

THEMATICS

Nr 186: APRIL 2024

Newsletter of *Thematics Southern Africa*/Nuusbrieff van *Tematika Suider-Afrika*

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ARTICLES FOR THEMNEWS

Most of the articles which appear in **Thematics** are sourced from a variety of available philatelic magazines; however, it would be wonderful to use more local articles. I have adjusted the newsletter to allow for local and longer articles. The request for articles remains as strong as ever.

FROM THE EDITOR OF THEMATICS

Dear Thematicists,

The month of March brought its own problems (or should I say challenges) with health, but fortunately the health professionals had some answers and it is back to health and compiling a newsletter. It is quite a search to look for articles on the more technical aspects of philately, which also affect thematic philately. In order to solve this problem, I have been searching the earlier philatelic magazines, but I will need some time to rework these in order to include them in this newsletter. So keep your eyes peeled. I have been involved in philately since the late 1960s, and in thematic philately since the late 1990s. The latter commitment led to the Philatelic Federation of SA to appoint me to lead a working team to study how thematic philately can be more emphasised in our country. This study was completed within 10 months, and the report submitted to Federation at their Congress in 1999. However, since then there has been little change as to alter the course of a body so set in its ways. But time eventually brings change, and hopefully we will see this change soon.

Editor

THEMATIC MEETINGS / TEMATIESE BYEENKOMSTE

***First Saturday of the month** – *The Pretoria Chapter* meets at **10:00** in Greek Orthodox Church Hall, corner of Lynwood Road and Roper Street, (opposite UP main gate).

Contact: Helena Snyman 012-803-8922, 083-990-8953 or helena.snyman@gauteng.gov.za.

***First Saturday of the month** – *The Western Cape Chapter* meets at **09:30** in the Church Hall of the DR Church Bellville-Vallei, c/o Postma and St Andrews Street, Oakdale, Bellville.

Contact: Diederik Viljoen at 082-456-6653 or diederikgviljoen@gmail.com.

STAMP FAIRS

***First Saturday of the month** – *The Cape Stamp Fair* @ DR Church Bellville-Vallei, c/o Postma and St Andrews Streets, Oakdale, Bellville, Cape Town. **Contacts:** Ken Joseph 072-597-1287 ken@philatelicfriends.co.za Robbie Harm 082 925 7103, robertharm9@gmail.com, from 08:30 until 12:30. Please confirm the date of the next Stamp Fair, although reminders are sent via SMS/E-mail.

***First Saturday of the month** – *Pretoria Stamp Fair* @ Pretoria, Greek Orthodox Church, corner Lynwood Road and Roper Street, (opposite UP main gate) **Contact:** Paul van Zeyl at 012-329-2464 or randstamps@gmail.com. From 09:00, auction at 11:00.

***Last Saturday of the month – Edenvale Stamp Fair** @ Edenvale Bowling Club, 6th Avenue, Edenvale. **Contact:** Kenny Napier Kenny.napier@mweb.co.za. From 09:00, auction at 11:00.

***Last Sunday of the month – Sunbird Stamp Auction** @ 1st Hillcrest Scout Hall, 16 Shortlands Road, Hillcrest from 09:00 until 13:00. **Contacts:** Kim Breytenbach sunbird.stampauctions@gmail.com.

THEMATICS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Pretoria Chapter – 3 March 2024

Six people met as usual at the Greek Church, Lynnwood. There was 1 apology. Our show and tell was again very successful with John Kollen showing us USA Apollo 7 to 11 special cards which fit very nicely into his collection. Also some Burundi aerospace stamps which he found at a dealer's table. Mias showed Russian stamps of aeroplanes developed between 1912 and 1934. He has written it up with info on aircraft designers and technical information. He asked for some exhibition advice and quite a few suggestions were made. Elize is struggling a bit with her Birds of the world collection as it threatens to overwhelm her. She showed a few pages on plovers. She made the comment that she started a few other collection fields just to give her a new focus on her stamps. Helena showed some postcards bought at antiques shops on the Kwazulu Natal South Coast. Quite a few people say they visit hospice shops, second hand shops as well as antiques shop in search of postcards and envelopes.

Helena Snyman

WC Chapter – 3 March 2024

No report received. Reanie has asked to be released of all stamp activities due to extreme work pressure.

Diederik Viljoen

FACTS AND FEATS: THE POSTAL SERVICES

Stamps partially printed in one country, finished in a second, and issued in a third appeared in Ethiopia in March 1942, following the liberation from the Italians. The stamps portraying Emperor Haile Selassie, in his coronation robes, were lithographed at the Security Press, Nasik, India, and the values were added in letterpress at the McCorquodale Press, Khartoum in the Sudan. Later the stamps were produced entirely by lithography at Nasik.



Stamps produced in three countries by three different processes were issued in the Anglo-American zones of Germany in 1945, inscribed **AM** (Allied Military) **POST**



DEUTSCHLAND. The first series was letterpress printed by the US Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington and issued between 19 March and 1 July as the Allied advanced (**left**). The second issue was produced by photogravure by Harrison & Sons of High Wycombe, England and released between 28 August and 19 September (**right**). Final production was entrusted to Westermann of Brunswick who printed the stamps lithographically between late July 1945 and January 1946 (**left**). Apart from the different printing processes, the stamps can be distinguished by their shades, perforations and minute details in the spandrel ornaments.



The police have produced stamps on two occasions.

In January 1907 the police at Reefton, New Zealand endorsed various stamps of the 1906 series, from ½d to 2s, **Official** in red ink and marked them **GREYMOUTH – PAID – 3** inside a circular postmark. The so-called *Reefton Provisionals* were short-lived and examples, especially in used condition, are very rare. In February 1908 a shortage of 2½d stamps in the Cayman Islands, required for the postage on mail to Cuba, was met by Inspector JH O'Sullivan of the local police, who surcharged four sheets of 4d stamps by hand with the new value.



Stamps have been produced aboard ships on several occasions.

Stamps of the French Levant were overprinted aboard a warship in 1815 for use on Rouad Island, off the Syrian coast, when it was seized by French marines. In 1928 French stamps were provisionally surcharged aboard the liner *Ile de France* for use on mail flown by catapult aircraft. In 1934 Norwegian stamps were overprinted aboard *HMS Milford* for use during a visit to Bouvet Island in the Antarctic. On both occasions permission was given by the French and Norwegian consuls (in New York and Cape Town respectively), giving validity to these stamps.



Facts and feats from

Mackay, James, *The Guinness Book of Stamps*, Guinness Publishing Ltd, Enfield, 1988

Please note that the information used for this article has in many cases been overtaken by events – Ed

TIMELINE – NORWEGIAN ETHNOLOGIST THOR HEYERDAHL MAKES HISTORY



The **Kon-Tiki expedition** was a 1947 journey by raft across the Pacific Ocean from South America to the Polynesian islands, led by Norwegian explorer and writer Thor Heyerdahl (1914–2002). The trip began on 28 April 1947. Heyerdahl and five companions sailed the raft for 101 days over 6,900 km across the Pacific Ocean before smashing into a reef at Raroia in the Tuamotus on 7 August 1947. The crew made successful landfall and all returned safely. The raft was named *Kon-Tiki* after the Inca god Viracocha, for whom "Kon-Tiki" was said to be an old name. Heyerdahl's book on the expedition was entitled *The Kon-Tiki Expedition: By Raft Across the South Seas*. Heyerdahl believed that people from South America could have reached Polynesia during pre-Columbian times. His aim in mounting the *Kon-Tiki* expedition was to show, by using only the materials and technologies available to those people at the time, that there were no technical reasons to prevent them from having done so. Although the expedition carried some modern equipment, such as a radio, watches, charts, sextant, and metal knives, Heyerdahl argued they were incidental to the purpose of proving that the raft itself could make the journey. This idea has received support from statistical analysis of genetic evidence of contact between South America and Polynesia. The main body of the float was composed of nine balsa tree trunks up to 14 m long, 60 cm in diameter, lashed together with 30 mm hemp ropes. Cross-pieces of balsa logs 5.5 m long and 30 cm in diameter were lashed across the logs at 91 cm intervals to give lateral support. Pine



splashboards clad the bow, and lengths of pine 25 mm thick and 60 cm wide were wedged between the balsa logs and used as centreboards. The mainmast was made of lengths of mangrove wood lashed together to form an A-frame 8.8 m high. Behind the mainmast was a cabin of plaited bamboo 4.3 m long and 2.4 m wide, about 1.2–1.5 m high and roofed with banana leaf thatch. At the stern was a 5.8 m long steering oar of mangrove wood, with a blade of fir. The mainsail was 4.6 by 5.5 m on a yard of bamboo stems lashed together. Photographs also show a topsail above the mainsail, and also a mizzen sail, mounted at the stern. The raft was partially decked in split bamboo. The main spars were a laminate of wood and reeds and Heyerdahl tested more than twenty different composites before settling on one that proved an effective compromise between bulk and torsional rigidity. No metal was used in the construction. On the journey expedition leader Heyerdahl was accompanied by Erik Hesselberg (1914–1972) the navigator and artist. He painted the large Kon-Tiki figure on the raft's sail; Bengt Danielsson (1921–1997) took on the role of steward, in charge of supplies and daily rations; Knut Haugland (1917–2009) was a radio expert, decorated by the British in World War II for actions in the Norwegian heavy water sabotage that stalled what were believed to be Germany's plans to develop an atomic bomb; Torstein Raaby (1918–1964) was also in charge of radio transmissions. He gained radio experience while hiding behind German lines during WWII, spying on the German battleship *Tirpitz*; Herman Watzinger (1910–1986) was an engineer whose area of expertise was in technical measurements. A 1950 documentary film won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. A 2012 dramatized feature film was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

International Society of World Wide Stamp Collectors and Wikipedia

THE 1940 WAR IN NORTH AND EAST AFRICA

When Mussolini joined the war in support of Germany in 1940, Italy already had significant military forces stationed in its African colonies. With vastly inferior British forces present in East Africa at the time, the British government set out to protect its interest in the area, especially the strategically important Suez Canal. The author gives a detailed study of the conflict and highlights the type of datestamps, censor marks and postal history that bore witness to the battle for supremacy in the area during World War II.

Military datestamps and censor marks enable postal history to tell a story of the period and location of their use. This article illustrates this statement regarding the war fought in Egypt and East Africa between Britain and her Allies and Italy during 1940.

Military datestamps and censor marks

During World War II the armed forces of Allied and opposing nations made their own arrangements for the handling of mail from military personnel independent of their country's civilian postal services. Once operational, the army postal service of each country usually cancelled their mail using distinctive datestamps and censor marks. In most instances the datestamp bore a number that can, in conjunction with the date of posting, having consulted relevant reference books, be used to identify the location where it was being used or the unit that was using it, or in many instances, both.

In Egypt, at the outbreak of war, the named datestamps being used to cancel British force's mail were replaced by what has become referred to as the '**E600 Series**' datestamps numbered between 600 and 615, different numbers being used at different

locations. Following the arrival of Royal Engineers (Postal Section) on 24 September 1940, this series was replaced by the commonly used numbered Field Post Office datestamps. The Indian 4th Division, at that time stationed in Egypt, also used different numbered datestamps, one for Divisional HQ and one for each of its three brigades. The datestamps used by the Australian Army Postal Service that began to arrive in Egypt during September were less anonymous, frequently identifying the unit using them. All Allied Forces used the same double-boxed square '**PASSED BY UNIT CENSOR**' censor mark that was exclusive to Egypt. In East Africa, British and Allied troops in most instances, where Army postal services had been established, adopted similar anonymous numbered datestamps and censor marks. In Kenya, British forces used circular datestamps inscribed 'ASPEAF', 'E.A.A.P.S.' or 'E.A. ARMY POSTAL SERVICE' and various modified numbered 'bridge' censor marks. The South Africans brought their own datestamps and censor marks. Their numbered circular datestamps were inscribed 'A.P.O. – U – M.P.K.', each number identifying either the location or unit, or both. Rectangular boxed numbered censor marks were bilingual and included the inscription 'M.F.F. – U.D.F.'

In all theatres, the RAF used their own censor marks in conjunction with military datestamps. During 1940 two types were used, initially a circular mark enclosing a crown above the wording '**PASSED BY/R.A.F./CENSOR/No ..**', then towards the end of the year a boxed rectangular mark enclosing the same inscription but with a crown surmounting an eagle in the top left corner. Italian Forces used the same numbered '**POSTA MILITARE**' circular datestamps in both North and East Africa. A different number was allocated to each unit, and given the date of posting, the location of that unit on that date can be identified.

Italy's declaration of war

Benito Mussolini, the Italian fascist dictator, met Hitler at the Brenner Pass on 18 March 1940 and agreed to declare war in support of Germany, but at a time of his choosing. The day he chose was 10 June 1940 (**left**).



Italy franked with a 'NEW CROSS S.E. 14' cancel dated '10 JNE/1940', the day of Italy's declaration of war, struck with a 'NO SERVICE / RETURN TO SENDER' cachet. German forces were over-running Western Europe with France about to sue for peace. The repercussions for Britain were immense. Italy's declaration of war, followed soon after by the French-German armistice on 22 June, led to the immediate disruption of British sea routes

through the Mediterranean and Italian Forces in Libya threatening Egypt, the security of the Suez Canal and the oil fields of Iran and Iraq. Alternative sea routes along the East African coast to Egypt and across the Indian Ocean became vulnerable to attack from Italian forces in East Africa.

At the time of Mussolini's entry into the war Italy already had significant military forces stationed in its African colonies.

Italian Cartolina Postale per le Forze Armate Africa Orientale (Postal card for the East African Armed Forces) depicting Italy's East African colonies. This postcard was introduced in 1935 for use by service personnel in these colonies

To the west of Egypt, in Libya, the 10th Army, consisting of five divisions, was based in Cyrenaica facing the British across the border with a further nine divisions of



the 5th Army based in Tripolitania, five of which were transferred to strengthen the 10th Army following Italy's declaration of war. In total, the Italians mustered about 236,000 troops together with 1811 guns, 339 tanks and 151 combat aircraft. In addition, Italy had two colonial divisions based in Libya, numbering 14,800 men commanded by Italian officers. Similar large forces were present in Italy's East African colonies of Eritrea, Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia. Across this region, collectively known as *Africa Orientale Italiana* (**above right**), 256,000 men, including 182,000 native troops were under the command of the Viceroy of Ethiopia, the Duke of Aosta.

British Forces, June 1940

Confronting them Britain was fielding both land and air forces significantly numerically inferior. In June 1940 the Egyptian Garrison, under the command of General O'Connor, consisted of the 7th Infantry Division (redesignated 6th Infantry Division on 3 November 1939), 4th Indian Division, Mobile Division (renamed 7th Armoured Division during February 1940), Royal Artillery Group and eight British Infantry Battalions. In total, O'Connor's Egypt-based Western Desert Force only numbered some 31,000 men to defend the country against Italian invasion.

The importance of the Suez Canal to British interests had long been recognised. Under the terms of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, signed on 26 August 1936, while Egypt was recognised as a sovereign independent state, Britain was permitted to station troops, pilots and auxiliary personnel in Egypt to protect the Suez Canal and surrounding area. Concessionary postal rates for British personnel serving in Egypt had been in place since 1 November 1932, all mail bearing the concessionary rate having to be posted through military or RAF post offices using special '**Army Post**' adhesives obtained from the NAAFI.



Soon after the outbreak of war, a series of numbered datestamps used at these post offices replaced the named military datestamps previously used, a change presumably prompted for security reasons (**left**).

This RAF-censored cover bears four 10m. 'Army Post' adhesives, the correct concessionary airmail rate to England franked with an FPO E606 datestamp used at RAF El Daba, an airfield created in the Western Desert about 110 miles west of Alexandria

British and colonial troops were thinly dispersed throughout East Africa. In the Sudan, Major General William Platt had three regular British infantry battalions

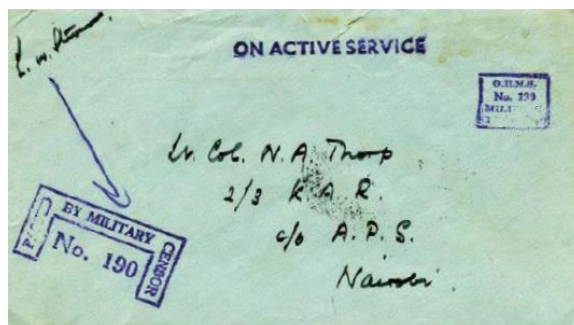
and the Sudan Defence Force, totalling 13,000 men under his command. British Somaliland was garrisoned by a small contingent of British and Kings African Rifles troops supported by 631 members of the Somaliland Camel Corps. The defence of Kenya was the responsibility of the East Africa Force under the command of Major-General Douglas Dickinson. His force comprised two East African brigades, mostly consisting of troops of the Kings African Rifles drawn from Kenya, Tanganyika, Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia. An East African reconnaissance regiment, a light battery, and the 22nd Mountain Battery RA from India also came under Dickinson's command.

There were no special postal arrangements for forces personnel in British Somaliland or Sudan, and local stamps and the civil post office had to be used. This situation changed in Sudan with the arrival of an Army Postal Service detachment in Khartoum in September. In Kenya, the Army Postal Service – East Africa Force was established on 3 September 1939 and issued with its own datestamps and distinctive 'bridge' censor mark introduced in February (**below right**). Surface mail from the colony endorsed with 'On Active Service'

was forwarded post-free. Air support in both Egypt and East African theatres was meagre, the RAF being under-strength and equipped with obsolete aircraft.

Struck with a British military 'bridged' censor mark this cover is addressed to an officer in the 2/3rd Battalion, King's African Rifles. This unit was attached to the 25th (East Africa) Infantry Brigade, 12th (African) Division. Lieutenant Colonel N A Thorp was a serving officer in the King's Own Scottish Borders seconded to the KAR. The cover is back-stamped with two different British military datestamps, 'E.A.ARMED POSTAL

In Egypt, Bomber Command totalled five squadrons of Bristol Blenheims, one of Vickers Valentias and one of Bristol Bombays. Giving fighter support were just three Gladiator and four Blenheim squadrons. Based in Aden and Iraq were three and one Blenheim squadrons respectively. Three squadrons, one Gladiator and two Vickers Wellesley, were based in Sudan, while the air defence of Kenya was largely dependent on squadrons of the South African Air Force, but like its RAF counterparts, it was equipped with obsolete aircraft including, Hawker Hartbeest, Fury and Hardy biplanes.



Initial skirmishes

Hostilities commenced almost immediately. On 14 June the British 4th Armoured Brigade passed through the 'wire' into Libya and captured the Italian border forts at Capuzzo and Maddalena. Two days later a British patrol intercepted an Italian column of 12 L3 tanks and 30 lorries full of infantry heading north towards Fort Capuzzo. In the ensuing encounter, the Battle of Nezuat Ghirba, the Italian column was wiped out, leaving only 12 lorries and 100 prisoners (**left**).



Italian Carolina Postale per le Forze Armate (Postcard for the Armed Forces) depicting the action at Nezuat Ghirba on 16 June, following which Lieutenant Raffaele Bonanno was posthumously awarded the Gold Medal for 'Military Merit' for his heroism during the British assault

However, the British did not press home their attack and retired back across the border. In East Africa, confident

in their numerical superiority, the Italians soon undertook incursions into British territory. In early July a force of 6500 men, crossing the border from Eritrea into Sudan, advanced on the railway junction at Kassala forcing the British garrison of 320 men of the Sudan Defence Force, and some local police, to retire after inflicting casualties of 43 killed and 114 wounded for ten casualties of their own (**right**).

Cover with a 'KHARTOUM' cancel dated '20 SEP 40' and endorsed with a 'PASSED BY CENSOR / HQ S.D.F.' cachet. The sender's name, Major FPL Gray, probably a member of the Sudan Defence Force, is written on the back flap

The Italians also drove a platoon of No 3 Company, Eastern Arab Corps of the SDF, from the small fort at Gallabat, just over the border from Metemma, about 200 miles south of Kassala. From there the Italians ventured no further into Sudan owing to a lack of fuel. They fortified Kassala and proceeded to establish a brigade-strong garrison.



Further south, Italian forces advancing from Ethiopia into Kenya attacked and occupied the border town of Moyale, and eventually advanced to water holes at Dabel and Buna,



nearly 100km inside Kenya. However, experiencing the same difficulties with fuel supplies as encountered in their incursion into Sudan, the Italian forces did not proceed further. The following month saw the successful Italian invasion of British Somaliland. On 3 August the Duke of Aosta launched an army of 25,000 men with air support against the British colony, including tanks, armoured cars and howitzer batteries (**left**).

Italian *Cartolina postale per le Forze Armate* (Postcard for the Armed Forces) depicting the Duke of Aosta and advancing Italian troops. Published in late 1941 by S A Grafitalia già Pizza & Pizio, Milano, the card bears the title 'The Duke of Aosta and the heroic defence of the Alagi Leg' on the reverse. The Italian defeat at the Battle of Alagi Leg in May 1941 effectively marked the end of any significant Italian control in East Africa

Despite RAF squadrons based in Aden flying sorties against the advancing Italian forces, British and allied troops were forced to retreat toward the port of Berbera, from where they were evacuated by Royal Navy destroyers from 17-19 August. Encouraged by these successes in East Africa the Italians now turned their attention to the invasion of Egypt. While border skirmishing had continued throughout the first three months of the conflict, the Italian 10th Army had been preparing for the invasion of Egypt, its initial objective being to advance from Libya along the Egyptian coast to seize the Suez Canal.

On 13 September the 10th Army crossed the border and advanced 105km into Egypt against British screening forces of the 7th Armoured Division, the main British force remaining in the vicinity of Mersa Matruh, the principal British base in the Western Desert. By this time the Italian objectives had been revised to an advance as only far as Sidi Barrani and the engagement of any British forces in the area (**right**).

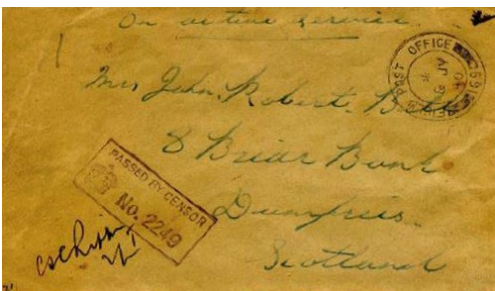
Cover franked with 'POSTA MILITARE NRO 304' cancels dated '3.12.40'. The sender's details, '270th Legione CC. NN., 147th Btg. 1st Compagna' appear on the back flap. The 'POSTA MILITARE NRO 304' was allotted to the 4th (3 gennaio) CC.NN. Division. At the date of posting the division was dispersed around Sidi Barrani, 'POSTA MILITARE NRO 304' being used at Bugbug, 88 miles west of Sidi Barrani



Once dug into fortified positions east of Sidi Barrani, the Italian forces made no further advances into Egypt. Instead, they concentrated on repairing roads demolished by the British, cleaning wells, beginning work on a water pipeline from the border and accumulating supplies for the resumption of the advance in mid-December.

Build-up of reinforcements

Back in Britain, the government was well aware of the need to send reinforcement to Egypt and East Africa if they were to be successfully defended and to be bases for future action against the Italians. With the Mediterranean Sea now closed to merchant shipping, all troop reinforcements had to travel by sea via South Africa, a 14,000-mile trip that required three months to complete. From late June, until the end of 1940, no less than ten escorted convoys consisting of requisitioned ocean liners, variously designated WS



(Winston Specials), RS or AP convoys, sailed from Britain to Egypt via South Africa, transporting over 88,000 troops together with their equipment and supplies to Suez, Port Said and Alexandria (**left**).

At the date of posting, FPO 169 was being used on board the *Queen Mary* sailing in convoy WS 1. This cover was put ashore at Freetown, Sierra Leone when the ship docked for supplies on 8 July

Due to their size, and the risk of them being exposed to Italian attack in the Red Sea, some of the larger liners, including the **Queen Mary**, sailed to Ceylon where their troops were transhipped onto smaller liners for the onward voyage to Suez. The RAF was also reinforced in Egypt with much-needed new aircraft, including Hurricane fighters and Wellington bombers. To reduce the delivery time the West African Reinforcement Route was established. Crated aircraft from Britain were unloaded at Takoradi in the Gold Coast, assembled, test flown and then ferried on a six-day journey across Africa, undertaken in stages with several rest and refuelling stops, to Egypt.

By the end of November two Hurricane and two Wellington squadrons had been successfully delivered using this route. This build-up of British forces was boosted by additional New Zealand and Australian troops already in the Middle East. The original plan was for these troops to undergo additional training in Egypt and Palestine before moving to France, but the fall of France resulted in them remaining in the Middle East. The first of many convoys from these antipodean Dominions bringing troops to give their support to the 'Mother Country' was Convoy US.1, which sailed from Wellington, New Zealand, on 6 January before being joined by five additional troopships at Melbourne and Sydney. The enlarged convoy left Australia on 20 January 1940, arriving in Suez on 10 February. From here the New Zealand troops moved to Maadi Camp, 12km south of Cairo, while the Australians were entrained to bases in Palestine. In early September 1940, the Australian 6th Division moved from Palestine into Egypt in readiness to support British operations against the Italians in Libya (**left**).



Cover to Australia with Australian Army '1st. BGE. H.Q. P.O. M.I.' cancels dated '18 SE 40' and endorsed with a British Army censor. This datestamp had previously been used by the 6th Division at Qastina, Palestine. It was subsequently used by the Division at El Amirya during October and November and then in Libya in December following the division's advance as part of Operation Compass

Dominion and Empire troops were similarly being deployed in Sudan and Kenya in preparations for counter-offensives against the Italians. The Indian 5th Infantry Division started to arrive in Sudan in early September 1940 and absorbed Platt's three British infantry battalions to form a third infantry brigade within the division. The Sudan garrison was further strengthened in December by the arrival of the 4th Indian Infantry Division from Egypt to prevent the numerically vastly superior Italian forces from threatening Red Sea supply routes to Egypt as well as Egypt itself and the Suez Canal from the south.

By the end of July additional East African Brigades, and brigades from Nigeria and Gold Coast, had arrived in Kenya to be formed into two divisions, the 11th and 12th African Divisions. On 1 June the 1st South African Anti-Aircraft Brigade arrived in Kenya to protect Mombasa harbour from feared Italian air attacks, to be followed during the following months by the 1st South African Infantry Division (**right**).

Cover with a South African military datestamp and bilingual censor mark dated '16 IX C40'. The address of the sender, 'Sgt J May, 5th Reserve M.T. Coy' (Motor Transport Company) is written on the back flap

By December 1940 there were 77,000 troops in Kenya of which 27,000 were South African.



Operation 'Compass'

The reinforcements in both North and East Africa, despite remaining numerically inferior to the Italian forces in both regions, enabled the planning of offensive actions. Following the Italian incursions into Egypt during September, General Sir Archibald Wavell, Commander-in-Chief Middle East, ordered the commander of British Troops Egypt, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, to plan a limited operation to push the Italians back into Libya. Designated **Operation 'Compass'**, the plan was to mount a five-day raid with consideration given to exploit the situation if the Allied advance met with success. Planning for the invasion of the Italian East African colonies by Allied Forces in Sudan and Kenya and the recapture of British Somaliland were being scheduled for the opening months of 1941. In Egypt, the offensive opened on 9 December when the Western Desert Force, numbering about 36,000 men consisting of the 7th Armoured Division and the 4th Indian Infantry Division under the command of Lieutenant-General Richard O'Connor, advanced from Mersa Matruh towards the Libyan border. From 14 December troops of The 6th Australian Infantry Division joined the attack. Confronting them were 150,000 men of the Italian 10th Army entrenched in fortified posts around Sidi Barrani. Within two days the fortified camps had been overrun and Sidi Barrani was captured. So rapid was the

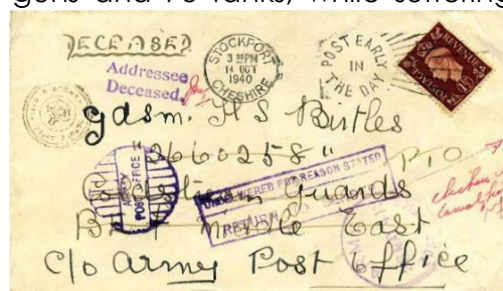


advance that supporting RAF squadrons strove hard to keep pace, often landing after a combat sortie at more advanced airstrips than from which they had set out (left).

Cover bearing an FPO 246 cancel dated '13 DE / 40' endorsed with a Type R2 'PASSED BY / R.A.F. / CENSOR No 114' cachet. There are several records of FPOs 242 to 246, allocated to the 7th Armoured Division, being used on the same covers with Type R2 RAF censor marks with numbers including 123. The use of these FPOs, in conjunction with these RAF censors, coincides with General O'Connor's advance into Libya, suggesting these censors probably belonged to units of the RAF giving tactical support to General O'Connor's troops

Within days the Allied force had crossed into Libya and was in hot pursuit of the retreating Italians. By the end of December, the Western Desert Force had taken 38,300 prisoners and captured 237 guns and 73 tanks, while suffering casualties of 133 killed 387 wounded and eight missing (right).

Cover to 'Gdsm F S Birtles, "2660258", BEF Middle East' dated 14 October 1940. The cover bears a red manuscript instruction 'check casualty list', and an 'Addressee Deceased' cachet. The reverse bears a 'CAPTAIN & ADJUTANT / 3rd. BN. COLDSTREAM GUARDS' cachet with signature and manuscript 'Deceased' and 'Return to Sender'. Guardsman Frederick Stanley Birtles of the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards was killed on 11 December 1940, aged 24. He is buried in Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery. The rout of the Italian forces continued and by 5 February 1941 the British had advanced to Beda Fromm but were unable to continue beyond El Agheila, due to broken down and worn out vehicles and the diversion, beginning in March 1941, of the best-equipped units to the Greek Campaign in **Operation 'Lustre'**.



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An article by Jim Etherington in Gibbons Stamp Monthly of February 2024

CAPTAIN COOK AND THE PACIFIC

The Pacific Ocean is the largest body of water in the world. The total area of the Pacific Ocean is estimated at 163,000,000 km² or nearly 40 per cent of the whole water extent of the world. It extends from the Southern Ocean (latitude 40° S) to the Bering Strait ie. practically to the Arctic Ocean. It divides the Old and New Worlds and is roughly bisected by the 170° W longitude meridian; the greatest breadth is 16,000 km; the length is 11,000 km. This ocean is usually divided into two sections, the North Pacific which extends south to the equator and the South Pacific which extends from the equator southward. The South Pacific is illustrated on a stamp from the Cook Islands issued for the South Pacific Conference in 1969 (*right*).



The history of discovery and navigation of the Pacific probably dates back to the days of written history. However, Balboa is recorded as the first European to see the Pacific, viewing it in 1513 from a mountain in Darien, Panama. Magellan sailed through the strait bearing his name in 1520 and gave the name to the ocean. History also recalls such names as Tasman, Drake, Bering and Vancouver. However it was Captain James Cook (1728-1778) who brought the scientific method into discovery; his lunar observations, plus the first use of the chronometer made longitude-finding accurate; his careful preparations and his zeal for cleanliness made long voyages possible.

James Cook was born on 27 October 1728 in Yorkshire, the son of a farm labourer. Apprenticed to a ship owner in Whitby, he studied mathematics and navigation and enlisted as an able seaman in the British Navy at age 28 becoming a ship's master in 4 years. Cook soon earned a master warrant; from 1759-67 he charted parts of the St. Lawrence River, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Captain Cook's signature was featured on a British stamp issued in 1968 (*left*). Because of the accuracy of his charts and observations Cook was chosen in



1769 to master the **H.M.S. Endeavour** and travel with an astronomer of the Royal Society, to Tahiti to observe the transit of the planet Venus across the Sun, and then to search for the supposed "Terra Australis" (the unknown Southern Land). A botanical party led by Joseph Banks went along as passengers. The "Transit of Venus" was depicted on a Norfolk Island stamp issued in 1969 (*right*).

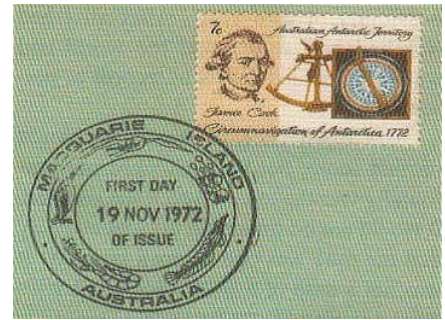


Having made the observations and explored the neighbouring Society Islands, Cook headed south till he sighted New Zealand. He made an accurate first survey of its 2,400 miles of coast, proving that it was not part of a Southern continent. Cook's actual chart of New Zealand was depicted on a stamp from a set of four issued by New Zealand in 1969 (*left*). Cook then travelled to the east coast of Australia, but just missed Bass Strait. He mapped the east coast of Australia, which he annexed under the name of New South Wales. Cook successfully navigated through the Great Barrier Reef although the ship struck a reef and had to be beached and repaired. He then sailed through Torres Strait and the Coral Sea to visit Batavia for repairs and supplies before returning home.



In July 1772 Cook went on another search for the Southern Continent in command of the converted collier **H.M.S. Resolution**, accompanied by Captain Tobias Furneaux in the

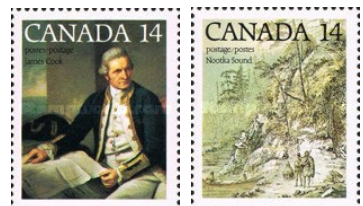
H.M.S. Adventure. He sailed Southeast from the Cape at the end of November. In three Antarctic cruises (Atlantic Indian Ocean sector December 1772 to March 1773; Pacific sector November 1773 to December 1774 and Atlantic sector January to February 1775). He completely dissipated the old continental theory. The Australian Antarctic Territory issued a stamp in 1972 featuring Cook and commemorating the circumnavigation of Antarctica (**right**). The stamp shows two important instruments carried by Cook on the voyage, the Ransden sextant and the Knight azimuth compass. In between these cruises, he made further visits to New Zealand (of which the ships parted on 30 October 1773) and made an astonishing series of discoveries and rediscovers mainly on a great tropical sweep, February to October 1774, that took in Easter Island, the Marquesas, the Society islands, Niue, Tonga, the New Hebrides, Norfolk Island and some smaller islands.



On the last part of the second voyage, he discovered and charted the icy Sandwich Islands and the South Georgia Group, before returning to England in 1775. This voyage was notable, not merely for his masterly technique in Antarctic navigation and in preserving the health of his seamen, but, also for its proof of the value of the chronometer as an aid to finding longitude. Cook's chronometer is depicted on Pitcairn Islands 1969 (**left**). In later years this instrument was installed in the **H.M.S. Bounty** at Captain Bligh's request. After changing hands many times, the chronometer was presented to the United Service Museum, Scotland Yard, where it now rests. This second voyage was possibly the greatest voyage ever made.



In 1776, in command of the **Resolution** and **Discovery** Cook, again using the chronometer, was sent to search for the supposed North West Passage from the Pacific to Europe. He visited the mid-Pacific discovering the Cook Islands and the Hawaiian Group, before reaching the American coast at about Oregon. Cook then made the American coast work up it, and around the Aleutian Islands, through the Bering Strait until pack ice turned him back. Canada issued two stamps in 1978, that commemorated Cook's visit to Nootka Sound on the Canadian Coast. Sailing back to the Hawaiian Islands, Cook was at first welcomed, but, later he went ashore because of trouble about a missing ship's cutter. There at Kealahou Bay, he was killed by the Hawaiian islanders and his body burnt on the 14th of February 1779.



Cook's death bi-centenary was depicted on stamps issued in 1979 by Cook Islands; Maldives; Niue; and Norfolk Island; featured is the pair issued by Norfolk Island, which traces this third journey of Captain Cook (**left**). The pair of stamps gives some idea of the magnitude of the Pacific Ocean and the scope of Cook's third voyage. Captain James Cook had found the map of the Pacific half-fantasy, and left it, though incomplete, basically correct.



Reference work for this article was both *Colliers* and the *New Age Encyclopaedia*. The author used the American Topical Association Captain Cook checklist, 1990 courtesy of Messrs B. Sandford and M. Glicksman.

SWANS ON STAMPS

Over the years many stamps have been issued that feature swans — some more 'ugly ducking' than graceful Cygnus. The author picks out some of his favourite stamp issues that do justice to this most elegant of birds.

Swans are the largest and best-known of the waterfowl group. All species are represented on stamps, some very well, for instance, the Mute Swan has made over one hundred appearances. Clumsy on land, they are very graceful on water or in the air. Many of the stamps show them swimming or flying, and amongst them are some of the most beautiful bird stamps of all.

Mute Swan

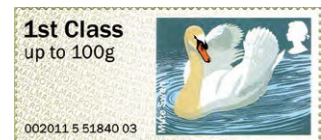
This is the only resident swan in Britain and can be seen wherever there are lakes or rivers.



Despite their name, they have an extensive repertoire of noises including grunts, hisses and yaps. In 1942 a 20k. value from Sweden featured two Mute Swans in flight (**left**). Recess printed in monochrome, this is a beautiful example of its kind with little loss by the lack of colour as Mute Swans are practically all white. Stamps from Sharjah 1973 (1r.) and the Isle of Man 1991 (17p)(**right**) both depict a Mute Swan



swimming with a young bird taking a ride on its back. Mute Swans are one of the few species of waterfowl that carry their young in this way. In 1993 Great Britain issued a set of five stamps to mark the 600th anniversary of the Abbotsbury Swannery (**left**). All featured the Mute Swan and two values, 18p and 28p, are close-ups of the head, showing the prominent black knob at the base of the orange bill. In 1998 Somalia brought out a set of water birds featuring, on a 1000s. miniature sheet, a splendid portrait of a Mute Swan with wings upraised in a threatening posture. Mute Swans are aggressive, particularly in the breeding season, and another example of such behaviour can be seen in one of a set of first-class values issued by Great Britain in 2011 (**right**). There were portraits by Robert Gillmor, the prominent British bird artist.



Black Swan



A native of Australia, this swan is a very early entrant to the stamp scene. It is the state bird of West Australia which, before becoming part of the Federation of Australia, issued its own postage stamps. The first issue, featuring the Black Swan, was made in 1854 and there were several more until 1911 (**left**), when the State joined the Federation. All the West

Australia issues were originally thought to show the Black Swan, but subsequent research has suggested that some of them, such as an early issue produced by Perkin Bacon, portrayed the Mute Swan. However, no doubt, the intention was to show the Black Swan in all cases. A good example of the whole series is the 2½d. value of 1901. The Black Swan is familiar as a handsome member of waterfowl collections all over the world. Examples of Black Swans in wildlife parks can be seen on the Isle of Man 1991 (17p) and on a Singapore 2009 (\$1.10) miniature sheet. Australia 1991 (43c.)(**right**) shows a pair of Black Swans on their nest with three young. The nest is typical of all swans' nests which are

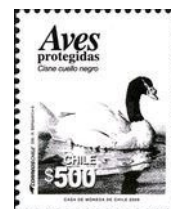


usually situated in shallow water or on land close to the water's edge. Small islets are favourite spots.

Black-necked Swan



Found in the southern regions of South America, Black-necked Swans are the largest freshwater birds in the Falkland Islands. They appear on two issues from there—the 2d. value from 1938 (**left**) and the £1 from 1960. Inland ponds are their favourite haunts, but the bird in the 1938 value is swimming on a wide expanse of sea and the 1960 portrait shows a standing bird with no background. A more realistic portrait can be seen in Brazil 1993 (84c.) with three birds swimming on a pond and another good portrait appears in Chile 2009 (500p) (**right**), one of a set entitled, 'Protected Birds of Chile'.



Whooper Swan



On 30 October 1956, Northern Countries Day was marked by separate issues of stamps from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, all with an identical design of five Whooper Swans in flight. These rival the designs of the 1942 Sweden issue of two Mute Swans in flight as fine examples of bird stamp design.

The Whooper Swan, so called because of its bugle-like call, breeds in the far northern regions of Europe and Asia, and is a winter visitor to Britain. To mark the 50th anniversary of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in 1996, Great Britain brought out a set of five values including a 41p illustrating the heads of Whoopers with close-ups of the bills. Japan has issued two values featuring the Whooper—the 62y. from 1992, which shows up well with the yellow and black bill, and the 80y. from 2007 (**right**), showing birds flying over Chogoku National Park.



Trumpeter Swan



The largest member of the swan family, the Trumpeter, is named after its call, which is resonant and trumpet-like. They are restricted to the North American continent with the main breeding area located in Alaska. In 1985 Bhutan (**left**) brought out a set marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of J Audubon, the famous American bird artist, which included, a 15n. value, his portrait of a Trumpeter Swan. The Isle of Man 1991 (17p) shows a Trumpeter with wings outstretched, which gives a good indication of the eight-foot wingspan. The bill of Trumpeters is entirely black as can be seen in both portraits.

Bewick's Swan

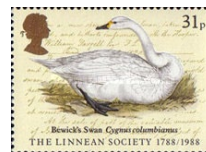
Winter visitors to Britain, these swans breed in the far north, from the Pacific coast of North America right across northern Eurasia. They can be seen every year at the Wildfowl Trust site on the Severn estuary where they are attracted by food specially put out for them.



Hundreds of birds congregate on a small pond. On Bewick's Swans, the yellow and black bill markings are extremely variable and individual birds are recognised over many years by their patterns. Bewick's (and Whooper) Swans can be distinguished from Mutes by their straighter necks and this difference can be seen in Mongolia

1987 (60m.) (**above left**), which features the three species. They are named after Thomas

Bewick, the renowned woodcut artist, who is credited with producing the first portrait of the swan. Stamp appearances include Great Britain 1988 (31p)(**below right**) and Isle of Man 1991 (26p). The Great Britain portrait is by Edward Lear, who, although better known as a writer of nonsense verse, was also a fine bird artist.



Coscoroba Swan



A native of South America, this is the smallest of the swan family. Their preferred habitat is ponds and lagoons in open country. They can be seen in wildfowl collections all over Europe. The unusual name is derived from their loud, four-syllable call. They are more goose-like than other members of the swan family as can be seen from the stamp portraits on Jersey 1984 (28p)(**left**), Isle of Man 1991 (31p) and Angola 2000 (300,000k.). The Jersey issue marks the 21st anniversary of the Jersey Wildfowl Trust.

Christmas Swans

The number of swan stamps is increased by issues illustrating the Christmas carol, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, with its reference to 'Seven Swans a Swimming'. In some cases, the swans are stylised as in Great Britain in 1977 and Guernsey in 1984. Mute Swans were shown in the Gambia in 1987 and the Cook Islands in 2011. For Christmas Island 1977(**right**), Black Swans were chosen.



An article by P.J. Lanspeary in Gibbons Stamp Monthly of August 2015

Compiled by Robert Harm 28 February 2024

PHILATELIC TERMS: P-12

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Paper, Goldbeater's Skin

The name **Goldbeater's Skin** refers to a strong paper made translucent by resin. The paper is used by printing the design in reverse on the back before gumming so that it is viewed through the paper. The paper has rarely been used for stamp production. Examples are two stamps issued by Prussia in 1866. The idea was to make it difficult for the stamps to be removed from the paper and reused.



Paper, Grain of

During the process of paper making, the fibres tend to align themselves in the direction of the flow of material that will become the paper. This imparts the grain to paper and explains why many stamps bear compound perforations. Paper usually tends to tear more easily with the grain than across it. Hence to avoid premature separation of stamp sheets, it is not unusual for stamp producers to use a gauge of perforation in the direction of the grain that is less fine than that used across the grain.

Paper, Grand Consommation

There were many shortages in France during World War I, and the peacetime industry was greatly disrupted. None was more hit than the paper-making industry. So it happened that paper of a quality required for stamp production ran out. There were, however, adequate stocks of newsprint, and it was decided to use it for stamps, beginning in 1917 and lasting until 1920. French postal authorities called the emergency paper *papier de Grand Consommation*, literally meaning *paper of great consumption*, but actually meaning *paper of extraordinary emergency*. Printing plates used to print stamps were marked GC in the margin to identify them. The paper was of low quality and contained undissolved fibres and small bits of foreign matter. It was largely composed of wood pulp and straw and had a greyish colour. Also referred to from time to time by its French name **Papier de Grande Consommation**.

Paper, Granite



Granite paper contains short coloured fibres introduced into the paper at the pulp stage of manufacture. It was used for older stamps of Austria and Switzerland and is also used for many modern Swiss issues and stamps of other



countries (such as the United States) produced by Courvoisier SA of Switzerland.

Paper, India

India paper is a thin, tough paper, tending toward off-white or cream in colour. It was developed in China in the 18th century and has been based on bleached hemp and rag fibres. Hence, the name is a bit confusing, even more so when the paper is referred to from time to time as China paper. It is thought to have originated from the fact that it was used to print bibles sent to India. It is frequently found used for proofing purposes.

Paper, Jones

Jones paper is a chalk-surfaced paper used for the New Zealand stamps of New Zealand.



Paper, Makeshift

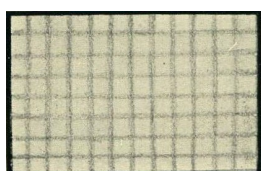


The term *makeshift* describes the paper used in Europe for stamp production after World War I when stamps were printed on the backs of German military maps, unfinished banknotes, cigarette paper, writing paper, and others. An example is the first stamps of Latvia, which were printed on the backs of military maps.

Paper, Pelure

Pelure paper is almost as thin as tissue paper but is harder and much tougher.

Paper, Quadrille



The term *quadrille* means squares and is used to refer to a type of paper into which is incorporated a pseudo-watermark in the form of a grid of squares. These squares are usually visible without holding the paper to



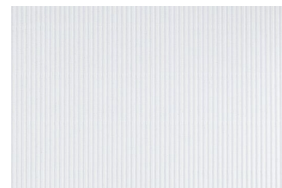
a light source, much as baton paper shows the lines. In fact, **quadrille paper** is really baton paper with the lines at right angles and about 3 mm apart. An example of quadrille paper can be seen in a French stamp of 1892, the 15c blue in the Peace and Commerce key type.

Paper, Rag Content

High-quality paper is usually made with a rag content ranging up to 75%. This type of paper is preferred for philatelic use such as envelopes for first-day covers, for which a long life is essential. Using cheaper-grade paper for envelopes and other items is to invite yellowing and other forms of deterioration.

Paper, Ribbed

Ribbed paper has a surface of ribs created when the paper is passed between rollers during its manufacture. It is similar to laid paper except that the lines are on the surface in the form of ribs, instead of being formed as a watermark. It is sometimes referred to as Repp Paper.



Paper, Silk thread

Silk thread paper is made with continuous silk threads embedded in it. It should not be confused with granite paper, which has many short lengths of thread.

Paper, Silurian

Silurian paper is a form of granite paper that is blue-grey with blue fibres.

Paper, Surface coloured

Paper coloured on one side after the manufacturing process is known as surface-coloured paper, to distinguish it from paper from paper into which colouring matter is introduced during the process of manufacture. The so-called *White Backs* issued during World War I for some British colonial areas were produced on surface-coloured paper as a wartime economic measure.

Paper, Toned

Toned paper is any paper that, while not white, is not any specific colour. It may be off-white or have a buff or brownish cast.

Paper, Waterlow

The term **Waterlow paper** describes a thick, soft paper used for the 1900 issue of New Zealand.



Paper, Winchester



This is a brand of security paper that has imprinted upon it a series of grey-blue semi-circles. The name *Winchester Security Paper* appears in an ornate-shaped area at intervals. The purpose of this paper is to prevent the removal of cancellations and reuse of the stamps since any attempt to tamper with the stamp would disturb the security pattern. However, it also effectively blanked out many stamp designs imprinted on it. This type of paper was used for the Venezuelan issue of 1932 for regular and airmail stamps.

