

Guiana (postage-rate, 1s. 3d. each card), and in the Island Territories of New Zealand, Tonga, and American Samoa (postage-rate, 3d. each card).

For the purpose of conveying seasonal greetings for Christmas and the New Year, a special greetings air letter-card was placed on sale in November, 1945.

AIRGRAPH SERVICE

The airgraph service was closed on the 31st July, 1945, following an improvement in the available mail-load capacity on aircraft operating on overseas air services which permitted the development of the more popular air letter-card service. During the two and a half years that the airgraph service was in operation, 3,633,991 airgraphs were despatched and 4,325,781 airgraphs were received. The majority of both inward and outward airgraphs were Forces messages.

OVERSEAS SURFACE MAILS

During the year fairly frequent despatches of surface mails were maintained to the United Kingdom, North America, Australia, and the East. The shipping position to the United Kingdom improved considerably following the termination of hostilities, and notwithstanding the fact that many vessels used the Cape Horn or Suez Canal routes instead of the Panama Canal route, taking approximately a week longer on the journey, the service provided for mails was very satisfactory. The absence of fast passenger-vessels plying to North America and Australia, however, resulted in mails for those countries being forwarded by cargo-vessels, and transit times suffered accordingly.

Due to irregular steamer sailings between Australia and South Africa, surface-mail communication between New Zealand and South Africa continued to be poor. No improvement in the position can be expected until steamer services between Australia and South Africa are again normal.

In the Pacific, regular services to Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, and the Cook Islands have been maintained by the steamers "Matua" and "Maui Pomare."

OVERSEAS FORCES' CORRESPONDENCE: REDUCED POSTAGE-RATES

In March, 1946, the rates of postage payable on correspondence posted in New Zealand addressed to personnel of the New Zealand and British Armed Forces overseas (including members of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan) were reduced considerably. The main reductions were: 3d. for an air letter-card instead of 6d.; 5d. for an air-mail letter instead of 1s. 6d.; and 3s. for an 11 lb. parcel instead of 4s. Simultaneously, the rates of postage payable on correspondence posted by personnel of the New Zealand section of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan were fixed to conform as near as possible to those payable by other Empire personnel of the Force.

GIFT PARCELS FOR UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

In November last, following representations made by Government, the British authorities agreed to permit civilians in Great Britain to receive from abroad gift parcels weighing up to 11 lb., subject to the provisos that not more than 7 lb. of food is included in any one parcel, that the weight of any one particular foodstuff (with the exception of cake) does not exceed 2 lb., and that not more than one gift parcel a month is received by any one addressee. The British authorities have stressed that infringements of these conditions may result in parcels being confiscated on arrival. Formerly, the weight limit of gift parcels for civilians in the United Kingdom was 5 lb. and the contents could consist wholly of food.

Gift parcels for persons in the European countries to which the parcel-post service has been restored are accepted up to 11 lb. in weight on the same conditions as parcels for persons in Great Britain, except that the total weight of food included in any one parcel must not exceed 5 lb.