

MALTA

MALTA – THE GREEN CROSS LABEL SCHEME 1940 - 43 The R.A.F. Air mail service to the Island

By Tony Camilleri

After the fall of France and the entry of Italy into the war, the Governor and C. in C. of Malta complained of the inadequate air mail service to the Island which was having a serious effect on the morale of British Forces.

A few Sunderland flying boats had made the trip in the past few weeks but these had carried high priority material and were unable to include mail in their cargo.

It was proposed by the R.A.F., in liaison with the Post Office, that three Wellingtons of No. 24 (Communications) Squadron at Hendon, should be used to provide a weekly outward and homeward service and should carry 100 lbs of private mail addressed to service personnel at Malta.

The Post Office printed small, oblong labels bearing a green St. Andrews Cross of "one ounce" type on 3rd August 1940 and "half ounce" type on 5th November 1940. These were sent to Malta and distributed to Servicemen for enclosure with their mail home, then to be used on return letters which would be sent by the short air route to Malta.

It was designed to ensure that the very limited space which was available for mails on the few aircrafts which operated direct between the United Kingdom and Malta was devoted to the carrying of letters not exceeding half ounce in weight addressed to troops and civilians from their friends in this country.

The prepaid postage on a Green Cross letter was 2½d when addressed to a civilian and 1½d when addressed to members of H.M. Forces.

Secrecy was essential and correspondents were asked not to use "By Air Mail" labels – they often did! The G.P.O. also denied 'postal significance' for the labels and refused to answer enquiries about the scheme at Post Office counters. The scheme was a success and, although due to enemy presence, it is doubtful whether the once weekly average was achieved, mail which had previously flown on the UK – Lisbon – Gold Coast (Ghana) – Cairo route and had been subject to very long delays, reached Malta quickly.

With an improvement in the British military and naval situation, the scheme ceased to operate on 1st October 1943.

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and ENVELOPES.

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THE GREEN CROSS LABEL



When the siege of Malta became so severe that it was difficult to maintain the mail services a new air mail service was arranged. Each soldier was given one green cross label per week. This he sent home to his relatives and they put it on the front of the reply letter. Letters bearing these labels were flown to Malta by special fast planes. All others went via the Cape, taking over two months instead of a few days. Very few such letters bearing labels have survived.

J. DOVE,

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Types of Green Cross label

First type showing St Andrew's Cross in deep olive green ink with inscription "Weight/not to exceed one ounce" ordered on 29th July 1940 and available for dispatch on 3rd August. When it was later decided that one ounce was too heavy for letters a number of the printed one ounce labels were altered by hand to read " $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce".



Second type in light green ink with inscription "Weight/not to exceed half ounce" ordered on 23rd October 1940 and available for dispatch on 5th November. There were at least two printings of this label – *sans serif* lettering and *serif*.



Serif

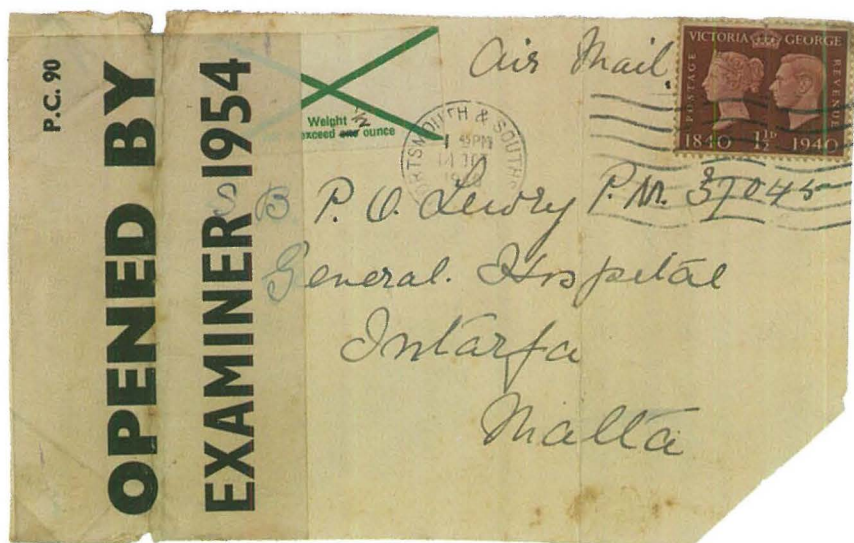


Sans Serif



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When the weight of letters was restricted to $\frac{1}{2}$ oz a small number of the printed labels for one ounce were altered to read ' $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce' by hand



Cover front posted 14 October 1940 franked GB 1½d, Forces air mail rate, addressed to P.O. Lewry at General Hospital, Imtarfa, Malta
Green Cross label from the first printing with a deep olive green ink inscribed "Weight/not to exceed one ounce" with 'sans serif' lettering amended to read " $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce" by hand

Cover was opened by Examiner before leaving the UK

This is the earliest recorded use of the Green Cross label

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13 February 1941 - franked 1½d, normal Forces rate



20 May 1941 - franked 1s3d, air mail letter rate

Covers with Green Cross labels from the first printing printed with a deep olive green ink inscribed "Weight/not to exceed one ounce" with 'sans serif' lettering

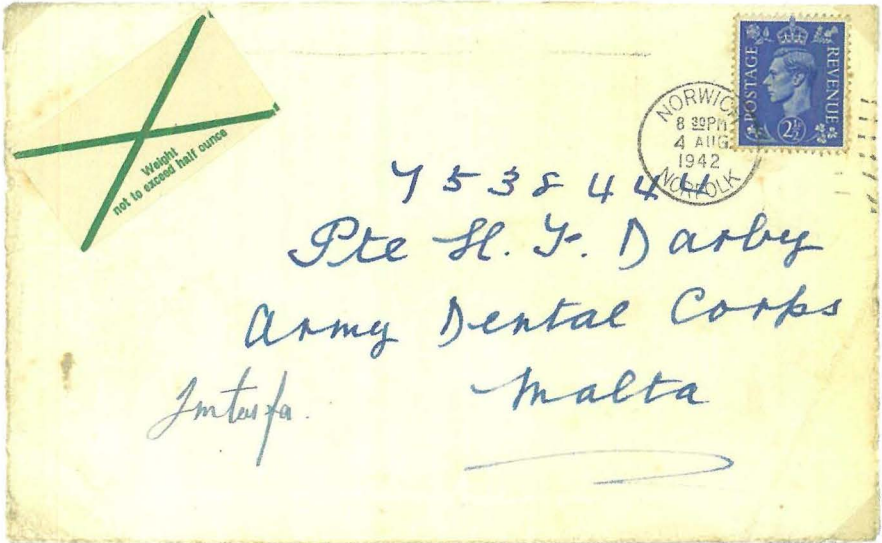
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Cover to Malta posted 31 July 1941 franked GB 2½d, civilian rate
Green Cross label from the first printing printed with a deep
olive green ink inscribed "Weight/not to exceed one ounce" with
'sans serif' lettering amended to read "½ ounce" by hand
Cover opened by examiner before leaving the UK

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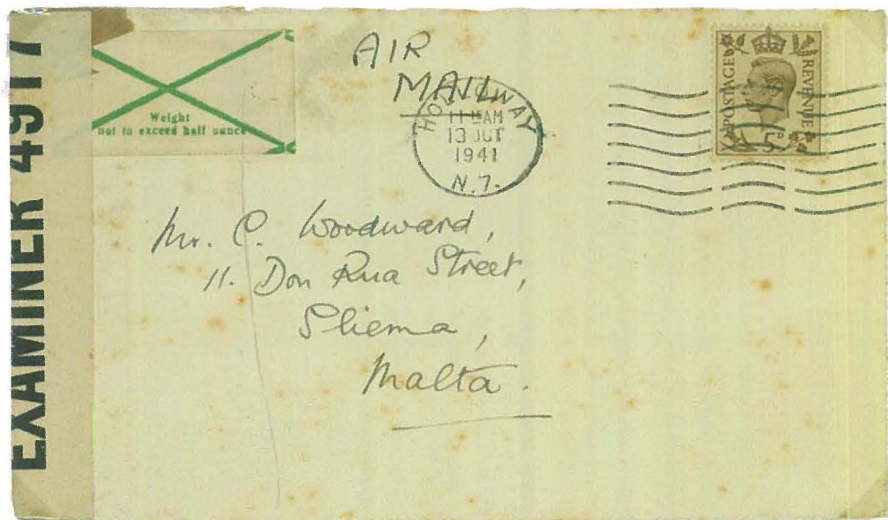
Second type with inscription "Weight/ not to exceed half ounce" of which there were at least two printings of this label using 'Serif' and 'Sans serif' letterings



Cover posted 4 August 1942 at the civilian rate of 2½d, addressed to a serviceman at the Army Dental Corps, Imtarfa Hospital, Malta
Green Cross label inscribed "Weight/not to exceed half ounce" with 'sans serif' lettering

Manuscript annotation '14.8.42' entered on the flap

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Cover posted 13 October 1941 from Holloway, UK rated 5d,
the European air rate, addressed to Malta
Label with inscription "Weight/not to exceed half ounce"
with serif lettering partly tied with P.C. 90 censor label
It is quite unusual for a Green Cross cover in being
opened by examiner before leaving England
Delivered by Postman Number 10

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Cover to Malta posted on 14 January 1942 rated $2\frac{1}{2}$ d the civilian rate
Label with serif lettering "Weight/not to exceed half ounce"



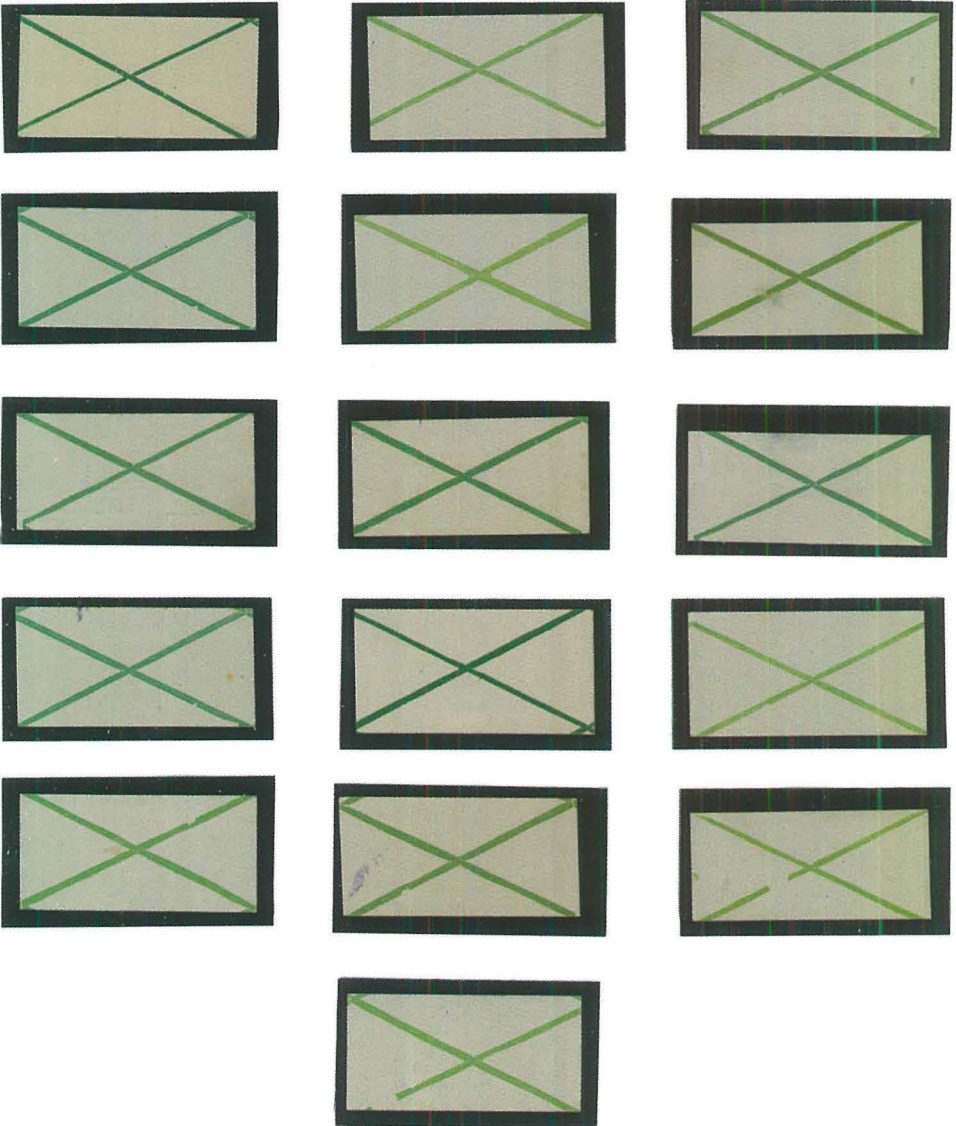
Cover to Malta posted on 19 January 1943 rated $2\frac{1}{2}$ d the civilian rate
Label with serif lettering "Weight/not to exceed half ounce"

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Third type with no inscription printed in many different shades and colours from apple green to deep blue green and thin to thick lines used from July 1941.

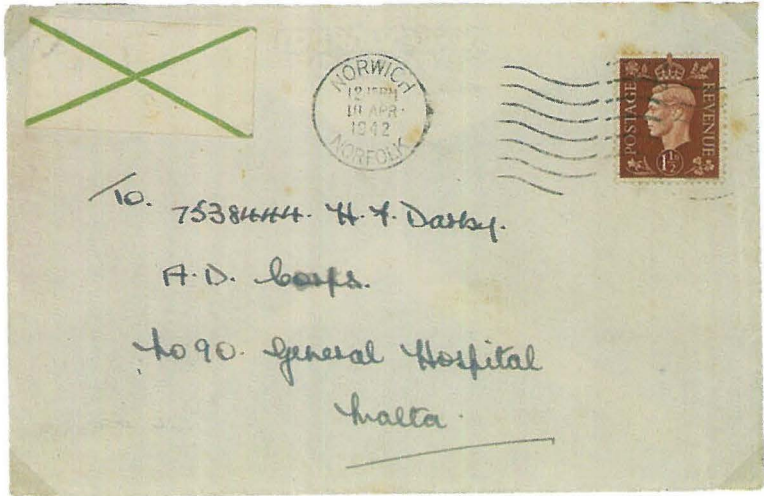
A few of these labels were also altered in manuscript to read "*Not exceeding ½ oz*" or "*Not more than ½ oz*"

As printing was from several different plates, many of them being more or less defective, various flaws and varieties showed up on the resulting labels.

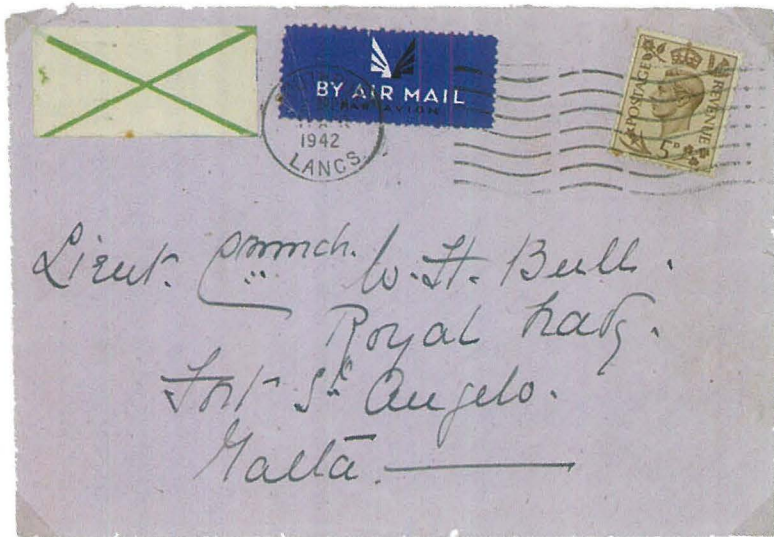


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Different shades and colour from the third printing with no inscription



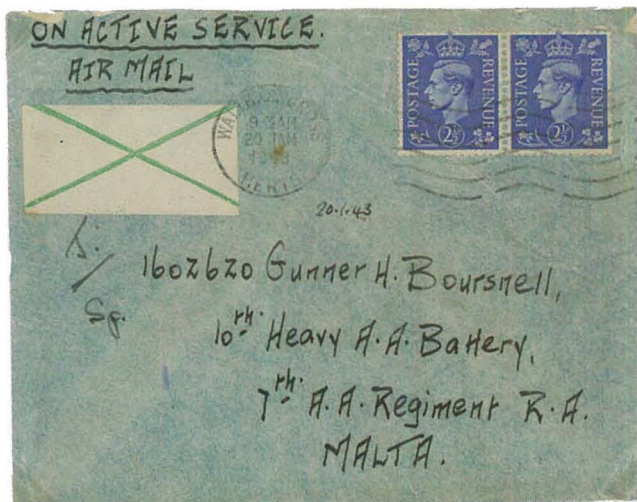
Posted 10 April 1942. Franked 1½d - Green Cross Forces Rate



Posted 17 April 1942. Franked 5d - European Air Rate

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Different shades and colour from the third printing with no inscription



Posted 20 January 1943. Franked 5d - European Air Rate



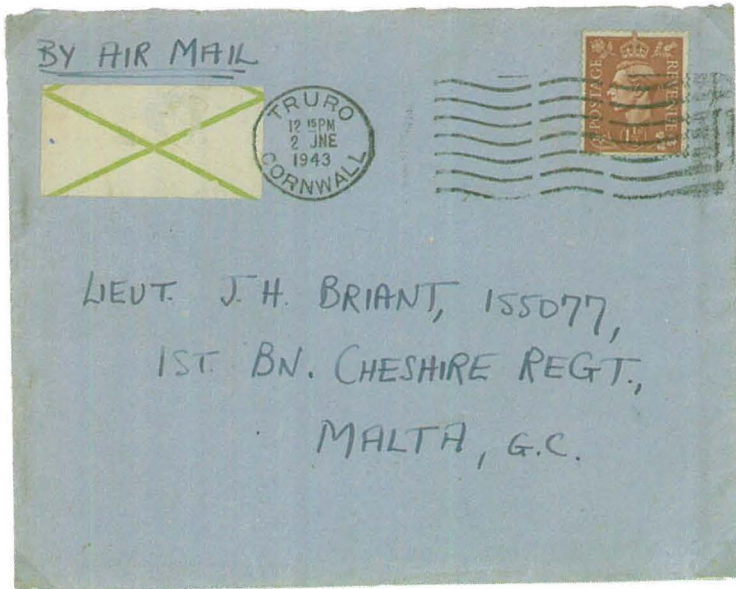
Posted 22 April 1943. Franked 1s3d - European Air Rate

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Different shades and colour from the third printing with no inscription



Posted 3 May 1943. Franked 5d - European Air Rate



Posted 2 June 1943. Franked 1½d - Green Cross Forces Rate

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Different shades and colour from the third printing with no inscription



Posted 7 September 1942. Franked 1½d - Green Cross Forces Rate



Posted 16 May 1943. Franked 2½d - Green Cross Civilian Rate

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Apple Green variety



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Wide Light Green (Kidderminster 31st December 1942.)

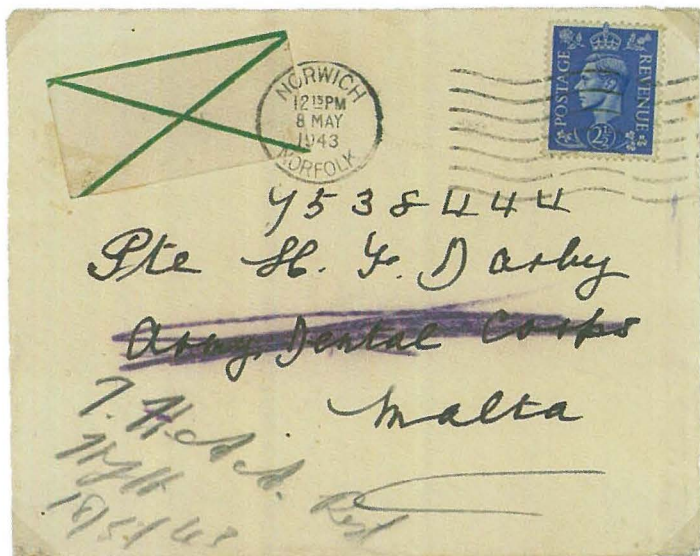
A. Bonnici



Narrow Dark Green (29th January 1943.)

A. Bonnici

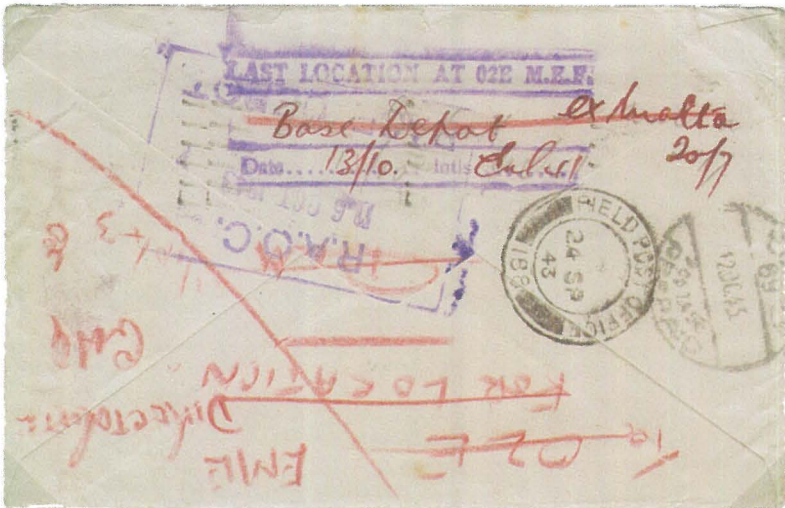
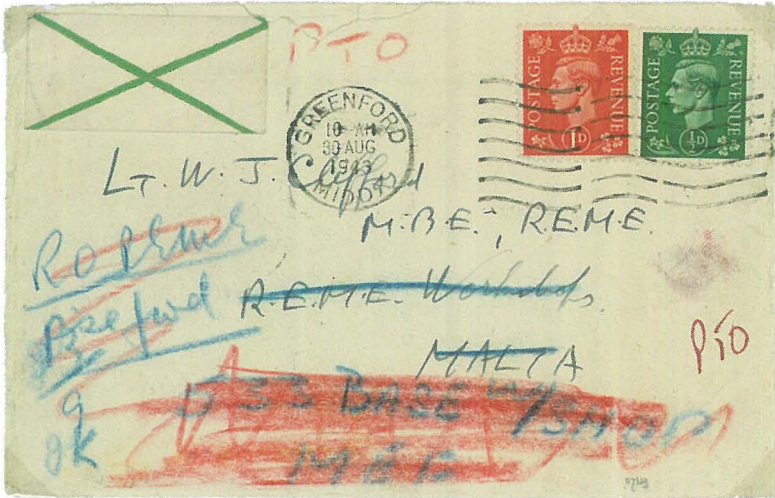
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Cover posted on 8 May 1943 from Norwich to a serviceman in Malta
Franked with a 2½d GB stamp being the civilian air rate, with
the machine cancellation tying also the Green Cross label
Received by addressee on 18.5.43 as per manuscript on the back

The Green Cross label from the third printing has an unusual
green horizontal bar along its upper margin

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Cover with a Green Cross label with no inscription from the third printing posted 30 August 1943, a month before the Green Cross label scheme ceased to operate. Franked GB 1½d the Forces rate, the cover was primarily addressed to R.E.M.E. Workshop, Malta but then redirected to Egypt arriving 12 October 1943.

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Cover posted in June 1943 bearing a 10d GB stamp cancelled FPO 165
which was located in Egypt

Green Cross label tied to the envelope by the word 'ON' in
manuscript. Censored in Egypt before forwarding to Malta

The use of a Green Cross label on mail other than from U.K. is
most unusual

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Fourth type was hand-drawn labels in green ink drawn on the envelopes and the very few examples known made their appearance from December 1942 to February 1943.



Posted 11 February 1943. Franked 5d - European Air Rate



Posted 16 February 1943. Franked 5d - European Air Rate

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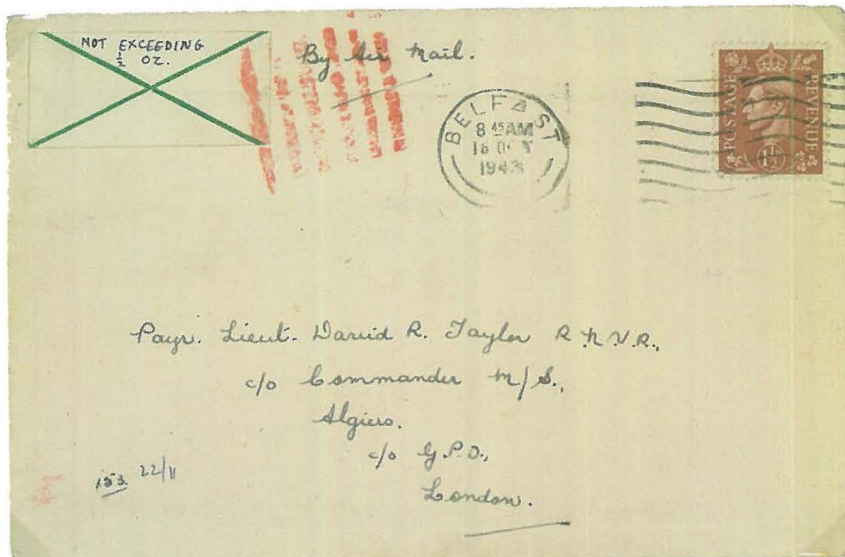
An imitation of the Green Cross label drawn on an envelope posted on 25 January 1943 to Gunner Boursnell, from his fiancée in U.K.



The hand drawn Green Cross obliterated by two rough hand strokes in red ink applied by a postal official in London
Usually a cancel of six bars in red ink was the normal practice when conveyance by air could not be provided

This air letter with a hand drawn Green Cross is the only example coming from the same source to have been cancelled in this way

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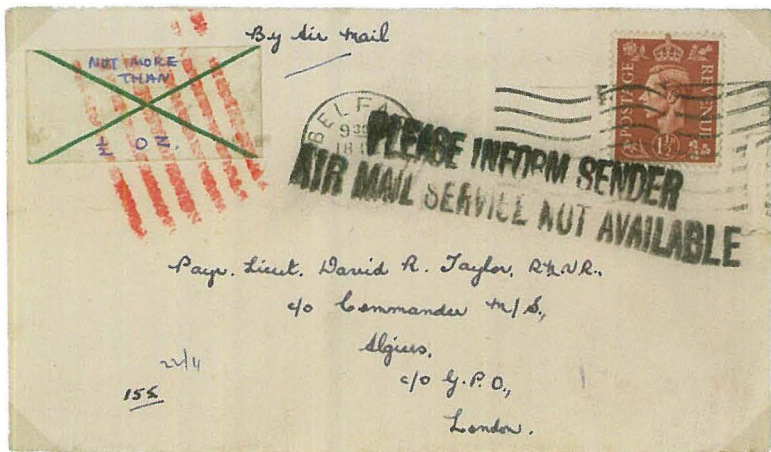
Manuscript 'NOT EXCEEDING/1/2 oz.'



Manuscript 'NOT MORE/THAN/1/2 oz.' (partly scratched)

Two covers posted on 16 October 1943 from Belfast to Algiers c/o GPO London Green Cross labels and manuscript *By Air Mail* deleted in red by a cancel of six bars indicating that they were not valid as the Scheme had ceased operating on 1 October 1943 and there was no longer a special Air Mail Service Covers received by addressee on 22/11 as per manuscript bottom left

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Cover posted on 18 October 1943 from Belfast, Northern Ireland to a Naval Officer in Algiers, North Africa c/o GPO London, as was usual
Endorsed "PLEASE INFORM SENDER/AIR MAIL SERVICE NOT AVAILABLE"

Green Cross label endorsed in manuscript 'NOT/MORE/THAN/1/2 oz.'
overstruck in red by a cancel of six bars indicating it was not valid
The Green Cross Label Scheme had ended on 1 October 1943 and there
was no longer a special Air Mail Service

Cover received by addressee on 22/11 as per manuscript bottom left



The above mark was copied from the original hand stamp

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A Post Office circular issued on 13 October 1943 sets out the arrangement for the issuing of a refund where postage was prepaid for an air mail service that no longer existed. Two types of handstamps, in violet were introduced



1943 (17 October) On Active Service cover posted in U.K franked 5d in G.B stamps and having the air mail label cancelled by five violet horizontal bars. Two other violet handstamps also applied;

"1/3 PER 1/2 OZ AIR MAIL LETTER
SERVICE NOT AVAILABLE"

"Air Mail fee 3 1/2d
refunded"

The amount of '3 1/2d' is filled in by hand and then initialled. These handstamps were introduced for a very short period by the Post Office after the Green Cross Label Scheme was withdrawn on 1st October 1943

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Type 1

1943 (13 October) O.A.S. cover from U.K showing violet handstamp
"1/3D PER HALF OZ AIR MAIL/SERVICE NOT AVAILABLE"



Type 2

1943 (10 October) O.A.S. cover from U.K showing violet handstamp
"1/3 PER 1/2 OZ AIR MAIL LETTER/SERVICE NOT AVAILABLE"

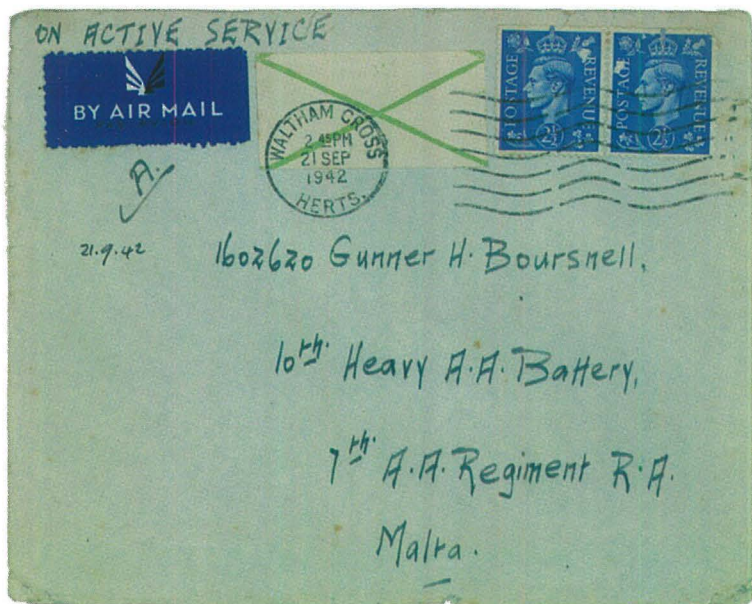
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Marks probably made by Sorting Officer before delivery



- 30 Nov 1942 - Yorkshire

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Waltham Cross - 21 Sep 1942 - Herts

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Medium Pale Yellow Green, narrowing at centre
(Waltham Cross 5th March 1943.)

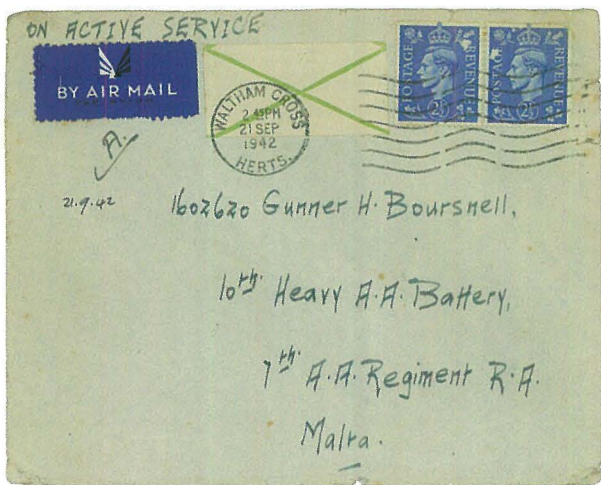
A. Bonnici



Censored by examiner 6510 Charlton 9 Sep 1941

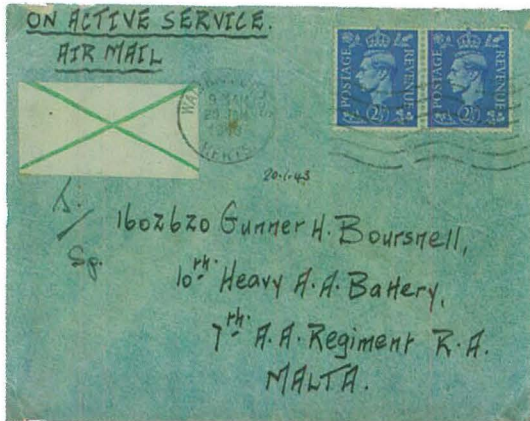
A. Bonnici

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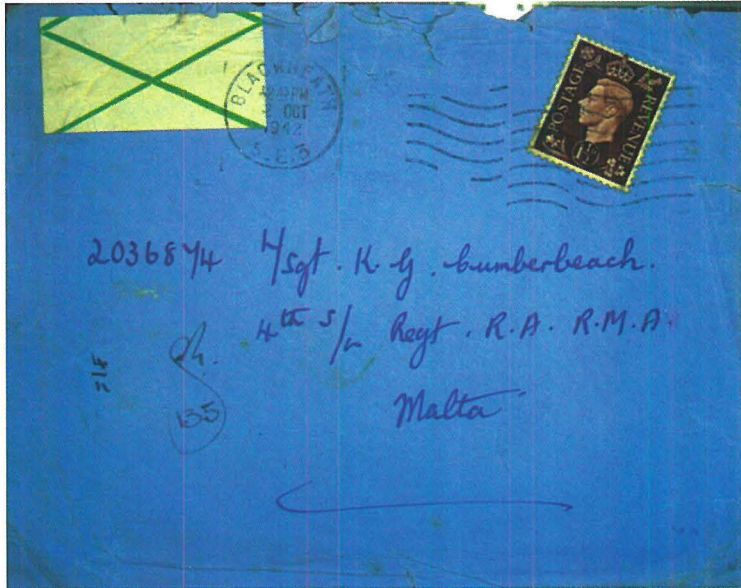


W.P.
/
✓



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John Winter



Geoff Dean. W.W.II. data base.

S/L School (Search Light School)

