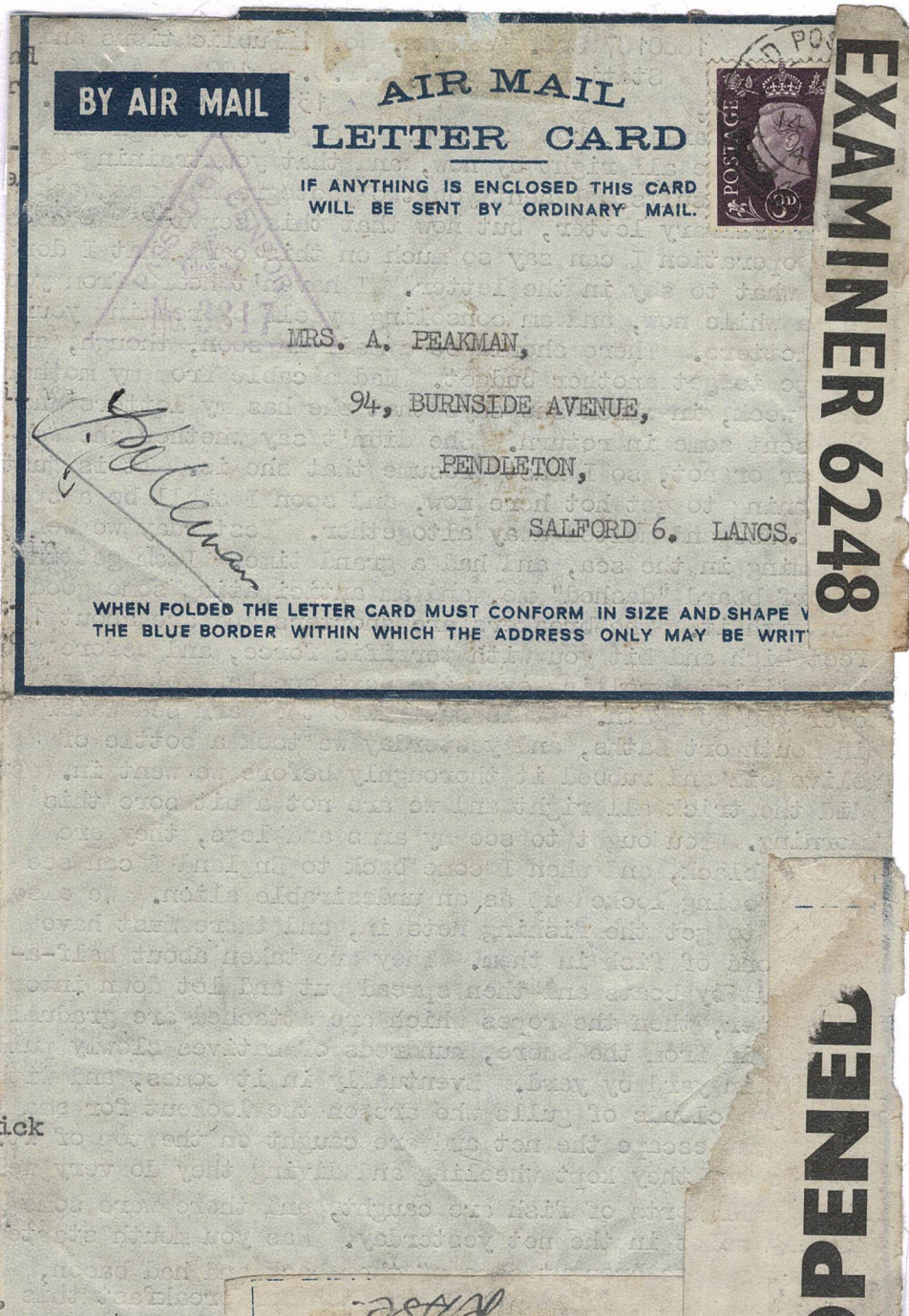


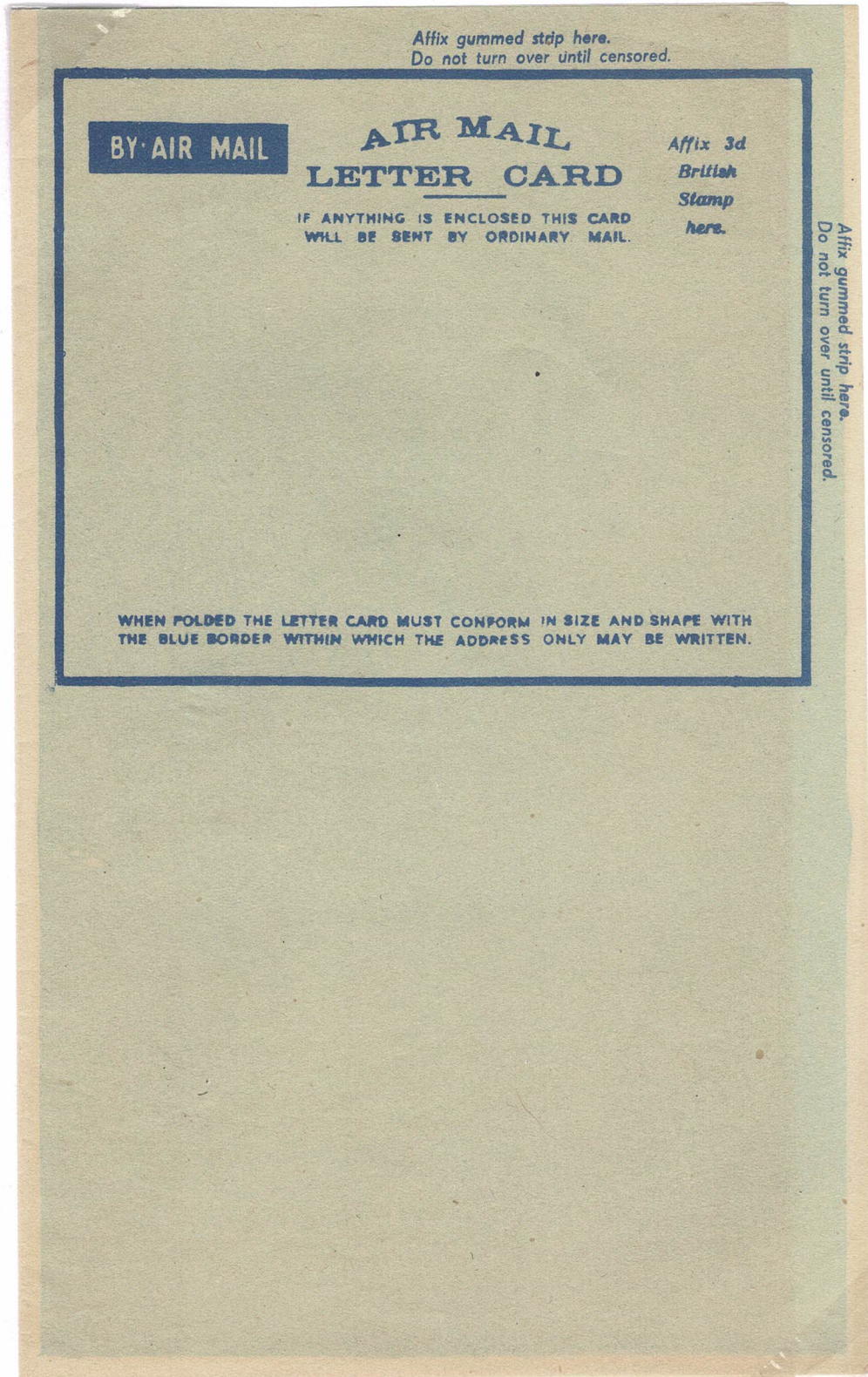
Use of formula air letters or aerogrammes to and from Nigeria

Lightweight folded air mail letter cards were first used in the British sphere in Iraq from 15 June 1933 using a design copyrighted by its inventor Douglas Gumbley, Inspector General of Posts & Telegraphs for Iraq. The same format was adopted by Major R.E. Evans MEF, for use by the army during World War II. It entered service, northbound only, from the Middle East Forces on 1 March 1941, using British 3d adhesive stamps, flown by a combination of landplanes to West Africa then flying boats to the UK. The troops serving in West Africa were not allowed to use this northbound service until 1 October 1941. I show use of one of the first air mail letter cards from Gold Coast sent on 14 October 1941 by SGt A. Peakman of the RASC, APO S100, Takoradi to his wife in Salford, UK. He refers in his message to this new service but says he is also sending photographs by ordinary surface mail.

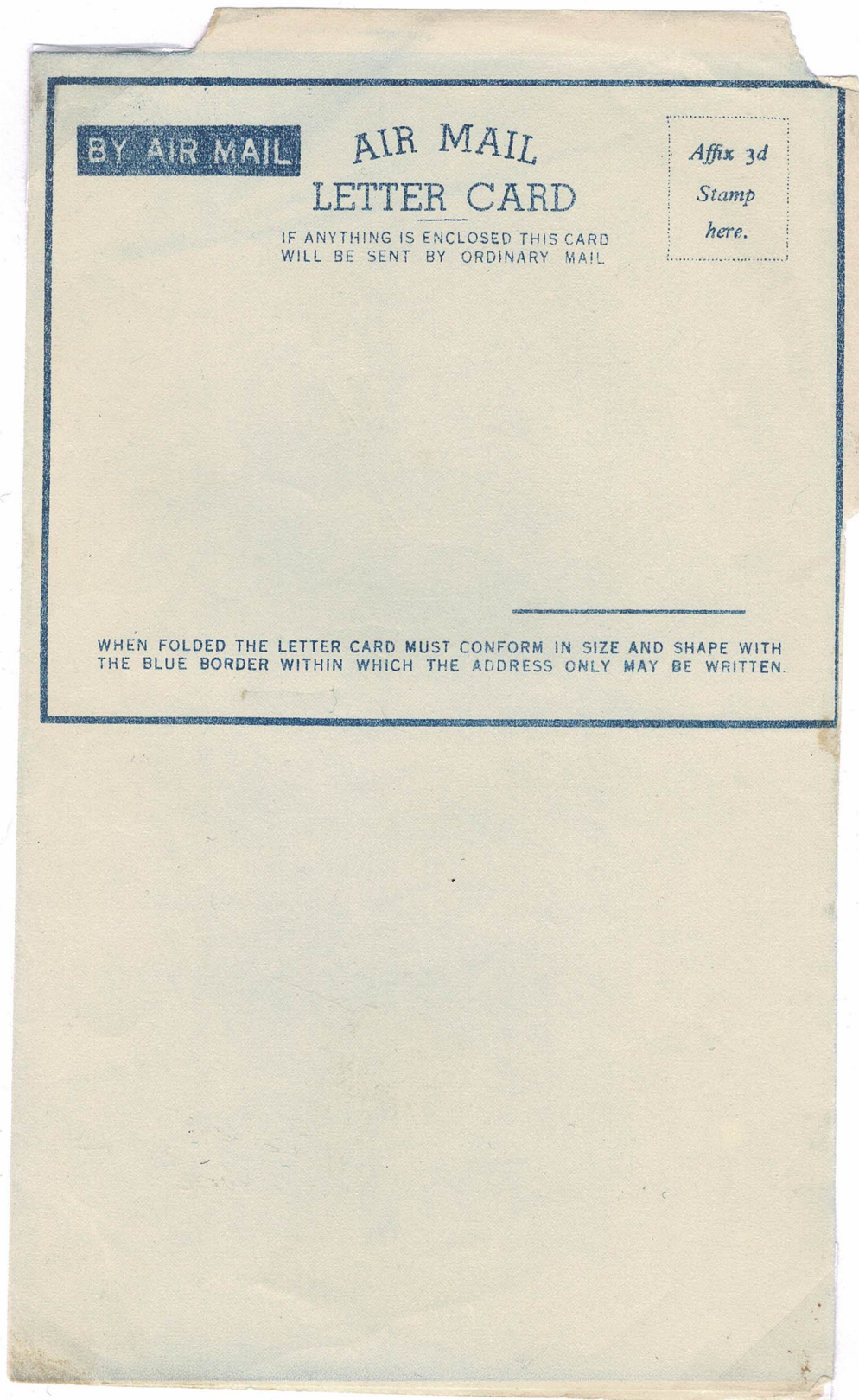
Censor 3317 is recorded by Martin, Walton & Harris (3rd edition) only on 22 September 1941 in Nigeria. The censor's signature seems to be J. or T. Coleman.



The same version of the first type of forces air letter card is shown unused. It is un-gummed and required a separate gummed strip to be glued to the top edge and right edge of the front of the air letter. The instruction shows that the air letter should not be closed with the gummed strip until the content is censored. The blue overlay is printed on the inside of parts A and B which, because of the thin paper, shows through to the front and back of this stationery.



This version of the formula wartime forces air letter card (to be franked with a 3d stamp) has a slightly larger frame, taller letters throughout and the words LETTER CARD are much narrower, at 40mm overall, instead of 52mm.



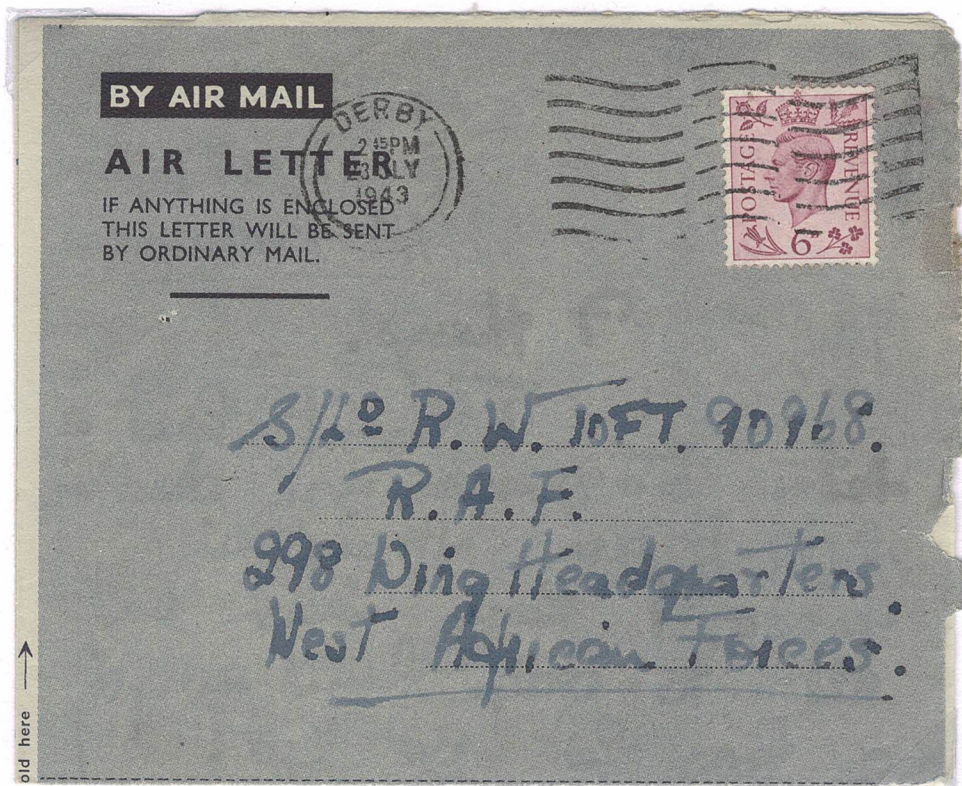
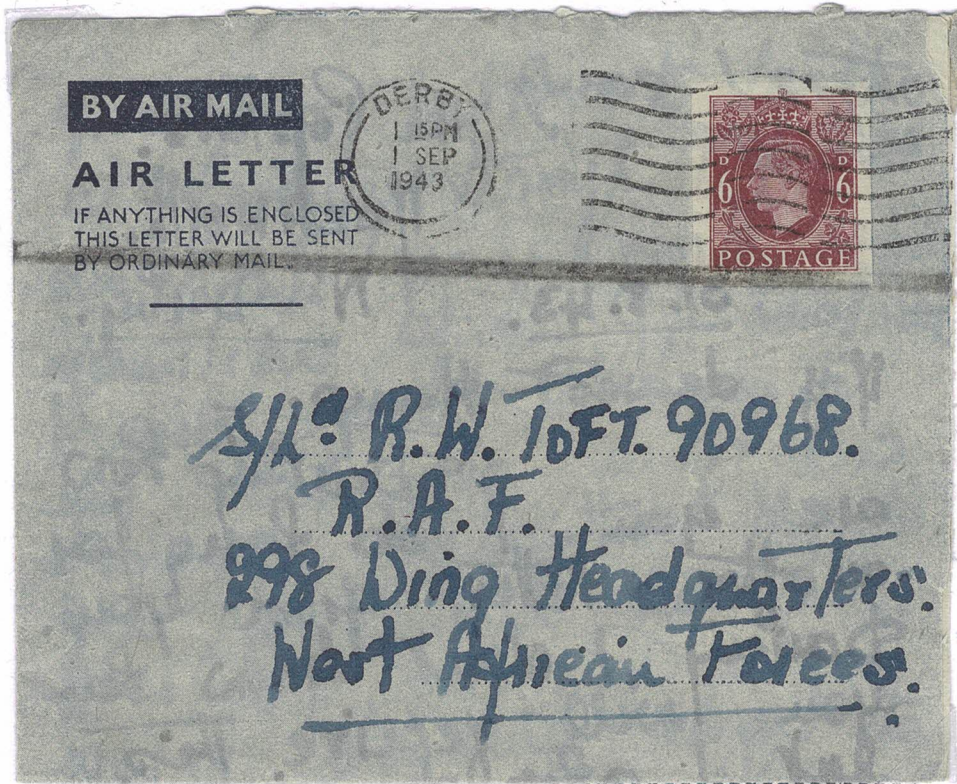
West African forces were usually the last to benefit from these air mail innovations during the war. As an example, I show an air mail letter card from India on 3 JA 1943 to the West Africa Command which was hand-stamped "no airmail service available". This AMLC will have been flown as bagged mail through to the UK then back from the UK to West Africa by sea after the handstamp was applied in London.



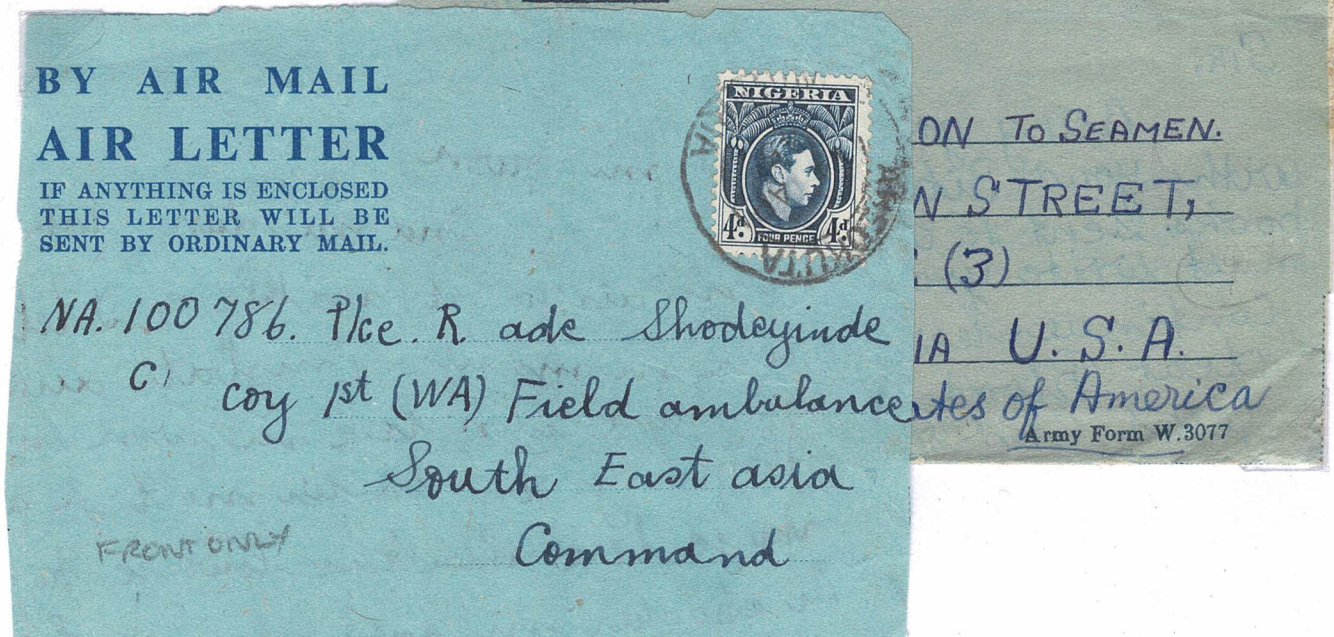
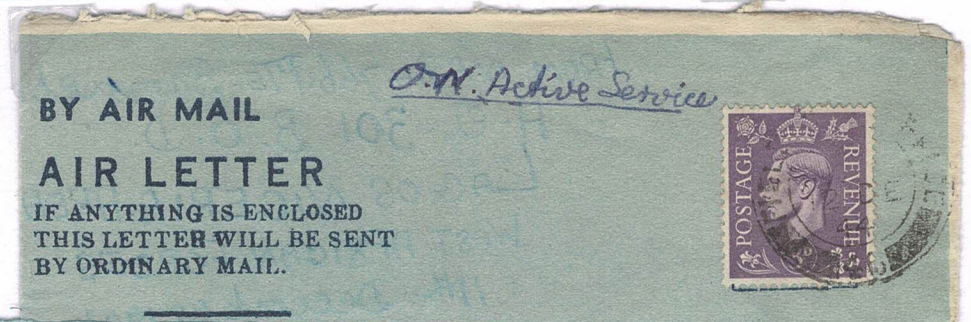
Almost a year later an air mail letter card from a Nigerian soldier in Egypt writing to a convent at Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria has a 3d stamp cancelled Egypt 75 forces post office on 31 December 1943. It is backstamped with an Egypt machine cancel on 3rd January and at Aba, Nigeria on 15th January. It was flown only as far as Nigeria, rather than to London then back again.



Southbound air letters for the forces in West Africa officially started on 5 March 1943 at 6d rate. This example is from the UK to RAF 298 Wing HQ, West African Forces on 1 September 1943. 298 wing was stationed at Takoradi, Gold Coast from 19 September 1942 flying Vickers Wellingtons on anti-submarine and Atlantic convoy protection roles. Other letters to the same addressee are known.

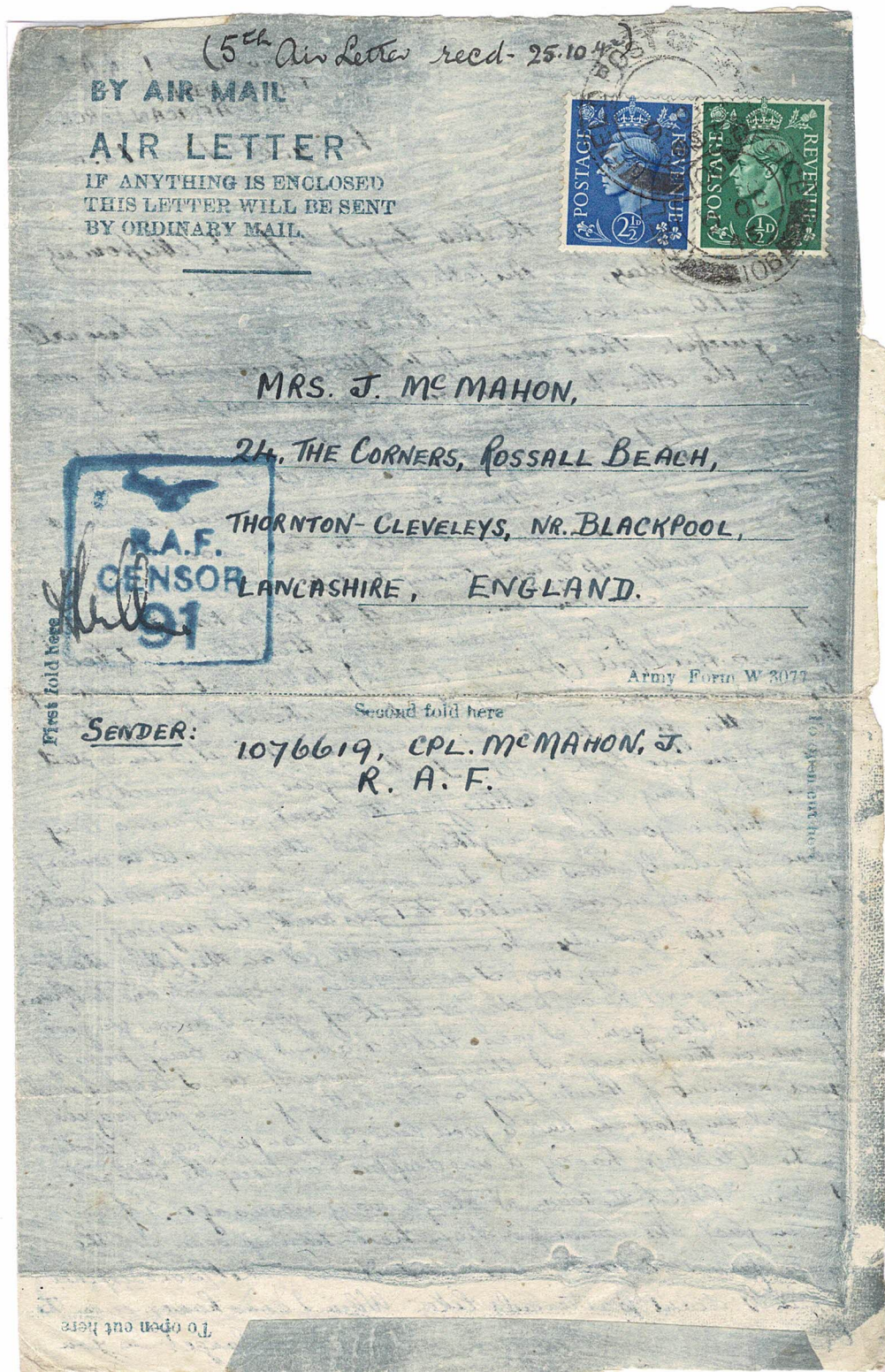


Towards the end of the war there was a problem with supply of air letter forms from the UK to West Africa and Army Form W.3077 was reproduced in West Africa by various local printers. They were used for both service and civilian mail. An unused example pre-franked for civilian use with a 6d adhesive is shown, along with a used locally-printed Army Form W.3077 posted in Nigeria at 3d rate from FPO46 on 11 December 1944 to the USA, and a front sent on 14 April 1945 at 4d rate by a civilian at Abeokuta to a private serving with the Field Ambulance in Burma.



Towards the end of the war there was a problem with supply of air letter forms from the UK to West Africa and Army Form W.3077 was reproduced in West Africa by various local printers. They were used for both service and civilian mail. This very-poorly printed specimen with a defective grey overlay was sent from FPO106 at Takoradi, Gold Coast to his wife in Britain on 11 October 1943 and is endorsed by her "(5th air letter recd 25.10.43)" – two weeks in transit.

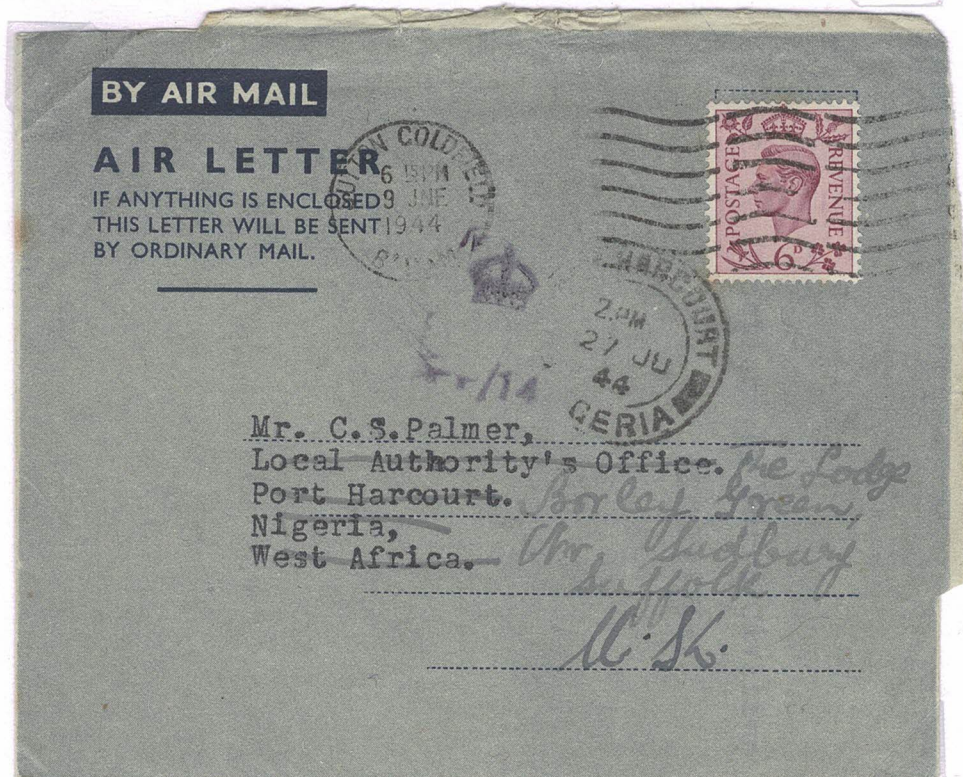
The sender had arrived by sea three weeks earlier. He says he is given only one air letter a week and says his wife should send her letters the same way because "I believe air mail (1/3d per oz. I think) takes much longer, coming by sea, not air."



Towards the end of the war there was a problem with supply of air letter forms from the UK to West Africa and Army Form W.3077 was reproduced in West Africa by various local printers. They were used for both service and civilian mail and two more examples, both at 3d from Gold Coast to the UK, the first sent on 31 October 1944 and the second is a blue triangle form (not requiring external censorship) posted in Gold Coast at FPO45 on 24 May 1944.



Southbound civilian air letters to West Africa were not permitted until 9 June 1944. Shown here are first day philatelic examples to Gambia which reached Bathurst on 19 June, and to Nigeria from Francis Field which reached Port Harcourt on 26 June. From the dates of these backstamps they were probably both sent by sea!




Northbound civilian air letters were permitted, postage 6d, from 15 October 1944.

Correspondence between Nigerians is uncommon. This air letter is from a father at Potiskum in Nigeria, using the address of the District officer at Potiskum, to his son serving with the 1st West African Field Ambulance in Burma. It was sent on 12 November 1944 and talks about the irregularity of the mail. It may have been written by the DO on his behalf, as the script looks very European and it is all in English.

BY AIR MAIL

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



No. 230290 Pt Gwani Fika
1st W.A.F. Ambulances
W. African Forces
INDIA COMMAND

Army Form W. 3077
← Second fold here →

Senders Name *Mallam Liman Alhaji*
Address *c/o District Officer*
1/c Potiskum Division
Bornu province

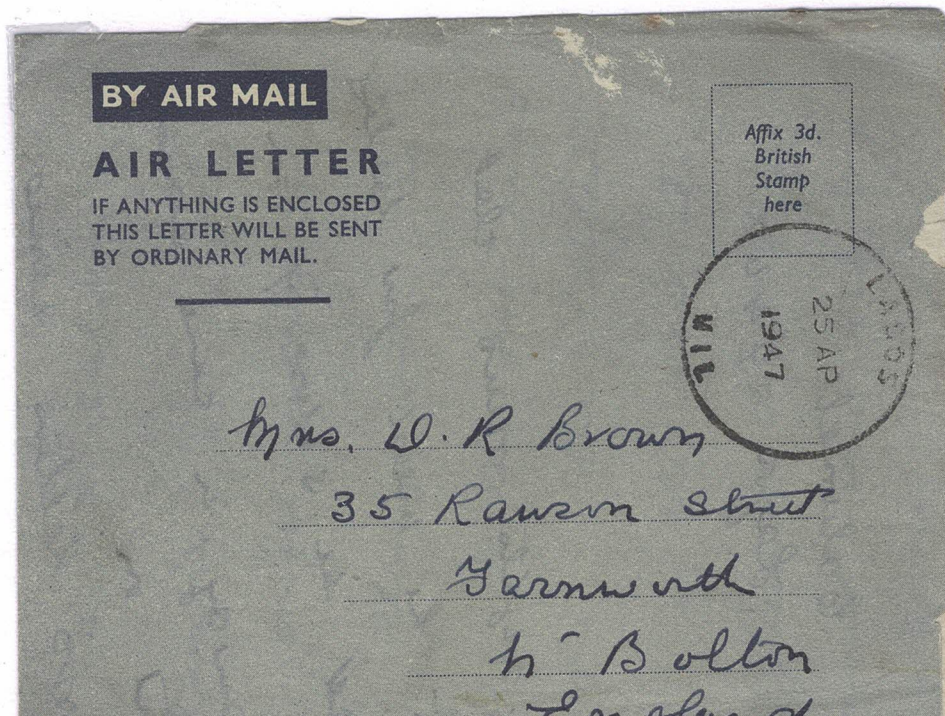
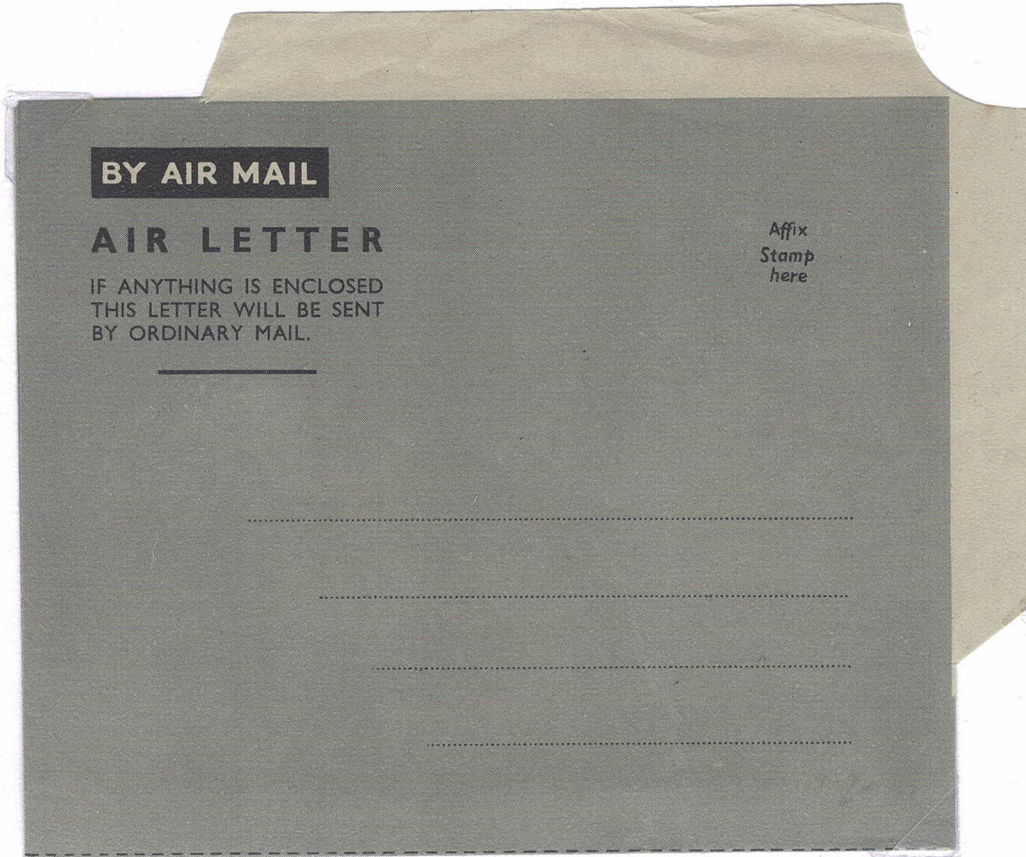
NIGERIA

To open out here →

Serial no
T51-6616

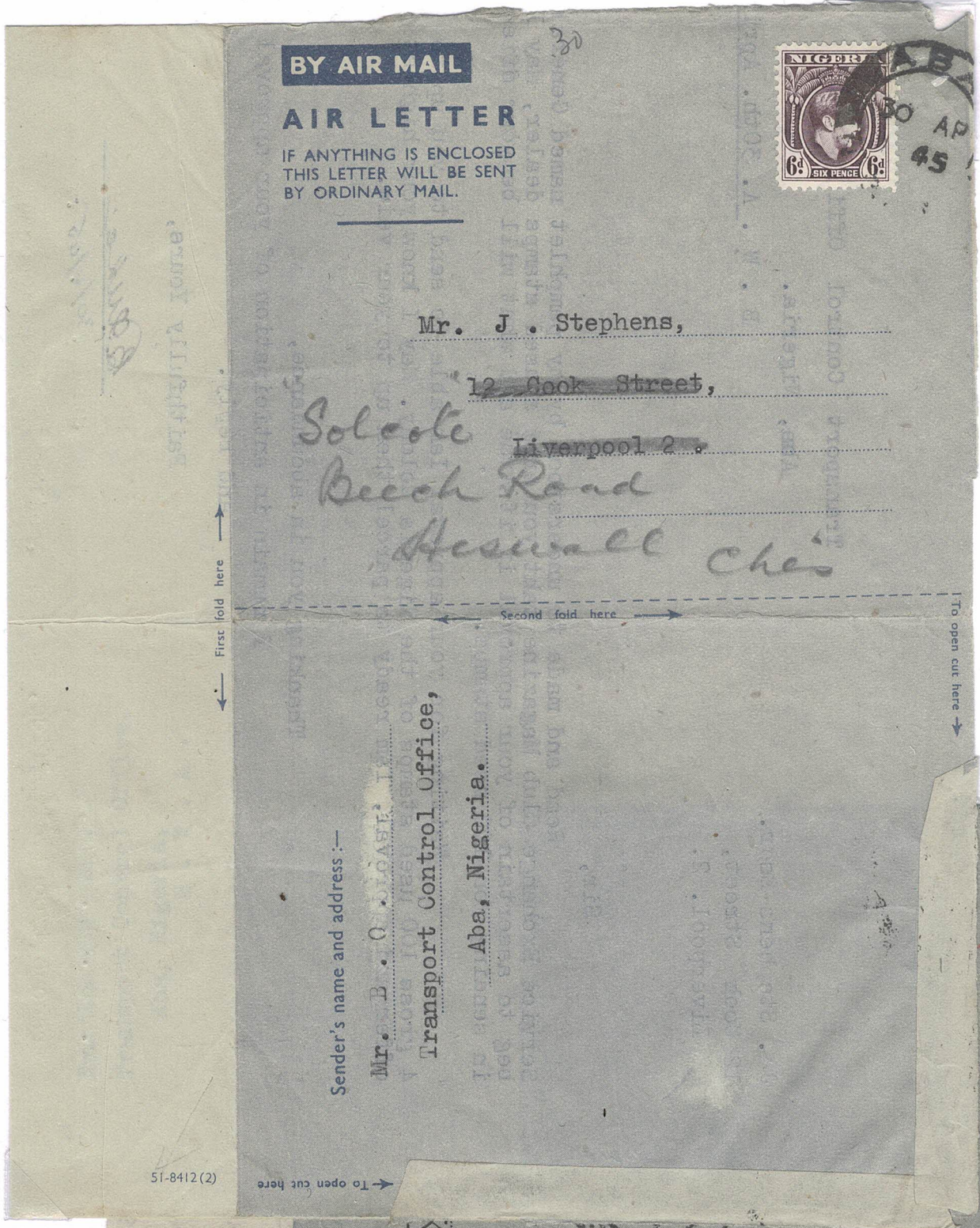
Northbound civilian air letters from West Africa were permitted, at the 6d rate, from 15 October 1944. The Crown Agents, on 17 October 1944, ordered 1 million air letter forms for Nigeria "without stamp or gumming: weight not to exceed 1lb per 180 forms". The printers replied that "supplies could begin in 3-4 weeks and completion in 6 weeks". By the same requisition, 200,000 forms were ordered for Sierra Leone and 500,000 for Gold Coast.

An unused example of the first printing of these has a full stop after MAIL as shown. A used copy from LAGOS MIL, Nigeria on 25 April 1947 has this full stop.



Serial no
51.5430

Some of these airletters with full stop after MAIL have serial numbers printed on the back page. Serial numbers 51-8412(1) and 51-8412(2) are shown on used air letters to the USA on 25 AU 49 and to the UK on 30 AP 45. The reason for these serial numbers is unknown: if they are printing batch numbers they seem to have been used in the wrong order!



BY AIR MAIL

AIR LETTER

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



Mr. J. Stephens,

12 Cook Street,

Solihole
Beech Road
Heswall Ches

Sender's name and address:—

Mr. B. O. ...
Transport Control Office,
... Aba, Nigeria.

51-8412(2)

To open cut here

First fold here

Second fold here

To open cut here

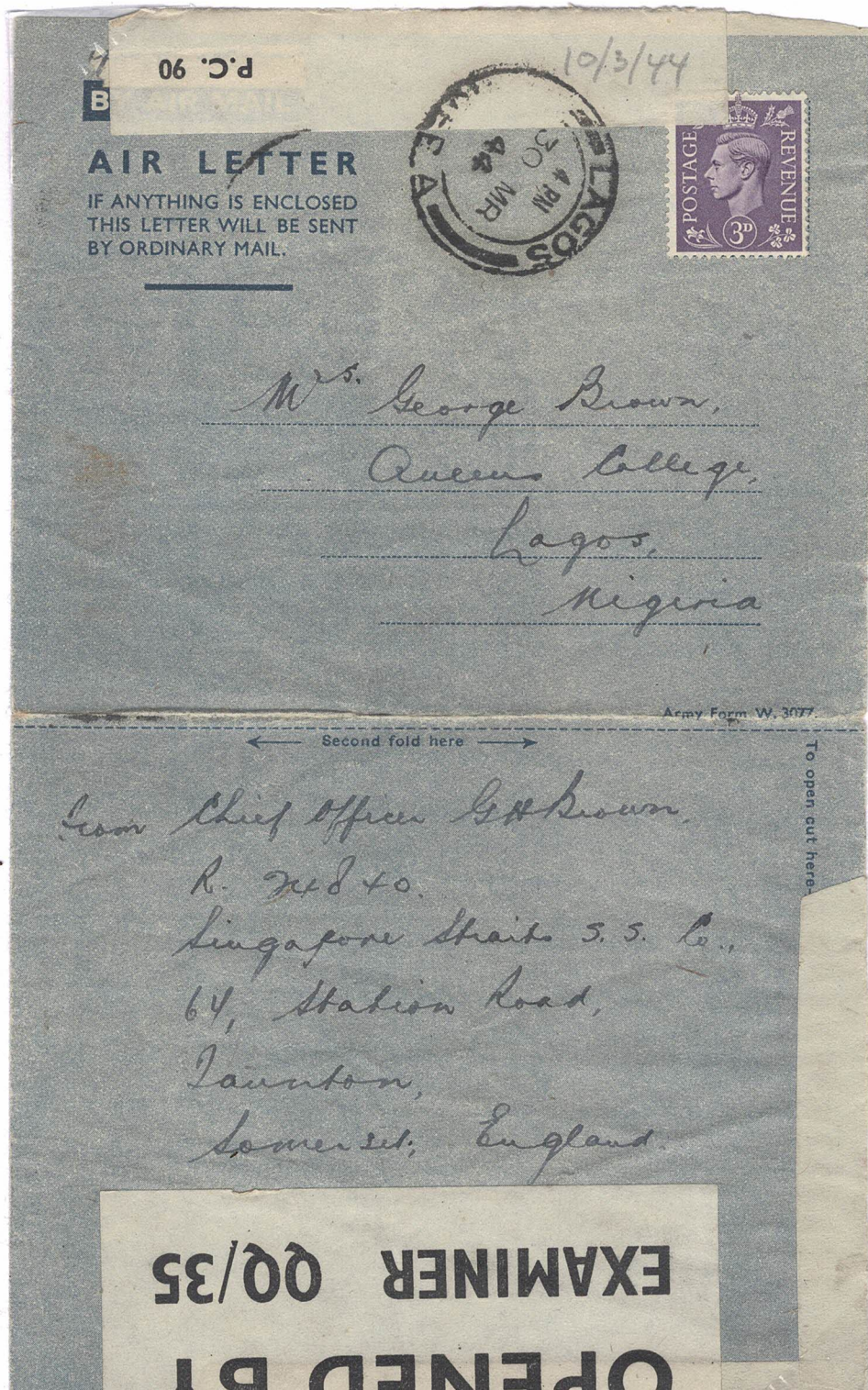
To open cut here

Sender's

51-8412(1)

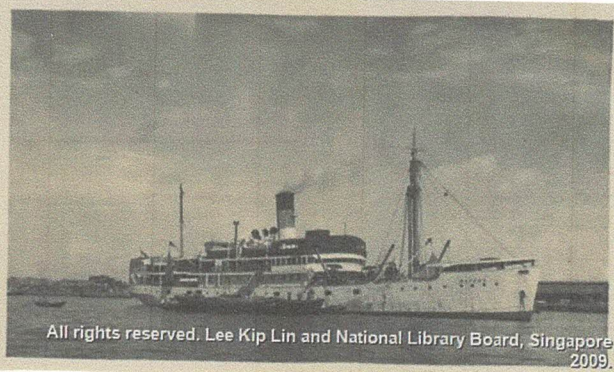
The earlier printing, with full stop after MAIL is seen used from Sierra Leone to Lagos on 10 March 1944. It is written by the Chief Officer of SS Matang to his wife living at Lagos. Air letters between West African territories are unusual. Although the censor has cut out the word Freetown from the letter, he has sealed the letter with the EXAMINER QQ/35 label which was used only in Sierra Leone.

The story of the Matang is interesting (see the reverse of this sheet). She belonged to the Singapore Straits SS Co. and escaped from Singapore ahead of the Japanese invasion with the crew and their families. Matang found new purpose using her shallow draft to move troops and military cargo on the West African rivers. Although the note on the back of this sheet implies she was based at Freetown, her "home port" at that time was Lagos, hence why his wife was living there.



M.V. Matang : general view

Transportation, Tyers, R. K. (Ray K.), 1919-, 1950



The boat had an interesting history. When the Japanese threatened Singapore, the ship was one of several that escaped across the Indian Ocean to India and Africa. Matang was stationed in West Africa and carried troops and war equipment up the rivers.

The ship was finally sent to the breakers in 1963 so the old girl had a long and interesting life.

Good luck finding more information.[/QUOTE]

Sorry I have taken so long to reply. Thankyou for your help. Emlyn

sandybeach776 Just Browsing

Apr '13

[QUOTE=Emlyn;19876]My parents travelled from Britain to Penang in 1934 on a vessel "Matang".

What is the correct descriptor of this vessel? MV, SS ? ?

Thanks Emlyn[/QUOTE]

Hi - Emlyn: My partner's Grandfather Captain W. Phillips was Straits Steamship Company Captain in that era and certainly skippered the Matang late 30's to 40's up to the Japanese invasion.

We have just returned from Singapore hoping to piece together some more information. He had a house in Singapore and another in Penang. He took the Matang with other Straits vessels to Freetown on the West Coast of Africa as the Japanese arrived. In Freetown she was able to undertake River duties as she had a 'light draft' and this is mentioned with Captain Phillips in K.G.Tregonning's Home Port Singapore together with many references to the ship.

Any information you have would be most gratefully received. Your parants names and why they were travelling, any information on the voyage - ports on route and where they stayed in Penang etc etc. would be fantastic.

Many thanks,

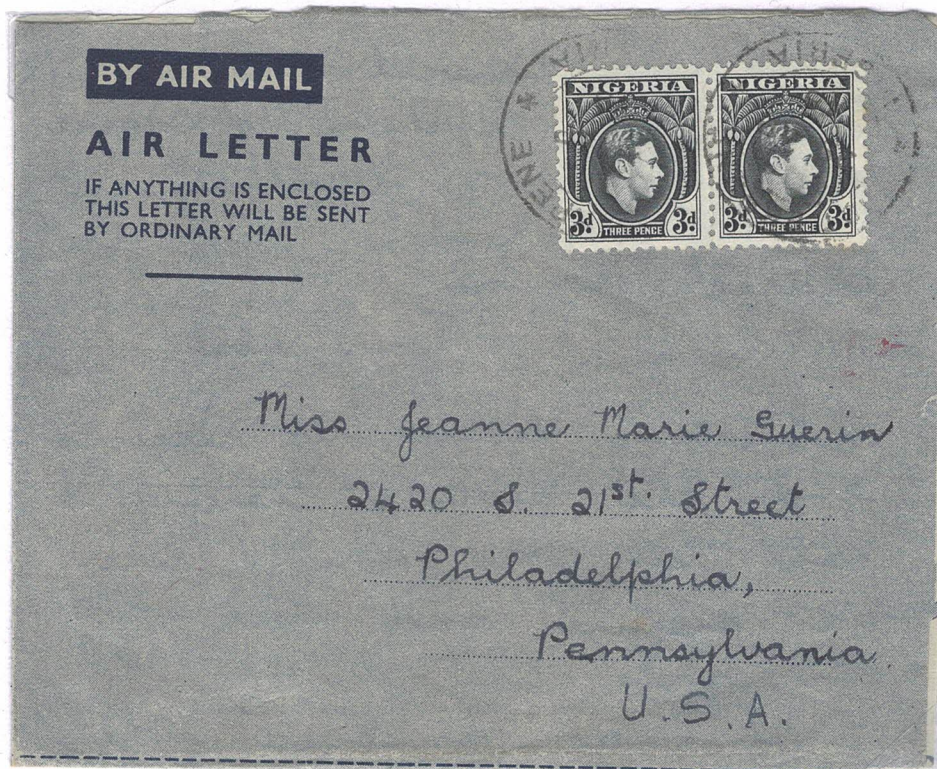
David

Sue_P Just Browsing

Sep '13

<https://forum.gcaptain.com/t/matang/2534>

An unused example of the later printing without a full stop after MAIL is seen here. A used copy from Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria to the USA on 20 April 1948 also lacks this full stop. These formula airletters were a temporary supply pending delivery of the first Nigeria aerogrammes with a 6d "stamp" within the design. Those were first issued on 15 December 1948, 5 million of which were supplied between then and June 1950.



This stamp-less Indian Army air letter was sent by a Nigerian soldier with his return address shown as Akwete, Aba Nigeria on 6 February 1946. The surprising feature is that the FPO postmark is of FPO697, one of the Burma Campaign FPOs AFTER the Expeditionary Force had returned to Nigeria. It seems that one of the Demob camps in Nigeria was able to use this FPO date-stamp, but I don't think there was any such camp at Akwete. The nearest of the camps named *supra* is Enugu.

C. N. MADUNTA,
AKWETE, ABA.
NIGERIA, West Africa
6/27+6

The Principal
American School

Sir

I am sending this for a copy of
your "free bulletin" of the High School
course and hope it will meet me
at home as early as possible.

At receipt of same, I shall
make a choice of one of the
branches of courses.

Truly yours

Callank

N. P. - 3289/2/G1832 of 24.4.45 - 20.00

SECURITY: THINK BEFORE YOU WRITE

BY AIR MAIL

AIR LETTER

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

FORCES MAIL



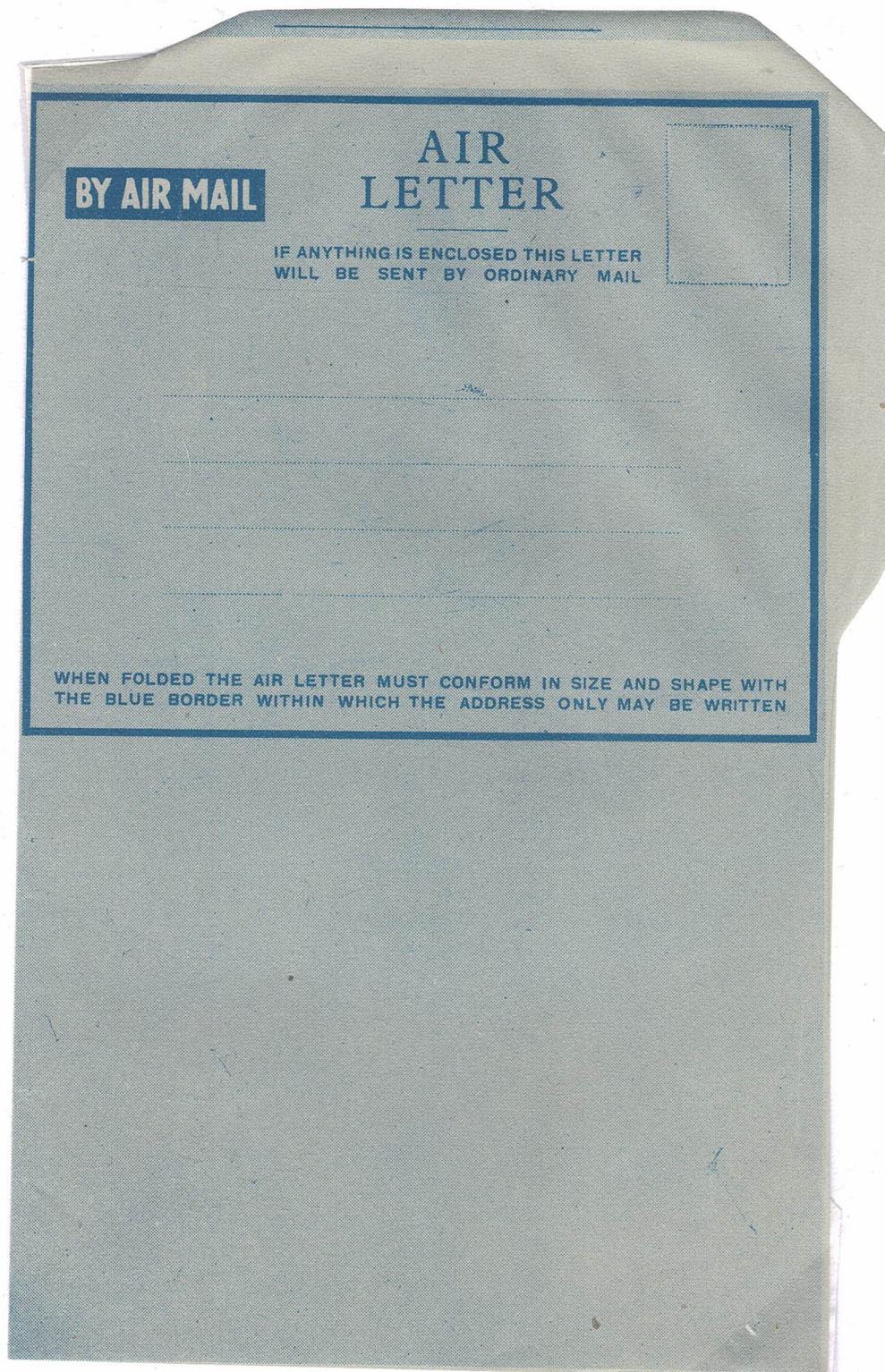
The American School,

Dept. H514 Drexel at 58th

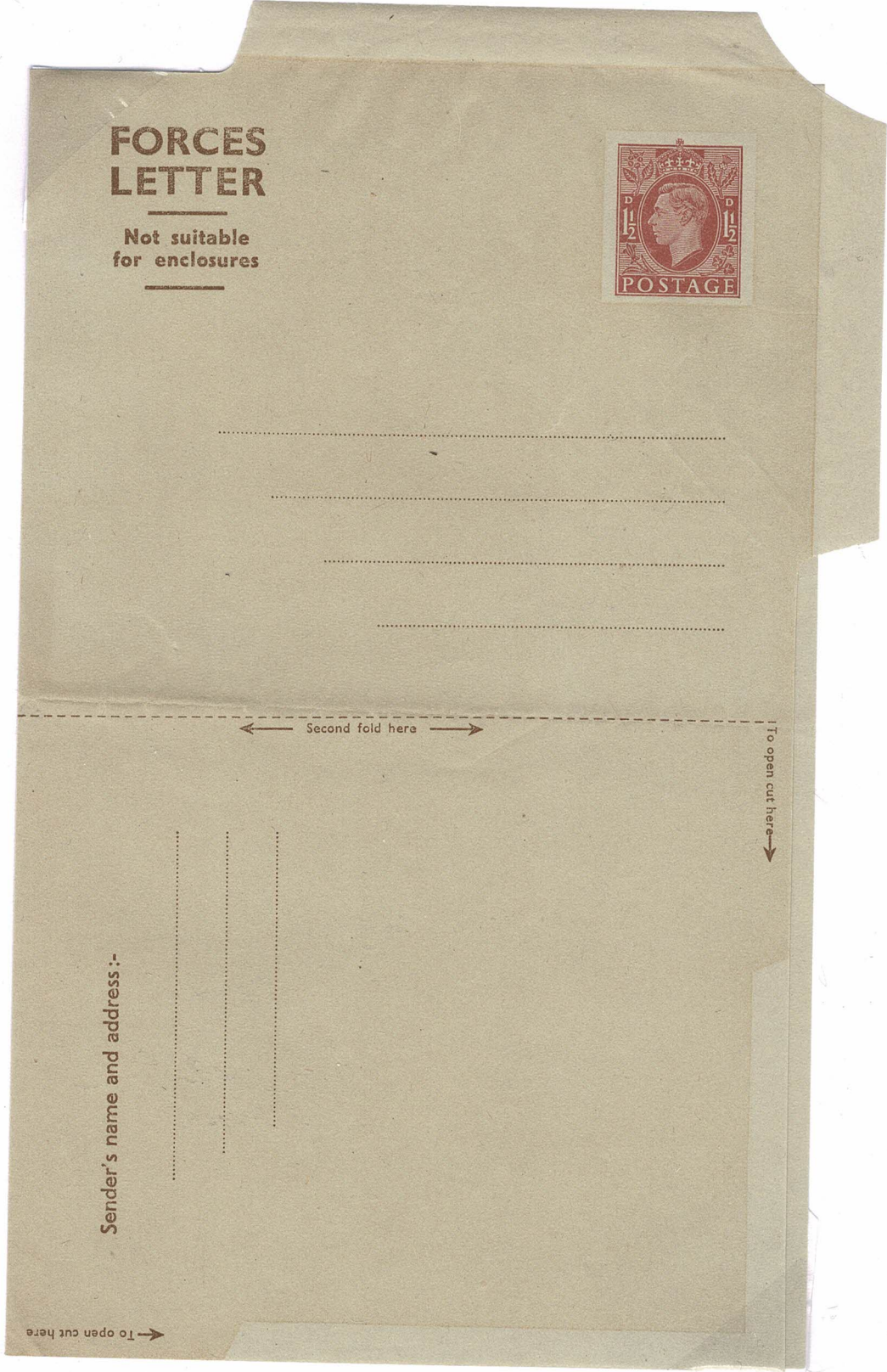
Chicago 37. U.S.A.

From Nigerian
Callank

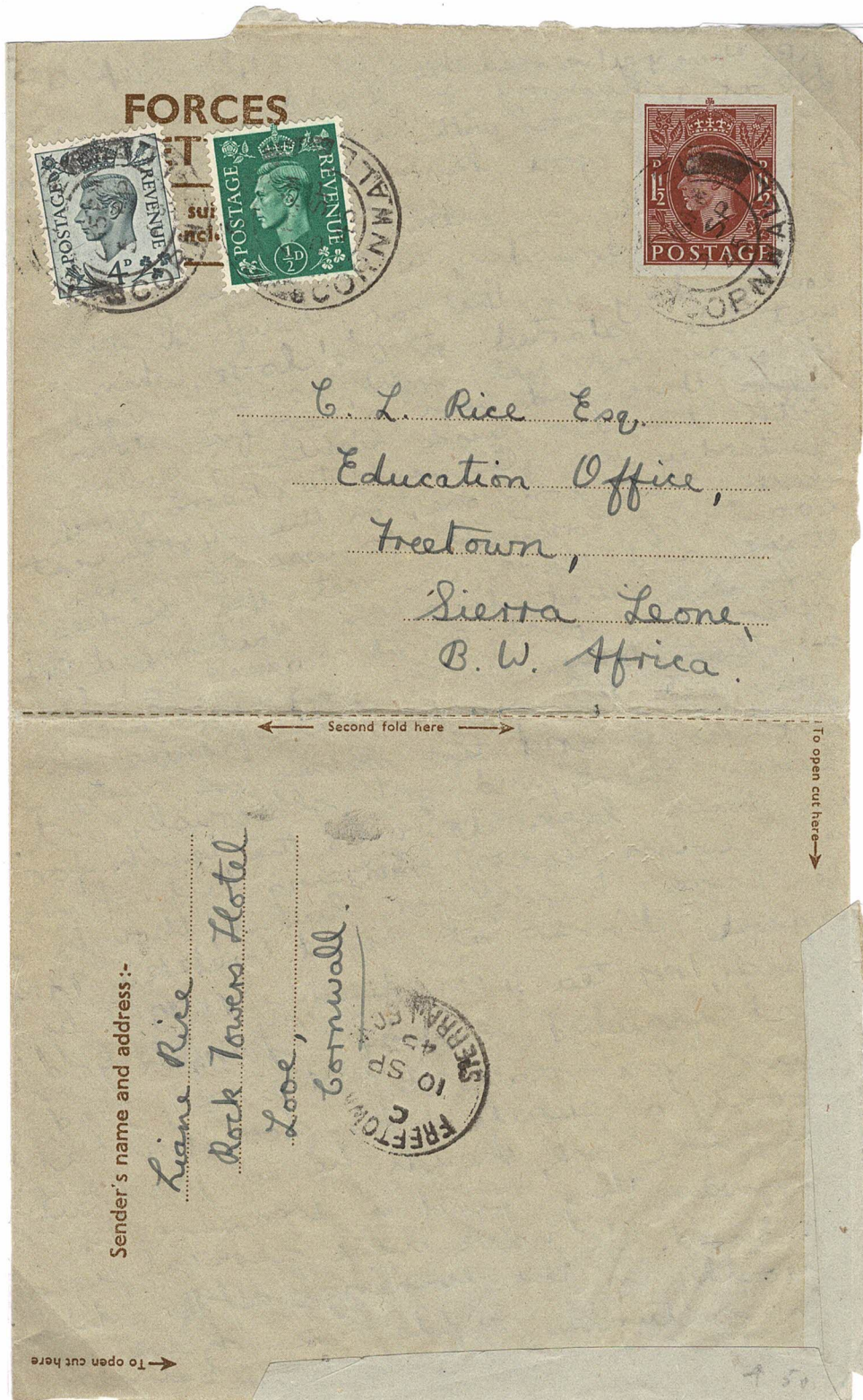
This unused air letter is listed as the type 4 forces air letter in the GB Collector's Database by P.R. Adby and is shown there as issued in August 1944. There is also a note that, in forces use, it could be sent post free from about 1 April 1945. This is the normal version: there was also a "free of censorship privilege version with a declaration printed and signed on the back.



The rate for air carriage of mail to and from British forces overseas, both for letter mail up to 1 ounce and for air letters, was reduced to 1½d from 7 April 1945 and this new air letter was made available from that date. The first version had dotted address lines, as shown here but printings from August 1945 have solid address lines. As from 15 September 1947 the air mail concession was withdrawn for ordinary letters and a new 2½d forces air letter became the only available concession.



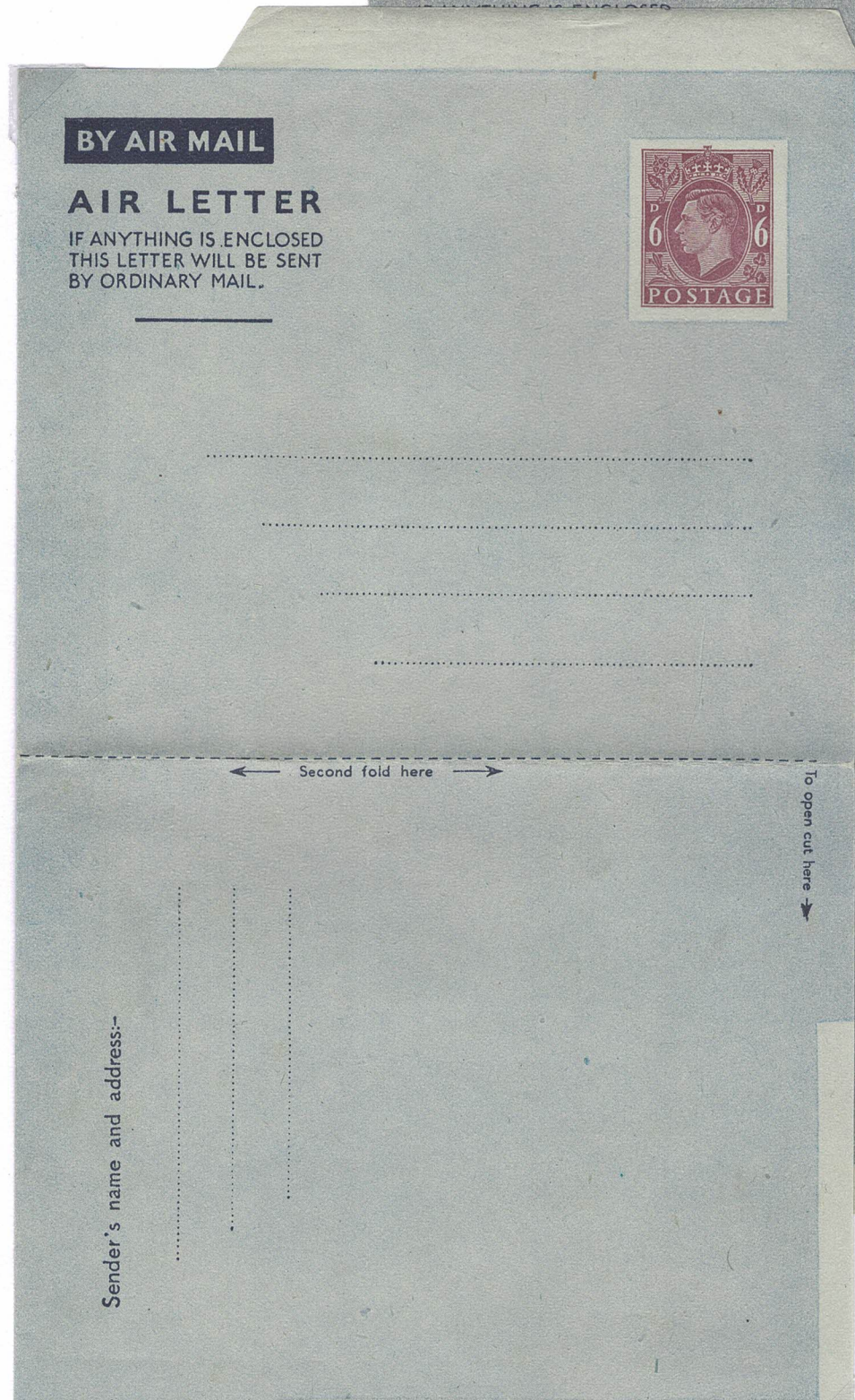
An example of the 1½d forces air letter with dotted address lines was adapted for civilian air mail use from the UK to Sierra Leone by the sender, by adding a further 4½d of adhesives covering the Forces Letter warning message at the top left of the front. The letter is from the recipients' school age daughter, Liane, to her mother and father, sent on 5th September 1945 and received at Freetown on the 10th. It starts "When you've read this, please don't be cross with me"! Most of the letter is harmless holiday chat about a holiday with related families in the Rock Towers Hotel, Looe but the last page is a rant about one of the other girls and ends with capital letters "Please don't let me stay with Auntie Dots for Christmas... Don't tell Auntie Dots. I do want you to come home."



Shades of the outside overlay and the indicium on the first civilian type of air letter (type 3)



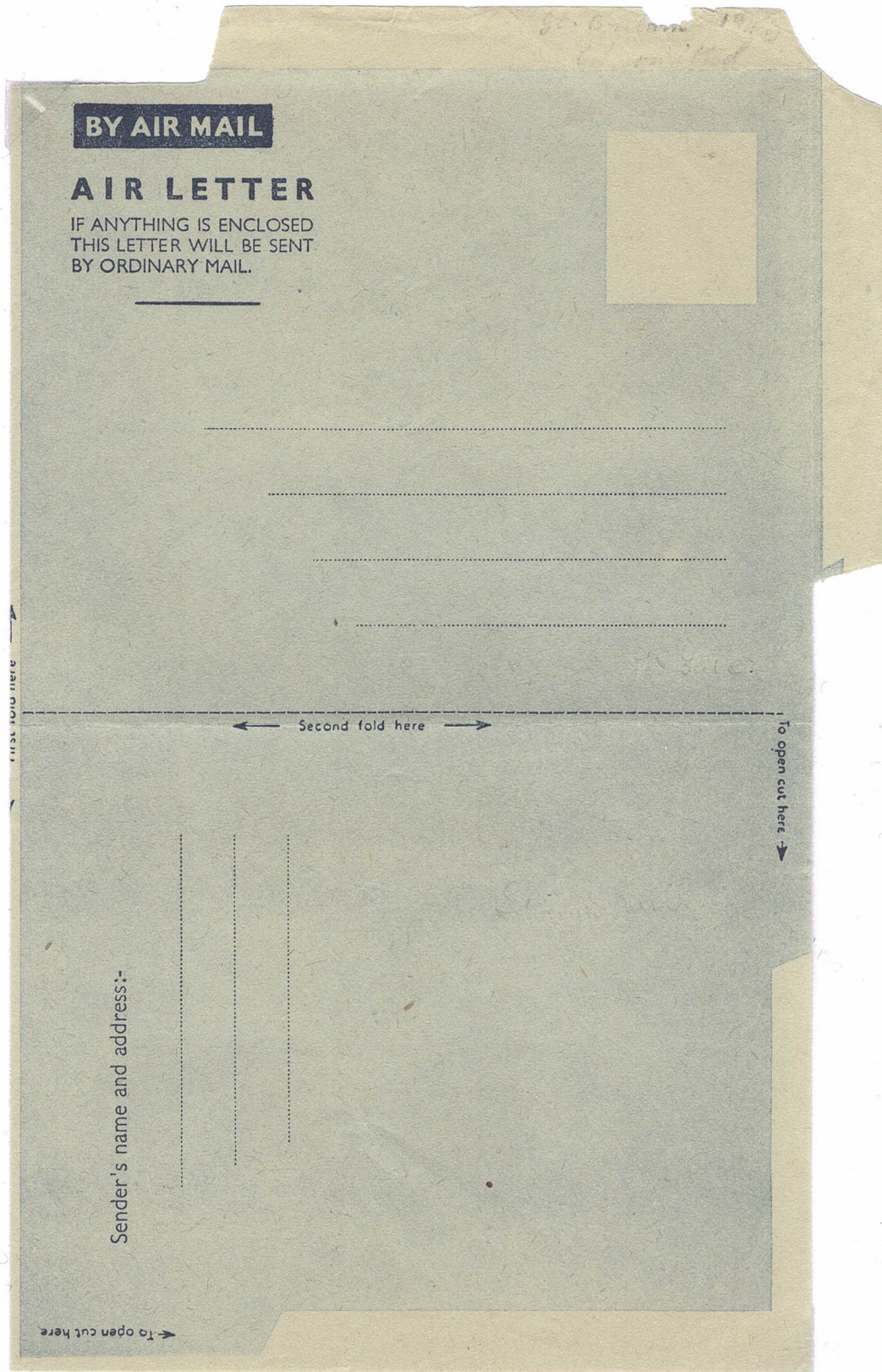
The second type of the 6d civilian air letter has clear spaces with vertical ends. Unused examples shown here have either greenish blue or charcoal grey surfacing.



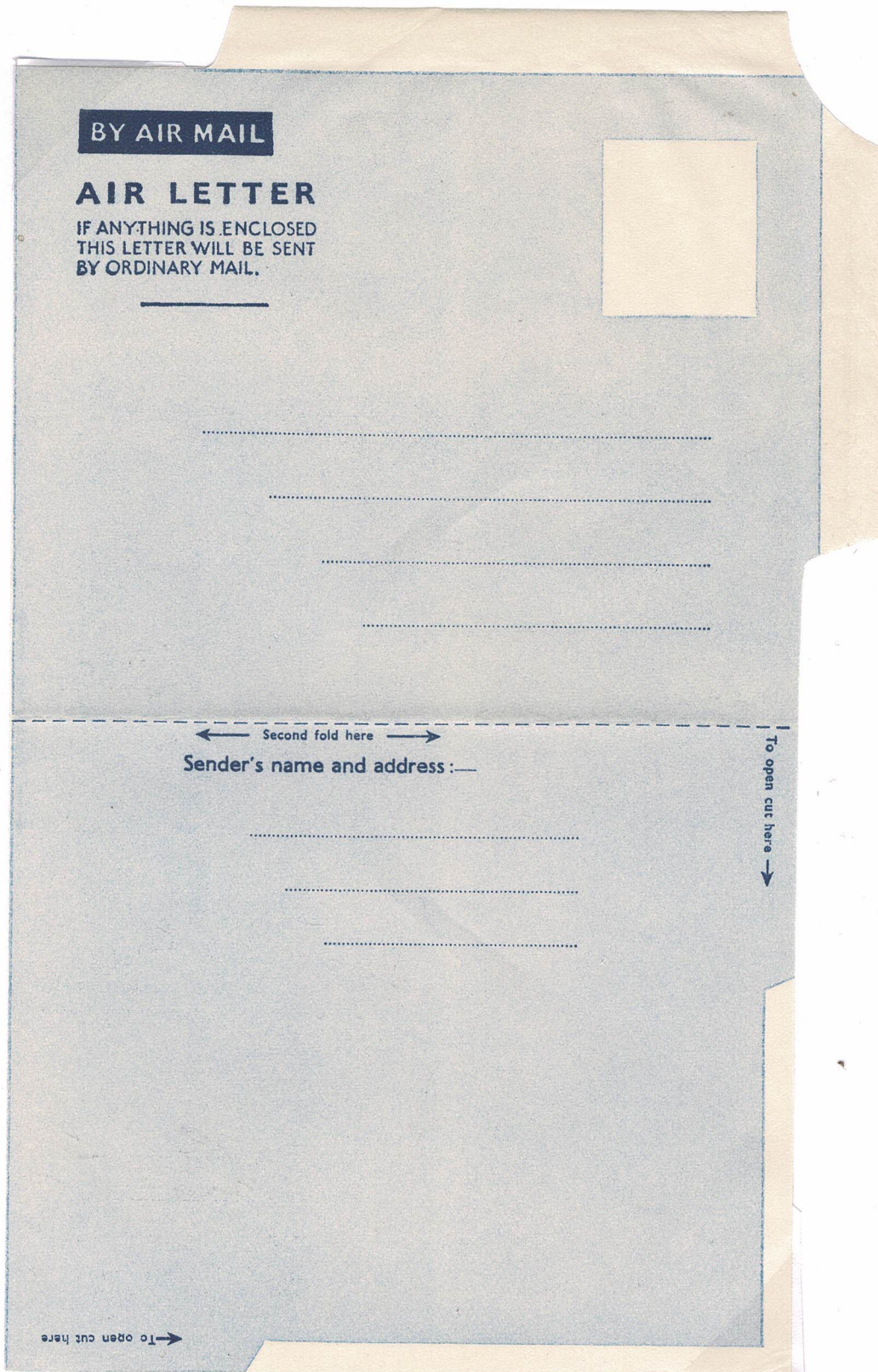
The third type of the 6d civilian air letter has clear spaces with 45 degree chamfered ends. Unused examples shown here have either greenish blue or pale grey surfacing.



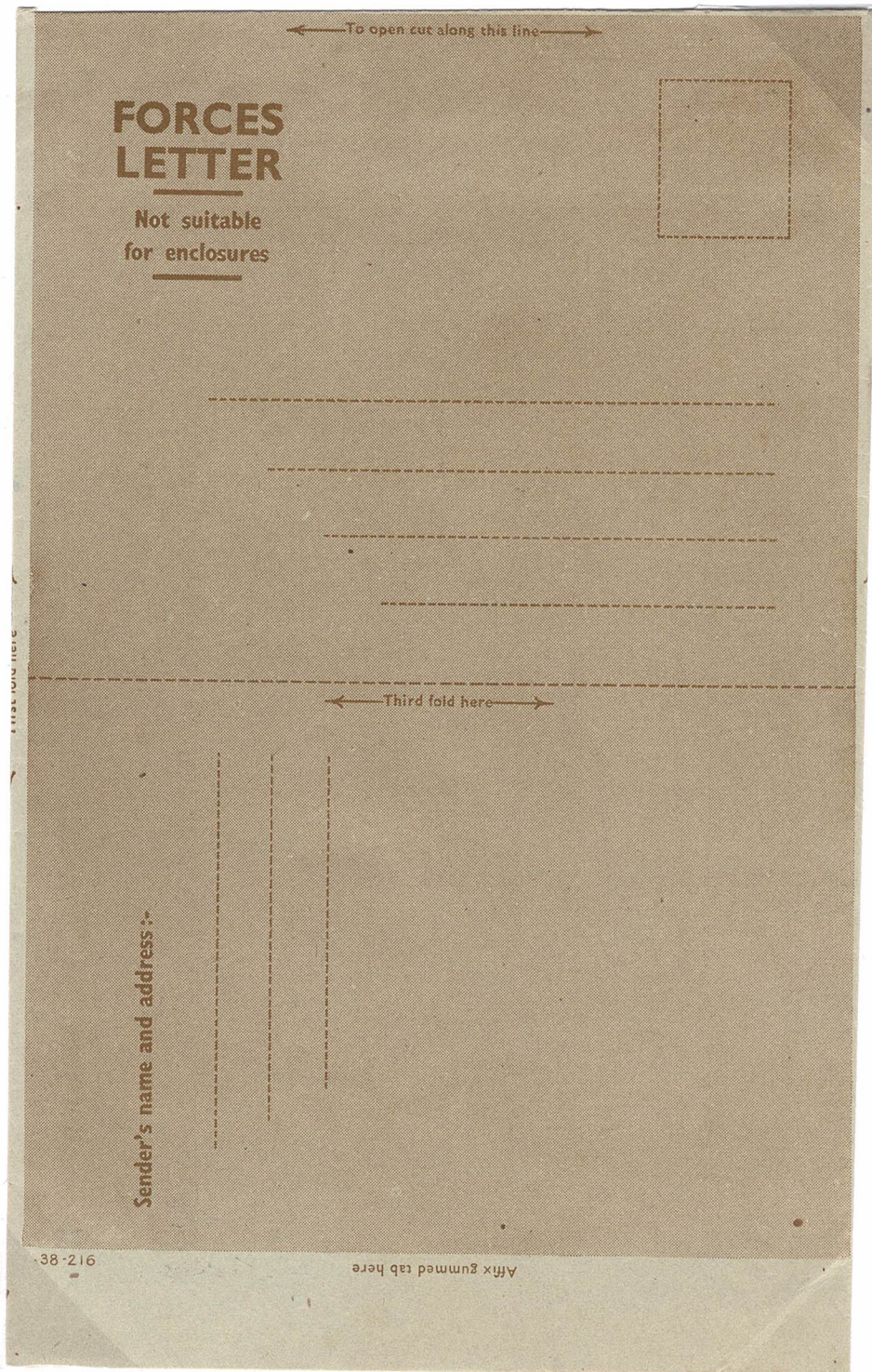
The same design but without a 6d indicium. For use in the Colonies?



An unused formula air letter of the same general design as the Nigerian overseas design of the 1950s on off-white paper with a light blue overlay that leaves a clear box for the necessary adhesive.



This unused Forces Letter is listed as type F10-2.f forces air letter in the GB Collector's Database by P.R. Aaby and is shown there as issued in May 1951. It has code 38.216 and no guide marks.



In August 1951 the Nigerian post office put into use a stampless "official paid" internal air letter which continued in use until independence. There was no equivalent post free external airletter for use on government mail but stocks of the formula air letters on the type which first appeared in the war time were apparently available throughout the 1950s and were used for Government "post free" overseas mail. This example is from the P&T Department at Lagos on 15 November 1958.

BY AIR MAIL *ON Postal Service*

AIR LETTER

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

EARLY Affix stamp here
FOR
CHRISTMAS

Mr. Leland I. Neff,
430 South Burnside Avenue, 10-K,
Los Angeles 36,
CALIFORNIA.

FG *300*

Second fold here

Sender's name and address :—
The Director,
Posts and Telegraphs,
Lagos, NIGERIA.

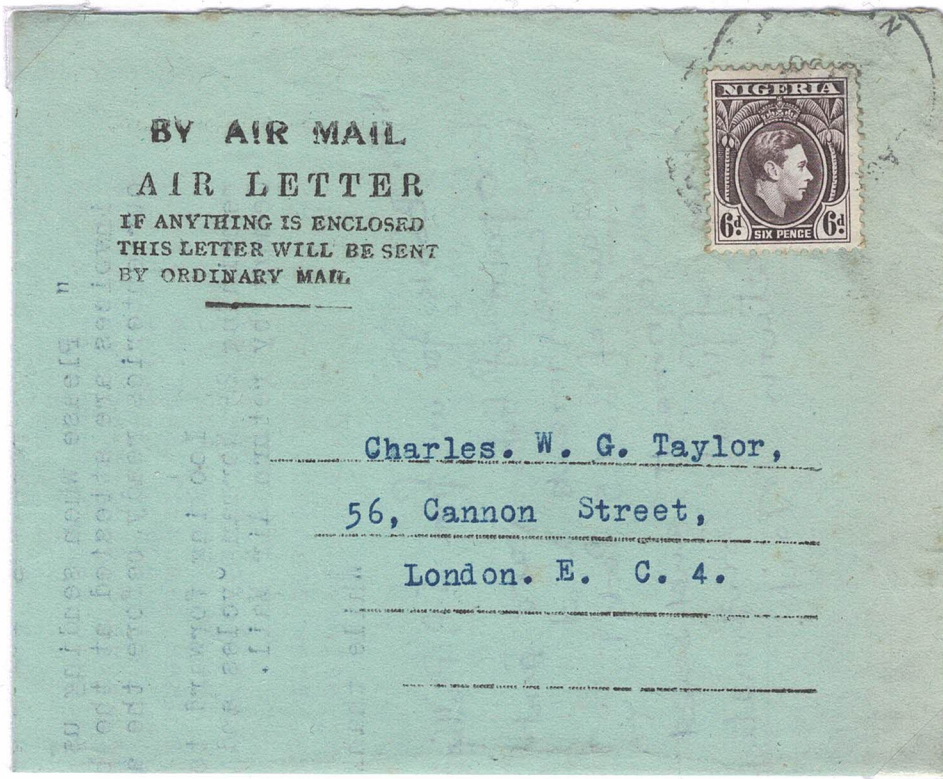
To open cut here

To open cut here

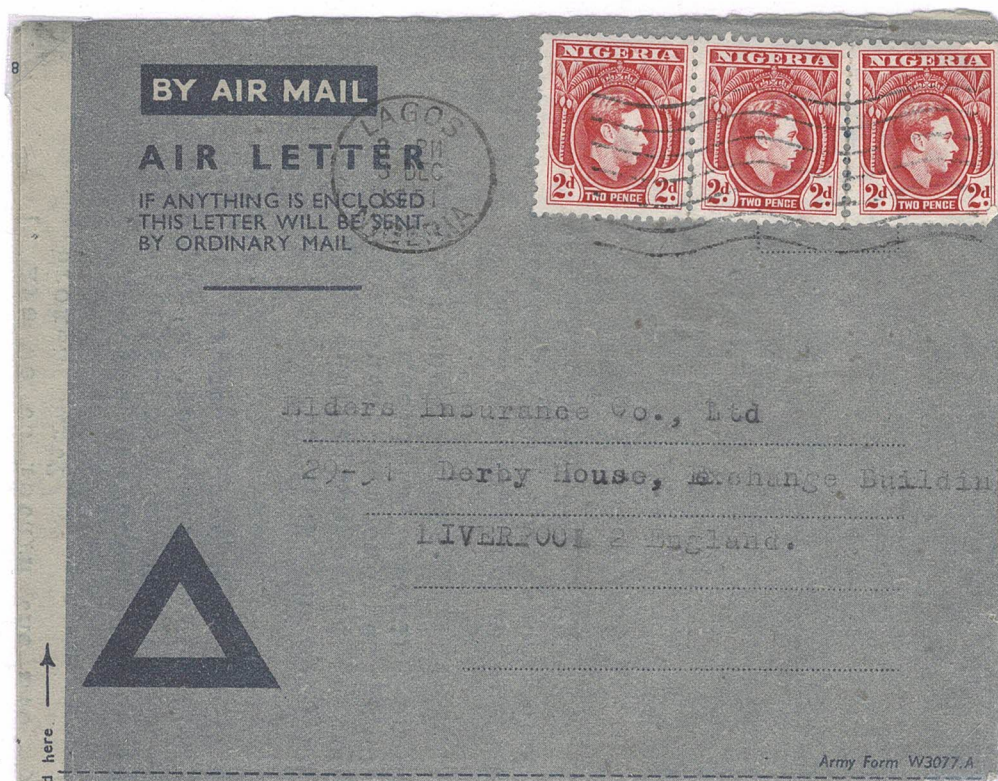
Nigeria seems to have acquired a large supply of the wartime formula forces air letters which can be seen in both postal service and commercial use throughout the 1950s. The commercial example dated 12 August 1954 is from the Toye Trading Company which was one of the first stamp dealerships owned and run by Nigerians, established in 1940. They were asking Harris Publications to enter their details into the "International Stamp Dealers' Directory" for 1955.



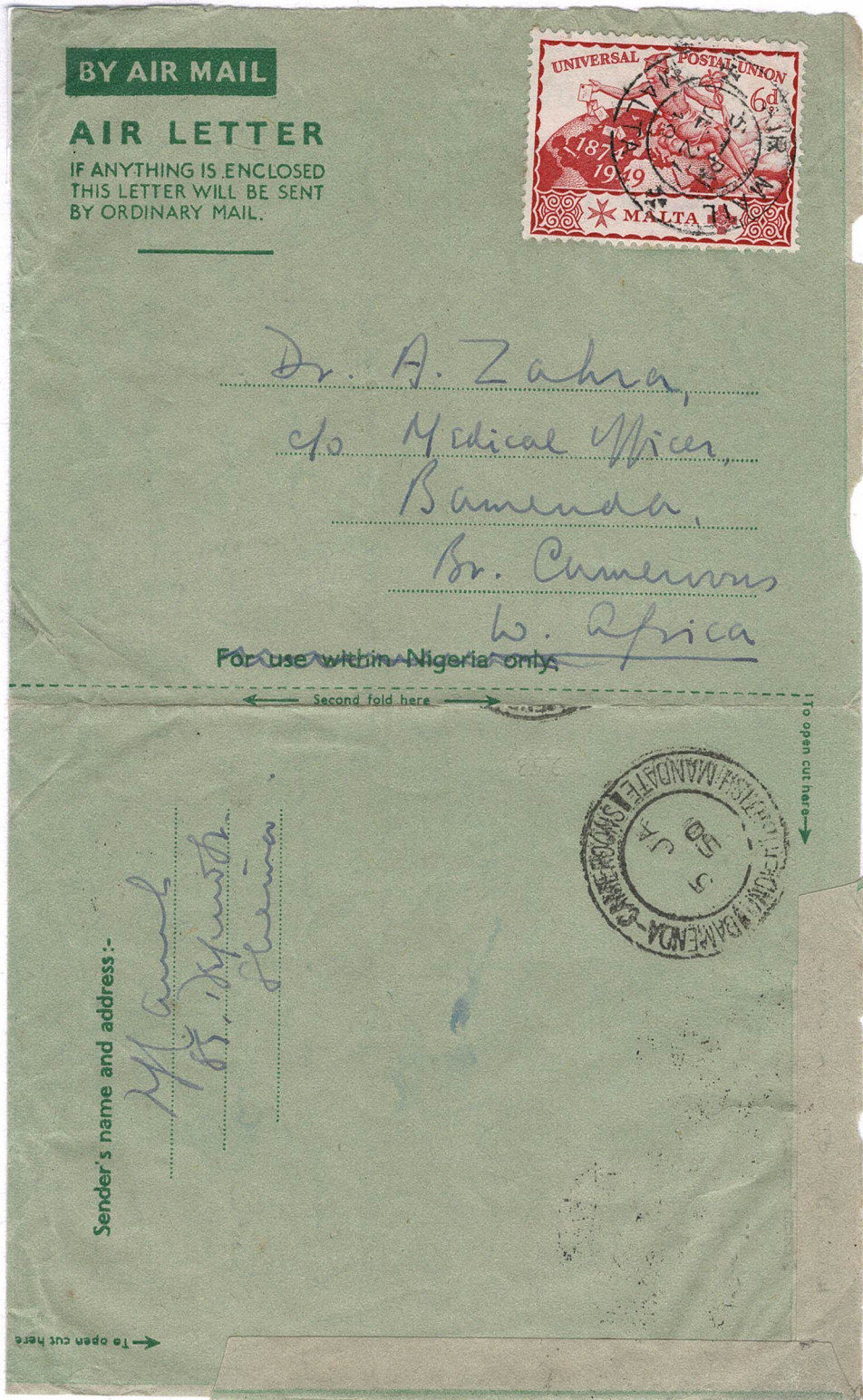
Late uses of the locally-printed air letter and the Army Form W3077 A are shown. The locally-printed air letter is seen in civilian use from a Nigerian trading company, Y.A. Fashola & Son at Lagos on 10 March 1950 to the UK. The text is correct but we later see locally-printed forms with extra imprints to show that they were approved by the Director of P&T, probably because some printers made mistakes.



The wartime Army form W.3077A with a redundant blue triangle has a printed letterhead inside for Universal Printing Works & Co, Lagos. It is tempting to think that this might have been one of the local printers of air letters towards the end of the war, now using up their own unsold stock.



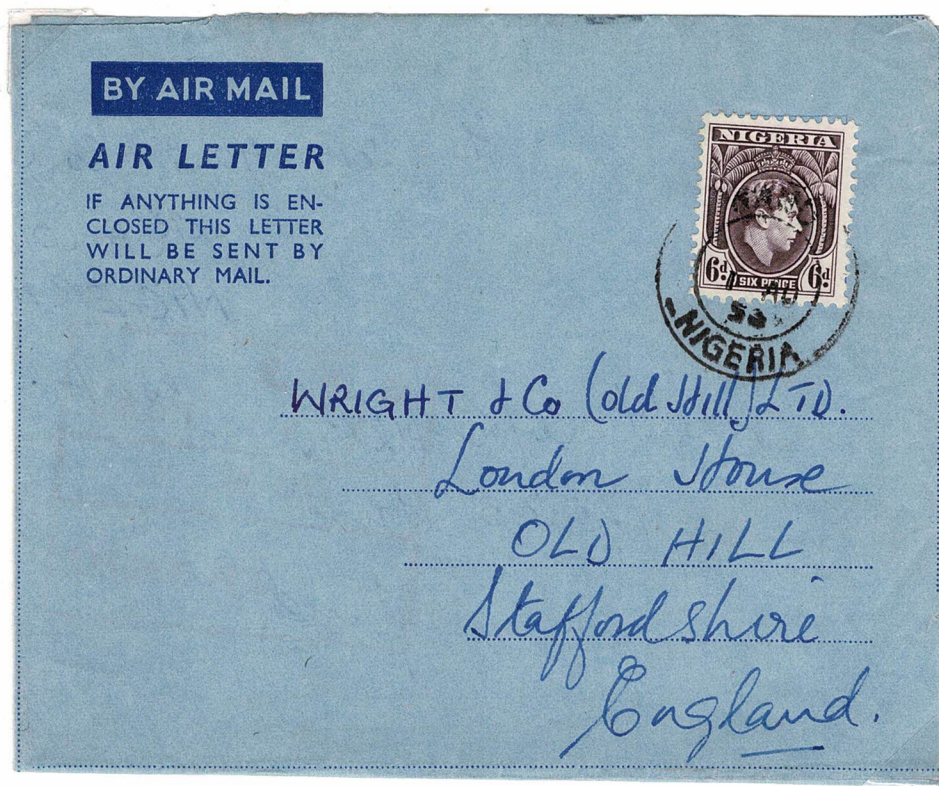
An unusual use of a Nigerian internal aerogramme in on 27 December 1949 has the 1d internal air letter used as if it was a formula aerogramme from Malta with a Malta 6d UPU stamp stuck over the 1d indicium. It is at the correct 6d rate for an international aerogramme from Malta to Camerouns. The message inside explains how this has happened. The sender had just travelled back from a visit to friends in Bamenda, returning overland from Bamenda to Lagos, then by air from Lagos to Malta.



1952. Formula airletter requisitioned for Nigeria as a stop-gap until the QE2 air letters were available.
 Harris WANG.AF.01.01 and WANG. AF. 01.02.

Date of issue: November 1952, exact date unknown
 Earliest known used date: 28 November 1952.

Requisition 4245/3 was an order for 5 million from McCorquodales with no duty (ie no indicium) specifically for Nigeria, even though there is no reference to Nigeria on these airletters. The order presumably followed the death of the King, coinciding with the stock of the KGVI aerogrammes for Nigeria running out. The design of the six-line etiquette is the same as concurrent British and Commonwealth air letters which did have indicia. Harris identified two versions, with and without a dotted line around "Stamp to be affixed here". It is impossible to tell which version has been used when stamps are affixed in that place. The used example shown here is a first day cover for the Coronation stamps on 2 June 1953.



1952. Formula airletter requisitioned for use within Nigeria as a stop-gap until the QE2 air letters were available.

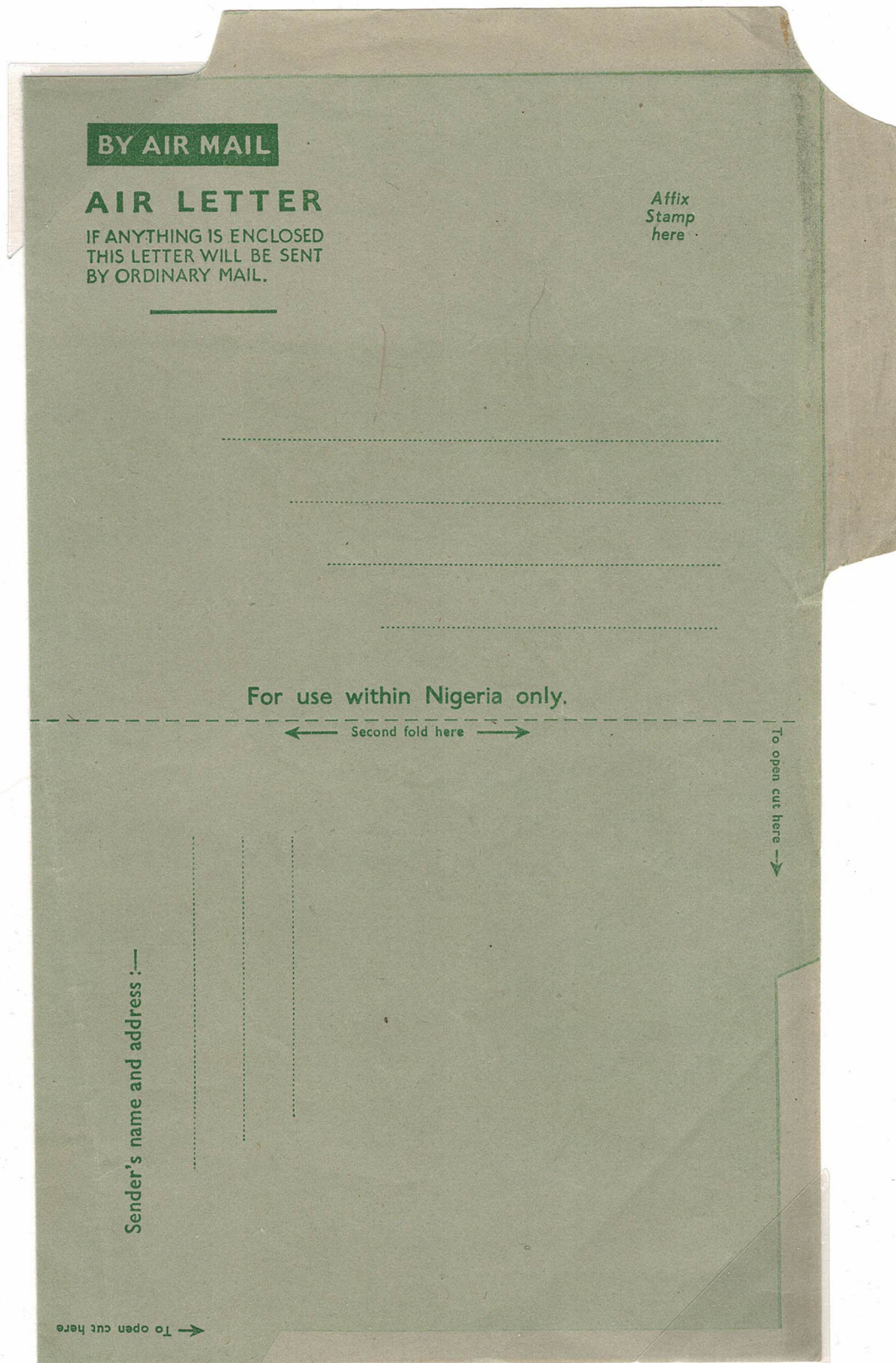
Harris WANG.AF.02.01

Date of issue: 1952, exact date unknown

Earliest known used date: 21 June 1952.

Like the blue formula airletter this was also requisitioned as a stop-gap pending the arrival of QE2 internal air letters when the stock of the KGVI 1d airletters were exhausted. It is also relevant that the price increased to 1½d on 8 April 1952 but it was not worth printing a KGVI stock with the new rate indicia. One million were ordered. The layout of the etiquette is the same as the stamped version (WANG.A.02.01).

These are scarce mint and used internally; they are most often found used externally with a 6d adhesive. A mint example is shown here



1952. Formula airletter requisitioned for use within Nigeria as a stop-gap until the QE2 air letters were available.
Harris WANG.AF.02.01

Date of issue: 1952, exact date unknown
Earliest known used date: 21 June 1952.

Like the blue formula airletter this was also requisitioned as a stop-gap pending the arrival of QE2 internal air letters when the stock of the KGVI 1d airletters were exhausted. It is also relevant that the price increased to 1½d on 8 April 1952 but it was not worth printing a KGVI stock with the new rate indicia. One million were ordered. The layout of the etiquette is the same as the stamped version (WANG.A.02.01).

The earliest known used date is 21 June 1952. Used examples at 6d to Germany on 1 July 1952 (a very early date) and registered at 9d to Holland on 24 MR 53 are shown here. Both are commercial correspondence from Nigerian traders. The registered one has transit postmark of Lagos on 26 March and a backstamp of Groningen on 30 March.



1952. Formula airletter requisitioned for use within Nigeria as a stop-gap until the QE2 air letters were available.

Harris WANG.AF.02.01

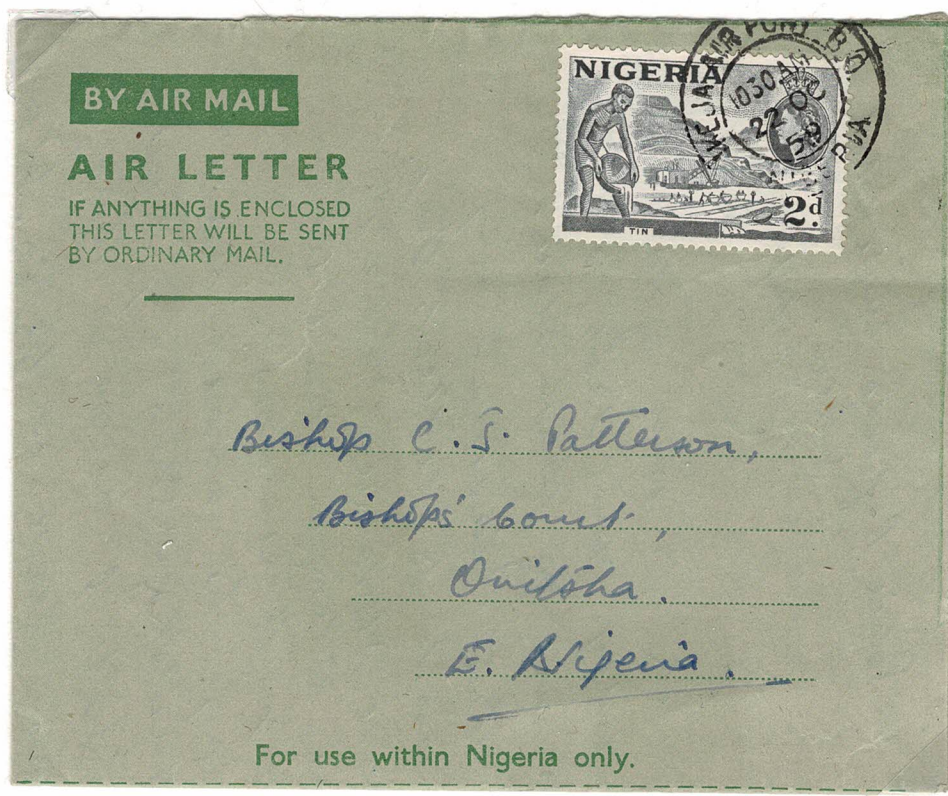
Date of issue: 1952, exact date unknown

Earliest known used date: 21 June 1952.

Like the blue formula airletter this was also requisitioned as a stop-gap pending the arrival of QE2 internal air letters when the stock of the KGV1 1d airletters were exhausted. It is also relevant that the price increased to 1½d on 8 April 1952 but it was not worth printing a KGV1 stock with the new rate indicia. One million were ordered. The layout of the etiquette is the same as the stamped version (WANG.A.02.01).

Here is a very late use of this formula airletter during the period after the internal aerogramme rate increased to 2d on 1 October 1957.

It is from Ikeja Airport Branch Office to Bishop Patterson at Onitsha on 22 October 1959, correctly franked 2d.



On 1 March 1950 a second-class air mail rate came into effect. This allowed a discount for specific postal materials, being "printed papers, commercial papers, samples, small packets and literature for the blind" and "nothing in the nature of a letter". The rate to the UK was 4d, compared to 6d for an aerogramme and 1/3d per half ounce for letters.

The formula air letter shown here is paid 4d and marked "2nd class air mail" to England. It was sent by the Olupelu Trading Company setting out a request for samples of aluminium wares. It is thus "in the nature of a letter" and a misuse of the second-class concession, but it was not taxed. I have not seen any other example of a second class air mail aerogramme, for which only formula air letters or uprated 1d internal air letters could be used.



The QE2 "stamped" aerogrammes from 1953 were printed on Imperial Air Mail watermarked paper with code letters F or G. This page shows the same type of watermarked paper being used by the Sudan United Mission at Mkar, near Gboko in Nigeria for their headed writing paper. The code letter is O which implies that this version of the paper is probably from the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s. SUM changed its name to Action Partners in 1989.

HOME OFFICE
2850 KALAMAZOO AVE., S.E.
GRAND RAPIDS 8,
MICHIGAN, U. S. A.
CABLES: CRMISSIONS

SUDAN UNITED MISSION

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH BRANCH

MKAR OFFICES

SECRETARY

TREASURER

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

BUILDING ENGINEER

EDUCATION SECRETARY

SUPERVISOR OF SCHOOLS, MKAR

TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE

MKAR CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL

CABLES:
SUDANUM, GBOKO

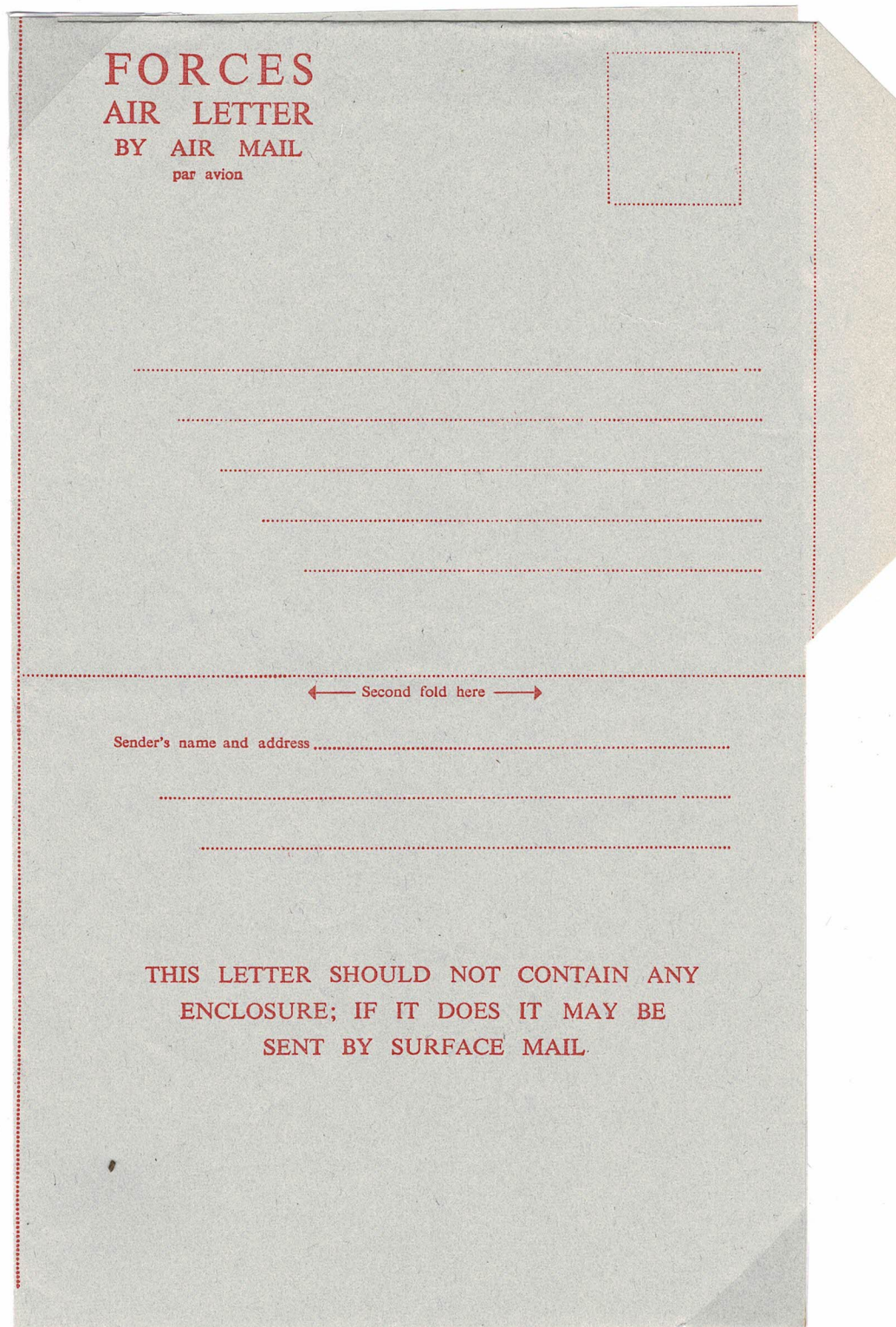
MKAR P. A.
GBOKO POST OFFICE,
N. NIGERIA

IMPERIAL AIR MAIL

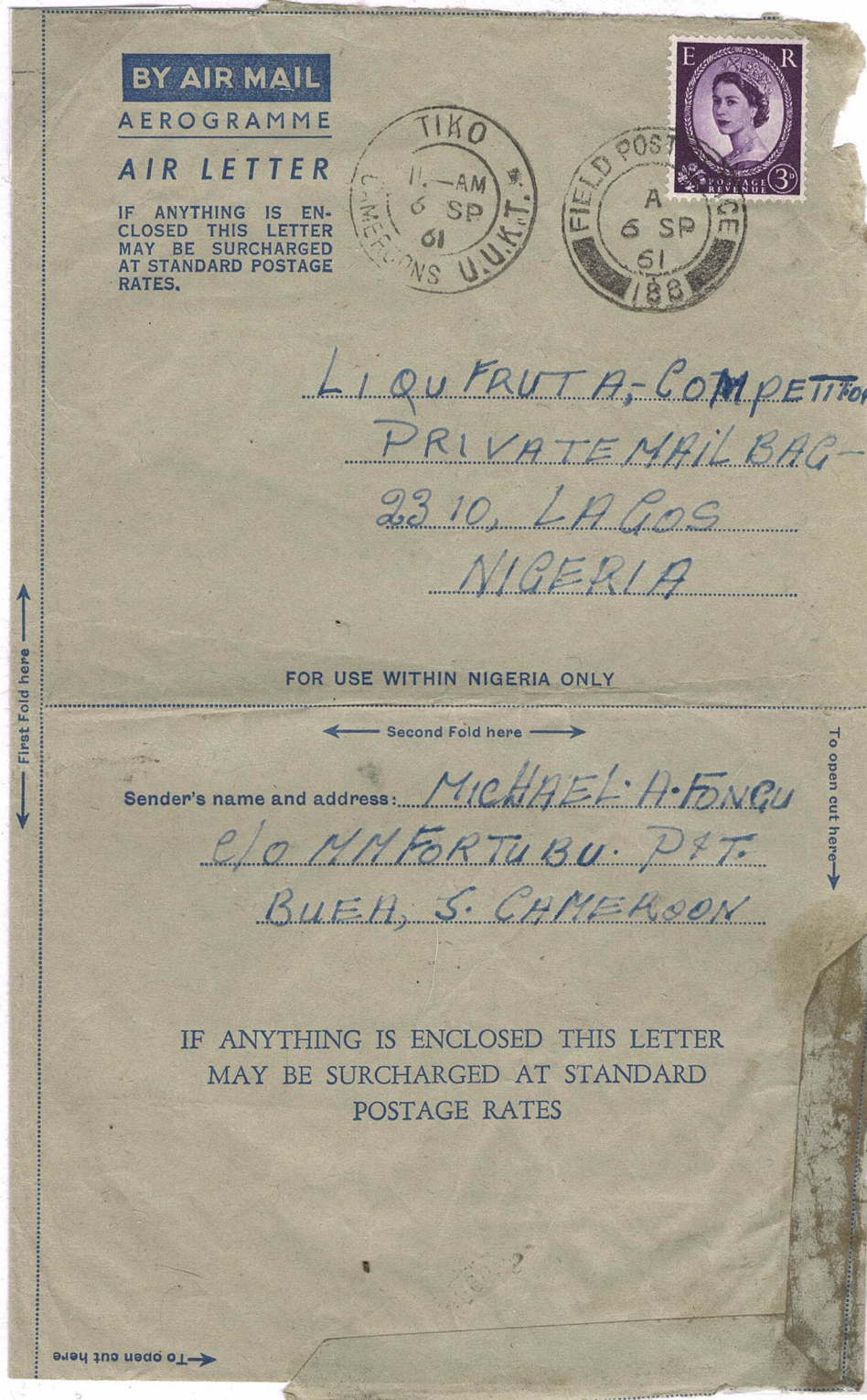
W. M. BRISTOW
SECONDARY
SCHOOL
GBOKO P. O.

TAKUM
CHRISTIAN
HOSPITAL
TAKUM P. A.
WUKARI P. O.
VIA MAKURDI

Unstamped versions of the Forces air letters continued to be printed after Queen Elizabeth II came to the throne but the design and paper colour were completely changed in 1957. The new style was printed in various colours, on grey paper, designated type F11 by Adby. The third stampless Forces type was issued in August 1963 as shown here, which now has the second fold at the bottom of the front. There is no colon after "sender's name and address".



FPO188 was at Buea but was not established before 10 July 1961. The troops stationed there included some native troops judging by the name of the addressee on this formula internal aerogramme, used to Lagos at 3d concessionary rate. This type of aerogramme, with the text FOR USE WITHIN NIGERIA ONLY at the bottom of the front page, was a stop-gap printing which is scarce mint or used and very scarce used internally (Harris gives that his highest rating on page 23 of his "Aerogrammes of Nigeria 1948 to 2000"). This is the only example known used from the Cameroons.



1961. Formula internal airletter.

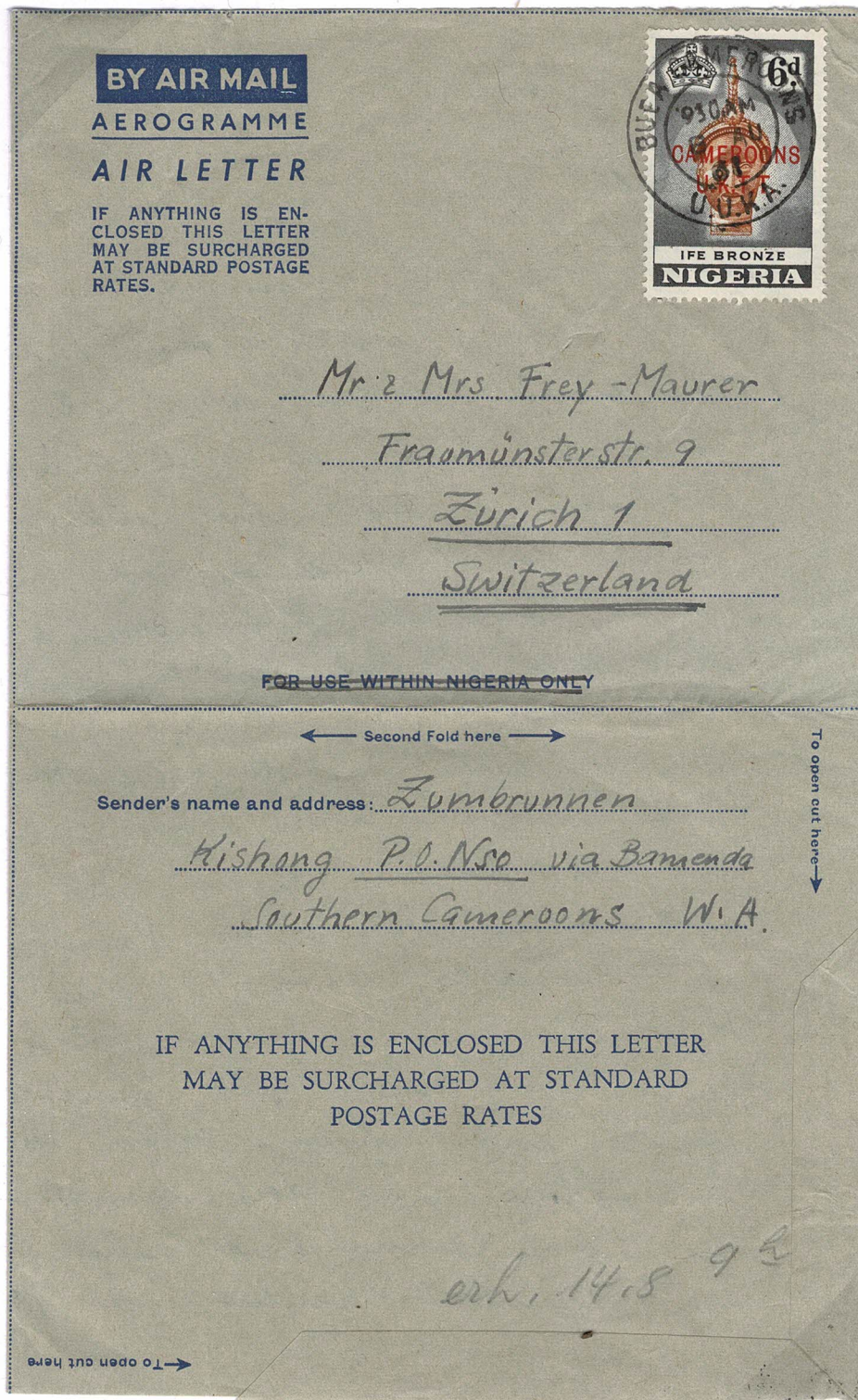
Harris WANG.AF.03.01. Requisition not recorded, 2.6 million ordered but possibly only 400,000 delivered

Date of issue not known. Earliest recorded date: 31 January 1961

This is strange temporary aerogramme. It is similar to, but identical to, WANG.A.10.1 so it has been printed from a new plate. It is a formula aerogramme but includes the words "For use within Nigeria only". Why make it specific to Nigeria when a generic design could have been delivered if a stop-gap was needed?

Then, its earliest date of use is just one day before the date of issue of the 3d OYO CARVER (WANG.A.11.01).

Unsurprisingly, it is very scarce both unused and used.



McCorquodale printed aerogrammes which were identical to the 1962 Nigeria Benin Mask issue apart from the omission of the stamp and the addition of the "approval" text. An unused copy is shown here.

← To open cut here →

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION
AIR LETTER
AÉROGRAMME

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

← Second fold here →

Sender's name and address:

.....
.....

AN AIR LETTER SHOULD NOT CONTAIN ANY
ENCLOSURE ; IF IT DOES IT WILL BE SURCHARGED
OR SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL.

Form approved by the Postmaster-General No. 99

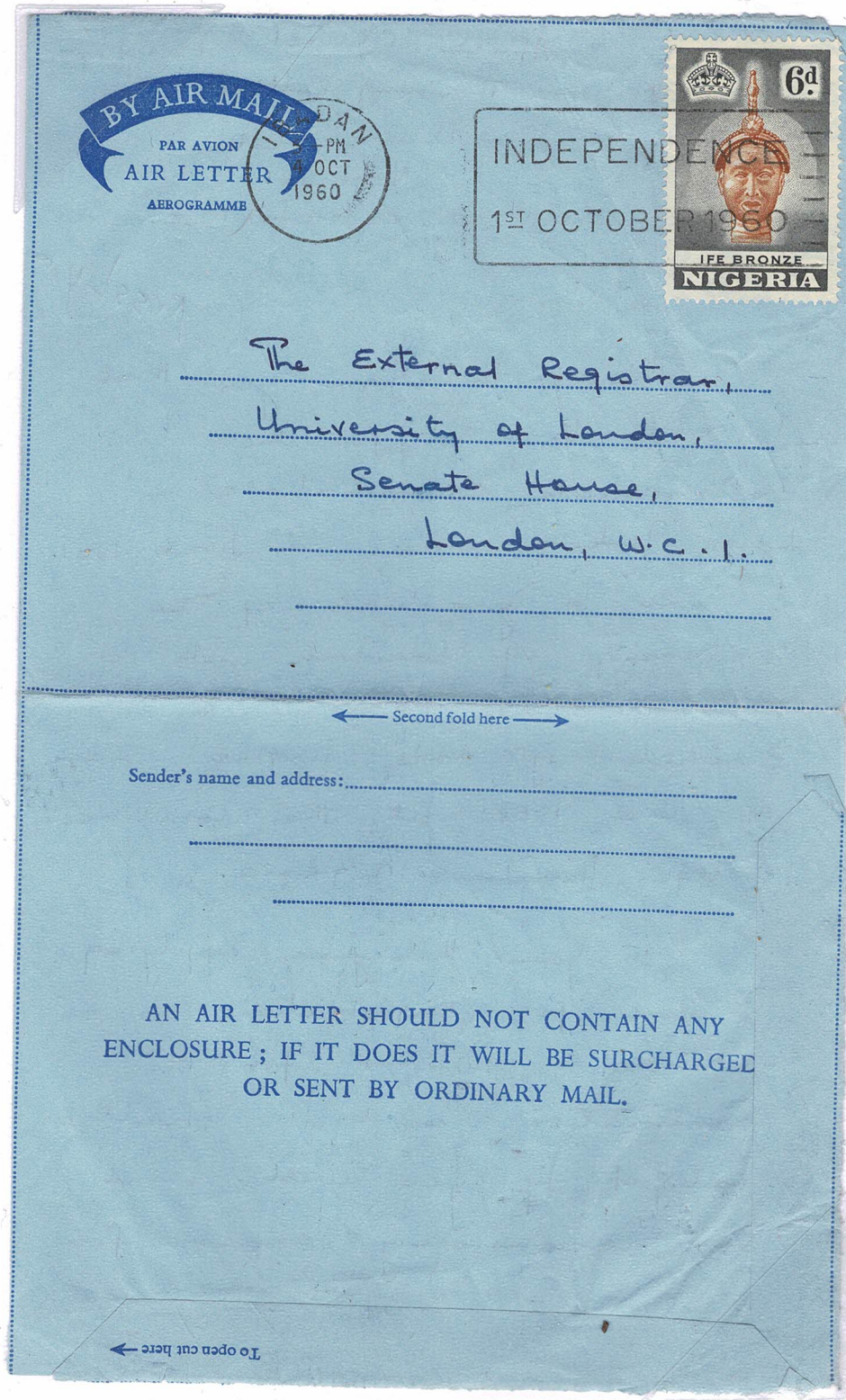
1959-60. Formula external airletters.

In contrast to the temporary internal airletter, WANG.AF.03.01 which was printed specifically for use in Nigeria, generic UK and Commonwealth blue external airletters were released in Nigeria in the pre-independence period.

The first type I show had the words By AIR MAIL on a arched ribbon design at the top left.

This design was also used on the first post-independence Nigerian airletters.

The first used air letter shown here was used on 4 October 1960, four days after Independence and franked with the Independence slogan.



1959-60. Formula external airletters.

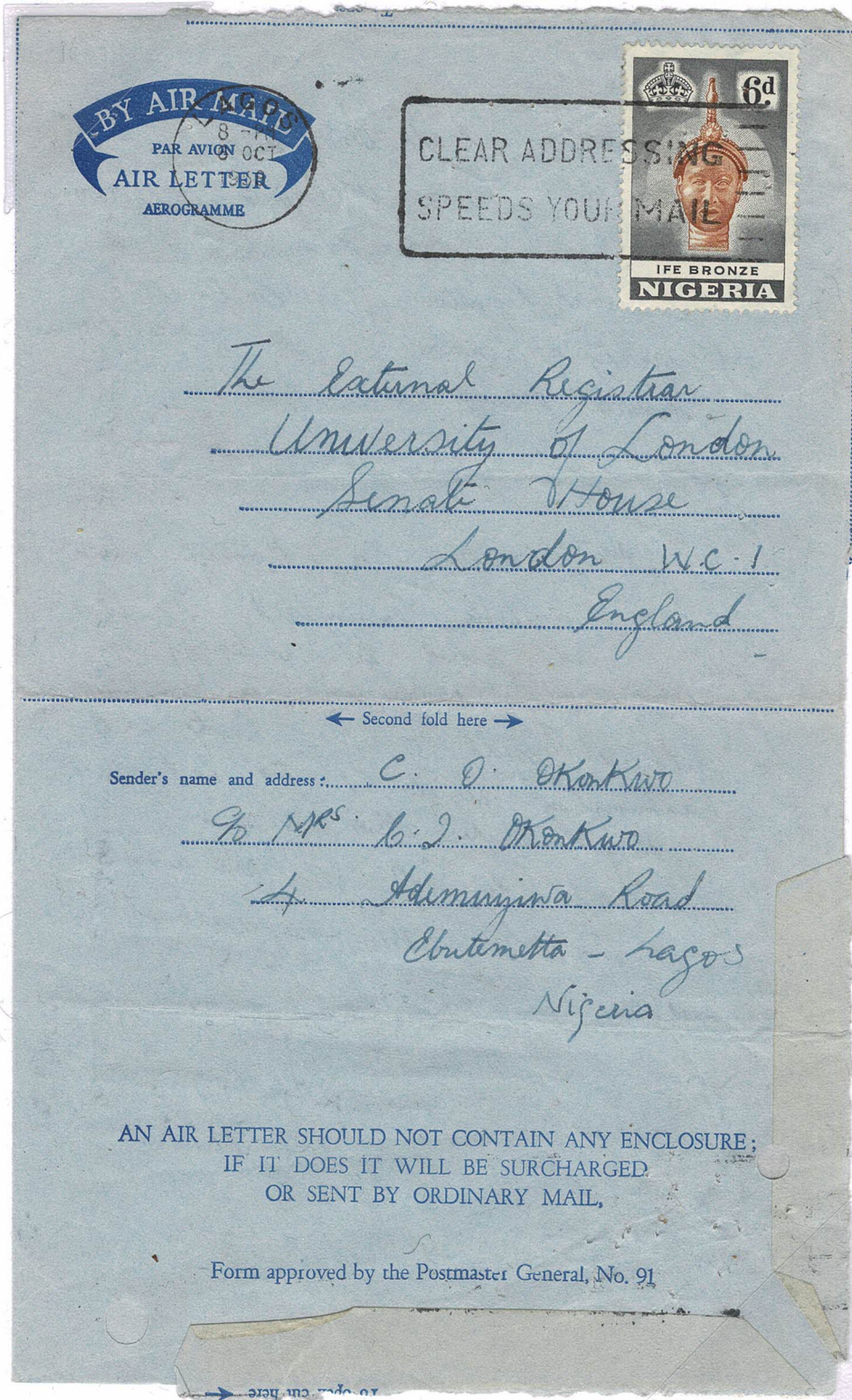
In contrast to the temporary internal airletter, WANG.AF.03.01 which was printed specifically for use in Nigeria, generic UK and Commonwealth blue external airletters were released in Nigeria in the pre-independence period.

The first type I show had the words By AIR MAIL on an arched ribbon design at the top left.

This design was also used on the first post-independence Nigerian airletters.

The second used one shown here was used on 6 October 1959 and its reverse is a slightly different design incorporating "Form approved by the Postmaster General, No .91".

Compare with the unused example which has "Form approved by the Postmaster General, No .99".



1960s. Locally-printed blue formula external airletter.

Nothing is yet known about how and when the Director P&T of Nigeria approved this layout, nor who printed them.

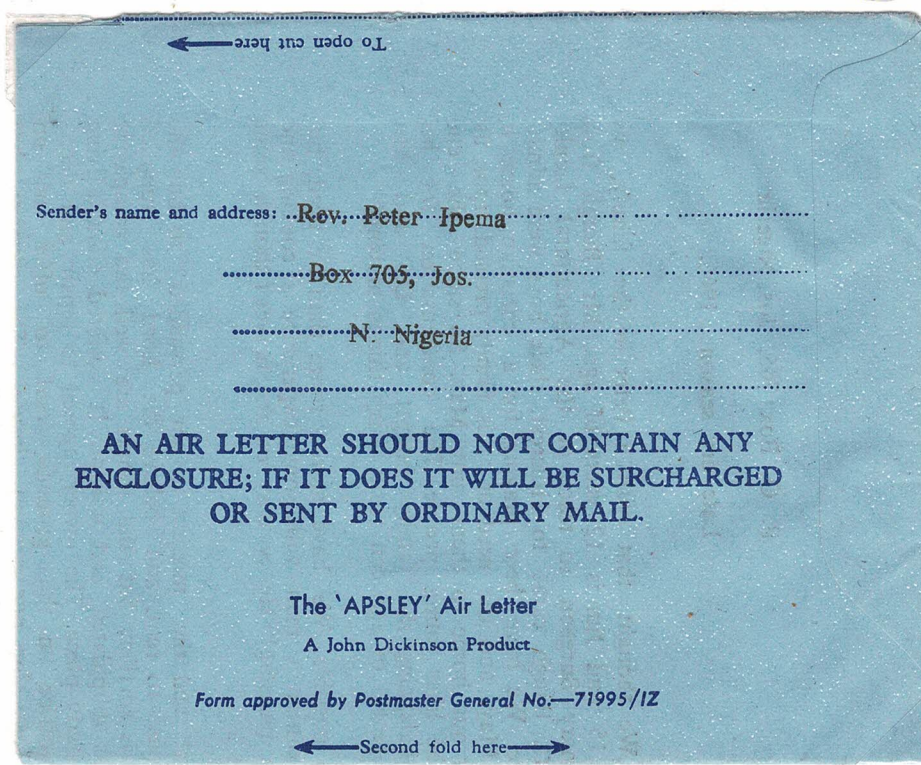
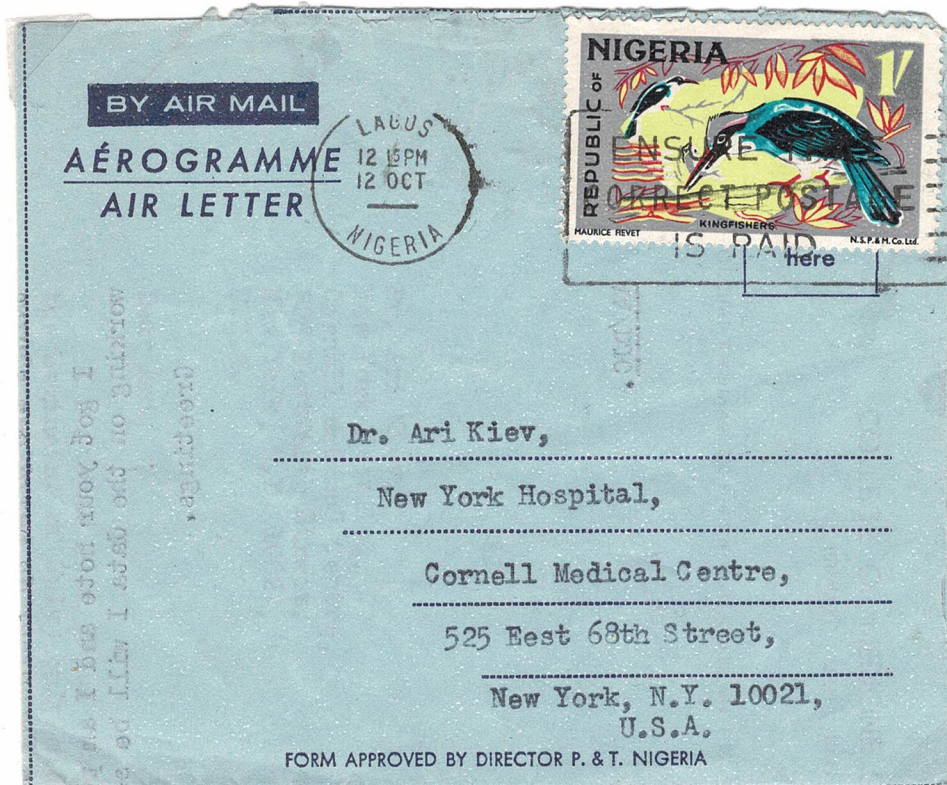
The earliest date shown here is 7 October 1964 on deep blue paper, then 28 September 1965 on mid-blue paper with poor quality printing.



1960s. Locally-printed blue formula external airletter.

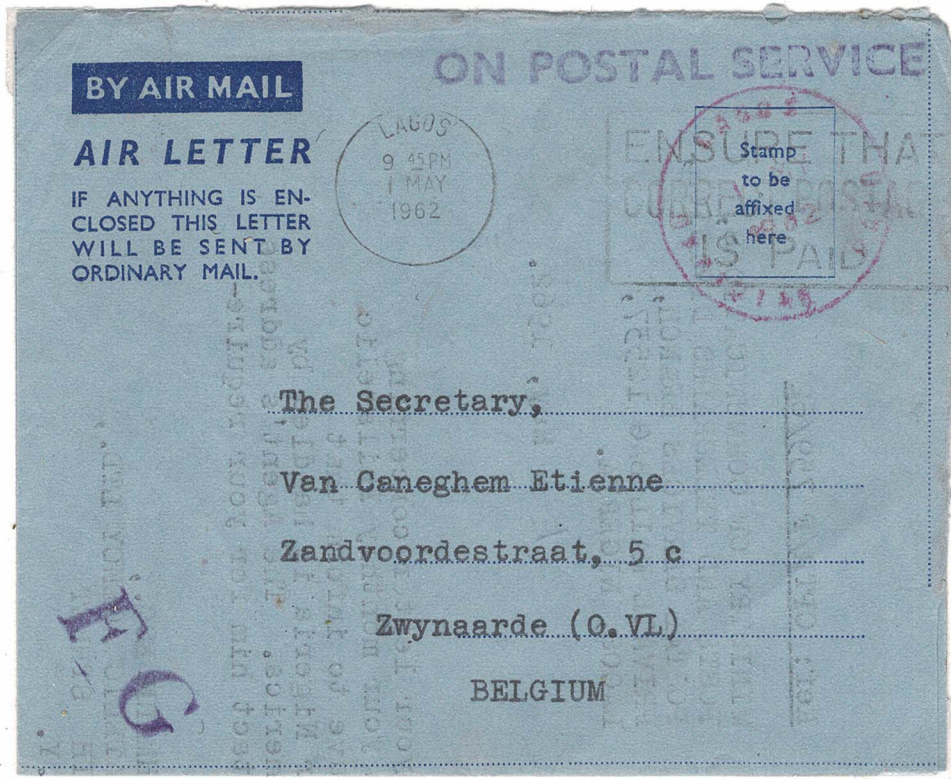
Nothing is yet known about how and when the Director P&T of Nigeria approved this layout, nor who printed them. The latest date shown here is 12 October 1972 on light blue paper, with good quality printing. Note that the year date is taken from the text inside the letter as the Lagos machine cancel does not show the year.

Many other formula air letters were imported from various British and overseas suppliers in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, the John Dickinson "Apsley" air letter form "approved by Postmaster General No.--71995/1Z" used from Jos in 1966.



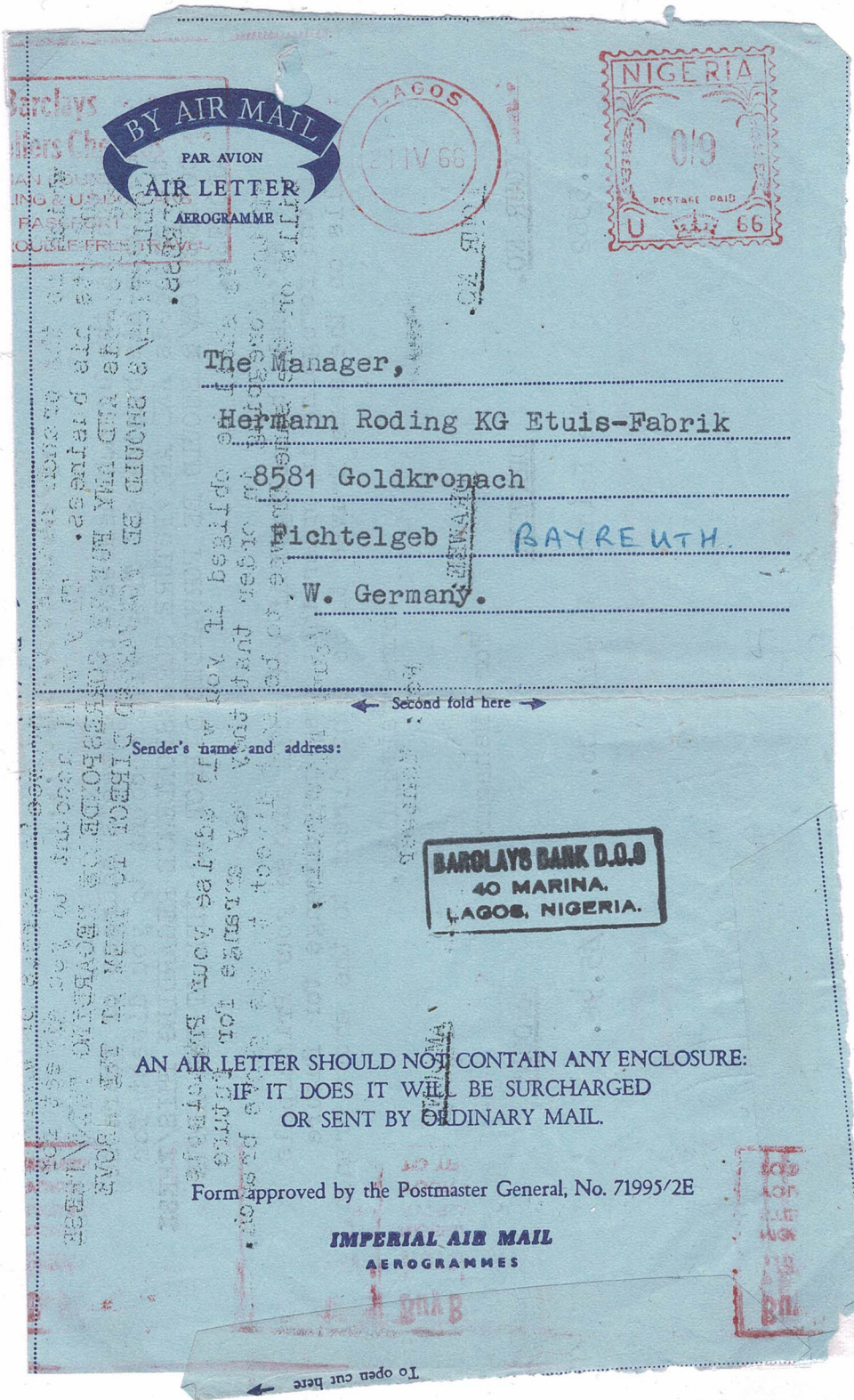
1962. Formula external airletters.

The generic McCorquodale-printed UK and Commonwealth blue external airletter which is shown in this display in 1952 as WANG.AF.01.01 was used again by the Nigerian postal service in 1962. Kessler classifies it as an "official" aerogramme but the second example below shows that it was also available to the general public; sent from Numan to the USA on 7 NO 62.



Unstamped aerogrammes with printers' names or brands on the reverse came into use in Great Britain in the 1950s and supplies of these were bought by banks and other firms trading in Nigeria, probably by wholesale dealings with the printers. To avoid errors in the layout and text of these commercially-printed ones the draft designs were apparently submitted to the British Postmaster General for approval and such approval was then added to the back.

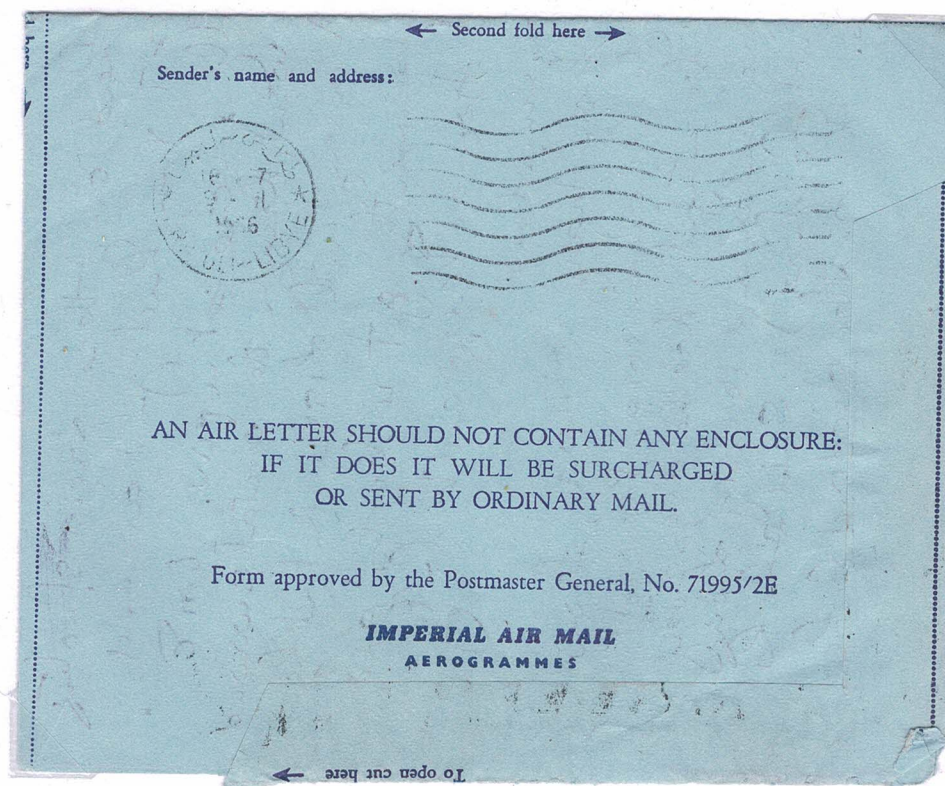
The Imperial Air Mail brand was one of the first of these and has an approval code number 71995/2E. It is seen on the back of a letter from Barclays Bank, Lagos to a firm in West Germany.



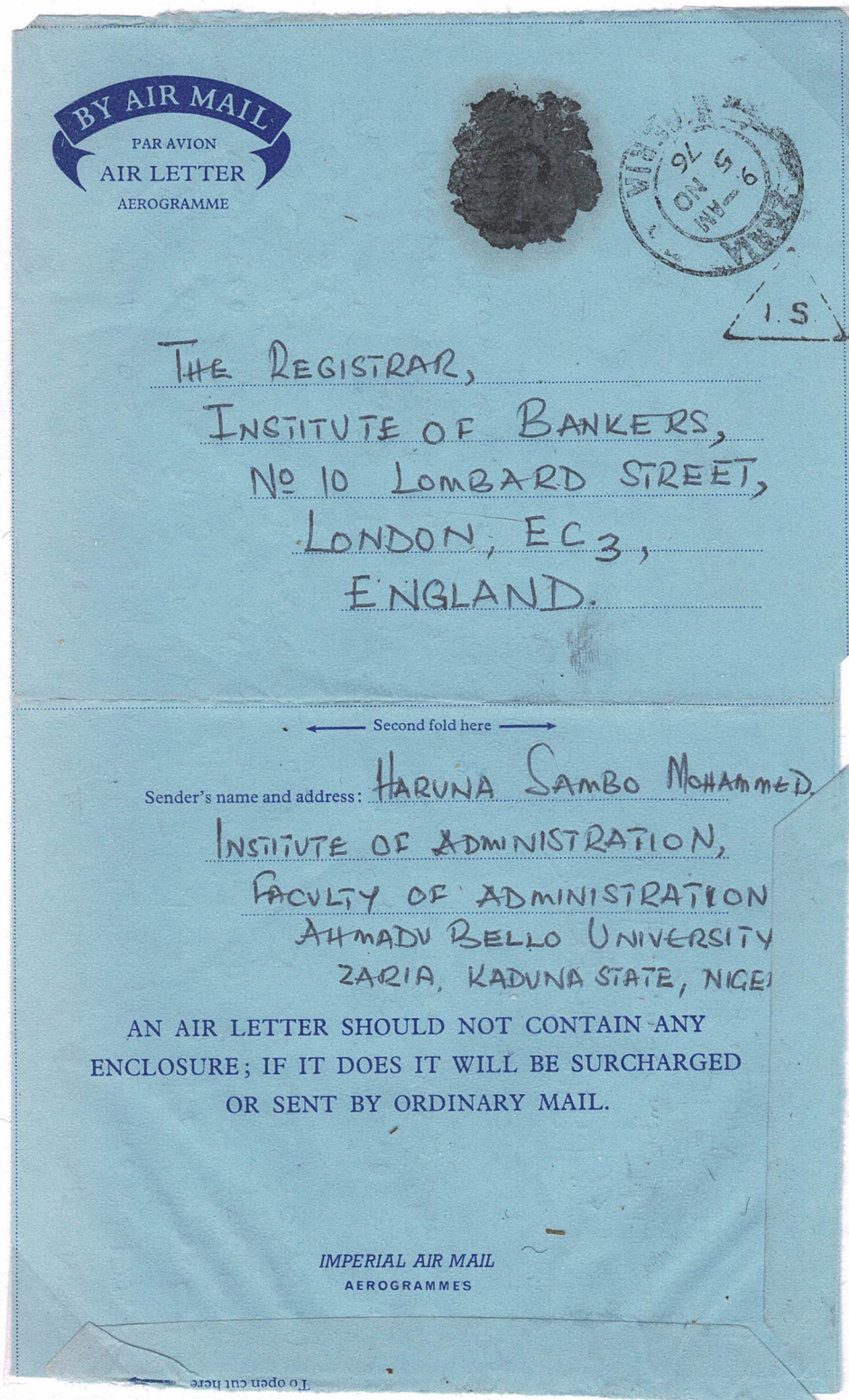
Another example of the Imperial Air Mail brand on the back of an aerogramme from Barclays Bank, Lagos has a letter dated 3 June 1966 from the manager of their branch at Yaba to a former colleague who had moved to Tripoli. The 3d adhesive is an underpayment: that was the internal aerogramme rate at the time. The writer said, inter alia:

"On Monday we had one of those drear shooting larks outside the bank. P&T van had just arrived outside to deposit their lolly and were set upon. 6 or 8 shots fired, one of which went through the metal surround of one of the doors of the bank. They got away with £1,950 but had never got inside. They subsequently got 4 bods and the car they used, but still two at large and the lolly. It appears the P&T driver was involved."

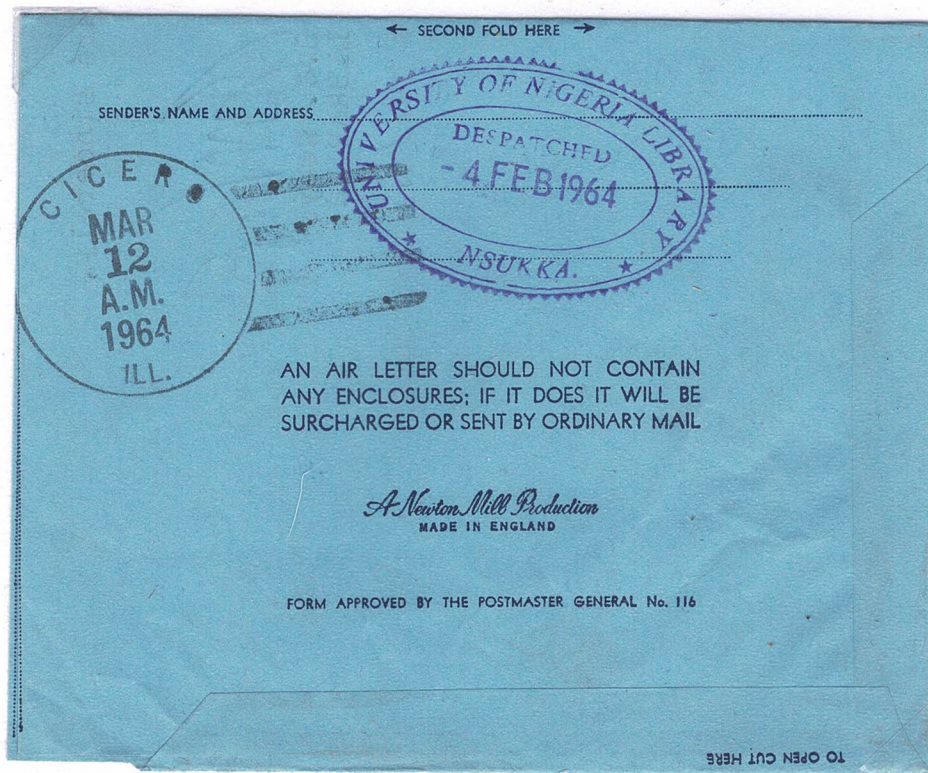
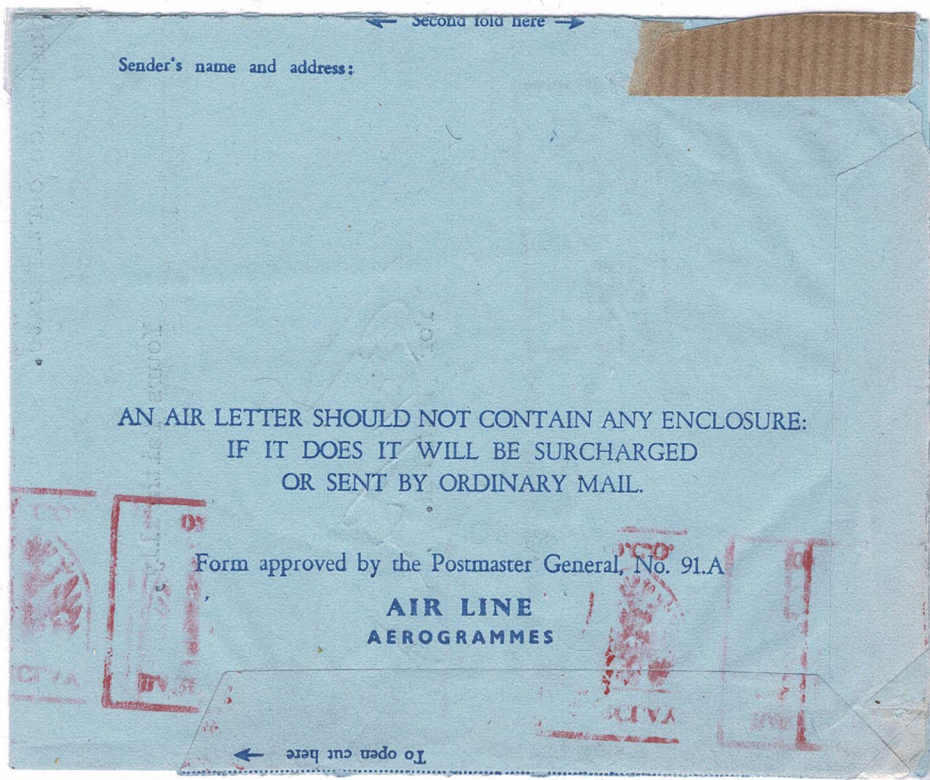
"Drear riots and things up north. Apparently, several branches (says Skef) have had the staff knocked about and attempts to burn the down (the offices!). The day before our shooting, a £3,000 wage grab at Ikeja. Never a dull moment. House breakers are pulling down the remains of Rasmusson Building and we much enjoy the performance daily. One wonders, however, how it ever managed to stand up!"



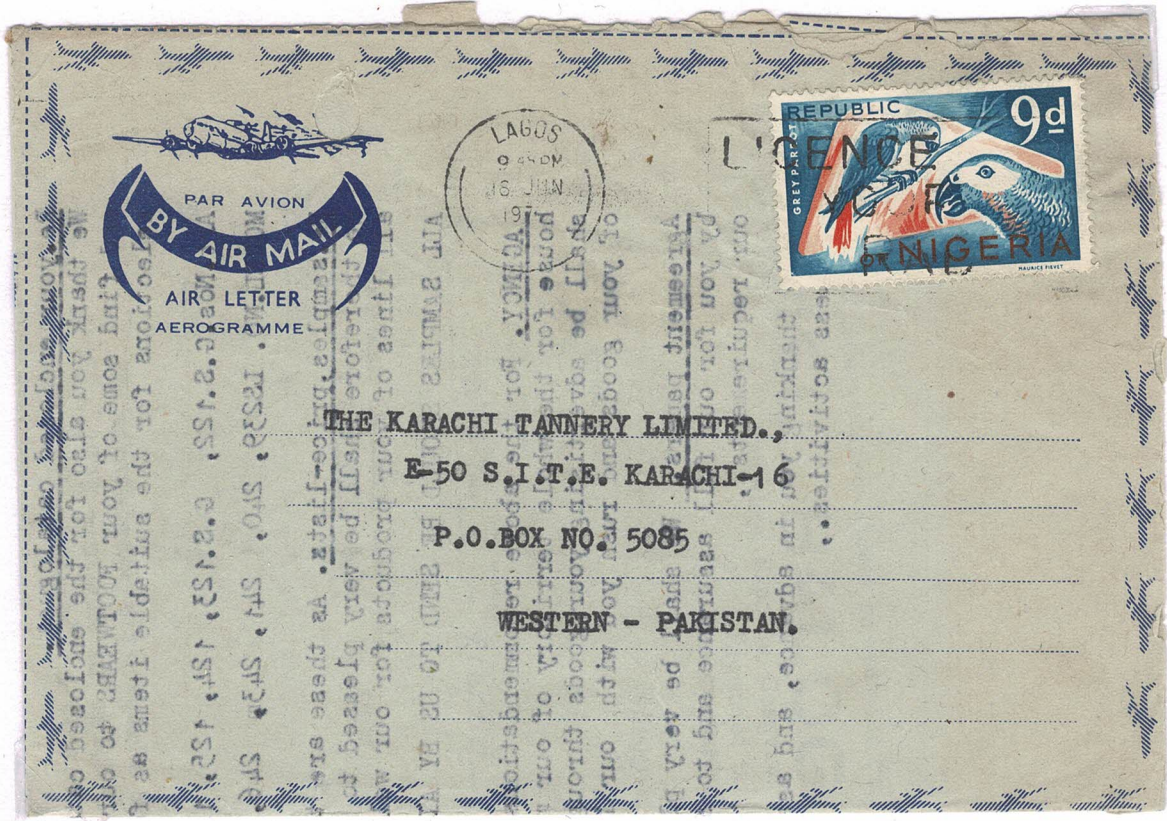
A further Imperial Air Mail branded aerogramme is seen used from Zaria on 5 NO 76 without any postage paid. The T mark applied in Nigeria has been deleted, for no obvious reason – it is unlikely the sender was entitled to Government post free and there is no Nigerian Government departmental handstamp in any case.



Postmaster approval number 91.A is on an "AIR LINE" branded aerogramme used from Ibadan on 11 October 1963 and approval number 116 is on a "Newton Mill Production" branded one from Enugu on 8 May 1964.



Locally-printed formula aerogrammes printed in unconventional designs for use by commercial firms with their own letter heads on the inside. The first is dated 16 Jan 1970 at 9d rate to Pakistan and the second was written on 26 January 1976 and sent to Belgium at 10 kobo rate.



An air letter with McCorquodale Printers Ltd imprint but no postmaster approval endorsement is shown used from Ibadan in July 1976.



BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION
AIR LETTER

R B. H. O.
No. 415



Messrs, D. Van Reken,
44 East 15th Street,
Holland Mich 49423,
U.S.A.



Second fold here

Sender's name and address:

Mount Jambakuta
P.O. Box 7040
Ibadan - Nigeria

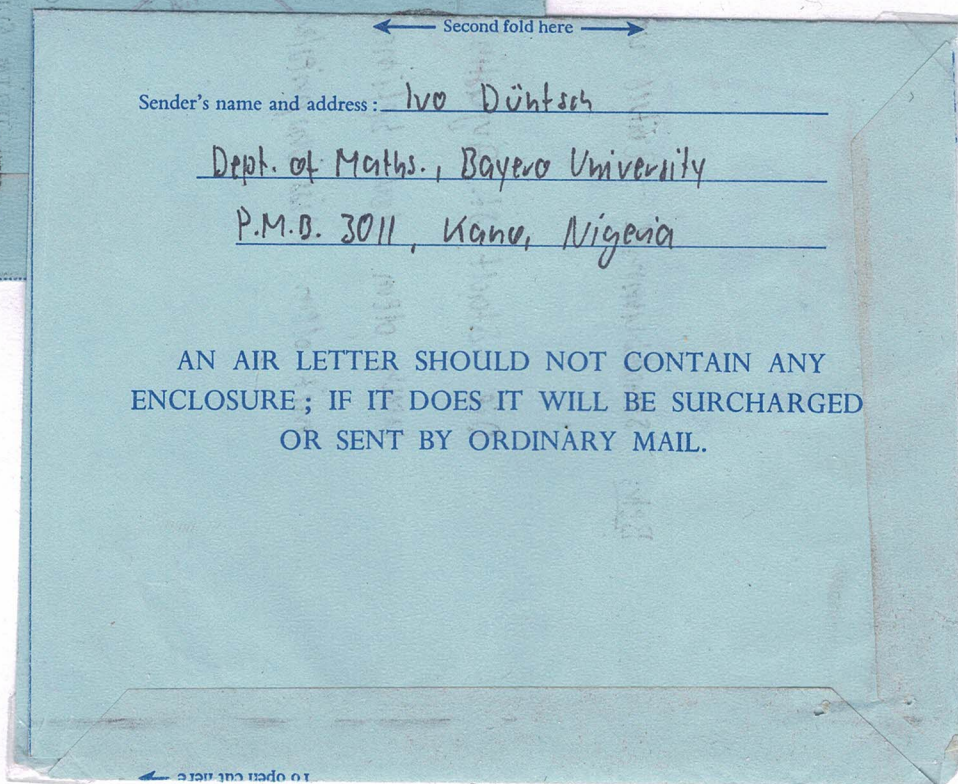
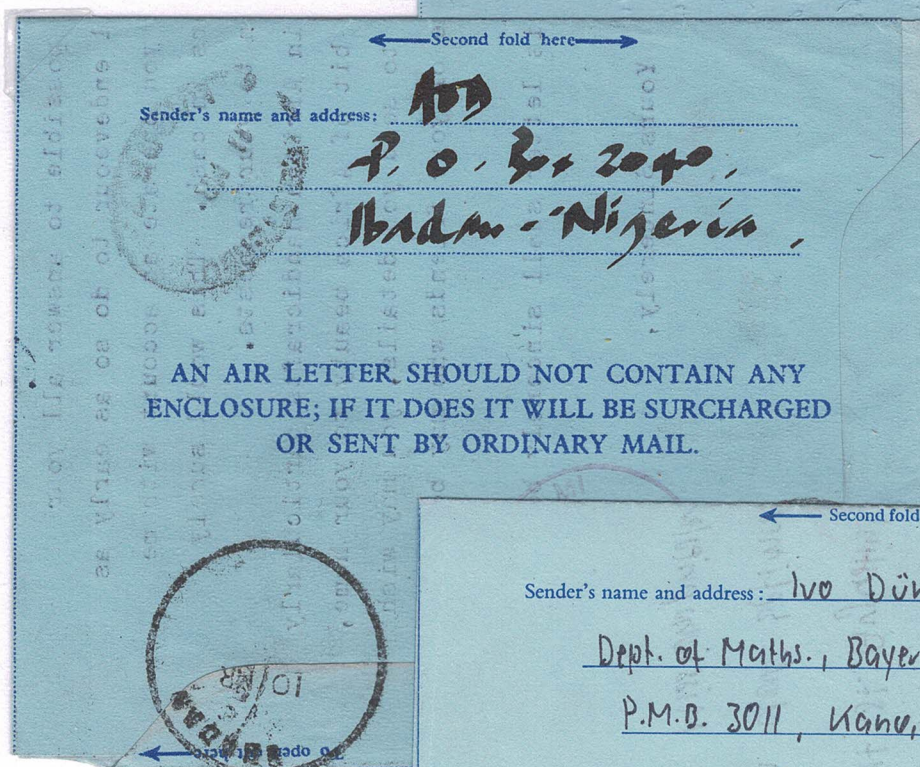
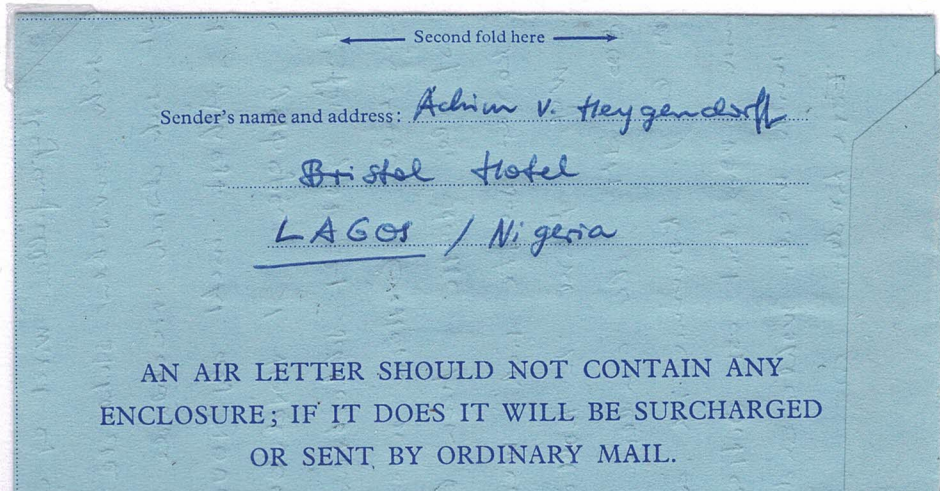
AN AIR LETTER SHOULD NOT CONTAIN ANY
ENCLOSURE ; IF IT DOES IT WILL BE SURCHARGED
OR SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL.

McCORQUODALE PRINTERS LTD



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Later formula aerogrammes tended to have neither a printers' imprint nor a postmaster endorsement. The three shown here seem to me to have been printed in the UK with detail differences on the back. The first, used from Lagos on 21 JY 75, has small arrow heads, the second from Ibadan on 10 MR 76 has large arrow heads and smaller gaps between the rows of the warning message, then the third from Kano on 30 NO 1982 has large arrow heads, solid underlines marking the space for the sender's details but similar style of warning message to the first version.

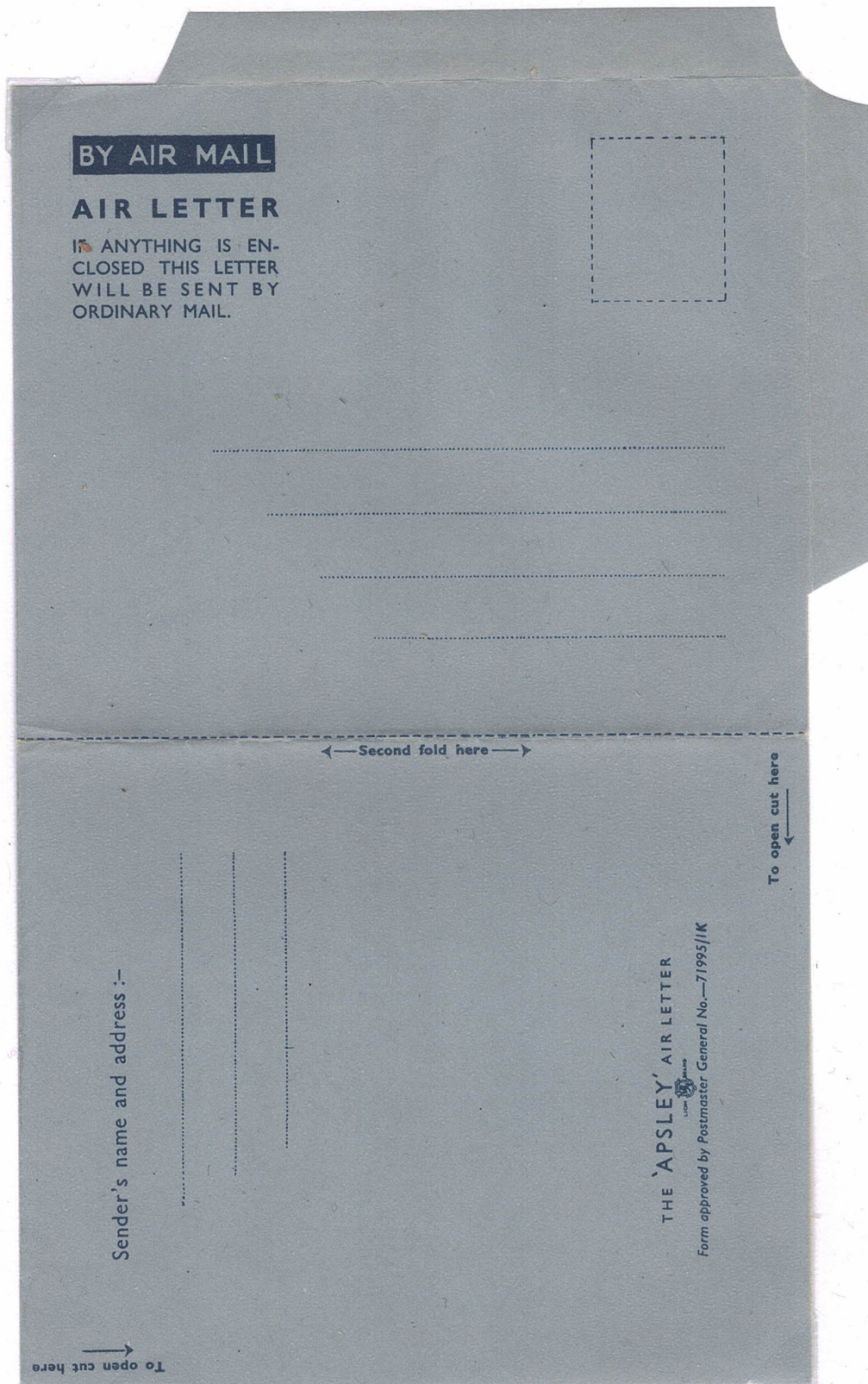


Later formula aerogrammes tended to have neither a printers' imprint nor a postmaster endorsement. This 1971 version sent from the Federal Ministry of Education at Lagos has substantial differences of layout from those on the previous page; the warning message is at top left of the front instead of the middle of the back and the sender's name and address is at right angles. This is a similar layout to the first Apsley airletters and it may be a locally-printed copy of an "Apsley" without the brand name.



"Apsley" aerogrammes were printed by John Dickinson Stationery Ltd at their papermill at Apsley, near Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire (the nearby Frogmore Paper Mill, which Dickinson did not own, is now a papermaking museum). John Dickinson became part of the Dickinson Robinson Group in 1966 but DRG was split up by a venture capital firm and the only parts that still exist are subsumed into the French Hamelin Group and into Rexam (formerly Bowater). They also owned the Basildon Bond stationery brand from 1918 until those takeovers.

A study of their designs has not been undertaken as far as I am aware. I show a few versions here, starting with one that seems to replicate the wartime layout.



Two more Apsley designs which are very similar to each other apart from the paper colour and an approval by the Postmaster General.

Sender's name and address:

AN AIR LETTER SHOULD NOT CONTAIN ANY
ENCLOSURE; IF IT DOES IT WILL BE SURCHARGED
OR SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL.

The 'APSLEY' Air Letter

A John Dickinson Product

Form approved by Postmaster General No.—71995/1Z

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T CONTAIN ANY
L BE SURCHARGED
RY MAIL.

← To open cut here

← To open cut here

The Apsley aerogramme design which includes "A Dickinson Robinson Group Product" must date from after 1966 when a merger created that group.

Sender's name and address:

AN AIR LETTER SHOULD NOT CONTAIN ANY
ENCLOSURE; IF IT DOES IT WILL BE SURCHARGED
OR SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL.

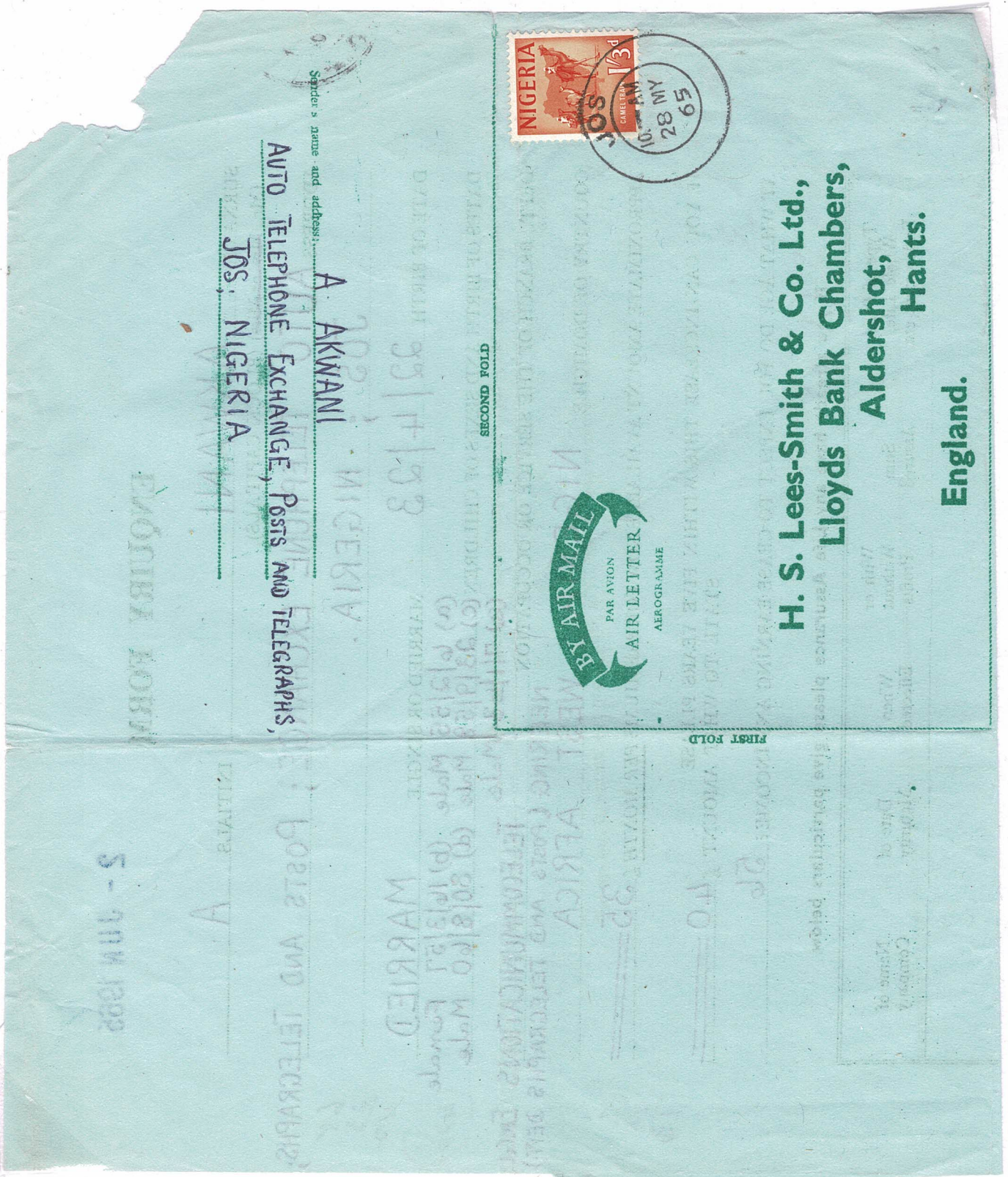
The 'APSLEY' Air Letter
A Dickinson Robinson Group Product

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An aerogramme that has the pre-printed address of a life insurance broker in Aldershot UK. The whole document is pre-printed inside and outside as an enquiry form to ask about the availability and cost of a life policy. This must have been printed in Britain and sent to many countries – it just happens that this one was returned from Jos, Nigeria.



An unused East Africa formula aerogramme with illustration of a secretary bird found its way to Nigeria and was used from Lagos to the UK in October 1972 with postage paid using a meter mark RN155. There is nothing on the cover or in the message to shown which firm that was. The sender was named Roberta McWilliams and she seems to be a school teacher, previously based in Israel and with no clear link to East Africa.

