

The Conquest and British Administration of Palestine and (Greater) Syria: 1914-1920

This postal history exhibit shows the period of richest diversity in Palestine philately. From a base in Egypt, Empire and Allied Forces conquered Palestine and adjacent territories from the Ottoman Turks. At the outset of World War I, a minimal British Force in Egypt for the Protectorate was present. The Force was rapidly augmented by the arrival of Australia-New Zealand (ANZAC) Forces by troopships to meet multiple demands. Combined forces in the east defended Egypt at the Suez Canal and sustained internal control of the populace; a Western Frontier Force was formed to defend against the Senussi in the west. A Mediterranean Expeditionary Force was also created to invade Turkey at Gallipoli, which failed with substantial losses. After withdrawal and reorganization of these units in Egypt, and further augmentation by Empire troops, the successful advance into Palestine could begin. Postal history from each of these phases is shown, with emphasis on the development of postal services in Palestine, under General Allenby's Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF). Selected EEF postmarks and adhesives for Palestine were extended unaltered for use in Syria and Lebanon, and are also represented in this exhibit.

The extraordinary practices of civilian use of military post offices, then later pre-payment of postal fees with subsequent application of adhesives are shown. Censorship practices, rates & handstamps incidental to this theme are also displayed.

The exhibit commences with the "**Pre-invasion Period**" build-up of British/Imperial Forces and Allies in Egypt. Emphasis is placed on the major role of the ANZAC build-up, followed by mail of the base camps/operations from which the invasion was launched. Next is the "**Conquest of Palestine**," organized by Forces' mail, followed by the unique "**First Interim**." This primitive period is remarkable for civilian use of military post offices, a practice that continued with pre-payment of postage during the "**Introduction of Adhesives for Palestine**." In December 1918, the military established the "**Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA)**" with a postal administration to provide mail services. The OETA period introduced new postal rates, which necessitated expansion of the existing adhesives. The use of these "**Palestine Devices/Adhesives/Rates Abroad**" in the adjacent occupied territories of Cilicia, Lebanon, and Syria are then shown. Military rule ended June 30, 1920, with the installment of a British Civil Administration, later formalized by a League of Nations Mandate for Palestine. This "**Transition to Civil Administration**" required modification of existing devices, to delete EEF, OET (Occupied Enemy Territory), OETA, and OETPA (OET Postal Administration) references.

The importance of this period includes the end of Ottoman Turkish rule, the escalation of modern European influence in the area, and the introduction of aerial mail transportation.

The Exhibit Plan:

1. Pre-invasion Period in Egypt [Dec 1914 - Mar 1917]
 - 1.1 Organization of British Forces
 - 1.2 Arrival of the ANZAC Forces
 - 1.3 Imperial / Allied Reinforcements
 - 1.4 Base Camps / Operations
2. Conquest/Administration of Palestine [Mar 1917 – Jun 1920]
 - 2.1 Conquest of Palestine- Military Forces Mail [Mar 1917 – Dec 1918]
 - 2.11 British (Includes Traveling Post Offices; Jewish Legion)
 - 2.12 Imperial (ANZAC, British West Indies, Indian)
 - 2.13 Allied (French, Italian)
 - 2.2 First Interim Period [Dec 1917 - Feb 1918]
 - 2.21 Civilian Mail through British Army Post Offices
 - 2.3 Introduction of Adhesives for Palestine [Feb 1918 and May 1918]
 - 2.31. "The Blues," uses of /prepayment for mail with the first four EEF issues for Palestine.
 - 2.4 OETA Postal Administration Period [Dec 1918 - Jun 1920]
 - 2.41 Expansion of EEF Adhesives for additional rates
 - 2.42 Military Forces Occupation Mail
 - 2.43 Postmarks (City / Small Town)
 - 2.44 Reintroduced Turkish Devices
 - 2.45 Royal Air Force Mail
3. Use of Palestine Devices / Adhesives "Abroad" [Sep 1918 - Jun 1920]
 - 3.1 Cilicia
 - 3.2 Lebanon
 - 3.3 Syria
4. Transition to Civil Administration [Jul 1920]

The British Force in Egypt, predecessor to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, that invaded Palestine and adjacent lands.

Cairo 20 JU 96 dispatch to Wellingborough, England. Manuscript, "Army of Occupation...Cairo...Egypt."

Informational Sources:

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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.