

British Palestine 1917-1920

The Egyptian Expeditionary Force in Palestine and (Greater) Syria

A. Purpose of the Exhibit

The purpose of this exhibit is to show the period of richest diversity in the collection of Palestine Area postal history. The exhibit captures the movement of the British and allied troops through Palestine, into adjacent lands of the Middle East, through postmarks and specially introduced adhesives.

The exhibit is structured to the movement beginning with the most complex of philatelic aspects involved - the "First Interim" period (17.12.17-20.2.18). This primitive period shows ad hoc methods of handling civilian mail and the prepaid use of the new Palestine adhesives.

Most of the remainder of the period falls under the British military Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (O.E.T.A.), which ended June 30, 1920.

This period is important because it covers the end of the long Turkish administration of the region, and the start of the modern European influence in the area.

B. Challenge Factor

General Edmund Allenby's forces were initially faced with the task of fighting a war against a determined enemy in difficult terrain. As the war front moved forward, there existed a need to sustain military postal services for the troops, as well as for the remaining civilian population.

While much literature is available describing the various army field postmarks, much of the important material has been held by a few collectors until recently. Several significant collections have come on the market, which has made it possible to more fully tell the story. On display for the first time are grouped key pieces of the collections of Sacher, Firebrace, Libeu, Groten, and Wofchuck.

Firebrace (1) has published the best overall survey, and in many cases documents the paucity of this material for any given facet. This scarcity factor outweighs condition; in example the only known Bale No. 2 *on cover* is shown, but represented as the torn 1/5 of an envelope in *cover front* only. The scarce material is well researched, but new discoveries are possible, such as the prepaid cover from Syria to Lebanon, a previously unrecognized *internal use* within Greater Syria (certified Dorfman 2005).

The challenge has been to obtain the material and organize it into a coherent story.

C. What is presented

The First Interim material is presented by individual dominions of the Egyptian Expeditionary Forces (E.E.F.), to contrast differential use of adhesives, censorship practices, and materials in postal use. Next is Civilian Mail, including prepaid use of adhesives introduced for Palestine, then material of the O.E.T.A. period. Uses of Palestine adhesives "abroad" follow, as the British extended their use into adjacent lands.

Not shown are postal services of the E.E.F. occupation of TransJordan. While this territory was a part of historic "Greater Syria" (from the Syrian perspective this included Israel, Gaza/Sinai, Jordan, and Lebanon), the occupation used overprinted adhesives, not as specifically prepared for use in Palestine.

D. Organization

The exhibit plan follows:

- I. Forces Mail
 - A. British Forces
 - B. Dominion Forces
 - C. Allied Forces
- II. First Interim Civilian Mail
- III. Introduction of Adhesives for Palestine
 - A. "The Blues", Bale No. 1-3
- IV. Prepaid Mail
- V. Expansion of Adhesives
 - A. "The Blues", Bale No. 4
- VI. OETA Postal Services
 - A. Postmarks
 - B. Typographed adhesives, Bale 5-12
 - C. Reintroduced Turkish Devices
- VII. Air Mail
 - A. RAF Mail/Emergency Service
 - B. Experimental Flight
 - C. Forces Stationed in Palestine
- VIII. Uses Abroad
 - A. Lebanon
 - B. Syria
 - C. Cilicia

E. Material Highlights

- I. General Allenby signature cover, title page.
 - I.A. JAP TPO on post card.
 - I.B. B.W.I. Contingent wreck cover.
- II. First and second recorded covers for civilian use of the Army Post Office{APO} (both *ex. Libeu*).
- II. Earliest recorded cover for civilian use of APO to England (*ex. Firebrace*).
- II. First Interim foreign mail, forwarded untaxed (*ex. Groten*).
- II. Postal card *ex. Jerusalem*, taxed on arrival in Cairo.
- II. Rare First Interim *Inland* use of postal card.
- IV. Prepaid No. 1.
 - IV. The only example of No. 2 on cover; used *prepaid* for *Inland* destination (*ex. Posner, Wofchuck*).
- VI.C. Two examples of the reintroduced Turkish Safed postmark, one registered (*ex. Sacher; ex. Wofchuck*).
- VI.C. Reintroduced Turkish registration devices (*ex. Wofchuck*).
- VII.A. RAF Aerial Post cover, reused three times. (*ex. VanAs*).
- VII.B. Early Experimental RAF flight cover Baghdad to Cairo, via Palestine, with original official contents.
- VIII.B. New discovery, the only known prepaid cover with origin/destination in Greater Syria, this sent at the internal letter rate. This cover *ex. Aleppo*, had adhesive Bale No. 9 *applied in Port Said, Egypt*, then forwarded for delivery to Beirut, Lebanon.

F. Informational Sources

1. Firebrace, John. *British Empire Campaigns and Occupations in the Near East, 1914-24: A Postal History*, Christies Robson Lowe, London, 1991.
2. Sacher, Michael M. *The Postal Markings of Mandate Palestine 1917-1948*. RPSL, London, 1995.
3. Steir, Joseph. *Bale Palestine: Stamps of Palestine Mandate*, Chariot Global Marketing Ltd., Ramat Gan, 2001.
4. Dorfman, David D. *Palestine Mandate Postmarks*, Tower of David, Inc. Sarasota, FL 1985.