IMPERIAL AIRWAYS GAZETTE

Issue 62

December 2022

Contents

Editorial 1

Flight No. AN1 – 12th to 13th March 1931 - Juba, Sudan to Khartoum 2
By Pete Halmkin

Duncan Crewe's answer to Richard Rawlingson's query in June 2022 Gazette 3
By Duncan Crewe

A Salonika post card 4
Provided by Richard Rawlingson

A Cover from India to Poland from the Imperial Airways' *Scipio* Crash in 1936 4
By Dr. Jerzy W. Kupiec-Weglinski, FRPSL

Flights to Salonika and Athens in 1930 7
By Richard Rawlingson

One thing leads to another 9
By Nick Arrow

South Africa to China by BOAC in 1943 13
By John Wilson

Imperial Airways Germiston envelope 16
By Peter Wingent

Qantas leaflets 17
By Richard Rawlingson

Imperial Airways and the Liverpool Civic Week, September-October 1928 19
By Duncan Crewe

Imperial Airways' book matches 28
Peter Wingent

Cygnus crash questions 29
By Peter Wingent and Duncan Crewe

Kisumu service KN23 31
By Peter Wingent

The first I.A. services to and from Australia which carried passengers 31
By Laurence Kimpton

For the record ~ our Zoom meetings, June to November 2022 34

Editor: Peter Wingent
4 Twyford Court
Northlands Drive
Winchester
Hampshire
SO23 7AL

Telephone:
01962 851780

e-mail:
pwingent@googlemail.com

Front cover illustration: *Imperial Airways' S.23 flying boat Canopus at Marignane Airport, Marseilles.*
See articles on pages 29 and 31.

Editorial

I sent out the last edition of the Gazette with a rather heavy heart, feeling that it was well below our usual standard but it is with great pleasure that I am writing this editorial because so many of you responded to my plea for contributions which have filled this edition to bursting. Very many thanks to all of you who have sent me articles. They have come from not only our regular stalwarts but also from three new members, so thanks to Pete Halmkin, Richard Rawlingson and Jerzy W. Kupiec-Weglinski to whom I offer a warm welcome.

The fourteen pieces provide a very wide range of topics which hopefully will provide something of interest to every reader. Many of the articles are the result of painstaking research which has unearthed hidden stories behind the covers featured. How rewarding for the writers and how fascinating for us all.

I am delighted that the Zoom meetings continue to be a popular event with the number of attendees regularly around the twenty mark. As with the Gazette, the quality of the material shown and the depth of knowledge of the presenters is, I think, extremely high. So once again I offer my thanks to all who have contributed to the Zoom meetings over the past months.

Now, as you no doubt expect, comes my usual plea for material! So, no resting on your laurels, please keep your contributions coming for both the Gazette and the Zoom meetings. As I always remind you, we are a very small group and we would not exist without material from the membership. Large articles are great but also nothing is too small. When you get to page 28 you will see I have included illustrations of some I.A. book matches and I haven't said a word about them. So please make a contribution large or small – but something!

Finally, I wish you all Best Wishes for Christmas and a Happy and Peaceful New Year.

Flight No. AN1 – 12th to 13th March 1931 – Juba, Sudan to Khartoum
An Unscheduled Overnight Stop in Kosti

By Pete Halmkin

Wed 11th / Thurs 12th		Thurs 12th		Thurs 12th		Thurs 12th / Fri 13th		Fri 13th
Juba		Shambe		Malakal		Kosti		Khartoum
Arr. 18:00	Dep. 06:00	Arr. 08:05	Dep. 09:15	Arr. 12:05	Dep. 14:10	Arr. 17:40	Dep. 06:10	Arr. 08:40

The flight from Juba set off at 06:00 and, following the course of the White Nile River, was scheduled to land at Malakal and Kosti before reaching Khartoum in the late afternoon. However owing to strong head winds an extra stop was made in Shambe on the southern edge of the Sudd district for petrol.

The Flight Engineer on the Short S.8 Calcutta Flying boat G-AASJ '*City of Khartoum*', Mr A.C.Blay, noted in the flight log:

"We landed at Shambe at 8.5 a.m. and had to wait for nearly three quarters of an hour before the petrol came out to us. In the meantime naked natives with huge spears peered at us through the rushes. There are no white men there at all. We got away at last at 9.15 a.m. and flew once again over the Sudd to Malakal where we landed at 12.5 p.m. At 2.10 p.m. after a nasty side wind takeoff in the narrow river we tried to make Khartoum in one hop but the delay at Shambe and the head wind beat us and we found we should not be there until after dark. It was then decided that the night should be spent at Kosti, where we landed at 5.40 p.m. After a night spent sleeping or trying to sleep in the open, but being kept awake by the continual beating of tom-toms away somewhere in the bush, we took off for the last stage on Friday, the 13th at 6.10 a.m. arriving safely at Khartoum at 8.40 a.m."

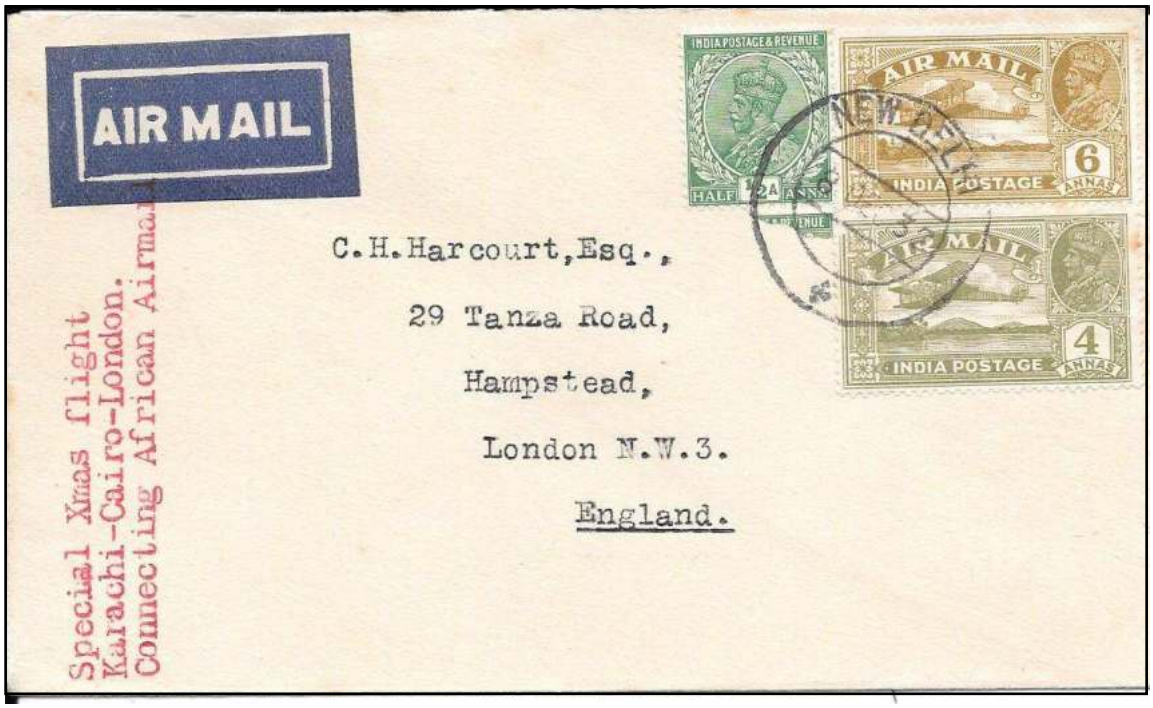
Torit via Juba to Great Britain

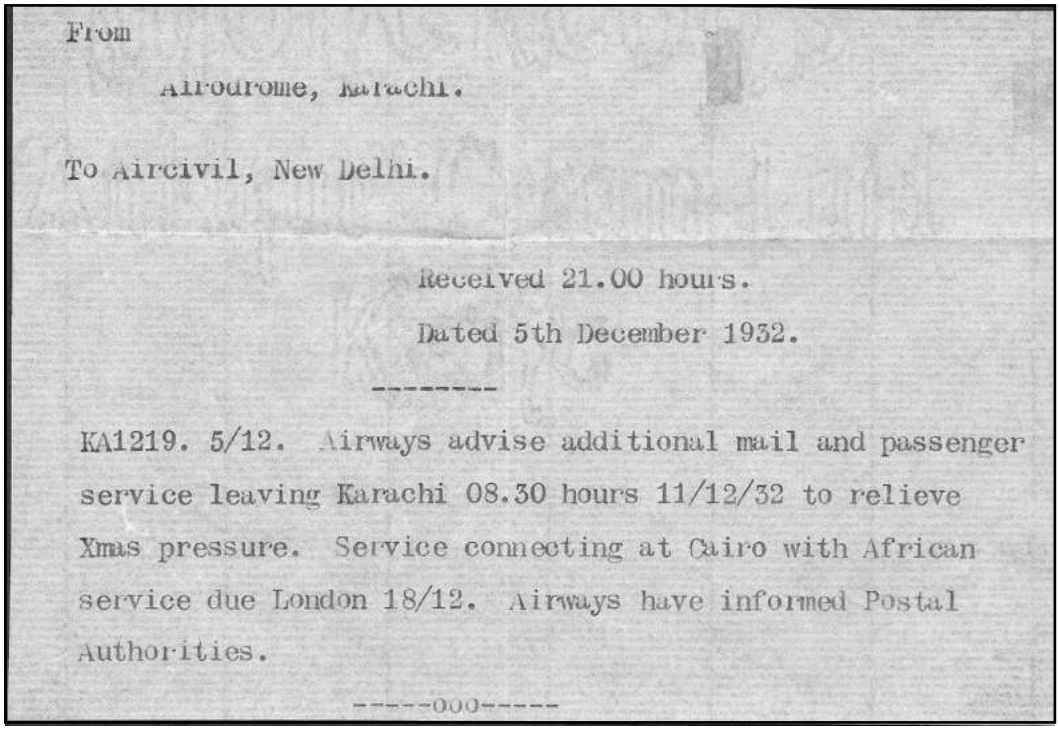
The letter left Torit in Equatoria Province on Wednesday 10th March, arriving in Juba, 135 miles to the west, the same day. It was put on the northbound first flight which arrived from Butiaba, Uganda during the evening of 11th March and left at 6am the next day.

Question answered

In the June 2022 Gazette Richard Rawlingson's cover carried on an additional Eastern service in December 1932 was illustrated. Duncan Crewe has responded, sending me scans of his cover and a telegram from the Karachi aerodrome authorities to those at New Delhi. The latter explains clearly the purpose of the additional service.

Richard questioned the accuracy of the quantity of covers flown, stated as 20 by Francis Field. I have not received any comments on this thorny question and I say thorny because my personal view of quantities stated by dealers is that they should be treated with much caution. The only figures I regard as accurate are those given by the postal authorities involved in the handling of the mail on such flights.





From

Airodrome, Karachi.

To Aircivil, New Delhi.

Received 21.00 hours.

Dated 5th December 1932.

KA1219. 5/12. Airways advise additional mail and passenger service leaving Karachi 08.30 hours 11/12/32 to relieve Xmas pressure. Service connecting at Cairo with African service due London 18/12. Airways have informed Postal Authorities.

-----000-----

A Salonika post card

Provided by Richard Rawlingson

Richard sent this unusual post card, published by Delta of Athens, showing a Calcutta flying boat coming in to land. He thinks the photograph must have been taken between November 1929 and September 1930, this being the only period during which Imperial Airways' India service was routed via Salonika.

Thank you for sharing your card with us Richard.

A Cover from India to Poland from the Imperial Airways' *Scipio* Crash in 1936

By Dr. Jerzy W. Kupiec-Weglinski, FRPSL

The direct service by British Imperial Airways Ltd. (I.A.) between England and Australia commenced in December 1934, when a transcontinental route of 12,754 miles (20,525 km) traversing Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, The Persian Gulf, India, and Malaya was completed in twelve days. Initially, there were weekly flights from London-Croydon (Sat. departure) to Brisbane, Australia (Thu. arrival). In May 1936, a second flight was added in each direction, making it a twice-weekly regular service from Croydon (Sat., Wed. departure) to Brisbane (Thu., Mon. arrival); and back (Brisbane Wed., Sat. departure; Croydon Mon., Thu. arrival). The Karachi–Singapore leg was operated jointly with Indian Trans-Continental Airways (formed in 1933), while the eastward leg from Singapore to Australia with Qantas Empire Airways (established in 1934). Both companies were associated with the I.A.

The subject mail from India to Poland was on the Australia – England airmail service, leaving Brisbane on Wednesday, August 12, 1936 (Flight IW470). The aircraft were *Brisbane* (Brisbane–Bangkok; August 12-17), *Athena* (Bangkok–Karachi; August 17-19), and *Helena* (Karachi–Alexandria; August 19-22). On Saturday, August 22, 1936, at 6 a.m., the Short S17 Kent flying boat *Scipio* (registration G-ABFA; in I.A. fleet since May 1931) left Alexandria for Brindisi on its way to London. Around 10.40 a.m., the aircraft plunged into the

Aegean Sea while landing in the Mirabella Harbor, some 100 yards off the Crete island, and sunk in minutes. Two of the seven passengers died trapped in the wreckage, and the remaining occupants were injured. The I.A. depot ship *Imperia* arrived at the crash site with much-needed emergency support.

The aircraft was loaded with 38 mailbags collected *en route* in Australia and the Indian subcontinent. After the crash recovery, which lasted about 6 hours, the water-soaked mail was transported by a British cruiser H.M.S. *Durban* to Athens and handed over to the Greek authorities. Some of the correspondence addressed to England (including two bags with 29 kg. of mail from Hong Kong) was carried by a direct I.A. service (aircraft *Danae*), arriving in London on August 25. The balance was forwarded to Brindisi, Italy, the original destination for the ill-fated *Scipio* flight, from where it went by train to Paris for further distribution. Over 20 boxed and unboxed "*Damaged By Sea Water*" advisory cachets (black or purple) were applied in London and other European localities.

Figure 1.

The front and reverse of a cover from India to Poland recovered from the Imperial Airways' Scipio crash (August 22, 1936).

A possibly unique cover from India, with routing instructions "BY AIR MAIL INDIA – POLAND" (Figure 1, both sides shown), was amongst the salvaged mail from the I.A.'s *Scipio* crash on August 22, 1936 (*Nierinck 360822*). Based on a closer examination of the departure cancellation remnants, it is still possible to decipher that the cover was posted in the morning hours on Tuesday, August 18, 1936, in Amritsar, a city in the northwestern Indian state of Punjab. It was then carried by surface mail to nearby Lahore, just 32 miles (51 km.) away from Amritsar, as evidenced by a dated boxed machine slogan cancel on the reverse flap ("Use The Air Mail And Save Time / 18 Aug 36 / 2 – P.M. / LAHORE").

Most of the Indian franking has floated off after *Scipio* sunk in the Mirabella Bay. The remaining pair of 3p. adhesives (6p. total face value) (SG 201; 1926 King George V issue) represent part of the prevailing rate (3½A. per 1 oz. surface plus 6A. air fee for the first weight ½ oz. step) to Europe (except Britain), of 9½A. postage, effective November 28, 1934. Thus, it appears that 9A. worth of stamps was washed-off. The empty spots and postmark remnants on the cover recto imply three additional adhesives made up the 9½A. franking. For comparison, the all-inclusive airmail rate from India to England was 7½A.

The c/o Warsaw addressee, Mr. Alfred Jurzykowski (1899-1966), warrants mentioning. He was one of the wealthiest Polish businessmen, and a patron of art and science in interwar Poland. After the war, he emigrated to Sao Paulo and became the chairman of the Mercedes Benz, Brazil. In 1960, he established the New York-based Jurzykowski Foundation, a charitable organization in the US-Polish community.

The information gleaned from the postal markings on this cover leaves no doubt about how it was carried from India to Poland. In the Summer of 1936, the Indian National Airways (I.N.A.; formed in 1933) provided regular service (Sun., Tue., Thu.) from Delhi via Lahore (Civil Aerodrome) to Karachi (Drigh Road). After reaching Lahore by surface from Amritsar, this cover was flown by I.N.A. on Tuesday, August 18 (2 p.m. departure) via Multan and Jacobabad to arrive in Karachi the same evening (7.10 p.m.). It was then picked up by the I.A. service (aircraft *Helena*) from Karachi the following day, Wednesday, August 19 (9 a.m.). The "September 2, 1936 / Brindisi Posta Aerea" transit backstamp confirms the Greek postal authorities' quarantine and "drying" period for water-soaked *Scipio* mail. Brindisi was the last port of call for all-air westward I.A. service, which continued to Paris by rail and a steamer to England. In February 1937, Short S23 flying boats were introduced on the Alexandria – Southampton section of the *Eastern* Route.

"Our" cover was transported from Brindisi to Paris by train, where a 2-line typed advisory label in French was applied to pieces that lost their franking ("Lettre endommagee de l'eau de la / mer a la suit du desastre aerien"). It reads: *Letter retrieved from the sea after a plane crash*. With minor variations due to the number of typists, this label is scarce and previously known on a few items addressed to Germany and Italy.

The final leg for this well-traveled Warsaw-bound Indian cover was by Air France (Flight 471), which offered daily connection from Paris (6 a.m. departure) via Strasbourg, Nuremberg, and Prague to Warsaw (5.15 p.m. arrival). The receiving backstamp from Warsaw 1 P.O. of "September 5, 1936; 11 a.m." translates to the transit time of 3 days from Brindisi; 14 days from the crash site off Crete island; 17 days since the transcontinental travel started in Karachi (present-day Pakistan); and 18 days since posting at the remote Indian town and handled by a domestic air carrier in Lahore. This is an unthinkable mail delivery timeframe for the twenty-first-century postal systems.

Epilogue: The consulting airmail crash experts confirm this might be the only Poland-associated postal item from *Scipio* 1936 deadly accident. Perhaps, wishful thinking considering tens of thousands of water-damaged salvaged letters. On the other hand, with vast, if not all, correspondence on the ill-fated flight being private or commercial, these items lacking fancy cachets or markings were considered less attractive, drew little attention of collectors, and relatively few were saved. However, this does not diminish their importance. Indeed, their "miraculous" survival after almost 90 years of turbulent European history warrants attention for an impressive record of aerial achievements in the world of commerce in the 1930s.

Every postal item recovered from a fatal crash has a unique, albeit tragic, story to tell. The research has revealed a complete history of the cover as it is possible to achieve. It exemplifies how rewarding it is to dig a little "deeper" while researching a postal item, which opens a window on history, and provides multiple avenues for further studies.

References

Nierinck, H.L.: Courrier recupere: Accidents d'avions, 1918-1978 / Recovered mail: Airplane crashes, 1918-1978. Antwerpen, Belgium: R-Editions, 1984; pp. 367.

Sanford, K.C.: Air Crash Mail of Imperial Airways and Predecessor Airlines. The Stuart Rossiter Trust Fund, 2003.

Wingent, P.: Aircraft Movements on Imperial Airways' Eastern Route; vol. 1 (1927–1937); Winchester 1999; pp. 207.

Flights to Salonika and Athens in 1930

By Richard Rawlingson

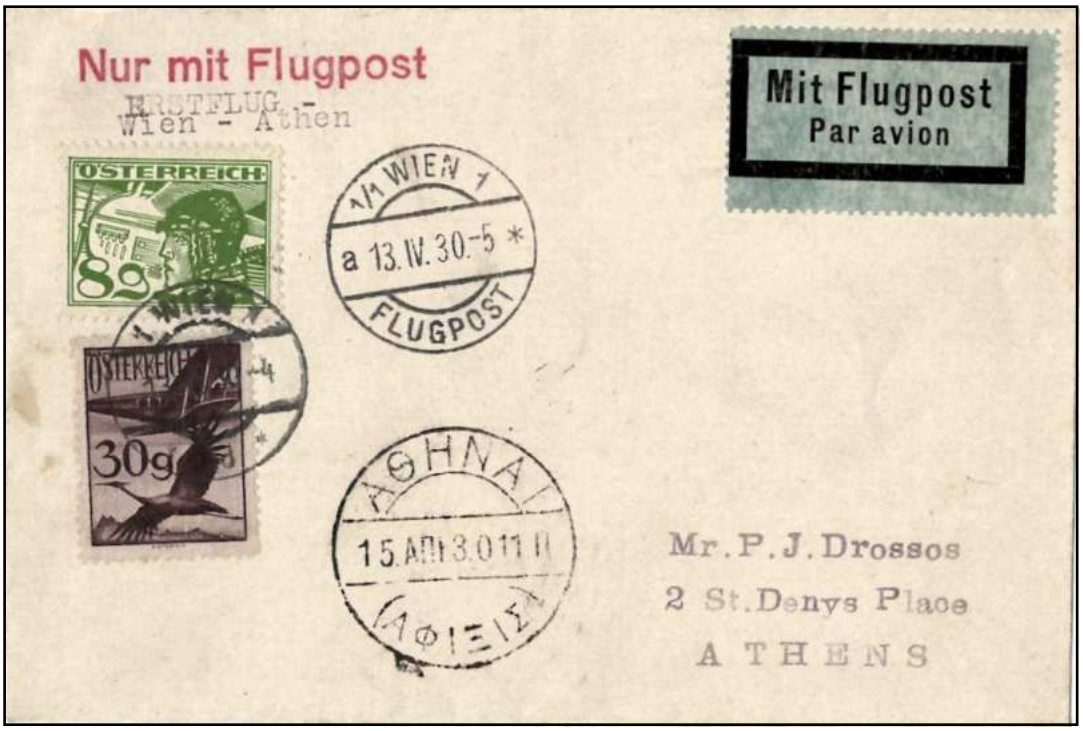
[Editor: some weeks after receiving from Richard the post card to Salonika shown on page 4, I received an email from him attaching the three covers featured here.]

Richard wrote: Following on from the Salonica post card I sent you, I thought it would make it more interesting if I included some covers that would have passed through the city. I have chosen three from the reopening of the mainly flown route in April 1930.

1) A Gertrude Collins cover from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to Salonica via IE55 on 12th April 1930, arriving 14th April, the first departure to the new schedule which reduced the journey to Karachi from 7½ to 6½ days. This reinstated the air route through Northern Europe that had been abandoned the previous autumn as a result of bad weather and logistical problems. As noted in your book, this was flown all the way to Salonica by *City of Birmingham*, cutting out the scheduled rail leg from Uskub to Salonica, possibly to make up time lost after a late departure from Nuremburg.

Interestingly, the very similar cover illustrated in your book carries the correct 6½d. franking (2½d. per oz plus 4d. air fee) whereas this one is underpaid at 4½d.

2) An attractive Drossos cover, also from IE55, from Vienna to Athens arriving 15/4. It carries the inscription 'First flight Vienna to Athens' and the red cachet which translates as 'Only with Airmail.'



3) From IW54, the first westward service to the new schedule, from Alexandria to Vienna. This arrived in Vienna on 21st April, one day late. I assume the First Flight cachet was locally applied in Egypt.

One thing leads to another

By Nick Arrow

We all like collecting, and we acquire new material through numerous sources. We plough through auction lists, dealer's stocks, Ebay and so on, and every so often we stumble across something which inspires! This is about two covers which I acquired almost by mistake, as a result of a comedy of happenings, which has led to considerable satisfaction, and libations being offered to the Gods of Good Fortune!

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE AEROPHILATELIC SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

EDITOR: NEVILLE POLAKOW RDPSA, FRPSL

THE AEROPHILATELIC SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

DIE AEROFILATELISTE-VERENIGING VAN SUIDELIKE AFRIKA

ASSA: GOLDEN JUBILEE 1960-2010
AEROLETTER NUMBER 100

JULY 2010

AFFILIATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF AEROPHILATELIC SOCIETIES AND THE PHILATELIC FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

This 1935 Zeppelin cover with an Umtali, Southern Rhodesia acceptance addressed to the Falkland Islands is thought to be unique. Franked by 4/11d adhesives (being the airmail rate per half-ounce to South America) the cover was flown on numerous aircraft and on a mail ship before it arrived at its destination almost a month later. See article page 27.

President / Editor
Neville Polakow RDPSA, FRPSL
149 Cape Road
Mill Park
Port Elizabeth 6001
South Africa
e-mail: nev1kp@intekom.co.za
Phone: +27 (0) 41 373 2226 (H)
1237 (W)
1061
013

Honorary Secretary / Treasurer
Dave Morton
2 Anemone Avenue
Wolgendale 7530
Western Cape
South Africa
e-mail: dmorton@mweb.co.za
Phone: +27 (0) 21 913 6461
Fax: +27 (0) 86 684 3066
Mobile: +27 (0) 82 297 7388

Mailed to: Neville Polakow, 149, Cape Road, Mill Park, 6001 Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Figure 1

This particular story takes its origin from my membership of the Aerophilatelic Society of Southern Africa, which was revived in the early 2000's by Dave Morton, who basically did all the work, although sadly, on his death, the Society died with him.

The society's magazine, "The Aeroletter," was edited by Neville Polakow, who had a fantastic collection of South African Airmails and for the Centenary Edition of the Magazine (figure 1), he included an article featuring two items from his collection shown in figures 2 and 3. These were described as follows:

"Two exotic 1934 acceptances carried on a combination of Imperial Airways' Indian and African services. Registered and mailed from Iraq and Kuwait, the covers were carried to Durban, registered and then remailed back to Baghdad. They bear respectively five and nine backstamps. It is known that two covers were carried from Kuwait while the assumption is made that a similar number emanated from Iraq."

When I saw these items, I felt that they were just basic covers, very much tarted up by fancy cachets to make them out to be rather more important than they were. There may have been only two each in total, but I felt that they were akin to souvenirs, or curios, and were collectable as such, as opposed to making any kind of contribution to the history of aerophilately.

[However, having said that, I should be very happy if any member can let me have further evidence which proves me wrong!]

Figure 2.

Figure 3.

About 5 or 6 years later, I managed to acquire an item similar to one of these shown in figure 4. This was posted in Basrah on the 12th July and carried by Imperial Airways, via Egypt, to Johannesburg, arriving on the 19th, and thence by SAA to Durban, arriving 3 days later. It was then returned to Basrah by registered mail and carried by flight AN176 to Cairo and by flight IE280 to reach Basra (via Bahrain) on the 31st July. It was processed in Basra on the 1st August and delivered. It was then readdressed to Bahrain and reposted on the 7th August, where it arrived on the 9th August. As well as numerous postal markings, there is the fancy cachet "First Aerial Despatch / Iraq – to – Durban / by Imperial Airways" which frankly I think is rubbish, as (a) it had been possible to send mail from Iraq (Bahrain) to Durban ever since the service to South Africa had been established, and (b) Imperial Airways never went anywhere near Durban, although if anyone can prove the truth of this claim, I would be extremely interested.

Figure 4.

In April 2019, Spink offered the Polakow collection in one of their collectors' sales. One of the lots (#2133) offered about 20 covers, several of which I already had but which included –

> *"…1934 envelopes from Iraq and Kuwait (possibly only two from each country known) to Durban and remailed back to Baghdad…"*

Obviously the two items referred to in the article in The Aeroletter. The estimate of £200-250 seemed reasonable, and I marked this down as a lot for serious consideration.

The sale itself was the subject of much grief to Spink as someone had hacked their computer, and they managed to sell only about 100 lots in the afternoon session, before giving up and saying that they would start again another day. However, I discovered that they had decided to carry on early the following morning, which enabled me to participate. Because of the hacking problems, I asked Spink to bid for me. The lots started within my budget, but this was soon exceeded, and I gave up.

However, a later lot (#2150) offered items connected with South West Africa (SWA)-

> *"Later flights incoming selection (6) with mail from Germany to Wilhelmstal, Australia (2) to Keetmanshoop and Windhoek, Singapore to Windhoek, Thailand to Windhoek and India to Mariental."*

These had an estimate of £150-200, and the representative from Spink kindly kept holding on the phone for me. When reached, there had been no bid at all on the lot, which was reserved at £75, which I felt was something of a bargain, so I put in a bid through the phone – the hammer came down as fast as I think I can ever remember!

It was the commercial cover from Germany shown in figure 5 which primarily interested me.

When the lot arrived through the post, I immediately looked it up in Peter's book and to my astonishment, it proved to be a "crash cover" from AS287. On attempting to take-off at 4am on the 3rd November from Kisumu, the AW-15 '*Atalanta*' struck a tree and crashed. No-one was injured. Three planes were chartered to convey the mail to Nairobi, where the flight resumed, with the '*Andromeda*' carrying the mail on to Johannesburg, arriving only one day late. The item was then taken by SAA to Kimberley and thence by SWAA on the link flight to Windhoek for delivery to Wilhelmstal, on the 7th November, by surface mail. On further checking Neirinck, it seemed that no other mail is recorded addressed to (or through) South Africa! Joy and Rapture!!

Figure 5.

I was then able to consider the other covers, one of which was from Siam, shown in figure 6. I was a little surprised at the rather late arrival mark (9th February 1934 for a cover flown out on the 6th January), and, after checking (and a few false starts), I discovered that although not carried on the first Imperial Airways return from Singapore, it was a first **acceptance** from Siam, as the necessary treaties for the carriage of such mail were only signed after the first flight had gone through. What is more, it was wrongly bagged for London – note the red lines cancelling the air mail etiquette – so it was carried by sea (Carnarvon Castle – acknowledgement to Peter!) to Cape Town.

Which presented the Cape Town Post Office with a problem, as (a) due to flooding, all surface mail to SWA was then impossible due to quite incredible flooding and (b) it could not be flown on the SWA Feeder Service because the regulations at the time prevented mail from South of Kimberley being accepted. However, Gordon Store of Aero Services (Pty) Ltd, who was carrying out aerial surveys over SWA at the time, came to the rescue, by volunteering to carry mail bags to SWA if there was room on his plane, and my cover must have been one of the first covers to take advantage of this arrangement. So a first acceptance from Siam, mistakenly bagged for London, addressed to SWA, carried by sea to Cape Town and finally flown to SWA under the informal arrangement with Gordon Store, surely must count as a pretty unusual item at the least!

(Incidentally, I have not been able to obtain any other covers from Siam to South Africa carried by Imperial Airways before or since, and if anyone has a spare copy knocking around somewhere, I would not mind having the chance to haggle over a change of its ownership to me!]

So, out of the six covers in this lot, two are at the least of some considerable scarcity, and, at £25 plus hammer markup, I am very happy to have added them to my collection. Incidentally, it is strange indeed that Neville Polakow was totally unaware as to the scarcity of these two very unusual items.

And, I wonder, if he had not drawn attention to the two "bells and whistles" covers sent from Bahrain to Durban and back, whether I would have paid that much attention to #2133, and, having noted that lot, whether I would have considered #2150 to be such a reasonable and desirable alternative.

As I said at the start of this article, one thing leads to another . . . !

South Africa to China by BOAC 1943

By John Wilson

Showing how BOAC carried on using the Imperial Airways routes and the value of having friends like Peter Wingent!

In an accumulation of covers relating to my "LATI substitute" researches, I have a folder marked "Interesting". Reviewing its contents, I found to my delight a forgotten cover which went by air from South Africa to China in 1943 (Fig. 1). I had designated it "interesting" because of the airmail route, but when I turned it over I found that it was ship's stationery from the "Gripsholm". I put aside the airmail route issue and took a closer look. This is the moment when "Interesting" became more so.

Fig. 1. Port Elizabeth to Kunming.

Posted in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, the sender was W.B. Burke, and the addressee was James C. Burke in Kunming. The "Gripsholm" was on the return voyage from China to the US carrying released exchange prisoners of the Japanese when she called at Port Elizabeth before crossing to Rio and then New York. Burke senior obviously wrote and posted this cover to his son whilst docked at Port Elizabeth. A look at the "Gripsholm" passenger list shows William B. Burke aged 79 and from Macon, GA. His age and the fact that

he had been a prisoner of the Japanese is evident from the shaky writing. Son James B. Burke was born in Shanghai in 1915, father William being a missionary there. James returned to the US, graduating from Emory U. in 1932, but in WW2 he had returned to China and was acting as war correspondent to Chennault's 14th Air Force.

The journey of the "Gripsholm" is shown in an American newspaper article of the time (Fig. 2), confirming the call at Port Elizabeth. Quite a journey for a 79 year old man who had been in the hands of the Japanese.

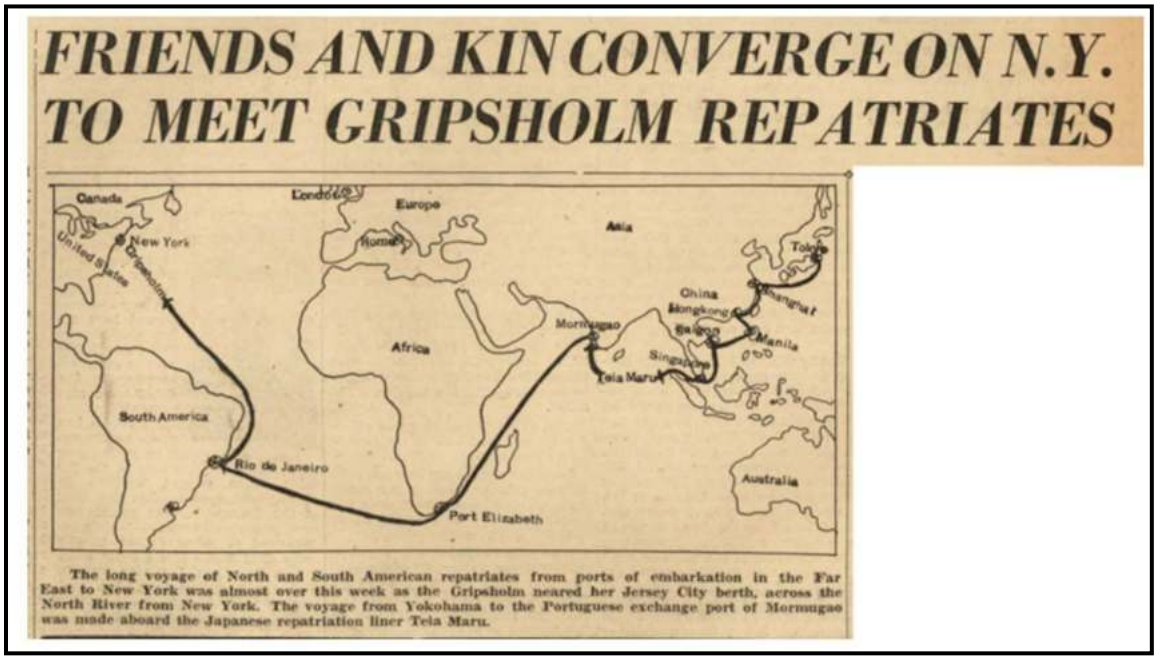
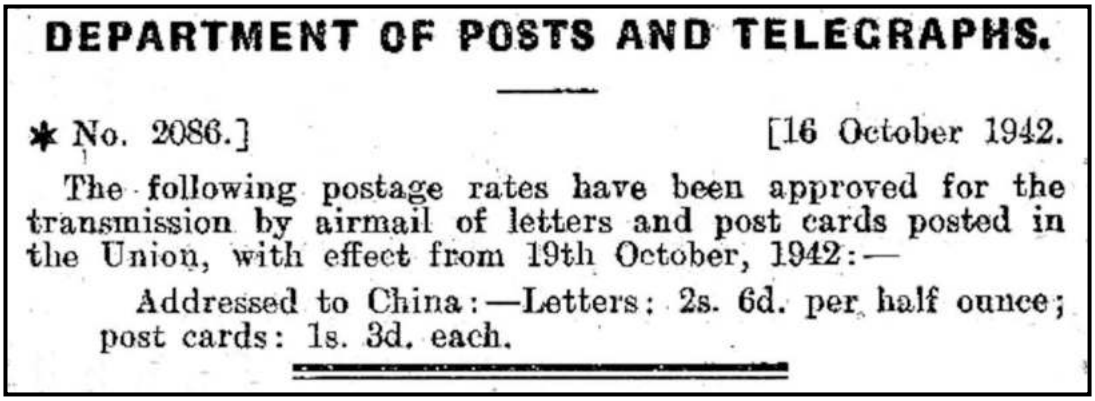


Fig. 2. "Gripsholm" journey from Japan to USA.

Now to the postal history. My first thought on the mail rate was that it was simply a double fee of 1/3d but having been taught to be cautious I eventually found a South African Government Gazette showing that there was an individual rate to China of 2/6d; exactly as per cover (Fig. 3). Note the "V" and Morse code V in the canceller.



DEPARTMENT OF POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS.

✱ No. 2086.] [16 October 1942.

The following postage rates have been approved for the transmission by airmail of letters and post cards posted in the Union, with effect from 19th October, 1942:—

Addressed to China:—Letters: 2s. 6d. per half ounce; post cards: 1s. 3d. each.

Fig. 3. South Africa Gazette.

Posted on the 4th of November 1943 the cover was sent to Cape Town for censorship (Censor code "A") and returned to Durban for connection to the "Horseshoe", since the journey to Kunming must have been by air in order to arrive on the 9th of December. Peter W. has long warned about the fact that a lot of "airmail" destined for India from Durban was actually sent by sea because of congestion on the route to Cairo. Post Office archive records extracted by Peter do show much irritation caused by these transshipments but fortunately for Mr. Burke the same records show that at the very time his letter was posted in South Africa the "Horseshoe" congestion eased, and mail was carried from South Africa by air (Fig. 4). That's what it means to have Peter as a friend and colleague!

AIR MAILS FROM NAIROBI TO LONDON.

Date of despatch	Date of receipt	No. of days in transit
2nd Sept '43	16th Oct 43	44
5th " "	16th " "	41
9th " "	14th Nov "	66
12th " "	14th " "	63
16th " "	14th " "	59
19th " "	13th " "	55
22nd " "	13th " "	52
25th " "	2nd " "	38
29th " "	12th " "	44
2nd Oct "	12th " "	41
6th " "	12th " "	37
9th " "	27th " "	49
13th " "	27th " "	45
16th " "	20th " "	35
20th " "	8th Dec "	49
23rd " "	2nd Nov "	10
27th " "	6th " "	10
30th " "	12th " "	13
3rd Nov "	12th " "	9
6th " "	19th " "	13
10th " "	22nd " "	12
13th " "	22nd " "	9
17th " "	25th " "	8
20th " "	1st Dec "	11

apparently all the way by air

Average time of mails sent by sea from Egypt - 48 days

GPO

SS 281.

Fig. 4. From GPO records, courtesy of Peter Wingent.

We know the journey of the writer from Japan to Port Elizabeth but what of the return journey of his letter? Durban to Cairo and on to Calcutta by the BOAC "Horseshoe" then transferred to the CNAC/US Transport Command flight across the Himalayas, "The Hump". This delivered the cover to Kunming as shown on the rather poor map (Fig. 5) taken by me from a microfilm image held in the Air Forces Historical Agency records at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. This was the only part of the route that was not within BOAC despite some American collectors saying that their Air Transport Command carried the airmail across India. There is more to say on this, but not here!

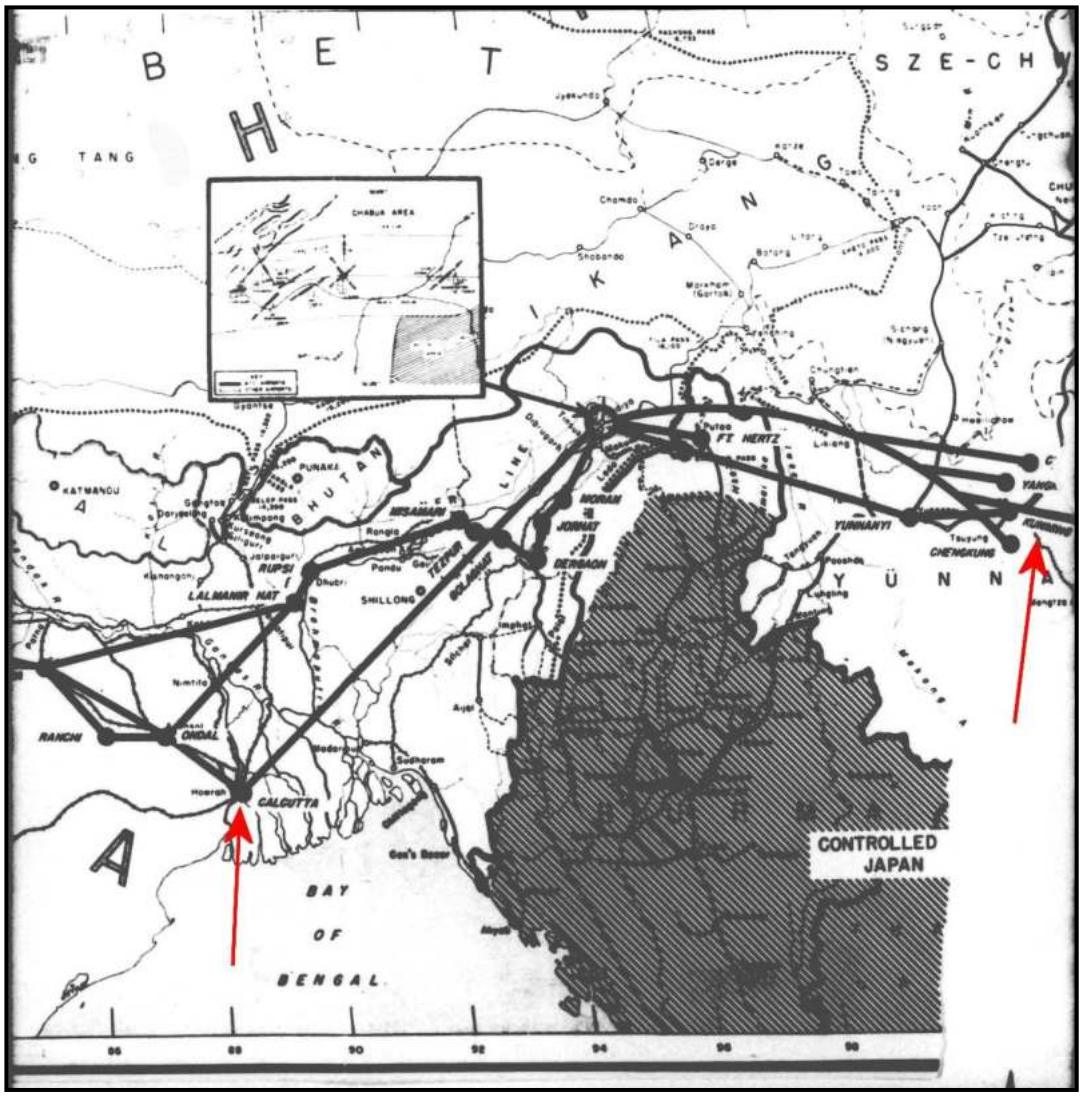


Fig. 5. CNAC route to China from Calcutta.

I hope you are not bored by my ramble across Asia, but at least BOAC were carrying the Imperial banner and using the Imperial routes established many years earlier.

For a complete history of the "Gripsholm" prisoner exchange trips, the essential reference is the book "Detained, Interned and Incarcerated" by Louis Fiset, published by the Collectors Club of Chicago. None of the illustrations in my article were taken from the Fiset book.

Imperial Airways Germiston envelope

By Peter Wingent

Envelopes with the I.A. name and badge on the reverse are fairly common but this envelope has in addition the name of the airport and as such, is the first I have seen. Do any readers have examples? Bottom left datestamp is timed 4PM, top right datestamps timed 5.15PM. Pencil note "*Insufficiently prepaid*." Top right stamps then applied later.

Qantas leaflets

By Richard Rawlingson

Attached are scans of two Qantas leaflets from my collection, promoting their passenger services. Neither is dated but there are enough clues to get fairly close to the publication dates.

The 'Fly To Australia' leaflet (Figures 1 to 3) I would put at late 1935. The Hong Kong link does not appear on the map so it must predate March 1936. The second 'Fly To The East' (Figures 4 to 6) I would guess as mid to late 1937. The Hong Kong spur is now shown and the copy describes completing the journey to the UK by Empire flying boat across the Mediterranean. The route to Singapore is still flown by the De Haviland DH 86 fleet, with 'Adelaide' pictured on the back page.

It is interesting that Qantas were promoting these services. I believe the long-range version of the DH 86 only carried ten passengers, so they would have been addressing a fairly small potential customer base.

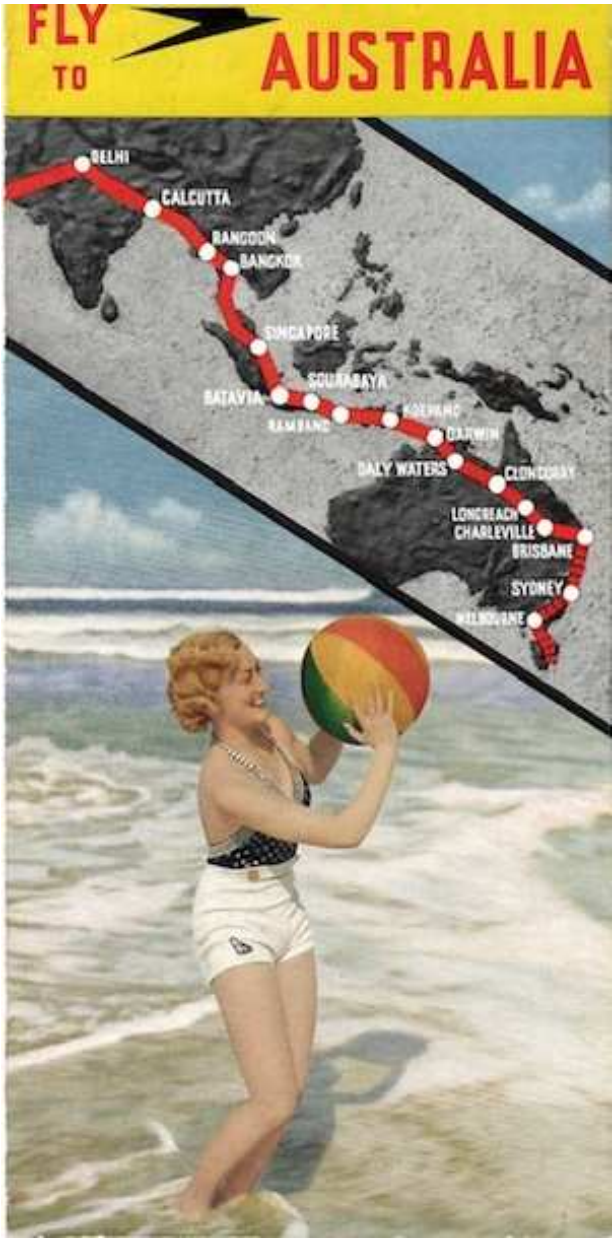


Figure 1.

RE-FUELLING AT DALY WATERS

Four-Engined Airliners carry you in armchair comfort without the least vestige of a thrill over the great impenetrable forests of Sumatra, and the glory of the Thousand Isles, to Batavia and Sourabaya, and on to the little known but beautiful island of Lombok for the first night's stop. Rinjani's 12,000 ft. peak penetrates the morning mists as you set out next day on the interesting run over Sumba and Sumbawa to Koepang. That night you sleep in Australia, comfortably housed in the Company's Rest House at Darwin.

Next day you fly over Australia's vast open spaces for a night landing at Longreach, and the following noon brings you to Brisbane, the Capital City of Queensland.

On Business or Pleasure use the Airway to Australia.

Qantas Airliners leave Singapore, Batavia and Sourabaya on Mondays and Fridays, arriving Brisbane on Thursdays and Mondays—Leave Brisbane on Wednesdays and Saturdays arriving Batavia and Singapore on Saturdays and Tuesdays.

Qantas services connect at Singapore with Imperial Airways services to and from Malaya, Hong Kong, Burma, Siam, India, Egypt, Africa and Europe.

FARES:

Singapore - Brisbane	£52
Batavia - Brisbane	£48/16/0
Sourabaya - Brisbane	£47/12/0

(Return Fares subject to 10% Discount)

For full particulars apply to:

AGENT

Knock weeks off your journey. It is easy by air. Nights are spent comfortably on land. Four-Engined Airliners assure complete reliability and luxurious comfort. There is ample accommodation for baggage.

QANTAS EMPIRE AIRWAYS LIMITED

(In Association with Imperial Airways)

43 Creek Street, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

Figure 2.

To Australia's East Coast

IN THREE AND A HALF DAYS

Qantas Empire Airways service, in association with Imperial Airways, provides a new and fascinating short cut to Australia, that southern land teeming with diversified interests for the visitor from overseas. Only 36 hours after leaving Singapore you arrive at Darwin. Two days later you disembark at Brisbane. Another four hours takes you to Sydney, the sixth city of the British Empire, with its magnificent Harbour, ocean surfing beaches, modern theatres, luxurious hotels and scores of beauty spots within easy reach. The east coast of Australia possesses a tonic climate, cool and invigorating after the torrid heat of the equatorial climes. Modern Railways and good motor roads lead you to the many delights of Australia's country life. Shooting and fishing to gladden the heart of the most ardent sportsman, orchards and farms, and vast sheep and cattle stations where Australia's curious animals and birds, the Kangaroo, Emu, Koala Bear, Laughing Jackass and Duck-billed Platypus, can be seen in their native habitat. All these absorbing interests lie at the end of a magic three-and-a-half day flight over the beautiful Netherlands Indies and Australia's far interior.

Figure 3.

Figure 4.

Qantas Airliners fly on Oil and Petrol by Shell—the Safest Combination in the World

A LAND OF COLOUR AND CONTRAST

At your destination, be it Sourabaya, Batavia or Singapore, strange, fascinating interests await you. Quaint friendly natives: modern luxurious hotels: ancient temples: excellent motor roads and railways: bracing mountain resorts: bazaars and markets packed with native arts and crafts: golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools: luxuriant tropical vegetation: strange animals and gaily plumed birds.

FOUR-ENGINED AIRLINERS

Qantas airliners leave Brisbane on Wednesdays and Saturdays, arriving at Sourabaya on Fridays and Mondays and at Batavia and Singapore on Saturdays and Tuesdays—leave Singapore, Batavia and Sourabaya on Fridays and Mondays, arriving Brisbane on Mondays and Thursdays.

Fares:—

Brisbane-Sourabaya	£59 10 0
Brisbane-Batavia	£61 0 0
Brisbane-Singapore	£65 0 0
Brisbane-London	£200 0 0

(Return fares subject to 10% discount).

FARES ARE INCLUSIVE—NO EXCHANGE—NO EXTRAS—NO TIPS

Qantas services connect at Singapore with Imperial Airways services to and from Malaya, Hong Kong, Burma, Siam, India, Egypt, Africa, and Europe.

For full particulars apply to:

AGENT

QANTAS EMPIRE AIRWAYS LTD.
(in association with Imperial Airways)
43 Creek Street,
BRISBANE.

Figure 5.

To the East in Three Days

● The East today is not a distant land. It lies just across the way, joined to Australia by a magic three-day link forged by Qantas Empire Airways.

● Dawn on the third day after leaving Brisbane raises the curtain on the romantic East. In fascinating succession the Islands of Timor, Sumba, Sumbawa, Lombok and Bali roll beneath the silver winged airliner.

● Chequered rice-fields, native villages, age-old temples, quaint native craft in turquoise-blue seas—and towering over all the majestic grandeur and beauty of mighty volcanoes.

● So on throughout the third day to Sourabaya. Next morning you continue to Batavia, and over the beautiful Thousand Isles to Singapore—Hub of the East.

● Beyond Singapore, a never-ending variety of interests lies along the Imperial Airways' Route to London—strange mystic India, historic Arabia and the Holy Land, romantic Egypt.

● On the final stage across the Mediterranean and over France to Southampton, you fly in one of the new Empire Flying Boats—the most luxurious aircraft in the World.

Figure 6.

Imperial Airways and the Liverpool Civic Week, September-October 1928

By Duncan Crewe

In the autumn of 1928, Liverpool City Council held a Civic Week, partly to celebrate the achievements of the area as well as to encourage investment. As part of the programme (see Fig. 2) Imperial Airways was persuaded to operate an experimental service between Liverpool and Belfast using one of the new Calcutta flying boats, G-EBVH, the *City of Stonehaven*. It was planned to operate a daily return service and as the Post Office Daily list noted, mail was to be accepted in both directions (Fig. 1).

AIR MAILS.

Liverpool—Belfast Air Mail.

An experimental air service will be carried out between Liverpool and Belfast between the 24th and 29th of September inclusive. Mails will be despatched daily from Liverpool to Belfast and vice versâ by this service.

Correspondence intended for transmission by this service must be marked by the sender "By Flying Boat," and have the usual Air Mail label affixed.

All kinds of Inland correspondence will be accepted, registered as well as unregistered, except parcels.

Special fee in addition to ordinary postage, and registration and express fees (when necessary): 1d. per 2 oz.

Correspondence can be received at Liverpool from other offices, for connexion with the outgoing Mail from Liverpool, up to 8.20 a.m. and at Belfast up to 1.45 p.m. For latest times of posting apply at local Head Post Office.

Delivery :—In Liverpool : First delivery next morning.
In Belfast : 1.15 p.m., City delivery same day (3.30 p.m. Saturday).

Figure 1.

LIVERPOOL
CIVIC WEEK

SEPTEMBER 22–29

: Official :

Programme

Price -- Two Pence

Full List of Music Events in
Special Handbook - Price 3d.

Liverpool Ships on View

H.M.S. " Rodney " (built on the Mersey) in the Gladstone Dock. Open on Tuesday and Wednesday from 1.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. No permits required.

H.M.S. " Eaglet " (R.N.V.R. training ship) in Salthouse Dock. Open daily (Sunday excepted), 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. No tickets required.

Eight modern liners will also be open FREE for inspection during the week. Application should be made to the shipping companies concerned by letter, sending stamped envelope (one penny).

CUNARD LINE.
The " Scythia " in Huskisson Dock from Saturday, September 22nd, to Friday, September 28th, inclusive.

The " Antonia " in the same dock Tuesday, September 25th, to Thursday, September 27th, inclusive.

WHITE STAR LINE.
The " Calgaric " in the Gladstone Dock, Monday to Thursday noon.
The " Baltic " in the same dock, Tuesday to Friday noon.

CANADIAN PACIFIC.
The " Montclare " on view Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, September 25th, 26th and 27th, in the Gladstone Dock.

BLUE FUNNEL LINE.
The "Anchises" loading for Australia in the Gladstone Dock. Hours of inspection: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, September 24th, 25th and 26th.

AT BIRKENHEAD.

ANCHOR LINE (Henderson Bros.) LTD.
The " Assyria," Loading Berth, Vittoria Wharf, Birkenhead. On view Tuesday and Wednesday, September 25th and 26th. Application for tickets to Anchor Line, Cunard Building, Liverpool.

ELLERMAN " CITY " LINE.
The "City of Nagpur," September 24th and 25th, "City" Line Berth, Vittoria Wharf, Birkenhead. Apply tickets, from Ellerman's " City " Line Liverpool Agency, 22, Water Street, Liverpool.

River Trips to the "Indefatigable '

At 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The Canadian Pacific Steamship Co. has placed the " Bison " at the disposal of the city for carrying visitors to the Liverpool Training Ship " Indefatigable." Displays of seamanship and hornpipe dancing by the cadets. Tickets 6d. each from the offices of the " Indefatigable," Church House, South John Street, Liverpool. Send stamped addressed envelope.

Liverpool-Belfast Air Service

Friday, September 21st. Imperial Airways Flying Boat " Calcutta " flies from Southampton to Liverpool.

Saturday, September 22nd, and Sunday, 23rd. " Calcutta " Air Liner on view to public, and will make demonstration flights at £1 per head.

Monday, September 24th, to Saturday, September 29th. Return Service to Belfast, leaving Liverpool at 10 a.m., arriving Belfast 11.45 a.m. Depart Belfast 3 p.m., arriving Liverpool 4.45 p.m. Fares: £4 single, £7 return.

Sunday, September 30th. Aircraft returns to Southampton.

Figure 2.

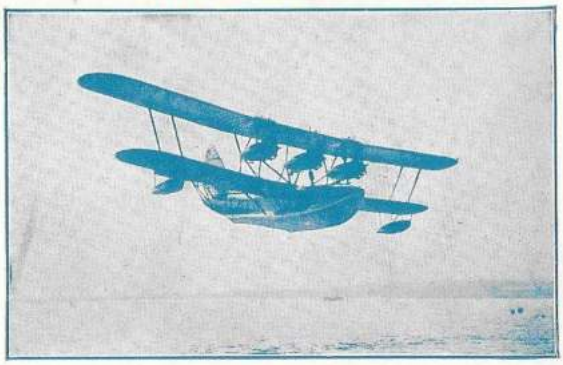
The service was widely publicised and agents' adverts (Fig. 3) encouraged passengers to book their seats.

The first mail carrying flight left Liverpool on Monday 24 September and returned later the same day. Problems with the tide and fog caused delays most days and the Friday service was cancelled because of poor visibility. It was decided to extend the service for a second week with the flying boat leaving Belfast for Liverpool each morning and returning in the afternoon. Weather and tide again caused problems and the return journey was only accomplished once in the second week. At the end of the week the service was abandoned and the flying boat returned to Southampton with one-way tickets being offered on the flight. In the event engine problems necessitated a landing at Pembroke Dock rather than Southampton. Nearly all the mail carried on the flights was philatelic.

The covers (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5) were carried on the 24th September flight and both are correctly franked with the 1d. per 2 oz. air fee as well as the normal 1½d. per oz. surface fee.

BRITAIN'S LARGEST FLYING-BOAT

"CALCUTTA"



Accommodates 15 Passengers and their Baggage

Carries a Steward and Buffet, from which Refreshments are obtainable during the journey.

IMPERIAL AIRWAYS

LIVERPOOL–BELFAST

DAILY AIR SERVICE

From SEPTEMBER 24th to SEPTEMBER 29th inclusive

TIME TABLE

LIVERPOOL (Mersey) - - dep. 10.0 a.m.
BELFAST (Musgrave Channel) arr. 11.45 a.m.
BELFAST (Musgrave Channel) dep. 3.0 p.m.
LIVERPOOL (Mersey) - - arr. 4.45 p.m.

FARES:—Single, £3 10 0; Return, £6 10 0

Baggage—30 lbs. FREE; Excess, 4d. lb.

PASSENGER TENDERS leave ROCKFERRY PIER, BIRKENHEAD, at 9.45 a.m., and 1 ALBERT SQUARE, BELFAST, at 2.30 p.m. daily.

SEATS SHOULD BE BOOKED AT

The Liverpool Organisation, Royal Liver Building, Liverpool. Telephone: BANK 5630

Jas. Little & Co. 1 Albert Square, Belfast. Telephone: BELFAST 2583

Or any Travel Agency

Figure 3.

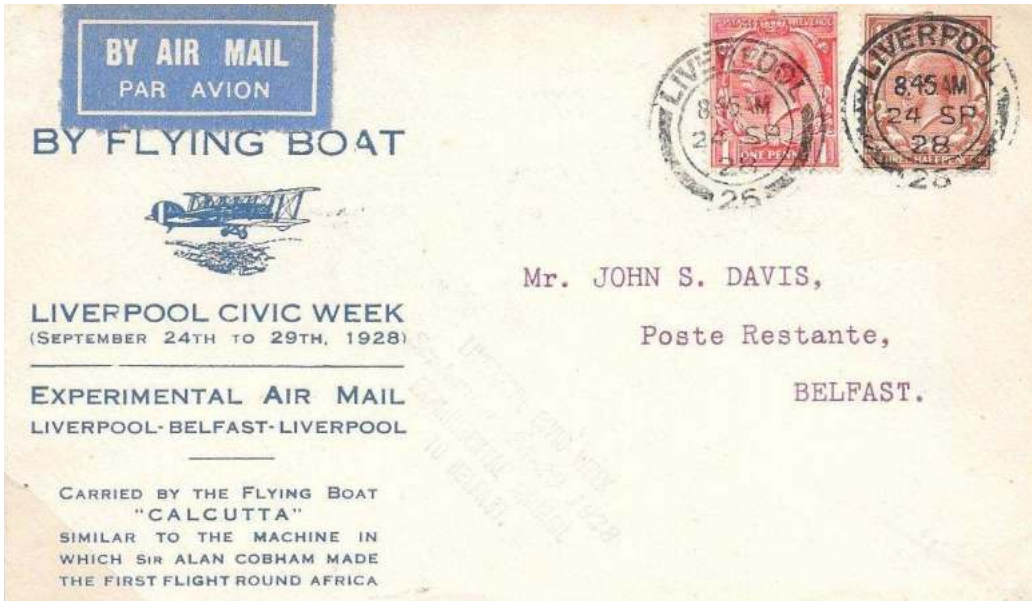


Figure 4.

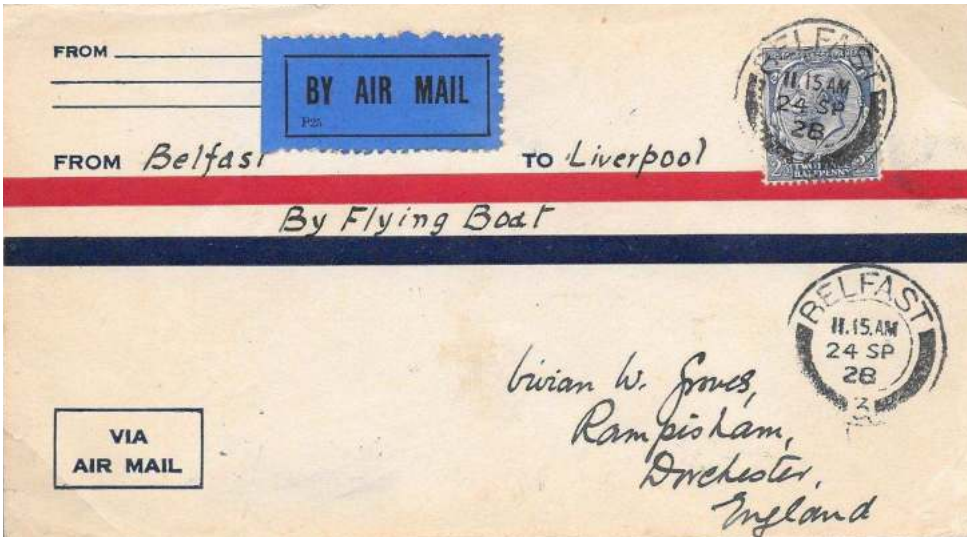


Figure 5.

As mentioned in the introduction, not all flights operated to schedule and the cover shown in Fig. 6 was originally intended to be carried from Belfast on Friday 28 September but unfortunately fog in the Mersey meant that the outbound flight from Liverpool was unable to operate and the cover was therefore held over and flown next day when the service did operate in both directions. The second cover (Fig. 7) was signed by the pilot Francis Joseph Bailey. The cachets were private ones apparently prepared by G. McCulloch and in the second instance by the dealer Francis J. Field.

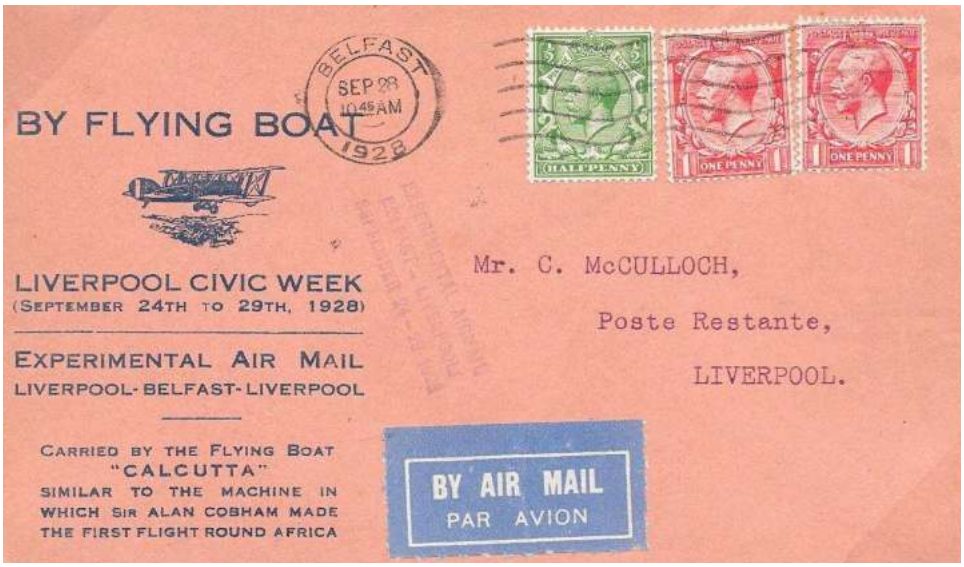


Figure 6.

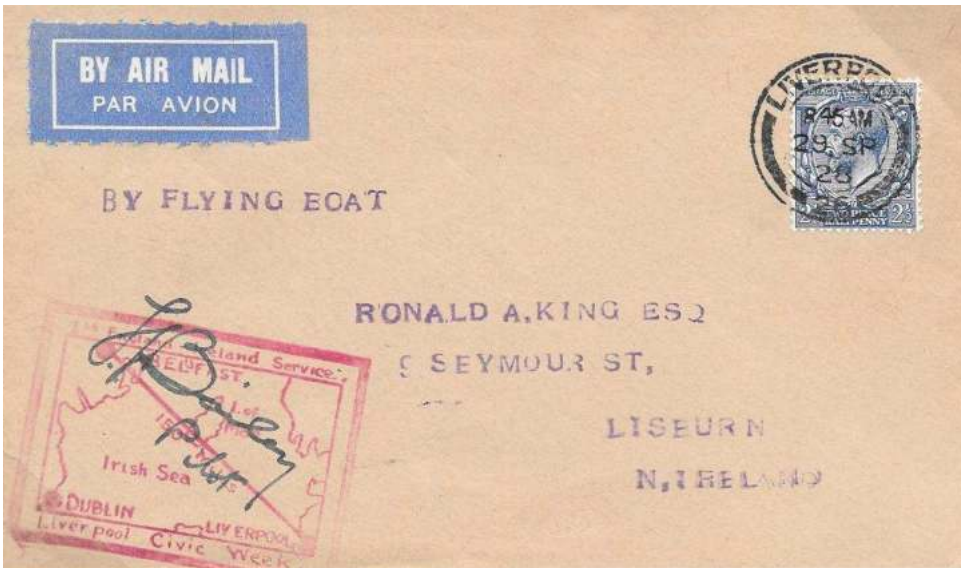


Figure 7.

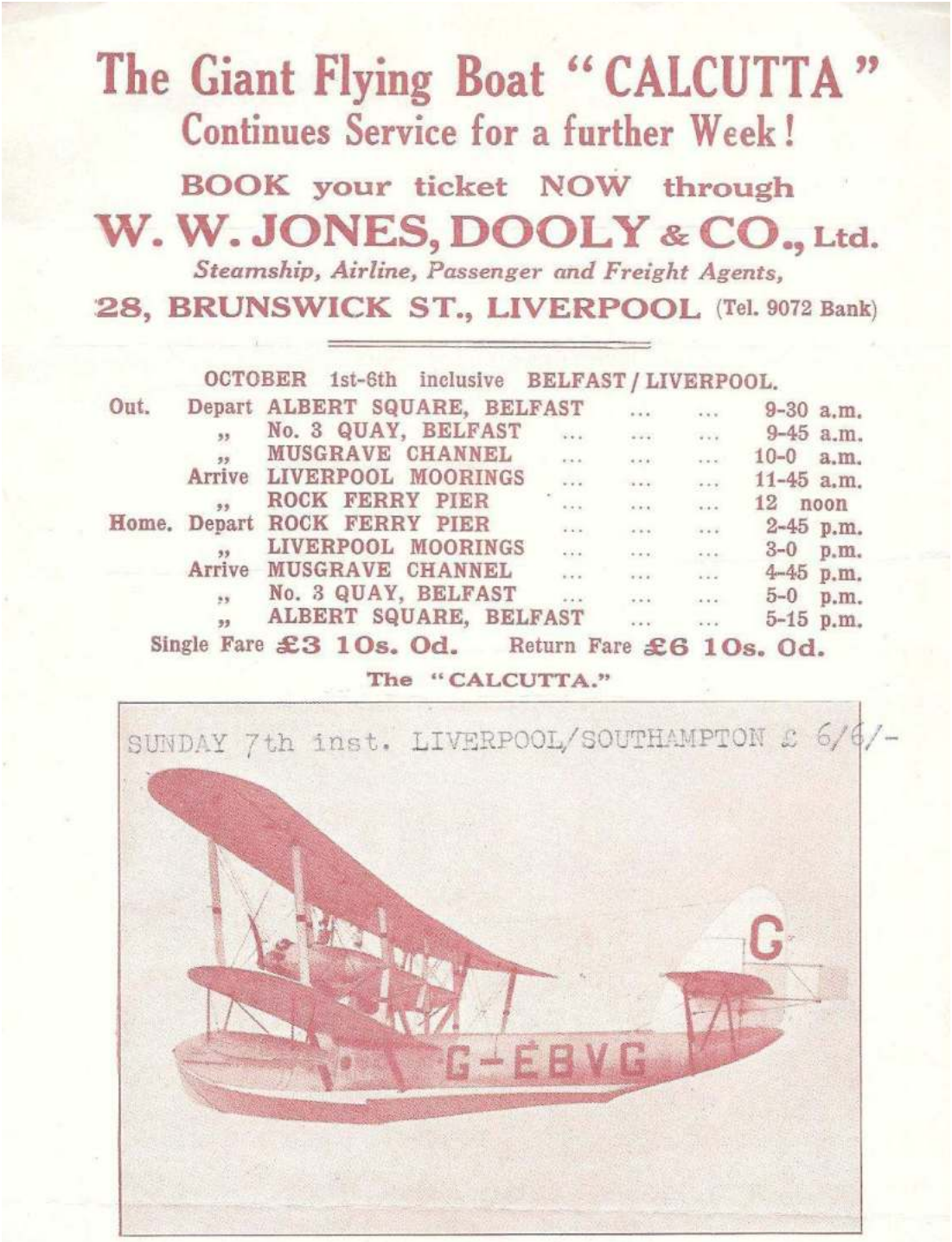
In view of the delays and disruptions encountered during the first week it was decided to extend the service for a second week. In the hope that it would operate more smoothly it was decided to fly from Belfast in the morning and return from Liverpool in the afternoon. This however proved even more problematic and the only day on which the service operated as planned in both directions was 4 October and a cover carried from Liverpool to Belfast on that flight is shown in Fig. 8. Many who posted covers that week were disappointed for they were either held over as noted on the cover from Belfast to Liverpool (Fig. 9) or in the case of the cover posted on 5 October (Fig. 10) probably forwarded by surface as it received a NO FLIGHT cachet.

Figure 8.

Figure 9.

Figure 10.

The aircraft did reposition to Liverpool on 6 October and the service was brought to an end. As the leaflet (Fig. 11) shows, tickets were offered to passengers to fly down to Southampton on the aircraft but any who did were to be disappointed for as the log of the flight engineer shows (Fig. 12) the aircraft made a forced landing at Pembroke Dock after the centre engine failed.



The Giant Flying Boat "CALCUTTA"
Continues Service for a further Week!
BOOK your ticket NOW through
W. W. JONES, DOOLY & CO., Ltd.
Steamship, Airline, Passenger and Freight Agents,
28, BRUNSWICK ST., LIVERPOOL (Tel. 9072 Bank)

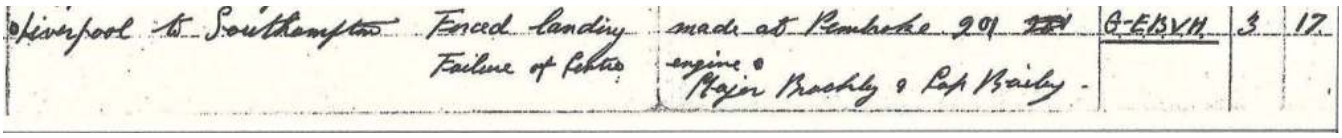
OCTOBER 1st-6th inclusive BELFAST / LIVERPOOL.

Out.	Depart	ALBERT SQUARE, BELFAST	9-30 a.m.
	,,	No. 3 QUAY, BELFAST	9-45 a.m.
	,,	MUSGRAVE CHANNEL	10-0 a.m.
	Arrive	LIVERPOOL MOORINGS	11-45 a.m.
	,,	ROCK FERRY PIER	12 noon
Home.	Depart	ROCK FERRY PIER	2-45 p.m.
	,,	LIVERPOOL MOORINGS	3-0 p.m.
	Arrive	MUSGRAVE CHANNEL	4-45 p.m.
	,,	No. 3 QUAY, BELFAST	5-0 p.m.
	,,	ALBERT SQUARE, BELFAST	5-15 p.m.

Single Fare £3 10s. 0d. Return Fare £6 10s. 0d.

The "CALCUTTA."

Figure 11.



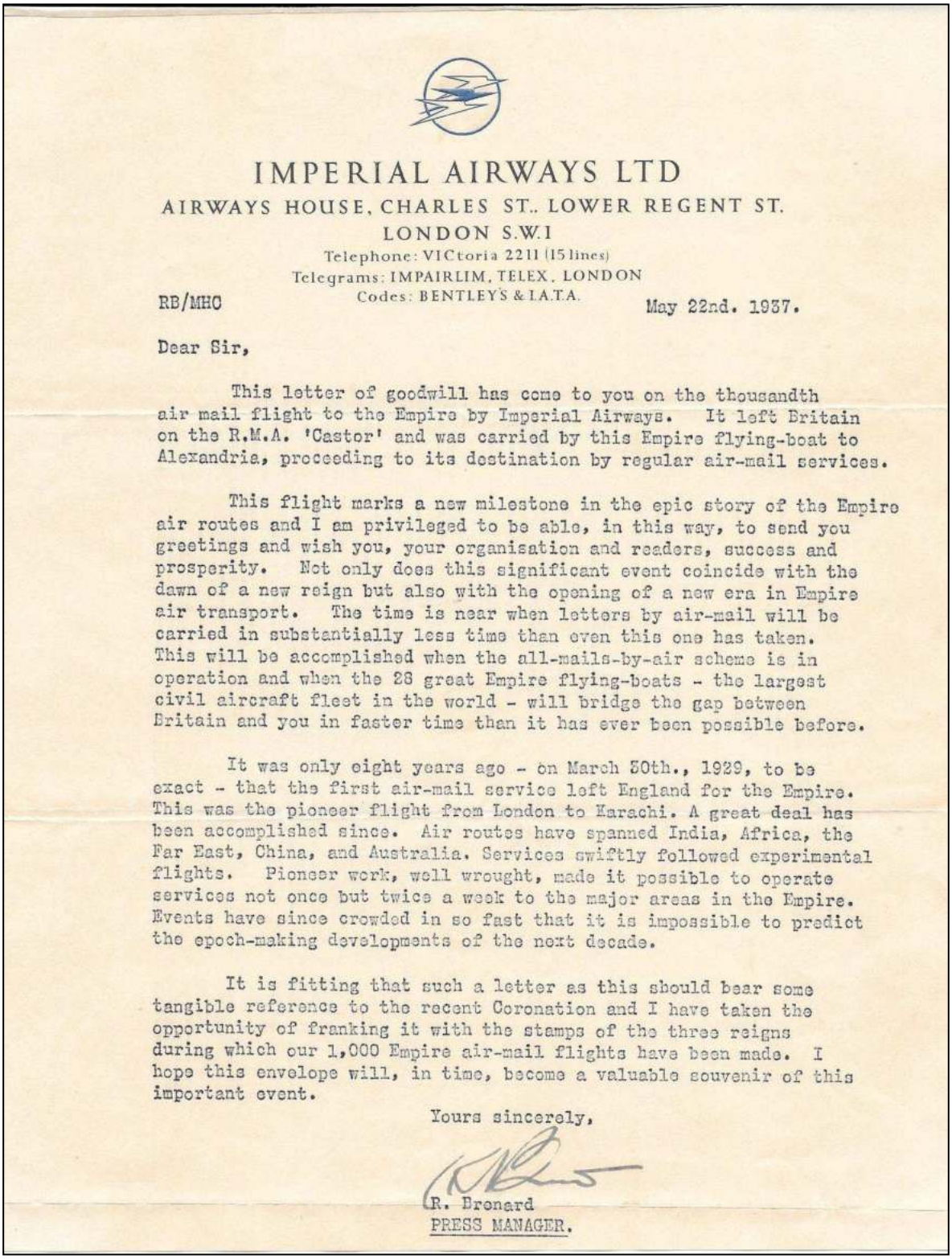
Liverpool to Southampton	Forced landing Failure of petrol	made at Pembroke 2.0 p.m. engine. Major Brackley & Capt Bailey.	G-EBVH	3	17

Figure 12.

The 1,000th Empire flight

By Duncan Crewe

Editor: Duncan sent me scans of a cover and two different Imperial Airways' letters which were enclosed in covers flown by the 1,000th flight to the Empire. He wrote, *"The first one was sent to newspapers and business users and carried a facsimile signature of R. Brenard, the Press Manager. The second is manuscript addressed to My dear Excellency and is also manuscript signed by Woods Humphery, Managing Director. Sadly although I have envelopes to go with the standard letter, the other was sold to me separately. The use of Excellency would suggest it was sent to high ranking officials such as Ambassadors, High Commissioners, Governors etc. Perhaps another member of the group has an envelope so addressed?"*



IMPERIAL AIRWAYS LTD
AIRWAYS HOUSE, CHARLES ST., LOWER REGENT ST.
LONDON S.W.1
Telephone: VICtoria 2211 (15 lines)
Telegrams: IMPAIRLIM, TELEX, LONDON
Codes: BENTLEY'S & I.A.T.A.

RB/MHC

May 22nd. 1937.

Dear Sir,

This letter of goodwill has come to you on the thousandth air mail flight to the Empire by Imperial Airways. It left Britain on the R.M.A. 'Castor' and was carried by this Empire flying-boat to Alexandria, proceeding to its destination by regular air-mail services.

This flight marks a new milestone in the epic story of the Empire air routes and I am privileged to be able, in this way, to send you greetings and wish you, your organisation and readers, success and prosperity. Not only does this significant event coincide with the dawn of a new reign but also with the opening of a new era in Empire air transport. The time is near when letters by air-mail will be carried in substantially less time than even this one has taken. This will be accomplished when the all-mails-by-air scheme is in operation and when the 28 great Empire flying-boats - the largest civil aircraft fleet in the world - will bridge the gap between Britain and you in faster time than it has ever been possible before.

It was only eight years ago - on March 30th., 1929, to be exact - that the first air-mail service left England for the Empire. This was the pioneer flight from London to Karachi. A great deal has been accomplished since. Air routes have spanned India, Africa, the Far East, China, and Australia. Services swiftly followed experimental flights. Pioneer work, well wrought, made it possible to operate services not once but twice a week to the major areas in the Empire. Events have since crowded in so fast that it is impossible to predict the epoch-making developments of the next decade.

It is fitting that such a letter as this should bear some tangible reference to the recent Coronation and I have taken the opportunity of franking it with the stamps of the three reigns during which our 1,000 Empire air-mail flights have been made. I hope this envelope will, in time, become a valuable souvenir of this important event.

Yours sincerely,

R. Brenard
PRESS MANAGER.

The Standard letter sent to newspapers and business users with R. Brenard facsimile signature.

IMPERIAL AIRWAYS LTD.

TELEGRAMS: IMPAIRLIM, LONDON.
TELEPHONE: VICTORIA 2211.

FROM
MANAGING DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

AIRWAY TERMINUS,
VICTORIA STATION,
(CONTINENTAL DEPARTURES)
LONDON, S.W.1.

22 May 1937

My dear Excellency,

This letter of greetings and good wishes is coming to you by the thousandth regular air mail service dispatched from the United Kingdom along the Empire routes.

For many years now, British air liners, manned by British crews, have flown backwards and forwards, by day and by night, carrying the mail and passengers to and from the Empire.

Step by step, during three reigns, these great routes have been begun, extended and duplicated, until now their existence is part of the very life of those whom they serve.

Service is their aim. The desire to improve understanding between man and man, between the Dominions and the Colonies and the Mother Country and thus eventually, so we hope, between all nations.

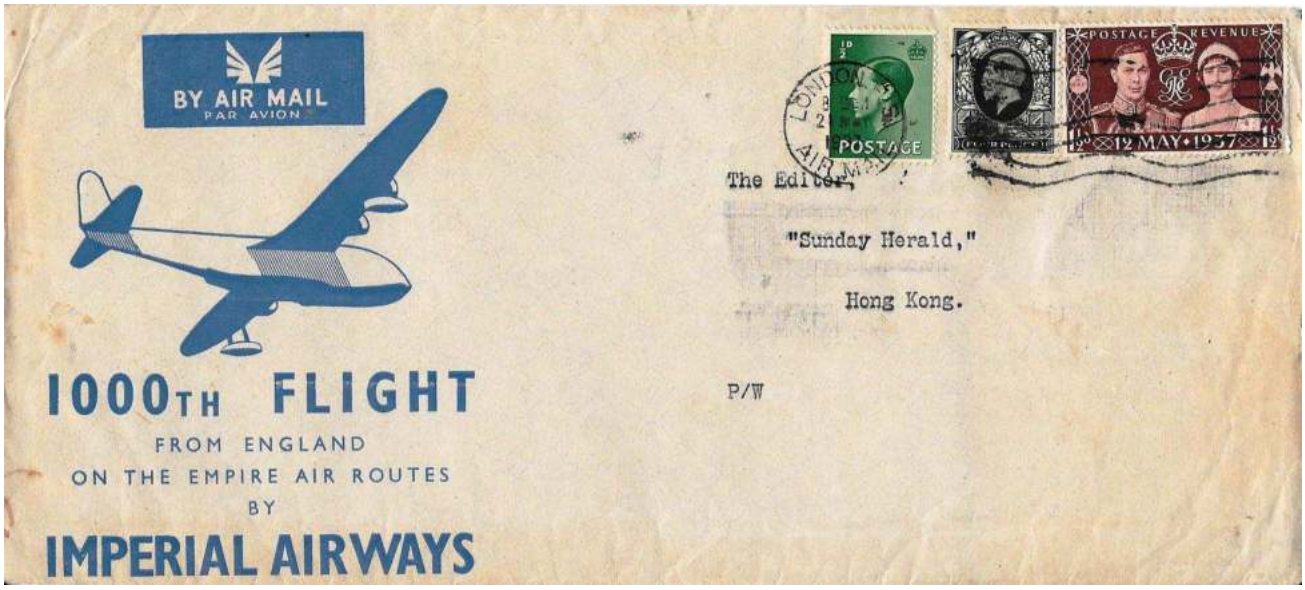
The envelope to this letter bears an air mail label and the stamps of an air mail fee made up to mark the occasion by specimens of stamps issued in the three reigns. The special fee and the air mail label will soon be a thing of the past for in a few weeks' time the Empire Air Mail Programme will be inaugurated. Then, starting along the Africa route, postcards and all letters posted in the United Kingdom for transmission to places along that route will go by air without the need of an air mail label, without a special fee, just with an ordinary three-halfpenny stamp for a letter and a penny one for a postcard.

This scheme will shortly be extended to embrace the India-Australia route and later the whole of the Empire.

Yours very truly

G.E.Woods Humphery,
Managing Director.

The 'special' letter with Woods Humphery manuscript signature. (Same text as standard letter but different format).



The cover in which the standard letter was enclosed. Flown by IE550 to Penang, then FEE63 to Hong Kong.

Sat., 22 May, 1937

CASTOR DAMAGED IN COLLISION WITH A YACHT

Cygnus Takes Her Place On Empire Service

THOUSANDTH PASSENGER AND AIR MAIL FLIGHT

Scheduled to leave Southampton this morning on the 1,000th passenger and air mail flight from England to the Empire, the Imperial Airways' Empire flying boat Castor was damaged in collision with a yacht in Southampton Water, off Hythe, last night, and had to be withdrawn from the service.

Her place was taken by the Cygnus, a sister craft, and the Castor's commander (Captain H.W.C. Alger) and crew were transferred to the second flying boat.

The Castor was taxi-ing from her mooring towards the embarkation raft so as to be in readiness for her early morning departure, when she was caught by a strong gust of wind, and came into contact with the yacht Neptune, moored nearby. Slight damage was done to the flying boat's tail plane. As repairs could not be effected in time, it was decided that the Cygnus should take over the service.

PASSENGERS EMBARKED

The 11 passengers, who arrived at Southampton last night and spent the night in the South Western Hotel, embarked in the Cygnus by motor launch this morning. Earlier, more than three-quarters of a ton of mails and a quantity of freight had been placed on board the flying boat.

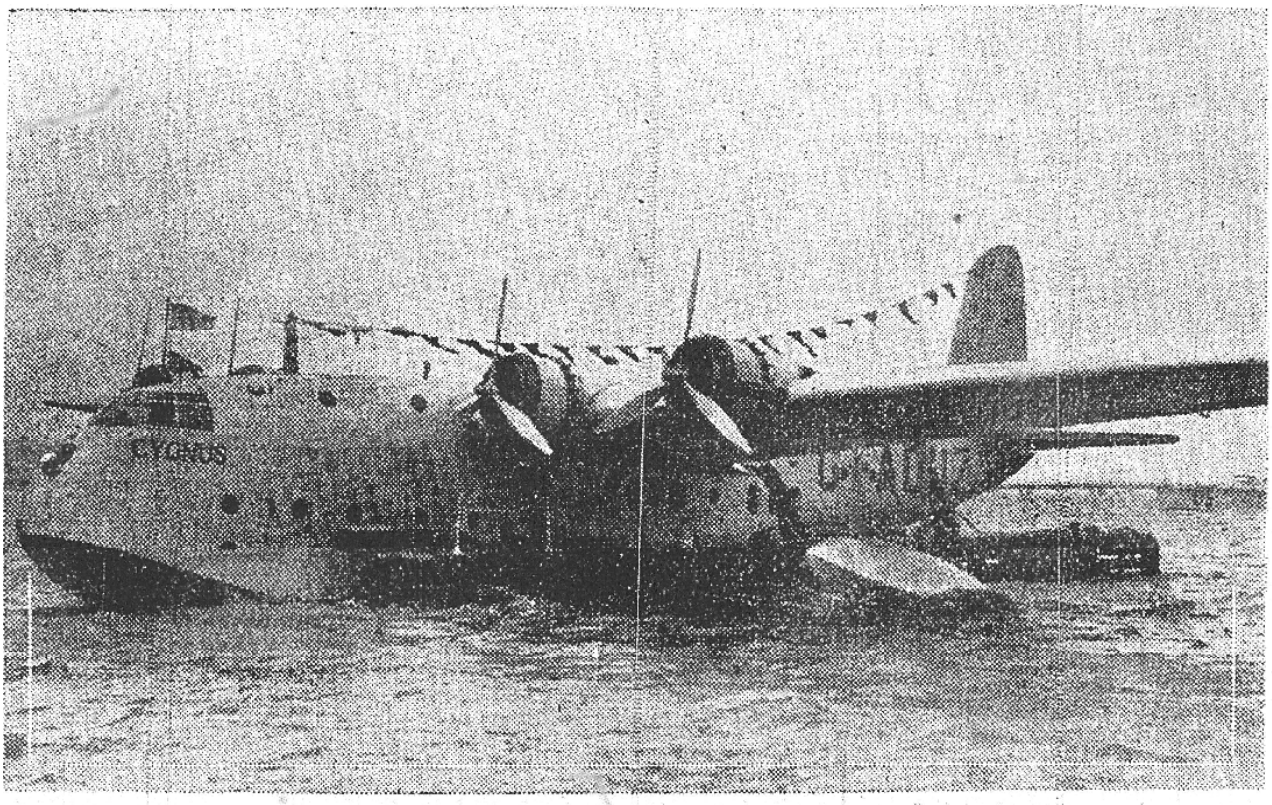
The flying boat was "dressed" in honour of the occasion, a line of signal flags being run out from the tail to the nose. These were hauled down before she took off at 10.30 a.m. on the first stage of her flight to Alexandria, where she is due to arrive tomorrow afternoon.

BRITAIN TO THE EMPIRE

The service which the Cygnus is operating is the 450th to Central and Southern Africa. The other 550 flights to the Empire have been made on the route to India, Malaya and Australia.

The first service flight from Britain to the Empire was on March 30, 1929, when an Imperial Airways' aircraft left Croydon and flew in stages to Karachi. The service became a weekly one in each direction the same month.

Report from the Southern Daily Echo, 22 May 1937 edition.



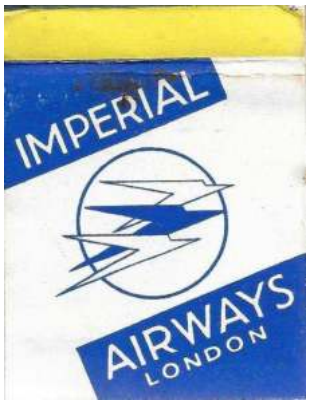
"Echo" Photo.

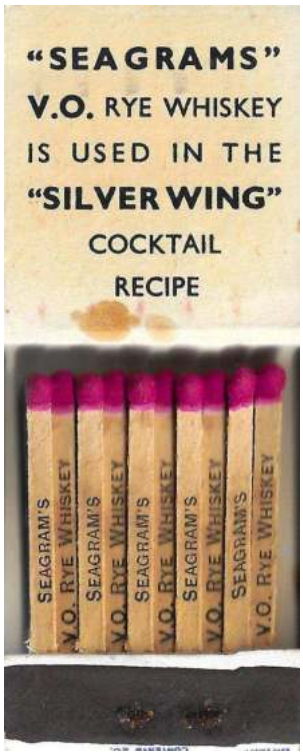
The Empire flying boat Cygnus was gaily beflagged before she set out from Hythe to-day with the 1,000th load of Empire mails to be carried by air.

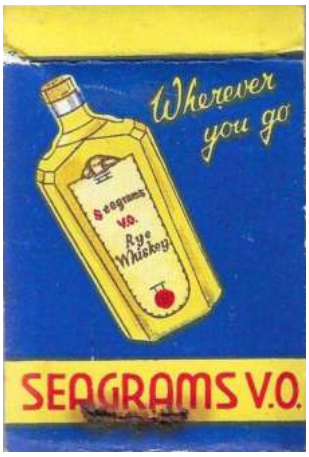
From the Southern Daily Echo, 22 May 1937 edition.

Imperial Airways' book matches

By Peter Wingent







Cygnus crash questions

By Peter Wingent and Duncan Crewe

The events surrounding the crash of the Imperial Airways' flying boat *Cygnus* at Brindisi on 5 December 1937 when operating service IW604 are generally well-documented. However, the questions of exactly when the mail was sent from Brindisi to London and how it was carried remain largely unanswered.

Douglas Walker [1] stated that, *"The mails were forwarded by a relief aircraft to the British Post Office at London where drying-out procedures were undertaken immediately."*

Certainly mail was dried in London, as graphically described in the press cutting shown right (source and date unknown), but according to other press reports mail was also dried at Brindisi. The Sydney Morning Herald of the 7th December 1937 stated that, *"All the mail in the Cygnus, weighing more than a ton, has been salvaged. The Italian Post Office is drying it and will forward it as soon as possible."*

DRYING 120,000 LETTERS

SALVAGED FROM SEA

From a Special Correspondent

The last batches of 120,000 sea-sodden letters from the Imperial Airways liner Cygnus, wrecked at Brindisi on Dec. 5, are being dried before delivery in a basement room at the General Post Office.

The whole of the Cygnus's 100 bags of mail has now been salvaged.. Although some of the letters have been soaked in sea water for over a week, very few are so badly damaged as to be undeliverable.

The radiator-lined room where all this mail is being dried is usually used to dry the wet clothing of postmen. For the past five days men have been employed day and night placing thousands of letters one by one on the radiators. As soon as one batch has dried, other waiting bundles are opened and their contents spread out.

The floor is ankle-deep in the stamps of almost every nation east from Egypt to New Zealand. Generally the first thing that happens when a letter is dried is that the stamp peels off. Already several basketfuls have been swept up.

All the stamps are sent to the Returned Letter Section, where they are carefully preserved for six months before being sold. Anyone receiving a stampless letter marked "Damaged by Sea Water" may apply there for the missing stamp—or one like it.

Similarly, the Evening Post, a New Zealand newspaper, published the same report on 7th December, which begs the question how much mail was dried at Brindisi and how much at London? Duncan suspects that at least some of the mail that was dried in Brindisi was probably mail to European destinations that would otherwise have gone via Marseilles and Paris.

With such a large amount of mail involved it would have taken quite a few days to dry all of it so it was forwarded from Brindisi in batches as more mail was dried. Brian Peace [2] states that some of the mail was carried on 9 and 10 Dec. by *Capella*, operating service IW605, and later batches were sent by rail from Brindisi to Paris. Brian Peace also asserts that "the first batch for London was picked up by another IA Short S23 flying boat." He also details a cover with 8 December London transit. This would seem to fit mail flown to Southampton the previous day by IW605. Proud also states mail was forwarded to London by a relief aircraft. The problem is that Walker might be the source for both Peace and Proud.

So when did Walker's relief aircraft play its part? A relief aircraft does make sense as the other services passing through Brindisi en route to Southampton were likely to have had very little spare pay load given the large quantities of Christmas mails needing to be carried.

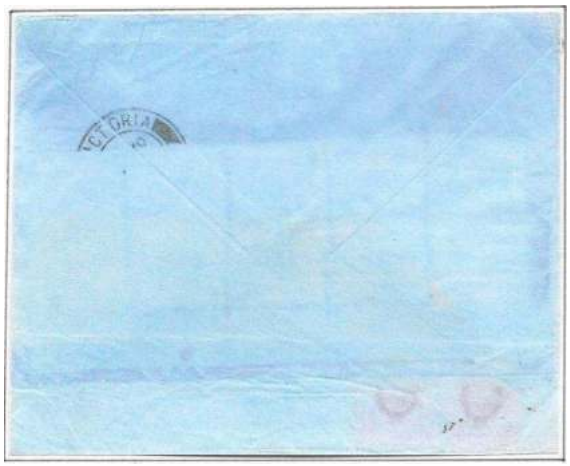
Certainly the mail was delivered in stages after drying, as witnessed by arrival datestamps on covers held by Duncan Crewe:

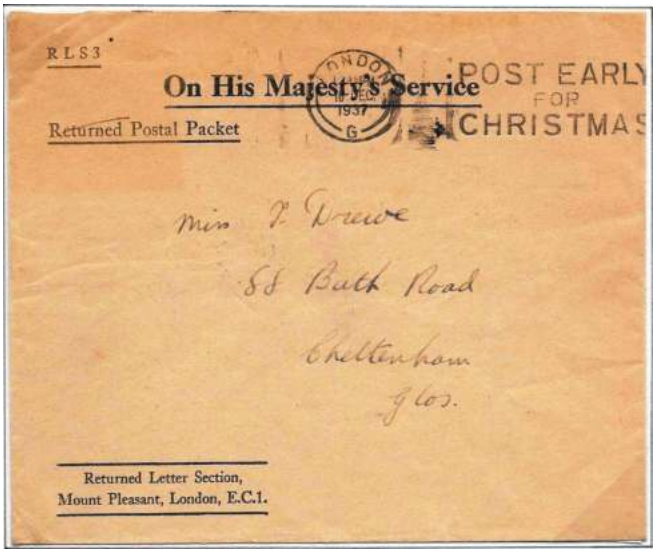
A letter from Hong Kong to Cheltenham was reposted in an ambulance envelope with a London datestamp of 10 December.
Hong Kong to Portsmouth with manuscript received 18 Dec.
India to Rotterdam with manuscript received 19 Dec.
Palestine to Vienna with Wien Flugpost arrival of 11 Dec.
Palestine to New York with London FS datestamp of 13 Dec.
Egypt to Paris backstamped 14 Dec.

It would be very pleasing to know the identity of the relief aircraft and we think it is likely to have been *Canopus*. She was operating Kisumu service KN23 when she arrived at Marseilles on 6 December, the day after the *Cygnus* crash. Lloyd's List of 8 December reported, *"Canopus (G-ADHL) arrived Marseilles Dec. 6. Transferred to Air France 'plane which left Marseilles and arrived Paris Dec. 6. Transferred to Scylla (G-ACJJ). Left Paris and arrived Croydon Dec. 7."*

The quite drastic transfer of mails, and presumably passengers, from *Canopus* to an Air France aircraft at Marseilles could be due to the breakdown of *Canopus* and lack of a relief aircraft to take over KN23 during the exceptionally busy Christmas period. On the other hand, and we think far more likely, *Canopus* is the relief aircraft and thus she flew back to Brindisi from Marseilles and then carried at least some of the *Cygnus* mail to Southampton. She arrived at Marseilles at approximately 10 a.m. on 6 Dec. so she could easily have arrived back at Brindisi the same day and might well have flown to Southampton with mail salvaged from *Cygnus,* departing on the 7th and arriving on the 8th.

Shown below is the front and reverse of Duncan's cover from Hong Kong to Cheltenham, together with the ambulance envelope datestamped 10 Dec., and a report from an unknown newspaper. Although stamps to the value of 30c. remain on the envelope, Duncan says that a strip of five others have floated off the reverse. He believes these were 4c. Coronation stamps as these would have made up the 50c. per ½ oz. rate to the U.K.





Salvaged Mail

Some 120,000 letters were salvaged from the Imperial Airways Liner *Cygnus* which was wrecked in Brindisi Harbour on the 5th December. Most of these letters were dried at the G.P.O. in London before being delivered, but a large packet was delivered to one London dealer with the sea water still running out of the package. Thousands of stamps from the Near and Far East are being retained by the Returned Letter Section of the Post Office in case they are claimed by the owners of the letters on which they were stuck. Most of the envelopes were stamped "Damaged by Sea Water" before being delivered. Surely waterproof mail bags would be a good idea?

The question remaining:

Can any reader confirm that *Canopus* was the relief aircraft and/or add further details regarding the forwarding of the mail from Brindisi to London?

Acknowledgements:

Our thanks to Bob Clark who found a report in the New Zealand Evening Post newspaper. In addition both Duncan and Bob searched their reference sources for information.

References:

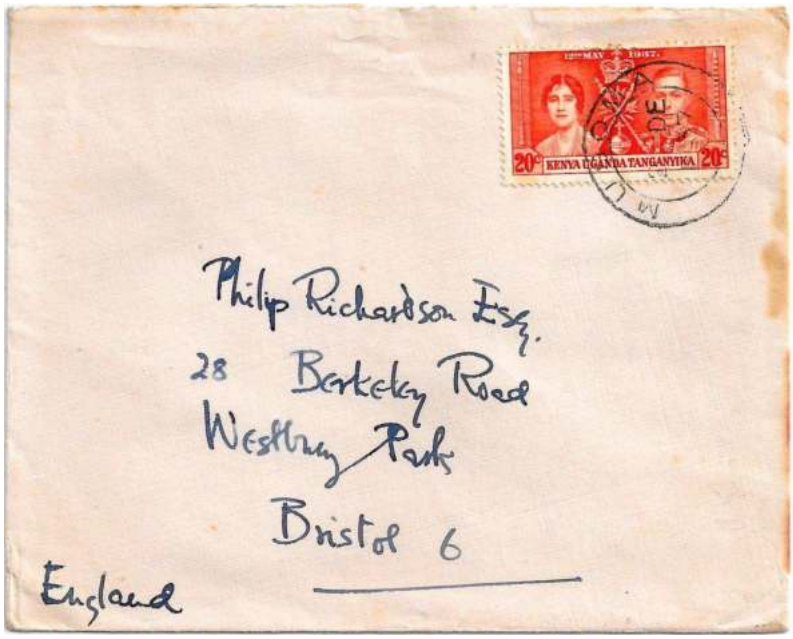
[1] Walker, Douglas. *Airmails of New Zealand, Vol. 2*, p.251.
[2] Peace, Brian. *Australasian Crash Mail, Vol. 3*, p.196.

Kisumu service KN23

By Peter Wingent

In case the reference to service KN23 in the previous *Cygnus* article has aroused the interest of collectors of African air mail, shown below is a cover flown by KN23 and a full itinerary of the service.

The cover was posted at Musoma on 2 December 1937 and is franked at the 20 cents per ½ oz. E.A.M.S. rate to the U.K. In accordance with P.O. instructions, an air mail label was not applied.



Wilson Airways Goldfields Service:

Musoma	dep.	13.25	02 Dec.
Kisumu	arr.	15.30	02 Dec.

Imperial Airways KN23:

Kisumu	dep.	06.00	03 Dec.	Corsair
Khartoum	arr.	-	03 Dec.	Corsair
Khartoum	dep.	06.50	04 Dec.	Corsair
Alexandria	arr.	-	04 Dec.	Corsair
Alexandria	dep.	06.00	05 Dec.	Canopus
Rome	arr.	15.25	05 Dec.	Canopus
Rome	dep.	08.10	06 Dec.	Canopus
Marseilles	arr.	-	06 Dec.	Canopus
Marseilles	dep.	-	06 Dec.	Air France ‘plane
Paris	arr.	-	06 Dec.	Air France ‘plane
Paris	dep.	-	07 Dec.	Scylla
Croydon	arr.	-	07 Dec.	Scylla

The first Imperial Airways services to and from Australia which carried passengers

By Laurence Kimpton

Imperial Airways extended the London-Singapore service to Brisbane with service IE 298, departing Croydon on 8th December 1934. Imperial Airways aircraft operated as far as Darwin where connection was made with Qantas Empire Airways who continued the service to Brisbane. Qantas were due to operate the service from Singapore to Brisbane with a fleet of 5 de Havilland DH86 aircraft, but they were still awaiting their delivery. The aircraft Qantas had available were the DH50J *Hippomenes* and two DH61 aircraft, *Apollo* and *Diana*. They were single engined aircraft which did not have the capacity to carry passengers besides large loads of mail. Following delivery of the DH86 fleet, service IE 315, departing Croydon on 16th February1935 was the first to be operated officially by a Qantas DH86 from Singapore to Brisbane (although three earlier services had been flown by a DH86).

Two months later, passenger bookings over the whole route became available on service IE 331, departing Croydon on 13th April 1935. However, all seats were taken by passengers for intermediate destinations before it was known that a through journey to Australia would be available on this service. Fig. 1 shows a cover to Australia flown on service IE 331. The press photograph in Fig. 2 shows passengers boarding HP42W *Horatius* which operated service IE 331 as far as Paris.

Fig.1. Cover to Australia posted at Farnham, Surrey, on 12th April 1935. Flown on service IE 331, the first service for which passenger bookings to Australia became available, but all seats had already been taken by passengers to intermediate destinations. Following re-direction, cancelled at Brewarrina, NSW, on 28th April.

Fig. 2. Press photo taken at Croydon Aiport showing passengers boarding HP42W *Horatius* which operated service IE 331 as far as Paris. A printed label on the back of the photo wrongly states: *"Photo shows some of the first London to Australia passengers by air boarding their plane at Croydon Aerodrome this morning 13/4/35."* Whether the woman passenger actually made it to aircraft's door, let alone to Paris, is uncertain.

The next service to Brisbane, IE 333, departing Croydon on 13th April, carried the first passengers to fly all the way to Brisbane, two British geologists, Mr. K. W. Gray and Dr. G.M. Lees. The cover shown in Fig. 3 was flown on this flight as far as India. The first service from Brisbane to carry passengers to England was service IW 331, departing on 17th April and arriving at Croydon on 29th April. Two passengers were carried, Major A. Phillips, who flew from Brisbane, and Lady Mountbatten from Charleville. The cover shown in Fig. 4 was flown on this flight.

Fig. 3. Registered cover posted at South Norwood, London, on 18th April 1935. Flown on service IW 331, the first service to carry passengers all the way to Australia. Backstamped at Simla on 27th April.

Fig. 4. Registered cover addressed to the Marquis of Taverstock (sic) at the House of Lords posted at Launceston, Tasmania, on 15th April 1935. It would have been flown to Melbourne (backstamped 16th April) by Holymans Airways, then sent by train to Cootamundra and flown by Butler Air Transport to Charleville to connect with Qantas. Flown on service IW331 by Qantas to Singapore and by Imperial Airways to London (train between Brindisi and Paris) arriving on 29th April. Backstamped at House of Commons on 30th April.

References:

Peter Wingent, *Aircraft Movements on Imperial Airways' Eastern Route, Volume 1, 1927-1937.*
John Gunn, *'The Defeat of Distance, Qantas, 1919-1939.'*

For the record~ our Zoom meetings, June to November 2022

By Peter Wingent

June 2022:

John Sims	-	The Croydon Aerodrome postmarks, December 1934.
Bob Robertson	-	Australia first flight covers, December 1934.
Nick Arrow	-	One thing leads to another.
Robin Davis	-	Three covers.
Duncan Crewe	-	The 1928 Liverpool – Belfast experimental service.
Bob Clark	-	Covers from NZ to UKflown both across the Tasman and by IA from Karachi.
Peter Wingent	-	South African Airways Jo'burg. ~ Lourenco Marques feeder service.

September 2022:

Duncan Crewe	-	Daimler Airways.
Ed Wolf	-	The 1929 London – Karachi and Perth – Adelaide connections.
Peter Richards	-	Clyde to the Congo, August 1940.
Laurence Kimpton	-	Covers flown eastwards on the RAF Cairo – Baghdad service.
Bob Clark	-	Australia – Austria cover, Aug./Sept. 1939.
Peter Wingent	-	My miscellaneous album.

October 2022:

Bob Clark	-	Late non-New Zealand EAMS mail.
Nick Arrow	-	Four covers, help needed.
Sue Burn	-	New acquisitions.
Peter Richards	-	Three new acquisitions.
David Bradley	-	Portuguese East Africa printed etiquette envelopes.
Peter Wingent	-	The Albertville ~ Kigoma connection.

November 2022:

Duncan Crewe	-	Some Indian Ocean covers.
Peter Wingent	-	The Christmas 1937 concession labels.
Ed Wolf	-	Australian Post Office 1929 account manipulations.
Freddie Hoadley	-	Entebbe/Kampala airport question.
Sue Burn	-	Charles Ulm, part 1.
Nick Guy	-	Covers to Salisbury 1931 and East Africa postage dues.