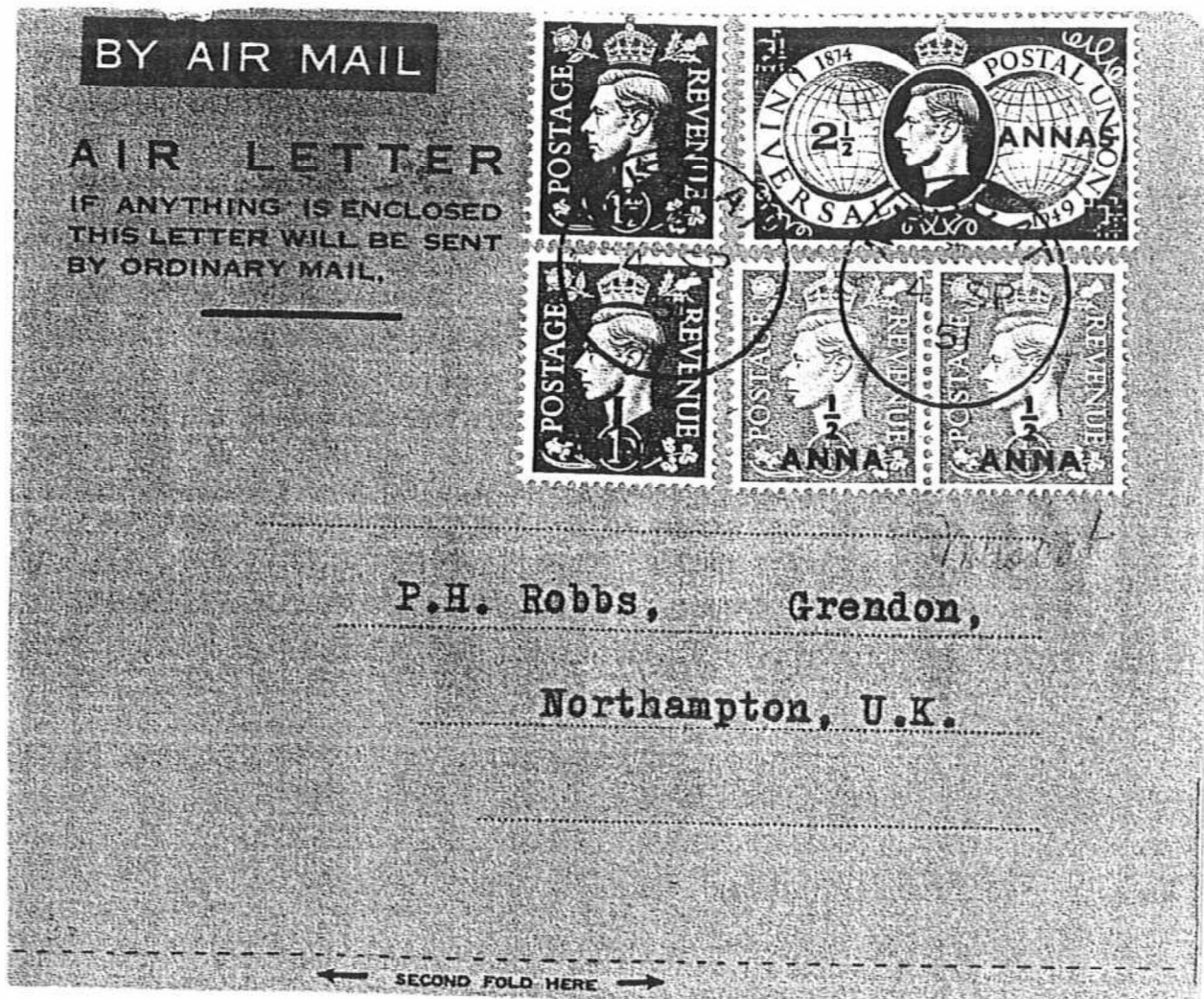


ARABIAN GULF STATES

POSTAL HISTORY

QUARTERLY



Muscat 4.9.51

A good array of stamps and a very crisp postmark

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Editorial

This time I am focusing on aerogrammes over the first 50 years from war time use through the British Postal Agencies period to the independent postal administrations. Aerogrammes were once the fastest means of mass international communication but the advent of direct dialling, fax and e-mail has made them as old fashioned as the mail coach. Kuwait has already ceased issuing them.

Air Mail Letter Card and Air Letter are earlier names for the Aerogramme. There is confusion in some auction lists which also use the term 'air letter' to describe any light weight cover with red, white and blue borders. Commercially used aerogrammes have always been hard to find. As they often contain personal or confidential messages they do not reach the stamp trade. Lack of used material has always made it difficult to know what has been issued and when, particularly when postal administrations did not promote the sale of postal stationery or keep records. The few devotees interested in aerogrammes took to sending them under separate cover for cancellation and return. This became such a common practice that the British Postal Agencies used an official cachet to denote these items. (see pg.21) To compound the difficulties Abu Dhabi and Dubai sometimes applied FDI cancellations after the true dates of issue. Many issues, particularly those from the BPA period, can be sub-divided based upon variations in the layout of the instructions and the lines of dots and gaps in the lines. Some sheets from the India period and the independent P.O. period were also printed on watermarked paper. This gives a great scope for long lists but claims of rarity for some of these varieties are often based on very small samples. However a premium on the price is justified for commercially used. In my experience over 30 years less than 10% of used are truly commercial.

3
Air Mail Letter Cards

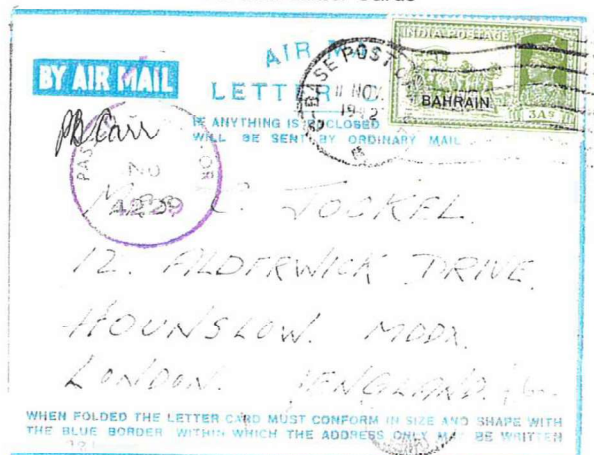


fig.2&43

Forces mail from Sharjah

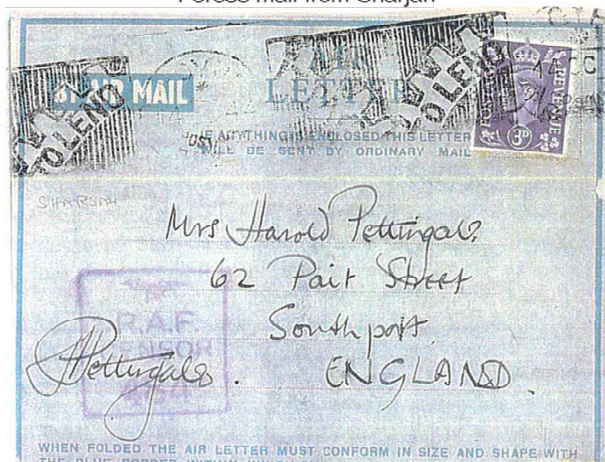


fig.4

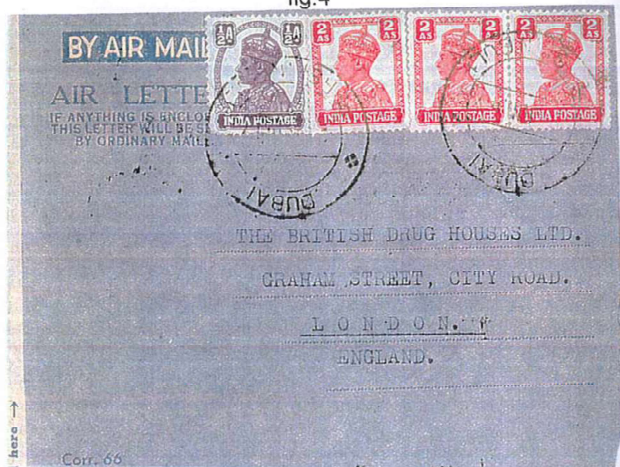


fig.5

Wartime Issues

The first aerogrammes recorded from the Gulf were those issued and used by the armed forces. Their origin can be determined by a return address or the use of local stamps but all known examples went through the forces postal system and none bear any postal markings from the Gulf P.O.'s.

AIR MAIL LETTER CARDS

Four have been recorded with a Gulf origin.

1. 20.7.42 franked GB 3d with machine cancel Egypt and RAF Censor 796. Return address RAF Bahrain.
2. 23.9.42 franked Bahrain 3 annas and cancelled 'C-Base Post Office'. This P.O. was in Basrah. (aerogramme book, p8)
3. 11.11.42 as (2). The return address is 247 Light AA Bly RA, Paiforce (Persia and Iraq Forces). This identifies the area and the franking pin points it to Bahrain. (fig. 2, p3)
4. 14.4.43 same sheet layout but a different type face. The 'dumb Maritime Mail cancellation is often seen on wartime aerogrammes. 'FS' (=Foreign Section?) looks like a GPO type. No return address but see below. (fig. 3, p3)

*I am making up
my letters with Bahraini
stamps so will try and
get a used set - please
keep all these as they*

may be difficult to get.

AIR LETTER

Two have been recorded; identical except for date.

5. 14.10.44 franked GB 3d and cancelled in Egypt by a slogan 'It pays to lend'. Return address RAF Sharjah. (fig. 4, p4)
- This is AL 124 but surely not all of them came from Sharjah as the sender has only been stationed there 3 months! Contents overleaf.

Part of the Sharjah air letter.

A/L. 124

F/Lt H. Pettingale 125661

6/10/44

PAF Stn. SHARJAH.

PAIFORCE.

My Darling, Since my last letter both your 175 + 176 have arrived thank you very much but I'm very much afraid I have to apologise again for being overdue. I know it sounds very much like what the R.A.F. call "shorting a line" but things have been getting even more + more hectic so that I have been unable to get even a single letter written. Yesterday I started at 6.15 am + finished at 11.30 p.m. at it's been the same for days. However today being the monthly pay day I have made myself take the afternoon off. I have just had a two hour sleep which I badly needed and am sitting at my bed writing. However there is no rest for the wicked!

for I have just been interrupted by a business call from an Arab shipowner + pearl fisher for whom we hire dhows (or native ships)

BLUE TRIANGLE AIR LETTERS

These were supplied to forces on active service and did not need franking. The 'dumb' Maritime Mail cancellation is the same as on (4) above.

6. Letter headed 29.1.46 from HMS Jufair which identifies it as Bahrain. (issue 2, p11)

CIVILIAN MAIL

The first recorded civilian use of an aerogramme is from Muscat, written by the Postmaster to East Africa. The message is shown below and the front on the next page-note double censorship. I only have a poor photostat but it is worth recording 7. 13.5.46 India PO formula sheet franked 6as cancelled Muscat type 15 24.5.46 (P8)

Codes: MIP 5031-5-A-532-27-10-44 on flap. Corr. 66 front panel Front and back panels blue overlay on off-white paper.

Muscat
Dt 13.5.45

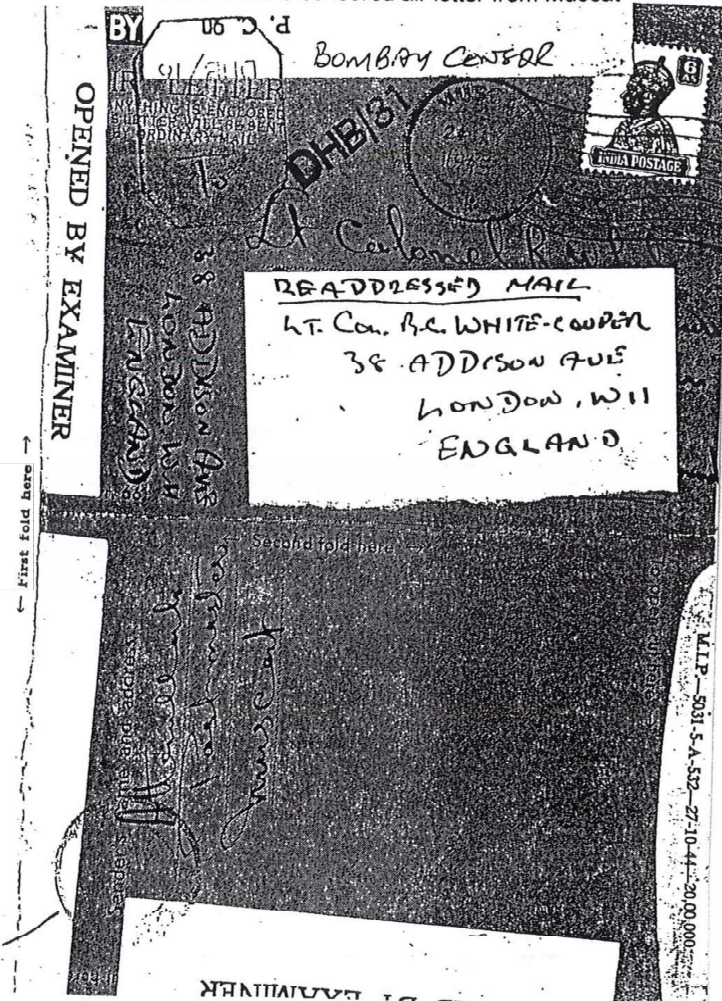
from: Postmaster Muscat
to: Lt Colonel R C White Cooper MC
East Africa Command

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of 30 shilling British Postal Order for which you would like to purchase 2 sets of 'Al Bu said' stamps. These stamps are no longer in issue and therefore can be purchased from the public only. At present the market rate is Rs22/set i.e. 34 shillings. So if you like to purchase 2 sets of the stamps then kindly send 38 shillings. If it may not be desired by you then kindly permit me to return back to you the 30 shillings recd. from you.

Yours etc.....

Front of double censored air letter from Muscat



Corr.66 sheets. Indian and British periods

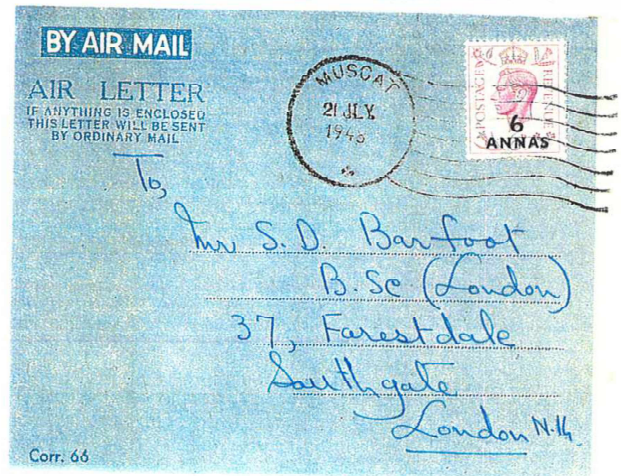
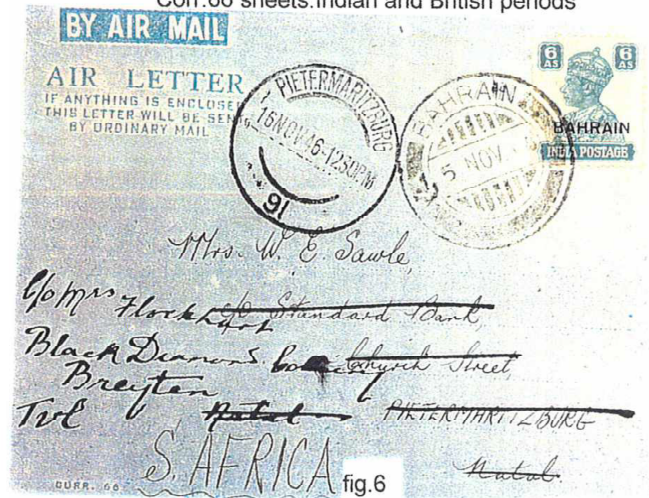


fig.7

from Qatar 1949-casual use of Iraqi sheet



fig 8

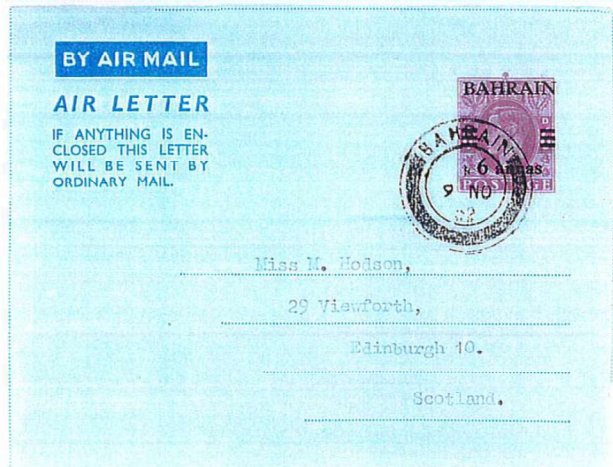


fig.9 Bahrain 6as/6d

This item also confirms that Muscat PO had aerogrammes available. All the recorded examples from this period are coded Corr.66.

BAHRAIN

8. 14.2.47 From Bahrain. Corr.66 see p9 and issue No.2 p12
Code: SSP Ltd. PO No. 5031/5/A-534-DT
27.10.44-20,00,00

(8 other examples recorded from 22.10.46 - 30.11.46)

9. 14.4.47 From Bahrain franked 6as to Essex (Aerogramme book p10).

10. 10.7.47 From Bahrain franked 8as (probably overfranked) cancelled Type 8A to USA. Printed on watermarked paper reading Govt of India/ITPM Co. Ltd.

DUBAI

11. 5.6.47 From Dubai franked 6 1/2as. (why?) and cancelled with type 7 with a Bahrain transit 7.6.47 and received in UK 10.6.47. See p4, fig. 3.5

NEXT ISSUE

More interesting Kuwait covers from M Alhajer.
Continuation of the Kuwait date stamp listing.

BRITISH POSTAL AGENCIES

There are two recorded examples of the Corr.66 sheet used after 1st April 1948.

11. 8.7.48 Bahrain registered to the UK from the Postal Superintendent. See issue No.2 p13.

Registered aerogrammes are unusual but quite legitimate and two are recorded from the Gulf..

12. 21.7.48 Muscat to UK franked 6as.(p9,fig.7)

The BPA then issued a new formula aerogramme similar in layout to the India one but without overlay and on grey-blue paper. There are three versions, the first with code:51-5829.

An example of this sheet is shown in the Qatar listing below.

QATAR

Qatar is particularly interesting because early mail can only be identified by a return address as there was no postal service until 1950. There is only one recorded aerogramme from this early period.

13. 6.1.49 This is casual use of a formula aerogramme probably from Iraq. It is franked 6as and cancelled type 6A Bahrain. The return address is PDQ (Petroleum developments Qatar) with date 29.12.48. This was sent 18 months before the Qatar PO opened and at this time mail from Qatar was sent by any available means to Bahrain for posting. (See Donaldson p217 and this issue p10,fig.8 and p13)

14. 28.1.51 This aerogramme is a later version of the BPA formula sheet without the code number. It was posted after Qatar PO had opened in late May 1950 and has the same return address as no.13. Why was it franked and cancelled in Bahrain on 30.1.51?

Pages 14, 17 show the contents of this sheet.

Petroleum Development Qatar,

c/o Petroleum Concessions Ltd.

Bahrein Island,

Persian Gulf,

29 December 1948.

Dear Miss O'Hea,

Many thanks for your letter of 16 November. Unfortunately I did not get it until today as it seems to have come by the surface mails, which are astonishingly slow to the Gulf, though the Air mails are fairly good. I sent off three stories which I got on my last trip to Iraq, a few days ago, addressed to Miss Crawley. If they don't turn up and are being forwarded on after Miss Crawley to some remote corner of the globe, I should be most grateful if you could send me a line, as I can easily send you a carbon copy. My best wishes for a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,

C.G. Campbell
C.G. Campbell

14

c/o P.D.Q. Ltd.,

Qatar,

Via Bahrain,

Persian Gulf.

28 - 1 - 1951.

Dear Mr Hillard,

I must apologise for the long silence from this end. It must be some time since I last wrote to you, so I hope you will forgive me.

As you will observe, I am back in one of my old haunts, and glad to be so. Basrah leaves an awful lot to be desired, whereas this place is at least clean.

I drew a blank at Ras el Misha'ab, by the way. International Bechtel Inc., are the people over there at the moment, and they say that they use no letter sheets, and have no post office, all the outgoing mail being sent by Aramco plane to Dhahran for processing there. (I am awaiting a

15

Earliest Kuwait sheet from British period

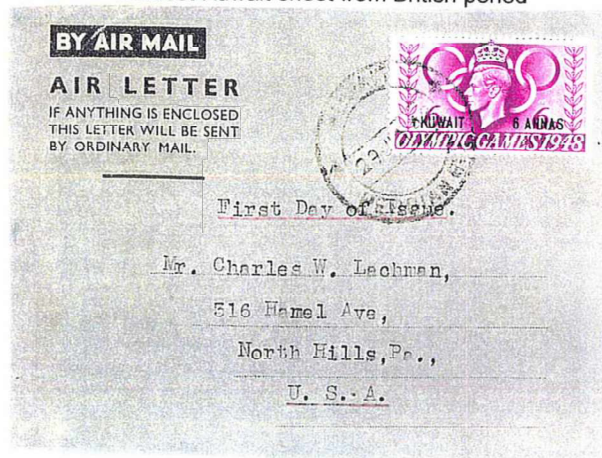


fig.10

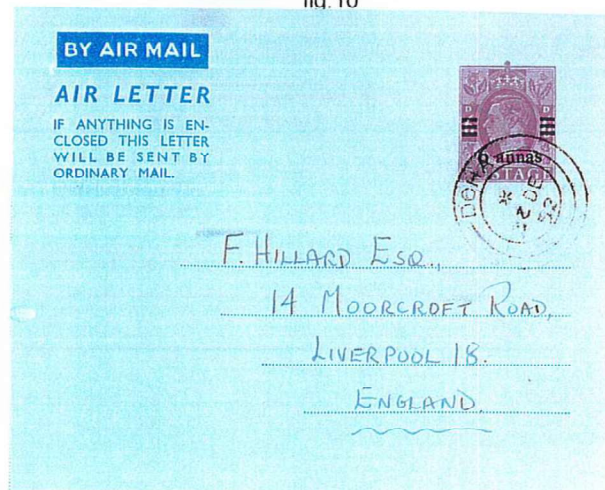


fig.11 Value Only surcharge from Qatar

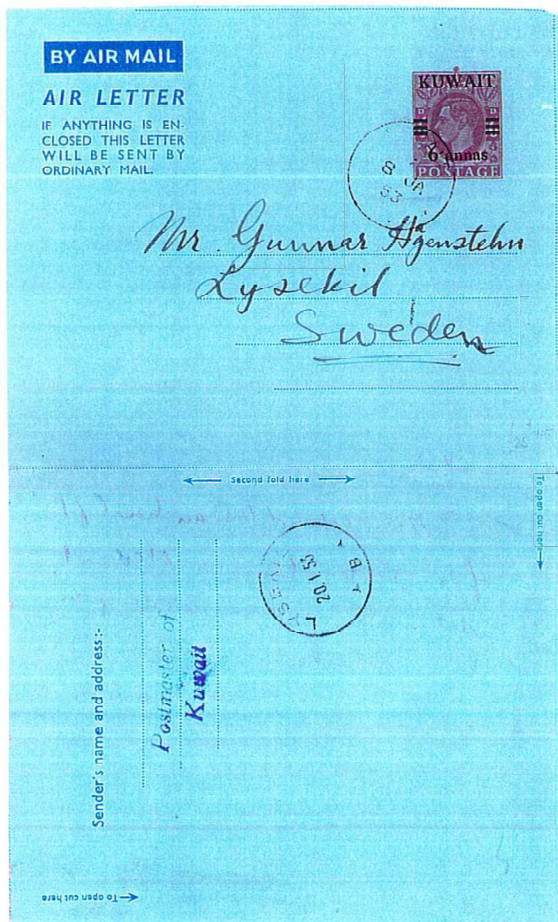


fig. 12

reply from there any day now).

I have at last got some Persian money, and hope to do something with it, and I have not forgotten Kuwait and Doha, although the latter have not materialised yet. I must admit that I have not been very busy in the Air Mail Letter Card world of late, but now that I am back here things should get going again. I owe you quite a lot of stuff!

This place is getting bigger each time I come back. We have a laundry now, which should let the shirts live twice as long no matter how poor it is. They just get pounded to pieces between stones by the dhobi boys atherwise.

Hope you will excuse the delay.

Yours very sincerely,

W. J. L. L. L.

18
KUWAIT

The earliest date of use of the new formula type coded 51-6829 is from Kuwait. This is dated 29.7.48 the first day of issue of the Olympic Games set and cancelled with type 12. It is also the earliest Kuwait aerogramme recorded from the BPA period. (page 15, fig. 10)

SURCHARGED AIR LETTERS

All the above sheets are formula types. In 1952 the decision was made to surcharge the current GPO 6d air letter with 6 annas/Bahrain, 6 annas/Kuwait and 6 annas only for the Trucial States. A wave of interest from collectors worldwide soon depleted the stocks and it is very unusual to find truly commercial used sheets. However the contents of some of the philatelic air letters are very interesting.

Bahrain 26.6.52

Bahrain, 26th June 1952.

Dear Miss Hodson,

With reference to your letters of 16th & 21st June concerning Persian Gulf air letters, I have to inform you that air letters were brought into use at all offices on 1st June.

As regards stocks of air letters, they do pass through this office, which is quite separate from Bahrain Post Office and no cash transactions are made here. Items despatched to you are purchased from Bahrain P.O. At the moment the Bahrain issue has been used up by the public and it will be some time before more are received. The amounts you require could be issued to Bahrain for I still have a few hundred each of Flain and Kuwait. They are not folded in stock, therefore a box would perhaps be a good proposition. They could be sent registered surface mail, there being no 2nd class air mail from Bahrain. Air parcel is Rs2.12 per 1/2 lb.

cont. page 19

19

Awali is an oil town some 12 miles over the desert from Manama, (the capital of Bahrain Island). The population is entirely European. The Post Office which handles a tremendous amount of business is based on similar lines to a scale payment sub-office in U.K. Ahmadi, 25 miles from Kuwait has the same set-up. Muharraq is a small one-man sub-office of Manama, in which Bahrain P.O. is situated. Doha is a growing little office on the Qatar peninsula. All these offices are controlled from the Supt's office in Bahrain.

Policy is controlled by London Headquarter therefore I am afraid that I cannot do anything about your overprinting and special postmarking suggestions.

The stamp club at Awali is very active and I suggest that you communicate with Mr George Bechy Thompson c/o R.M.C.O., Awali, Bahrain.

Yours faithfully

Miss M. Hodson,
29 Viersfort,
BOSTON, 10.

Asst. Postal Superintendent

See fig. 9, p10 for an example of the type of sheet used for this letter. The Postal Superintendent or his assistant generally used ordinary air letters and not the OHMS types. I don't know why this was the case but it makes the Service sheets rare pieces of postal stationery.

20

Dear Miss Hodson, Bahrain 9.11.52 (fig.9,p10)

Thank you for your letter of 4. November and the interesting FDC.

Stocks of Air Letters are now finished, it is not known whether we shall continue to use them in the future, and it is difficult to decide whether they have been of use to us because the bulk of the stock has been purchased by philatelists all over the world. If any new overprint is made, I shall of course let you know.

Special Greetings forms would be nice but as this administration is part and parcel of the British administration we have what they have.

There may be something interesting within a few months but not to enquire, I shall let you know if and when.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]
9 - NOV 1952

Miss M. Hodson,
29 viewforth,
Edinburgh, 10.
Scotland.

Also on page 21 is a 'silly' one. Forces Letters were available free at PO's in the UK and this well known addressee sent a lot of items for reposting, many bearing unacceptable frankings. The only merit of this item is that it received the correct treatment at Bahrain PO and the PO in the UK. The 'T' in a circle is a rarely used Bahrain mark and a survivor from the Indian Agency period. The letter can be dated by a Bahrain backstamp of 12.10.54.

Page 16 shows a Kuwait Air Letter addressed to a more unusual destination. It took 12 days to reach Sweden compared with 2/3 to the UK and 4/5 to USA. The 'Postmaster of / Kuwait' cachet, also inside the letter, is not often seen. The contents give a little bit of the history of the Kuwait PO.

21

Forces Letter

Not used correctly and taxed

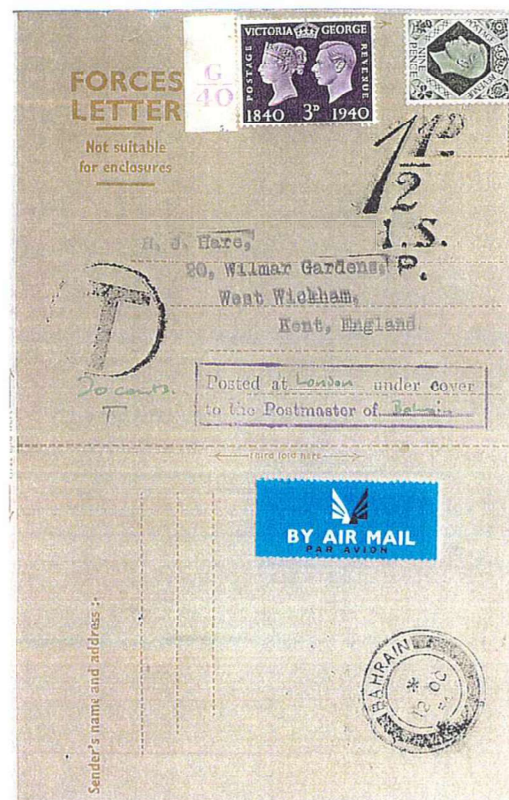


fig. 13

ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE

BY AIR MAIL

AIR LETTER

IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED
THIS LETTER WILL BE SENT
BY ORDINARY MAIL.

Miss Mildred Hodson,
Stamp Dealer
29 Viewforth,
Edinburgh 10.
Scotland

Postal Superintendent
British Postal Agencies
Bahrain.

Second fold here

To open cut here

Sender's name and address :-
Postal Superintendent
British Postal Agencies
Bahrain.

To open cut here

fig. 14

Dear Sir,

Ref your requisition of
9th ultimo I have the pleasure
to send you an used Air
letter. One unused air letter
has been enclosed in one cover
and sent by Surface mail.
Hope it reaches you safely.

Here there is a Post Office in
Ahmadi, besides the present
one in town.

Yours faithfully.

W. W. Widdin

Postmaster of
Kuwait

8/1/53

Kuwait air letter concluded

N.B.

*Mrs Mohd Khan has left
for Sabirtein in Nov. 51,
since then I am working in
his place.*

S. NURUDDIN.

SERVICE AIR LETTERS

These were only used by the Postal Superintendent's Office, Manama, Bahrain. There is just one recorded use of the ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE sheet from the Gulf as reported in my aerogramme book published in 1995. It is the formula sheet code 51-5829 with the addition of the OHMS heading. 16.10.51 Bahrain with PS cachet. There is no printed heading inside the sheet.