

An Aerogramme Safari



During the Second World War air mail letter sheets were introduced and found to be convenient for overseas correspondence. In 1942, the UPU established an international standard size and weight (124 x 129 mm, 1/10 oz). Worldwide, numerous countries adapted the format for convenience: the front displayed stylised wings with BY AIR MAIL/PAR AVION; letters folded along dotted lines and the sender's name and address shown on the reverse. Gummed flaps guaranteed confidentiality of correspondence once censorship ended on 30 September 1945.

(Top left: June 1948 aerogramme, SR 1 addressed to Switzerland from Bulawayo with imprinted portrait of King George VI)

The paper, extensively employed throughout the Commonwealth nations was manufactured by Wiggins Teape & Company Limited in England, and watermarked 'KENT VALE PARCHMENT'



In a comparatively short while all the three territories, Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland adopted the format, with printing outsourced to McCorquodale & Co Limited, Wolverton in Lancashire.

The second issue NR2 was issued on 29 June 1952 with the same 6d stamp in pink depicting King George VI, though the King had died some four months earlier. This issue had four lines of instructions below the etiquette and no line underneath.

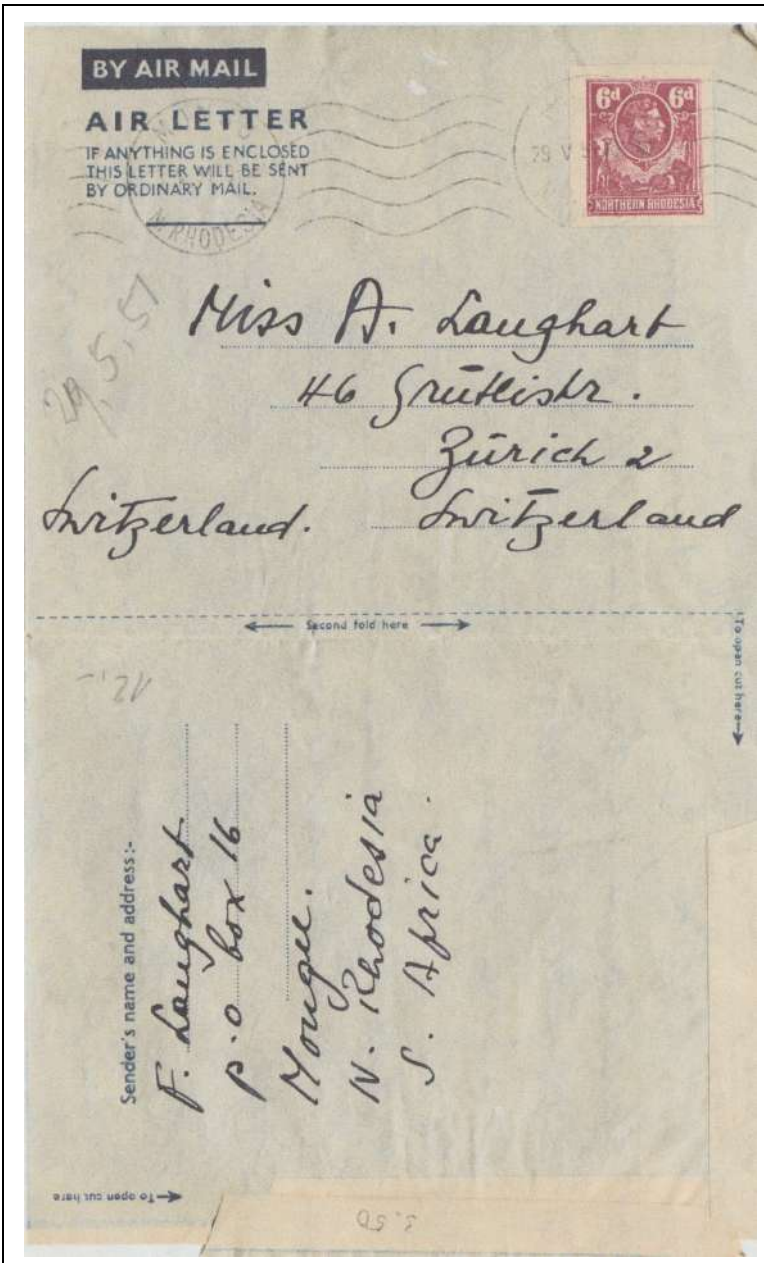
(Lower left: a 1951 aerogramme from PMS missionary Frieda Langhart, Mongu Barotseland addressed to her sister Anna in Zürich, Switzerland)

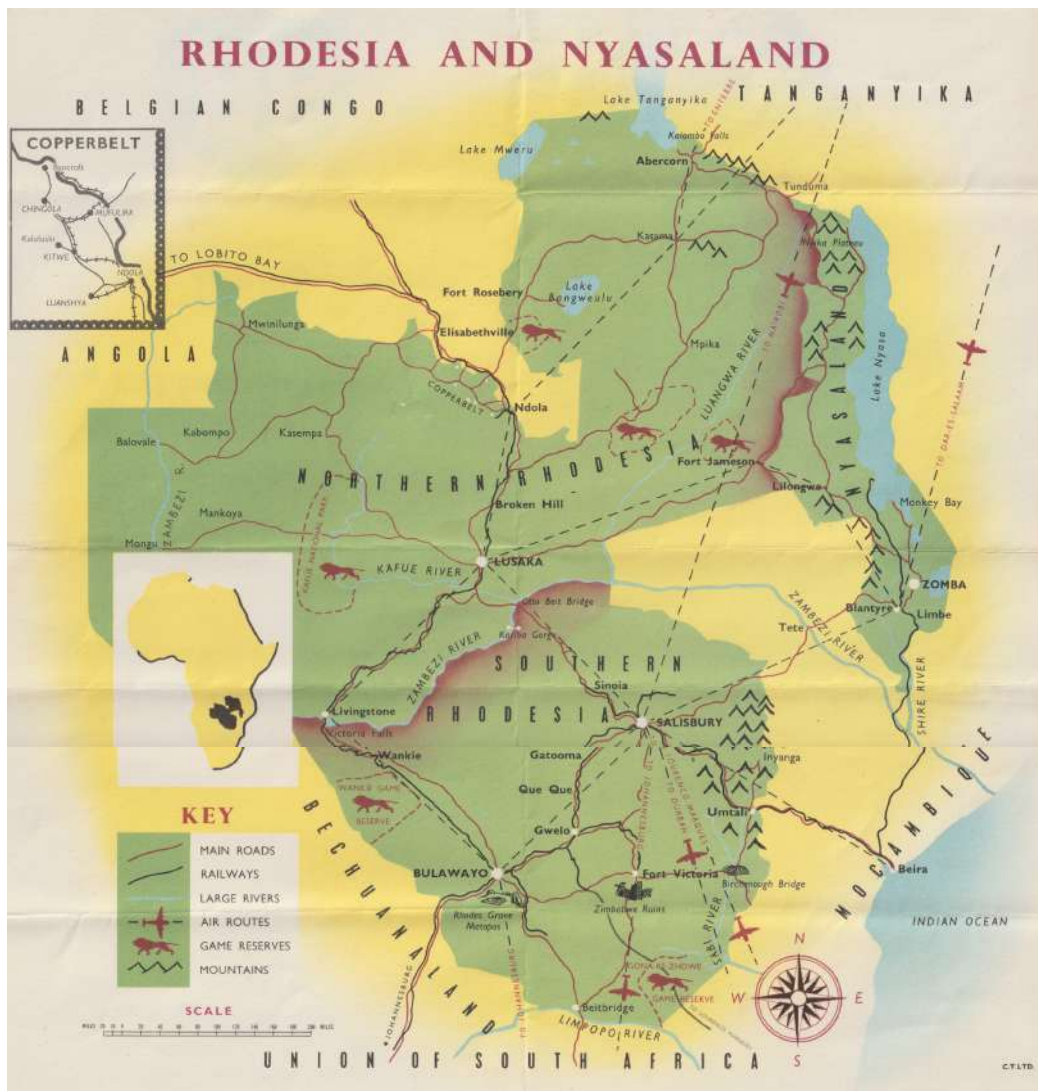
Here, we trace the continuing popularity of the pictorial aerogramme format promoting tourism and, in some instances, for propaganda purposes.

Source

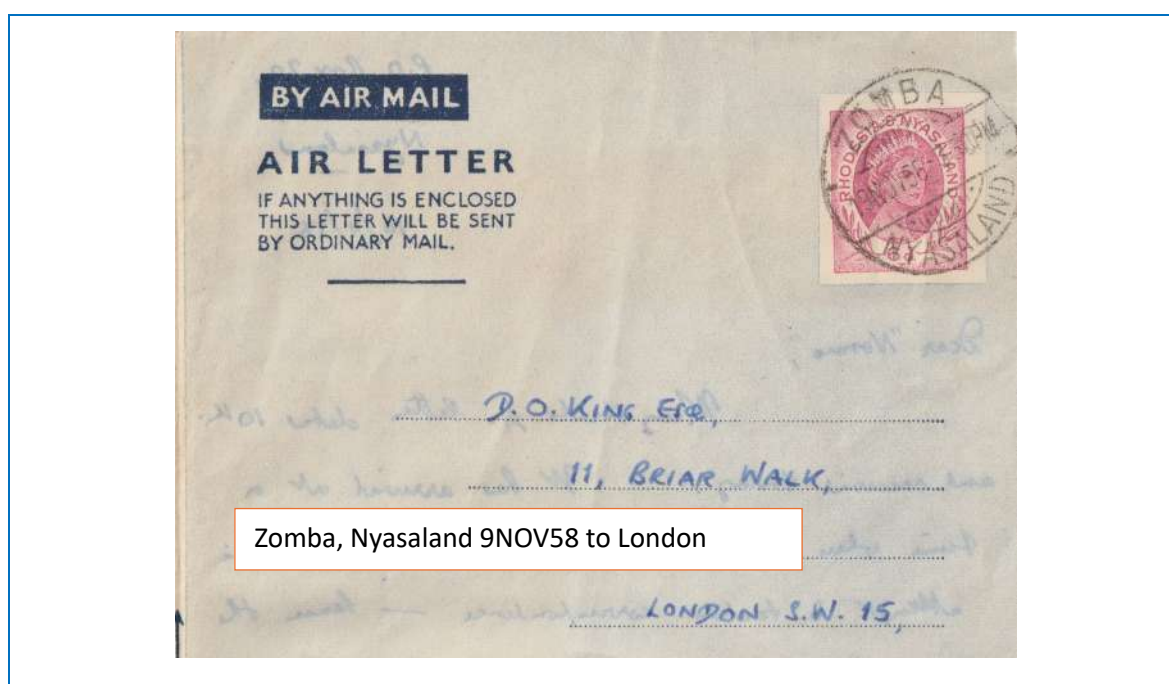
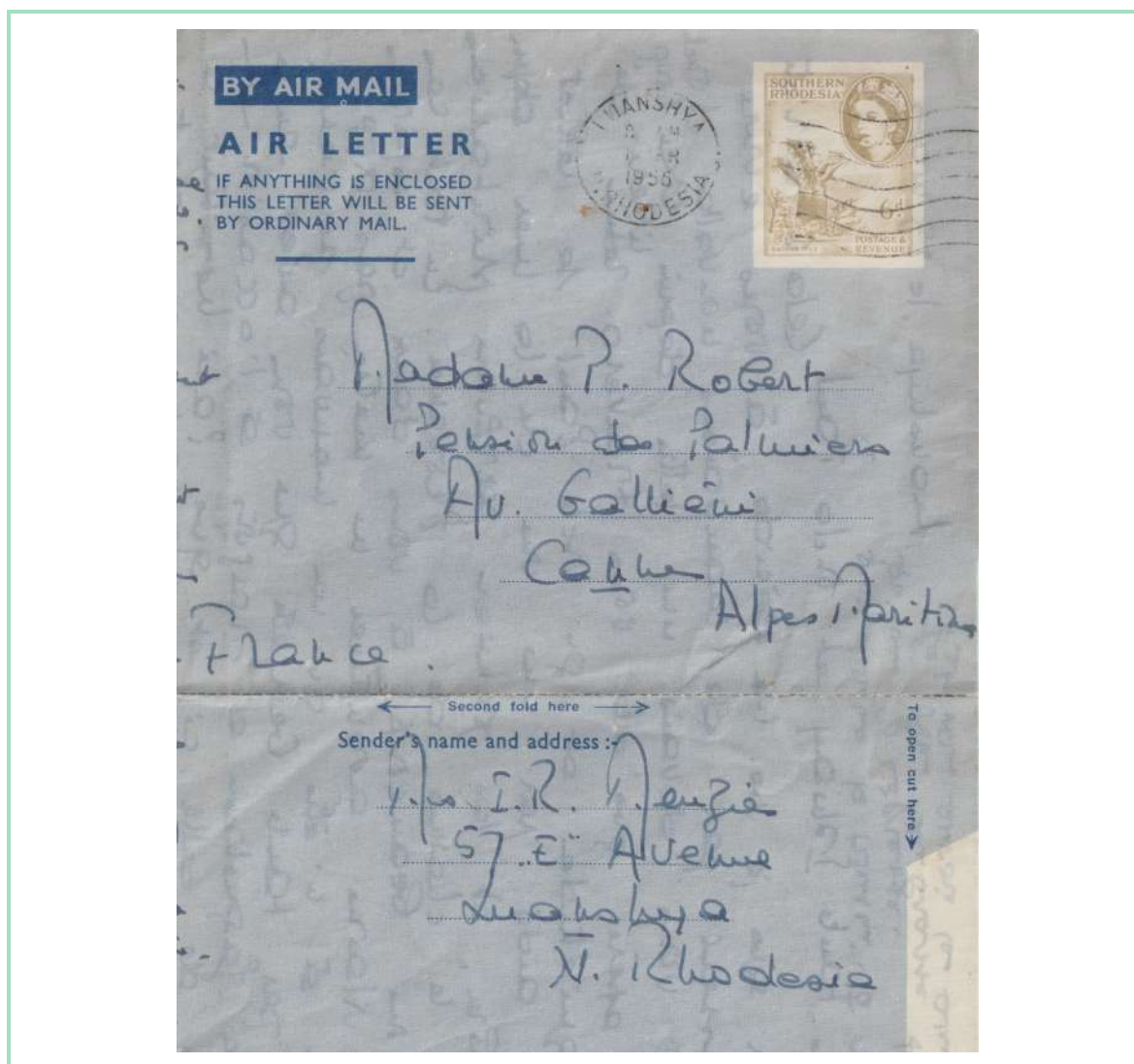
Aerogrammes of British Central Africa, Chapters 1-12, RSC website

<https://www.rhodesianstudycircle.org.uk/aerogrammes-of-british-central-africa/>



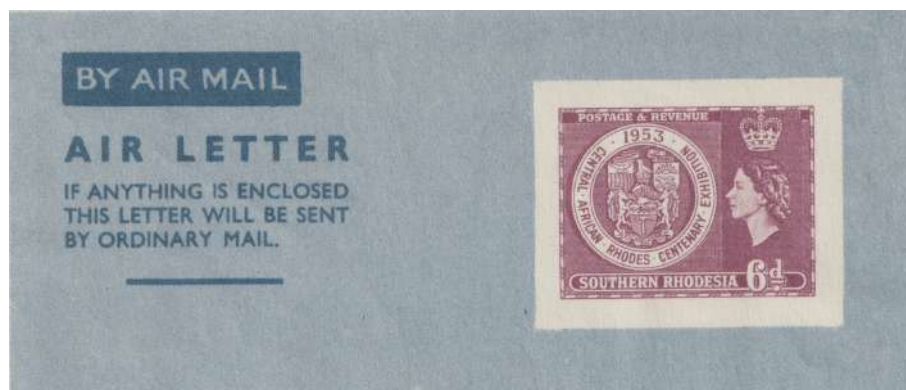


Use of Southern Rhodesia aerogramme (SR8) from the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia to France 1955 and from Zomba, Nyasaland November 1958 (SG7); as with all the previous air mail letter sheets issued in the three territories, this aerogramme featuring Queen Elizabeth II was designed for the most common postal rate to the UK (6d). Additional postage to other countries, mainly outside Africa, required additional postage stamps.

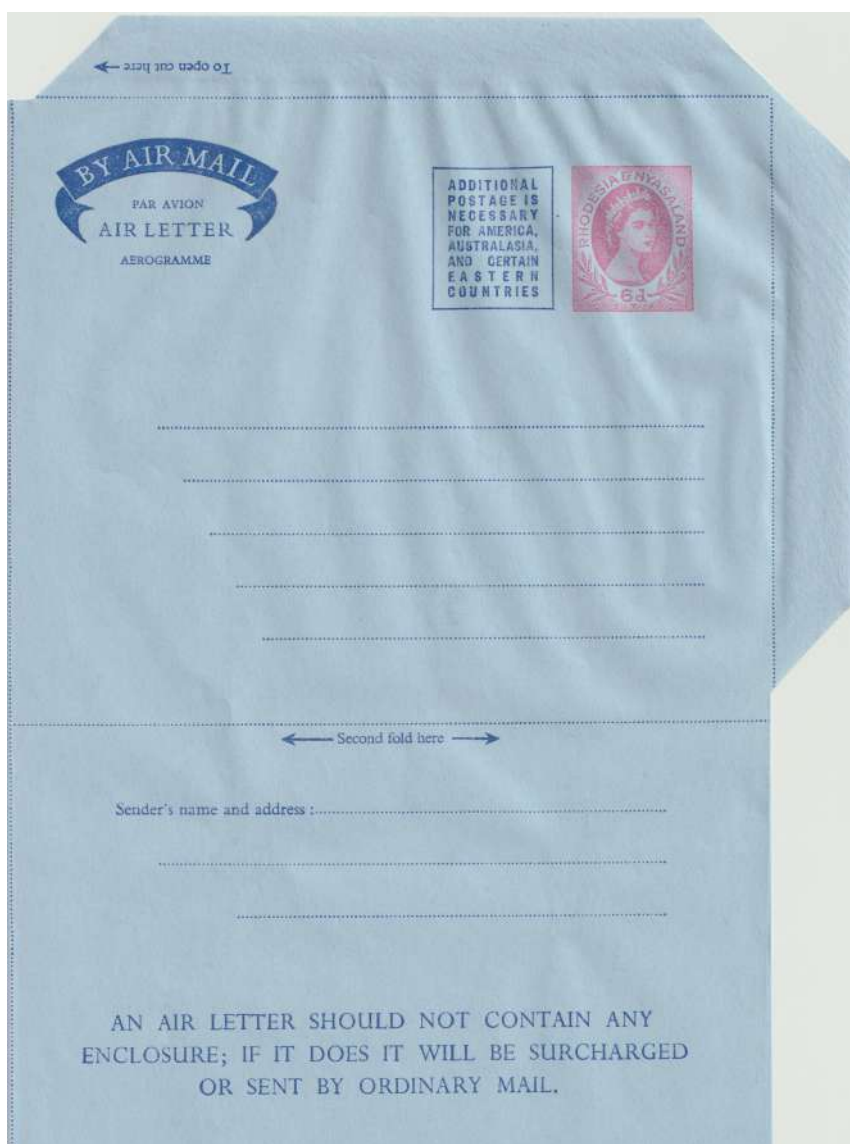


An air letter sheet (SG76) bearing Queen Elizabeth II's portrait produced for the **Central Africa Rhodes Centenary Exhibition** in Bulawayo from 30 May to 29 August 1953.

Authorised for use in all three territories, none are known used outside Southern Rhodesia.

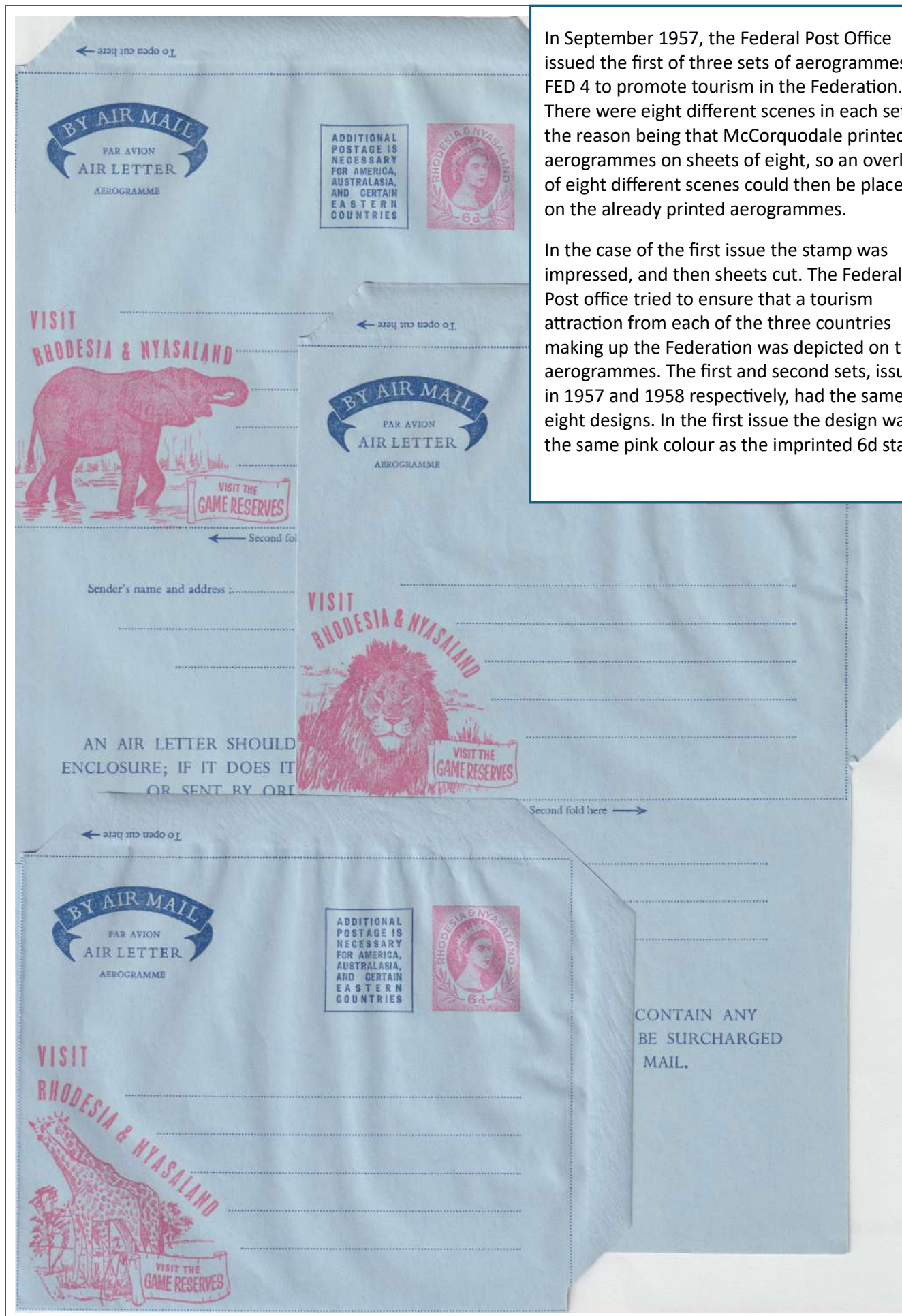


In December 1956, the Federal Post Office issued a new aerogramme (FED2), featuring the redesigned étiquette printed by McCorquodale & Co which was by then the standard aerogramme used in the United Kingdom and many Commonwealth countries; the FED 3 (shown below) featured a box next to the imprinted 6d stamp giving a reminder when posting that additional postage was required for certain countries



In September 1957, the Federal Post Office issued the first of three sets of aerogrammes FED 4 to promote tourism in the Federation. There were eight different scenes in each set, the reason being that McCorquodale printed aerogrammes on sheets of eight, so an overlay of eight different scenes could then be placed on the already printed aerogrammes.

In the case of the first issue the stamp was impressed, and then sheets cut. The Federal Post office tried to ensure that a tourism attraction from each of the three countries making up the Federation was depicted on the aerogrammes. The first and second sets, issued in 1957 and 1958 respectively, had the same eight designs. In the first issue the design was in the same pink colour as the imprinted 6d stamp.

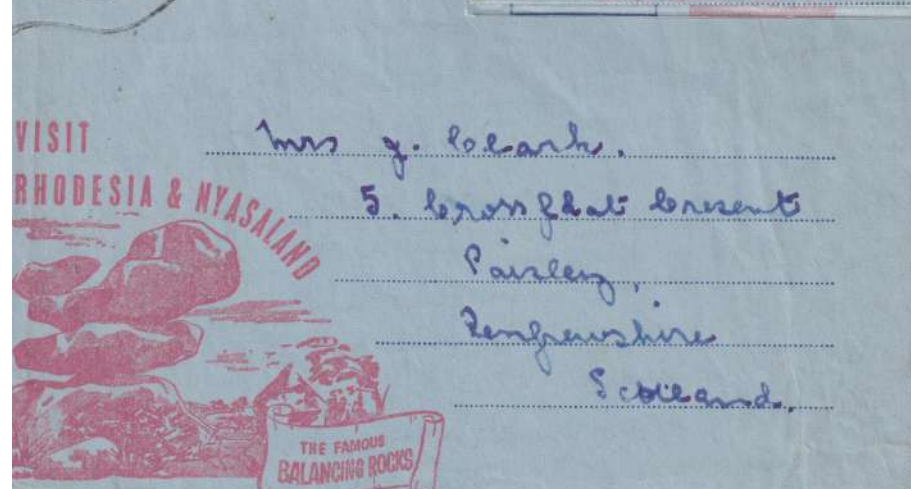
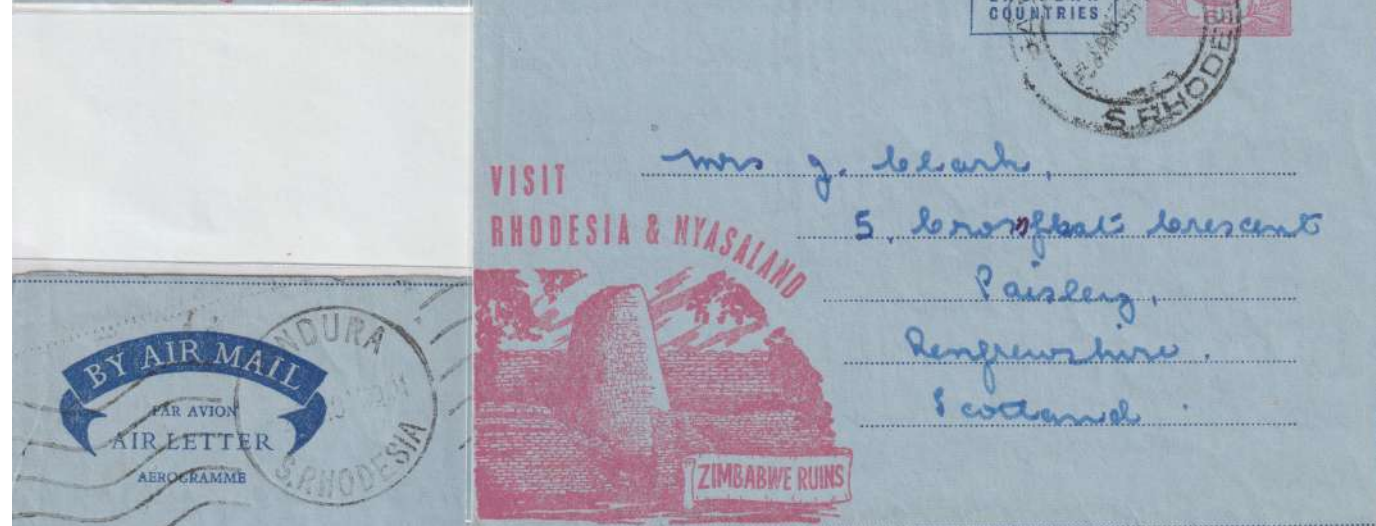




FED 4 aerogrammes included a reminder box for additional postage needed for some areas; this issue was the last made by the Federation with an imprinted stamp.

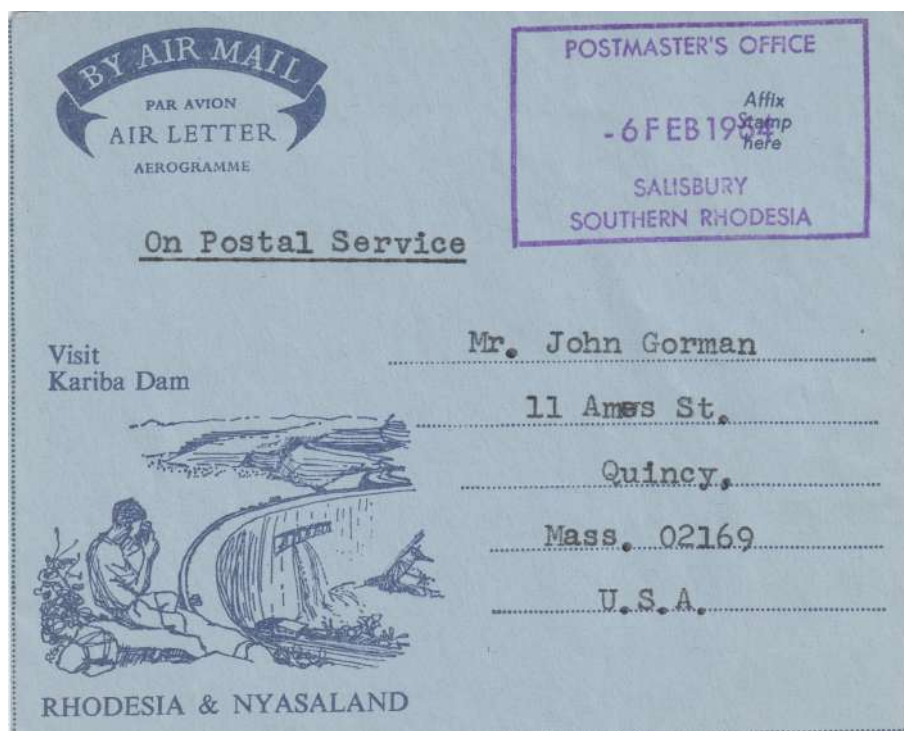
Here, we show three examples used for correspondence in 1958; Visit Lake Nyasa, the Zimbabwe Ruins and Epworth Balancing Rocks.

Mail sent from Shamva and Bindura to Paisley in Scotland.

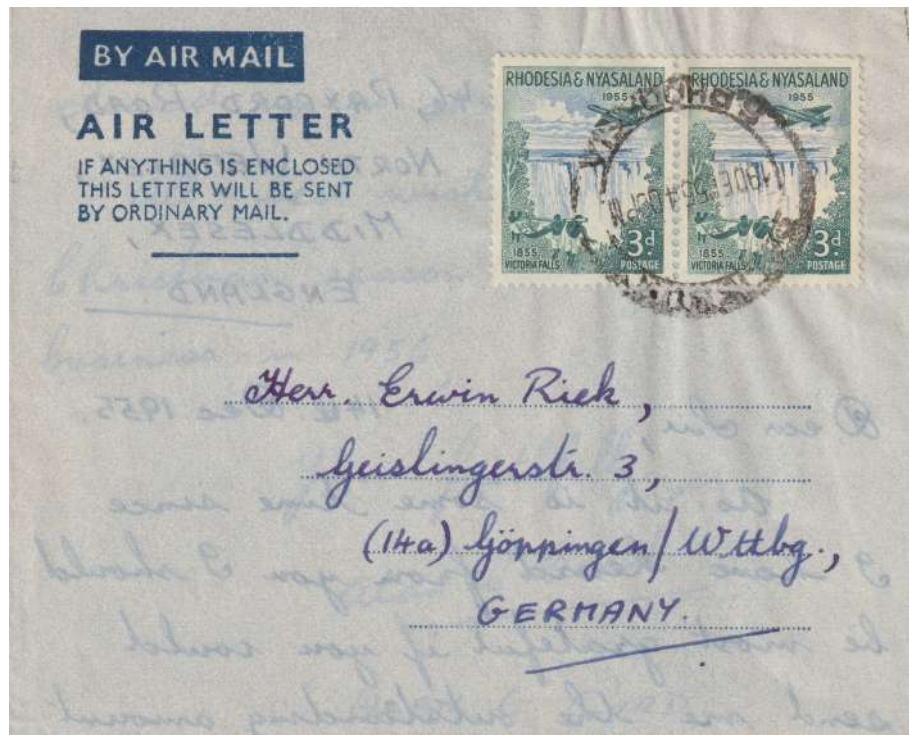


In order to meet the continuing demand for aerogrammes, the Federal Post Office sold formula aerogrammes from 1958 (FED5 and 5a) with no imprinted stamp, at the cost of ½ d each. Two printings of this were issued with landscapes and monuments in blue-black ink. New scenes showed tourists viewing the Victoria Falls and Wankie game reserve; a further series in 1959 (FED6 shown below) included a view of Lake Kariba on somewhat darker paper.

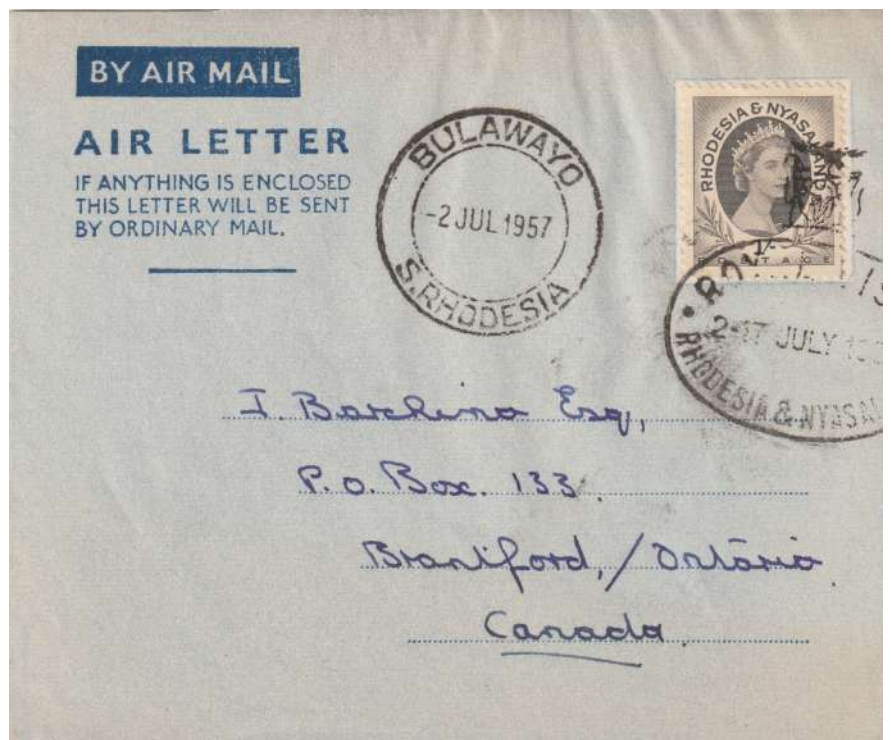
Following the dissolution of the Federation on 31 December 1963, unstamped aerogrammes continued to be used with postage stamps from the country of origin. In some instances the words 'Rhodesia and Nyasaland' were obliterated.



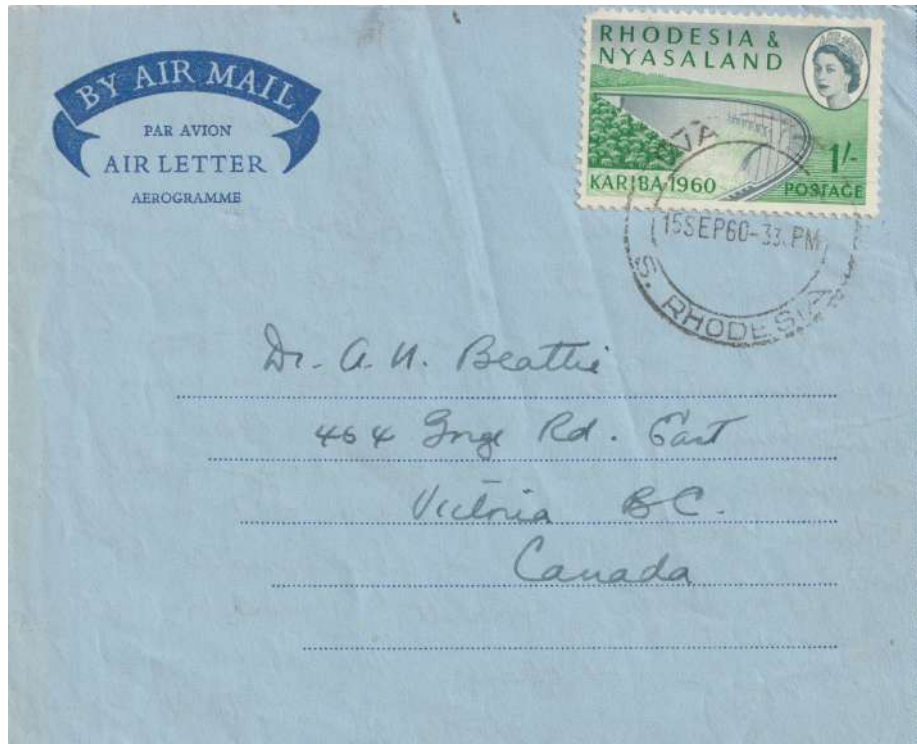
Livingstone: Centenary of the discovery of the Victoria Falls 1955



Royal Visit of the Queen Mother, Bulawayo 2 July 1957 (banquet with the Governor of Southern Rhodesia)



Kariba Dam was officially opened by the Queen Mother on 17 May 1960 as part of her Royal Visit. Below, an example of the FED7 aerogramme, blue ink on light-blue paper printed by McCorquodale & Co Ltd, Wolverton.



The Seventh Commonwealth Mining and Metallurgical Congress held in Rhodesia from 10 April to 20 May, 1961 under the auspices of the Commonwealth Council of Mining and Metallurgical Institutions. Here, the FED6 aerogramme thought to have been issued late 1958.

The 6d. stamp depicts a miner with a drill, and prepared from a photograph supplied by Nchanga Copper Mine. The miner is shown drilling underground with a drill powered by compressed air (FED6



Post Federation: Zambia and Malawi Aerogrammes

Following the dissolution of the Federation on 31 December 1963, many aerogrammes used during the Federal period continued to be used in Zambia, and unstamped aerogrammes were used in Nyasaland/Malawi with postage stamps from the country.

Zambia postal authorities issued ZAM2 on 24 October 1964 with an illustration of a Makishi dancer in blue, printed by McCorquodale & Co. Ltd. To promote tourism in Zambia the postal authorities thereafter issued a series of aerogrammes under the logo 'Zambia in the sun'



Nyasaland then Malawi continued to use the 'Visit Lake Nyasa' Federal Post Office tourism issue, often obliterating the words 'Rhodesia and Nyasaland'. Later aerogrammes issued from 1970 onwards (MAL9, 10 and 10a) promote tourism ('Lilongwe Capital City') and feature a 9d stamp in red.

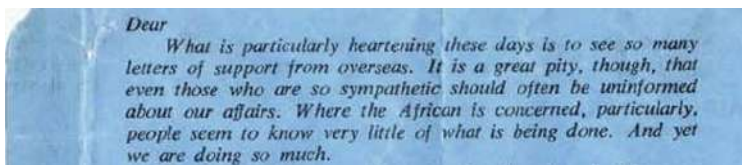


Rhodesia UDI Aerogrammes

After Rhodesia unilaterally declared independence in 1965, the United Nations recommended implementation of economic sanctions; in December 1966, the UN reiterated that sanctions be mandatory for all member states.



'There remains a lack of detail as to the precise regulations that authorised the British postal authorities to implement their postal sanctions' writes Mike Hughes in *Postal Sanctions Against Rhodesia* (2018) but breaking off postal services was, effectively, in compliance with United Nations requirements. Within weeks, fifty countries suspended, returned (or surcharged) letters bearing Rhodesian stamps. Letters were marked **Invalid Stamps Used**. Rhodesians were encouraged during UDI to circulate aerogramme propaganda letters to overseas friends and

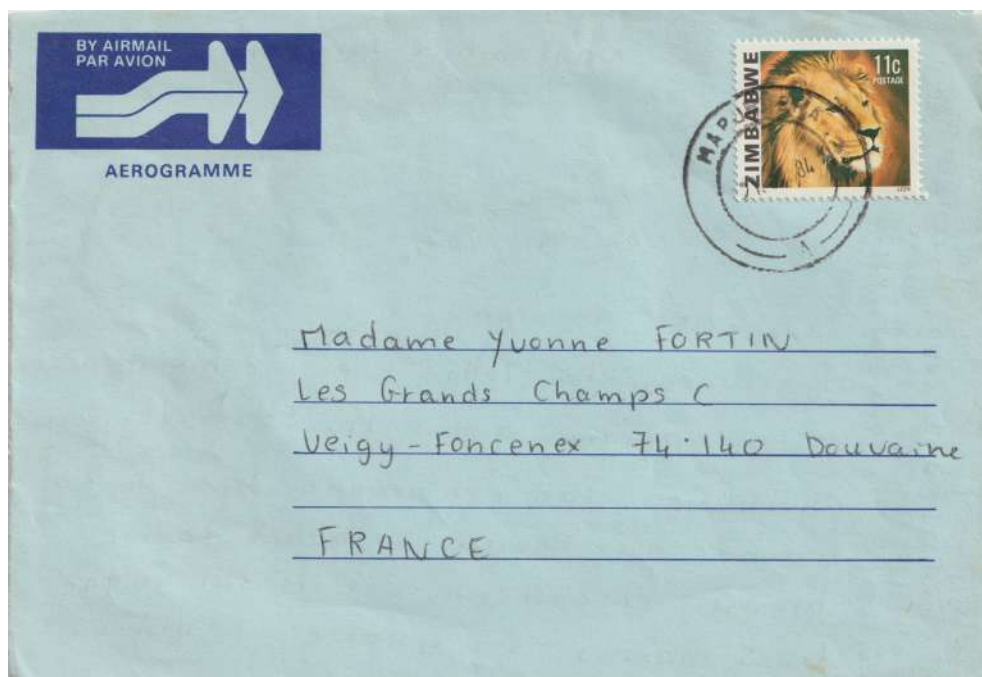


family (RP5, March 1966): 'What is particularly heartening these days is to see so many letters of support from overseas. It is a great pity, though, that even those who are so sympathetic are uninformed about our affairs.'

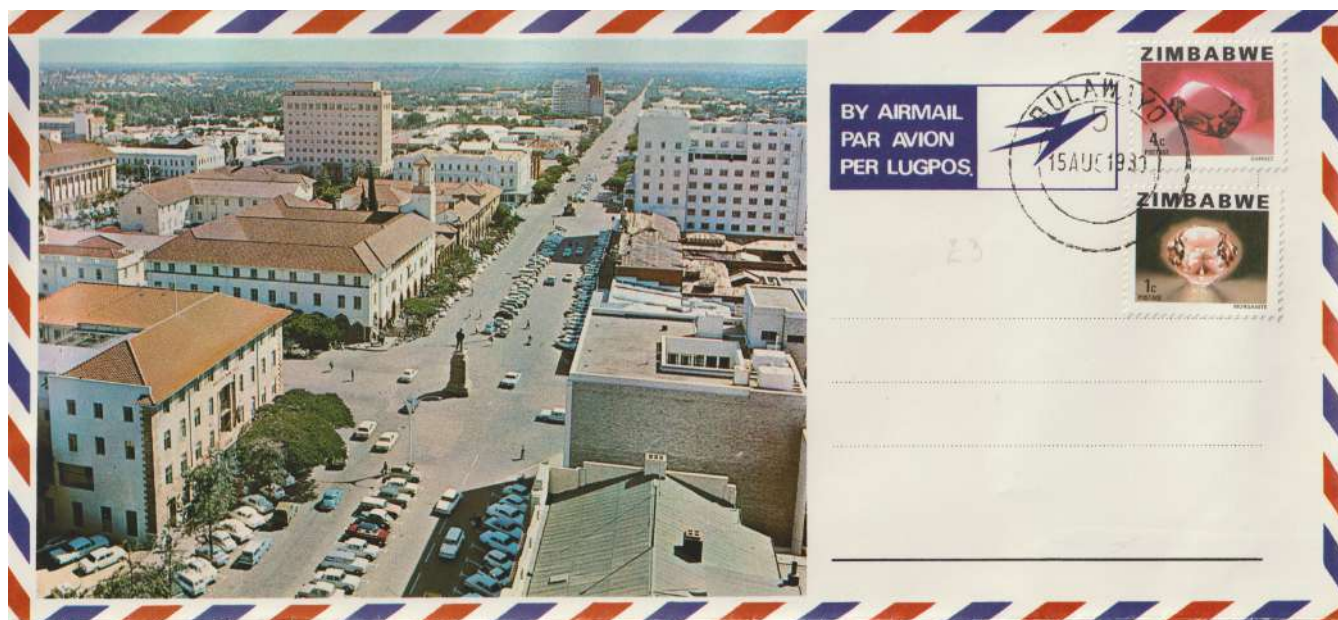


'The imposition of sanctions created many trading problems for us. We find that we are compelled to export at a discount and import at premium. The result is that we lose out on both transactions. This has the effect of reducing profit margins internally, and at the national level, it has an adverse effect on our balance of payments and foreign exchange reserves.' PM Ian Smith, statement to the Rhodesian House of Assembly, 17 April 1973

Aerogrammes and pictorial Air Letters produced by the Posts and Telecommunications Corporation of Zimbabwe post-independence. The first example, printed in July 1983 (ZW1) used the PTC logo and had folds lower third upwards then again in half from bottom, blue ink on light blue paper:



Subsequently, the Posts and Telecommunications Corporation produced four sets of aerogrammes, each having four small colour photographs and a large colour photograph of scenes around Zimbabwe. These aerogrammes no longer used the traditional UPU format. The first sets listed as ZW 4a to 4f consisted of six scenes, shown here 'View of Bulawayo Main Street' and featuring tourist venues in the country. Issued in 1986 and printed by Mardon Printers (later NatPrint.)





Example of the ZW2c format aerogramme for use by Meikles Hotel clients:



Zimbabwe Pictorial Air Letter (ALC 8) 1984 published by Big Game Photography circa 1982 featuring photography by David Trickett





Tourism Promotion in Africa (formerly Big Game Photography Pvt Ltd). An illustrated Air Letter with full front of Flame Lilies, Crested Crane, Guinea Fowl, Bee Eater, Masked Weaver and Proteas.



Aerogrammes for decades a much appreciated, convenient and inexpensive mail service now, sadly, outmoded.