

BRITISH HONDURAS – WW2 Censored Mail

Dr Ian Matheson

The exhibit shows several interesting censored items from British Honduras in World War II. The sections shown are (i) the unboxed handstamps, (ii) the “British Honduras” labels – rarely described clearly in auction catalogues, (iii) other foreign censor numbers – 622 and 4266, (iv) the crown octagonal handstamps. This area was well researched and published by Brian Rogers in the Civil Censorship Study Group Bulletin, but little has been published by BCPSG or BWISC.

Note that all pages shown are photocopies. If any member wishes further details about any item please contact me in person or at ian@cdi.biz.

No. 519.

POST OFFICE NOTICE.*General Post Office,**Belize, 2 September 1939.*

In view of the present crisis communications will be subject to censorship.

2 Except messages on the service of any British Government, and certain privileged messages on the service of foreign governments, all telegrams originating in and/or addressed to British territory will be subject to the following restrictions:—

(a) The use of cipher is prohibited except in the case of approved Banks.

(b) The use of all codes is prohibited except for service messages and telegrams of approved Banks.

(c) Terminal and transit British telegrams must bear the surname of the sender at the end of the text included among the words which are charged to the sender and signalled forward.

(d) For the time being abbreviated addresses will not be accepted either as the address or as the name of the sender of a telegram originating in and/or addressed to British territory (except certain British Governments and official abbreviated addresses registered throughout the Empire).

(e) All telegrams must be in English or French. In the case of purely local services other languages, if permitted, may be used.

3 Until further notice no telegrams will be accepted at the Wireless Station for transmission but must be handed in at the Post Offices.

4 In order to avoid delay, the public is advised to conform to the following directions in regard to correspondence with places abroad:—

(a) The name and address of the sender should be stated on the envelope.

(b) Correspondence should be conducted in English if possible; the language should be plain and the letters as clearly written and as brief as possible.

(c) If English is not employed, the name of the language should be endorsed on the envelope.

(d) Envelopes should contain no lining paper or empty sheets.

(e) Firms and individuals should refuse to act as intermediaries or agents for the receipt and transmission of postal correspondence on behalf of persons in places abroad.

Failure to comply with these directions may lead to delay or return of correspondence.

5 Every carrier, master of a vessel, or other person is warned that the Colonial Postmaster has the exclusive privilege of conveying from one place to another, and of collecting, sending and delivering, all letters and postal matter, and that if any person carries any letter, whether stamped or not (except such as is permitted by law), other than at the request of a proper postal authority, he will be liable to the penalties prescribed.

F. C. P. BOWEN,

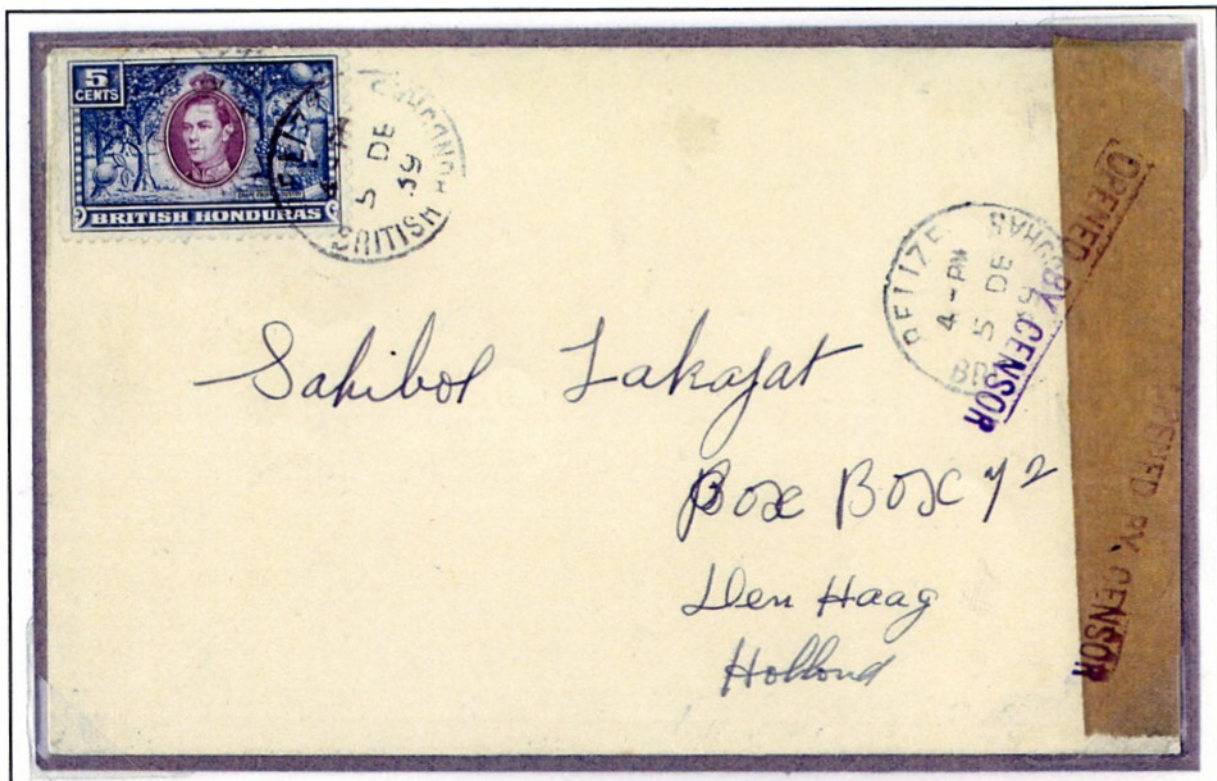
Colonial Postmaster.

HANDSTAMP TYPE CH1

This handstamp was first reported by Ian Matheson in *British Caribbean Philatelic Journal*, April 1980 but it was suspected that it may have been a bogus marking. As no other early censored covers had been reported at the time, and the earliest report of censorship was mid-1940 there was good reason to be doubtful. However the discovery¹ of the Government Gazette notice of 2 September 1939 proved that censorship was indeed introduced in 1939 and a couple of other covers have been found with the same handstamp. It is now confidently established that the handstamp is genuine.

OPENED BY CENSOR

Type CH1



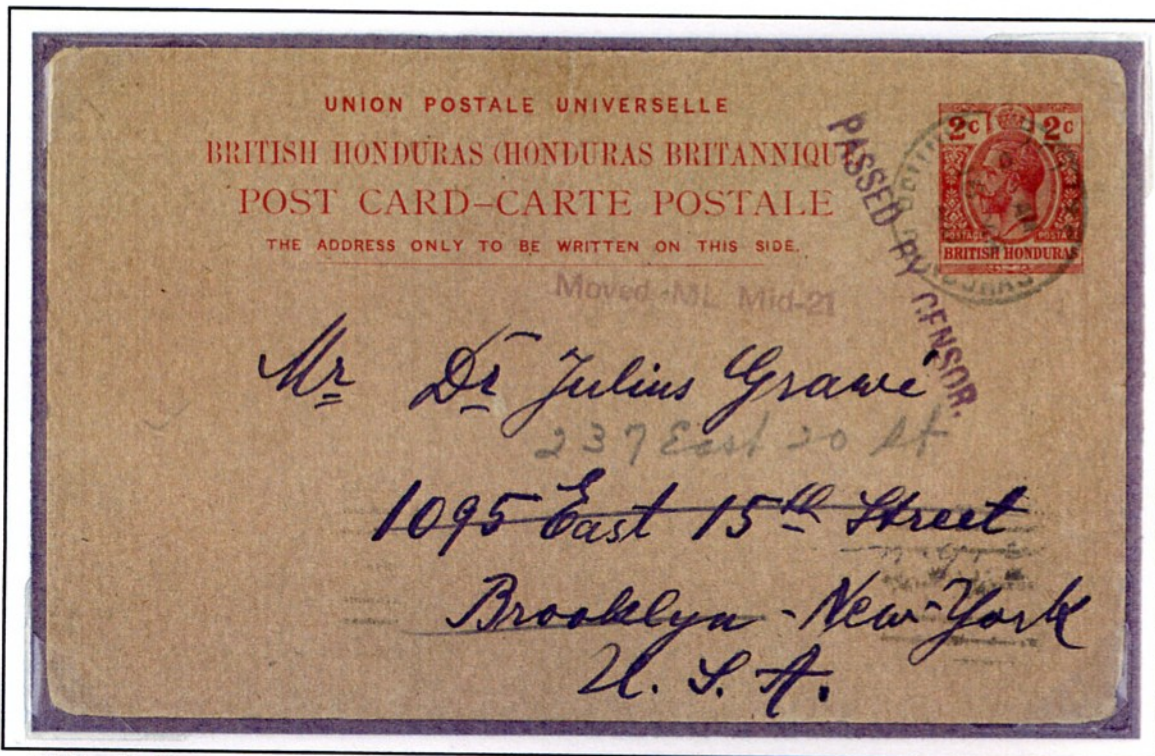
5 December 1939. Early censored cover sent from Belize City to Holland. Resealed with plain brown paper tape and handstamped with the type CH1 "OPENED BY CENSOR" marking, a practice employed by several Colonies prior to receiving their first printed resealing labels. Most early covers were not intercepted by the censor; maybe this letter attracted attention because of the destination..

HANDSTAMP TYPE CH2

This handstamp was produced in the same font as the type CH1 "OPENED BY CENSOR" mark. It is speculated that the alternative wording was for use on items that were not physically opened, as would be the case with the postcard below. This was certainly the case with similarly worded instruments used in other Colonies.

PASSED BY CENSOR.

Type CH2



15 March 1940. Postal stationery card posted from Belize to Brooklyn and forwarded to New York. The text of this commercial postcard is written in German. Rule 4(c) of the censorship notice declared that "if English is not employed, the name of the language should be endorsed on the envelope". Maybe it was felt that this was not necessary as the text was clearly visible to the censor, who handstamped the postcard with the type CH2 "PASSED BY CENSOR" mark (**earliest recorded date**).

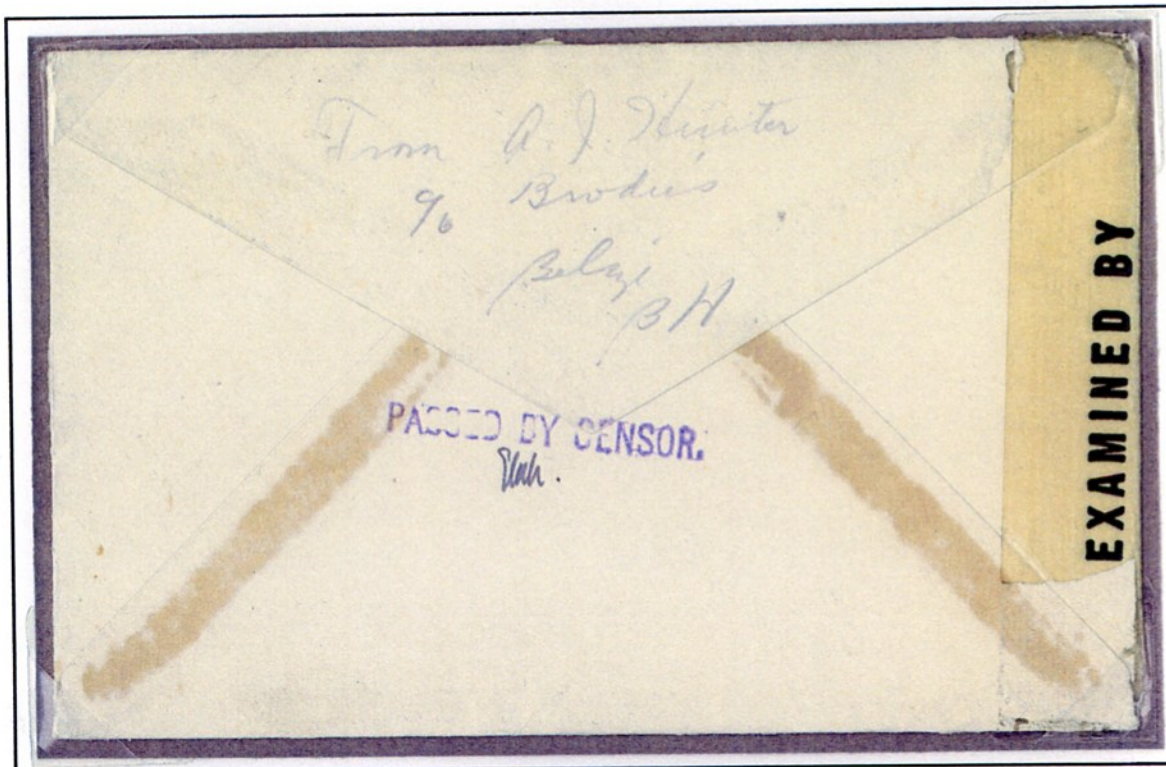
Type CH2 ERD = 15 March 1940 LRD = 29 February 1944

HANDSTAMP TYPE CH2

This handstamp was re-introduced for a short period in February 1943 during a temporary period of label shortage and was used on covers that had been physically opened and examined. The cover below was not physically opened in Belize, but it might have been speculated that it belonged to this period. The question is answered by the date – 29 February. The cover must have been used in a leap year. This would restrict the options to 1940 and 1944. The US censor label was not in use in 1940 but was in use in 1944. This extends the recorded period of use of the handstamp by a year.

PASSED BY CENSOR.

Type CH2



29 February 1944. Cover posted from Kansas endorsed in manuscript "via Guatemala, Mexico, Laredo. The datestamp does not have a year slug to confirm the 1944 usage but it is evidently 1944 (see discussion above) The cover was not opened by the censor, but was handstamped with type CH2 "PASSED BY CENSOR" (**latest recorded date**) across the flap and signed by the censor. This was evidently not enough for the US censor (no.5274) who opened the cover and resealed it with a type T2.5 label with censor number handstamped in seriffed numerals.

Type CH2 ERD = 15 March 1940 LRD = 29 February 1944



Photocopy (reduced) of
obverse of cover.

HANDSTAMP TYPES CH1 and CH2

Both of these handstamps are rare and the need for the labels is not clear as printed labels were available from January 1940. However the fact that they are found used in conjunction with 25mm brown tape suggests that they may have been brought into service during temporary label shortages. However there can be no reasonable explanation for this commercial cover, which shows type CH1 on the front and type CH2 on the reverse.

OPENED BY CENSOR

Type CH1

PASSED BY CENSOR.

Type CH2



11 February 1941. Registered commercial airmail cover from Belize to USA opened and re-sealed by censor. The cover was resealed with 25mm wide plain brown tape tied with a strike of type CH1 on the front and type CH2 on the reverse. Backstamped in Brownsville, Texas (13 Feb), New York (15 Feb) and New York Station D (15 Feb). Maybe the type CH1 strike was made in error with a redundant handstamp.

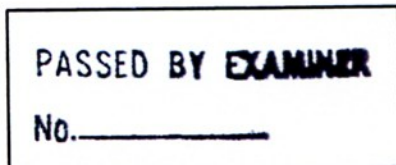
Type CH2 →



Photocopy (reduced) of reverse of cover.

HANDSTAMP TYPE H1 (Bates)

This handstamp was first reported by Trevor Bates¹ in his excellent first study on civil censorship in British Honduras. The handstamp was illustrated with the speculation that it may have been a local marking. It is now known that the handstamp was used by the New Orleans censor, but examples of this mark are still regularly described in the trade as possible emanating from Belize.



Type H1



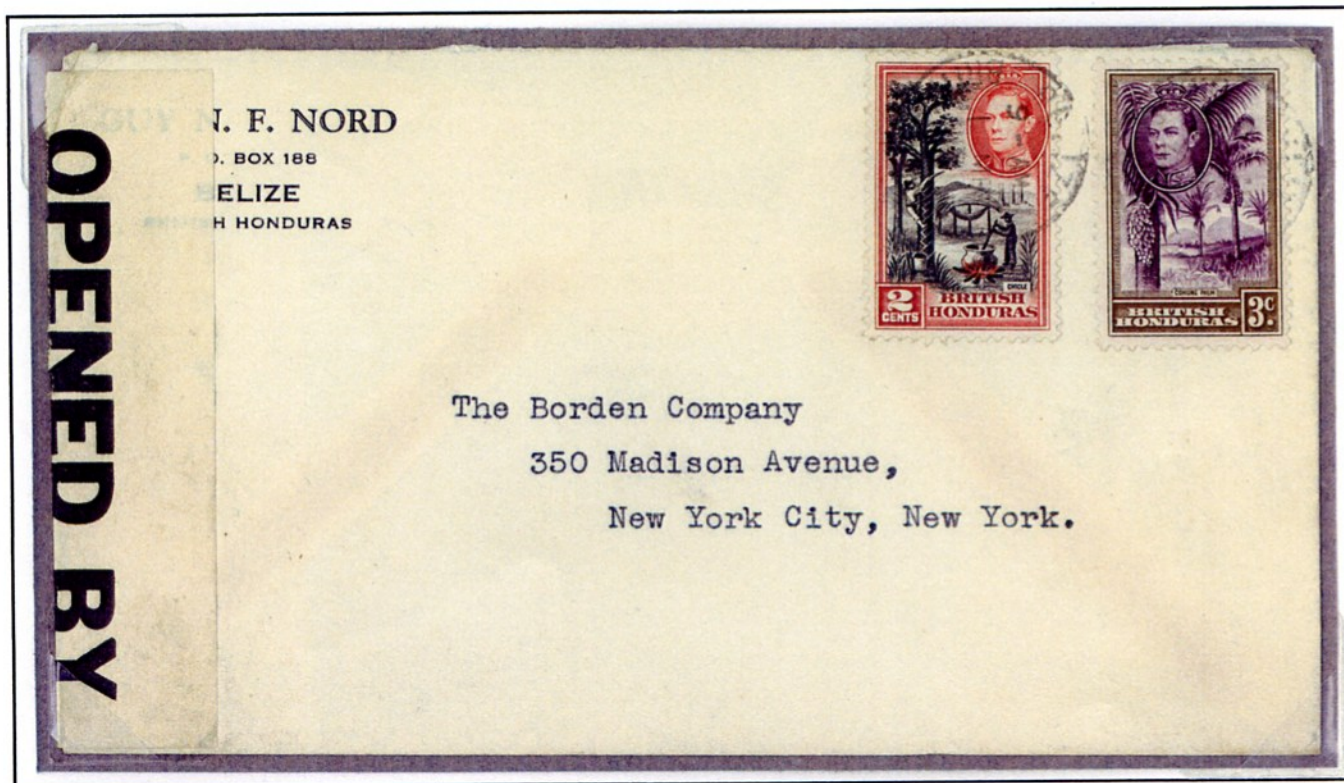
28 March 1942. Censored cover sent from Belize City to Buchanan, New York. Resealed with plain brown paper tape and handstamped with the type H1 "PASSED BY EXAMINER / No" marking used at New Orleans. The censor's number (2005) is added in manuscript. The resealing tape is 1½ inches wide – significantly wider than the 25mm (1 inch) tape in use in Belize. A company receipt marking dated 13 April 1942 is struck on the reverse.

Reference: 1. Civil Censorship in British Honduras in World War II. Trevor S. Bates. "West Indian Censorship Devices". *Roses Caribbean Philatelic Handbook* no.1, p98-102.(1976).

LABEL TYPE CL1

This is the first resealing label to have been used in Belize. Rogers has reported that the Colony name is printed with ink of a slightly different shade of black, indicating that labels were printed without the Colony name and then customised for the country of use. The same label type was also used in Ascension Is., St. Vincent and Jersey. It is not clear whether the country name was printed in UK or in British Honduras.

Very few covers have been recorded with this label as a large proportion of mail was passed without examination in the early period of the War.



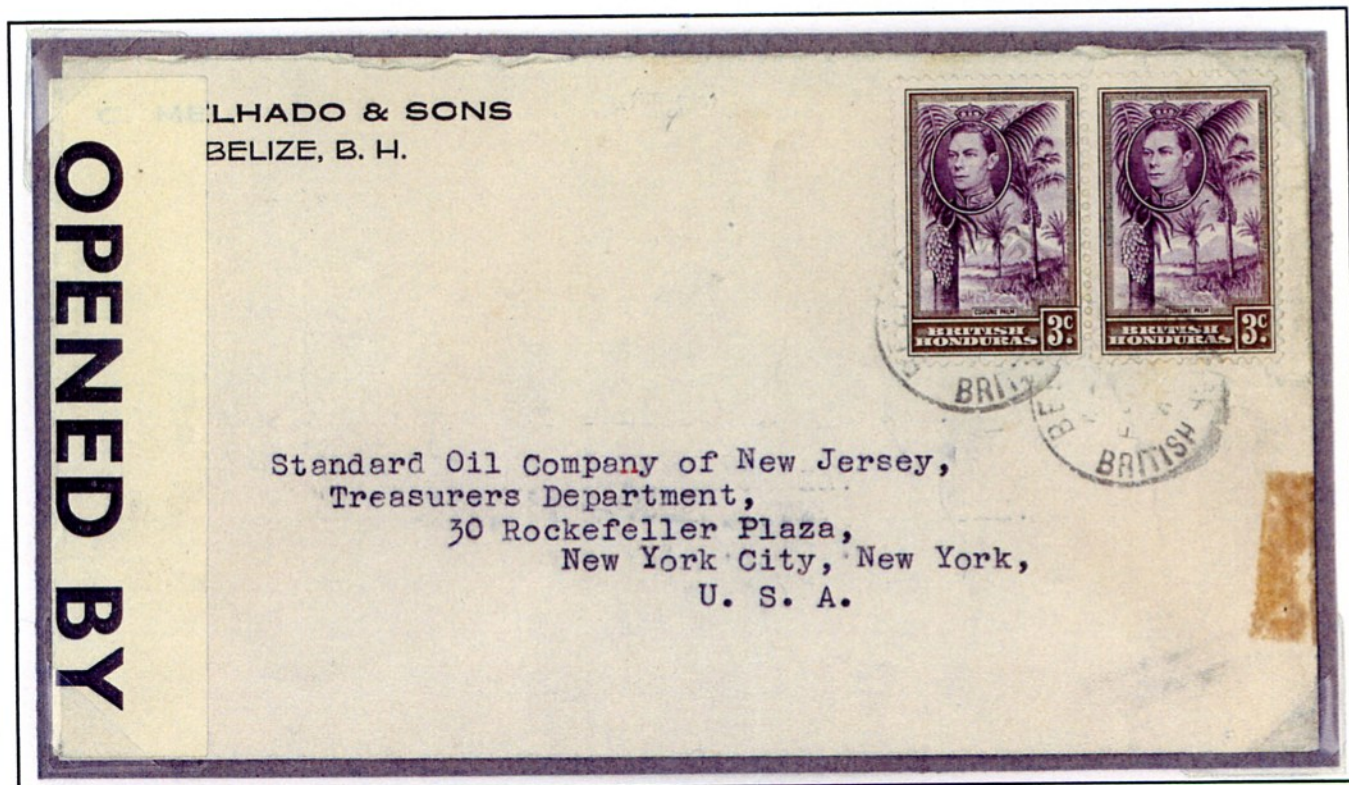
1 March 1940. Cover from Belize to New York opened and re-sealed by censor using label type CL1.



Type CL 1 Label. ERD = 29 January 1940 LRD = 20 September 1940

LABEL TYPE CL2

The type CL2 label was followed by this label, type CL2. The major difference between this and the previous label is the shape of the letters "O" and "C". Type CL2 is the most common of the early labels.



February 1942. Cover from Belize to New York opened and re-sealed by censor using label type CL2. Company receipt markings on reverse dated 9 March 1942..



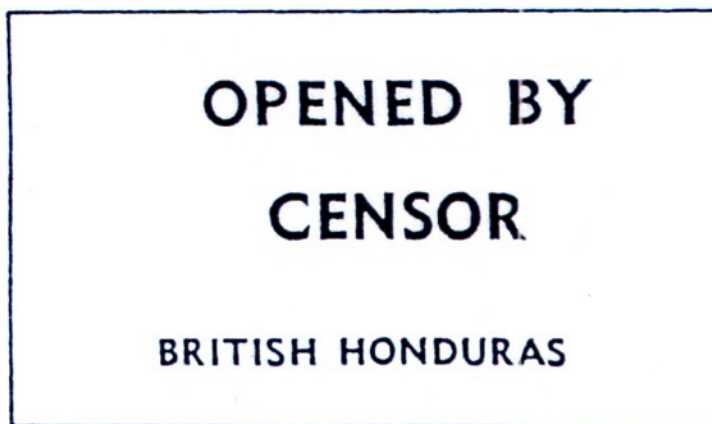
Type CL 2 Label. ERD = 10 April 1940 LRD = 28 May 1942

LABEL TYPE CL3

The type CL3 label was used concurrently with type CL2. It has been suggested that the label was probably printed in the United Kingdom but there is no evidence to prove this. It is not clear why two different labels should have been used at the same time.



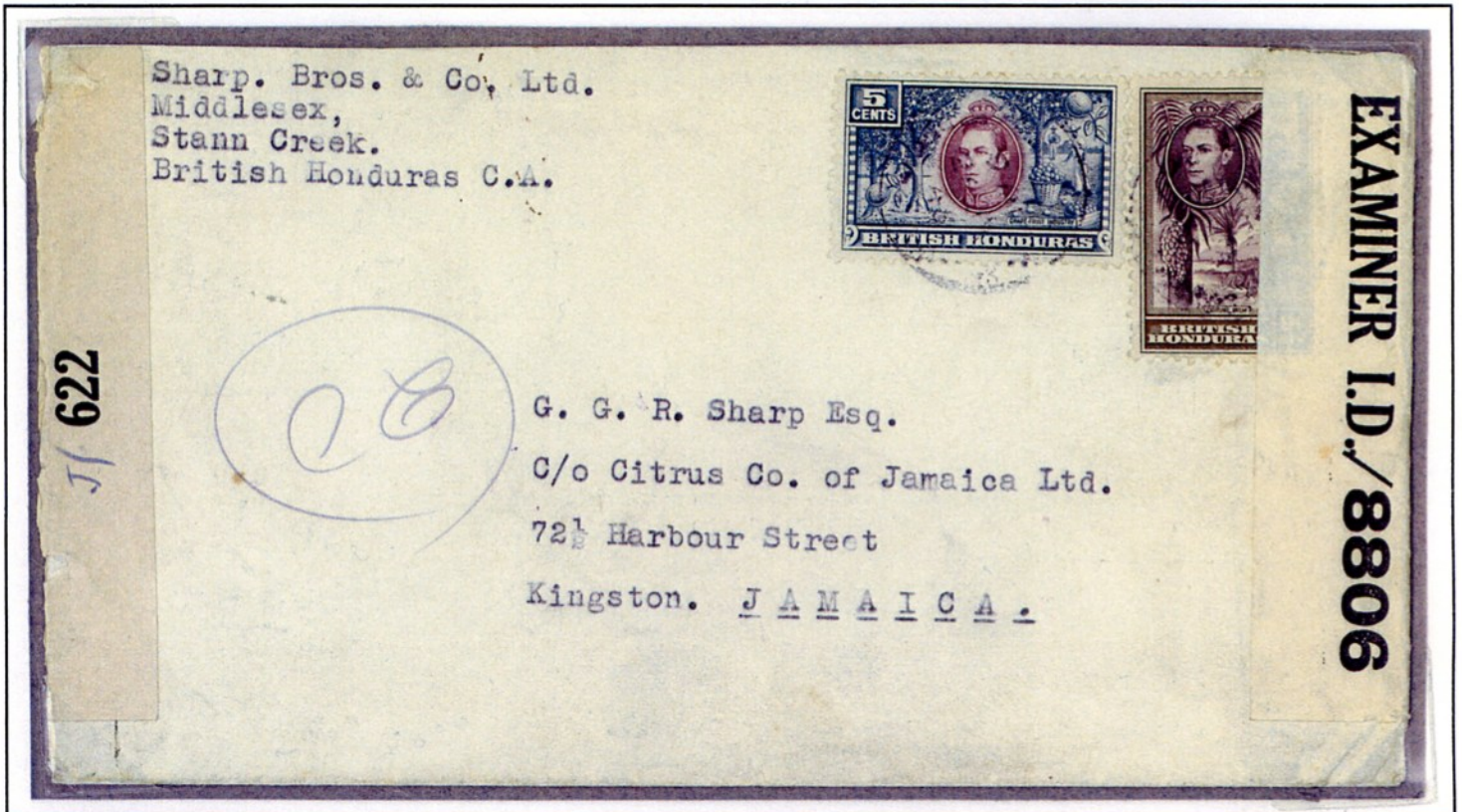
20 June 1942(?). Cover from Belize to USA opened and re-sealed by censor using label type CL3. Although it was only necessary to specify language if English was not used (section 4) of P.O. Notice 519 of 2 September 1939) the "ENGLISH LANGUAGE" cachet was often used to assist the censor.



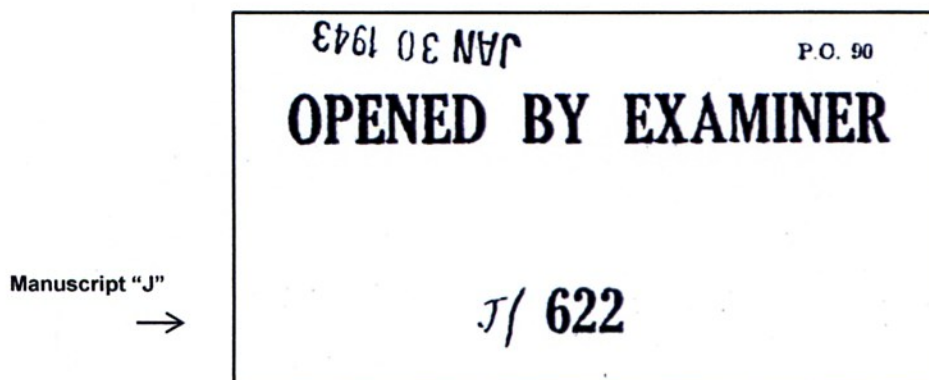
Type CL 3 Label. ERD = 1 January 1941 LRD = 29 June 1942

LABEL TYPE CL6 (EXAMINER 622)

This examiner was based in Jamaica and examples 622 labels are recorded¹ used in Kingston until September 1942 and again from mid-1943. It appears as if he was in Belize training the local officials in the interim period. Rogers² reports that this cover is the only known example without the initials (C.T. or S.G.) of one of the local Belize censors. Maybe 622 examined it himself, whereas the other few recorded covers were used as training examples. It is also the first time the Imperial Censorship code for British Honduras ("J") was employed. The latest recorded date of use was February 1943, when the CH2 handstamp was re-introduced. Maybe 622 left or maybe there were no printed labels available until receipt of label CL7 in March of the same year.



26 February 1943. Cover from Stann Creek to Jamaica opened and re-sealed by censor 622 using label type CL6 on 30 February. Manuscript "J" applied before censor number. The cover was again re-opened and examined by censor 8806 in Jamaica (label type L10b).

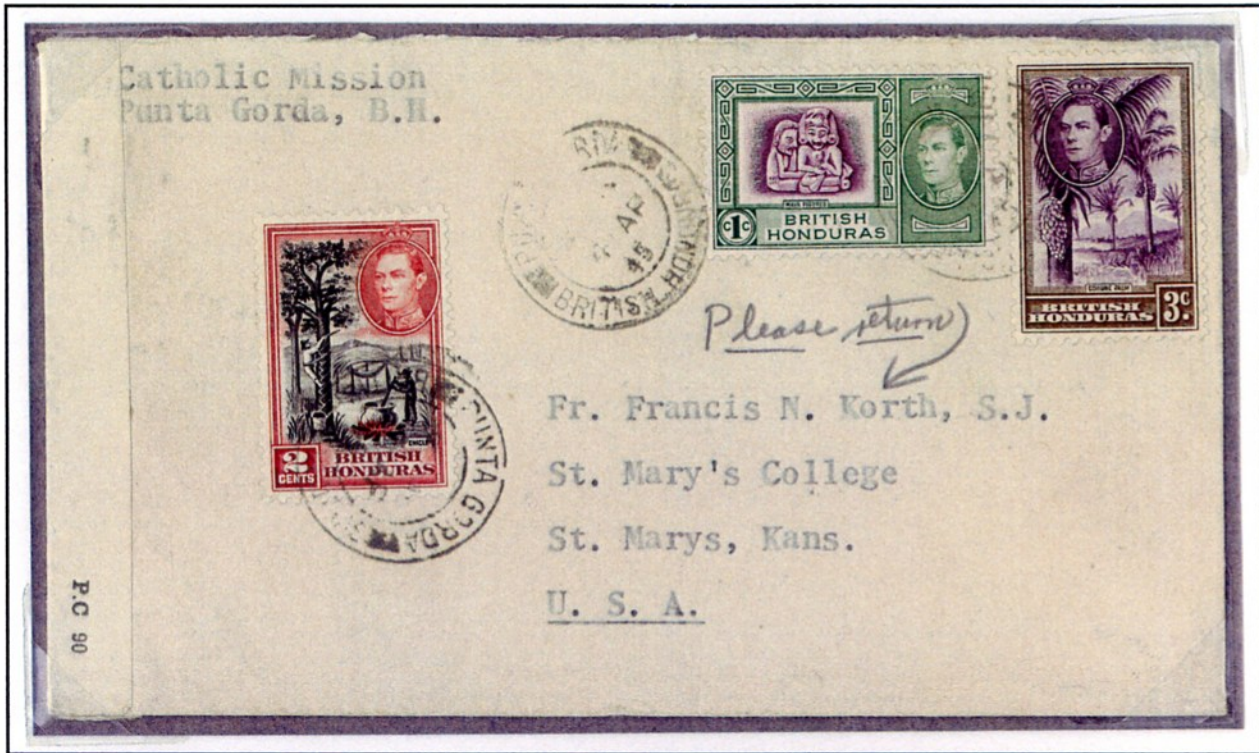


Type CL 6 Label. ERD = 22 December 1942 LRD = 6 February 1943

- References:**
1. British Honduras – A Censorship Update. Horst Augostinovic. Caribbeana vol 9, p 8-12. (March 1980).
 2. Civilian Censorship of Mail in British Honduras during World War 11. Brian Rogers. Civil Censorship Study Group Bulletin (vol19, issue 94, p75-106)

LABEL TYPE CL11 (EXAMINER 4266)

This examiner is reported^{1,2} to have been based in Trinidad from 1941 to 1944. However there is good evidence to prove that he was active in British Honduras in April and May 1945. (i) The datestamps are identical to those used in Belize. (ii) The time difference between postmark and censor date is too short for the letter to have reached Trinidad. (iii) Trinidad was not on the most likely transit route for the letters. Three different label types are recorded. Rogers^{3,4} reports that of the seven covers recorded by him, five had a suffix "c" in manuscript. The significance of this is not known.



4 April 1945. Cover from Punta Gorda to USA opened and re-sealed by censor 4266 using label type CL11. Manuscript "c" applied after censor number. Belize backstamp under censor label.



Type CL 11 Label. ERD = 4 April 1945 LRD = 22 April 1945

- References:**
1. West Indian Censorship Devices. Roses Caribbean Philatelic Handbook no.1. (1976).
 2. British Empire Civil Censorship Devices World War II; Section 6, Canada and Colonies in the Caribbean and North and South America. Christopher Miller. Pub Civil Censorship Study Group (2006).
 3. The Mystery of UK/Colonial Examiner 4266. Brian J.W.Rogers. Caribbeana Vol 14, p 3-6. (April 1986)
 4. Civilian Censorship of Mail in British Honduras during World War 11. Brian Rogers. Civil Censorship Study Group Bulletin (vol19, issue 94, p75-106)

LABEL TYPE CL12 (EXAMINER 4266)

This label was used concurrently with CL11, suggesting that the examiner possibly brought a residual stock of labels from Trinidad, comprising a few of each type. Rogers reports two recorded examples of this label, each with a manuscript "c". This is the third to be recorded and does not have the "c".



12 April 1945. Cover from Belize to USA opened and re-sealed by censor 4266 using label type CL12. Handstruck date (APR 13 1945) below "EX" of label. The cover was also opened by the US censor 7576 (based in New York, according to Broderick & Mayo). 21c rate = 6c surface postage + 15c air mail surcharge.

P.C. 90

OPENED BY

EXAMINER 4266

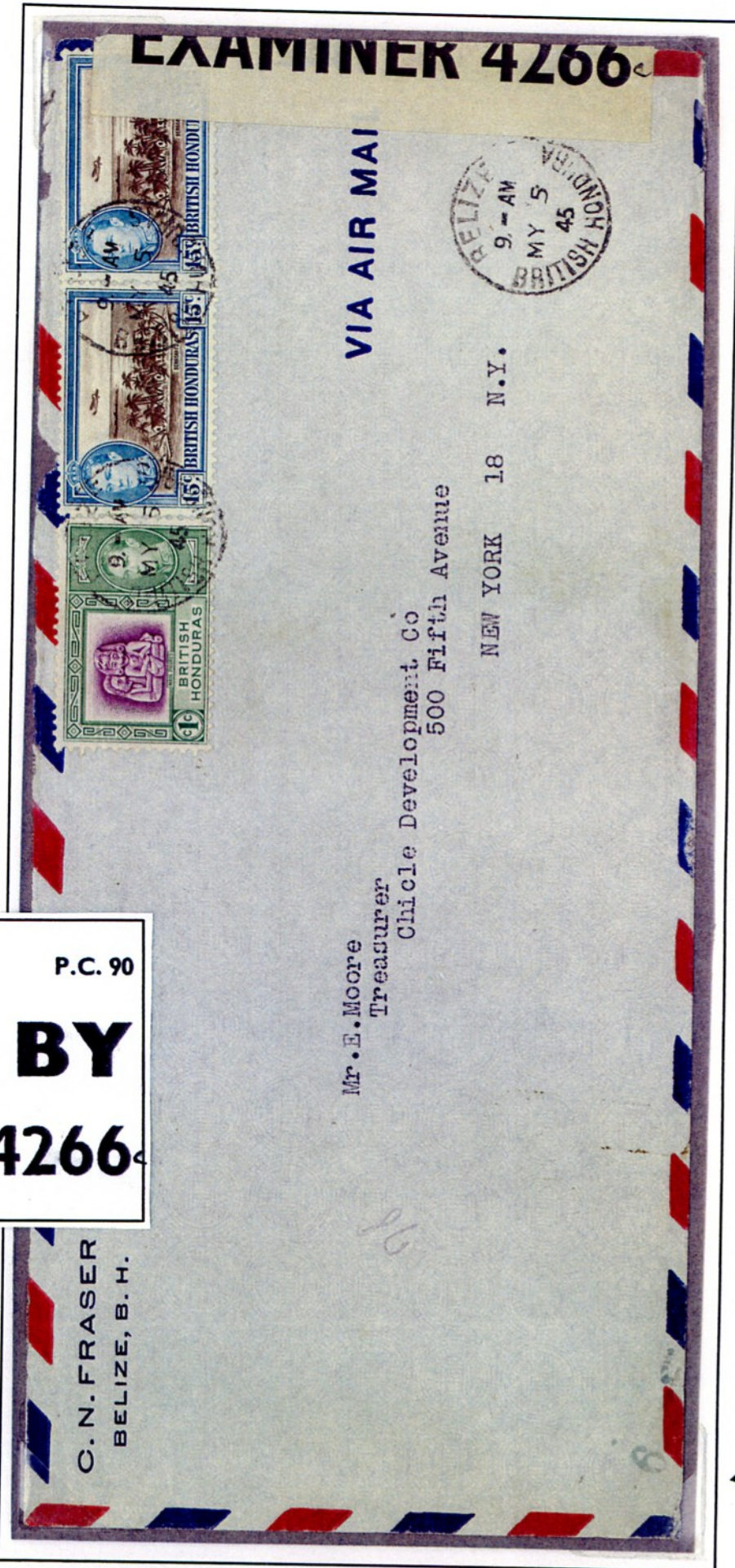
Note that the centre point of the "M" extends down to the base line.

Type CL 12 Label. ERD = 13 April 1945 LRD = 21 May 1945

**LABEL TYPE CL13
(EXAMINER 4266)**

This label was used concurrently with type CL12. The label was first reported used in British Honduras in the Civil Censorship Study Group Bulletin of April 1989 but was not classified. The earliest recorded date (shown here) has manuscript "c" but the other recorded cover (LRD) does not.

Note that the centre point of the "M" does not extend down to the base line.



P.C. 90
**OPENED BY
EXAMINER 4266**

Type CL 13 Label.
ERD = 7 May 1945
LRD = 23 May 1945

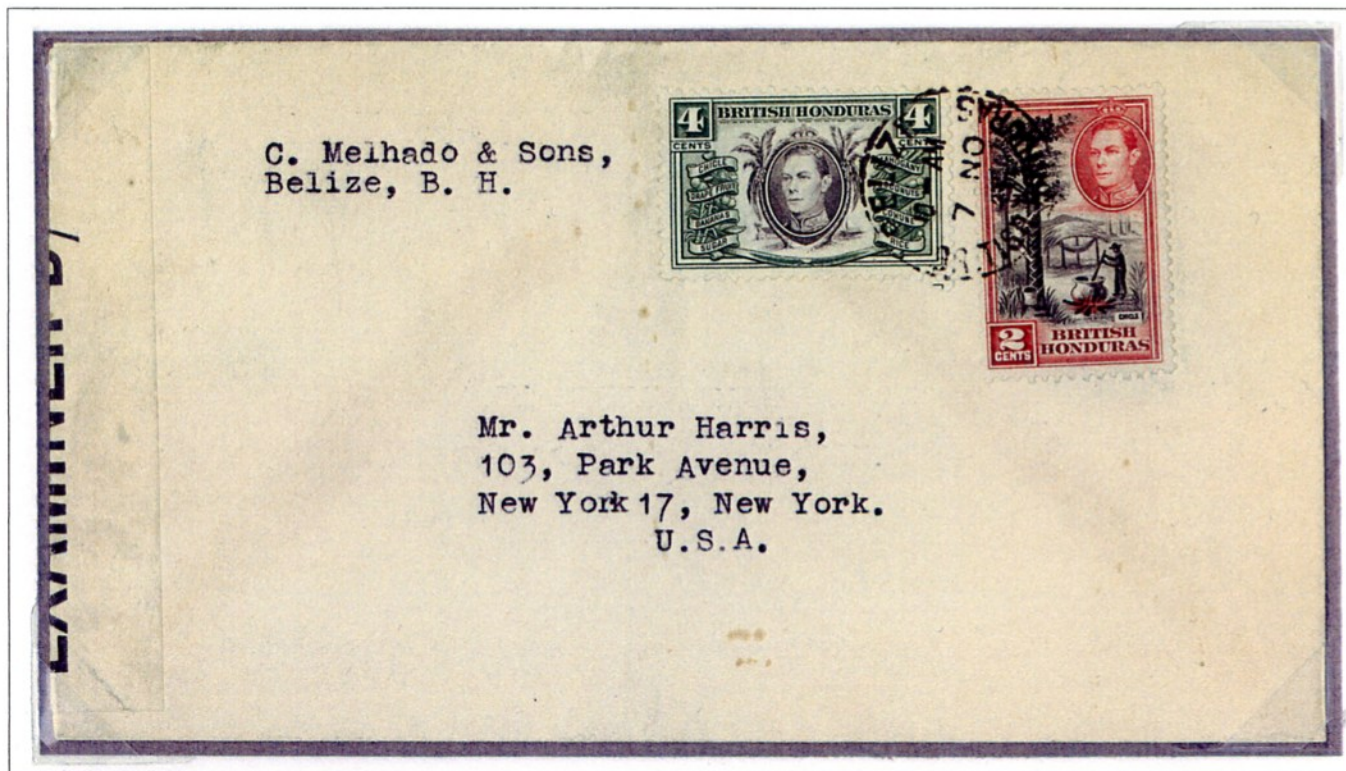
“6”
←

5 May 1945. Cover from Belize to USA opened and re-sealed by censor 4266 using label type CL13. Handstruck date (MAY - 7 1945) on label on reverse. 31c rate = 6c surface postage + 25c (15c + 10c) air mail surcharge.. Small numeral "6" on front lower left of the cover.

CENSORED IN TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

The Turks and Caicos Islands were a dependency of Jamaica and postal censorship was handled accordingly. Few covers are recorded censored in the Colony and the covers that were not opened in Grand Turk were examined in Jamaica in transit^{1,2}.

The cover below is unusual in that it must have entered the civil censorship system in Grand Turk. The cover was sent to New York by surface mail, and must have been carried via Jamaica. It would then appear as if the ship experienced problems and could not continue to New York, so the mail was off-loaded at Grand Turk where it was examined.



7 November 1944. Cover from Belize to New York opened and re-sealed by censor D/43 at Grand Turk.

P.C. 90
OPENED BY
EXAMINER D/ *43*

Type EL1 Label. ERD = 4 May 1943 LRD = 5 May 1945

- References:**
1. Turks and Caicos Island Censorship During World War II. Peter McCann. British Caribbean Philatelic Journal, Vol. 37(2), p 101-104. June 1997.
 2. British Empire Civil Censorship Devices World War II; Section 6, Canada and Colonies in the Caribbean and North and South America. Christopher Miller. Pub Civil Censorship Study Group (2006).

TYPE CH4

This handstamp is the standard Imperial Censorship type used throughout the British Commonwealth. Rogers reports only two copies recorded (each with handstamp on the reverse), but this excludes the two covers below. The reason for use is unclear as each of the two censors had a supply of labels at the time, Maybe it simply denoted mail that was passed without being opened – a result of the senders' church connection? The "I.J." in the handstamp proves that it was a British Honduras type and not a mark borrowed from another Colony.

Censor 8171a (First recorded example)



18 August 1943. Cover from Punta Gorda to USA with handstamp type CH4. Backstamped Belize 20 Aug.

Censor 8174 (ERD = 6 Jan 1943(?), LRD = 26 Jul 1944)



26 July 1944. Cover from Corozal to USA with handstamp type CH4. Backstamped Belize 20 Aug.