

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN SOUTH AFRICA WORLD WAR 2

Located: Cape Town.
Postmark: Cape Town civil 22nd March, 1941.
Censor: R4/22. David Gifford Hall.
Sender: Unknown.
Postage: 1/3d, South African stamps Air Mail to UK.



The R4 censors were geographically located within the UK between 1940 and 1942, ie Northern Ireland and Scotland. It was also used in Iceland and the Faroe Islands. However odd examples have been recorded from Ceylon, Egypt, Gibraltar, Gold Coast, India and Palastine.

R4/22 is a new recording and has received the 'diamond wavy lines' machine cancel 'indicating arrival in the UK by sea. I believe that this censor may have been allocated to a troop ship administered by the RAF, this would also account for the other examples which would be port of calls en route to the Middle or Far East. Several examples are also known with no despatching postmark but with the 'diamond wavy lines' machine cancel.

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RAF POOL DURBAN

South African Air Force OHMS
Bilingual envelope endorsed
'SECRET'
to RAF Record Office
Gloucester. With cachet
'Headquarters
Royal Air Force Pool
9 - Oct 1941 /
DURBAN'

SECRET

IN DIENS VAN SY MAJESTEIT.
ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE.

Air Officer
Royal Air Force
1/2 Records
Gloucester
England



PC/60/Dur/181

D/1
Gebruik van binnen enveloppe
om postgeld te betalen is
strafbaar met 1000 beest.
Penalty for private use in
envelopes is £1000.
E. 10.
avoid payment of postage 200

A liaison office was established at Durban to cope with the troop movements via the Cape en route to the Middle East, India and the Far East as a result of the Mediterranean route being closed.

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Located: Durban.
Postmark: Diamond wavy line machine cancel in UK
Censor: R5/169
Sender: AC1 Cope, RAF HQ, APO 1650.
Postage: none – sent surface mail.

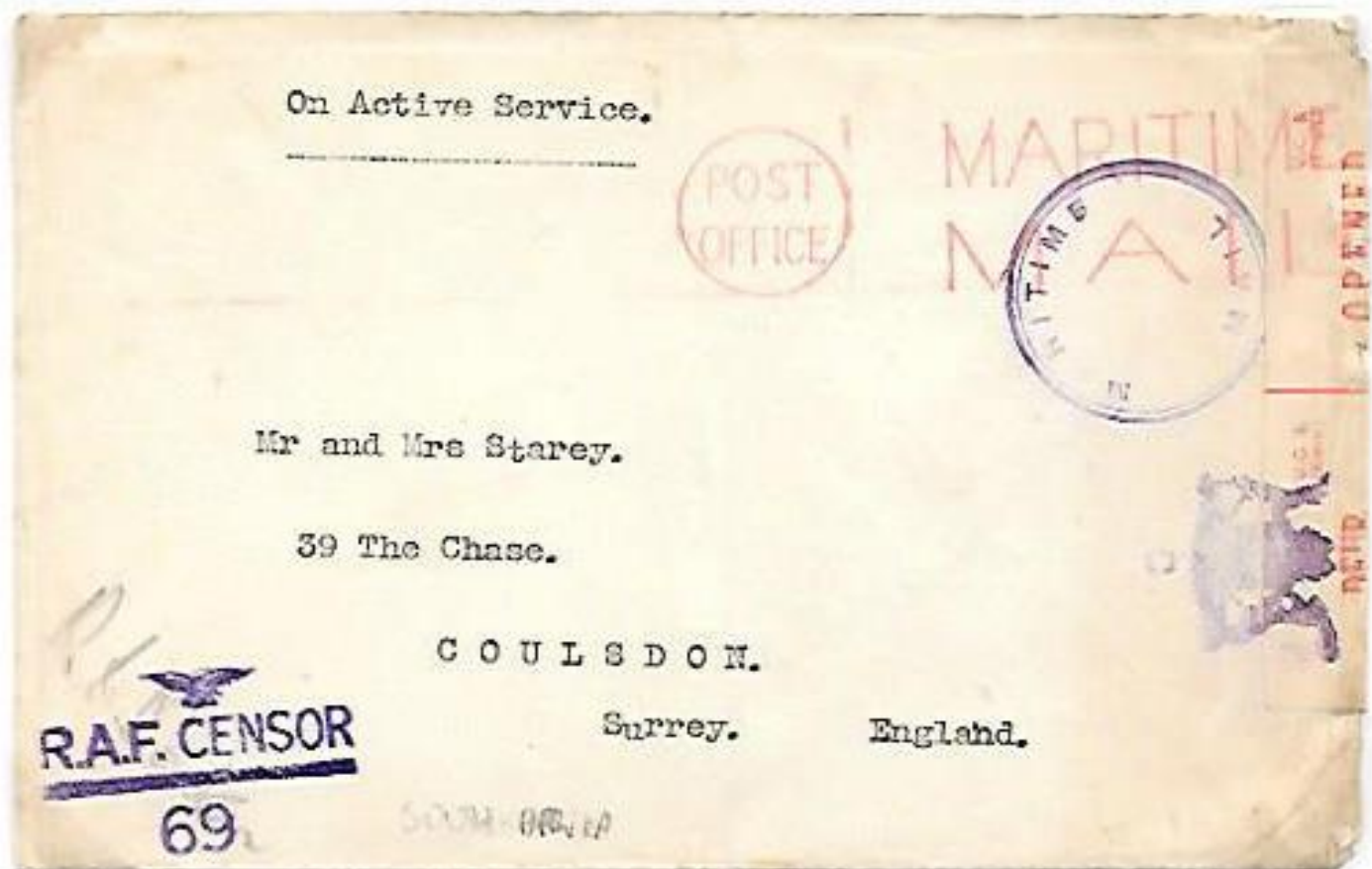


APO 1650 was located at Durban, and this is the only known example of R5/169 being applied to a cover from RAF Durban. The postmark is one of several used in the UK on surface mail arriving from abroad and would depend on the port of arrival.

The Mediterranean was a 'no go' area for British troop movements by sea to both the Middle and Far East and were routed around the Cape. As a result the RAF established a base at Durban to deal with the RAF personnel on these troop ships.

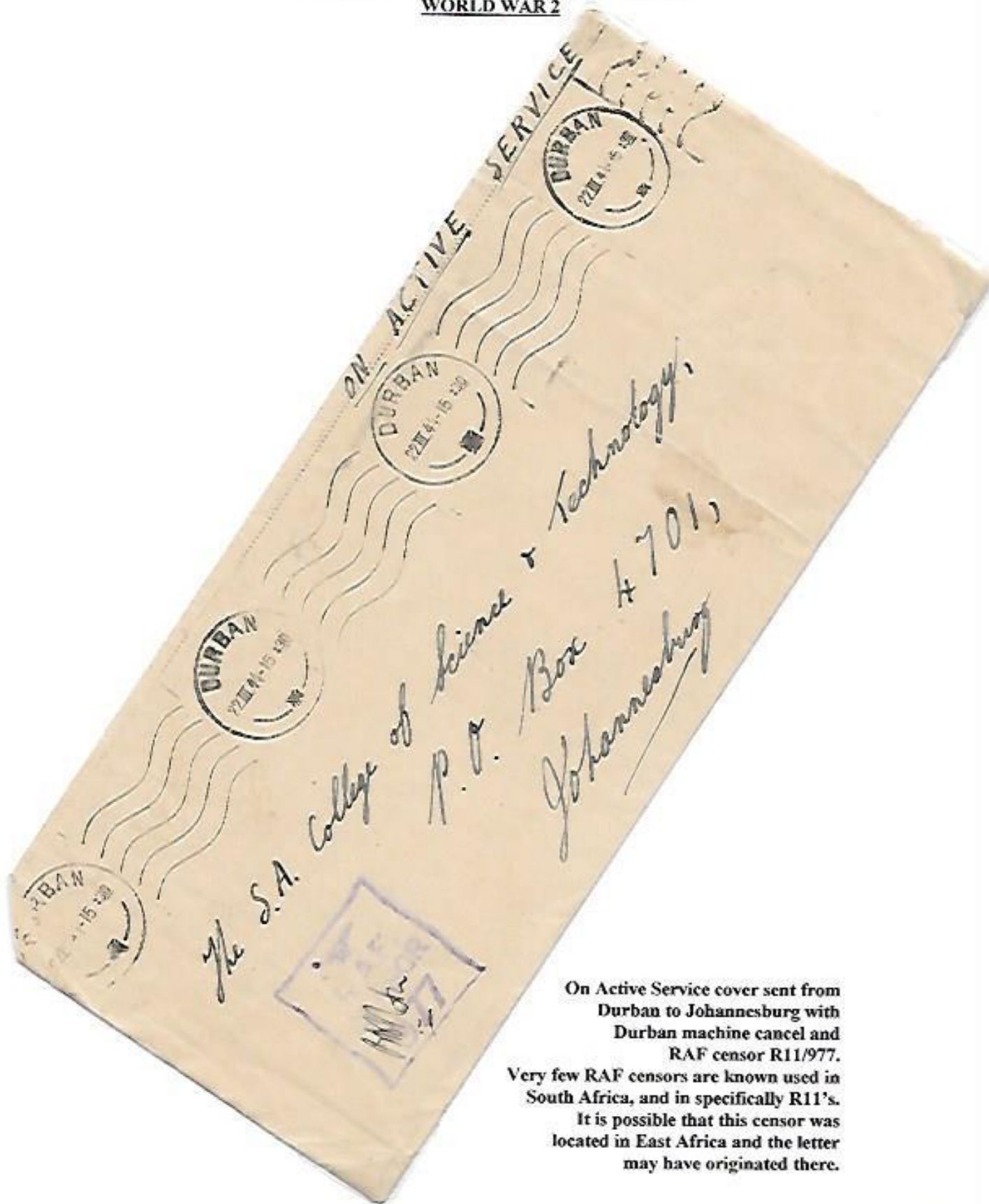
THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN SOUTH AFRICA
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- Located: Durban.
- Postmark: Maritime Mail circular handstamp in purple.
Post Office Maritime Mail in red.
Used on arrival of surface mail in the UK.
- Censor: RAF R6/69 and South African 'Opened by Censor' label U C 8 small.
- Postage: none. On Active Service surface mail.



The use of R/6 censors was generally confined to the Azores, Faroe Islands, Gibraltar, Iceland, Northern Ireland and Scotland. There are examples that have been recorded from Egypt and India which have been assumed to have been used on board Troopships en route to the Middle East and Far East when the Mediterranean was too dangerous to use and were routed via the Cape. Two examples, of which this is one, are known to have been used on mail, both with 'Maritime Mail' hand stamps. This cover is most likely to have been posted at Durban where troops disembarked prior to sailing on to the Middle East or India, and also posted internally within South Africa.

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On Active Service cover sent from Durban to Johannesburg with Durban machine cancel and RAF censor R11/977. Very few RAF censors are known used in South Africa, and in specifically R11's. It is possible that this censor was located in East Africa and the letter may have originated there.

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Located: Durban.
Postmark: Post Office Maritime Mail circular hand stamp in red.
Censor: RAF R6/69 self censored.
Sender: M Twells.
Postage: none. On Active Service surface mail.



The use of R/6 censors was generally confined to the Azores, Faroe Islands , Gibraltar, Iceland, Northern Ireland and Scotland. There are examples that have been recorded from Egypt and India which have been assumed to have been used on board Troopships en route to the Middle East and Far East when the Mediterranean was too dangerous to use and were routed via the Cape. Two examples, of which this is one, are known to have been used on mail from South Africa. It is most likely to have been posted at Durban where troops disembarked prior to sailing on to the Middle East or India. Some airmen were also posted internally within South Africa.

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Located: Durban.
Postmark: none.
Censor: RAF R38. – Flt Lt R Ingham
Sender: LAC Chambers
Postage: none. On Active Service surface mail.

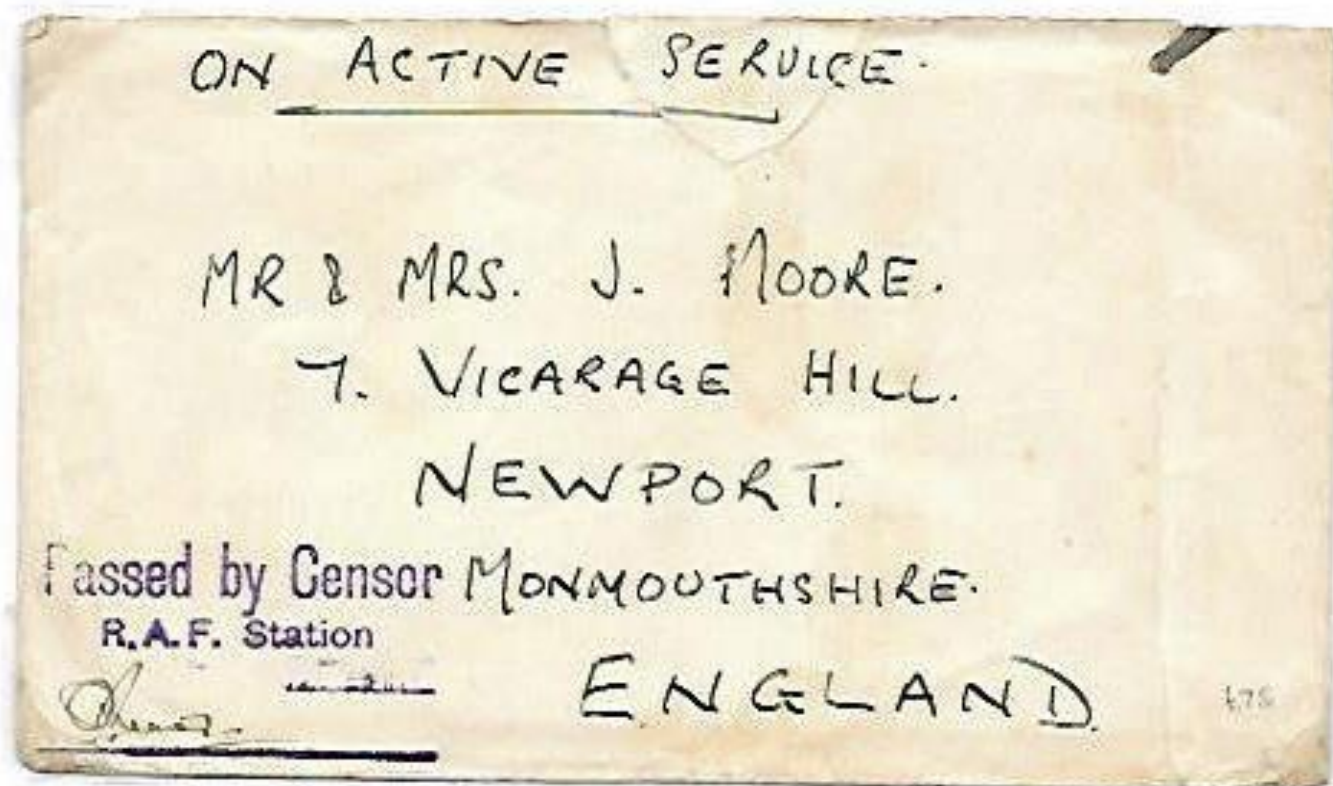


YMCA:CVJM envelope and 1942 South Africa Christmas Label.

There are only 3 recorded examples of this RAF Censor which appears to have had 'Durban' removed. One is postmarked Durban 7th December, 1942 with a 1942 South Africa Christmas Label,

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Located: Durban.
Postmark: none.
Censor: RAF R38.
Sender: AC1 Moore
Postage: none. On Active Service surface mail.



There are only 3 recorded examples of this RAF Censor which appears to have had 'Durban' removed. The other examples have a South African Christmas label for 1942. One is postmarked Durban 7th December, 1942.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN SOUTH AFRICA
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Located: Durban.
Postmark: Margate, Natal. 3rd September, 1941
Censor: RAF R39. Self censored.
Sender: Fg Off J H Bidlake, Box 1830, Durban.
Postage: none. On Active Service surface mail.



There are only 2 recorded examples of this RAF Censor. The other example has no local postmark and received the UK arrival machine cancel with a diamond and wavy lines indicating that it arrived by surface mail.

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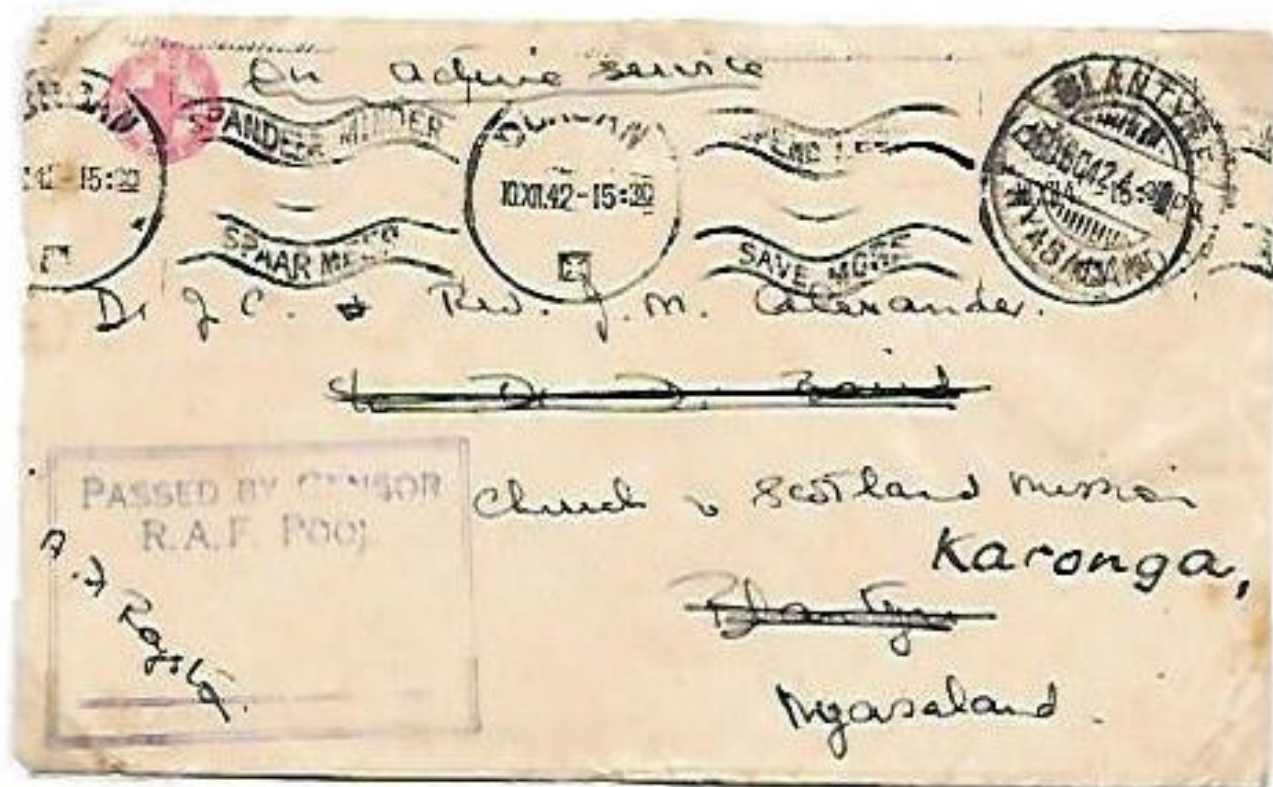
Located: Durban.
Postmark: black diamond wavy line machine cancel.
Censor: RAF R39.
Sender: Mahoney RAFVR.
Postage: none. On Active Service surface mail.



There are only 2 recorded examples of this RAF Censor, the other example has a Margate, Natal postmark dated 3rd September, 1941.
The diamond wavy line machine cancel is normal for surface mail arriving in the UK.

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- Located: Durban.
- Postmark: Durban 'Spend less save More' machine cancel 10th December, 1942.
Karonga, Nyasaland redirection mark 28th December, 1942
- Censor: RAF R58, self censored.
- Sender: Sister A M Royston PMRAFNS.
- Postage: none. On Active Service mail to Nyasaland.



This is possibly the only known cover of RAF Censor R58, and appear to be type R39 with 'Durban' removed.
The sender, Sister Royston is with the Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service, and her rank was the equivalent to that of a Flying Officer in the RAF.

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RAF Westlake was the base for the Imperial Forces Transit Camp (IFTC) and located near to Cape Town. Servicemen arriving for aircrew training on the JATS programme disembarked at Cape Town or Durban before travelling on to their new units.

Conversely RAF personnel returning to the UK at the end of the war were also accommodated at Westlake awaiting troopships to take them home. When the war ended some airmen still under pilot training were offered the opportunity to sign on for 3 years and qualify. Most did not take up the offer and it seems they made the correct choice as the trainees returned to the UK and it took almost 3 years to get their wings and for most of the time they were employed on general duties.



South African bilingual Air Letter with 2 x 3d bantam type pre printed stamps sent by LAC Johnson 'In Transit' from RAF Westlake, with Westlake postmark dated 22nd February, 1945. He has stated that he has travelled down from Waterkloof, (Pretoria). There is a faint rubber hand stamp 'Censored by/ RAF' with the censor Fg Off H C M Wilstead's signature. The cover has also been endorsed with a circular 'B T A' (British Troops in Africa) hand stamp.