

POSTAGE PAID MARKS ON NAVAL AIR MAIL 1939-45

by A.J.Brown

For many years I have taken an interest in the various handstamps appearing on naval mail from overseas to show that an air mail fee had been prepaid. Some of these were recorded by John Goldup in his invaluable book NAVAL MAILS 1939-1949 and the later supplements to it published in TPO Magazine. A few more have come to light since then, and in the hope that more information will be forthcoming, it seems worthwhile collating such data already known.

The circumstances surrounding the use of such handstamps is well described by Goldup in Chapter V "Handstamped 'Paid' Marks".

"It inevitably happened that on some occasions during the war British stamps were not available at certain places and on board certain ships (and local stamps could not, of course, be used for ships mail). There was a wide demand for them, however, as air mail which provided the only quick means of transit, had until the closing stages of the war to be prepaid. But a stamp is, after all, no more than an adhesive receipt for the payment of postage. An alternative, though less convenient, method is for cash to be taken over the counter, the mail bagged unstamped and a bulk receipt included in the mail bag to cover the total postage on all mail enclosed. This was in fact the normal procedure when British stamps were not available. The cash representing the total postage on the mail concerned was taken on charge by the Mail Officer in his contingent account, or, in the case of a ship, probably direct by the Supply Officer (Paymaster), and debited in his account under the appropriate heading. Thus the G.P.O. was ultimately reimbursed by the Admiralty for the amounts concerned.

"The use of handstamped 'franks' formed no part of the arrangements for the transmission of mail under this scheme and these marks were not in themselves recognized by the G.P.O. as entitlement to delivery without surcharge (which lay in the accompanying voucher certifying that the postage money had been collected); and thus these marks are not franks in the strict sense of the word. Their origin arose from the dire necessity of the Fleet Mail Offices, where the work of sorting and accounting without stamps for large quantities of prepaid air mail made the introduction of such 'Paid' marks indispensable or at least highly convenient."

The marks range from official post office issues to unofficial impromptu handstamps made locally. Some of the latter were apparently accepted by the post offices through which they passed as substitutes for cancellations, since the covers did not receive additional arrival postmarks.

It has proved difficult to identify the place of use of many of these marks, since the only markings on covers are the usual RECEIVED FROM H.M.SHIPS or POST OFFICE MARITIME MAIL postmarks and the naval 'tombstone' censor marks (FPHS types N1/N2). Only when some other clue is present such as the writer's address or a local censor label is identification possible. So it is particularly important

that readers should come forward with any clues they may have to the unattributed marks.

P.P.1 A number of covers have been recorded with this handstamp consisting of two letters "P.P." in dull blue, which often look as though they were printed by hand. All of them occur early in 1940, and most on envelopes of French origin, with "Par Avion" printed thereon or written in by hand. Although handstamps inscribed "P.P." were issued to the French Navy about this time, while supplies of French stamps overprinted "F.M." were awaited, and such mail was routed through the Marseille-Navale office, it is hard to see why French handstamps would occur on British naval mail, which was usually bagged and sealed and sent direct to the G.P.O. London in the case of mail for the U.K. Covers have the usual "tombstone" naval censor marks and a RECEIVED FROM H.M.SHIPS arrival mark. Not recorded by Goldup.

P.P.2 A double circle with POSTAGE PAID between and a value in the centre, the values recorded on cover being 3d, 4d, 5d, or in one case 3d + 3d. No difficulty in placing this one, as handstamps with values 3d, 4d, 5d or 7d (the latter not recorded used so far) are, or were until recently in the possession of the Gibraltar Postmaster. Known in violet or blue-black, not accompanied by a port of arrival postmark in the examples seen. The rates of postage indicated by these and other handstamps listed further on form a fruitful field for speculation, as wartime naval air mail rates do not seem to have been firmly established. (Goldup G.11).

P.P.3 It is arguable whether this mark should be included, since it does not state that air mail postage has been paid, but it occurs on unstamped air mail covers bearing no other indication that the air mail fee was paid. Goldup was unable to allocate it, suggesting either the Bristol G.P.O. or the Fleet Mail Office at Taranto as possibilities. However, a number of covers have Gibraltar civil censor labels, making Taranto less likely, and an office in the U.K. more probable. Known in blue, pink or black, later impressions much coarser due to wear. (Goldup B.22).

P.P.4 There were at least three different handstamps of this type, a rectangle with POSTAGE / (value) / PAID inside, values 5d, 1/3d, and 2/6d being known. 1/3 was the regular non-concessionary Empire air mail rate which replaced the 1¹/₂d "all-up" rate in September 1939, and 2/6d could represent double weight. The frequent occurrence of a 5d rate as early as 1940 suggests that this was a regular rate for naval air mail from Gibraltar and/or Malta to the U.K. A cover with the 5d mark is addressed to the U.K., and endorsed by the writer "Via Rome" tending to confirm that Malta was the probable place of use. Goldup records a cover addressed to Australia, with the 2/6d mark, dated 23.1.40 by the censor and having a manuscript note that the writer was at Malta at the time. Somewhat of a mystery is another cover with the 5d, addressed to the U.K., but having an oval censor mark on the back PASSED BY CENSOR 210 (FPHS type NP 15), hitherto always associated with Hong Kong ! (Goldup G.17).

P.P.5 If readers can refer to Newsletter No.110 (July-August 1971), page 96, they will find an article entitled "SPECIAL NAVAL AIR MAIL" which describes a series of covers from the same writer bearing four different types of "Air Mail" handstamp, including this one "5 PAID", which is stated to have been in use for three weeks only from 5 October 1941. In blue. Unfortunately the covers gave no real clue to where the handstamps were used. This is the only mark of the four which mentions the payment of a fee, presumably "5d". (Goldup G.14).

P.P.



P.P.1

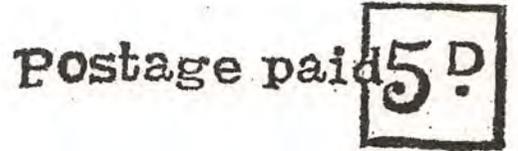
P.P.2

P.P.3

P.P.4

5 PAID

AIR MAIL
POSTAGE PAID



P.P.5

P.P.6

P.P.7



P.P.8

P.P.9

P.P.10



PAID M.O.

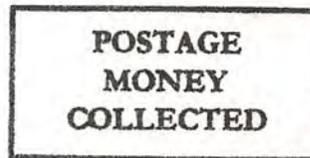


P.P.11

P.P.12

P.P.13

P.P.14



P.P.15

P.P.16

- P.P.6 On usual cover with 'tombstone' censor and RECEIVED FROM H.M.SHIPS machine of U.K.origin. In red. Goldup says "censor stamp date 14.10.40." (Goldup G.14).
- P.P.7 Two separate handstamps "postage paid" and "5d" in a rectangle; the latter is stated to be a Malta accounting mark. Dates between Sept.1939 and March 1940. One cover is endorsed "By Italian Airmail", tending to confirm Malta as a likely source. Not recorded by Goldup.
- P.P.8 Struck in black. No other clues, except that if the '5' indicates '5d' postage, it probably emanated from Gibraltar or Malta. (Goldup G.19).
- P.P.9 This double circle mark is known with the numerals '1' and '2' in the centre, in red or violet. Neither 1 or 2 pence, or 1 or 2 shillings fit with known air mail rates, so the numerals probably do not refer to the amount of postage paid. Handstamp with '1' occurs in conjunction with the rectangular PASSED BY / 5862 / NAVAL CENSOR mark (FPHS NN.5) known used on mail from HMS NILE, the naval base at Alexandria, and probably in use there. (Goldup G.21).
- P.P.10 Known in red with dates November and December 1940. No clues as to area of use. '10d' is an unusual rate for naval mail, though of course well known as a Middle East air mail concession rate for the other services. Goldup says "a 1/3d value is reported to exist". (Goldup G.18).
- P.P.11 Apparently used by the civil post office, Mombasa, Kenya on mail handed in by the Fleet Mail Officer, Eastern Fleet, Kilindini, according to Goldup. In red, dates between June 1942 and October 1943. See also P.P.13. (Goldup C.20).
- P.P.12 Used at Kilindini during the second half of October 1942 on unstamped mail. Later used as a cancellation on British or Kenya stamps. In black (Goldup G.2).
- P.P.13 Also in use at Kilindini, in conjunction with P.P.11 or P.P.15. In blue or violet, June-July 1942. (Goldup G.1).
- P.P.14 Believed to be another Kilindini mark. No other details.
- P.P.15 Known in red, black or violet. Goldup thought this was another mark used at Mombasa/Kilindini. However, as the same mark occurs on cover emanating elsewhere, it seems more probable that it was used in the U.K. One example has "1/3" in m.s. below "Paid". Dates mid-1940, July 1942, Feb.1943, and on an undated stampless cover probably post-war, endorsed "H.M.S.Orestes, Fisheries Board." (Goldup C.21).
- P.P.16 Allocated by Goldup to Mauritius. Seen on an air letter. In use March 1944. (Goldup G.5). Not seen by me.
- P.P.17 This is known on covers from Bermuda, and the actual handstamp has recently been discovered in the P.M.G.'s office there. There is thus no doubt as to the place of use of this one. In violet, December 1944. (Goldup B.23).
- P.P.18 This is also only known on covers from Bermuda, and so was probably used there. In violet, dates undeterminable, with N.2 type 'tombstone' censors and unique type of P.C.90 OPENED BY EXAMINER 8168 or 8169 censor label. (Goldup B.24).

- P.P.19 Known on an undated cover to Canada, bearing a Trinidad civil censor label P.C.90 / OPENED BY EXAMINER / I.E./8081. In purple, not recorded by Goldup.
- P.P.20 Both these marks occur on air letter forms originating at HMS GOSHAWK,
P.P.21 the Fleet Air Arm Station, Piarco, Trinidad. Not recorded by Goldup.
- P.P.22 Another mark on an air letter from H.M.S.GOSHAWK dated 3 May 1944, in purple. Also recorded by Goldup in March 1944. (Goldup G.6).
- P.P.23 This mark was recorded by Lincoln Kieffer, on a cover with return address "Elder Dempster Lines, Port of Spain, Trinidad, with a Trinidad civil censor label. Not recorded by Goldup.
- P.P.24 These four marks are all recorded on mail from St.Johns, Newfoundland,
P.P.25 mentioned by P.P.27. They occur in blue, P.P.24 in black, on both
P.P.26 Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy mail. Goldup only recorded P.P.25
P.P.27 (as M.2). Date spread 1942-1945.
- P.P.28 Almost certainly a Canadian mark, as suggested by the French/English wording. Known in red dated August 1941.. (Goldup M.1).
- P.P.29 In black on mail from the British Fleet Mail Office San Francisco, often philatelically inspired. What the "183" signifies is not known, as the normal double-ring datestamp used at this office was inscribed "British Fleet Mail 6". (Goldup G.3).
- P.P.30 Somewhat similar mark used by the British Fleet Mail Office, New York. In cerise, again often on philatelically inspired covers. (Goldup G.4).
- P.P.31 "PAID" mark found on a rare type of Air Letter printed in black in light weight paper dated December 1943 and February 194(4?). In blue. (Goldup G.7).
- P.P.32 Occurs in purple on printed air mail envelopes, of Transatlantic origin. One cover has '1/-' in ink above it, dated February 1943. No other clues as to where used. (Goldup G.8).
- P.P.33 Struck in blue, with Post Office Maritime Mail machine in red. A m.s. note on one cover says "1943". No clue as to allocation. (Goldup G.16).
- P.P.34 No clues as to place or ship of origin to this or the remainder of the marks listed. This one occurs in blue-black (Goldup G.9a).
- P.P.35 In greyish-black (Goldup G.13).
- P.P.36 In pink (Goldup G.10).
- P.P.37 In red (Goldup G.12).
- P.P.38 In blue, possibly part of G.9a. (Goldup G.9).
- P.P.39 This red mark is obviously a post office datestamp, probably used in the U.K. The date is 7 MR 40, and the cover has in addition an unusual framed "BY AIR MAIL / PAR AVION". Perhaps another from the Mediterranean sent via France. Not listed by Goldup.



POST OFFICE
MARITIME MAIL
POSTAGE PAID

MARITIME MAIL
POSTAGE PAID

P.P.17

P.P.18

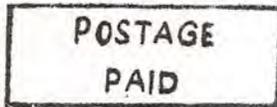
P.P.19

FROM H.M. SHIP
POSTAGE PAID

FROM H.M. SHIP
POSTAGE PAID

P.P.20

P.P.21



P.P.22

P.P.23

P.P.26

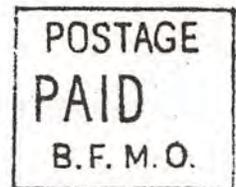
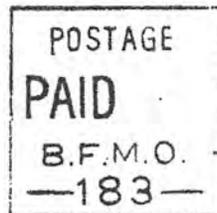


P.P.24

P.P.25

P.P.27

AIR POSTAGE PAID
PORT AERIEN PAYE



P.P.28

P.P.29

P.P.30

PAID

POSTAGE PAID

P.P.31

P.P.32

POSTAGE PAID

**AIR MAIL
PAID**

**AIR MAIL
PAID**

P.P.33

P.P.34

P.P.35

P.P.36 MAY 19 PAID

P.P.37 PAID

P.P.38 PAID



P.P.39

P.P.40

P.P.41

P.P.40 In blue on the front of an air mail envelope. On the back there are 10 G.B.1½d stamps cancelled by one of the undated rubber packet stamps RECEIVED FROM / H.M.SHIPS used in the U.K. Presumably the G.B.stamps were added at a later stage in its journey, but where? Not recorded by Goldup. Probably from the 1940 era.

P.P.41 Known on two covers addressed to Turkey, one as shown with -/7 in the centre, backstamped Istanbul, 26.12.39. The other has -/4 inserted, and two m.s. notes on the front "2/1/40" and "3/1/40". Not recorded by Goldup.

There are a number of handstamps just worded "AIR MAIL" which almost certainly were intended to indicate that postage had been paid, but I have not included them as they contain no reference to this.

There are doubtless other "Postage Paid" marks besides those described here, and I need hardly add that I should be pleased to be advised of any - they should be on covers sent by air mail, however, as certain similar marks are known used on surface mail. Marks containing the words "Postage Free" do not qualify, as this endorsement was used to show that postage need not be paid, in the case of the free Christmas mail concession, for instance. As indicated before, details of items bearing any of the marks described in the article would be welcome.

BRITISH FORCES POST OFFICE HONG KONG

Thanks to John Daynes, we can now illustrate the parcel post datestamp (numbered '2' in this example). For the double ring and single ring stamps see Newsletter 158 (Sept.-Oct.1979).

