5. Australian Mail Processed Through the British Army Postal Service

Although the Australian Light Horse Brigades each had specific datestamps, there were no Australian cancelling devices for the Divisional Headquarters, with the mail being almost totally processed through the British Army Postal Service.

There are three good reasons for this. Firstly, after the Gallipoli Campaign mail security was greatly tightened up as all the Australian datestamps were easily identifiable, especially the privately produced censor cachets. Secondly, the British Army postal service was second to none, and since they were responsible for the distribution of mail to the Australian units, there would be no reason why their services should not be used in reverse. Finally, the Light Horsemen were mobile units, and when not engaged in battle, were continuously on the move for patrolling and reconnaissance. It would be quicker for the postal corporal to exchange the outgoing mail for that incoming on the ration wagon, which in due course would pass a British Army post office.

The British wanted to lock down the postal service for the entire campaign. British type datestamps were manufactured for the Australian units, as well as the Headquarters and the central processing locations in Cairo and Alexandria.

Arrangement of the Australian Mail Processed Through the British Army Postal Service

> 5.1 British Base Army Post Offices
> 5.2 Allocation of British datestamps to the Australian Base Army Post Office
> 5.3 British Advance Base Army Post Offices
> 5.4 Australian mail processed through British Stationary Post Offices
> 5.5 Australian mail processed through other military postal services

5.1 British Base Army Post Offices

There were three British Base Army Post Offices which are found on Australian mail from this campaign and their details are listed in the table below:

Datestamp	Location	Opened	Closed
Base Army P.O. Z	Alexandria	4.1915	12.1919
Base Army P.O. T	Port Said, Egypt	1.1916	1.1920
Base Army P.O. K	Kantara, Egypt	1.1918	3.1920

Army Post Office Z - Alexandria, Egypt   **Period of use: April 1915 - December 1919**
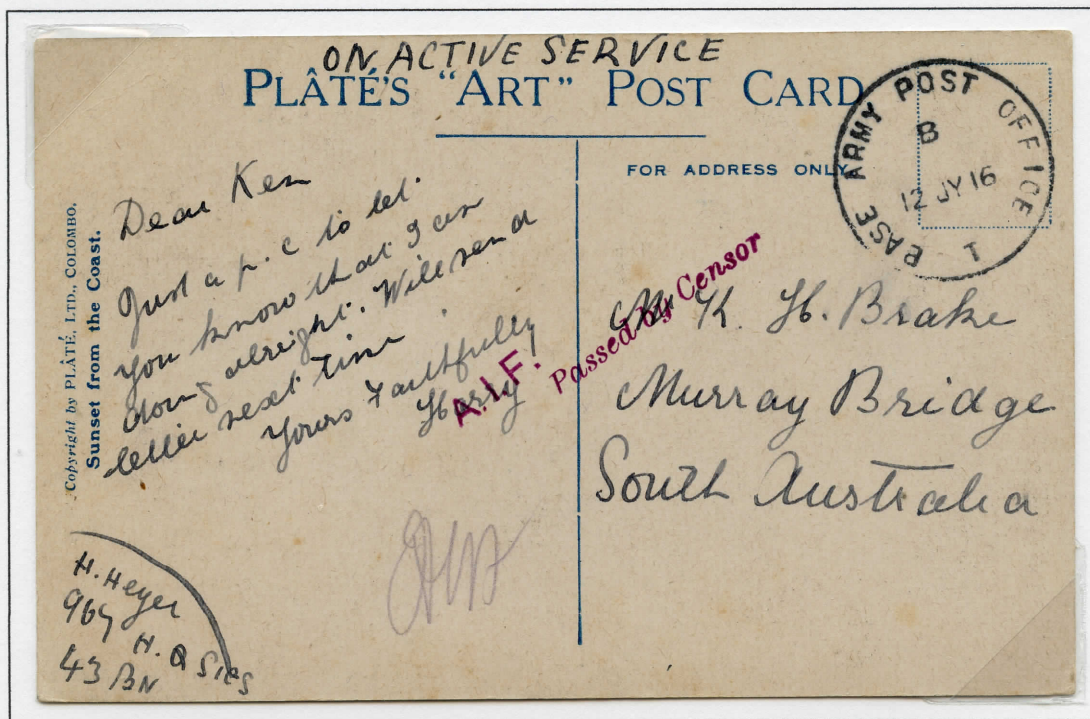

An envelope cancelled by the Army Post Office Z cds dated the 22.10.1916 which was allocated to the British Base Army post office in Alexandria where Australian mail was processed.

On the reverse, the envelope shows the imprint for the "SULTAN HUSSEIN CLUB" which was located on the first floor of the stock exchange at Alexandria.
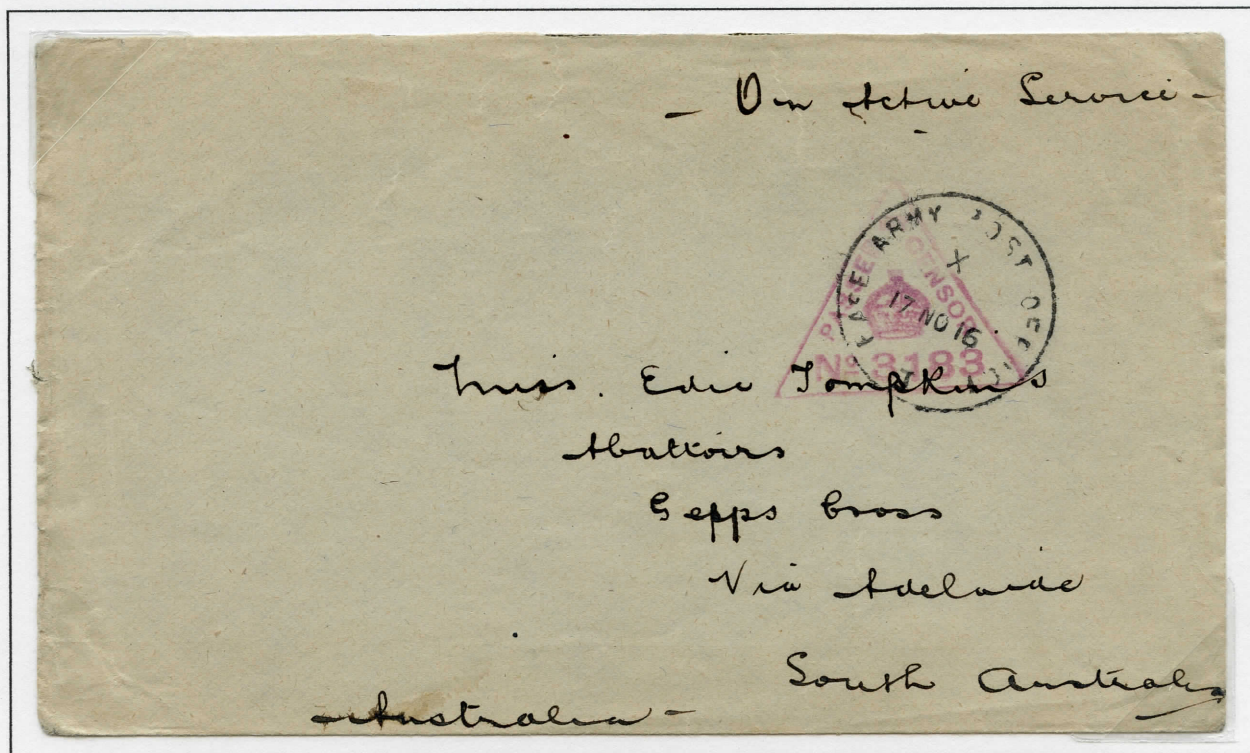
A postcard cancelled by the skeleton Army Post Office T cds dated the 12.7.1916 which was allocated to the British Base Army post office at Port Said, Egypt.

Note: This postcard was written by Private Henry Heyer of the 43rd Infantry Battalion whilst at sea on the A19 "Afric". The card was cancelled on arrival by the Army Post Office T datestamp. Private Heyer died of wounds on the 1.7.1917 in France.

An envelope addressed to South Australia cancelled by the skeleton Army Post Office T cds dated the 17.11.1916 which was allocated to the British Base Army post office at Port Said, Egypt.
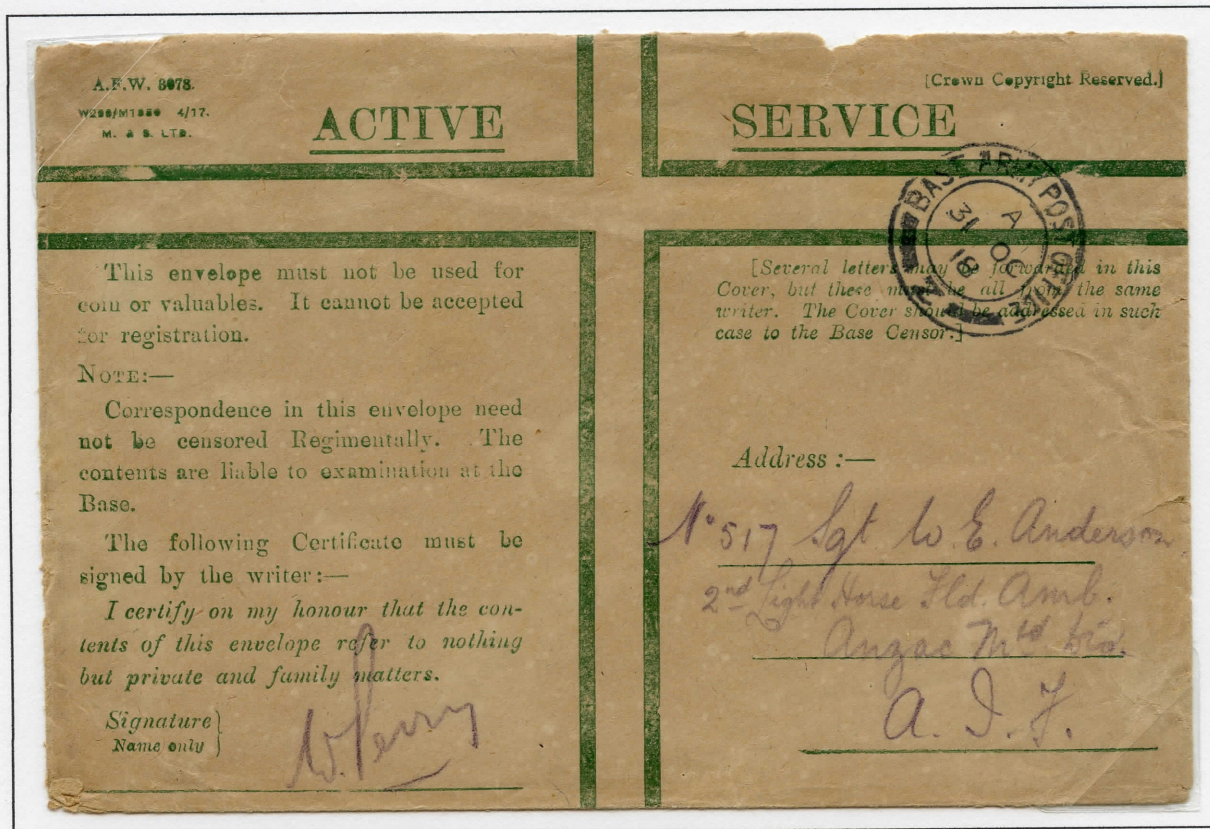
An envelope cancelled by the skeleton Army Post Office Z cds which was allocated to the British Base Army post office in Alexandria dated the 3.8.1917.

An Honour envelope unusually addressed to another soldier of the ANZAC Mounted Division cancelled by the Army Post Office Z cds of Alexandria dated the 31.10.1918.

Note: The envelope is addressed to Sergeant Waldo Anderson of the 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance just before the Armistice was signed eleven days later.

A Field Service Postcard addressed to South Australia and cancelled by the Field post office "160" cds dated the 10.7.1916.

This datestamp was allocated to the Headquarters of the British 160 Brigade when it was preparing for the Battle at Romani.

Usage of this datestamp on Australian mail is not recorded by Emery

Establishment of the Australian Base Post Office at Alexandria

The Australian Base post office was opened on the 1st of June 1915 at Alexandria during the Gallipoli campaign. It remained open for the Light Horse Campaign with the latest known usage of the 11.11.1916 recorded.
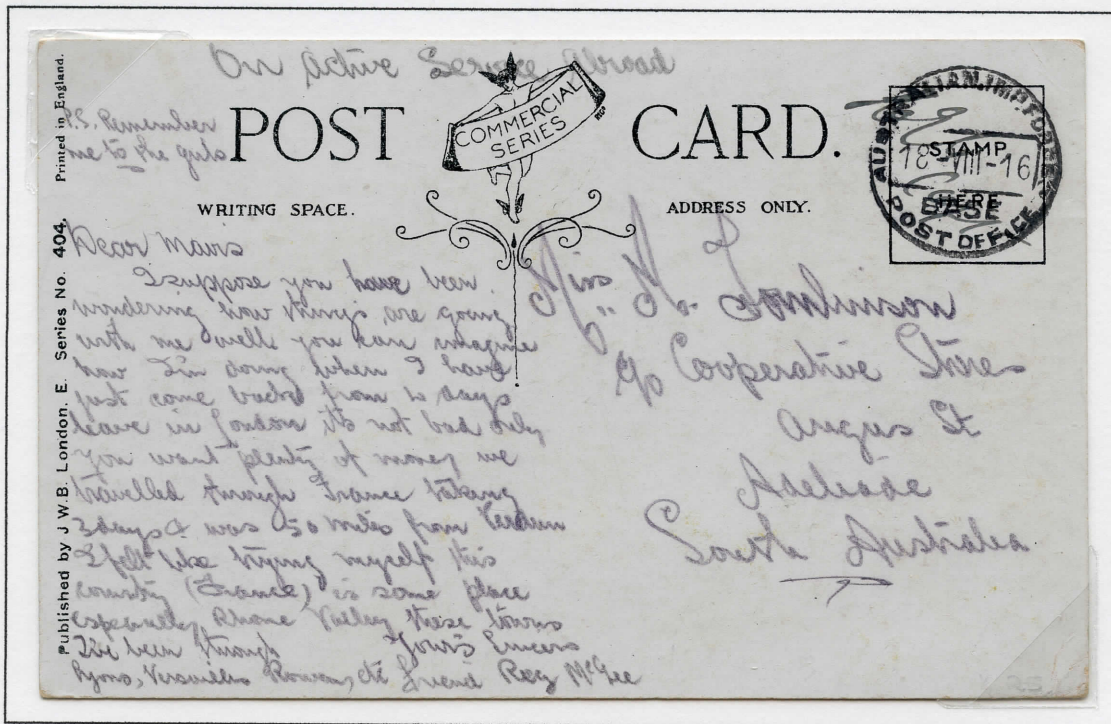
A postcard to Adelaide cancelled by the Australian Base Post Office datestamp of the 18.8.1916 (Firebrace Type DS 8).

Note: The usage of this datestamp during the Light Horse Campaign is quite scarce. The British Stationary Office S.Z.3 datestamp was transferred to Alexandria as the Australian Base Post Office in July 1916. The following month, it moved to Moascar.

The card was written by Driver Reginal Mc Gee of the 3rd Divisional Training Co. who survived the war and returned to Australia on the 16.9.1919.

5.2 Allocation of British Datestamps to the Australian Base Army Post Office

Advance Base Army Post Offices

The British Army allocated four SZ numbers to the Australian Army. Post Office number SZ 3 was allocated to the Australian Base Army, and SZ 4A allocated at Ismailia, the "A" indicating usage of the Australian section of that post office. Their usage is detailed from the following locations listed in the table below:

Datestamp	Country	Location	Opened	Closed
Army Post Office SZ 3	**Egypt**	Alexandria	7.1916	
		Moascar	8.1916	4.1917
		Kantara	5.1917	4.1919
Army Post Office SZ 4A	**Egypt**	Ismalia	3.1916	6.1916

Late in the Light Horse Campaign, a further two SZ numbers were allocated by the British Military Postal Service.

Datestamp	Country	Location	Opened	Closed
Army Post Office SZ 41	**Palestine**	Jerusalem	17.3.1918	
		Jericho	9.5.1918	
		Jerusalem	11.5.1918	
		Jericho	2.7.1918	14.7.1918
		Jerusalem		21.7.1918
		Jericho	1.9.1918	19.11.1918
	Egypt	Kantara	14.3.1919	26.6.1919
Army Post Office SZ 42	**Palestine**	Selmeh	5.4.1918	
		Jordan Valley	5.1918	14.6.1918
		Jerusalem	2.6.1918	14.7.1918
		Jericho	21.7.1918	10.8.1918
		Rantieh	21.9.1918	25.9.1918
		Haifa	26.9.1918	30.9.1918
		Semakh	1.10.1918	
	Lebanon	Tripoli	19.10.1918	15.3.1919

An Honour envelope cancelled by the skeleton Army Post Office S.Z. 3 cds dated the 8.1.1917 which was allocated to the Australian Base Army post office at Moascar, Egypt.

Note: The envelope was written by Private Horace Lane of the 8th Light Horse Regiment, who survived the war and returned to Australia on the 31.1.1919.

An envelope cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 3 cds dated the 12.1.1917 which was allocated to the Australian Base Army post office at Moascar, Egypt.

Note: The envelope is addressed to Captain Charles Simpson, the senior medical officer of the 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance, who survived the war and returned to Australia on the 9.8.1919.

Army Post Office SZ 3 - Kantara, Egypt
Period of use: May 1917 - April 1919

A Y.M.C.A. envelope written on board the H.M.A.T. A15 "Star of England" where it received the handstamp "A.I:F./ Passed by Censor No......." cachet in purple (Firebrace Type MCM 3).

Upon arrival, the envelope was cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 3 cds dated the 17.12.1917 which was allocated to the Australian Base Army post office at Kantara, Egypt.

Army Post Office SZ 4A - Ismalia, Egypt
Period of use: March - June 1916

An Australian section was added to the Army Post Office at Ismalia in the Suez Canal Zone from March to June 1916 to assist in the processing of mail whilst the Australians were occupying the Suez Canal defences.

An envelope cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 4A cds dated the 16.4.1916 which was allocated to the Australian Base Army post office at Ismalia on the Suez Canal Zone.

Note: The letter "A" in the datestamp identifies it as from the Australian Section as there was a SZ 4 datestamp used by the British.

5.3 Australian Mail Processed Through the British Advance Army Post Offices

Although the British Army had allocated two SZ datestamps to the Australians for use as Advanced Base Army post offices, other SZ numbers are known to have been used to process Australian mail from the front. Their usage is detailed from the following locations listed in the table below:

Datestamp	Location	Opened	Closed
Army Post Office SZ 8	**Egypt** - Rafa	4.1917	9.1918
	Lebanon - Beirut	10.1918	5.1919
Army Post Office SZ 9	**Palestine**	2.1916	8.1918
	Lebanon - Tripoli	10.1918	1.1919
Army Post Office SZ 10	**Egypt** - Cairo	3.1916	5.1919

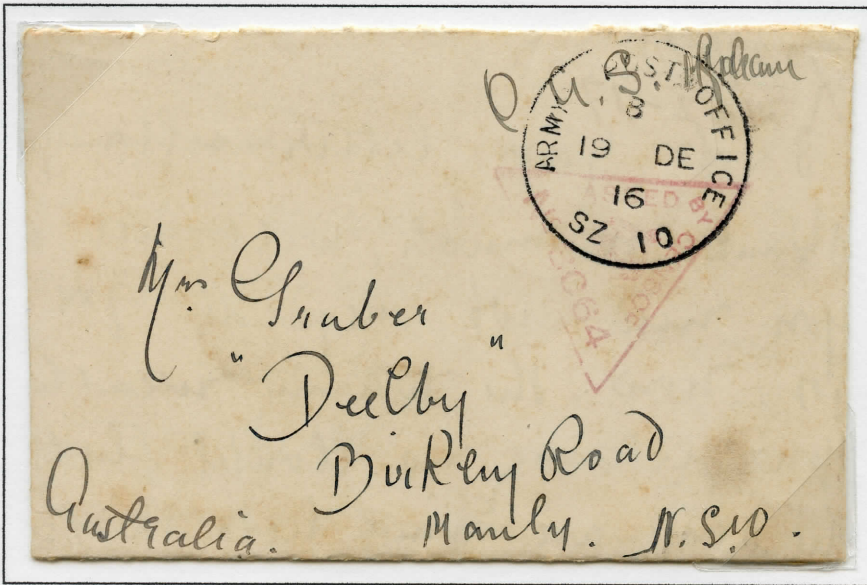**Army Post Office SZ 8 - Rafa, Egypt**　　　　　　　　　**Period of use: April 1917 - September 1918**

A Field Service Postcard cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 8 cds dated the 17.5.1917 which was allocated to the British Base Army post office at Rafa, Egypt.

Note: The card was written by Sergeant Clarence Coe of the No. 1 Flying Squadron Corps which was based at Heliopolis and saw action in Egypt and Palestine. He survived the war and returned to Australia in 1919. It is rare to identify mail from the Australian Flying Corps during the Light Horse Campaign.

An envelope cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 10 cds dated the 19.12.1916 which was allocated to the British Base Army post office at Cairo, Egypt.

Note: This is the first larger type datestamp with a two line date, with a known usage between March 1916 and February 1918.
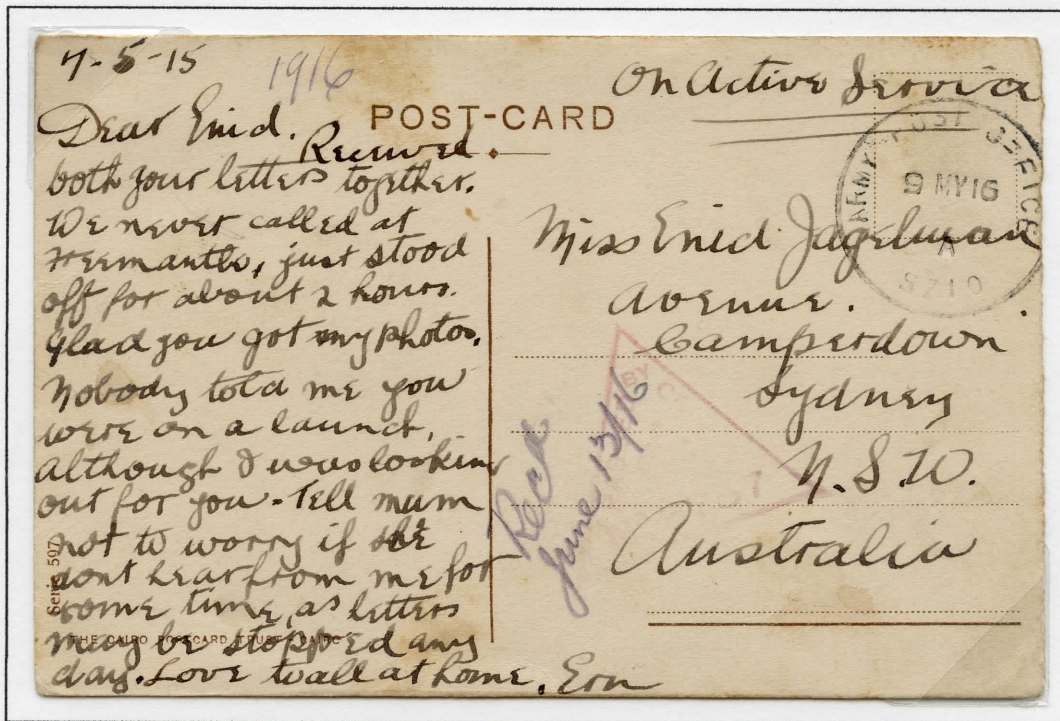
A postcard cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 10 cds dated the 9.5.1916 which was allocated to the British Base Army post office at Cairo, Egypt.

Note: This is the second smaller type datestamp with a one line date. The card was written by Sergeant Ernest Jagelman of the 20th Infantry Battalion who survived the war and returned to Australia on the 6th of July 1919.

## 5.4 Australian Mail Processed Through British Stationary Post Offices

The British Stationary post offices were designated Army or Field Post Offices, and although "stationary", some of them did move forward as the E.E.F. advanced. The post offices listed below are known to have processed Australian mail from the front.

Datestamp	Location	Opened	Closed
Army Post Office SZ 1	Suez Canal Defences	2. 1916	8.1916
	N.Z. Base Army P.O.	5.1918	6.1918
Army Post Office SZ 2	Zagazig, Egypt	3.1916	3.1917
	Jerusalem, Palestine	3.1919	11.1919
Army Post Office SZ 3			
Army Post Office SZ 4	Ismalia, Egypt	3.1916	3.1919
Army Post Office SZ 5	Southern Suez Defences	2.1916	6.1916
	Syria	2.1916	6.1916
Army Post Office SZ 7	Palestine	4.1917	10.1918
Army Post Office SZ 13	Suez Canal Defences	2.1916	10.1916
	Palestine	2.1917	9.1917
	Rayak, Lebanon	12.1918	2.1919
Army Post Office SZ 15	Northern Suez Canal Defences	3.1916	1.1918
	Abbassia, Egypt	5.1918	12.1919
Army Post Office SZ 16	Egypt	4.1916	10.1916
Army Post Office SZ 22	Port Said, Egypt	5.1916	7.1919
Army Post Office SZ 24	Suez Canal Defences	8.1916	5.1919
Army Post Office SZ 25	Suez Canal Defences	6.1916	10.1917
	Tel-el-Kebir, Egypt	11.1917	
Army Post Office SZ 32	Ramleh, Palestine	3.1918	8.1918
	Jerusalem, Palestine	12.1918	
Army Post Office SZ 44	Jerusalem, Palestine	12.1917	12.1918
Army Post Office SZ 45	Jaffa, Palestine	12.1917	12.1918
Army Post Office SZ 57	Haifa, Palestine	11.1918	4.1919

5.4 Australian Mail Processed Through British Stationary Post Offices

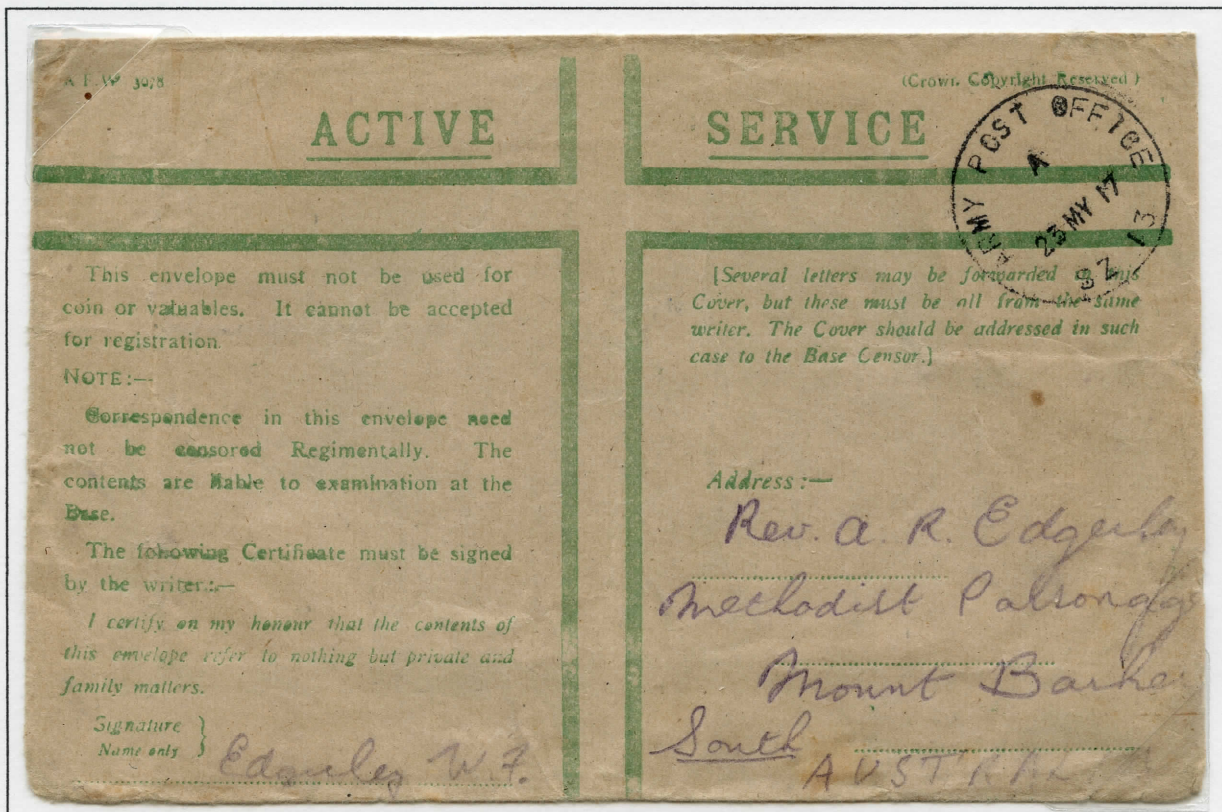## Army Post Office SZ 4 - Ismalia, Egypt   Period of use: March 1916 - May 1919
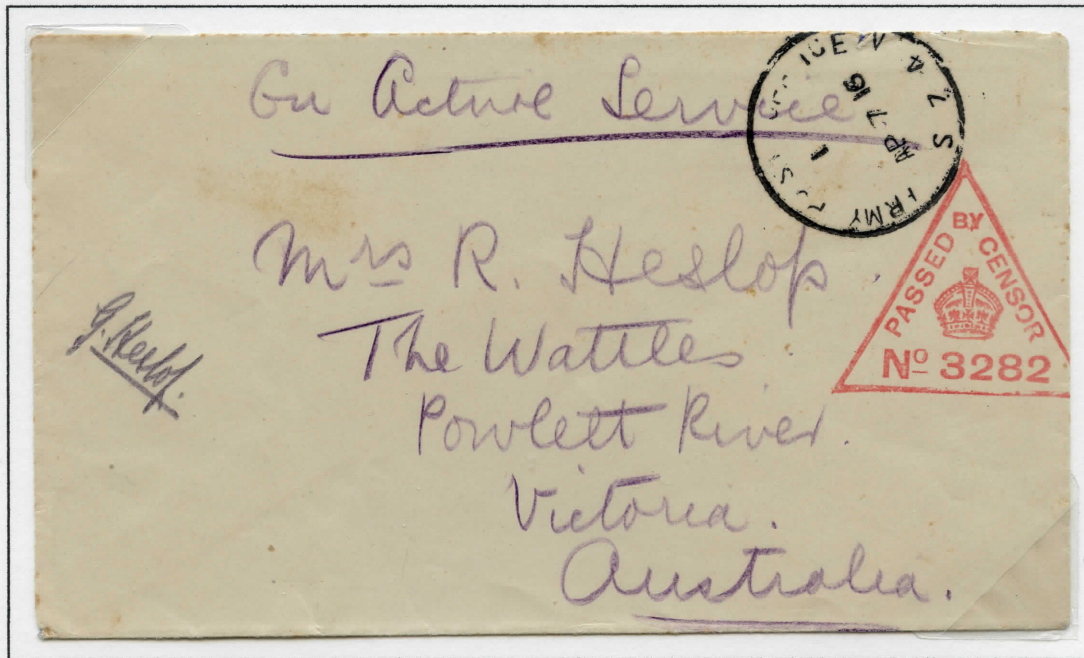
An envelope cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 4 cds dated the 7.4.1916 which was allocated to the British Stationary Army post office at Ismalia, Egypt for the defence of the Suez Canal.

Note: This envelope was written by Captain George Heslop, a Veterinary Officer who was awarded the Distinguished Service Order on the 3.6.1919 for veterinary management of the horses in the First Australian Division

Army Post Office SZ 13 - Palestine   Period of use: February - September 1917

An Honour envelope cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 13 cds dated the 25.5.1917 which was allocated to the British Stationary Army post office in Palestine.

Note: This envelope was written by Private William Edgerley of the 9th Light Horse Regiment who served throughout the campaign and returned to Australia on the 10.7.1919.

Army Post Office SZ 22 - Port Said, Egypt   **Period of use: May 1916 - July 1919**

An envelope cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 22 cds dated the 17.1.1918 which was allocated to the British Stationary Army post office at Port Said, Egypt.

Army Post Office SZ 24 - Suez Canal Defences, Egypt   **Period of use: August 1916 - May 1919**

A YMCA envelope cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 24 cds dated the 5.7.1918 which was allocated to the British Stationary Army post office for the Suez Canal Defence in Egypt.

A Field Service Postcard cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 25 cds dated the 25.10.1917 which was allocated to the British Stationary Army post office for the Suez Canal Defence in Egypt.

Note: It is interesting to record that the card is dated the 23.9, and it took over a month to reach the nearest post office.

Army Post Office SZ 32 - Ramleh, Palestine   **Period of use: March - August 1918**

A British newspaper wrapper cancelled by the Army Post Office S.Z. 32 cds dated the 18.4.1918 which was allocated to the British Stationary Army post office at Ramleh, Palestine.

5.5 Australian Mail Processed Through Other Military Postal Systems

Australian mail processed through the British Headquarters Post Office

The Australian Mounted Division was formed on the 12.8.1917 together with the British Desert Mounted Corps under the command of the Australian Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel. The British Desert Mounted Corps used the "FIELD POST OFFICE/ H.M." headquarters datestamp to cancel all mail processed through the Brigade.

FIELD POST OFFICE/ H.M. - Talat ed Dumm, Palestine

An envelope cancelled by the British "Field Post Office H.M." cds dated the 6.3.1918. This datestamp was used by the British Desert Mounted Corps headquarters post office which was located at Talat ed Dumm, just after the capture of Jericho on the 21.2.

Australian mail processed through the British Desert Mounted Corps is not recorded by Proud

Australian mail processed through the Indian military postal service
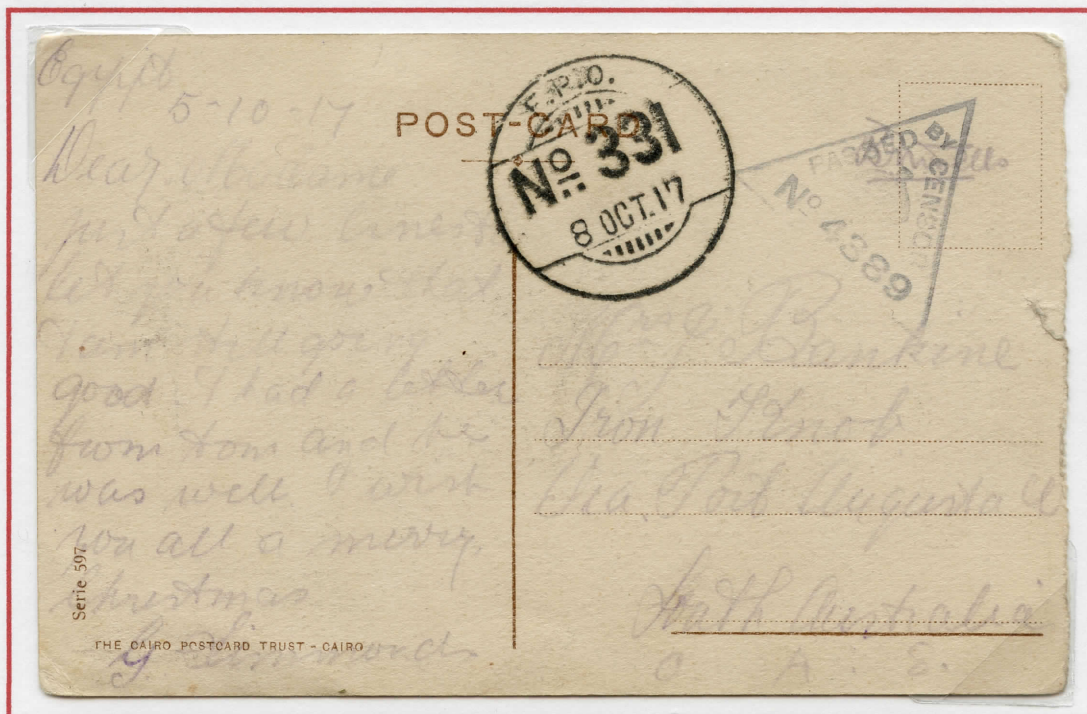

A postcard cancelled by the Indian Field Post Office datestamp No. 331 (Firebrace Type IFPO 1) of the 8.10.1917. Firebrace states that this Field Post Office was moved to the Gaza area in September 1917.

This is confirmed by the soldier, Private George Simmonds of the 9th Light Horse Regiment who wrote this postcard. The 3rd Light Horse Brigade was patrolling the Gaza area in October 1917 before the raid on Beersheba in early November. Private Simmonds survived the war and returned to Australia on the 2.8.1918.

Australian mail processed through the Indian military postal service is rare

6. The role of the Australian Flying Corps

Although this campaign was mainly fought as a Light Horse Campaign, the Australian Flying Corps played an important role in surveillance and air cover for the soldiers. Their aircraft were inferior to the German machines until mid way through 1917, when the Allied technology and fighting tactics became superior and they began to take control of the skies. Although their aircraft were flimsy, their bombing and machine gun power in attacking enemy columns was used to deadly effect, especially at Wadi Fara in September 1918 where they annihilated the Turkish 7th Army which became known as the "nine miles of dead". This was the campaign where Ross and Keith Smith fought in, providing the training ground for their flight from England to Australia in 1919.
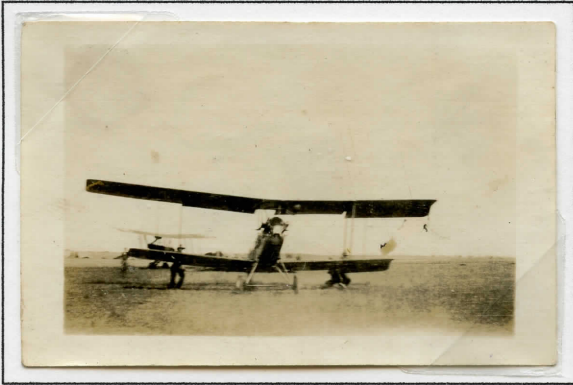
These two small photographs from the same camera were taken of the Australian BE2e which was the main aircraft of the Australian Flying Corp in 1916 and 1917.

A SMASH IN THE DESERT.

Two photographs of an Australian BE2e which had a minor crash in the desert. The second photograph shows the number of soldiers sent to help the stricken aircraft.

Late in the war, the Allied aircraft began to dominate the skies and most of the German airforce which were assisting the Turks was destroyed. The capture of German aircraft was rare, with this photo showing a German DFW plane being towed.

A rare pay book for 1st Class Air Mechanic David Harper who enlisted on the 14th of September 1915 at Point Cook. After training he embarked with the No. 1 Squadron of the Australian Flying Corps on the 16th of March 1916.

This pay book reflects Harper's service from his embarkation on the A67 "Orsova" to the preparations for the Light Horse Campaign in Egypt. From August 1916, each entry is endorsed "In the Field", which signifies the squadrons movement from airfield to airfield as the offensive progressed. The pay book ends with the hospitalisation of Harper in April 1917. He rejoined the No. 1 Squadron and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in 1919.

It is estimated only 400 Air Mechanics served in this theatre of the war of which very few pay books survive

Signature of Soldier *David Thomas Harper*

Book opens on *March 16th* 191*6.* (For the Net Daily Rate of Pay see pages 4 and 5, and Note on page 7.)

If the soldier was in debt on the above date, the amount to be recovered from the next pay due to him should be stated.

Debt £ _____ s. _____

W H Anderson Capt AFC O. C. Company, &c.

Cash Payments.

Date.	Place.	Amount. £	s.	d.	Signature of Officer.
191					
9/4/16	At Sea A67	—	10	0	J H Newland Lt
20/4/16	Tel el Kebir	1	0	6	J H Newland Lt
1/5/16	Abbassia		10	4	J H Newland Lt
15/5/16	Heliopolis	1	0	6	H Newland Lt
31/5/16	Heliopolis		16	5	W Sheldon Capt
17/6/16	Heliopolis		15	5	W Sheldon Capt
30/6/16	Heliopolis		10	3	R Ross Lieut
13/7/16	Moascar Hosp		10	3	T Mercer Maw
31/8/16	In the Field	2	11	4	Eric G Roberts Lt
15/9/16	In the Field		10	4	D Manwell Lt
20/9/16	In the Field	1	0	6	D Manwell Lt

25/9/16 *Net daily rate for issue raised to 1/6 on promotion to 1st Class Air Mechanic* } J. F. Rutledge Major

Carried Forwd   9 - 15 - 10