

## The Seventeenth Convoy

15<sup>th</sup> January - 12<sup>th</sup> April 1916

Comprising of eight troopships, the Seventeenth Convoy sailed to various ports, representing the number of theatres of war the Australians were involved in, including Egypt, Malta, Italy, France and England.

### A rare and complete troopship correspondence written from each of the ports of call

The next three pages is a rare and complete correspondence by Private Ken Clark of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Brigade showing all the troopship dockings of the A32 H.M.A.T. "Themistocles" on the Seventeenth Convoy. Private Clarke, although wounded a number of times, survived the war and returned to Australia on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1918.

### The embarkation of the A32 "Themistocles" - Melbourne

28<sup>th</sup> January 1916

Troopship "A 32"  
T.S.S. Themistocles"  
Jan 27 / 1916

Dear Mother

Just a few lines in haste. We (135 Artillerymen) arrived on board about 9.30 am today. We are now waiting for our dinner. I am sorry to say that no leave will be granted this evening. We have now stept (sic) off Australian soil for good, that is till the war is over.....'

Troopship "A 32"  
(T.S.S. "Themistocles").  
Jan. 27 / 1916.

Dear Mother,

Just a few lines in haste. We (135 Artillerymen) arrived on board about 9.30 a.m. today. We are now waiting for our dinner. I am sorry to say that no leave will be granted this evening. We have now stept off Australian soil for good that is till the war is over. This is a fine boat of 12,800 tons and I have been spending a good while exploring her. I will

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A32 "Themistocles": Melbourne, Victoria 27.1.1916 to Malvern

**Note:** The Melbourne machine cancel of the 28<sup>th</sup> January 1916 was the day the "Themistocles" sailed for Colombo. The enclosed letter is surprisingly uncensored as it details the name of the ship and their destination.



A32 "Themistocles": Used from Colombo, Ceylon 14.2.1916 to Victoria

**Postal markings:** "A.I.F./PASSED BY CENSOR" handstamp in purple (Finlayson Type MCM 13) specifically used on the "Themistocles".

A YMCA postcard for the Australian Imperial Force (Emery Type PSYC 1) bagged and posted from Colombo, Ceylon. Unusually, the card has an Australian 1d Red KGV stamp when the writer was eligible for free postage, however, the reason for this is explained in the message.

The "Themistocles" left Colombo on the 14<sup>th</sup> February, a week after this card was written. The censor has excised the port name in purple indelible ink. Private Clark writes "I am going to put an Australian P stamp on it, and hope that the Censor, or whoever stamps the date on our letters, will be kind enough to stamp the date on the P stamp, as it will be rather a novelty after the war".

**A32 "Themistocles":**

A postcard of the ship prior to the war when the "Themistocles" was a passenger liner.



The Seventeenth Convoy

15<sup>th</sup> January - 12<sup>th</sup> April 1916

The first port of call of the A32 "Themistocles" - Colombo, Ceylon

14<sup>th</sup> February 1916



A32 "Themistocles": Colombo, Ceylon 14.2.1916 to Victoria

A YMCA printed postcard for the Australian Imperial Force (Emery Type PSYC 1) headed "Colombo, Feb 13/ 1916" written by Private Clarke who writes "we were only allowed ashore for 4 hours yesterday and that took the form of a route march". The card shows no signs of censorship, compared to the card on the previous page.

The final port of call of the A32 "Themistocles" - Port Tawfiq, Egypt

2<sup>nd</sup> March 1916



A32 "Themistocles": Port Tawfiq, Egypt 2.3.1916 to Victoria

Postal markings: "A.I.F./PASSED BY CENSOR" handstamp in purple (Finlayson Type MCM 13) specifically used on the "Themistocles".

The lettersheet has been heavily censored inside. Private Clarke writes "The day after tomorrow we expect to land at Port Suez".

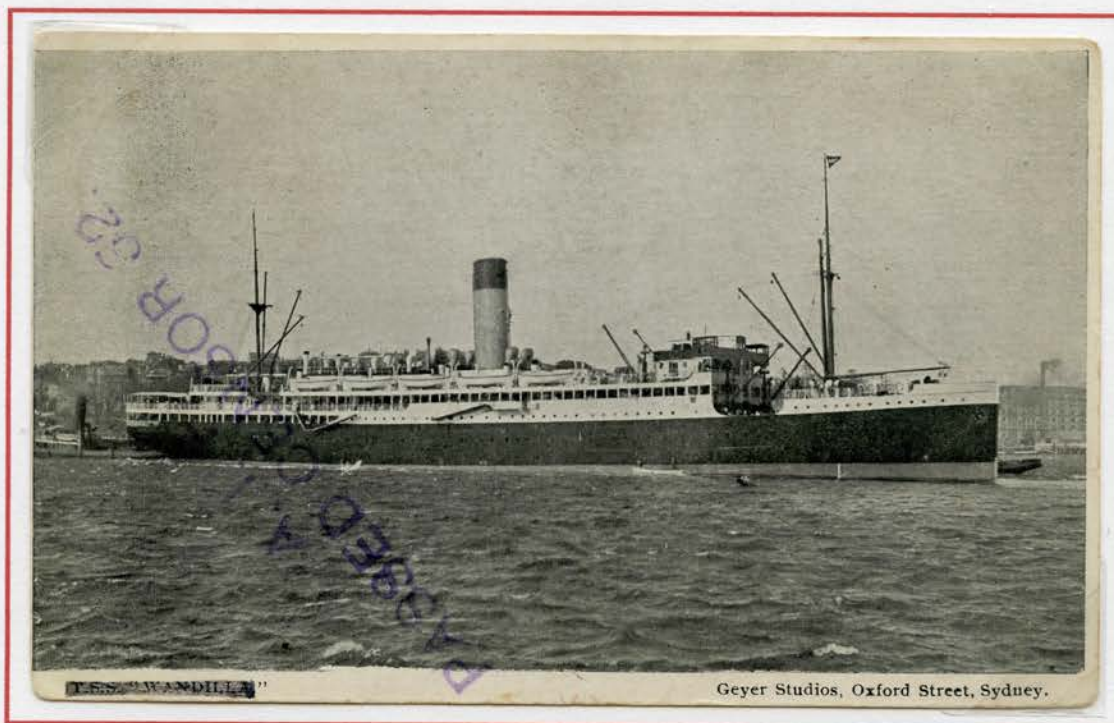
The Seventeenth Convoy

15<sup>th</sup> January - 12<sup>th</sup> April 1916

The second port of call of the A62 "Wandilla" - Port Taufiq, Egypt

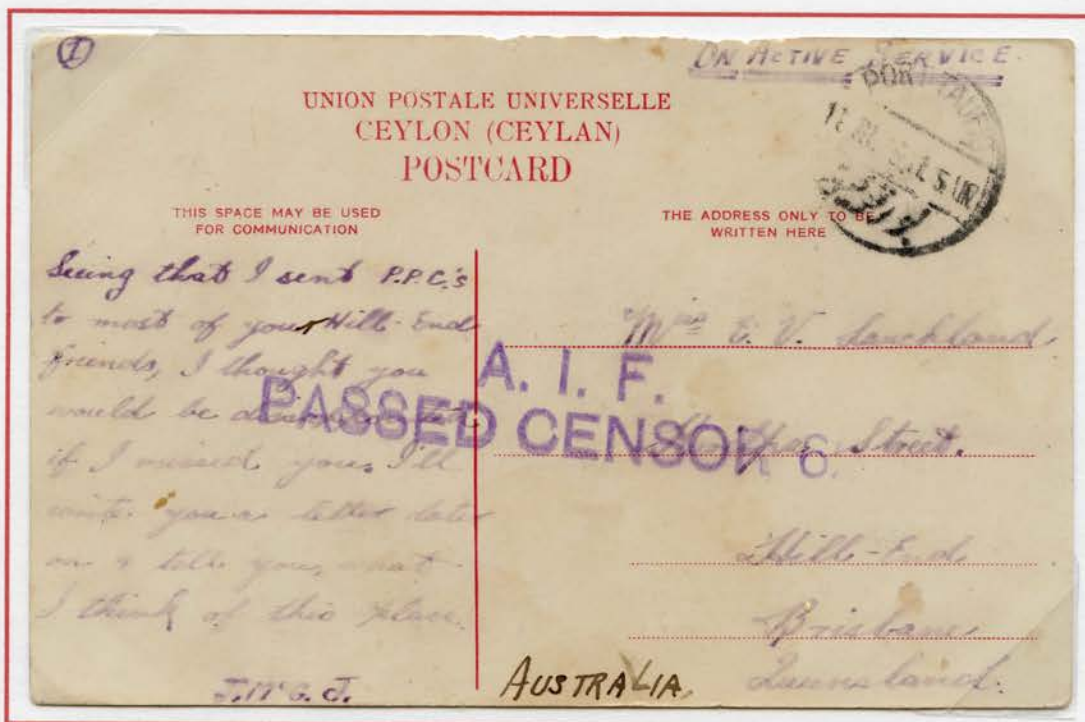
2<sup>nd</sup> March 1916

An unlisted troopship cachet



A62 "Wandilla": Port Taufiq, Egypt 8.3.1916 to New South Wales

Postal markings: "A.I.F./PASSED CENSOR 62" handstamp in violet (not listed by Finlayson) and with the name of the ship excised out by the censor at lower left.



A62 "Wandilla": Port Taufiq, Egypt 11.3.1916 to Queensland

Postal markings: "A.I.F./PASSED CENSOR 62" handstamp in violet (not listed by Finlayson).

These are the only recorded examples of both these troopship censor handstamps

## The Eighteenth Convoy

20<sup>th</sup> February - 1<sup>st</sup> June 1916

There were thirteen troopships in the Eighteenth convoy stopping mainly at Egypt on the way to England, although a couple of ships called at Malta.

### The departure of the A38 "Ulysses" - Melbourne, Victoria

1<sup>st</sup> March 1916



#### A38 "Ulysses":

A real photo postcard of the troopship dated 1.3.1916 and published by Josiah Barnes of Melbourne, an official troopship photographer.

### The departure of the A67 "Orsova" - Melbourne, Victoria

16<sup>th</sup> March 1916



#### A67 "Orsova":

Another Barnes real photo postcard of the departure of the "Orsova" dated 16.3.1916.

# The Eighteenth Convoy

The departure of the A73 "Commonwealth" - Brisbane, Queensland

20<sup>th</sup> February - 1<sup>st</sup> June 1916

28<sup>th</sup> March 1916



**Pinkemba Wharf, Brisbane:** A scanned image of the reverse of this real life postcard of the departure of the A73 "Commonwealth" from Brisbane.

## An unlisted troopship cachet



**A73 "Commonwealth":** Used at sea, mid April, 1916 to Queensland

**Postal markings:** "A.I.F./PASSED CENSOR 73" handstamp in bright green (not listed by Finlayson). The "Commonwealth" left Brisbane on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1916.

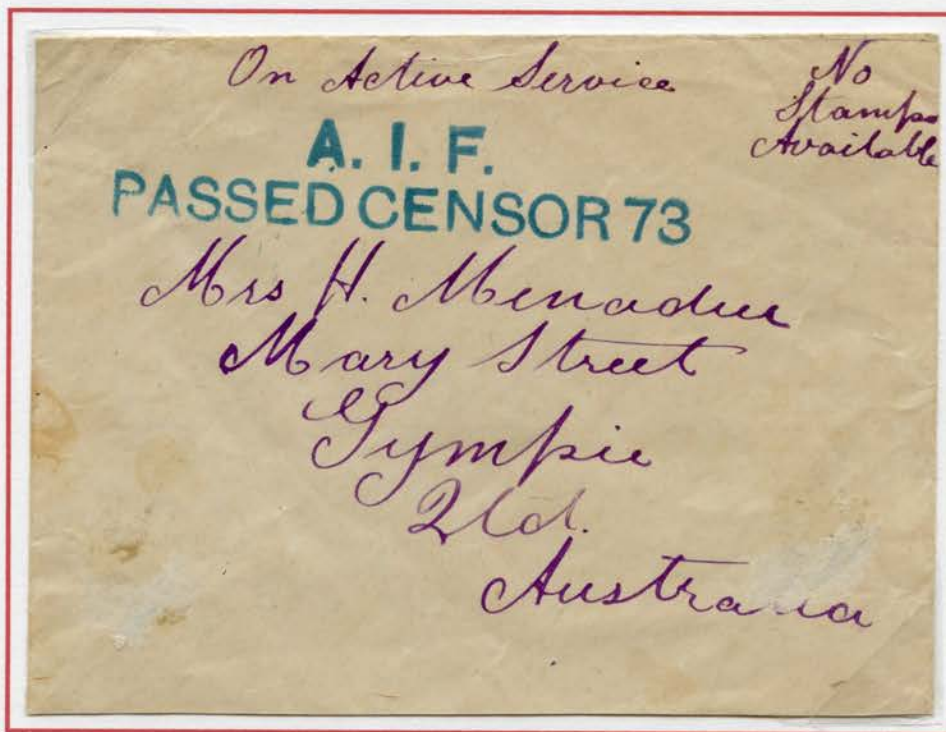
The Eighteenth Convoy

20th February - 1st June 1916

The final port of call of the A73 "Commonwealth" - Alexandria, Egypt

19th April 1916

An unlisted troopship censor handstamp



A73 "Commonwealth": Alexandria, Egypt 19.4.1916 to Queensland

Postal markings: "A.I.F./PASSED CENSOR 73" handstamp in bright green (not listed by Finlayson)

Ex Finlayson, Blake

The sailing of the A15 "Star of England"



A15 "Star of England": Used on the Eighteenth Convoy to New South Wales

Postal markings: "A.I.F. /Passed by Censor \_\_\_\_\_" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 1/F) with manuscript "15" in red.

Note: The only indication that this envelope was posted from the Eighteenth convoy is the Soldier "No: 4830" at the top. Three soldiers from different battalions with this serial number sailed on this troopship.

## The Nineteenth Convoy

21<sup>st</sup> March - 27<sup>th</sup> May 1916

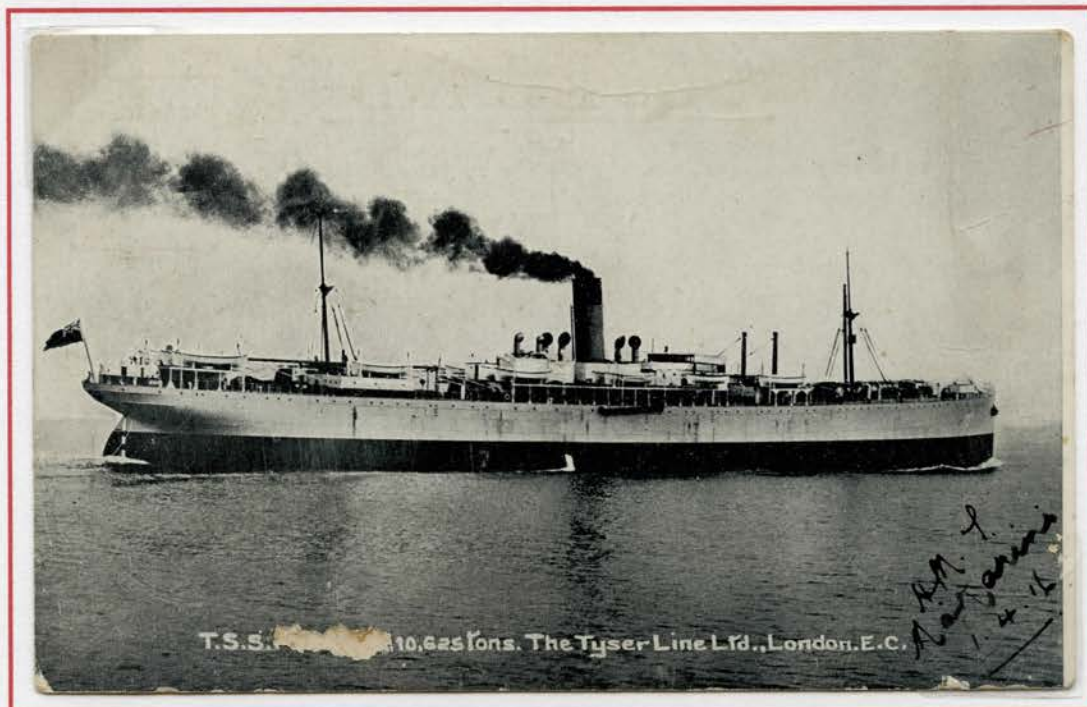
The Nineteenth convoy comprised of ten ships disembarking troops at Egypt for the Light Horse Campaign and England for the battles at the Western Front.

### The first port of call of the S.S. "Makarini" - Colombo, Ceylon

23<sup>rd</sup> April 1916

**S.S. "Makarini":** A rare postcard from this troopship used from Colombo to New South Wales.

**Note:** the name of the troopship has been erased by the censor at base, however, its name and date of departure from Sydney is at the lower right.



**S.S. "Makarini":** Colombo, Ceylon 23.4.1916 to New South Wales

**Postal markings:** "A.I.F./Passed by censor No. \_\_\_\_\_" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 1/J) with an unusual censorship manuscript authorisation similar to other transports which were not allocated a troopship number.

**Note:** The postcard headed "At sea 7/4/16" almost a week after the ship had departed Sydney.

**The S.S. "Makarini" was only contracted by the Australian government for two convoys**

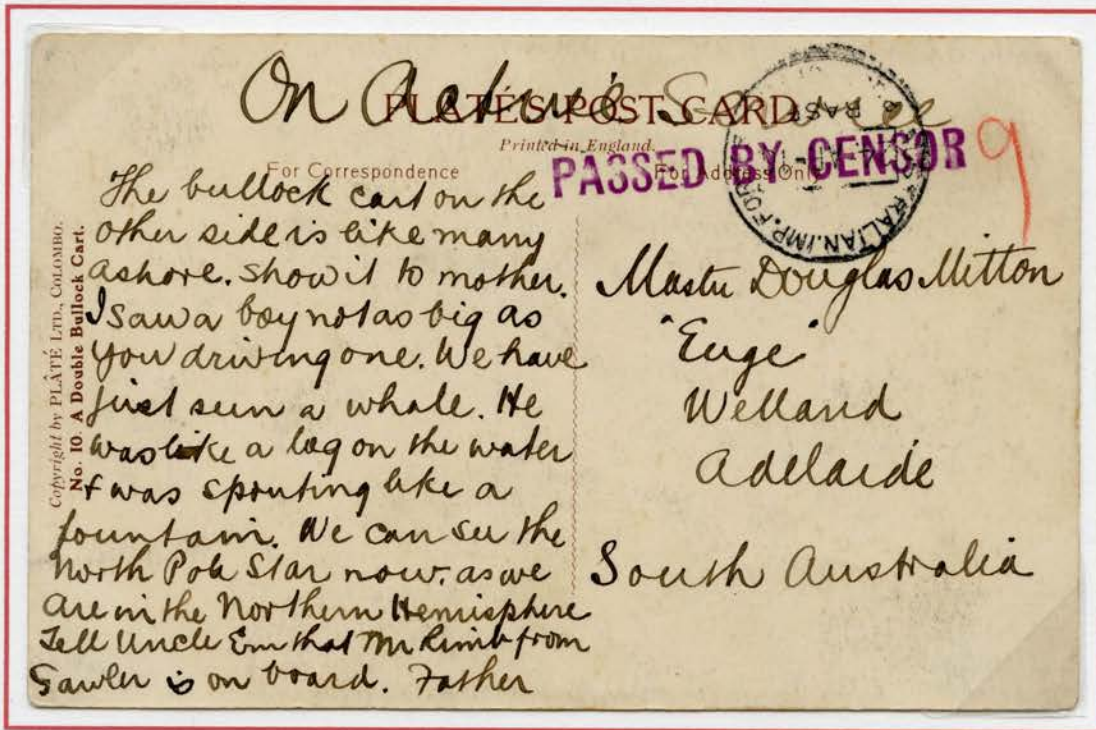
The Nineteenth Convoy

The final port of call of the A9 "Shropshire" - Port Said, Egypt

21st March - 27th May 1916

24th April 1916

An unlisted troopship handstamp



The card was written by Private Herbert Mitton of the 32nd Infantry Battalion to his son. He survived the war and returned to Australia on the 1st May 1919.

A9 "Shropshire": Alexandria, Egypt 24.4.1916 to South Australia

Postal markings: "PASSED BY CENSOR" handstamp in purple (not listed by Finlayson) with manuscript "9" in red

The final port of call of the A71 "Nestor" - Alexandria, Egypt

15th May 1916



A71 "Nestor":

A rare blank postcard with the "Newspaper boy" image printed on board the ship of the A71 "Nestor", which is unique to this troopship.

A71 "Nestor": Alexandria, Egypt 15.5.1916 to New South Wales

Postal markings: "A,I,F,/ Passed by censor No. \_\_\_\_\_" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 1/E) with manuscript "71" in blue.

## The Twentieth Convoy

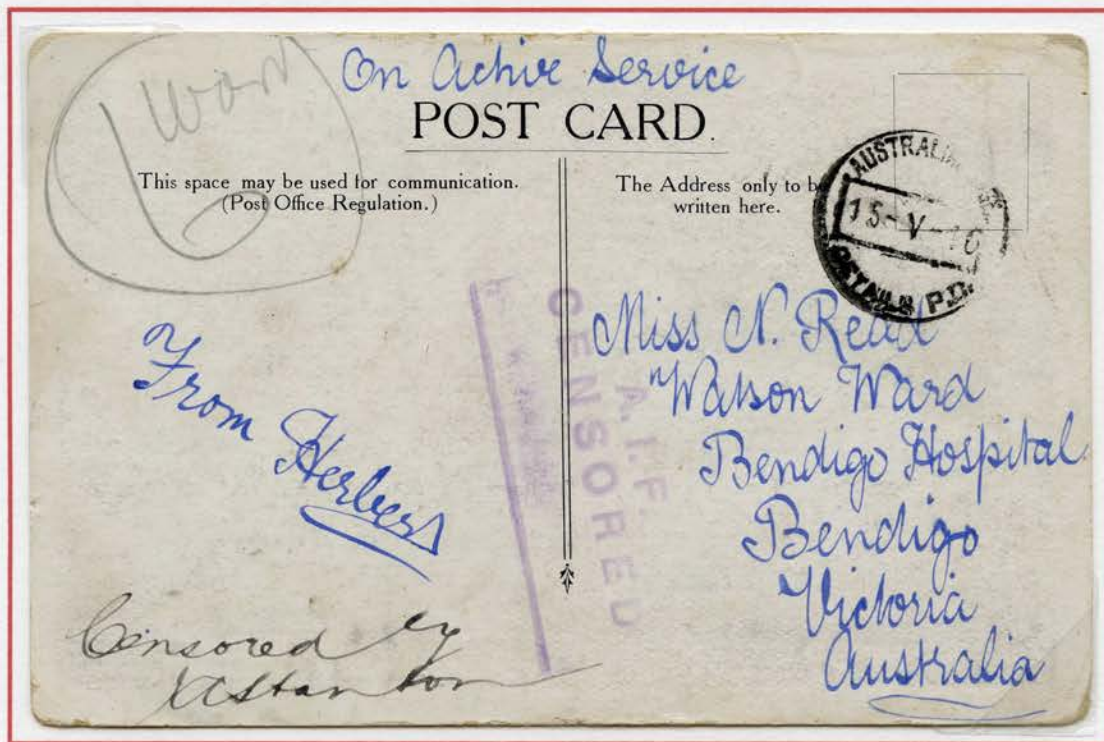
4<sup>th</sup> April - 24<sup>th</sup> June 1916

The Twentieth convoy comprised of sixteen ships disembarking troops at Egypt for the Light Horse Campaign and England for the battles at the Western Front.

### The second port of call of the A14 "Euripides" - Port Said, Egypt

7<sup>th</sup> May 1916

#### An unlisted troopship handstamp



A14 "Euripides": Zeitoun, Egypt 15.5.1916 to Victoria

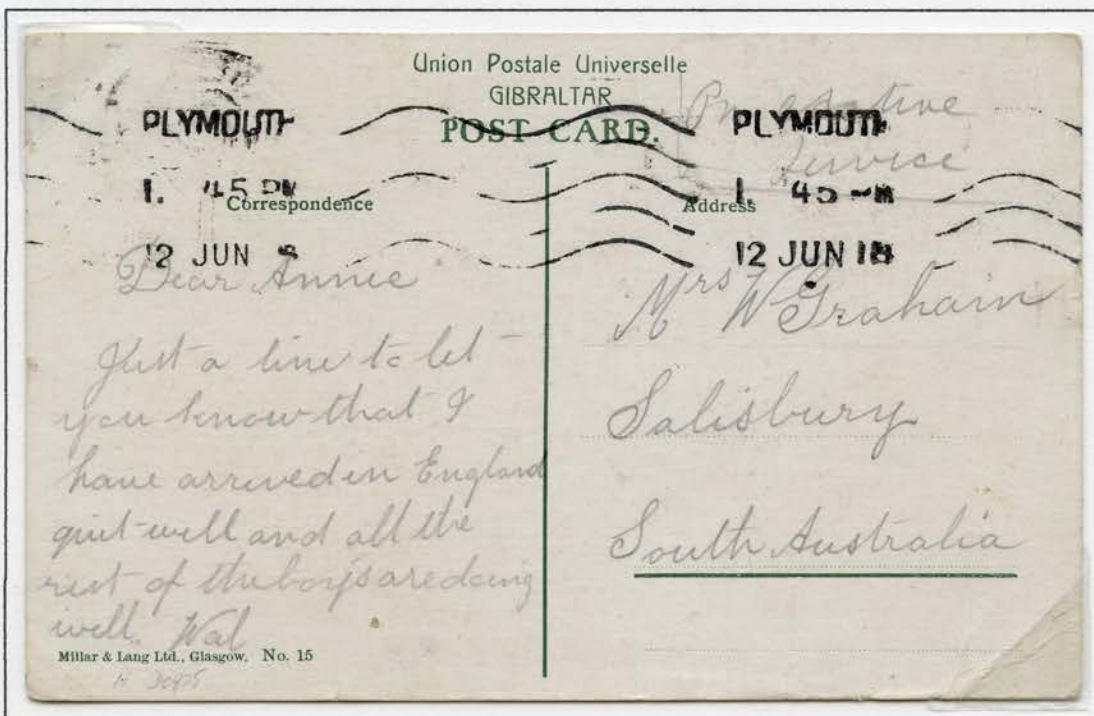
**Postal markings:** "A.I.F./CENSORED" handstamp in violet (not listed by Finlayson) and authorised for censorship at the lower left by Lieutenant James Stanton of the 46<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion.

**Note:** Given that Lieutenant Stanton was on board the A14 "Euripides", it must be assumed that the censor cachet was applied on board the ship rather than on land at Zeitoun.

*Ex Finlayson*

### The return journey of the A60 "Aeneas" - London, England

12<sup>th</sup> June 1916



A60 "Aeneas":

A postcard of Gibraltar cancelled on arrival at Plymouth on the 12.6.1916 to South Australia.

The card is written by Private Walter Graham of the 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion who embarked on the A60 "Aeneas".

## The Twenty First Convoy

1<sup>st</sup> May - 13<sup>th</sup> September 1916

Comprising eighteen ships, the Twenty First convoy sailed by two different routes to reach England. The first was via South Africa, the first time that convoys had sailed on this route. The second was through the Suez Canal, stopping at various ports including France, and Malta before arriving in London.

### The departure of the A11 "Ascanius" - Melbourne, Victoria

27<sup>th</sup> May 1916



#### A11 "Ascanius":

A real photo postcard of the departure of the troopship dated the 27.5.1916 and published by Josiah Barnes of Melbourne, an official troopship photographer.

### The departure of the A34 "Persic" - Melbourne, Victoria

3<sup>rd</sup> June 1916



A34 "Persic": A real photo postcard of the departure of the "Persic" dated the 3.6.1916. Unusually, this photo focuses on the crowd at the docks waving to the troops just before they sail.

**The Twenty First Convoy**  
**The final embarkation of the A29 "Suevic" - Fremantle**

1<sup>st</sup> May - 13<sup>th</sup> September 1916  
 6<sup>th</sup> June 1916



**A29 "Suevic":** Fremantle, Western Australia 7.6.1916 to South Australia

**Note:** This postcard is unusually franked with a 1d postage stamp instead of the free delivery for soldiers. It was written by Sapper Stanley Coker, who embarked at Adelaide on the 31<sup>st</sup> May, with this card posted on the 7<sup>th</sup> June, the day after the "Suevic" left for Table Bay, South Africa.

**The first port of call - Cape Town, South Africa**

June 1916

**An unlisted maritime censor handstamp**



**Unknown troopship:**

A postcard sent from Cape Town on the 27.6.1916, tying the card to the 21<sup>st</sup> Convoy.

**Postal markings:**

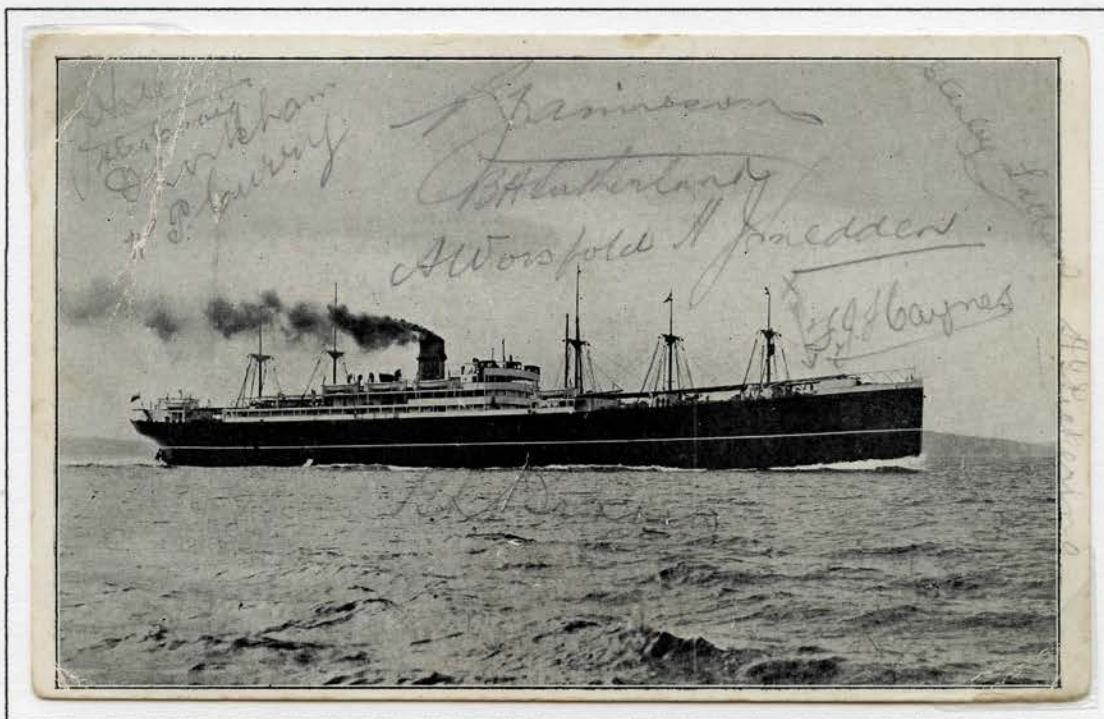
"A.I.F./ PASSED BY CENSOR..." handstamp in purple (not listed by Finlayson) and initialled for censorship.

## The Twenty First Convoy

The first port of call of the A8 "Argyllshire" - Durban, South Africa

1st May - 13th September 1916

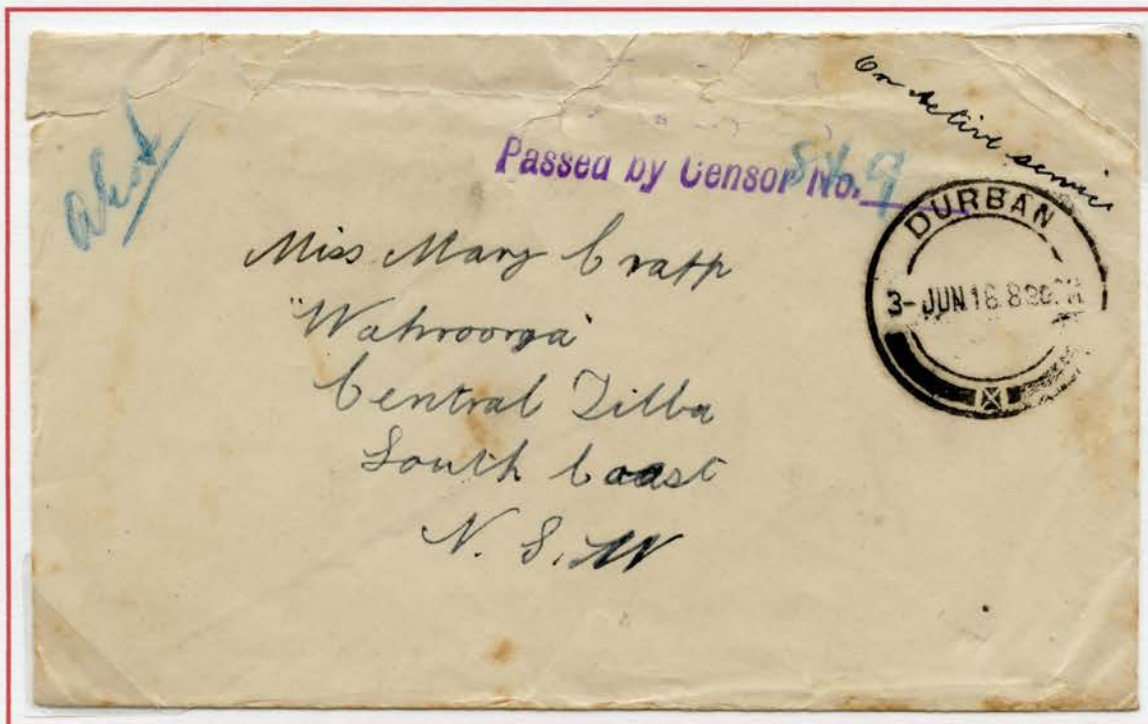
3rd June 1916



A8 "Argyllshire": Durban, South Africa 3.6.1916 to New South Wales

**Postal markings:** "A.I.F./Passed by Censor No." handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 1C) with no manuscript number for censorship. The card is headed "At Sea 28/5/16" and on the front of the card are the signatures of eight soldiers from the 9th Field Ambulance.

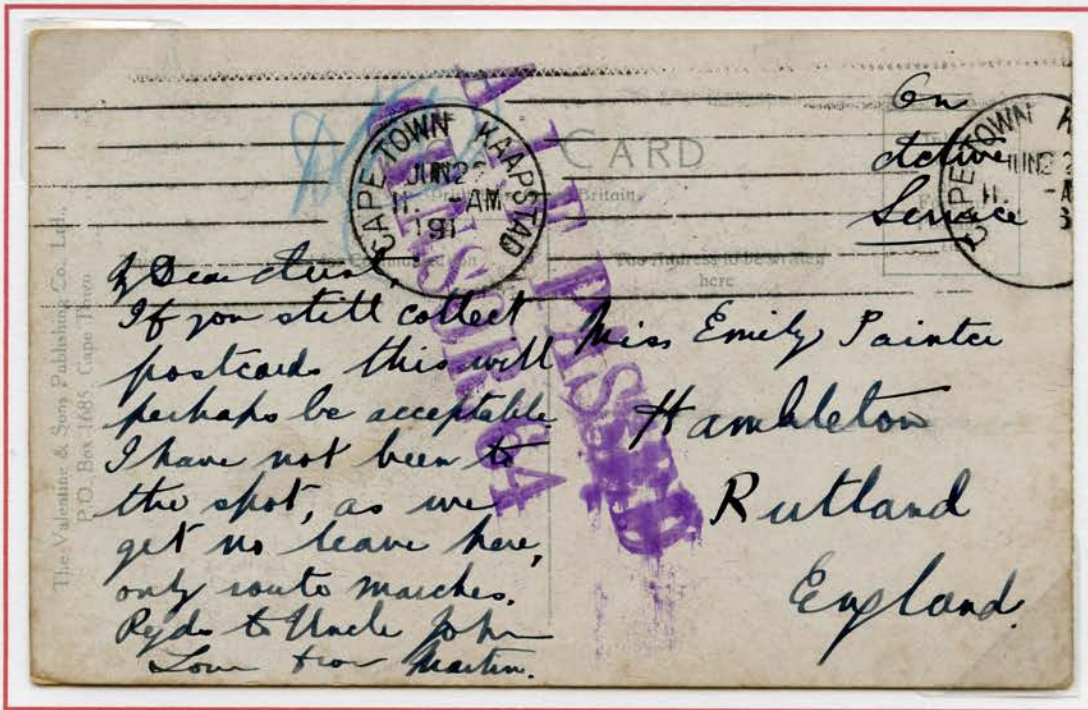
### A rare manuscript for troopship censorship



A8 "Argyllshire": Durban, South Africa 3.6.1916 to New South Wales

**Postal markings:** "A.I.F./Passed by Censor No.\_\_\_\_\_" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 1C) with manuscript "8X9" in blue for censorship. Only a handful of examples are recorded where the manuscript number such as "8X9" does not correspond to the troopship number, and there is no logical explanation for this numbering sequence.

**Note:** This envelope was written by Gunner Russell Crapp who embarked on the "Argyllshire" in Sydney. He was awarded the Military Medal on the 29th August 1918 for action at Suzanne.

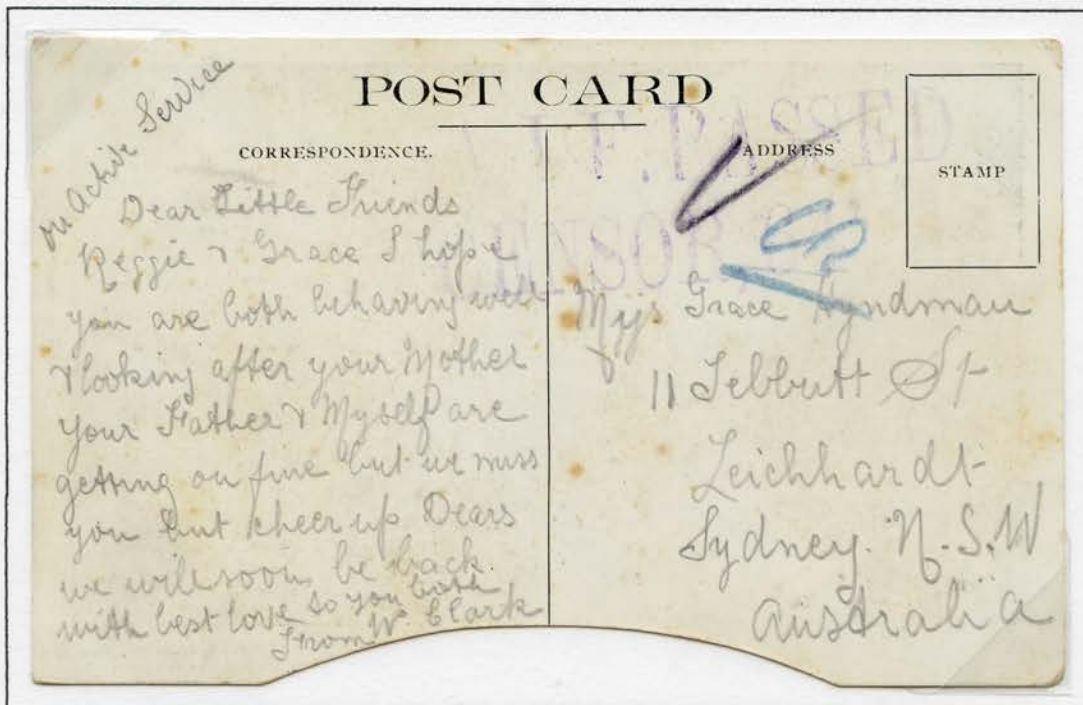


A64 "Demosthenes": Cape Town, South Africa 22.6.1916 to England

Postal markings: "A.I.F. PASSED/CENSOR 64" handstamp in purple (Finlayson Type MCM 6).

Ex Finlayson

Less than five examples are recorded of this censor handstamp

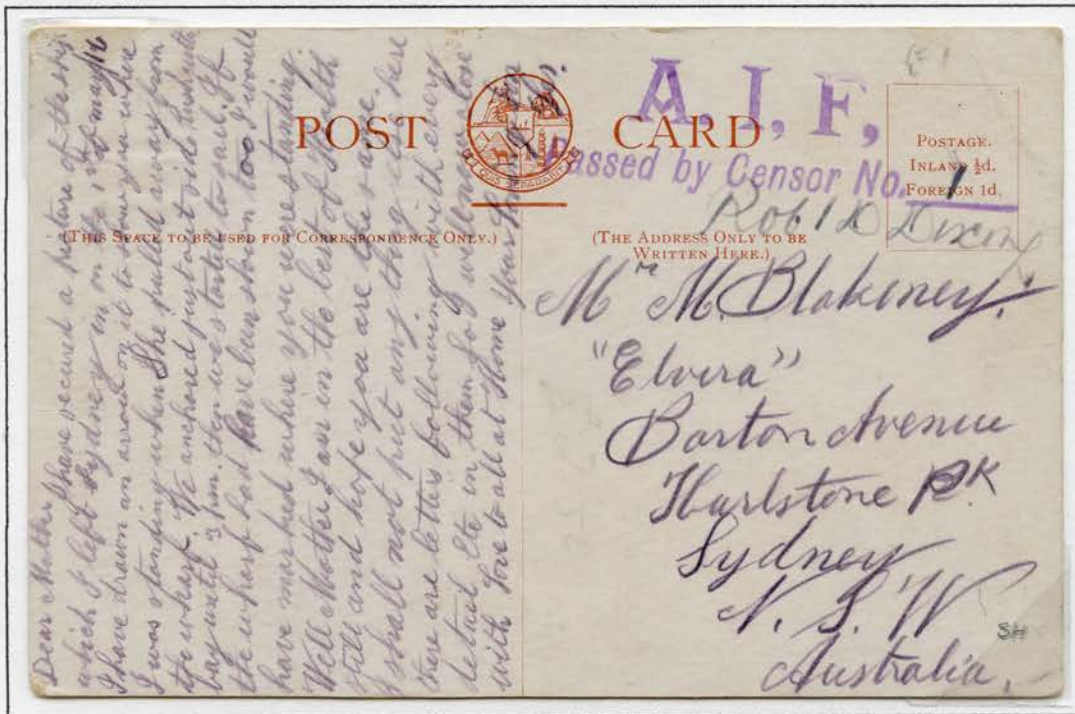


A64 "Demosthenes": Cape Town, South Africa 22.6.1916 to New South Wales

Postal markings: "A.I.F. PASSED/CENSOR 64" handstamp in purple (Finlayson Type MCM 6). This card showing a picture of the troopship has been heavily censored, with the name of ship removed by scissors at the base and other details scored through by pencil.

Note: This postcard was written by W. Clark to the daughter of another trooper T. J. Hyndman. Both were enlisted with the 27th AASC of the 3rd Field Bakery which embarked on the A64 "Demosthenes".

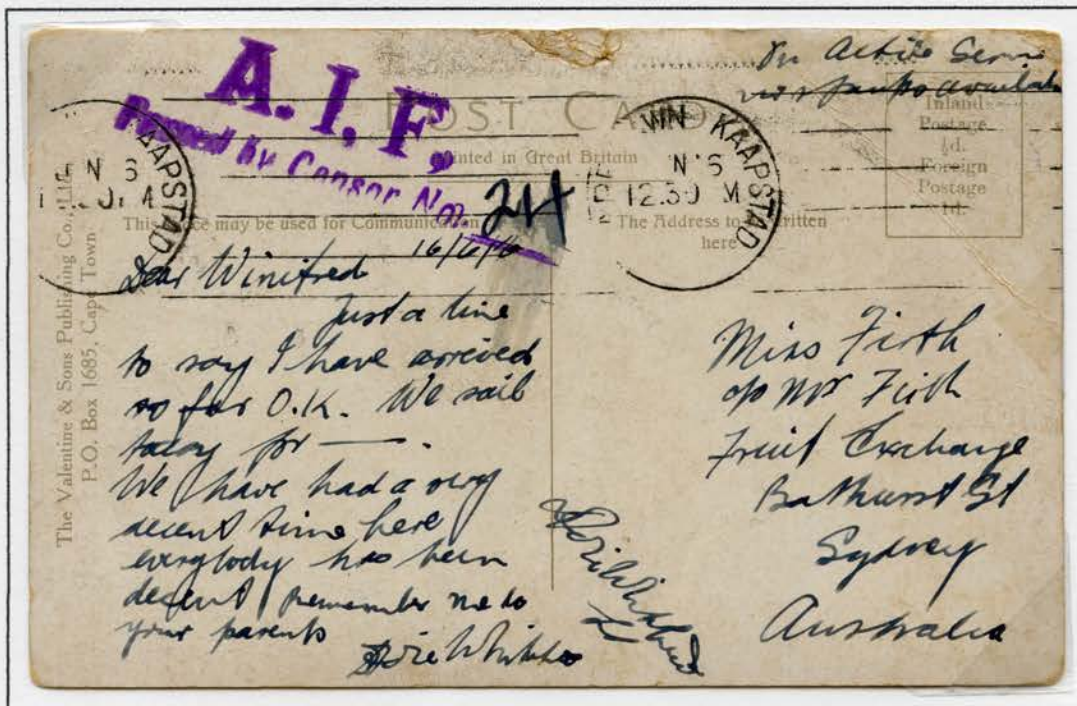
Unusual miss-classification of a troopship censor number



A24 "Benalla": Table Bay, South Africa 15.6.1916 to New South Wales

Postal markings: "A.I.F./ Passed by Censor No \_\_\_\_\_" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 1C) with manuscript number "1" inserted by hand.

Note: This is a generic postcard of the "B" named P&O Steamers during their civilian liner days before the war, with their names crossed out for censorship. The card is written by Private Leslie Blakeney of the 9th Field Ambulance who embarked on the A24 "Benalla", however, the manuscript number "1" does not correlate to this transport. The "Hymettus" which was allocated the A1 prefix did not sail on this convoy.



A24 "Benalla": Table Bay, South Africa 15.6.1916 to New South Wales

Postal markings: "A.I.F./ Passed by Censor No \_\_\_\_\_" Handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 1C) with manuscript number "24" inserted by manuscript.

The card was written by Lt. David Aldie Whitehead of the 9th Machine Gun Coy.

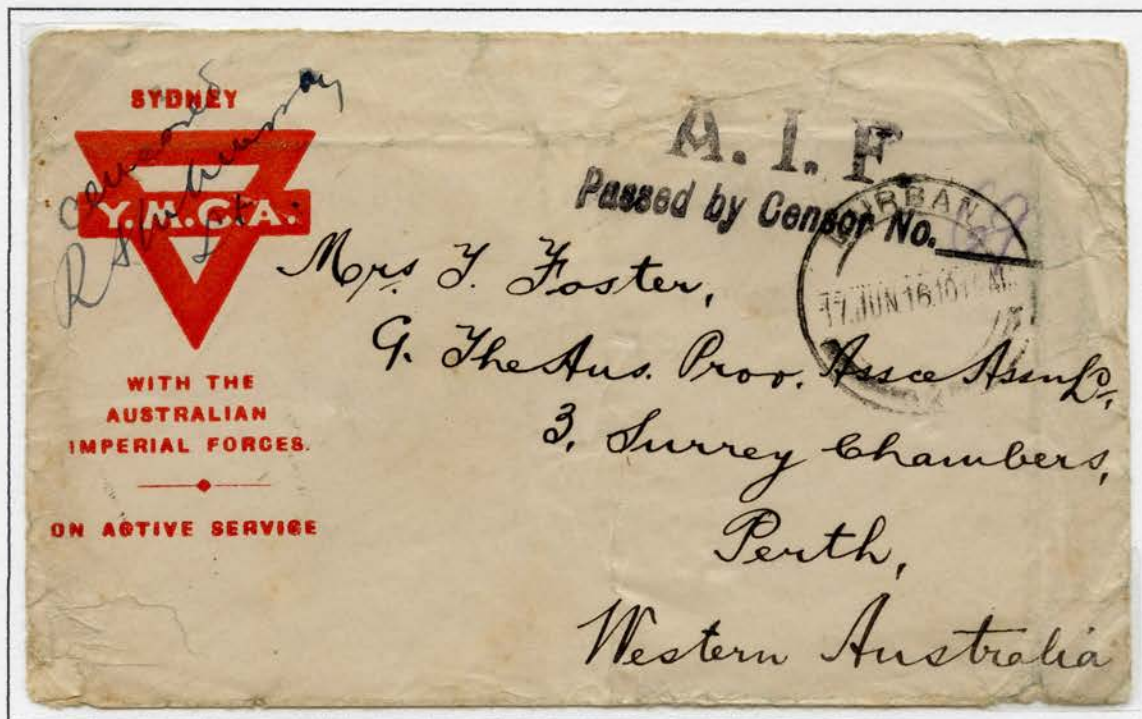
He was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry at Ypres on the 4th October 1917 and the French Croix de Guerre in January 1919.

The Twenty First Convoy

1st May - 13th September 1916

The first port of call of the A69 "Warilda" - Durban, South Africa

17th June 1916

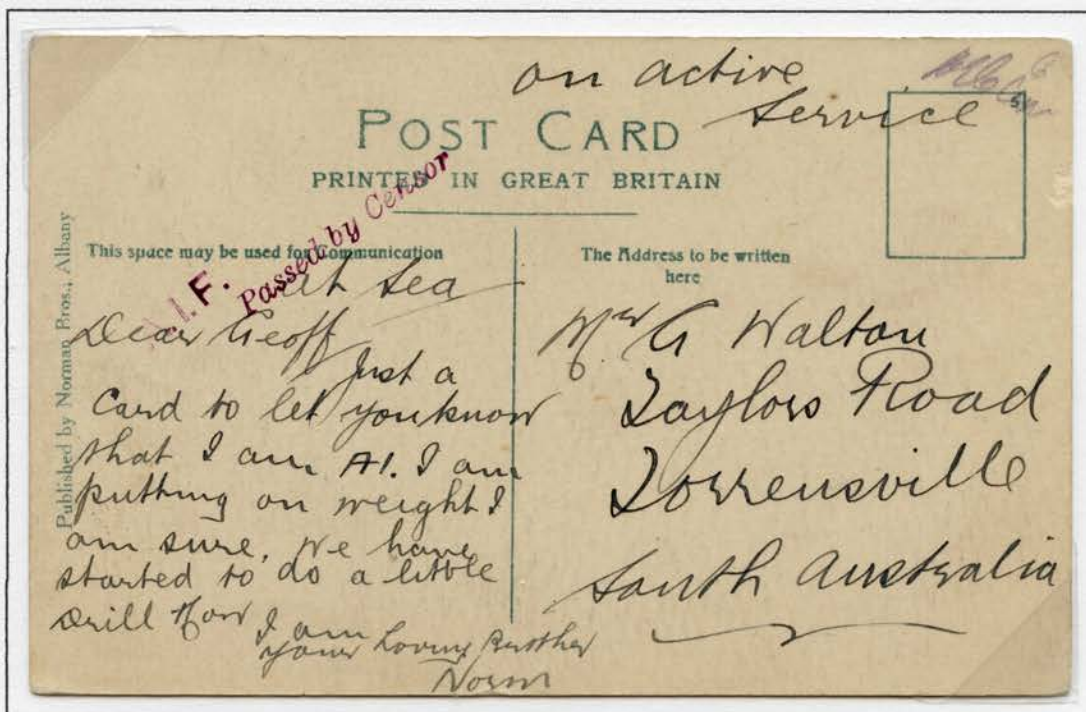


A69 "Warilda": Durban, South Africa 17.6.1916 to Western Australia

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed by Censor No. \_\_\_\_\_" handstamp unusually in black (Finlayson Type MCM 1J) with manuscript number "69" inserted for censorship.

The first port of call of the A19 "Afric" - Suez, Egypt

July 1916



A19 "Afric": Suez, Egypt July 1916 to South Australia

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed by Censor" handstamp in purple (Finlayson Type MCM 10A) allocated to the "Afric".

Note: Troopship records state that the "Afric" arrived at Marseilles on the 20th July 1916, however, it must have docked at Suez in order to sail up the canal earlier in the month when this card was posted. It was written by Private Norman Walton of the 43rd Infantry Battalion who was killed in action on the 10th October 1917 at Zonnebeke.

# The Twenty First Convoy

1st May - 13th September 1916

The second port of call of the A8 "Argyllshire" - Dakar, French Senegal

29th June 1916

## A rare manuscript for troopship censorship



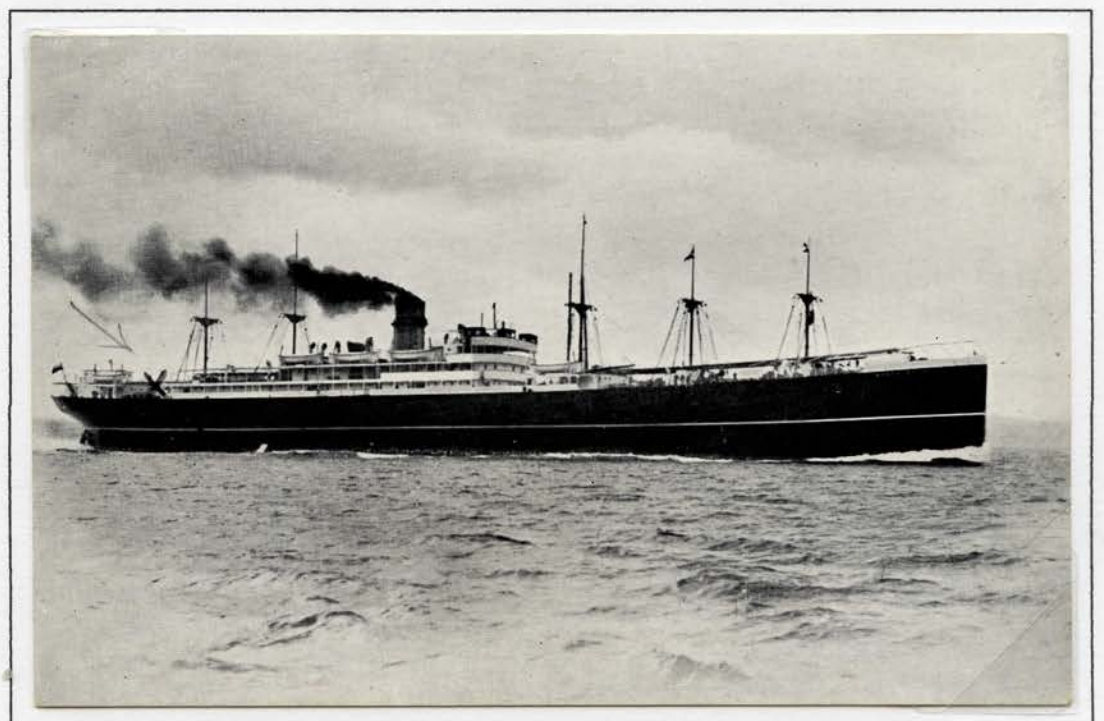
**A8 "Argyllshire":** Used from Dakar, Senegal 29.6.1916 to New South Wales

**Postal markings:** "A.I.F./Passed by Censor No \_\_\_\_\_" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 1C) with manuscript "8X7" in blue for censorship. The manuscript censorship number does not correspond to the transport ship number. A couple of other examples from this convoy are also recorded, indicating censorship on this troopship did not follow the normal pattern compared to other convoys. The card is headed "Dakar, French Senegal/ 29/6/1916"

**Mail from Dakar is very rare, with only a handful of covers recorded from a couple of convoys**

### A8 "Argyllshire":

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

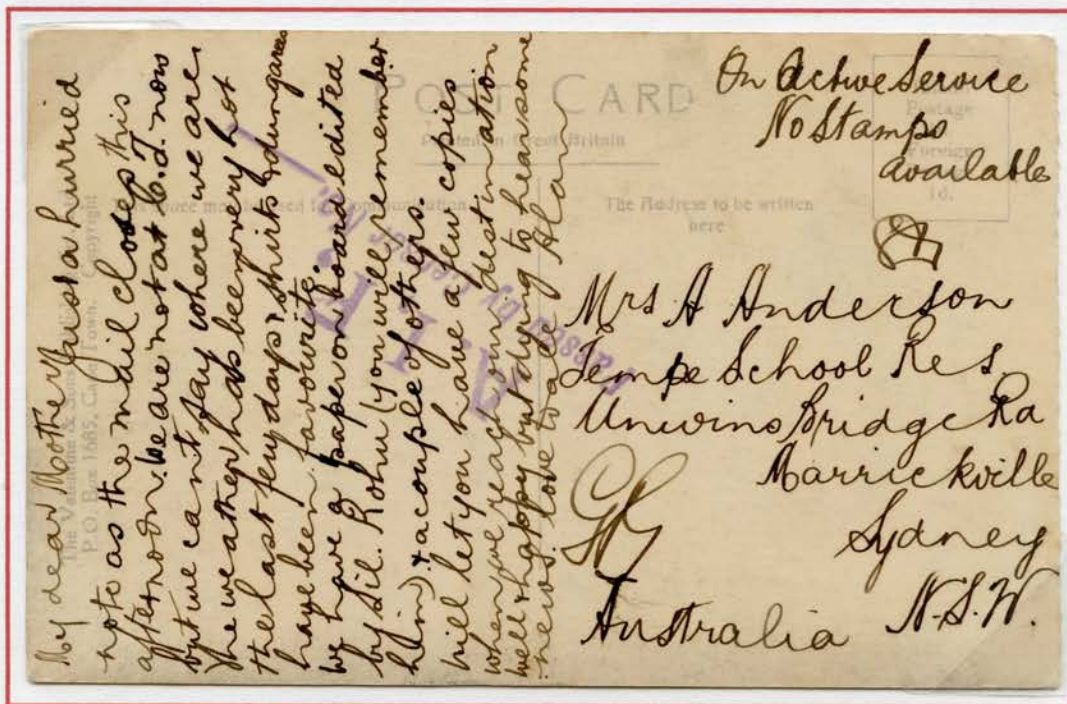


The Twenty First Convoy

1st May - 13th September 1916

The second port of call of the A8 "Argyllshire" - Dakar, French Senegal

29th June 1916



A8 "Argyllshire": Dakar, Senegal 29.6.1916 to New South Wales

Postal markings: "A.I.F./Passed by Censor No \_\_\_\_\_" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 1C).

The card is written by Private Alan Anderson of the 7th Field Artillery Brigade who embarked on the A8 "Argyllshire" at Sydney on the 11th May 1916. He writes that the ship has left Capetown, with the next port of call being Dakar in French Senegal.

Ex Finlayson

Mail from Dakar is very rare, with only a handful of covers recorded from a couple of convoys

The second port of call of the A20 "Horarta" - Suez, Egypt

9th June 1916



A20 "Horarta": Suez, Egypt 9.6.1916 to New South Wales

Postal markings: "A,I,F,/Passed by Censor No \_\_\_\_\_" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 1/E) with "20" inserted in manuscript. There is a stationary APO datestamp of the 11th June 1916 confirming the stop over at Suez. Whilst most of the 21st Convoy sailed via South Africa, the "Horarta" sailed via the Suez Canal.

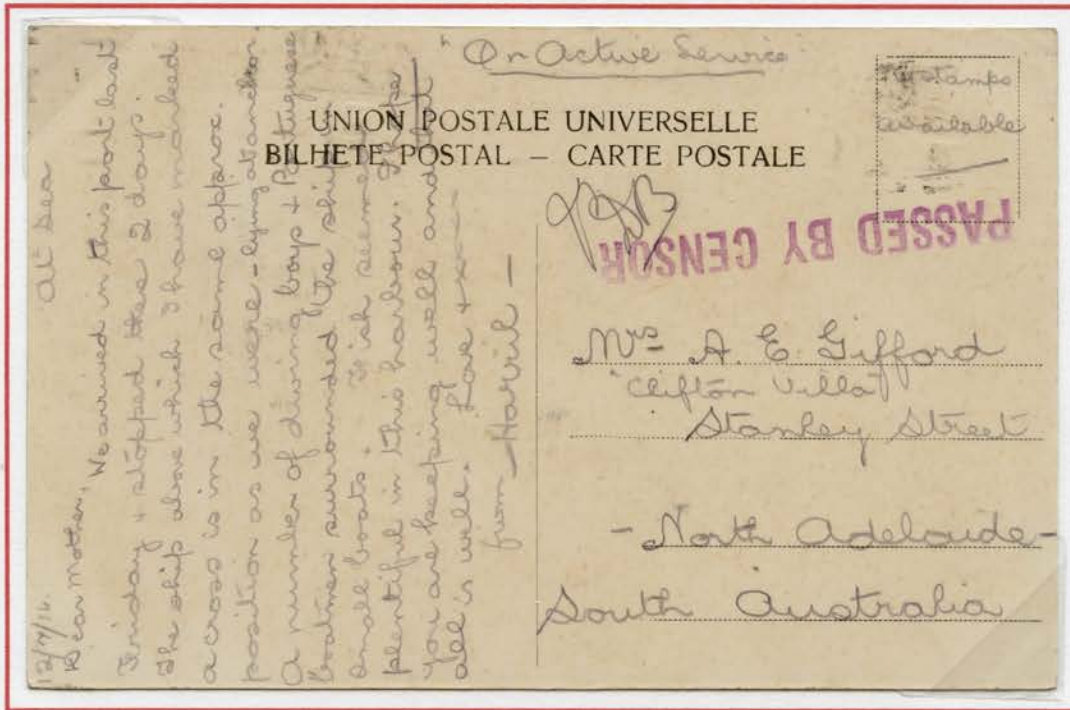
The card is written by Sergeant Charles Mooney of the 9th Field Ambulance who was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in September 1918.

# The Twenty First Convoy

1st May - 13th September 1916

The second port of call of the A11 "Ascanius" - Sao Vicente, Cape Verde Islands

10th July 1916

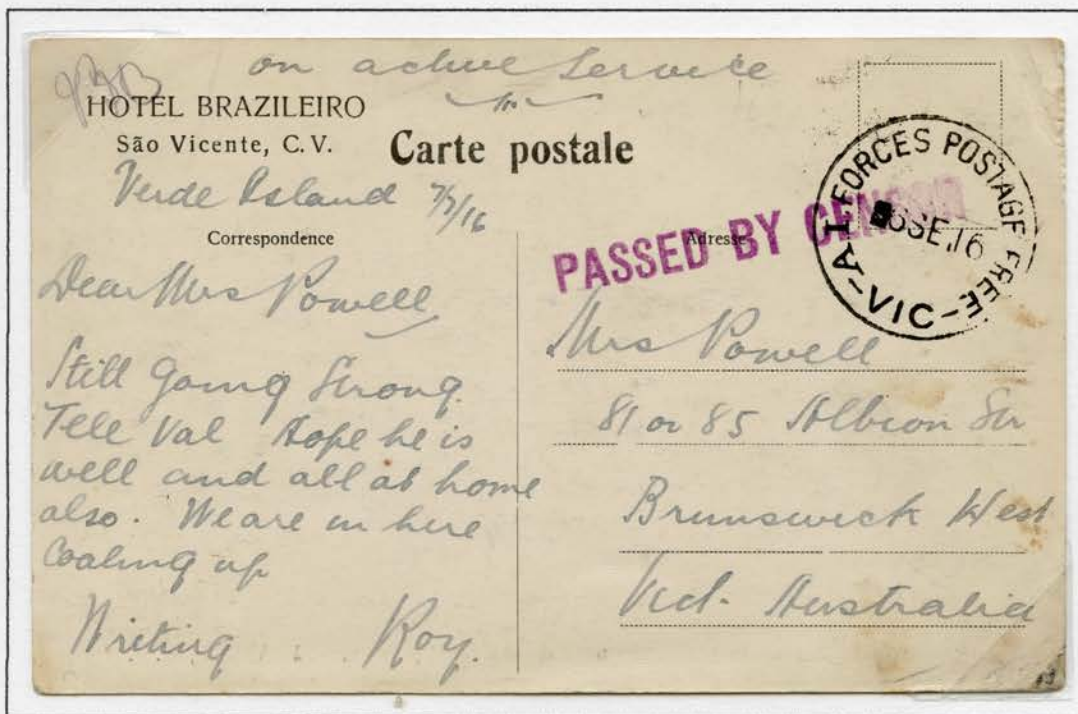


**A11 "Ascanius":** Sao Vicente, Cape Verde Islands to South Australia

**Postal markings:** "PASSED BY CENSOR" handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type MCM 1C).

The card is written by Corporal Alfred Gifford of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisional Signal Co. who embarked on the "Ascanius" at Melbourne on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 1916. He writes that the ship has docked at Sao Vicente in the Cape Verde Islands and that "a number of diving boys and Portuguese boatmen surround the ship". Corporal Gifford was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1917.

**Mail from the Cape Verde Islands is very scarce with only a couple of convoys docking here**



**Unknown troopship:**

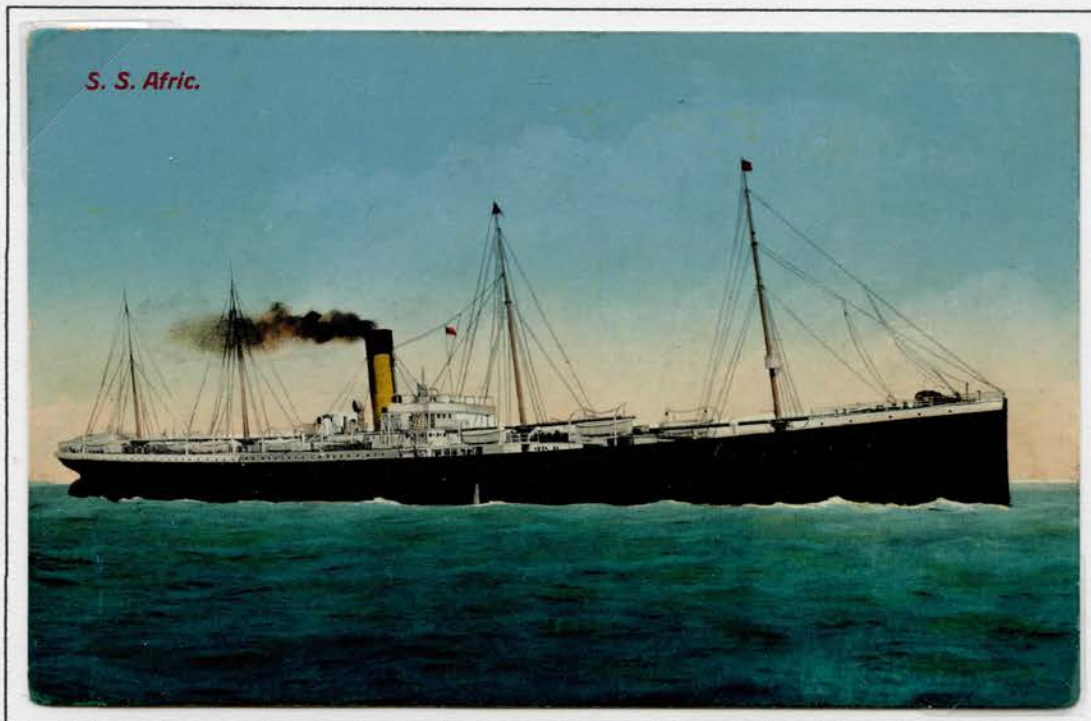
Although there is no evidence confirming the soldier or the troopship on this postcard, the date of the 7.7.1916 confirms that the ship was part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Convoy.

# The Twenty First Convoy

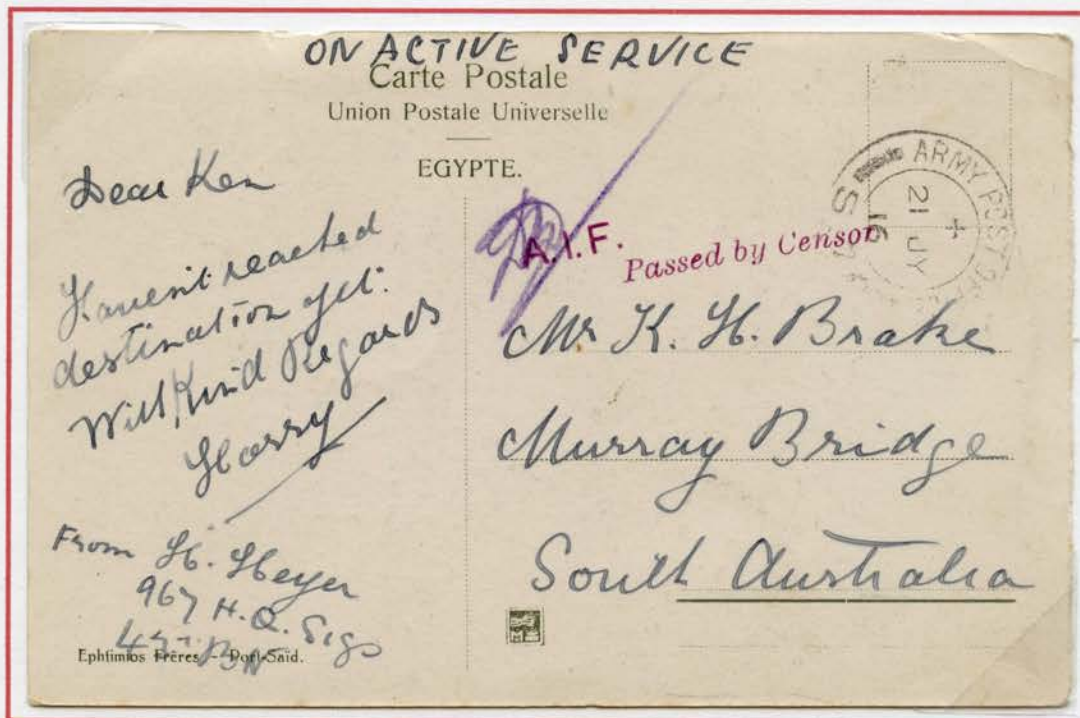
The final port of call of the A19 "Afric" - Marseilles, France

1<sup>st</sup> May - 13<sup>th</sup> September 1916

20<sup>th</sup> July 1916



**A19 "Afric":** This troopship sailed on five convoys transporting Australian troops. She was torpedoed off the Eddystone Lighthouse, off the English Channel on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 1917 with the loss of 22 lives.



**A19 "Afric":** Marseilles, France 20.7.1916 to South Australia

**Postal markings:** "A.I.F./Passed by Censor" handstamp (Finlayson Type MCM 10A) and initialled for censorship.

This postcard was written by Private Henry Heyer of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Battalion, disembarking at Marseilles on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1916 where the Army Post Office datestamp was cancelled the following day.

Only a couple of examples are recorded of this censor handstamp

*Ex Finlayson*