

THE AIRGRAPHS OF SOUTHERN RHODESIA

15 November 1941 to 31 July 1945

The forerunner of the Airgraph was conceived in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War, when micro-photography was used to enable messages to be flown into Paris by carrier pigeons. During World War II the Eastman Kodak Company developed Recordak machines which photographed letters onto microfilm and enlargers were then used at a receiving station to print out the messages, thereby saving considerable weight in the air freight of letters.

The system used in World War II was for the sender to complete a printed form, obtained from a post office, which was then delivered to a processing centre where the form was photographed onto microfilm.



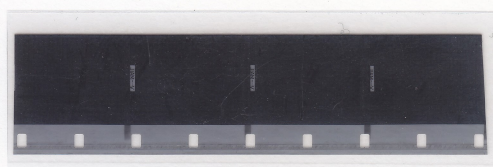
Poster

The rolls of microfilm were then sent by air to the processing centre in Harrow, Middlesex for northbound messages, and initially Johannesburg and later Nairobi for southbound messages. Printing was done on rolls of bromide paper usually within 24 hour of the receipt of the forms by Kodak. The end product measured about 5 x 4 inches and was placed in an envelope for sorting and delivery. The rolls of microfilm were then sent by air to the processing centre in Harrow, Middlesex for northbound messages, and initially Johannesburg and later Nairobi for southbound messages. Printing was done on rolls of bromide paper usually within 24 hour of the receipt of the forms by Kodak. The letter measured about 5 x 4 inches and was placed in an envelope for sorting and delivery.

The service in Southern Rhodesia started in November 1941 when Royal Air Force personnel were allowed to send airgraphs at no charge from Southern Rhodesia to the United Kingdom for Christmas 1941. The standard British form was used. The forms were flown to and the microfilming was done in Nairobi. The official Airgraph service from Southern Rhodesia to the United Kingdom was announced in Postal Notice 12 of 1942 on 4 May 1942. The service commenced on 18 May 1942. The charge for Airgraphs to and from members of the Armed Forces was 3d, and 8d when sent to a civilian. Payment was made by way of postage stamps at the Post Office placed on the reverse of the form. After the form was completed it was handed to the Post Office and then sent the censor. The first Airgraphs left Southern Rhodesia on 19/20 May 1942 and arrived in the United Kingdom on 10/11 June 1942, a journey of three weeks.

Southern Rhodesia used South African airgraph forms and in the early days of the service outward forms were processed in Nairobi for transmission to the UK, and inward forms were processed in Johannesburg and forwarded on to Rhodesia. Later all the processing was completed in Nairobi. After a period the original form was destroyed.

Special forms were prepared in Southern Rhodesia with a Christmas greeting for 1943, and surplus stock was used again in 1944. The service was closed with effect from 31 July 1945. It had become more expensive than the new airmail rates introduced in February 1945 and was no longer popular.



Sample of microfilm
Contains 4 V-mail letters

FRONT OF AIRGRAPH FORM

Airgraph form printed in South Africa (Keeton SA/4) available for use in Southern Rhodesia.

P. 1122.

The Address
must be
written in
LARGE
BLOCK
LETTERS
wholly within
the panel
alongside.



The address
must NOT
be type-
written.

Above space for
Post Office use only

G.P.-S

Read Instructions overleaf. Write the message in ink very plainly below this line.

Sender's Name and Address :

Date :

This space should not be used.

G.P.-S.8830-1942-2-17,000,000. S.

AIRGRAPH CHARGES.

Airgraphs addressed to civilians sent by members of the Forces (British and Allied) 3d. each.

(The name and address of the sender must clearly show that the airgraph is from a serving member of the Forces.)

Airgraphs addressed to members of the Forces (British and Allied), whether sent by civilians or members of the Forces 3d. each.

All other airgraphs 8d. each.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR AIRGRAPH SERVICE.

1. The Airgraph Service is available to the United Kingdom, Eire, Canada and Newfoundland only. Any subsequent extension of the service will be notified to the public through the Press, and full information may be obtained at any Post Office.

2. Nothing should be written on this side of this form.

3. The *address* must be written in **LARGE BLOCK LETTERS** in accordance with the instructions on the other side of this form. Black or blue black ink should be used, if possible. The address must not be typewritten.

The *message* should be written in manuscript, and black or blue black ink should be used. Typewritten messages will, however, be accepted if clearly reproduced with a good black ribbon. Messages written in pencil do not reproduce clearly. This form of writing must not therefore be used.

The whole message must be written on the other side of this form as instructed. *Very small writing is not suitable.*

4. As a miniature photographic negative of the message and the address will be made and sent by air mail, the foregoing instructions must be complied with. At the destination and a photographic print, measuring about 5 inches by 4 inches, will be made and delivered to the addressee.

5. This form must be kept flat and must not be folded. After completion by the sender, who should affix the requisite postage stamp or stamps in the space provided above, the form should be handed in over the counter at any Post Office. The form must *not* be posted in a posting box.

6. If it is desired to send a second or any number of subsequent sheets in continuation of any communication, a separate form must be completed in accordance with these instructions. Each form must bear the requisite postage stamps.

7. The success of the Airgraph Service largely depends on the sender writing the address and message in accordance with the instructions contained in this form.

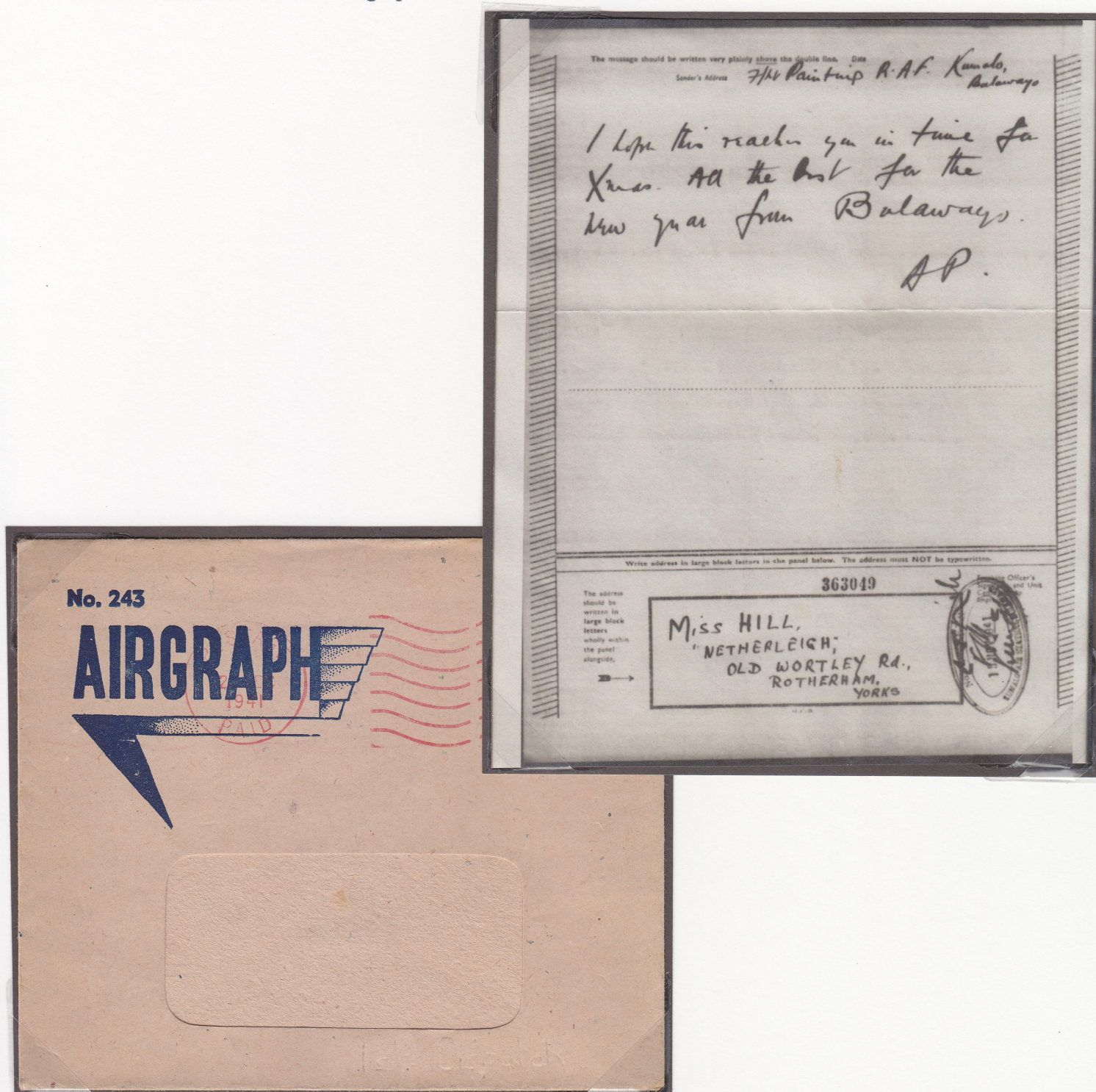
THE ROYAL AIR FORCE CONCESSIONARY SERVICE

Airgraph from Flight Lieutenant A Painting, RAF Kumalo, Bulawayo to Miss Hill in Rotherham, Yorkshire. The address is that of Norman Hill, who was a well-known collector and dealer, and a former headmaster. He kept in touch with ex-pupils from the school to get airgraphs and other philatelic material.

Written on British form (Keeton GB/2) with oval censor mark dated 15 November 1941

Envelope (Keeton GB/4) dated 2 December 1941 by 'Universal' type machine cancellor. Keeton gives the earliest known date for this type of envelope as 16 December 1941.

This is the earliest known airgraph sent from Southern Rhodesia.



FIRST DAY OF OFFICIAL AIRGRAPH SERVICE

Airgraph from A Morgan of Bulawayo to Mrs A Collings of Barry, South Wales. Written on South African form (Keeton SA/2). Illegible stamp to left of address block.

Envelope (Keeton GB/7) with Pitney Bowes cancellor dated 9 June 1942

DEPARTMENT OF POSTS & TELEGRAPHS
Southern Rhodesia.

Postal Notice No. 12 of 1942.
AIRGRAPH SERVICE

It is notified for public information that a new postal facility known as the "Airgraph" service will be introduced on the 18th May, 1942. This service will for the present operate to the United Kingdom only.

Details of the service are as follows:—

(1) DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE

- The Airgraph Service will at present be available only for messages addressed to the United Kingdom.
- The sender will write his message, and the address to which it is to be sent, on a specially designed form which may be obtained on application at any Postal Money Order Office on payment of the charges laid down in paragraph 2. Instructions to the sender are printed on the back of the form.
- The completed forms will be photographed on miniature films which will be conveyed by air to the United Kingdom.
- Upon arrival of the films in the United Kingdom photographic enlargements measuring about five inches by four inches will be made; these will then be enclosed in covers and delivered to the addressee by post.

(2) CHARGE

The postal charge for airgraph letters is as follows:—

- For each airgraph letter addressed to a member of His Majesty's Forces serving in the United Kingdom or sent by a member of His Majesty's Forces serving in Southern Rhodesia to the United Kingdom, 3d.
- For each airgraph letter sent by civilians to any address (other than to a member of His Majesty's Forces) in the United Kingdom, 8d.

In view of the necessity for economy in the use of paper, airgraph forms will only be supplied on payment of the appropriate charge mentioned above.

(3) GENERAL

The success of this new and important service will, however, depend largely upon the sender writing the message, and particularly the address, very plainly in black, or blue-black ink in accordance with the instructions printed on the form. There is no restriction on the number of words which may be included in the "message" section of the form, but the use of very small writing is, however, unsuitable. The type-writer may be used for the message, if the sender wishes, but, as stated on the form, the address must be written as large as possible in block letters.

When two or more forms are used comprising one message, indent, order, etc., each form must bear the full postal charge and all other necessary details.

The form must be kept flat and must not be folded. After completion by the sender the form should be handed in over the counter at any Post Office. The form must not be posted in a posting box.

Airgraph letters not written on the official form cannot be accepted.

The inward service from the United Kingdom is not yet in operation.

Further details of the service may be obtained at any Postal Money Order Office.

C. J. SWIFT,
Postmaster General.

General Post Office, Salisbury.
4th May, 1942. Gen. A/1497/41.

Postal Notice 12 of 1942

The address must be written in LARGE BLOCK LETTERS wholly within the panel alongside.

The address must NOT be type-written.

Read instructions overleaf. Write the message very plainly below this line.

Sender's Address: *P.O. Box 596
Bulawayo
S. Rhodesia*

Date: *18/5/42*

*Mrs. A. Collings
7. Harbour Road
Barry
South Wales*

Airgraph Service.

*First airgraph from Southern Rhodesia
to United Kingdom
18/5/42*

*Please retain initial pending
receipt of surface letter*

*Regards.
Eus.
(A. Morgan)*

No. 243

AIRGRAPH

POSTAGE
9 JUN
1942
PAID

FIRST DAY OF SOUTHBOUND AIRGRAPH SERVICE

In Postal Notice 18 of 1942 it was announced that the airgraph service from the United Kingdom to Southern Rhodesia would commence on 10 September 1942. The service was allowed to civilians as well as the Forces.

Airgraph from Norman Hill of Rotherham to Aircraftman L Ducker at RAF Kumalo sent on first day of official use southbound. Written on Great Britain form (Keeton GB/9) with Rotherham dated stamp of 11 SP 42.

South African envelope (Keeton Type 1) dated at Bulawayo 10 OCT 42 - confirming that processing was done in Johannesburg.

DEPARTMENT OF POSTS & TELEGRAPHS

Postal Notice No. 18 of 1942.

AIRGRAPH SERVICE FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM.

IT is notified for public information that the Airgraph Service from the United Kingdom to Southern Rhodesia will commence on the 10th September, 1942.

C. J. SWIFT,
Postmaster General.

General Post Office,
Salisbury.
10th September, 1942.

Gen. A. 1499/41

Printed for the Government Stationery Office by The Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., Ltd., Salisbury.

Official notice of service

44979

Write address in large BLOCK letters wholly within this panel →

TO:—
1060193 AC1 DUCKER, L.,
MIASI BOMBING RANGE,
R.A.F., KUMALO,
BULAWAYO,
SOUTHERN RHODESIA.

The address must NOT be typewritten.

Write the message very plainly below this line.

Sender's Address: South Grove Central School,
Rotherham, Yorkshire,
England.

Date: 10th. Sept., 1942.

Dear Laurence Ducker,

Today sees the opening of the Airgraph Service from Britain to S. Rhodesia.

May I request a favour of you, please? Will you return this Airgraph and its covering envelope when next you write to me?

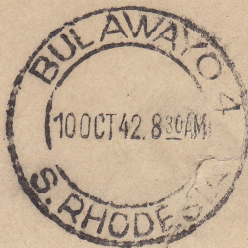
Hope the cards and News-letters still come through OK?

Best of luck,
Norman Hill

This space should not be used.
ADDRESS IS WRITTEN IN LARGE BLOCK LETTERS IN THE PANEL ABOVE

P 216

AIRGRAPH
FOTOBRIEF



EXTENSION OF SERVICE TO CANADA

The Airgraph service from Southern Rhodesia was extended to Canada effective from 21 November 1942.

The example shown is from Major L E Creasy using a standard South African form (Keeton SA/4) dated stamped Salisbury 21 NOV 42. In the bottom left corner is the 'Official Free' stamp of the Deputy Provost Marshall. No censor mark.

The envelope is dated JAN 12, 1943 (Keeton CA/1).

The address must be written in LARGE BLOCK LETTERS wholly within the panel alongside.

The address must NOT be typewritten.

P. 1172

91907

IVOR GIBLIN Esq.
70, ST. HUBERT AVENUE,
TORONTO,
CANADA

986486

Read instructions overleaf. Write the message very plainly below this line.

Sender's Address: L. E. Creasy

Date: 20/11/42

DEPUTY PROVOST MARSHAL
S.R.
MILITARY & AIR FORCE
POLICE
P.O. BOX 608
PHONE NO. 4023
AGENCY CHAMBERS,
BULAWATO

My dear Githlin,
Hope you got my letter of 20th
Sept. last - thanking you for yours of January!
Have just heard to day that the
Airgraph service for the Public from this colony
to Canada is now open, so am sending you
a few - 4 including this - and should
be happy if you can return the 3 I have by surface
mail. Also with sending you one or two
of my own Airgraph Christmas Cards - please
return me return the others.
The news is better isn't it? Wonders
Canada has done - 600,000 men in
the front!
Write again soon. Yours always
L. E. Creasy

Official Free



EXTENSION OF SERVICE TO NEW ZEALAND

The Airgraph service from Southern Rhodesia was extended to Australia, New Zealand and Fiji effective from 18 August 1943.

The example shown is from Major L E Creasy using a standard South African form (Keeton SA/4) without a date stamp, but handwritten for the first day of the service. No censor mark.

The envelope is the standard New Zealand envelope, back stamped Carterton 21 September 1943. (Keeton NZ/1).

P. 1122.

The Address must be written in LARGE BLOCK LETTERS wholly within the panel alongside.

→

The address must NOT be repeated.

C.V. DOWNES Esq.
CARTERTON.
NEW ZEALAND.

441673
35
Above space for Post Office use only
G.P.S.

Read Instructions overleaf. Write the message in ink very plainly below this line.

Sender's Name and Address : *Major L.E. Creasy*
Box 803
Butterworth

Date : *18th August 1943.*

The Airgraph service from Southern Rhodesia to New Zealand commences today this is being sent today as a record of the event.

ASSISTANT
PROVOST MARSHAL
G.P.
MILITARY AIR FORCE
POLICE
P.O. BOX 144
TEL. NO. 203
GWELO

This space should not be used.

ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE

Postage Paid

AIRGRAPH MESSAGE

NEW ZEALAND POST OFFICE.