

# The History of the Aerogramme and the Start of Commercial Air Mail — Part Four

## Post-War Aerogrammes of Great Britain up to 1966

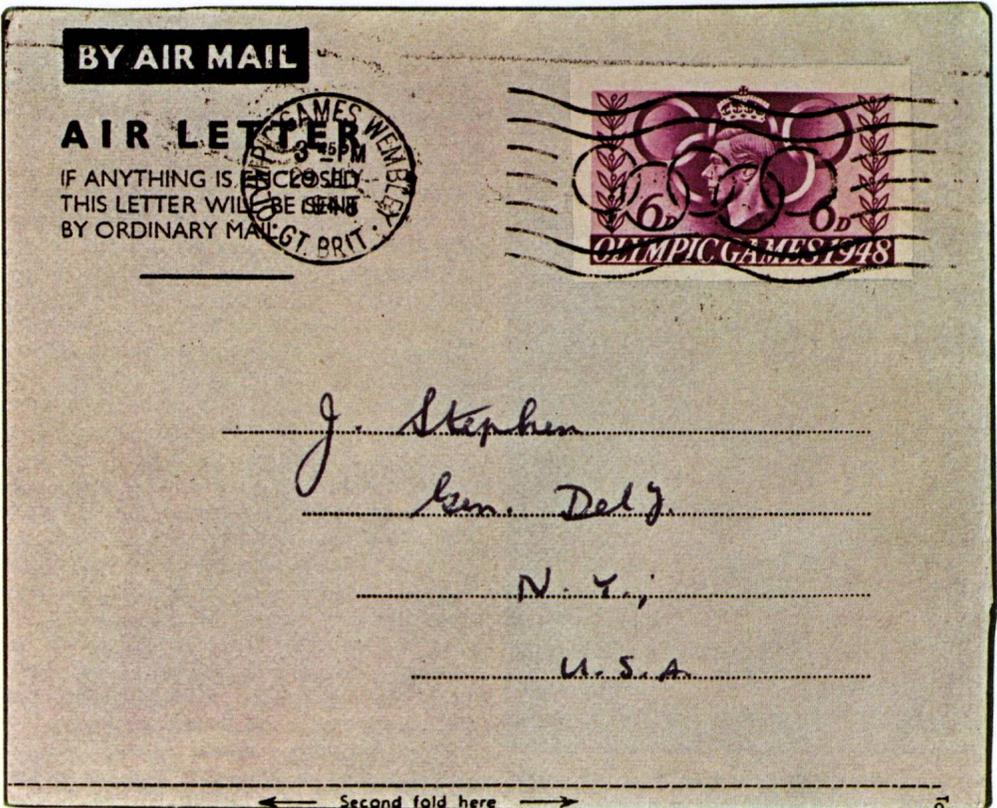
Together with a set of four postage stamps, Great Britain issued a special Air Letter form on July 29, 1948 to commemorate the Olympic Games, held at Wembley.

4,000,000 forms were printed by McCorquodale & Co Limited, at Wolverton, on grey azure paper, using an American reel-fed rotary letter-press machine. After printing the forms were sent to Harrison & Sons Limited, at High Wycombe, in uncut sheets of eight, where the impressed 6d stamp designed by Stanley D Scott, was printed, using the photogravure process. The forms were then returned to Wolverton for cutting and gumming with Gum Arabic.

On May 3, 1951, Great Britain issued two postage stamps to commemorate the Festival of Britain. No special Air Letter form was issued by the Post Office but forms with the 'Festival' symbol privately applied (with official sanction) were issued.

At the XIII Universal Postal Union Congress, held in Brussels May 4–July 15, 1952, a resolution was passed: 'Official recognition of the category of articles which will henceforth be known as 'Aerograms', which do already exist under such names as 'Air Letter', 'Letter Avion', without official recognition'.

The British Postal Authorities chose the term 'Aerogramme' (which spelling was first



**BY AIR MAIL**

**AIR LETTER**

IF ANYTHING IS EN-  
CLOSED THIS LETTER  
WILL BE SENT BY  
ORDINARY MAIL.



MR. I. H. C. GODFREY,  
P.O. BOX 2838,  
JOHANNESBURG,  
SOUTH AFRICA.

used by Israel on airmail stationery in 1951) to comply with the UPU ruling.

In August 1952, the Post Office were thinking of overprinting the standard British Air Letter with a Coronation Symbol in a two or three colour design. However, in September they decided not to modify the standard form but to make a special Coronation issue which would be put on sale on June 2, 1953.

On February 27, 1953, Warrant No 494 was issued to McCorquodale for ten million unstamped Coronation Air Letters and at the same time a warrant was issued to Harrison & Sons for the stamping of the forms with a special 6d Coronation stamp. In all, 21,500,000

forms were printed by McCorquodale & Co Limited at Wolverton, on light blue paper, using the old rotary letterpress Postal Order machines. After printing the forms were sent to Harrisons at High Wycombe, in uncut sheets of eight, where the impressed 6d stamp—a modification of M C Farrar-Bell's design for the 1/6d commemorative, incorporating the Dorothy Wilding photograph of the Queen—was printed, using the photogravure process. The forms were returned to Wolverton for cutting and gumming. Together with four commemorative postage stamps the forms were put on sale on June 3, 1953 (all Post Offices were closed on Coronation Day, June

BY AIR MAIL  
PAR AVION  
AIR LETTER  
AEROGRAMME



With best wishes  
Stuart Rose

2) and remained on sale until December 31, 1953.

When the Air Letter form with an impressed stamp was first introduced by the Post Office in June 1943, it was pointed out that the mitre corner of the 'Gumbley' form was covered by a patent and a suitable alternative had to be adopted so the 'curved cut corner' was used on all Great Britain Air Letters. However it was decided to modify the corner of the new Coronation issue and new cutters were ordered in February 1953, but rather than hold up production the old cutters with curved corners were used on the very early deliveries, until the new cutters arrived.

On January 1, 1954, a modification of the

Coronation Air Letter was issued with the emblem omitted and 'sixpence' substituted for '2nd June 1953' on the impressed stamp. The forms were printed by McCorquodales at Wolverton on light blue paper and were sent for stamping at Blades East & Blades, a McCorquodale subsidiary, which was later to be absorbed by Charles Skipper and East, another subsidiary at Basingstoke.

From June 1953 until the beginning of 1955, a two-line text was printed on the back of the form reading:

'If anything is enclosed this letter  
may be sent by ordinary mail'

A change was made in January 1955, when a stronger admonitory test was substituted, read-

ing, in three lines:

'An air letter should not contain any enclosure; if it does it will be surcharged or sent by ordinary mail'

On September 12, 1957, a special Air Letter was issued to commemorate the 46th Parliamentary Conference held in London.

A new stamp designed by Lynton Lamb, showing the Houses of Parliament and the Dorothy Wilding portrait of the Queen had a two-line letterpress overprint in blue reading, '46th Parliamentary Conference'. Six million forms were printed by McCorquodale & Co Limited at Wolverton and were on sale until October 13, though only in the London Postal Region. For the duration of the Conference a special large LONDON SW1 postmark depicting Big Ben was used.

On October 20, the form was put on sale without the overprint and remained on sale until June 1960 when, as an experiment, the top right hand part of the Air Letter was transferred to the bottom right hand portion. Only 1,000,000 forms were printed in the new style so as to assess public opinion as to whether the new arrangement of the panels should be made standard in future printings. The new style was adopted for general use in July 1961 and the old style printing was discontinued. The first delivery of the new style took place on July 10, 1962.

On May 20, 1965, a trial order of 4,000 each of two kinds of gum was supplied to the Post Office gummed with PVA adhesive. Previously, the adhesive used on all Air Letters produced by McCorquodales was Gum Arabic. In this trial batch 'RES' was printed on the sealing tab of those forms gummed with Samuel Jones' Res and 'LX409E' on those forms gummed with Sichel adhesive. These forms were put on sale at selected London Post Offices during the early spring of 1965. The Post Office selected Sichel LX409E.

On October 12, 1965, McCorquodales received instructions from the Post Office to replace all dotted lines with continuous lines and to dispense with arrow heads. The new

type of Air Letter appeared in Post Offices as old supplies became exhausted. They were first seen in the middle of January 1966.

In the House of Commons on June 20, 1966, it was announced that as from October 3, there would be changes in some of the charges for inland and Overseas Postal Services and this included the Air Letter form which was increased from 6d to 9d. The design for the 9d stamp was the same as the 6d with only the value changed. As fairly large supplies of the 6d form remained the 9d form did not appear in most Post Offices until near the end of October and consequently a 3d adhesive postage stamp had to be added to the form to make the postage rate up.

Next time, Pictorial issues up to 1973.

PETER JENNINGS

## Postal Service Changes

Changes in postal services announced in February as part of an all-out drive to maintain price stability in basic letter rates, have been introduced.

From May 2, letter collections on Sundays were suspended. Weekend mails, however, will still be cleared before Monday mornings if posted in time for the Saturday morning collection in country districts or the Saturday collection in towns, which is made between noon and 1 pm.

From Monday, May 3, the last collection from street letter boxes on weekdays will be made between 5.30 pm and 6.30 pm in towns in the provinces and between 6 pm and 7 pm in central London. The collections made from a very restricted number of boxes between 7.30 pm and 8 pm in the provinces and 7.45 pm and 8.30 pm in central London will be suspended and the final clearance from many main Post Offices and Sorting Offices will be brought forward. Details of the latter changes have been made known locally.

At the end of a year these changes will be reviewed. In the current financial year, they will have produced savings of nearly £10 million in postal operating costs.