

Philip Henry Hansen

Aka John



Philip Henry Hansen, also known as John, was born on 25th November 1920, the son of German immigrants; Charles and Emily Hansen, who had settled in Britain in the early part of the 20th century.

On 15th May 1941, Philip was conscripted into the Royal Army Ordnance Corp, and sent to Nottingham for basic training. From Nottingham he joined the 77th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Unit, a Welsh Regiment.

On 8th of December 1941, the regiment set sail for the Middle East. By the time they reached Durban, South Africa, the ship was diverted to Singapore in response to the rapid advance of the Japanese army. Once in Singapore, the regiment was re-equipped (most of their equipment having been sent to the Middle East. They were then directed to Batavia (Jakarta). Having spent 6 weeks in Java, with the only sight of the enemy being dive bombers, they were ordered to surrender on 12th March 1942.

Philip Hansen was held in POW camps for the next 3½ years. Firstly, on Java in Tanjong Priok from 29th March 1942 until October 1942. In Changi, Singapore, for a short time in October, and finally in Batu Lintang, Kuching from October 1942 until September 1945.



Hansen's Squad pictured prior to embarkation. Within 4 months all these men had either been killed, or were prisoners of the Japanese

COMMUNICATION WITH PRISONERS OF WAR AND CIVILIANS IN JAPAN AND JAPANESE-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, and other Service personnel and Civilians believed to be in Japanese hands.

Letters and postcards addressed as shown below may be sent post free to Service personnel and Civilians known or believed to be in Japanese hands. They should be posted in the ordinary way and should not be sent to the British Red Cross Society to be forwarded. The name and address of the sender should be shown on the back of the envelope: members of H.M. Forces should, however, give a civilian address to which replies should be sent. Only letters and postcards may be posted, and parcels and other packets cannot be forwarded. In order to avoid delay in Japanese censorship, no one should write more than once a week. Letters should be brief (i.e., not exceeding two sides of an ordinary sheet of notepaper). They should be clearly written and whenever possible, should be typed. No enclosures are allowed. There is at present no air mail service.

All letters and postcards must invariably bear the two phrases—

"Prisoner of War Post,

Service des prisonniers de guerre"

in the top left-hand corner.

I.—If the internment camp address is known, address your letter this way—

(1) Write in the top left-hand corner—

"Prisoner of War Post,
Service des prisonniers de guerre."

(2) Write personal particulars (see below).

(3) Write "British Prisoner of War" (or "British Civilian Internee") and the Camp address.

The personal particulars to be furnished under (2) are:—

Navy.

Officers. Rank, Initials, Name (in block letters).

Ratings. Rating, Initials, Name (in block letters), Official No.

Army.

Officers. Rank, Initials, Name (in block letters).

Other Ranks. Army No., Rank, Initials, Name (in block letters).

Air Force.

Officers. Rank, Initials, Name (in block letters).

Airmen. Personal No., Rank, Initials, Name (in block letters).

Local Defence Forces.

Initials and Name (in block letters).

Name of Unit.

Merchant Navy.

Initials and Name (in block letters), Rank.

Civilian Internees.

Initials and Name (in block letters).

II.—If the internment camp address is not known, address your letter this way—

(1) Write in the top left-hand corner—

"Prisoner of War Post,
Service des prisonniers de guerre."

(2) Write personal particulars (see below).

(3) Write "British Prisoner of War" (or "British Civilian")
C/o Japanese Red Cross,
Tokyo.

The personal particulars to be furnished under (2) are:—

Navy.

Officers. Rank, Initials, Name (in block letters), R.N. (or R.N.R. or R.N.V.R.).

Name of Ship.

Ratings. Rating, Initials, Name (in block letters), Official No.

Name of Ship.

Examples.

Cdr. K. JONES, R.N.,
H.M.S. Exeter,
British Prisoner of War,
C/o Japanese Red Cross,
Tokyo.

Stoker J. SMITH, 123456,
H.M.S. Exeter,
British Prisoner of War,
C/o Japanese Red Cross,
Tokyo.

I.P.T.O.

Instructions for Communication with POWs

A leaflet given to relatives of prisoners of war in Japanese hands.

Mail Outgoing Cards from Batu Lintang Part 1

1st January 1943

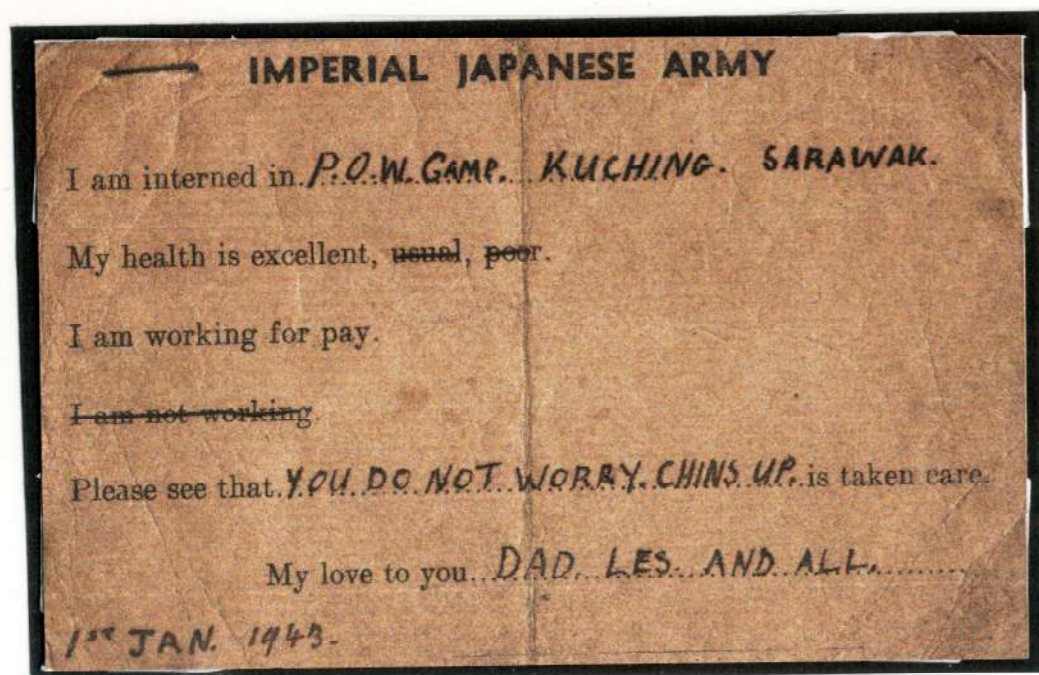


DAMAGED BY FIRE IN TRANSIT

The first consignment of 30,000 postcards from all parts of the Far East was dispatched in July 1943. The plane carrying them from Lisbon to Shannon crashed whilst landing in fog.

Approximately 5,000 cards were saved, many of them stamped DAMAGED BY FIRE IN TRANSIT, as in the example above.

It had taken 7 months for the Japanese to forward this postcard.

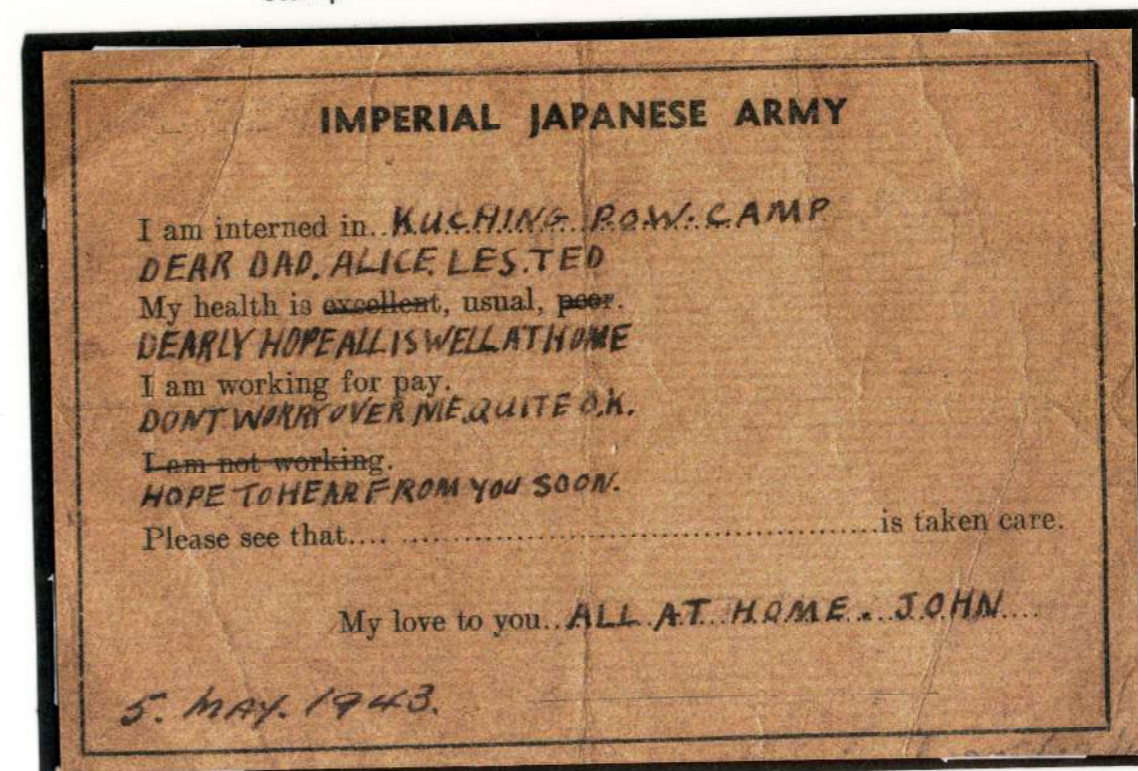


5th May 1943



The second issue of postcards on 5th May 1943' was the version with the black frame intact.

Since this was written prior to the July consignment it is likely that this was also carried by the crashed plane, and although 'recovered' did not receive the Damaged by Fire stamp.



Outgoing mail from the POW camps was restricted to postcards supplied by the Japanese authorities. These cards were issued infrequently and each prisoner received only 4 or 5 cards over the entire 3½ years for which they were interned.

Most of the cards had preprinted sentences to be completed by the internee.

No criticism of the Japanese authorities or the conditions in the camp was permitted.

It is likely that many cards were completed by the Japanese guards or by trusted prisoners, and the address only completed by the sender.

Several different issues or printings have been identified of these postcards

The first of these cards, on thick brown paper, was issued initially in a cut down version (1/1/1943) and later with a black border left intact (5/5/1943).

Both cards carry the British censor mark.

Mail Outgoing Cards from Batu Lintang Part 2

The later issue of POW postcards were printed on thin buff card and printed with Japanese

They are designated Type 3 and Type 4 by Neville Waterson

Type 3

Issued 14/09/1943

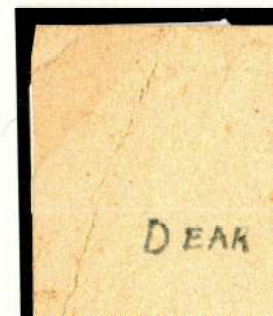
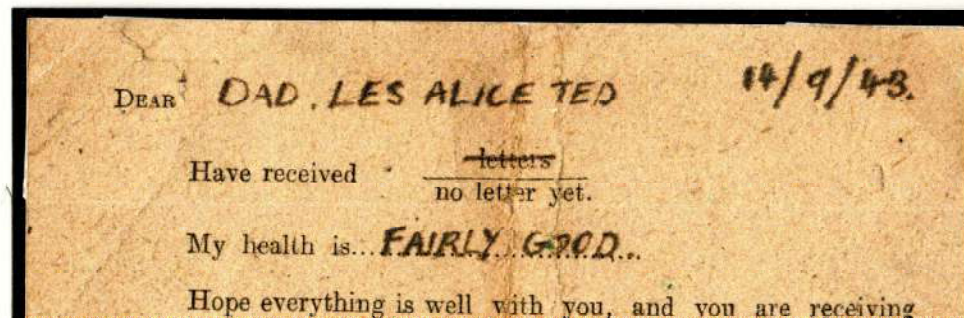


The inscription top centre of the cards translates as 'PRISONER OF WAR MAIL'

The vertical box on the left reads 'BORNEO CAMP' and the 3 Japanese characters in the small horizontal box are the Japanese censor marks.



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The 3 cl



P.C. 90

OPENED BY

EXAMINER 4536

PRISONER OF WAR POST,
SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE



10,553,443, CRAFTSMAN P. H. HANSEN.

ROYAL ELECTRICAL & MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

BRITISH PRISONER OF WAR

INTERNED BORNEO CAMP.
% JAPANESE RED CROSS
TOKYO.

222, BLYTHE ROAD
LONDON, W.14.
ENGLAND

4.3.1943.

DEAR JOHN

I have just got news of you, after fourteen months. And it is the best news, I have ever had. How are you doing John. Hope you are keeping your chin up, well up. I'm afraid John, that I have to give you some very bad news, You see. Dad died last year, in July 1942. After a fine weeks illness, He did not want to go to hospital, so I kept him home. I managed to get a nurse in, to

Mail Incoming to Batu Lintang

The first real information received by relatives and friends of prisoners in the Far East was from a leaflet published in October 1942, which stated that the Japanese required that only a single sheet of paper should be sent, although both sides could be written on.

In 1943, the mail was sent by surface mail, postage free, all post to be marked, 'Prisoner of War Post' 'Service des Prisonniers de Guerre'.

This letter and cover, from Philip's brother Leslie, dated 4 March 1943, complies with this condition. The stampless cover is postmarked West Kensington and bears a censor tape, 'opened by examiner 4536.' There is also the Japanese chop for Batu Lintang. It talks of the delight in receiving news of Philip (John) after 14 months, but also the news of the death of his father.

It is not known when this letter reached Philip, but in an outgoing card from September 1943, he stated that he had received no mail, 6 months after the letter was written. It is likely that the letter was held by the Japanese until the camp was liberated by the Allies.

attend to him, during the day, But at night we took turns of watching him. I honestly think John, that Dad would not had lived so long, had he gone to hospital. Dad never complained once, and was in all his senses till the last. He passed away while sleeping. I did every thing that was possible, and spared nothing John. But it was no use. Ted was a real brick, helped me a lot. Will and Bert came round several times. Aunt Alice came every day. Tell you more later on, only allowed one page. Alice and Ted are Ok. Keep smiling John, and keep your chin up. All the Best from Les

IMPORTANT: FOR A PRISONER IN GERMAN HANDS THE PRISONER OF WAR No. MUST BE CLEARLY SHOWN. IT MUST NOT BE CONFUSED WITH HIS BRITISH SERVICE No.

PRISONER OF WAR POST
KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST
 SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

AIR MAIL
 PAR AVION

9 24 AM
 10 APR
 1943
 N.7.

RANK & NAME: 10553443 620/15man P.H. HANSEN
(SURNAME IN BLOCK LETTERS) REME British Prisoner of War

PRISONER OF WAR No.: BRITISH PRISONER OF WAR.
 PASSED (SEE NOTE ON FLAP)

CAMP NAME & No.: INTERNEED BORNEO CAMP
(INCLUDING SUBSIDIARY NUMBERING OR LETTERING IF ANY - E.G. WORKING CAMP)

COUNTRY: JAPANESE RED CROSS, TOKYO

FROM (SENDER'S FULL NAME & ADDRESS)
 MRS. HULETT
 ARCTLE HOUSE
 105 SEVEN SISTERS
 HOLLOWAY, N.7.

Mail Incoming to Batu Lintang

King George VI 2½d blue Prisoner of War airmail letter sheet, dated 9th April 1943 and postmarked Holloway, 10th April 1943. The letter bears a British censor mark and the Japanese chop for Batu Lintang.

The airmail letter sheet used was intended for communication with Prisoners of War in Germany, but had been passed for sending to the Far East.

The letter had arrived at the camp, but its condition, along with Private Hansen's outgoing card stating that he had not received any mail by September 1943, suggests that the letter had not been received until after the camp was liberated.

In July 1943, further regulations were added to the conditions, including:-

Only relatives and close friends should write.

Members of any one family should only write once a fortnight.

Letters to Army personnel captured before the end of July could include in the details of the Regiment or Corps and location where last serving.

The sender should put their name and address on the back of the card.

WRITE VERY CLEARLY ON THE LINES TO AVOID DELAY IN CENSORSHIP

DATE 9.4.43

DEAR PHILLIP.

I WENT TO SEE ALICE ON HER BIRTHDAY WAS DELIGHTED TO HEAR THEY HAD NEWS OF YOU. AFTER SUCH A LONG TIME I HOPE YOU ARE WELL. JOANS HUSBAND WAS IN MALAYR WHEN THEY HEARD OVER A YEAR AGO. THEY ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING NEWS OF HIM.

HOPE WE SHALL SOON SEE YOU AGAIN. ALICE WAS AS BUSY AS EVER. I AM HAVING A DAY WITH HER SOON. WE SAW YOUR FATHER WHEN HE WAS ILL GLAD TO SAY HE DIDNT SUFFER LONG. HE LIVED TO BE A GOOD AGE. IT IS VERY COLD HERE CLAD THE WINTER HAS GONE. I THOUGHT OF YOU XMAS EVE HOW YOU USE TO VISIT US. WINNIE & MACCIE DALE ARE MARRIED. WINNIE LIVES A HOLLOWAY. MARRIED A CANADIAN. NEVILLE HAS A DAUGHTER I EXPECT YOU WILL BE HEARING FROM THEM. WE HAVE HAD THE PLACE DONE UP A BIT. ARTHUR WISHES YOU ALL THE BEST. LOVE FROM MACCIE.

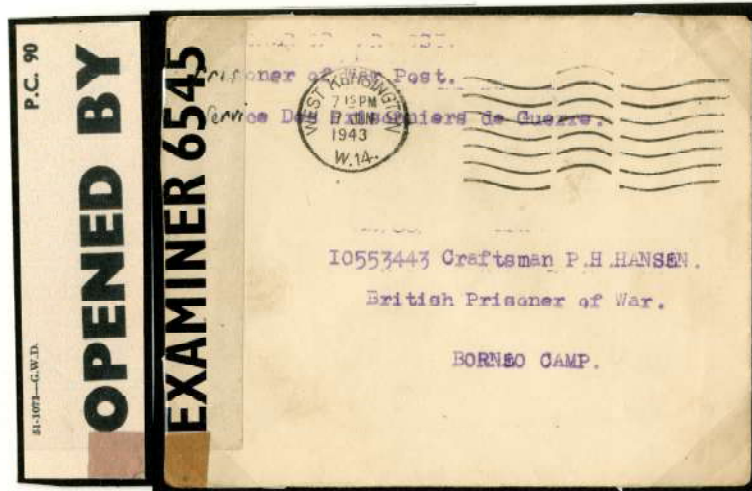
CONTINUE IN BOTTOM PANEL OVERLEAF

Incoming Mail to Batu Lintang

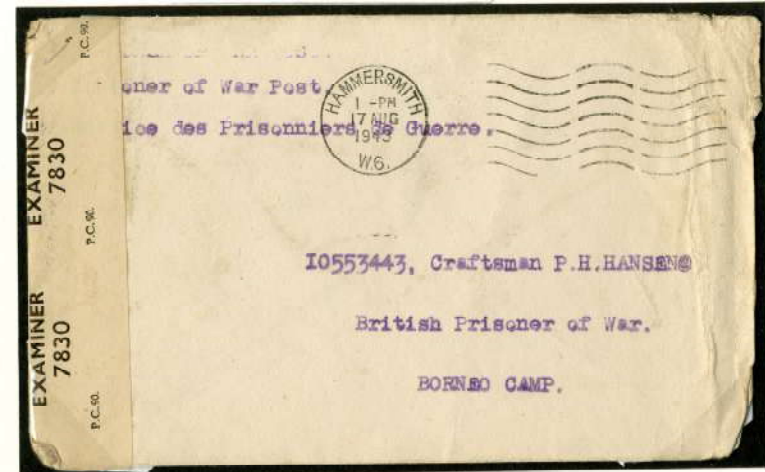
Initially incoming mail was the responsibility of the Japanese Red Cross, but the Japanese Government blocked the activities of the Red Cross. The Imperial Japanese Army Postal Service was made responsible for distributing mail to the camps, where it was censored and passed on at the whim of the Camp Commander. Thus, the mail could be delayed for months or even never given to the prisoners until the arrival of the Allied armies. These had all been sent well before the outgoing card of September 1943, where Philip Hansen stated he had received no mail.

3 stampless covers sent to Philip Hansen in 1943. Opened by censor and resealed with tape. All 3 have the Japanese chop on the back, reading 'BORNEO CAMP' and the 3 characters meaning 'PASSED BY CENSOR' as on the cover from 17/8/1043, below:-

17th June 1943



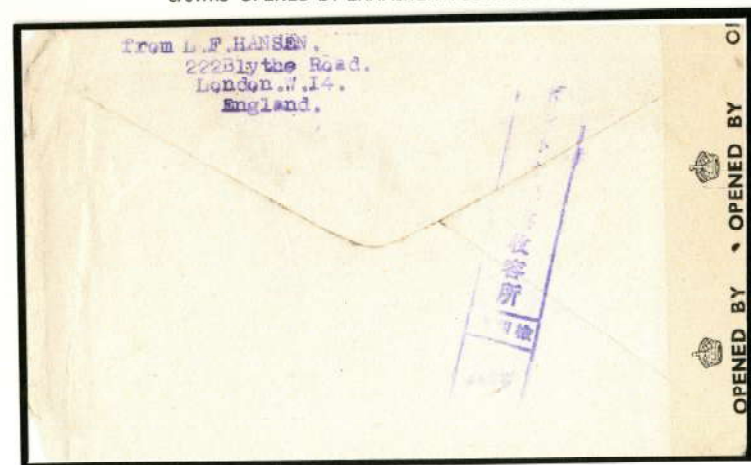
17th August 1943



13th July 1943



Resealed with a more unusual tape with 2 small crowns 'OPENED BY EXAMINER' 7830 code PC90

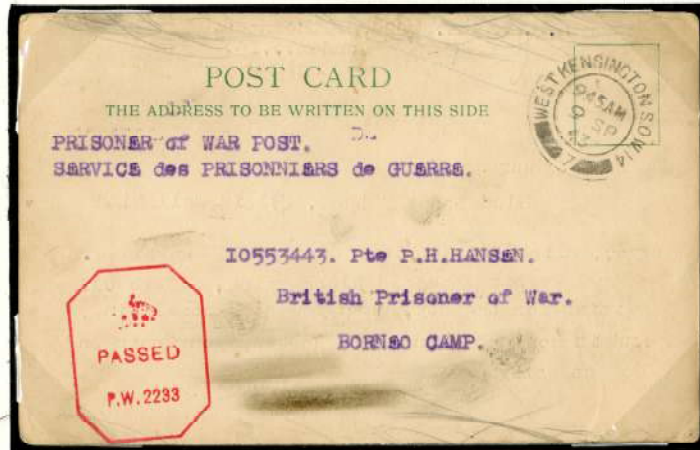


Incoming Postcards to Batu Lintang

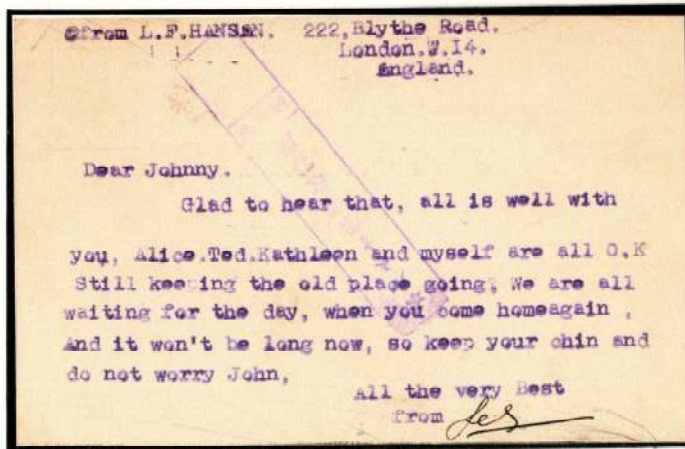
In April 1943, the Red Cross issued new instructions had been received by the Japanese Authorities. This required that the letters and postcards should be limited to 25 words, either type written or in block capitals, in order to speed-up and simplify their censorship process. Mail not complying with these conditions would not be delivered. In September 1943, the G.P.O. attached an endorsement to their leaflet making a similar statement.

The restriction to 25 words meant that it was more likely for a postcard to be sent rather than a letter. The postcards sent to Philip Hansen all had a very similar message i.e: 'We are all OK.' 'Don't worry'. 'Hope you are well.' 'Keep your chin up.' The restriction to 25 words was not always closely adhered to. The Japanese chop was sometimes on the front, at other times on the back and at times missing.

9th September 1943



16th November 1943



9th September 1943
Typical message



14th December 1943

Incoming Air Mail Postcards to Batu Lintang

Attempting to reduce delays in transit the G.P.O. introduced an air mail postal stationery card, to which a 3d adhesive stamp had to be affixed. On 27th March 1944, an air mail card with a printed impression of the current George VI stamp. The cards had an inscription on the reverse instructing the sender to type or write in block letters a message of no more than 25 words. The front of the card also had the words 'Prisoner of War Post' 'Service des Prisonniers de Guerre', and vertical Japanese characters reading 'POW Mail'

Of the cards sent to Philip Hansen very few had the Japanese censor chop, the condition of the cards suggests they were only received on the approach of the allied army.

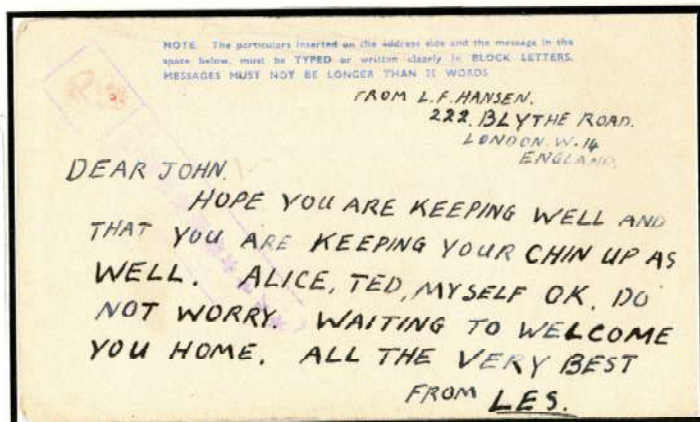
10th April 1944.



The cancel missed the card leaving it undated.



The message on the card is typical of those on all cards.
The Japanese chop is a rarity on these later cards.



20 November 1944.



The last card in the effects of Philip Hansen, suggesting that no cards were delivered to the camp in 1945.