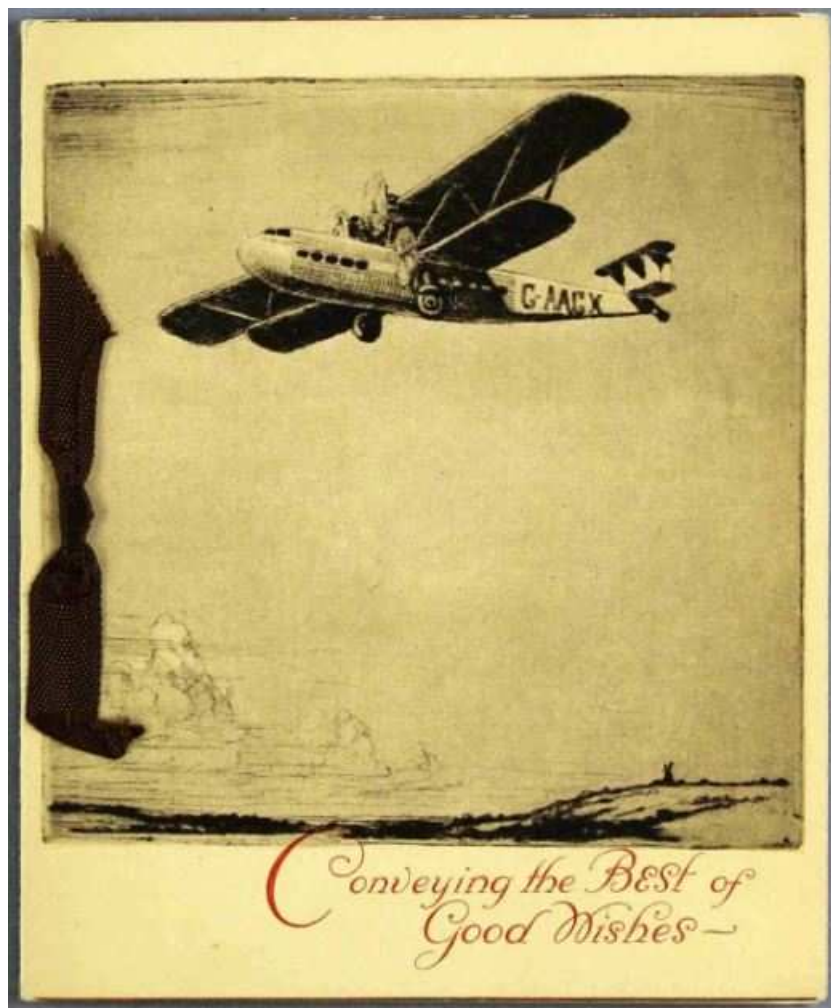


IMPERIAL AIRWAYS GAZETTE



Issue 64

December 2023

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Editorial

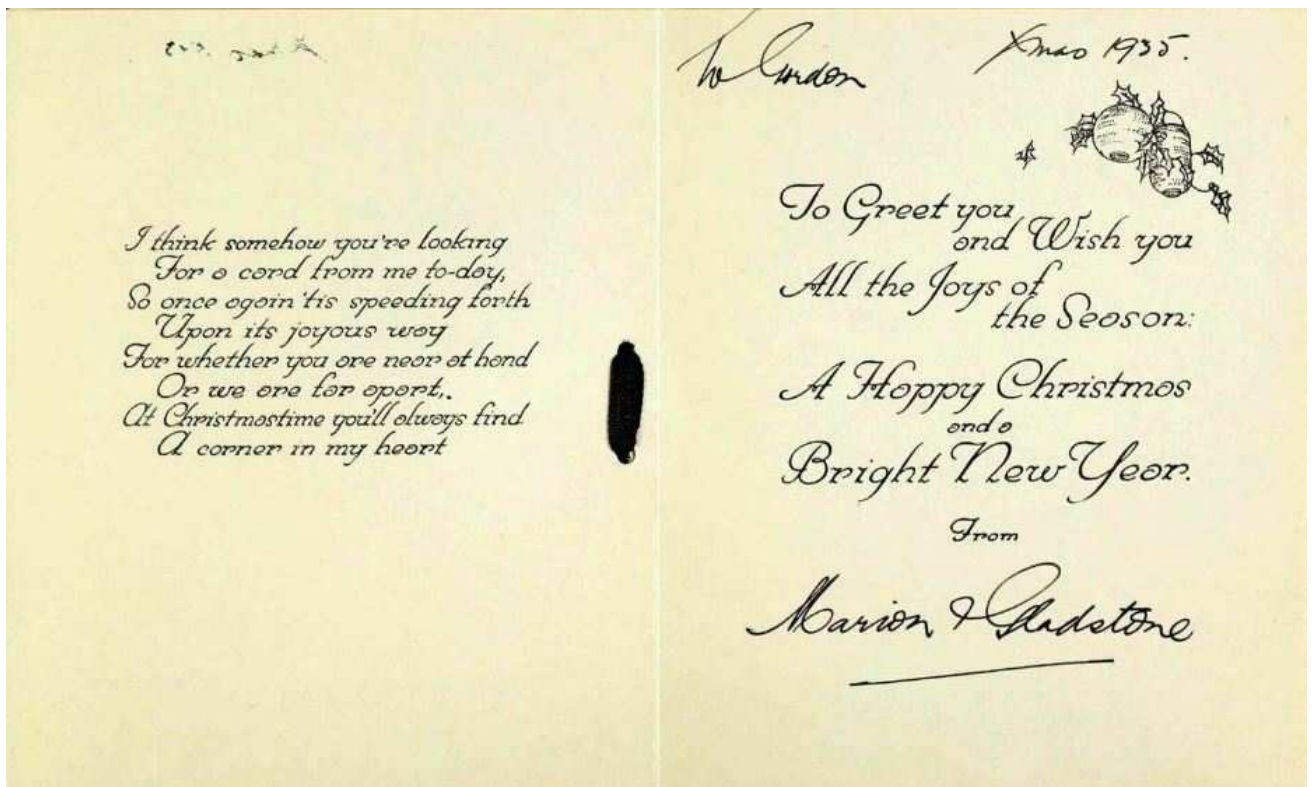
No doubt you will be surprised to receive this December edition of the Gazette so early in November. The reason being, as many of you know already, is that I am moving from Hampshire to the Highlands of Scotland at the end of November and I want to 'clear my desk' before the move. My new postal address is on the Contents page opposite – email address remains the same.

Our Zoom meetings continue to be popular, judging by the numbers attending but the regular contributors are finding it increasingly difficult to find new material to show simply because we don't have an infinite supply of our treasures! We badly need support from other members because otherwise the meetings will come to an end. Your contribution doesn't have to be a major presentation, one or two slides showing a new acquisition or a problem cover will be fine. Please note the next Zoom meeting will be at 10AM, G.M.T. on Saturday, 13th January 2024.

I also need to make a plea for material for the next Gazette. This edition will be sent to thirty six members but it comprises contributions from just Duncan Crewe, Ed Wolf (to whom my thanks) and myself. As with the Zoom meetings, we are running out of material and topics to contribute. We need help from others, so please send me something and be assured, small is beautiful!

For a number of years when Stan Wheatcroft produced the Gazette, he tried to find an illustration for the front cover which had a Christmas theme related to Imperial Airways. He told me more than once that he found this to be a difficult task and I now understand why. In previous years I failed to find something suitable but I was reminded again of Stan's idea when I saw recently the card on Ebay which I have placed on the cover of this edition (inside shown below). At the time of writing it is still on offer on Ebay.

Despite it being over six weeks away, I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and good health and successful collecting in the New Year.



African service AS18 ~ forced landing at Kibanga Port

By Peter Wingent

Imperial Airways service to East Africa opened on 28 February 1931 and the early services experienced many difficulties. Service number AS18 departed from Croydon at 08.30 on 27 June and when the Calcutta flying boat *City of Khartoum* departed from Port Bell on 4 July, it was only the fourth southbound service to be operating without delays.

However, as reported in *The Times* of 7 July, shown right, the flying boat made a forced landing at Kibanga Port soon after her departure from Port Bell. The event has been recorded by Colley [1], Baldwin [2] and Gisburn [3]. As their descriptions are similar, I will only quote Bill Colley's:

"On 4 July 1931 Imperial Airway's aircraft City of Khartoum made a forced landing at Kibanga Port, 15 miles from Entebbe, when en route for Kisumu. The mails were conveyed by road to Kisumu from where they were flown on a charter to Nairobi. Mail is only recognised by the Kisumu transit mark and the Nairobi receipt mark of 5 July 1931. Surviving examples appear to be scarce."

The charter to which Bill Colley refers was by Wilson Airways and is notable for being the first official England – East Africa mail to be carried by the airline.

A cover from Leipzig is shown below which was sent by train to Athens from where it was carried by service AS18. Whilst the arrival date of 5 July of the mail at Kisumu and Nairobi has been recorded, the Mwanza arrival datestamp of 8 July is, to my knowledge, the first record of the arrival of the mail at that town.

AFRICAN AIR MAIL

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

NAIROBI, JULY 6

The African air mail was delivered in Nairobi last night by a Wilson Airways machine in consequence of a forced landing of the Imperial Airways machine at Kibanga Port, 15 miles from Entebbe, when on the way to Kisumu on Saturday. The mails were taken to Kisumu by road and picked up there by the Wilson machine, which was chartered by Imperial Airways in order to avoid delay.

An important addition is to be made to the air mail services this week. By arrangement with the Post Office a Wilson Airways machine will take the mails from Nairobi to Kisumu every Wednesday to connect with the main line. Before, inward mails arrived on Monday and outward closed the same afternoon, which made it impossible for business firms to reply to correspondence. The new local service is to be maintained for three months.



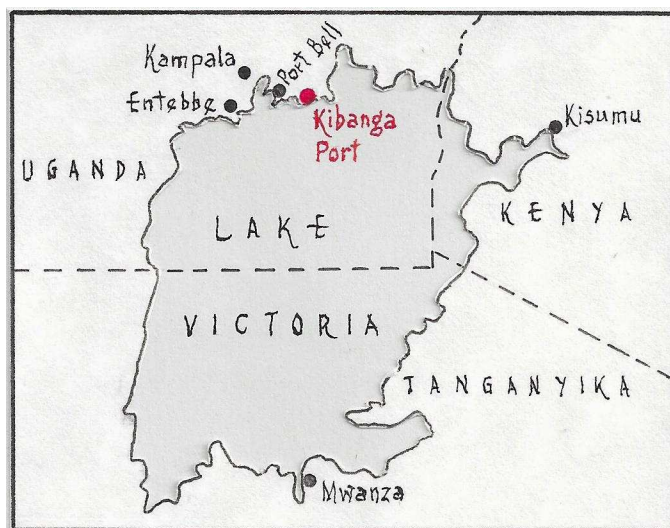
I imagine that the cover was forwarded with all the mail by road to Kisumu but from there it might have been forwarded to Mwanza by road but because the roads between the two towns were of poor condition, I believe it is more likely that it was carried by the weekly Lake Victoria steamer service, operated by Kenya & Uganda Railways & Harbours Ltd. From Mwanza, the cover was sent approximately 75 miles by train to Malampaka station. The 65pf. postage = 25pf. first 20 gr. ordinary postage + 40pf. per 10 gr. air mail fee to East Africa.

Neither The Times, nor the three writers noted earlier, provide a reason for the forced landing and in the hope of discovering this, I emailed an enquiry to British Airways Archive. I received a reply from the archivist Adrian Constable, extracts from which are shown below.

“There is no surviving discrete record of an incident on that day, and no record of City of Khartoum being damaged or mechanically incapacitated at that time, which suggests the issue was not with the aircraft itself. The best I can do is the Air Superintendent’s monthly report to the Imperial Airways Board for July, in this case delivered to the meeting on 15 September 1931. In these reports, the Superintendent does not usually mention the aircraft or the service unless there was damage or major disruption (so we can infer that there wasn’t) but notes that the weather conditions during the month of July were generally poor. In particular, on 4th (and 15th and 26th) “fog, low cloud and rain interferred with services.” Since any of those would quite plausibly have prevented navigation in that region, I think it is safe to say that the weather is likely to have been the cause of the forced landing, and that the aircraft would have been unable to proceed until the weather improved.

Records indicate that sending mail on by car was not an infrequent occurrence, and they generally seem to have been able to produce a vehicle more-or-less at the drop of the proverbial hat. Quite how this was arranged is no longer clear to us; probably part of the nearest station manager’s remit to sort out as necessary.”

So there it is: the forced landing was caused by bad weather on the 4th July. The Air Superintendent who gave the monthly report was Major H.G. Brackley, who held that position from 1924 to 1939.



The map above left shows the location of Kibanga Port and that above right the route of the once-weekly “Round the Lake” steamer service which took five days to return to Kisumu after initial departure.

Finally, an explanation for the Alexandria transit backstamp on the reverse: a lot of air mail sent from European countries at this time received either Alexandria or Cairo backstamps. This was because the mail was sent à découvert, i.e. in ‘open’ bags intended to be resorted en route, in this case in Egypt. The time taken for the resorting caused a number of delays to the African services which resulted in letters of complaint from Imperial Airways to the G.P.O., London. Eventually, European countries were prevailed upon to despatch their mail in ‘closed’ bags, i.e. ones which were not opened until they reached their final destination.

Acknowledgement: My thanks to Adrian Constable of British Airways Archive who, not for the first time, wrote a very detailed reply in response to my question.

References:

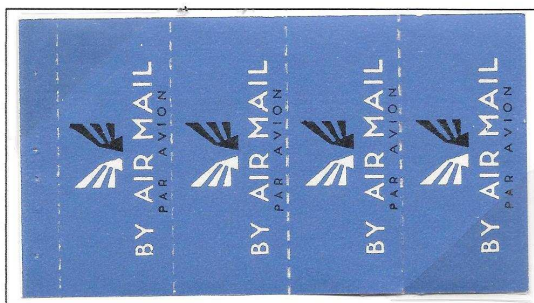
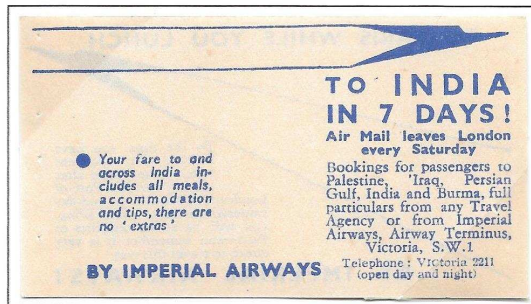
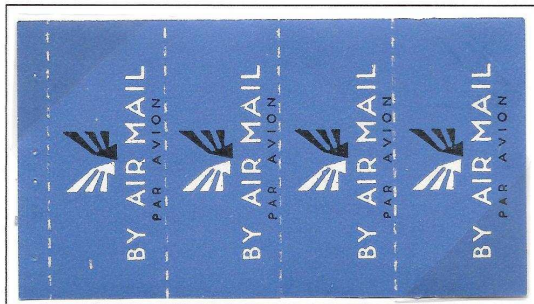
- [1] Colley, W., *The Airmails of East Africa to 1952* (Second edition). East Africa Study Circle, 2009.
- [2] Baldwin, N.C., *The Air Mails of British Africa, 1925 – 1932*. Francis J. Field, 1932.
- [3] Gisburn H.G.D., *The Story of Imperial Airways*. Francis J. Field, 1950.

Post Office air mail label booklets

Material provided by Duncan Crewe

The last issue of the I.A. Gazette included correspondence relating to the poor quality of the printing of the second edition of the type 4 air mail label booklets. Duncan Crewe sent me scans of two examples from his collection which are shown below. In his email to me he wrote, "Attached are scans of both a pale exploded booklet and a darker one. Not sure the interleaves are as bad as the letter suggested but they are fainter and less crisp." The difference between the two examples is very clear.

Imperial Airways booklet March 1934 Brown GB-4-1



Imperial Airways booklet July 1934 Brown GB-4-2

AIR MAIL LABELS
 THESE BOOKS OBTAINABLE FREE AT POST OFFICES




IMPERIAL AIRWAYS
 THE GREATEST AIR SERVICE IN THE WORLD
 Travel - Post your letters
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HOW TO POST LETTERS FOR AIR MAIL
 Air mail letters may be posted in any letter box. Every letter should bear one of the enclosed blue Air Mail labels stuck on to the top left hand corner of the envelope

YOU CAN ALSO SEND PARCELS BY AIR
 Full particulars of letter and parcel Air Mails may be obtained at any post office or from the Air Mail Department, Imperial Airways Airway Terminus, S.W.1


BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION




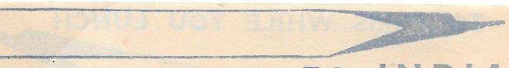
BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION



BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION



BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION


TO INDIA IN 5 DAYS!
 Air Mail leaves London every Saturday

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Bookings for passengers to Palestine, Iraq, Persian Gulf, India, Burma and Malaya; full particulars from any Travel Agency or from Imperial Airways, Airway Terminus, Victoria, S.W.1
 Telephone: Victoria 2211 (open day and night)

BY IMPERIAL AIRWAYS


BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION




BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION



BY AIR MAIL
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PAR AVION



BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION



TO CAPE TOWN IN 9 DAYS
 By IMPERIAL AIRWAYS
 Air Mail Leaves London Every Wednesday and Capetown Every Tuesday

Bookings for passengers to Egypt, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Uganda, Kenya Colony, Tanganyika Territory, Northern and Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa, and full particulars of this service from any Travel Agency or from IMPERIAL AIRWAYS Airway Terminus, Victoria Station, S.W.1
 Telephone: Victoria 2211 (open day and night)

Your fare through Africa includes meals, accommodation and tips, there are no 'extras'



EUROPEAN AIR MAILS

Letter Air Mails are despatched every week-day to most EUROPEAN countries. The postage rates for letters and postcards are:-

LETTERS :- First Ounce - - - 4d
 Each Additional Ounce 3d

POST-CARDS - - - - 2½d

Correspondence may also be sent by air or by combined air and ordinary services to many countries outside Europe. Parcel Air Mails are despatched on week-days to most European countries. For postage rates and full particulars of letter and parcel air mail services, see AIR MAIL LEAFLET obtainable free of charge from any Post Office

Australian air services in 1939, 1945 & 1948

Material provided by Ed Wolf

I received an email from Ed Wolf to which were attached scans of the extraordinarily detailed maps which are shown on the following pages. Our thanks to Ed for sharing them with us. Ed wrote:

"I have just read, for the first time, a book that I bought many years ago. It was published in 1951 and contained the signature of C.A. Butler, the principal of Butler Transport so I believe it once belonged to him. It contained some wonderful maps that I wish to share with you and the rest of the group."

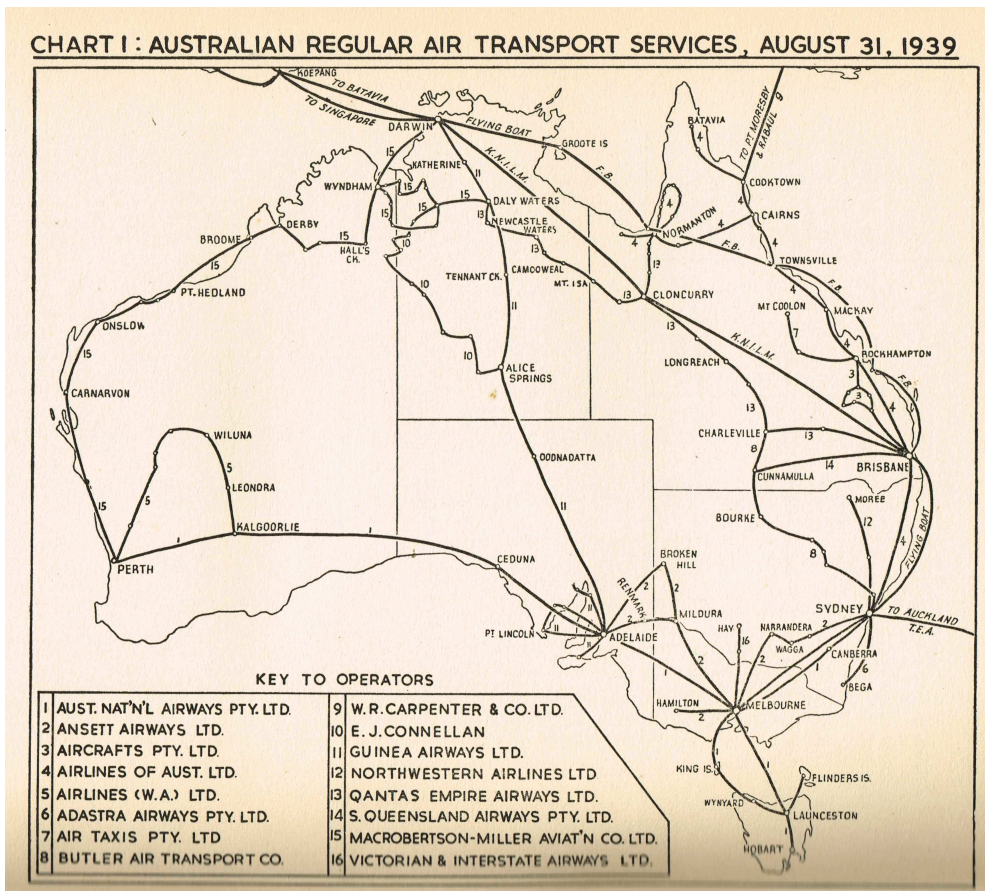
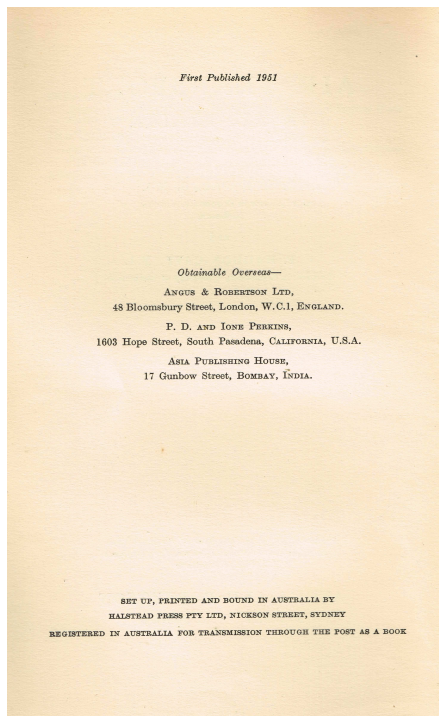
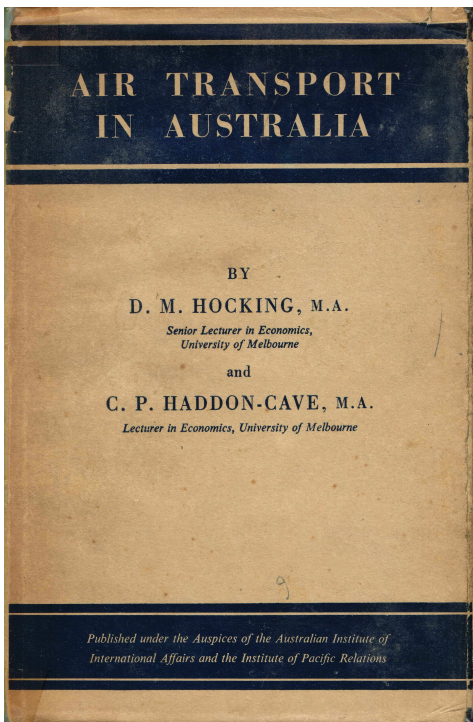


CHART II: AUSTRALIAN REGULAR AIR TRANSPORT SERVICES, JUNE 30, 1945

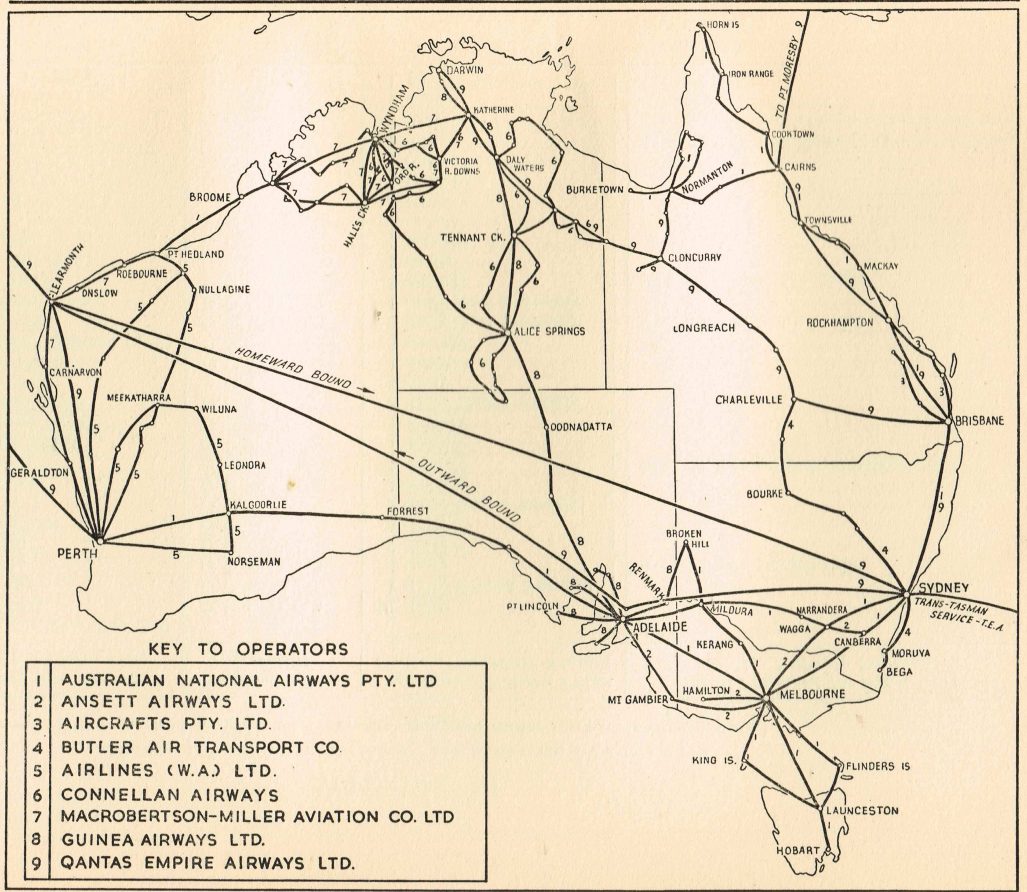
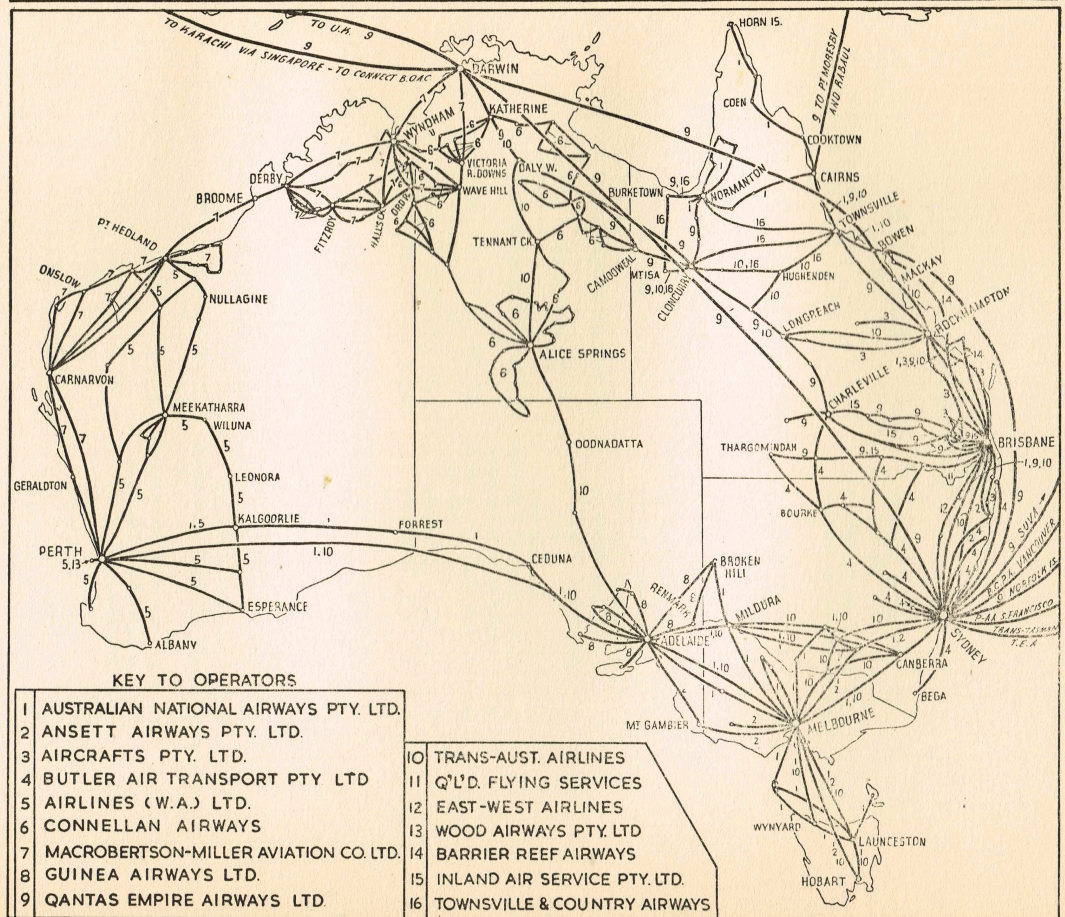


CHART III: AUSTRALIAN REGULAR AIR TRANSPORT SERVICES, JUNE 30, 1948



Imperial Airways' emergency landing grounds in South Africa

By Peter Winget

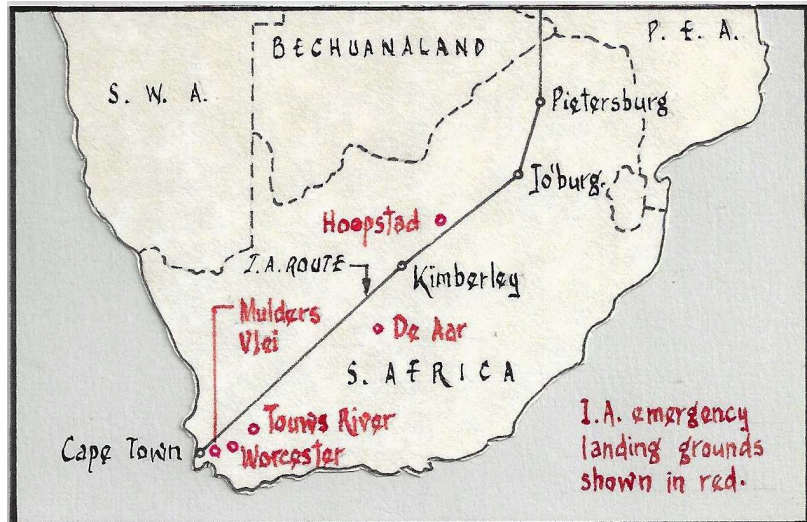
The only listing of Imperial Airways' emergency landing grounds of which I am aware is given in a book by David Jones [1]. The list is headed "Imperial Airways: African Trunk Route. Aerodrome and Marine Landing Facilities Listed 1936." This must have been a list produced early in 1936 because at the end of March that year South African Airways took over the operation of the Johannesburg ~ Cape Town sector.

Jones lists all the aerodromes between Cairo and Cape Town but the concern here is only with those south of Johannesburg. They are given below and shown in the map.

Hoopstad Kimberley De Aar Victoria West Touws River Worcester Mulders Vlei

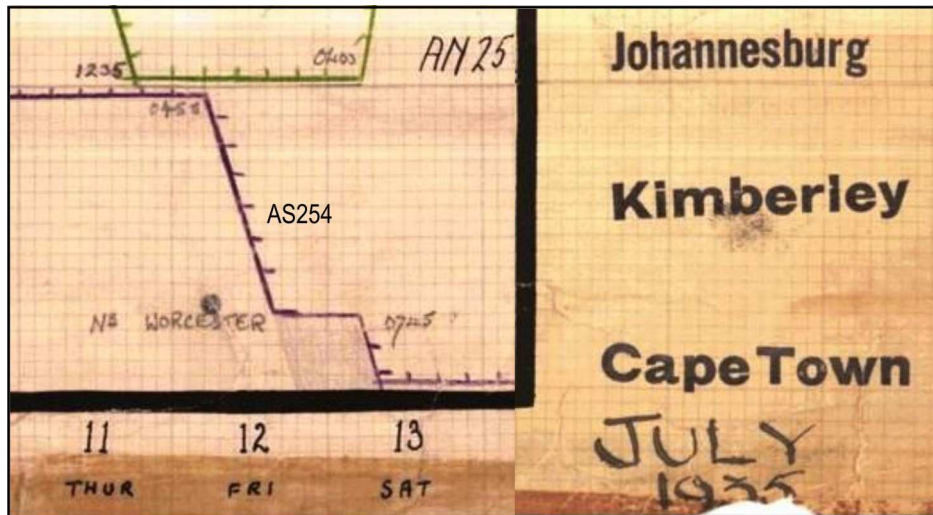
In March 1936, Kimberley was the only timetabled call between Jo'burg. and Cape Town. Calls at Victoria West were scheduled until October 1934 after which timetables stated calls there were made, "If inducement offers and circumstances permit."

From information given in Lloyd's Daily Lists [2] and the Imperial Airways' aircraft movement charts [3], I have been able to identify one service which landed at Worcester and four which landed at Touws River. In addition, two services are known to have called at Beaufort West. In May 1932 service AN64 spent a night at Mossel Bay and in November 1934 AN195 landed at Baragwanath. These last three places never appeared on Imperial Airways' timetables and were not in Jones' list.



The cover above is dated London F.S./Air Mail, 2 July 1935 and was flown by AS254 which departed Croydon at 12.37 on 3 July. The service was operating to schedule when the AW XV *Amalthea* departed Johannesburg at 06.55 on 12 July. She should have arrived at Cape Town that day but bad weather forced her to land at Worcester emergency landing ground. She flew the last 70 miles to Cape Town the next morning.

The July 1935 Imperial Airways aircraft movement chart shows the landing at Worcester. In the extract from the chart shown below, the blue circle and shading was the code used to indicate a weather delay.

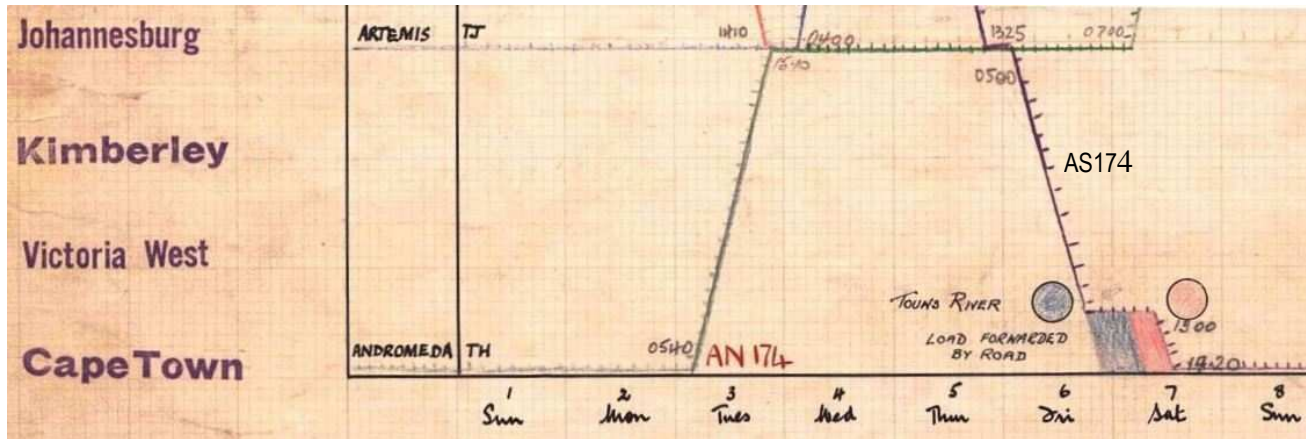


The cover below is not in my collection. It was sold on Ebay for a surprisingly large amount, probably helped greatly by the vendor’s description: “Zeppelin Chicago Farht Germany to South Africa cover 1934. Scarce.” Clearly it was not carried by a Zeppelin, nor did it go anywhere near Chicago. I hope the buyer was aware.

It was posted in Cologne on 25 June 1934 and was probably sent by train to Brindisi where it connected with I.A. service AS174 which departed there at 06.00 on 29 June. On 6 July the AW XV *Amalthea* departed Johannesburg to schedule at 07.00 but bad weather caused her to land at Touws River. A note on the chart shown on the next page states that the load was forwarded to Cape Town by road where it arrived, according to the arrival datestamp, on the 7th. The chart shows that *Amalthea* was unable to leave Touws River until the afternoon of the 7th due to mechanical trouble for which the code was a red circle and shading.



Part of the I.A. movement chart for July 1934 showing the call by AS174 at Touws River is shown below:



The table below lists all the calls at emergency landing grounds of which I am aware and also non-scheduled calls at other airfields in South Africa, i.e. Mossel Bay, Beaufort West, Victoria West and Baragwanath. There were no doubt many more landings so if any reader can add to the list, please send me details which I will include in the next Gazette.

Service number	Called at	Date	Reason for call	Source of information
AN64	Mossel Bay	25-26 May 1932	Bad weather	Lloyd's List, Mossel Bay Advertiser & S.A. Philatelist
AS68	Touws River	26-28 June 1932	Unknown	Lloyd's Daily List
AN79	Beaufort West	7-8 Sept. 1932	Bad weather	Lloyd's Daily List
AS120	Beaufort West	24 June 1933	Unknown	Lloyd's Daily List
AS174	Touws River	6-7 July 1934	Bad weather	I.A. movement chart
AN195	Baragwanath	27-28 Nov. 1934	Thunderstorm	S.A. Philatelist, Jan. 1935
AN246	Victoria West	11-12 June 1935	Bad weather	I.A. movement chart
AS254	Worcester	12-13 July 1935	Bad weather	I.A. movement chart
AS258	Touws River	26-27 July 1935	Bad weather	I.A. movement chart
AS304	Touws River	3-4 Jan. 1936	Engine trouble	I.A. movement chart
AN282	Victoria West	15 Oct. 1935	Unknown	Lloyd's Daily List

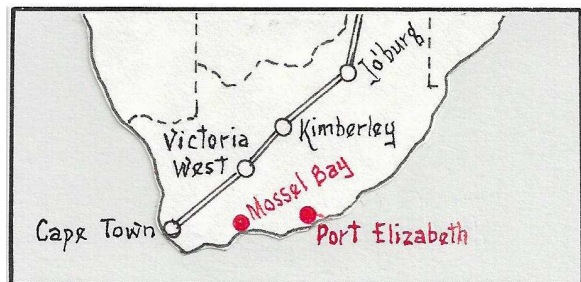
References:

- [1] Jones, David, *The Time Shrinkers*, David Rendel Ltd., 1971.
- [2] *Lloyd's Daily Lists*. Held at the Guildhall Library, London.
- [3] Imperial Airways' aircraft movement charts held at the British Airways Museum, Harmondsworth.

Service AN64 diverted to Mossel Bay

By Peter Wingent

I mentioned in the previous article that one Imperial Airways service is known to have landed at Mossel Bay. It might well be the only one given that the town is well off the normal flight path from Cape Town to Victoria West. A line from Mossel Bay to the flight path, drawn at a right angle to it, measures 130 miles on a map.



At 08.20 on 25 May 1932 the DH66 *City of Delhi* took off from Wingfield Aerodrome, Cape Town, operating service AN64. She encountered a very strong gale and was forced to land at Mossel Bay aerodrome and remained there overnight. The *City of Delhi* departed the next morning and the service operated one day behind schedule until the Alexandria – Brindisi section was flown in one day instead of the scheduled two days.

Mossel Bay Advertiser 28/5/1932

Air Mail Plane Lands at Mossel Bay.

City of Delhi Confronted by 80 Miles an Hour Gale.

Passenger's Gruelling Experience.

The City of Delhi, one of the Imperial Airways' aeroplanes which left Cape Town, at 8.20 a.m. on Wednesday, en route for England with the English Mail and one passenger on board for Johannesburg, was forced to land at the Mossel Bay aerodrome shortly after 11 o'clock, on Wednesday morning, owing to a very strong gale and inclement weather conditions. The plane was supposed to have left Cape Town, at 6 o'clock on Wednesday morning, but owing to bad weather conditions it was delayed for two hours.

Shortly after leaving Capetown the plane ran into a very strong headwind of 80 miles an hour and in view of the fact that the velocity of the wind caused the plane to drop one thousand feet per minute the pilot decided to rise and was forced to reach an altitude of eleven thousand feet where the plane became covered by snow. Icicles were formed and were hanging from the wires between the wings. On several occasions the plane reached an altitude of fourteen thousand feet.

While proceeding north near Meirings Poort, wind increased in velocity to 85 miles per hour and the plane was compelled to return and landed at Mossel Bay during a ground gale of 40 miles an hour.

When the plane abandoned its course to the north a wireless message was sent to Slangkop to inform Mossel Bay that it intended landing at Mossel Bay, but when the message was received at Mossel Bay the plane had already landed.

It passed over Mossel Bay at an altitude of five thousand feet but instead of making headway it was almost driven backwards released and then stopped.

We learn from good authority used no petrol in to Mossel Bay gale. 46 petrol approximately 8 gallons.

The plane took up of Shell Petrol and oil.

During Wednesday afternoon weather got worse and the pilot had to abandon the idea of reaching Johannesburg the same day and only left at 7.20 a.m. on Thursday.

The City of Delhi is the largest plane which has yet landed at Mossel Bay. The pilot spoke very favourably about the condition of the aerodrome.

The passenger on board the plane related to a representative of the Advertiser some of his experiences of the trip from Cape Town.

In the first case, he said, he found it extremely cold and very bumpy. The plane appeared to drop down like a lift suddenly

Mossel Bay deviation

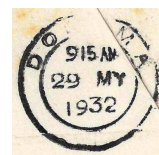
Pauw Steyl, George, writes: Here is the answer to Jill Redmond's question "Why Mossel Bay?" (SA Philatelist, August 2002): I was lucky to find the answer in the library of the George Museum. The George and Knysna Herald of 1 June 1932 reported:

"The big Imperial Airways liner City of Delhi descended from the skies last Wednesday at Mossel Bay, driven out of her route by terrific weather. She was en route from Cape Town to London and climbed to 14 000 feet to cross the Zwartberg in a gale blowing dead ahead at 90 miles/hr. Ice began to form on the wings and fuselage, and the airship was blown back in the heavy rainclouds. In these circumstances the course was diverted to Mossel Bay where the night was spent. Leaving next morning at 7:20, Port Elizabeth was reached before 10 o'clock where new supplies of petrol were taken aboard."

Above is a copy from the September 2002 edition of the South African Philatelist in which Pauw Steyl provided a detailed reply to a question from Jill Redmond asking why the service called at Mossel Bay.

Left is an incomplete copy of a very detailed report published in the 28 May 1932 edition of the Mossel Bay Advertiser. It was sent to me many years ago by Bryan Stokoe, to whom I am very grateful. It provides an interesting insight into the large amounts of fuel consumed by the *City of Delhi*. Presumably Mossel Bay aerodrome did not have sufficient supplies to refuel the 'plane and hence the call at Port Elizabeth for fuel before returning to the normal route.

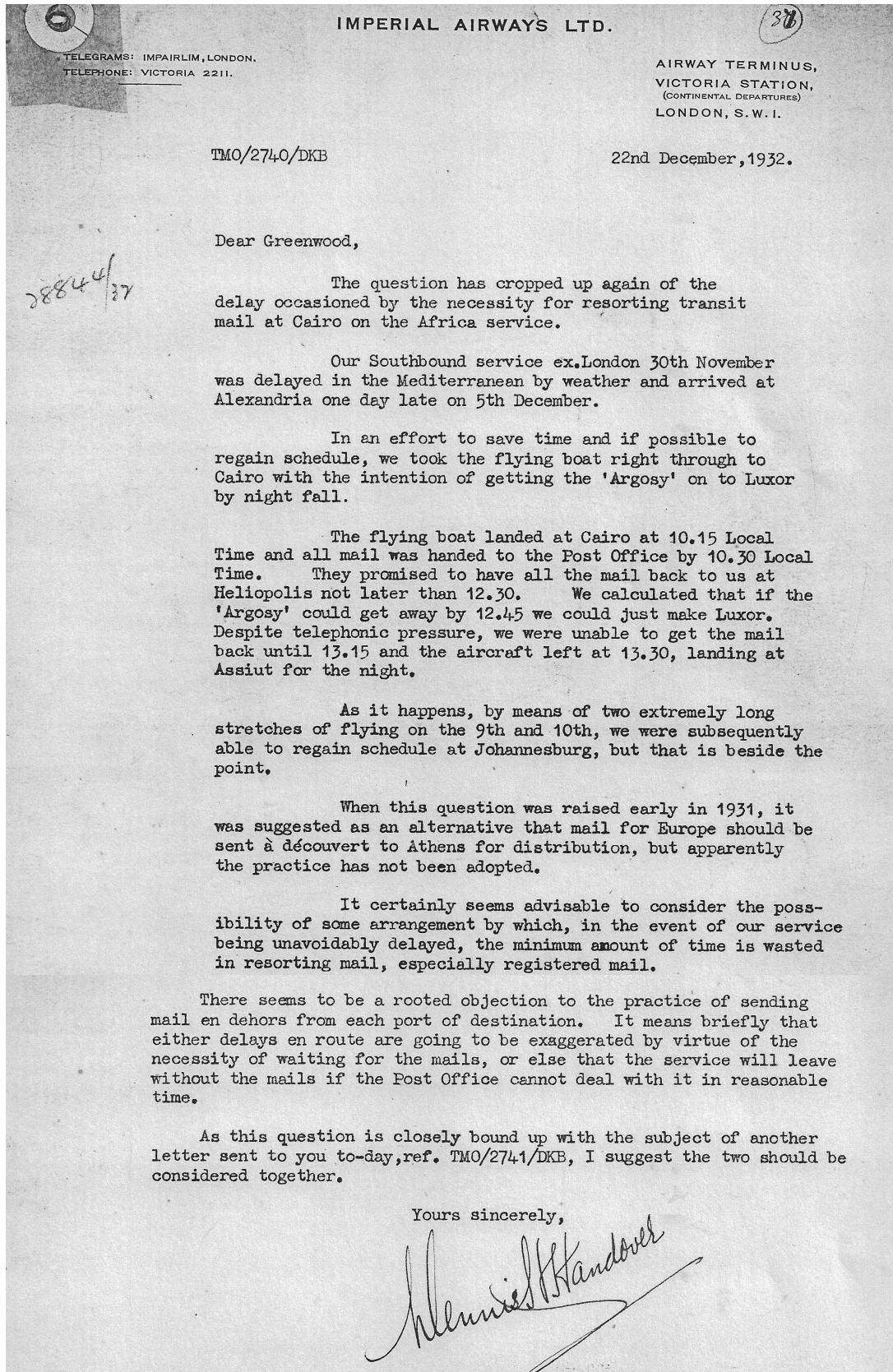
Cover below was flown from Johannesburg to Dodoma by the delayed service AN64, then sent by train to Dar es Salaam.



Delays to I.A. service AS92

By Peter Wingent

In May 1931, Dennis Handover, Imperial Airways Traffic Manager, wrote the first of many letters of complaint to the G.P.O., London regarding delay to I.A. services caused by the resorting of the African air mail at either Alexandria or Cairo. The final items of correspondence which I found on the subject in the British Postal Museum & Archive are the two which follow. The first relates to delay caused to service AS92 and it provides some useful and interesting detail.



A draft of the reply, written by J.F. Greenwood of the Post Office Air Mail Section, is shown below. From this it would seem that the matter was finally resolved by requesting Germany, the sender of the largest volume of mail from Europe outside of the U.K., to forward correspondence in closed bags instead of à découvert (open bags).

Letter sent 4 Jan 1933.
Signed by Mr Greenwood
Gen. ref T1070/2440/DKB.
Recd no 63281/32.

Write to:-
D.H. Handover Esq.,
Imperial Airways, Ltd
Hudson's Place,
3/1/39
Wilton Rd, Sw.1

Dear Handover,

With reference to your letter of the 22nd of Dec: regarding the resorting of mail at Cairo, we have just heard from Germany that in future they will make up closed mails for the African service instead of sending the correspondence à découvert to Egypt. This will probably enable the Egyptian P.O. to deal with the à découvert correspondence much quicker than formerly as the amount of correspondence sent from Germany

Germany is considerable.
 as regards the countries
 from which the amount of correspondence
 is small, I am afraid that, as the
~~normal~~ ^{normal} interval at Cairo is
 sufficient to allow the mail to be
 resorted, there is no further action
 which we can take at present.
 We quite agree however that the
 service should not be delayed
 on account of the practice and
 there would have been no
 reasonable ground for complaint
 if the aeroplane had left Cairo
 at 12.45 on the occasion in
 question.
 I will reply to your letter No T.1070/2441/DKB separately.
 Yours sincerely
 J. G.
 2 January 1933.

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 17

The cover shown on the next page was flown by service AS92. Posted in Athens on 2 December 1932, it should have departed the next day but the Short Kent *Satyrus* was delayed there by bad weather and only reached Athens on the 4th. Further delay was caused when more bad weather was encountered at Mirabella, resulting in an overnight stop on the island and thus when *Satyrus* took off from there on the 5th, the service was two days late. As mentioned in Handover's letter, the flying boat flew right through to Cairo, eliminating the usual rail link from Alexandria.

It was at Cairo that the delay caused by the resorting of the European mail resulted in a departure which only allowed time for Assuit to be reached on the 6th.

The 39dr. postage = 7dr. first 20 gr. ordinary postage + 2 x 12dr. per 10 gr. air mail fee to South Africa + 8dr. registration fee.



The itinerary of service AS92, given below, has been compiled from returns published in Lloyd’s Daily Lists together with the times and dates in Handover’s letter to the G.P.O.

Croydon	dep.	12.30	30 Nov.	Heracles	
Paris	arr.	14.55	30 Nov.	Heracles	
Brindisi	dep.	11.30	02 Dec.	Sylvanus	
Athens	arr.	11.00	03 Dec.	Sylvanus	1 day late
Athens	dep.	07.20	04 Dec.	Sylvanus	1 day late
Mirabella	arr.	-	04 Dec.	Sylvanus	1 day late
Mirabella	dep.	-	05 Dec.	Sylvanus	2 days late
Cairo	arr.	10.15	05 Dec.	Sylvanus	2 days late
Cairo	dep.	13.30	05 Dec.	C.Cov.	1 day late
Assuit	arr.	15.40	05 Dec.	C.Cov.	1 day late
Assuit	dep.	05.15	06 Dec.	C.Cov.	2 days late
Khartoum	arr.	-	06 Dec.	C.Cov.	1 day late
Khartoum	dep.	05.00	07 Dec.	C.Stoneh.	1 day late
Juba	arr.	16.15	07 Dec.	C.Stoneh.	1 day late
Juba	dep.	-	08 Dec.	C.Stoneh.	1 day late
Kisumu	arr.	12.45	08 Dec.	C.Stoneh.	1 day late
Kisumu	dep.	13.45	08 Dec.	C.Jodhp.	1 day late
Nairobi	arr.	-	08 Dec.	C.Jodhp.	1 day late
Nairobi	dep.	-	09 Dec.	C.Jodhp.	1 day late
Jo'burg.	arr.	20.35	10 Dec.	C.Jodhp.	4½ hours late
Jo'burg.	dep.	06.30	11 Dec.	C.Delhi	
Cape Town	arr.	18.50	11 Dec.	C.Delhi	

The 1934-1935 delivery flights of Qantas of DH 86s (Mystery solved)

By Ed Wolf

Of the six aircraft delivered to Australia for Qantas, two were delivered by ship (VH-USD *Brisbane* and VH-USE *Sydney*) and the other four were flown out, the first two did not carry official mail but unofficial mail exists. (AAMC 412-413 and 457) [1]

Another aerophilatelist [2] has written extensively on four of the six flown in his article "1935 -Empire airmail between England and Australia." Indeed he devoted Chapter 4 entirely to this aspect. He was left with an enigma on the last aircraft to arrive being airframe #2306 G-ACWE to become VH-UUA ultimately in Australia.

A recent reading of a book written and produced in 1942 may provide the answer he has been waiting for.

Captain John Lock [3] in his biography (pages 97-135) relates that he was selected as an experienced DH86 pilot to fly one of the new Qantas aircraft out to Australia. He had been chosen in August 1934 to open the Railway Air Service in the DH86.

Australian pilot P.G. Taylor, having flown with Kingsford Smith to America on the Lockheed Altair, was to fly with Lock but called it off following the two reported crashes of DH86s in Australia including the second delivery flight of IA pilot Prendergast and crew. Hudson Fysh would not accept his refusal to fly and terminated Taylor's employment with Qantas before it had even started.

Lock describes the journey to the East in detail, and is told when he gets to Singapore that this was the end of the line for him and that a Qantas pilot will take over from there. The dates of the flight are very significant as you will see.

Lock describes that there were four aircraft to be flown out in the following order:-

Lester Brain VH-USC *Canberra*

R.A Prendergast VH-USG (probably named *Adelaide* prior to delivery)

Jimmy Youell VH-USF *Melbourne*

John Lock G-ACWE renamed VH-UUA *Adelaide*, his being the last.

Note that the last aircraft was only certified on February 14 according to Jackson [4] when reading the following log. There is no call sign given in Lock's story, but the dates match up. All times are GMT.

1935

February

- 22 Start from Croydon with first officer Thomas for Le Bourget (Paris).
- 23 11.30 am Le Bourget – Marseille arrives 3 pm.
- 24 11.00 am Marseille – Rome arrives 2 pm.
- 25 7.30 am Rome- Valetta Malta arrives 10.50 am.
- 26 12.30 pm Valetta- Benghazi.
- 27 6.30 am Benghazi- Mersa Matruh.
- 27 ? Mersa Matruh – Cairo 2 hr. flight.
- 28 4.30 am Cairo – Gaza arrives 6 am bogged for 2 hours in sand.
- 28 ?Gaza – Baghdad 4.5 hr. flight.
- 28 Baghdad – Basra with passenger "Knocker" White, Station supt. Basra.

March

- 1 Basra- Sharjah
- 2 3.00 am Sharjah – Gwadar and Karachi
- 3 Early start Karachi – Jodhpur
- 4 Jodhpur – Allahabad
- 5 12.30 am Allahabad- Calcutta 1.5 hrs. to refuel
- 5 Calcutta- Akyab
- 6 Akyab – Rangoon

- 7 12.30 am Rangoon – Bangkok 1 hr. to refuel.
- 7 Bangkok- Alor Star took longer than anticipated.
- 8 Alor Star – Singapore 3.5 hr. flight.

On arrival at Singapore Lock is told by Charles Barnard, local IA area manager, “The Aussies are sending a crew to take delivery from here instead of Brisbane.”

The dates for the flight are important as they indicate the earliest dates on which the fourth aircraft could have left Singapore.

According to Brackley [5] Lester Brain was in Singapore on February 23 and may have been the one to take over the aircraft for its flight across the Timor Sea to Darwin

Lock stays in Singapore and takes over the Singapore-Karachi route using AW XV *Atalantas* then starts the Penang – Hong Kong surveys on December 5, 1935 before operating the first service on 23 March 1936, again using DH 86 G-ADUG *Dorado*.

In the process of this discovery it was also possible to make some other observations about the other early 1935 February flights shown by Peter Wingent [6] based on information other than “The Times” and “Lloyd’s List”.

The third aircraft flown by Captain Jimmy Youell came into service at Singapore with IE305 departing January 21 and arrived at Darwin on December 23. Because of the Prendergast crash and another DH86 belonging to Holyman’s, an enquiry had been set up to discover the causes. Meantime flying DH 86s in Australia was suspended.

When VH-USF *Melbourne* was inspected on arrival at Darwin, it was found to have a defect in the operation of the tail fin bias operation which needed a competent woodworker’s attention. The nearest Qantas woodworker, George Boehm, was at Singapore so the plane was flown back there by Youell on January 25 for repairs as IW307. There was a specific instruction given for this flight that the bias fin was not to be used en route. Boehm found that had a major lateral movement been made with the aircraft during flight, it could have caused the collapse of the fin post. As an additional aside, Boehm had been with Qantas since 1922 and was completely trusted. It was likely that every DH 86 that transited through Singapore would need to be checked by him for structural failure and the necessary repair.

Presumably the Brisbane Darwin leg of that service IW307 was flown by the only other DH 86 VH-USC *Canberra* on January 23 although the aircraft suspension was not lifted until January 25.

Certainly the *Canberra* was used as a shuttle between Brisbane and Darwin as it is recorded by Parnell [6] as being delayed at Daly Waters by the late arrival of the MacRoberson aircraft from Perth prior to arrival at Darwin on January 31 for the IW309 service.

The repaired VH-USF *Melbourne* was flown back to Darwin as IE313 from Singapore on February 18 and got to Darwin two days later. On board for this first regular flight from Singapore were the British delegation coming to Australia to outline the proposed Empire Airmail Scheme involving flying boats when Qantas just invested in their DH86s! A special dispensation was arranged, as no passengers were intended to fly for the first three months of the aircraft’s operation, only mail.

Wingent records that *Adelaide* completed the journey to Brisbane but that could not be as that aircraft had not yet left Croydon as seen from the above log. The likely aircraft used was *Canberra* instead.

It was only day one later, on February 21, that *Melbourne* turned around to fly to Singapore and then onto Alor Star to drop off its load to *Arethusa* on IW314 service by February 22. The flying time from Darwin to Alor Star appears to indicate a very fast trip. Scotty Allan [8] explains this possibility by altering the altitude to catch the prevailing winds along the way.

The return trip from Singapore for *Melbourne* was on February 24 as IE 315 and this time she flew all the way to the Qantas home base at Brisbane.

Similarly Scotty Allen remembers flying from Brisbane on February 26 which must have been the shuttle from Brisbane to Darwin for the IW 311 service using the *Canberra*.

A note by Wingent questions an unrecorded flight westbound from Brisbane on February 25 to Singapore. He notes that four authors state this occurred. I found a fifth in Jackson all of whom claim that Scotty Allan, Crowther, and Purton were on this flight. But...this is refuted by Scotty Allen who claims that he flew a different service being IW317 with VH-USD *Brisbane* from Brisbane on February 27 to Singapore according to his own logbook.

It is this author's belief that the mistake was first made by Ernie Crome [9] when he wrote his and that it was followed by all the other authors without checking the facts. Jackson actually uses Crome words!

That there was a flight on the February 25 from Brisbane may explain the appearance of VH-USC *Canberra* starting from Singapore and stopping at Surabaya on March 6 as IE 317. That mystery flight was possible a staging flight to get to Singapore and would therefore not have been recorded in Lloyd's list.

There is a further conflict of dates regarding IE 315 and IW317 both referring to VH-USF *Melbourne*. In the former the aircraft arrived in Brisbane on February 28 and in the latter, it departs from Darwin on March 1.

IW317 has now been identified as the aircraft VH-USD *Brisbane* flown by Scotty Allan from Brisbane on February 27 arriving at Singapore on March 2. When VH-USD *Brisbane* was first examined in Qantas workshops in Brisbane after unloading from the ship, it was found to have an incorrect location of the fin bias transverse screw which had also been apparent on the crashed VH-USG. Note that this was found before *Brisbane* had flown at all! Modifications got over this but left a bad impression on de Havilland's product.

There was certainly a steady flow of DH86 s landing at Singapore during the early March period.

- March 2 *Brisbane* arrives as IW317,
- March 5 *Canberra* leaves as IE317,
- March 8 VH-UUA *Adelaide* arrives from UK though not recorded by IA,
- March 10 *Sydney* arrives as IW319,
- March 12 *Sydney* leaves as IE 319 there are at least 4 covers known to Australia from this flight.

One could get the impression that each of these machines was sent to Singapore to ensure that George Boehm could inspect them for their airworthiness by inspecting their suspect components.

There arises the question when did the *Brisbane* return and when did *Adelaide* set off for Australia?

The detailed records of the next few flights by DH 86 aircraft from March 1935 are not available. It is not until we get to June 1935 that Lloyds Lists are once again providing the relevant details, by which time the service has settled down to a routine run.

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2. Author does not wish to be acknowledged.
3. Captain John Lock & John Creasey. The Log of a Merchant Airman, Stanley Paul, London 1942.
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6. Peter Wingent Aircraft Movements on Imperial Eastern Route Vol. 1, Privately published 1999.
7. Neville Parnell & Trevor Boughton, Flypast, An AGPS Publication 1988.
8. G.U. Allan with Elizabeth Shearman, Scotty Allan, MacArthur Press, Melbourne 1992.
9. E.A. Crome, Qantas Aeriana 1920-1954, Francis Field, Sutton Coldfield 1955.

Opening of the new terminal building at Croydon Airport

By Duncan Crewe

Duncan kindly sent a scan of a very fine recently acquired press photograph taken at Croydon Airport. He wrote, "It was taken on the first day on which passengers used the new terminal: Monday 30 January 1928. It was not officially opened until May. Judging from the clock on the terminal building, the Argosy was probably about to depart for Paris on the lunchtime Silver Wing service."



For the record ~ our Zoom meetings, September & October 2023

September 2023:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Duncan Crewe | - | City of Khartoum crash. |
| Christopher Cooksey | - | RANA 1934 service. |
| Robert Duns | - | Africa to New Zealand, 1932 – 1939 |
| Peter Richards | - | New acquisitions. |
| Laurence Kimpton | - | RAF Cairo to Baghdad service. |
| Peter Wingent | - | Some BOAC WWII services. |

October 2023:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Christopher Cooksey | - | RANA 1938-39 services. |
| Nicholas Arrow | - | Between South Africa and America ~ By Air Across the Pond. |
| Robert Duns | - | Imperial Airways disaster mail and delays to New Zealand. |
| Peter Wingent | - | Madagascar air mail via Imperial Airways, 1932 ~ 1934. |