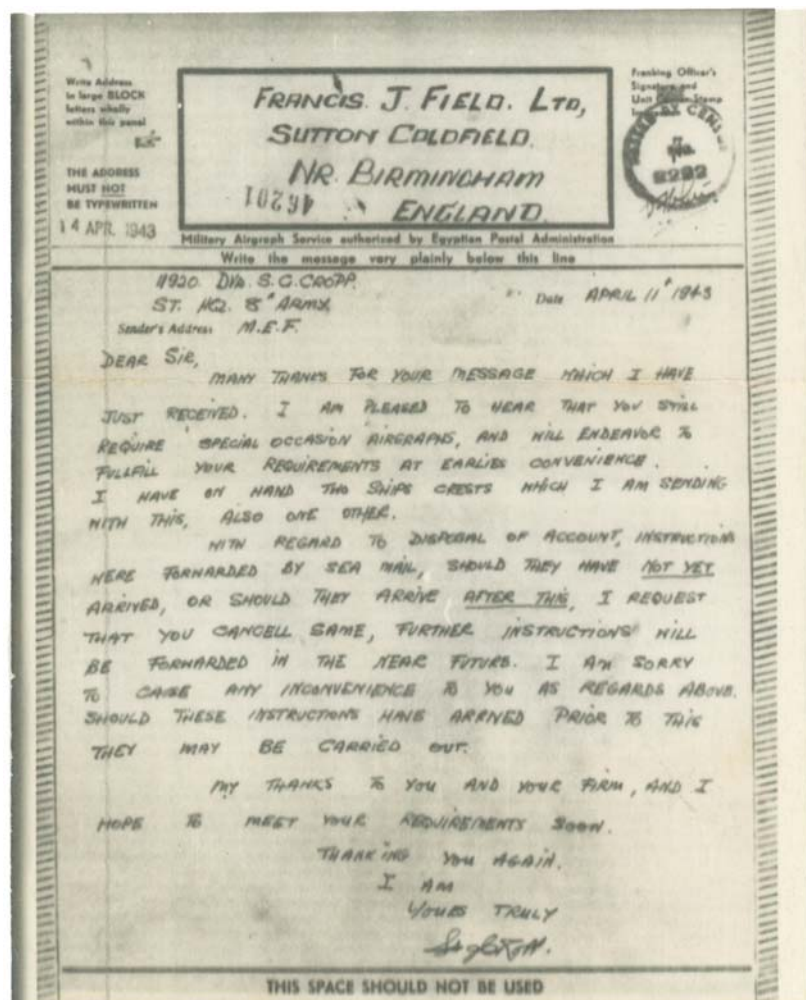
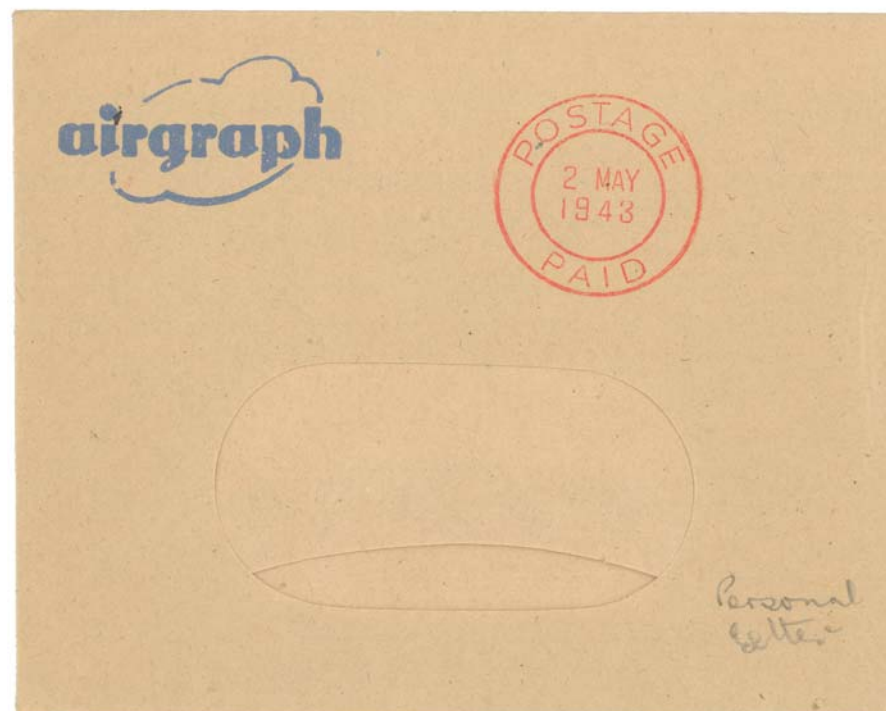


PITNEY-BOWES 'POSTAGE PAID'

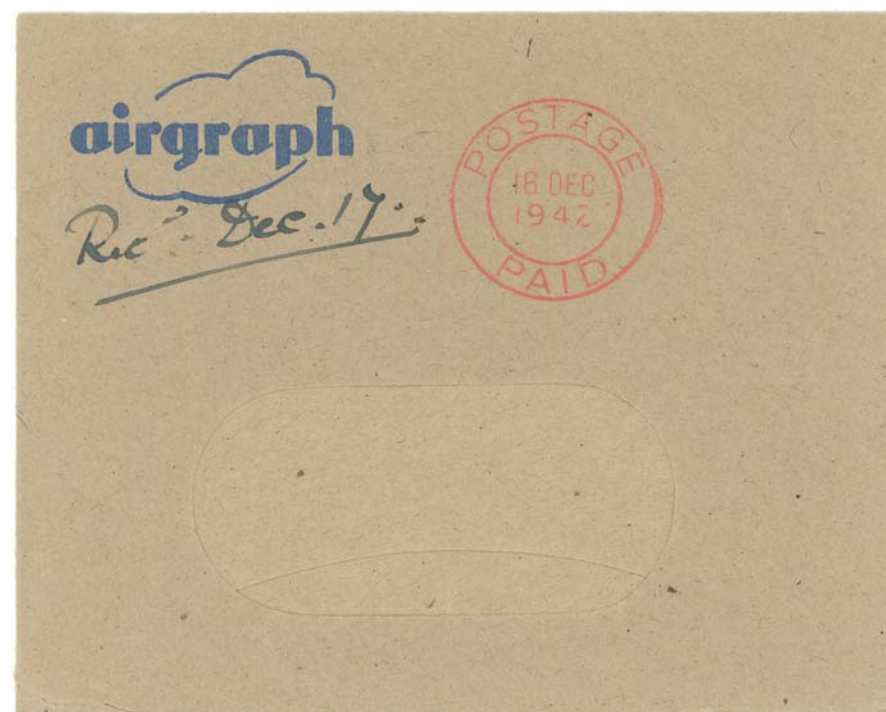
Processed airgraphs were folded, inserted into window envelopes, postmarked and (presumably) delivered by the normal post. Various machines were used but many airgraphs were dealt with by modified Pitney-Bowes Model A or F franking machines which applied a 'POSTAGE PAID' impression. According to E. H. Keeton's handbook *Airgraph* (1987), the earliest Pitney-Bowes date recorded is 12 Apr. 1942.



This airgraph was contained in the envelope dated 2 MAY 1943 and is addressed to the well-known airmail specialist, Francis J. Field who had a large stock of airgraphs. The writer, a driver in the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force of the British Army based in Egypt, is offering to supply 'special occasion' airgraphs to the firm.



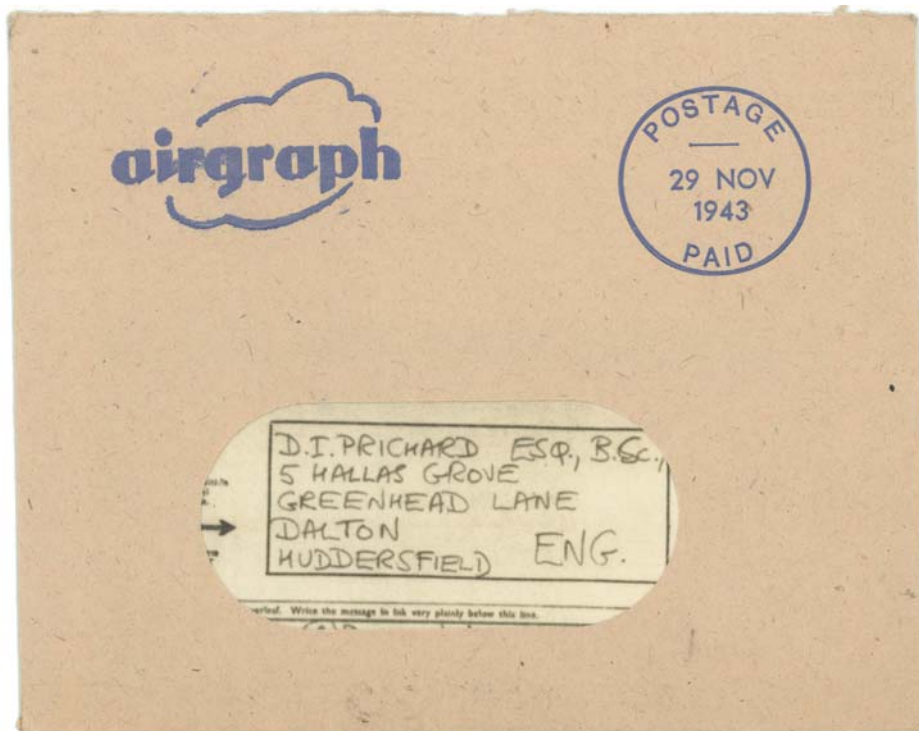
Pitney-Bowes 'POSTAGE PAID' impression 2 MAY 1943



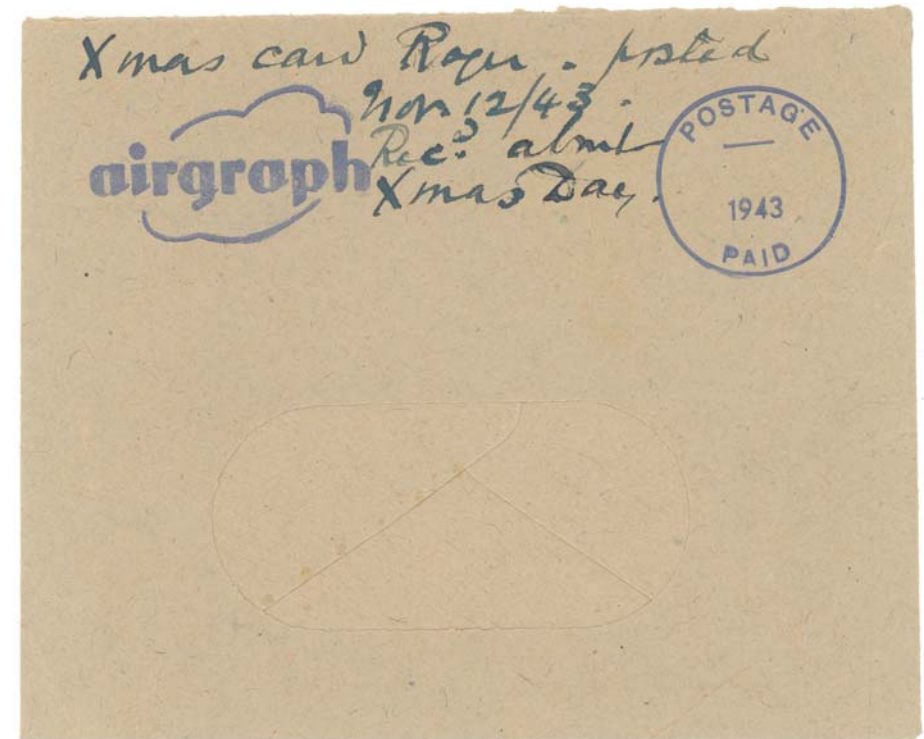
Pitney-Bowes 'POSTAGE PAID' impression 16 DEC 1942

DICKINSON ENVELOPES

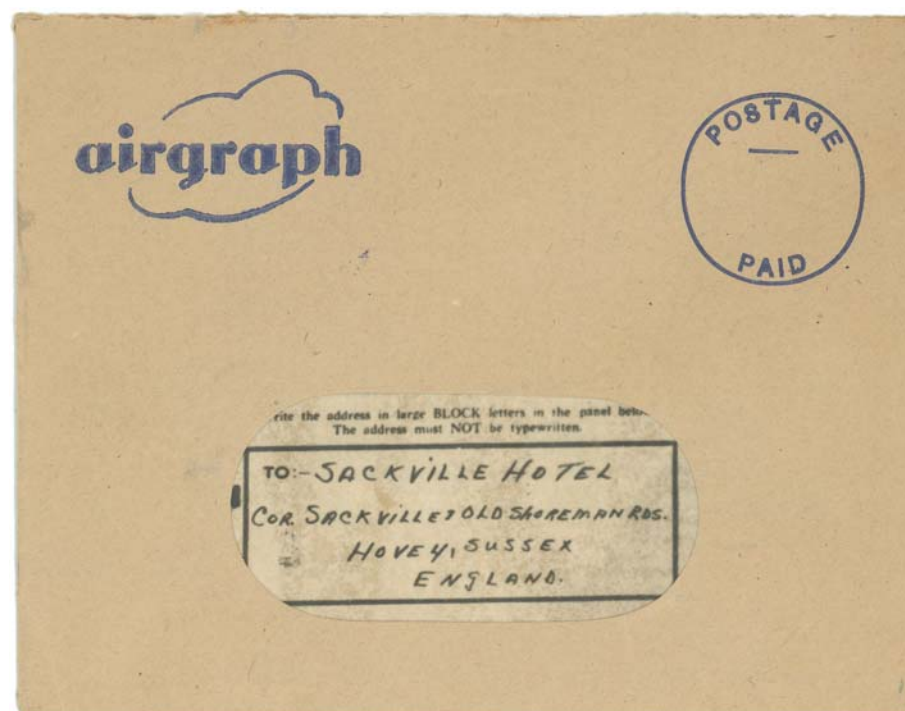
The London firm of Dickinson constructed a machine which printed the envelopes including the 'POSTAGE PAID' stamp in blue, then folded and inserted the airgraph. According to E. H. Keeton's handbook *Airgraph* (1987), the first use of Dickinson's machine was on 16 Aug. 1943. At times when the number of airgraphs to be delivered was exceptionally large, typically at Christmas, the date was omitted from the datestamp (this also applied to the Pitney-Bowes marks).



Dickinson envelope with blue printed datestamp 29 NOV 1943



Dickinson envelope with blue printed datestamp 1943



Dickinson envelope with blue printed datestamp with no date at all. Although it is never certain if a particular airgraph belongs to the envelope, the airgraph this one contained was a Christmas greeting.

1942 — MPs VISIT THE GPO — SAMPLE AIRGRAPH

Write address in large BLOCK letters wholly within this panel —
The address must NOT be typewritten.

TO:—
**MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
VISITING LONDON POSTAL REGION**

Write the message very plainly below this line.

Sender's Address: **G.P.O. LONDON**
Date: **15. OCT. 1942**

THE POST BOY 1774
THE MAIL COACH
THE TRAVELLING POST OFFICE
MODERN MAIL VAN
AIR-MAIL

The Airgraph Service is an interesting development of postal communication overseas. It is made possible by the use of micro-photography and modern aircraft. Airgraphs are a hundred times lighter than ordinary letters. The service was opened to the Middle East in 1941. Airgraph Letters can now be sent to Civilians in twenty-three different countries and to Forces personnel in twenty different territories. The number of inward and outward airgraphs handled in this country has reached 250,000 a day.

This space should not be used.
MAKE SURE THAT THE ADDRESS IS WRITTEN IN LARGE BLOCK LETTERS IN THE PANEL ABOVE.

Write address in large BLOCK letters wholly within this panel —
The address must NOT be typewritten.

TO:—
**MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
VISITING LONDON POSTAL REGION**

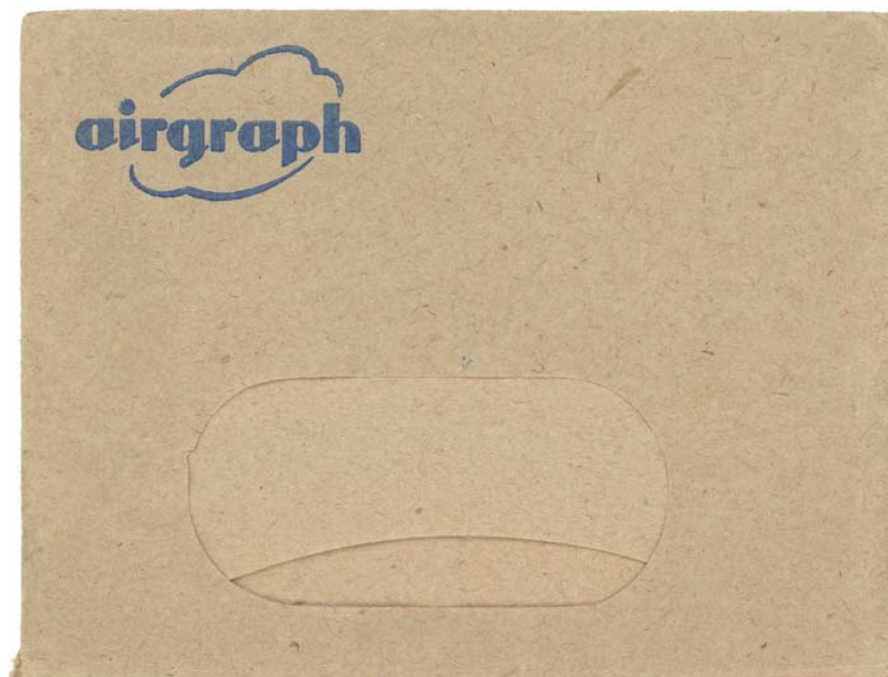
Write the message very plainly below this line.

Sender's Address: **G.P.O. LONDON**
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MAKE SURE THAT THE ADDRESS IS WRITTEN IN LARGE BLOCK LETTERS IN THE PANEL ABOVE.



SECRET DESTINATIONS OF MAILS

M.P.s VISIT THE G.P.O.

The Postmaster-General, Mr. W. S. Morrison, yesterday conducted a party of fellow members of Parliament on a tour of the General Post Office, more particularly of the departments dealing with mails to and from the forces overseas and H.M. ships at sea.

In a large room in which airgraphs from men in the Middle East to their families in Britain are folded and put into envelopes the visitors saw on the wall a notice in Spanish. "Silence is of the gods; only monkeys chatter," the notice says.

The number of inward and outward airgraphs handled here has now reached 250,000 a day. They can be sent to civilians in 23 countries and to members of the forces in 20 territories.

The necessity for secrecy about the whereabouts of ships of the Royal Navy complicates the work of the G.P.O. in dispatching mails to the Navy. The M.P.s were informed how the Navy's mail is sent abroad, while the whereabouts of every ship is kept secret. By means of a sealed dispatch to the man in charge a message detailing the position of all H.M. ships on foreign service is given. This official is the only man among the 3,000 employed who possesses this knowledge.

As reported in *The Times*, on 15 October 1942 the Postmaster-General took a party of Members of Parliament on a tour of the General Post Office, in particular to see the department dealing with mails to and from forces overseas.

It appears that each MP was given this sample consisting of an airgraph window envelope containing: (A) a form upon which the message was to be written (*see the following sheet*), (B) a tiny 16 mm microfilm negative of the message, and (C) the processed airgraph.

The Times, 16 Oct. 1942

1942 — MPs VISIT THE GPO — SAMPLE AIRGRAPH

Form for writing a message to be sent by the outward Airgraph Service.

The reverse has detailed instructions and a space for affixing a postage stamp (3d to the Forces, 8d to civilians). According to the *J. Stephen's Airgraph and V...- Mail Catalogue* (1948), the first airgraphs (between 40,000 and 50,000) arrived in the UK on 13 May 1941 from troops in the Middle East. The first outward service was on 15 August 1941, confined to mail for troops in the Middle East.

The Airgraph Service from Great Britain ceased on 31 July 1945.

Write address in large BLOCK letters wholly within this panel →

TO:—

The address must NOT be typewritten.

Write the message very plainly below this line.

Sender's Address:

Date.

“ Airgraphs,
Fo

In that case it is desirable that a large form should be folded as few times as possible as the writing.

(7) If it is desired to send more than one sheet a separate form must be completed and stamps to the value of the appropriate charge must be affixed to each form. The name and address of the sender and of the addressee must be inserted on each form in the usual way.

This space should not be used.

MAKE SURE THAT THE ADDRESS IS WRITTEN IN LARGE BLOCK LETTERS IN THE PANEL ABOVE

AIRGRAPH SERVICE.

- (1) Particulars of the destinations to which the Airgraph Service is available, and the appropriate charges, may be obtained at any Post Office.
- (2) Nothing should be written on this side of the paper.
- (3) The whole of the message should be written on the other side below the double line.
- (4) The name and address to which the message is to be sent should be written in large BLOCK letters wholly within the panel provided. The address should be the same as is appropriate in the case of an ordinary letter.
- (5) A miniature photographic negative of the message and address will be made and sent by air mail. At the destination end a photographic print, measuring about 5 inches by 4 inches, will be made and delivered to the addressee. **It is therefore important that the message should be written very plainly and that the address should be written as large as possible in BLOCK letters.** Wherever possible, black ink should be used. Very small writing is not suitable.
- (6) Stamps to the value of the appropriate charge should be affixed in the space provided below. The completed form should then be handed in at any Post Office. If preferred, the completed form (with stamps to the value of the appropriate charge affixed in the space below) may be forwarded to London in an envelope which should be addressed to:—

“ Airgraphs,”
Foreign Section,
London.

In that case it is desirable that a large envelope should be used and that the form should be folded as few times as possible, preferably in the same direction as the writing.
- (7) If it is desired to send more than one sheet a separate form must be completed and stamps to the value of the appropriate charge must be affixed to each form. The name and address of the sender and of the addressee must be inserted on each form in the usual way.
- (8) The original will be retained by the Post Office and eventually destroyed.

Affix stamps here.

Wt. 13784/P.1585. 6,000,000. 5/42. D.P.W. 51-7065

P.229SG.