

Indian Army Postal History Second World War

1939-1947

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1. Introduction

During the Second World War 2, between 1939 and 1945, India underwent extraordinary and irreversible change. Indian soldiers had fought in a stunning range of places Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaya, Burma, Iraq, Iran, Syria, North and East Africa and Italy. The Indian army had raised trained and deployed some 2.5 million men. Even at the time it was recognized as the largest volunteer army in history. Nearly 90,000 of these men were killed or maimed. Many more millions of Indians were pulled into the vortex of the Second World War-as industrial, agricultural and military labour. India emerged as a major military-industrial and logistical base for allied operations in South East Asia and the Middle East, and the country was also among the largest wartime creditors of Britain.

(India's War-The Making of Modern South Asia, 1939-1945;Srinath Raghavan; Penguin books 2016)

The Indian Army Postal Service during the Second World War.

Our record of proper Field Post Offices begins with the Persian Expeditionary Force of 1856-58. When the Second World War loomed on the horizon, the mobilization plan of the Army included a number of field and base post offices. The responsibility for the quick mobilization of the postal units rested with the Director General, Post and Telegraphs. He was entrusted with the duty of liaising with Army HQ.

Though the P&T Department transferred its responsibilities for the mobilization, administration and supervision of army post offices to the Army Postal Directorate in 1942, the War Branch of the DG P&T continued throughout the war, maintain active liaison with the Army authorities to further the prospects and well-being of its field service deputationists. The department granted various concessions to APS personnel to encourage recruitment and to reward field service.

Indian Army Postal Services travelled with the Indian Army thru Second World War in places such as Abyssinia, Bahrain, Burma, Ceylon, Cocos Island, Cyprus, Dodecanese Islands, Dutch East Indies, Egypt, Eritrea, Greece, Hong Kong, Indo-China, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaya, Maldives, North Borneo, Palestine, Persia, Siam, Singapore Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Kingdom and even Andamans

(Indian Army Post Offices in the Second World War; Brig D.S. Virk; The Army Postal Service Association 1982)

2. Plan

This exhibit attempts to showcase the widespread deployment, locations of the Indian Army Post Offices and the Indian Forces during the Second World War from 1939 to 1947. The study showcases locations in **Burma, Ceylon, China, Cyprus, DEI Java & Sumatra, Eritrea, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Indo-Chine, Iraq, Italy, Lebanon, Malaya, Palestine, Persia, Singapore, Sudan, Syria and Great Britain.** The study does not include rates, censor marks or postal routes.

A tribute to all the personnel who were part of the Second World War. In gratitude to those who fortunately returned and the others who fell in the War. Each one along with their unsung families, not to be forgotten for their sacrifices.

**“When you go home, tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow, we gave our today.”**

John Maxwell Edmonds

credited with authorship of a famous epitaph in the War Cemetery in Kohima

3. The Second World War
1939-1945
Axis vs Allied Powers



Map source
:https://www.mapsofworld.com

4. The War deployment of Indian Army Postal Service during Second World War

The Middle East- Egypt and Neighbouring countries

The nerve centre of all the FPOs under this theatre was the **No 1 Base Post Office** in **Cairo**. A postal Tracing Unit assisted the Base Post Office in redirecting mail for personnel whose mail could not be delivered because of battle casualties, sickness or other reasons. The Base Post Office moved from Cairo to **Fayid** in the canal Zone and the last postal detachment left Egypt in September 1947.

The Middle East- Sudan, Eritrea and Abyssinia

The FPO s in this theatre of war were aligned with **No 2 Section Base Post office** which was located at **Khartoum**. In 1943 the Base Post Office in Khartoum was replaced by an FPO.

Persia and Iraq Forces

C Base Post Office was started at **Basra** in May 1941, In November 1941, **Advanced Base Post Office No 7** was opened at **Baghdad**, **Section Base Office** at **Ahwaz** later shifting to **Shaibah** in 1943. All the FPO s along the line of communication were attached to them.

Italy and Greece

The FPO s in Italy in 1943 remained attached to the **Indian Post Office** in **Cairo** for mail and accounting purposes. The Section Base Post Office was shifted to **Naples** from **Bari** in may 1944. It was then designated as a Base Post Office. They wound up operations in 1946

The War deployment of Indian Army Postal Service during Second World War (continued)

United Kingdom

A combined FPO-Section Base Post Office was included to receive Indian Prisoners of War from Germany. It was opened at **Thetford** in July 1944

Malaya and Burma

Two Section Base Postal Offices No **3 and 4** reached **Malaya** in January in 1941. The section at **Singapore** was raised to a **Base Post Office** and at **Penang** a **Branch office**, No **5** Base post office was at **Rangoon**

Assam, Bengal and Burma

Section Base Post office **No 6** was sent to **Manipur Road** in April 1942 to support FPOs in Assam section. **No 12** started functioning in **Calcutta** in July 1942 for the Bengal FPOs. In 1942-43 the Section Base Post Office at Manipur road was reorganised as **Advanced Base Post Office** and shifted to **Guwahati**. Sections were opened at Chittagong, Imphal, ledo and Manipur Road to support FPOs in forward areas in 1944. The mail was sorted centrally at the **South East Asia Base Post Office, Calcutta**. The three forward Base Post Offices at Chittagong, Guwahati and Imphal were converted into line of communication postal units

The War deployment of Indian Army Postal Service during Second World War

Ceylon

Base Post Office No 9 reached Ceylon in May 1942

Japan

British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan was supported by a **Base Post Office** at **Kure**

Indian Base

The administration load was shared between the Director General (Posts and Telegraphs) and the Army HQ. The traffic was handled by the **two Base Postal Depots, Bombay and Karachi.**

(**Indian Army Post Offices Locations and Movements 1939-1947**, Brig D S Virk, *The Forces Postal History*)

5. Indian Base Post Offices of the Second World War

No 1 Base Post Office

The cover was posted from **BPO 1 at Cairo, Egypt** in April, 1941 to England; 4*10 mills Army Post Egypt stamps affixed. It bears a boxed **Opened By Unit Censor** in violet



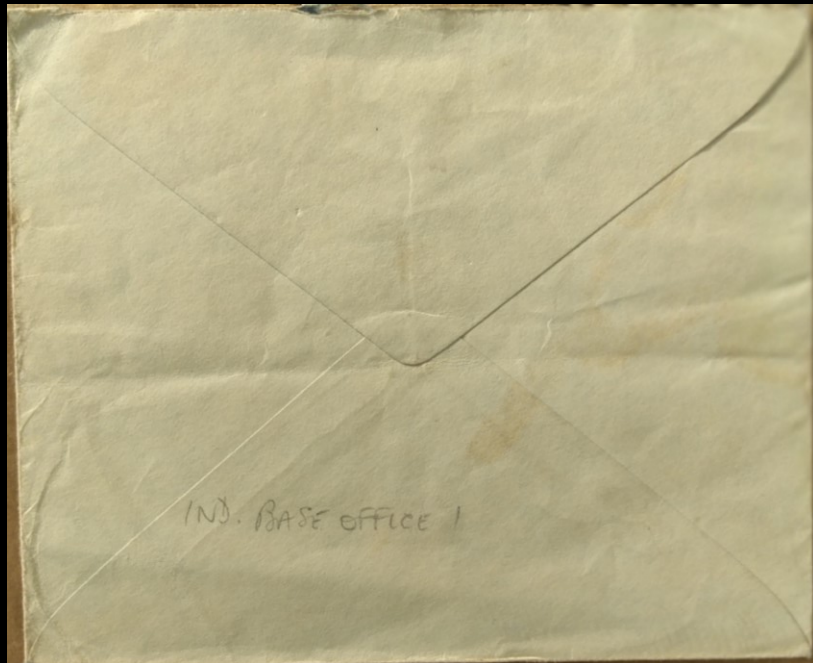
This type BPO 1 datestamp was seen between 18th March 1941 and 23rd November 1944. (E B Proud)

The Indian Section BPO arrived in Cairo under w/o RMM Maya Ram and opened in December 1939. Subedar Raj Rup Lal arrived in July 1940 and reorganised and smoothened the mail operations. In August 1940, another Section BPO was raised for "Niblick Force" they were then numbered 1 and 2 in September 1940. Redesignated No 1 Base PO in February 1942

During 1941-42, the strength of the Indian Forces in MEF increased and the Section Base PO designed to serve one division had to serve four. The Indian Post and Telegraph staff stretched themselves, each man did the work of four!!

This Base Post Office worked on the lines of the Head Post Office, providing counter facilities to the base units, replace casualties in the Base and Field Post Offices and establish additional FPO s where necessary.

Major S A Siddiqi arrived in the first quarter of 1941 as the Indian DADAPS. He was to organise mail arrangements to sort out problems regarding currency and fixation of postage rates and to plan the postal set up for the activities that loomed ahead. He organised the Indian Section in the Middle East Postal Directorate and assumed his duties as adviser on Indian postal matters and controller of Indian Postal Units





No 1 Base Post Office

The Registered cover was posted from **British FPO 123** on 23rd September, 1943 to Ootacamund. **Interestingly a combination of both Indian and Great Britain stamps used to post at the British FPO; India; 2*1/2 as, 2*1, 1/2 as, 3 as India King George VI and 7p King George V, Great Britain; stamps affixed.** The cover then transited thru British Base Army Post Office C, then the IND BPO R (Indian Base Post Office) on 24th September 1943 and reaches its final destination at Ootacamund

It bears the black Deputy Chief Field Censor handstamp and the black octagonal Passed steel stamp with DHD/5 (Madras) which was supplied to the stations in India in March 1942.

This type BPO 1 datestamp was seen between 29th January 1941 and 26th January 1944. (E B Proud)

In the peak period of April 1943 to March 1944 over 100 postal workers were employed in Base PO under command of a Captain and they handled record traffic including 3,000,000 registered articles, Rs 6,500,000 worth of money orders and postal orders and Rs 1,000,000 worth of postage stamps

This Base Post Office worked on the lines of the Head Post Office, providing counter facilities to the base units, replace casualties in the Base and Field Post Offices and establish additional FPO s where necessary. It was finally closed in January 1947



Post much deliberation and resistance from various stakeholders, the British authorities later extended to cover the usage of the postage stamps of all Dominions whose forces were serving in PAI Force or the Middle East.

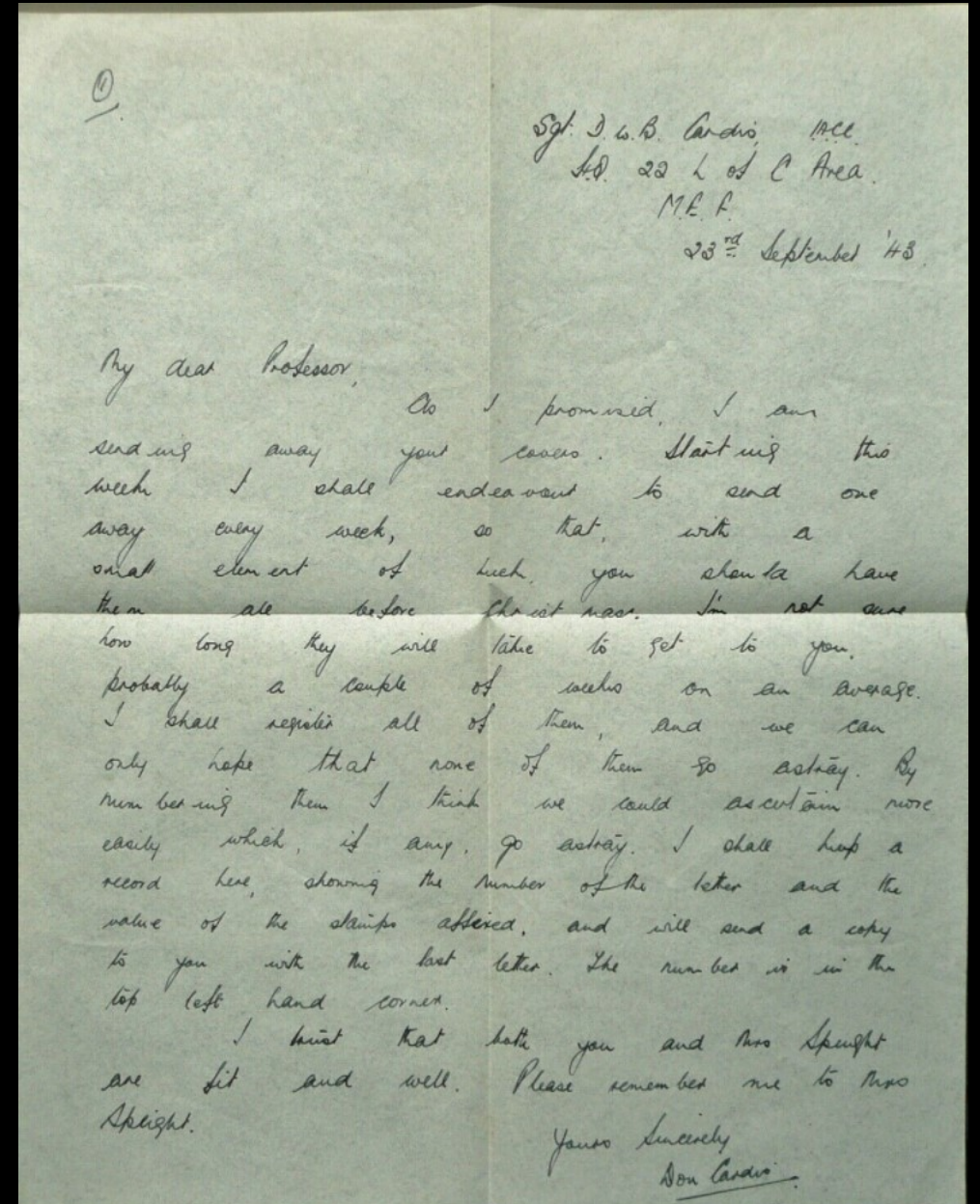
(Brig DS Virk)

Thus the cover stamped with a combination of Indian and British stamps was posted at a British FPO, transited thru British Base PO carried thru by the Indian Base PO and reached its destination in India.

It seems the Professor (to whom the letter has been addressed to) is a philatelist.

Excerpts from the letter “as promised I am sending over your covers, starting this week I shall endeavour to send one away every week, so with a small amount of luck you should have them all before Christmas.....I shall register all of them...by numbering them I think we could ascertain more easily which if any go astray.....I shall keep a record here showing the number of the letter and will send a copy to you with the last letter....the number is in the top left hand corner,”

Incidentally the number for this letter is 1.





No 2 Base Post Office

The cover was posted from **BPO 2 at Khartoum (old war office building), Sudan** on 6th March, 1941 to Trichinopoly, India (recd. 12th March 1941) with the delivery cachet Buy Defence Savings Certificate; 5 millimes Sudan stamp with an overprint of 4 ½ Piastres (black olive brown)



This BPO2 postmark was seen between 12th November 1940 and 21st March 1945. (E B Proud)

It bears a Triangle Passed By Censor with a crown inside No 1610 and a faint Egyptian oval Deputy Chief Censor all in violet



Initially the No 2 BPO part of “Niblick Force” was sent by mistake to Egypt and reached Khartoum only by end of October and started functioning from 2nd November 1940. Indian stamps were brought into use in December 1940, for all purpose except airmail. The FPOs prior to arrival of No 2 BPO were functioning only as postal agencies of Sudan PO and were selling Sudanese stamps and the outgoing mail was being sent by rail or river route to BPO in Cairo



No 2 Base Post Office;

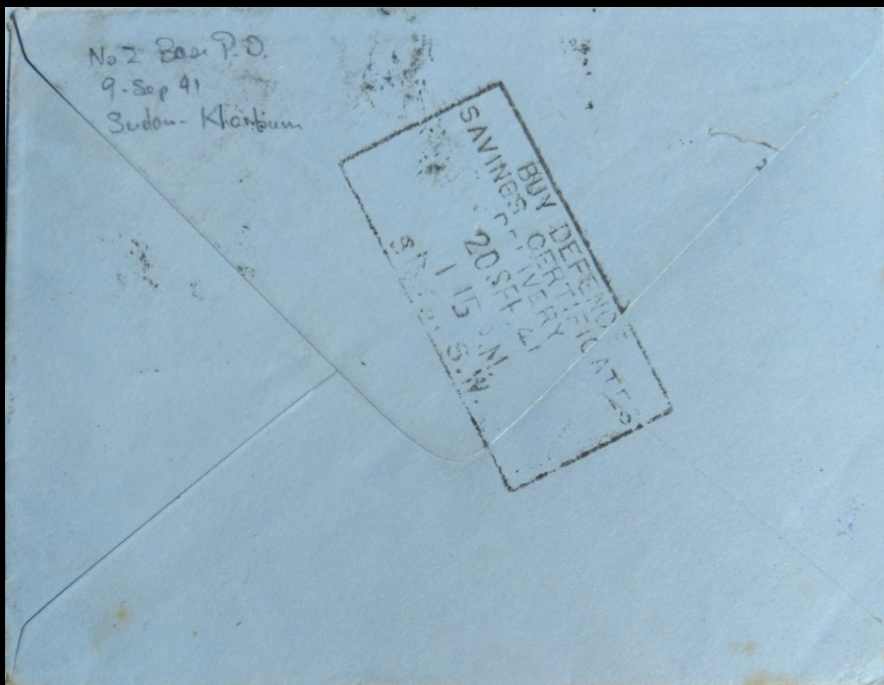
The cover was posted from **BPO 2 at Khartoum (old war office building), Sudan** on 3rd September, 1941 to **Major General (Later Lt Gen) F Gwatkin** Military Adviser- The Indian State Forces. He was based out of Political Secretariat at **Simla, India** (recd. 20th September 1941) with the delivery cachet Buy Defence Savings Certificate.

This BPO2 postmark was seen between 16th November 1940 and 2nd February 1942. (E B Proud) In March 1941 onwards Indian stamps were sanctioned even for Airmail

It bears a Triangle Passed By Censor with a crown inside No 162 in violet

Forces from princely Indian states were not only used for releasing units of the regular army for overseas duties but were themselves deployed abroad. By Aug 1941, 17 units of princely states were serving in Egypt, East Africa, Iraq and Malaya. The King of Nepal also loaned 8 battalions.

(India's War-The Making of Modern South Asia, 1939-1945; Srinath Raghavan; Penguin books 2016)





No 2 Base Post Office and 2nd Echelon Postal Unit

This cover has been posted from Camp D'Internment Militaire, Bornhausen, Eschenz , Switzerland by Major JAG Carmichael from RAMC addressed to Lt Col G S N Hughes, IAMC c/o 2nd Echelon (Indian) MEF. It has been received at British Base Army Post Office on 24th June 1944; 2nd Echelon Postal Unit on 27th June 1944; **No 2 Base Office on 30th June 1944** at Bari /Naples. It also bears Base Post No 1 at Mena Camp, Egypt and the Switzerland and Indian FPO datestamp

No 2 Base Post Office was recorded at **Bari** between 27th February 1944 and 17th May 1944 and at **Naples** between 16th August 1944 to 20th February 1946. (Brig D S Virk)

No 2 Base Post Office and 2nd Echelon Postal Unit (continued)

The cover bears a Geoffnet strip (Germany), Opened By Censor at Berlin as signified by the lowercase b below the eagle perched on the Swastika (Reichsadler), the Egyptian Censorship and Examined By Base Censor (Indian)

It bears two red circular German censor handstamp on the Geoffnet strip at Berlin as signified by the lowercase b below the eagle perched on the Swastika (Reichsadler); small and the large handstamp of the British Deputy Chief Field Censor in violet; 2 black small handstamp of the Egyptian censor on the Egyptian censor strip and a large violet Egyptian Postal Censor 53.

It bears the chop no 14 in a box; 580 and 310

As per the rule the Army Postal Service was to deliver mail to the unit to which it was addressed. If an addressee was not present with the unit and his address was not known, his mail was to be sent to Headquarters 2nd Echelon, where complete and upto date records were available of all units and individual movements.. Mail which could not be traced even in the 2nd Echelon, was to be sent back to the Base Postal Depot for return to the senders. It did not work out that way in Middle East Forces (MEF), as the 2nd Echelon required postal assistance almost from the day that the first battle casualties came in.

By march 1943 the volume of undelivered mail had increased to a point where the 2nd Echelon gave up all tracing responsibility and the Postal Tracing Section of the Base PO took over control of this tedious but very important duty. The section was permitted to maintain its own records, in addition to being given full access to the records of the 2nd Echelon .

On this cover, apart from the 2nd Echelon Postal Unit datestamp on 27th June 1944, we also see the **No 2 Base Office datestamp on 30th June 1944** at Bari /Naples. It also bears Base Post No 1 at Mena Camp, Egypt.

During April 1944-March 1945 when no battles were being fought with the enemy and there was no abnormal movements, the unit dealt with over 1 lakh undelivered items of mail (Brig DS Virk)

No 2 Base Post Office and 2nd Echelon Postal Unit (continued)

Switzerland remained neutral during two world wars, it often comes as a surprise that it actually interned prisoners of war from all sides. German, French, British, American, Russian, Polish, and Italian. These internments were perceived as a humanitarian gesture by a strategically important neutral nation but it helped the Swiss hotel industry which were converted to internment camps as the accommodation was paid by the government of the internees. (<https://www.global-geneva.com/switzerlands-prisoners-of-war-during-two-world-wars-and-beyond/>)

Switzerland was economically dependent on Germany and totally surrounded by Axis-controlled nations. In its defense, the wartime Swiss government explained to the Allied powers that it was the unwilling prisoner of geography. After the occupation of Vichy France in November 1942, Axis powers surrounded the country; the closest free nation was more than 1,000 miles away. Fearing reprisals or violations of its territorial integrity, the Swiss government permitted the *Luftwaffe* to set up a rest facility for its pilots at a fashionable hotel in Davos, a sylvan mountain resort. Distressed German fighter planes were also permitted to land at the same Swiss air bases that regularly fired on incoming Allied aircraft.

<https://www.historynet.com/pow-hell-switzerland.htm>

Europe in 1941

Switzerland surrounded by Axis Nations and Nations under Axis control



(Map source: https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/Map_8.1_Europe_ME_1941.jpg)

No 2 Base Post Office and 2nd Echelon Postal Unit (continued)

In September 1943 the British Government had agreed through their Minister in Berne to the Swiss Government exercising some measure of military control over British escapers. A 'gentleman's agreement' on this point was understood between HM Minister at Berne and the Swiss Foreign Minister, and the Swiss thereafter admitted any British escapers who crossed their frontiers. In December the Swiss Government issued regulations for the control of escapers which, in the British view, were more appropriate for military internees than for escapers, the main point of difference being the presence of armed Swiss troops in the escapers' billeting areas to enforce obedience to Swiss regulations. In spite of many representations by the British Minister and the British military attaché in Berne, the regulations were never modified, though they were in practice somewhat relaxed. The result was a confusion in the minds of almost all the Swiss officers concerned between an escaper and an internee, and a good deal of irritation and resentment among escapers. It is clear, however, that the geographical position of Switzerland placed her in a most difficult situation, and it is by no means certain that her action in maintaining severe control on paper and leaving it to the discretion of the Swiss officer on the spot to relax it may not have been the most neutral action and in the best interests of all concerned

<https://www.historynet.com/pow-hell-switzerland.htm>

While this cover was posted, the Allied landing and invasion began at Normandy on 6 June 1944 as part of Operation Overlord during World War II. It was Codenamed Operation Neptune often referred to as D-Day, it was the largest seaborne and associated airborne invasion in history. The Allies landed 2,052,299 men in northern France between 6th June to 21st August 1944

No 2 Base Post Office and 2nd Echelon Postal Unit (continued) letter written and posted by Major JAG Carmichael (RAMC) from the Internment Camp, Switzerland to Lt Col GSN Hughes (IAMC)

J A G CARMICHAEL

CB, FRCP

With James Carmichael's grandfather and father both doctors, perhaps medicine was an easy choice. One of the youngest doctors ever to graduate from Guy's Hospital, James (often Hamish) joined the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was posted to India and during the second world war served in Iraq and north Africa, where he was captured by the Italians and imprisoned. He escaped as Italy surrendered to the allies in 1943 and had an adventurous flight to Switzerland, where he was interned until the end of the war. Subsequently he held appointments at Millbank, Austria, Singapore, Egypt, Aldershot, and then Millbank again, where he was professor of tropical medicine. Tragically, he had a myocardial infarct, and his military career—so clearly destined for the highest ranks—crashed. He was retired as a full colonel and embarked on a new career in the civil service, working in Blackpool, Leeds, and then London, where he retired in 1978 and was made a Companion of the Bath.

Retirement should have meant halcyon days of gardening, reading, watching birds and televised sport, enjoying family and friends, listening to music—but his wife, Nina, died in 1981, which broke his heart. He was incomplete without her—a weakness, perhaps, but a reflection of his love for her. In 1988 he moved to Harrogate to be near his two sons, and some of his old liveliness returned. He adored his four grandchildren. Touchy, argumentative, warm hearted, emotional, convivial, self reliant, unimaginative, stubborn, appreciative, conservative, determined, loyal, generous—he had a remarkable life and made lasting friends wherever he went.—RC.

James Armstrong Gordon Carmichael, who worked in the Department of Health and Social Security 1958-78, latterly as chief medical adviser (social security), died 28 January aged 76. Born Manchester, 28 July 1913; educated Epsom College, Guy's Hospital (MRCS, LRCP, 1935). Previously served in Royal Army Medical Corps, retiring as colonel.



J A G Carmichael

G. S. N. HUGHES, D.S.O., L.M.S.S.A.

Colonel G. S. N. Hughes, formerly an officer in the Indian Medical Service, and, at the time of his death, a general practitioner in South Wales, died at Trawscoed, Cardiganshire, on May 30.

George Sidney Norman Hughes was born on October 6, 1907, and received his professional training at St. Mary's Hospital, qualifying L.M.S.S.A. in 1932. In the following year he entered the Indian Medical Service, in which he served until 1947. In India he soon showed his administrative ability, particularly in the planning and equipment of hospitals. During the second world war he served in various theatres, and in 1943 was awarded the D.S.O. for gallant and distinguished services in the Middle East, having been previously mentioned in dispatches. Later he was awarded the American Silver Star for gallantry at Cassino, in Italy. After the war he spent 18 months in Japan and Korea, and then returned to India, where he remained until the Indian Medical Service was disbanded in 1947. During the Suez crisis in 1956 he was recalled to take command of the 5th General Hospital, with the rank of colonel in the Army Medical Services.

Administration and Army methods had become a habit with him by the time he retired from the Indian Medical Service, but 10 years ago he settled down in general practice in his home country, first at Trawscoed, Cardiganshire, and then in the Gwendraeth valley. He never failed his patients, and as a routine would always follow closely behind the ambulance taking a seriously ill patient to hospital. To him the British Légion was a sacred mission, and he was ever ready to fight for what he considered to be the rights of ex-Service men. He was a former president of the Carmarthenshire branch of the Legion. He had a wide general knowledge of the world and its affairs and he was a fine artist. He lived every one of his 51 years to the hilt. His infectious spirit of dedicated service in the cause of others will remain to inspire his successors. His two sons are following a military career.

George Sidney
Norman Hughes

Service Number:
MZ12123

Duty Location:

Middle East
(including Egypt,
East Africa,
Western Desert,
Sudan, Greece,
Crete, Syria &
Tobruk)



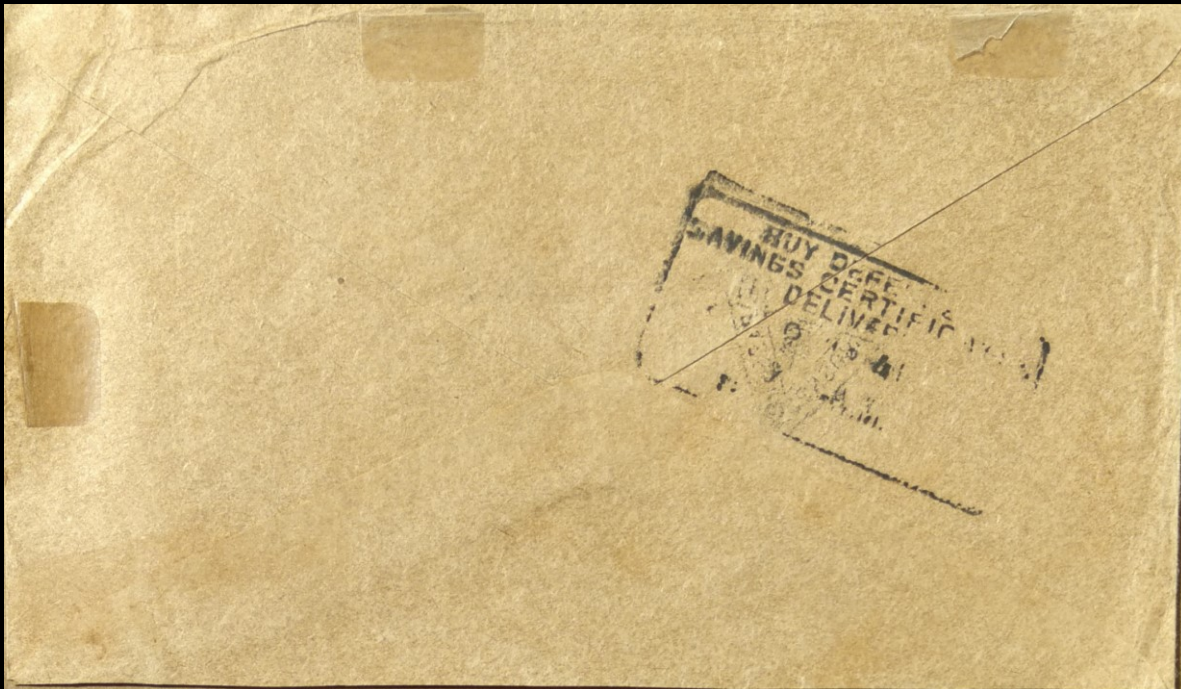
C-Base Post Office ;

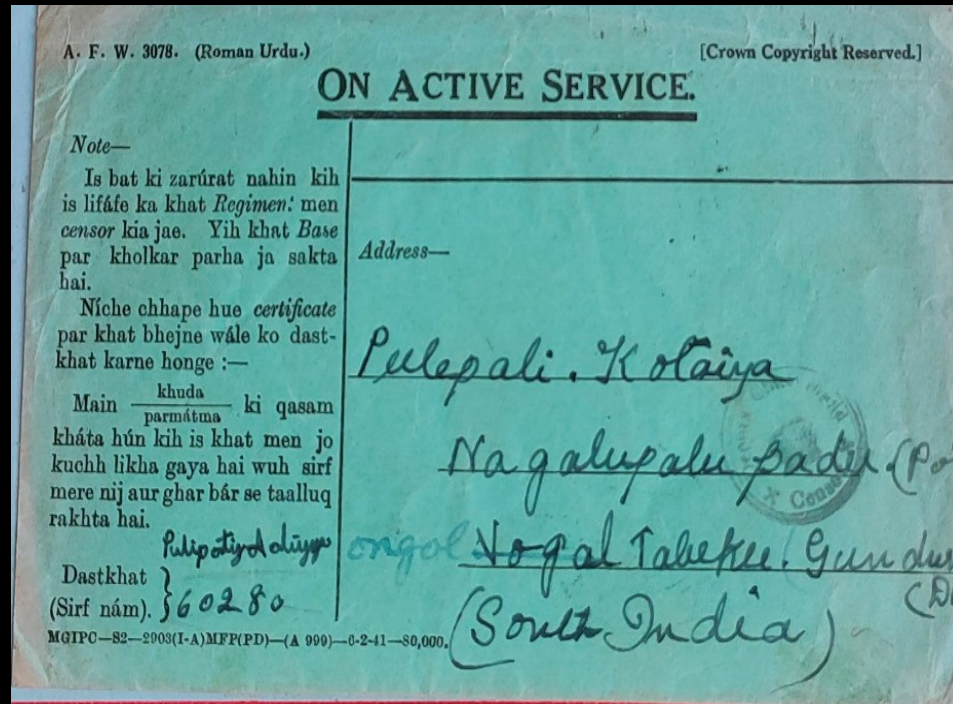
This cover was posted from **C-BASE POST OFFICE** at **Basra Ashar, Iraq** on 30th June 1941 to **Bareilly, India**. It bears the Deputy Censor Chief handstamp

An Indian letter censor officer of the unit has censored the letter with his signature and has handwritten - Censored and Unit Censor. No hand stamp has been used to signify the same.

It bears the Black Triangle Passed by Censor marked indicating to the postal authorities that it was already censored and should not be presented again at any point along the route. The station code on the Black Triangle B indicates as Karachi and 4 is the chop mark of the censor.

The **Jat Regiment** fought extensively in all the theatres of war and is one of the longest-serving and most-decorated regiments. The 10th Battalion of the 9th Jat Regiment was a training Battalion based at the Regimental Centre, Bareilly thru the Second World War. 20



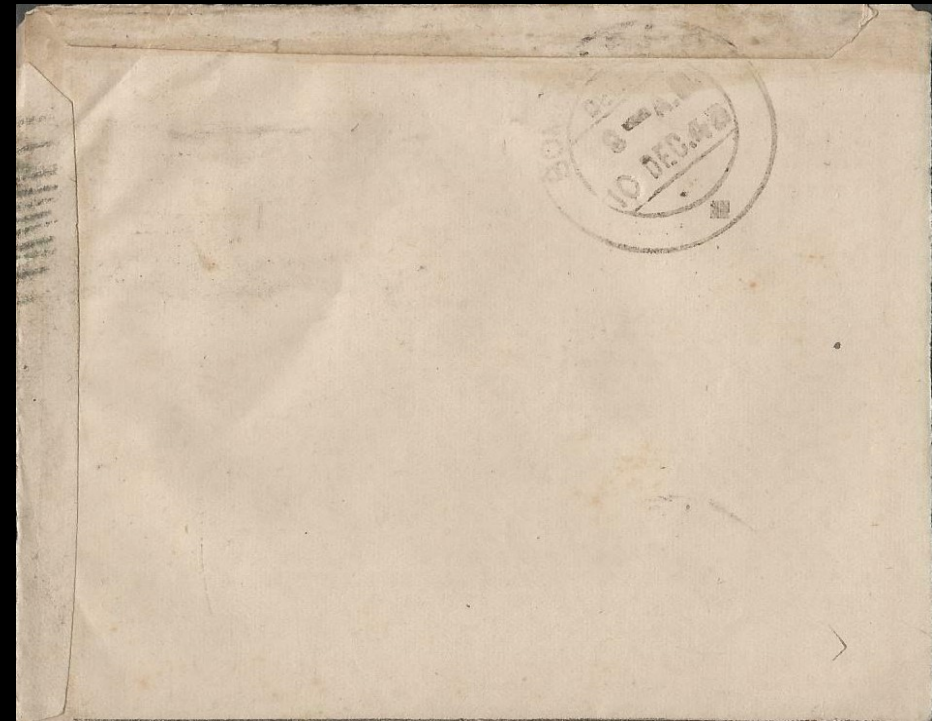
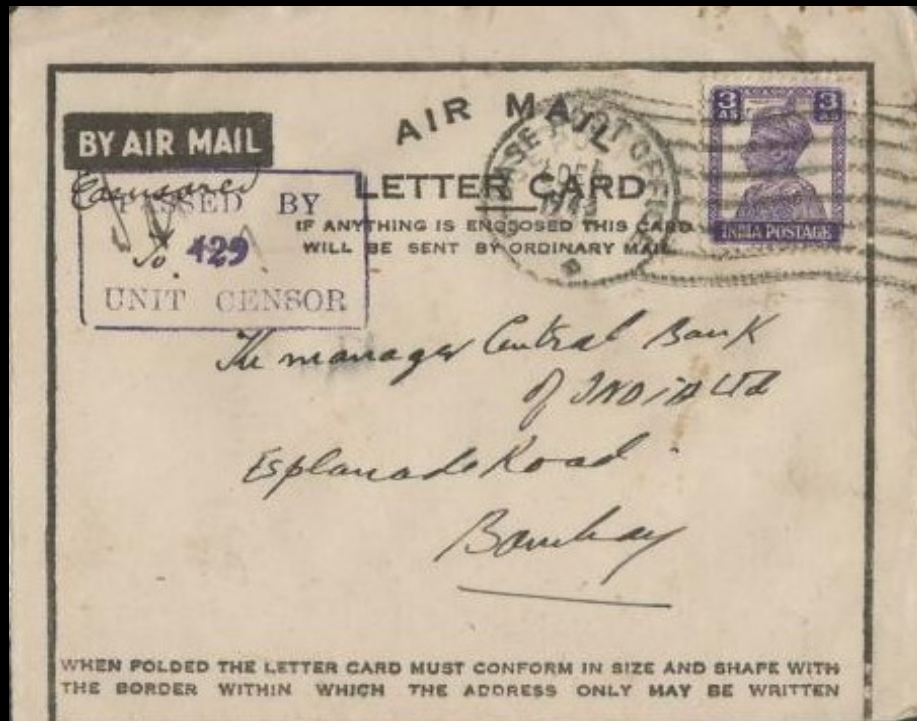


C-Base Post Office ;

This Green/Honour Envelope (Roman Urdu) was posted from **C-BASE POST OFFICE** at **Basra Ashar, Iraq** on 1st August 1941 to **Guntur, India**, It was received at its destination on 21st August 1941. It bears the Deputy Censor Chief handstamp

The **C-BASE POST OFFICE** sailed aboard SS Varela from Karachi, India on 4th May 1941.

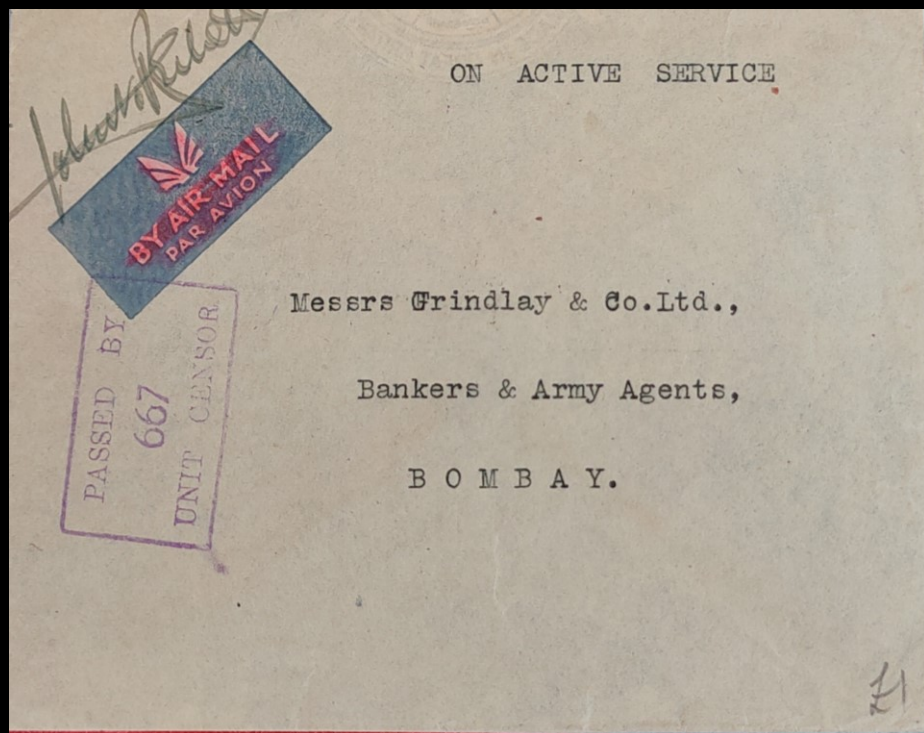
This Honour Envelope was printed on 6 February 1941 and 80,000 were printed. The template of this Honour Envelope was based on the a version seen during the First World War



C-Base Post Office

This Air Mail Letter Card was posted from **C-BASE POST OFFICE** at **Basra-Margil, Iraq** on 6th December 1943 to **Bombay, India**, It was received at its destination on 10th December 1943

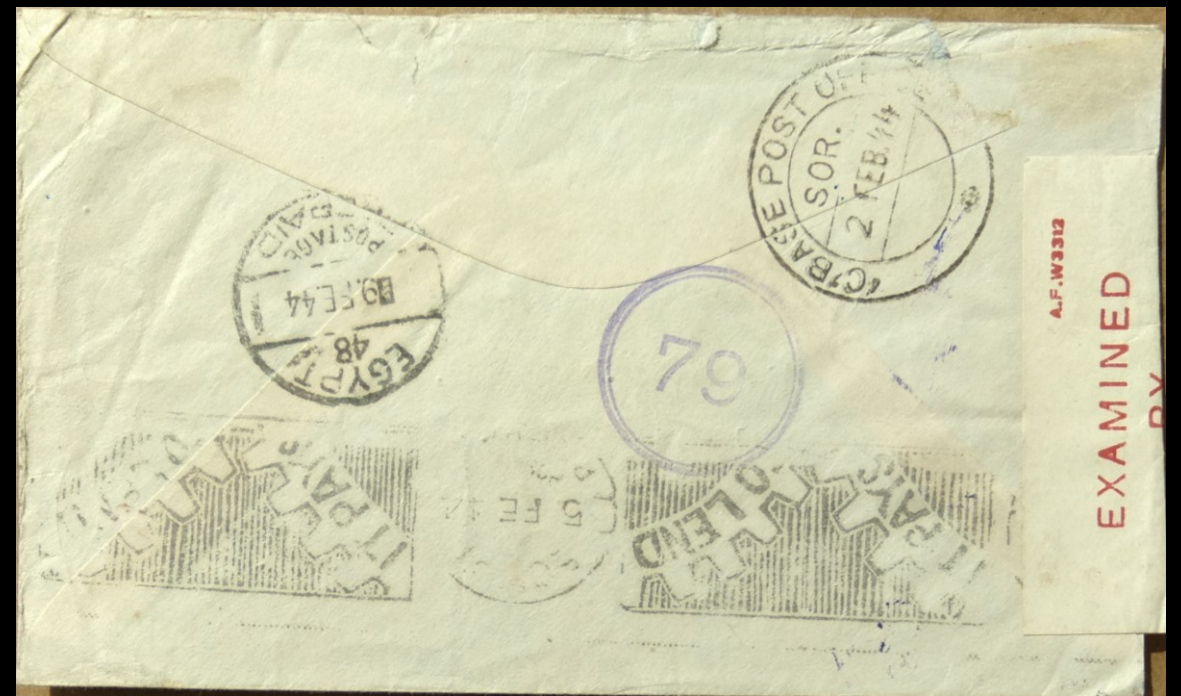
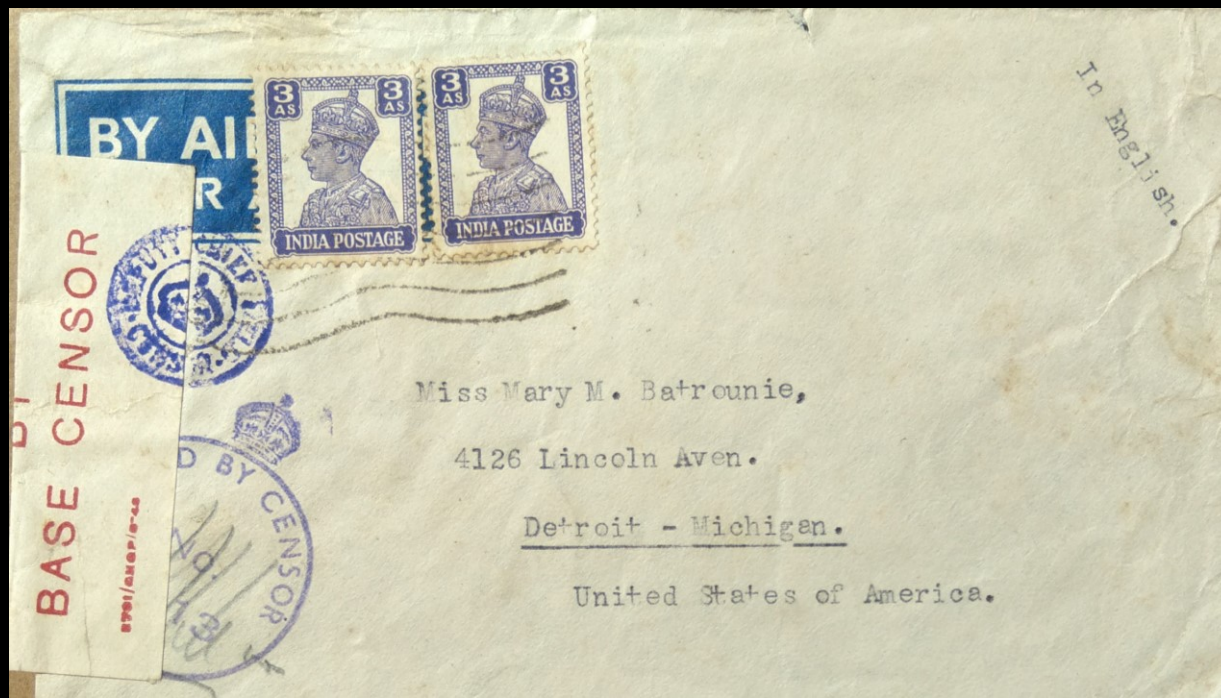
It bears a boxed Passed By Unit Censor 429



C- Base Post Office

This stampless cover was posted from **C-BASE POST OFFICE** at **Basra Margil, Iraq** on 27th April 1943 to **Bombay, India**. It was received at its destination on 15th May 1943. It seems to bear a partial transit **Base Postal Depot Bombay** dated 14th May

It bears a boxed Passed By Unit Censor 4667



C-Base Post Office

This cover bears the C BASE Post Office at Basra Margil on 2nd February 1944, Egypt 48 Postage Prepaid and Benians type Egypt VI EPP **IT PAYS TO LEND** slogan cancel dated 5 February 1944 (earliest recorded date of use: Mar 10, 1943); 2*3as India KGVI stamps affixed and tied with a comet shaped datestamp. The destination for the cover is United States Of America.

The cover has the circular Passed By Censor with a crown covered by the Examined By Base Censor strip and the Deputy Chief Censor stamp, 79 in a circle all in violet



No. 6 ABPO;

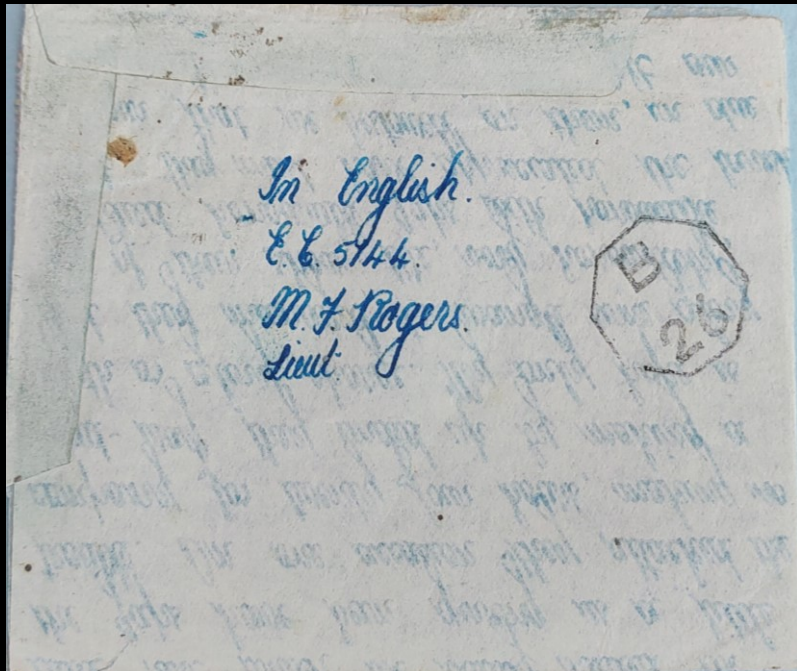
This Air Mail Letter Card was posted from 6ABPO at Guwahati, India on 28th May 1944 to England.

The writer is Lt Rogers from 4th Battalion Burma regiment which was under India Command. The letter has been written on 7th May 1944. Interesting information shared by the sender “quite a lot of our mail has been lost in the jungle recently because pilots have had to lighter their planes because of engine troubles during bad weather”

The battalion company is getting some rest “as Japs on one occasion attacked their company for 24 hrs, making no headway, they ended up making a death or glory charge.” During this period the battalion was in the middle of the battlefield around Fort Hertz and was part of Operation Bamboo. Battalion Headquarters on the north side of the Tiang Hka, Burma

It bears the circular Unit Censor in violet colour and an octagonal B26. Smaller octagonal steel stamps with a single letter (B=Karachi) and a number were provided post March 1942 to be used on unopened mail. (E B Proud)

In the days of air craft shortage air mail did not always get priority of airlift over other traffic, it was after a great struggle that light weight air mail (air letter, air graphs, telegrams) was accorded top Priority 1, while remaining air mail followed in Priority 3 (Brig D S Virk)



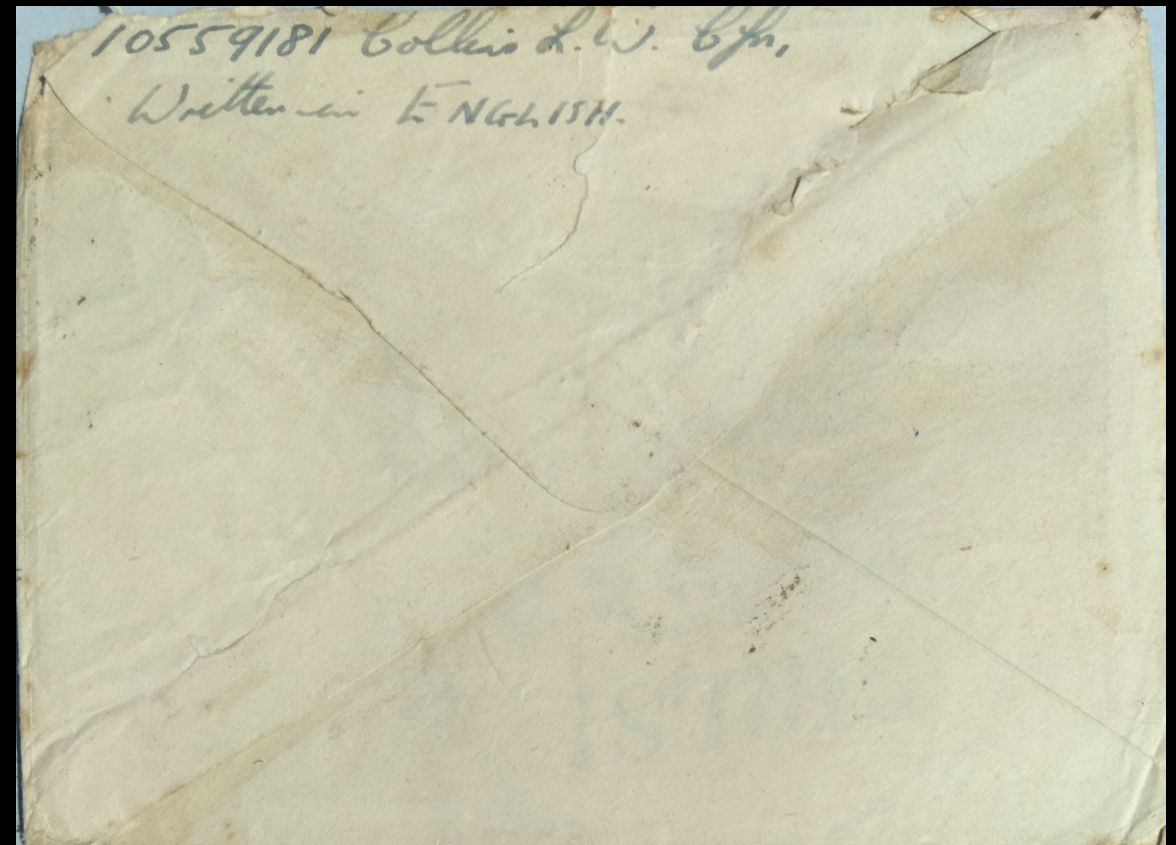
4th Battalion Burma Regiment.

Lt. Colonel Perry, the Battalion Commander, was evacuated due to sickness to Tingpai and then to India on 28th May 1944 , ready to be flown out to India. It was around this time that Major Scott returned from India to find the Battalion in a serious situation due to the spread of typhus.

In addition to the Commanding Officer, Lt. Colonel Perry, the Second in Command, Major Thunder, a company commander, Major G.F. Kinnear, the Adjutant, the Intelligence Officer and several senior Governor's Commissioned Officers had been or were about to be evacuated to India. Another company commander, Major Fetherstonhaugh, had been killed in action earlier. The assaults against the Japanese at Tiang Zup had all been without success and at some cost.

The 4th Battalion had entered the campaign on 9th November 1943 with around 950 men and had received more than 200 reinforcements subsequently. However for the final attack on Maingna on 3rd Aug 1944 it could muster only 149 men, the rest having been lost along the way as battle casualties or due to sickness. During the advance south the wounded and sick were evacuated back up the road, being treated at field hospitals built along the way and the more serious casualties being evacuated to India by air from an airstrip at Tingpai. After the fall of Myitkyina a light aircraft strip was prepared at Mankrin and many sick and wounded were flown from here down to Myitkyina by a friendly American pilot

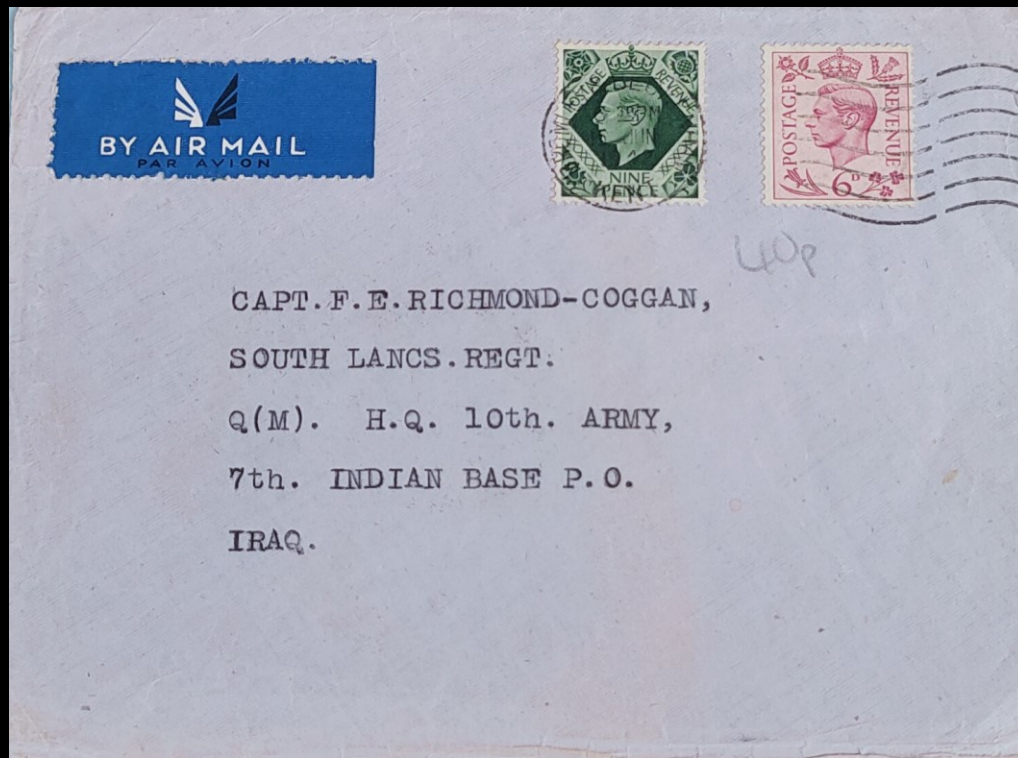
Burma regiment composed of Gurkha and Kumauni soldiers and the Regimental centre was at Hoshiarpur, India



No. 6 ABPO

This Honour Envelope was posted from **6ABPO** at **Guwahati**, India on 7th June 1944 to **England**; 2*4 as India KGVII affixed. It bears the circular Unit Censor A278 and triangle Field Censor 193 inside both in violet colour.

6 ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 17th August 1946 (E B Proud)

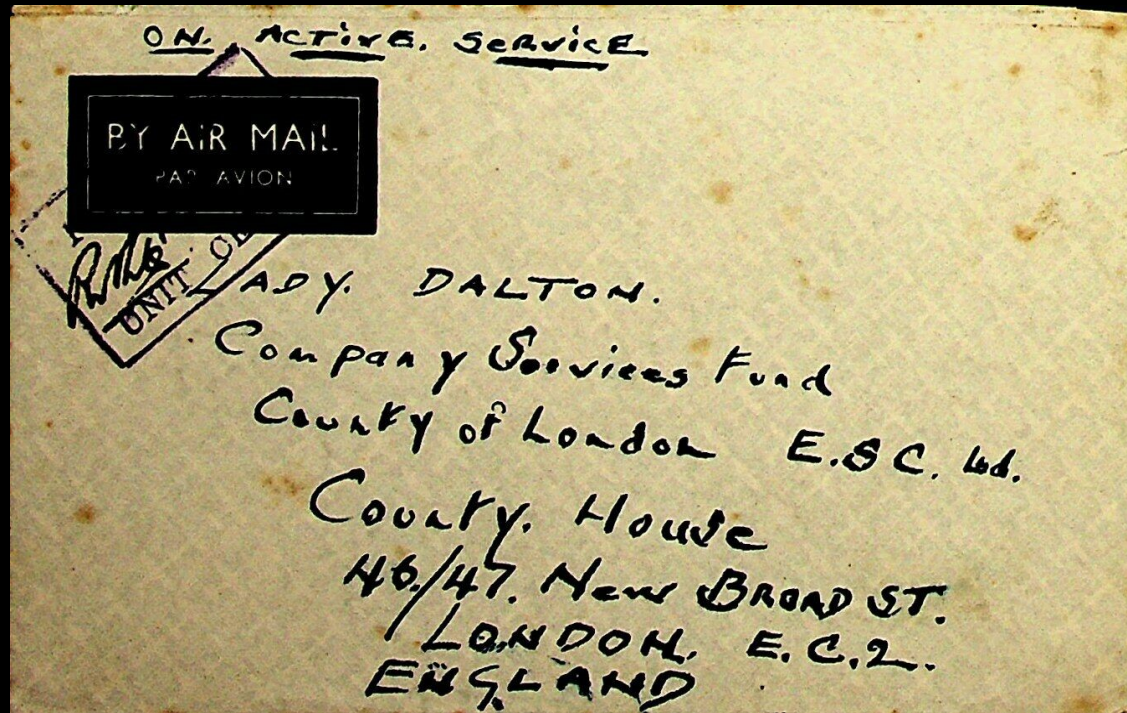


No. 7 ABPO

This cover was posted from Kent, England on 15th June 1942 to **England** addressed to **Capt F E Richmond, South Lancs Regt, HQ 10th Army, location came under 7th ABPO which was at Baghdad, Iraq**; 9p and 6d GB KG VI stamps affixed

In January 1942 the Iraq Force was placed under the command of GHQ Middle East and in February it was known as 10th Army.

7 ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 21st June 1946 (E B Proud)



No. 7 ABPO;

This stampless cover was posted from **7 ABPO** at **Baghdad, Iraq** on 21st September 1943 to **England**

It bears a boxed Passed by Unit Censor 762

7 ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 21st June 1946 (E B Proud)

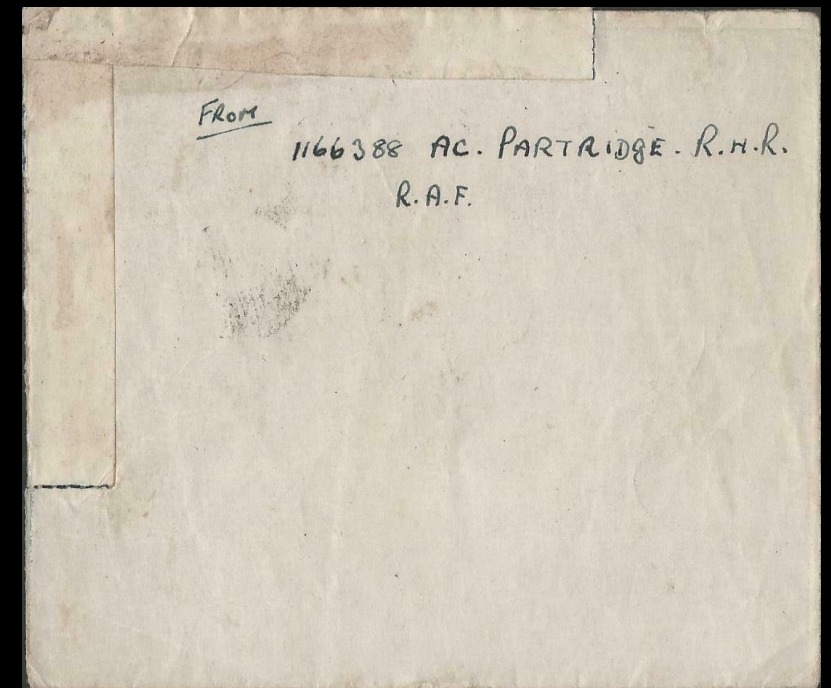
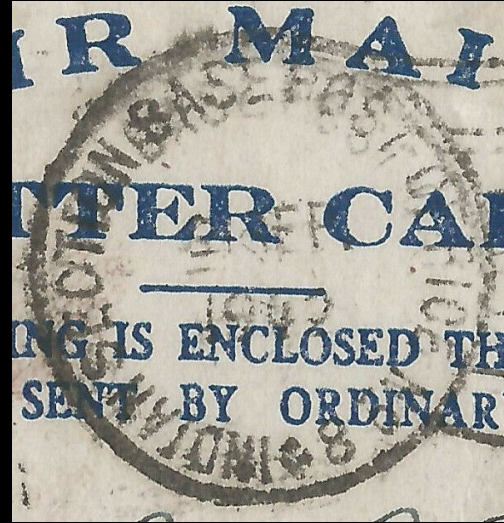
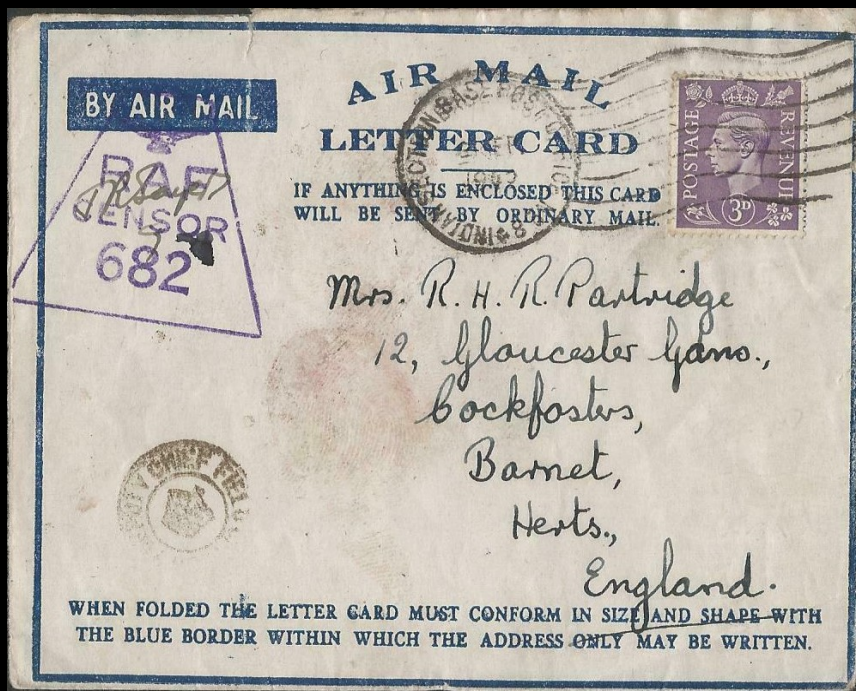


No. 7 ABPO

This cover was posted from **7 ABPO** at **Baghdad, Iraq** on 21st September 1943 to **England**

It bears a boxed Passed by Unit Censor 142 in violet colour. The black octagonal “Passed” steel stamp with DHC/44 (Bombay) which was supplied to the stations in India in March 1942. A partial Deputy Chief censor handstamp in black

7 ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 21st June 1946 (E B Proud)



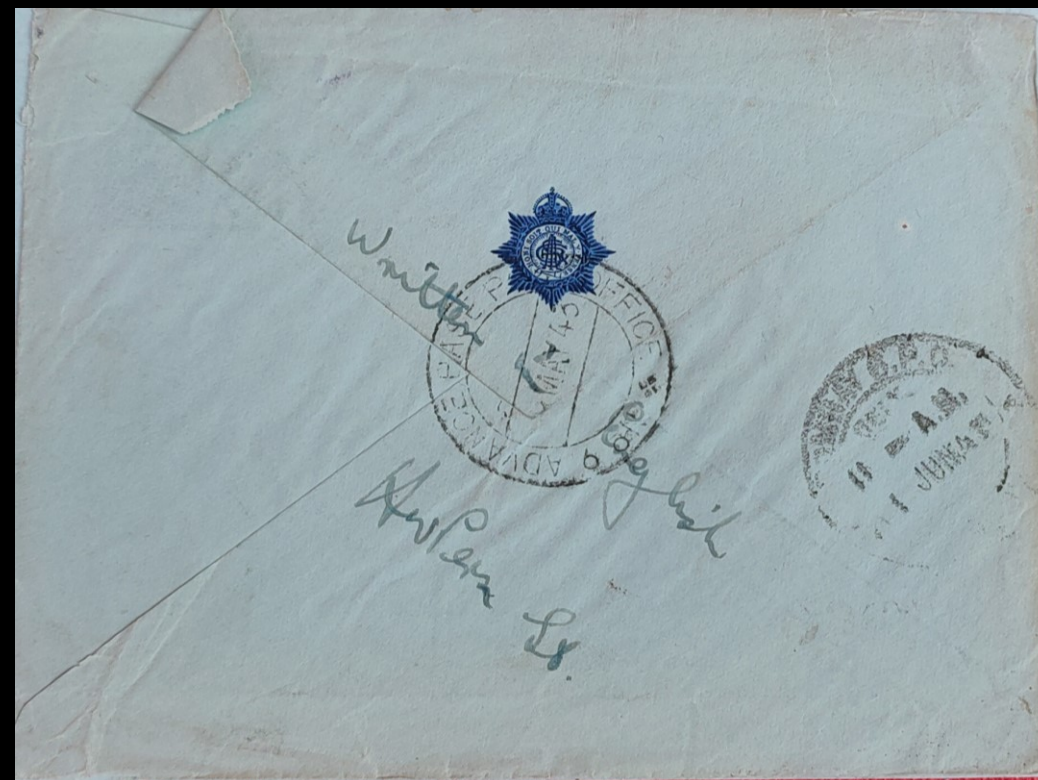
No. 8 ABPO

This Air Mail Letter Card was posted on 9th September 1940 to England (this datestamp / location not seen by E B Proud) from **8 ABPO**.

8 ABPO was raised at Delhi on 7th December 1941 and left Bombay on 18th December 1941 arriving at Basra 6 days later. 8 ABPO was then at **Ahwaz, Persia** from 24th February 1942 to 20th March 1943 (E B Proud's records); **3d GB KG VI stamps affixed**

It bears a triangle RAF Censor 682 in violet and the black Deputy Chief Censor. The British Army and RAF were integrated with the Indian formations. Many of the British units from Army and RAF served by Indian FPO held stocks of British postage stamps. They were permitted to use them on unregistered mail. The concession was later extended to cover the use of the postage stamps of all dominions whose forces were serving in the Paiforce or the Middle East.

8 ABPO was disbanded at Ambala, India on 30th December 1945 (E B Proud)



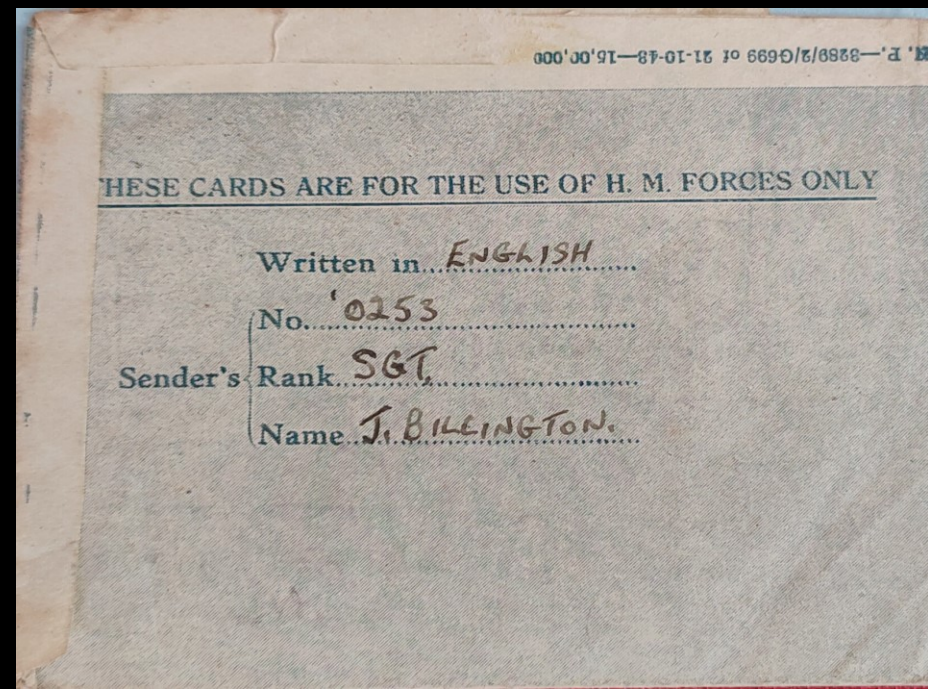
No. 9 ABPO

This stampless cover was posted from **9 ABPO** at **Colombo, Ceylon** in May 1943 to **Bombay, India**. It reached its destination on 1st June 1943

It bears a circular Unit Censor 183 in violet colour.

9 ABPO arrived in May 1942 and the senior postal officer arrived in June 1942. Post that an agreement was made with the local administration thereafter the FPOs started using Indian postage stamps (Brig D S Virk)

It was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 30th June 1946 (E B Proud)



No. 12 ABPO;

This Air Mail Letter Card was posted from **12 ABPO** at **Calcutta, India** on 2nd June 1944 to England. The letter was written on 29th May 1944. Interestingly the writer **Sgt. J. Billington** was part of the **British Military Mission Chungking, China**. The postal address mentioned by him inside the letter is c/o no 12 Advance Base P.O India .

It bears a Triangle Field Censor 2 and faint Triangle faint Field Censor Stamp which has been signed by the writer, all in violet colour. 204 Mission, also known as Tulip Force, was a secret British Military Mission to China organized in 1940-1941. The aim of the Mission was to infiltrate into China, and train Chinese guerrillas to fight the Japanese. This GPO was opened in January 1942 until then there was a liaison officer based at the Calcutta GPO

This **British Military Mission Chungking, China** has not been recorded either by Brig D S Virk or E B Proud.

12 ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 30th June 1946 (E B Proud)

29/5/44

0253 Sgt. J. Billington
British Military Mission
Chungking,
China.
c/o No. 12 Advance Base P.O.
India.

Dear Mother and all,

This week the mail seems to be scarce, I only got one from Alice, but I did get a parcel of newspapers, they were quite interesting to read. The post isn't anywhere near the same that it used to be, anyway it's the same with all papers these days, you can't pick any of them up without finding them full of war news.

The sun came out in all its glory this morning, after being absent for two or three days, by mid-day it got pretty hot and I think the heat has

come to stay this time, of course this evening we had a game of basket ball and the sweat simply poured out, I had a hot bath immediately after and feel fine now.

I am now wearing a medal ribbon, it's the 1939-43 star, I got it last week, I am entitled to it for being in China but I was really entitled to it for that time I was out on operations on the North-West-Frontier in India.

There are three of us here who are due for repatriation at the same time, we all came from home together and I hope we can all come home together. We are already planning what

we are going to do on the way home and what we are going to do when we get there. I suppose we are looking ahead a bit although it's only just over seven months now.

Well the second front doesn't seem to be starting yet and we are all waiting patiently for it, it's going to be rotten for the chaps who go in to it but still someone has to do it.

I seem stuck for anything to write about this week so I will close until next week. Hope to hear from you this week so now cheerio until next week.

Love Jim.

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

AIR MAIL
LETTER CARD
INDIA

MR. & MRS. BILLINGTON,
"OAK COTTAGE"
WHITTINGHAM LANE
BROUGHTON,
PRESTON,
LANCS.

Name: J. BILLINGTON
Rank: Sgt
No: 0253
Written in: ENGLISH

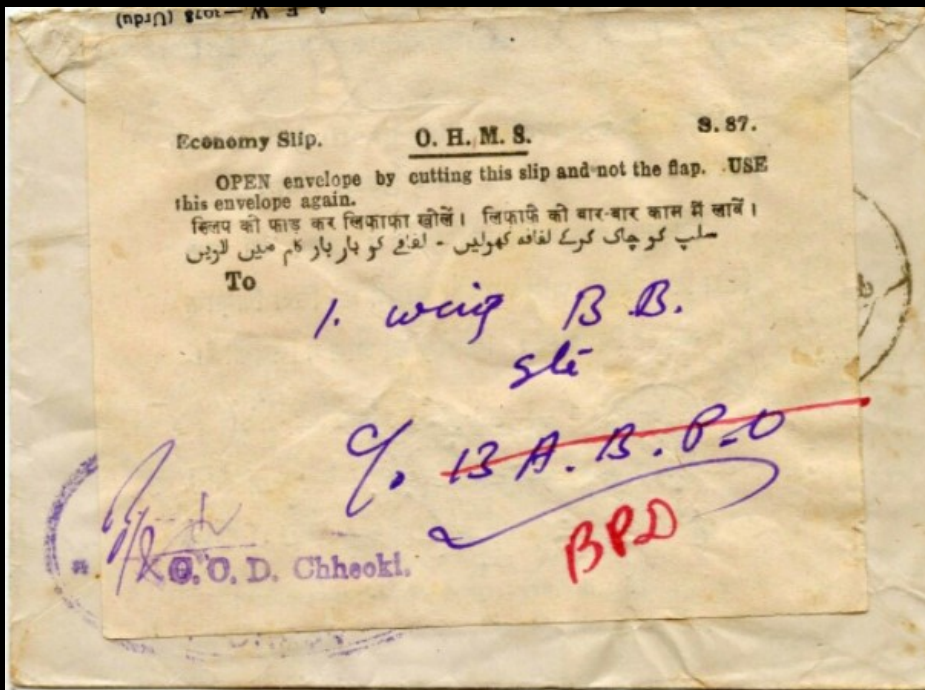
THESE CARDS ARE FOR THE USE OF H. M. FORCES ONLY

N. P.—34950/2/G699 of 21-10-43—15,00,000

The writer **Sgt. J. Billington** was part of the **British Military Mission Chungking, China**. The postal address mentioned by him inside the letter to receive letters was c/o no 12 Advance Base P.O India .

China-Burma-India is one of the most forgotten theaters of World War 2

Once United States entered the war after Pearl Harbor, it looked to China as a source of manpower and a base for its bombers so as to eventually invade Japan. Meanwhile, the Chinese Nationalist (KMT) leader, Chiang Kai Shek looked to Burma Road for material supply during the war. (India's War-The Making of Modern South Asia, 1939-1945; Srinath Raghavan; Penguin books 2016)



No 13 ABPO

The Honour Envelop (Urdu) is addressed to 1 Wing B B ste c/o 13 ABPO. It has been received at 13 ABPO at Bombay, India on 6th March 1946.3 ps*6 India KGVII affixed on the cover

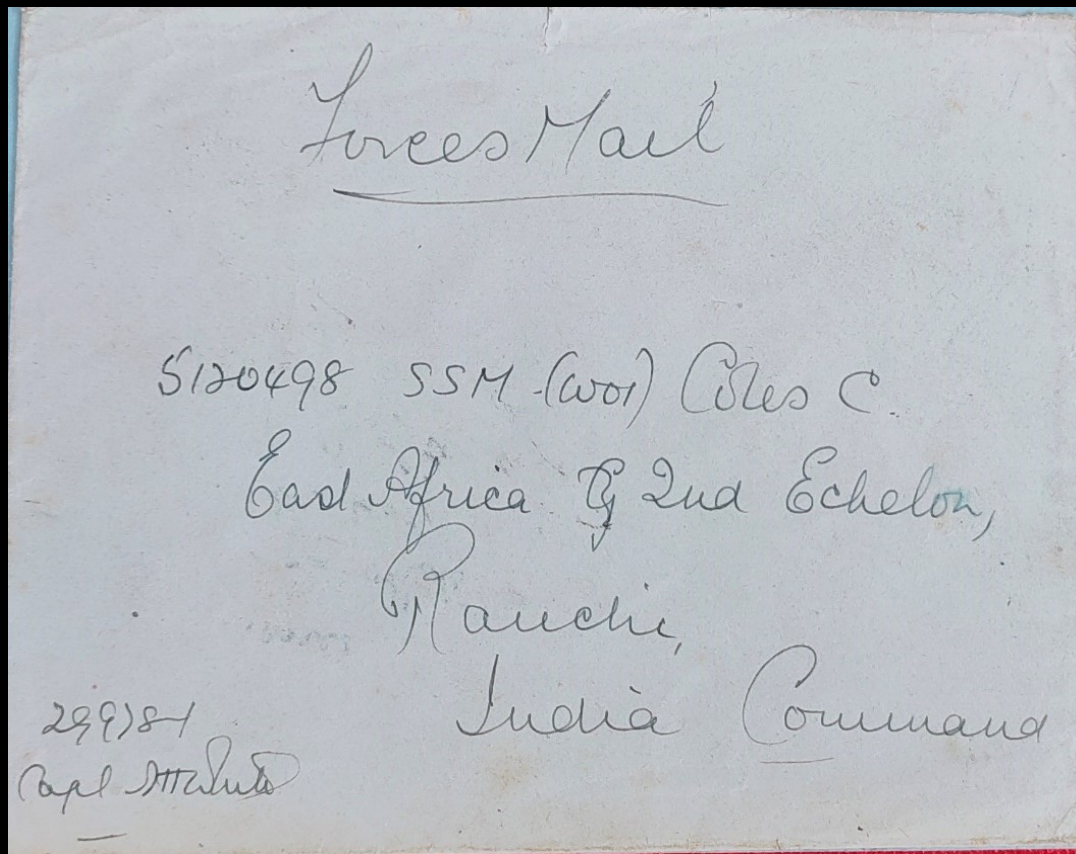
It bears the OHMS Economy slip (S87) to recycle the Honour Envelope. It clearly states that the envelope needs to be opened by cutting this slip and not the flap!!

C.O.D. Chheoki handstamp in violet from where this originated. Central Ordnance Depot, Cheoki is at a distance of 10 km from Allahabad junction and was an important Ordnance Depot.

It was under the control of the Ordnance Department and responsible for the supply of weapons and ammunition.

Chheoki The records show that in 1942 the Depot was supplied by a 60cm narrow gauge(NG) locomotive. Why the 60 cm gauge was used is not known.

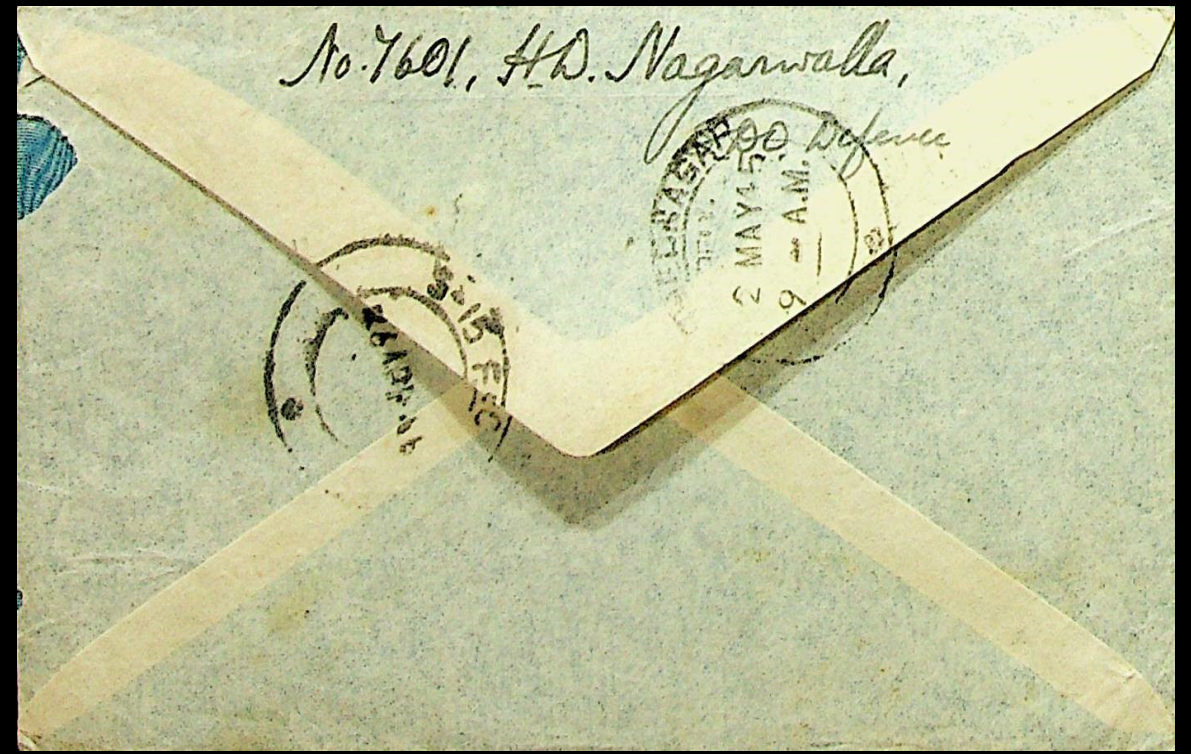
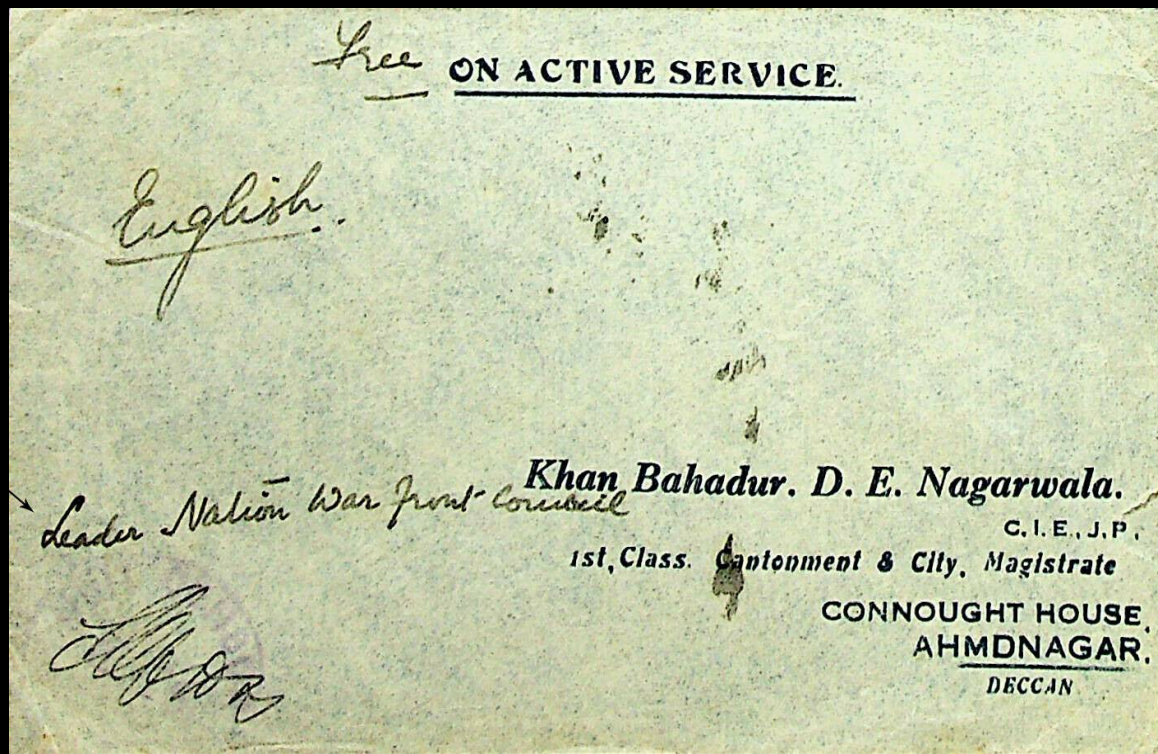




No. 15 ABPO

This cover was posted from Experimental P O B29 on 18 February 1946 and received at 15 ABPO at **Manipur Road, India** on 22 February 1946. This shows us that **East Africa 2nd Echelon** was located at **Ranchi, India** to **Bombay, India**. 1 1/2as India Victory stamp affixed

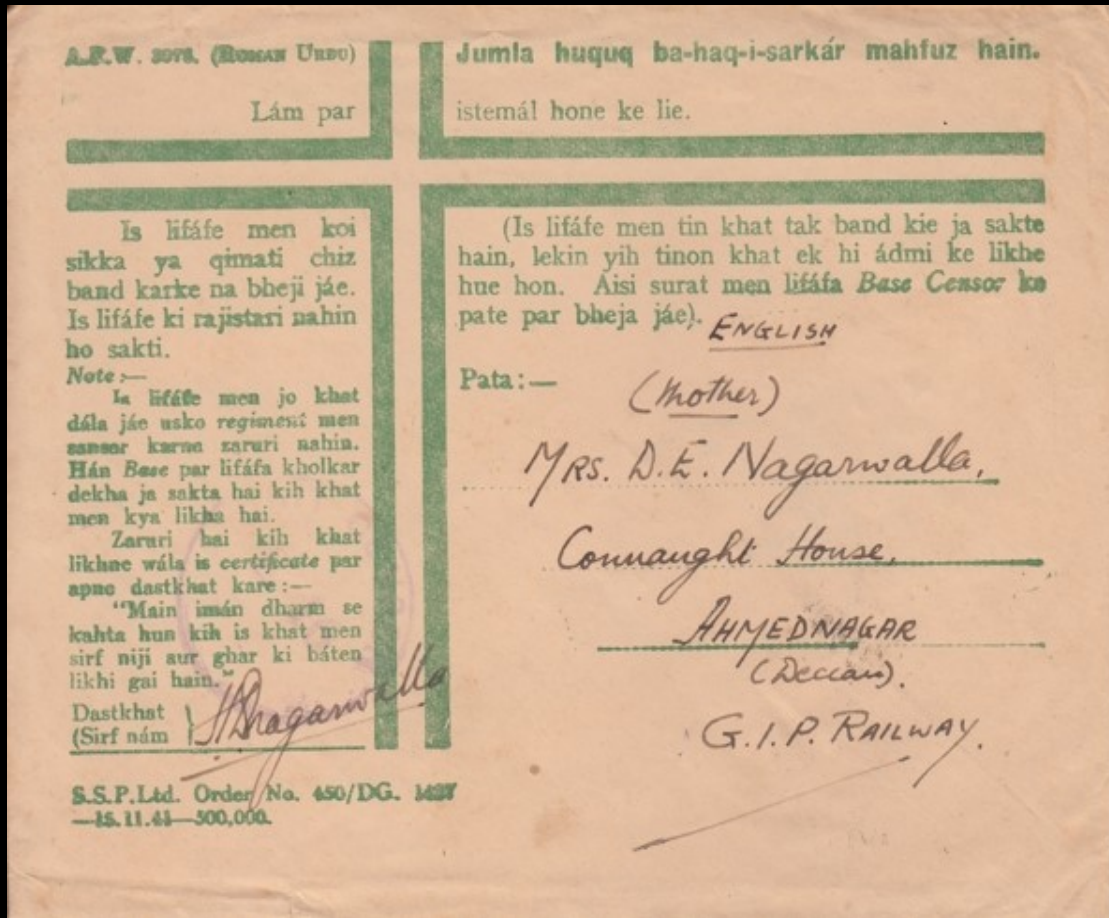
Experimental P O were normally issued to new or temporary post offices (Brig D S Virk)



No. 15 ABPO

This cover was posted from **15 ABPO** at **Manipur Road, India** on 26th April 1946. There seems to be an error on the year of arrival at Ahmednagar the delivery postmark is 2nd May 1945. The letter is written to a prominent philatelist and the Leader of Nation War Front council, Khan Bahadur D E Nagarwala.

15 ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 15th November 1946 (E B Proud)

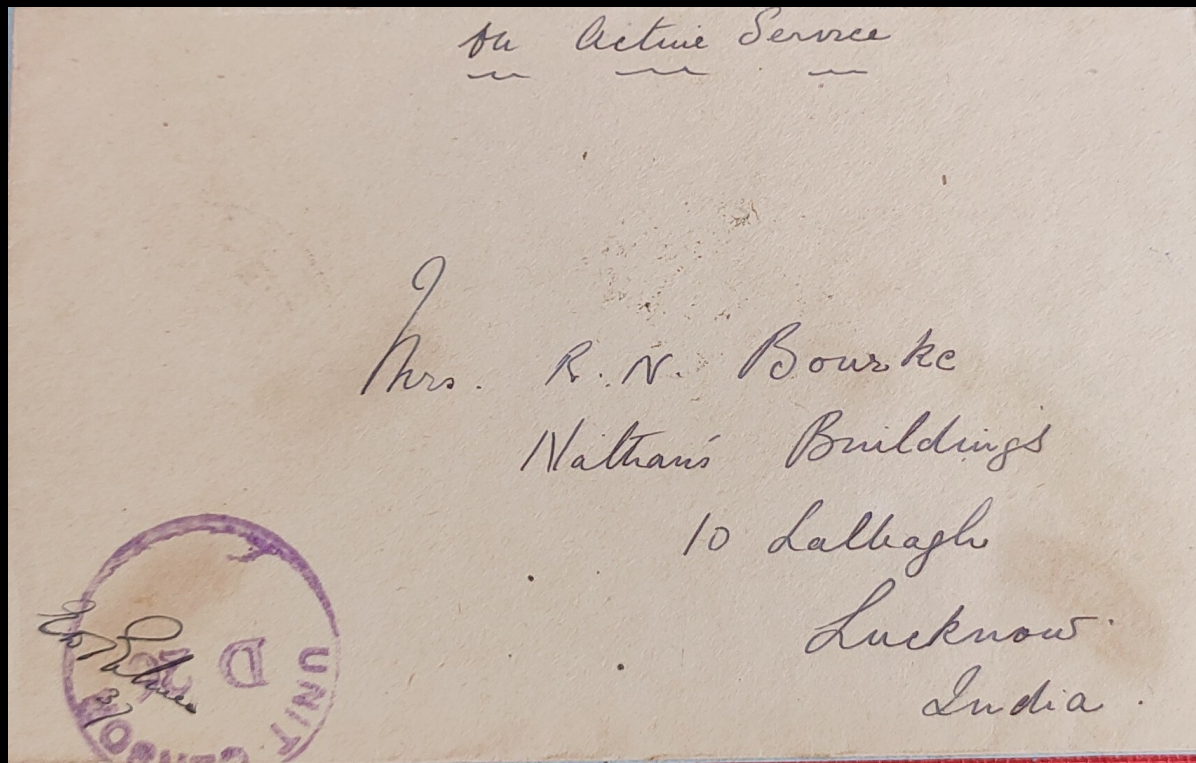


No. 15 ABPO;

This Honour Envelope (Roman Urdu) was posted from **15 ABPO** at **Manipur Road, India** on 26th April 1946 to **Ahmednagar, India** It arrived at its destination on 3rd May 1945.

This S-15 postmark the 2 horizontal lines are partially visible in which the date/ month/year is boxed as recorded as by E B Proud

15 ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 15th November 1946 (E B Proud)



No. 16 ABPO

This stampless cover was posted from 16 ABPO at Imphal, India on 15th January 1945 to Lucknow. It has reached its destination on 19th January 1945

This S-16 postmark with the 2 horizontal lines boxing the date/ month/year is one of the many types of the postmarks used by this ABPO. On 1st August 1944, the ABPO was converted to 16 L of C P. U. (E B Proud)

ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

The Managers.
Messrs Grindlay and Co. Ltd.
Bombay.



L. Haynes.

English.

L. Haynes.

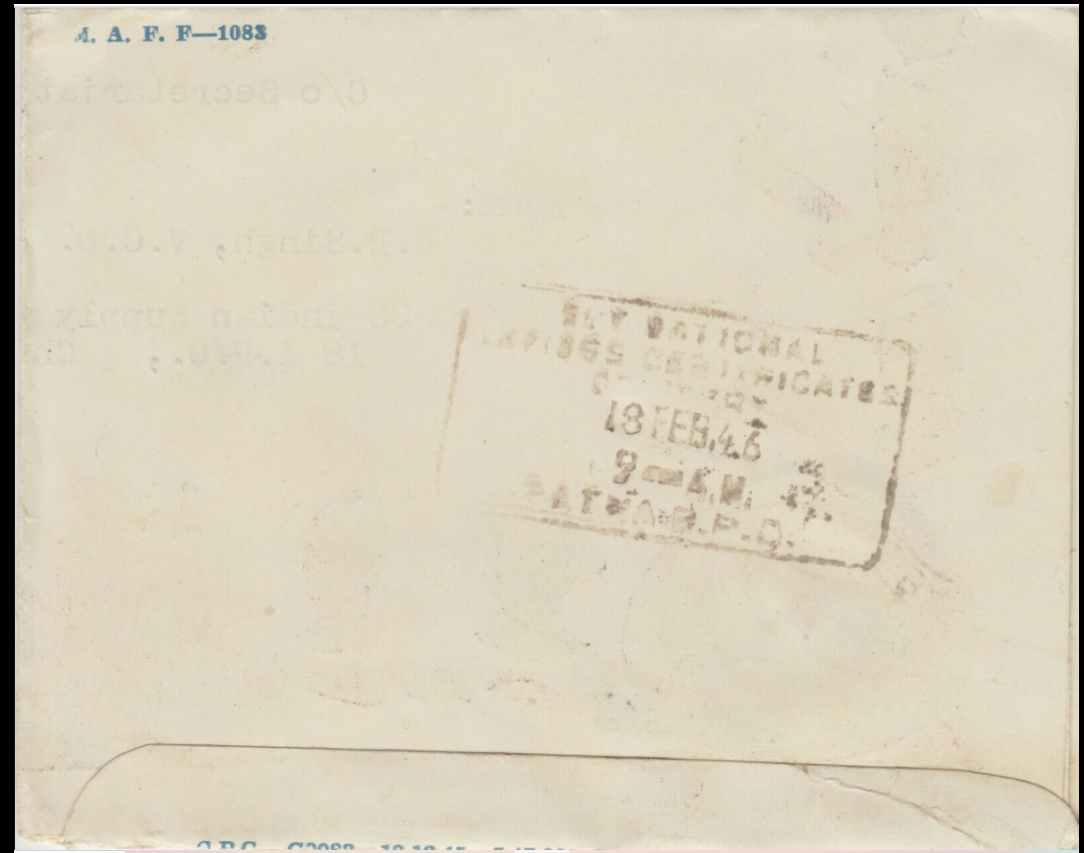
166932



No. 17 ABPO;

This stampless cover was posted from 17 ABPO at Secundrabad, India on 6th January 1944 to Bombay.

On 8th November 1946, the ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 8th November 1946 (E B Proud)

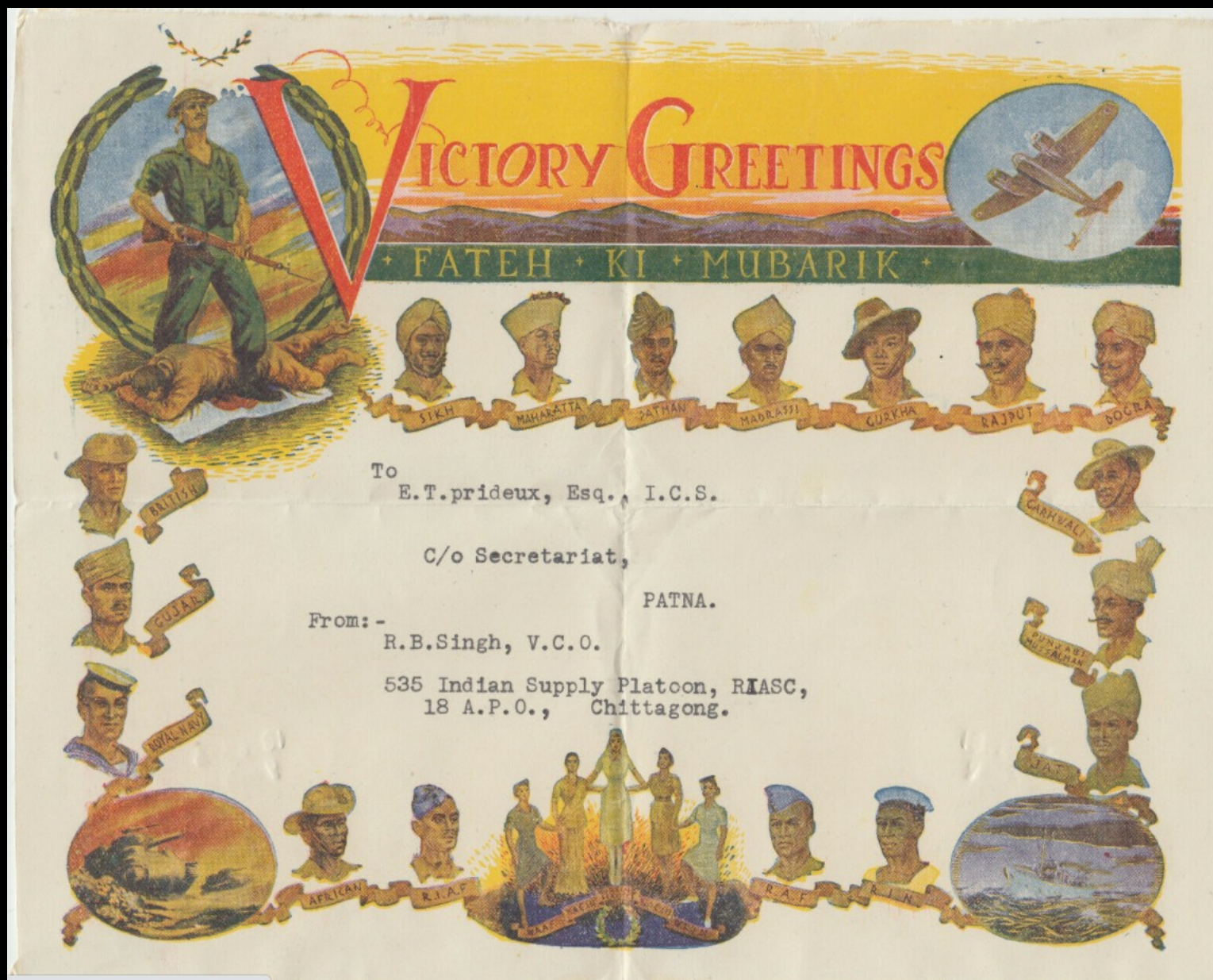


No. 18 ABPO;

This Victory Greetings Inland was posted from **18 ABPO** at **Chittagong, India** on 13th February 1946 to Patna, India. It reached its destination on 18th February 1946 with the cachet Buy National Savings Certificate

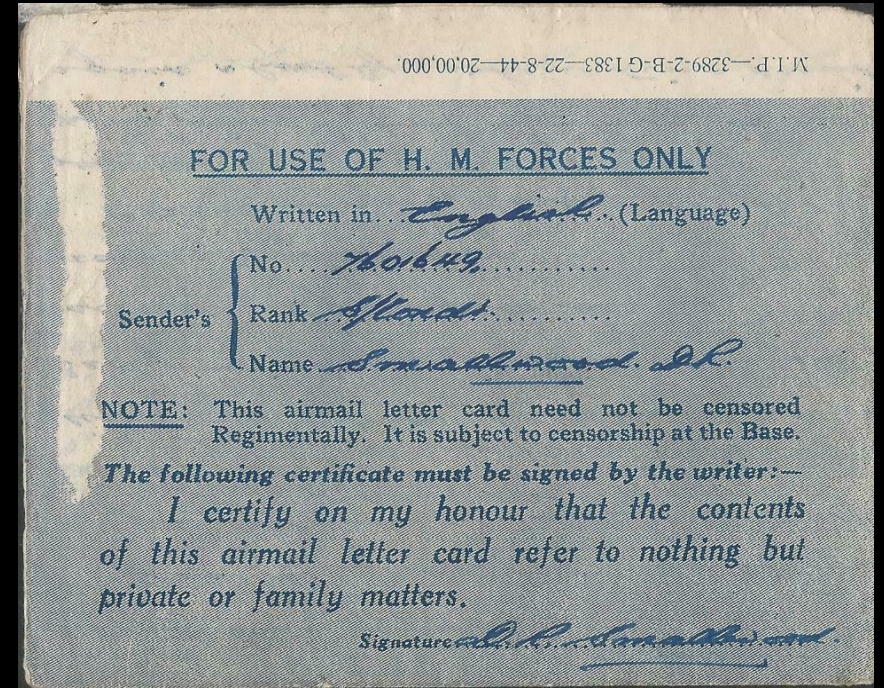
The Inland is Postage Free and captures the Sender s No./Rank/Name

On 8th November 1946, the ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 20th August 1946 (E B Proud)



Brig D S Virk has documented that a specially designed Pictorial Victory Greetings Air Letter Form and Enveloped Letter was issued to the troops in connection with the Victory celebrations in March 1946

Interestingly this Victory Greetings was posted on 13th February 1946



M.T.P.—3289-2-B-G-1383—22-8-44—20,00,000.

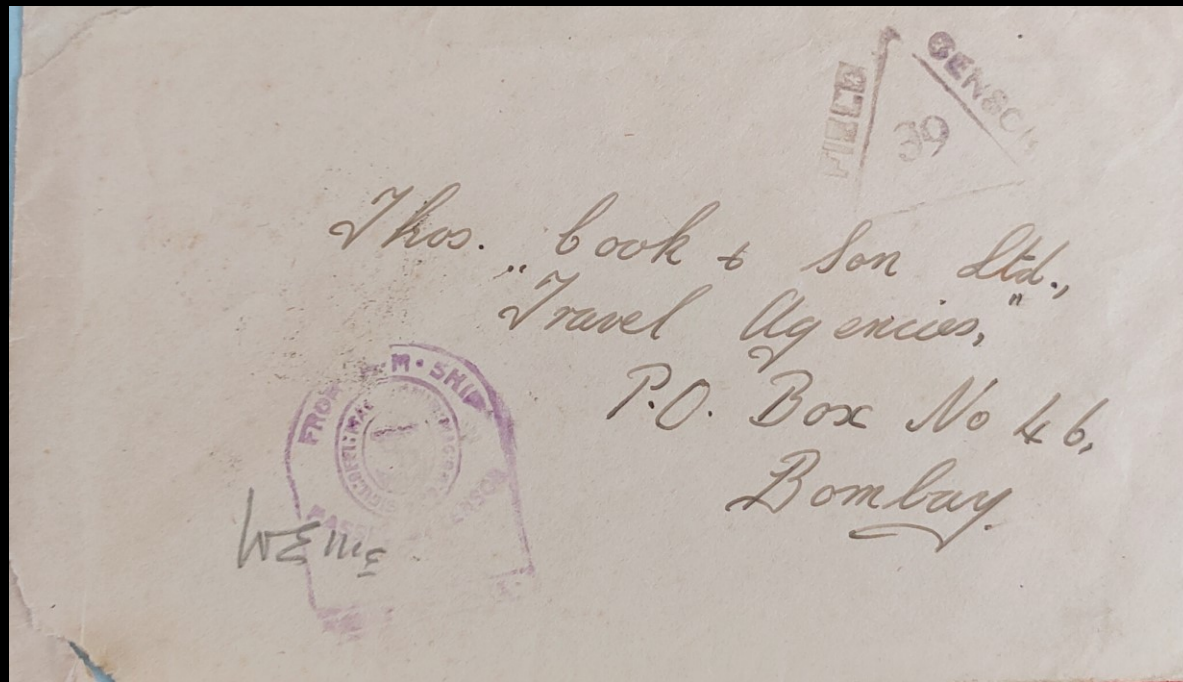
No. 18 ABPO;

This Blue Triangle Air letter cover was posted from **18 ABPO** at **Chittagong, India** on 7th February 1945 to **England**

This S-18 postmark with the 2 horizontal lines boxing the date/ month/year is one of the many types of the postmarks used by this ABPO.

The Blue Triangle Air letter, 1.A.F.F.-1083(Triangle) was issued to the troops in place of the Green Cover or the Honour Envelope. This too was not to be censored at the regiment. It was subject to censorship at the Base. It was also self censored by the writer.

On 8th November 1946, the ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 8th November 1946 (E B Proud)

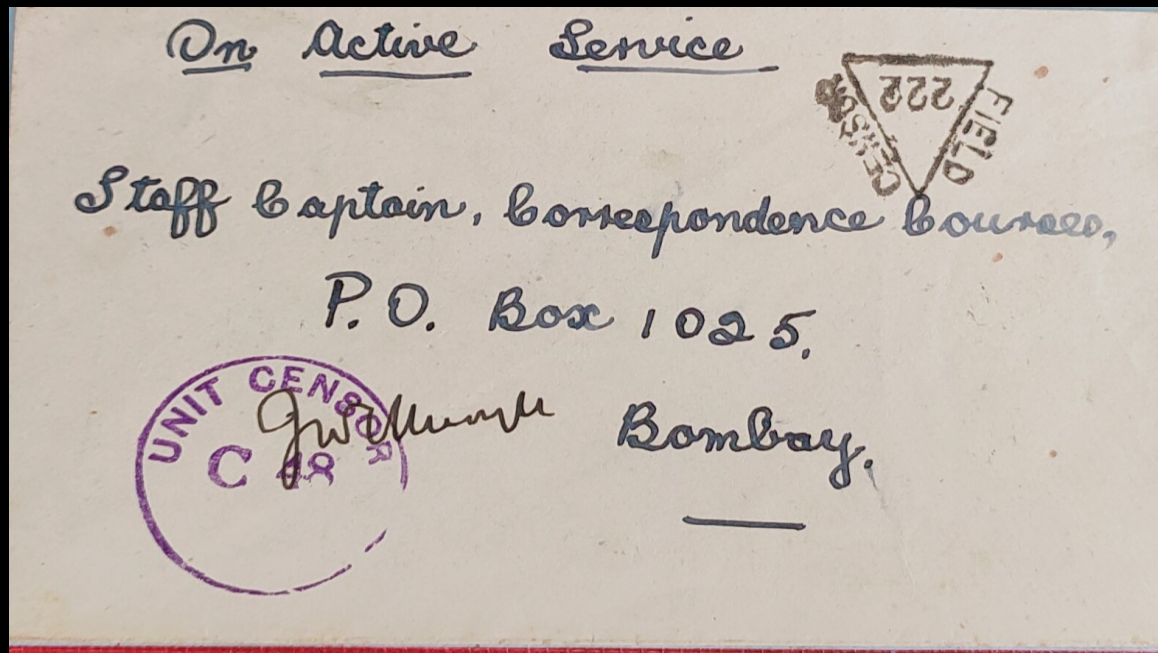


No. 19 ABPO;

This stampless cover was posted from **19 ABPO** at **Salem, India** on 21st September 1944 to **Bombay**.

The 19 Sec BPO was redesignated as 19 ABPO on 23rd May 1944. This cover bears a the front Royal Navy tombstone PASSED BY CENSOR

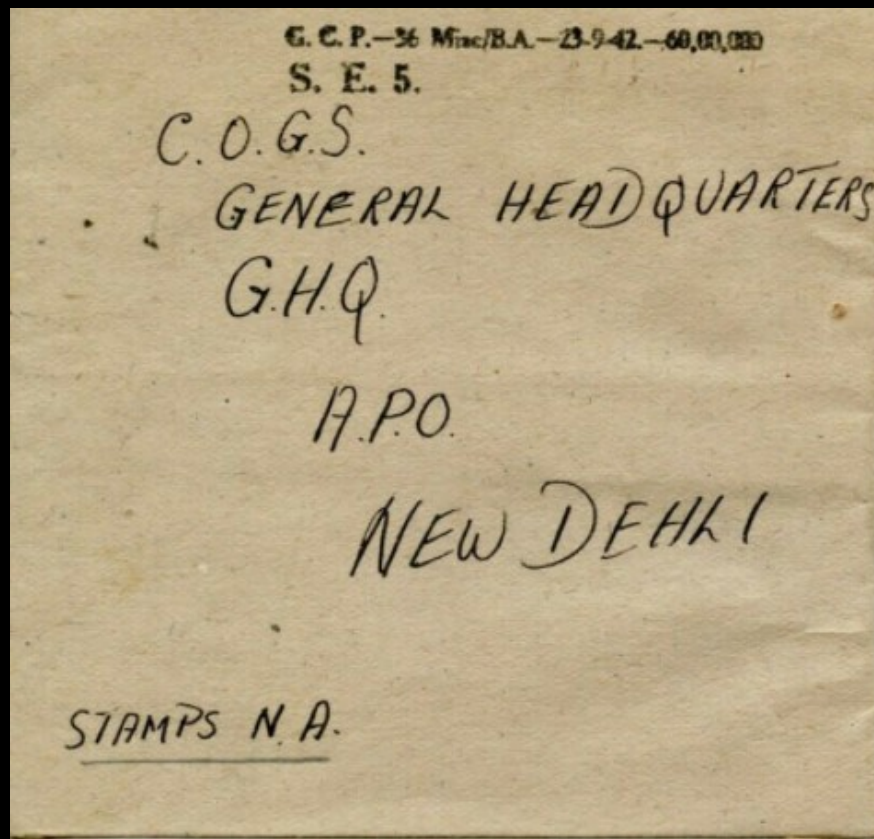
On 8th November 1946, the ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 20th June 1946 (E B Proud)



No. 20 ABPO

This stampless cover was posted from 20 ABPO at **Patna, India** on 13th March 1945 to **Bombay**.

On 8th November 1946, the ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 16th July 1946 (E B Proud)

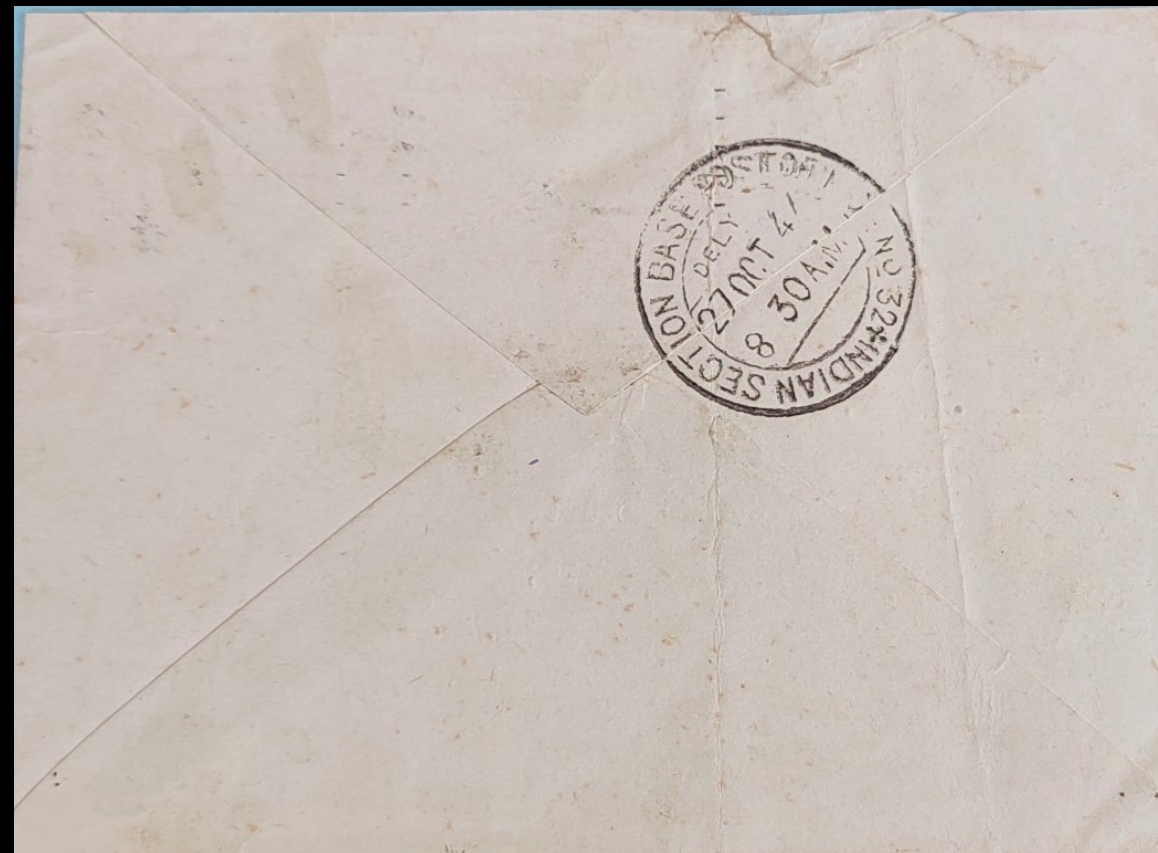
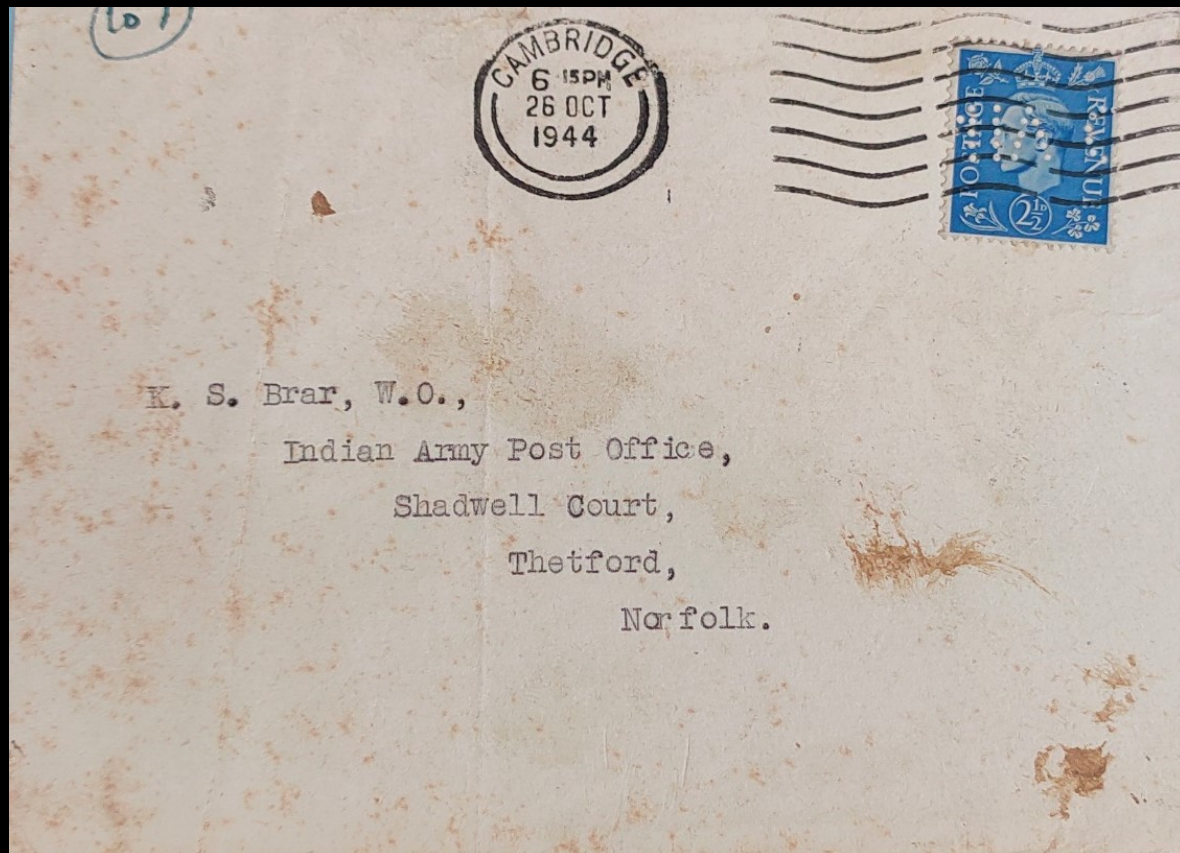


No 20 ABPO

This stampless cover bears the datestamp, 11th April 1946 at 20th Advance Base Post Office, Chas, India and the New Delhi datestamp, 13th April 1946. It is addressed to COGS, GHQ, New Delhi. Proud has recorded that he has not seen any cover during 1st January 1946 and 31st May 1946 at Chas. Interestingly it mentions stamps N.A.

No 20 ABPO was stationed at Patna from March 1943 to January 1946. When the Area HQ was put on open address, it moved to Chas where again it worked as a large FPO for four months before being disbanded at Kamptee on 16th July 1946.

No. 32 ABPO



No. 32 ABPO

This cover was posted from **Cambridge, England** on 26th October 1944 TO W.O K S. Brar at an address where the 32 ABPO was located; **Shadwell Court, Thetford, Great Britain**. It was received at the destination on 27th October 1944 ; perfin 2½ GB KGV1 stamp affixed. WO K S Brar was posted at 32 ABPO

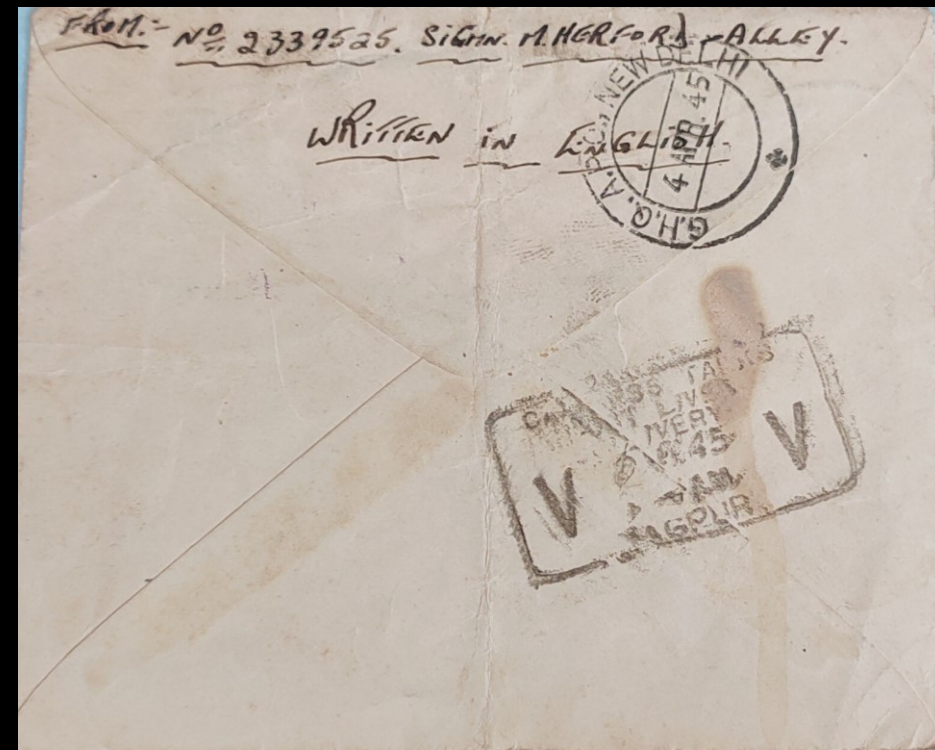
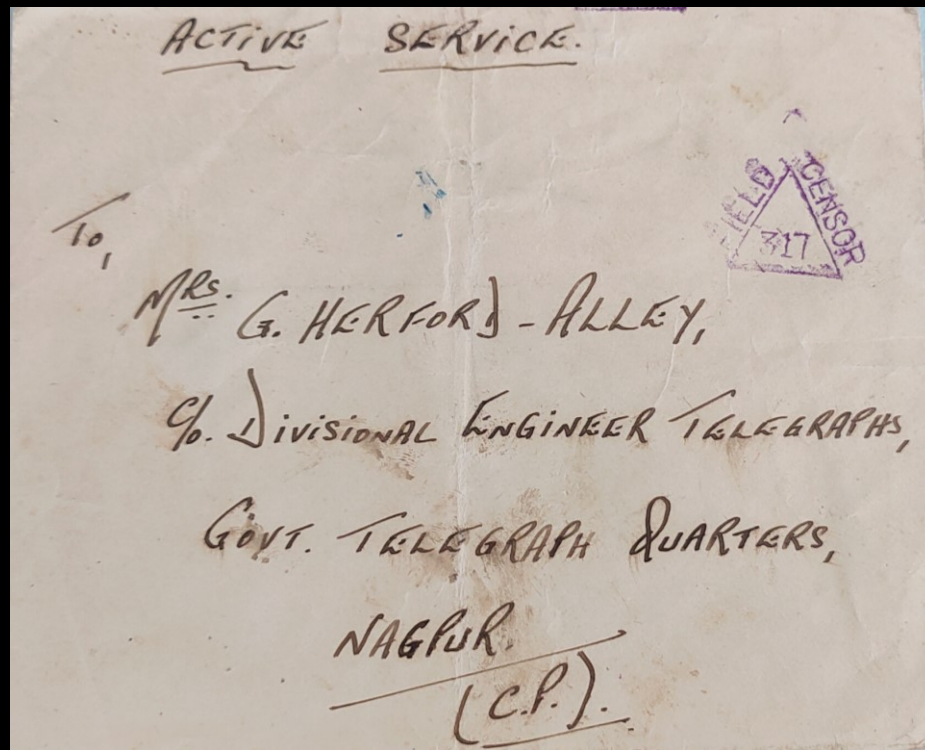
32 ABPO arrived in England in July 1944. It was initially located at Market Harborough in the midlands, this area came under intense aerial bombardment from V-1 and V-2 rockets. They then moved to Pottton and then finally to its location Shadwell Court. This ABPO was designed to provide full postal facilities to the permanent staff of the Four Indian Base Camps-1 military hospital and a supply platoon and the Indian prisoners recovered from the POW camps in Europe. In actual practice it only dealt with the receipt and despatch of ordinary and registered mail and did no parcel or money orders. British postage rates applied and they only sold British postage stamps. Surface letters to India were postage free from the beginning and airmail became free from April 1945.

On arrival each ex POW was supplied with a number of Safe Arrival Cards which were completed and despatched immediately by air to India. These cards requested the recipients to write to the Ex POW at the Reception centre address. Though some recovered prisoners left for India before they got letters from home. This ABPO was happy to deliver nearly 10,000 of letters to the EX POW who had reached India.

After the defeat of Germany, the Indian Liaison Officers with the Allied Command recovered nearly 20,000 undelivered letters for Indian prisoners from German Camps and from the International Red Cross depots in Sweden and Switzerland. This ABPO delivered whatever it could to the freed prisoners and returned the rest to the senders.

During its tenure the ABPO served over 13,000 ex POWs and 2,000 men based there.

It closed down officially on 31st August 1945 but continued to handle correspondence for some more time before it sailed for India in October. 8th November 1946, the ABPO was disbanded at Kamptee, India on 14^h May 1946 (Brig D S Virk)



GHQ Army Post Office;

This cover has the **GHQ Army Post Office** at **New Delhi, India** on 4th April 1945 to **Nagpur, India**. It was delivered at its destination with a cachet Careless Talk Cost Lives

It bears the triangle with Field Censor 317 in violet colour



GHQ Army Post Office;

This cover has the **GHQ Army Post Office** at **New Delhi, India** on 24th August 1944 to **Karachi, undivided India**. It has a delivery cachet **Careless Talk Cost Lives 30th August 1944**

This **G.H.Q.A.P.O. NEW DELHI** (comet type) postmark was seen between 8th October 1944 and 11th February 1945. IN 1942 with the expansion of the Armed Forces, FPO s, BPO s were opened at all large Army Centres within India(E B Proud)

It bears the triangle with Field Censor 120 in violet colour