

BRITISH WEST AFRICA STUDY CIRCLE 1970  
AIR LETTERS AND POSTAL STATIONERY OF THE GAMBIA

by Eric Lewis

who acknowledges the kind help given  
by various members of the Study Circle.

AIR LETTERS

Air Letters and Postal Stationery of the Gambia

The Gambia Handbook - Chapter 23 (Page 47) lists these and states:-

Air Letters were introduced in the Gambia 1949.

Imprinted 6d. (Design as SG 155 - in purple) white frame around the "stamp".

- GEORGE VI. 1949. 1st Issue - 4 continuous lines, and 3 on back for addresses.  
1950. 2nd Issue - 4 dotted lines and 3 on back for addresses.  
1951. 3rd Issue - somewhat similar but on a darker paper.

Variations of these have been noted, such as gummed flaps, and ungummed. Varying widths of the white frame space, from 33mm to 36mm. Some catalogues list 4 items in this way, two with Continuous lines for the addresses, two with dotted lines. The following information obtained from the Crown Agents Requisition Books (1921-1952) can now be added:-

Air Letters. 4 separate deliveries - but no dates mentioned, these were for 50,000; 50,000; 50,000; and 25,000.

The nearest date quoted to the 1st delivery is 27.10.1947 and the Gambia delivery follows this very closely.

The last delivery comes after a 1951 date (for Nigeria).

The first three deliveries are marked "gummed".

In addition to the K. G. VI. issues we can now add Q. E. II. and Independence Issues as follows:-

QUEEN ELIZABETH

1953. 6d. dark purple 'stamp' (as SG 177). No white frame, blue unwatermarked paper. 4 dotted address lines on front. 3 dotted lines for Senders address.

- 1956-1959 6d. as above, but quite different shade. "By Air Mail" in Scroll, "Aerogramme". 5 dotted lines on front. Instructions now printed on the reverse. Paper water-marked "AIR MAIL" with device above. There is a variation of this issue, unwatermarked, different spacing of the instructions, and, from arrow point to arrow point of "Second fold here", the measurement is increased from 35mm to 37mm.
- 1963-4 6d. Large head of Queen, Bright purple, Crown to top left of 'stamp', 6d. top right. "GAMBIA" at foot.
- 1965 (18th Feb.) Independence Commemorative Air Letter Sheet - this has no imprinted "Stamp" - but used with  $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. adhesive(s). "Gambia Independence", and coat of arms, in red, at bottom left corner "By Air Mail" etc. is in blue.
- 1966 (maybe earlier). Very similar to 1963-4 issue but value is  $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. Imprinted Large head of Queen, crown top left,  $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. to right and the inscription at foot "THE GAMBIA" (note THE) with, below, "INDEPENDENCE 1965" (light blue).
- 1966 (29th June). Claret coloured inscription and dotted lines. "Stamp", imprinted, has design of Coat of Arms. "THE GAMBIA" at top right.  $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. at bottom right.
- 1967 Very similar but "stamp" reads 8d. and the paper is a brighter blue.

Extract from Orders. H.Q. Military Forces. West Africa 26th September 1941.

2) AIR MAIL LETTER CARD SERVICE

With effect from 1st October, 1941 a rationed Air Mail Letter Card Service to the U.K. will be introduced. This service will extend to British and Allied personnel serving in all arms of H.M. Forces in the West African Command. All ranks will be allowed to send one letter-card once a fortnight, cards must bear a British 3d. Stamp.

6) PRIVATE MAILS

With effect from 22nd September, 1941, letters, postcards, and printed papers not exceeding 2ozs. in weight are exempt from postage. Exceeding 2ozs. at rate of  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. for 1st oz. and 1d. per oz. thereafter, calculated on full weight of packet. Registration Fee 3d. British postage stamps will be used and are obtainable from the Detachment of the Base Postal Sections at Area H.Q. Colonial Stamps will be used for Air Mail Letters to all places until further notice. (End of extract).

Service Air Letters

There are several types of Service Air Letters, with inscriptions varying from Air Mail Letter Card (with a blue frame line all round the front) to Air Letter (without frame line) - at least 6 varieties are known. Dates of use noted from 1942 to 1944, with British stamps to value of 3d, these are cancelled F.P.O. 109. This mark is with and without Code letter A.

Civilian Air Letters. 1944 (June 9th).

Air Letters accepted to Civilian addresses in Gambia. From the Gambia, an example, of Oct. 1944 bearing 6d. Gambia adhesive (SG 155) Cancelled Bathurst. Censor Mark. Greenish blue paper. Inscription reads "BY AIR MAIL. AIR LETTER. If anything is enclosed this letter will be sent by ordinary Mail". (In Black).

The usual "honour" envelopes, green on buff, were also used from the Gambia.

PRINTED STATIONERY. ENVELOPES

<u>SIZES.</u>	A. $3\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$ .	B. $4\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$ .		
<u>1911</u>	K.E.V11.	E.P. 1	1d. Carmine	A. B.
<u>1912</u>	KG.V.	E.P. 2	1d. Red	A. B.
		E.P. 3	1½d. Carmine	A. B. (1924)

The following information from the Crown Agents Requisition Books (1921-52) can now be added.

- ENVELOPES
1. 1½d. A. Court size. Red. 10,188 sent 5th Oct. 1922.  
New duties (i.e. New Issue).
  2. 1½d. (no size stated) 5,125 sent Jan. 1929.

REGISTERED ENVELOPES. F( $3\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ ). G( $3\frac{3}{4} \times 6''$ ). H(5 x 8"). K(6 x  $11\frac{1}{2}''$ ).

<u>1902</u>	KE7	RP1	2d BLUE	F. G. H.	
<u>1912</u>	KG5	RP2	2d BLUE	F. G. H.	
<u>1920</u>	KG5	RP3	4d BLUE	F. G. H.	
<u>1922</u>	KG5	RP4	4½d BLUE	F. G. H. K.	Surface printed Head in Oval
<u>1924</u>	KG5	RP5	4½d BLUE	F. G. H.	Embossed head in Circle
?	KG6	(De La Rue)	4½d BLUE		Embossed head facing to Right
?	QE2	(De La Rue)	5½d	✓	
?	QE2	(McCorquodale)	5½d	✓	(Darker)
?	<u>INDEPENDENCE.</u>	Official P. O. Issue - Without Value Stated.Coat of Arms on Flap.			

Notes:

RP1. Early issues had Greenish coloured lines and instructions.  
Later Blue.

RP2. With and without "PATENT" (De La Rue) under flap.

RP3. This item is recorded but I have not seen it.

QE2. The De La Rue has line REGISTERED and McCorquodale REGISTERED  
POST T POST

INDEPENDENCE. The P.O. Charged 7d. for this envelope.

Information from C. A. 's REQUISITION BOOKS (1921-52)

Registered Envelopes. 3 sizes despatched 5.10.1922. marked new duties.

- (1) 5216 (G) 5362 (H) 5080 (K)
- (2) 12,080 (G Size) despatched Mar. 1924. to design submitted 20.6.23.  
"to specimen A".
- (3) 5031 (H) despatched May 1925. 1st time H size. GPO Specimen.
- (4) After 1925 only G and H sizes are mentioned in deliveries.
- (5) K.G. 6 Regd. Envelopes G and H. 4½d. despatched 21.12.37.  
3,925 (G) 4250 (H). Specimens of G size provided. Both sizes  
sent to CA Records.

Post Cards size 3½ x 5½"

- 1880 QV. CP1 1½d. Grey  
(a) Thinner tinted Card.  
CP2 1½d. + 1½d. Grey. Reply Card.
- 1892 ✓ as above surcharged 1d. CP3  
1d + 1d CP4 Reply Card
- 1893 ✓ CP5 1d. Carmine  
CP6 1d + 1d Reply Card
- 1902 KE7 CP7 1d Carmine  
8 1d + 1d Reply Card
- 1912 KG5 CP9 1d Carmine  
10 1d + 1d Reply Card

Note: No deliveries of Post cards are mentioned in the CA Requisition  
BKs (1921-52).

SPECIMEN OVERPRINTS

These do not seem to be mentioned in Handbooks or Catalogues. The following have been reported to date.

<u>Envelopes</u>	EP1 (size A)	EP2 (size A)		
<u>Registered Envelopes</u>	RP1 (F)	RP2 (F)	RP4 (G)	
	RP5 (G. H.)	KG6 (G)		
<u>Post Cards</u>	CP2	CP5	CP6	CP7
	CP8	CP9	CP10.	

All these seem to be overprinted in large black seriffed capitals (about 90mm x 9mm) with the exception of CP2 (1880) which has very small overprint (15mm x 2½) and KG6. Redg. Envelope (1937/8) which has an unusual neat thin lettered SPECIMEN (sans serif) 41mm x 4.

The author would value any additional information and comments from members.