

Old Graham's Philatelic Tales No.5

Salt! A human necessity, but consuming too much of it will lead to health problems. It has been taxed in many human societies, and one of Gandhi's most famous acts of civil protest was to walk 240 miles to the sea in 1930 to make his own salt from sea-water, strictly forbidden in British India.

In the last years of the **19th Century**, the Government of Egypt held a **monopoly** over the wholesale distribution of salt.

Retailers would have to buy salt from the Government in the following way:

The Retailer would go to the Post Office, and buy Salt Stamps with a face value to that of his requirements. The stamps would then be affixed to a "Salt Requisition Form", which duly filled out and signed, was then submitted to the postal clerk for cancellation. With the said form in proper civil service fashion, it could then be taken to the salt depot.

There are **three issues** of these particular stamps.

The first issue from **early 1892**, of four values in blue, orange, red and green.

There is a **provisional issue** from **February 1892** with the orange stamp **overprinted** with 50 Millimes and the red stamp overprinted with 100 millimes.

Finally, there is a **proper second issue** from **August 1892** with four values in **blue (250 millimes)**, **orange (500 millimes)**, **red (One Egyptian Pound)** and **Green (Two Egyptian Pounds)**.

This latter one is the one you would be most familiar with, and it does come up in stamp packets from time to time. The four values of this issue are illustrated below:



In the cities of **Cairo** and **Alexandria**, special dated cancellations were used only for these salt stamps. The one for Cairo can be found as "**Caïre (Service Du Sel)**".

In other towns, the normal postal cancellation was used. At least 35 towns can be found cancelled on the salt stamps.

In **1899**, the Government sold the Salt Monopoly to a private firm, the **Salt and Soda Company**, in exchange for a fixed annual payment. The Salt stamps of the 1890s became obsolete, and were sold to Stamp Dealers.

At the time of writing this article, a used set of the four values from the Second Issue is being offered on e-Bay for £9, but canny souls should be able to put this beautiful set together over time from your trusty local packet for a fraction of this.

Please pass the salt...