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(Incorporating: The Date Stamp and Australian Journal of Postal History)

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Express Delivery

Cover Story—Two Letters with OAT cachets to Vichy
France

Vale—Augustus Harewood

Hand-Held Date-Stamp Notes

Meetings: The Australian Philatelic Society meets bimonthly on the third Monday of (February, April, June, August, October, December), at 7.45 pm at the RSL Canterbury Memorial Homes, 152 Canterbury Rd, Canterbury, Melway Ref: page 46 C 10/11. Visitors welcome.

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Webmaster: Website address: <http://www.aps.org.au>

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2009 Programme		
20 April 2009	Members	Work in progress. 8 sheets per member
15 June 2009	John Young	Australian overseas airmail covers, 1930-1950s
17 August 2009	Members entries	From Eastern Suburbs Competition

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Cover Inward cover from Malone, NY, USA to a member of the NZ Dental Corps. It has been redirected to 1 Base Depot Dental Corps. Egyptian censorship. On reverse is a Chief Post Office 2 NZEF dated 5 AU 43 (earlier than Proud / Startup) and an English double circle Base Army Post Office 4 dated 4 AU 43. From 18 Sept 1941-31 Oct 1946 the rate USA to Egypt was 70cents. By air via PANAM FAM-22, Miami to Leopoldville, by air Leopoldville to Caairo via BOAC, PANAM or SABENA.	

Editorial

Tony Lyon

Well, a little slip of paper in the last issue requesting articles for this journal, evoked quite a response. I thank you all who took the time to respond. Keep the articles, cover stories, information, snippets coming.

Since our last issue, we here in Victoria have experienced the most horrendous fires, which claimed many lives. Many of us knew someone affected. If you suffered loss in the fires we offer our sincere sympathy.

In this issue we feature the first part of Richard Pecks *Express Delivery*. As many of you would know, Richard Peck has been a prolific publisher of handbooks, articles and the like on a variety of postal subjects.

I will continue my exhibit of NZ at War 1939-45, when there is space to do so. I have received some good feedback which is always welcome.

The website is receiving many hits and has resulted in some new members. We are grateful to Tom & Ruth O'Dea for all the work they have done on it. Do have a look and explore the site. I continue to put up some of the back issues as I get time.

We are sad to see the demise of the august Augustus Harewood. He was an icon of journalistic integrity; merciless to the pompous. He will be missed.

Hope you find something in this issue. Ciao

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The Society collects personal information about a member in order to:

1. maintain a current membership list;
2. inform members about the Society's activities;
3. publish details of members, with their consent, in the AJPH or other Society publications.

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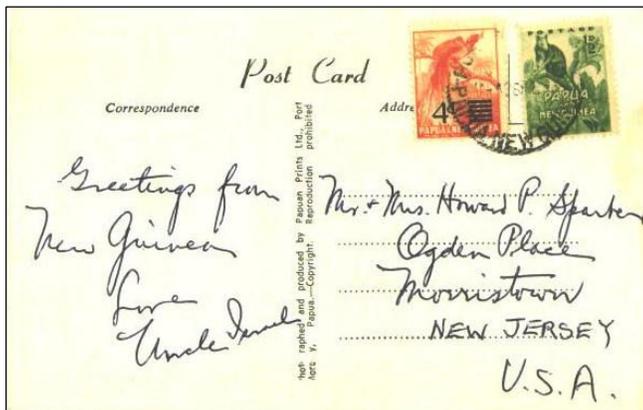
From the President

Our next members' meeting on 20 April is for works in progress. It is for uncompleted, possibly ground-breaking, collecting fields; or perhaps for something old but elusive, taking years to accumulate before a dozen display sheets can be mustered. In any case, the April meeting is the occasion to bring something into the light and let others have a look. There can be benefits all round. Display can garner advice and tips, and members know to look out for items for the collector's field of interest. The syllabus says 8 sheets per member, but we won't quibble if a few more are shown.

The little slip in the December journal asking for articles for future issues has brought some welcome contributions. It occurs to me that some work in progress may be turning over new ground, or at least unfamiliar ground, and could be the basis of interesting articles. We need text and good colour copies of illustrations. Commercial A4 colour photocopies are usually under a dollar each, and usually four covers fit on a page, or more if reduced for copying.

As every news item needs a picture these days, I show below a postcard sent by surface mail to USA in 1958 at the 4 pence half penny rate from Papua New Guinea. Presumably the rate applied for the same period as in Australia, 1 October 1956 to 30 September 1959. Australian postcards with the 4½d rate are not easily found, and the PNG ones are no doubt seldom seen. The card's reverse also has an authentic picture. I won't venture a "No Woodchips" valuation for the card.

John Young



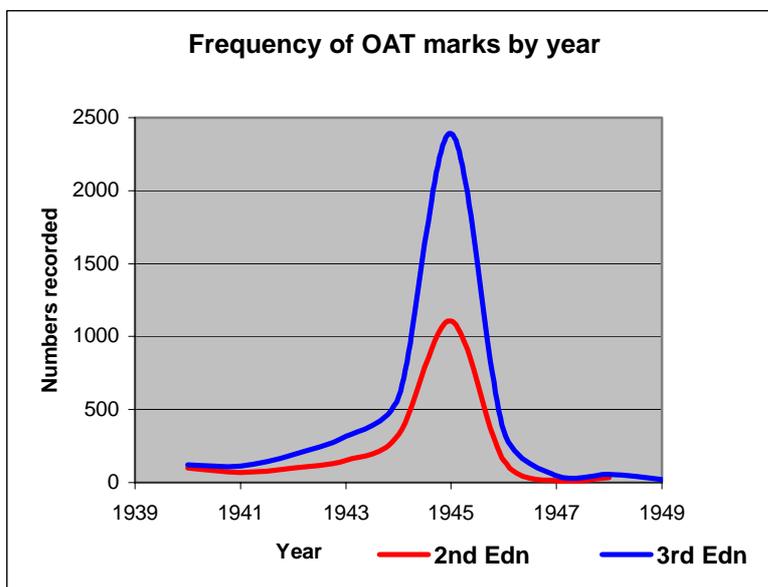
Cover story – two letters with OAT cachets to Vichy France

Michael Barden

Some six months ago I bid about double the estimate for these covers, but to no avail. To make matters worse, the successful purchaser of the second letter described below, was unwilling to sell for a 200% profit. All I am able to do is work from scans, which Michael Pigin kindly sent me.

Two events make these covers of greater interest; the OAT cachet and the letters' destination.

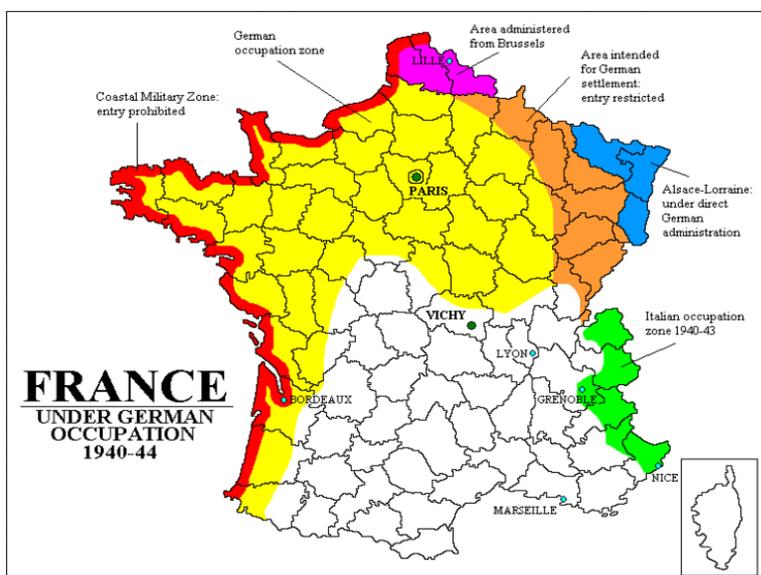
OAT cachets were applied to the top letter of a bundle of up to 60 letters to signify "Onward Air Transmission" (or Travel) beyond London whether paid for or not. This was to simplify mail handling during wartime. It means that OAT cachets are 'sleepers' and relatively rare, some 4000 only having been catalogued worldwide by 2006 for all the mail handled during this period.



OAT markings occurred from 1940 to 1973 with their greatest use being between 1943 and 1946. Mostly they were applied at London during the war and were oval framed. In 1945 the London cachets were smaller and rectangular. Both covers have an oval framed type 1 cachet (Heifetz numbering), which is the most common type.

Tied and marked bundles travelled in open bags. Had there been enough mail to warrant a closed bag from London to its destination,

markings would only occur on the bag's label, not on the letters themselves. Open bags were sorted at one or more intermediate destinations, but a bundle itself did not require resorting as all letters normally went to one country.



After the May 1940 invasion of Western Europe, northern France was occupied by the Germans, while southern France (except the entire coastline – see map) was controlled by the Vichy Quisling Government from Vichy.

This lasted until November 1942 when the French fleet was scuttled at Toulon and the Allies invaded Morocco and Algeria. The latter initially met some resistance, but a truce was soon instigated.

During the Vichy period, diplomatic relations and mail had

been maintained at the Germans' behest with the outside world. After November 1942, diplomatic relations were severed, and mail was banned as for the rest of occupied Europe. Thus letters to Vichy France only occurred for some 18 months.



The letter shown above went from Montreal to Panazol (Haute Vienne Department) in France. It was posted on 13 June 1941 and marked 'via **New York Atlantic Clipper**'. Censored in Canada with part of the reverse being shown to illustrate the closure, it went to New York and then on Pan-Am FAM 18 route via Bermuda and the Azores to Lisbon. Flying boats serviced these routes, so it landed in the sea at Bermuda and the Azores and the Tagus River for Lisbon.

As Portugal remained neutral throughout the war, both Allied and German mail was interchanged using special post box addresses. From Lisbon, BOAC flew the mail to Foynes in Eire on the Shannon River. This service operated from Lagos via Lisbon. Again Eire remained neutral throughout the war, so covertly handled mail for various protagonists. From Foynes the letter went to London by land based plane. Here it was sorted, bundled and, being the top of the bundle, received an OAT type 1 cachet red in red ink, the commonest colour.

From London it was flown back to Lisbon and would most likely have gone through Spain by rail into France, where it has a **Panazol/Haute Vienne** arrival cds dated 8 July 1941. German airline DLH also flew regularly from Lisbon via Madrid, Barcelona and Marseille on to Berlin, so it is possible it was carried by them into France. There are no other datestamps by which we may track its progress.

30c Canadian was the correct rate at this time for a letter up to ½ ounce weight going to Europe.

The 3½ weeks transit time was not unreasonable as letters would have had to wait for flights and The Foreign Office sorting in London would not have happened overnight.

The second letter not only originated from a rare source, French Equatorial Africa (FEA), but went in August 1942 to Vichy France. From Perpignon it was forwarded to Casteil.

The letter entered the postal system at Port Gentil on 5 August. The double circle cds read **Port Gentil/A.E.F/5 /Août/42**. The A.E.F standing for **Afrique Equatoriale Française**.

Before being censored, the letter received two violet (≈ 39 mm dia) **Contrôle ... Commission / Afrique Equatoriale Française** cachets (recto). Then it was censored for the first time, probably at

Port Gentil (rather than the capital Libreville, which is off its later route) by the authorities and the closures bear the words **Afrique Française Libre / Contrôle Postal** (Free French Administration, who controlled FEA, and who were opposed to the Vichy administration) on the right hand end. There are also five violet pointed oval cachets **Ouvert / par / l'Autorité Militaire** over the two closures. Two violet circular **A1** and **D1** cachets would have been the censors' ID.

From Port Gentil the letter went to Brazzaville (transit cds of **Brazzaville** dated **13 Aug 42** verso), thus it probably went by boat and up the Congo River, which is navigable to this point from the sea. I do not know of any airmail services between Gabon and the Congo to suggest it was flown, nor does the time prove it. Thence it crossed the river to Leopoldville, which is opposite on the left bank.

There was a regular weekly airmail service between Johannesburg and Lagos, alternatively flown by Sabena and SAA, which went through Leopoldville. This route also carried some mail to and from Australia (via Durban).

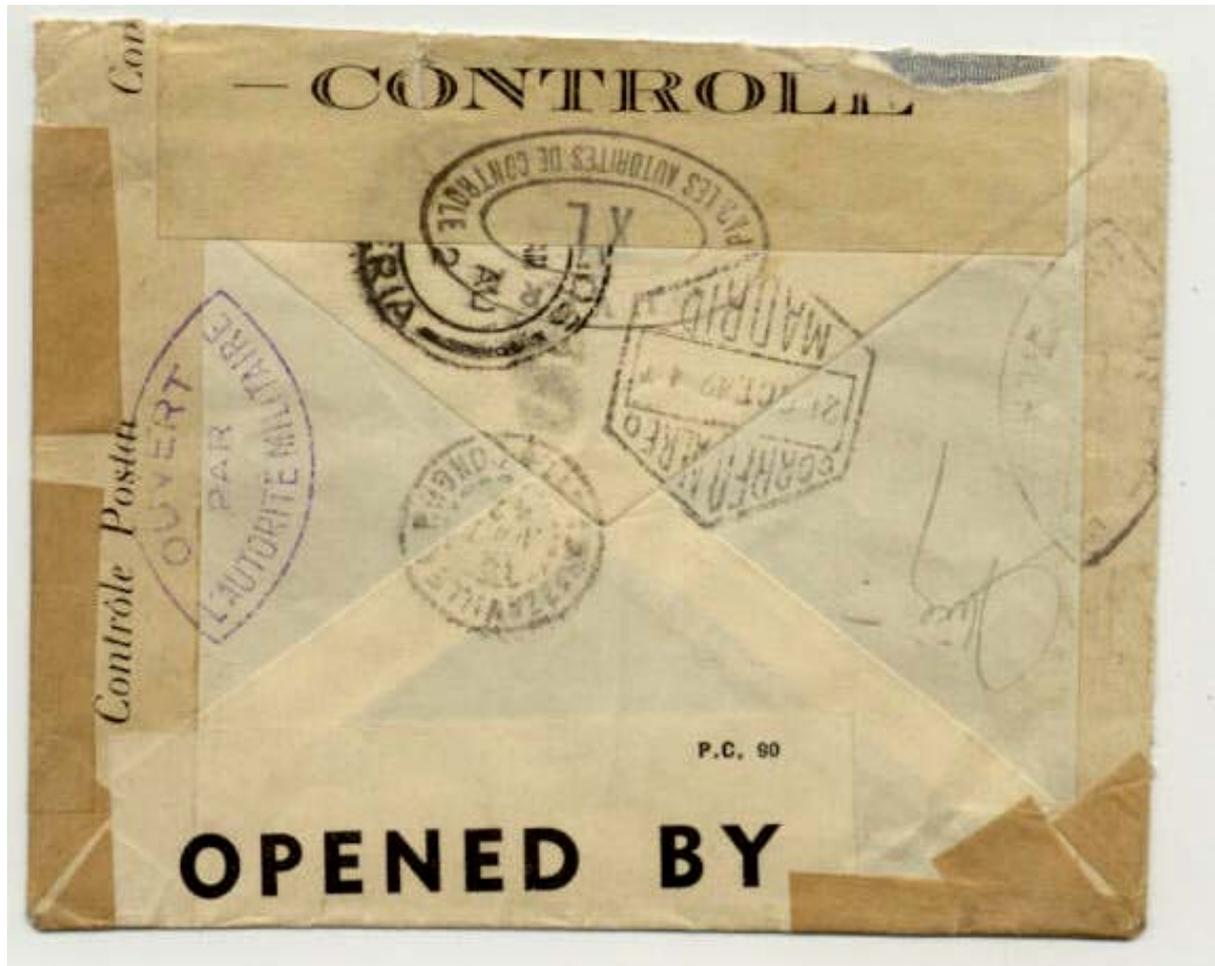
At Lagos, as the letter entered the British controlled area, it was censored for the second time (**Examiner 4910** on the recto and **P.C. 90 / Examined by** on the verso of the closure. Under the third and last closure (Vichy France at the top) is a partially visible transit cds **Lagos / Nigeria / AU / ..2** (verso).



Recto of letter from French Equatorial Africa to Vichy France

From Lagos BOAC flew to Lisbon with four intermediate stops around the African coast and then onto London via Foynes as before.

In London. again being the top of a bundle, it received a type 1 red OAT cachet (on and below the airmail notation). It retraced its steps back to Lisbon, where it was transferred to DHL, who flew it to Madrid. There are two hexagonal **Correo Aereo / Madrid / 21 Oct 42** cds transit marks. Also there appears over part of the OAT cachet an inverted red **Correo Aereo / Censor** cachet, no doubt applied here, but the letter was not opened. Somewhere between Lagos and Madrid had taken some two months, yet the letter had gone airmail. We can only speculate why it sat somewhere so long.



Verso of letter from French Equatorial Africa to Vichy France

From Madrid the letter may have flown to Barcelona and then by train to Perpignan, which is just over the border into France on the main rail line, or gone by train the whole way. As Perpignan is the first main town into France, it probably received its third censorship here, this time at the top of the letter. The closure remains on the verso, but appears to have been removed from the recto. Over the closure on both sides is an oval **Overt par les Autorités de Contrôle XL**. That on the recto is incomplete due to removal of the closure as noted above.

Finally the recipient must have been away for the address was altered to Casteil par Vernet-les-Bains.

I knew I should have upped the ante. Such interesting letters do not come along every day, the more so for me with an OAT cachet. I should have studied it better before the sale – hindsight always has its wisdom! Maybe some of our readers have letters bearing OAT cachets they may wish to offer me. No guarantees, but interesting ones are sure to generate interest.