

Value for money from the Postal Service

John Froggatt

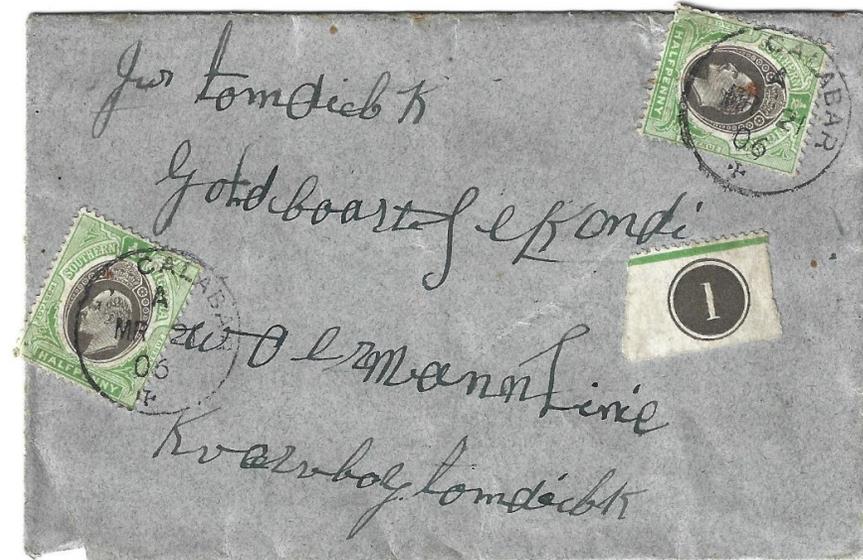
Does anyone have any idea to whom this envelope is addressed?

A small cover with two Edward VII half penny stamps both with a "Calabar MR 2 06 CDS. So far so good.

The second line says Gold Coast Sekondi

Below that: Woermann Linie. The first and fourth lines are a mystery.

The spelling of Linie and the attachment of a sheet number suggests the sender was German?

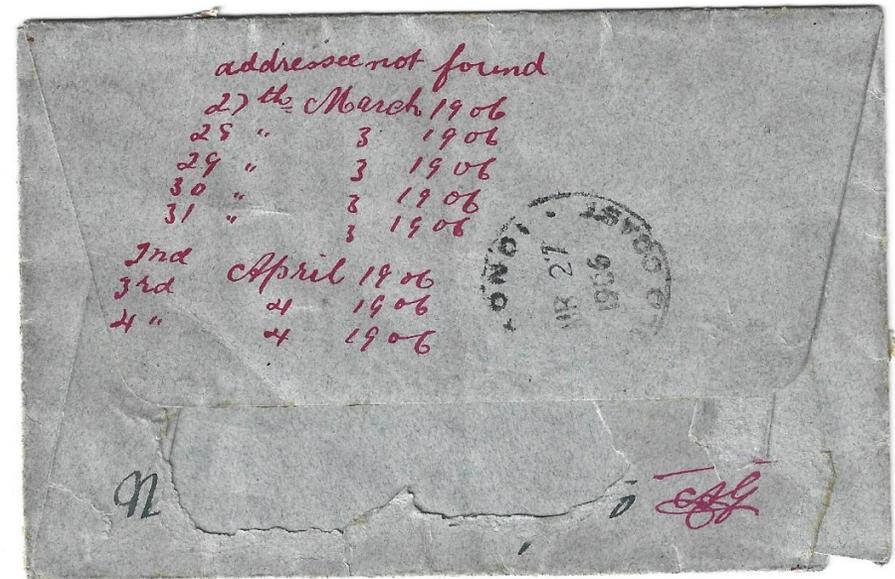


The postman did not have much luck either

He did however try very hard.

In addition to a Sekondi Gold Coast CDS of MR 27 1906, the reverse shows at least eight attempts to deliver with the ink comment "addressee not found".

Was there a return address on the missing part of the envelope?



A very long way to nowhere?

An official envelope addressed to J. E Davies Esq, passenger M.V. Apapa , c/o Elder Dempster Lines, Port Harcourt.

With a George VI Coronation one penny stamp on the flap as a sort of seal, the cover followed a lengthy route with duplicated postmarks front and rear.

Lagos 2.45 PM 15 OC 37

Port Harcourt 4 21 OC 37

Port Harcourt 6.30AM 23 OC 37

MAKURDI 3PM 26 NO 37

JOS 10.10AM 29 NOV 37

JOS 2.30 PM 1 DEC 37

YOLA 9 DEC 37

JOS 6.30 AM 15 DEC 37



Where did it end up?

The cover was redirected three or perhaps four times:

Given the sequence of CDS' perhaps initially to C/o THE resident, Makurdi

But if so, why did it take over a month?

Then Jos, then Yola, then finally on 15th December Jos again.

Yola is written on the cover twice in red, but probably in the same hand. An address in London W13 is also written on the cover in red but there is no evidence that the cover reached London.

Or was London the first redirection which would help to explain the month's gap between Port Harcourt and Makurdi?

An awful lot of effort by the Post Office for one penny, even in 1937.

Comment at the meeting suggested that as the addressee was a "homeward" passenger on M.V. Apapa the cover ultimately found its way to London where, not being registered, it received no CDS.

Where it went between 23rd October and 26th November was probably the "too difficult" file!



By 1958 it cost 6d
- each way

This envelope containing a wedding invitation was sent from Northern Ireland to my parents in Kano at a point when my father was clearly at home on leave in England.

Comment at the meeting suggested that second class air mail was only supposed to be for official mail. Oops!

However, Paul Redhead has since pointed out that Lutwyche's summary of George VI Postal rates states that : "Second class mail matter consists of printed papers, commercial papers, samples, small packets (to those countries which admit them) and literature for the blind."

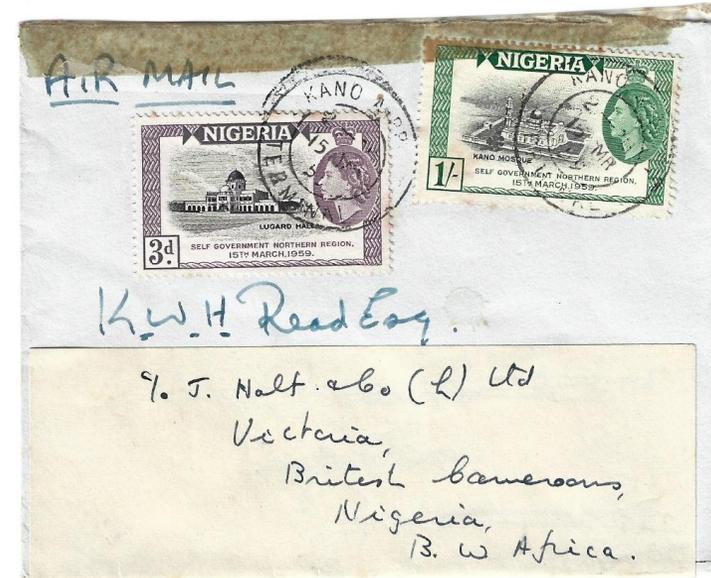
Printed matter perhaps, there was no letter.



This one went the
opposite way in 1959

This envelope was sent from Kano to an
address in Harpenden which seems to
have missed someone who had gone back
from leave to Victoria.

A round trip for one shilling and
threepence.



Do we get value for money today?

- According to the Bank of England inflation calculator
- £1 in 1840 is equivalent to £89.20 in December 2025 so the Penny Black should cost 37p today.
- £1 in 1906 is equivalent to £106.46 today (which seems odd until you realise that inflation was far from uniform and for example averaged minus 3.5% between 1920 and 1933) so 1d equals 44p today
- £1 in 1937 equals £59.65 today so 1d equals 24p today
- £1 in 1958 equals £20.62 today so 6d equals 51p today

Cost of sending a letter to Nigeria today?

Royal Mail International Economy £3.30

(15-80 business days)

Why would anyone use this?

International Standard £3.40

(6-7 business days)

International Tracked and Signed £8.50

Conclusion

The huge volumes of mail in its heyday made such service and value for money possible.