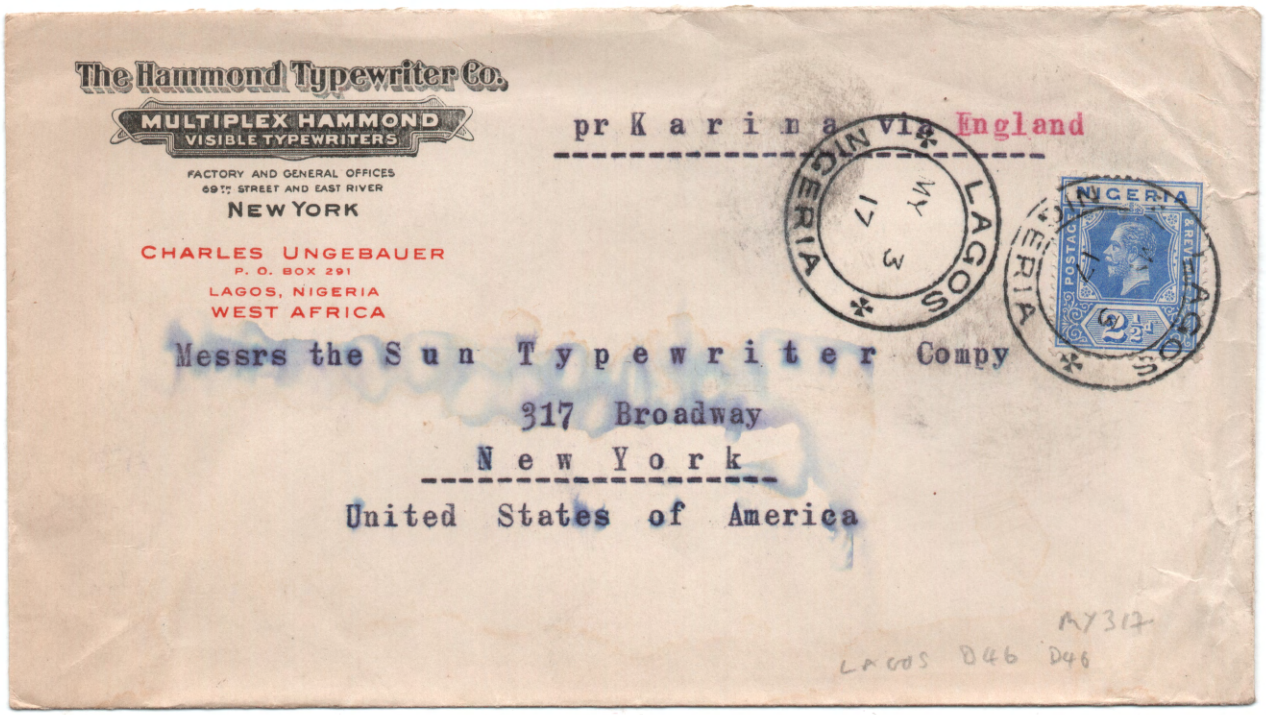
The J2 / J3 group

These double ring cancellers with Maltese crosses at 3 and 9 o'clock were the main cancellers in use between mid 1916 and mid 1922. Jones assigns them all to two types, **J2** and **J3**, exemplified by the two covers below (the lower one sent by Charles Ungebauer not long before his untimely death). Proud gives 5 types (D40, 41, 43, 46 and 47), of which D46 is clearly equivalent to J3. The others are variants on J2, further explored on the next sheet.



J2



J3

J2 sub-types

Although it requires good examples to examine, there are consistent differences to be found in looking at a selection oj J2 cancels, though these do not correspond exactly to particular Proud types.

In some (shown in 1 and 2 below) the A in LAGOS is wider than in others (shown in 3 and 4), the R in NIGERIA has a longer top loop and LAGOS itself is wider (18mm Vs 17mm). Yet others are intermediate (see 5 and 6 below), in which LAGOS has a narrow A, a more angular G and is 17.5mm wide).



1



2



3



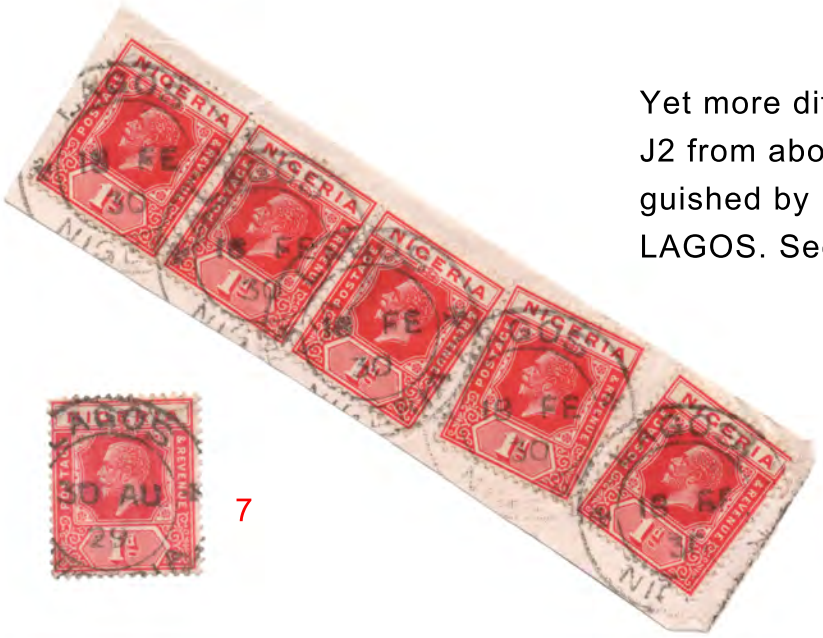
4



5



6



8

7

Yet more differences can be seen in examples of J2 from about 1923 to 1932, which are distinguished by having an almost perfectly round O in LAGOS. See examples 7 and 8.

J8 - another varied canceller

J8 (Proud D49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60 and 61) is the first of the Lagos double-ring cancellers with sidebars. It also has three lines of text across the centre, showing time of day, day/month and year. At first sight these common cancellations are quite uniform: 27mm / 16.5 ring diameters, with right and left sidebars similar in width and length (allowing for vagaries of uneven inking), and the words LAGOS and NIGERIA are all more or less the same width.

Thus Jones assigns them all to J8. However, as the examples below show, there is variety in the shapes of some of the letters: both Gs, the S and the R. Whether those are sufficient to justify the 11 different Proud types is debatable, and the slightly blurred quality of most J8 cancels makes it difficult to be sure of small differences.The cover and examples on piece below illustrate these small variations, but for the time being are all simply assigned to J8





J7 and the like

J7, **J21**, and **J36** (D76, 77, 78 and 80) : the next of the main ‘routine’ cancels on Lagos GPO mail, in use 1934 to 1951. The 3 Jones types are essentially the same, likewise the 4 Proud types. Diameters are given as 29mm to 30mm, and that is borne out by measured examples. However, as shown by the examples on the next sheet, the canceller became worn and that can push in the outer edges of the instrument. The earlier, crisper impressions do show some variation in letter shape, and it is likely, given the volume of mail dealt with, that there were several cancellers in use. Pending further study I would tend to lump them all under J7.

First Day Covers of the 1937 Coronation set are common, but the example shown below is unusual in that the stamps are all from sheets with the same sheet number, 0007, and to an unusual destination: Sierra Leone.





It would seem likely that the addressee, JA Reffell, is either the same person as Mr Reffell, who was Postmaster Surveyor of Lagos GPO at the time, or a relative of his. The image to the left is taken from Proud p168, and shows Mr Reffell ‘supervising the arrival of the mail, 1935’

J7 continued

The examples below are arranged in date order, from early to late usage. The early examples are crisp and it is possible to see some differences in letter shapes, but over time the cancellations are increasingly blurred, due to a combination of wear and accumulated dirt. Letter shapes become less easy to make out, side-bars become thicker, and diameters are less easy to measure.



J28 - featuring LAGOS and G.P.O.

J28 (Proud D66, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73). Jones' J28 covers two similar but different cancellers. One (D69 and D73 in Proud), shows 'G.P.O.' at the foot of the cancel with 'LAGOS' on top (and has side dots), while in the other 3 Proud types the word positions are reversed, and there are no side dots.

In D66 and 70 the inner ring is 19mm diameter, with a two-line date (1, 2, 3 below). In D71 and 72 the inner ring is 20mm and the posting time is shown above the date (4, 5, 6). I can't reliably distinguish between D69 and D73 (the two types with G.P.O. at the foot). Although known usage dates run from 1933 to 1954, the J28 types are relatively scarce, especially on cover.

The 1949 date given for the D69, 71 and 72 images suggest that they came from the 1949 Colonial Postmark census. The current whereabouts of the Nigerian section of that census is unknown, but it confirms that cancellers producing virtually identical cancels were assigned to specific counters within the post office (see p167 Proud).


1


2

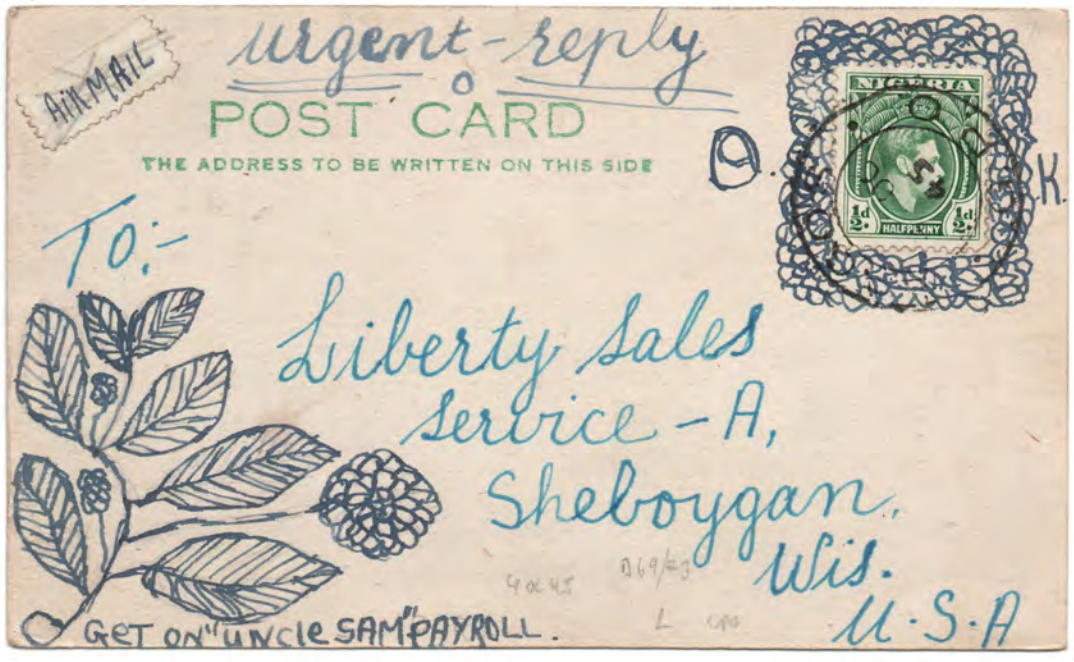

3


4


5


6

G.P.O on top



G.P.O at the foot

J20 and J18

J20 (Proud D67 and 75 – which I can't reliably distinguish). A similar design to the J28 cancellers, but with NIGERIA below rather than G.P.O. Side dots and centrally positioned date lines. In use 1933 to 1947 and quite common. Jones gave an lkd of 1981 for this cancel – was that a misprint or resuscitation of an old cancel?

J13 (Proud D87) looks like a slightly smaller version of J20, but has no side dots and the date slugs are below the central line. Many examples show smudges at the sides which are easily mistaken for dots or side-bars. In use 1947 to 1950.



J20







J13

J14

J14 (Proud D82-84). The Proud images show variations in the width and position of sidebars but in practice it is difficult to assign cancels to Proud type: usage and age affect the impression the bars make. The cancel should show a four figure year though the 19 is often faint or invisible. In use 1943 to 1957. The covers show early use, while the canceller was unworn, and later use with edges less clear









Military mail during WW2

Lagos was an important staging post during the second world war.There were several military bases and installations in Lagos during the war from which a considerable volume of mail originated both during the hostilities and in the years after the end of the war.

1. Ikeja Cantonment: the main British Army base in Lagos during the war and served as a hub for military operations in West Africa
2. Apapa Naval Base: the main Royal Navy base in Lagos during the war. It was also used as a repair and maintenance facility for British naval vessels
3. Yaba Military Hospital: a large military hospital in Lagos
4. Lagos Race Course: used as a temporary military camp and was also used to house prisoners of war.

Five Field Post Offices (FPOs) served troops in Nigeria and several others were used by Nigerian Forces in India and Burma. Army Post Office S102 was based in Lagos and two cancels are known in use there, with FPO numbers 46 and 563. Use dates for 46 are July 1941 to August 1945, for 563 use dates are May to Dec 1945.

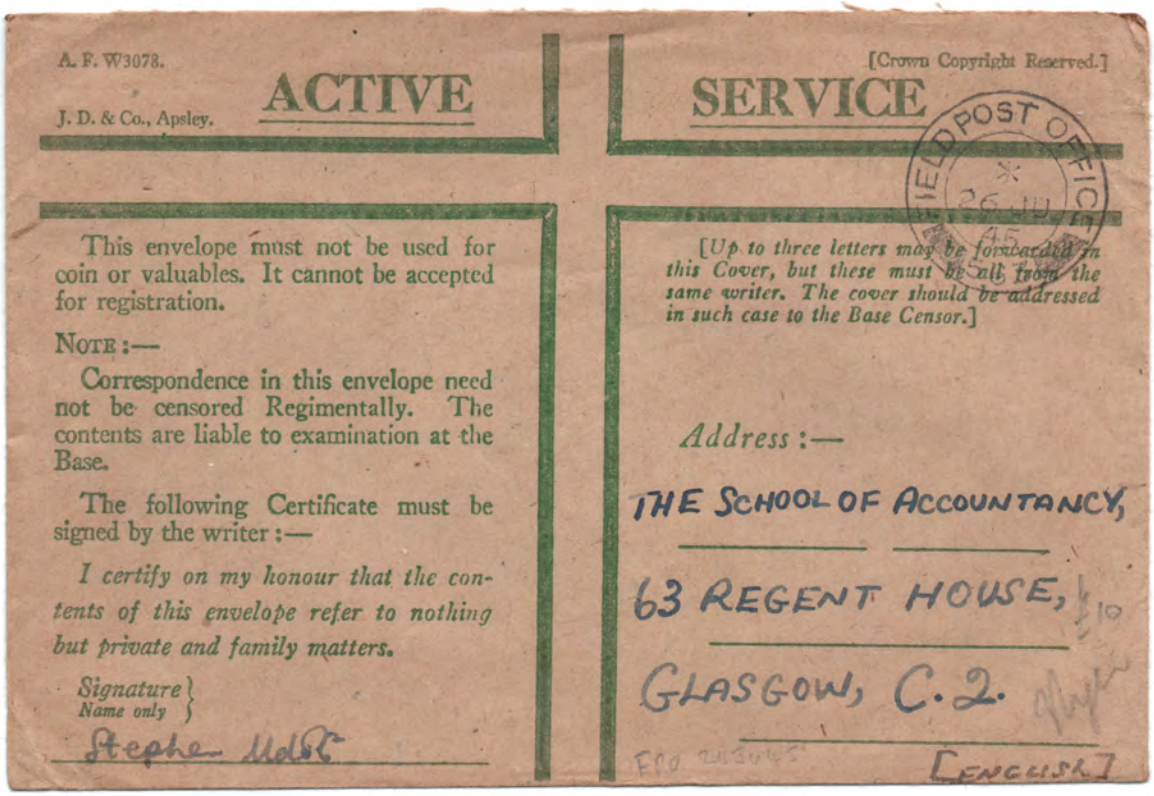
The cover below, cancelled with FPO 46, was sent on 8 SP 43 from Lt Col HH Gilbert to NG Gilbert, also a Lt Col (his father?). It carries Army Censor type A500, No. 3144 (previously unreported).



Military mail during WW2 continued

The two covers below both originate from Lagos. The top one, on a standard army-issue air mail ‘letter card’ is dated 6 JU 43, with a 3d British stamp cancelled by FPO 46, from Lt Havercroft to his wife. It begins: Dearest Darling most sweetest beloved Pet’ but continues in more restrained vein to give a detailed account of life on base. The second item is an ‘Honour’ cover, cancelled with FPO 563.





Military mail after WW2

J30 (Proud F1) Significant British forces remained stationed in Lagos after the end of WW2, and this ‘LAGOS MIL’ cancel was used on Lagos army base after the BFPO cancellers were returned at the end of the war. It is known in use from January 1946 to October 1956).

The cover below is part of a considerable correspondence between a serviceman called Napier and his mother, usually involving corner blocks of low denomination QEII stamps, sent at the concessionary air-mail rate for serving soldiers. The oval cachet on the back ties the cover to the Lagos Camp Post Office.

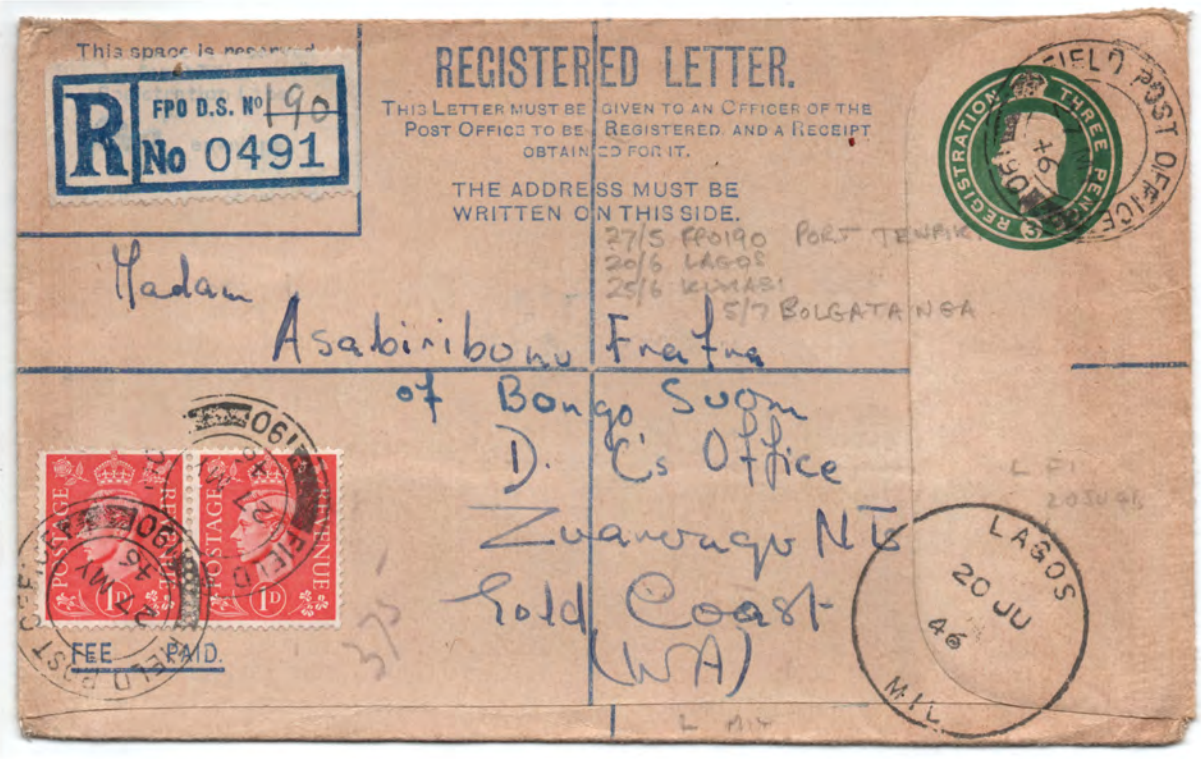




Military mail after WW2 continued

The cover below has a decent, and quite early, J30 transit cancel, but its main interest lies in its journey. The envelope is a 3d Registered cover, with an extra fee of 2d paid in GB stamps. It originates from FPO 190, in Port Tewfik, at the Red Sea end of the Suez canal, sent on 27 May 1946 by Azobiri Frafra, serving with the Middle East Force.

The Frafra are a people in north-east Gold Coast, and the letter is addressed to Asabir-ibonu Frafra - a relative one presumes - at Bongo, sent c/o the District Officer's office Zuarungu. The letter took almost a month to reach Lagos on 27 May, and two back stamps show it took almost another month to reach Kumasi in the Gold Coast, and a further 10 days to reach Bolgatanga, some 10 miles south of Bongo.







J34

J34 (Proud D88). This type of double ring canceller, is 27mm diameter with time over a two line date. Together with J33 (identical but without time) J34 is known from over 200 post offices in Nigeria. Lagos was one of the first offices to use J34 but its use there was quite short-lived, from May 1950 to June 1952.

Carlton advertised in the Nigerian press offering to buy stamps. The letter within offers 300 stamps, for which the sender (hopefully) asks to receive a camera or a fountain pen.



This letter to Vienna was openedby the 'Osterreichische zensurstelle' - the Austrian censorship office. From 1946 to 1955 Austria was administered by the former allies, and up to 1953 all incoming mail to Vienna was censored. 29n is a supplementary mark possibly denoting the official involved



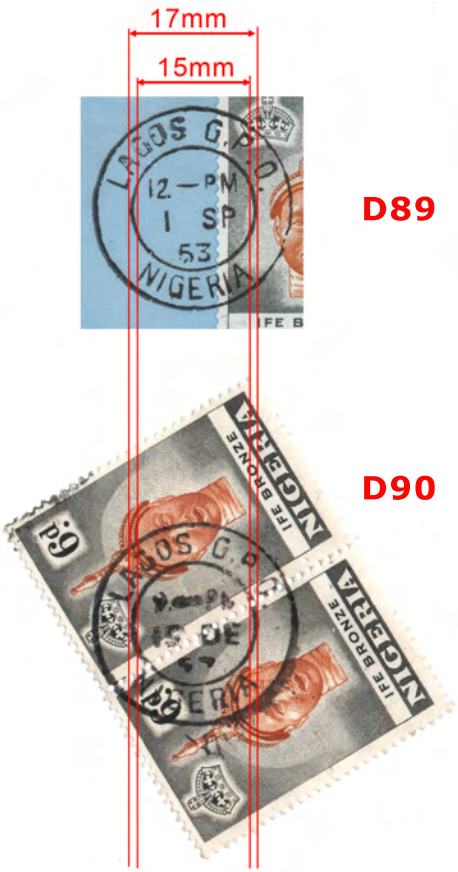
The J47 family

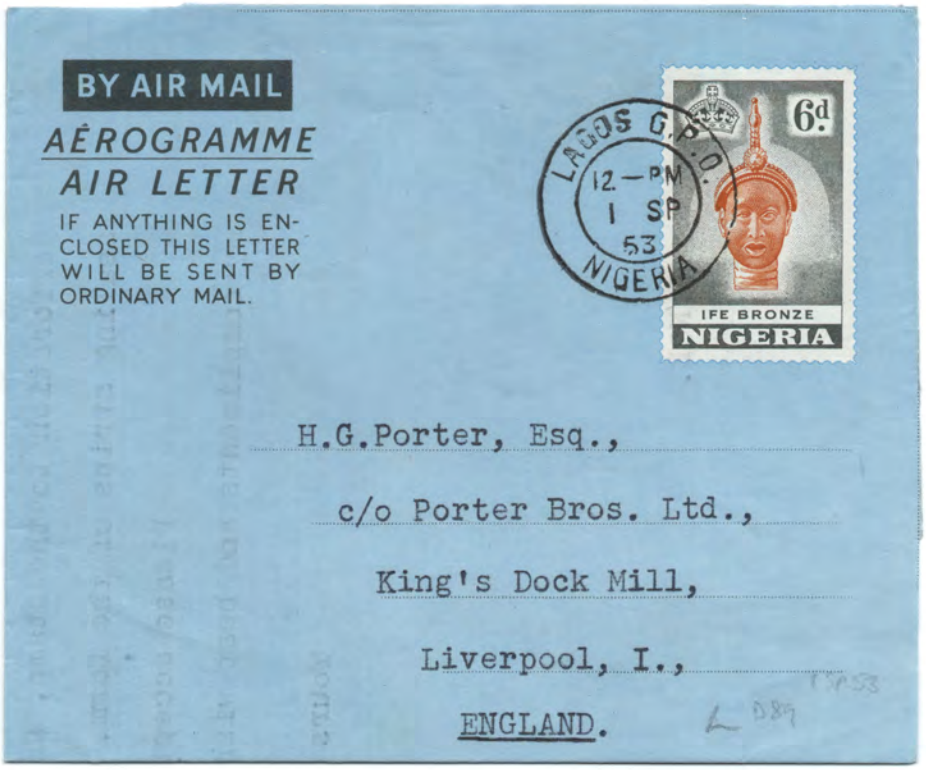
The J47 group includes 3 similar cancellers, of the same layout and size as J34. Proud illustrates 2 of them (D89 and 90), which show LAGOS G.P.O. at top, NIGERIA at the foot. In D89 NIGERIA is 15mm wide, in D90 it is 17mm wide. The known use dates differ too. For D89: June 1952 to June 1956 For D90: May 1957 to July 1958

The third J47 type is not mentioned in Proud, though it is not scarce. It has G.P.O. LAGOS at top, and does not have the time slug. Known dates are November 1955 to January 1959.

Examples of the two LAGOS G.P.O. types are shown below left.The aerogramme was sent to Porter (an assiduous collector of Nigerian material) by L A Rowe, a post office official with whom he exchanged a considerable correspondence.

'*Dear Mr Porter, As promised in my last letter I am posting to you on the first day of issue this specimen of the new Nigerian air letter form (external service). I think you will agree that the design is both original and attractive. You will notice the dummy perforation to the stamp, and the bevelled edging to the sealing strips of the form. Please accept this first day posting with my compliments and best wishes...*'





The J47 family continued

The cover below, cancelled with D90 (wider NIGERIA - 17mm), is very clearly official, with its various authorisations and cachets (the CENTRAL REGISTRY one is on the back).

The addressee lived in Normandy, which is actually a small village between Aldershot and Guildford.





Examples of J47 with G.P.O.LAGOS at top, rather than LAGOS G.P.O.







The J48 family

J48 (Proud D91, D92) is very similar to J47 but has a numeral after NIGERIA. D91 shows ‘NIGERIA 1’ (with or without a dot between NIGERIA and 1 according to Jones), D92 shows ‘NIGERIA 2’.

The top cover, while philatelic, shows several strikes of NIGERIA 1, some with and some without the dot, suggesting that it is not a constant feature. The lower cover shows the only known example of NIGERIA 2, with a scan of the same from the back of the cover.







The J48 family continued

There also exists a cancel with NIGERIA 3, in occasional use between September 1958 and November 1962. The philatelic UK air letter below (front and back), is from Frank Field, a dealer from Sutton Coldfield, addressed to himself 'Post Restante' Lagos.

The front shows a UK machine cancel dated 30 SEP 1958 and a large cachet 'NIGERIAN AIRWAYS LONDON'.





The back shows J48 NIGERIA 3, dated 3 OC 58, Mr Field's cachet, and note that the cover was flown on Nigerian Airways' first flight - Oct 1 / 58. I wonder how the cover got back to Mr Field from Lagos

J54

J54 (Proud D93) LAGOS GPO NIGERIA with 3 at foot, known in use between September 1954 and May 1957. The 3 probably refers to the counter number at which the canceller was used. The top cover has 2 cachets and a label to make sure the letter got to its destination (Sporting Forecasts ran a Football Pool). A backstamp shows the letter reached London on 18 Feb so the Express fee was worth it. The second cover seems remarkably cheap even with the concessionary rate for serving men (in this case probably a Naval man judging from the Apapa return address).

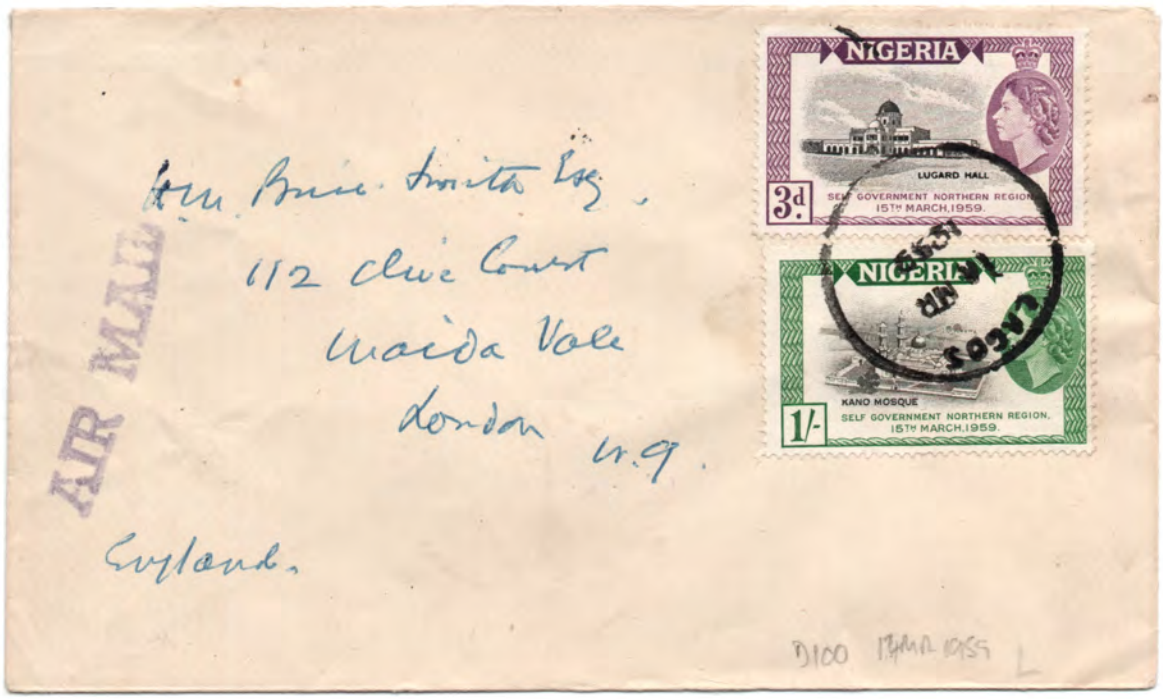




The 30mm cancellers

In 1958/9 several 30mm diameter cancellers based on a single circle were introduced. Three (J46, 74 and 75) were used on general mail and one for registered letters (described later). Variants show that J74 and J75 were definitely ‘skeletons’, with type which could be inserted round the rim by the operator as opposed to the fixed type of ‘steel die’ cancellers. **J46** (Proud D100) - shown below - was probably a skeleton, but variants are not known. It was introduced in January 1959, and is known as late as 1978.

Brice-Smith was a keen collector with Nigerian con-nections. This is a privately sent first day cover



J46



How did this strange assort-ment of damaged stamps and GB air-mail cut out make it through the post untaxed? And was it sent to a naval attache, and what did the Admiralty make of it ?!

The 30mm cancellers continued

J74 (D101 101A). This 30mm canceller was in use for approximately a year from August 1958. A similar cancel (D101A), but with no letter B at the foot, and with GPO either single or double spaced, was in use 1966-7, though whether it was the same instrument is uncertain – D101 was almost certainly a ‘skeleton’ canceller, so the peripheral type could be altered. Jones mentions a cancel (J63) with PO at the foot, which is odd if it was used at the GPO. I’ve not seen an example.

The unregistered cover to cover to Holland shows D101 and the three stamps below it the (probable) D101A.







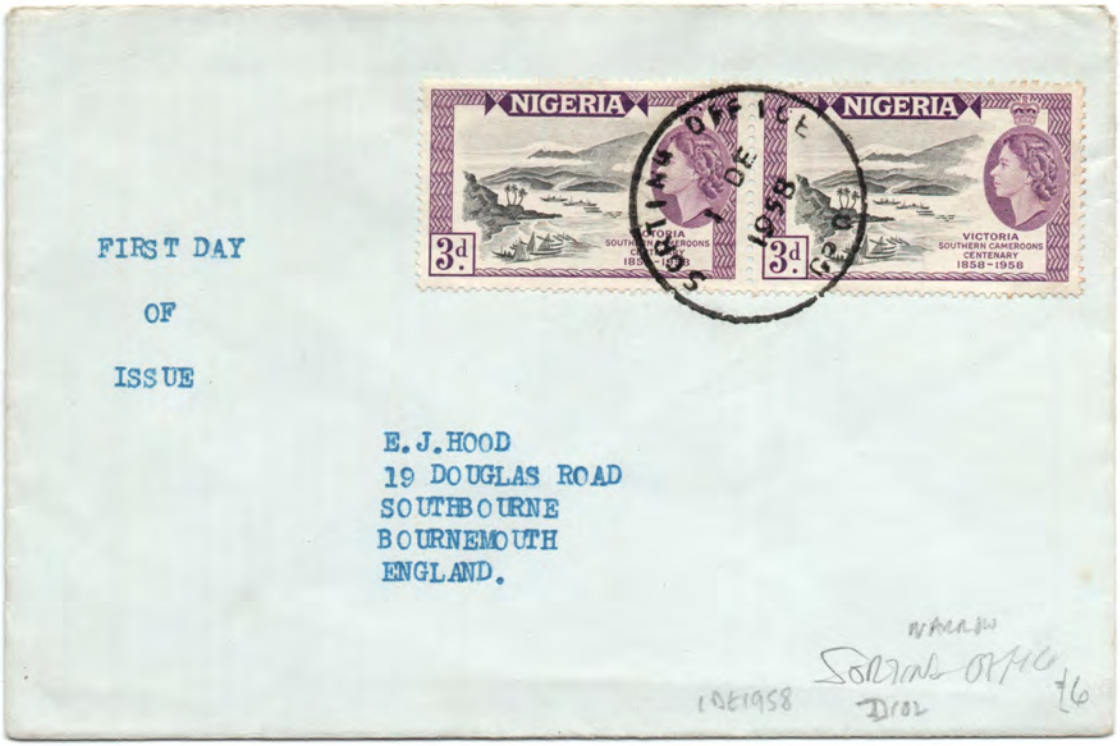


The 30mm cancellers continued

J75 (D102). This canceller was used at Lagos GPO Sorting Office. Although in use for less than a year (October 1958 to January 1959) there are 4 variants involving moved letters - this was definitely a skeleton canceller!

In D102 (see cover) there are no spaces in GPO. In D102A GPO is spaced ‘G P O’ . In D102B the letter I has moved from ‘SORT NG OFFICE at the top to make IGPO at the foot. The image for J75 in Jones is this IGPO variant, but with the I in place (not seen by me) In D102C an extra O has crept in from somewhere to make 'SORTINGOOFFICE' at top, ‘G PO’ at foot. The three variants are shown below the cover.

D102



D102A



D102B





D102C

J69

J69 (D97 - 99) was introduced in 1960 and remained in use until 1975. There are no clear differences between the Proud illustrations.

The cover is presumably philatelic, addressed to Spencer Perlstein who was a noted American philatelist (and dealer?). The four 1/2d stamps come from a booklet, and there are two 2d stamps on the reverse. The three stamps below the cover show J69 over time. The 24 FE 60 example is earliest known date, the 4 SP 75 is last known use.









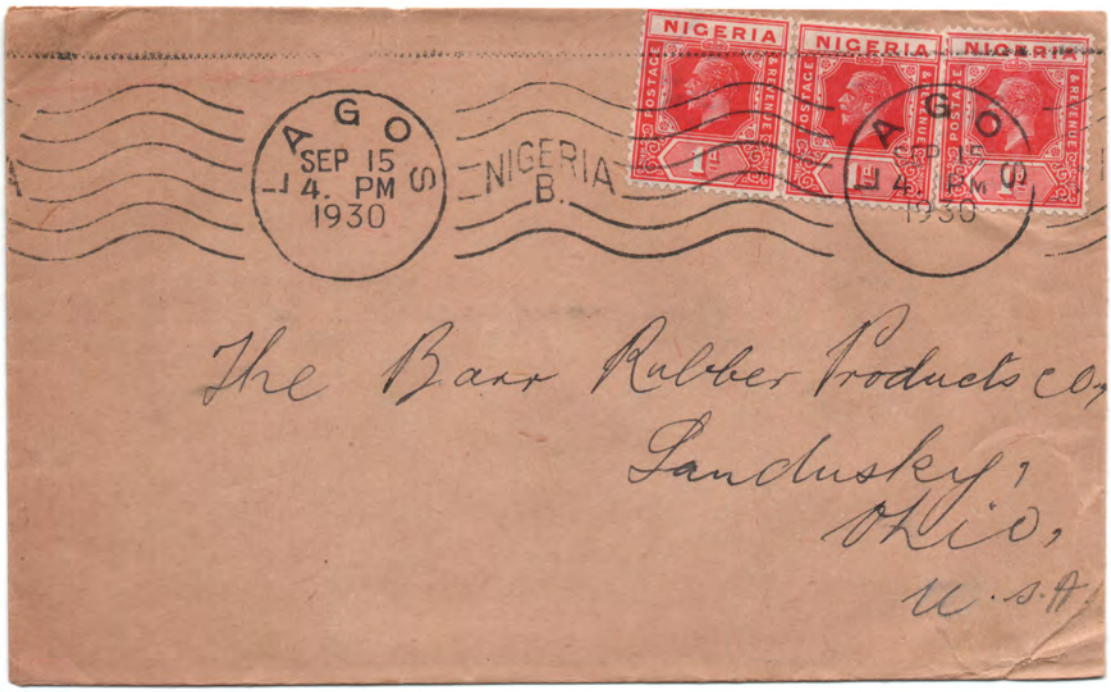
Machine cancellations 1920 to 1960

The first known use of a cancelling machine was at Lagos on 31 October 1920, ‘Nigeria B’ (Proud M1 S1).

'Nigeria B' was probably applied using a Norwegian-made Krag machine, in which the cancellation was applied by a continuously rotating head which had two identical dies, and provided an impression running across the whole of the top of each envelope.

There followed a six year gap until February 1936 when the use of machine cancels restarted, using a new machine of the ‘universal’ type, which put a single impression on each envelope, consisting of a CDS and a slogan. Slogans could be changed independently of the CDS. More information can be found in *Machine Cancels of Nigeria* (Cameo No. 117, p159 Sept 2022), from which the slogan names used here are taken. Although some of the same slogans crop up over many years, in the sheets which follow I have illustrated the first usage only.

The cover below shows the last known date for 'Nigeria B'. Nigeria was (and still is) a significant exporter of natural rubber. Barr Rubber Products began as a balloon manufacturing plant, but soon it branched out into the manufacturing of balls, pet toys, and other quality rubber products.



Machine cancellations continued

The next generation of machine cancels, (the Proud M2s) were introduced in 1936. LAGOS in the CDS is 15mm across, and the M2s are known with 5 different slogans (S1-S5 in Proud). M2 S7 is (I think) actually an M3 type (see next sheet). S1, 2, 3, 4 are not uncommon. S5 is recorded for 14.12.40 to 16.12.40 only. All the M2s are more usually seen as backstamps than actually cancelling stamps.



'7 wavy lines (v1)' slogan. Proud M2 S1. Known use dates 14.2.36 to 17.10.36.



'Use Air Mail' slogan. Proud M2 S2. Known use dates 6.11.36 to 17.9.38.



'Open a PO Savings a/c' slogan. Proud M2 S3. Known use dates 6.6.36 to 11.8.41.



'Come on the phone' slogan. Proud M2 S4. Known use dates 11.3.39 to 22.9.41.



'Send by Telegram' slogan. Proud M2 S5. Known use 14.12.40 to 16.12.40. Top image is the drawing from Proud, bottom one is a copy of an actual scan (Prestedge), showing distortion caused by poorly adjusted machinery.

Machine cancellations continued

The Proud M3 cancels, characterised by LAGOS 13.5mm across, came into use in 1941. Examples of M3 S1 (7 wavy lines) are common and can be found for every year from 1941 to 1954. M3s show a range of new slogans, as shown below. Most were in use for a relatively short time.



'Buy Savings Certs' slogan. Proud M2 S7. In two examples seen, LAGOS is 13.5 - 14mm across,The shape of the S in LAGOS is also more like an M3. Known use dates 6.10.41 to 10.11.41.



'Nigerian blind (v1)' slogan. Proud M3 S2. Known use dates 20.1.53 to 23.3.54



'Post early for Christmas (v1)' slogan. Proud M3 S3. Known use dates 18.11.54 to 21.12.54



'Address clearly (v1)' slogan. Proud M3 S4. Known use dates 30.12.54 to 26.2.55



'License your radio (v1)' slogan. Proud M3 S5. Known use dates 1.3.55 to 5.4.55

Machine cancellations continued

The Proud M4s were introduced in 1955, with 4 slogans. At 13mm, the width of LAGOS in M4s is quite close to the M3s, but individual letters are clearly narrower, more spaced out. M4s were in use to 1967, though there seems to have been a gap in usage from the end of 1955, when the M5 CDS (see later sheet) was brought into use. Some of the new slogans found with the M4 CDS are illustrated below,



'Ensure correct postage (v1)' slogan. Proud M4 S3. Use dates 4.3.55 to 4.3.65



'Save with the P.O. S.B. (v1)' slogan. Proud M4 S4. Use dates 3.8.55 to 2.7.67



'Ensure correct postage (v2)' slogan. Only known use date with M4 CDS is 11.5.65



'Save with the P.O. S.B. (v2)' slogan. Use dates 1.9.64 to 7.9.66



'Support Red Cross' slogan. Use dates 7.1.67 to 14.2.67

Machine cancellations continued

The final type of machine cancel introduced before Nigerian Independence was the M5 group. LAGOS in the CDS part is 15mm across but there is no NIGERIA at the foot. Eighteen different slogans are known, including a number of short-lived ones advertising specific events. Four of these are shown below.

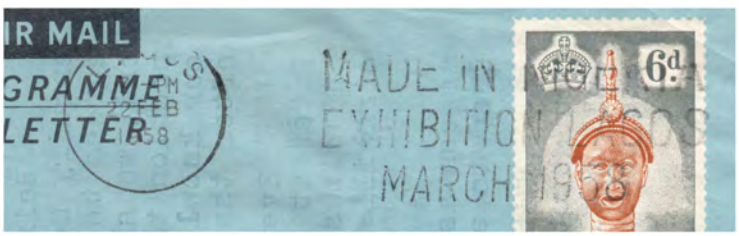
As with the M4s, these machine cancels continued in use well into the 1960s.



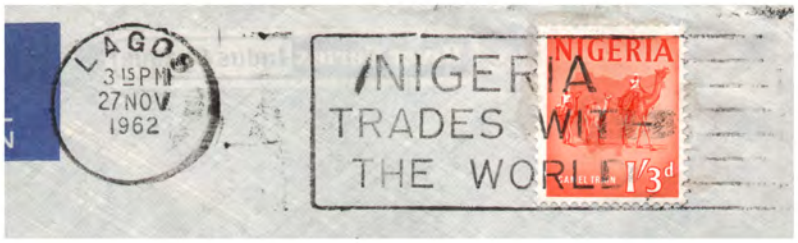
'Visit the Nigeria Exhibition' slogan (Proud M5 S8). Known use dates 4.9.60 to 30.9.60



'Independence 1960' slogan. Known use dates 1.10.60 to 29.11.60.



'Made in Nigeria Exhibition' slogan. Known use dates 14.2.58 to 26.2.58.



'Nigeria trades with world' slogan. Known use dates 27.10.62 to 27.11.62

Cancels showing Registration

Although archive material from HG Porter contains a drawing of a IS-L 15 type registration cancel (see image on the right), no copies in use have been seen since, and until 1922, Lagos registered mail was cancelled with the IS-S R14A Southern Nigeria cancellers described on an earlier sheet.



JR1 and **JR3** (PR18, 19) were introduced in 1922. As Proud's illustrations show, the dot between LAGOS and NIGERIA is equidistant from the words in JR1 (PR18), but closer to the N in JR3 (PR19), which also has a taller, thinner N. The difference is slight but real, and is illustrated below the cover. Both instruments were in use at the same time, between 1922 and 1928 (1920 to 29 according to Jones).

The cover below, cancelled with JR1, was sent to Barr Rubber products, to their former location at Lorain Ohio. The Registration label is repurposed from the Lagos Returned Letter Office. Backstamps show that the cover, sent 21 July 1922, went via Liverpool and New York and reached Lorain on the 21st of August.





JR1



X 3



JR3

Cancels showing Registration continued

JR7 (PR24). This circular pattern, with heavy sidebars and a Maltese cross at the foot was also used for parcels, official paid and returned letter cancellers. Known use dates are 1922 to 1935.

The cover below, from Badagry, with a repurposed Lagos Registration label, was sent to George Odom and Co, textile manufacturers in Leicester. For some interesting speculations on George Odom see '*Skeleton' Coast Security in West Africa* David Horry Cameo No 104 p72, and Cameo Nos 105 and 106 for subsequent correspondence. The cover carries JR7 as transit cancel on the back, shown inset to the bottom left.

The image below the Odom cover shows another example, taken from a long cover to Vorarlberg, Austria



