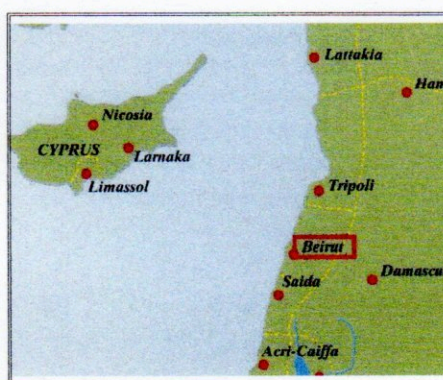
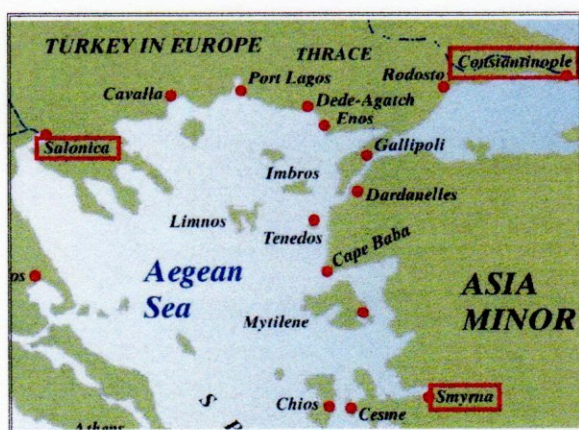


# The British Postal Service in the Levant, 1857-1923

**Purpose of Exhibit:** To illustrate the establishment and development of the civilian British Postal Service in the Ottoman Empire from 1857 (when the first British PO was opened in Constantinople after the end of the Crimean War) until 1923 (when all foreign post offices were abolished in the new Republic of Turkey).

**Historical Background:** Great Britain was among the Powers that operated their own Post Offices on sovereign Turkish territory in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This anomaly of national post offices operating in the Ottoman Empire was due to the so-called *Capitulations*. The term "Levant" is used to describe the Ottoman Ports.

**Postal Background:** A civilian British Post Office was first established in Constantinople in 1857, a year after the closure of the Army Post Office which was set up during the Crimean War. In the following years, four more offices were opened in the Levant: Smyrna in 1872 (now Izmir in Turkey), Beyrout in 1873, Stamboul in 1885 - a Constantinople sub-office and Salonica in 1900 (now Thessaloniki in Greece).



Maps showing the four cities (in red rectangle) where British Post Offices were established.

The Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and especially the outbreak of WW1 severely affected the Levant postal network, causing the indefinite closure of the Offices by the Sublime Porte in September 1914. It was only in 1919 that the British re-established civilian POs in Smyrna and Constantinople. The former was burned down during the destruction of Smyrna in September 1922, while the latter closed permanently in September 1923.

The exhibit is organized by Post Office and divided in two periods:

- Part I: 1857 - 1914 (The pre-war post offices, the effect of War on British Levant mail),
- Part II: 1919-1923 (The post-war post offices).

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**Original research:** The exhibit reflects considerable original research in the PO Archives in Mount Pleasant, London and new discoveries are regularly reported in "The Overprinter" Journal of the Great Britain Overprints Society of which the exhibitor is the Levant Research Coordinator. A brief synopsis on British Levant postal history was also published in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* (June 2010, pp 55-58).

The most important items are shown in red frames. Highlights include:

- The earliest recorded letter from Turkey bearing a postage stamp (Smyrna, 1843)
- The only recorded cover showing the 6d Reg'n Fee per item (Constantinople, 1864)
- The earliest recorded letter from Smyrna (March 1873)
- Mixed franking entire letter (GB + FR) via the French Post in Alexandria (Beyrout, 1875)
- The unique Transatlantic Triple Rate PSRE to Canada (Smyrna, 1883)
- The unique "Post Office Smyrna" window notice (Smyrna, 1905)
- The only recorded Insured cover from British Levant (Constantinople, 1911)
- The only recorded Express cover from British Levant (Salonica, 1914)
- A unique pair of covers franked with the rarest shades of KGV 2½ d "Indigo Blue on Toned Paper" (Smyrna, 1920) and "Dull Prussian Blue" (Smyrna, 1922)

**Early Mail:** Before the establishment of the British Post Office in Constantinople, mail to Great Britain was regularly sent by French steamers via Marseilles or British packets via Malta, or using the Austrian postal land service via Semlin and Vienna. Mail of importance was carried in the diplomatic bag of the Constantinople Embassy and carried outside the mainstream mails, only to be opened on arrival in London.



*Smyrna 9<sup>th</sup> July 1843*

British Consulate Smyrna 9/2/1843 to London via the British Embassy in Constantinople (disinfection slits), franked 1d imperforate plate 30. Carried in the diplomatic bag, opened in London where it entered the mail system at the Great Russell St. Bloomsbury Receiving House.

It was then sent the Twopenny Post Office (Chief Office) within St Martins le Grand where a Twopenny Post Maltese Cross was applied.

**This is the earliest recorded letter from Turkey bearing a postage stamp (ex Lady Mairi Bury).**

**Crimean War:** A British Army Post Office was established in Constantinople (with branches in Varna and later in Scutari) in June 1854 to cater for the needs of the British men serving in the Crimean War. Edward Smith, of the Post Office Inland Letter Section, was appointed as the Army Postmaster.

29/7/1854 from Captain Frere serving on HMS Bellerophon, Black Sea Fleet to his wife in London at the 3d concession rate, via the British Army Post Office and French Packet via Marseilles. Message reads:

"Yesterday I had note from a brother of my old shipmate Smith ... He has been sent out to Constantinople as postmaster and has come up here I fancy to see in what kind of order the post office here is in."



Edward Smith remained in Constantinople well after the closure of the Army Post Office in September 1856, and organised the civilian British Post Office in July 1857.

## Part One: 1857 - 1914

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<i>Constantinople</i>	<i>pp 3-36</i>	<i>Beyrout</i>	<i>pp 60-71</i>
<i>Stamboul</i>	<i>37-43</i>	<i>Salonica</i>	<i>72-88</i>
<i>Smyrna</i>	<i>44-59</i>	<i>Effect of the War</i>	<i>89-96</i>

### British Post Office in Constantinople

Opened on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1857, it was the first and the largest British PO in the Levant with a business volume that exceeded 50% of all other British Levant offices. It effectively replaced the Army PO which was closed in late-1856. Ordinary British stamps were used, cancelled with the C barred obliterator.



London, 16/7/57 to Constantinople (30/7), at 6d per 1/2 oz via French Packet to Marseilles.

**One of three letters recorded from the first month of operation of the office.**

**BPO Constantinople  
Mail to Great Britain**

**Pre-UPU Period: 1857-1875  
via French Packet to Marseilles**

**Route: via French Packet to Marseilles.** Normal route until 14/5/67.  
Became Secondary route on 15/5/67.

**Rates: 1/7/57 - 14/5/67 6d per 1/4 oz, 1/7/70 8d per 1/2 oz, 1/7/75 6d per 1/2 oz**  
1/7/57 - 10/61 Registration fee 6d per 1/4 oz



Constantinople 7/12/64 to London (15/12) triple rate registered letter via French Packet paying 2s (6d per 1/4 oz + 6d Reg'n fee). Elusive REGISTERED handstamp applied in Constantinople.

Only recorded example of the 6d per item Reg'n fee (Ex Cihangir, Metliss).



4/12/72 to London (14/12) via Marseilles at 8d per 1/2 oz.

Two letters incoming via Marseilles, each requiring action by the BPO Constantinople:



10/10/66 from Manchester at 6d per 1/4 oz. This is a 1/2 oz letter underpaid and marked INSUFFICIENTLY PREPAID additionally charged 1s (i.e. the additional 6d per 1/4 oz and two fines of 3d per 1/4 oz unprepaid). No markings of the Constantinople PO to denote collection of the additional charge.



7/7/69 from Lombard Street, London 3/4 oz letter at 1s 6d. Arrived on 16/7 and remained for a few months in the BPO Constantinople. NOT-CALLED-FOR applied before returned to London in January 1870.

Very few examples of this Instructional handstamp are known (Ex Robert Johnson).

**Route: Quick Route via Vienna and France.** Normal route from 15/5/67 (no mail from Constantinople recorded before this date). With the opening of the Varna - Rustchuk railway this superseded the route to Marseilles by French Packet.

As a result of the Franco-Prussian war this service was suspended and replaced by the Belgian route in July 1870.

**Rates:** 15/5/67 - 24/7/70 8d per 1/4 oz, 1s 2d per 1/2 oz, 1s 10d per 3/4 oz.



13/8/67 to Manchester (20/8) at 1s 2d per 1/2 oz via the Quick route.

**Only one other double rate via the Quick route is recorded.**

**Route: Via Belgium.** Normal route from 25/7/70 (no mail from Constantinople recorded before this date). During the summer, the usual route was by Austrian Packet to Varna, but in the winter months a less weather-dependent route was adopted and that was by Austrian Packet to Trieste.

**Rates:** 25/7/70 - 24/11/72 6d per 1/2 oz, 25/11/72 5d per 1/2 oz, 1/5/73 4d per 1/2 oz.



4/2/71 to London (13/2), 1/2 oz letter at 6d via Belgium, taking the winter route by Austrian Packet to Trieste.



15/8/73 to Liverpool (22/8), 1/2 oz letter at 4d via Belgium. This would normally take the summer route via Varna, instead it was sent via Trieste because in the summer of 1873 a cholera epidemic broke out in the Danube making it necessary for the mails to be diverted from the contaminated area. This practice started on 7/8 and lasted only for a couple of months.

**A new discovery, this is one of only two recorded covers from Constantinople using the Emergency route.**

**BPO Constantinople**  
**Mail to Malta**

**Pre-UPU Period: 1857-1875**

There existed important commercial ties between Constantinople and Malta, and as such a considerable volume of mail is recorded. There are no official documents detailing the routes and rates (except an incomplete 1865 Treasury Warrant), but study of the recorded letters suggests the following:

**Route:** By British, French, Egyptian or Italian Packet.

**Rates:** Unpaid: 6d per 1/4 oz    Prepaid: 4d per 1/4 oz, increased to 5d from 1866.



24/3/64 to Malta (2/4) at 1s 6d unpaid rate of 3/4 oz.



25/1/60 to Malta (14/2) at 4d per 1/4 oz prepaid rate (until 1865). The letter was **missent to England** and so was significantly delayed (for ten days).





(e)

27/3/67 to Malta (3/4), 1/4 oz letter paying 4d instead of the increased rate of 5d. Arched INSUFFICIENTLY PREPAID handstamp applied in Constantinople, 2d to be paid by the addressee (1d underpayment + 1d fine).

**Only five covers are known with this instructional handstamp (Ex Metlis).**

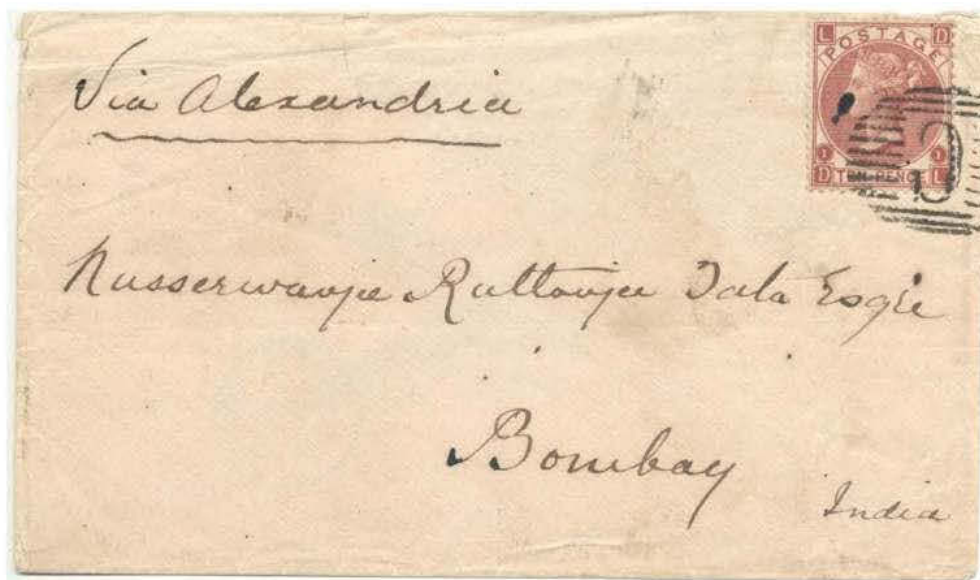


17/3/69 to Malta (23/3), 1/4 oz letter this time correctly franked at 5d.

Mail to other destinations is seldom seen. A small number of covers to US are recorded; all other destinations are rare. Except for the case of the US, there are no known published rates, making the rate and route identification a difficult task.



12/7/73 to Massachusetts, US via Belgium. The rate of the route via Belgium from Constantinople to Great Britain fell to 4d per 1/2 oz on 1/5/73. This cover, sent two months after the reduction of the rate, pays 4d to GB plus 2d transatlantic surcharge. The figure 2 (cents) in red pencil was the amount to be credited to the US Post Office.



7/7/73 to Bombay (14/2) via Alexandria. No known published rates, the three known examples are all franked at the 10d per 1/2 oz.

**From the three recorded examples to India, this is the earliest.**

Although there exists a number of covers in the pre-UPU period from Gibraltar to Constantinople, this is not true for the other way around.



9/6/75 to Gibraltar (29/6) via Malta (22/6), paying 5d per 1/4 oz for the part of the journey to Malta. Boxed TO PAY applied on arrival: 4d to be paid by the addressee for the Malta - Gibraltar trip.

**Previously unrecorded, no other example of mail from British Levant to Gibraltar is known in the pre-UPU period..**

**BPO Constantinople  
Postcard Rate**

**UPU Rates: Sterling Period 1875-1885**

As a result of the Congress in 1874 the General Postal Union approved certain international rates as from 1/7/75. The most important foreign rates are:

Printed Paper	1/2d
Postcards <i>reduced 1/4/1879</i>	1 1/4d <i>1d</i>
Letter 1/2 oz	2 1/2d
Registration fee <i>reduced 1/1/1878</i>	4d <i>2d</i>
Acknowledgment of Receipt fee	2 1/2d

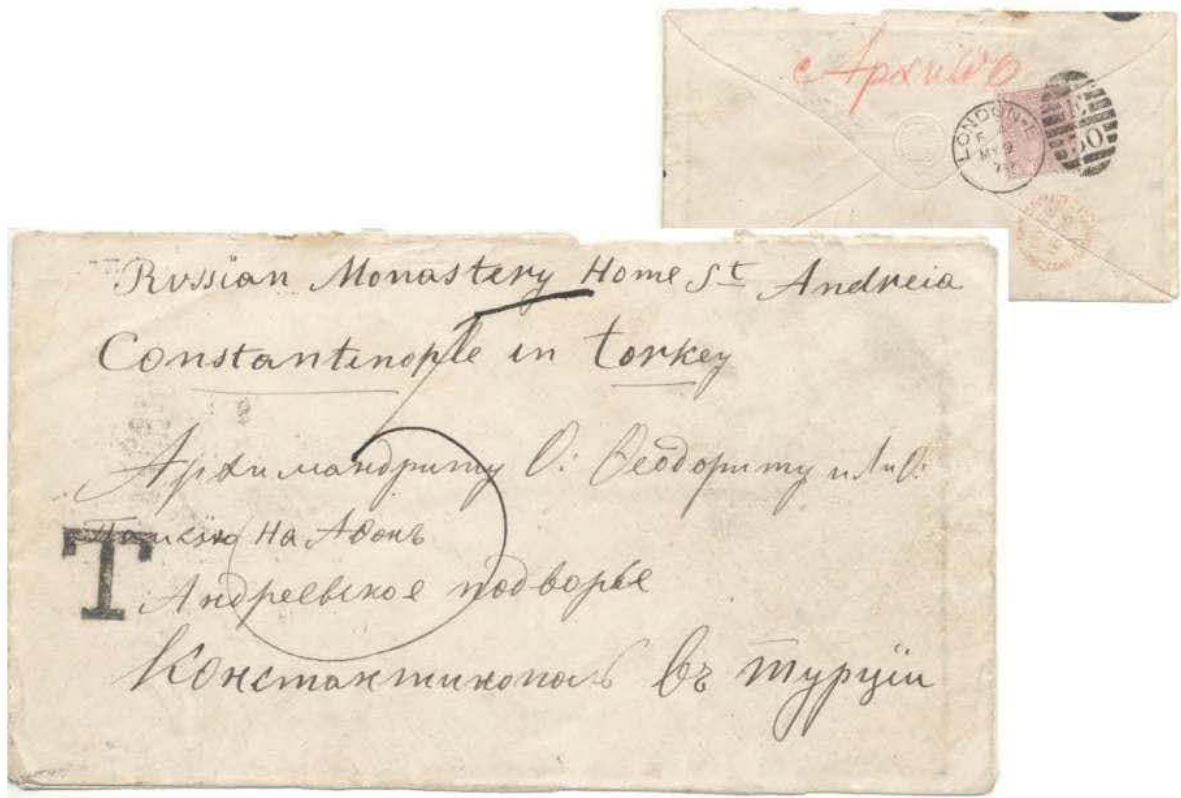
27/2/80 to Guildford.  
1879, 1d brown foreign card.  
(CP10 according to Huggins/Baker)

*Postal Stationery will be identified by the Huggins / Baker catalogue: Collect British Postal Stationery, 2007*



23/8/84 to Ipswich.  
Reply part of the 1883  
1d + 1d brown foreign  
reply card (CP18 R)  
which had arrived in  
Constantinople on  
21/8.

A genuine Relpy use of this card from British Levant and as such most elusive.



9/5/76 from London, addressed to a Russian monastery in Mount Athos, but wrongly sent to Constantinople. From there the cover was re-directed to the correct address, treated as unpaid and thus marked 5d (double the foreign letter rate of 2 1/2d) and impressed with the fresh T handstamp according to the new UPU regulations.

The earliest recorded strike of all British Levant T(axe) handstamps.



11/7/78 to London (17/7) single rate letter, unusually marked *via Odessa*. By 1877 the "Normal" Summer Route was by Packet to Brindisi.

Three examples are recorded of this seldom used route.



30/1/78 to Washington DC, US at 5d double rate.



4/12/83 British Embassy Constantinople to Marlborough House (8/12), 1 1/2 oz triple letter at 7 1/2d.

- The sender is Lord Dufferin, ambassador to the Ottoman Empire - later appointed as Viceroy of India.
- The addressee is HRH The Prince of Wales - later became King Edward VII.

Higher than double rates in this period are seldom seen.



14/11/77 to Manchester (22/11) double rate *via Brindisi* with the 4d Reg'n fee.

One of two recorded covers from British Levant with the GB 4d Sage-green (1877) and one of three recorded covers showing the elusive 4d Reg'n fee (ex Bollen, Metliss).



25/1/82 to Wolverhampton (1/2) double rate showing the **reduced 2d** Reg'n fee (paid by the stamp imprint on the back flap). 1878-79, 2d blue PSRE (Postal Stationery Registered Envelope) (RP6), size F.

Previously unrecorded used in British Levant, this is the only recorded example..

**Introduction of Stamps Surcharged in Turkish Currency**

On 1/8/85 the British Post Office surcharged stamps in Turkish currency (except for the low values of 1/2d and 1d). This in effect gave each stamp two face values: a 2 1/2d stamp surcharged 40 Paras would cost 40 Paras if paid for in Turkish currency and 2 1/2d if paid for in Sterling. At the same time the overprint made the postage stamp invalid in the home country and therefore ruled out currency fiddling. Much later, in August 1905 a set of British stamps was introduced without surcharge, but overprinted LEVANT. This issue was used on postcards, printed paper and parcels. As stamps of both British and Turkish currency were used and accepted at the British Post Offices in the Levant, this period is referred to by students as *Mixed Accounting Period*.

The basic (foreign) UPU rates thus became:

Printed Paper *	1/2 d
Samples *	1d up to 4 oz 1/2 d / esch extra 2 oz
Postcards*	1/2 d each extra 2 oz
Letter per 20g	1 Piastre **
Registration fee	1 Piastre
Acknowledgment of Receipt fee	1 Piastre

\* Printed Paper rate, Samples and Postcard rate still expressed in British currency.

\*\* 1 Piastre = 40 Paras



16/8/87 to London (20/8), paying 40 Paras foreign letter rate up to 20g plus 2d Registration fee (instead of the usual 40 Paras stamp).

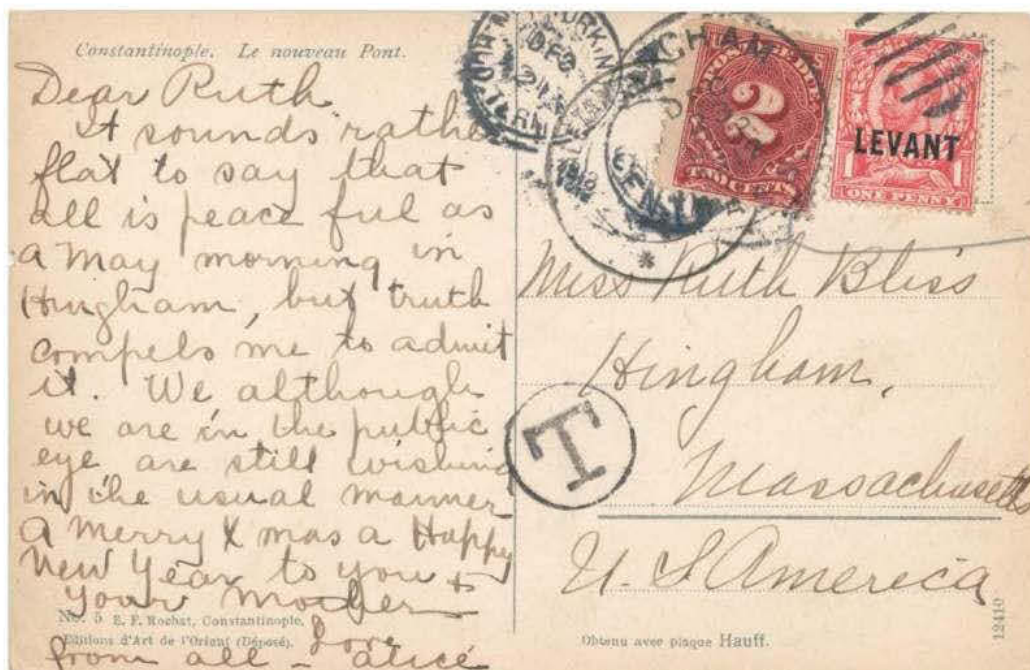
The only recorded use of the GB 2d lilac (1884) on cover from Constantinople and a truly representative *Mixed Accounting* example.





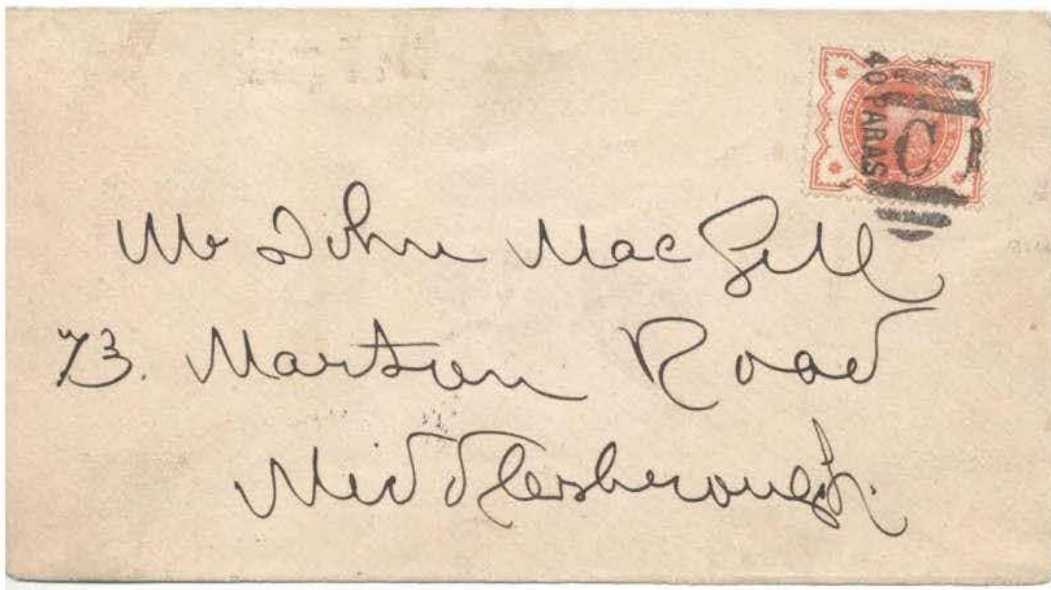


1/10/00 to Dardanelles (4/10), via the Galata Turkish PO. 1899, 1d carmine foreign card (CP35). Taxed by the Turkish officials as the Ottoman Post did not recognize prepayment in stamps of a foreign Nation for delivery within the Ottoman Empire.



Dec. 1912 Ppc of Constantinople franked 1d LEVANT posted on a ship of the Romanian "ALEXANDRIA - CONSTANTA" line. The British Levant stamp was not recognized as valid payment by the Romanians and a T in circle mark impressed indicating deficiency. A 2c surcharge (double the deficiency) was collected on arrival in Hingham Mass.

**A previously unrecorded use from British Levant of the Romanian Maritime Postal Service between Egypt and Romania.**

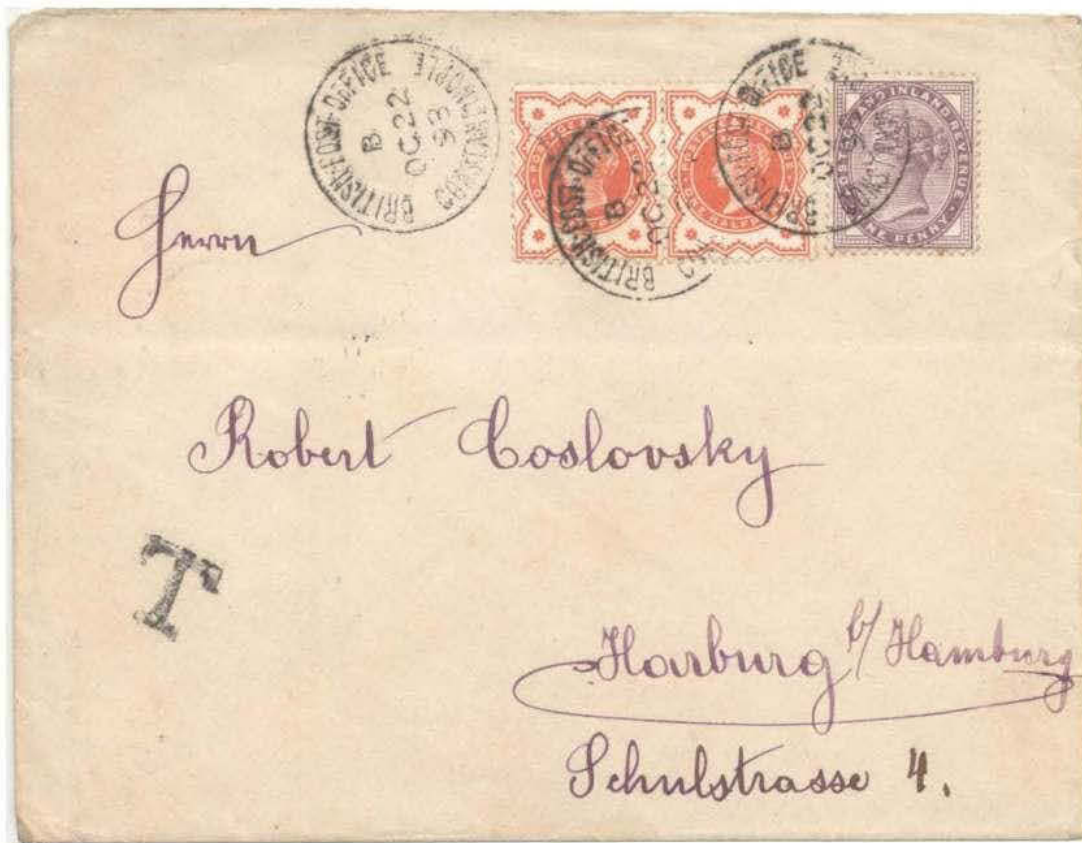


25/2/93 to Middlesborough (2/3), first day *MacGill* use of the 40 Paras / ½d "Constantinople provisional", paying the foreign single letter rate. These stamps were overprinted locally by handstamp after an initiative by Mr Cobb the Constantinople Postmaster, reportedly as the ordinary 40 Paras / 2 ½d stock was running low. Used from 25 February – 1 March 1893.



14/4/03 to London (18/4), single rate paying 40 paras basic foreign letter rate plus 40 paras Registration fee. The 80 Paras stamp is perfined BIO (Banque Imperiale Ottomane).

**Perfined British Levant stamps in the first period (up to 1914) are seldom seen and very few are recorded on cover.**



22/10/98 to Hamburg (25/10), taxed for the ½d deficiency. As stated earlier, it was possible to use stamps in Sterling (2 ½d) to pay for the 40 Paras foreign letter rate but seldom used as this was a more expensive option.



15/3/87 Boston Mass. to Constantinople (31/3) "open mail via London", single rate at 5c, but found in London to be a double rate, thus impressed with 5D handstamp and similarly in Paris with T and 25 (centimes) in circle. On arrival the postal clerk marked that the recipient "paid 2 1/2 piastres" postage due (double the deficiency of 2 1/2d).

The only recorded cover from British Levant showing collection of the postage due.



25/4/96 to Wittenberg  
(28/4), 2 ½ d grey-blue  
PSE (EP35) overprinted  
**40 PARAS** with  
additional stamps of  
120 Paras for a triple  
rate Registered letter.



17/8/04 to  
Zurich (20/8),  
paying a total of  
5 Piastres for a  
quadruple rate  
Registered  
cover.



13/2/97 to Dresden (16/2) paying a total of 15 Piastres for a 14<sup>th</sup> rate Registered letter, showing a commercial use on cover of the 12 Piastres / 2s 6d high value stamp.

Rate calculation:

1 Piastre Registration fee

14 Piastres (1 Piastre \* 14 weight steps)

A total of 15 Piastres for a Registered letter of up to 280g.

**Only three covers are recorded with this high value stamp (ex Cihangir).**

On 29 October 1907, rate reduced to 30 Paras for each additional 20 grams.



2/12/09 to Palermo via maritime "NATANTE NAPOLI-PALERMO", double rate letter paying 1 Piastre 30 Paras (1d=20 Paras), the correct rate after the October 1907 rate change.

The 1 Piastre 10 Paras / 3d stamp was part of the *double line* overprints set issued on 16 November 1909 which was shortly replaced on 24 January 1910 by the subsequent *fractional* issue (in this case the "1 Piastre 10 Paras" was changed to "1 1/4 Piastre").

**The only recorded cover with the 1 Piastre 10 Paras / 3d stamp showing a proper commercial use in the correct period of usage.**



31/1/12 to Honolulu (20/2) Hawaii, double rate Registered & AR cover with AR handstamp. The extra AR Fee of 1 Piastre was affixed to the accompanying special AR form.

Only three AR covers are recorded from Constantinople, this being the only double rate and to a most unusual destination.



The insurance of mail was first introduced in the British Levant Post Offices as late as 1908. The maximum amount of insured value was 400 pounds and the fees payable for insurance, including registration, were 2 piastres for the first 300 francs (12 pounds) of insured value and 1 piastre for each subsequent 300 francs (12 pounds) or fraction thereof.



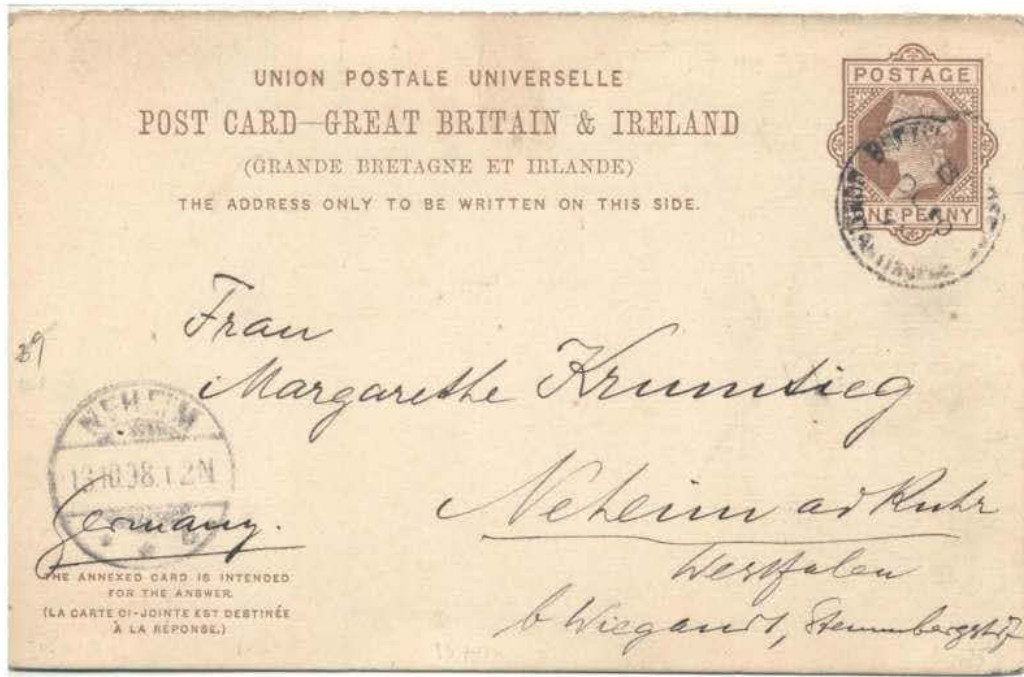
6/3/11 to Penarth (11/3) paying a total of 32 Piastres 30 Paras for a 23g Registered letter insured for 8750 Francs (350 Pounds), an amount close to the maximum allowed of 10,000 Francs. Rate calculation:

- Weight component: 1 Piastre (up to 20g) + 30 Paras (second weight step) = **1 Piastre 30 Paras**
- Insurance component: 8750 francs / 300 fr = 29.16 thus 30 insurance steps, 30 \* 1 Piastre = **30 Piastres**
- Registration **1 Piastre**

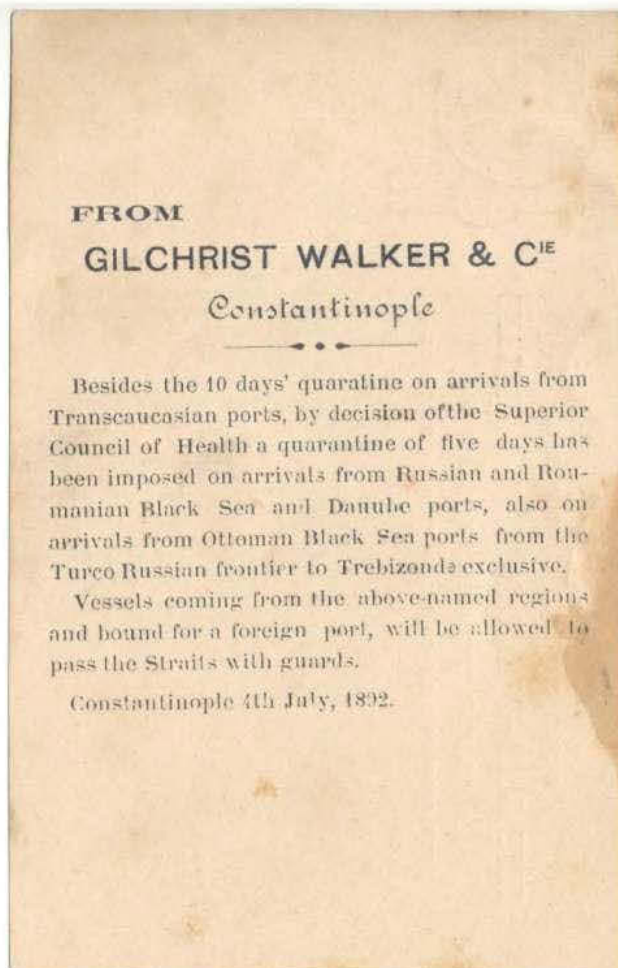
Total rate paid: **32 Piastres 30 paras**

**The highest recorded franking on non-philatelic cover from British Levant, the only known cover showing a commercial use of the 24 Piastres / 5s high value stamp, and the only recorded insured cover from any of the British Post Offices in the Levant (a cover front is also known).**

A selection of postal stationery and special forms is shown in this section including some elusive items.



10/10/98 to Neheim (13/10), Germany. 1883, 1d + 1d brown foreign reply card (CP18), with the Reply part unused.



4/7/92 to Liverpool. 1892, 1d red foreign card (CP27), privately printed at the back with message referring to quarantine measures.

In 1892, plague broke out in several areas in the Levant, and cholera spread from Persia into the general area.

Postcards overprinted LEVANT for use in the Ottoman Empire were first introduced in September 1905.



28/1/07 to Bludenz (1/2), Austria. 1902, 1d + 1d carmine foreign reply card (CP47), overprinted LEVANT with the Reply part unused.



13/5/11 to Gothenburg (20/5), Sweden. 1908-11, 1d pale-carmine postcard (CP56) overprinted LEVANT. This is the **provisional** overprint (smaller lettering) only used for a few months in 1911.

Less than ten examples known of this card.

**BPO Constantinople**  
Postcards

**Postal Stationery & Special Forms**  
Foreign postcards used in British Levant

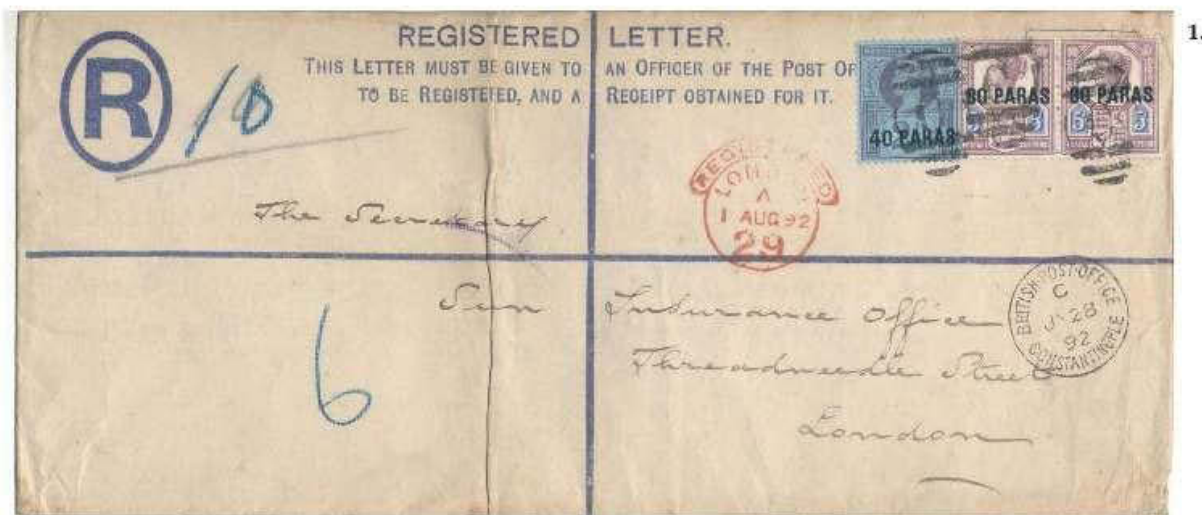
In a few cases foreign postcards were posted in the British PO and were not taxed by the British officials, probably because they would expect similar treatment to their own postcards. Two **genuine commercial** uses are shown here:



12/6/06 to Hamburg (15/6). 10c Belgian postcard.



1/5/07 to London (4/5). 20 Paras / 10 Heller Austrian Levant postcard.



1.



2.



3.

1. 28/7/92 to London (1/8), 5 Piastres quintuple rate plus 2d Reg'n fee.

1888, 2d blue PSRE (RP15), size HZ.

Rarely seen used in British Levant.

2. 28/5/06 to Beaune, France, single rate Registered Letter.

1893, 2d blue PSRE (RP20), size F.

3. 30/4/01 to London (4/5), a heavy (up to 320g) Registered Letter, paying a total of 17 Piastres (16 weight steps of 20g\* 1 Piastre plus 1 Piastre Reg'n fee).

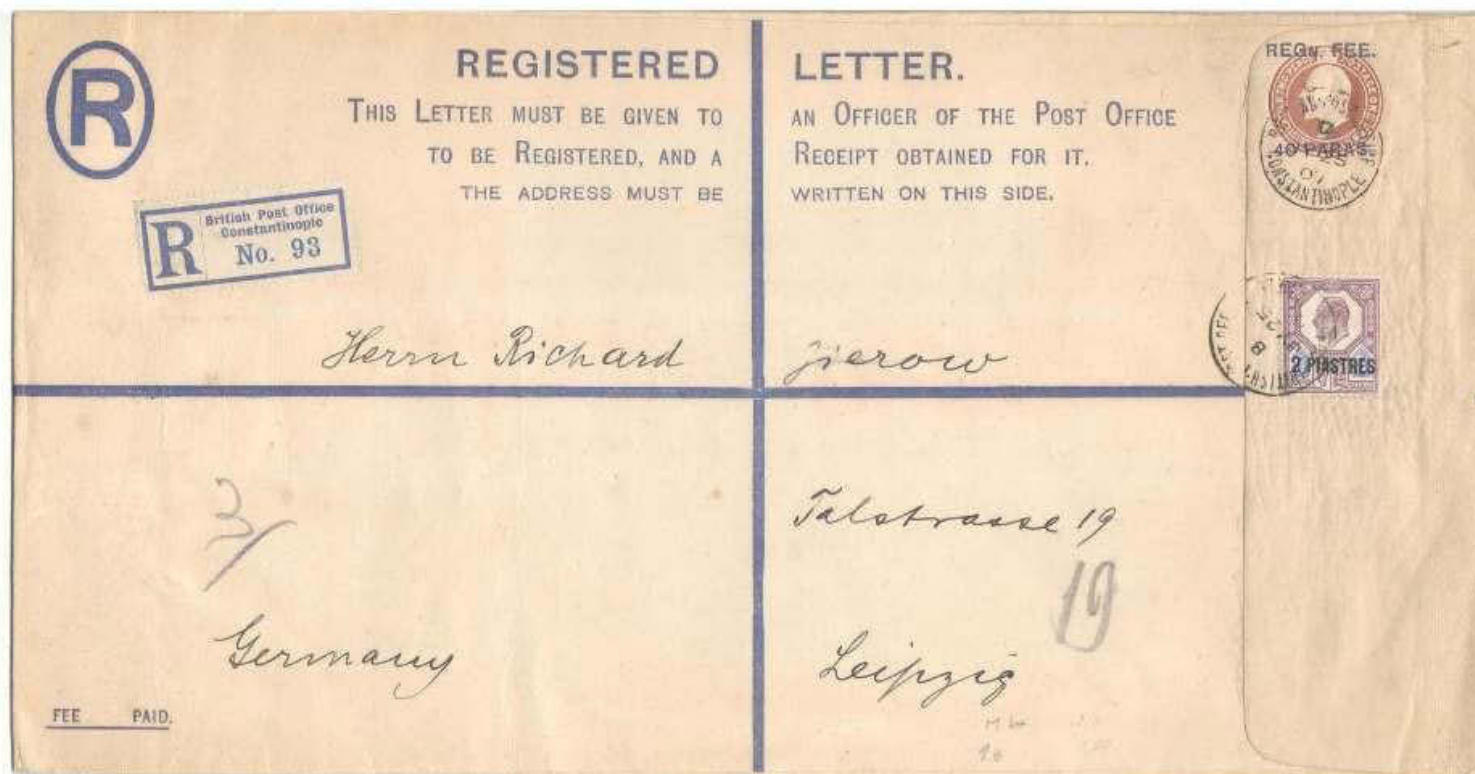
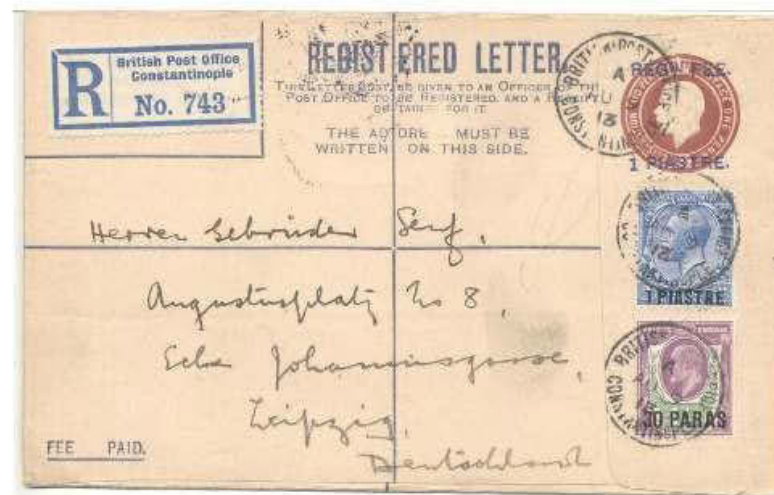
1898, 2d blue PSRE (RP22), size K.

Less than five examples are recorded from British Levant.

**BPO Constantinople**  
Registered Envelopes

**Postal Stationery & Special Forms**  
Surcharged in Turkish Currency

Registered Envelopes were surcharged in Turkish currency as early as 1902. The surcharged value of 40 Paras (1 Piastre) covered only the Reg'n fee.



1. 8/3/07 to London (12/3) at single rate, 1902 3d red-brown PSRE (RP24), size G overprinted REGN. FEE. / 40 PARAS. It bears the provisional Reg'n label issued on 18/2/07 which was replaced by the definitive issue only a month later.

Only four covers with this Registration label are recorded from Constantinople.

2. 25/7/07 to Leipzig (28/7) at double rate. 1902 3d red-brown PSRE (RP24), size K overprinted REGN. FEE. / 40 PARAS.

Very few examples of this size are recorded used.

3. 9/8/13 to Leipzig (12/8), double rate, 1912 3d red-brown PSRE (RP28), size G overprinted REGN. FEE. / 1 PIASTRE.



**BUREAU DE POSTE BRITANNIQUE  
 CONSTANTINOPLE.**

La Direction de la Douane de Galata est priée de remettre au porteur de la présente  
 postal désigné dans notre liste de consignation en date du 10.3. 1909 comme ci-dessous:

Numéros d'ordre	MARQUES	ADRESSES	CONTENU.
31	1790 1692.	Mrs Paraskevita Livargola Coursu Gesme	Belt  Valeur. Ps: 27

Galata, le 10 Mars 1909

*[Signature]*  
 Le Directeur du Bureau de Poste Britannique.

G & B 1459 5000/4/07-11630 5000 2/08\*

3/4/09 special form of the British PO Constantinople to the Galata Customs Office with Turkish fiscals, requesting hand over to the bearer of a parcel sent on 10/3/09. On reverse black on green 11<sup>2</sup> Quais de Constantinople perforated label.

**This is the only recorded example of this form.**



17/5/07 Smyrna to Constantinople Registered letter at single rate.

No less than three unsuccessful attempts were made for delivery. Finally marked 'Retour' and bilingual boxed 'Non Reclame / Not Called For', before being returned to Smyrna. 'DUPLICATE' handstamp also applied; according to the Proof Book in the PO Archives this handstamp was sent to Constantinople on 14 /12/05.

An unusual combination of two elusive instructional marks on the same cover.



21/2/09 written on board SS Llandudno (letter enclosed) to Cardiff (27/2).

The ship's mailbox was cleared and given to the BPO in Constantinople where the stamp was cancelled on 23/2 also receiving the PAQUEBOT mark of Constantinople.



**BPO Constantinople**  
India / Danish West Indies

**Unusual Destinations**



20/10/00 originally to Punch, East India and re-addressed four times within India before returned to Constantinople about 8 months later (7/6/01).



14/11/05 to Christiansted (10/12), St Croix, Danish West Indies, via New York (21/11).



24/7/06 originally to Melbourne via Alexandria (28/7) and Suez (29/7), but re-addressed to Sydney (29/8).



14/3/12 to  
Devonport, Tasmania  
(23/4) via Alexandria  
(22/3) and Port Said  
(23/3).

## **British Post Office in Stamboul (Constantinople sub-Office)**

Opened in April 1885. No mail from this office is to be found between 25<sup>th</sup> August 1896 (closed due to Anti Armenian riots) and 9<sup>th</sup> February 1908 (re-opened). Closed permanently on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1914. The smallest British PO in the Levant.

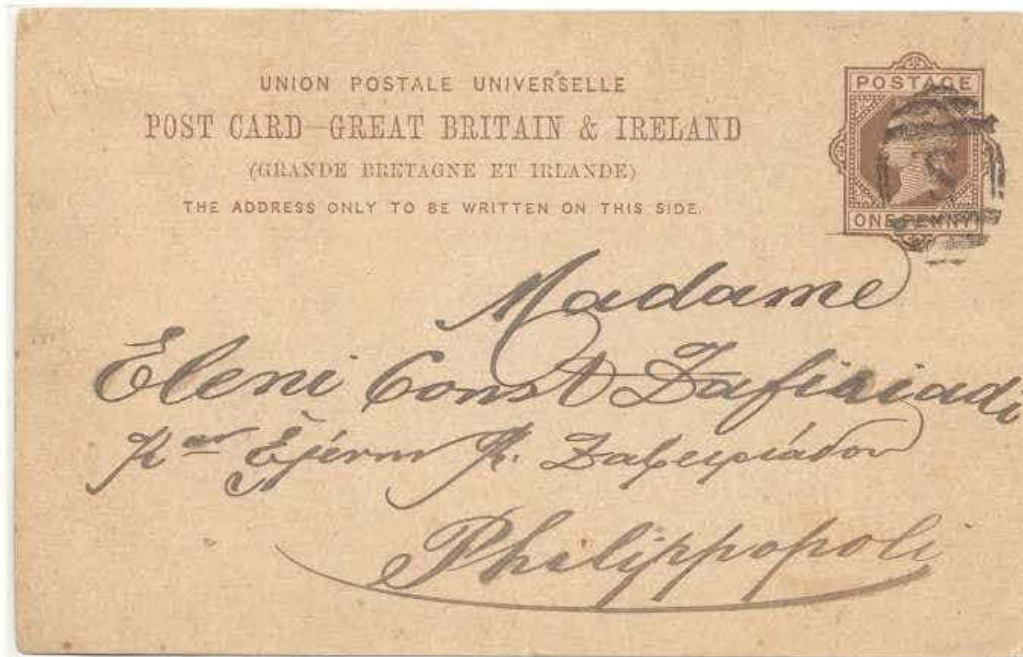
*Rates as stated in the Constantinople section.*

For the brief period April - July 1885 (before the introduction of the surcharged stamps in August) it is possible to find letters franked with ordinary British stamps.



23/5/85 to Dakota Territory, US paying 2½ d for a single rate letter. The British stamp is cancelled by the Stamboul S. barred obliterator.

**Only three covers are recorded with British stamps in this short period (ex Cihangir).**



7/4/92 to Philipopolis (now Plovdiv), Bulgaria 1d brown postcard (CP15)



16/6/93 to Amsterdam (20/6), 2 1/2 d grey-blue PSE (EP35) overprinted 40 PARAS paying the single letter rate.

The S. barred obliterator is seldom found on this PSE as it was used until August 1893, while the PSE was issued in April that year.



28/2/93 to Paris (4/3) paying 40 Paras single rate plus 40 Paras Reg'n fee. Franked with two copies of the 40 Paras Constantinople Provisional.

The overprint shows the "damage in S", typical of the last couple of days of use.



25/6/87 to Somerville Mass. (8/7) via New York at 80 Paras double rate.



14/6/87 to San Francisco (3/7) triple Registered Letter. 1883, 2d blue PSRE (RP13), size G.

The earliest recorded use of the "40 Paras / 2 1/2 d" Jubilee stamp, and most probably a unique First Day Cover.



10/7/88 to Galveston, Texas triple rate. 1886, 2d blue PSRE (RP14), size F.

This PSRE bears an *Express d' Orient* label in salmon-pink. Research in the PO Archives does not provide evidence to support the theory that these labels pay any additional fees for the Orient Express service and most probably their use is purely instructional.

One of only two recorded *Express d' Orient* triple rate covers.

The Office – being closed for a period of twelve years - resumed business on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1908. Because of riots the office was closed on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> 1909.



30/12/10 to Chicago paying the ½ d or 10 Paras per 2 oz Printed Paper Rate.



24/2/08 to Leeds, via the *French Day Mail TPO*, parcel tag of a *Sample With No Value*, paying 2d Reg'n Fee plus 1d the minimum charge for Samples. It bears an ordinary Constantinople Reg'n label cancelled with a Stamboul undated and uncoded cds.

An early item of the second period showing an elusive commercial use of the 3d value overprinted LEVANT and the **only recorded use of this Stamboul Provisional Reg'n label.**

BPO Stamboul  
Mixed Accounting Period

Second Period: 1908-1914  
Letter Mail: Double / Quintuple



22/7/13 to  
Cronenfeld  
(27/7), double  
rate, showing  
the earliest  
recorded use  
of the 1/2 d  
profile head  
overprinted  
"LEVANT"  
issued in July  
1913.



9/7/10 to Cassel  
(12/7) at 5 Piastres  
for a quintuple  
Registered cover.





14/9/93 to Fredrikshamn, Finland (21/9) triple rate Registered letter. No routing instructions, but most probably routed via St Petersburg.



8/7/96 single rate letter to Sao Paulo, Brazil (5/7).

## British Post Office in Smyrna

Opened in December 1872. Ordinary British stamps were used cancelled with the Smyrna F87 barred obliterator. This was the second largest office generating about a quarter of the total revenue of all the British Levant POs. The Treasury warrant of 2.12.72 announces the opening routes and rates to Great Britain. Basically, two routes were offered: via Marseilles and via Vienna.

For this pre-UPU period, only mail to Great Britain is known.

*{For a comprehensive analysis of the Routes and Rates used in this period see the Exhibitor's article: 'Early mail of the BPO Smyrna 1872-76' published in "The Overprinter" (Journal of the GBOS) edition 3/2009 (pages 87-9)}*

**Route: Via French Packet to Marseilles.** Offered throughout the year as it did not depend on weather conditions.

**Rates:** 12/72 - 30/6/75 **8d ½ oz**  
1/7/75 - 31/12/75 **6d ½ oz** (no examples recorded)  
Reg'n Fee 4d (no examples recorded)



7/3/73 to London (15/3) ½ oz letter at 8d rate via French Packet to Marseilles.

**The earliest recorded cover out of the British PO in Smyrna (Ex Metliss).**

**BPO Smyrna**  
Mail to Great Britain

**Pre-UPU Period: 1872-1875**  
via Vienna (Austrian Packet)

**Route: Via Vienna**  
**Summer Route:** Via Constantinople and Austrian Packet to Varna  
**Winter Route:** Austrian Packet to Trieste

**Rates:** 12/72 - 31/4/73 6d per ½ oz (no examples recorded)  
1/5/73 - 30/6/75 5d per ½ oz (note: cheaper than the French service)  
Reg'n Fee 4d (no examples recorded)



22/3/73 to Manchester (31/3) ½ oz letter at 5d per Austrian Packet via Trieste, the normal Winter route. **The only recorded Smyrna cover with the GB 3d rose (1867).**



9/8/73 to London (19/8), 1/2 oz letter at 5d via Vienna. As with the similar cover shown in the Constantinople section, this would normally take the summer route via Varna, but instead it was sent via the Trieste summer emergency route due to the Danube cholera epidemic. **Previously unrecorded, this is the only known cover from Smyrna using this Emergency route.**

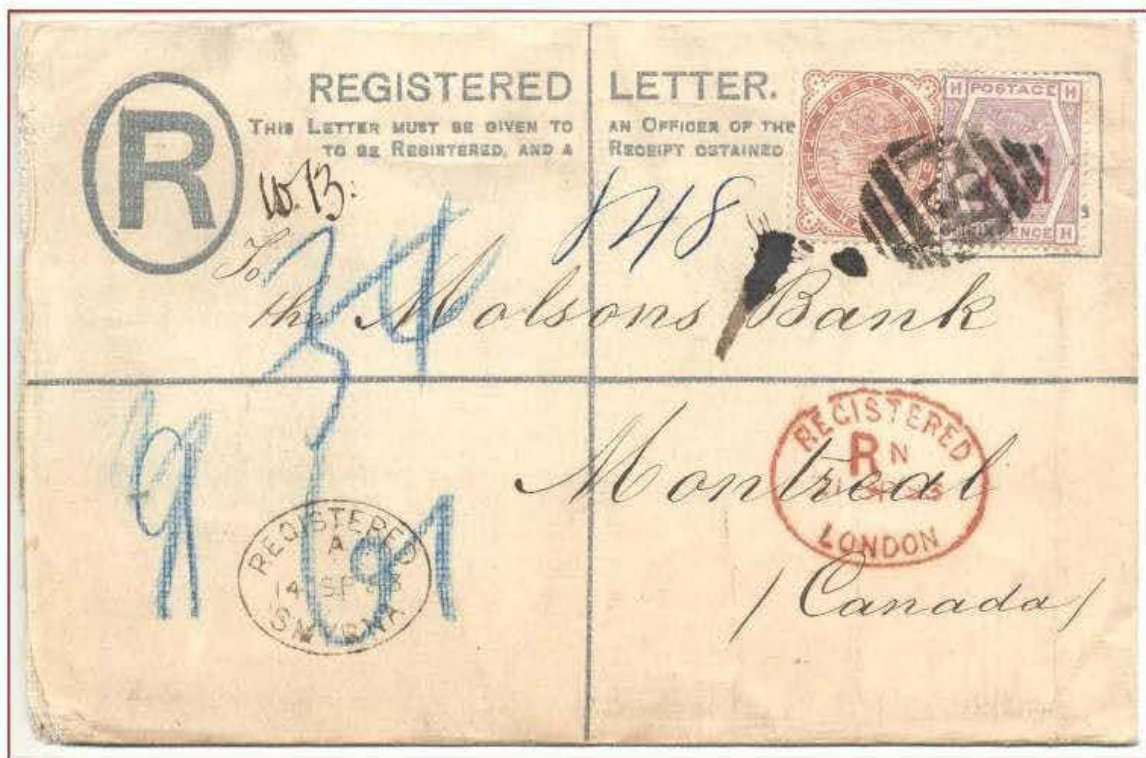
This is the period spanning from the introduction of the new UPU rates up to the issue of surcharged stamps in August 1885. Rates as shown in the Constantinople section.



28/7/76 to London (4/8) via French Packet, ½ oz letter at the 2 ½ d UPU rate.

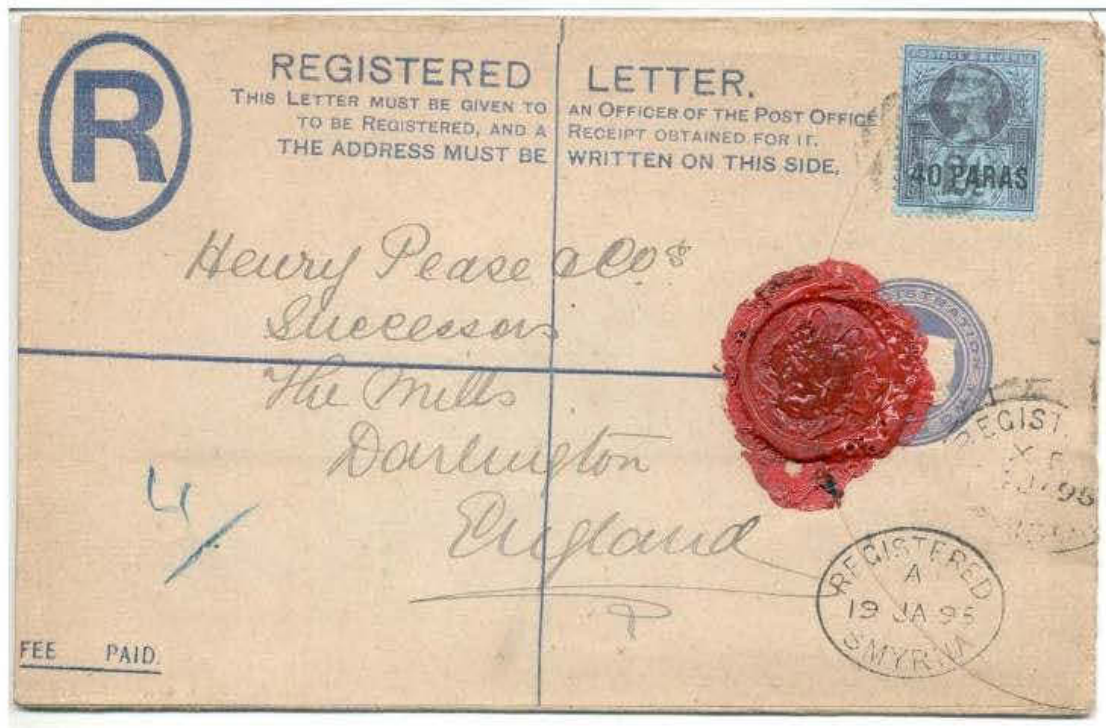


31/7/78 London, single rate via Smyrna (9/8) to the local Forwarding Agent Hadkinson, Merrylees & Co for further dispatch by boat to Calymnos. At the time, there existed no PO of any Power in the small Dodecanese Island of Calymnos.

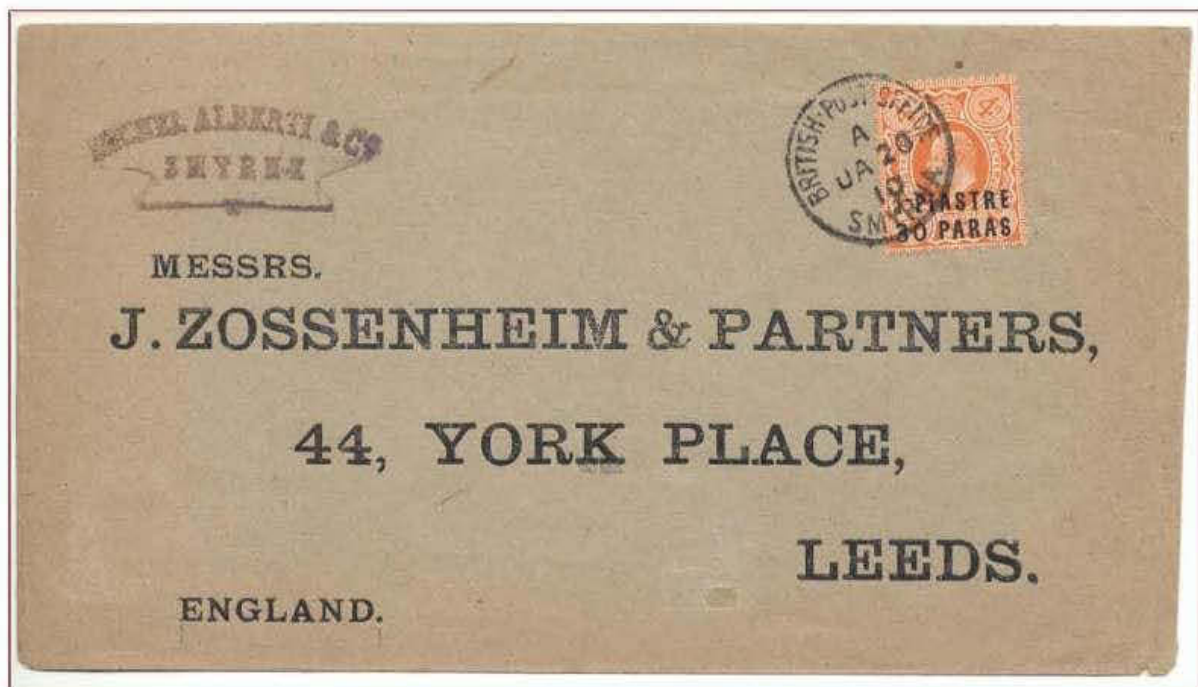


14/9/83 to Montreal (3/10), Canada via London and Liverpool (21/9). 1883, 2d blue PSRE (RP13), size G franked with GB 1 ½ d Venetian red (1880) & 6d / 6d lilac (1883) to make up the total rate of 9 ½ d for a triple rate Registered letter.

**One of two recorded pre-1885 PSREs used in Smyrna and the only recorded cover from any of the British Post Offices Abroad that shows this highly unusual combination of stamps.**



19/1/95 to Darlington, UK (25/1) at registered single rate. 1893, 2d blue PSRE (RP20), size G.



20/1/10 to Leeds (25/1), double rate (post-October 1907 rates). The 1 Piastre 30 Paras /4d brown-orange stamp was legitimately used for one month only (16/12/09 - 23/1/10), before being replaced by the fractional 1 3/4 Piastres / 4d value.

The only recorded cover with the 1 Piastre 30 Paras /4d brown - orange stamp showing a proper commercial use in the correct period of usage.



**Top:** 3/7/12 to London (8/7) at 6 1/2 Piastres.  
The rate is calculated as: Reg'n fee = 1 Pi,  
1st weight step = 1 Pi,  
2-7th weight steps = 6 x 30 Paras = 4 1/2 Pi.

A total of 6 1/2 Piastres for a Registered letter of weight up to 140g.

**Bottom:** 10/2/12 to London (15/2) at 10 1/4 Piastres.

The rate is calculated as: Reg'n fee = 1 Pi,  
1st weight step = 1 Pi,  
2-11th weight steps = 11 x 30 Paras = 8 1/4 Pi.

A total of 10 1/4 Piastres for a Registered letter of weight up to 240g.

**One of the highest recorded mail frankings from Smyrna and the only recorded use of a multiple of the 5 Pi/1s stamp on commercial cover.**



22/4/99 to Weimar (29/4), early picture postcard of Smyrna at 1d.



17/3/98 to London (22/3). 1892, 1d red foreign card (CP27). On arrival in the London Foreign Branch, the card was erroneously marked for a 4d postage due, then amended by an Inspector who applied the A01 mark.

The A01 canceller was previously used in Kingston, Jamaica (1858-60), and later returned to London. From the number of worldwide items seen with this mark it appears that the Foreign Branch in London mostly used the A01 when it was determined that the item in question was incorrectly marked for postage due.

**The only recorded item from British Levant cancelled with the A01 obliterator.**



Prepaid mail posted aboard yachts cruising the Mediterranean is occasionally found with the stamps cancelled in transit at the British PO Smyrna.



23/4/05 PPC posted aboard S/Y ARGONAUT to London via BPO Smyrna (25/4).



25/3/10 PPC posted aboard S/Y VECTIS to Aberdeen via BPO Smyrna (28/3).


*A detailed account of this period and its Rates is given in the respective Constantinople section.*



12/12/91 to London, printed circular at 1/2 d or 10 Paras per 2 oz printed paper rate.



July 1897 to Glarus (29/7), sample without value paying the 1d per 4 oz minimum sample rate plus 40 Paras registration fee. A late use of the F87 barred obliterator.

POST OFFICE.  
  
SMYRNA.

The undermentioned Mails will be despatched this day.

BRITISH POST OFFICE  
A  
OC 2  
05  
SMYRNA

Latest time for posting Ordinary correspondence.

For Europe (except Greece and Malta), America)	via Constantinople	Khedivial 2.15 P.M.
„ Africa (except East), Persia, Japan.....)	via <del>Suez</del> do	Italian 5.15 P.M.
„ do. do. do. do. ....	via Marseilles	
„ Europe, America, Africa (except East), Japan ....	via Brindisi	
„ do. do. do. do. do. ....	by	
„ Greece, Malta, Tunis, Crete .....	via Alexandria	
„ Egypt, East Africa, India, China, Japan, Australia	by	
„ Cyprus, Beyrout and Syria .....		

N.B.—Registered Correspondence should be posted 15 minutes earlier.

G & S 1590 [3294] 5000 7/05VP

Window notice, dated 2/10/05 showing information of the day's despatch of mails. The only services of the day were via Constantinople by Egyptian and Italian steamers. Note that the closing time for the Italian service was three hours later than the Egyptian one.

This is the only recorded British Levant item of such nature.



12/12/00 to Rouen, France (18/12). 1888 ½ d brown postcard for inland use (CP21), uprated for use to abroad. Seldom seen from British Levant.



18/2/14 to Zurich, Switzerland. 1911 ½ d bright-green Wrapper (WP22) overprinted LEVANT, uprated with 1d for an overweight newspaper wrapper up to 6 oz.

**BPO Smyrna**  
Parcel Post / Customs Declaration

**Postal Stationery & Special Forms**

**PARCEL POST.**  
**SMYRNA.**  
FORM OF CUSTOMS DECLARATION.

Date Stamp: **SMYRNA** 1900 JAN 9

Place to which the Parcel is addressed:  
*37 Mining Lane London E.C.*

Gross Weight of Parcel: *9 lbs. 4 ozs.*

Net Weight of Parcel: *6 lb. 110*

Value of Merchandise: *11*

CONTENTS: *One silk rug*

Inland Postage: *1*

Parcel Bill No. *27*

Entry No. *3*

G & S 3227 [8133] 1000 2/99c

**SMYRNA.**  
No. *3*  
FOREIGN AND COLONIAL PARCEL POST

*1200000000 Co Smyrna*

1/9/00 to London at 3s, regarding the sending of a **9 lbs 4 oz rug**.

"SMYRNA FOREIGN AND COLONIAL PARCEL POST" label indicating the 1s inland postage was applied in the GPO London.

**Highest recorded franking in Sterling.**

Date Stamp: **SMYRNA** 1913 NOV 15

Place to which the Parcel is addressed:  
*Leeds*

Route Via *Brindisi*

Gross Weight of Parcel: *5* lb.

Net Weight of Contents: *5* lb.

Value of Merchandise: *5* £ s. d.

*Cheese*

(For use of Post Office of Exchange only.)

No. of Rates prepaid: *1*

Name and Address of Sender: *A. Harram Smyrna*

**SMYRNA.**  
No. *35*  
FOREIGN AND COLONIAL PARCEL POST

Inland Postage: *9*

PARCEL PASSING THROUGH THE G.P.O.

15/11/13 to Leeds via Brindisi at 16 Piastres, regarding the sending cheese. Starting from 1901 Brindisi became the preferred Route for the sending of parcels.

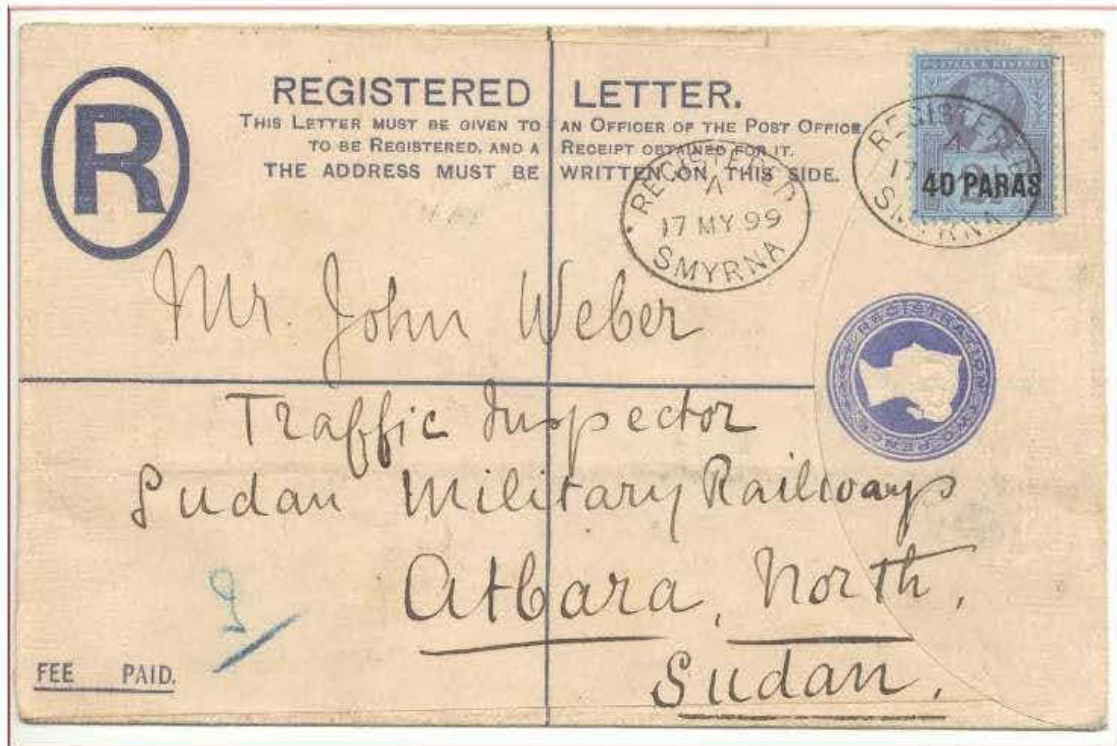
**Only recorded parcel franking in Turkish currency.**



24/12/97 to Jaala, Finland single rate via Constantinople (29/12) and St Petersburg, readdressed to Kuopio (5/1).



15/7/12 to Copenhagen, Denmark (21/7) registered triple rate via Constantinople (17/7).



17/5/99 to Atbara, North Sudan, registered single rate via Alexandria (20/5) and Wadi Halfa (29/5).



11/2/12 to Swakopmund, German West Africa, via Hamburg, readdressed to Karibib.

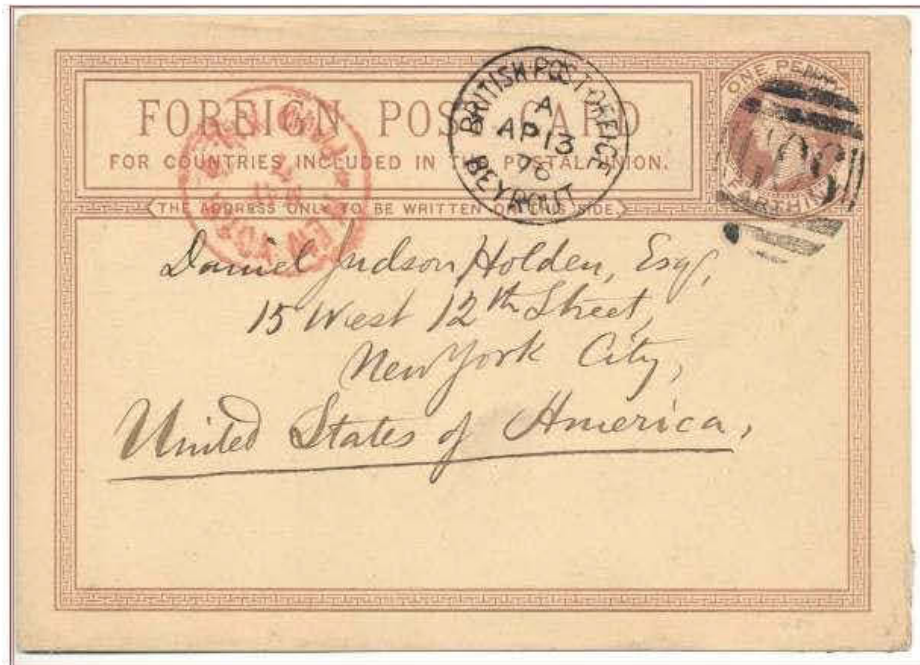


21/4/13 to Kerman, Persia registered double rate via Alexandria (25/4) and Teheran (10/5).



13/6/90 to Guatemala (15/7), via Constantinople (17/6) and New York.

This is the period spanning from the introduction of the new UPU rates up to the issue of surcharged stamps in August 1885. *Rates as shown in the Constantinople section.*



13/4/76 to New York (7/5), a commercially used example of the 1 1/4 d "One Penny Farthing" brown postcard (CP5).

The 1 1/4 d foreign postcard rate was only valid until 31/3/79. This postcard is seldom seen from Levant, and even more so from Beyrout.



22/11/80 to Omaha, Nebraska at the 2 1/2 d single letter rate.





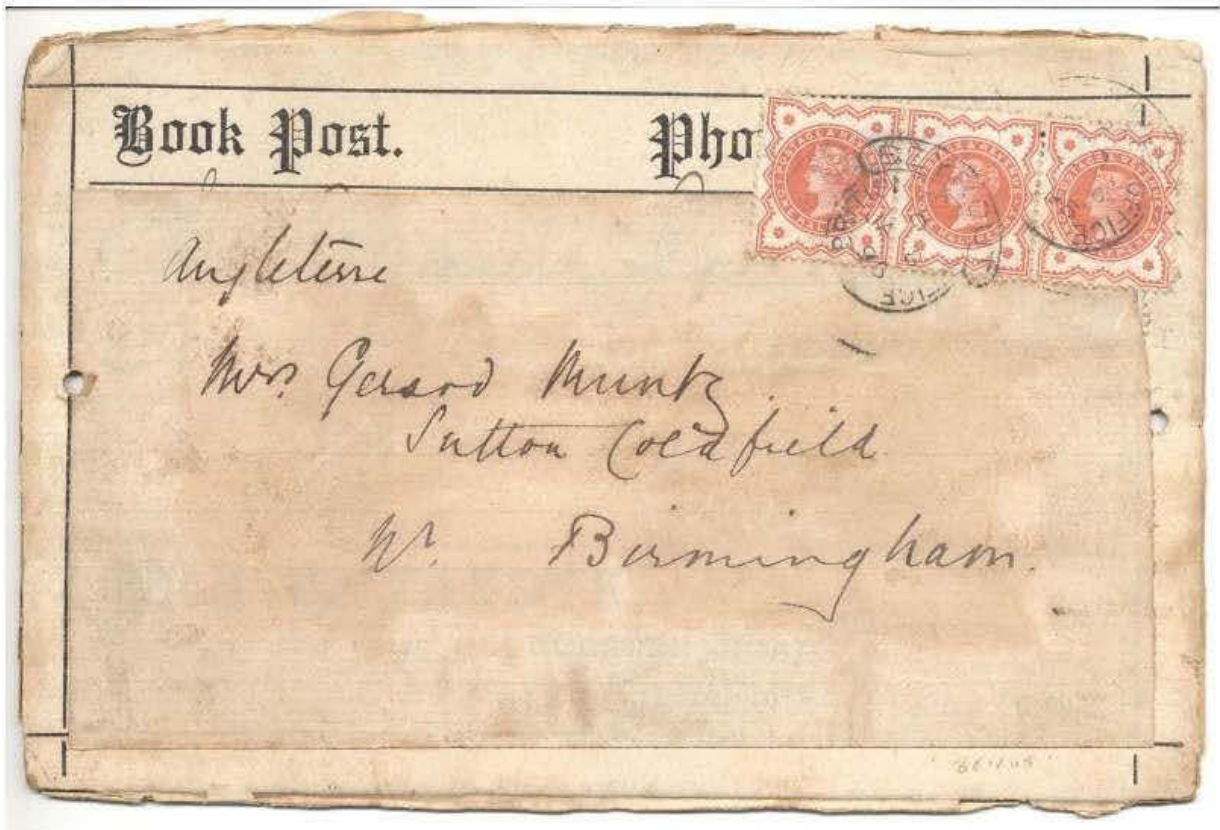
12/9/78 to Crawley (24/9), Sussex, via Brindisi at the 5d double letter rate.  
The addressee, Lady Anne Blunt, was Lord Byron's granddaughter.



13/8/81 to London (25/8) at single rate, 2d blue PSRE (RP6), size G.

Very rare use from Beyrouth of this PSRE, possibly a second example exists.

A detailed account of this period and its Rates is given in the respective Constantinople section.



8/1/95 to Sutton Coldfield, UK *Book Post* thick card previously attached to a 4-6 oz packet.



9/4/95 to Smyrna (17/4). 1892 1d red postcard (CP27).

Anything higher than single rates from this small office is difficult.



28/10/98 to Breslau (6/11) at the 80 Paras Registered single rate, sorted on the Breslau - Oderberg TPO, where the *Vom Auslande* (From Abroad) Reg'n label was affixed.



17/4/96 to Pulsnitz (25/4) Germany, double rate Registered home-made envelope. The 80 Paras stamp shows the *small 0* variety.

Only one other example of this variety is recorded on cover.

**BPO Beyrout  
Letter Mail**

**UPU Rates: Mixed Period 1885-1914  
Registration Fee paid in Sterling**

Two examples paying the registration fee in Sterling (2d), instead of the usual Turkish 40 Paras.

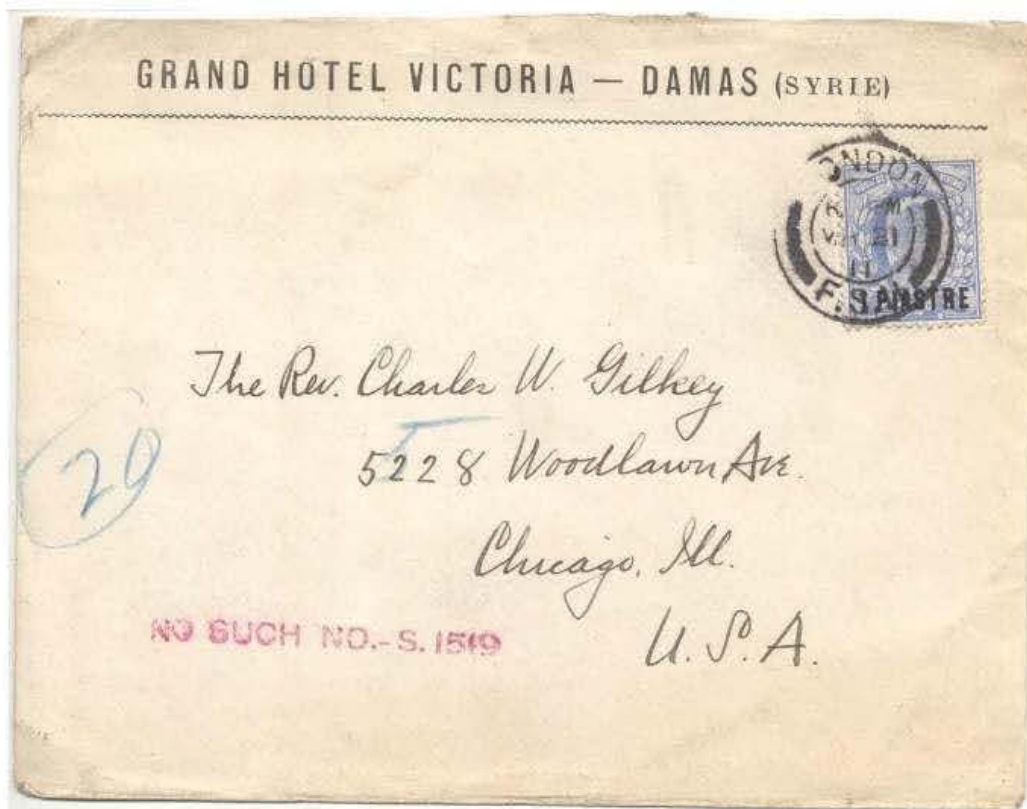


1/10/00 to London  
(10/10), double rate  
Registered letter.



4/11/02 to Oxford  
(10/11), single rate  
Registered letter.





22/3/11: Rayak, Palestine, 4-page letter from an American traveler to Chicago (10/4). The letter in part reads: "Yesterday we stayed at Damascus and are today en route to **Beirut** via Baalbek". Franked with 1 Piastre stamp to cover the foreign single rate postage and posted abroad the ship's mailbox. The ship's mailbag was treated as a closed bag at the Beyrout PO and was only opened and the stamp cancelled in the London Foreign Section.



21/4/11 to London. 1908-11, 1d pale carmine postcard (CP56), metropolitan issue (without overprint). From the Autumn of 1905 all postcards used in British Levant were overprinted, **this being a very uncommon commercial use of the unoverprinted card.**



21/6/07 to Waldshut (30/6), Germany. 1902, 1d carmine postcard (CP46) overprinted LEVANT.



10/6/13 to London. 1908-11, 1d pale-carmine postcard (CP56) overprinted **LEVANT**. This is the provisional overprint (see also in the Constantinople section for another example). This particular card was privately printed on the reverse for use by the Consul General.



16/11/12 to Amsterdam (26/11) via Port Said (19/11), 1912, 1d scarlet postcard (CP62) overprinted **LEVANT**.

**BPO Beyrouth**  
**Envelopes: Ordinary / Registered**

**Postal Stationery**



22/2/94: to London (3/3), 2 ½ d grey-blue PSE (EP35) with **inverted surcharge 40 PARAS**. Remained in London until 18/5 and stamped "Not Called For / EC" before returned to Beyrouth. While in Poste Restante it was evidently damaged & marked by the Return Letter Office "Recd in a damaged state in RLO London/19.5.94". (Ex Gunther Heyd)

The inverted surcharge was created by a forger in 1894. A PO decision dated 14<sup>th</sup> July 1894 was made to treat these items as unpaid. Before that date covers were accepted with the fake inverted surcharge as having paid the 2 ½ d charge for the envelope in Sterling.



18/1/87 to London (31/1) at 40 Paras single rate, 2d blue PSRE (RP13), size G. Elusive use.





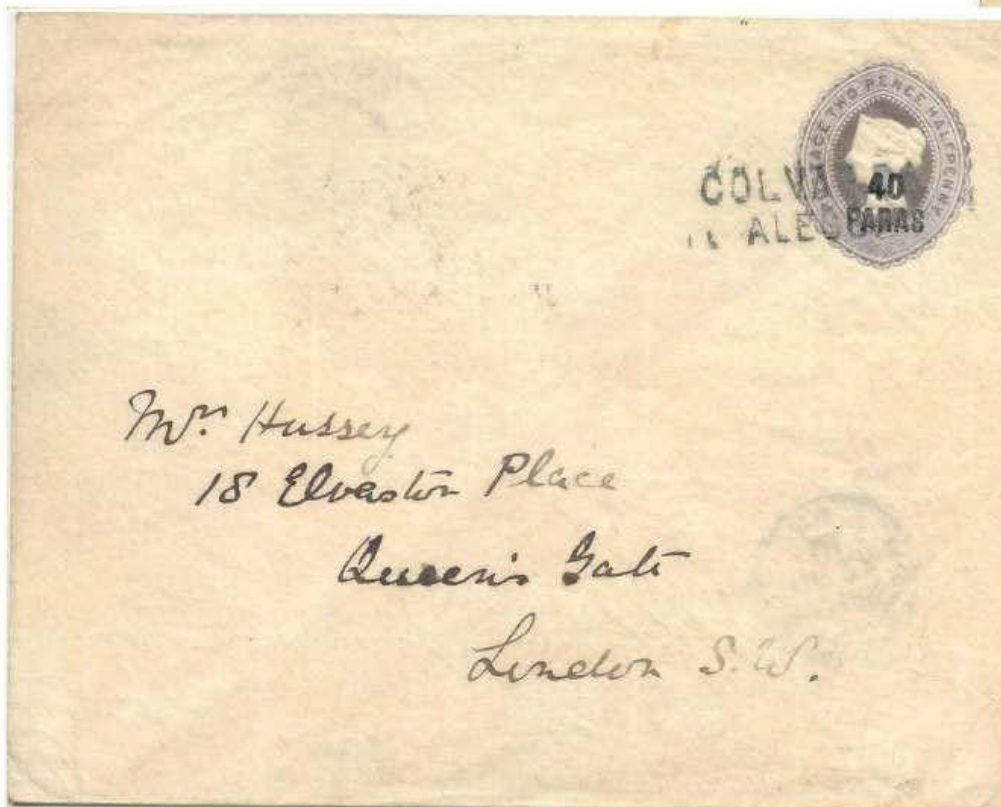
25/2/07 to London (7/3) double rate, 1902 3d red-brown PSRE (RP24), size G overprinted REGN. FEE. / 40 PARAS.

One of only two recorded examples of the provisional Registration label from Beyrouth.



4/5/09 to New York (20/5), 1902 3d red-brown PSRE (RP24), size F, overprinted REGN. FEE. / 40 PARAS. Elusive size.

Beyrouth was an important Middle East port where Austrian, French and Russian ships regularly called. Late mail could be posted on special boxes at the harbor to be loaded directly on board.



No indication of origin on this PSE, but according to Austrian Lloyd's schedule tables for 1901, this letter traveled as:

13/4/01 posted in Austrian Lloyd's ship box in Beyrouth. 20/4/01 (morning) delivered to the Austrian PO in Smyrna where the COL VAP.DA /ALESS handstamp was applied. 20/4/01 (afternoon) handed in the local British PO. 25/4/01 Arrived in London.



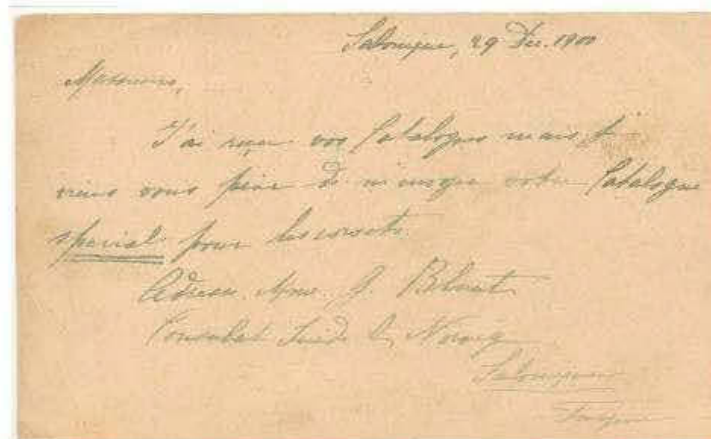
Genuine usage of the 1d postcard by a German traveler, giving a brief account of his journeys. Acquired in Beyrouth, posted in the Russian **ROPIT** Agency in Haifa on 1/5/09.

## British Post Office in Salonica

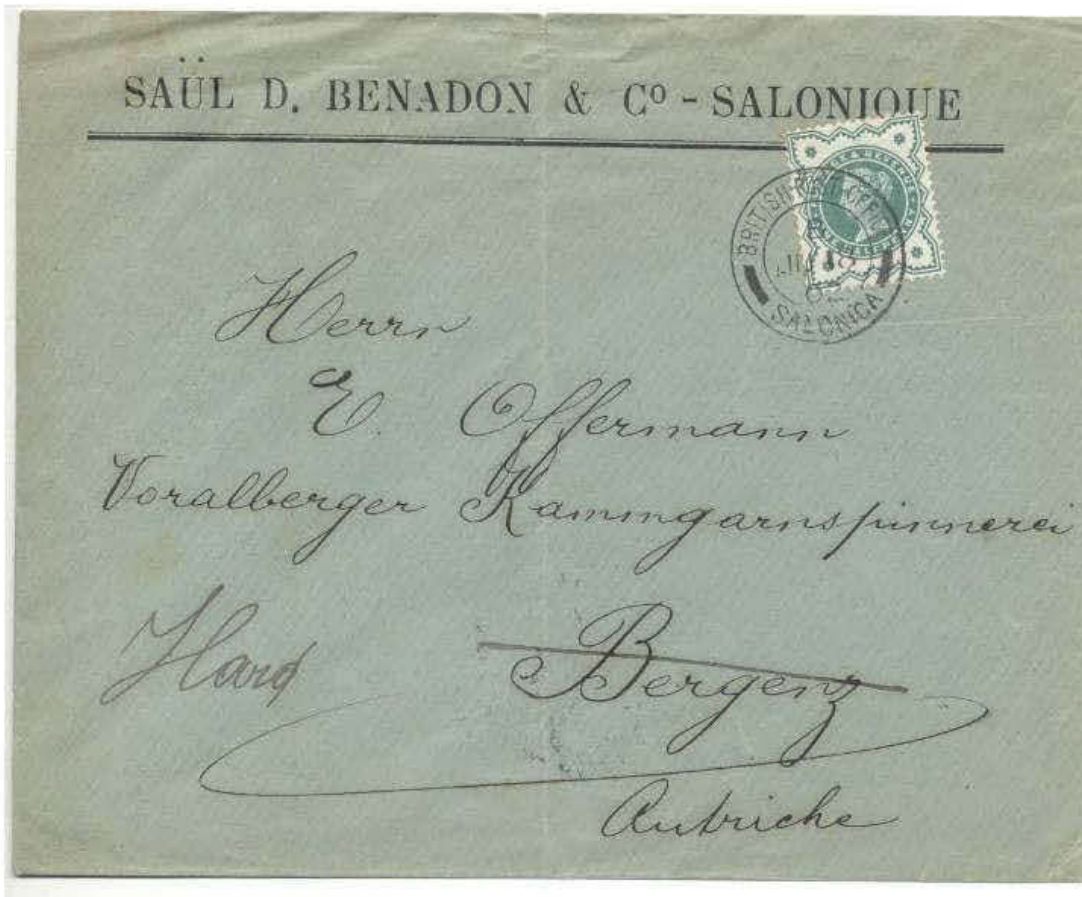
Opened on 1st May 1900. Throughout its operation a double-ring datestamp was used. In the first year of operation a single-ring datestamp was also used, but only rarely. All mail to Europe went by rail via the Nish-Belgrade line. Mail to other parts of the world made use of the various Austrian, French, Russian, Italian and Greek maritime agencies.

The office was allowed to operate after the Greek occupation of the city in November 1912 and was closed down in October 1914.

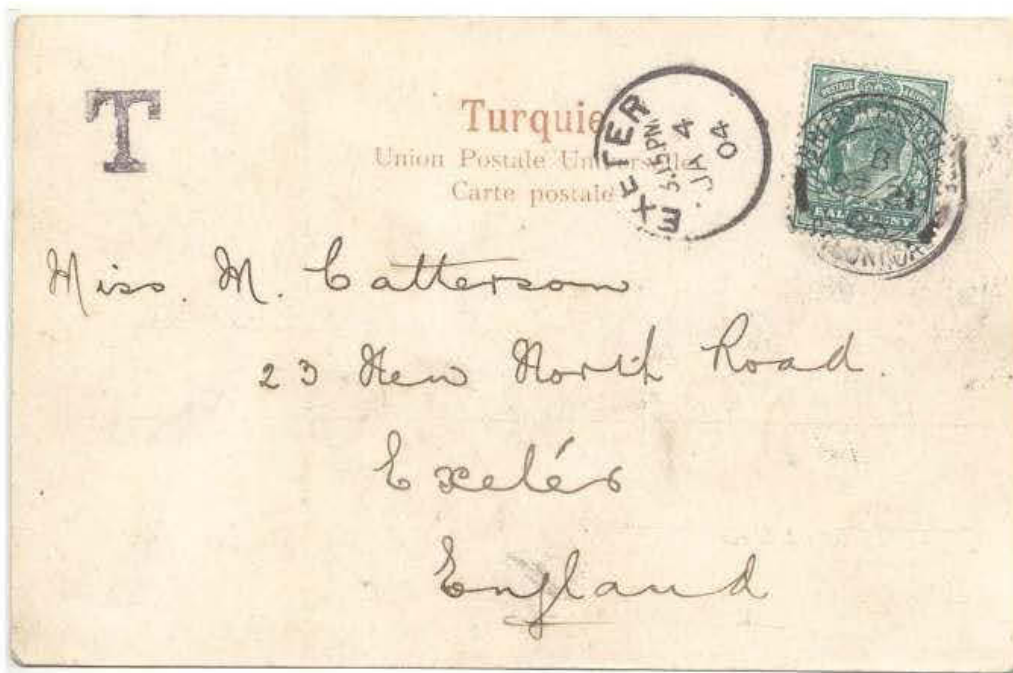
To get a glimpse of the historical background that gave birth to the British Post Office in Salonica, see the exhibitor's article: "The establishment of the British Post Office in Thessaloniki" published in "OPUS XIII" (pages 171-5), *Journal of the European Philatelic Academy*.



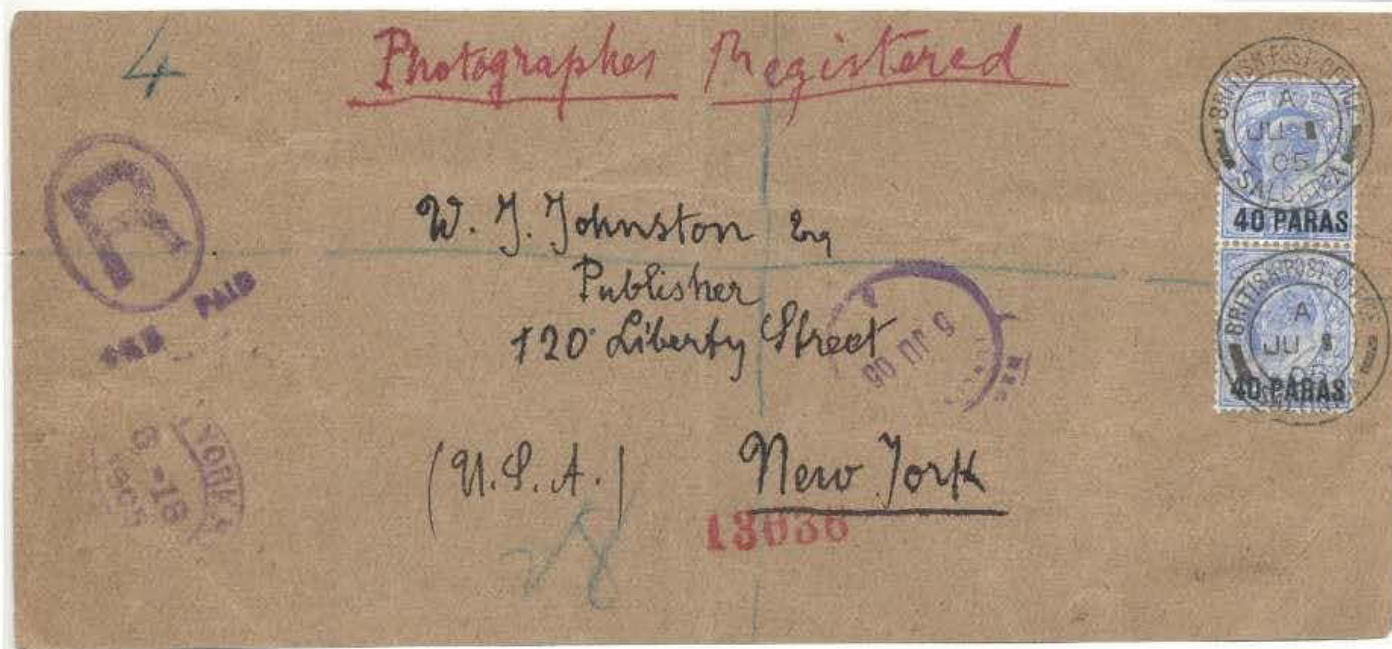
29/12/00 to Paris, 1899 1d carmine postcard (CP35). The sender is the BPO Salonica Postmaster George Blunt, who was also the honorary Swedish and Norwegian consul.



18/6/02 to Austria (re-addressed within Austria) at the 1/2 d printed matter rate.



31/3/04 to Exeter (4/1), picture postcard at the 1/2 d printed matter rate. The message at the picture side exceeded the six-word limit, and so it must have been taxed 1d on arrival. One of three recorded strikes of the Salonica "T" handstamp.



1/6/05 to New York (16/6) registered large part wrapper containing photographs. Under PO regulations photographs qualified for the printed matter rate. This pays 40 Paras for a 6-8 oz Printed Matter plus 40 Paras Reg'n Fee. **Printed Papers are seldom found Registered.**



16/7/02 to Manchester (21/7), at 1d minimum Samples rate (up to 4 ozs) with an extra 40 Paras for Reg'n Fee. Posted too late and so dispatched in the next day's mailbag (17/7), hence the **TOO LATE** handstamp (one of two recorded from Salonica - the other also in this exhibit).



17/1/01 to Somme, France at the 1d postcard rate.



14/2/02 to Antwerp (17/2), three-fold picture postcard at the 1d postcard rate. Due to its size it was charged on arrival 30 centimes (double the 15c = 1 ½ d deficiency), as it was thought that it should have paid the letter rate.

**BPO Salonica**  
Postcards

**Postal Rates**  
Royal Naval Mail

Sailors' mail serving on Royal Naval vessels patrolling the Mediterranean was treated as a closed bag: the ship's bag was put inside the Post Office's closed bag, and was not opened until on arrival in London (where it was also postmarked).



15/1/02 HMS Pegasus,  
Salonica to Plymouth via  
London (27/1).



14/9/04 HMS Maine,  
Salonica to Weymouth  
via London (18/9).



The London octagonal "fancy" cancellation with code letters CS was used on Sundays for overseas mail posted on board ships. Period of use: 1904-09.



28/3/07 to Leeds (2/4) at registered single rate, showing a commercial use of the provisional Registration label.



An alternative payment of the 2 Piastres registered single rate: 11/3/09 to Milan (14/3), Italy single rate Registered commercial cover. The Reg'n fee is paid in British currency.

This item demonstrates legitimate use of **three** kinds of stamps: 1) unoverprinted, 2) overprinted LEVANT, 3) overprinted in Turkish currency. The only recorded commercial cover from British Levant showing proper use of all three categories of stamps.





7/6/00 to Leeds (11/6) paying 80 Paras double rate plus 40 Paras Reg'n Fee.



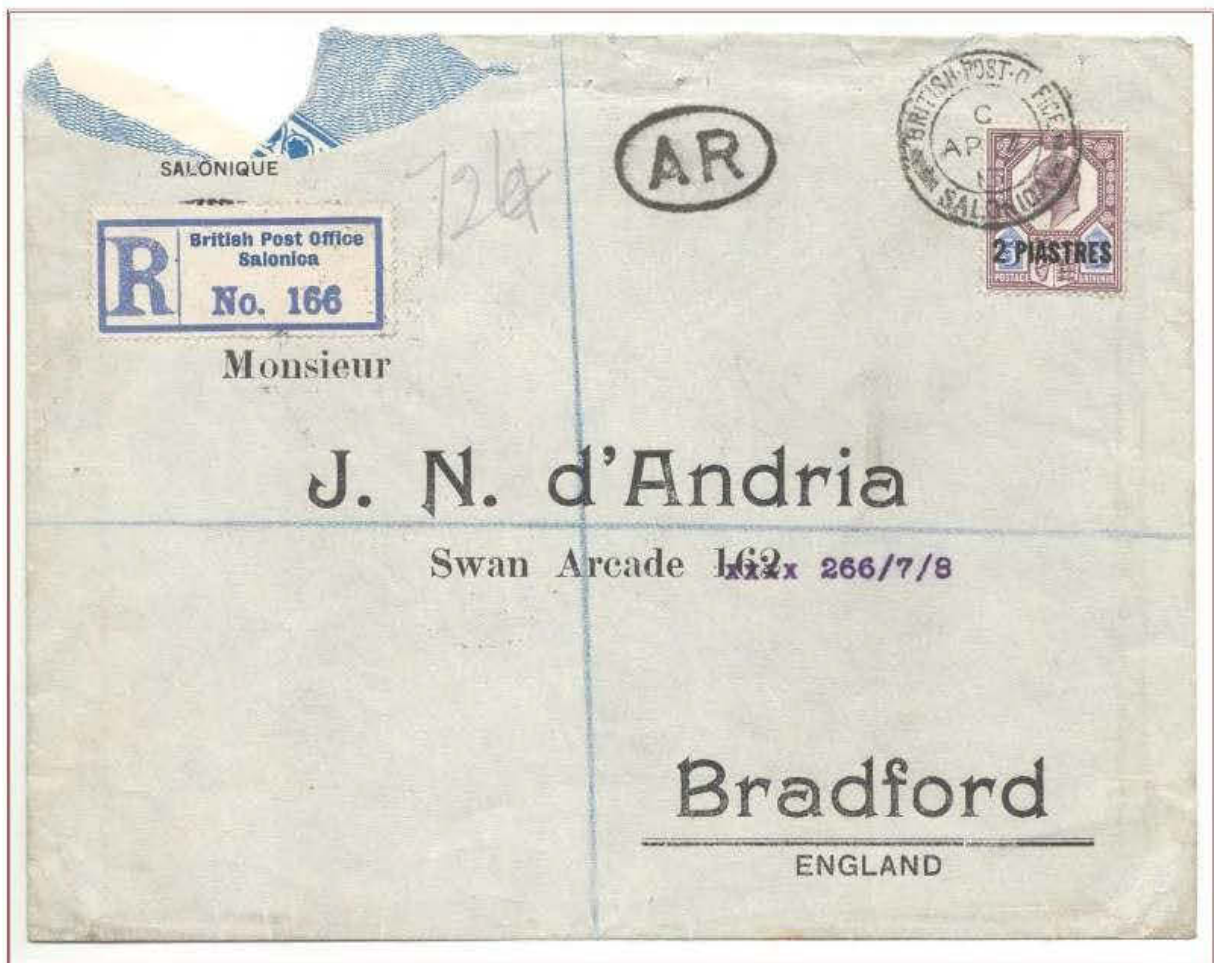
1/5/00 to Leeds (5/5), paying 3 Piastres (=120 Paras) triple rate plus 1 Piastre Reg'n Fee.

The only recorded use of the KEVII 4 Piastres/10 d on cover from Salonica.



20/3/03 to London, quadruple registered cover at 5 Piastres.

Salonica's highest recorded franking.

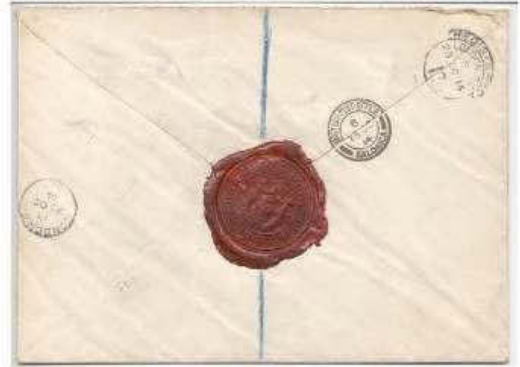


7/4/13 to Bradford, single rate Registered & AR cover with appropriate AR handstamp. The extra AR Fee of 1 Piastre was affixed to the accompanying special AR form.

**The only recorded AR cover from Salonica.**

The International Express Delivery Service was first introduced in Constantinople on 1 August 1911. From 8 May 1913 it was also extended to the other Levant offices. The prepayment of the Express Fee was in Sterling and obligatory.

For a comprehensive presentation of the introduction of this Service to the British Levant Post Offices based on original research in the PO Archives, see the Exhibitor's article: 'Levant - International Express Delivery Service' published in "The Overprinter" edition 4/02 (pages 86-92).



13/10/14: Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in exile during WW1) to the "Times" in London (23/10), triple rate Registered Express letter. The Express Fee in this case was 3d as the distance between the PO of delivery and the "Times" Office was less than a mile. Express label and handstamp applied in Salonica.

The only recorded Express Letter from any of the British Post Offices in the Levant (Ex Cihangir).



23/12/00 to Leeds (27/12), at 40 Paras single rate plus 40 Paras Reg'n fee.  
One of three recorded covers with the single-ring cancellation.



16/6/02 to Leeds (20/6) at 80 Paras registered single rate, posted too late and so dispatched in the next day's mail. One of two recorded examples of the Salonica TOO LATE mark.



27/12/02 (dispatched on 30/12) to Smyrna (3/1/03). 1899, 1d carmine REPLY postcard (CP37).

A genuine commercial REPLY use and as such extremely elusive.



23/8/05 to Ransart (27/8), Belgium. 1902, 1d carmine postcard (CP46).



26/12/05 to Floriana (1/1/06), Malta. 1902, 1d carmine postcard (CP46) overprinted LEVANT.

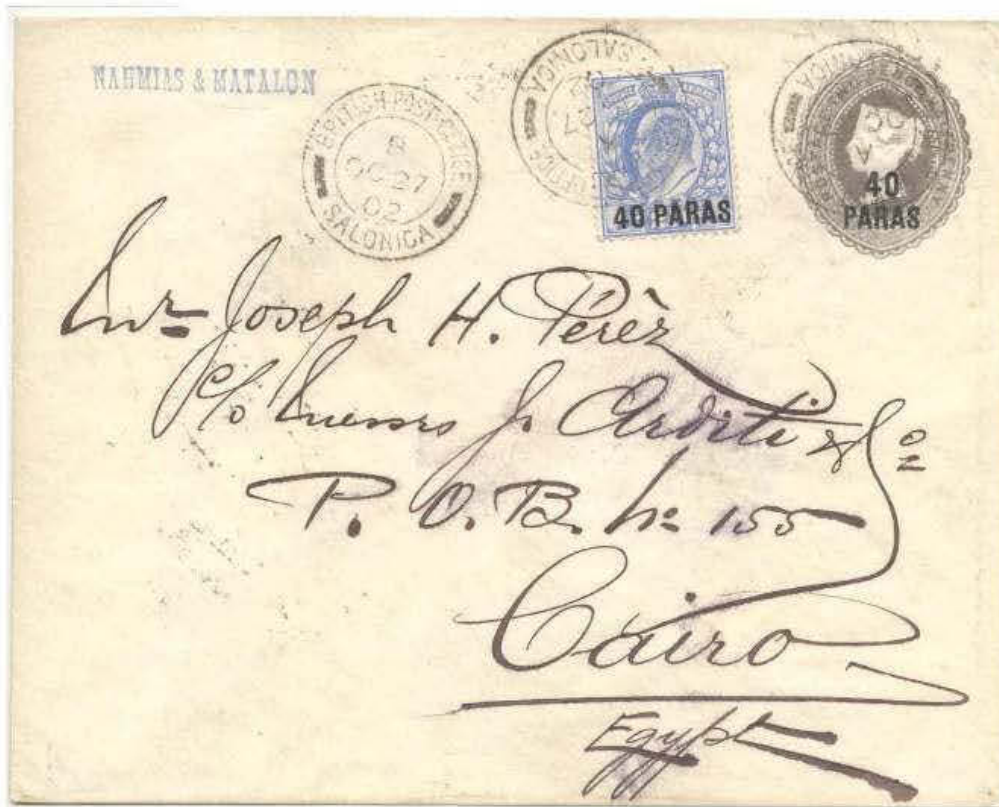


16/7/11 to Magdeburg, Germany. 1908-11, 1d pale carmine postcard (CP56) overprinted LEVANT.

Postcard: Overprinted / Envelope: Surcharged



18/7/13 to Schlieren bei Zurich, Switzerland. 1912, 1d scarlet postcard (CP62) overprinted LEVANT.



27/10/02 to Cairo (1/11). 1892, 2 ½ d grey-blue PSE (EP35) surcharged 40 PARAS. Additionally franked 40 Paras to make up the foreign double letter rate.



Rarely seen from Salonica; very few examples known.



14/8/07 to Berlin (17/8). 1902 3d red-brown PSRE (RP24), size G overprinted **REGN. FEE. / 40 PARAS.** showing the latest recorded use of the provisional registration label.



7/8/13 to Preasburg, Hungary. 1902 3d red-brown PSRE (RP24), size F, overprinted **REGN. FEE. / 40 PARAS.** Elusive size.

As a rule, mail to uncommon destinations from this small office is very seldom seen.



20/6/04 to Meester Cornelis, Java, Dutch East Indies (18/7), via Alexandria & Suez, single rate Registered cover (Ex Cihangir).

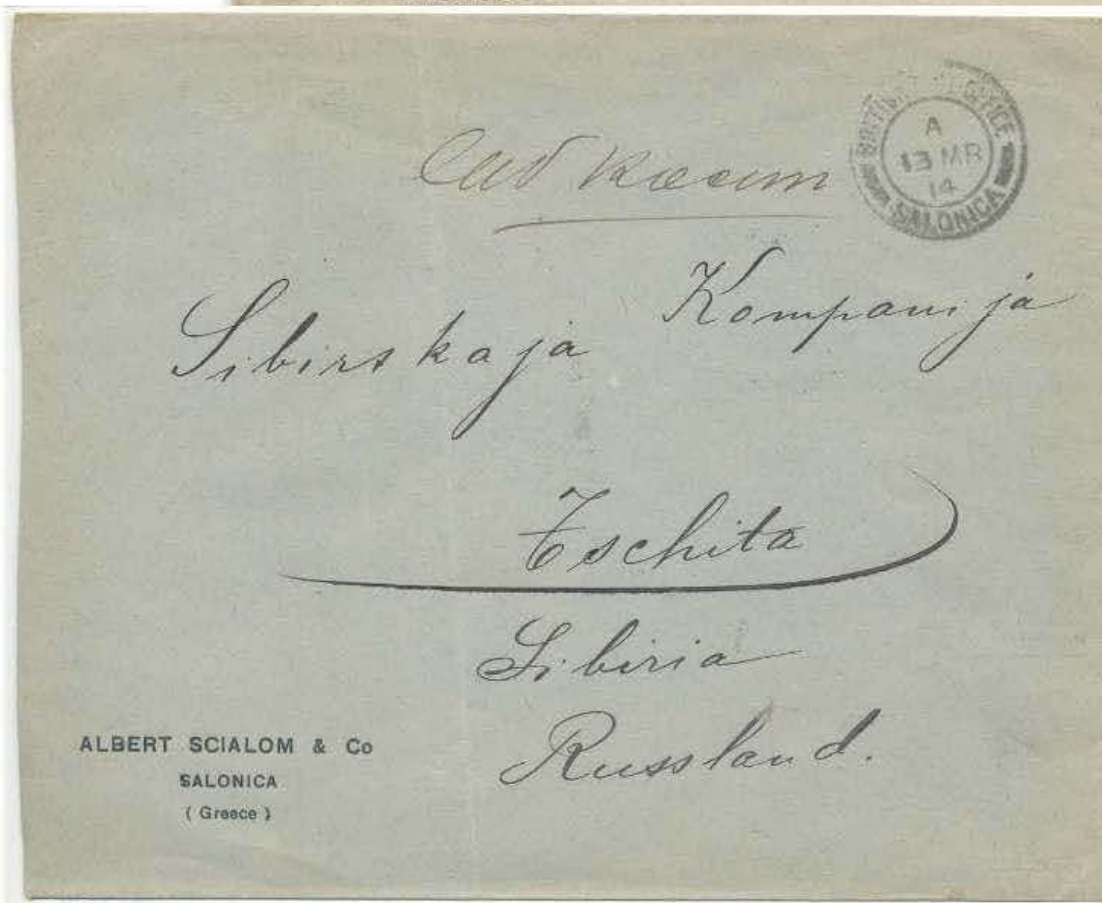
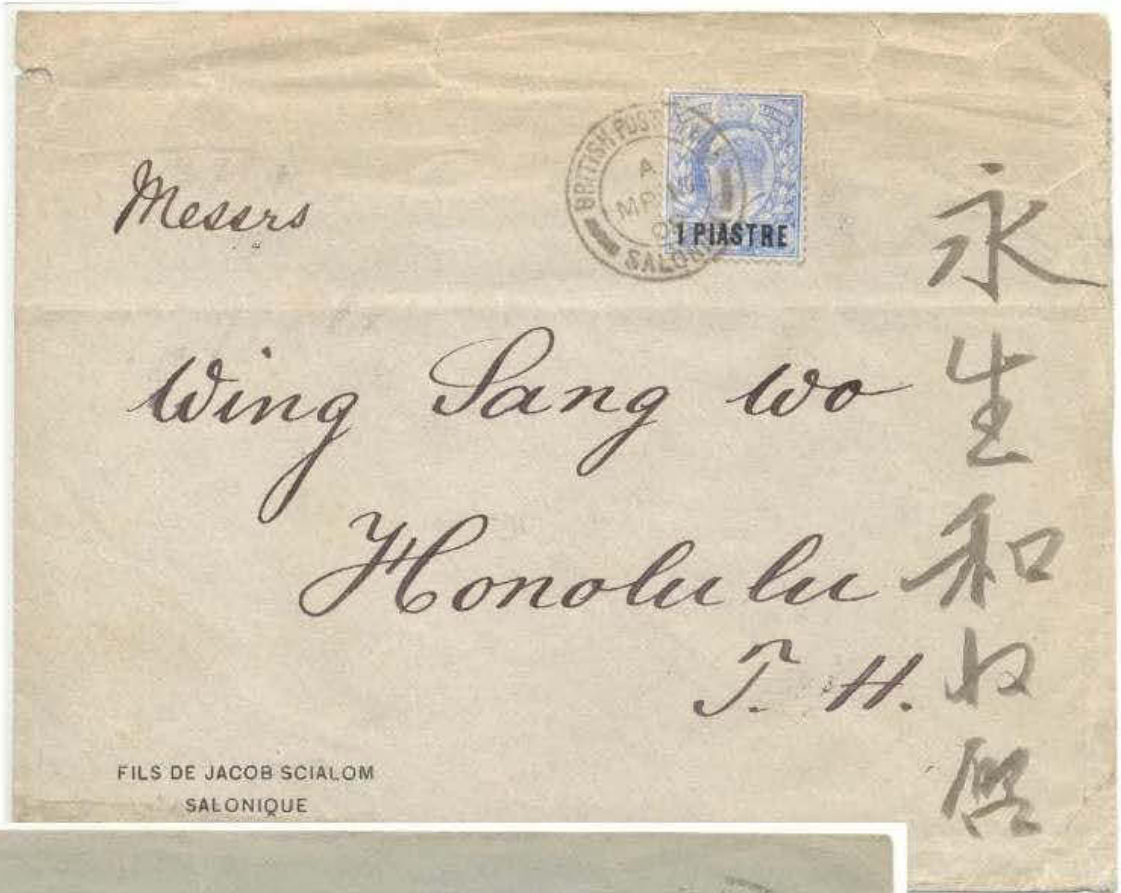


27/8/12 to Kobe, Japan (16/9), postcard rate.

**BPO Salonica**  
Hawaii / East Siberia

**Unusual Destinations**

10/3/08 to  
Honolulu,  
Hawaii,  
single rate  
cover.

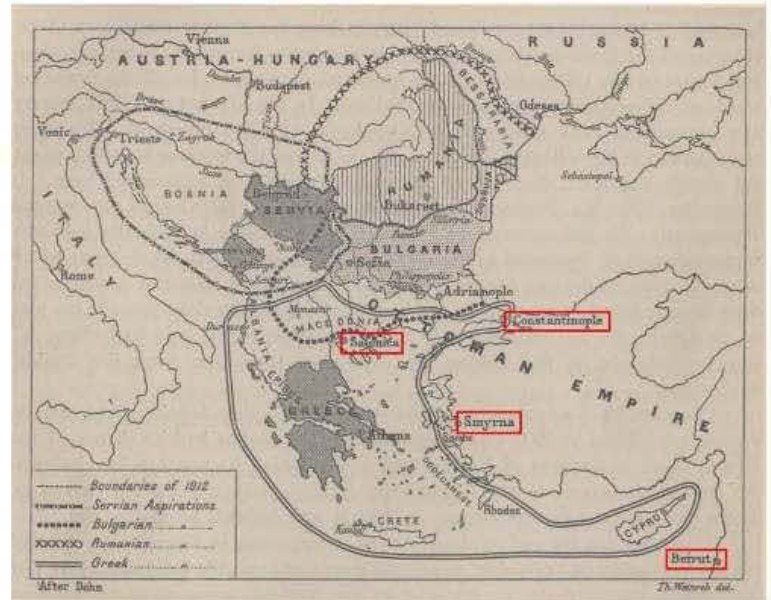


13/3/14 to Chita (13/3 Old Calendar), East Siberia, single rate via the Trans - Siberian Railway.

This – the last Section of Part One – is devoted to the effect of War on the mail from British Levant. It deals with: 1) The Balkan Wars of 1912-13, and 2) The WW1.

The **First Balkan War** broke out on **8 October 1912** when Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia, having large parts of their ethnic populations under Ottoman sovereignty, attacked the Ottoman Empire, terminating its five-century rule in the Balkans in a seven-month campaign resulting in the Treaty of London.

The **Second Balkan War** broke out on **16 June 1913** when Bulgaria, dissatisfied with its gains, attacked its former allies, Serbia and Greece. Their armies repulsed the Bulgarian offensive and counter-attacked penetrating into Bulgaria, while Romania and the Ottomans used the favourable time to intervene against Bulgaria to win territorial gains. In the resulting Treaty of Bucharest, Bulgaria lost most of the



The War interrupted communications along the railway line from Constantinople West. Likewise the Salonica – Nish – Belgrade railway was fought over, the usual transit time to European destinations was considerably affected, as mail was now routed via Greek ports.

### Outbreak of the Balkan Wars

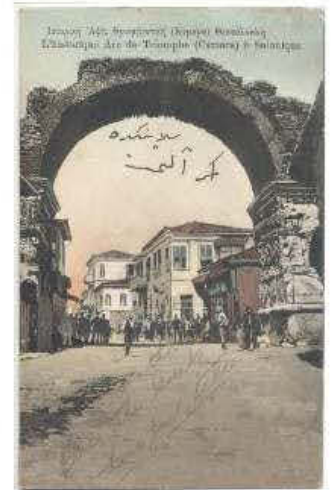


7/10/12 Salonica to Paris, commercially used 1d deep carmine postcard (CP56) overprinted **LEVANT**. Posted the day before the War broke out. As there is no arrival b/s it is not possible to tell whether it made the last train service to Europe.

**The British Postal Service in the Levant**  
**The Balkan Wars 1912-3**

**Effect of War**  
**The Capture of Salonica**

Greek forces capture Salonica on 7/11/12. A British Sailor serving on a RN ship sends the following postcard with a note on the picture side: "this is the place the Greeks have just taken".



11/11/12 Beshika Bay, Turkey to Portsmouth carried in the closed RN Mailbag and through one of the British Post Offices in the area. Postage paid in cash and as the ship's 1d stamp stock run out, the card received the 'LONDON PAID' handstamp. Due to the War it took 11 days to reach London instead of the usual 4-5 days.

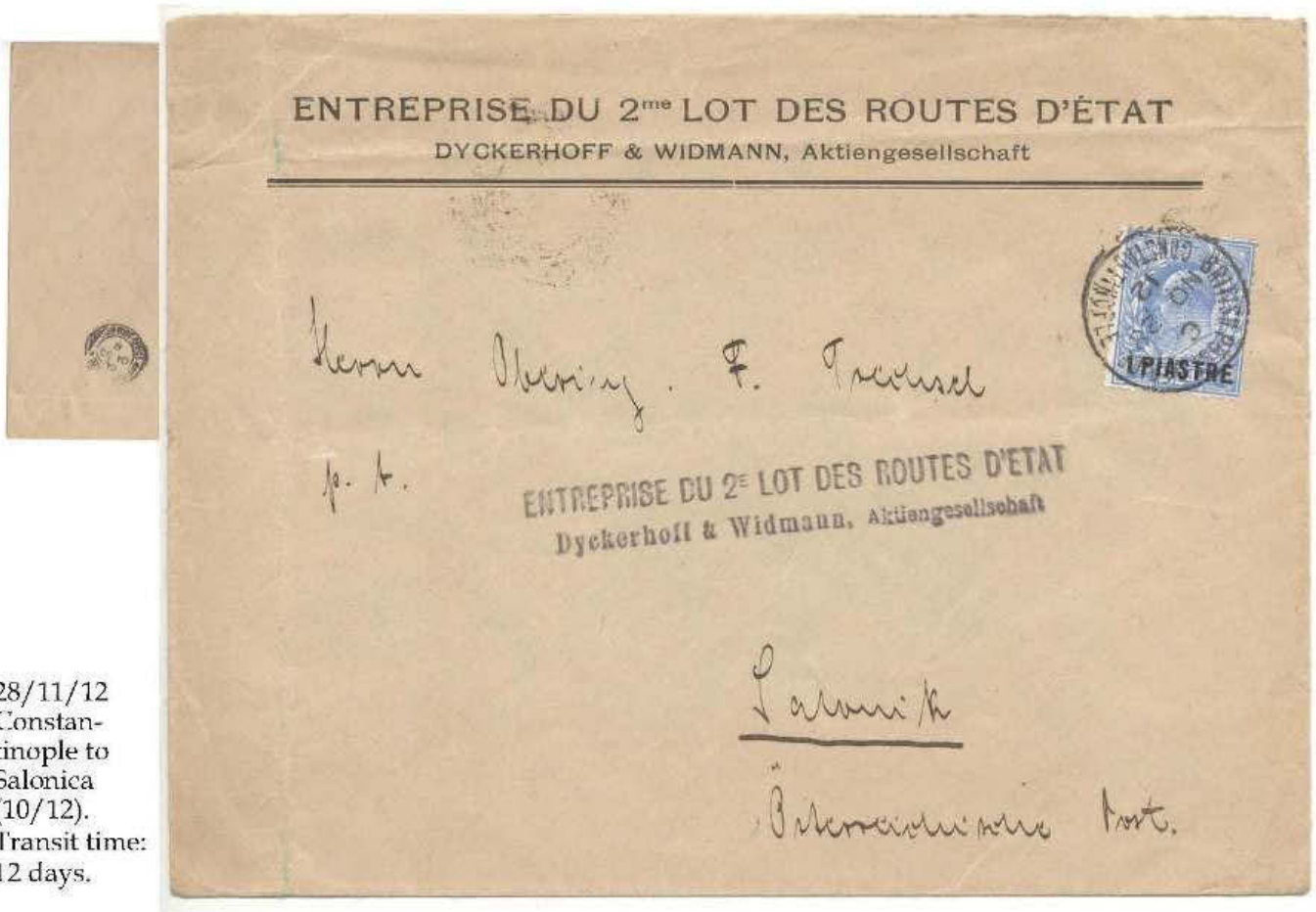


14/11/12 Salonica to London, the earliest recorded cover after the liberation of the city.

**The British Postal Service in the Levant**  
**The Balkan Wars 1912-3**

**Effect of War**  
**Communications Disruption**

Communication between the British PO in (the now Greek) Salonica and the British POs in Constantinople and Smyrna was severely affected, the usual transit time of 1-3 days became about 2 weeks.



28/11/12  
 Constantinople to  
 Salonica  
 (10/12).  
 Transit time:  
 12 days.



16/1/13 Salonica to  
 Aleppo (2/3), via  
 the British PO  
 Smyrna (27/1).  
 Transit time  
 between the two  
 British POs:  
 11 days.

Hours after the liberation of Salonica, a few Bulgarian Army units were granted permission by the Greeks to settle in the city resulting in a very tense situation as Bulgarians coveted Salonica too. The future of the city seemed uncertain.



3/4/13 Salonica to Regensburg, Germany. Message reads: "...the city is full of Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian troops and no one really knows who will finally conquer Salonica..."

The Bulgarians, dissatisfied with their share of territorial gains of the First Balkan War, attack the Greek forces on 17<sup>th</sup> June near Nigrita, Northern Greece and so starting the Second Balkan War.



17/6/13 Salonica to Bradford postcard sent on the day the Bulgarian offensive started the Second Balkan War. Impossible to say if/when the card arrived safely.

## The British Postal Service in the Levant First World War

## Effect of War Service Suspended (Vienna)

The First World War broke out on 28/7/14. The Parcel Post and Money Order services were suspended. Again, railway connections from Constantinople West and Salonica North were interrupted. Alternative routes were employed mainly by ship to Pireaus, Marseilles or Brindisi. Transit times were severely affected.

The two covers below from Constantinople and Smyrna were both posted on the day the War broke out and returned from Vienna with "Zurück! / Keine Beförderungsgelegenheit" cachet.



Constantinople  
28/7/14 to  
London.



Smyrna  
28/7/14 to  
New York.



**The British Postal Service in the Levant  
First World War**

**Effect of War  
Roundabout Routes**



6/8/14 Salonica to Newark, USA (31/8). It took 9 days to London (instead of the usual 4 days by rail) as it was dispatched by Sea via Marseilles or Brindisi.



31/8/14  
Stamboul to  
Leeds (14/9)  
via London  
(13/9), double  
rate Registered  
cover.  
Transit time to  
London: 13  
days.

One of three  
recorded  
covers from  
Stamboul in  
the period  
August -  
September  
1914.



3/9/14 Smyrna to Vienna. As the railway lines from Constantinople West and Salonica North were closed, the cover was routed via Piraeus (transit backstamp).



7/10/14 Salonica to Lucerne, Switzerland. 1912, 1d scarlet postcard (CP62) overprinted LEVANT, sent a week after the rest of the British Levant POs had closed. The Salonica PO operated until the end of October (a very late use on 13/10/14 is shown in the Salonica Section).



13/9/14 Salonica to Calcutta (7-8/10) postcard, showing Indian mark "Passed by censor."  
This is the only recorded (up to 1914) British Levant item with a censor mark.



23/9/14 Smyrna to Buenos Ayres (7/11). Transit time to London: 18 days. A very late cover from Smyrna as the PO closed only a week later.

## Part Two: 1919 - 1923

<i>Smyrna</i>	<i>pp 97-112</i>
<i>Constantinople</i>	<i>113-128</i>

### Smyrna 1919-22

Re-opened on 1st March 1919 under the enterprise of Commander Dixon, the Senior Allied Naval Officer. Accounting was made in Sterling alone. Ordinary British stamps and stationery were used. Pre-war surcharged items are occasionally found but the surcharged value in Piastres was ignored in these cases.

In the period 15/5/1919 - 8/9/1922 Smyrna was under Greek administration.



13/3/19 to Manchester, six-fold registered letter paying 1s 1/2 d (the Piastre surcharge was ignored). Passed by Censor in London (9-14/4). Censored mail originating from the BPO in Smyrna is found up to July 1919.

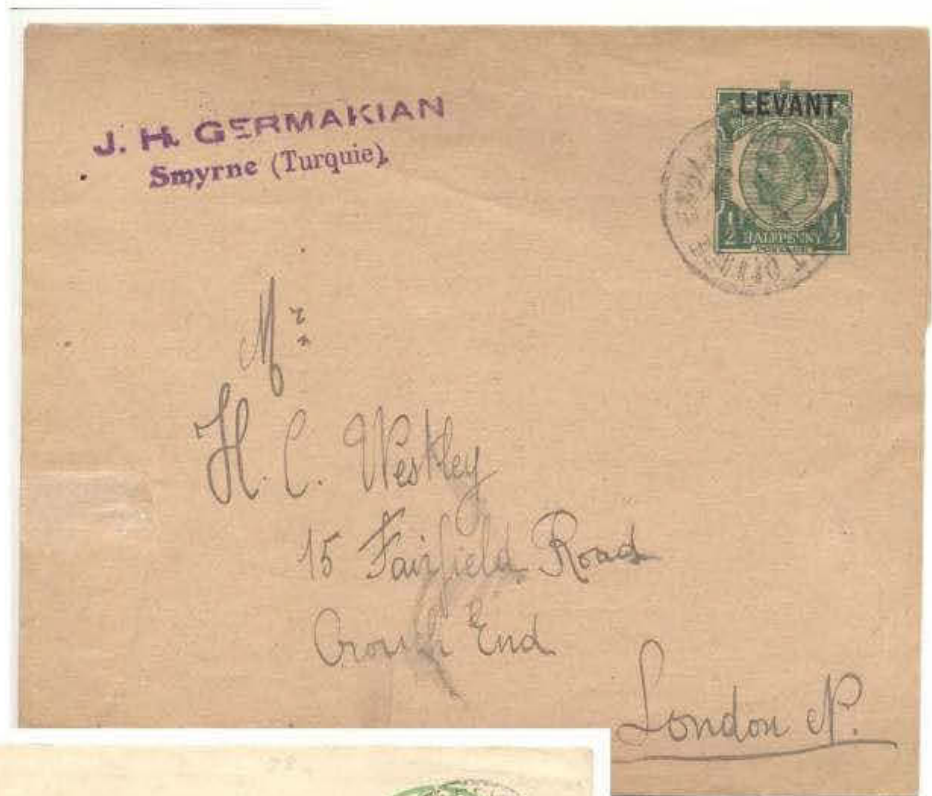
**The earliest recorded letter from the British Post Office in Smyrna in the 1919-22 period.**

The Postal Rates remained fixed until the closure of the office:

Printed Paper	½ d
Postcards	1 d
Letter up to 20 grams	2 ½ d
each extra 20 grams	1 ½ d
Registration fee	2 d
Acknowledgment of Receipt fee	2 d

17/12/19 to London.  
1912, ½ d green Newspaper  
Wrapper (WP25),  
overprinted LEVANT.

Pre-war stationery used in  
the post-war period.



6/12/20 to Zurich.  
1913-20, ½ d green  
Envelope (tongued flap at  
left - EP54), size E.

**Most unusual from  
Smyrna.**

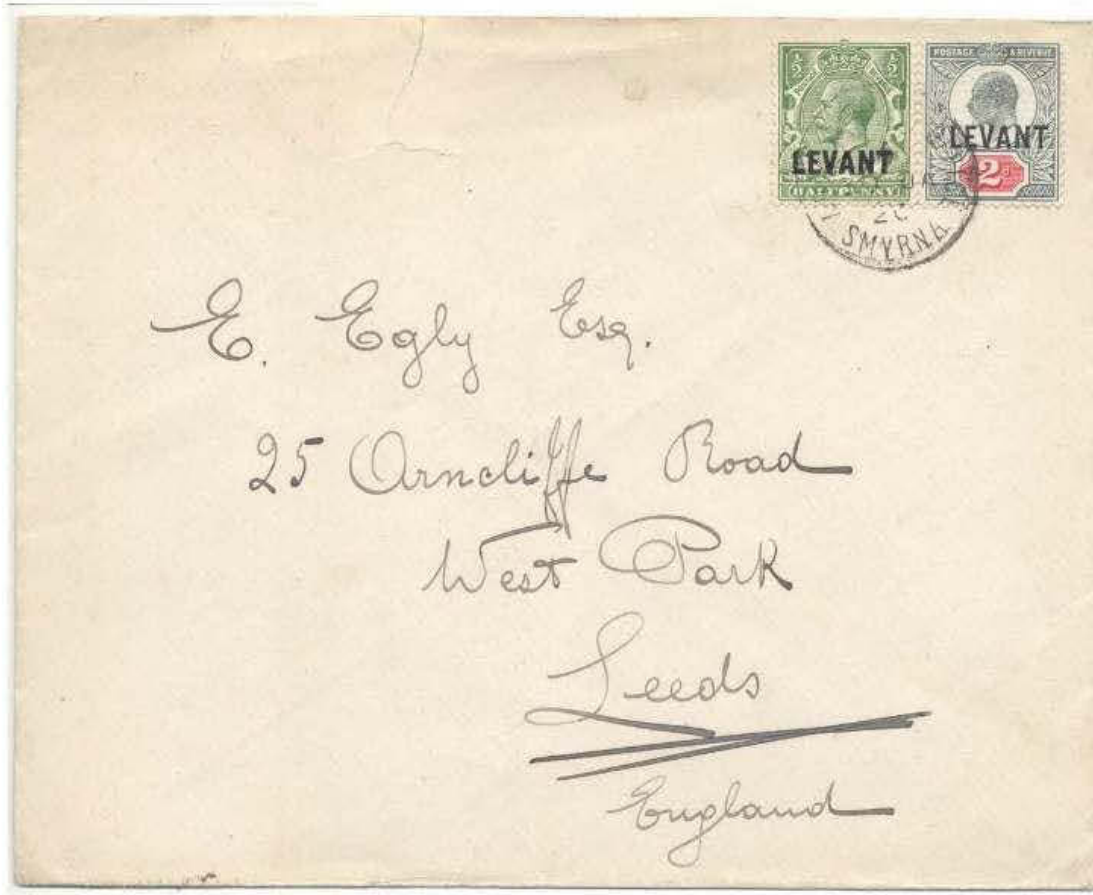


13/7/20 to Harar, Abyssinia (Ethiopia), via Alexandria (21/7) at the 1d postcard rate. Scarce destination.

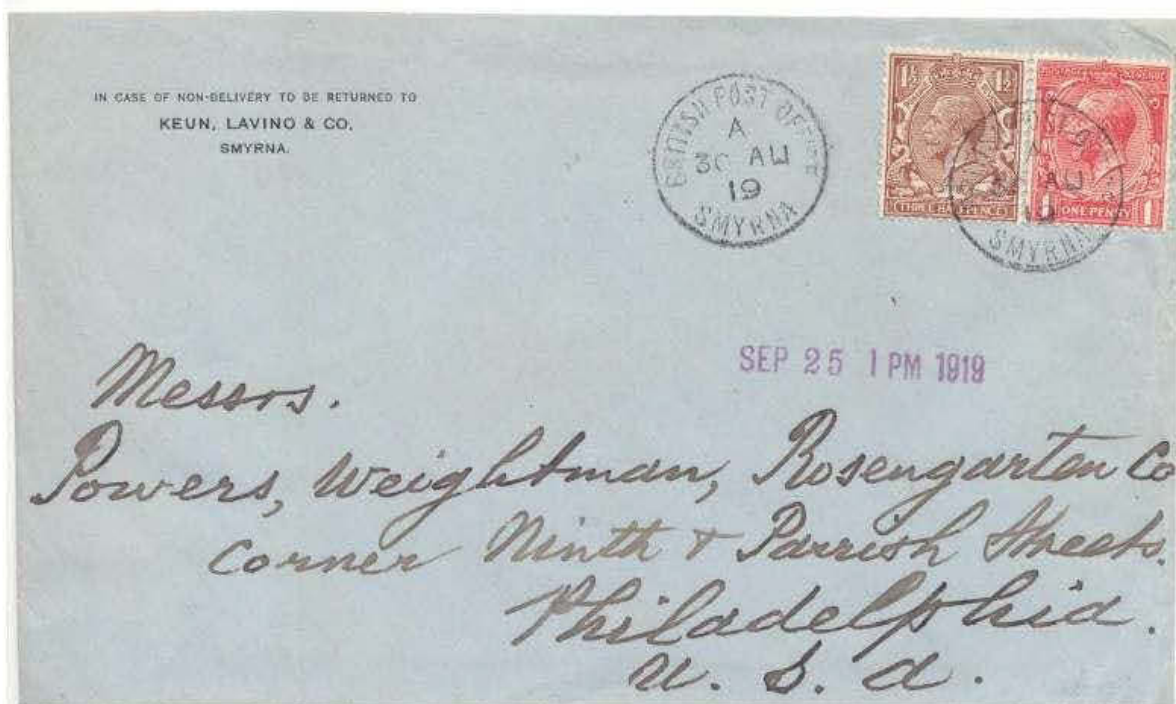


13/10/20 to New York, unpaid postcard. The pre-war "T" handstamp of Smyrna was applied and a 4c (double the deficiency) postage due was collected on arrival.

As shown previously, mail could be franked with pre-war Piastre overprints. A few items are known with pre-war LEVANT overprints, but the vast majority of mail was franked with ordinary GB stamps.



30/1/20 to Leeds at 2 ½ d single letter rate franked with LEVANT overprints.



30/8/19 to Philadelphia single rate paid with ordinary GB stamps.



28/1/22 to Constantinople (30/1), double rate Registered letter.

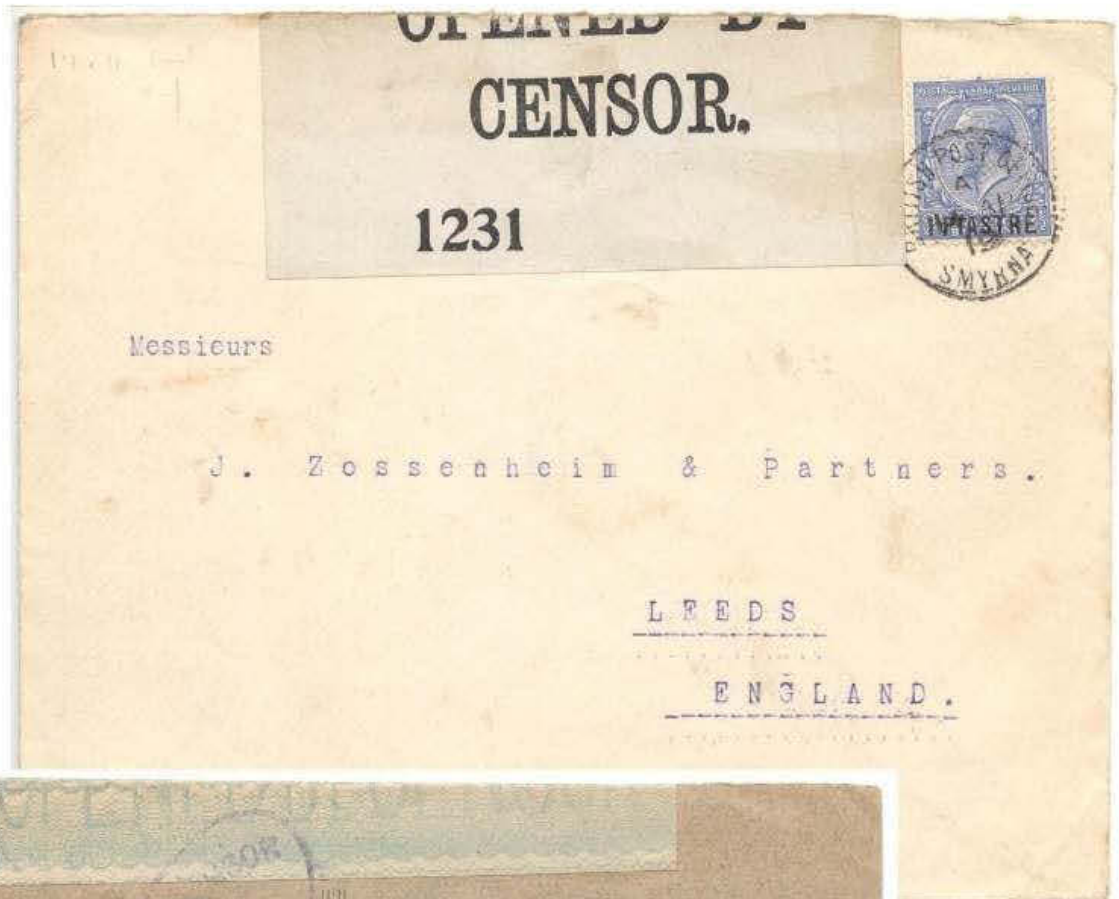


c1920: to London, front portion of large Registered letter, which purports to be a twelfth rate item. Rate: 2d Reg'n Fee + 2 ½ d first 20g, + 1 ½ d for each of the next 11 steps = 21d (½ d overpayment). The use of the 8d value in Smyrna was previously unrecorded - This is the discovery piece.



Mail posted in the British PO Smyrna was never censored **in Smyrna**, but early mail of the period March - July 1919 is found censored by the British **on arrival in GB or Egypt**. From the end of July 1919 no censorship was applied and this was due to the fact that Smyrna was by then - on Allies' order - under Greek administration.

14/4/19 to  
Leeds, censored  
in London.



20/6/19 to  
Alexandria  
(11/7), censored  
in Egypt by the  
British.



21/7/19 to Zurich (7/8), single rate Registered letter of the Imperial Ottoman Bank, routed via Piraeus. The identity of the sender must have excited the Greek Censors.

**An unprecedented case of Greek censorship on mail originating from the British PO Smyrna.**

**BPO Smyrna**

**1919-1922**

**Use of the British PO by the Greeks**

The British PO in Smyrna was very successful; even the Greek Authorities and population made use of its services even though there existed a local Greek Post Office!



13/4/20 From "ΥΠΑΤΗ ΑΡΜΟΣΤΕΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ ΕΝ ΣΜΥΡΝΗ" (High Commiserate of Greece in Smyrna) to Alexandria (19/4), single rate Registered letter.



6/6/21 From the editor of the Greek Newspaper "ΑΜΑΛΘΕΙΑ" to the ex chief marshal Leonidas Paraskevopoulos in Paris, single rate Registered letter.

A few of the most sought-after King George V Profile Head (wmk Simple Cypher) stamps are recorded cancelled with Smyrna postmarks. Perhaps the best known of these is the 2 1/2 d "dull Prussian - blue" SG spec. N21(17) of which a small number of loose stamps are known including two blocks.



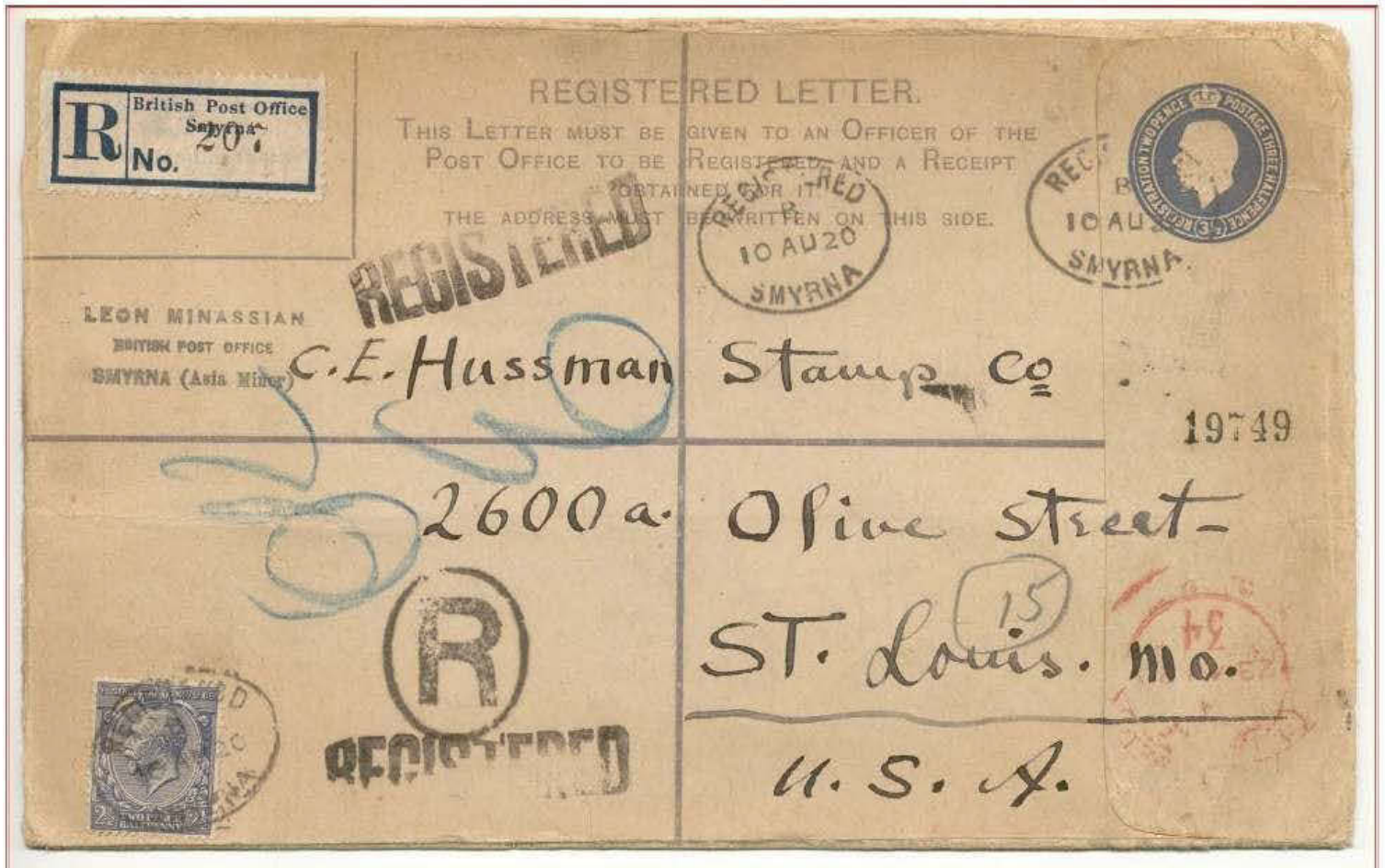
(e)

14 /2/20 to Dresden (23/2), single rate Registered letter. Currency control tape and handstamp applied in Germany.

**The only recorded cover franked with the elusive 2 1/2 d dull Prussian blue.**

The 2 1/2 d "Indigo-blue on Toned Paper" SG spec. N21(15) is considered to be one of the rarest KGV stamps. Seldom seen used in GB or abroad, one other copy on piece is recorded used in Constantinople in 1920.

The cover below was discovered by the exhibitor. Its use in Smyrna was previously unrecorded.



(e)

10/8/20 to St Louis (4/9), USA at double rate. 1918, 3 1/2 d blue PSRE (RP29), size H.

The only recorded cover from British Levant franked with the rare 2 1/2 d "Indigo-blue on Toned Paper" stamp.

A major rarity of KGV philately.

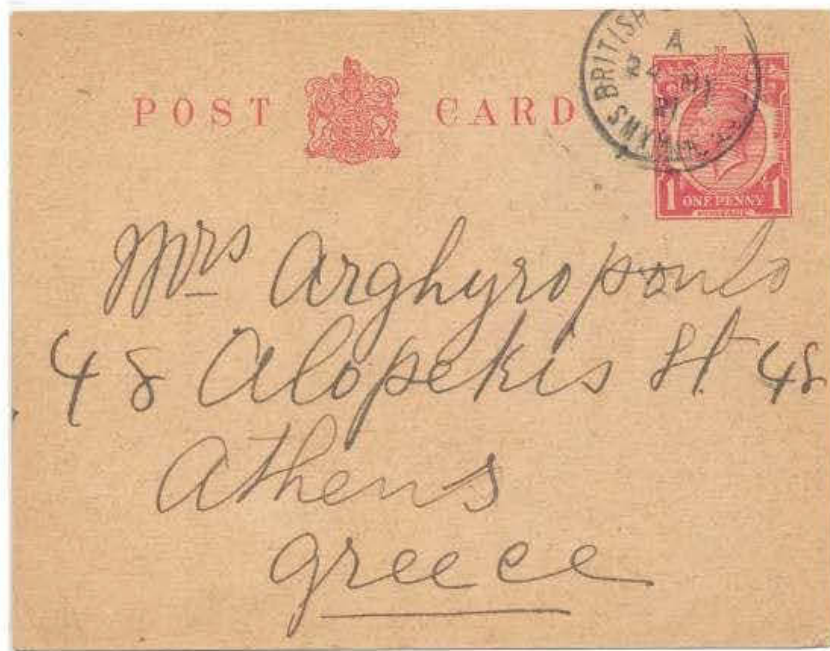
Pre-War stocks of this double card was available in the Post Office to be used as ordinary postcards. Both halves could be used for this purpose.



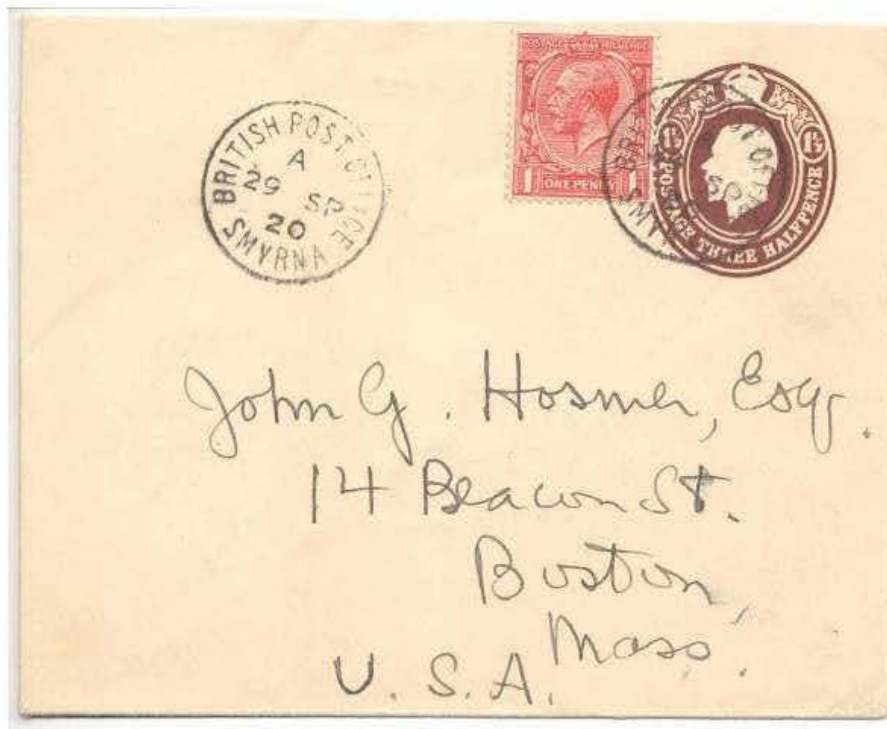
12/8/20 to Kifissia, Athens. 1902, 1d carmine **Outward** part of originally double foreign reply card (CP47), overprinted LEVANT. Commercially used as an ordinary postcard.



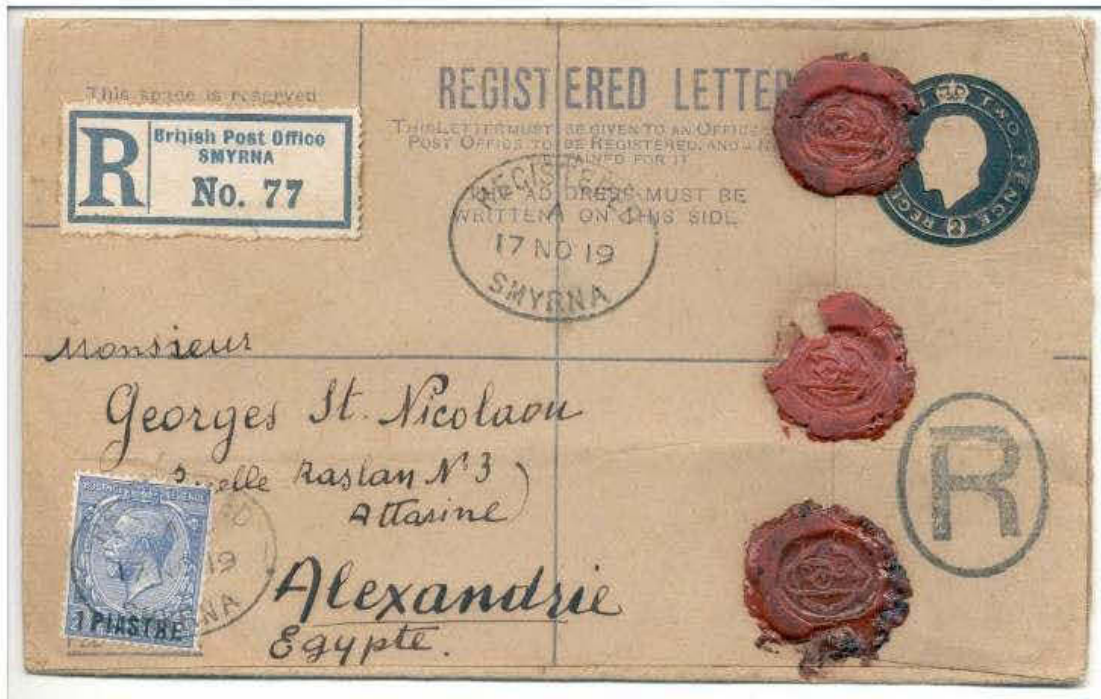
16/12/20 to Athens. 1902, 1d carmine **Reply** part of originally double foreign reply card (CP47), overprinted LEVANT. Commercially used as an ordinary postcard.



24/5/21 to Athens. 1918, 1d carmine inland card (CP73), overprinted LEVANT. Commercially used and **the only recorded use from Smyrna.**



29/9/20 to Boston. 1919, 1 ½ d brown Envelope (EP61), size H uprated for the foreign single rate. Commercially used and **the only recorded use from Smyrna.**



17/11/19 to Alexandria, single rate Registered Letter. 1915, 2d black Forces PSRE (RPF1), size G2. Civilian use.



20/1/21 to Kansas City (23/2) at double rate. 1920, 4d grey-green PSRE (RP30), size H.





18/11/20 to Paris via Brindisi (23/11) at double rate. 1920, 3d brown + 1d carmine PSRE (RP32), size G. Rare use.



13/12/21 to Leeds (20/12) at single rate. 1921, 5d orange PSRE (RP34), size G. One of only two recorded examples.



Turkish cavalry entered into Smyrna on September 9<sup>th</sup> 1922. The Greek army had evacuated the city the day before. During the confusion and anarchy that followed, a great portion of the city was set ablaze in the Great Fire of Smyrna.

The British Post Office was burned down and under the new administration was never allowed to resume business.

Left: Reproduction of a photo showing the British PO after it was burned down on September 15<sup>th</sup> 1922.



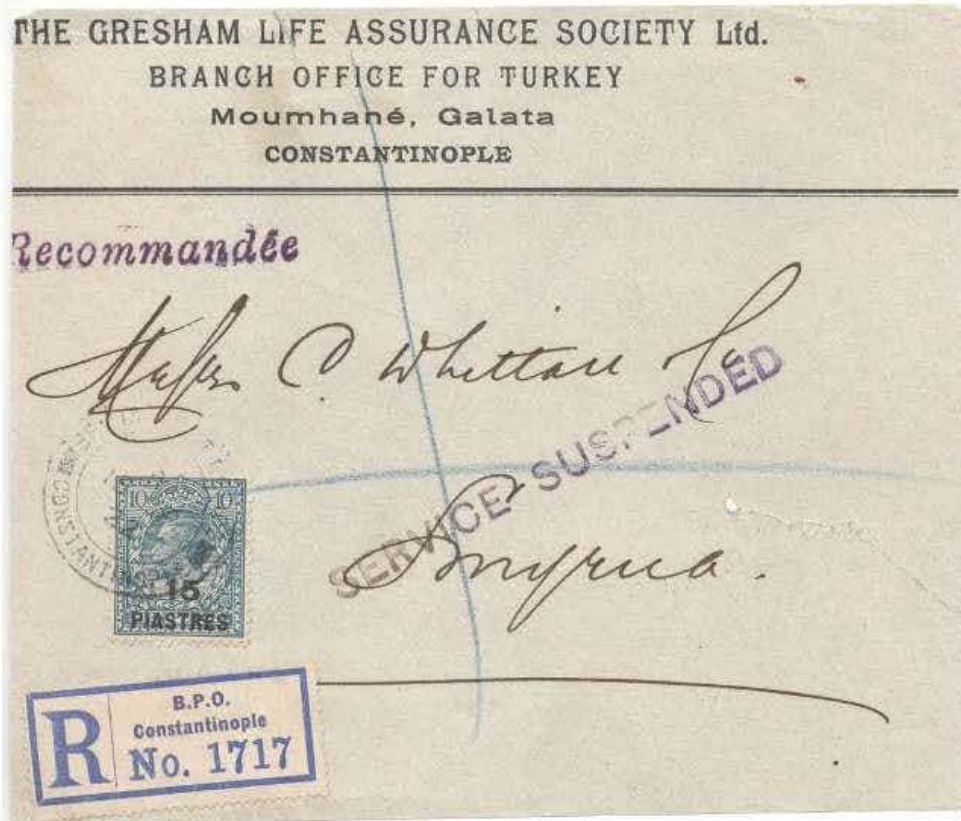
6/9/22 to  
Delemont,  
Switzerland  
(18/9).

Due to the extraordinary conditions of the time -the Turks were about to capture the city- the normal postal arrangements were abadoned and a safer route was chosen, namely by British Warship. London transit backstamp for 16/9.



The latest recorded letter of Smyrna, just a few days before the distruction of the city.

The suspension of the British Postal Service at Smyrna was officially advertised in the PO Circular of the 20<sup>th</sup> September 1922: "*The Postal Service at Smyrna is suspended and until further notice no letter or parcel Mails will be accepted for transmission to that place.*"



15/9/22 Constantinople to Smyrna, cover front at registered single rate, showing a fine strike of the BPO Constantinople postmark SERVICE SUSPENDED.

One of two examples recorded of this BPO Constantinople mark.



16/9/22 Liverpool to Smyrna, returned to sender due to the suspension of mail services.

## Constantinople 1919 - 23

The British Army PO in Constantinople started accepting civilian mail on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1919. It switched to civilian control on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1919. Accounting in this period was done in Sterling alone. The most important foreign rates were (in red the June 1921 rate increases imposed by the 1920 UPU Madrid Congress):

	1919 - 12/6/1921	13/6/1921 - 8/1921
Postcards	1 d	2d
Letter per 20 grams	2 ½ d	3d
Each extra 20 grams	1 ½ d	1 ½ d (unchanged)
Registration Fee	2 d	3d



17/1/21 to Dardanelles at the 1d postcard rate. The British franking was not accepted by the Turkish Post Office, "0" marking placed next to the stamp.

17/2/21 to Brussels, franked with Ottoman 40 Paras stamps for the postcard rate but put in the British PO postbox. Stamps were not valid for payment, the card was taxed double the deficiency at 20 c. on arrival.



Obtenu sur Plaque. Jougla.



1.



2.



3.



4.

1. 11/6/21 to London, at the minimum 1/2 d unsealed cover rate.
2. 19/7/19 to Leeds, sample of no value paying 1 1/2 d sample triple rate plus 2d Registration fee.
3. Parcel Post label paying postage 1s 8d, dated Constantinople 1/5/20. **Only one other example is known.**

4. 25/7/19 to Amsterdam (8/8), paying 7 1/2 d for a Registered eleven - fold Commercial Papers cover.

Rate calculation:  
2 d Reg'n Fee  
5 1/2 d (1/2 d per 2 ounces x 11 steps) Commercial Papers  
Rate. A total of 7 1/2 d

The only recorded Commercial Paper Rate item from Constantinople in this period.



29/7/19 to Zurich (15/8) single rate Registered Letter. 1915, 2d black Forces PSRE (RPF1), size G2. Civilian use. Censored in Constantinople by the British Military Authority and by the French near Switzerland.



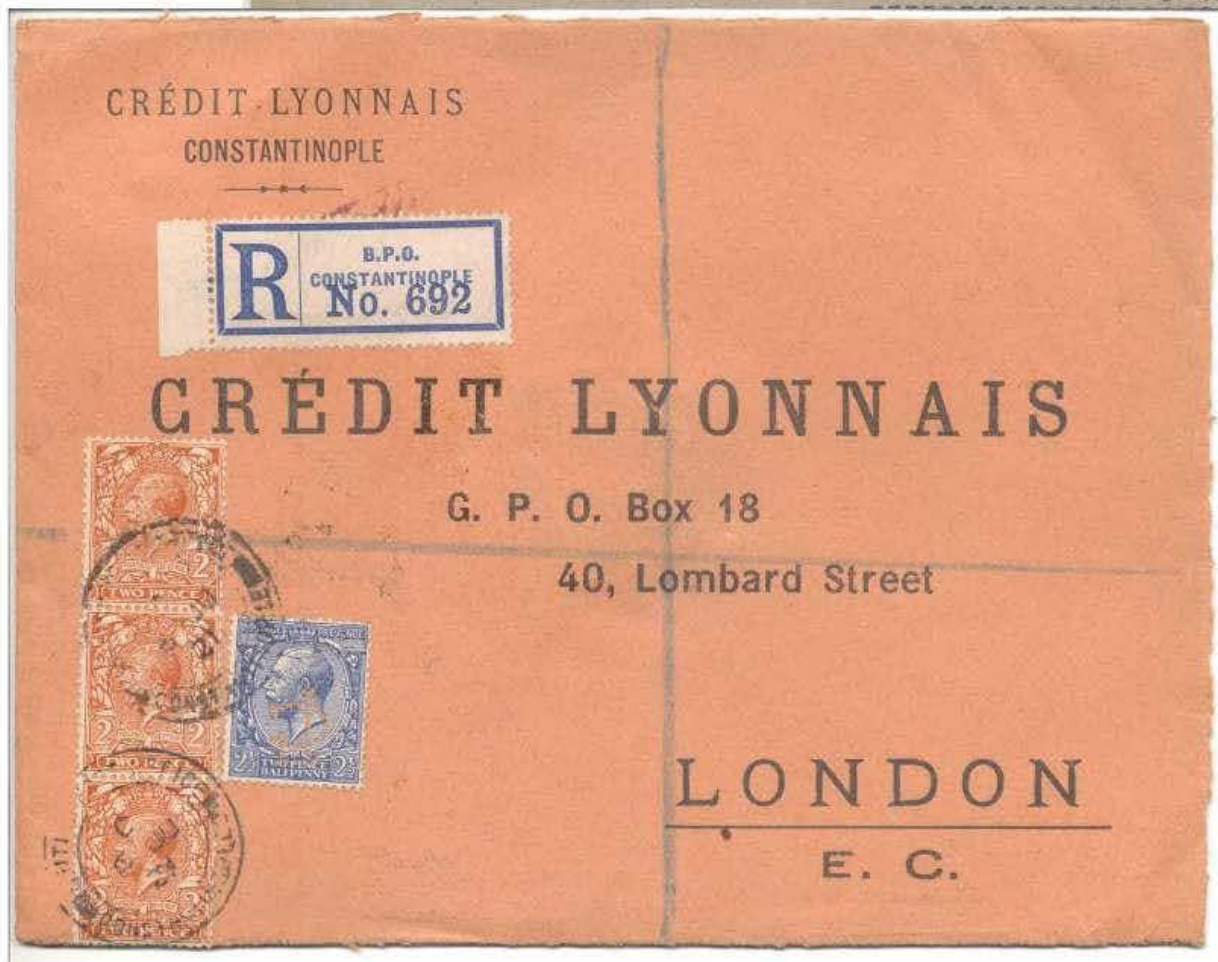
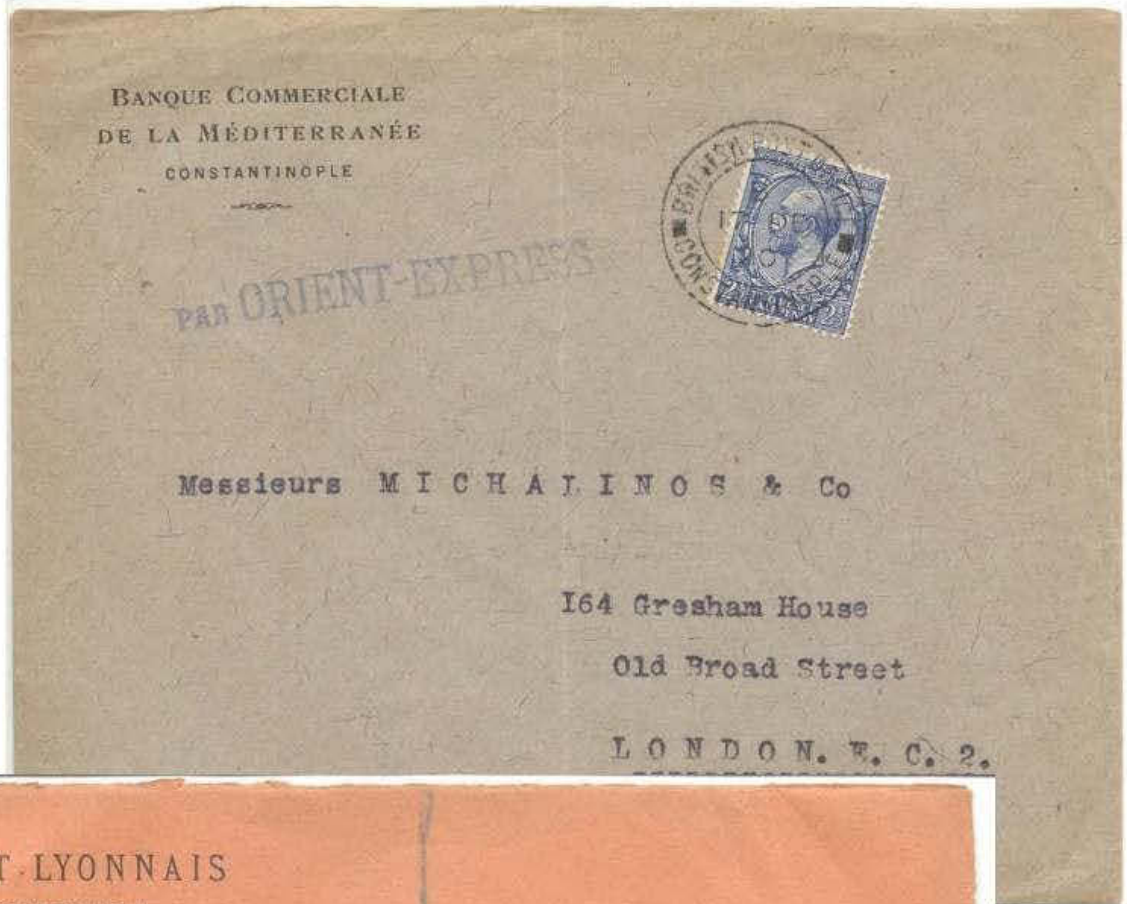
6/1/21 to Schatzalp, Switzerland (14/1) double rate registered cover at 6d. The use of the KGV 6d stamp in Constantinople is most unusual.

**BPO Constantinople**  
Letter Mail

**Sterling Period: 2/1919 - 8/1921**  
Orient Express

Starting from 1919 the British tried several times to negotiate with the French for their mails to be transported on the Orient Express Train Service. Limited access was granted in the winter of 1920-21, and from 4th June 1921 all British mails were boarded on the new Simplon Orient Express Train.

17/12/20 to London, single rate cover. Sender's instructional mark "PAR ORIENT EXPRESS" as this service was at the time available for British mails only occasionally.

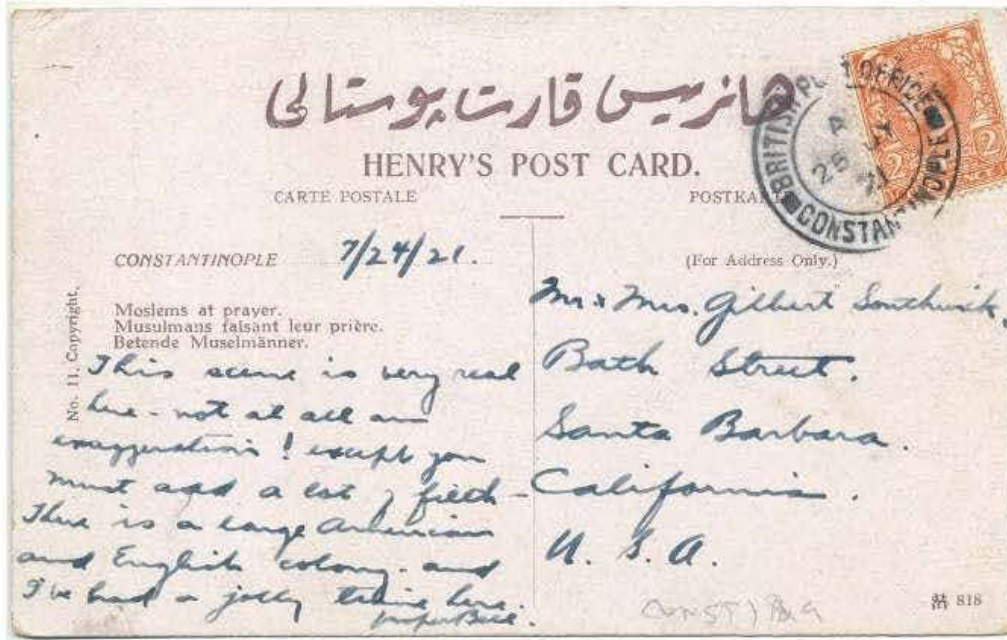


6/6/21 to London, triple rate registered cover. Stamps perfined C.L. Posted on the third day of the regular Simplon Orient Express Service.

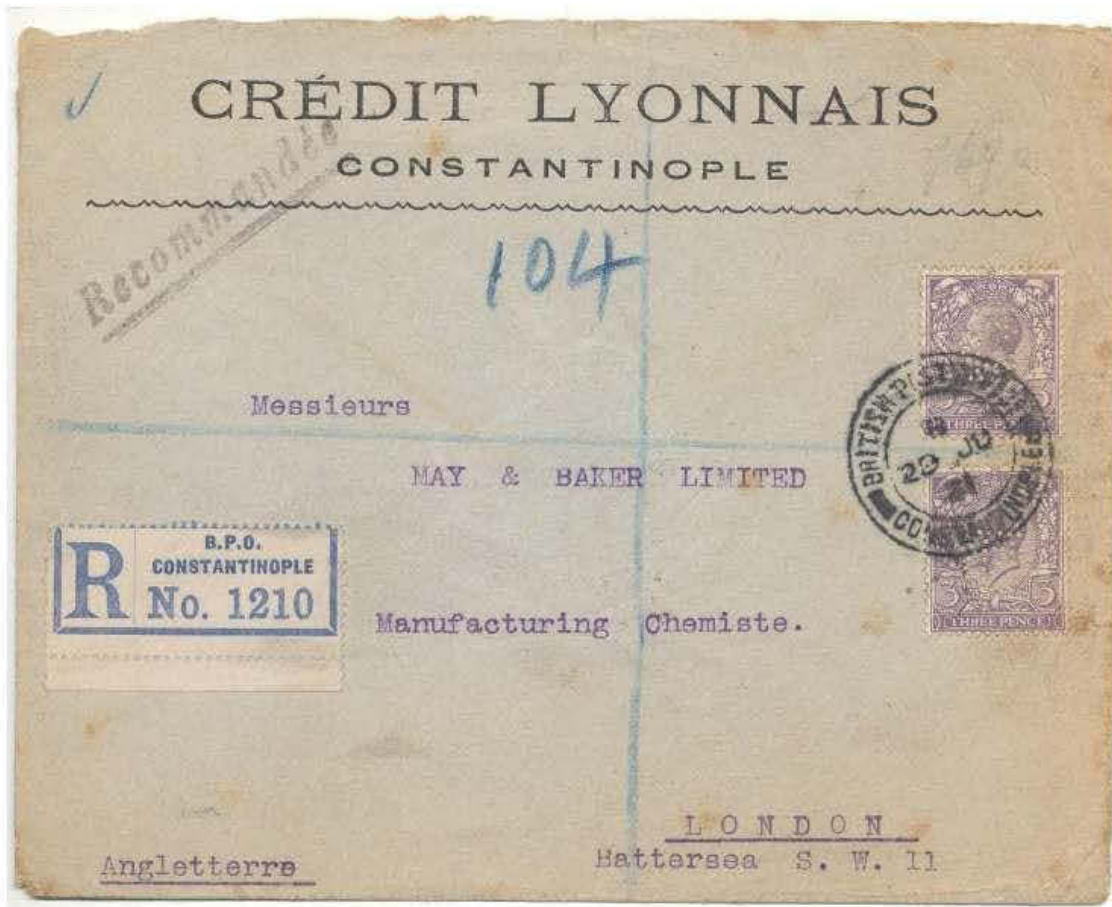
**BPO Constantinople**  
Rate Increase: June 1921

**Sterling Period: 2/1919 - 8/1921**

On 13<sup>th</sup> June 1921, the new increased rates came into effect. They were in force for only two months – until the introduction of the surcharged stamps in Piastres.



25/7/21 to Santa Barbara, California, at the new increased 2d postcard rate.



29/6/21 to London single rate Registered cover at the new increased rates (3d Reg'n Fee + 3d foreign letter rate up to 20 grams). Stamps perfined with sender's C.L. monogram.





15/3/21 to Barcelona at single rate. 1920, 4d grey-green PSRE (RP30), size G. Seldom seen.



10/2/21 to Sliema (22/2), Malta at single rate. 1920, 2d black + 2d orange PSRE (RP31), size G. Seldom seen.



**Top:** 7/9/20  
to Ponderoyen  
(18/10) West  
Bank, British  
Guiana, a  
double rate  
Reg cover.



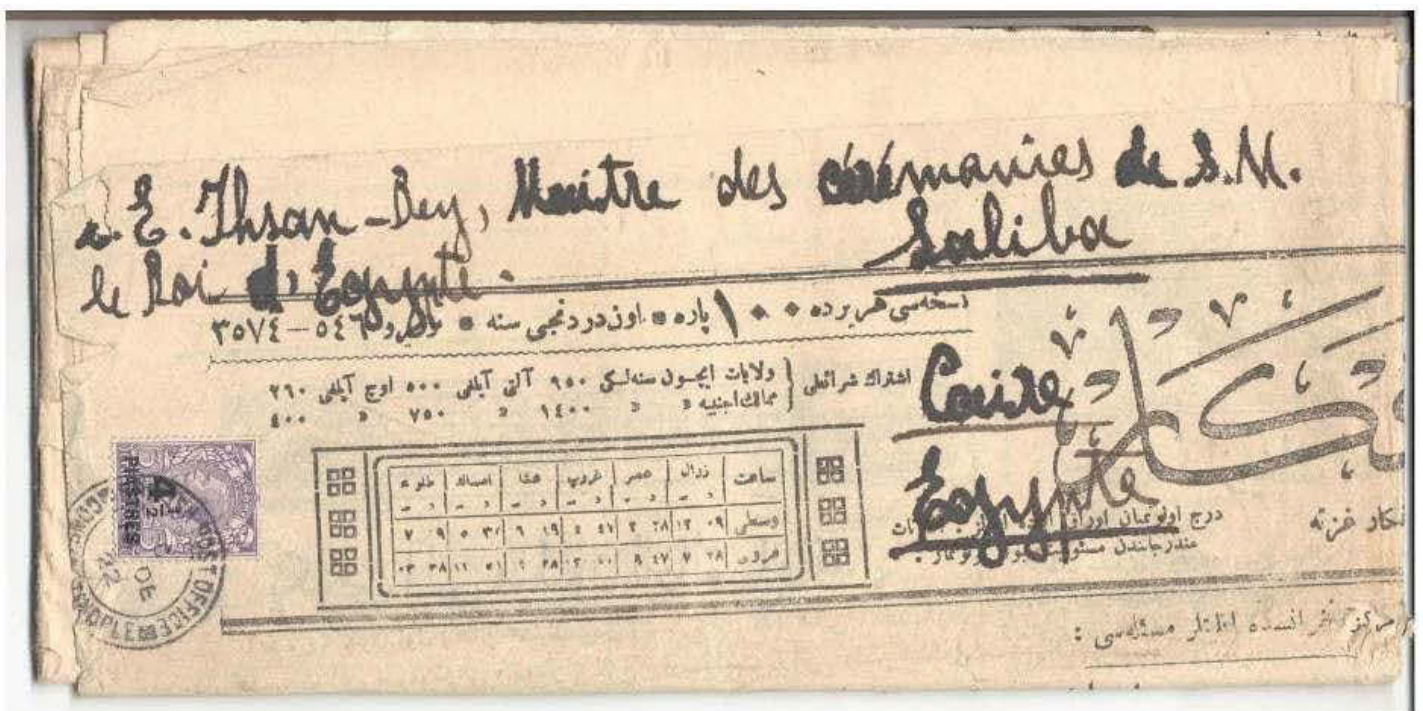
**Bottom:**  
1/4/21 to  
Shanghai,  
China, single  
rate cover.

**BPO Constantinople**  
Postal Rates

**Piastre Period: 8/1921 - 9/1923**  
Printed Matter (Newspapers)

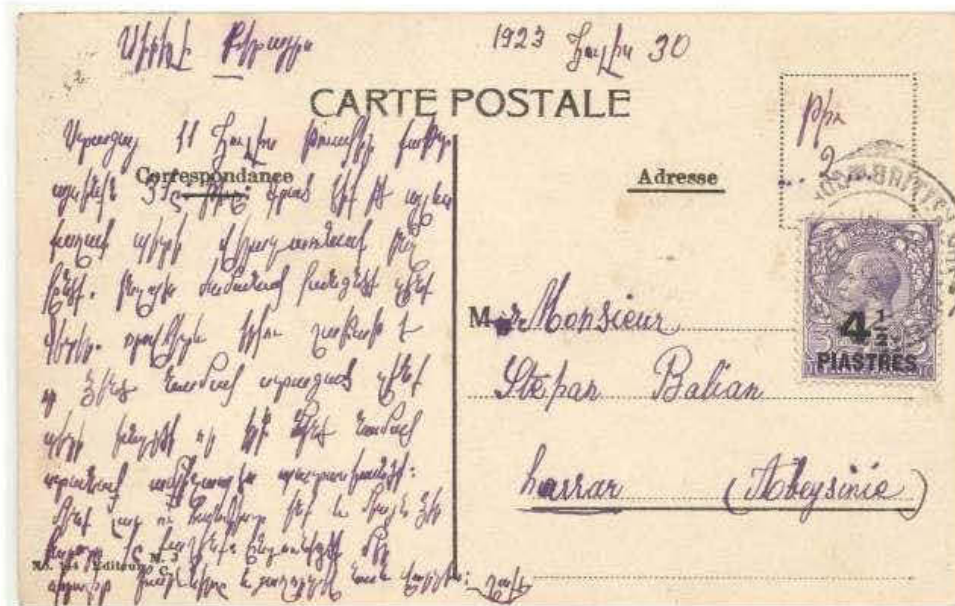
In Constantinople the economic situation deteriorated after the war and the piastre continued to be depreciated against the pound. To prevent speculation in the purchase of Great Britain stamps with Turkish currency, the British PO surcharged the stamps in piastres. This period is called "Piastre Period" as all accounting was made in Piastres (with the sole exception of Airmail Fees which were accounted for and paid in Sterling). The most important foreign rates now became (and remained unchanged until the closure of the PO in September 1923):

	8/1921 - 9/1923
Printed Paper Rate	1 ½ Piastres
Postcards	4 ½ Piastres
Letter per 20 grams	7 ½ Piastres
Each extra 20 grams	3 ¾ Piastres
Registration Fee	7 ½ Piastres
Acknowledgment of Receipt Fee	7 ½ Piastres



18/12/22 to a Minister of the Egyptian King in Cairo, complete newspaper at triple printed matter rate.

Very few examples of the newspaper post have survived.



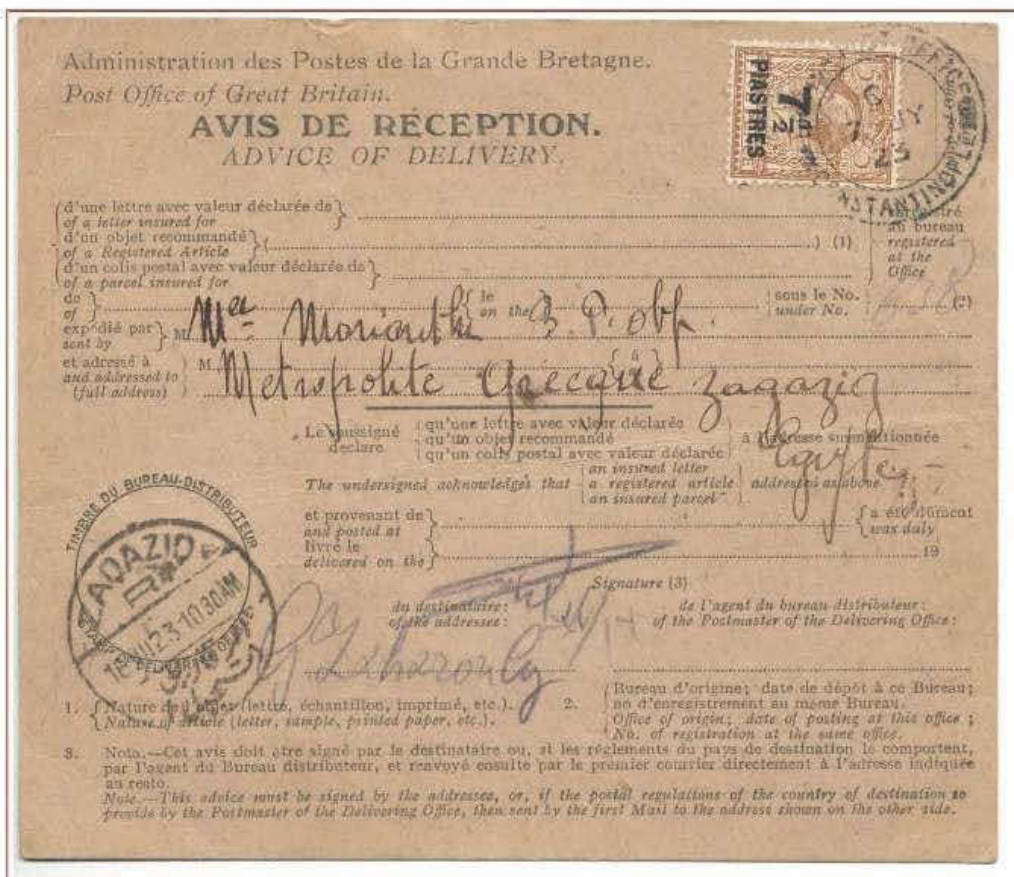
30/7/23 to Harrar, Abyssinia (Ethiopia), via Port Said (11/8) at the 4 1/2 Piastres postcard rate. Scarce destination.



24/2/23 to Richmond, Virginia postcard short paid by 3/4 Piastres. The pre-war "T" handstamp of Constantinople was applied and a 6c (double the deficiency) postage due was collected on arrival.

21/7/23 to Kotor in Dalmatia, at the single rate Registered rate of 15 Piastres. Boxed "AR" applied, the extra 7 1/2 Pi for this service would have been affixed on the special AR form.

Only two other covers known with this mark.

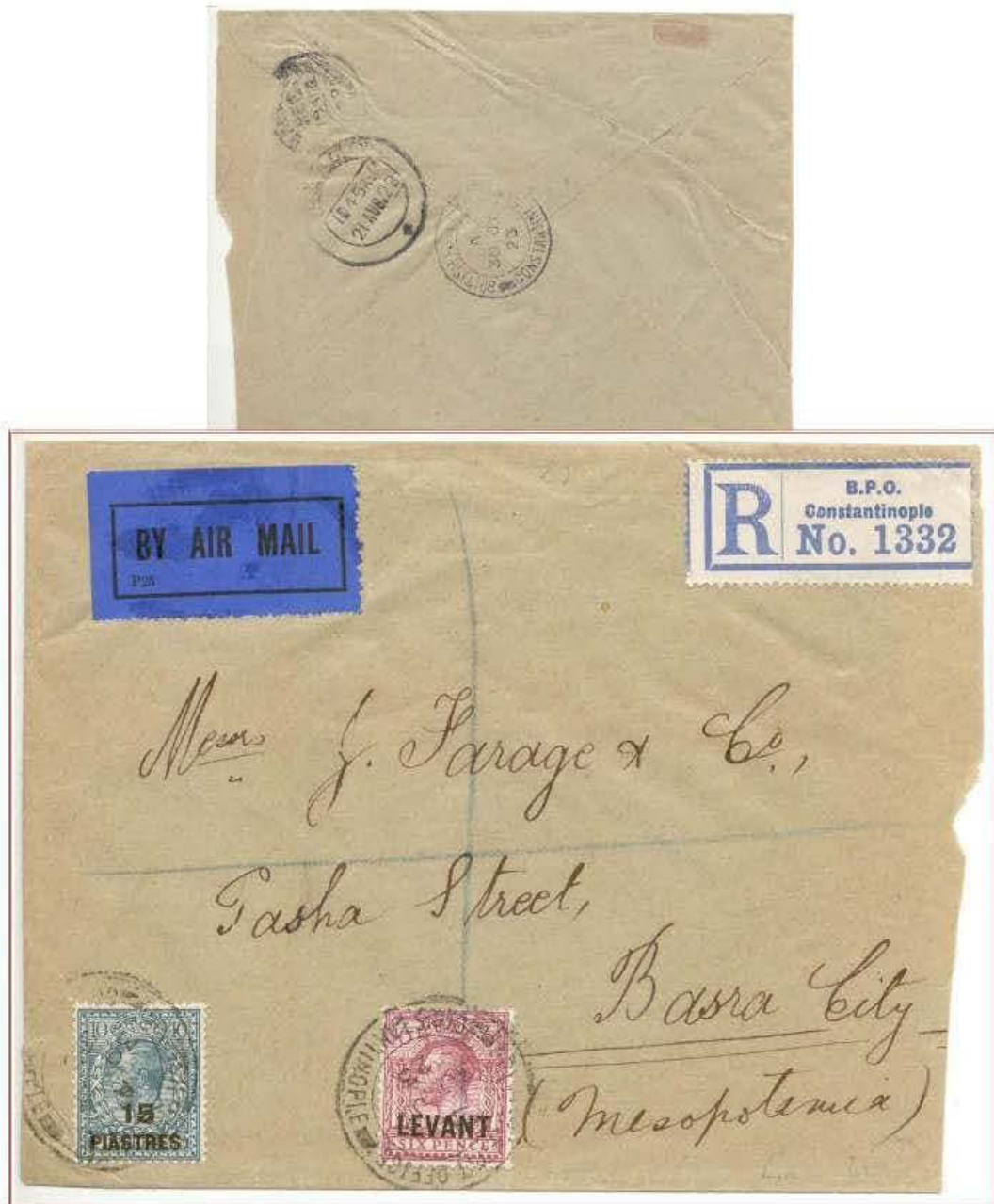


7/7/23 to Zaqaziq (16/7), Egypt via the Cairo - Port Said TPO, AR card showing the AR Fee of 7 1/2 Piastres.

The only recorded AR card from British Levant.

In 1921, the Royal Air Force began the fortnightly Desert Airmail Service between Cairo and Baghdad. From October 1921 it carried private as well as official mail. Mail from the British PO Constantinople was first accepted for these pioneer flights around February - March 1923.

The sender had to pay the usual postage plus a **special airmail fee of 6d per oz** in British currency.



30/7/23 to Basra, Iraq (21/8), single rate Registered letter at 15 Piastres with additional Airmail Fee 6d per oz. Carried to Egypt by surface mail, airmail from Cairo to Baghdad (19/8) and surface again to Basra. The flight between Cairo and Baghdad usually took two days.

**One of only four recorded commercial examples of British Levant airmail.**



19/8/22 to Porto and re-addressed within Portugal. 1921, 1 ½ d brown inland card (CP77) surcharged 4 ½ PIASTRES for the foreign postcard rate. On arrival it received the boxed 'NAO CARECE DE NOVA FRANQUIA' to affirm that postage has been properly paid by valid currency accepted by the UPU. Commercial use.



19/1/22 to Zurich. 1921, 1 ½ d brown Reply part of originally double foreign reply card (CP80), surcharged 4 ½ PIASTRES. Commercially used as a normal card.



28/12/22 to Geneva, 1921, 5d orange PSRE (RP34), size F, surcharged REGN.FEE./ 7 1/2 PIASTRES. Most elusive size.



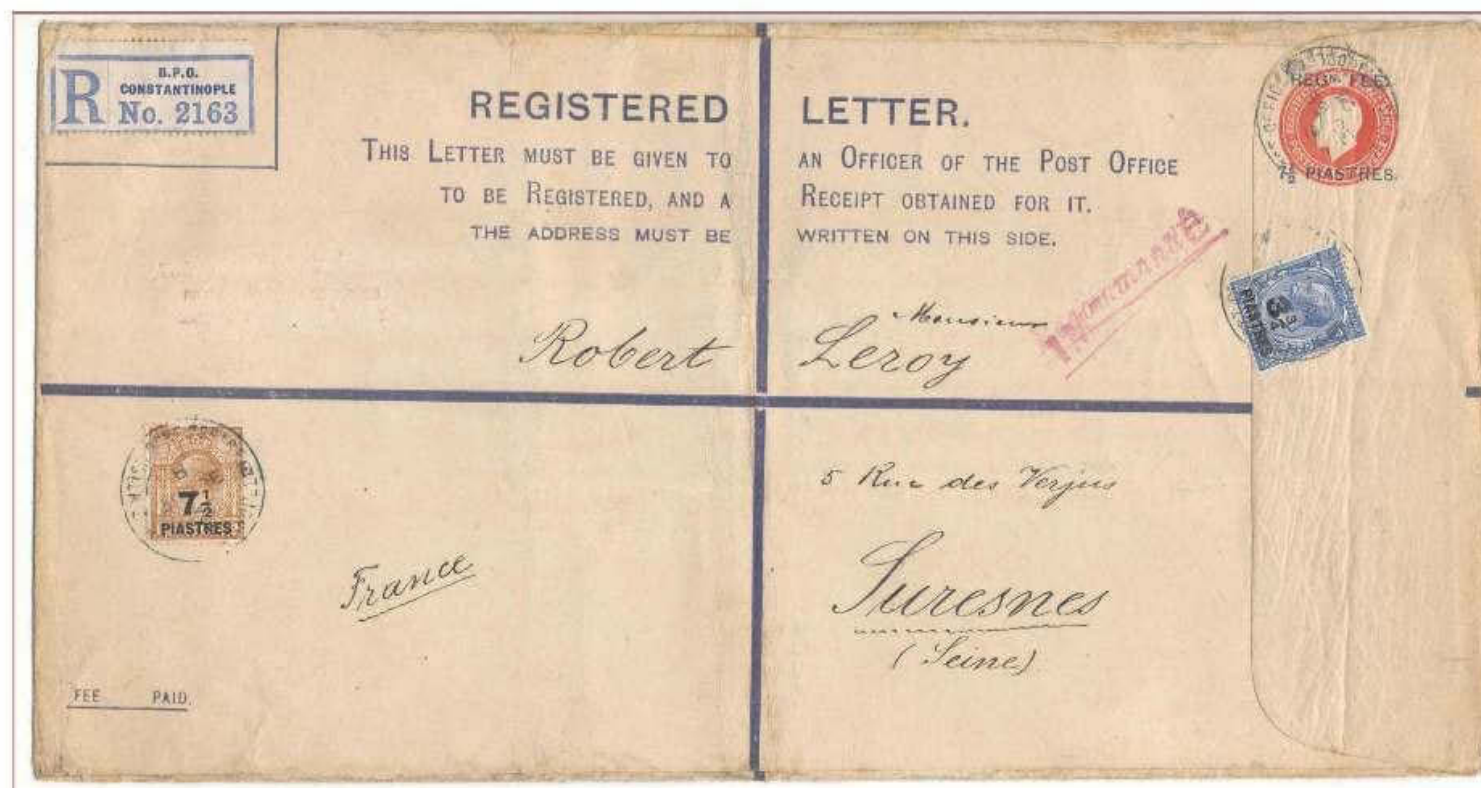
16/10/22 to Sofia, Bulgaria. 1921, 5d orange PSRE (RP34), size H, surcharged REGN.FEE. / 7 1/2 PIASTRES. Up-rated to pay the foreign double rate. Note that it is flap type 8 and as such exceptionally elusive.





9/3/23 to Liernaux, Belgium at single rate.  
1922 4 1/2 d puce PSRE (R138), size G  
overprinted REGN. FEE. / 7 1/2  
PIASTRES.

All sizes of this series are seldom seen  
used.



30/12/21 to Lursnes via Paris (4/1/22)  
at double rate. 1921 5d orange PSRE  
(R134), size K overprinted "REGN. FEE. /  
7 1/2 PIASTRES."

Only one other example of this size is  
recorded used.