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Front cover illustration: *Part of the December 1944 BOAC “Lyneham Base Operations” aircraft movement chart referred to in the article by John Wilson to be found on pages 40 – 41.*

Editorial

Welcome to another edition of the Gazette and a particularly warm welcome to new members Colin Searle and John Sims. Colin specialises in Gibraltar air mail, as you will see on pages within because he has contributed two articles already, for which many thanks Colin.

This edition is somewhat larger than normal, mainly due to the fact that Ed Wolf, who has been locked down in Sydney, has used his time most profitably by contributing thirty of the forty one pages. This does mean though that without him this would be an extremely thin edition and so, once again, I ask you all to try to make a contribution to future issues. These do not have to be long articles. Good examples in this issue are those by John Wilson and one of Colin Searles. Both of these feature a single cover and are just one page long. Surely it is not an onerous task to pick a favorite cover and briefly tell its story?

Of course, our regular contributors to the magazine have also been the regular contributors to the Zoom meetings. Unfortunately, this has resulted in them using up all their possible topics on Zoom with little or nothing left for the magazine, so it is even more pressing that others step in to help out by contributing.

In his articles in this issue Ed Wolf has analysed past studies of Indian mail carried on the second Imperial Airways flights to and from Australia and included images of some very scarce covers. He has also painstakingly transcribed reports from local newspapers which recorded aviation events at Darwin in 1931 which will provide those interested with much fascinating detail.

I always have a little difficulty coming up with an image for the front cover. After I incorporated John Wilson's article into the magazine I thought it would be a good idea to show the part of the BOAC chart which enabled John to tell the story of his cover. Unfortunately, the original of the chart is dark and rather unclear. However, I think it is important to show this primary source of information and I hope you agree, although it does make an unusual cover illustration.

Below is a copy from the front cover of the BOAC "Staff News" magazine, March 1947 edition, showing the ladies who produced the aircraft movement charts at that time.

Christmas is looming yet again and let us hope that it will be at least a little easier than last year for friends and families to get together. I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a safe and healthy New Year.



A glimpse of the Operational Planning chart room at Airways Terminal, where progress of all Corporation flights are plotted. Right to left are: Miss I. M. Barry (in charge), the Misses S. Howell, A. Challen, M. Morley and A. Anness

Indian Aerophilatelists and the 1931 Second Imperial Experimental Flight to Australia.

By Ed Wolf

The second attempt to fly all the way to Australia from England had been planned for take-off on Saturday April 25 1931 from Croydon exactly three weeks after the first flight. The same Argosy G-AAEJ *City of Coventry* was used to carry the mail items bound for Australia and New Zealand made up in six bags. There were two bags for Sydney which would have included the New Zealand mail and one bag each for Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth. There were other bags on board as well particularly mail for India and 260 items were apparently sent from London bound for Calcutta.

Unlike the previous service Imperial Airways did not produce a special envelope to commemorate this event. The franking at ¼d per half ounce to Australia and New Zealand was the same as the previous flight, as was the 1/- for the Strait Settlements and the Malay States.



There were only 101 letters sent from London to Darwin. Items were backstamped May 11, 1931.

The usual Central European route was followed as far as Skopje where the mail was transferred to the train for Salonika. At Salonika on April 29, the flying boat Short Calcutta G-EBVH *City of Athens* transported the mail through Athens to Alexandria in Egypt. Transferred once more to a motor car, the mail was delivered to Cairo for the onward flight by DH66 G-EBMY *City of Baghdad* as far as Karachi on April 30.

At Karachi on May 3, the DH66 G-ABCP *City of Jodhpur* took the mail to Delhi via Jodhpur. For the Karachi- Delhi leg, the aircraft owned by Imperial Airways had been chartered to Indian State Air Service to overcome some internal politics and Imperial Airways could not claim for that portion of the journey.



The 3-line cachet was applied unofficially by Stephen Smith subsequent to the flight.

Items carried from Karachi beyond Delhi, were subject to a claim for reimbursement by Imperial Airways and Traffic Manager Dennis Handover did so in a separate letter dated August 19, 1931 to the British postal Authorities for the following:

Karachi – Allahabad	90 grams
Karachi – Calcutta	130 grams
Karachi – Akyab	30 grams
Karachi – Rangoon	40 grams
Delhi – Allahabad	354 grams
Delhi – Calcutta	1019 grams
Delhi – Rangoon	297 grams
Allahabad – Calcutta	227 grams
Allahabad – Akyab	30 grams
Allahabad – Rangoon	28 grams
Calcutta – Akyab	280 grams
Calcutta – Rangoon	765 grams

The total claim was for 3.29 kg. or about 660 items assuming an average of 5 grams per item. This appears a severe case of “penny pinching” by Imperial Airways, but provided us philatelists with information not otherwise available! It is also interesting that Handover used the metric system by quoting the weights in grams when the British Post Office applied postal rates based on Imperial half ounces. As there are 28 grams to an ounce it would appear that at least some of the conversions were from the Imperial measure in the first place.

The Indian Government rejected Handover’s claim as the mail was carried by Indian State Air Service at least part of the way in the case of the Karachi covers.

Jal Cooper [1] provided quantities for some of the destinations which allows us to convert Handover’s weights into item numbers and averages. For example for Karachi- Calcutta Cooper states 20 items thus providing an average weight for those items as 6.5 grams.

Appendix 2 records the quantities arrived at by Cooper and various other authors. It will be seen that in the main Cooper’s quantities were accepted and adopted by others and that the variance from them is negligible.

Author A.R.Binns [2] provided a further break-up of the Delhi-Rangoon and Rangoon started covers, thus adding to the overall knowledge, though we have no idea of the source of his information.

Delhi – Rangoon	10
Rangoon – Singapore	17
Rangoon – Batavia	?
Rangoon – Brisbane	5
Rangoon – Sydney	10
Rangoon – Melbourne	6

Pickering [3] records “from five ports of call in India 585 items were picked up, of which 261 were for Indian destinations; 162 for Burma; 55 for Singapore and 96 for Australia and New Zealand.” Presumably the five ports were Karachi, Jodhpur, Delhi, Allahabad and Calcutta.

Using Cooper’s quantities against Pickering’s version we end up with a slightly different result, however the overall quantities are relatively small.

Destination↓	Karachi	Jodhpur	Delhi	Allahabad	Calcutta	Total
Jodhpur	?					
Delhi	?	?				
Allahabad	?	6	?			
Calcutta	20	10	150	40		220
Akyab	3	4	6	3	20	36
Rangoon	?	6	?	10	95	111
Total	23	20	156	53	115	367

Even though Jodhpur was technically not part of the experimental mail service there were some 10 covers created there by Stephen Smith to record the flight as far as Calcutta.

The flight East beyond Delhi, on May 5, was really the “Experimental” portion and was flown by Imperial Airways without any interference from Indian politics. It was also the portion where Indian philatelists were keen to record the events. At each of the intermediate stops across the sub-continent such as the one at Allahabad, mail was added to the Eastbound aircraft but not made up into a specific bag. Gordon Anstee [4] recorded a total of 509 items for the various stops en-route of this flight as it went through India and beyond. Unfortunately, he did not indicate his source of information. We will refer to his results for the various stops.



Again, note the same 3-line cachet this time apparently “used” between Delhi and Akyab.

The mail was carried from Delhi by DH 66 G-AARY *City of Karachi* as far as Akyab via Allahabad and Calcutta. The *City of Karachi* had arrived at Delhi early in the day on May 5 from its first westward journey with the first Experimental service. It was quickly relieved of its UK bound mail and loaded with the mail bound for Australia and took off for Calcutta that same day and arriving at Akyab the next day, May 6.



The 3-line cachet used in black as a variation to the theme here “used” between Allahabad and Calcutta.

At Akyab, Kingsford Smith was waiting in the Fokker F.VIIb 3m VH-USU *Southern Cross*. Smith had been at Akyab since May 3 to perform the shuttle service for the missing aircraft which had crashed on the first outward service at Timor.



In addition to the 3-line cachet a neat 3-word sentence described the cover's journey.

Following the transfer of the mail, Smith took off and flew to Rangoon the same day for an overnight stop. He picked up some mail at Rangoon destined for Alor Star and Singapore. This mail was meant to be on the first experimental flight from Tavoy but was not picked up earlier as the first flight had not called at Tavoy so ended up waiting at Rangoon.

Such mail was NOT delivered when Kingsford Smith reached Alor Star on May 7, where the Tavoy mail should have been dropped off (non-delivery is indicated by the faint inverted Singapore May 9, backstamp). The circular backstamp of Kedah 10 My 1931 shows the delay caused by flying it to Singapore.



Note the date of sending was April 17, 1931.

Due to the predominant printing, there is only a faint outline of the Singapore postal marking at the base. The Kedah cancellation is clear of any printing.

The *Southern Cross* arrived late at Singapore, much to the consternation of the Acting Secretary for Postal Affairs of the Federated Malay States, [5] who in a letter to the London Postal Authorities dated 15th May 1931 wrote:

“Difficulties and uncertainty was also experienced in connection with the dates and times of arrival of the second outward flight. The aircraft however arrived at Singapore at 11.45 am on the 8th of May instead of on the 7th as was notified in the original schedule.”



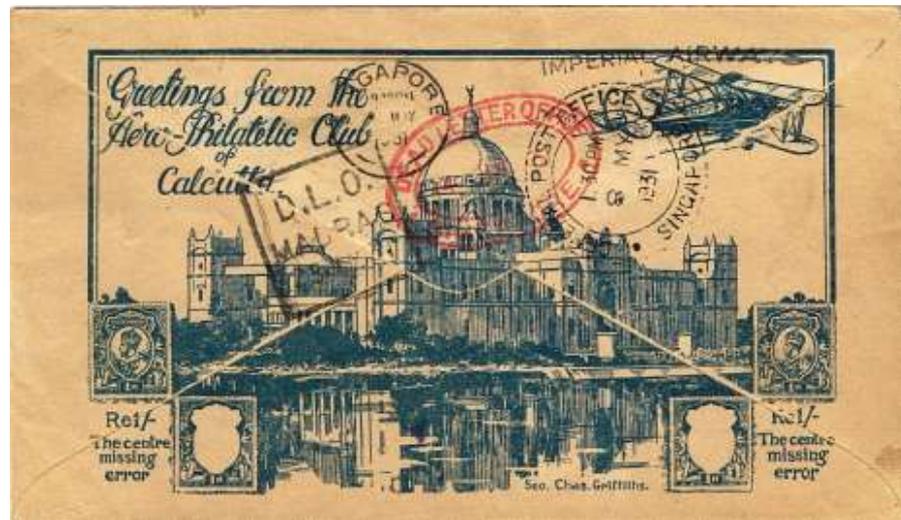


The cover was held in Singapore for two months, then returned to the sender after being unclaimed.

On the reverse, the Imperial Airways commemorative cancel is just visible at top right.

At Singapore, the special postmark used for the first experimental service, with the line "First Flight" omitted, was applied to the mail received and a small quantity of outward mail from Singapore also had the cancel applied to its franking. The quality of the impression was extremely poor, most are very faint.

Three separate bags of mail were added in Singapore, one each for Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne and in addition a further three bags were made up for mail from Penang to the same capitals. It is not clear whether the *Southern Cross* called at Penang or the mail bags were forwarded to Singapore.



Kingsford Smith's effort to accelerate the mail is indicated by his overflying Batavia and landing at Sourabaja on May 9 and arriving at Koepang on May 10 where he picked up the stranded Imperial Airways radio operator Mr. Sang from the fatal *City of Cairo*. If there was any mail added in the Dutch East Indies it did not make it into a separate bag

The *Southern Cross* completed its charter by arriving at Darwin at 2.15pm on May 11 where Smith handed over the mail consisting of the 12 bags, 6 from the UK, 3 from Singapore and 3 from Penang.

At Darwin itself, mail was created for the onward south journey via Qantas DH50J VH-ULG *Hippomenes* flown by Russell Tapp on May 12. Three bags were created, one each for Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, thus making a total of 15 bags heading south once Australian shores had been reached.

An overnight stop was made at Cloncurry and the mail arrived at Brisbane at 4.20 pm on May 13 where the local mail was backstamped that very afternoon. The next day mail for Sydney (and New Zealand) as well as the Melbourne bag were loaded on the ANA Avro X VH-UMI *Southern Moon* flown by P.G. Taylor to Sydney where the Sydney bag was received at the GPO and backstamped May 14. The New Zealand mail then went by steamer arriving at Wellington on May 18 and the mail for Christchurch on May 19.

The Melbourne bag, on arrival in Sydney, was transferred to ANA Avro X *Southern Sky* which proceeded to Melbourne flown by Eric Chaseling, arriving the same day. Adelaide and Perth mail were sent on by rail to Adelaide and then by air to Perth from there.

For completeness the following is the official record as supplied by the Post Master General’s Annual report for 1930-1931 on the question of quantities delivered to Australia. It must be tenciled that a significant number of items were “passengers” for part of the journey only and did not reach Australia at all.

Postal articles to Australia on the Second Imperial Airways Experimental Flight:

For	Number of articles	Net weight lb. oz.
New South Wales	2,288	65 1½
Victoria	1,355	38 5½
Queensland	541	12 13¼
South Australia	299	7 13
Western Australia	316	9 6
Tasmania	59	1 7½
Darwin	101	1 14½
New Zealand	272	*(incl. In NSW)
Total	5,231	136 13¼

AIR MAIL SERVICE FROM DARWIN TO BRISBANE. DATE 12/3/31

Mails for	Mails from					Total number of bags received	Signature of person receiving the mail	Date of arrival of mail	Time of arrival of mail
	London	Calcutta	Rangoon	Singapore	Darwin				
Brisbane	1			1	1	4	B. Hudson 15.10.31	13.5.31	5.10 PM
Sydney	2			1	1	5			
Melbourne	1			1	1	4			
Adelaide	1					1			
Perth	1					1			
Total number of bags despatched from each office						333			

Hudson Fysh
 Pilot
 Darwin - Brisbane

A signature must always be given by the Receiving Officer for the mails delivered to him.
 Particulars of mails and the total number of bags despatched must be entered at each air port.
 The total number of bags received at each air port must be inserted by the receiving officer in the column provided.



Waybill for Incoming mail from the 2nd Imperial Airways Experimental flight.

Signed subsequently by Hudson Fysh, this document refers to the Darwin –Brisbane sector of the second inward flight flown by Russell Tapp. (Fysh had flown the mail North on the first outward flight).

Appendix 1

Cooper, Anstee, Binns etc. comparisons on 2nd Experimental East:

	2 nd Experimental East						'42 Price
Description	To	Cooper Qty	Anstee	Binns	Handover grams	Cooper Rupees	
Karachi	Allahabad	?	?		90	?	
	Calcutta	20	20		130	75	
	Akyab	3	3	3	30	150	
	Rangoon	?	?		40	?	
	Victoria Point	1	?	1		?	
	Singapore	?	?			?	
	Darwin	?	?			?	
	Aust Cities	?	?			?	
Jodhpur	Allahabad	6	6	6		100	
	Calcutta	10	10	10		75	
	Akyab	4	4	4		75	
	Rangoon	6	6			75	
	Victoria Point	2	2	2		150	
	Singapore	?	?			?	
	Darwin	?	?			?	
	Aust Cities	?	?			?	
Delhi	Allahabad	?	?		354	25	
	Calcutta	150	147		1019	10	
	Akyab	6	6	6		75	
	Rangoon	?	?	10	297	?	
	Victoria Point	1	2	2		?	
	Singapore	?	?			?	
	Darwin	?	?			?	
	Aust Cities	?	?			?	
Allahabad	Calcutta	40	37		227	50	
	Akyab	3	3	3	30	100	
	Rangoon	10	10		28	75	
	Victoria Point	1	2	2		?	
	Singapore	?	?			?	
	Darwin	?	?			?	
	Aust Cities	?	?			?	
Calcutta	Akyab	20	20		280	100	
	Rangoon	95	94		765	15	
	Victoria Point	50	48			15	
	Singapore	17	17			50	
	Darwin	50	51			30	
	Aust Cities	21	21			40	
Akyab	Rangoon	?	?			?	
	Victoria Point	2	?	2		?	
	Singapore	?	?			?	
	Darwin	?	?			?	
	Aust Cities	?	?			?	
Rangoon	Victoria Point	?	?			?	
	Singapore	?	?	17		?	
	Darwin	?	?			?	
	Aust Cities	?	?	21		?	
		518	509	89	3290		

Appendix 2

Gordon Anstee Article published "India Post Vol. 2" about May 1968:

EXPERIMENTAL AIRMAILS - ENGLAND-AUSTRALIA-ENGLAND 1931

by Gordon R. Anstee E.R.D.

PART II - SECOND EXPERIMENTAL SERVICE

ENGLAND TO AUSTRALIA 25th April, 1931.

The mail which left Croydon on the 25th April 1931 arrived at Dum Dum aerodrome, Calcutta on the "City of Karachi" on the 5th of May being piloted by Mr. Alcock.

The mail delivered in Calcutta was made up as follows:-

London to Calcutta	- 260 items
Delhi (1st packet) to Calcutta	- 139 "
" (2nd ") " "	- 8 "
Karachi to Calcutta	- 20 "
Allababad to Calcutta	- 37 "

(The small mail from Jodhpur is included in the Delhi lot).

After delivering the above mails to the Postal Authorities the undernoted mails from Calcutta were handed over to Mr. Alcock:-

Calcutta to Akyab	- 20 items
" " Rangoon	- 94 "
" " Victoria Point	- 48 "
" " Singapore	- 17 "
" " Darwin	- 51 "
" " Sydney	- 10 "
" " Melbourne	- 6 "
" " Brisbane	- 5 "

On Wednesday the 6th May the "City of Karachi" left Dum Dum Aerodrome, and flew to Akyab where the mails were made over to Kingsford Smith who left the same day in the "Southern Cross" for Darwin via Rangoon, Victoria Point, Singapore and Batavia. Melbourne was reached on the 14th May.

Covers and cards on the Indian and Burma Stages:-

Karachi to Allababad, Calcutta (20 items), Akyab (3), Rangoon, Victoria Point, Australian Cities and New Zealand.

Jodhpur to Allababad (6 items), Calcutta (10), Akyab (4), Rangoon (6), Victoria Point (2), Australian Cities and New Zealand.

Delhi to Allababad, Calcutta (147 items), Akyab (6), Rangoon, Victoria Point (2) and Australian Cities.

Allababad to Calcutta (37 items), Akyab (3), Rangoon (10), Victoria Point (2) and Australian Cities.

A cachet (see Type 12a) in violet, purple or black was applied at each of the five Indian airports and at Akyab.

Calcutta to Akyab (20 items), Rangoon (94), Victoria Point (48),
Singapore (17), Darwin (51) and Australian Cities) (21)
and New Zealand)

Akyab to Rangoon, Victoria Point (2 items) and Australian Cities.

Rangoon to Victoria Point, Singapore, Darwin, Australian Cities and New Zealand.

Victoria Point to Alovstar, Singapore, Batavia, Bina and Darwin.

A cachet (see Type 13) in purple was applied at either Rangoon or Singapore.

2nd. Experimental Flight,
England.....Australia,
"CITY OF KARACHI."

Type 12a.

VIA THE AIR TRAIL BLAZED BY THE
ROSS SMITHS AND COBHAM.

ہوائی جہازت



2nd. Experimental Flight
Australia - England.

Type 14.

AUSTRALIA - ENGLAND
2ND. EXPERIMENTAL FLIGHT.



ASMANI GHARI.

اسمانی گاری * آسمانی گاڑی

Type 15.

AUSTRALIA-ENGLAND

SECOND OFFICIAL
TRIAL FLIGHT

CALCUTTA-KARACHI

Type 10.

2nd. Experimental Flight.
By "SOUTHERN CROSS" VH - USU.
Pilot. Commander C. Kingsford Smith.

Type 13.

اسمانی گاری



आसमानी गाड़ी

ASMANI GHARI.
Carried by the West Australian
Airways Air Liner, "V. H. UJD"
Pilot.:-MR. R. P. MULLARD

Type 16.

AUSTRALIA-ENGLAND

SECOND OFFICIAL
TRIAL FLIGHT

CALCUTTA-JODHPUR

Type 17.

اسمانی گاری



ASMAN KA GHARI.

Via.:-W. A. A. "V. H. UJD"
PILOT. MR. R. P. MULLARD.
From. ALLAHABAD.

Type 19.

References:

- [1] Jal Cooper "Stamps of India" India's Stamp Journal 1942, Bombay.
- [2] A.R. Binns "Asiatic Air Mail", The Philatelist, Dec. 1960 p64.
- [3] John Pickering "The routes of the Valkyries", Picton Press, Chippenham, Great Britain 1977, p21.
- [4] Gordon Anstee "Experimental Airmails England-Australia-England 1931" India Post Vol.2 May 1968.
- [5] Post 33/679-80 Letter from Sec. for Postal Affairs S.S.&.F.S to London Postal Authority.

Indian Aerophilatelists and the 1931 Second Imperial Experimental Flight from Australia.

By Ed Wolf

As a final fling in its experimental flights, Imperial prepared special envelopes of similar design to the ones used for the first return flight from Australia. There were two changes made. One was the removal of the word FIRST in the top left corner of the envelope and replacement of it by the word PER. Thus the caption now read PER “ALL THE WAY /BY AIR” Royal Mail.” The other was a change in the substitution of Cairo for Alexandria on the bottom of the envelope.



In the space for the stamps the rates to various destination was shown. 1/11d. being the correct franking here. At 1/10½d. this cover was thus ½d. underpaid without being taxed on arrival.

The return flight left Melbourne on May 15 1931 in the ANA Avro X VH-UNA *Southern Sun* for Sydney with the South Australian, Tasmania and Victorian mail under the command of James Mollison who was later to have some fame in the Melbourne Centenary Air Race. The aircraft stayed overnight in Sydney where it was loaded with the Sydney and New Zealand mail and departed for Brisbane on May 16 with the same crew. The next day, May 17, the mail was transferred to Qantas DH 50J VH-ULG *Hippomenes* and the Queensland mail was added. After an intermediate tenciled stop at Camooweal, for an overnight stay, Hudson Fysh as pilot and Managing Director of Qantas with Dudley Wright as engineer, reached Darwin on May 18. This was the last time that Fysh flew as a pilot for his company.

According to the official records [1] by the time the mail left Darwin on May 19 it consisted of the following items.

Singapore	284
Rangoon	10
Calcutta	161
Karachi	550
UK, Irish Free State, Europe	5646
Total	6651

This was a far cry from the quantity shipped on the first flight (31,584) and indicates that there was no major interest in this flight from the general public nor the philatelists in Australia. The flight warranted no mention in the article by Dr. D.J. Banerjee [2] on the Stephen Smith catalogue of Indian flights even though there was still quite some activity amongst the Indian philatelists.

The beginning of the Imperial Airways “Experimental” connection was from Darwin when Roger Mollard, took off on May 19. Mollard had negotiated the purchase of a West Australia Airlines DH66 VH-UJQ to

replace the crashed DH 66 aircraft *City of Cairo* wrecked at Timor. He had flown it part of the way from Perth with the Perth mail to Darwin.



Part of the mail added at Brisbane on the 2nd Imperial Experimental return flight dropped at Singapore.

A good strike of the Imperial special cancellation applied at Singapore before forwarding on to Kuala Lumpur.



A cover prepared by Western Australian philatelist Mitchell was posted too early for the flight to Darwin. It was sent East by the then available route by air to Adelaide, by train to Melbourne and then by air through ANA to Brisbane via Sydney to join the Qantas flight to Darwin. It was not flown by the replacement aircraft as indicated on the cover. The backstamp of Darwin is the evidence for this assertion.

The first stop after Darwin was at Koepang the site of the crash of the first Experimental venture by the DH 66 *City of Cairo*, where the replacement Hercules overnighted. No mail is known from this port of call.

The next day, May 20, pilot Roger Mollard reached Sourabaja on the island of Java where again an overnight stop was taken and the aircraft tencile. According to Douglas Walker [3] although there was New Zealand mail for Java, this was not offloaded at Sourabaja, but was overcarried to Singapore as it was in the closed Singapore bag.

The flight plan for the 2nd Imperial Experimental service West:

	1931 Imperial 2 nd Experimental Return Flight				
Arrive	Place	Depart	Notes	Aircraft	Coy
	Melbourne	May-15		Southern Sun	ANA
May-15	Sydney	May-16	Overnight	Southern Sun	ANA
May-16	Brisbane	May-17	Overnight	Southern Sun	ANA
May-17	Charleville	May-17		Hippomenes	Qantas
May-17	Longreach	May-17		Hippomenes	Qantas
May-17	Cloncurry	May-17	Overnight	Hippomenes	Qantas
May-17	Camooweal	May-18		Hippomenes	Qantas
May-18	Daly Waters	May-18		Hippomenes	Qantas
May-18	Darwin	May-19	Overnight	VH-UJQ	Imperial
May-19	Koepang	May-20	Overnight	VH-UJQ	Imperial
May-20	Rambang	May-21	Overnight	VH-UJQ	Imperial
May-21	Sourabaja	May-22	Overnight	VH-UJQ	Imperial
May-22	Singapore	May-23	Overnight	VH-UJQ	Imperial
May-23	Alor Star	May-24	Overnight	VH-UJQ	Imperial
May-24	Victoria Point	May-24		VH-UJQ	Imperial
May-24	Rangoon	May-25	Overnight	VH-UJQ	Imperial
May-25	Akyab	May-25		VH-UJQ	Imperial
May-25	Calcutta	May-26	Overnight	VH-UJQ	Imperial
May-26	Allahabad	May-26		VH-UJQ	Imperial
May-26	Delhi	May-27	Overnight	City of Karachi	ISAS
May-27	Jodhpur	May-27		City of Karachi	ISAS
May-27	Karachi	May-28	Overnight	City of Delhi	Imperial
May-28	Gwadur	May-28		City of Delhi	Imperial
May-28	Charbar	May-28		City of Delhi	Imperial
May-28	Jask	May-29	Overnight	City of Delhi	Imperial
May-29	Bushire	May-29		City of Delhi	Imperial
May-29	Basra	May-30	Overnight	City of Delhi	Imperial
May-30	Baghdad	May-30		City of Delhi	Imperial
May-30	Cairo	May-31	Overnight	City of Alexandria	Imperial
May-31	Corfu	Jun-03		City of Alexandria	Imperial
Jun-03	Genoa	Jun-03		Train	
Jun-03	Basle	Jun-04	Overnight	City of Glasgow	Imperial
Jun-04	Croydon			City of Glasgow	

On May 21 the journey to Singapore was completed as is evidence by the back stamp on the cover addressed to Kuala Lumpur. The special cancellation that had been used for the first experimental flight was again utilised in the electric cancelling machine, but with the words "First Flight" omitted. Generally, the strike was very poor and the complete date and time is often not available. In the example shown we can make out that the cancelling occurred at 6 pm on May 22, but the minutes are obscured if they were present.

For the remainder of the journey to Karachi the majority of authors have "skipped over" the details. The exceptions are Peter Wingent [4] who supplies the dates and Douglas Walker who provides some additional facts. Walker postulates that an overnight stop was made at Alor Star on May 23 based on the fact that Rangoon was reached two days after leaving Singapore.

Eustis [5] claims that there was mail from Victoria Point which would have been the next port of call after Alor Star and this is confirmed by Jal Cooper [6] in his summary of the flight as shown in the Appendix 2. According to Anstee, the mail from Victoria Point was shipped to Rangoon by steamer and went by air from there.

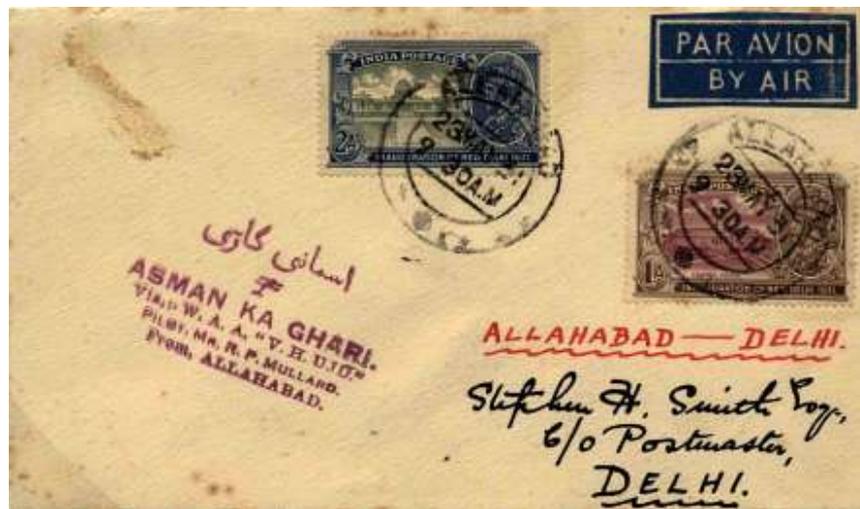


The green cachet was applied subsequently by Stephen Smith.

Mail from New Zealand was delivered to Rangoon on May 24 and the aircraft flew on to Akyab and Calcutta on the same day. At Akyab mail prepared for the occasion by Stephen Smith was picked up for intermediate Indian cities



The green cachet was applied subsequently by Stephen Smith.



The name of the pilot was incorrectly recorded on the purple cachet as Mullard when it was Mollard.

An overnight stop was made at Calcutta where considerable mail was added to the flight. Departure was on May 26 to arrive at Delhi on the same day having called at Allahabad along the way.

At Delhi the flight terminated for the ex WAA aircraft on May 27 and the mail was transferred to the DH66 *City of Karachi* for onward flight by the chartered Indian State Air Service to Karachi which was reached on the same day.

From Karachi the mail was transferred to the regular Imperial Airways DH66 *City of Delhi* as far as Cairo then across the Mediterranean by *City of Alexandria* flying boat to Corfu where there was an unexplained two days delay before proceeding to the Italian port of Genoa. A train journey was required from Genoa to Basle where the air service recommenced.

The final leg of the experimental service was by the Argosy *City of Glasgow* arriving at Croydon two days late on June 4.

Appendix 1.

Gordon Anstee's article published in "India Post Vol 2 "about May 1968

AUSTRALIA TO ENGLAND 16th MAY 1931

On the 16th May 1931 the second return experimental flight left Melbourne and picked up the New Zealand mails at Sydney later the same day. The return flight was operated by Imperial Airways with a D.H. "Hercules", bought from West Australian Airways, as far as Delhi, the pilot of the "City of Cairo" (which ...?... at Kupang, Timor Island) being in charge. The plane arrived at Calcutta on Monday the 25th May, three days later than the notified date of arrival. After an uneventful journey the mails reached London on the 4th June.

The following is a statement of the mails delivered and also picked up from Calcutta:-

Mails delivered in Calcutta -

From Australia	236 items
" Akyab	17 "
" Rangoon	54 "

Mails picked up from Calcutta -

For Allahabad	61 items
" Delhi	37 "
" Jodhpur	8 "
" Karachi	366 "

(This Karachi mail includes those addressed to places outside India).

Covers and Cards on the Burma and Indian Stages:

Victoria Point to Akyab, Rangoon, Calcutta, Allahabad, Delhi, Jodhpur, Karachi and Croydon (all the above mail was first sent by steamer to Rangoon and thence by air from Rangoon with the exception of the mail for Calcutta. Mail for Calcutta was sent by steamer from Rangoon).

Rangoon (where cachet (see Type 14) in purple applied corrected to Ross Smiths in red ink) to Akyab, Calcutta, Allahabad, Delhi, Jodhpur, Karachi and Croydon.

Akyab (where cachet (see Type 15) in green applied) to Calcutta, Allahabad, Delhi, Jodhpur, Karachi and Croydon.

Calcutta (where cachet (see Type 16) in purple applied on mail to Allahabad and Delhi and cachets types 17 and 18 in black applied) to Allahabad, Delhi, Jodhpur, Karachi, Baghdad, Gaza, Paris and Croydon.

Allahabad (where cachet (see type 19) in purple or black applied) to Delhi, Jodhpur, Karachi and Croydon.

Interspersed between the First Outward and Second Return Experimental Flights the normal Indian air mail service had resumed the South European route, which although slightly longer than the Central European one, enabled mails to be speeded up by the introduction of the Short "Kent" class of flying boat on the Mediterranean section of the route. As before the Basle Geneva lap was by mail. Part of the acceleration effected on the Indian route was due to the introduction of night flying between Baghdad and Basra in April 1931. The European portion of the Second Experimental Return Flight followed the South European route from Athens.

Until the Imperial Airways extension beyond India, British Mails were accepted via Amsterdam for the Dutch line to the Middle East, and were also carried by the Special Dutch Flight to Australia in May 1931.

2nd. Experimental Flight,
England.....Australia,
"CITY OF KARACHI."

Type 12a.

VIA THE AIR TRAIL BLAZED BY THE
ROSS SMITHS AND COBHAM.
ہر ای جہازت



2nd. Experimental Flight
Australia - England.

Type 14.

AUSTRALIA - ENGLAND
2ND. EXPERIMENTAL FLIGHT.

ASMANI GHARI.
اسمانی گازی * آسمانی گاڑی

Type 15.

AUSTRALIA-ENGLAND

SECOND OFFICIAL
TRIAL FLIGHT

CALCUTTA-KARACHI

Type 18.

2nd. Experimental Flight.
By "SOUTHERN CROSS" VH - USU.
Pilot, Commander C. Kingsford Smith.

Type 13.

اسمانی گازی * آسمانی گاڑی

ASMANI GHARI.
Carried by the West Australian
Airways Air Liner, "V. H. UJD"
Pilot, :-MR. R. P. MULLARD

Type 16.

AUSTRALIA-ENGLAND

SECOND OFFICIAL
TRIAL FLIGHT

CALCUTTA-JODHPUR

Type 17.

اسمانی گازی
ASMAN KA GHARI.
Via, :-W. A. A. "V. H. UJD"
PILOT, MR. R. P. MULLARD.
From, ALLAHABAD.

Type 19.

Appendix 2

Cooper & Anstee comparison on quantities with pricing is shown on the next page.

	2 nd Experimental West					42 Price
		Cooper		Anstee		Cooper
Description	To	Qty		Qty		Rupees
Australia	Calcutta	?		236		
Victoria Point	Rangoon	?				?
	Akyab	1				?
	Calcutta	?				?
	Allahabad	1				?
	Delhi	1				?
	Jodhpur	1				?
	Karachi	1				?
	Croydon	40				50
Rangoon	Akyab	8				100
	Calcutta	55		54		40
	Allahabad	6				100
	Delhi	25				50
	Jodhpur	4				75
	Karachi	?				?
	Intermediates	?				?
	Croydon	?				?
Akyab	Calcutta	17		17		30
	Allahabad	7				75
	Delhi	10				50
	Jodhpur	?				?
	Karachi	?				?
	Intermediates	?				?
	Croydon	?				?
Calcutta	Allahabad	60		61		20
	Delhi	40		37		25
	Jodhpur	8		8		50
	Karachi	70		?		15
	Intermediates	?		366		?
	Croydon	?				?
Allahabad	Delhi	45				15
	Jodhpur	10				30
	Karachi	6				75
	Intermediates	?				?
	Croydon	?				?
Total		416		779		

References:

- [1] National Archives File C3898 239/5 *Mail Transport air first flights –Australia –London 1931-1981.*
- [2] Dr.D.J.Banerjee “*Stephen Smith’s List of Official etc. Flights*” The FIAF Journal 1993.
- [3] Douglas Walker “*Airmails of New Zealand Vol. 2*” 1986. The Airmail Society of New Zealand Inc.
- [4] Peter Wingent “*Aircraft movements on Imperial Airways’ Eastern Route Vol. 1*” 1999 self published.
- [5] Eustis & Frommer “*The Australian Air Mail Catalogue*” 8th Ed. 2008.
- [6] Jal Cooper “*Stamps of India “ India’s Stamp Journal” 1942 Bombay.*

Gibraltar and the philatelic attempts to follow the eastward expansion of Imperial Airways 1933/1934.

By Colin Searle

Gibraltar in the 19th and early 20th century was an important maritime crossroads from the UK through the Mediterranean to the Far East and southwards to South Africa.

However, it did not have an airport until 1941. There was an established French air service linking Dakar to Paris via Casablanca, Rabat, Tangier, Barcelona and Toulouse. This was started in 1925 by CGEA (Compagnie Générale d'Entreprises Aéronautiques) and taken over by Aéropostale from 1927 until 1933 when it was merged into Air France.

Fig. 1 shows the earliest airmail cover known via Gibraltar to South Africa was probably from 1926. This went from Rabat to Tangier. The Italian shipping company Lloyd Triestino ran a regular mail service to Cape Town, which included a call at Gibraltar, which is why it was transferred there. This is the earliest cover of which I am aware, involving Gibraltar with an airmail connection.



Fig. 1 - 1926 Rabat, Morocco to Cape Town, South Africa via Gibraltar.

Gibraltar started an Airmail service in 1931 using Tangier as the point of connection. It even had a short lived seaplane service from Gibraltar harbour to Tangier harbour in late 1931 and this is commemorated by a Gibraltar 2003 stamp (Fig. 2). The first few flights were run by Capt. Edgar Percival who was the test pilot for Saunders Roe, but the plane was plagued with technical problems so it ended in early January 1932.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3/a - First Flight Gibraltar harbour to Tangier harbour. One of only 2 known covers on this flight.

July 1933 Imperial Airways extension to Calcutta

In 1933 it was announced that Imperial Airways would extend its eastern route to Calcutta. Imperial Airways had introduced a regular to from London to Karachi in 1929, and the Eastern route was gradually extended, first to Delhi in December 1929 and then to Calcutta, Rangoon and Singapore (1933).

The well-known aerophilatelists of the time, John S Davis, Capt. T Smye, Stephen Smith (in India) were quick to take advantage of Gibraltar as a starting point for some of their philatelic covers, because Gibraltar was (and still is) British. They all had connections with the Gibraltar GPO so often their covers included a mixture of GB and Gibraltar stamps.

Their first problem was how to get their covers to Gibraltar for Gibraltar stamps and postmarks to be applied. They sent multiple covers ‘under cover’ to the Gibraltar Post Office who were familiar with this practice, for example Capt. Smye had been doing this for many years with his maritime covers.

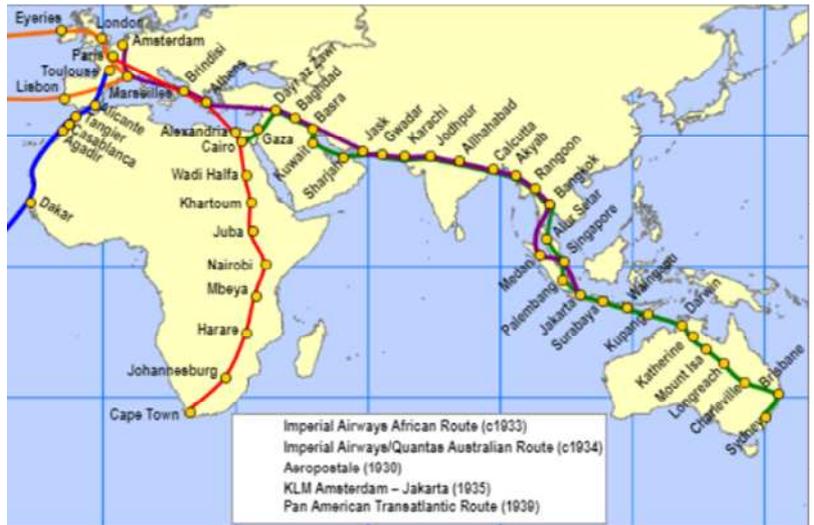


Fig. 4 - Imperial Airways routes in 1935.

The second problem was how to get them from Gibraltar to a stopping point on the Imperial Airways route. They were all sent by local steamer from Gibraltar to Tangier. Then transferred to the Air France service to London via Paris. In Croydon they were transferred to the Imperial Airways service.

The cover in Fig. 5 is interesting because presumably it started life in India as it was signed by Stephen Smith. The back of the cover has the address of John S. Davis in Liverpool, so it seems they were co-operating.



Fig. 5/a - 1933 Gibraltar to Calcutta, India.



Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

The covers shown in Figs. 6 & 7 are from John S Davis to himself, c/o the Postmaster in Delhi and Jodhpur. Both had nine pence Gibraltar stamps. Gibraltar had not officially published airmail rates to India in 1933, so he was guessing at the rate. The first published airmail rate was 10d. in 1934.

Fig. 8 shows a cover from Capt. T.A. Smye c/o. the Postmaster in Calcutta. Ten pence in mixed GB and Gibraltar stamps. The GB stamps were applied before sending initially to Gibraltar.

It is interesting that he used Gibraltar stamps for the Gib. To London portion and then GB stamps for the route to India. The rate from Gibraltar to India officially was not published by the Gibraltar GPO until 1934, however, in these early days of long distance airmail there was often confusion and people had varying interpretations. Apparently the Gibraltar Post Office must have turned a blind eye to the underpayment.



Fig. 8.



Fig. 9 – Another interpretation of the rate, this time 8d. from Gibraltar to Asansol, near Calcutta.

Extension to Rangoon, September 1933



Fig. 10 - George King, another well known cover philatelist, with 11d. to Akyab in Burma.



Fig. 11 - Capt Smye added another ½d. with 11½d. to Akyab in Burma.

Extension to Singapore, December 1933



Fig. 12.



Fig. 13.

In December 1933 the service was extended from Rangoon to Singapore via Bangkok, Bandon (Siam) and Alor Star. A cover to Bandon is shown in Fig. 12. The first service (IE 246) left London on 9th December and arrived in Singapore on December 19th. The cover in fig. 13 was unclaimed, probably because there was no prior arrangement, and therefore was returned to Gosport by sea which is why the airmail cachet was cancelled with an X.

Extension to Australia, December 1934

Finally in 1934 Imperial Airways reached Australia.

Fig. 14 shows a cover from Gibraltar to Waingapu in the Dutch East Indies with 1s.-1d. postage.

Figs. 15 and 16 show covers to Longreach and Cloncurry, stops on the way to Brisbane, Queensland. The sender of these covers lived in the Netherlands, so he was guessing when 1s.-4½d. was applied in Gibraltar. The registration rate was 3d., and the airmail rate was finally fixed at 1s 3d. in 1935.



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

References:

Aircraft Movements on Imperial Airways' Eastern Route, Vol. 1, 1927 – 1937, Peter Wingent, Winchester 1999.
The Postal History of Gibraltar by Richard Garcia and Edward Proud.

Unhappy Sudan Director of Posts ~ Part 1 ~ 1931

By Peter Wingent

On 5 March 1932 the Director of Posts & Telegraphs in Khartoum wrote a letter of complaint to the GPO, London, shown below, enclosing a list of 'irregularities' of the handling of mail by Imperial Airways during the period March 1931 to February 1932. The list is shown on the next page.

one Khartoum

76

ImA

Sudan Government
R T G P
MAR 16 32
27293
6328 1/2 20
7
32

Postgen

General Post Office,
Khartoum.

Subject: 5th March, 1932.

Regd. No.: P. & T. 7-16-2/M.

Sir,

I have the honour to enclose herewith a list shewing irregularities concerning the overcarrying of Air mails by the Imperial Airways Co. since the inauguration of the London - East African Service in March last.

Each of the irregularities has been referred to the local Airways Representative and on several occasions have been brought to the notice of the General Manager, Imperial Airways, Cairo, and it was thought a gradual improvement would be effected as the personnel of the Company became better acquainted with the procedure operative in connexion with the conveyance of mails. It will be seen however that no improvement is apparent and I should be grateful therefore, if suitable representations could be made on behalf of this Administration to the Head Office of the Imperial Airways Co. in London.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,

W. H. R.

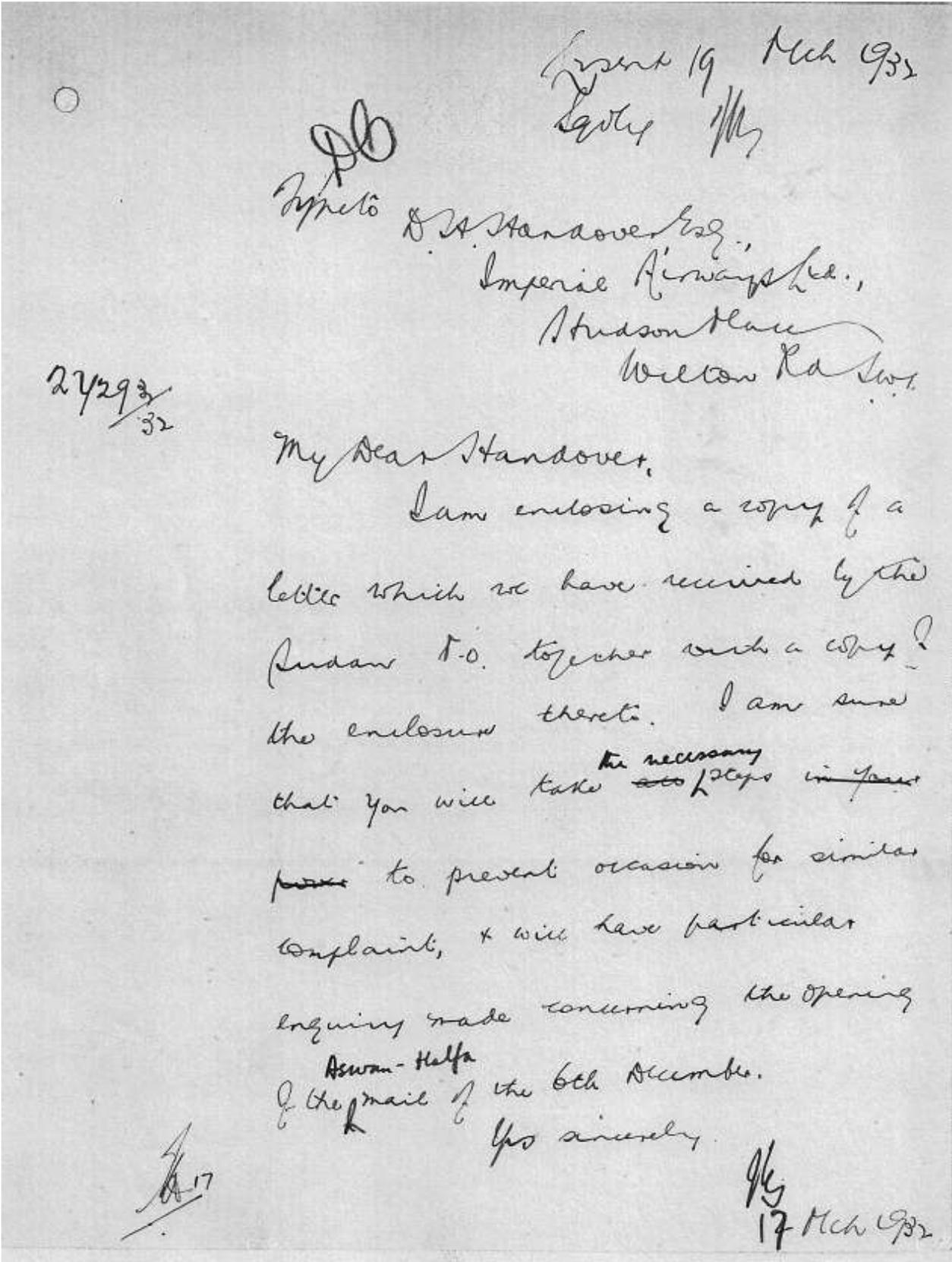
Director of Posts & Telegraphs.

7

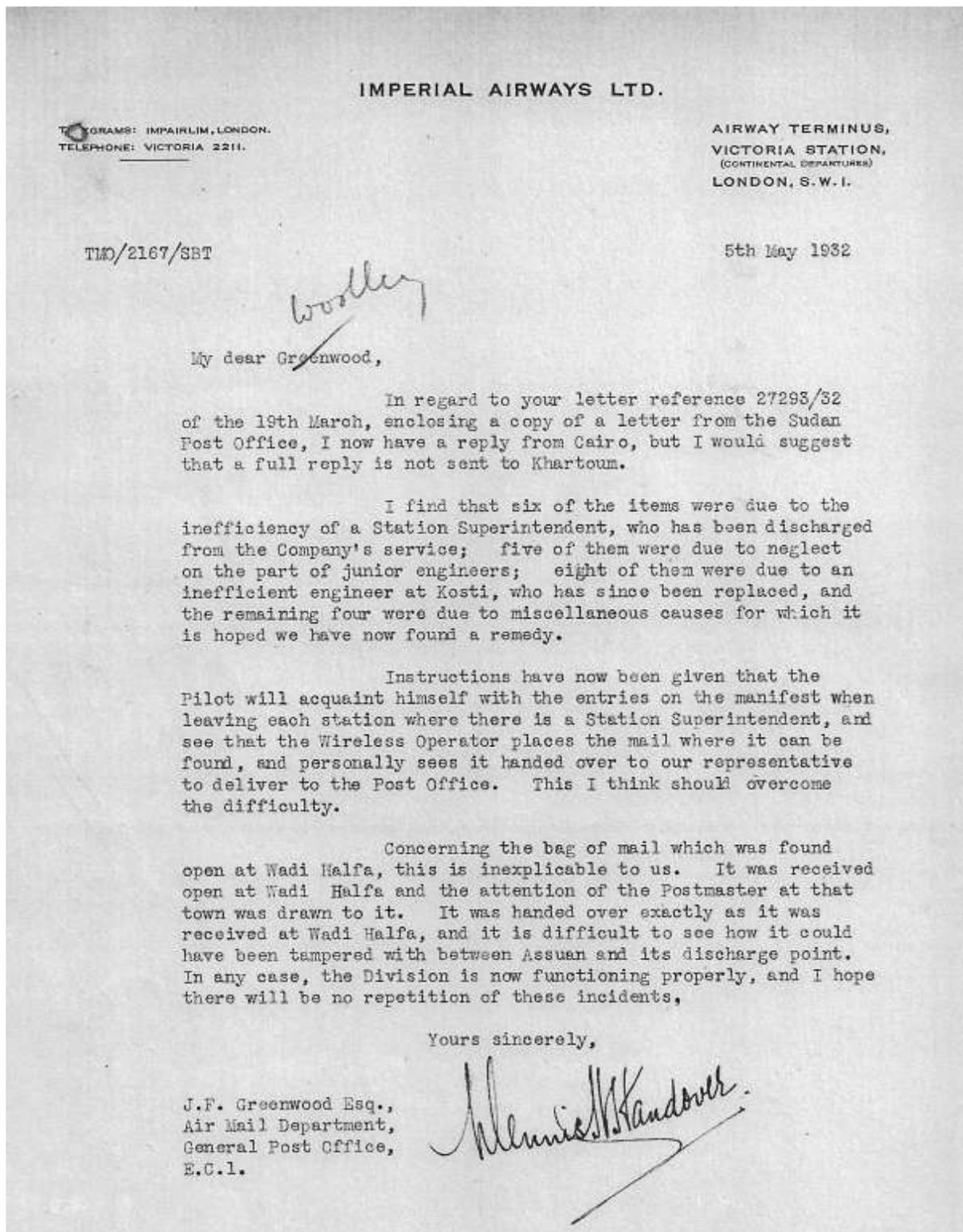
The Secretary,
General Post Office,
London, E.C.1.

- 21.3.31 No mail despatched or received at Wadi Halfa owing Airways Representative failing to notify Postmaster of movements of aircraft.
- 22.3.31 Alexandria to Khartoum Air mail receptacle arrived 20th delivered after delay of 48 hours.
- 28.3.31 Four mail receptacles for Kosti & Malakal off loaded at Khartoum & forwarded by ordinary route.
- 10.4.31 Cairo to Wadi Halfa despatch overcarried to Khartoum.
- 11.4.31 Two Juba to Wadi Halfa receptacles overcarried and delivered 17.4.31.
- 2.5.31 Khartoum to Malakal mail overcarried to Juba.
- 19.6.31 Cairo to Kosti " " and delivered 25th June.
- 18.7.31 Malakal to Kosti mail overcarried to Khartoum
- 31.7.31 Malakal and Juba mails to Kosti overcarried to Khartoum
- 7.8.31 8 mail despatches from various sources to offices of Exchange in the Sudan failed onward transmission from Halfa.
- 20.8.31 Khartoum to Malakal mail overcarried to Juba
- 16.9.31 London & Paris mails to Halfa delivered at Asswan. Asswan mails overcarried to Halfa.
- 8.10.31 Juba & Malakal mails to Kosti overcarried to Khartoum
- 15.10.31 Cairo & Alexandria mails to Atbara overcarried to Khartoum.
- || 19.10.31 Juba & Malakal mail to Halfa overcarried delivered 31.10.31.
- 26.10.31 Two Juba mail despatches to Atbara overcarried to Asswan.
Two Juba mail despatches to Halfa overcarried to Asswan.
- 9.11.31 Cairo to Atbara mail overcarried to Khartoum
- || 6.12.31 Asswan to Halfa closed air mail handed to Postmaster Halfa on 7.12.31 after having been opened.
9. 2.32 Mpika to Juba mail handed to Postmaster Juba day following its arrival - contents failed onward transmission.
10. 2.32 Juba & Malakal mails to Kosti overcarried to Khartoum
17. 2.32 " " " " " " " " "
20. 2.32 Juba to Kosti mails overcarried to Khartoum
22. 2.32 Malakal to Kosti mails overcarried to Khartoum.
-

A letter of enquiry into these events was written by J.F. Greenwood of the G.P.O. Air Mail Department to Dennis Handover, Imperial Airways Traffic Manager, which was sent on 19 March 1932, a draft of which is shown below.



After investigation, Handover replied on 5 May 1932, reporting that in some instances stern measures were taken. His last line reads, "..... *I hope there will be no repetition of these incidents.*" In fact, in 1933 the Sudan Director of Posts sent an even longer list of 'irregularities' which occurred during 1932. These will be shown in the June 2022 issue of the Gazette.



I do not have any examples of the mail concerned in these events. If any reader is lucky enough to have such an item, please send me a scan to include in the next issue.

I obtained the copies of the correspondence shown in the 1980s from what was then named Post Office Archives (now the BPMA). To my shame I did not record the file name and number.

Additional Information of the 1931 Second Experimental Flight East.

By Ed Wolf

Following an enquiry from Terry Hare-Walker, I realised that there were several extra pieces of information which were omitted from the Second Experimental East flight of 1931.

After the paragraph commencing "At Akyab" On page 5 insert, *According to Pickering [1], in the mail transfer process to the Southern Cross, the Akyab outgoing mail bag was missed. Where Anstee [2] states Rangoon, Victoria Point and Australian destinations from Akyab exist, they would not be on the Second Experimental flight.*

After the matter of the Tavoy covers delivered late which end on page 7 and before the paragraph commencing "At Singapore....." on page 8 insert, *When leaving Rangoon, Victoria Point was overflowed by Kingsford Smith (mail for this station was sent from Rangoon by steamer receiving the arrival backstamp on May 10.1931), arriving for another overnight stop at Alor Star on May,1931. The next day Singapore was reached.*



The purple cachet subsequently added. The cover is backstamped May 10,1931 indicating transport by steamer.

[1] Op. cit.

[2] Op. cit.

After the paragraph commencing "Three separate bags" On page 8 insert:



Backstamped Darwin 11 May, Melbourne 14 May, and Perth 18 May 1931.

Gibraltar 1940 (March 25th) censored airmail to Hong Kong

By Colin Searle



A very unusual destination for a World War II cover from Gibraltar. At this time on 25th March 1940, Italy had not entered the war, so the Imperial Airways 'Empire' flying boat service Southampton to Sydney was still in operation. They merged with British Airways Ltd on April 1st 1940 to form BOAC. In 1940 there was no airport in Gibraltar. Therefore it went by steamer to Tangier where it then joined the Air France service to Marseilles. Then it was transferred to the Imperial Airways service to the far east via India..

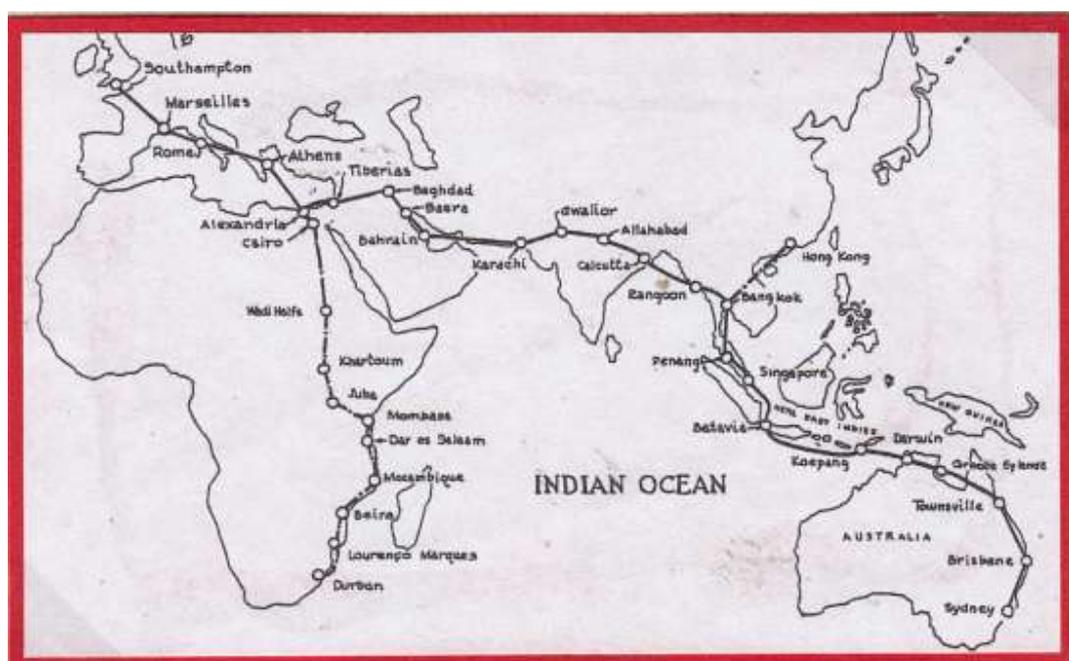
The journey to the far east was undertaken in a series of 'hops' by a combination of Short Empire Flying boats, and land planes. Imperial Airways/ BOAC and QANTAS operated a number of Short S-23 flying boats in a 'pool'.

Marseilles to Karachi. VH-ABF. Short S-23C Empire Class Flying Boat. 'Cooee'

Karachi to Bangkok VH-ABB. Short S-23C Empire Flying Boat. 'Coolangatta'

Bangkok to Hong Kong De Havilland DH86, via Adorn, Hanoi and Fort Bayard to Hong Kong.

Censored in Gibraltar by the local Gibraltar civilian censors who applied a sealing label Type T1B with censor number 5. The rate from Gibraltar to Hong Kong at the time was 2s.-6d. per ½ oz.



After Italy entered the war in June 1940, the service was suspended.



I am grateful to Duncan Crewe of the Imperial Airways Study Group for help with the routing details of this scarce cover.

The Aviation events at Darwin in April 1931.

By Ed Wolf

The month of April 1931 certainly was a busy time for the population of Darwin. There were quite a few aviators, sometimes called fliers in those days, who called in that month. My interest was aroused by the cover illustrated in this article.

The principal reason for the commotion was the expected arrival of the first direct air mail from England to Australia. It coincided with the arrival of the British University students, Fairbairn and Shenstone, who had flown a small monoplane from England; the record breaker Captain Scott flying solo from the UK; and the first time that Qantas had ventured to the North from its Brisbane base.

Additional news was that the Dutch were planning a trip to Australia from their colony just North of Australia, the Dutch East Indies. The latter news was not so well received because the foreigners were planning to make Wyndham their Australian landfall instead of Darwin.

Reporters for the local newspaper, The Northern Territory Times, a twice weekly edition on Tuesdays and Fridays, accurately reported to its readers both their impressions of the events and what the individuals had said.

Reading those papers, courtesy of Trove, the National Library of Australia's digitization program in collaboration with State and Territory libraries, enables us to get the full flavour of the times. It is for this reason that I have produced this paper in script without altering any of the text. Not only does it give a colourful picture of the players but also adds important facts to a story which would otherwise be quite bland.

The Northern Territory Times (Darwin) of Friday April 10, 1931, on page 5 told its readers in three separate sections of the same page:

AVIATION

SCOTT'S MOVEMENTS

Scott the Australian airman passed over Batavia at nine yesterday morning [April 8 ed.] and tencile that he was continuing his flight. It is understood that he was aiming for Bima but at a late hour last night no word had been received of his arrival there.

AVIATION

SCOTT ON WAY AHEAD OF SMITH

C. W. Scott who is attempting to fly from London to Darwin in 8 ½ days arrived at Karachi on Sunday [April 5 ed.] and left for Jaipur the same day he is slightly ahead of Kingsford Smith's schedule. He is said to have been some 500 miles ahead of Kingsford Smith at Karachi.

C.W. Scott the Australian airman flying from London to Darwin arrived at Calcutta on Monday night. [April 6 ed.] He hopes to reach Darwin by Thursday, thus completing the flight in five days.

Wednesday. Scott arrived at Singapore at 13. 50 today (10 minutes to 2). [April 7 ed.]

Wednesday. Scott left Singapore for Palembang and arrived there this evening [April 7 ed.].

Thursday. Scott left Palembang at dawn for Bima. [April 8 ed.] He is expected to reach Darwin on Friday evening.

Later-Scott passed over Batavia at 11 a.m. [April 8 ed.] flying fast.

IMPERIAL AIRWAYS LINKS AUSTRALIA WITH ENGLAND

The first Imperial Airways Air Mail is due in Darwin on Friday next April 17th according to our latest news. It connects with Qantas which will carry the mail on from Darwin to Brisbane. As this is the first official mail to arrive from England it should be an epoch-making event and we understand that arrangements are being made to welcome the fliers on arrival. It is not yet certain whether the fliers will land at the aerodrome or near the jetty as much is said to depend on the state of the aerodrome if too boggy the planes which can land both on sea and land will make a water landing, if the ground is dry enough then they will settle down at the aerodrome.

But it is safe to say that they will be welcomed, as bringing the Homeland so much the nearer to her daughter continent.

It is clear, that the reporters did not always have all the facts and must have relied on some imagination as the Imperial aircraft, a three engine DH66 Hercules, was definitely a land plane with no ability to alight at a jetty. Moreover C.W. Scott was not an Australian but a RAF pilot, who had previously been employed as an instructor by Qantas.

The Northern Territory Times (Darwin) of Tuesday April 14, 1931, had on its front page:

NOTICE

In connection with the experimental Air Mail flights from England to Australia- Mails will be despatched by these planes from Darwin as shown hereunder – April 27th and May 17th.

Due London May 14th and 31st.

- (1) Singapore- containing correspondence for –Dutch East Indies- Straits Settlements-Federated Malay States- Borneo- Philippines-Hong Kong-China –Japan.*
- (2) Rangoon- containing correspondence for Siam-Cochin China- and French Indo China.*
- (3) Calcutta-containing correspondence for –Eastern India-Burma- Ceylon.*
- (4) Singapore- containing correspondence for –Dutch East Indies- Straits Settlements-Federated Malay States- Borneo- Philippines-Hong Kong-China –Japan.*
- (5) Rangoon- containing correspondence for Siam-Cochin China- and French Indo China.*

Surcharges to be paid in addition to ordinary postage-

- 1. – Countries via Singapore 1/0 per half ounce,*
- 2. – Countries via Rangoon 1/3 per half ounce,*
- 3. – Countries via Calcutta 1/3 per half ounce,*
- 4. – Countries via Karachi 1/3 per half ounce, (For Western India) and for Persia – Iraq-Palestine and Egypt 1/7 per half ounce,*
- 5. – Countries in Europe other than U.K. 1/9 per half ounce,*
- 6. – London 1/9 per half ounce.*

Report on page 4:**RECORD BROKEN SCOTT ARRIVES LANDS AMONGST CHEERING CROWD.**

All day folk had waited at the aerodrome looking for the coming of Captain Scott, but not till nearly six p.m. [April 10 ed.] was the flier sighted coming from the direction of Shoal Bay. Mr Wilson the aviator who was intending to fly out to meet Scott on arrival had just descended from a flight and was unable to get into the air quickly enough.

The record breaker swept round in splendid spirals and made a perfect landing being greeted with loud cheers by the assembled spectators. On dismounting from his plane, he was at once surrounded by old friends who congratulated him heartily on his exploit. The Administrator on behalf of the Commonwealth Government, Mr. Hodges representative of Shell Oil Co., Mr. W.H. Grant as representative of Wakefield's, all congratulated him heartily.

The flier looked very sunburnt after his trip expressed his pleasure at the end of the journey and remarked that the last stage across the Timor Sea had frightened him the most a remark that was met with much laughter.

Captain Scott showed a mascot he had carried on his trip a small black gollywog doll belonging to his 14 month's old daughter and which accompanied him wherever he went. He asked for a smoke as soon as he landed and at once dozens of cigarettes were proffered. Asked would he have a whisky he expressed a preference for beer but none being available he accepted a soft drink instead. He had left London at 4.55.a.m. on April 1st and arrived at Darwin at 5.50 p.m. on April 10th having done the journey in nine and a half days.

Captain Scott thinks that Smith had given him a hard job to break his record, but he fully expects that someone else will break his record in a year or do as flying conditions improve. And the man who does so will receive Scott's sincerest congratulations for it is in his parlance 'a hellishly hard job to do.' According to calculation Captain Scott beat Smith's record by 19 hours and 35 minutes.

Captain Scott prefers a Gipsy Moth for flying as spares for the machine are easily obtainable in Australia and he thinks that an all-metal machine is best for all round flying purposes. His machine shows signs of travel being well splashed with Bima mud as he took off there in six inches of water. Some remark being made on the comfort of his seat in the plane he remarked that comfort in travelling helped materially in record in breaking flights as it enabled one to give all one's attention to the job in hand. The plane has a small silver plate with the title 'Mr Scott, Australia' engraved on it and the aviator remarked that would be sufficient address for about three weeks.

He also had his wife's name written in ideographic writing (which resembled Chinese) in red at the forward part of the plane. He used Borneo Aviation Spirit on the journey and at the end of the trip his sediment bulb showed not the slightest sign of residue thus testifying to the purity of the spirit.

Within ten minutes after landing Captain Scott was on his way into Darwin by car and the folk who had gathered to welcome him also dispersed to their homes.

In the evening the captain was entertained at a dinner at the Hotel Victoria when leading members of the professional and business life of Darwin met to do him honour. Colonel Weddell sat on his right-hand Captain Scott being placed at the head of the table.

Various patriotic songs were sung, and toast were honored Captain Scott giving the toast of Squadron Leader Hinkler the man who made the first record. The health of the King (who had sent Scott a cable of congratulation on his successful flight) and of the British Empire and British flying men were also honored a meek inquiry from round the table about Americans being met with the laughing answer "Hell! America won the war! What does she want with more than that?"

Scott says he hopes the Timor Sea will soon silt up and become dry land as it's the worst of the whole journey and he frankly hated flying over it. A most enjoyable evening was spent by the company.

Scott having sold his story to certain newspapers was unable to grant any special interview but mentioned that he had quite a nice trip (in the tone one would speak of a run say from the Post office to Fanny Bay) save for a bad crossing of the Java Valley and of Sumboyna and was frightfully glad to be back in Australia again. This is his third trip to Darwin the first was with Captain Salmond the next to meet Amy Johnson who in his expression is a girl with the 'greatest guts' and now this record flight.

He left Bima at 6.20 a.m. on the Friday (Bima time) and landed in Darwin at 5.50.p.m. Darwin time.

On Saturday Scott spent most of the afternoon cleaning his plane and filling the tanks in preparation for his flight on to the South but he intends to do that part of the journey at his leisure.

On Sunday morning [April 12 ed.] he left for South at 7.3 a.m. there being a fair number of folk to wave him farewell. His machine was ready on his arrival at the aerodrome and after stowing away his personal belongings he climbed aboard and sailed off. Wilson being first in the air. It was perfect flying weather, and everything points to a quick trip south.

On page 5 appeared:

AVIATION
SCOTT'S JOURNEY

Scott reached, Longreach yesterday [April 13 ed.] and expects to be in Brisbane today. Scott's unofficial flight is recorded by Eustis [1] as AAMC # 186.

Continuing on with page 5

FIRST AIR MAIL TO EUROPE

Melbourne.-The first experimental air mail from Australia to London will leave Melbourne on April 23rd, Sydney on April 24th. Brisbane on April 25th. Darwin on April 27th. arriving in London on May 15th rom Melbourne to Brisbane the mail will be carried by the Australian National Airways and from Brisbane to Darwin by the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services. The first air mail from England to Australia is carrying 15.000 letters for delivery in the Commonwealth it left Croydon England on April 4th and is due at Darwin on April 19th. A second mail is expected to leave England April 25th, reaching Darwin May 10th.

[1] Nelson Eustis, The Australian Air Mail Catalogue, eighth edition, A Page in Time Hawthorne 2008.

The Northern Territory Times (Darwin) of Friday April 17 reported on page 4:

AVIATION

The two aviators Fairbairn and Shenstone are expected to arrive about noon tomorrow. It is reported that they made a start this morning for Darwin [April 17 ed.] but were forced to return again to Dilli. They will make a fresh start tomorrow.

On page 7 was the following: -

AVIATION

The Qantas airplane 'Apollo' arrived at the aerodrome at 4.45 p.m. yesterday [April 16 ed.]. She carried with her Mr. Hendriksen of the Shell Oil Company and was piloted by Mr. Tapper(sic). The 'Apollo' is the first passenger plane to arrive at Darwin and her cabin with its comfortable armchairs and its beautiful furnishings make flying in her a most delightful method of travel.

She made a perfect landing at the drome and compared to the small planes to which we have been accustomed looks a giant as she lies at her ease. She has come up to meet the Imperial Airways plane due here on Sunday next and will depart the next day with her cargoes of mails and passengers for the south.

Many folk thought her to be the plane carrying the overseas airmen Fairbairn and Shenstone and there was a rush of cars to the 'drome but the delight of seeing the enormous Goliath more than compensated for the disappointment at it not being the plane expected.

This flight is not recorded in Eustis as it carried no mail. But mail exists for the return flight from Darwin to Brisbane and is also not recorded (see p.8).

Also on Page 4 in the "Events, Ships & Mails" column it stated;-

19 April – First aerial overseas mail arrived at Darwin

20 April – Aerial mail per Qantas leaves for Brisbane

This was in anticipation of the *City of Cairo* getting to Darwin and the consequent flight South by Qantas. The crash changed all that and made *Apollo's* trip north redundant as will soon be seen.

The Northern Territory Times (Darwin) of Tuesday April 21, 1931, had this to say on page 4:

*AVIATION.
IMPERIAL AIRWAYS
PLANE CRASHES AT KOEPANG*

Word reached Darwin early on Monday morning that the Imperial Airways plane on its way to Australia with mails and cargo had crashed at Koepang. Details are scanty in the extreme but it is known that all mails and cargo are safe and that the pilots are unhurt., The plane is reported to be wrecked beyond repair.

This is a most unfortunate disaster especially as the Dutch aviation companies are preparing for an air mail to Australia via Wyndham and it is much to be deplored that this accident has overtaken the British Imperial Airways plane which would have made Darwin one of their ports of call to the consequent advancement of the town. It would also have added prestige to the Imperial Air Force in its endeavours to lessen the gap between Australia and the Mother Country.

This was followed on the same page by:

FAIRBAIRN AND SHENSTONE ARRIVE

Messrs Fairbairn and Shenstone the two young aviators who have been making a pleasure trip from London to Australia arrived at the aerodrome on Saturday afternoon [April 18 ed.] at 3.25.

A large number of people were assembled to meet them, but they seem rather shy and unassuming young men who have no idea of doing anything wonderful but who simply chose a plane as an easy way of going to Australia.

They took two months on the trip leaving Croydon aerodrome on February 19th and arriving at Darwin on April 18th. Mr Fairbairn is an Australian and his folk live in the Western District of Victoria. For a while they owned Peake Downs Station. Queensland and he has many friends in Australia. Mr Shenstone is an Englishman and he and Mr Fairbairn both are undergraduates of Jesus College, Cambridge University. Both also are members of the Cambridge University Air Squadron and have had about three years flying experience.

They did not hurry along on the trip though their longest stay was at Karachi where they spent a fortnight and had their engine thoroughly overhauled. Their longest period in the air was the seven and a half hours they spent crossing the Timor Sea. Asked if they had met Scott, they said that he had passed them at Victoria Point.

Their route was from London, to Nice, thence on to Rome, Catania, Tunis along the North coast of Africa and so on by the regular route.

Both fliers were delighted to hear that Scott had broken the record indeed that was almost the fast question that they asked. Neither man seemed inclined to talk about the crossing of the Timor Sea which must be very much of a nightmare to any flier.

Scott frankly admitted it was the one stretch of the journey that frightened him and all other aviators declare that it is the worst part of the whole route to cover.

The two young aviators were welcomed on their arrival at the 'drome by Messrs. Hodges and Henriksen as representatives of the Shell Oil Co. and Colonel Weddell also on behalf of the Government congratulated them on their safe arrival in Australia.

Unfortunately, the hard fight against a strong hard wind had temporally made both fliers very deaf so that it was a difficulty for them to hear much of what was said to them till their hearing returned to normal again.

After staying for a few days in Darwin they intend to proceed South at the same leisurely speed for the flight is more in the nature of a holiday trip than of anything else. 'A new adventure for us' is how one of them described it.

This was immediately followed by the next article.

*FAIRBAIRN LANDS AT CASUARINA
BEACH*

Mr P. Fairbairn one of the young aviators who arrived on Saturday last from England had a somewhat unpleasant experience, on Monday [April 20 ed.] evening. He and Mr. Shenstone were making all arrangements for an early start on Tuesday morning and Mr Fairbairn took the plane up for a trial flight late on Monday afternoon. He was seen to dip down behind the trees fringing the harbor but consternation was felt when he did not again rise and return, to the aerodrome.

Pilot Tapp of the Qantas plane set off about six p.m. on a search for the missing man, and located him and his plane close to the edge of the water on, Casuarina Beach. Plane and flier were unharmed, and it has, been reasoned with, some show of correctness that Mr Fairbairn in examining the foreshore with a view of using it as a taking off ground came so low that he lost headway and, was forced to land on the beach. Being down the rising tide would prevent him from taking off again, and he was therefore forced to wait till succour arrived.

As, soon as Pilot Tapp located Mr Fairbairn he flew back to the aerodrome with the welcome news and cars were at once sent out to render all the assistance possible. Shortly before midnight they returned bringing Mr Fairbairn with them, tired and bitten by sandflies but otherwise unhurt. This adventure has somewhat delayed the departure of the aviators who will now be forced to remain at Darwin for a longer period than they had originally intended.

In conversation with Mr Shenstone this morning he stated that Mr Fairbairn had been inspecting the indentations along the coastline within a few miles of Darwin in search of a better taking off place than the aerodrome is at present and that there really was nothing at all the matter. Mr Fairbairn had made a good landing but had found himself unable to rise again on account of the soft sand., He had provisions and water with him also a mosquito net so was suffering no hardships by his enforced stay on the beach. As he landed close to the Dripstone Caves his plane was easily accessible (sic) and he went out this morning in company with others to see if he could bring her back to Darwin again either by taking off from the beach or if that was impossible by having her brought in per medium of a lorry.

The unofficial flight by Fairbairn and Shenstone is listed in Eustis as AAMC #176-179

Our press telegrams state that Kingsford-Smith left Sydney this morning on route for Koepang which he is expected to reach tomorrow. No word has yet come through as to whether he is to call in at Darwin on his flight to pick up the mails though it is known that he will land at Darwin on his return. Other telegrams, not press news, say that he will come on Friday next and get away again as quickly as possible for Brisbane. One can only hope that his company will not clash with the arrangements made for Anzac Day; for his arrival on the Saturday will certainly mean much extra work for postal and telegraph officials as well as for other folk and it may affect considerably the attendance at the Sports Carnival at the Oval.

The Qantas plane Apollo made a good get away from the aerodrome at 12.45 today [April 21 ed.] as she is no longer needed here. Pilot Tapp and Mechanic Wright went away in her Mr Hendriksen will be remaining in Darwin for a few weeks longer.

A OHMS PMG Dept. Queensland cover unrecorded by Eustis but definitely carried by Apollo from Darwin confirmed by the backstamp at Brisbane on Sunday April 26, 1931 is shown on the next page.

The Apollo made a fast trip back to Brisbane arriving at there on Thursday April 23 where the crew was informed that they would be required to return with the same aircraft to Darwin on Saturday morning with a vast quantity of mail destined for England.

It is likely that this cover was carried personally by Russell Tapp as the pilot or by Dudley Wright the only other person on the plane, and was not handed over to the postal authorities until the day of his departure Saturday April 25.

On Friday April 24 the Avro Ten Southern Sun delivered the Melbourne and Sydney mail comprising 17 bags to the Brisbane staff who added them to their own bags holding them overnight. In the meantime the aircraft was serviced ready for its second trip to Darwin but this time with a full load whilst the crew no doubt rested. Was the cover still with the Apollo crew? There is no obvious answer that I can find.

Apollo left for Darwin with the same pilot Russell Tapp and engineer Dudley Wright on Saturday morning overnighting at Cloncurry and arriving at Darwin on Sunday April 26. It was not until Sunday evening that our cover was cancelled in Brisbane before then making its journey further south to Adelaide.



Page 5 carried further items of aviation interest.

LATEST TELEGRAMS
OVERSEAS AIR MAILS

KINGSFORD SMITH ON THE JOB

Sydney.-In charge of Air Commodore Kingsford, Smith the Southern Cross which has been tenciled for the Sydney Melbourne Air Service of the Australian National Airways will leave Sydney this morning [April 21 ed.] for Koepang to pick up the mails carried by the air liner City of Cairo which crashed at Koepang on Sunday while bearing the first air mail from England to Australia. The Southern Cross is expected to reach Koepang on Wednesday morning returning to Darwin on Saturday.

CITY OF CAIRO CRASHED
BADLY DAMAGED

Koepang.-The City of Cairo attempted to land in what appeared to be a grass field but was really a stretch of sharp rocky ground covered with grass. The wheels hit a rock and the plane was overturned.

The cause of all the ruckus was the news, originally only a rumour, that the Dutch were sending an aircraft from Batavia to Australia to ply for a mail contract between the two countries. By this stage KLM had been operating a regular fortnightly service from Holland to Java since the beginning of 1930 whilst Imperial Airways had not yet ventured beyond Karachi.

*AIR MAIL FROM BATAVIA
DUTCH BUSY*

Batavia.- An experimental air flight will be made by the Dutch Company from Batavia to Sydney and Melbourne and back between May 12th and 26th. The machine to be used will be a three engine Fokker. The mail will be carried to and from Australia by a plane connecting with the regular Amsterdam-Batavia Service. The Dutch plane will arrive at Wyndham on May 12, Brisbane May 17, Sydney May 18, Melbourne May 19. Sydney again May 20, Wyndham May 25.

It was the British Postal officials that had coined the term “experimental” for their flights to Australia as they were uncertain of what was involved. Rather than calling their flight “inaugural” which would have assumed a continuation shortly thereafter, they hedged their bets by using a more nuanced term. More than half the journey they were attempting, was along a route they had not previously surveyed. There was nothing experimental about the Dutch flight.

The Northern Territory Times (Darwin) of Friday April 24, 1931, page 4 continued to record some interesting aviation matters in a gossip column:

*FRIDAY. APRIL 24., 1931.
TOWN TOPICS*

Messrs Fairbairn and Shenstone will be remaining at Darwin for a few days awaiting a new piston for their engine. This is expected to arrive by the Qantas on her next trip to Darwin.

The local representatives of the Shell Oil Co. have been the busiest of folk in Darwin lately owing to the amount of petrol required for the planes that have been coming and, going at the local aerodrome. New pumps are now in operation for the □tenciled of aeroplanes so that work which formerly occupied hours can now be done in minutes. Scott took away with him over sixty gallons of Borneo Aviation Spirit the Qantas took more Kingsford Smith will require large amounts for his flights to Koepang and back so that more aviation spirit is on demand, at present than has ever been needed before and the array of drums at the ‘drome make a most imposing sight and a most cheering sight also for those who see in the movements of aviators whether they be casual visitors or pilots on mail duty a most pleasing sign of the advancement of the Territory.

Mr Henrikson representative of the Shell Oil Co. Sydney who is at present in Darwin on business connected with the □tenciled of air mail planes etc. will return from Darwin with a fuller and better knowledge of the handicaps under which this town suffers in the way of want of sufficient satisfactory communication with the South.

We hope that his visit to Darwin will bear fruit and that the local press correspondents will no longer find themselves doomed to hours of waiting for planes from overseas only to discover after a wasted day that the fliers will not arrive till a day or so later. News that the Southern states receive but that never comes to Darwin till too late to be of any real use.

Courier 22/4/31

Replying to the civic reception accorded on arrival in Brisbane[April, Flying Officer Scott announced that it was the desire to regain the England –Australia flight record for England that had prompted him to make the London-Darwin flight. Commenting on the friendly rivalry that exists in connection with this long-distance flying record Scott said, ‘After all and England and Australia ‘quarrel’ about the ‘Ashes’ do they not?’ He did not say that in the future the two countries are likely to have a friendly ‘quarrel’ over the England- Australia flight record but it is safe to assume that they will.

A SUGGESTED TROPHY

All this goes to prove that there exists today a very live interest in the England-Australia flight record, and it seems to me that it would be a sound scheme to stimulate this interest. The time is opportune for some aviation enthusiast or group of enthusiasts to provide some suitable trophy something in the nature of the famous Schneider Trophy for annual competition in connection with the England-Australia flight record. I would suggest that the trophy be known as the Ross Smith Trophy in memory of that gallant Australian pilot

who pioneered the England-Australia route in 1919 and whose time record of 28 days for the journey stood until 1928 when it was lowered in such a sensational manner by another famous Australian pilot Bert Hinkler. It would be well to place the control of the awarding of the trophy and governing conditions in the hands of the Aero Club of Great Britain and the Aero Club of Australia.

HIGH PRAISE

Melbourne April 21.- The Commonwealth Director of Civil Aviation (Col. H.C. Brinsmead) today complimented Air Commodore Kingsford Smith on his readiness in setting out at short notice to bring the stranded air mail from Koepang to Australia. 'Great praise is due to Australian National Airways Ltd., for the way in which they made the Southern Cross available fully equipped and at the shortest possible notice to go to Koepang in this emergency,' said Col. Brinsmead. 'I am certain that the promptitude with which the machine was made available could not have been surpassed in any part of the world.'

On Page 5 there is a further mention

AVIATION

AIR COMMODORE KINGSFORD SMITH ARRIVES

Despite the fact that Air Commodore Kingsford Smith was not expected to arrive till about 5 p.m., yesterday quite half Darwin was present at the aerodrome when the Southern Cross sailed down out of the clouds at 2.40 p.m. [April 23 ed.] The Government Resident, the Post Master the Customs officials all were there to meet 'Smithy' who greeted many old friends also. The Government Resident handed to the Commodore his clearance papers, for the trip for he had set off in such a hurry that passports had had to be left behind they will however arrive by the Qantas. One of the first inquiries made by spectators was whether anything had ever been found out regarding the missing Southern Cloud to which the Commodore returned a regretful negative.

As much of the interior space of the Southern Cross as possible has been filled with fuel tanks, so as to give her the greatest cruising range possible. It is the intention of Smith to drop all spares at Darwin and to pick them up again on his return.

He considers the aerodrome on account of the trees surrounding it an inconvenient place to take off from with a very heavy load and made anxious inquiries as to its size and diagonal distances also making enquiries as to the usual direction of the wind at daybreak.

The Shell Oil Co., with commendable forethought has seen to it that ample stores of supplies will be available at Koepang. Soerabaya. Singapore. Rangoon and Victoria Point. Also all possible information is available in reference to landing grounds, special marks for such, descriptions of aerodromes, prevailing winds, weather reports etc. so that nothing will be wanting to ensure safety of flight. Also should it be necessary for Smith to travel farther than, Koepang he will find everything ready for him.

Smith was first sighted at 2.30 p.m. his plane looking like a white cockatoo as it glittered in the sun. He circled the town twice and then swept low round by the jail making a perfect landing and slowly taxied up to his resting place at one corner of the drome. He brought with him Messrs Hewitt chief engineer of the Australian Airways, Allen second pilot of the plane and V. de P. O'Gorman reporter of the Sydney Sun and other associated newspapers who is accompanying the Commodore on his trip to pick up the mails, at Koepang.

Mr Guy Menzies who made the record flight to New Zealand at the beginning of the year is now on his way to England. He states that he intends to make an attempt to break Scott's record and hopes to make the journey from London to Darwin in seven days. His attempt will be made about June or July as soon as the necessary preparations can be completed.

Mr Fairbairn when returning from his plane on the beach, last Wednesday night had the misfortune to get badly bogged. The driver of his car endeavoured to get free of the mud but without success and he and his passenger were compelled to leave the car behind them and to walk back the long miles to Darwin where they arrived about midnight. Efforts were made on Thursday morning to release the car from the mud but without success at first though it was brought into town some time later in the day.

A large crowd assembled to bid farewell to Kingsford Smith on his trip to Koepang to pick up the mail. The plane made an excellent get away about 7.20 a.m. [April 24 ed.] rising to a good height very quickly and was soon out of sight over Point Charles. Chief Engineer Hewitt had been most careful in his examination of the plane before it took off, and he, second pilot Allen and Mr O'Gorman (Sydney Sun reporter) were all that went off in the plane with "Smithy. They expect to return about 1 p.m. tomorrow and the Qantas will then come to Darwin either on Sunday afternoon or Monday morning to pick up the mails for the South leaving as soon as possible for the South again.

WORK FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

The aerodrome at Darwin is according to Kingsford, Smith very unsuited for the landing of big business planes carrying mails and cargo. The trees encroach on it too much and the telegraph wires also are a danger for a heavily laden plane. The erection of a hangar is also a work needing to be carried out as early as possible and with so much unemployment in our midst surely some of the men in need of jobs could be set to work to improve the aerodrome? We want some of the blessings of aviation to come our way but if the Powers that be, will not give us suitable aerodromes and hangars for the aeroplanes it means that in a very little while Darwin will again become a has been. Darwin is the most suitable place for the landing and taking off of the big overseas planes being within reasonable distance not only of Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane but also of Perth and of Adelaide. It is the most central of all the coastal cities but unless the authorities set to work to provide suitable landing grounds and shelter sheds Darwin is going to be neglected in favor of other places with less natural advantages but whose authorities intend that to attract money you must spend money and who do make every effort to encourage their towns to prosper. Is Darwin to be the ONLY place to lag behind, in the race for air supremacy?

This was virtually an editorial plea in favour of the local town of Darwin as against the unstated rival town of Wyndham which was about to receive the Dutch competition and was favoured by West Australian Airways as the landfall for overseas aircraft being in West Australia rather than the Northern Territory.

On Page 7 the saga continued

AVIATION AUSTRALIA-LONDON AIR MAILS SOUTHERN STAR ON TRIP

Melbourne.-The monoplane Southern Star left Essendon Aerodrome shortly after noon yesterday [April 23 ed.] carrying mails on the first stage of the aerial service from Australia to London.

KINGSFORD SMITH ARRIVES AT KOEPANG

Kingsford Smith arrived at Koepang at 10 a.m. this morning [April 24 ed.](Java time) which corresponds to 12 o'clock Darwin time.

AIR MAIL FOR LONDON

The Post Master informs us that the registered mail for London by air mail closes at 10 a.m. tomorrow; for ordinary letters it closes at 4 p.m. on Sunday. Local residents who intend sending mail per air plane are advised to make note of these closing hours.

The Northern Territory Times (Darwin) of Tuesday April 28, 1931, on page 3 reports

FIRST IMPERIAL AIR MAIL FLIGHT

By the 'Southern Cross' carrying the first air mail from England to Australia the following letter was brought addressed to the 'Times' and we print it as an item of interest to Darwin folk. There is not a large population in the Territory but if it is to become one of the main mail stations on the direct air mail route then the advancement of the place is sure. The isolation and the handicaps under which the place has suffered will become a thing of the past when the Imperial Airways gets firmly established and it is for us as residents of the North to work for that result.

April 1931,

Dear Sir-This letter is coming to you by the first Air Mail from England to Australia covering in fifteen days a journey which by the fastest surface transport takes twenty-eight days. It is the first of two experimental return air mail flights between England and Australia.

It is our earnest hope, that in the not too far distant future this may develop into a regular weekly air mail service between Australia and, India which would, form part of the Empire route linking up with our passenger and mail service from India to England and connecting in Egypt with our other main trunk route through Africa. With the establishment of the regular service the journey between, Melbourne and London would be accomplished in eleven to twelve days.

There is no greater factor making for understanding and development of trade than quick communication, and there has never been greater need than there is today for the speedy communication provided by air to bring together the business communities and peoples of the Empire and to strengthen and maintain its position among the other nations of the world.

I hope that the special envelope containing this letter will serve as an interesting souvenir of the first Empire Air Mail between Great Britain and Australia.

*Yours faithfully
Managing Director.
IMPERIAL AIRWAYS LTD.*

This was the standard □tenciled letter produced by Imperial's Managing Director Woods Humphrey and sent to many commercial enterprises in Australia.

On the next page (4) we get an interesting insight in the working of the postal officials.

**AVIATION.
FIRST IMPERIAL MAIL
ARRIVES ON ANZAC DAY**

Kingsford. Smith carrying the first Imperial Air Mail from England to Australia arrived at the aerodrome at 2.45 p.m. on Anzac Day [April 25 ed.]. The 'drome had been, much improved in its approaches by the cutting down on trees on the Eastern end and also by the lowering of the telegraph wires and the lopping of the big mango trees that shaded it to the West.

Smith was first sighted over Point Charles and after a wide circle round he descended in fine style and taxied up to his position. He brought all the mail on from the 'City of Cairo' but complained of the dilatoriness of the Dutch in transmitting telegrams etc. they having to wait for authority from Soerabaya before they would do anything whatever.

Mr H. Bald, Post master then entered the plane and took over the charge of the mail bags which his assistants loaded on the mail truck and carried off to Darwin within ten minutes of the landing. Nineteen bags of mail were carried by the Southern Cross from Koepang eighteen being for other places and one for Darwin. There was also one bag of freight.

While Mr Bald was busy with the mails Mr J. S. Harris on behalf of the Returned Men welcomed Air Commodore Smith back to Darwin and stressed the fact of his arrival on Anzac Day. Mr Harris said it was a

gratifying fact to know that the world's greatest pilot had been able to step into the breach when things broke down and a pleasure to know that the first official air mail from Britain had got through safely. He congratulated the Commodore on his success and hoped that he would be spared for many more years of flying.

Air Commodore Kingsford Smith in reply stated that he was proud to belong to the Returned Soldiers' League and proud also to be the pilot of the first plane to carry air mail to Darwin.

A kindly action on the part of Mr Harris was to have a gangway kept clear during the handling of the mails so that even the smallest and most amateur of photographers was able to get excellent pictures of the carriage of the air mails. This kindness was greatly appreciated by the camera fiends who otherwise might never have had a chance, to get snaps of the great occasion.

AT THE POST OFFICE

On arrival at the Post office all air mail had to be dealt with and the staff was taxed to the utmost. From three p.m., on Saturday [April 25 ed.] till 6 30 a.m. on the Monday [April 27 ed.] they worked at top speed. All letters had to be resorted! And restamped and rebagged records had to be made up reports filed, ten or a dozen of each being needed for mails North and South. But all got their work done in record time. No less than 8080 letters were handled by the local postal staff for transference, by the air mail.

SMITH WELCOMED AT OVAL

At the Anzac Day Sports on the Oval Air Commodore, Kingsford Smith was formally welcomed by the Government Resident on behalf, of the Commonwealth who said that it was most fitting that the First Air Mail flight should end on Anzac Day. He wished the Commodore every success with his trip and hoped that the arrival and departure of the air mail would become a regular thing at the Darwin 'drome. On behalf of the Commonwealth Government and the people of Darwin the Colonel formally welcomed Air Commodore Kingsford Smith.

Mr J. S. Harris President of the Returned Soldiers' League endorsed the Government Resident's remarks. The Australians had made a name for themselves at Anzac and still proved that the men of Australia were worthy upholders of the name. He was very proud, to know that a Digger was the Ace of Aces in the flying world.

Commodore Smith had brought with him on his flight to Australia Messrs Garner and Mollard the pilots of the City of Cairo. All were delighted to have them among us but sorry that their luck had been too bad to allow them to carry the mails right through. Jock Allen second pilot (here Smith interjected 'and the fellow who does all the hard work ') was a worthy assistant to Smith and Darwin hoped to see him always with his brother pilot. All belonged to the one big family for the first air mail flight to Australia had been all British right through.

Three hearty cheers were given for the two British pilots and then the Commodore wanted to know why such a fuss was made of the delivery of a few bags of mail. Flights of 500 miles were quite a common place now. He was very glad to have the opportunity of helping the British airmen for flying was really an easy thing to do the only hard thing was the ground when a flier met it hurriedly. Smith said he was very glad to meet again old friends of the A.I.F. and hoped that this flight would be the inauguration of a regular fortnightly air mail service.

Mr Mollard said that they had rather bad luck crashing at the last lap he was sorry they had not been able to get right through but glad that Australians had been able to carry on the job.

The singing of 'For they are jolly good fellows' brought the little interlude to a close.

DEPARTURE OF AIR MAILS

The Apollo got away on Monday morning at 6.45 [April 27 ed.] with the air mail for the South and the Southern Cross went off on her lonely trip to Akyab at 7.5 twenty minutes later. The Apollo took away 20 bags of mail and the Southern Cross took 19 bags for London and other overseas. Places. The Southern Cross will make her first stop at Koepang then go on to Soerabaya, Singapore, Victoria Point, Rangoon and Akyab.

Then on page 5

*NEW HONOR
KINGSFORD SMITH RECEIVES
BRITANNIA TROPHY*

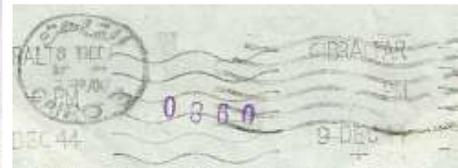
Kingsford Smith having flown across the Timor Sea three times in four days landed at Koepang at 11 o'clock yesterday morning [April 27 ed.] with the first air mail from Australia to England. He was to leave at dawn today for Soerabaya. A few minutes after his arrival from Darwin, on his flight which lasted for five hours ten minutes Smith received a message from the Royal Aero Club that he had been awarded the Britannia trophy for his meritorious performances in the air in 1930.

That ends the month of April as reported by the Darwin newspaper. It gave us a clear view of the human aspects as well as the official issues that were involved at a crucial time in Australia's postal history.

In praise of BOAC movement charts

By John Wilson

Cairo to Switzerland in 1944



Cover and backstamps.

Cairo 8 Dec. 1944

Gibraltar 9 Dec.

Barcelona 14 Dec.

In trying to unravel the topic of WW2 airmail rates from Egypt, I have examined as many covers as possible both in my possession and on the usual auction sites. I came across one that on the face of it (literally) seemed to be routine, but the back of the cover caused me to pause and think. Posted in Cairo on 8 December 1944 the cover was addressed to Switzerland but carried a clear cancel of Barcelona dated 14 December. Barcelona?

I turned to the trusty BOAC movement charts for December 1944 and found that Liberator G-AGFS departed Cairo on the 8th of December as flight 12M145 after having been delayed by fog. This was a regular flight on the Liberator service from Cairo via Tripoli, Rabat and Hurn to Lyneham. However, on this one (and only) occasion the flight called at Gibraltar and not Rabat. I cannot determine the cause of this change of flight plan.

To my delight I found that the rear of my cover had a clear strike of a Gibraltar roller dated 9 December 1944 confirming that the cover had been carried on flight 12M145 and off-loaded at Gibraltar.

So why Barcelona? Since early 1943 airmail addressed to Switzerland arriving from the US, UK and other countries at Lisbon had been picked up by Lufthansa service 96 and flown to Berlin for examination before being forwarded to Switzerland. This service, (IATA 22) was originally routed Lisbon-Madrid-Barcelona-Stuttgart-Berlin (1942) and added a call at Lyon in 1943. With the Allied reoccupation of Lyon and Marseille (Operation Dragoon) in August 1944 the Lufthansa service was interrupted and the German aircraft at Lisbon flew only Lisbon-Barcelona and return (Luftpostliste 20 January 1945). The postal staff at Gibraltar may not have known that the Lufthansa service had been suspended and sent the mail on to Barcelona as the exchange point. Such is wartime.

The five day delay between Gibraltar and Barcelona suggests rail carriage but once the cover arrived at Barcelona how did it proceed? There is no indication of arrival in Switzerland, and the presence of a two bar "jusqu'a" mark typical of London may indicate that somehow it was routed through London, although lack of UK censorship suggests otherwise.

Whatever the truth, I am pleased that the BOAC charts provided a necessary piece of information, and the cover remains so far the only one I have found from this diverted Liberator flight. It also nicely confirms that the Liberators were carrying civil mail and were not restricted to official documents.

For the record ~ our Zoom meetings, June to November 2021

By Peter Wingent

June 2021:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Sue Burn | - The same but different. |
| Bob Clark | - IA routes in Nov./Dec. 1929. |
| Duncan Crewe | - Persuading people to fly. |
| Nick guy | - Airmail beyond IA – a Central and East African selection. |
| Laurence Kimpton | - Mail between Australia and North America flown by IA or BOAC between Australia and Hong kong, 1937 – 1940. |

July 2021:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Bob Clark | - NZ flights to Africa in 1932. |
| Sue Burn | - Alan Cobham flight to Australia. |
| Laurence Kimpton | - IA and TEAL in the south Pacific. |
| Peter Wingent | - Airmail between Ceylon and Africa. |

August 2021:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Sue Burn | - Early wartime mail. |
| Duncan Crewe | - Hong Kong and the Horseshoe route. |
| Laurence Kimpton | - Sweden to Australia via the USSR and the Horseshoe route. |
| Terry Hare-Walker | - Alan Cobham flight to Australia. |
| Bob Clark | - New Zealand to Africa 1934 – 1938 |
| Peter Wingent | - IA accidents in October & November 1935. |

September 2021:

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|-------------------|--|
| Terry Hare-Walker | - Alan Cobham flight to Africa. |
| Duncan Crewe | - Incidents on the Hong Kong feeder service. |
| Bob Clark | - New Zealand mail by I.A. in early WW2. |
| Peter Wingent | - Wilson Airways Central African Service. |
| Laurence Kimpton | - Covers from Persia flown on the RAF Cairo – Baghdad service. |

October 2021:

- Duncan Crewe - *Courtier* crash.
- Bob Clark - Horseshoe or not? June 1940.
- Laurence Kimpton - Covers from and to Australia, 1939-1940.
- Peter Wingent - Incidents on the African service.
- Peter Wingent - BOAC Kenya – Madagascar service, 1943-1945.

November 2021:

- Bob Clark - The 2nd Horseshoe service.
- John Wilson - Double Atlantic mail.
- Duncan Crewe - The *Athena* fire.
- Peter Richards - Air mail to and from Sierra Leone and Gambia via I.A.
- Laurence Kimpton - The inauguration of the regular air mail service from England to Australia.
- Sue Burn - Difficult journeys.
- Peter Wingent - Mauritius air mail, 1931 ~ 1940.