

# Airmail of Egypt 1927 to 1937

**Purpose of Exhibit:** This frame display aims to provide a detailed overview of Egypt's Airmail from 1927-1937, with comprehensive coverage of the period's historical context, postage rates, and postal markings.

## **Background:**

### **Section 1: Early Air Travel in Egypt (1927-1931)**

In the early 20th century, air travel was still a relatively new concept, but it was quickly gaining popularity as a faster and more efficient means of transportation. One of the earliest air mail services was established in Egypt from 1927 to 1931, operated by Imperial Airways. The service was expanded to Basra, Iraq, and flights departed every two weeks.

In 1931, the Graf Zeppelin made its second flight to the Middle East, offering the first commercial transatlantic passenger flight service. The airship saluted King Fuad at the Qubbah Palace in Cairo and visited the Great Pyramid of Giza before flying to Palestine and circling Jerusalem. It was a remarkable feat of engineering and a significant milestone in aviation history.

### **Section 2: The Development of Airmail and MISR Airwork (1931-1936)**

As air travel continued to develop, Egypt recognized the need for an airmail service in the early 1930s. K.L.M. and Imperial Airways were approved for transporting mail to Europe, and the Simon Arzt post office in Port Said played a crucial role in facilitating communication and commerce in the region.

In 1935, the first flight from Cyprus to Egypt took place, followed by flight service from Cairo to Haifa. But the service was short-lived and was canceled by October of that year, with a forecast that it would be re-introduced in 1936.

MISR Airwork, a pioneering airline in the Middle East, made history in December 1936 by launching its first flight from Iraq to Port-Said, Egypt. The flight was a significant milestone in the development of air travel in the region, as it was the first commercial flight to connect the two countries. Prior to this, travel between Iraq and Port-Said was primarily by sea or overland, which was a time-consuming and often hazardous journey.

### **Section 3: The Resumption of Flight Service and Modern Aviation (1936-1937)**

In the late 1930s, flight service from Cairo to Haifa resumed, operated by Ala Littoria S.A., the Italian national airline. The flights started simultaneously in both directions and lasted until October 1937. At Almaza Airport in Cairo, two De Havilland DH 89's belonging to Misr Airlines were pictured being refueled, likely for transporting cargo. These aircraft were a testament to the continued development of air travel, and they helped to pave the way for the modern aviation industry that we know today. From the early days of air mail to the first commercial transatlantic passenger flight service and beyond, Egypt played a significant role in the evolution of air travel in the Middle East.

**What is Presented:** Items of interest are highlighted with **Red BOX**.

**Exhibit Plan:** This exhibit is arranged in chronological order to years.

- 1. Early Air Travel in Egypt**
- 2. The Development of Airmail and MISR Airwork**
- 3. The Resumption of Flight Service and Modern Aviation**

**Exhibitor contributed several research articles on the subject.**



**Early Air Travel in Egypt (1927-1931)**

Imperial Airways acquired the R.A.F. Cairo-Baghdad air service on January 12th, 1927, and expanded it to Basra, with flights departing every two weeks. On January 13th, 1927, the inaugural flight arrived at Baghdad, followed by Basra the following day. The registered mail takes 3 days to arrive to Basra.



From Egypt Cook's Post Office (CAIRO) CDS, Jan 6<sup>th</sup>, 1927, mailed to Basra, Iraq, arrived by first flight Cairo-Baghdad-Basrah on Jan 15<sup>th</sup>, 1927. Franked: Base 25 mills, short 2 mills. Overfranked by 3 mills.

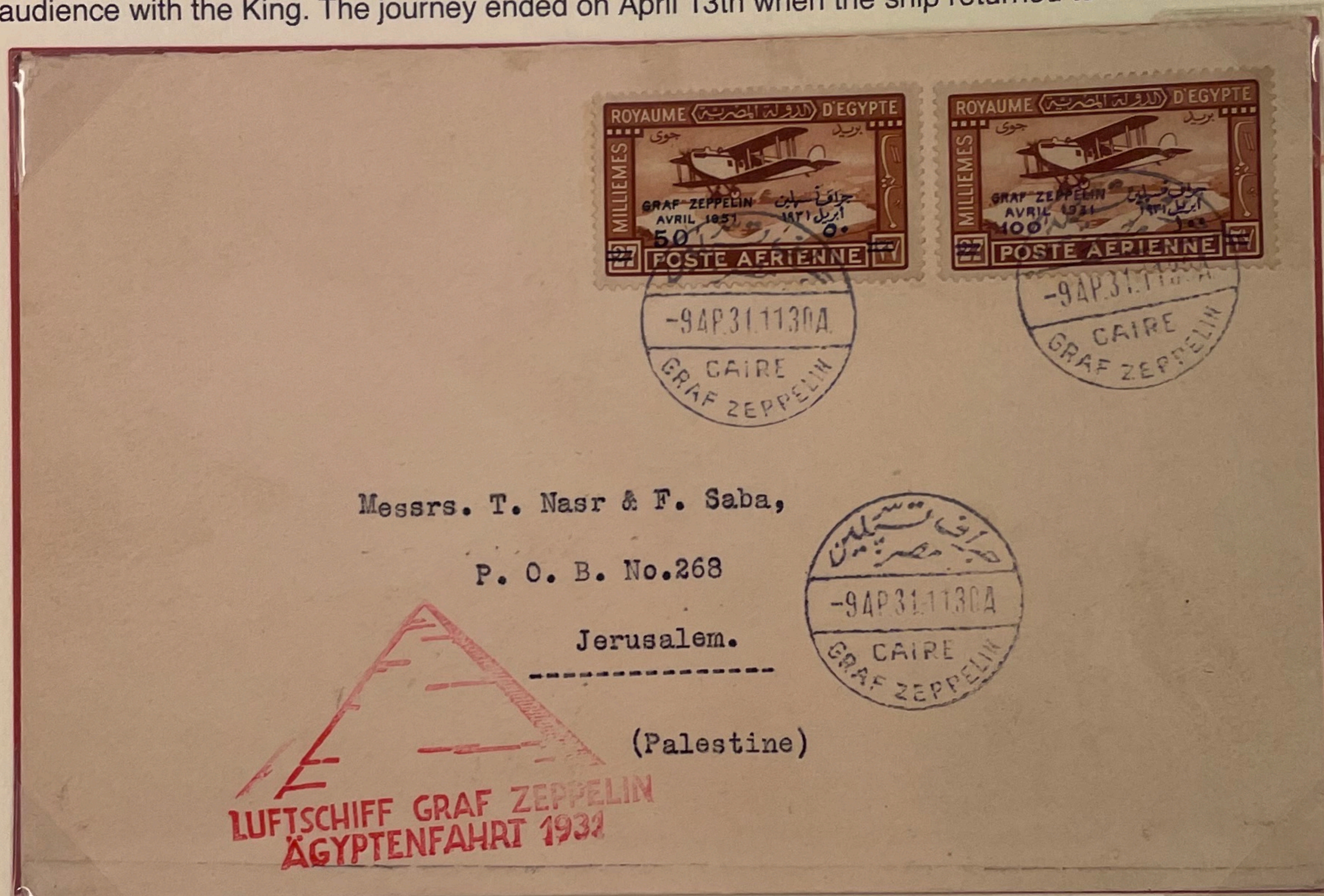


Cairo-Basrah by Imperial Airways, started fortnightly on Jan 14<sup>th</sup>, 1927, and became weekly on 12 April 1927. Registered cover carried on first weekly flight. Franked: Base 15 mills, air 12 mills, registration 15 mills, total 42 mills. Overfranked 15 mills.



LZ 127 Graf Zeppelin was a passenger-carrying hydrogen-filled rigid airship that operated from 1928 to 1937. It was named after Ferdinand von Zeppelin, a count in the German nobility and airship pioneer. Hugo Eckener, the chairman of Luftschiffbau Zeppelin, conceived and operated the airship. Graf Zeppelin made 590 flights, covering almost 1.7 million kilometers (over 1 million miles). It had a crew of 36 and could carry 24 passengers. At the time of its construction, it was the longest and largest airship in the world. It also offered the first commercial transatlantic passenger flight service.

In 1931, the Graf Zeppelin made its second flight to the Middle East, starting on April 9th. It flew from the Mediterranean to Benghazi in Libya, then via Alexandria to Cairo, where it saluted King Fuad at the Qubbah Palace, visited the Great Pyramid of Giza, and hovered 70 feet above the top of the monument. The airship then flew to Palestine, where it circled Jerusalem before returning to Cairo to pick up Eckener, who had stayed for an audience with the King. The journey ended on April 13th when the ship returned to Friedrichshafen.



Cover by 'Graf Zeppelin' from Cairo 9 Apr 1931, taken on the Palestine Flight, Jerusalem arrival backstamp 13 Apr 1931. Franked: At 150 mills for 100 mills letter rate.

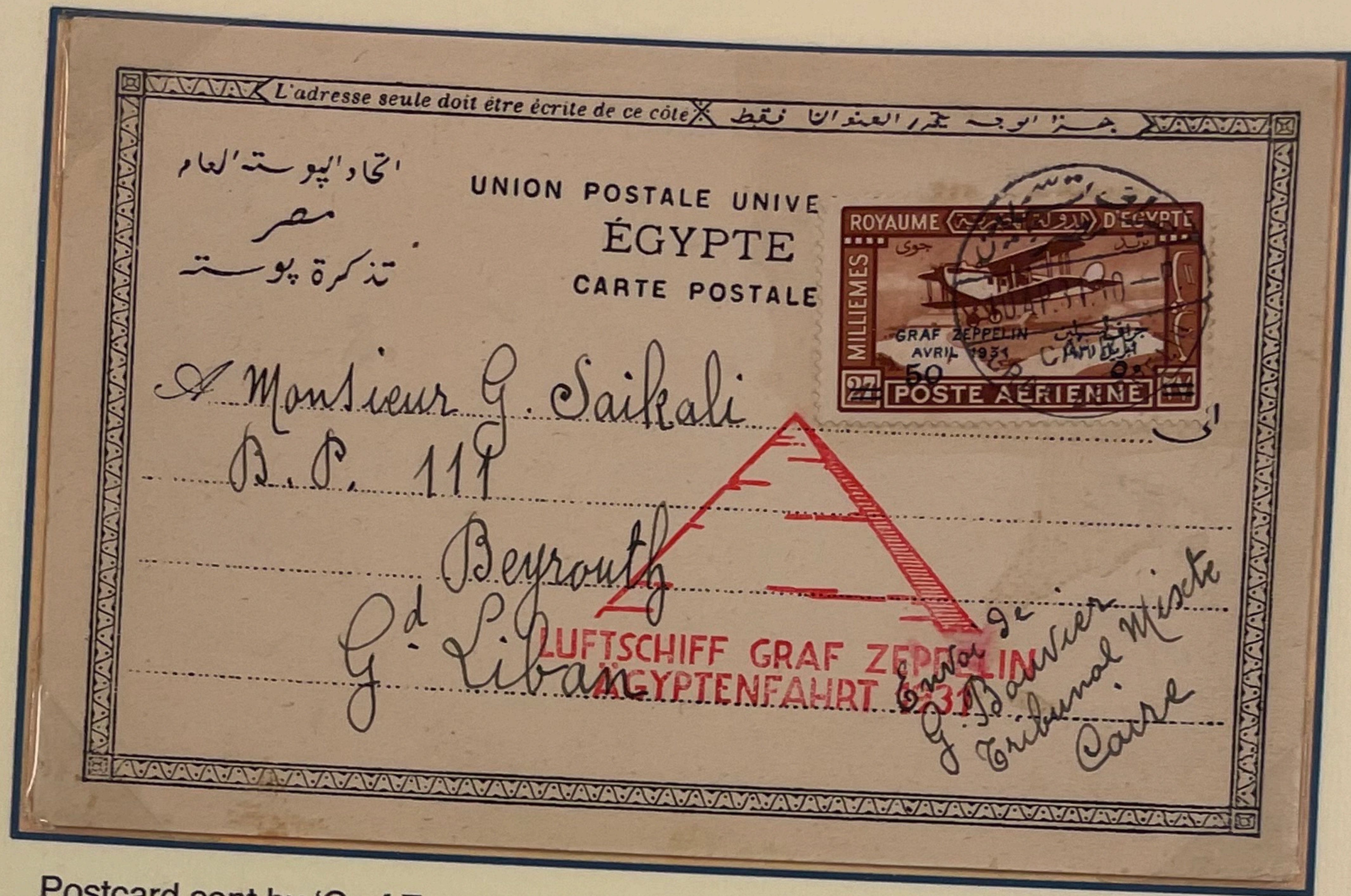
The "1951" for "1931" variety appears on the stamp as well as the "wide spaced 50" variety, a combination which only occurs in position 43 in the sheet of 50 stamps.

**BELIEVED TO BE THE EARLIEST RECORDED CANCELLATION OF A FLIGHT FROM CAIRO TO PALESTINE.**

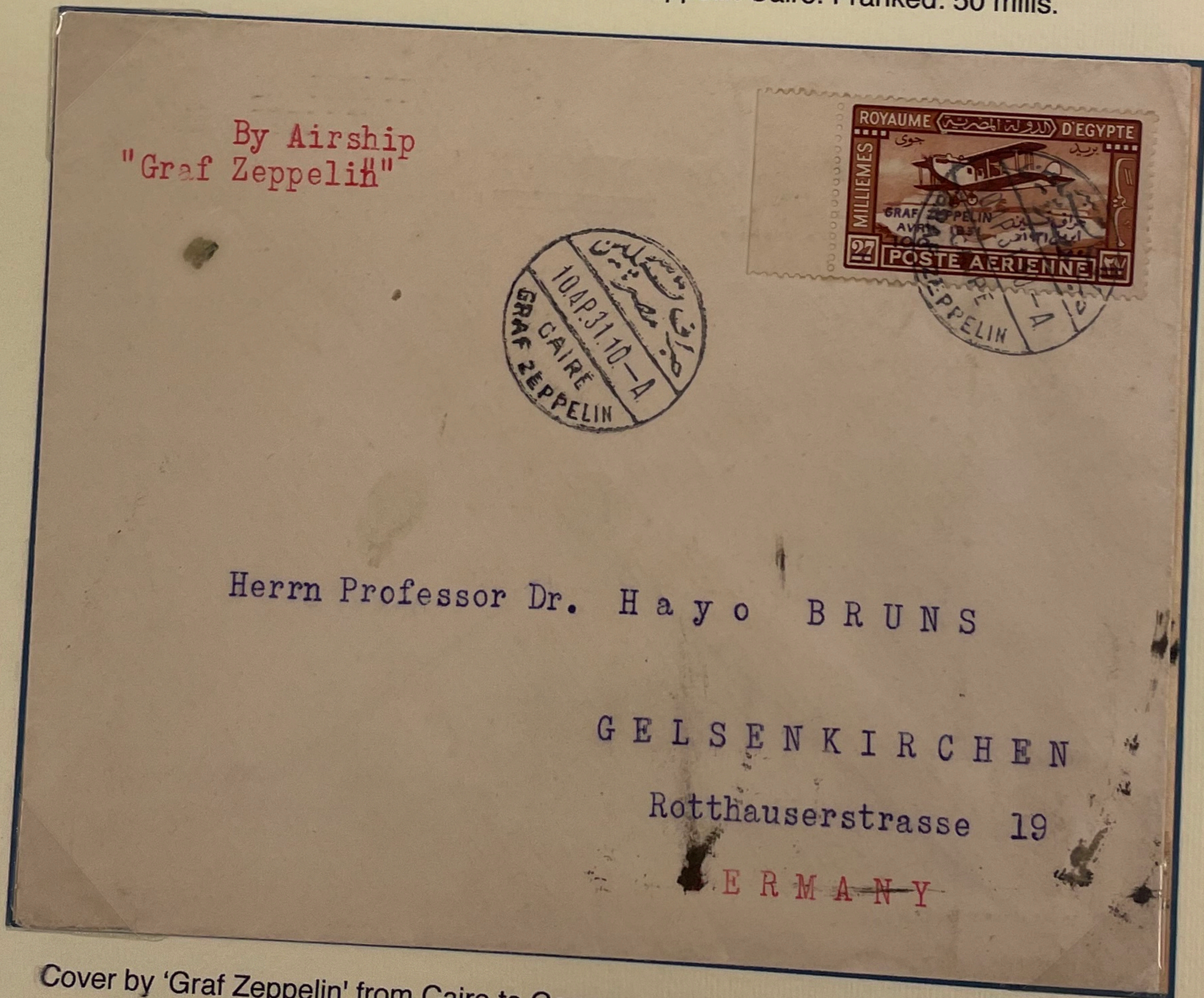


Reduced back of cover shown JERUSALEM Machine Cancellation





Postcard sent by 'Graf Zeppelin' from Cairo to Beirut, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1931. With red 'Agypten Fahrt' cachet. CDS Graf Zeppelin Cairo. Franked: 50 mills.



Cover by 'Graf Zeppelin' from Cairo to Germany, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1931. With red 'By Airship Graf Zeppelin' cachet. CDS Graf Zeppelin Cairo. Franked: 100 mills.

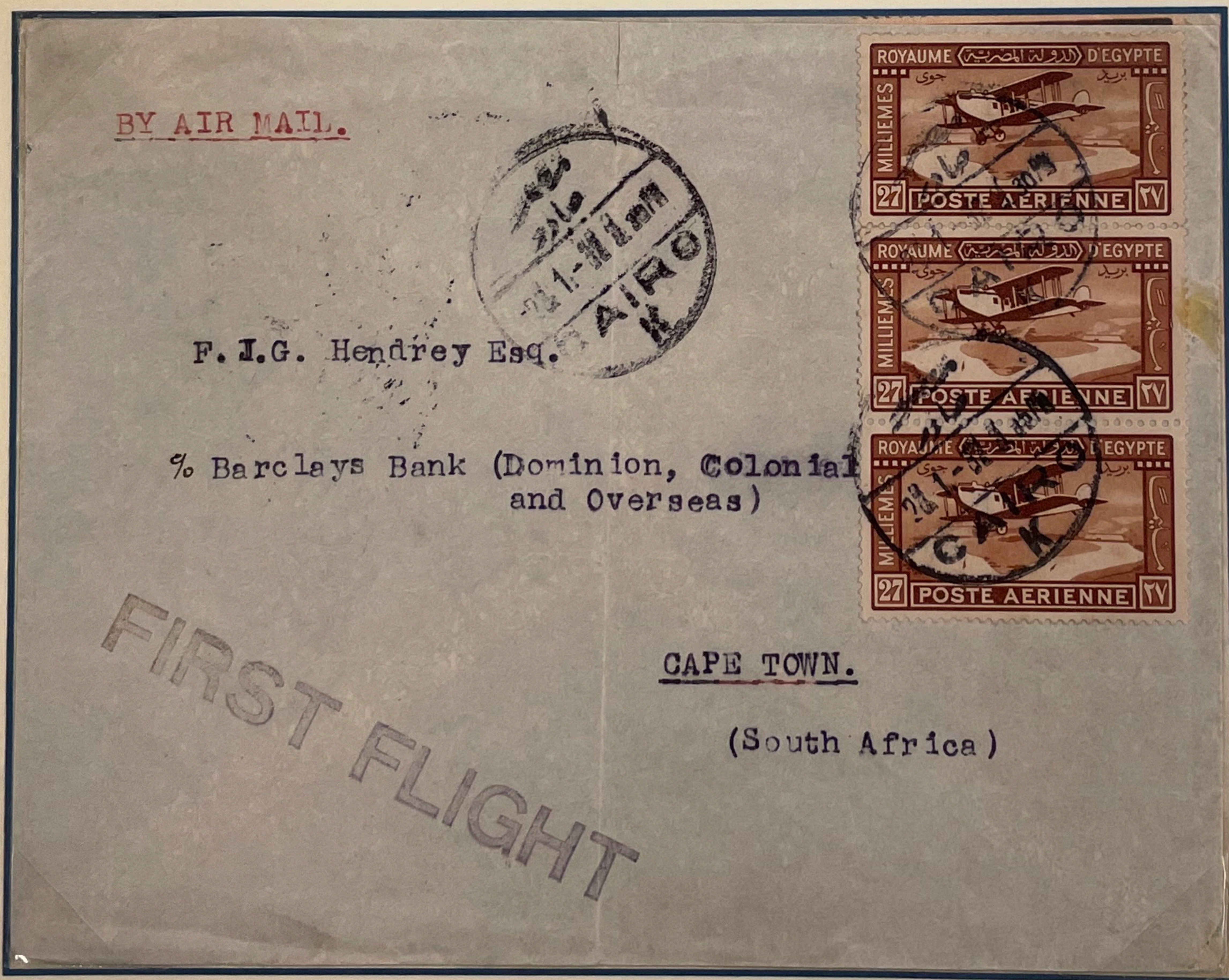


**The Development of Airmail and MISR Airwork (1931-1936)**

Because Egypt has always been a central hub for passengers traveling to India, Asia, and southern and central Africa, it was essential to have the airmail service developed in early 1930's.



Postcard first flight by Dutch – India Air Line from Port-Said to Berlin, Germany, Port-Said CDS, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1931. With red cachet 1<sup>st</sup> Flight. Franking: 30 Ml. 2<sup>nd</sup> rate.



Cover sent from Cairo on 23 January 1932, to Cape Town, South Africa. First flight by The Famous London – Cape Town Line arrive to Cape Town on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1932.

Reverse Arrival CDS  
 CAPETOWN  
 Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1932

Revers shown  
 details about Airline,  
 Famous LONDON-  
 CAPE TOWN LINE



On November 1st, 1931, the Egyptian authorities approved the use of both K.L.M. (Dutch Air Line) and Imperial Airways for transporting mail to Europe. On November 9th, it was announced that the air mail service would be available from Alexandria on Fridays through Mondays via Imperial Airways.



Cover 17 July 1933 Dutch Airmail sent to London from Cairo, Egypt with 1933 Airmails 1m, 2x2m, 3m, 4m, 5m, 6m, 2x7m, 9m, 10m, 20m, 30m and scarce use of 200m top value tided by Cairo CDS, on reverse, with 'Retta' cancels. **Unusual Usage.**



Reverse of the cover.



First flight EGYPT - SINGAPORE, STRAITS SETTLEMENTS.

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1933, service extended from Rangoon to Singapore via Bangkok and Alor Star.



Cover 11 Dec 1933.  
Sent to Singapore from Alexandria, Egypt. First flight London to Singapore via Paris – Cairo – Karachi – Calcutta – Rangoon. 1<sup>st</sup> day opening of the regular Airmail service by Imperial Airways.

Less than 10 items believed to exist.



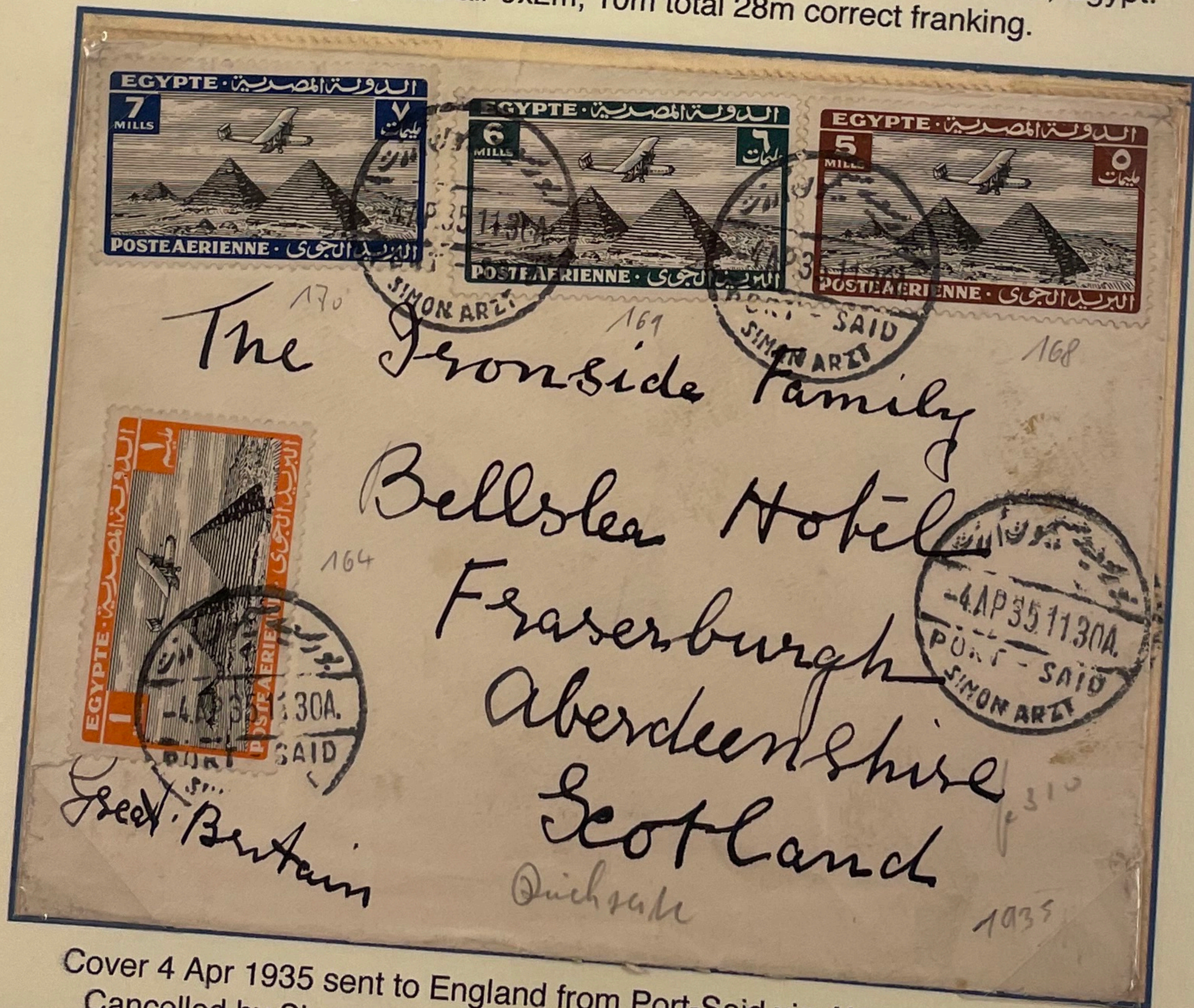
Commercial advertising cover 'Shephard's Hotel' Egypt CDS Jun 22, 1934, sent to Zurich, Suisse via Misr Airwork. Franked: 20 mills. covering postage rate.



The Simon Arzt post office in Port Said operated from October 1934 to March 1957 and had distinctive postal markings. It played a crucial role in facilitating communication and commerce in the region and is remembered as an important institution in the history of Port Said.



Cover 23 Aug 1935 sent to England from Port-Said via Alexandria, Egypt.  
 Franking: base air 9x2m, 10m total 28m correct franking.



Cover 4 Apr 1935 sent to England from Port-Said via Alexandria, Egypt.  
 Cancelled by Simon Arzt CDS. Franking: Total 28m correct franking.



The flight from Cairo to Haifa called at Port-Said & Lydda which was the aerodrome for Jerusalem. This cover flown on the 1st flight when service became a daily one.



Cover to R.A.F Ramleh, also known as ER RAMLE a few miles from Lydda. Franked 25 mills, Palestine did not qualify for the preferential "Empire" surface rate 15mills, so this is 20mills plus 5mills air mail surcharge. CDS Abu Suwer Aug 22, 1935.  
Transit marked Cairo 23 Aug, arrive ER RAMLE 24 Aug 1935



Cover correctly franked 25 mills which includes the Airmail surcharge of 5m. From Cairo on 23 August 1935 Back of cover: Cancelled MOUVEMENT ETRANGER, CAIRO 23 August 1935. Transit Mark BEYROUT 26 August, arrived CDS SOFAR 26 August 1935

A new service was introduced whereby mail for Lebanon and Syria was Flown to Haifa, and then carried overland (by car) to Beirut and Damascus.



The first flight from Cyprus - Egypt took place 21 days before the first from Egypt, it is the reason being the Egyptian authorities were that much later in confirming the service. The first mail from Cyprus being carried on 10th Aug 1935, some 14 days before the first mail flown from Egypt.



Cover bearing the Cypriot Airmail cachet, and correctly franked canceled Nicosia, 9.30am. 4 Aug 1935. Arrived at Cairo, same date at 5-6pm, takes around 7 hours to arrive.



Sealed cover franked 21/2pi. for normal rate + 1pi for Air mail surcharge. Canceled Nicosia 10 Aug 1935, transit mark Cairo 11 Aug, arrive Heliopolis 12 Aug 1935.



The service which opened in August 1935 was short-lived, and was canceled 19th October, with a forecast that it would be re-introduced in 1936. Once again, the first flight was ahead of that from Egypt. As in 1935, it was a weekly service and continued until 30th September.



Cover sent from NICOSIA 10 August 1936, 10 AM. Arrived in CAIRO PAR AVION (2) on 10 August 1936, 6-7 PM. This is 1st flight by MISR AIRLINES.



Cover from Port-Said 24 August 1936 sent to CYPRUS on reverse CDS's Arrival NICOSIA 24 August 1936; LIMASSOL, then KYRENIA 26 August 1936.





Cover sent from Port-Said 7 Feb 1936 Canceled by Simon-Arzt. Arrived at Klosters - Switzerland on 12 Nov 1936. Franked: 33 mills.



Cover sent from Port-Said to Baghdad on 16 Dec 1936 Canceled by Port-Said Traffic, C/O Post Master, arrived at BAGHDAD on 17 Dec 1936. Postmarked green cachet FIRST FLIGHT BY MISR AIR LINES (Sep. 16th. 1936 Port-Said Baghdad, EGYPT-IRAQ) 1st flight.

A Twice weekly Air mail service Port-Said to Baghdad by Misr Airworks was started 16 September 1936. Each Wednesday and Friday (the 16 was a Wednesday). The Airmail surcharge for a letter of 20gms was 12 mills, this item is unsealed, so it travelled by Printed Matter rate 4 mills plus 12 mills surcharge.

**Less than 10 items believed to exist mailed on first flight to Baghdad with C/O Post Master.**



**The Resumption of Flight Service and (37)**

MISR Airwork was a pioneering airline that operated in the Middle East during the early 20th century. On December 10, 1936, the airline made history by launching its first flight from Iraq to Port-Said, Egypt.

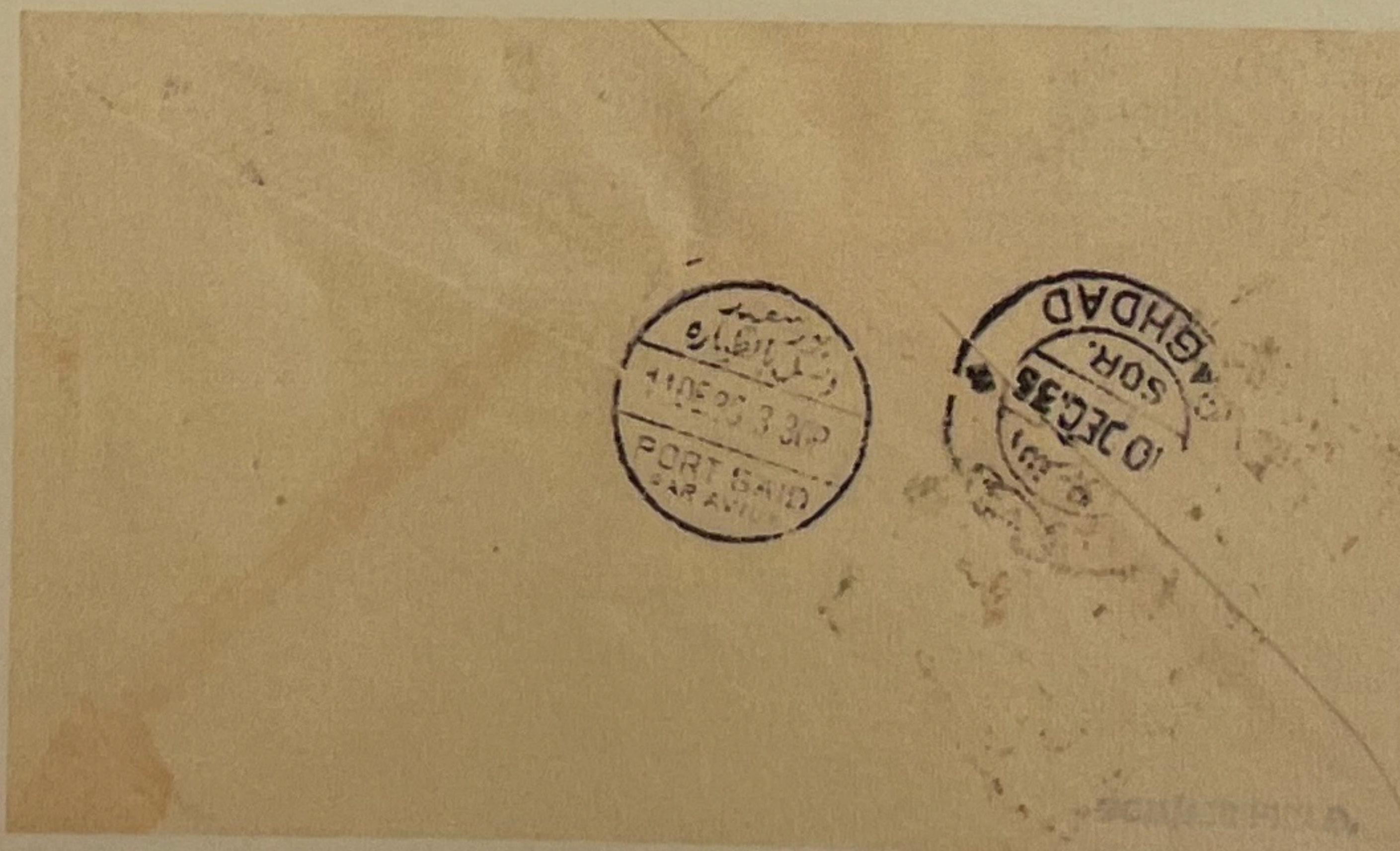
The flight was a significant milestone in the development of air travel in the region, as it was the first commercial flight to connect the two countries. Prior to this, travel between Iraq and Port-Said Egypt was primarily by sea or overland, which was a time-consuming and often hazardous journey.

The inaugural flight was operated by a De Havilland Dragon Rapides aircraft, which had been acquired by MISR Airwork specifically for this purpose. The aircraft was piloted by a British aviator, Captain Sam Falle, and carried a total of six passengers.

The flight took off from Baghdad's Al Muthanna Airport and landed in Cairo after a journey of approximately five hours. The flight was hailed as a major success, and it marked the beginning of a new era in air travel in the Middle East.



Cover sent from Iraq to Port-Said Egypt 10 Dec 1936 Canceled by Rashid, transit Baghdad, arrived at Port-Said on 11 Dec 1936. Postmarked green cachet (Iraq, Palestine, Egypt) opening first flight for Misr Airworks - Air mail line.



Back of the cover with Port-Said transit 11 Dec 1935 and

**ONE OF FIVE ITEMS RECORDED 3CM/AIR FIELD - FIRST FLIGHT FROM IRAQ TO EGYPT**



Ala Littoria S.A. was the Italian national airline that operated during the fascist regime in the 1930s and 1940s. A first flight cover of the Ala Littoria to Haifa, this cover addressed to Cairo was flown from Haifa by Misr Airworks.



Cover sent from Cairo 1 May 1937 to Melbourne - VIC arrived on same date 1 May 1937. Franked 135 mills to cover postal rate.



Cover sent from Roma to Cairo 7 Jul 1937 Canceled by ROMA 1<sup>D</sup> 'VOLO ROMA - HAIFA' and arrived at CAIRO 'PAR AVION' on 8 Jul 1937.



Flight in both directions started simultaneously at the beginning of June. Once again, a weekly service which lasted until 1st October 1937.

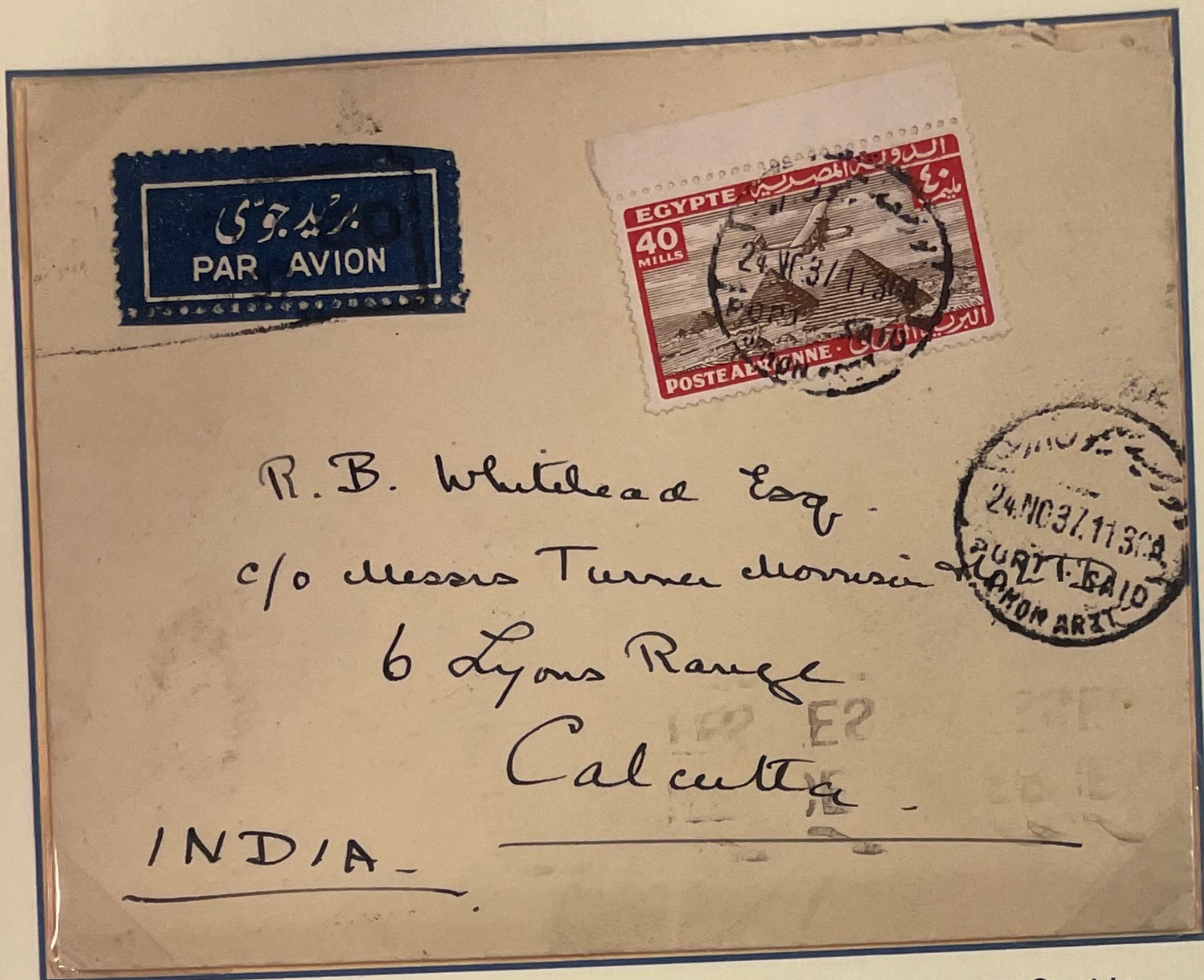


Cover sent from Alexandria to Cyprus on 2 Jun 1937. 1st flight to Cyprus after re-introduced arrived at LIMASSOL on 3 Jun 1937 takes one day to arrive.



Cover sent from LIMASSOL to Port-Said on 4 Jun 1937. 1st flight from Cyprus to Alexandria, Egypt after re-introduced arrived at Port-Said on 5 Jun 1937.





Cover from Port-Said, Simon Arzt post office 24 November 1937. Sent to Calcutta via Alexandria same day. Arrived at Calcutta 29 November 1937. By Misr Airworks.



At Almaza Airport in Cairo, two De Havilland DH 89's, also known as The Rapid, belonging to Misr Airlines, are pictured being refueled. These aircrafts are likely to have been used for transporting cargo across the globe.