

The Twenty Seventh Convoy

8th November 1916 - 10th March 1917

Thirteen ships comprised the Twenty Seventh Convoy, calling at all the capital cities for fresh troops, except Hobart. Troops from Tasmania were sent to Melbourne for embarkation.

The departure of the A7 "Medic" - Melbourne, Victoria

16th December 1916



A7 "Medic":

A real photo postcard of the departure of the transport dated the 16.12.1916 and published by Josiah Barnes of Melbourne, an official troopship embarkation photographer.

The first port of call of the A20 "Hororata" - Port Natal, South Africa

22nd December 1916

An unlisted troopship censor cachet



The envelope was written by Private Phillip Nicholas of the 2nd Pioneer Battalion who served throughout the war and returned to Australia on the 24th August 1918.

A7 "Medic": Port Natal, South Africa 22.12.1916 to Victoria

Postal markings: "PASSED BY CENSOR/NO. 20" handstamp in violet (not listed by Finlayson).

The envelope was processed on arrival at Melbourne where the machine cancellation of the 2nd January 1917 was applied..

The Twenty Seventh Convoy

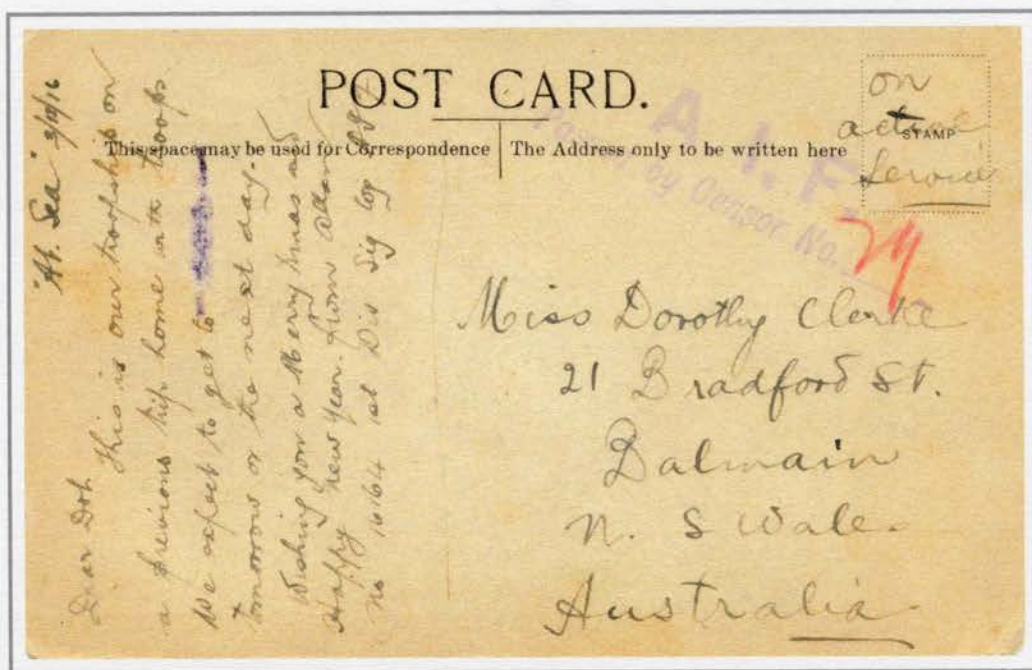
8th November 1916 - 10th March 1917

The first port of call of the A29 "Suevic" - Port Natal, South Africa

5th December 1916

A29 "Suevic":

A real photo postcard of the "Suevic" departing port on a previous convoy.



A29 "Suevic": Cape Verde Islands 19.1.1917 to New South Wales

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed by Censor No. _____" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 2/L" with manuscript "29" inserted in red. The censor has excised the next docking port of Port Natal on the card.

The card is headed "At sea 3/12/16" with the "Suevic" docking two days later at Port Natal. The card was sent by Sapper Allen Richardson of the 1st Divisional Signal Coy, who returned to Australia on the 13th July 1919.

- Troopship mail from the Cape Verde is very scarce

The Twenty Seventh Convoy

8th November 1916 - 10th March 1917

An unscheduled coal stop for the A20 "Hororata" - Cape Verde Islands

19th January 1917

Occasionally troopships called in at the Port of St. Vincent in the Cape Verde Islands to obtain good quality steaming coal. These stopovers were unscheduled, and mail from this port to Australia is very rare.



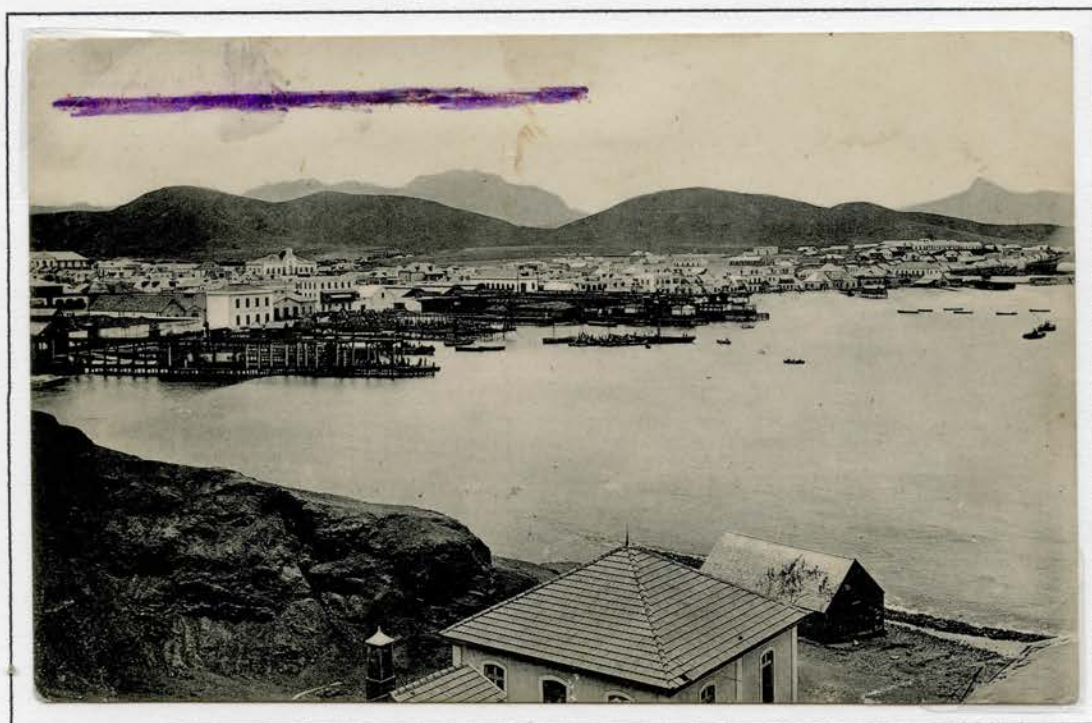
A20 "Hororata": Port of St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands 19.1.1917 to Victoria.

Postal markings: "PASSED" civilian censor handstamp in violet applied on arrival in Melbourne.

For the 27th Convoy, three troopships left Cape Town on the 2.12.1916, but the only one originating from Melbourne was the "Hororata" where this envelope is thought to have been sent from.

Ex Blake

Convoy mail using Cape Verde Island adhesives is very rare



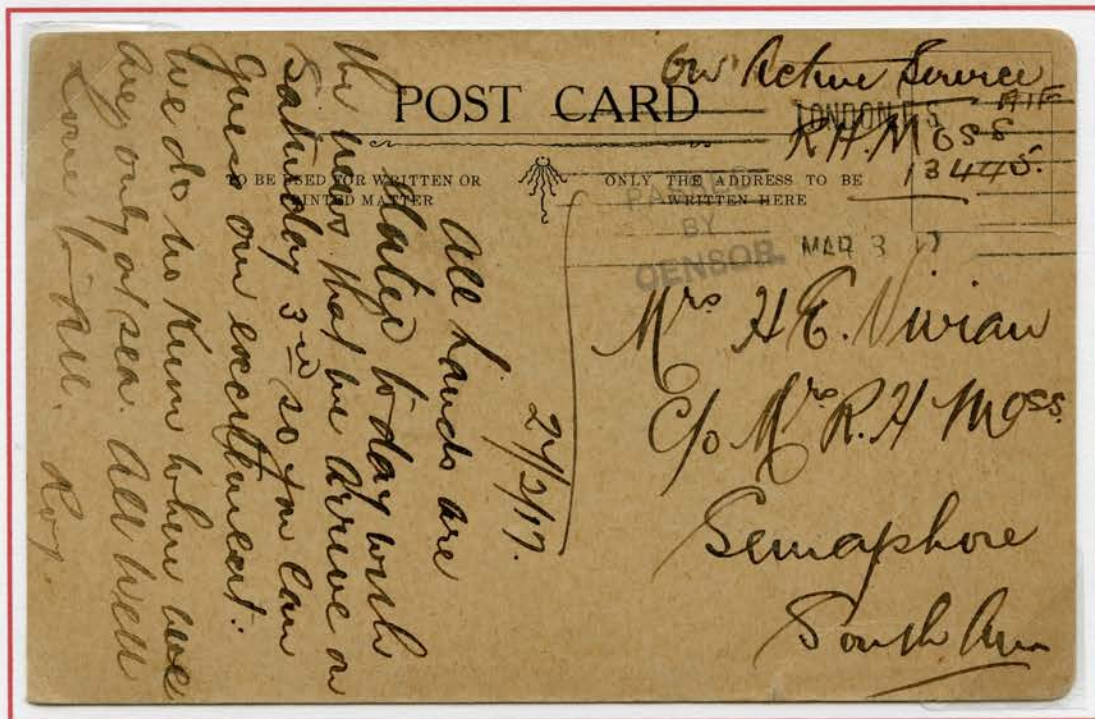
Inside the envelope was this postcard with a view of the Port of St. Vincent. Notice that the censors have excised the text of the card which identifies the port and its location.

The Twenty Seventh Convoy

The final destination of the A34 "Persic" - Plymouth, Great Britain

8th November 1916 - 10th March 1917

10th March 1917

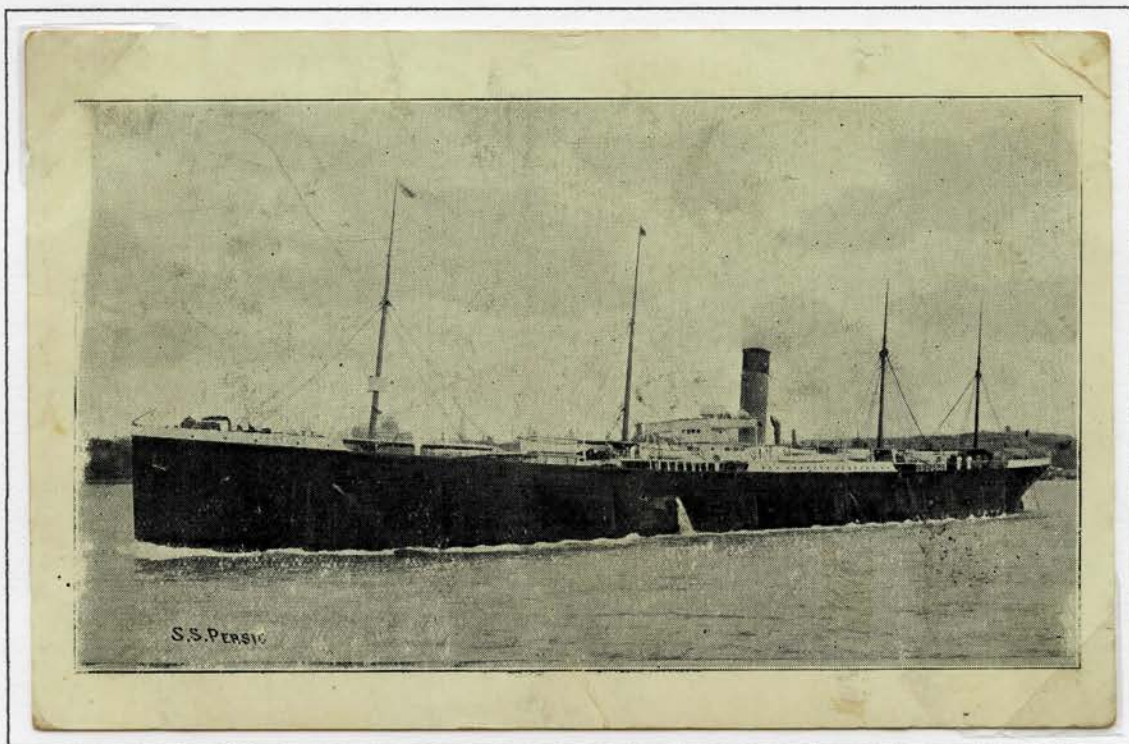


A34 "Persic": Plymouth, England 10.3.1917 to South Australia

Postal markings: "PASSED/BY/CENSOR" handstamp in black (not listed by Finlayson)

The card was written by Driver Roy Moss of the 1,2,3 Auxiliary Transport Company, seven days after leaving the port of Dakar, on the way to Plymouth. He survived the war and returned to Australia on the 9th August 1919.

The only recorded example of this troopship censor handstamp



A34 "Persic": A postcard of the ship prior to the war when it was a passenger liner

The Twenty Ninth Convoy

13th January 1917 - 25th April 1917

Ten ships were allocated to the 29th Convoy including three Royal Mail Ships requisitioned by the Australian government, all sailing via the Cape of Good Hope.

Embarkation of the A33 "Ayrshire" from Sydney

24th January 1917



A33 "Ayrshire": A scarce real photo postcard of soldiers from the Reinforcements for the 9th Battalion on board the "Ayrshire" dated "January 1917" on the reverse when she embarked from Sydney as part of the 29th Convoy.

Embarkation of the A70 "Ballarat" from Melbourne

19th February 1917

A70 "Ballarat":

A real photo postcard of the "Ballarat" docked at Melbourne on the day of her departure on the 19.2.1917, published by the official embarkation photographer J.E. Barnes.



Note: This was the last convoy for the troopship "Ballarat" which was sunk in the English Channel on 25th April 1917. A submarine torpedoed her whilst carrying Australian troops from Melbourne to England. Efforts made to tow the ship to shallow water failed and she sank off Lizard Point in south Cornwall the following morning. No lives were lost of the 1752 soldiers and crew on board.

The Thirty First Convoy

4th April 1917 - 19th July 1917

Thirteen troopships sailed on the Thirty First Convoy to either Egypt via the Suez Canal or to England via South Africa.

The second port of call of the A23 "Suffolk" - Port Natal, South Africa

12th June 1917

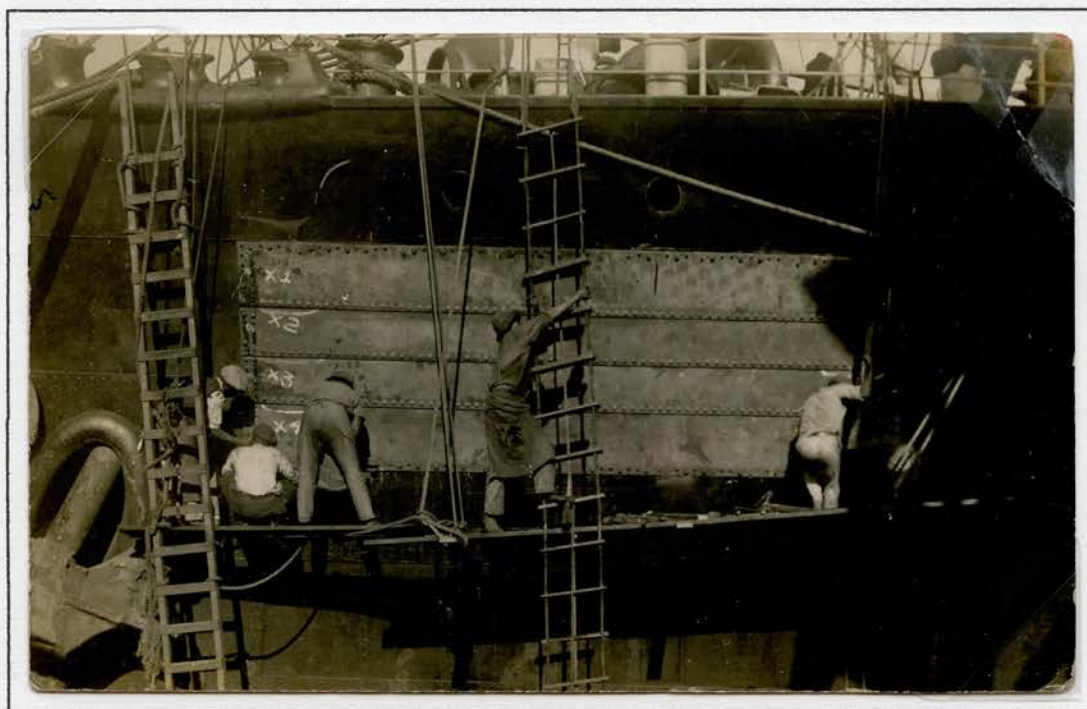


A23 "Suffolk": Cape Town, South Africa 15.6.1917 to Queensland

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed by censor No. ____" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 2/L) with number "23" inserted in manuscript. Mail from this troopship is particularly scarce

Collision of the A23 "Suffolk" with the A38 "Ulysses" - Durban, South Africa

14th June 1917



A38 "Ulysses": A real photo postcard of sailors repairing the hull of the "Ulysses" after a collision with the A23 "Suffolk" in Durban, South Africa on the 14th June 1917.

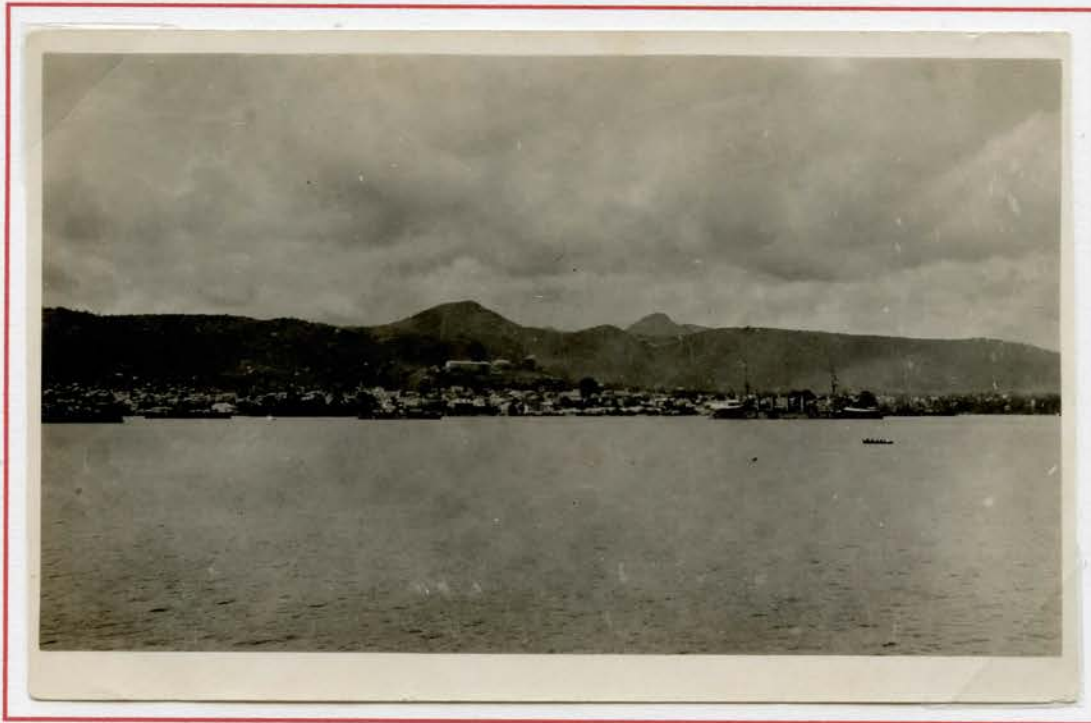
Ex Finlayson

The Thirty First Convoy

An unscheduled stopover for the A9 "Shropshire" - Freetown, Sierra Leone

4th April 1917 - 19th July 1917

6th July 1917

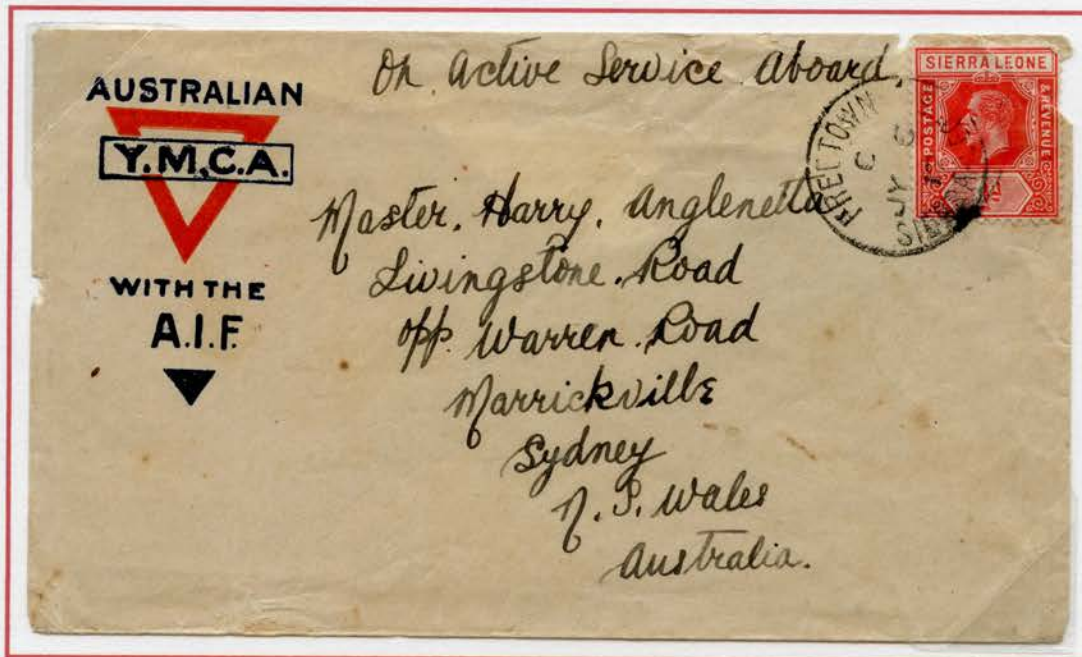


A9 "Shropshire": A rare photograph from the "Shropshire" when anchored at Freetown in Sierra Leone in July 1917. This stop over is not recorded in the troopship transport records. On the reverse, the soldier writes *"The building on the rise in the centre of the photo is the Garrison Barracks where the white soldiers live. The native soldiers are camped at the top of the hill..."*

Very few convoys stopped at Freetown, Sierra Leone, and photographs of the city are rare

An unscheduled stopover for the A38 "Ulysses" - Freetown, Sierra Leone

6th July 1917



Note: This cover is believed to have originated from one of the Sydney troopships, most likely the A38 "Ulysses" from the 31st Convoy.

Unusually there are no censorship handstamps on this cover.

Ex Blake

A38 "Ulysses": Freetown, Sierra Leone on the 6.7.1917 to New South Wales.

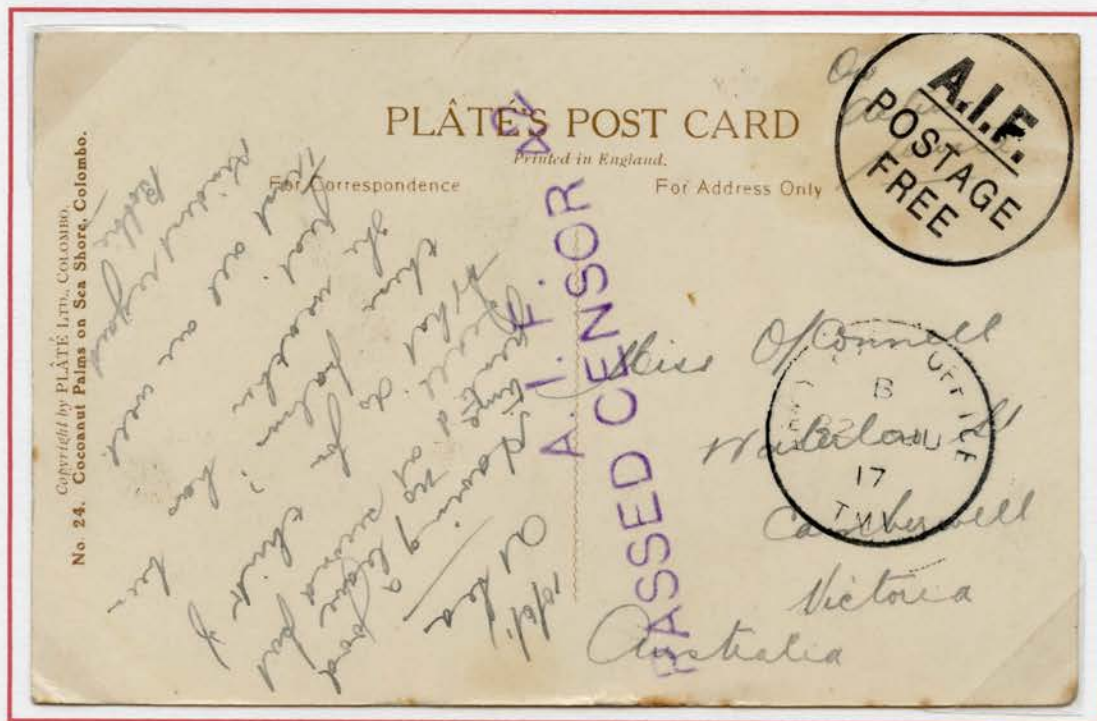
Convoy mail from Sierra Leone is very rare

The Thirty First Convoy

The final port of call of the A42 "Boorara" - Alexandria, Egypt

4th April 1917 - 19th July 1917

21st June 1917



Note: The first shot fired in WW1 was across the bows of the German Norddeutscher Lloyd steamer "Pfalz" from Fort Nepean at Port Phillip Heads on the 5th August 1914. She was seized by the Australian government and refitted as HMAT 42 "Boorara".

A42 "Boorara": Cairo, Egypt 22.6.1917 to Victoria

Postal markings: "A.I.F./PASSED CENSOR 42" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 21)

The card is cancelled by The Army post office datestamp TM1, allocated to the Australian Training Division in Egypt.

Ex Finlayson

The final port of call of the A9 "Shropshire" - Plymouth, England

19th July 1917



A9 "Shropshire": Plymouth, England on the 19.7.1917 to New South Wales

Postal markings: "PASSED/CENSOR" handstamp in purple (Finlayson Type CM 50).

The cover was written by Captain Clyde Davis of the Australian Army Medical Corps who embarked on the "Shropshire" to England. Given that the envelope bears no other postal markings, it is believed that the censor cachet was used on board the "Shropshire". The letter was placed in the "bagged" mail for shipment to Australia.

Ex Finlayson

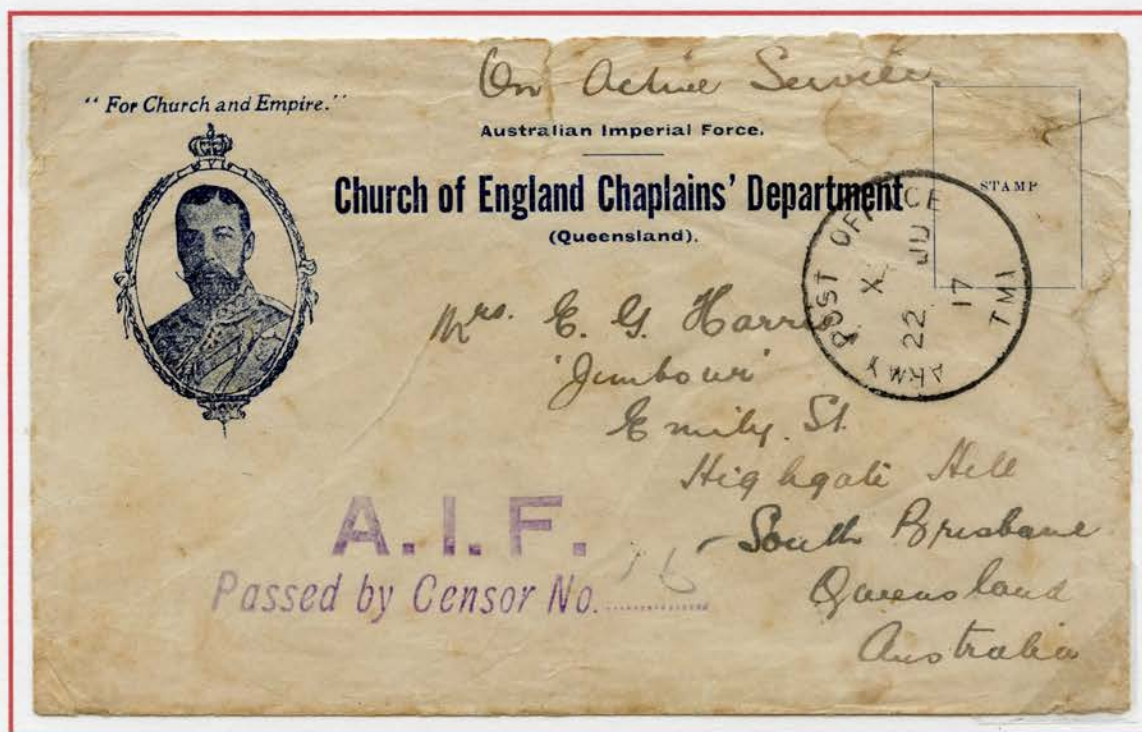
The Thirty First Convoy

The final port of call of the A15 "Port Sydney" - Port Said, Egypt

4th April 1917 - 19th July 1917

22nd June 1917

An unlisted censor cachet

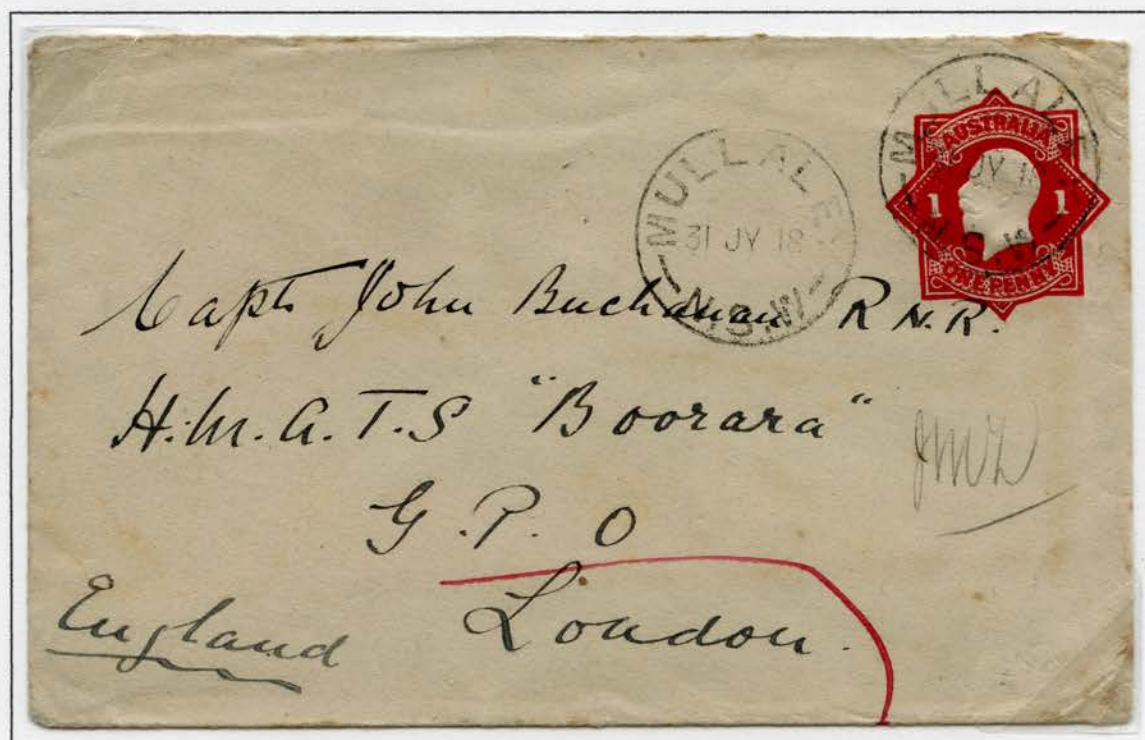


A15 "Port Stanley": Port Said, Egypt 22.6.1917 to Queensland

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed by Censor No. _____" (Finlayson Type 2/J) handstamp in purple with manuscript "15" inserted. The cover is cancelled by the British Army Base Post Office datestamp at Port Said of the 22nd June 1917, the day the "Port Sydney" docked.

Mail addressed to the A42 "Boorara" after convoy service - London, England

31st July 1918



Note: The "Boorara" was previously a captured German vessel named the "Pfalz" which was fired on from Fort Nepean on the 5th August 1914 attempting to steam out the Port Phillip Heads from Melbourne harbour.

These were the first shots fired by the Australian Forces in WW1.

A42 "Boorara": Mullaly, New South Wales 31.7.1918 to England

The 31st Convoy was the last troopship voyage of the "Boorara". This cover is addressed to the Captain after completing her convoy service.

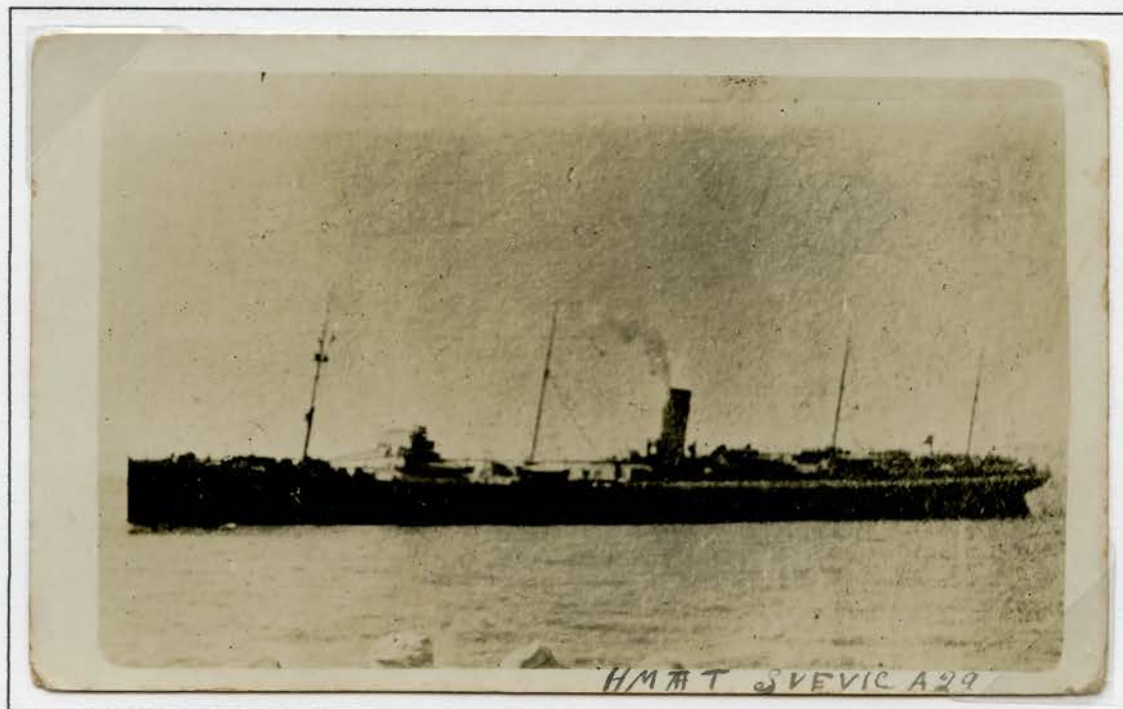
The Thirty Second Convoy

9th June - 24th August 1917

Only seven ships were sent on the Thirty Second Convoy, including two Royal Mail Steamships requisitioned by the Australian government. The A17 "Port Lincoln's" final port was Genoa, an unusual destination.

The departure of the A29 "Suevic" - Melbourne, Victoria

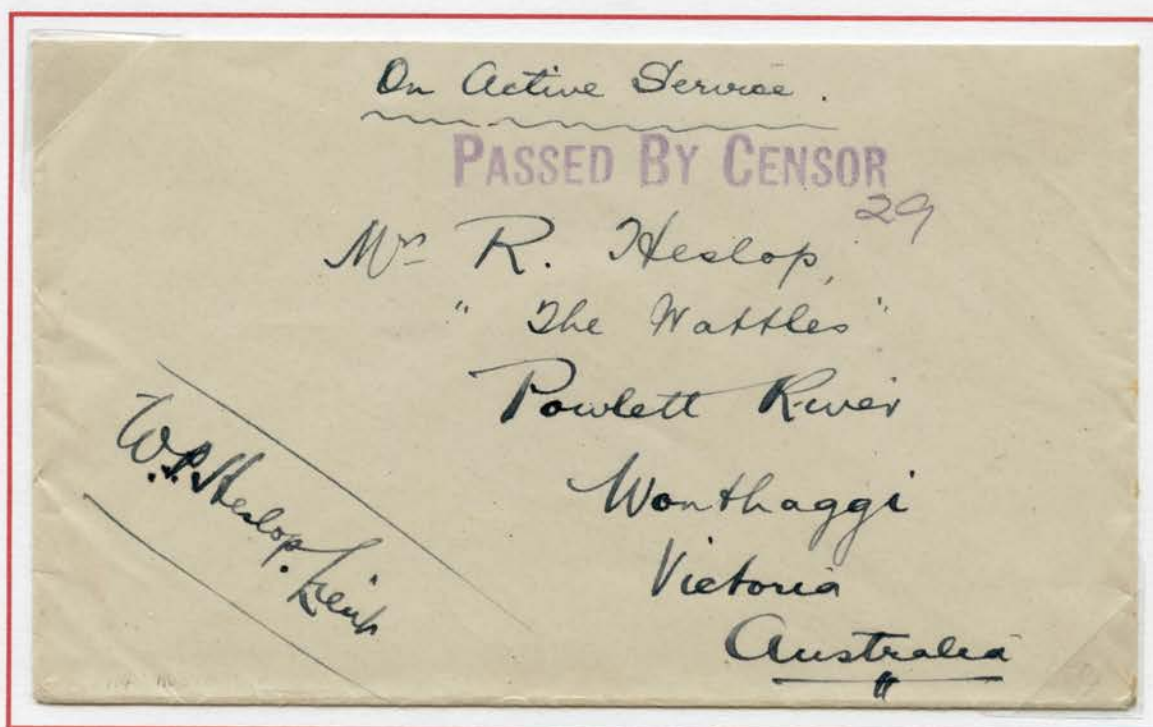
21st June 1917



A29 "Suevic":

A real photo postcard of the "Suevic" sent under cover.

The soldier writes: "This is a photo of the Suevic" which we sailed on from Port Melbourne on 21st June"



A29 "Suevic": Used from the 32nd Convoy to Victoria

Postal markings: "PASSED BY CENSOR" handstamp in violet (not listed by Finlayson) and with "29" inserted in manuscript.

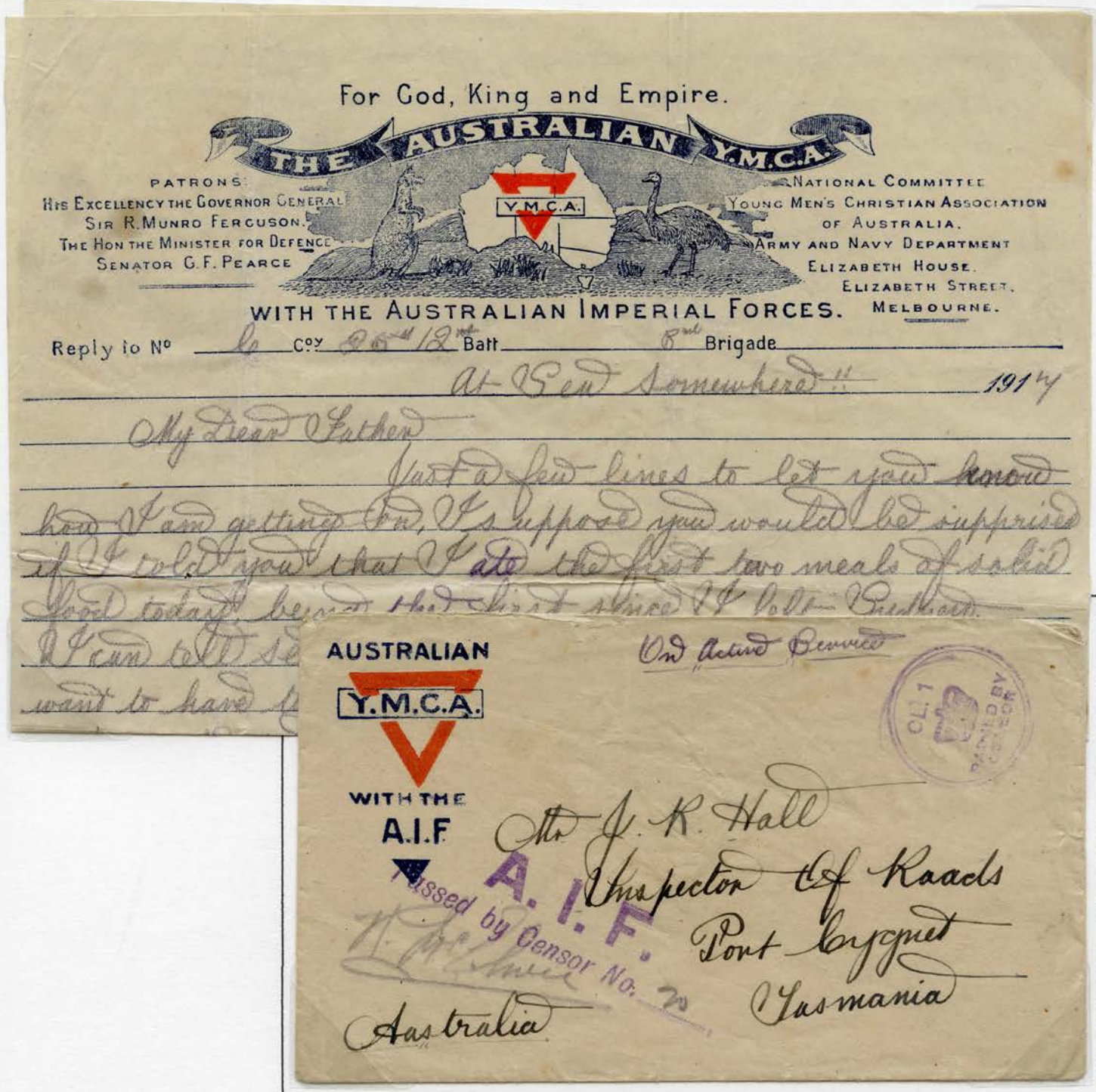
The envelope was written Lieutenant William Heslop who joined the Flying Corps and embarked from Melbourne on the 21st June 1917 with his signature is at the lower left for censorship. Since there are no postal markings on this envelope, the port of posting is unable to be identified.

The Thirty Second Convoy

The departure of the A29 "Suevic" - Melbourne, Victoria

9th June - 24th August 1917

21st June 1917



A20 "Hororata": Melbourne, Victoria 21.6.1917 to Tasmania

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed by Censor No. _____" handstamp in purple (Finlayson Type MCM 2/L) and with "20" inserted in manuscript. The YMCA notepaper is unusually accompanied with the letter.

The envelope was written by Private Roy Hall of the 12th Infantry Battalion who survived the war and returned to Australia on the 25th January 1919.