

## "PRIVILEGE" AIRLETTERS and ENVELOPES.

Text for specialist postal stationery collection

Known as "Honour", "Privilege" or "Green" envelopes, these were introduced to the British army during World War I in March 1915.

The "privilege-type" airletter form had either a small or large bold triangle in the lower left-hand corner, or a filled-in triangle in the right corner. On the back panel, there was inscribed an honour pledge which read... "I certify on my honour that the contents of this 'privilege' Air Mail Letter refer to nothing but private and family matters."

These airletters were limited to one form per serviceman per month and were immune from censorship except by the base censor. The intension was to enable a serviceman to write a letter of personal nature to his family without the unit censor knowing the contents thereof

There were complaints that officers entrusted with censoring the mail of troops directly under them had access to purely domestic and personal information which was embarrassing to the writer. Accordingly, there was an issue of one green envelope per month which, after the writer had signed the "honour" certificate on the front, was sealed and was no longer subject to censorship at unit level. Thereafter, the letters were forwarded to the Base Censor, who was entitled, if he wished, to open and censor such letters at random.

The system continued during World War II and was adopted by South African troops. There was a bilingual printing of which specimens are relatively rare. There were various printings of the British envelope (Army Form AFW 3078) with numerous varieties.

The 10d stamp is the normal airmail rate from the Middle East to South Africa.