

THE FORGOTTEN WAR

IEF 'D' AND THE WAR IN MESOPOTAMIA 1914 - 1918

Purpose:

This is a postal history exhibit during the British Occupation of Mesopotamia (Iraq) from 1914-1918. Period is identified by the first landing of the **IEF 'D' (Indian Expeditionary forces 'D')** in Fao and ends by the occupation of Mosul in Northern Mesopotamia following the Armistice. It is generally chronological following the arrival, opening or reassignment of the Indian Field Post Offices (FPO's) and the military under which they served. Mainly it chronicles the postal markings, censor marks, special cachets and other facets of the military operations in Mesopotamia. Included are also related civilian post office activities (post offices and use of overprinted stamps and stationary).

Organization:

The war can be divided into four distinct campaign stages:

Stage 1: September 1914 - August 1915

The initial landing by the IEF 'D' at Fao, capture of Basra in November and the limited actions in Lower Mesopotamia.

Stage 2: September 1915 - April 1916

The first advance toward Baghdad, battle of Ctesiphon where the Turkish forces were victorious, retreat to, siege and capitulation of the IEF in Kut.

Stage 3: May 1916 - March 1917

Reinforcement of troops, second advance toward battle of Kut leading to its capture, and advance on Baghdad and its capture on 11 March 1917.

Stage 4: April 1917 - December 1918

Campaign in Northern Mesopotamia, with lower Mesopotamia support leading toward the final capitulation of the Turkish VI army, and the occupation of Mosul in November following the Armistice. Last letter from the General headquarters was sent on December 1918.

Note: The exhibit, in most cases, is organized in chronological sequence by dates of the first cover in the page under a given heading.

Difficulty and Importance:

Covers during the war in Mesopotamia are very difficult to obtain especially those during the initial landing in 1914 and during the 1917 Baghdad provisional period. Selected items were described in **Red** to show some of the important acquisitions of this exhibit.

To the exhibitor's knowledge, this exhibit shows the most comprehensive study ever formed on the subject.

References:

- E.P. Proud 'History of Indian Army Postal Service. Vol II 1914-1931 Chapter 5 IEF 'D'
- E.B. Proud and P.C. Pearson, The Postal history of Iraq
- Lt-Col Tennant, In the clouds above Baghdad
- A J Barker, The neglected war, Mesopotamia 1914-1918
- Lt-Col Wilson Loyalties, Mesopotamia 1914-1920
- Moberley 'History of the Great War based on Official Documents. The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914-1918'
- A. Al-Manaseer, Letter to the Editor on covers of Baghdad, OPAL 214, 2006