

Around the World with Active Service Letter Cards

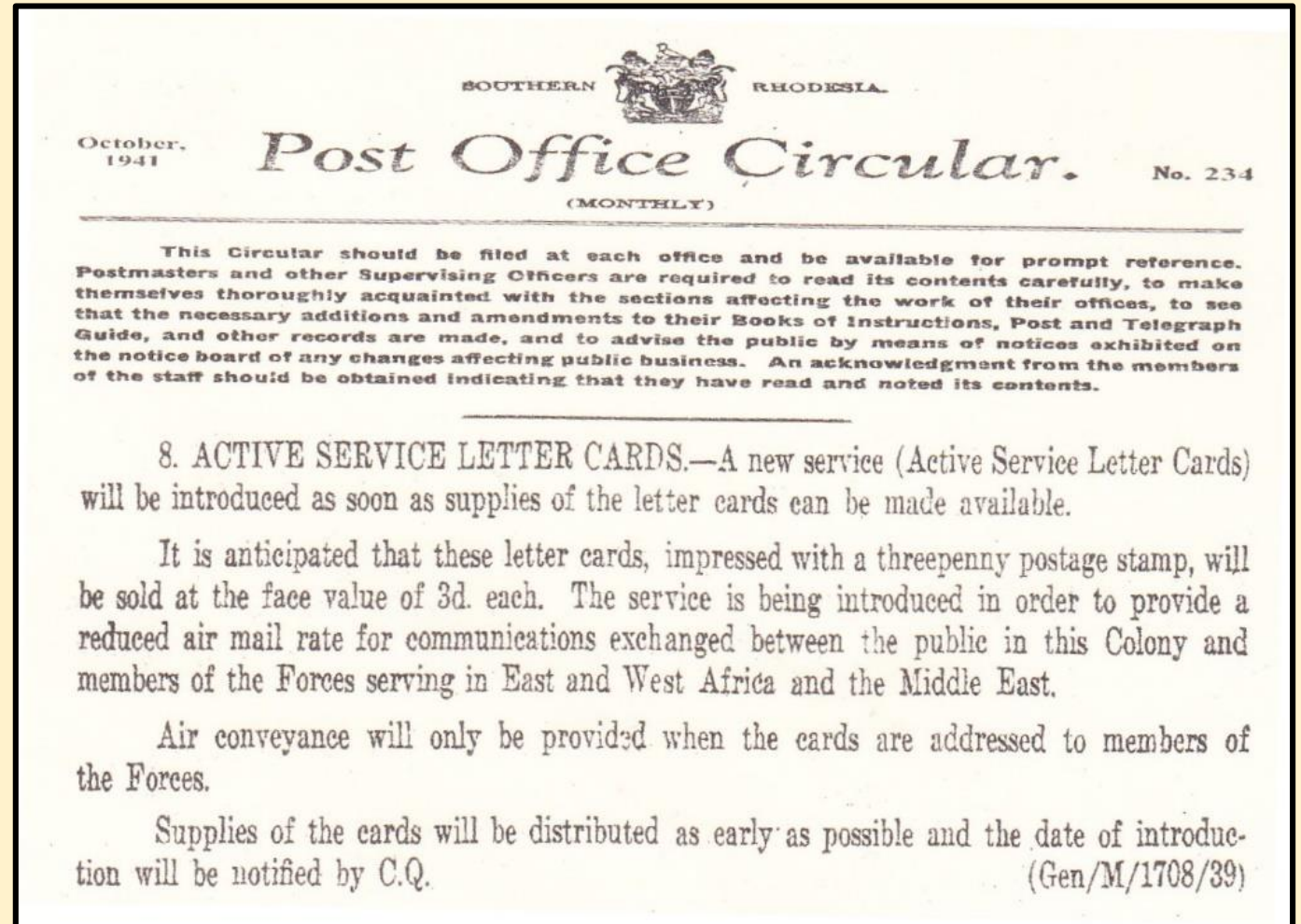


Christopher J. Cooksey
April 2025

The Introduction of Active Service Letter Cards

The Introduction of Active Service Letter Cards was first announced in Post Office Circular No. 234 of October 1941

South Africa operated a similar service, It is not known if other Commonwealth countries offered a such a service.



Type 1 Active Service Letter Cards



First Issue (a)
17th November 1941
Printed on thin white paper with
an overlay

**"SOUTHERN RHODESIAN
GOVERNMENT"**



Second Issue (b)
27th July 1942
Printed on rough buff
paper without overlay



Third Issue (c)
25th March 1944
Printed on cream paper

Type 2 Active Service Letter Cards



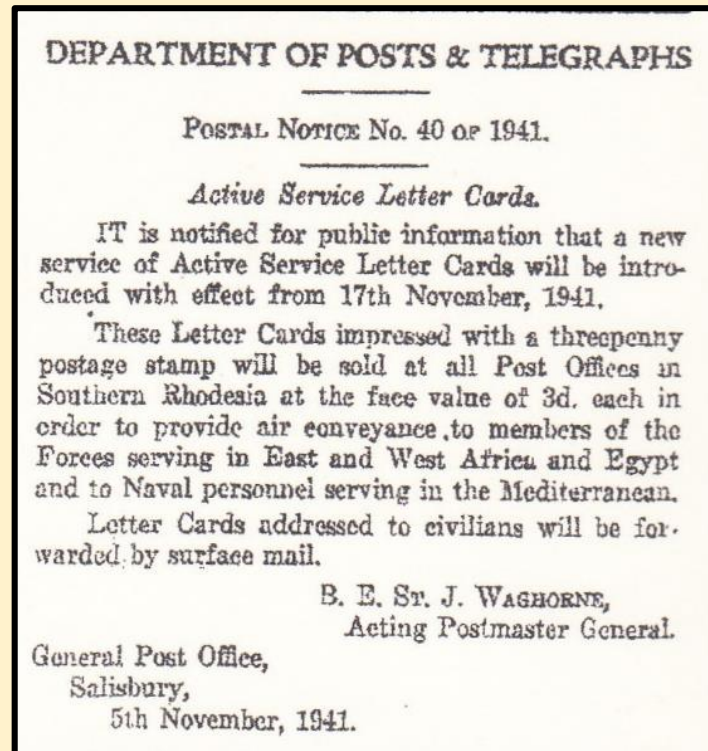
First Issue (a)
May 1944
Printed on cream white paper



Second Issue (b)
1944
Printed on rough buff paper

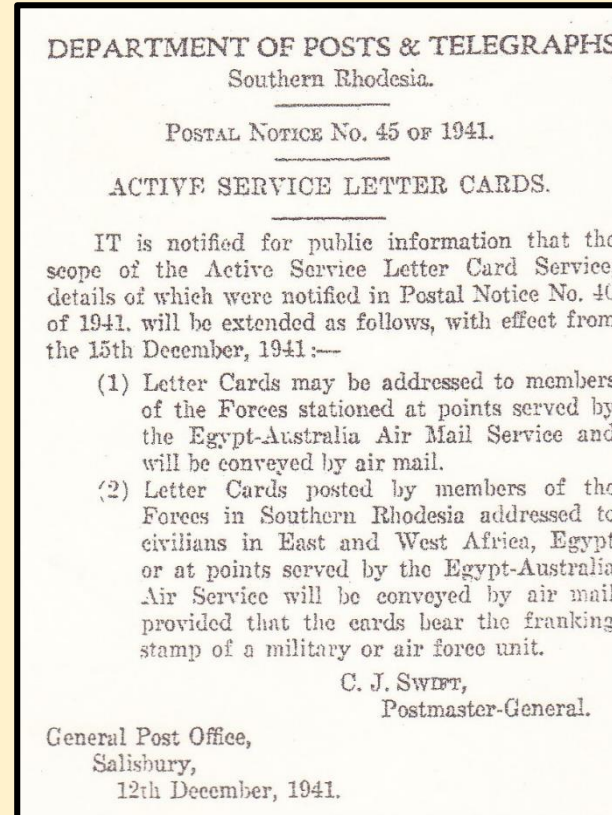
ACTIVE SERVICE LETTER CARDS

Introduction of Service 17th November 1941



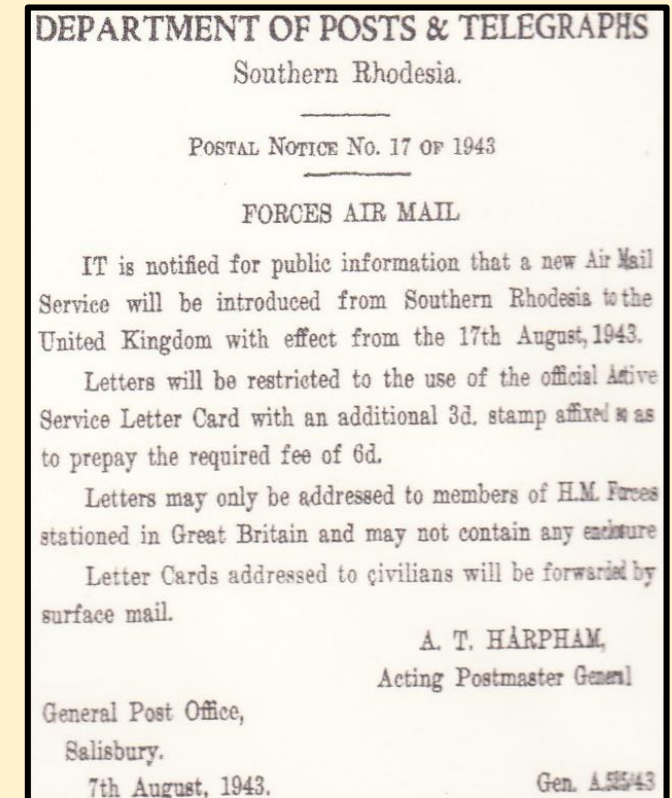
To Forces serving in East and West Africa and Naval personnel in the Mediterranean

First Extension of Service 15th December 1941



- To forces stationed at points served by Egypt – Australia Air Service
- To civilians in SR from Forces in the areas served by the Service

Second Extension of Service 17th August 1943

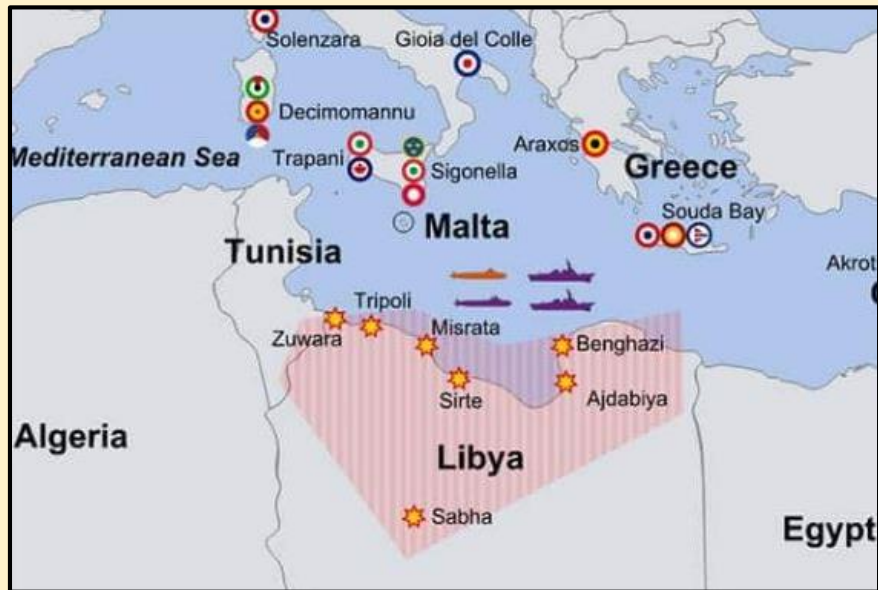


To Members of H.M. Forces stationed in the Great Britain for a fee of 6d.

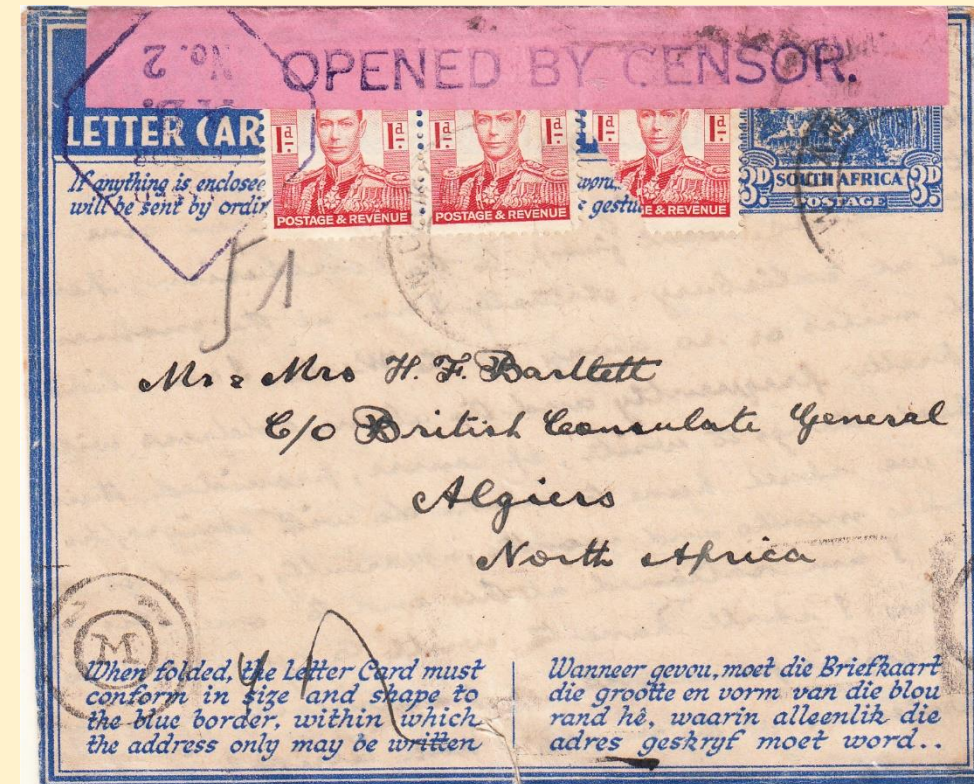
ASLC to Algeria

South Africa operated its own system of ASLCs which could be used by South African troops in S. Rhodesia

The sender has used a South African ASLC and added S. Rhodesian stamps. It is not certain if this was necessary

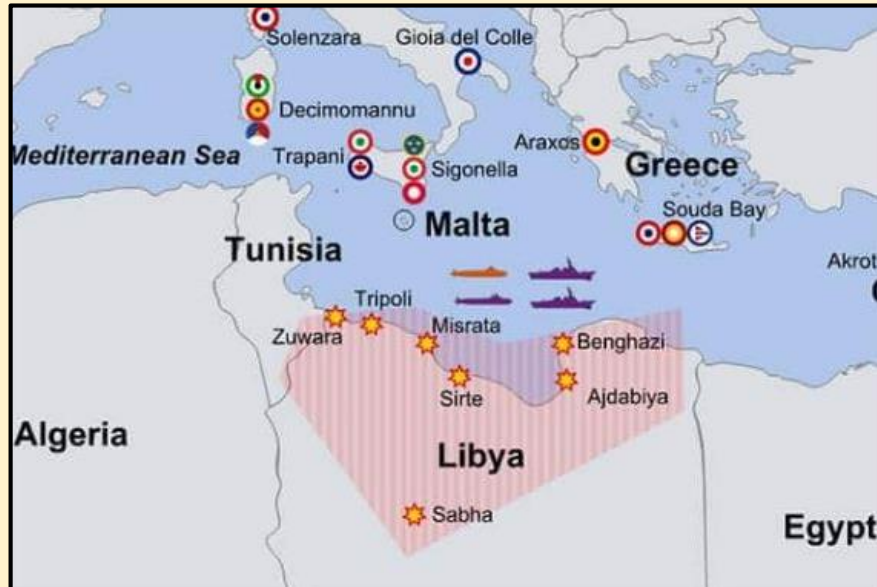


Algeria was not included in Central Mediterranean Forces

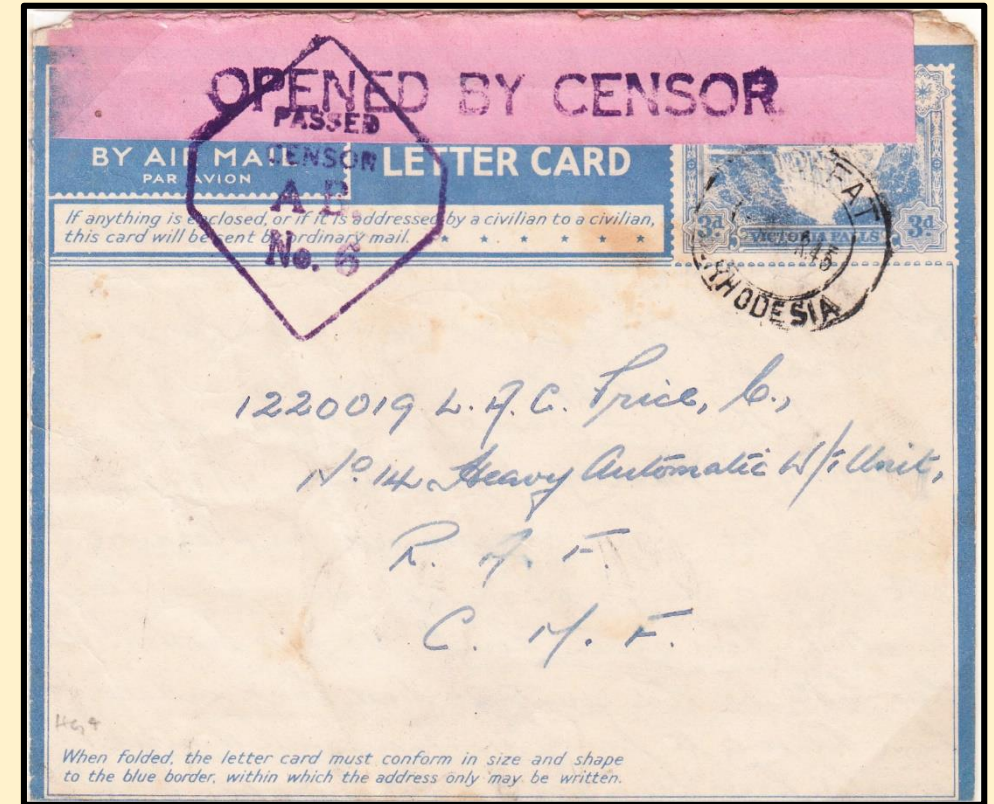


June 1944 South African ASLC
From Serviceman at I.T.W. to a Civilian in Algeria
(Stage 1 Regulations did not specifically state North Africa)

ASLC to C.M.F. (Central Mediterranean Forces)



Map showing area of C.M.F. in pink



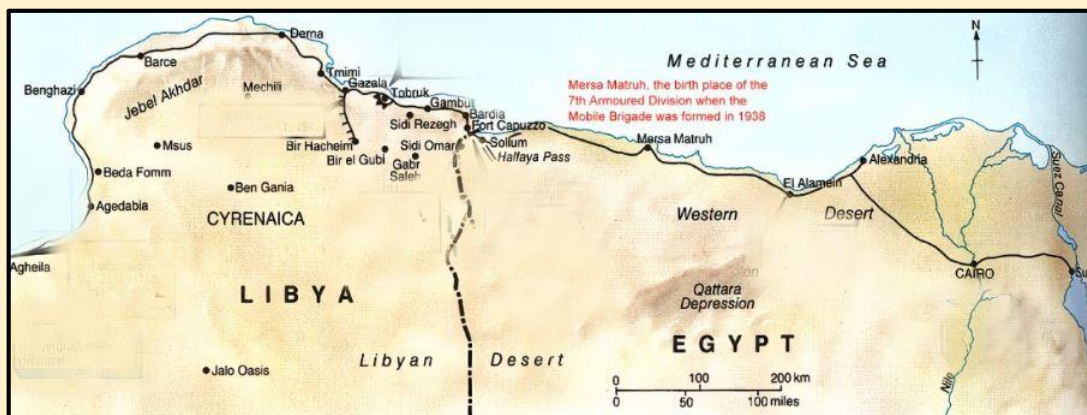
24th March 1945 Type 2a ASLC
From Serviceman at Moffat to a Serviceman in C.M.F.
(Stage 1 Regulations)

Stage 1 Regulations did not specifically
cover North Africa

ASLC to B.N.A.F. (British North African Forces)

The regulations concerning the use of the service were continually changing and were perhaps not fully understood by the users. This ASLC was sent by a serviceman serving in S. Rhodesia to his civilian brother who was attached to the Press Corps with the British North African Forces and therefore did not require the additional 3d. franking.

It may well be that the sender applied the additional 3d. in desperation as his letter states "*The inefficient post office here has no information regarding Air Mail Services to North Africa, so it may be that the five or six air letters that I have sent off have gone by surface mail*".



Map showing area covered by B.N.A.F



24th August 1944 Type 2a ASLC
From a Serviceman at I.T.W. Camp to
a Civilian in B.N.A.F.
(Variant of Stage 2 Regulations)

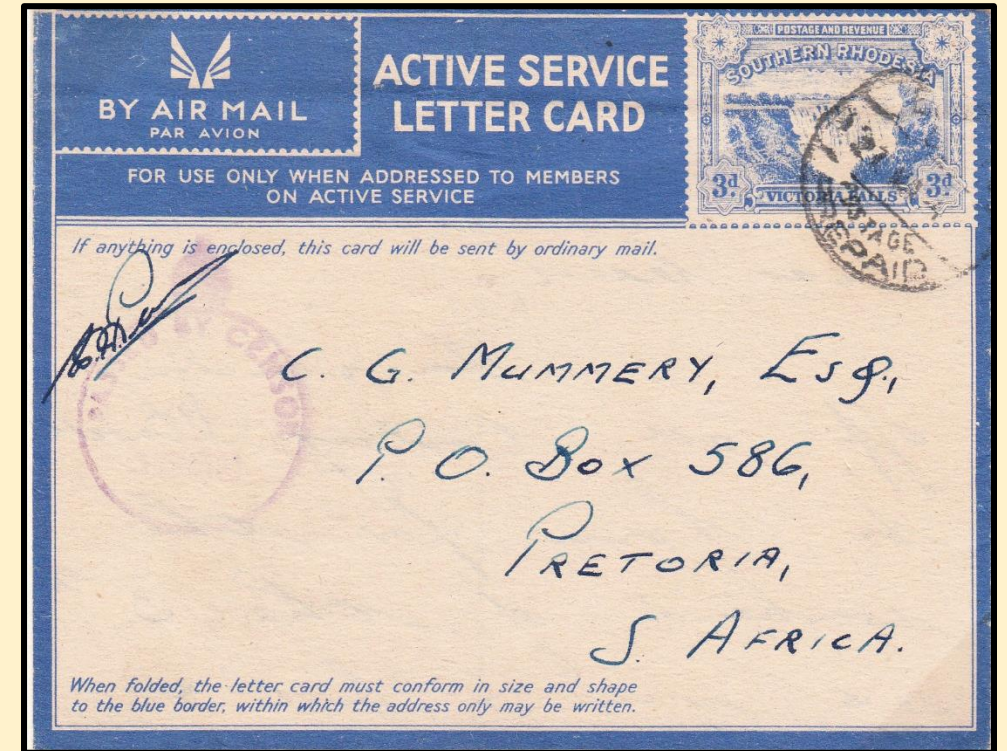
ASLC from Egypt to South Africa

This ASLC is a variant of the service in as it was posted by a serviceman in Egypt.

The Anglo-Egyptian Postal Treaty came into effect on 1st May 1941 and provided for the use of "Egyptian Prepaid" date-stamps. Postage stamps or Active Service Letter Cards of any allies were accepted.



An example of "Egypt Postage Prepaid" postmark



27th May 1943 Type 1b ASLC
From a Serviceman in Egypt to a Civilian
in South Africa.

ASLC to South Africa then Ceylon

Over eight months this well travelled ASLC bears many handstamps including

"NO TRACE AT FLEET MAIL OFFICE or HMS LANKA" and "BRITISH FLEET MAIL" date-stamps of 05.03.45, 12.04.45, 18.04.45, 02.05.45 25.09.45

Durban date-stamp of 27 Sep 1945

Salisbury date-stamp of 5 Nov 1945



Reverse of ASLC



28th February 1945 Type 2b ASLC
From a Civilian in Salisbury to a sailor at HMS Assegai
(Variant of Stage 2a Regulations)

HMS Agessai was originally the Corsica, a ship of 1,100 tons, built in 1895. In 1942 she became the Royal Navy training centre HMS Assegai at Durban

HMS Lanka was the Royal Naval Headquarters in Colombo, Ceylon

Air Letter to Palestine

The first Civilian Letter was issued on
25th October 1944 (Postal Notice 31 of 44)

P.N. No. 31.] [23rd October, 1944.]

AIR LETTER SERVICE

With effect from 25th October, 1944, a civilian "Air Letter" service will be available to the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland and Eire and all countries participating in the Empire Air Mail Scheme as follows:—

Aden	Malta
Australia	Mauritius
Ceylon	New Hebrides
Cyprus	New Zealand
Egypt	Nigeria
Eire	Palestine
Fiji Islands	Seychelles
Gambia	Sierra Leone
Gilbert and Ellice Islands	Solomon Islands
Gold Coast	Sudan (Anglo-Egyptian)
India	Tonga
Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika	Transjordan
	United Kingdom
	Zanzibar

Letter written in German



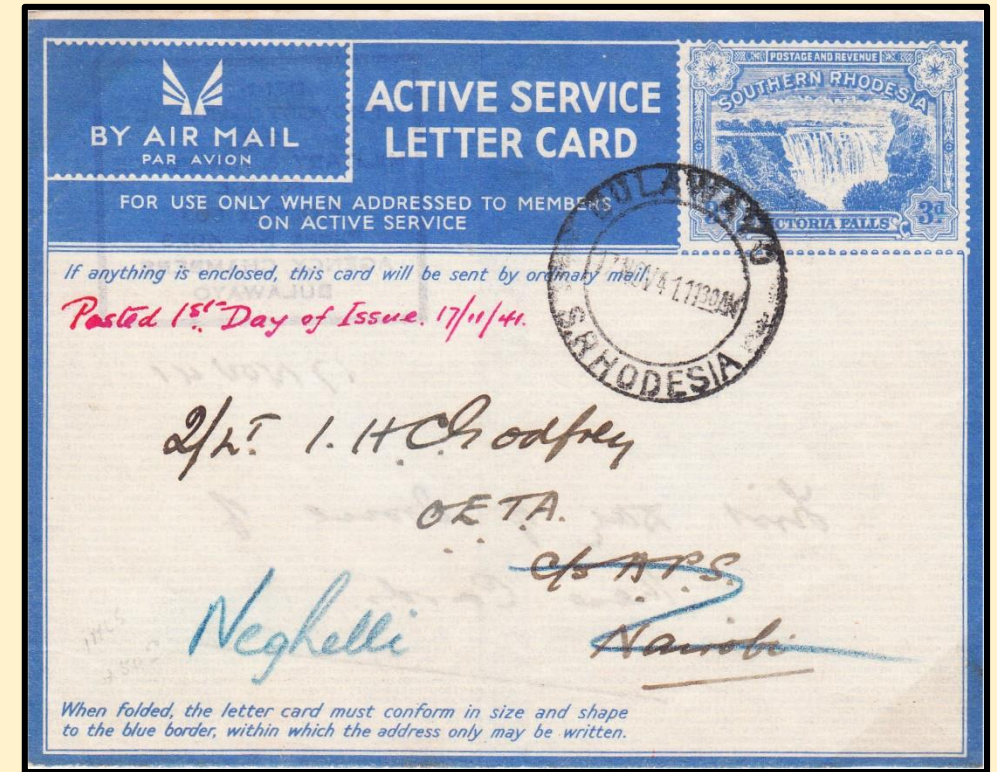
31st October 1944 Civilian Air Letter Card
From Bulawayo to Haifa, Palestine

ASLC to Kenya and Ethiopia

ASLC initially addressed to OETA (Occupied Enemy Territory Administration) and forwarded to Neghelli in Ethiopia



Map showing location of Neghelli



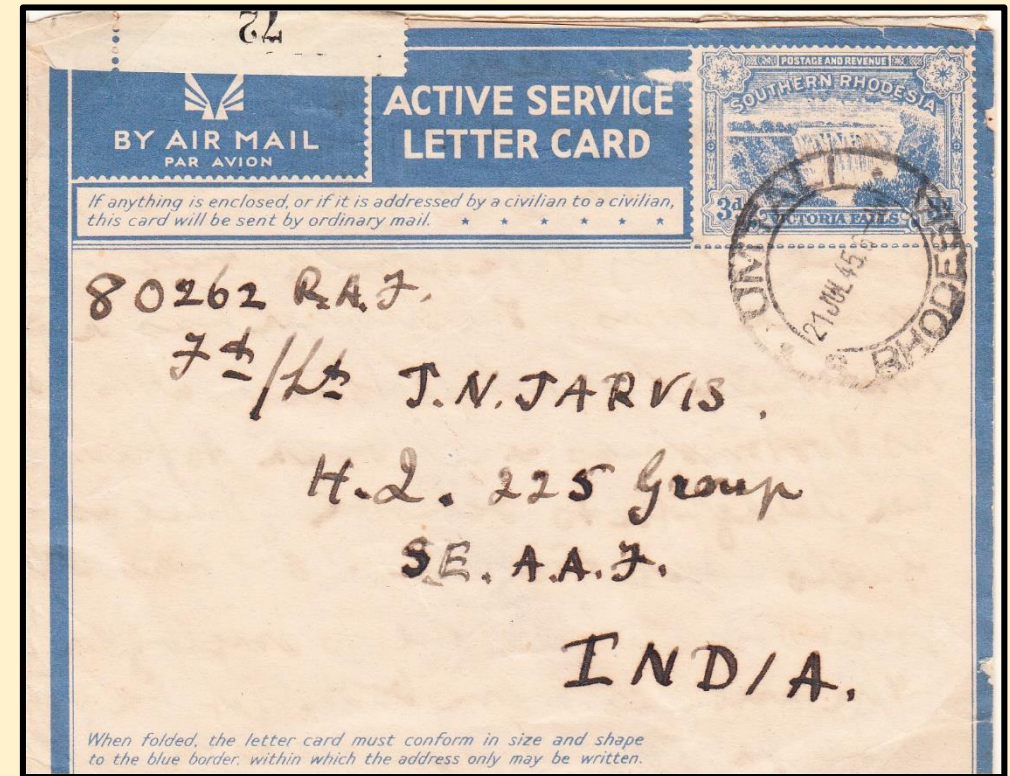
17th November 1941 Type 1a ASLC
From a Serviceman in Bulawayo to a Serviceman in Kenya
(Stage 1 Regulations)

Posted on First Day of Service

ASLC to India



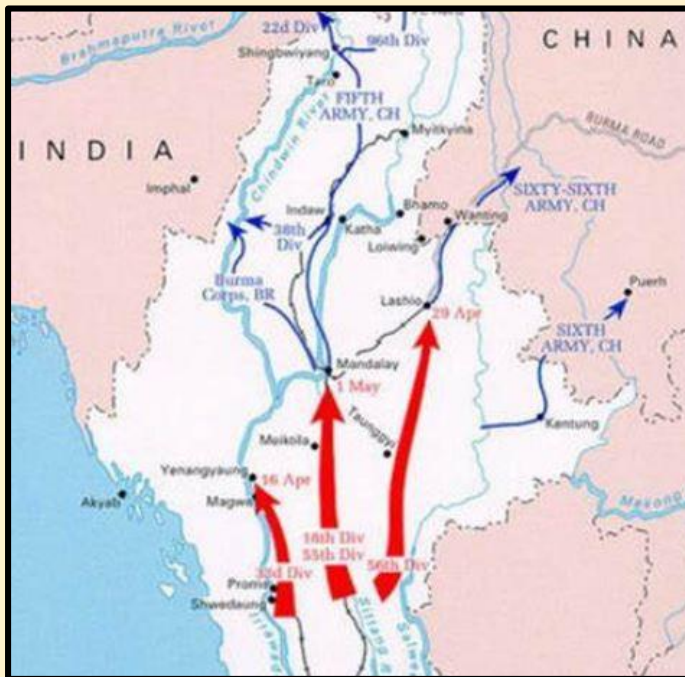
Type 1b ASLC
From a Serviceman at Hillside Camp to a Civilian in India.
(a Variant of Stage 2 Regulations)



21st July 1945 Type 2b ASLC
From a Civilian in Umtali to a Serviceman in India.
Stage 2a Regulations

ASLC to South East Asia (Burma)

7th Battalion Gold Coast Regiment was part of the Royal West Africa Frontier Force which served in Burma with 5 (W.A.) Brigade, 81 (W.A.) Division



Map showing the Burma Campaign

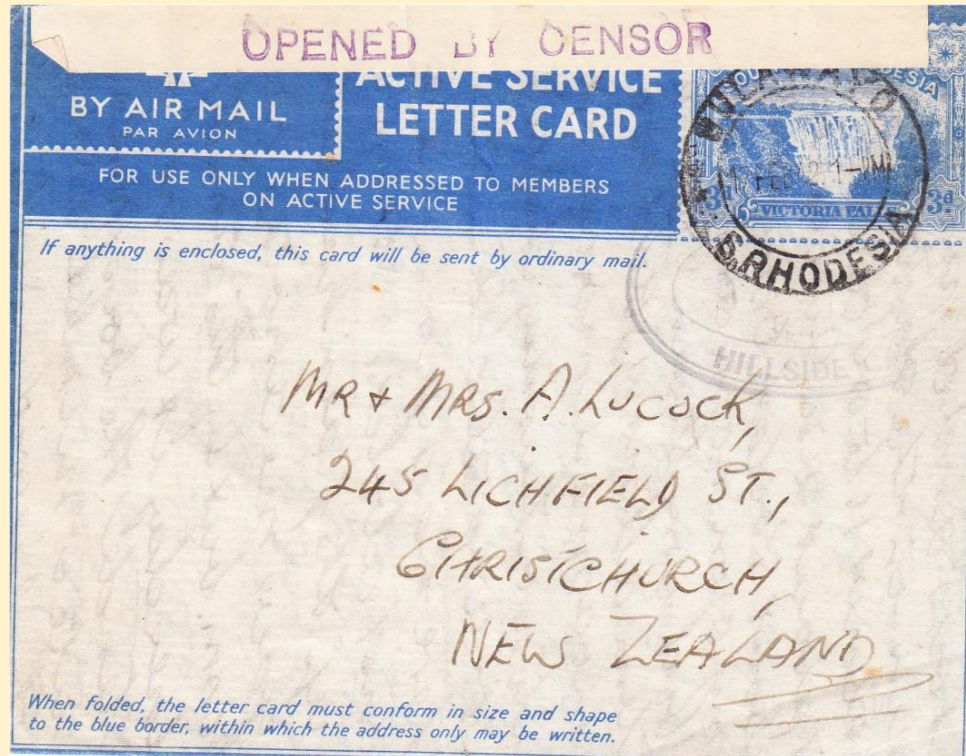


Date unclear Type 2b ASLC
From a Civilian in S. Rhodesia to a Serviceman in Burma
Stage 2a Regulations

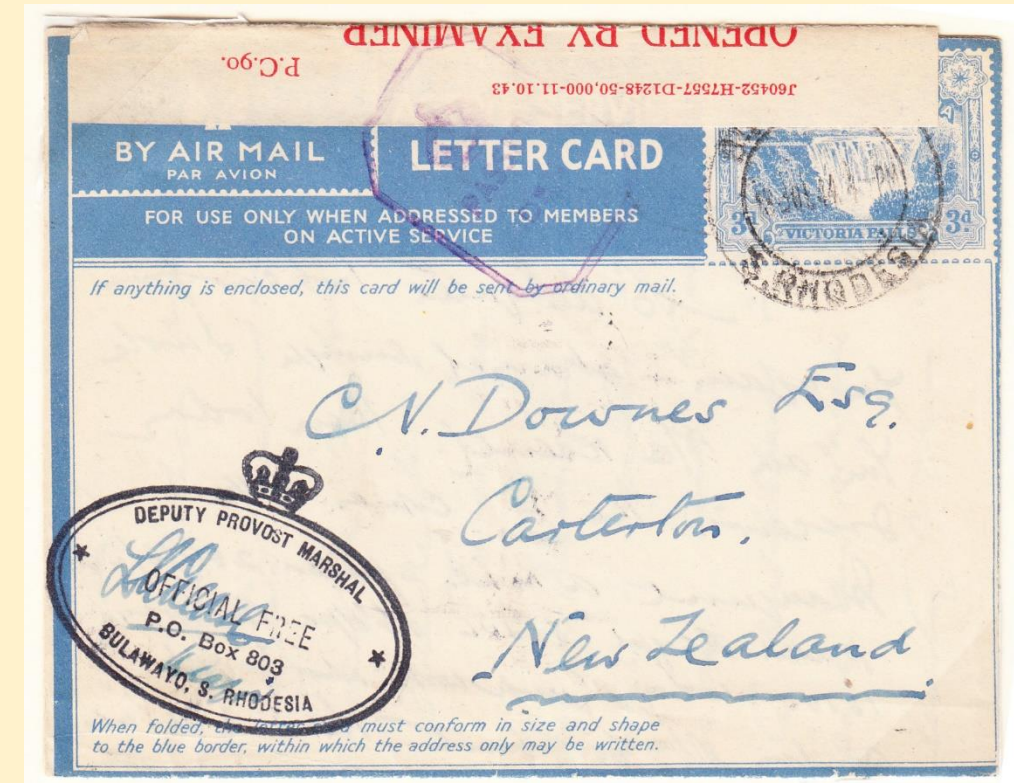
Image taken from the Internet

Bendigo Military Museum collection

ASLC to New Zealand.



Type 1a ASLC
From a Serviceman at Hillside Camp
to a Civilian in New Zealand
Stage 2a Regulations



13th July 1944 Type 1c ASLC
From Deputy Provost Marshall in Bulawayo to a Civilian in
New Zealand
Stage 2a Regulations

ASLC to U.S.A.

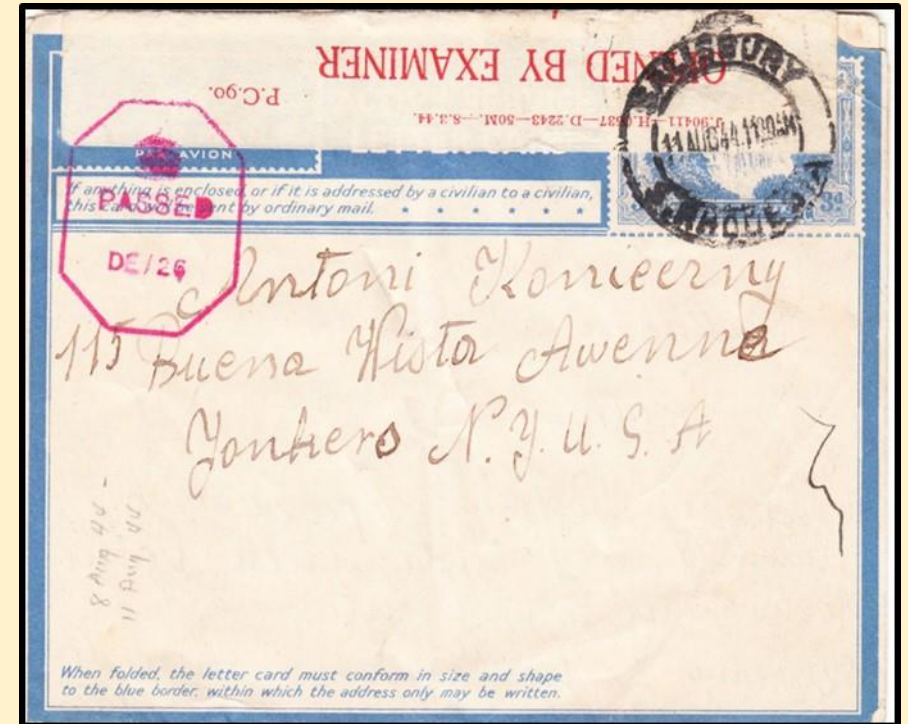
ASLC from a refugee in Rusape Refugee Settlement

The writer, Marysia, writes to her Uncle as follows *"I dear uncle feeling fine only I am worried that five weeks passed and have not received a letter from my husband. I do not know if he is alive or something happened because now as you know uncle there are terrible battles in which he takes action"*

Thus the writer's husband is with the Polish Free Forces and therefore she would be entitled to use ASLCs for her letters to him. It seems probable that she did not appreciate that these ASLC could not be used to the USA.



Cachet of Rusapi Polish Refugee Settlement (on reverse)



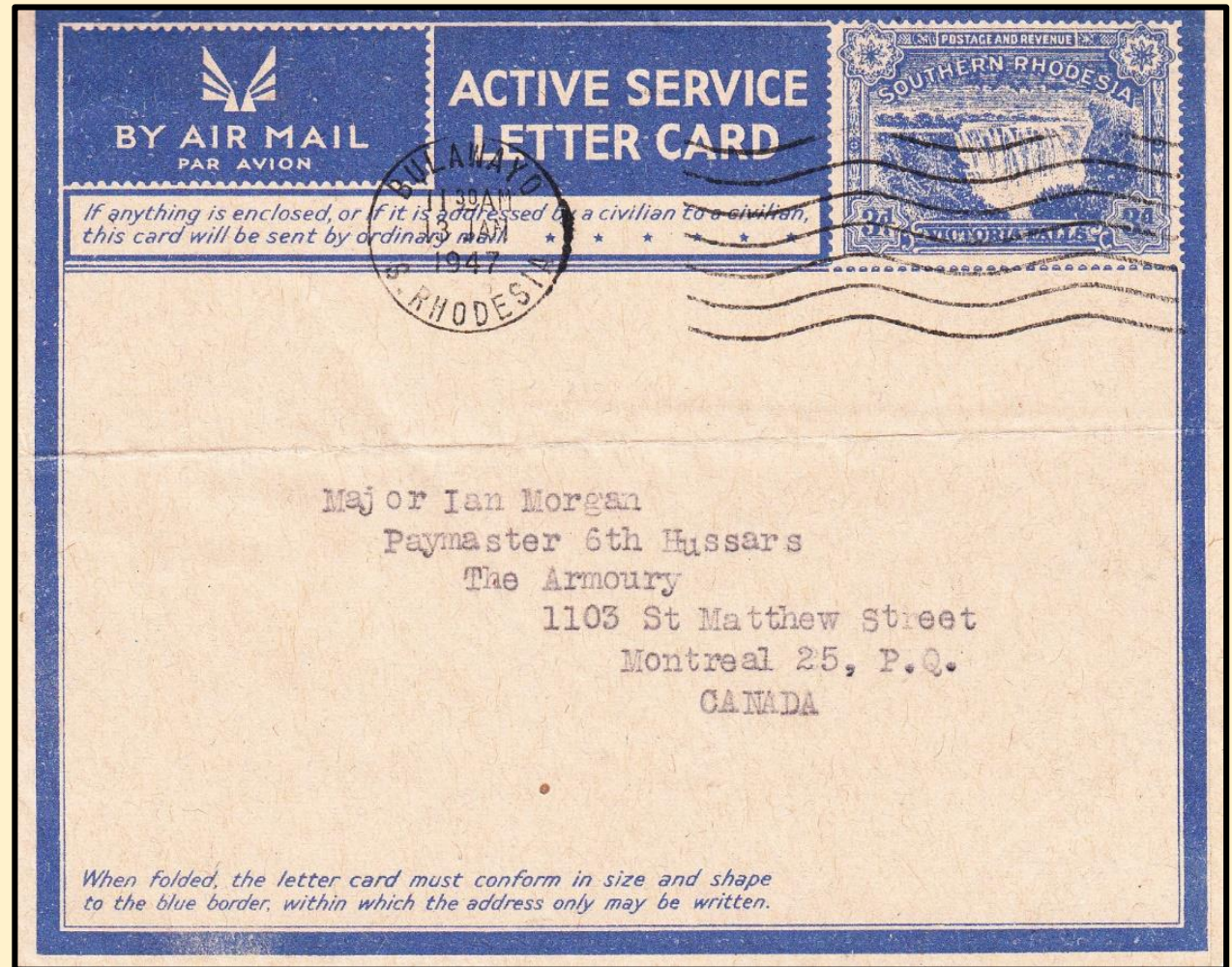
11th August 1944 Type 2b ASLC
From a Refugee in Rusape Camp to
her uncle in the U.S.A.
(Not covered by Regulations)

As the surface rate to the U.S.A. was 3d.
the ASLC most likely went by sea.

ASLC to Canada

Late use of ASLC to Canada

Canada was never part of the ASLC
service



13th January 1947 Type 2b ASLC

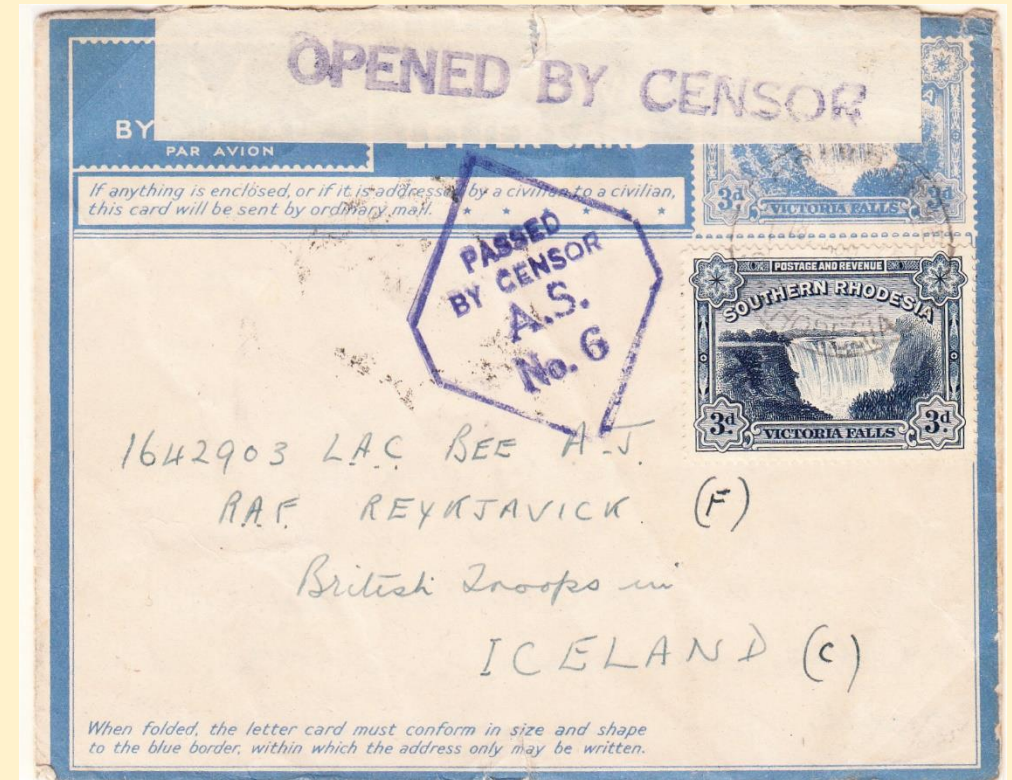
From Bulawayo to Serviceman in Canada

This ASLC would have been treated as a normal letter and sent by sea

ASLC to Iceland

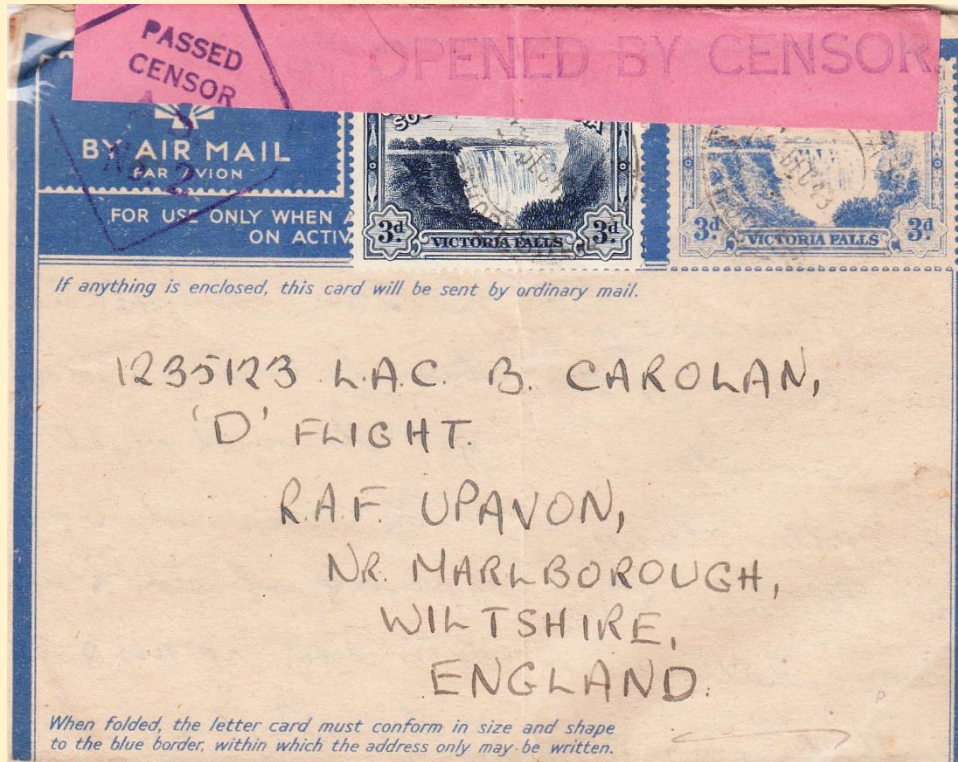
On 10th May 1940 British Military Forces sailed into Reykjavik harbour. The number of troops stationed there was about 25,000. In July 1941 the responsibility for Iceland's defence passed to the United States, but the British retained a number of squadrons for the protection of Atlantic convoys.

Iceland was not officially covered by any of the ASLC regulations but it would appear that this has been treated as if to the UK.



18th August 1945 Type 2b ASLC
From a Serviceman in Salisbury to
a Serviceman at Reykjavik (his brother)
.(Variant of Stage 3 Regulations)

ASLC to U.K.



17th December 1943 Type 1b ASLC
From a Serviceman at Moffat Camp to a Serviceman in U.K.
(Variant of Stage 3 Regulations)



19th March 1945 Type 2b ASLC
From a Serviceman at Guinea Fowl to a Civilian in UK.
(Unapproved Stage 3 Regulations)
Stage 3 Regulations did not cover ASLC to Civilians and
ASLC may have been sent by sea

ASLC to U.K.

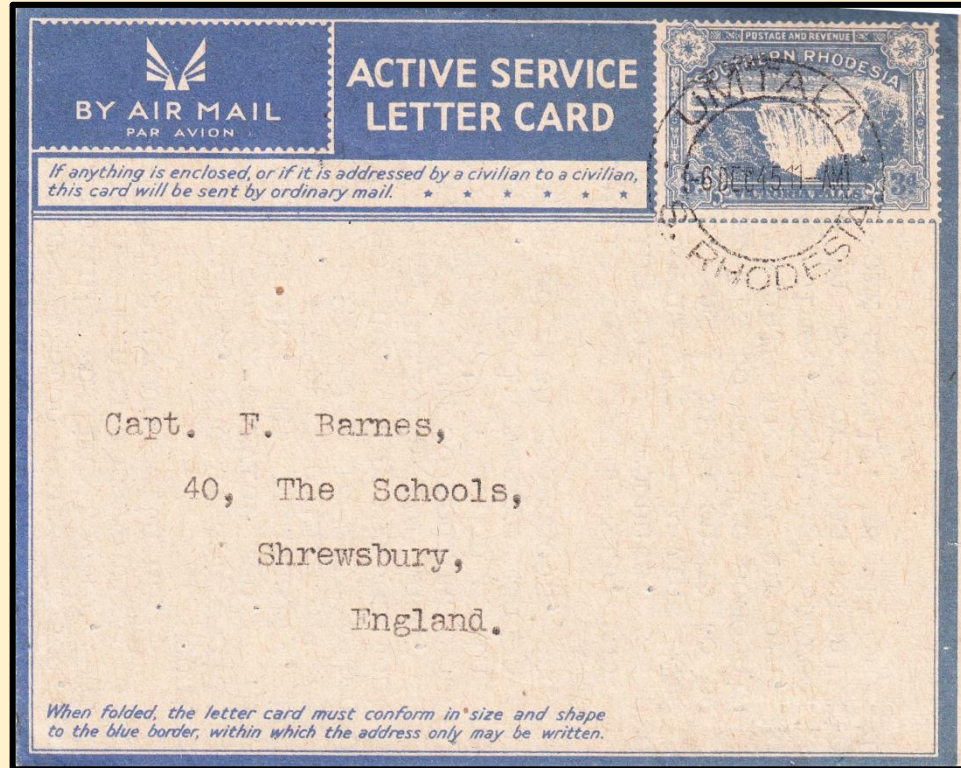
Use of South African ASLC to the UK correctly
rated but officially not covered by
Stage 3 Regulations



Date not clear, South African ASLC
From a Serviceman at Norton to a Civilian in UK.
(Unapproved Stage 3 Regulations)
Stage 3 Regulations did not cover ASLC to Civilians and
ASLC may have been sent by sea

ASLC Used by Civilians to U.K.

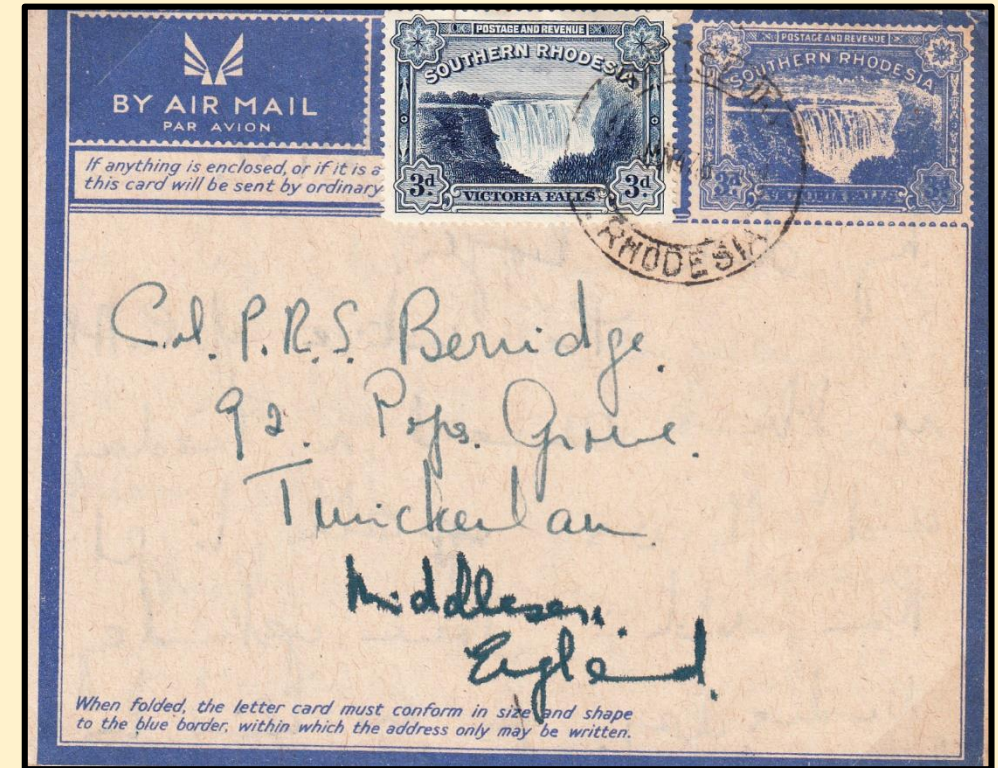
Incorrect Use of Card



4th December 1945 Type 2b ASLC
From a Civilian in Umtali to a Civilian in the UK

The writer writes "This 3d. Card is really only for Service use and is one left over after Dennis was demoted but I expect it will pass muster."

Correct Use of Card



15th January 1947 Type 2b ASLC
From a Civilian in Salisbury to a Civilian in the UK
ALSC could be used to the UK if correctly uprated
(Postal Notice 31 of 44)