

Part 6. AEROGRAMS

Introduction

(updated 6. 2013)

Aerograms (aerogrammes, air letters – AG for short) are second only to post cards as the most prolific of the Hong Kong postal stationery categories, and they are the last type of official HK PS to continue in use. As indicated in the introduction, only the official Hong Kong issues with imprinted stamps will be addressed herein (except for Webb #1, described in Chapter 6, section A of his Hong Kong Airmails monograph); i.e., not including Christmas aerograms, and other such AGs.

I probably should recant my somewhat elitist introductory remarks about certain Hong Kong PS, such as the Christmas aerograms, after seeing 1966 and 1967 Christmas aerograms (Webb A.13 and A.14) sitting at over 30 GBP each on Ebay. These, at least, appeared to be genuinely used (vs. the usual hand-backs), which I don't recall having seen before, but they still looked philatelic. That may be the only way to obtain them, but the price had already climbed too high for me to justify joining in the fray.

I later found the Christmas greeting card addressed to me, which is illustrated and described in HKSCJ 365/21. It is Yang Type CG2a, which was restricted to only local use, unless additional stamps were affixed, whereas the “b” set was prepaid for airmail. This “b” set is clearly a form of aerogram, but, since I have no other new information to contribute regarding this type of AG, they are not further addressed herein.

Due to the relatively large number of AGs, the ERD / LRD and related information have been provided in separate tables for the KG VI and QE reigns, and for convenience, the QE AGs have been broken into two tables: 1) 40c and 50c values, 2) 60c and above values. There are several “new finds,” but they tend to be more of a “fly speck” nature than the new finds for other types of HK PS. The tabular ERD / LRD and related information may be accessed by clicking below on the appropriate table link. The corresponding text follows each of these tables.

<u>Reign / Type</u>	<u>Section</u>	<u>Table</u>
King George VI	<u>AG-A</u>	AG-1
Queen Elizabeth 40c & 50c	AG-B	AG-2
Queen Elizabeth 60c & up	AG-C	AG-3

Mr. Martin Walker, a Philatelist in Australia, emailed me that he has developed an interest in HK aerograms. He mentioned that he found, via internet search, and made use of the aerogram part of the postal stationery monograph on our web site. He kindly provided the following information concerning AG quantities issued, based on his research in the microfilms of the Crown Agents Philatelic, Security and Printing Archive at the British Library. He noted:

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"This archive contains 16 requisition books for jobs arranged by the Crown Agents from 1921 to approximately 1968. There are many references to Hong Kong stamps, stationery and revenues in these microfilms. If you have any UK based members with time to spare the microfilms to look at are - CM/PHIL/323 (1 & 2); CM/PHIL/339 (1-4); CM/PHIL/373 (1 & 2)".

There are also microfilms recording the issue of paper - CM/PHIL/541 (1 & 2) and the registration of dies, plates, printing formes, etc - CM/PHIL/459 (1 & 2). Records on jobs done by De La Rue, Harrison and Sons, Waterlow and Bradbury Wilkinson are quite detailed.

I did make some notes on the airletter and aerogramme records for Hong Kong. They are not as detailed as most records in the books as they simply record that jobs were done by the third party of McCorquodale's. The details are found in the backs of requisition books 7 - 12. There are no aerogramme records for Hong Kong in the indices for books 13 (1962) to 18.

Book 7 entries for Hong Kong (1947 - 49):

- 500,000 x 40c air letters (undated, but the earliest entry)
- 1,000,000 x 40c despatched July 1948
- 1,500,000 x 40c gummed airletters overprinted HONG KONG, despatched circa September 1949

Book 8 (1950 - 52):

- 1,000,000 x 40c despatched 8 June 1950
- 1,000,000 x 40c blue paper (undated)
- 1,500,000 x 40c gummed blue paper (undated)

Book 9 (1952 - 54):

- 400,000 x 40c KGVII airletters blue paper gummed
(this is in the same requisition as the QEII issue below)
- 2,000,000 x 40c aerogrammes, New QEII blue paper gummed
- 3,000,000 x 40c QEII air letter forms gummed

Book 10 (1954 - 56):

- 3,000,000 x 50c QEII gummed forms overprinted HONG KONG

Book 11 (1957 - 59):

- 5,000,000 x 50c Aerogrammes

Book 12 (1960 - 61):

- 3,000,000 x 50c aerogrammes gummed flaps.

The requisitions also note that Specimens were produced for several of the issues."

I extend my sincere thanks to Mr. Walker for making this useful information concerning HK air letters / aerograms available to our HKSC members, as well as to others who may find it while doing research via web searches.

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Section AG-A: KGV I**

Webb #	Sch. #	Issue Date	Value	Description	Early	Webb Early	Webb Late	Late	Notes
		KG VI							
1		1.4.46	---	AIR LETTER" with 28 mm"HONG KONG"; 40c in adhesive stamps affixed by HKPO		4.4.46	26.4.46	16.3.48	LRD: Scan from Ebay. 1949 dates seen on Ebay, but not verified
2	1	1948	40c	Grey paper, "HONG KONG": 27.5 mm "By Air Mail" (negative), "Air Letter," and 3-line "enclosure" warning at upper left	28.1.48	15.2.48	28.8.48	15.11.49	ERD: FDC, Bull 6.2006, lot 261, see text LRD: Ebay 200026882575
2a				Imprinted 40c stamp missing					
3	2	1949	40c	As Schoenfeld #1, HONG KONG: 25.5 mm	28.4.50	27.6.50	26.9.52		ERD: LCS (Ebay 230287300486, 9.2008)
4	3	1.8.50	40c	Blue paper, "HONG KONG": 26 mm 4-line "enclosure" warning at upper left Watermark: Imperial Air Mail with index "B"		1.8.50	30.3.53		FDC: LCS - from Wantsai
	3a		40c	IAM / "C" watermark	18.10.50				ERD: LCS; Webb noted "or C"
4a	3b		40c	IAM watermark without letter					Webb: "No B in watermark"
	3c		40c	Distorted "P" in "Imperial" of watermark					
	3d		40c	Distorted "A" in "Air" of watermark					
	3e		40c	No watermark					
5	4	11.51	40c	Blue paper, red-orange indicia. As Sch. 3, but "HONG KONG" 23 mm. and no watermark.		3.1.52	23.1.55	8.6.55	LRD: Bull, 12.2012, lot 5363 LCS: 10.10.52 example on bluish-grey vs. blue paper
5a			40c	Indicia bright red orange					
5b			40c	Indicia brownish-orange				22.1.54	LRD: LCS
NEW?			40c + 10c	KGVI 40c (Schoenfeld 4) with 10c QE stamp added	17.6 (55?)				"Halewood: aerogramme rate to 50c 1.6.55 Only known example. See text

Table AG-1. Hong Kong KG VI aerograms, descriptions and usage

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It is unclear why Dr. Schoenfeld (whose name is subsequently abbreviated “Sch.” herein) chose to extirpate the 1946 HK air letter recorded as #1 in Col. Webb’s Hong Kong Airmails listing. While this 1946 issue had 40c in adhesive stamps affixed by the HKPO, vs. an imprinted stamp as on subsequent AGs, it was certainly an official HK issue. Webb stated that this AG had been issued on 1.4.46, but recorded 4.4.46 as the earliest use, as illustrated in Figure AG-1a.



Figure AG-1a. Webb type 1 air letter: stamps affixed; 4.4.46: earliest recorded use

The Webb type 1 issue appears to have been modeled after the British Army Form W.3077 air letter, which is known used in HK 8.11.45 – 12.9.52. The Webb #1 HK air letter is virtually identical to W.3077, both printed on grey paper, except for the addition of a 28 mm. “Hong Kong” at the top-center on the front, and a “Senders name and address” section on the back of the Webb #1 air letter. Yang also listed this first HK air letter issue, but with a typographical error of 1948 vs. the correct 1946 issue date.

Mr. Halewood indicated in Hong Kong Airmails 1945 – 1995 that the 40c air letter forms were initially accepted for transmission only to GB and British Empire destinations outside of the Western Hemisphere, per HKPO air mail Notification 276 of 26.7.46. Air letter forms were

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subsequently accepted for all “air throughout” destinations per Notification 469 of 11.6.47. However, they were not accepted for air mail to London and then surface mail to destinations such as Europe, the US, Canada, and South America. Notwithstanding this official prohibition, I have a 12.9.47 air letter to the US, and a 1.8.50 air letter to Canada, both by air to London only.

The Webb ERDs and LRDs for HK AGs listed in the tables herein are from his Hong Kong Airmails booklet. It is surprising that Webb only recorded use of his type 1 air letter in April 1946, whereas its usage has since been extended into 1948. Similarly, Webb only recorded use of his type 2 air letter, the first with imprinted KGVI stamp, for a six month period in 1948, whereas its usage has now been extended to 1949. Webb stated that his #2 air letter with 27.5 mm. “HONG KONG” (Sch. type 1) was issued on 15.2.48. However, Webb’s listed issue date is disproved by the 28.1.48 air letter illustrated in Figure AG-1b (Bull 6.2006 auction lot 261). This AG bears the personal chop applied by the “P M G / Hong Kong,” which was first recorded used 3.4.47 by Chris Norton on a set of apparently cancelled by favor stamps (HKSCJ 325/20). The Postmaster states to his daughter that this air letter to her is a FDC.

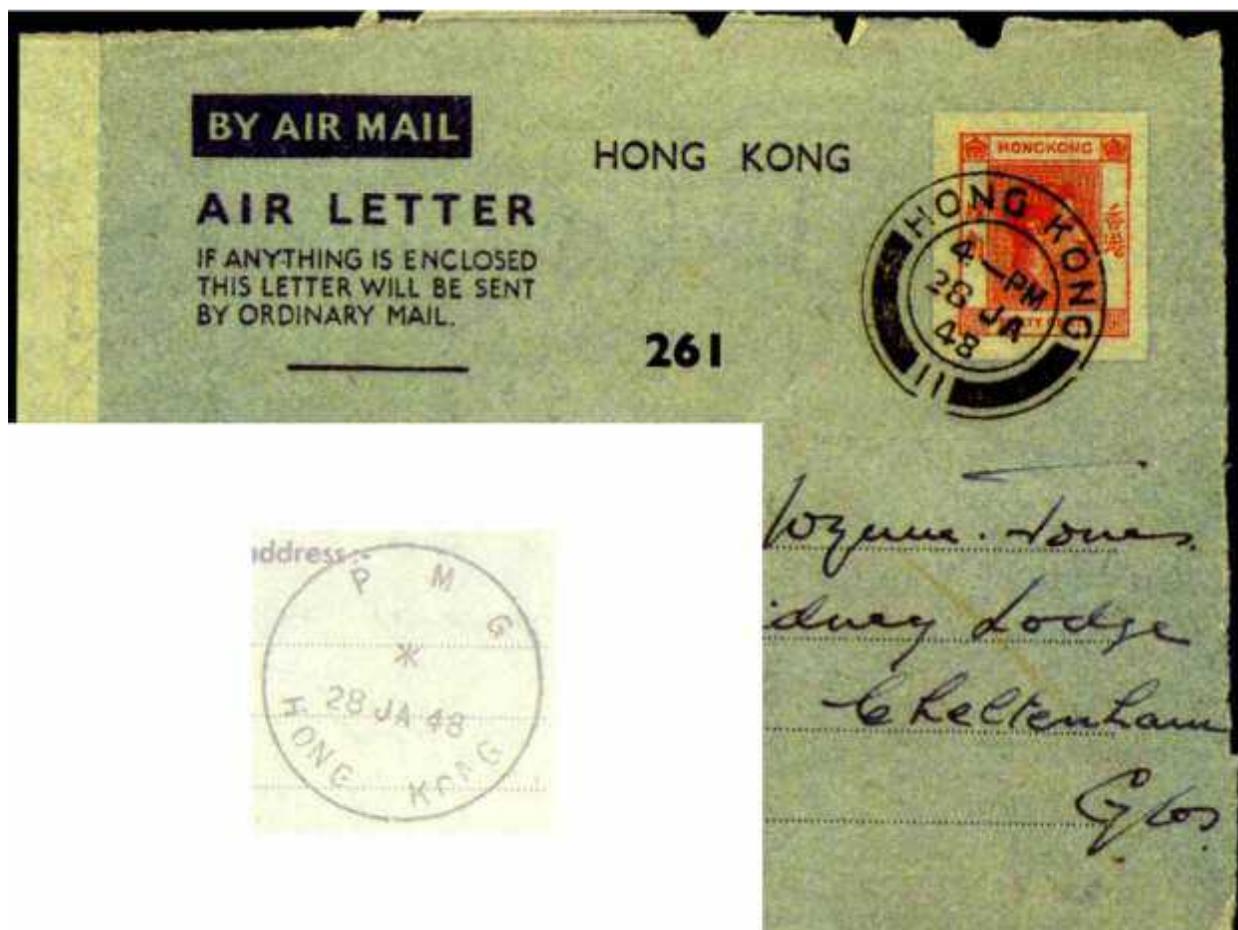


Figure AG-1b. Schoenfeld type 1 air letter, 28.1.48: earlier than recorded - FDC

Webb and Schoenfeld both list the air letter with 25.5 mm. “HONG KONG” as having been issued in 1949 (Webb 3, Sch. 2), although Yang shows it issued in 1948. However, Webb’s

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ERD is 27.6.50, and in the 40 plus years since, that date has only been extended to 28.4.50, as shown in Figure AG-1c, so the 1948/9 issue dates seem suspect. The 21.4.50 dateline and the “Leper Asylum / c/o Maryknoll / Stanley Hongkong” hand stamp on the back of the Figure AG-1c cover indicate that this message originated elsewhere in China.

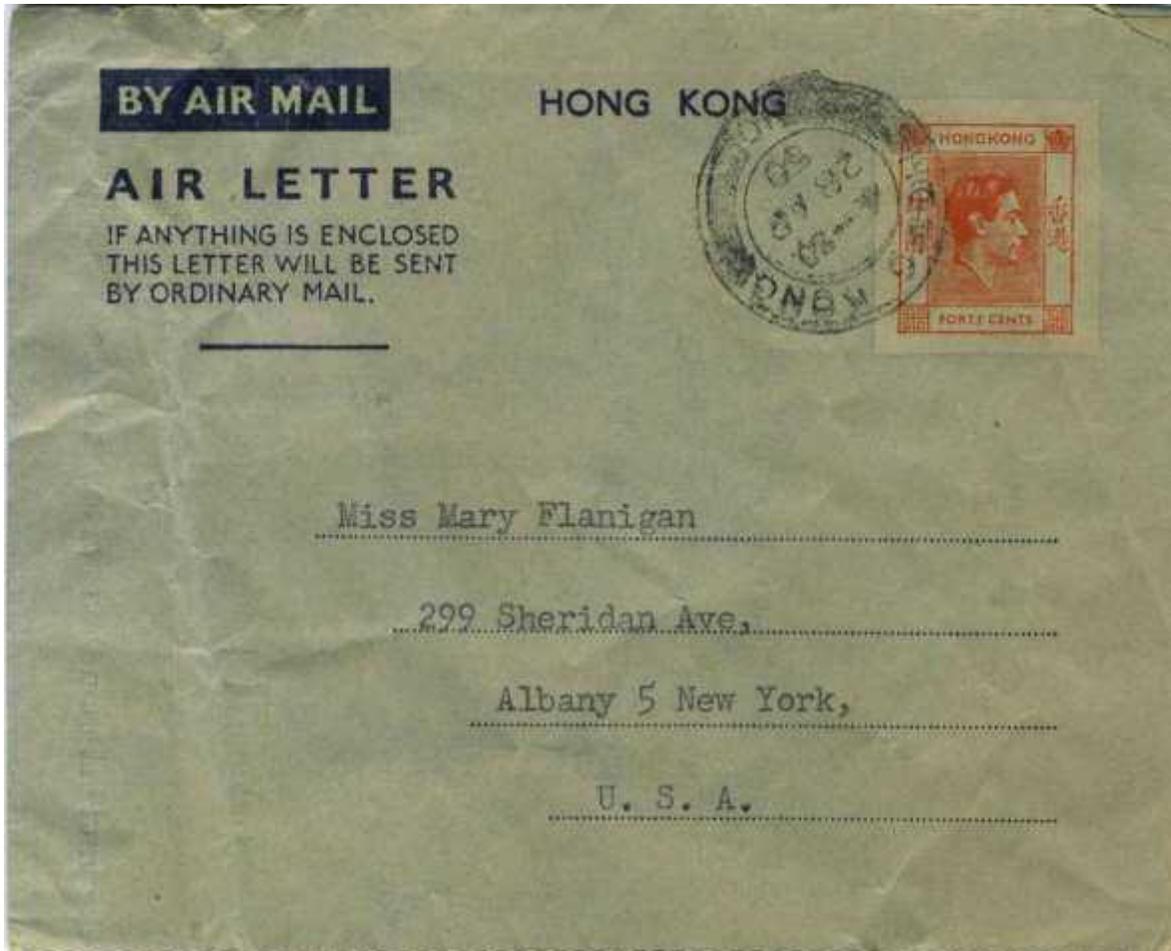


Figure AG-1c. Schoenfeld type 2 air letter, 28.4.50: earlier than recorded

A new air letter form with four-line enclosure warning, vs. the previous 3-line warning, was issued in 1950 (Webb 4, Sch. 3). Although the preceding issues were on un-watermarked paper, this AG was printed on blue paper watermarked “Imperial Air Mail” (IAM) with a castle gate. Webb and Schoenfeld recorded several watermark varieties for this issue, but only one of these varieties has so far been found used. It has index “C” in the IAM watermark (Sch. 3a), vs. index “B” in the watermark of the basic type.

My (ex.) 1.8.50 Sch. Type 3 FDC is illustrated in Figure AG-1d. As can be seen, the wording of the enclosure warning on this AG is the same as the three-line enclosure warning on the Figure AG-1b and AG-1c covers. However, the warning in Figure AG-1d has been reformatted to four lines, such that it is the same width as “AIR MAIL”. The IAM watermark on this AG has index letter “B”. The “Wantsai / Hong Kong” c.d.s. is Proud Type D7, recorded used 1949 – 52.

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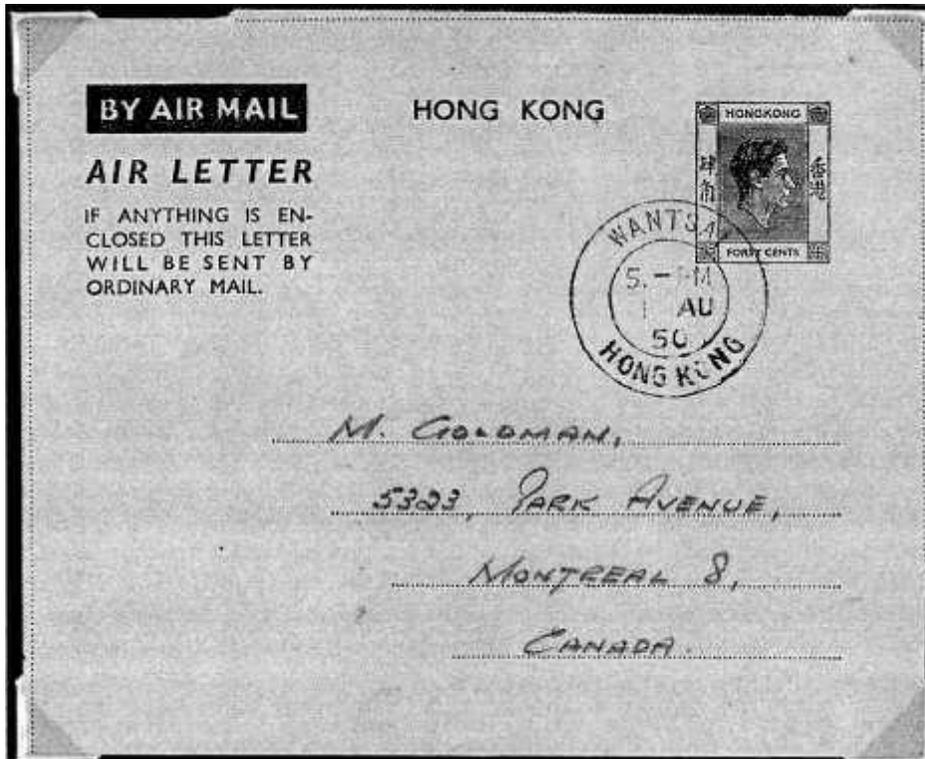


Figure AG-1d. Sch. type 3 air letter FDC: 1.8.50; 4-line enclosure warning

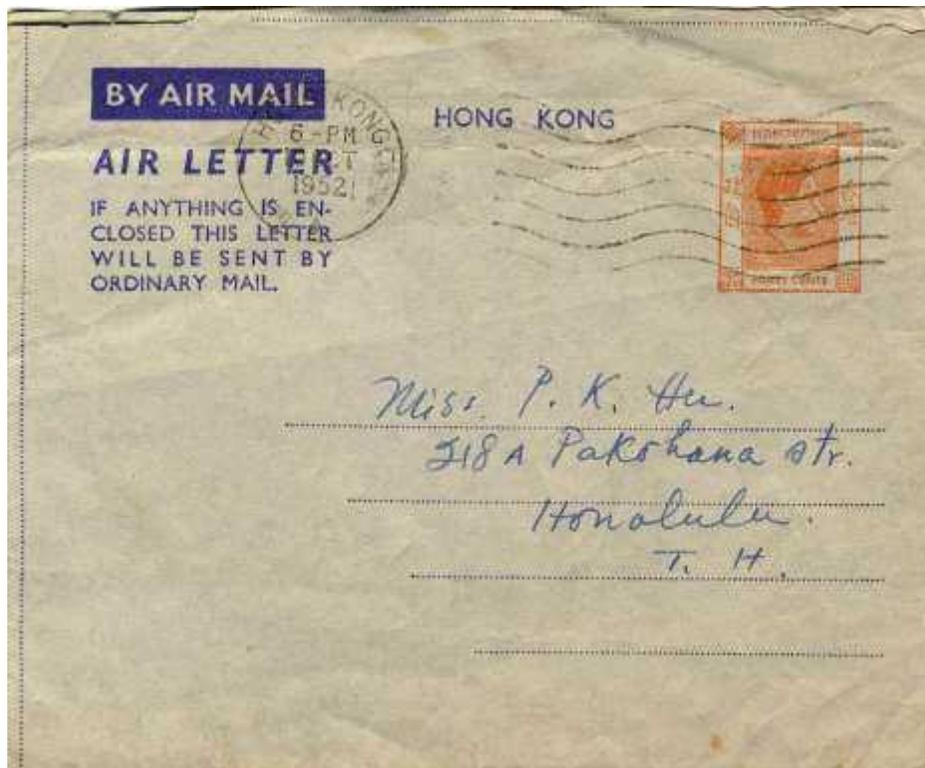


Figure AG-1e. Sch. type 4 air letter on bluish-grey paper – not recorded

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Webb and Schoenfeld record an un-watermarked air letter with 23 mm. "Hong Kong" as having been issued in 1951 (Webb 5, Sch. 4), although Yang shows it issued in 1952. Webb's 3.1.52 ERD has not been advanced. Webb recorded stamp color varieties on this issue: reddish orange (5), bright red orange (5a) or brownish-orange (5b). Yang listed two of Webb's three colors: brown orange (AL5) and bright red orange (AL5a), but Schoenfeld noted only red-orange.

Col. Webb noted grey paper used for his type 3 AG, but blue paper for types 4 and 5. A Webb type 5 AG (Sch. type 4) printed on a bluish-grey paper is illustrated in Figure AG-1e. It may be that a small amount of residual grey paper from the type 3 printing was consumed for the printing of type 5, along with the normal blue paper. The Figure AG-1e AG bears a 10.10.52 "Hong Kong / A" machine cancel, as Proud type M1. However, the curvature of the wavy lines at the right of the c.d.s. is a subtype, as in Proud type 5, but unrecorded for type 1. This AG is addressed to "Honolulu / T. H." (Territory of Hawaii), a scarce destination from HK.

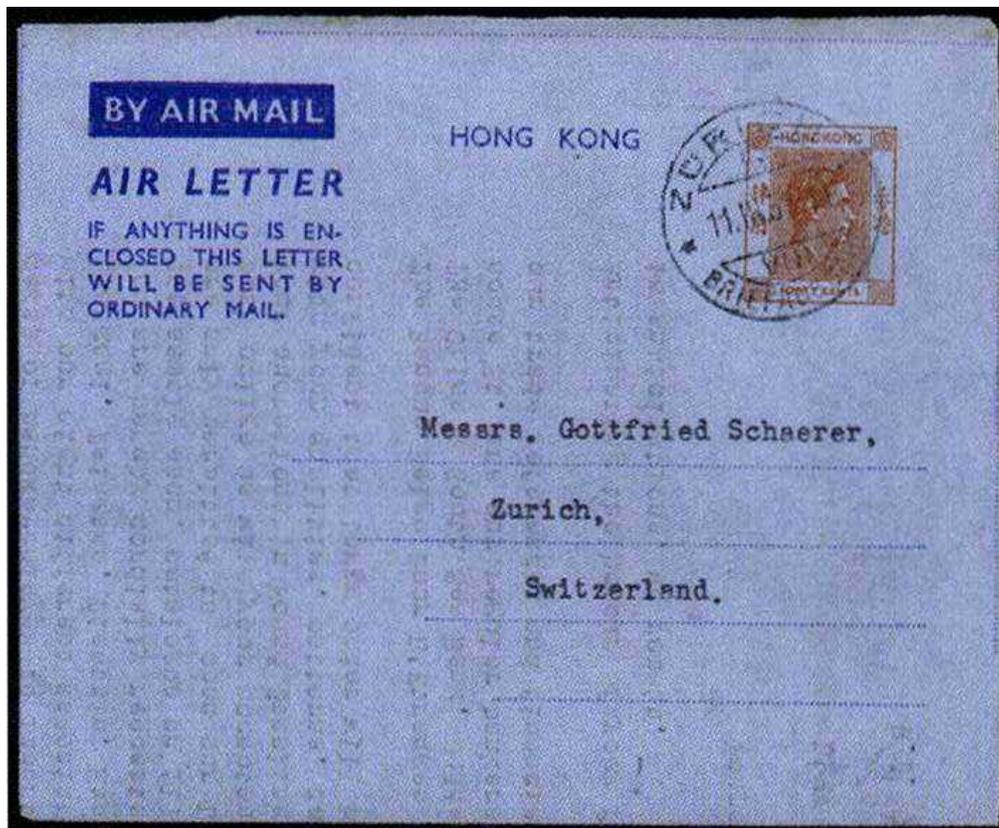


Figure AG-1f. Sch. type 4 air letter cancelled on arrival in Zurich, Switzerland

Although not the ERD or LRD, an interesting and very unusual usage of the Sch. Type 4 AG is illustrated in Figure AG-1f. It somehow escaped being cancelled in HK before departure, so was cancelled on arrival in Zurich, Switzerland, with an 11.3.52 bridge-type c.d.s. (John Bull auction, 12.2012, lot 5360). While arrival marks were not uncommon in earlier days of mail carried by ships, and a very small number are known on regular air mail letters, this is the only example I have seen of an arrival mark on an AG.

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Mr. Halewood stated that the 40c AG rate was raised to 50c on 1.6.55. A previously unrecorded George VI 40c aerogram, additionally franked with QE 10c to satisfy the new 50c AG rate, is illustrated in Figure AG-2. This AG also bears a red “AEROGRAMME” hand stamp, which the seller, George Alevizos (marketed via Ebay in 2008), states was applied by the HK GPO due to the UPU having ruled that all air letters were to be inscribed "Aerogramme." This is borne out by Article RL 124 of the current UPU Letter Post Manual, published in Berne, 2005, in which is stated in par. 2.2 concerning AGs: ‘It shall bear the indication “Aerogramme”.’ The two stamps were cancelled by a HK machine cancel dated 17.6, probably 1955, since that was when the 40c AG rate was raised to 50c.

This unusual AG has been listed as “New?” in Table AG-1, since no other example is yet known. However, Webb recorded a similar 4.2.58 example of a 10c QE stamp added to his Type 3 AG (Sch. 2), but this has not been seen. It seems possible that both of these usages were instances of individuals using up outdated KG VI 40c AGs by adding a QE 10c adhesive stamp. In addition, it also seems possible that the red “AEROGRAMME” was applied privately to the Figure AG-2 AG, since no other official HK instruction marks from that period are known in red. This, so far unique, AG was recently offered by Interasia (6.2013, lot 3456) at an estimate of HK\$ 15,000 – 20,000.



Figure AG-2. 40c KGVI AG (Sch. 4) + 10c QE stamp + “Aerogramme” - unrecorded

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Although I had been suspicious of the handstamped “Aerogramme” shown in Figure AG-2, I recently came across a reference to a similarly handstamped “Aerogramme” in Col. Webb’s “Hong Kong Airmails” booklet (Chapter 6, Section C: OHMS Air Letter / Aerogram forms, #4):

Form GF 106, light blue paper, with “By Air Mail / Air Letter”, and 4-line enclosure warning at the upper left, “On His Majesty’s Service / Hong Kong” printed in blue, “His” changed to “Her” with handstamp or typewritten, “Air Letter” crossed out and violet “Aerogramme” added above.

Col. Webb had stated that this official AG was issued in 1956, but I had a note of the 25.10.55 example exhibited in Figure AG-3 (John Bull, 6.2006, lot 264). Since Webb documented the addition of “Aerogramme” to his type 4 OHMS AG, an extant example of which was found, my concern about the “Aerogramme” handstamp on the Figure AG-2 cover has been ameliorated.

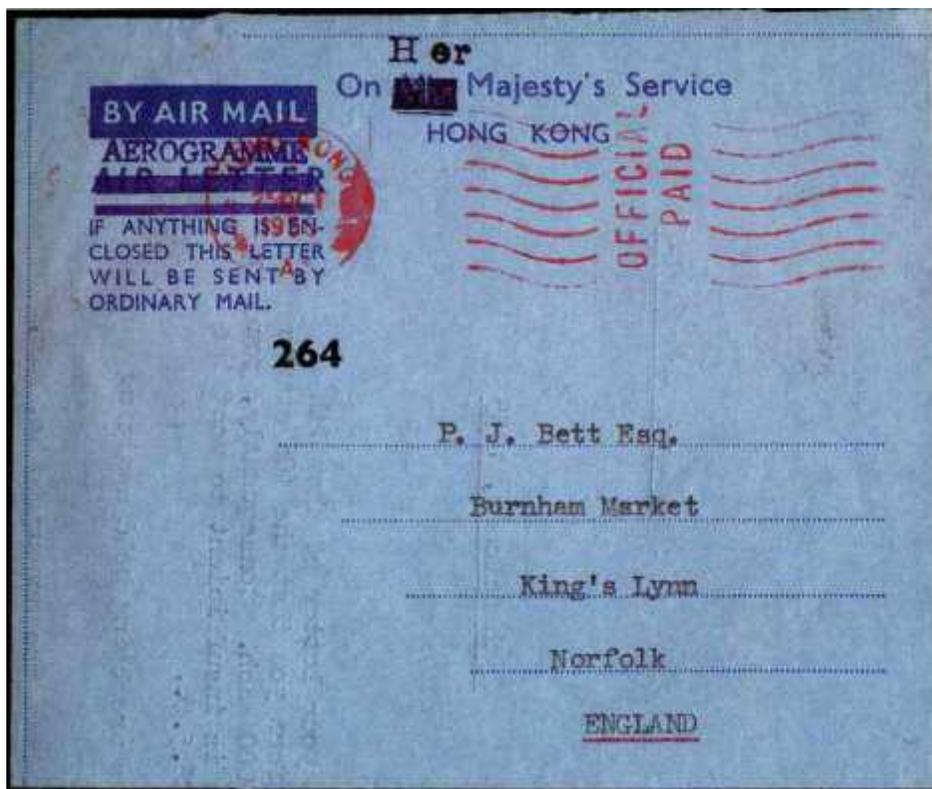


Figure AG-3. OHMS AG changes: “Him” to “Her” & “Air Letter” to “Aerogramme”

The next section is AG B: QE 40c and 50c. To access this section or other parts of the monograph, return to the HKSC website/Papers.

<http://www.hongkongstudycircle.com/papers.html>