

West African Forces
Air Mail Letter Cards,
Air Letters &
Honour Envelopes
1942-1945

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West African Forces Air Mail Letter Cards, Air Letters & Honour Envelopes, 1942-1945

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This monograph is based on a study started in 1989 by John Daynes of the Forces Postal History Society, in consultation with Jeremy Martin, FRPSL, of the West Africa Study Circle.

The current numbering is provisional and may need to be changed.

Anyone who has any item printed by the W.A.P.S.S. which is not covered in this monograph, or any information about variations in printings or extensions of dates and locations of usage, is invited to send in the first instance a good quality photocopy to: -

Nigel Lutwyche, 29 Bloomfield Place, ABERDEEN. AB10 6AG.

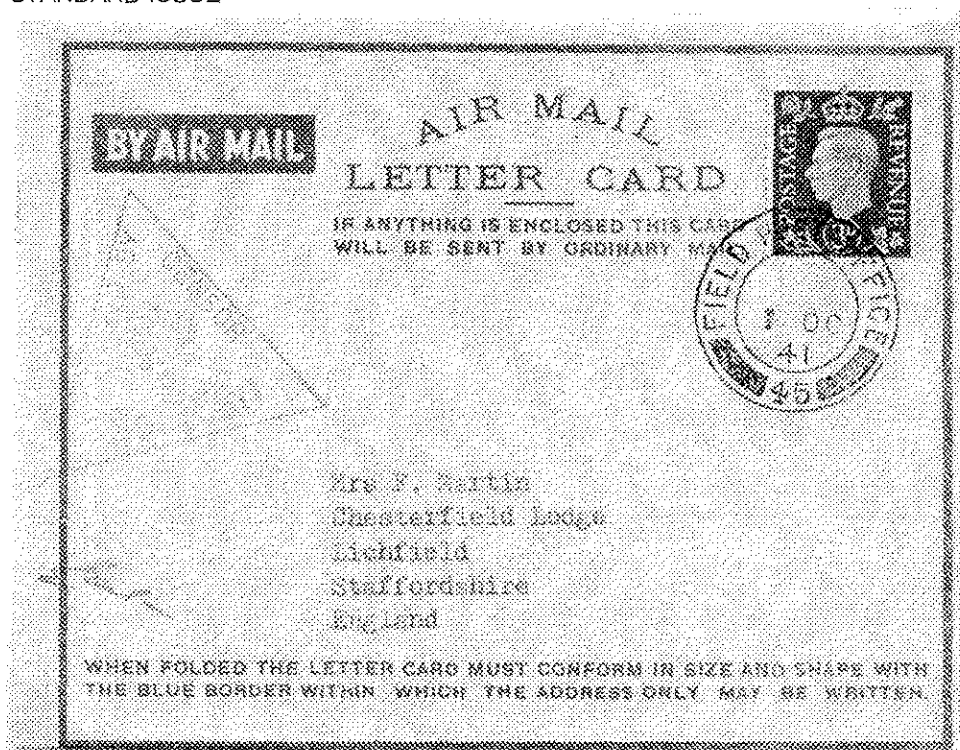
Email – nigel.lutwyche@dsl.pipex.com

WEST AFRICAN FORCES AIR MAIL LETTER CARDS, AIR LETTERS AND HONOUR ENVELOPES

The first use of air mail letter cards and air letters from West Africa was on 1st October 1941 (see first illustration below of a philatelic first day cover). Thereafter, standard British air mail letter cards and air letters were used, along with those printed locally in various theatres of war and those printed by the Dominions for issue to their troops. Some of these were used in West Africa (see second illustration below of a South African active service letter card used in the Gold Coast in 1943). This study, however, is concerned only with those letter cards, air letters and honour envelopes which were printed in West Africa itself.

In 'British Forces Air Mail Letter Cards and Air Letters', published by the Forces Postal History Society, the author O.R.J. Lee stated that in December 1943 the term 'Air Mail Letter Card' was discontinued in favour of 'Air Letter'. The latter term was already being used for the civilian form issued in the U.K. in December 1942.

STANDARD ISSUE



WEST AFRICAN USE OF A SOUTH AFRICAN ACTIVE SERVICE LETTER CARD



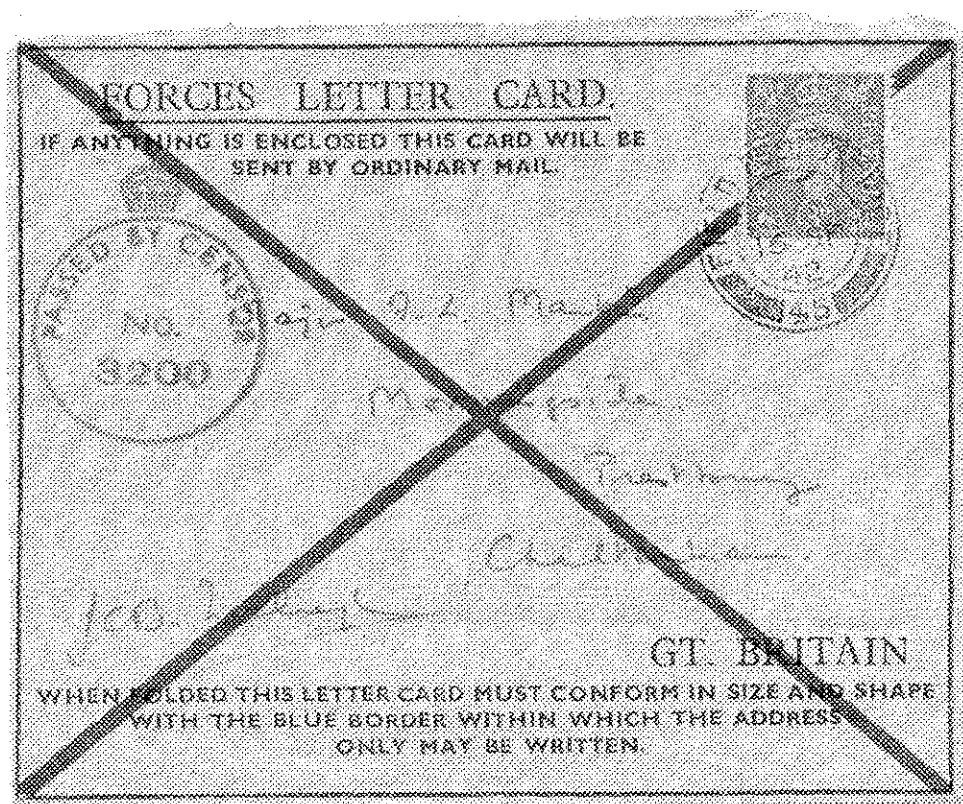
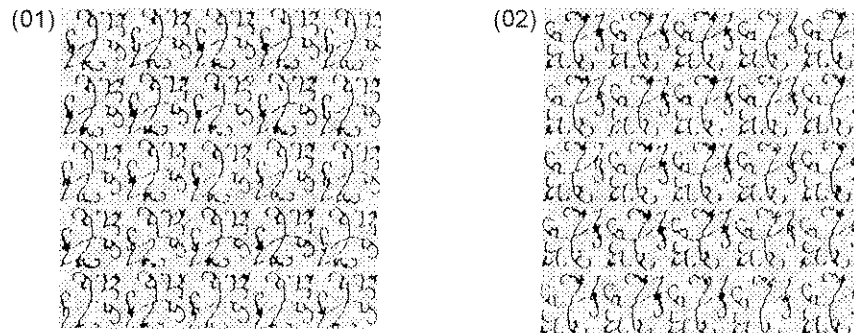
'FORCES LETTER CARD.'

With distinct diagonal red cross. Known from other theatres of war (e.g. Mediterranean). Probably not printed locally but left over from a Free Christmas issue of 1941 (Lee type CG41, sub-type 1). Lee stated that this unique letter card was printed in West Africa. He also said that Hodson (Elizabeth Hodson of Edinburgh, an early researcher into AMLCs) had stated that these were issued free of postage for Xmas 1941 but Lee said he has only seen them used in mid 1942 with a 3d stamp affixed.

Sub-types:

WA 02.01 Fancy overlay on inside of left half.

WA 02.02 As above, but overlay inverted.



RECORD OF USE – WA 02.01 and .02

Gambia	02.01	-	-
	02.02	FPO 109	26 Aug 1942
Gold Coast	02.01	FPO 45	16 Sep 1942
	02.02	FPO 45	30 Jun 1942 – 14 Aug 1942
	02.02	FPO 106	25 Oct 1942
Nigeria	02.01	-	-
	02.02	FPO 46	17 Aug 1942 – 01 Sep 1942
Sierra Leone	02.01	-	-
	02.02	-	15 Apr 1942
	02.02	FPO 537	19 Oct 1943

'AIR MAIL / LETTER CARD' generally in larger lettering. (Lee category H, type V).

WA 03.01 Imprint at bottom: 'W.A.P.S.S. 7/42/100000/192' at left and 'ARMY FORM 3077.' at right.

Uneven blue overlay on left half.

Upper and lower admonitions are sans-serif (See the next page for an enlargement of the upper admonition, and for serif admonitions see pages 8 and 9).

'BY / AIR MAIL' at top left is in two lines, the gap between the two lines being 1 mm. and 'AIR MAIL' is 22 mm. in length.

The length of the central 'AIR MAIL' is 40 mm. and the length of 'LETTER CARD' is 59½ mm.

The length of the underline is 16 mm.

The length of the lines of the upper admonition is 59 mm.

The length of the first two lines in the lower admonition is 99 mm. and the third line measures 36½ mm. 'O' of 'ONLY' in the bottom line is between 'B' and 'L' of 'BLUE' and there is no full stop.

The height of the lettering in the admonitions is 2 mm.

The length of the printer's imprint is 35 mm. and there is no full stop at the end.

Sub-types:

WA 03.01 The downstroke of 'Y' of 'BY' is directly above the first downstroke of 'M' of 'MAIL'.

WA 03.02 The downstroke of 'Y' of 'BY' is slightly to the right of the second downstroke of 'M' of 'MAIL' (See illustration of AMLC on next page).

(01)



(02)



RECORD OF USE – WA 03.01

Gambia	FPO 109	21 Nov 1942
Gold Coast	FPO 536	02 Dec 1942
Nigeria		-
Sierra Leone	FPO 41	14 Sep 1942

'AIR MAIL / LETTER CARD' generally in larger lettering. (Lee category H, type V, continued).

WA 03.02 As WA 03.01 but this sub-type has the downstroke of 'Y' of 'BY' slightly to the right of the second downstroke of 'M' of 'MAIL' with 'AIR MAIL' now being only 18½ mm in length. There is a 1 mm. space between the two lines.

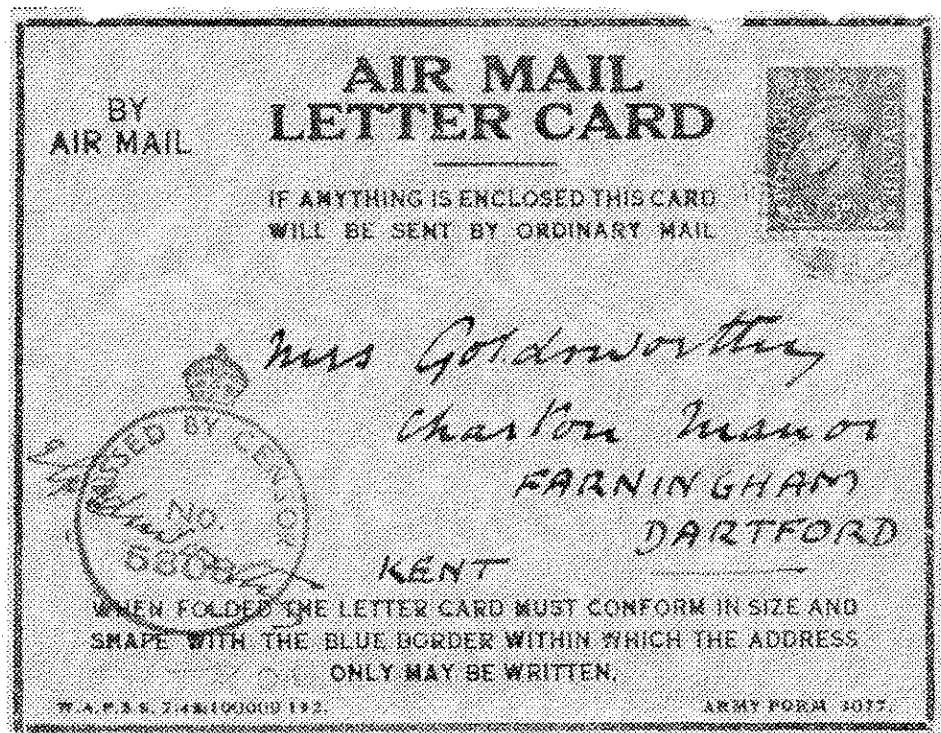
As with WA 03.01, the upper and lower admonitions are sans-serif but some of the measurements differ.

The length of the central 'AIR MAIL' is 39½ mm. and the length of 'LETTER CARD' is 58½ mm. The length of the underline is 16½ mm.

The length of the lines in the upper admonition is 58¼ mm.

The length of the first two lines in the lower admonition is 100 mm. and the third line measures 36¼ mm. 'O' of 'ONLY' in the bottom line is between the 'B' and 'L' of 'BLUE' and there is now a full stop.

The length of the printer's imprint is 35 mm. and there is now a full stop at the end of it.



Type 3 admonition in sans-serif lettering.

IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED THIS CARD
WILL BE SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL

RECORD OF USE – WA 03.02

Gambia
Gold Coast FPO106 11 Sep 1942 – 20 Oct 1942
Nigeria
Sierra Leone

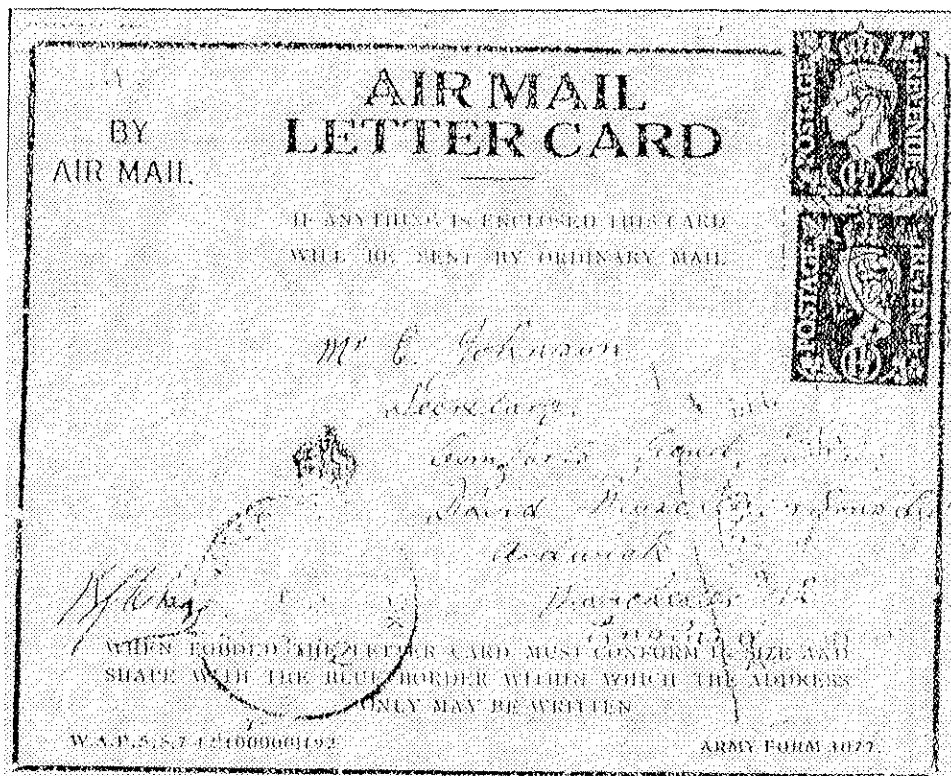
Another example is known cancelled by FPO 572 on 18 April 1944. This FPO was in Egypt at Alexandria F.M.O. between 1943 and 1945 (Proud).

'AIR MAIL / LETTER CARD' generally in larger lettering (Lee category H, type V, continued).

WA 04.01 Similar to types WA 03.01 and .02 but the admonitions are in serif lettering. Deeper blue printing on cream coloured paper with a blue patterned overlay on the left side.
The downstroke of 'Y' in 'BY' is slightly to the right of the second downstroke of the letter 'M' in 'MAIL' underneath, 'AIR MAIL' being 18 mm. in length.
The space between 'BY' and 'AIR MAIL' is 2 mm.
The length of the central 'AIR MAIL' is 37½ mm. and the length of 'LETTER CARD' is 57¼ mm.
The length of the underline is 10½ mm.
The length of the two lines in the upper admonition is 56½ mm.
The length of the first two lines in the lower admonition is 96½ mm. while the last line is 35 mm.
In the last line of the lower admonition, 'O' of 'ONLY' is between 'U' and 'E' of 'BLUE' in the line above (see enlargement below).
The height of the lettering in the two admonitions is 1½ mm.
The length of the printer's imprint is 34½ mm. and there is no full stop at the end.

In this printing, the bottom frame line has sloping ends. Normally, the ends are square. The breaks in the various frame lines may be constant.

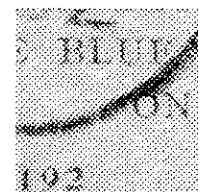
In the example illustrated below, the printing of the two admonitions is exceptionally crisp and clean. More usually, the W.A.P.S.S. printings of the admonitions appear over-inked and blurred.



Type 4 admonition in serif lettering.

'O' between 'U' and 'E'.

IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED THIS CARD
WILL BE SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL



RECORD OF USE – WA 04.01

Gambia	FPO 109	13 Apr 1942
Gold Coast		
Nigeria	FPO 46	28 Nov 1942
	FPO 559	28 Nov 1942
Sierra Leone		

Another example is known 'RECEIVED / HM SHIPS' censored 06 Nov 1942 and written on board H.M.S. Despatch (a light cruiser serving in the South Atlantic Command).

'AIR MAIL / LETTER CARD' generally in larger lettering (Lee category H, type V, continued).

WA 05.01 Similar in layout to type WA 04.01 but most of the measurements differ. The admonitions are in serif lettering. Lighter blue printing on cream coloured paper with a blue patterned overlay on the left side.

The downstroke of 'Y' in 'BY' is very slightly to the left of the second downstroke of the letter 'M' in 'MAIL' underneath.

The space between 'BY' and 'AIR MAIL' is just over 1 mm.

The length of the central 'AIR MAIL' is 38½ mm. and the length of 'LETTER CARD' is 58½ mm.

The length of the underline is 15 mm.

The length of the two lines of the upper admonition is 58½ mm.

The length of the first two lines in the lower admonition is 100½ mm, while the last line is 38½ mm.

In the last line of the lower admonition, 'O' of 'ONLY' is just to the right of the 'B' in 'BLUE' in the line above (see enlargement below).

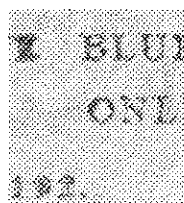
The height of the lettering in the two admonitions is 1½ mm.

The length of the printer's imprint is 35½ mm. with a full stop at the end.

The bottom frame line has the more normal square ends.



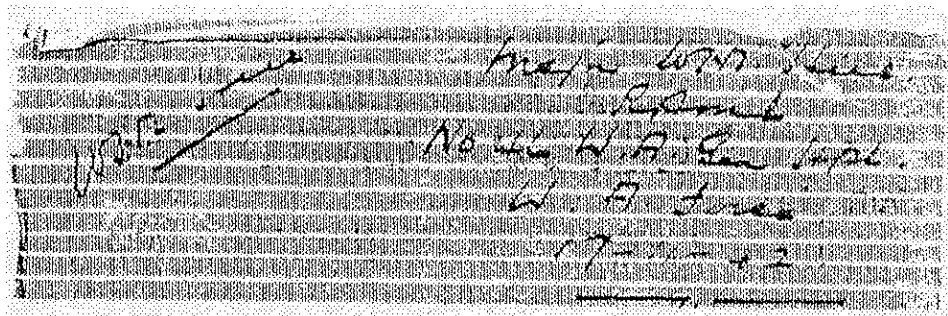
'O' just to right of 'B'.



RECORD OF USE – WA 05.01

Gambia
Gold Coast FPO 106 07 Apr 1943
Nigeria
Sierra Leone

WA 06.01 The front is similar to types WA 03, 04 and 05 but with no printer's imprint at bottom left. The letter 'W' is now included in 'ARMY FORM W 3077'. The overlay is on the left half inside and consists of bars printed in orange/pink on thin paper. This gives a distinct pink impression to the front. Unlike types WA 03 and 04, the printing is in dark blue and in the second line of the lower admonition, the word 'blue' is omitted.



Gambia		-
Gold Coast	FPO 45	13 Apr 1942
Nigeria	FPO 46	21 Jun 1942
	FPO 559	19 Nov 1942 - 22 Dec 1942
Sierra Leone		-

'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left. (Lee category KIV).

This type, first seen in 1943 and also known used in East Africa, seems to have become the standard West African military air letter.

There appears to have been more than one printing of this air letter with various slight differences in layout. Lee recorded eight sub-types of this air letter.

The initial printing was on cream coloured paper with a blue overlay on the front. The printing was of poor quality and the overlay was often unevenly spread and in various hues of blue. Later printings, towards the end of the war, were on greenish-blue paper which obviated the need for an overlay.

WA 07.01 In 'AIR LETTER' all letters are of the same height as shown in the example below (see next page for an example where the letters 'IR' and 'ETTER' in 'AIR LETTER' are smaller than the initial letters).

In the first line of the three-line admonition, the letter 'D' of 'ENCLOSED' is roughly above the letter 'N' of 'SENT' in the second line.

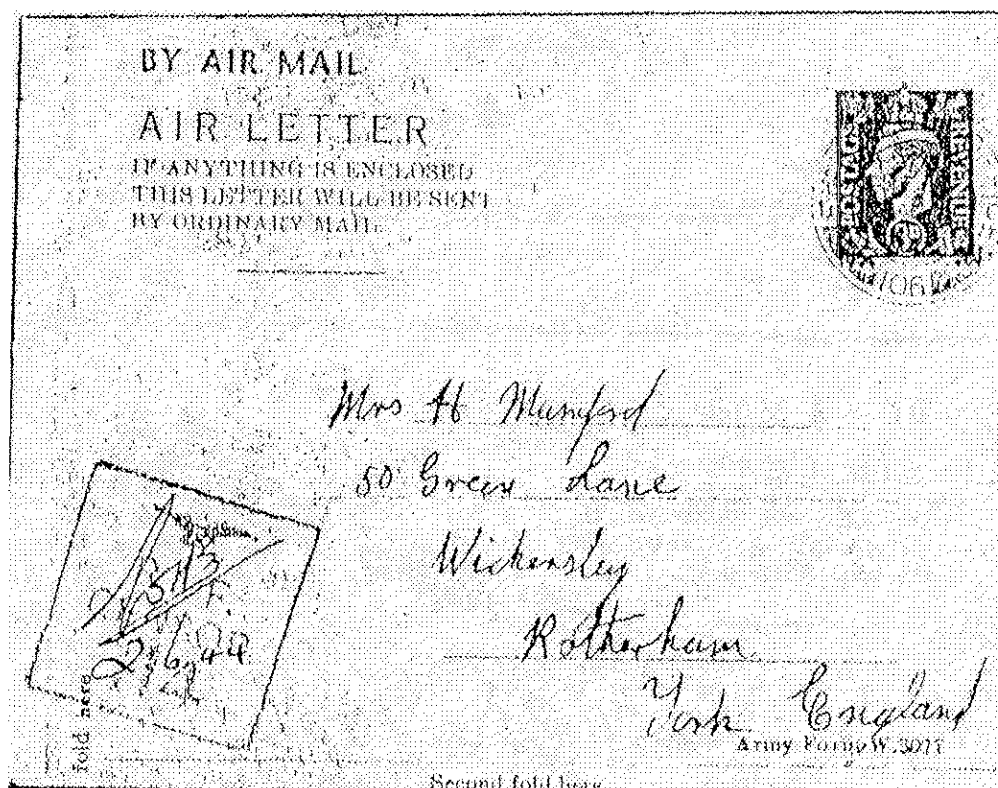
At the end of the second line of the admonition, the right hand horizontal bar of 'T' in 'SENT' failed to register or was broken.

There is a small full stop after 'MAIL' at the end of the admonition.

The underline is between 19 and 19½ mm. long and begins under the first vertical stroke of 'N' in 'ORDINARY'.

There is no full stop after 'Army Form W.3077'.

The dotted horizontal line above 'Second fold here' points towards the letter 'o' of 'fold' in 'First fold here' which appears on the front within the overlay.



RECORD OF USE – WA 07.01

Gambia		
Gold Coast	FPO 106	10 Dec 1943 – 22 Aug 1944
	FPO 536	18 Mar 1944 – 21 Mar 1944
Nigeria	FPO 559	18 Nov 1943
Sierra Leone		

'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left (Lee category KIV continued).

WA 07.02 The principal difference between this example and the one on the previous page is that although the initial letters in 'AIR LETTER' are of the same size as in the example on the previous page, the remaining letters 'IR' and 'ETTER' here are smaller. The printing is still of poor quality, the overlay unevenly spread and in various hues of blue.

The letter 'D' of 'ENCLOSED' in the first line of the admonition is now between the letters 'NT' of 'SENT' at the end of the second line.

In most examples seen so far, the right hand horizontal bar of 'T' in 'SENT' at the end of the second line of the admonition still failed to register.

There is still a small full stop after 'MAIL' at the end of the three-line admonition. The underline is still 19½ mm. long and begins under the first vertical stroke of 'N' in 'ORDINARY'.

There is still no full stop after 'Army Form W.3077' (see enlargement below).

The dotted horizontal line above 'Second fold here' points to between the letters 't' and 'f' of 'First fold here' or between the letters 'f' and 'o' of 'fold'.

(01)

BY AIR MAIL
AIR LETTER
IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED
THIS LETTER WILL BE SENT
BY ORDINARY MAIL.

(02)

BY AIR MAIL
AIR LETTER
IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED
THIS LETTER WILL BE SENT
BY ORDINARY MAIL.



Army Form W.3077

RECORD OF USE – WA 07.02

Gambia	FPO 106	01 Mar 1944 – 01 Sep 1944
Gold Coast	FPO 536	19 Dec 1943 – 10 Apr 1944
Nigeria	FPO 563	03 Aug 1945
Sierra Leone	FPO 537	23 Sep 1943

'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left (Lee category KIV continued).

WA 07.03 Small letters 'IR' and 'ETTER' in 'AIR LETTER'.

Compared with the example of WA 07.02 on the previous page, the printing of the example below is in a darker shade of blue.

In the first line of the admonition, the letter 'D' of 'ENCLOSED' is between the letters 'NT' of 'SENT' at the end of the second line.

In this example, the right hand horizontal bar of the letter 'T' in 'SENT' has registered.

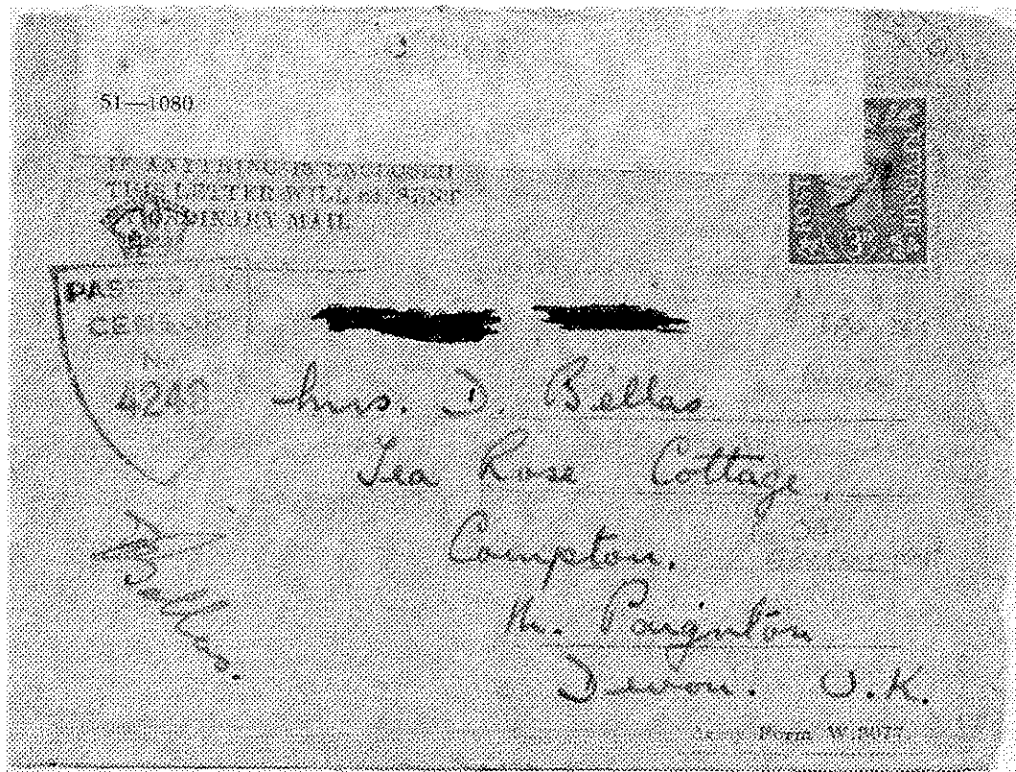
There is no full stop after 'MAIL' at the end of the admonition.

The 19 mm. underline now begins under the second vertical line of the letter 'N' of 'ORDINARY' and extends to the right of 'MAIL'.

The four address lines are not right aligned.

There is now a full stop after 'Army Form W.3077.' (see enlargement below).

The dotted line above 'Second fold here' points above the second 'e' of 'here' in 'First fold here'.



Army Form W.3077.

RECORD OF USE – WA 07.03

Gambia
Gold Coast
Nigeria
Sierra Leone

FPO 769?

30 Apr 1944

'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left.

As type WA 07.01 but printed in blue on greenish-blue paper which obviated the need for an overlay. (Lee category KIV, sub-types 7 and 8). The printing is generally of a better quality.

All the letters in 'AIR LETTER' are the same size. There appears to be at least three variants of this type.

WA 08.01 In the example below, 'BY AIR MAIL' is 29½ mm. in length. 'AIR LETTER' is 37½ mm. in length.

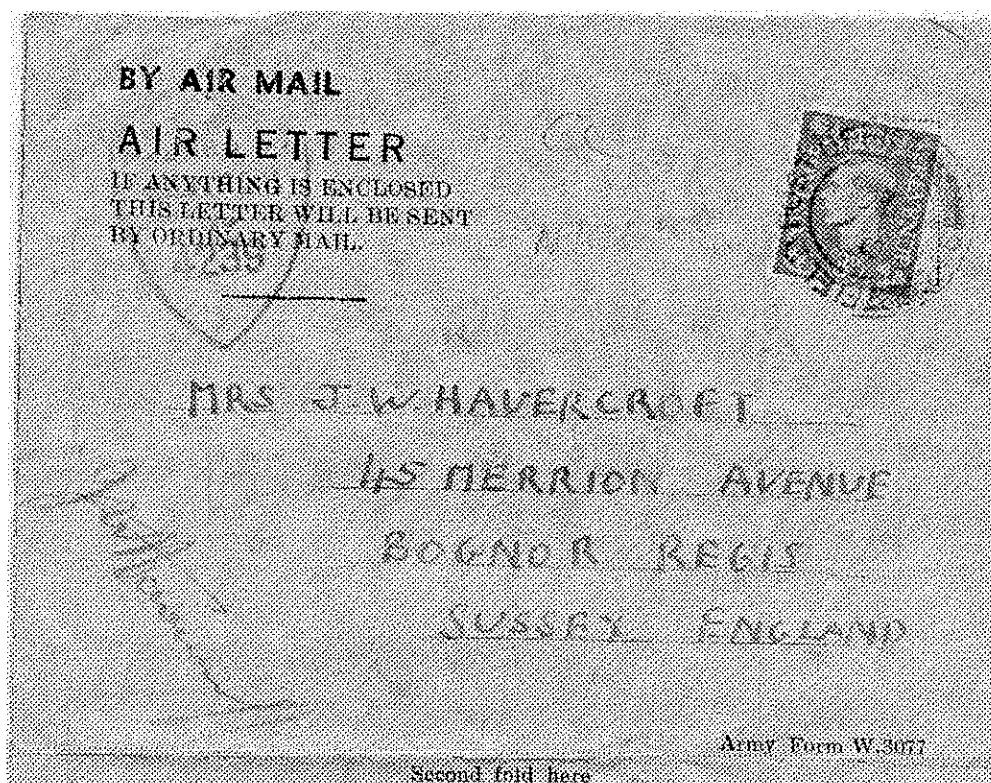
In the first line of the admonition, 'D' of 'ENCLOSED' is slightly to the left of 'N' of 'SENT' below.

In the third line of the admonition, 'L' of 'MAIL' is slightly to the left of the last 'L' in 'WILL' above and there is a full stop after 'MAIL'.

The underline begins under the 'N' of 'ORDINARY' and is just over 19 mm. in length.

There is no full stop after 'Army Form W.3077'.

'Second fold here' is 23½ mm. in length.



RECORD OF USE – WA 08.01

Gambia
Gold Coast
Nigeria
Sierra Leone

FPO 46 08 Dec 1944

'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left (Lee category KIV, sub-types 7 and 8 continued).

WA 08.02 In this example, 'BY AIR MAIL' is 29 mm. in length. 'AIR LETTER' is almost 38 mm. in length.

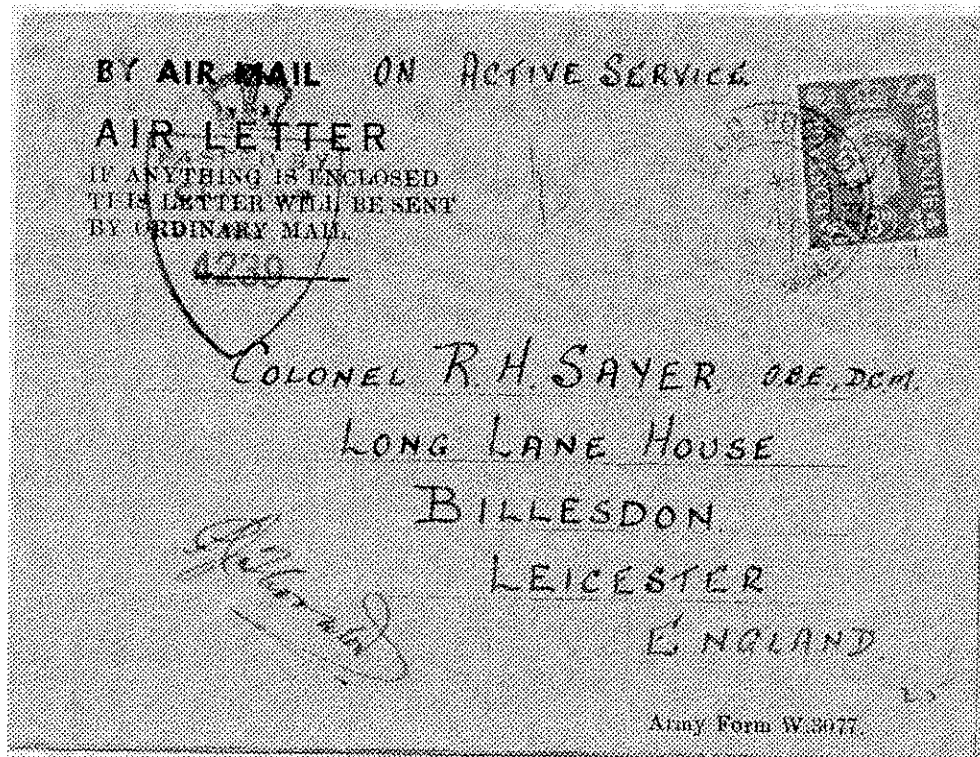
'D' of 'ENCLOSED' is above the letter 'N' of 'SENT' underneath.

'L' of 'MAIL' is slightly to the right of the last 'L' of 'WILL' above. There is a full stop after 'MAIL'.

The underline begins under the letter 'I' of 'ORDINARY' and is 20¼ mm. in length.

There is a full stop after 'Army Form W.3077.'.

'Second fold here' is 22 mm. in length.



RECORD OF USE – WA 08.02

Gambia
Gold Coast
Nigeria
Sierra Leone

FPO 46 04 Nov 1944

'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left (Lee type KIV, sub-types 7 and 8 continued).

WA 08.03 In this example, 'BY AIR MAIL' is 29 mm. in length. 'AIR LETTER' is just over 34¼ mm. in length.

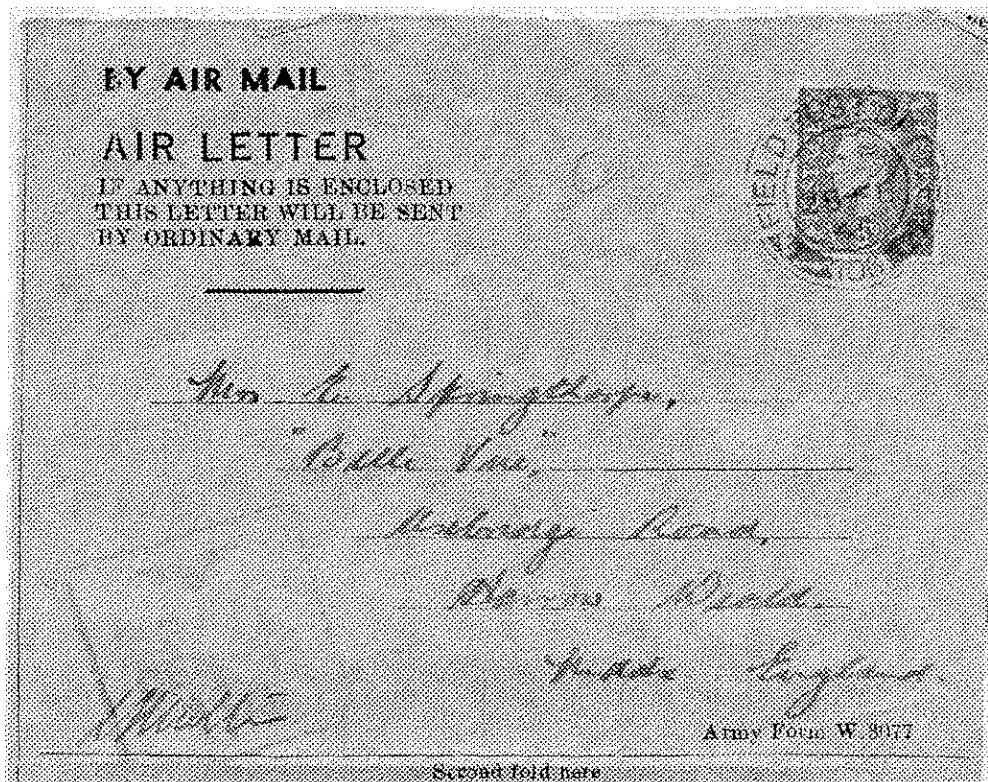
'D' of 'ENCLOSED' is above the letters 'NT' of 'SENT'.

'L' of 'MAIL' is between the last 'L' of 'WILL' and 'B' of 'BE'. There is a full stop after 'MAIL'.

The underline begins under the letter 'I' of 'ORDINARY' and is 21 mm. in length.

There is no full stop after 'Army Form W.3077'.

'Second fold here' measures just under 22 mm.



RECORD OF USE – WA 08.03

Gambia		
Gold Coast	FPO 106	28 Feb 1945 – 20 Nov 1945
Nigeria	FPO 46	04 Nov 1944 – 08 Dec 1944
Sierra Leone		

'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left (Lee type KIV, sub-types 7 and 8 continued).

WA 08.04 In this example, 'BY AIR MAIL' is 29 mm. in length. 'AIR LETTER' is 38½ mm. in length.

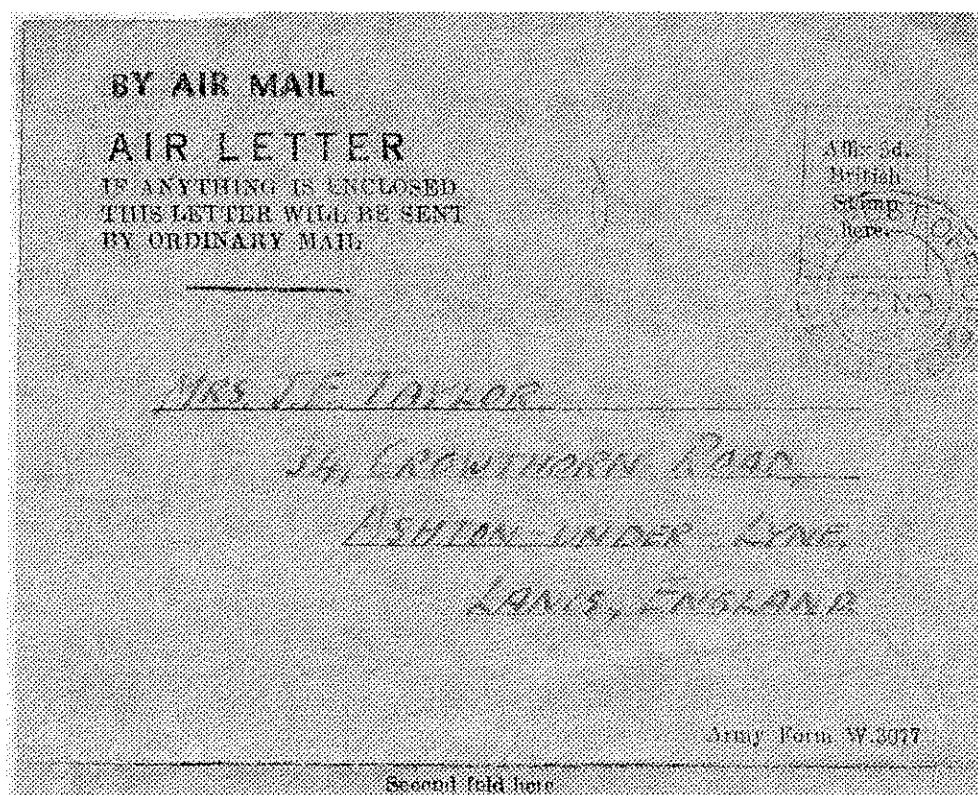
'D' of 'ENCLOSED' is above the letters 'NT' of 'SENT'.

'L' of 'MAIL' is between the last 'L' of 'WILL' and 'B' of 'BE'. There is no full stop after 'MAIL'.

The underline begins under the letter 'D' of 'ORDINARY' and is 21¼ mm. in length.

There is no full stop after 'Army Form W.3077'.

'Second fold here' measures just under 22 mm.

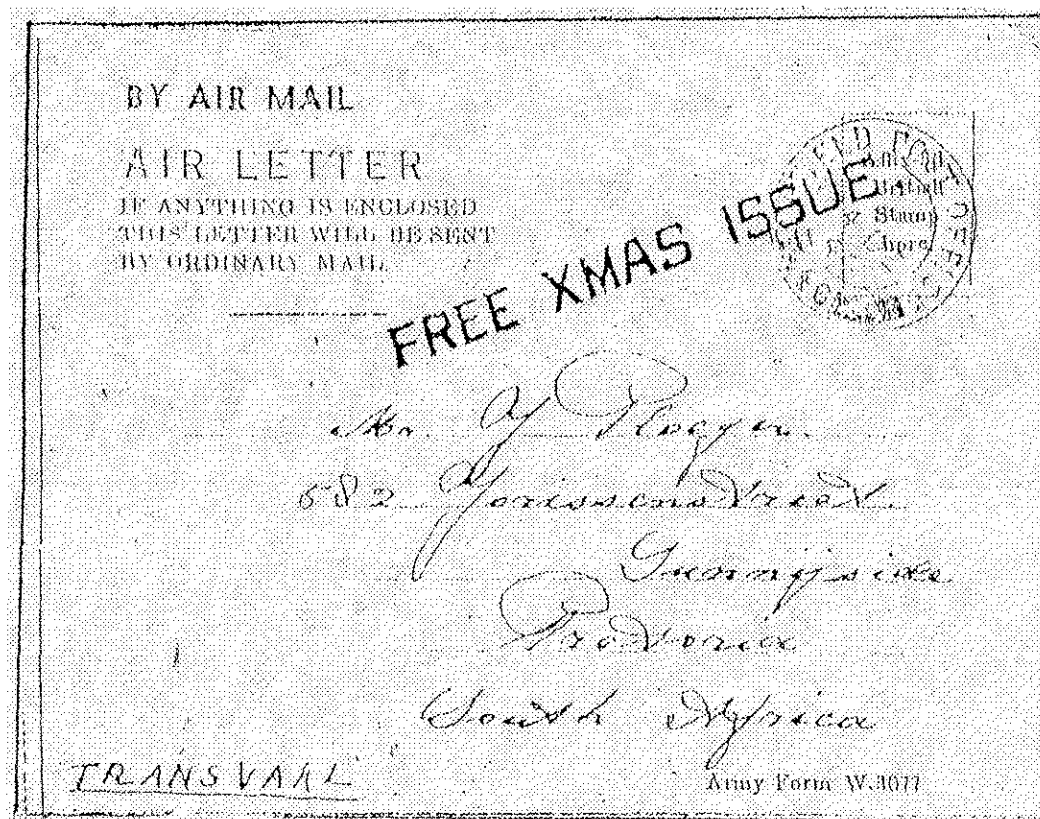


RECORD OF USE – WA 08.04

Gambia
Gold Coast FPO 106 20 Nov 1945
Nigeria
Sierra Leone

'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left (Lee category KIV).

WA 08.10 As type 08.02 but handstamped 'FREE XMAS ISSUE'. The illustration below appears to be Lee sub-type 8 but the various measurements as used by Lee would have to be checked on the actual air letter itself. It is not known where the handstamp was applied.



RECORD OF USE – WA 08.10

Gambia
Gold Coast
Nigeria
Sierra Leone

FPO 46 14 Dec 1944

FREE CHRISTMAS ISSUE for 1944.

WA 09.01 Almost identical to type WA 07.01 but printed on yellow paper as it was a specific Christmas issue.
(Lee type CG.44. sub-type 5).

'X'mas / Issue / Post / Free' printed in the 'stamp' rectangle.

'BY AIR MAIL' is 28½ mm. in length and 'AIR LETTER' is 38½ mm. in length.

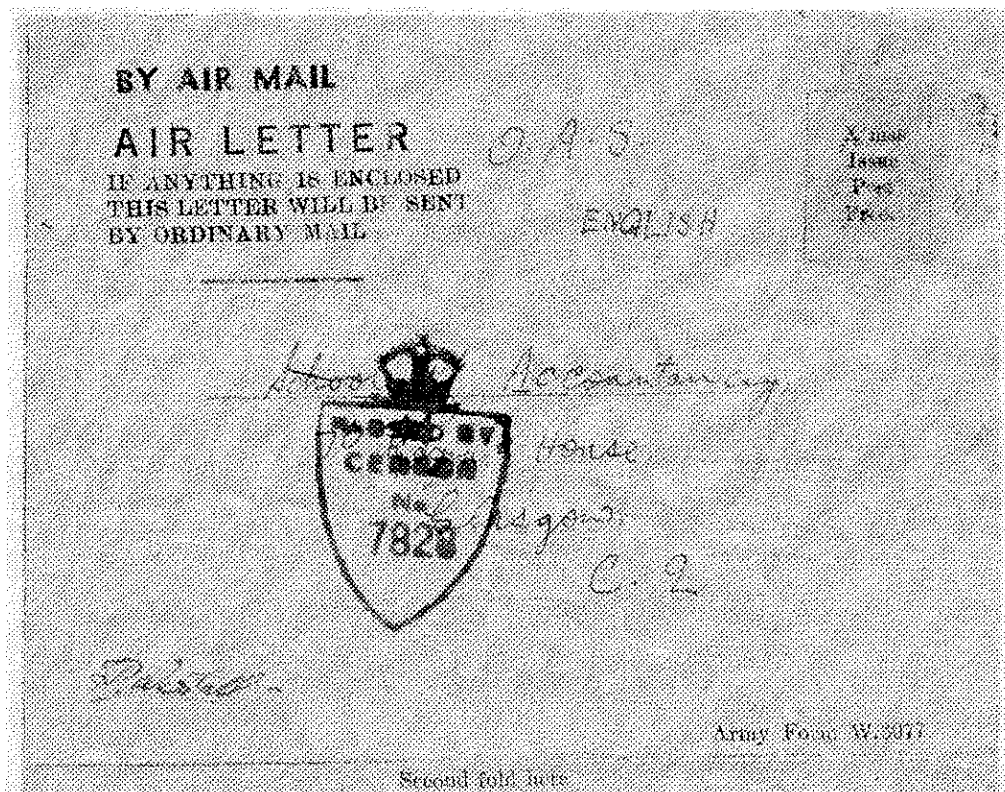
'D' of 'ENCLOSED' is above the letters 'N' and 'T' of 'SENT'.

'L' of 'MAIL' is between the last 'L' of 'WILL' and 'B' of 'BE'. There is no full stop after 'MAIL'.

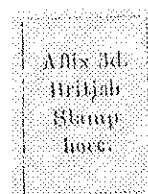
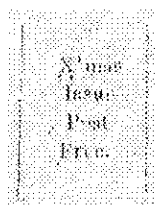
The underline begins under the letter 'D' of 'ORDINARY' and is 21 mm. in length.

Unlike type WA 07.01, there is a minute full stop after 'Army Form W.3077'.

'Second fold here' measures 22 mm.



This example was used after Christmas 1944 so a 3d stamp (subsequently removed) was required.



RECORD OF USE – WA 09.01

Gambia	FPO 45	08 Nov 1944 – 26 Feb 1945
Gold Coast		
Nigeria	date of writing – 26 Feb 1945	
Sierra Leone	date of writing – 24 Nov 1944	

PRIVILEGE AIR LETTER - 'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left.

Lee stated that these were introduced throughout the various Commands towards the end of 1943, the precise date varying with the different Commands. Privilege air letters had a solid or hollow triangle on the front and an 'Honour Certificate' on the back. The letter 'A' was added to the end of the imprint in the lower right corner to denote that it was a privilege air letter.

Privilege air letters were not to be censored at unit level but could be censored by a base censor (as with the green honour envelopes). According to Lee, a privilege air letter was to be issued in place of one of the four air letters issued to each serviceman every four weeks. Lee had no information as to any instructions passed to the West African Command. Neither had he any earliest dates of usage for West Africa (probably early 1944) nor had he classified any West African printings.

Provisional privilege air letters with no capital 'A' after 'Army Form W.3077' are military air letters subsequently overprinted with the triangle on the front and the 'Honour Certificate' on the back.

In addition, some units had a rubber stamp of the Honour Certificate, which was impressed on the back of an air letter. In other instances, the Honour Certificate was printed by duplicator or in manuscript by the writer of the letter. It is not proposed to classify these here.

WA 10.01 is similar to type WA 08.02 but was a dark blue printing on white paper with a hollow triangle at the lower left and 'Honour Certificate' on the back. The letter 'A' after 'Army Form W. 3077.' in the lower right corner denotes that it was printed as a privilege air letter.

For details of the print layout of this example and record of use, see the next page.

BY AIR MAIL
AIR LETTER
IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED
THIS LETTER WILL BE SENT
IN ORDINARY MAIL

Address:
Mrs J E TAYLOR,
31, CROWTHORN ROAD,
ASHTON UNDER LYNE,
Lincs, ENGLAND

Signature:
J. E. Taylor

The following Certificate must be signed by the writer
I certify on my honour that the contents of this envelope
refer to nothing but private and family matters.

Signature
Name only

only for

(WA 10.01 reduced to 75%)

PRIVILEGE AIR LETTER – 'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left.

WA 10.01 This was a dark blue printing on white paper and is similar in layout to type WA 08.02.

'BY AIR MAIL' is 29 mm. in length while 'AIR LETTER' is almost 39 mm. in length.

In the admonition, 'D' of 'ENCLOSED' is between 'NT' of 'SENT' underneath, while 'L' of 'MAIL' is between the last 'L' of 'WILL' and 'B' of 'BE' above. No full stop at the end of 'MAIL'. The underline starts between 'R' and 'D' of 'ORDINARY' and is just over 21 mm. in length.

At the bottom, 'Second fold here' is 22 mm. in length.

The frame of the stamp rectangle is made up of small dots close together – some 35 dots in the top horizontal line.



BY AIR MAIL
AIR LETTER
IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED
THIS LETTER WILL BE SENT
BY ORDINARY MAIL

Affix 3d.
British
Stamp
here.

Mrs J E TAYLOR
34 CROUTHORN ROAD,
WHTON-UNDER-LYME,
LEICESTERSHIRE, ENGLAND

Army Form W.9471.A

Second fold here

J E Taylor

The following Certificate must be signed by the writer

I certify on my honour that the contents of this envelope
refer to nothing but private and family matters.

Signature }
Name only }

2204 111

(reduced to 90%)

RECORD OF USE – WA 10.01

Gambia
Gold Coast
Nigeria
Sierra Leone

FPO 106

29 Jul 1945 (also known – Accra pmk 11 Jun 1952)

PRIVILEGE AIR LETTER – 'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left (continued).

WA 10.02 This printing was also dark blue on white paper and is similar in layout to WA 07.01.

'BY AIR MAIL' is 29 mm. in length while 'AIR LETTER' is 37½ mm. in length.

In the admonition, 'D' of 'ENCLOSED' is slightly to the 'N' of 'SENT' underneath while the 'L' of 'MAIL' is to the left of the last 'L' of 'WILL' above with a full stop at the end of the admonition. The underline begins under the 'N' or 'ORDINARY' and is 19 mm. long.

At the bottom, 'Second fold here' is 23½ mm. in length.

The frame of the stamp rectangle is made up of large dots widely spaced – only some 20 dots in the top horizontal line.

BY AIR MAIL
AIR LETTER
IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED
THIS LETTER WILL BE SENT
BY ORDINARY MAIL.

MAJOR E. TAYLOR,
34 CROMWELL RD,
BELLINGHAM, ENGLAND

Second fold here

Army Form W.3077 A

The following Certificate must be signed by the writer:—
*I certify on my honour that the contents of this envelope
refer to nothing but private and family matters.*

Signature }
Name only }

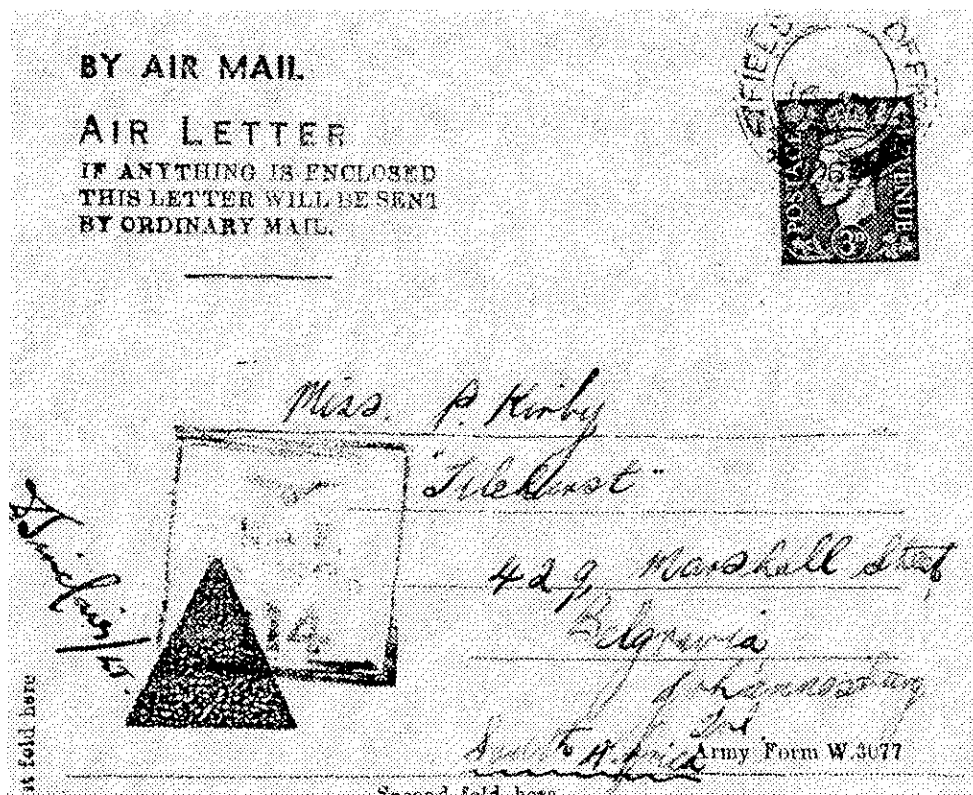
(reduced to 90%)

RECORD OF USE – WA 10.02

Gambia
Gold Coast FPO 106 19 Sep 1945
Nigeria
Sierra Leone

PROVISIONAL PRIVILEGE AIR LETTER

WA 11.01 This example appears identical in layout with WA 07.02. The lack of the letter 'A' after 'Army Form W. 3077' confirms that the triangle was added as an overprint. There would have been a certificate overprinted on the back of this air letter.



RECORD OF USE – WA 11.01

Gambia		
Gold Coast	FPO 106	16 May 1944
Nigeria		
Sierra Leone		

PROVISIONAL PRIVILEGE AIR LETTER

WA 11.10 Standard military British air letter overprinted with solid triangle and honour certificate. Only known used from West Africa and thought to be locally overprinted. The lack of the letter 'A' at the end of the imprint 'Army Form W3077' confirms that the triangle and honour certificate were overprints.

EXAMINER 6677

SI-1345 OF&PCOLD
BT CENSOR

0.8

RAF
CENSOR
114

MRS J. McMAHON,
"LAKE HOTEL", BELLE VUE,
MANCHESTER, LANCASHIRE,
ENGLAND

18

Army Form W107

OPENED BY

P.C. 90

NOT FOR

1. This air letter, like a green envelope, will not be censored in the writer's unit, but it is liable to be opened by the Base Censor.

2. It may not be used to send photographs, and it cannot be accepted for registration.

3. The writer must sign the following certificate:

I certify on my honour that the contents of this air letter refer to nothing but private and family matters.

Signature *J. McMahon* Rank *LCPL* No. *1076619*

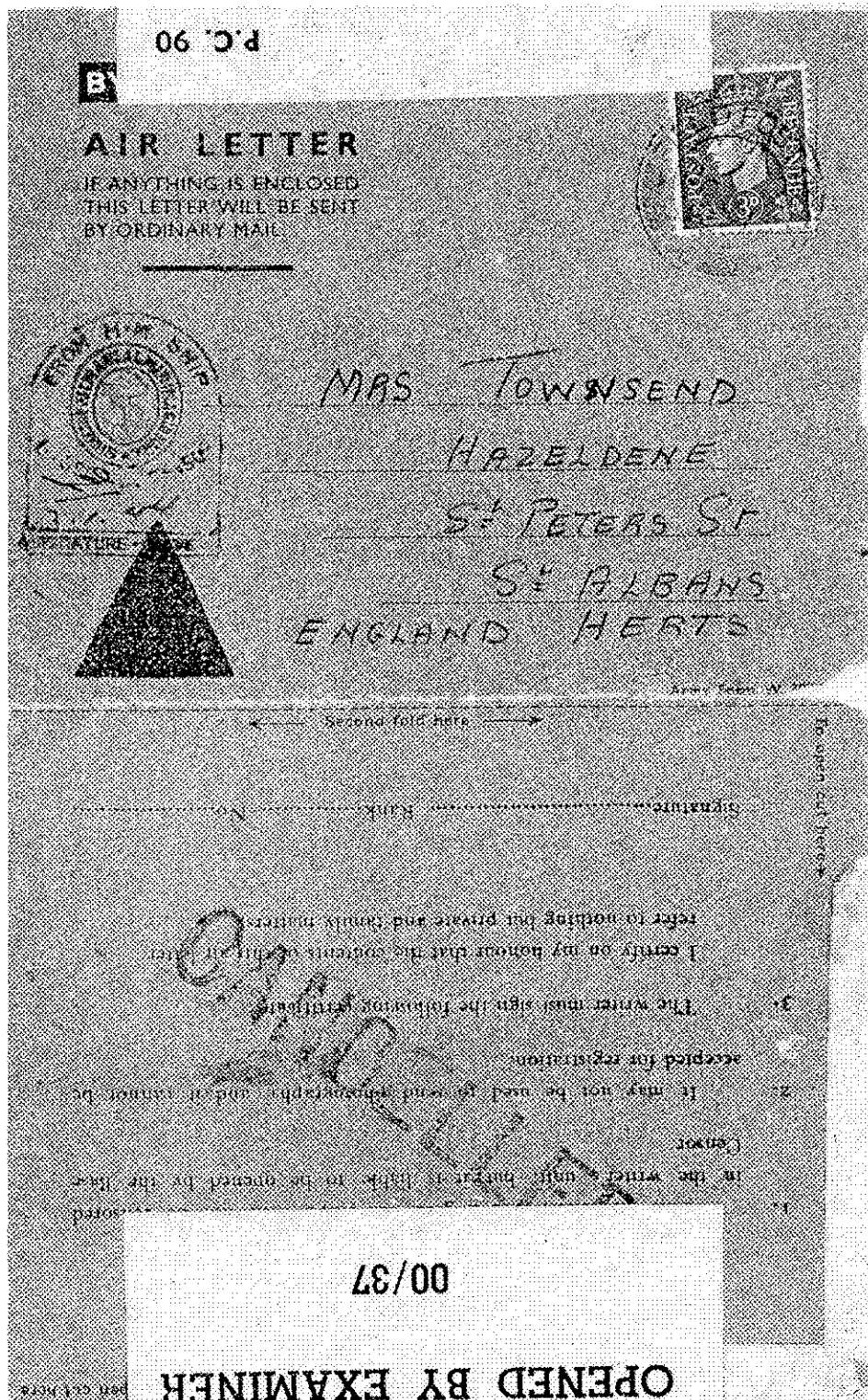
Second fold here

RECORD OF USE - WA 11.10

Gambia	FPO 106	12 Jan 1944 - 19 Feb 1944
Gold Coast	FPO 46	29 Dec 1943
Nigeria		
Sierra Leone		

PROVISIONAL PRIVILEGE AIR LETTER WITH THE HONOUR CERTIFICATE CANCELLED

WA 11.20 Standard military British air letter overprinted with solid triangle and honour certificate. In the example below, the honour certificate has been handstamped 'CANCELLED', the handstamp measuring 77 x 12 mm. This example was censored by both the military and civil censors before it left the Gold Coast.



RECORD OF USE – WA 11.20

GAMBIA
GOLD COAST
NIGERIA
SIERRA LEONE

FPO 106

20 Dec 1943 – 20 Jan 1944

'BY AIR MAIL / AIR LETTER' at left, for civilian use only but with Army imprint 'Army Form W.3077'.

This example is not a W.A.P.S.S. printing but is included because of the 'Army Form W.3077' imprint in the bottom right hand corner which may cause confusion.

On page 168 of 'The Postal Services of the Gold Coast' edited by Michael Ensor and published by the West Africa Study Circle in 1998, it is said that air letters were available to civilians from September, 1944, the air letters to be franked with 6d in local stamps. The example illustrated here was cancelled at Takoradi on 13th November, 1944.

It appears likely that the printers who were contracted to print the civilian air letters were allowed to base the design on the contemporary W.A.P.S.S. air letters. It is possible that the printers were not told to omit the Army imprint and so it was included in the initial print run.

Copies of these civilian air letters with the Army imprint appear to be scarce, possibly because the Gold Coast Post Office may have been obliged to withdraw them from sale once the error was realised. Subsequent printings of these air letters do not have the Army imprint.

These have a blue-green front on white paper with blue printing. The printing and layout appear very similar to WA.07.01 illustrated on page 11 but of much better quality. The address lines appear to be solid instead of dots. The principal difference is that on the back there is 'Sender's Name' with three dotted lines.

BY AIR MAIL
AIR LETTER
IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED
THIS LETTER WILL BE SENT
BY ORDINARY MAIL.

MR H.S. TOWNSEND
HAZELDEN
ST PETERS ST
SE ALBANS
HERTS
England

First fold here

Second fold here

Army Form W.3077

Sender's Name
Dr Townsend
Health Dept
TAKORADI

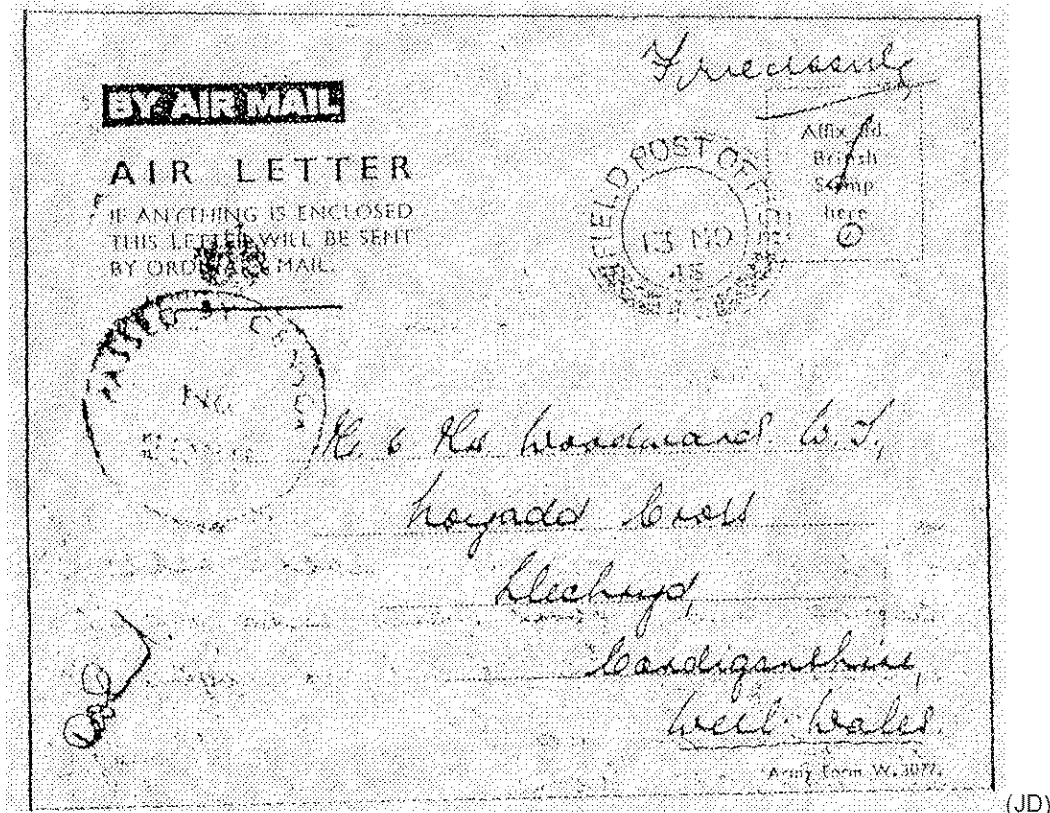
To open cut here

To open cut here

(Reduced to 80%)

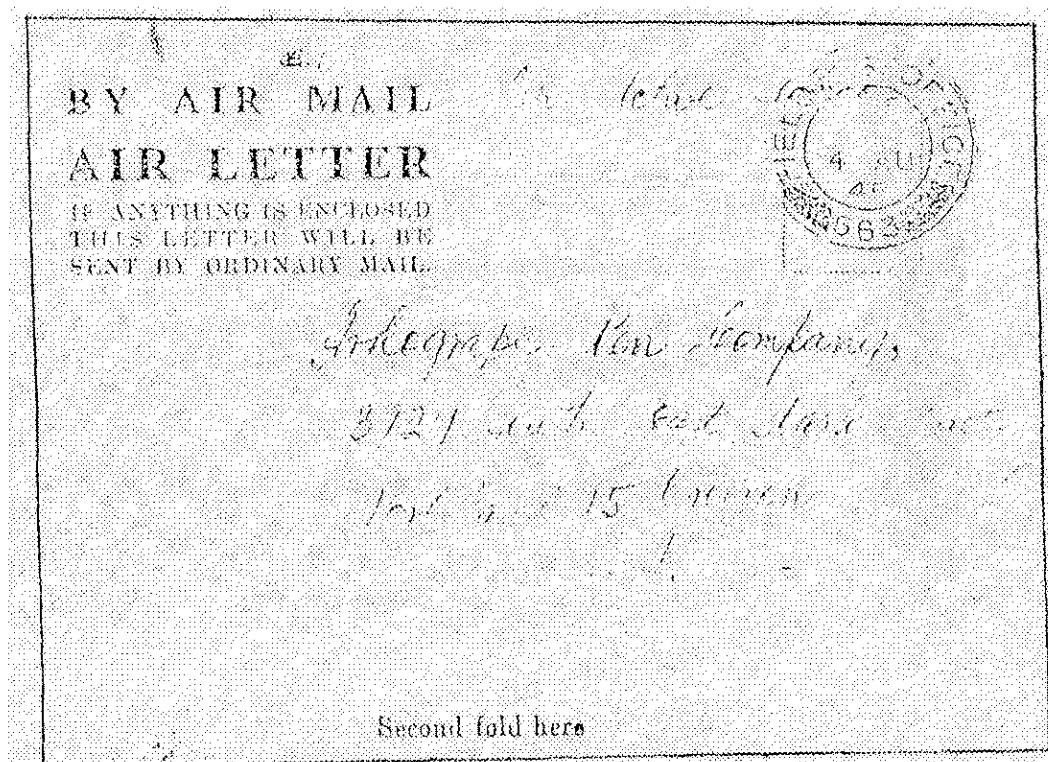
World-wide specific authorisation was given from time to time to issue troops with a 'Free' issue of air letters, usually for delivery before Christmas Day. More research is needed but it would be helpful to record the dates of use of such West African printed 'Free' issues. The one illustrated below is dated 13 NO 1943.

It should be remembered that all air letters to the U.K. (or to the writer's home country) were free from February, 1945. Stamps were still required on military air letters being sent to countries not on the approved list e.g. U.S.A. According to the air letters seen by Lee and others, it appears that different Commands implemented this instruction on various dates between February and April, 1945. Does anyone know the date of implementation by the West African Command?



(JD)

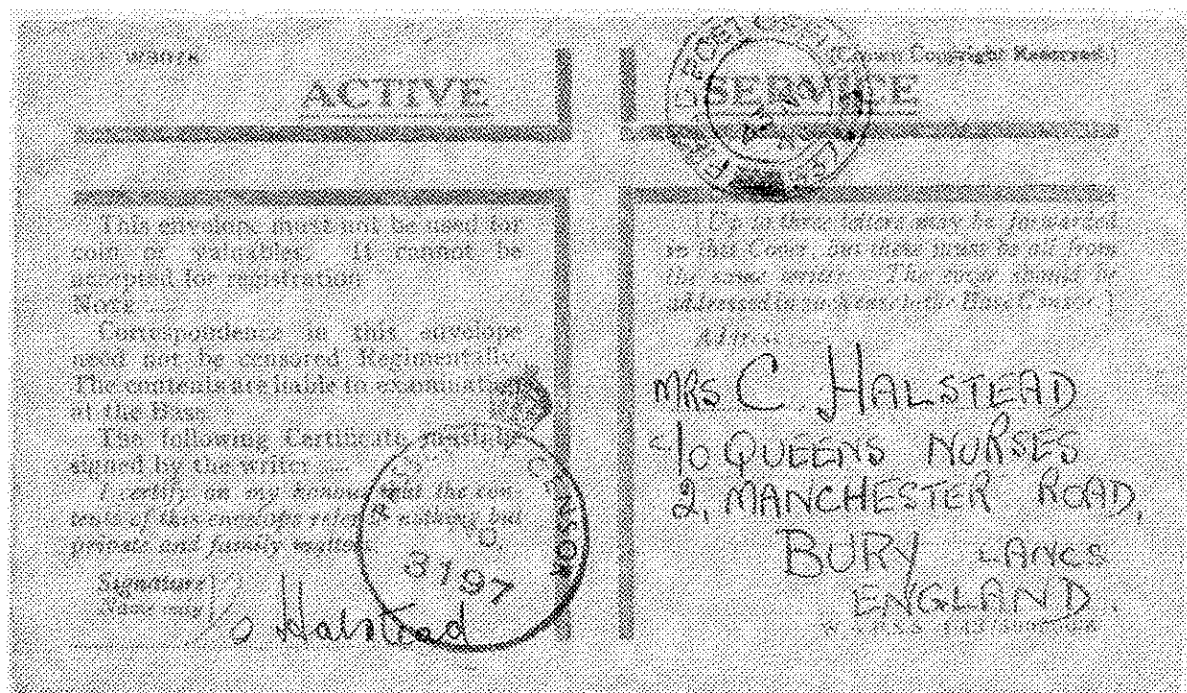
Civilian air letters were used free with FPO postmarks in August, 1945. It is not known if these were issued officially or the use of them was unauthorised.



'ACTIVE SERVICE' Honour Envelope.

These envelopes, printed in green on cream paper, had 'A.F. W3078.' in the top left hand corner and the imprint 'W.A.P.S.S. 1/43/500000/8' in the bottom right hand corner. If the '1/43' in the imprint refers to January, 1943, then, from the envelopes seen so far, there appears to have been only the one printing of the honour envelope. This can be disproved easily if someone produces an envelope with a different beginning to the imprint.

- WA20.01 Again, as with other W.A.P.S.S. printings, there are likely to be minor differences but more study is needed. In the example below, for instance, it appears that the full stop at the end of 'A.F. W3078' almost failed to register while in the example shown on the next page there is no closing bracket at the end of '{Crown Copyright Reserved.}' in the top right hand corner of the envelope (see enlargements below).



W3078

{Crown Copyright Reserved.}

RECORD OF USE – WA 20.01

Gambia
Gold Coast
Nigeria
Sierra Leone FPO 537 23 Nov 1943

'ACTIVE SERVICE' Honour envelope (continued).
 WA 20.02 In this example, there is a definite full stop at the end of 'A.F. W3078.' in the top left hand corner (see enlargement below).

There is no closing bracket at the end of '{Crown Copyright Reserved.' in the top right hand corner (see enlargement below).

A.F. W3078.	ACTIVE	SERVICE	Crown Copyright Reserved
This envelope must not be used for coin or valuation. It cannot be accepted for registration. NOTE: Correspondence in this envelope need not be censored Regimentally. The contents are liable to examination at the Base. The following Certificate must be signed by the writer: <i>I certify on my honour that the contents of this envelope refer to nothing but private and family matters.</i> Signature: <i>[Signature]</i> Name only: <i>[Signature]</i>		[Up to three letters may be forwarded in this Cover, but these must be all from the same writer. The other should be addressed in such case to the Base.] Address:— <i>Mrs. J. M. Scott</i> <i>To Birmingham.</i> <i>c/o Messrs. Lamb & Co.</i> <i>Birmingham.</i> W.A.P.S. 1431000000	

A.F. W3078.

Crown Copyright Reserved

RECORD OF USE – WA 20.02

Gambia
 Gold Coast FPO 45 21 Mar 1944
 Nigeria
 Sierra Leone

AIR MAIL LETTER CARDS AND AIR LETTERS**Table 1 – Earliest and latest recorded dates of use.**

Type	E.R.D.	L.R.D.	Remarks
WA 01.01	09 Mar 1942	03 Oct 1942	
WA 01.02	06 Feb 1942	18 Jul 1942	
WA 02.01	16 Sep 1942	16 Sep 1942	
WA 02.02	15 Apr 1942	19 Oct 1943	
WA 03.01	14 Sep 1942	02 Dec 1942	
WA 03.02	11 Sep 1942	20 Oct 1942	Also known cancelled FPO 572 on 18 Apr 1944.
WA 04.01	13 Apr 1942	28 Nov 1942	Is known RECEIVED / HM SHIPS, censored 06 Nov 1942.
WA 05.01	07 Apr 1943	07 Apr 1943	
WA 06.01	13 Apr 1942	22 Dec 1942	
WA 07.01	18 Nov 1943	22 Aug 1944	
WA 07.02	23 Sep 1943	03 Aug 1945	
WA 07.03	30 Apr 1944	30 Apr 1944	
WA 08.01	08 Dec 1944	08 Dec 1944	
WA 08.02	04 Nov 1944	04 Nov 1944	
WA 08.03	04 Nov 1944	20 Nov 1945	
WA 08.04	20 Nov 1945	20 Nov 1945	
WA 08.10	14 Dec 1944	14 Dec 1944	
WA 09.01	08 Nov 1944	26 Feb 1945	
WA 10.01	29 Jul 1945	29 Jul 1945	Also known with Accra pmk of 11 Jun '52.
WA 10.02	19 Sep 1945	19 Sep 1945	
WA 11.01	16 May 1944	16 May 1944	
WA 11.10	29 Dec 1943	19 Feb 1944	
WA 11.20	20 Dec 1943	20 Jan 1944	
WA 20.01	23 Nov 1943	23 Nov 1943	
WA 20.02	21 Mar 1944	21 Mar 1944	

Table 2 – Earliest and latest recorded dates by country.

Type	F.P.O.	E.R.D.	L.R.D.	Remarks
Gambia				
WA 02.02	109	26 Aug 1942	26 Aug 1942	
WA 03.01	109	21 Nov 1942	21 Nov 1942	
WA 04.01	109	13 Apr 1942	13 Apr 1942	
WA 07.02	537	23 Sep 1943	23 Sep 1943	

Gold Coast				
WA 01.01	45	04 Jul 1942	04 Jul 1942	
	106	09 Mar 1942	03 Oct 1942	
WA 01.02	106	06 Feb 1942	06 Feb 1942	
WA 02.01	45	16 Sep 1942	16 Sep 1942	
WA 02.02	45	30 Jun 1942	14 Aug 1942	
	106	25 Oct 1942	25 Oct 1942	
WA 03.01	536	02 Dec 1942	02 Dec 1942	
WA 03.02	106	11 Sep 1942	20 Oct 1942	
WA 05.01	106	07 Apr 1943	07 Apr 1943	
WA 06.01	45	13 Apr 1942	13 Apr 1942	
WA 07.01	106	10 Dec 1943	22 Aug 1944	
	536	18 Mar 1944	21 Mar 1944	
WA 07.02	106	01 Mar 1944	01 Sep 1944	
	536	19 Dec 1943	10 Apr 1944	
WA 08.03	106	28 Feb 1945	20 Nov 1945	
WA 08.04	106	20 Nov 1945	20 Nov 1945	
WA 09.01	45	08 Nov 1944	26 Feb 1945	
WA 10.01	106	29 Jul 1945	29 Jul 1945	Also known with Accra pmk, 1952.
WA 10.02	106	19 Sep 1945	19 Sep 1945	
WA 11.01	106	16 May 1944	16 May 1944	
WA 11.10	106	12 Jan 1944	19 Feb 1944	
WA 11.20	106	20 Dec 1943	20 Jan 1944	
WA 20.02	45	21 Mar 1944	21 Mar 1944	

Appendix 'A' (continued).

Nigeria				
WA 01.02	46	18 Jul 1942	18 Jul 1942	
WA 02.02	46	17 Aug 1942	1 Sep 1942	
WA 04.01	46	28 Nov 1942	28 Nov 1942	
WA 04.01	559	28 Nov 1942	28 Nov 1942	
WA 06.01	46	21 Jun 1942	21 Jun 1942	
	559	19 Nov 1942	22 Dec 1942	
WA 06.10	46	02 Dec 1942	05 Dec 1942	
WA 07.01	559	18 Nov 1943	18 Nov 1943	
WA 07.02	563	03 Aug 1945	03 Aug 1945	
WA 07.03	769?	30 Apr 1944	30 Apr 1944	
WA 08.01	46	08 Dec 1944	08 Dec 1944	
WA 08.02	46	04 Nov 1944	04 Nov 1944	
WA 08.03	46	04 Nov 1944	08 Dec 1944	
WA 08.10	46	14 Dec 1944	14 Dec 1944	
WA 09.01	-	26 Feb 1945	26 Feb 1945	
WA 11.10	46	29 Dec 1943	29 Dec 1943	

Sierra Leone				
WA 02.02	-	15 Apr 1942	15 Apr 1942	
	537	19 Oct 1943	19 Oct 1943	
WA 03.01	41	14 Sep 1942	14 Sep 1942	
WA 07.02	537	23 Sep 1943	23 Sep 1943	
WA 09.01	-	24 Nov 1944	24 Nov 1944	
WA 20.01	537	23 Nov 1943	23 Nov 1943	

