

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**).

Treatment: This exhibit is completely re-written since it was last shown. It is divided in two major parts: **Part One 1857-1914** and **Part Two 1919-1923**. In the period 1915 - 1918 there was no civilian British postal service (only Army Post Offices). The development of the exhibit is organized by Post Office. In **each Post Office Section** the emphasis is on postal rates, although there are **sub-Sections** showing choice material of postal stationery and other forms, unusual destinations and incoming mail. The Post Office Sections are proportionate to each office's significance (e.g. the Constantinople section is much larger than the Beyrout one). A separate Section - found at the end of Part One - is devoted to the most important effects of War (Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and WW1) on British Levant mail.

Philatelic Importance: The story of the development of the British postal service in the Levant is a most important one: not only it is spanning a period of over 65 years; it also constitutes some of the first serious attempts to establish a reliable communications link between the Ottoman Empire and the West.

Knowledge, Personal Study & Research: While the postal history of the British Empire has been extensively researched and a large number of excellent publications are available, this is not true for British Levant. For the Pre-UPU period the student has solely to rely on the outstanding Moubrays' book, and for the later periods on a series of Study Papers written many years ago by R.Malim of the GBOS (GB Overprints Society). Details of these two references are shown in the title page. Most of the Study Papers are outdated, and new discoveries are regularly reported in "*The Overprinter*" Journal of the GBOS by the exhibitor and other members of the Society.

Original research in the Post Office Archives in Mount Pleasant, London and subsequent articles by the exhibitor have shed light on many previously unknown aspects such as the actual circumstances of the establishment of the British PO in Salonica, the Express delivery and the Insured Mail Services in the Levant, etc. A brief synopsis on British Levant postal history was also published in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* (June 2010, pp 55-58).

Condition & Rarity: Every possible effort has been taken to include items in the best condition obtainable. Except for ordinary postcards or single letter rates which are abundant, **overweight letters, special services and some postal stationery especially from the smaller offices are difficult to locate**. This exhibit covers the whole range of rates and services except: *Insured mail* (only a cover front is known) and *Cash on Delivery mail* (no example recorded).

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

- 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 only recorded Express cover from British Levant (*Salonica, 1914*)
- PSRE uniquely franked with the KGV 2½ d "*Indigo Blue on Toned Paper*" (*Smyrna, 1920*)