

The Thirty Third Convoy

16th July - 22nd October 1917

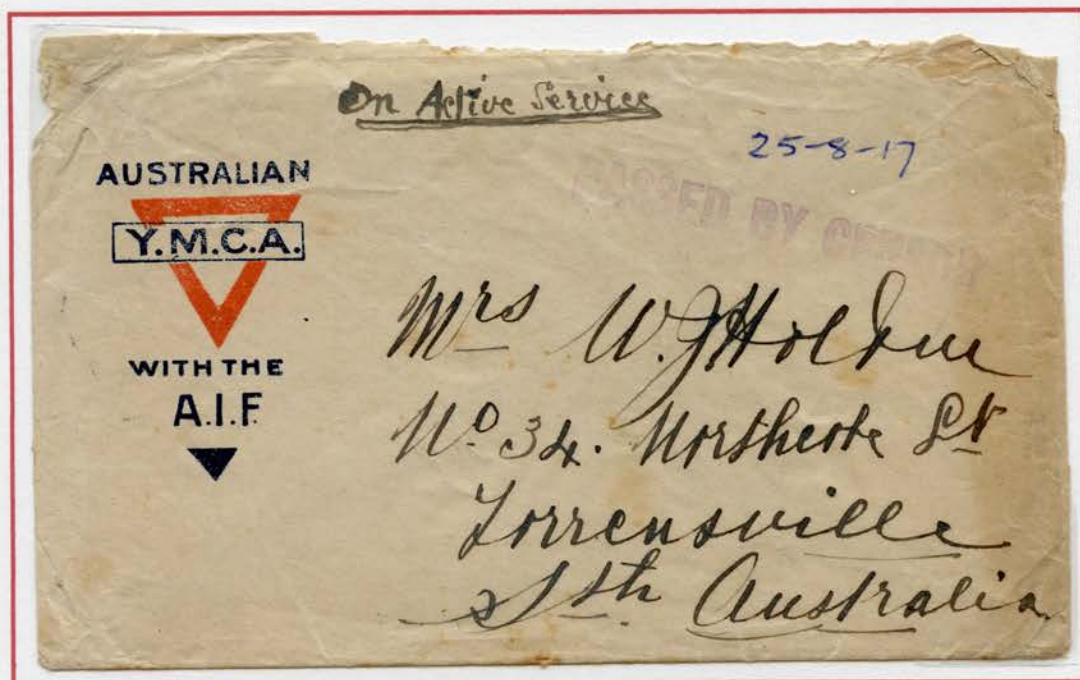
Eight ships were sent on the Thirty Third Convoy, with four of them being sent via the Panama Canal and the first Australian convoy sent via this route.

The first port of call of the A32 "Themistocles" - Colon, Panama

6th September 1917

The first Australian convoy sent via the Panama Canal

The letter on the following page was written by Sergeant Wellington Holden of the 43rd Infantry Battalion. He embarked on the A32 "Themistocles" on the 33rd Convoy and writes we are "*at anchor waiting for more ships to join us from New Zealand, there are at present four troopships laying here in Colon Harbour from Australia.*" and he proceeds to name the troopships. Given the sensitive nature of the message, it is very surprising that the letter was not censored. *Ex Finlayson*



Postal markings:

"PASSED BY CENSOR"
cachet in violet (not listed by
Finlayson).

One of the few recorded
covers from Colon, Panama

A32 "Themistocles": Colon, Panama 6.9.1917 to South Australia



Note: It is interesting to record that this envelope was sent through the civilian mail system without the free postage concession.

Ex Blake

One of the few recorded
covers from Colon,
Panama

A32 "Themistocles": Balboa, Canal Zone 7.9.1917 to South Australia

The Thirty Fourth Convoy

7th September 1917 - 14th January 1918

From the time of the Thirty Second Convoy, the number of ships sailing diminished rapidly. This convoy only comprised of five ships, with similar number for most of the remaining sailings.

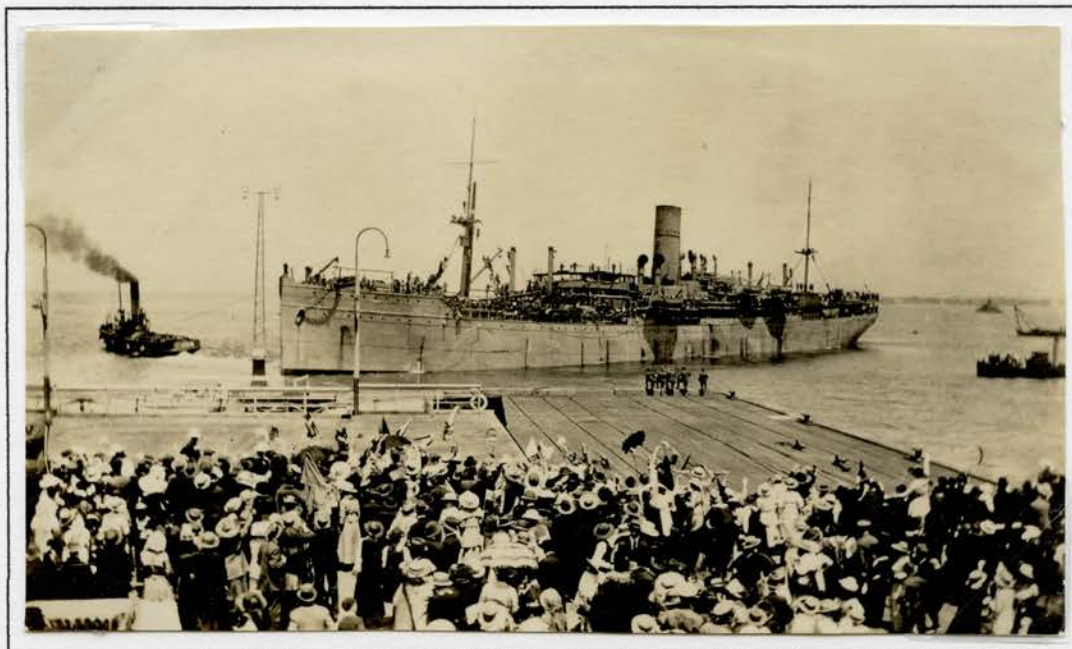
The departure of the A15 "Port Sydney" - Melbourne, Victoria

9th November 1917

A15 "Port Sydney":

A photograph endorsed "9/11/17 Port Sydney" on the day it departed Melbourne on the 34th Convoy.

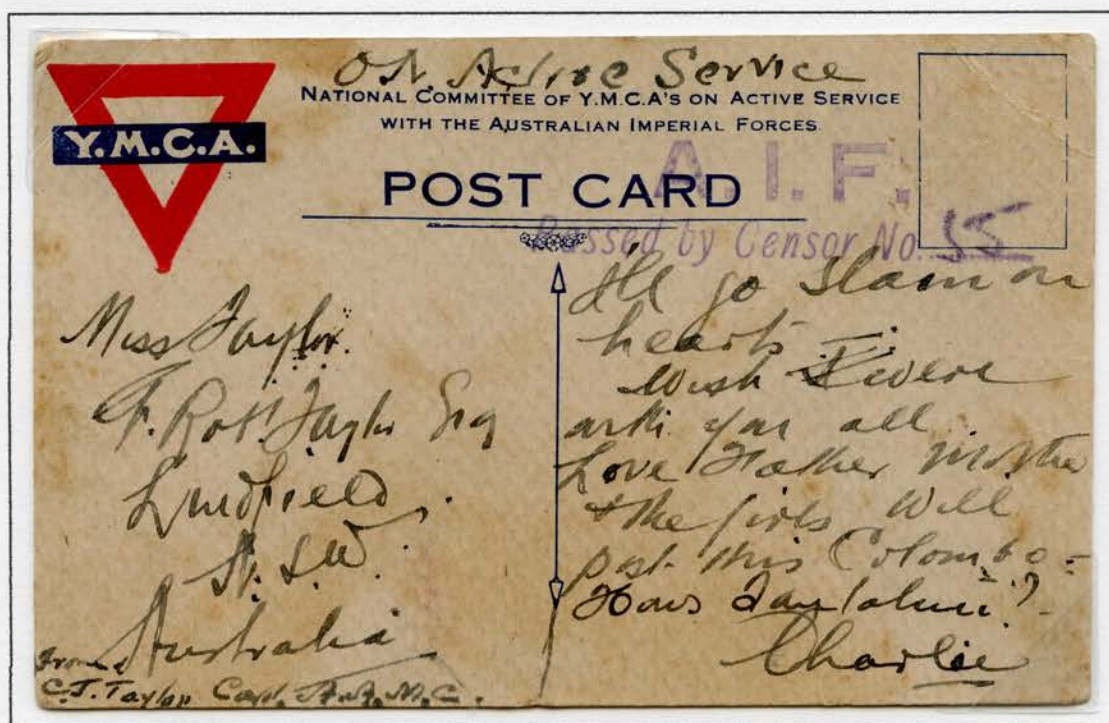
It is interesting to note the adoring crowd farewelling the troops.



The first port of call of the A55 "Kyarra" - Colombo, Ceylon

November 1917

The Embarkation Records state that this convoy sailed via South Africa, yet the message on this card clearly states that their next port of call is Colombo, Ceylon.



A55 "Kyarra": Colombo, Ceylon November 1917 to New South Wales

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed by Censor No....." handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 3N) and with "55" inserted in manuscript.

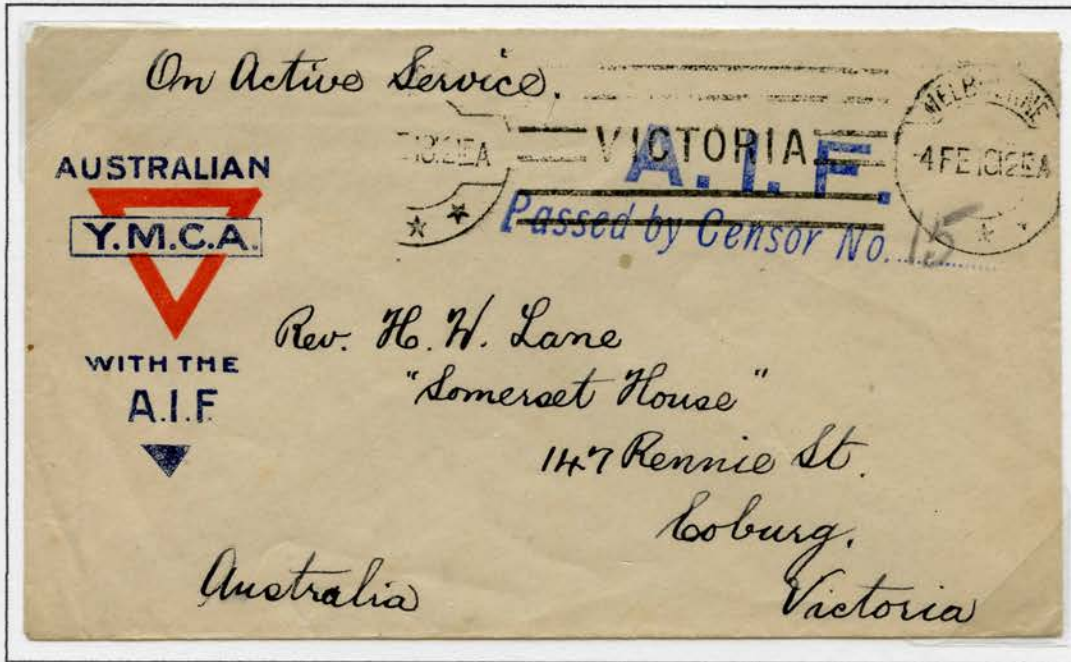
The card was written by Captain Charles Taylor of the 14th Australian General Hospital and writes "Will post this Colombo".

The Thirty Fourth Convoy

The final destination of the A15 "Port Sydney" - Plymouth, England

7th September 1917 - 14th January 1918

14th January 1918



The envelope was "bagged" and entered the Melbourne postal system on the 4th February 1918, four weeks after docking in Plymouth, England.

A15 "Port Sydney": Plymouth, England 14.1.1918 to Victoria.

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed by Censor No....." handstamp in blue (Finlayson Type MCM 30) and with "15" inserted in manuscript.



A15 "Port Sydney": Used on the 34th Convoy to South Australia

Postal markings: "HMAT/Port Sydney/No Charge To Be/Raised" handstamp in bright green (not listed by Finlayson).

The envelope was written by Private James Hale of the Reinforcements for the 27th Field Artillery Brigade who embarked on the A15 "Port Sydney" at Melbourne on the 9th November 1917.

Note: After serving on four convoys, the A15 "Star of England" was renamed the "Port Sydney".

The only recorded example of this handstamp

The Thirty Fifth Convoy

30th October 1917 - February 1918

Another small convoy comprising six troopships was the Thirty Fifth Convoy with all ships sailing via South Africa to Plymouth in England.

The final destination of the A30 "Borda" - Plymouth, Great Britain

February 1918



A30 "Borda": London, England 5.3.1918 to East Yorkshire

Postal markings: "A.I.F. Passed By Censor No. _____" handstamp in rose (Finlayson Type MCM 3/M and rare in this colour) with the numeral "30" inserted in manuscript.

Note: There is little information known of the "Borda" on this convoy, and it is believed to have docked at Plymouth in late February or early March 1918. It is interesting to note that the letter was forwarded to London where it received the Letter Section datestamp of the Australian Imperial Forces Base post office on the 5th March 1918.

A30 "Borda":

A postcard of the ship prior to the war when it was a passenger liner



The Thirty Sixth Convoy

16th November 1917 - March 1918

Comprising only six troopships was the Thirty Fifth Convoy with all ships sailing via South Africa to Plymouth in England.

S.S. "Indarra":

A real photo postcard of the "Indarra" during her civilian liner days. The only convoy that she sailed on was the 36th.



Note: This postcard was sent under cover and dated the 26.9.1917. It was written by a crew member from the docks at Birkinhead, Liverpool.



S.S. "Canberra":

A real photo postcard of the "Canberra" during her civilian liner days. The only convoy that she sailed on was the 36th.

The Thirty Seventh Convoy

2nd February - April 1918

This was the smallest convoy to leave Australian shores with only three ships allocated to the voyage. Scant details are known of the transit ports and arrival details, however, it is confirmed that part of this convoy was sent via the Panama Canal, one of only three convoys recorded.

The final destination of the A18 "Wiltshire" - Alexandria, Egypt

March 1918



A18 "Wiltshire": Moascar, Egypt 12.3.1918 to Victoria

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed By Censor No....." handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 3/N) with the numeral handstamp "18" inserted separately (not recorded by Finlayson).

The envelope was posted at Moascar, Egypt where the Field Post Office "T.M.1" datestamp of the 12th March 1918 was applied. It was written by Private Walter Schmidt of the 46th Infantry Battalion who survived the war and returned to Australia on the 15th January 1919.



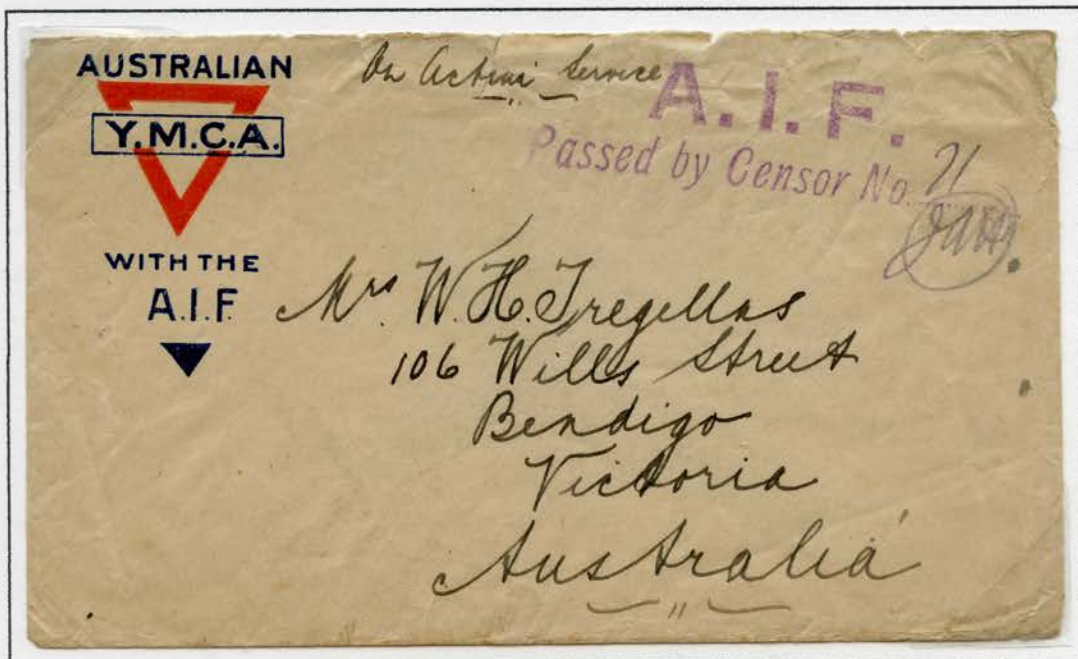
A18 "Wiltshire": Moascar, Egypt 27.3.1918 to Victoria

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed By Censor No....." handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 3/N) with the numeral handstamp "18" inserted in manuscript.

Note: The envelope is from the same correspondence as the above. Given that they are two weeks apart, it is probable that this maritime censor cachet was used on land.

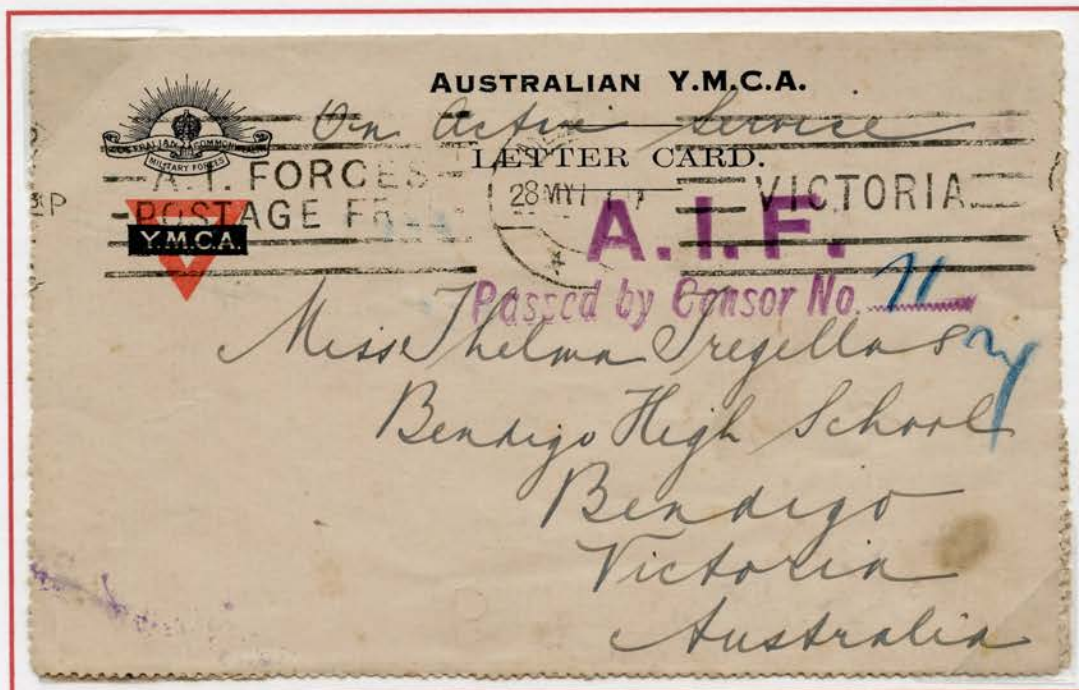
Convoy mail sailing via the Panama Canal

There are no transit or arrival details known of this convoy. The below envelopes were written by Private William Tregellas of the 46th Infantry Battalion. Both are handstamped with the "A.I.F./ Passed by Censor No....." handstamp in purple (Finlayson Type MCM 3/N) with manuscript "71" allocated to the A71 "Nestor".



This lettercard has been censored with sensitive details excised in purple ink. Private Tregellas writes;

"None of my letters have left the ship yet as we haven't reached port, but I keep on writing as we have plenty of spare time".



Proof of the transit via the Panama Canal is in the text of this lettercard; "Today is really Thursday but as we are crossing the xxx (excised by the censor) meridian we add a day and have xxxx. Most of the boys are at a loss as regards having two Wednesdays of the same date of the same week...." The "Nestor" docked in Liverpool on the 20th April 1918.

Ex Finlayson

The Thirty Eighth Convoy

2nd March - May 1918

This, and two other convoys were the smallest to leave Australia, with only three troopships. It is interesting to note that the Embarkation Roll does not record the route that this convoy took, however, it is almost certain that all three troopships sailed via the Panama Canal.

The first port of call of the A34 "Persic" - Colon, Panama

20th April 1918

Postal markings:

"A.I.F./Passed by Censor No....." handstamp in purple (Finlayson Type MCM 3/O) with manuscript "34" inserted in manuscript. This envelope was sent just before the "Persic" passed through the Panama Canal.

Ex Finlayson, Blake

Mail from this convoy via Panama is rare



A34 "Persic": Christobal, Colon 20.4.1918 to South Australia

The Thirty Ninth Convoy

13th April - June 1918

Comprising of five ships, the Thirty Ninth convoy was another small sailing. The route details of this convoy are unknown, but the correspondence below indicates that the S.S. "Port Darwin" docked in Egypt as a final destination.

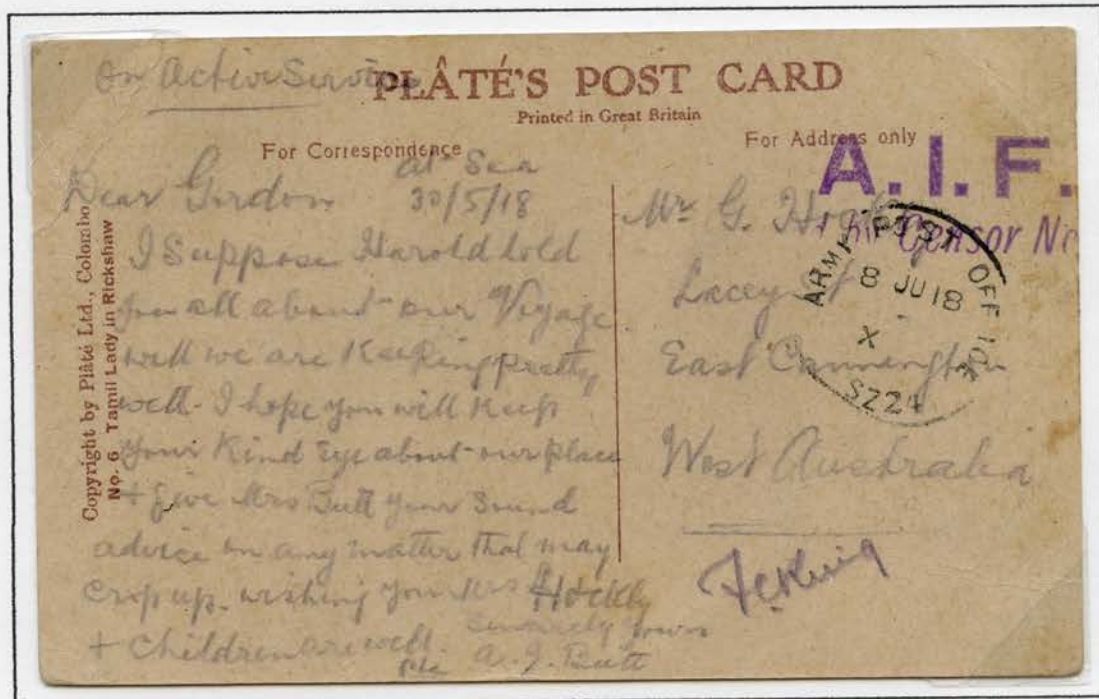
The final destination of the S. S. "Port Darwin" - Suez, Egypt

8th June 1918

Postal markings:

"A.I.F./ Passed By Censor No....." handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 3N).

The card was written by Private Allabuse Butt of the 1-3 Western Australian Reinforcements who returned to Australia on the 3rd September 1919.



S.S. "Port Darwin": Suez, Egypt 8.6.1918 to Western Australia

The Thirty Ninth Convoy

The final destination of the S. S. "Port Darwin" - Suez, Egypt

13th April - June 1918

20th June 1918

Usage of the ship censor cachet on land



S.S. "Port Darwin": Suez, Egypt 20.6.1918 to South Australia

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed By Censor No....." handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 3N).

Note: The envelope with the enclosed cards was written by Gunner Kenneth Bailey of the 5th Field Artillery Brigade who embarked on the S.S. "Port Darwin". It is interesting to note that since this was a contracted troopship, there was no number allocated to censor the envelope, so it had to be initialled off by the ships censor. The cards were written in the Y.M.C.A. Hut in Egypt, so the censor cachet must have been used on land instead of on board the ship.

The envelope contained two Y.M.C.A. postcards and Gunner Bailey writes:

"the afternoon parade has had to be postponed till the sun goes down a bit; so I am writing here in the Y.M.C.A. but just about sweltering."

He survived the war and returned to Australia on the 9th March 1919.



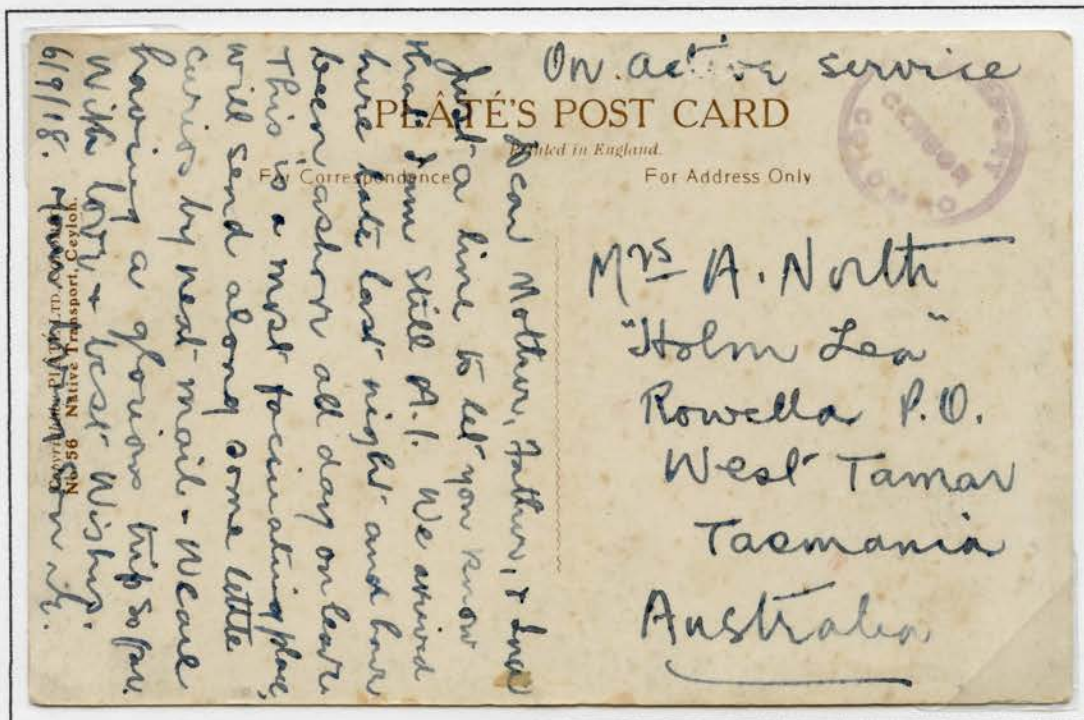
The Forty First Convoy

13th April - June 1918

Comprising of nine ships, the Forty First was one of the last convoys. The Embarkation Records do not record the route that they took, although some were sent via Colombo and the Suez Canal.

The first port of call of the A15 "Port Sydney" - Colombo, Ceylon

6th September 1918



Postal markings:

"PASSED BY/CENSOR/COLOMBO" handstamp in violet.

The card was written by Gunner Arthur North of the Field Artillery Brigade.

A15 "Port Sydney": Colombo, Ceylon 6.9.1918 to Tasmania

The Forty Second Convoy

31st August - 4th October 1918

The third last convoy comprised of nine vessels, including the hospital ships "Kanowna" and "Karoola". The Embarkation Records do not record the route that they took, although most were sent via the Suez Canal.

The departure of the A41 "Bakara" - Fremantle, Western Australia

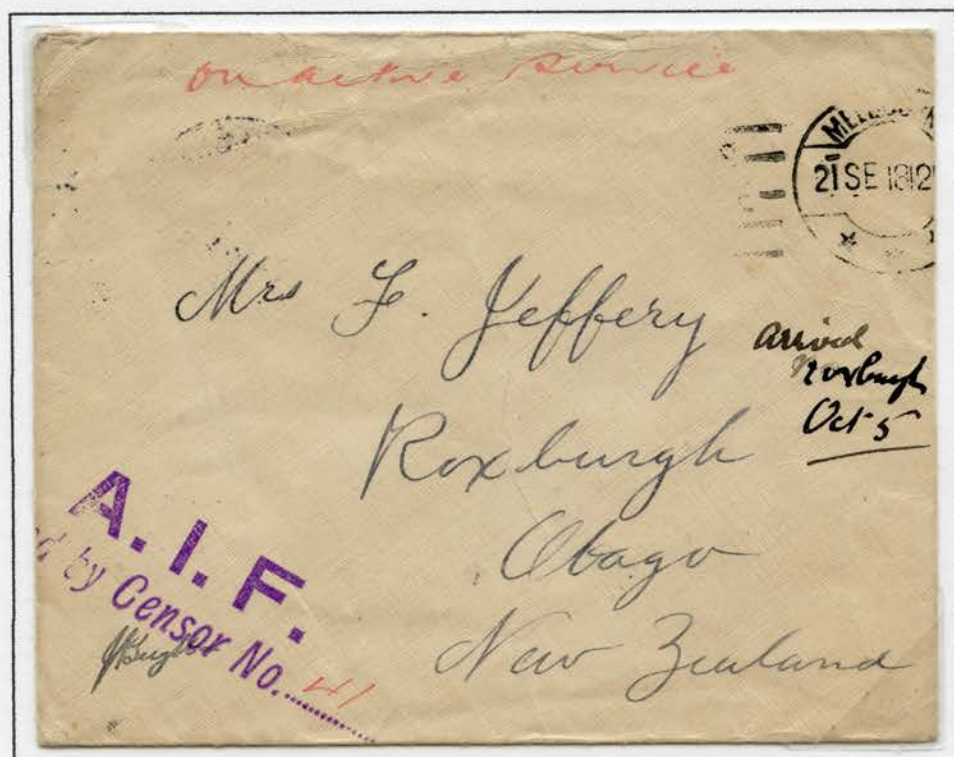
14th September 1918

Postal markings:

"A.I.F./ Passed by Censor No....." handstamp in purple (Finlayson Type MCM 3N) with "41" inserted in red manuscript.

The Melbourne datestamp of the 21st September 1918 confirms the posting from Fremantle of the 14th.

Note: Covers from the final convoys are very rare. This ship was carrying mostly horses.



A41 "Bakara": Fremantle, Western Australia 14.9.1918 to New Zealand