaga but sadly the date is obscured by the heavy "10" surcharge.

Then I have a mint corner block of four with an ornate border in the margin. There is a guide mark in the top left corner, stamp position 1, but best of all it has the major variety "cleft in pyramid" on the same stamp (*Fig. 2*).

Finally I have a mint marginal block of six with the ornate border and an extra vertical line of perforations. There is just one guide mark, in the lower left corner, stamp position 191 (*Fig. 3*).



Fig. 1

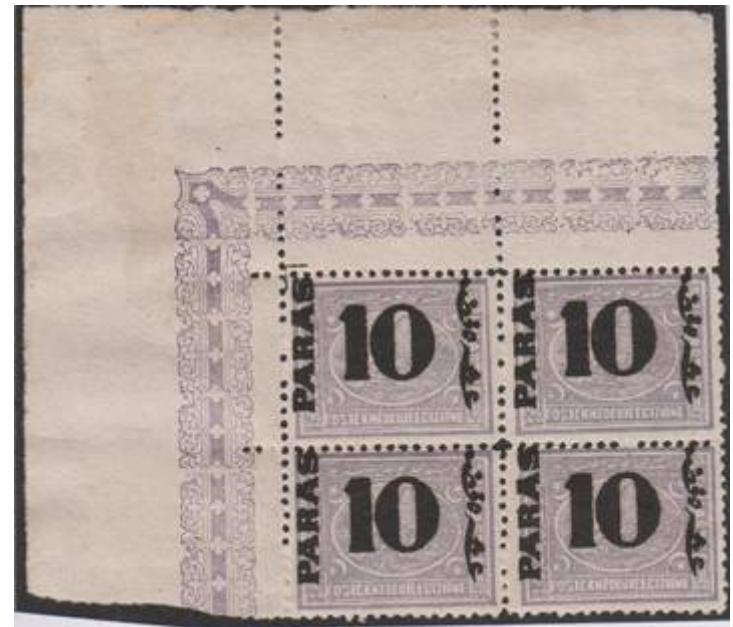


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Marlag and Milag Nord

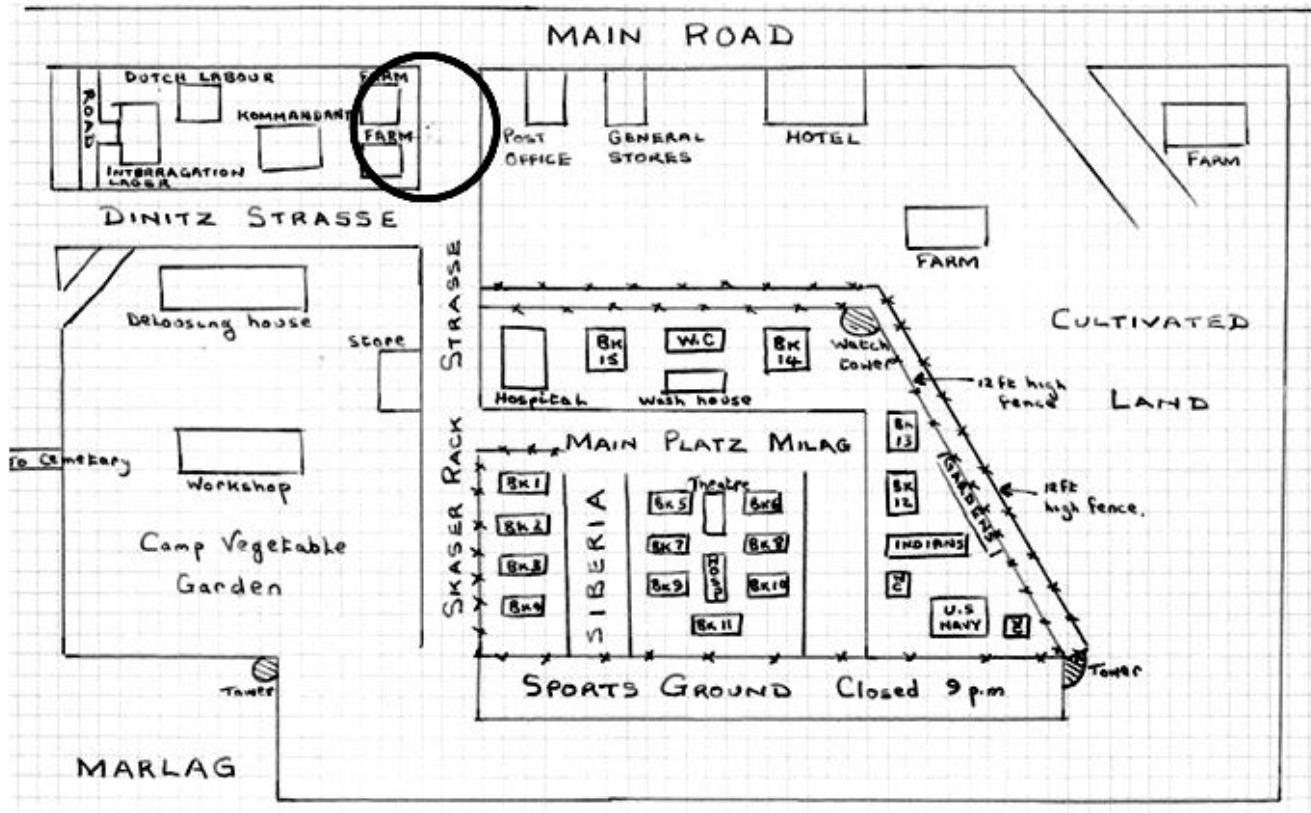
Scott Van Horn (ESC 619)

The PoW camps of Marlag and Milag North were established in October 1941 on the location of a small Air Force training facility just south and southwest of the town of Westertimke (near Bremen), which was in the 10th military district headquartered at Hamburg. Marlag (*Marinekriegsgefangenenlager*) was the camp for Navy PoWs, and Milag (*Marineinterniertenlager*) was the camp for the Merchant Navy PoWs, and was to the east of Marlag.

According to the Hague Conventions, merchant seamen were considered non-combatants, and as such "...are not made prisoners of war, on condition that they make a formal promise in writing, not to undertake, while hostilities last, any service connected with the operations of the war." Regardless, both the Germans and British considered Merchant Navy seamen as PoWs. During the war, Milag North held between 2,700 and 4,200 civilians from 29 nations, with a large portion from the United Kingdom.

As always in the case of war, the delivery of mail was very erratic. The average number of letters received per man per month was seven, and required as many as 61 days for transit. Parcel post packages required about 43 days in transit. PoWs received two letter and four card forms each month, while the medical staff received a double ration of the forms. The Germans were quite regular in issuing these forms and at times additional ones could be obtained from PoWs who did not desire to use theirs. There were no restriction on the number of incoming letters a PoW could receive and the letters could be kept indefinitely. German civilian girls censored all incoming as well as outgoing mail.

Both camps were liberated on 27 April 1945 by the British infantry.



MILAG. (Courtesy of moosburg.org)



The above postal card (NP SPC38a), was posted on 8 Jan 43 from MÎT-GHAMR, and addressed to:

Mr. M. Fouda
 Gefangenenummer: 101419 [Prisoner Number]
 Lager-Bezeichnung: Marlag und Milag Nord [Camp Name]
 Deutschland (Allemagne)

The card is handstamped "Marlag u. Milag Nord / 7 / geprüft" (inspected by #7) on both front and back, and with "INTERNEES MAIL" on the front. In addition, there is also a pointed message written at the top of the card, presumably by the censor(?), stating to "Inform dispatcher to write with ink!" It is also presumed that Mr Fouda was an Egyptian citizen employed in some capacity in the merchant navy [of what country?].

The card was written by Mr Fouda's brother, and reads as follows:

We have received your letter in which you say that the Malokhia and Bamia remembered you by the name. We send to you another few amounts of these kinds of food, but we wish to send to us what you require, we are ready to send money, cloth, and all kinds of food. All the family are well, happy and in good health specially your dear mother who is always remembering you. She was very glad when she saw your photo in the "Mosawar" with your friends. All your friends and all the people in Khafre-Behida are very anxious to see you soon, they always become very glad when they know that you are in good health. Your Brother, Mohamed 8-1-1943

Perhaps a couple of points in this fascinating message require a little explanation (Mike Murphy adds). **Molokhia** and **bamia** (okra, ladies' fingers) are favourite Egyptian vegetable foodstuffs, both of them somewhat slippery and the former most often made into a tasty soup with chicken, garlic and coriander. **Al Mussawar** was a famous Egyptian Arabic picture magazine that flourished until the 1950s and is still published today, but is somewhat in decline. **Kafr Bihida** is a small town immediately north of Mit Ghadr in the central Delta on the Umm Saimur Canal; as far as I can discover, it had a Rural mail station served out of Sanafa, a little farther to the northeast.

The card appears to come from an Italian Internee. If this was so it is correspondence from a prisoner held by one side to a prisoner held by the other side! Perhaps the brother in Egypt worked at one of the internment camps and posting it as an "enemy alien" hoping this would ease its transmission in Axis held Europe. The nearest camp to Mit Ghadr was Tanta although the boxed marking is associated with Cairo. A lovely bit of social history.

Editor

Bottle Post

Edmund Hall (ESC 238)

In the live auction of February 2014 there was an interesting and unusual cover with a cachet Posted by Bottle / In Straits of Messina / SS El Malek Fouad. / Khedivial Mail Line S.A.E (Fig. 1). Now I knew of these “posted by bottle” covers: the late Dennis Clarke had a couple, which I assume were sold in the auction of his material.



Fig. 1

At the September 2010 meeting a member raised the issue, having seen such a cover on an internet auction site with the description "never seen before, never to be seen again...". As our meeting report goes on to say, "Needless to say, it did not sell at a starting price of \$350". The report does however add a picture of a second bottle post cover, supplied by our member Cyril Defriez (ESC 172) with a different marking of the SS El Malek Fouad, together with an SS Nefertiti handstamp.

Also on our website, under Queries, Q18 of June 19, 2006 (from a non-member), is a cover with a cachet "Straits of Messina Bottle Post SS El Malek Fuad" dated 1951. The cachet is similar to the one on Cyril's example. The non-member asked for any information about his cover, saying he had found nothing in British or US philatelic journals, including the *Seaposter* (magazine of the TPO & Seapost Society) and the Italy and Colonies Study Circle. He hoped an ESC member may be able to help: it seems he has had no reply.



Fig. 2

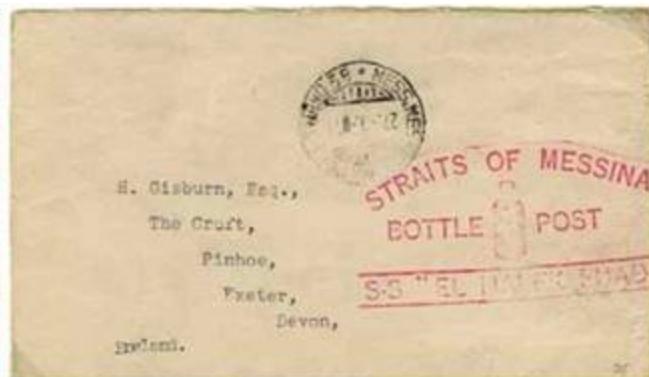


Fig. 3.

I can find little in my library of philatelic cuttings garnered over the last 35 years, or on the internet, for which the main references are our own website!

From my clippings I have one article, from the *Philatelic Magazine* of October 1955, by Tom Morgan in a potpourri of philatelic titbits in which he gives a few paragraphs about the bottle post. In full it reads:

I've had a letter by bottle post; by the "El Malek Fouad" Bottle Post, to be exact. Never heard of it? Neither had I until this unusual item came along the other day from Mr Basil Benwell Rees (Alexandria).

Mr. Rees was on his way out to Egypt on the *s.s. El Malek Fouad* and took part in an interesting mail posting ceremony.

When the ship was sighted approaching the Straits of Messina several small boats put off from the mainland. Meanwhile, on board the ship, letters were written and placed in a bottle along with some cigarettes and a few lira.

The ship slowed down and the bottles thrown overboard, whereupon they were picked up by the small boats which took the letters ashore and posted them while the boatmen presumably took themselves off to the nearest café to smoke the cigarettes and spend the cash.

The postmark on the envelope is Catona in Italy and the cachet was apparently applied on board the ship. Outer inscription on the cachet is: *s.s. El Malek Fouad, Khedive Mail S.A.E. Line*, and the inner words around the outline of the bottle are: *Posted in Bottle in Straits of Messina*.

Now the cover in our auction is addressed to Mr Rees, so is the cover in the auction the cover from the article, received by Mr Rees and passed on to Tom Morgan? Or did Mr Rees send another as well?

The illustration from the article (*Fig. 4*) has a small blob near the bottom left corner not seen on the auction cover. However this may merely have been added during the printing of the article.



Fig. 4. Postcard of the SS El Malek Fouad circa 1950.

A blog on the internet tells of how the writer and his wife sailed through the Straits of Messina by freighter and quotes their daily journal for April 30, 2001:

Curt & Margie [I assume travelling companions] told us of a longstanding tradition with the fishermen of the Straits of Messina, that any bottle message recovered in their nets would be returned to the sender, if the bottle contained a few cigarettes and Lira to cover the cost of postage for the message to be returned.

Curt with 6 others had done this previously (25 years previously), and 6 out of 7 messages had been returned. Curt & Margie were the unlucky ones, and were determined to try again on this voyage. Curt, Bridget & ourselves, prepared our bottles. We passed through the Straits of Messina at around midnight on the 30th April 2001 and Curt & I launched the bottles from Deck 11 of the *Grande Europa*.

On our return to England, our message, bearing a 5th May 2004 Messina postmark, was waiting for us! Bridget got hers back too! At the time of writing, Curt & Margie are still waiting.

An interesting website is devoted to *A place for "out of ordinary" stamps and covers!!*. It has a cover, clearly philatelic in nature with Danish stamps, but poorly illustrated so not used here, of "Bottle Mail at Strait of Messina": the bottle with this cover was dropped form by the *MS Christian Maersk*, of the Danish Maersk Line and dated 1967.

The website also shows two more bottle mail covers, one from the Hapag Lloyd line dropped off the Azores, Portugal, in 1976 and another a "postbuoy" cover with a cachet and postmark of a postbuoy that was placed in the Kiel Bight in June 1984 on the occasion of the 19th World Postal Congress in Hamburg.



Query 118 from John Davis (ESC 213) - CAIRE / T. IMPRIMES / (2)

While mounting two REFUSÉ covers from mid-1958 I noticed that on the reverse of one cover the 20 millièmes postage due stamp issued that year was cancelled with a date-stamp I have not come across before. The top of the circle is in Arabic - presumably it reads much the same as the French in the bottom sector, that is, CAIRE / T. IMPRIMES / (2).

The back of the cover includes in blue a Cairo roller cancel advertising a fair in Damascus reading "Visit Damascus International Fair 1-30 September 1958". My thanks to Ted Fraser-Smith (ESC 238) for the translation. A blurred boxed REFUSED - ARABIC - REFUSE completes the markings.

I have attempted to draw the date-stamp and have one or two questions:

1. Has anyone seen this before?	2. Is there a number (1)?
3. What does it actually mean?	4. Does the T. refer to taxe, as in postage due?



As to the meaning, I have referred to my French dictionary for "Imprimés", where it suggests "Book post" when in the plural. As a singular, as often seen written on postcards, it seems to refer to printed paper for which a special rate was available in the early part of the twentieth century.

Editor's reply:

I was under the impression that this is a "fairly common" date stamp. However, as I collect anything to do with the Egyptian military, I have noticed that it is often found on the back of mail sent by military personnel endorsed *barid el harby* (military post). The sender seems to have hoped that this endorsement would grant free postage to family or friends; for this concession, however, *barid el harby* mail had to be posted in a military mailbox rather than a civilian one. The 10 millièmes postage due, double the normal letter rate for the time, is always stuck to the reverse. As far as I know, only numbers (1) (see my illustration) and (2) have been recorded.



The Arabic reads *safra el qahira* (traffic post of Cairo); then *matbu aat* (printed matter). The T stands for traffic rather than tax and a part strike of this date stamp is recorded in the Blomfield sheets under the heading Traffic. These are therefore transit date stamps. My suspicion is that they record the point where the civilian post took over from the military post.

Now what is really intriguing is the use of the word "imprimés" which also means printed matter and is often found on Egyptian mail either hand endorsed or by a hand stamp. To my knowledge this is the only date stamp specifically designed for this purpose.

Study of Re-sealing Labels (Strips) Used on Censorship of Civil Mail in Egypt 1939-45

Ted Fraser-Smith (ESC 238)



Part One: Earliest printing, 1939-41

Introduction: At the Study Circle meeting at York in 2009 I displayed an attempt at plating “Opened by Censor” labels, using some 120 examples. Only 30 of those examples came from a printing using the formula 3:1 S:L (short: long). Our Secretary described the meaning of this formula in his report of the meeting (QC Sept 2009, page 148).

Long fascinated by the civil censorship of mail passing through Egypt during the Second World War, I had realised that these labels, printed in blue on white or blue on brown with two lines each of English and Arabic and used to reseal an envelope after the censor had sifted the contents, were worthy of more consideration.

As a keen user of Arabic, I first noticed that *al-maraaqabah al-masriyah*, the Arabic equivalent of “Egyptian Censorship”, was written – totally unexpectedly and inexplicably – in two different forms of Arabic calligraphy, one in which the letters *lam* and *mim* are quite clearly separately formed (*see solid rectangle in the illustration above*), making a “long” (L) form; and the other where the “l” and “m” are combined, with the *mim* appearing only as a short stroke to the right (*see chequered rectangle above*), against the flow of the right-to-left sentence and making a “short” (S) form..

I decided to examine all the examples I had on cover – and carefully traced and copied all 100 examples, happily eventually with the aid of a photocopier for ease of use. When I then compared the multiplicity of labels, I was surprised to find that the two types of script appear to have been placed in order quite deliberately, in the ratio of 3:1 S:L. Why? Looking even more closely, I realised that there was selvedge at the right end of some labels, and the left end of others; and also occasionally at top and bottom too.

So I was able to “plate” the labels, discovering that each had a distinctive place in the printed sheet; and could then reproduce the sheet from the examples to hand. But then it became even more intriguing ... a sizeable proportion of the labels did not fit the pattern, but were typeset with a 2:1 S:L proportion. And there were differences also in the sizes of the gaps between the English phrases “Opened by Censor” and “Egyptian Censorship” and between the Arabic *al-raqiib* (الرقيب) and *fath* (فتح). So I set out again; and was able to plate a larger sheet with the new proportions.

Close attention to the covers on which the two types were used allowed me to ascertain that the 3:1 sheet, the First Printing, was in use from 1939 to 1940-41, and subsequent printings (2:1) from 1940-41 to the end of censorship in 1945. Not only that, but that the sheets were of different sizes, the first a strip two labels deep and one metre long, the second some 540mm wide and with the depth yet to be ascertained.

To confuse matters further, from about 1941-42, when paper was in short supply, the Censor Department began to use scrap paper for printing the labels, which are often found with text on the other side – and now the text just appears to run off the edge of the printing sheet.

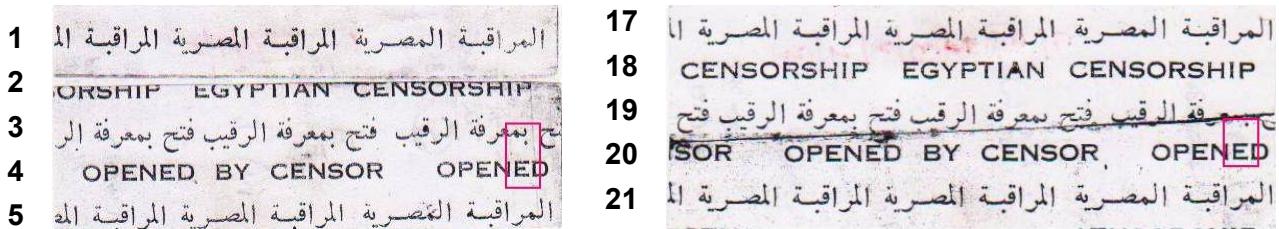
Since that meeting, members and my own acquisitions have increased my examples of the 3:1 printing to 110 examples.

I have now been able to produce a full sheet of 26 rows of script. The key elements for this “build-up” was the spacing of the long (L) form of Arabic calligraphy for words *al-maraaqabah al-masriyah*, EGYPTIAN CENSORSHIP. The long form appears at 125mm, 250mm and 375mm from the starting point of the left-hand script. Selvedge for this early printing was very helpful.

A full sheet would be cut into five longitudinal strips. Each strip was then cut into five pieces measuring approx 100x38mm each, producing 25 labels per sheet.

But identification of the 3:1 and 2:1 ratios for the short-long Arabic lettering, while the crucial first clue, did not resolve all the problems. To discover which labels followed which pattern it has been necessary to examine in minute detail the placing of both Arabic and English lettering, comparing positioning both within and between the rows of text. It has been a fascinating – and exhausting – exercise.

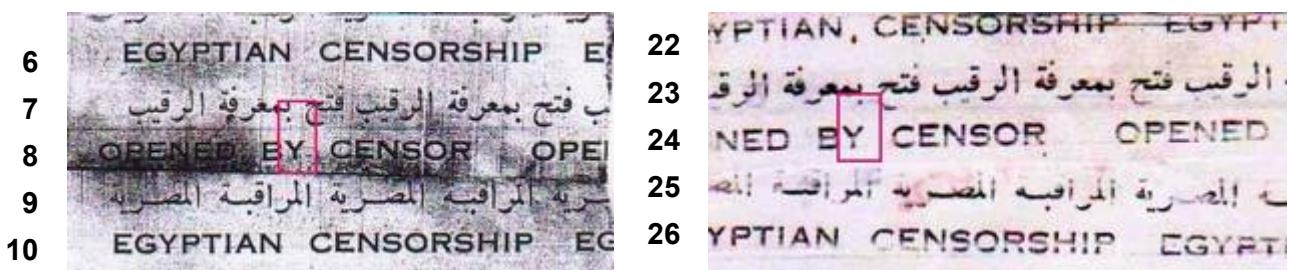
For instance, it can be observed that rows 1-5 and 17-21 contain the same lines of Arabic and English. To separate these two groups I found that rows 1-2 were set 3.5mm apart whereas rows 17-18 are set 3mm apart. Top selvedge helped. The joint formed when folding over the label to re-seal the cover after censorship hindered. Sometimes row 22 was partly visible. However, I observed a constant displacement difference of 0.5mm, illustrated best by the positions of the top of the E and the lower dot of the Arabic above it, shown at the 375mm mark in rows 3-4 at left and 19-20 at right in the two labels below.



The difference in spacing is shown by the two rectangular boxes: at left, example PA 39 of 7.8.41, and at right an example dated 2.12.39

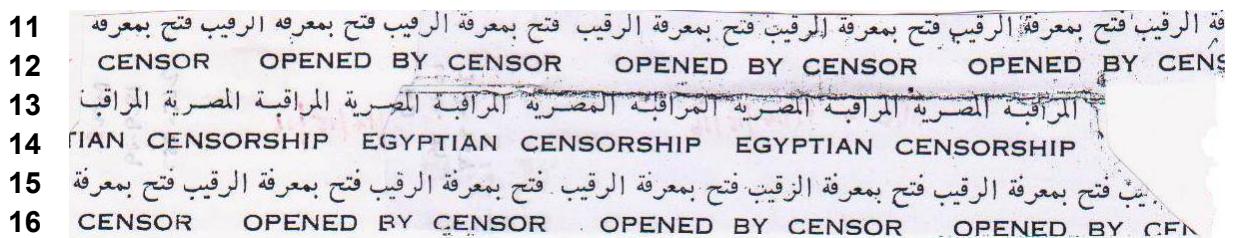
The exercise can be repeated for rows 6-10 and 22-26, they likewise having the same lines of Arabic and English. To separate these two groups, bottom selvedge is a great help.

A study of two labels, one from each group, shows a displacement relationship of 1mm in rows 7-8 and 23-24, position 23mm. The disparity is best seen by comparing the placing of the capital Y and the dot on the Arabic letter above it.



The difference in spacing is shown by the two rectangular boxes: at left, example RB 33 of 10.10.41, and at right example KM 11 of 4.4.40

To complete the picture I illustrate rows 11-16 using labels MM8 (13.9.39) and PA3 (10.10.39) joined together. No measurable displacement is found between rows 11-12 and rows 15-16. Could the type-setter have begun the plate from the middle rows?



This illustration combines two labels – MM 8 of 18.9.39 at left and PA 3 of 10.10.39 at right, covering the range from 256 to 452mm. It shows no measurable displacement

At row 7 (positions 132mm and 194mm) there is another flaw, a constant missing dot. The Arabic letter “qaaf” ق reverts to “feh” ف in the word *raqiib*, meaning censor.



This label, PA 7 of 21.5.40, is a perfect subject for aligning, with residual dots of the Arabic showing both at top and bottom. The Arabic errors occur at positions 132 and 194mm from the left

The earliest printing thus seems finally, after a long struggle, to have fallen neatly into place... I illustrate in the following pages my "build-up" of labels to illustrate the full sheet, together with a distribution chart of those positively identified from my 110 examples as fitting this first printing.

So, where next? My 250 other labels are arranged in groups, and a major second printing plate of 34 rows of text, made up to the 2:1 formula, early 1940 to 1945, is advancing. For this work I have already identified some 70 labels between the 300mm and 500mm positions (measured from the right, because that is how the script is laid out). And for late 1941-early 1942 I have some further 2:1 labels (about 12), which fit together but do not follow the pattern of the major second group.

I am happy to acknowledge help from members listed in the distribution chart. My abbreviations are: RB – the late Robin Blakeley (ESC 295), whose collection I acquired; KM – Konrad Morenweiser (Civil Censorship Society, who presented a query in the *QC* and I subsequently acquired his full collection); MS – Markus Sprenger (Civil Censorship Society), PA – Peter Andrews; MM – Mike Murphy; RS - Richard Stock (Sudan Study Group)..

Later printings are however, presenting problems. Please forward any examples that you might have to me – in black and white photocopy, both front and back of the cover, at actual size. I will be happy to receive all and every one of them. But please leave the jointing to me!

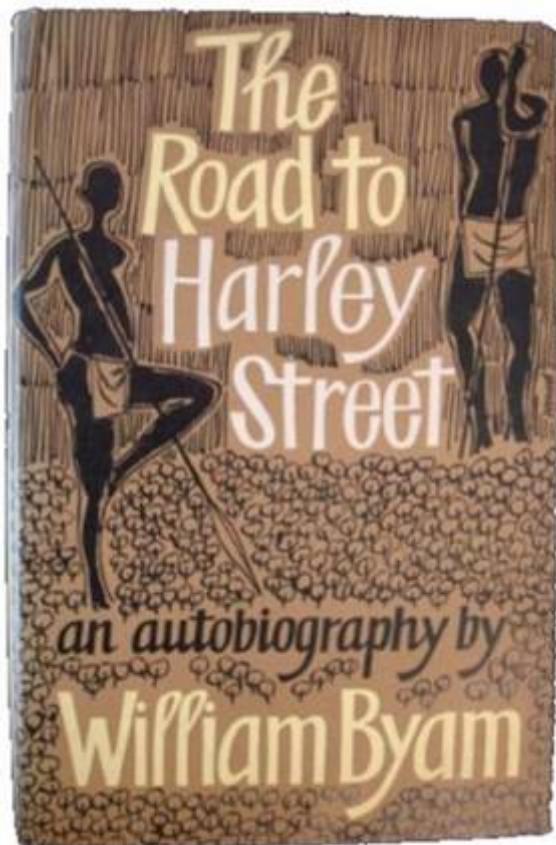
22-26	17-21	11-16	5-10	1-5	Rows
<u>2.8.41</u> MM 6 (15.12.40) RB 67 (31.1.40) KM 11 (4.4.40)	RB 65 (15.2.41) PA 11 (23.12.40) PA 53 (23.10.39) 15.10.41 20.9.41	RB 34 (10.10.41) RB 79 (?) RB 58 (12.10.39) RB 30 (23.3.40) KM 37 (18.9.41)	RB 33 (10.10.41) RS 2 918.11.39)	PA 22 (15.12.40) MM 9 (18.10.39) 21.9.39 17.5.41 PA 39 (22.3.41) MM retta	0-128mm
<u>PA 55 (18.9.40)</u> PA 68 (4.9.39) PA 65 (6.2.40) RB 27 (22.8.41)	PA 64 (9.6.40) 17.6.40	<u>PA 59 (rt top 14.11.39)</u> PA 59 (piece) Internet 28.9.41 Scott 28.1.41 RB 64 12.8.41	<u>RB 63 (23.12.40)</u> 13.8.41	<u>KM 38 (19.2.41)</u> PA 18 (2.2.41) PA 30 (13.3.41) 23.12.40	68-182mm
<u>RB 51 (24.6.40)</u> RB 61 (28.6.40) PA 43 (17.9.41) PA 50 (3.9.39) 27.12.39 19.8.41	KM 31 (16.8.41) RB 71 (1.8.40) MM 1 (25.6.40) KM 44 (20.9.41) 20.7.40 7.12.40	KM 62 (27.11.40) PA 35 (23.10.41) 23.10.41	<u>PA 58 (16.11.39)</u> PA 7 (21.4.40) TB 59 (2.2.41)	RB 43 (24.9.41) PA 15 (7.1.41) KM 23 (12.4.41) 14.12.39 MS (50)	155-300mm
<u>9.9.41</u> 6.12.40 RB 26 (12.12.40) RB 50 (26.11.40) RB 74 (15.10.39) PA 33 (8.6.40)	2.12.39 12.9.41 RB 47 (28.8.41) PA 45 (10.2.41) PA 14 (8.2.40)	<u>MM 8 (18.9.39)</u> MM 7 <u>PA 3 (18.10.39)</u> PA 5 (27.1.41) MS (19)	<u>MS 10</u> PA 56 (9.11.39)	15.10.41 PA 39 (7.8.41) PA 44 (11.1.41) 29.6.40 28.9.39	260-380mm
<u>KM 56 (24.9.41)</u> PA 67 (4.9.39) PA 57 (16.9.39) Scott 25.9.39 PA 1 (26.9.39) PA 66 (18.1.41)	EHF's retta Anton 23.8.41 RB 53 (7.2.40) PA 54 (13.10.39) 19.7.41	<u>PA 60 (22.2.40)</u> RB 14 (7.6.40) 29.6.40 KM 64 (12.2.41)	<u>RB 81 (21.2.40)</u> KM 35 (27.2.40) 23.9.41	<u>PA 36 (12.1.41)</u> PA 51 (5.10.39) PA 61 (?) 11.1.40 15.2.40	350-467mm

Underlined examples were used in the build-up of the printing plate

Book Review

Dr. Byam in Harley Street and The Road to Harley Street by William Byam

A recent telephone call requesting the loan of these two books prompted me to read them myself - the ESC Library has two copies of each - and, although one copy has been in the Library since I became Hon. Librarian almost forty years ago, I had never read them!



Having made a name for himself by organising the writing and publication of *The Practice of Medicine in the Tropics* during the 1920s, a book regarded as the “classic work” even today, William then set about creating his own medical practice in Harley Street itself. For the lovers of gory details there is plenty to satisfy, but it is the patients who provide interest to the non-medically minded. These latter include no fewer than three kings, George V, Edward VIII and George VI, as well as numerous well known personalities including Earl Haig of World War I fame.

Among those with whom Byam came into contact are T.E. Lawrence (of Arabia), the aviator Marc Pourpe, the pathologist Sir Bernard Spilsbury, the prisoner of the Mahdi, Major-General Baron Rudolph von Slatin, and many others.

This is a fascinating read. And he even mentions his stamps!

John Davis (ESC 213)

Little did I know what I had been missing; they constitute an autobiography by our founding father and, having met his last surviving daughter before she died a couple of years ago, I am now very much more acquainted with his life. And what a life it was!

Born in 1882 the son of Major-General William Byam, C.B., the young William was always bent on the life of a medical man despite his father’s wish that he should follow the family tradition in the military.

Having trained and qualified as a doctor specialising in tropical diseases, William did join the Army and was sent off to Egypt. After many interesting adventures in Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea and Abyssinia discussed in *The Road to Harley Street*, which was written largely after he had retired from his medical practice and was living on Guernsey, William returned from Egypt with several impressive animal head trophies that would adorn the entrance hall to his practice at 92 Harley Street.

