

Chapter 10: August – November 1941

10.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the period between the end of the disruption due to the rebellion in Iraq and fighting in Syria and the disruption due to the entry of Japan into WW2. The flights are from *NE 107* and *WS 107* up to *NE 140* and *WS 142*. On 16th October 1941, *Qantas Empire Airways* took over the operation of the Singapore – Karachi section of the service from *BOAC*.

This was a lull before the storm and so, like Chapter 8, the chapter does not go into the same detail as other chapters and only deals with significant events as well as discussing example covers. A summary table of dates of mail from the UK is shown in Section 10.4 and dates from Sydney to Durban together with their London deliveries is shown in Section 10.6.

10.2 Resumption of Normal Service

With *WS 107* and *NE 107* there was no longer a shuttle service between Cairo and Basra and flights resumed normal service.

WS 107				NE 107			
Sydney	dep	24 Jul	Corinna	Durban	dep	26 Jul	Castor
Townsville	o'n	24-25 Jul	Corinna	Mozambique	o'n	26-27 Jul	Castor
Darwin	o'n	25-26 Jul	Corinna	Kisumu	o'n	27-28 Jul	Castor
Sourabaya	o'n	26-27 Jul	Corinna	Khartoum	o'n	28-29 Jul	Castor
Singapore	o'n	27-28 Jul	Corinna	Cairo	arr	29 Jul	Castor
Bangkok	o'n	28-29 Jul	Corinna	Cairo	dep	30 Jul	Caledonia
Calcutta	o'n	29-30 Jul	Corinna	Basra	o'n	30-31 Jul	Caledonia
Karachi	o'n	30-31 Jul	Corinna	Karachi	arr	31 Jul	Caledonia
Basra	o'n	31/7-1/8	Corinna	Karachi	dep	1 Aug	Canopus
Cairo	arr	1 Aug	Corinna	Calcutta	o'n	1-2 Aug	Canopus
Cairo	dep	4 Aug	Ceres	Rangoon	o'n	2-3 Aug	Canopus
Khartoum	o'n	4-5 Aug	Ceres	Singapore	o'n	3-4 Aug	Canopus
Kisumu	o'n	5-6 Aug	Ceres	Sourabaya	o'n	4-5 Aug	Canopus
Mozambique	o'n	6-7 Aug	Ceres	Darwin	o'n	5-6 Aug	Canopus
Vaalbank	arr	7-8 Aug	Ceres	Townsville	o'n	6-7 Aug	Canopus
Durban	arr	8 Aug	Ceres	Sydney	arr	7 Aug	Canopus

The cover in Figure 10.1 is postmarked in Abadan, Iran on 29th July 1941 and is addressed to Kodaikanal in the Madras Presidency in South India. It has an indistinct arrival mark on 5th August and was opened by the censors in India. Abadan is near Basra and so I assume that it was taken there by surface and then flown from Basra to Karachi on *NE 107* on 31st July. *NE 108* had mechanical problems and an overnight stop in Bahrein and so did not arrive in Karachi until 5th August.

10.3 Complaint about the Service

Because of the possibility of mail being lost due to enemy action, a copy of business mail was often sent by an alternative route. Businesses then found that air mail from the UK sent to New Zealand was arriving later than ordinary letters posted at the same time. This led to a complaint from the *Federation of British Industries* in November 1941.

This was looked into and a letter (marked Secret) from the GPO to the *Air Ministry* dated 28 November 1941 states [AMS, Cla2]:

“I enclose for your information a copy of a letter which we have received from the Federation of British Industries in which it was stated that letters sent by air mail to New Zealand at the 1s.3d rate are arriving after ordinary letters posted at the same time.

We have carefully examined this statement and unfortunately it is true, not only for New Zealand but also for Australia. The sea services to South Africa have become very much worse during the past few months and the air mails are taking 6 to 7 weeks, or even longer, to reach Capetown, giving an overall transit time to Australia and New Zealand of 8 to 10 weeks. In contrast, the average transmission time to Australia and New Zealand of mails sent by surface route via North America and the Pacific is only 7½ weeks. The transmission times of air mails for the other countries served by the Durban-Sydney service are, of course equally affected by the deterioration of the services to South Africa.”



Figure 10.1: Iran to India flown on NE 107.

An internal GPO memo dated 19th November 1941 gives more details [AMS, Cla2, Win2]:

“It will be seen from the telegram from New Zealand dated the 13th of November that air mails despatched from the U.K. via the Cape between the 24th of July and the 28th of August had, with the exception of one mail lost en route by enemy action, reached Auckland by the 13th of November in transmission times varying from 50 and 81 days, the average being 62 days; and that ordinary mails, which are routed via America and the Pacific, despatched between the 19th of August and the 13th of September had also reached Auckland by the same date, in transmission times varying from 44 to 73 days, the average being 53 days.

...

The sea services to South Africa show no signs of improvement; in fact since the despatch of

the 28th of August – the latest of which New Zealand has reported the arrival – they have deteriorated still further. The transit time to Cape Town of air mails despatched between the 5th of September and the 4th of October (9 despatches in all) varies from 40 to 63 days, the average being 50 days. The average overall transit time of these mails will consequently be about 70 days to New Zealand, 67 days to Australia and 63 days to Malaya.”

The GPO letter also discusses whether the Empire air mail service to Australia (and presumably New Zealand) should be withdrawn as it: ‘*has ceased to afford any acceleration*’. They discuss the alternative of advertising the route by airmail to USA, but reject it for the same reasons as given in August 1940. Interestingly, the letter states that this service was already available for ‘*specialty superscribed correspondence*’, but that it had not been advertised. This unadvertised service is the one proposed in the OMB memo of August 1940 and described in Section 6.8 [Cla2].

Dates of dispatch from UK between 24th July and the 28th of August with transmission times to Cape Town in brackets [Pr] are: 24/7 (37); 25/7 (lost); 26/7 (?); 2/8 (28); 7/8 (38); 12/8 (50); 19/8 (46); 20/8 (42); 25/8 (39) (total of 9 despatches)

Dates of dispatch from UK between 5th September and the 4th of October with transmission times to Cape Town in brackets [Pr] are: 5/9 (33); 8/9 (?); 12/9 (63); 17/9 (43); 19/9 (50); 22/9 (38); 24/9 (41); 29/9 (44); 1/10 (?); 4/10(?) (total of 10 despatches, quoted in memo as 9)

10.4 Mail from the UK

The Singapore Press gives dates on which mail from the UK arrived in Singapore together with dates on which no UK mail arrived on the flying boat [SN]. The following table associates the dates of London dispatches, the UK – Cape Town ships listed by Proud [Pr] (unless marked with an asterisk), sailing dates from Convoy Web [CW] (unless otherwise stated) and the *Horseshoe* flights. (‘??’ indicates that no information was given for that flight in the Singapore Press.) It can be seen that arrivals in Cape Town are clustered and that there can be large gaps between the clusters explaining why there is quite a large variation in transit times. It also explains why no mail from the UK was carried on some flights. In general, there is very good correlation between the arrival, or non-arrival, of UK mail in Singapore with the arrival dates of ships in Cape Town given by Proud.

Arrival or non-arrival of UK Mail in Singapore					
London dispatch	Ships UK – Cape Town	Flight No	Leave Durban	Arrive Singapore	UK mail
-	-	NE 107	26 Jul	3 Aug	No
7 Jun 21 Jun	Ulysses 12 Jun – 23 Jul Sagaing 24 Jun – 25 Jul	NE 108	30 Jul	8 Aug	??
25 Jun	Ceramic 28 Jun – 27 Jul	NE 109	2 Aug	11 Aug	Yes
-	-	NE 110	6 Aug	14 Aug	No
26 Jun	Empire Success 30 Jun – 4 Aug	NE 111	9 Aug	18 Aug	Yes
28 Jun	Mentor 4 Jul – 5 Aug	NE 112	13 Aug	22 Aug	Yes
-	-	NE 113	16 Aug	24 Aug	No
		NE 114	20 Aug	29 Aug	No
		NE 116	28 Aug	7 Sep	No
		NE 117	30 Aug	8 Sep	No
9 Jul 17 Jul 19 Jul	Clan Macpherson 25 Jul – 24 Aug City of Bombay 25 Jul – 27 Aug Atlantic City 23 Jul – 26 Jul (damaged by torpedo) mail transferred to City of Johannesburg ??	NE 118	3 Sep	11 Sep	??
21 Jul	Mahsud 24 Jul – 31 Aug	NE 119	6 Sep	19 Sep	Yes

24 Jul 26 Jul 2 Aug	Empire Comet 29 Jul – 30 Aug Berakit 29 Jul - ? Clan Macauley 6 Aug – 30 Aug	NE 120	10 Sep	19 Sep	??
25 Jul	Mails lost	NE 121	13 Sep	21 Sep	No
23 Jul	Boskoop 30 Jul – 11 Sep	NE 122	17 Sep	25 Sep	Yes
7 Aug	Rochester Castle 19 Aug – 14 Sep	NE 123	20 Sep	30 Sep	Yes
15 Aug	??	NE 124	24 Sep	2 Oct	No
		NE 125	27 Sep	6 Oct	??
		NE 126	1 Oct	9 Oct	??
		NE 127	4 Oct	12 Oct	No
12 Aug 20 Aug 25 Aug	Sibajak?? 17 Aug – 1 Oct [Pr] Meerkerk 24 Aug – 1 Oct Bhutan 29 Aug – 3 Oct	NE 128	8 Oct	17 Oct	Yes
19 Aug 28 Aug	Ingria 23 Aug – 4 Oct Clan Murray 2 Sep – 6 Oct	NE 129	11 Oct	19 Oct	Yes
5 Sep	Rowallan Castle 8 Sep – 8 Oct	NE 130	15 Oct	23 Oct	Yes
		NE 131	18 Oct	26 Oct	??
		NE 132	22 Oct	30 Oct	No
		NE 133	25 Oct	2 Nov	No
8 Sep	Nanking 12 Sep – 3 Oct (Freetown) – ??	NE 134	29 Oct	6 Nov	??
		NE 135	1 Nov	11 Nov	??
17 Sep 22 Sep	Clan Farquar 21 Sep – 30 Oct Sarpedon 29 Sep – 30 Oct	NE 136	5 Nov	13 Nov	Yes
24 Sep	Clan Lamont 29 Sep – 4 Nov	NE 137	8 Nov	16 Nov	??
19 Sep	Empire Governor 23 Sep – 8 Nov	NE 138	12 Nov	22 Nov	??
-	-	NE 139	15 Nov	23 Nov	No
12 Sep 29 Sep 4 Oct	Tisnaren 4 Oct – 14 Nov Erria 3 Oct – 12 Nov In CT by 16 th November	NE 140	19 Nov	28 Nov	Yes
		NE 141	22 Nov	1 Dec	??
1 Oct	Arrived in CT between 22 nd November and 2 nd December	NE 143 – NE 145			??

Mail sent on the London dispatch of 1st October is discussed in Chapter 11.

A cover postmarked in Cornwall on 19th June 1941 with a Karachi censor mark and backstamped in Rajkot, between Karachi and Bombay, 50 days later on 9th August would likely be sent on the *Sagaing* that left UK on 24th June and arrived in Cape Town on 25th July and then flown from Durban to Karachi on *NE 108* on 30th July – 5th August. Covers to Batavia postmarked in Manchester on 17th and 18th June have ‘*Censuur*’ marks dated 13th August, the day after *NE 109* arrived in Batavia. They may have been held up by being censored in the UK and so went on the *Ceramic* that left UK on 28th June and arrived in Cape Town on 27th July.

A cover postmarked in Carlisle on 21st July 1941 with a Karachi censor mark and redirected in the North West Frontier on 25th September would likely be sent on the *Empire Comet* that left UK on 29th July and arrived in Cape Town on 30th August. Then flown from Durban to Karachi on *NE 119* on 6th – 16th September. A cover postmarked in Surrey on 18th August and addressed to India was backstamped on arrival in Kohal, North West Frontier on 19th October. Likely sent to Cape Town on the *Ingria* and flown on *NE 129* that arrived in Karachi on 16th October.

A cover addressed to Bombay, postmarked in Mombasa on 23rd October 1941 and backstamped on 29th October would have been flown on *NE 132* from Mombasa to Karachi on 23rd – 27th October.

The cover in Figure 10.2 was postmarked in Kirkwall in Scotland on 12th September 1941 and was redirected at a military camp near Wellington in New Zealand on 20th November. The London

dispatch of 17th September was sent on the Clan Farquar and connected in Durban on 5th November with *NE 136* which arrived in Sydney on 17th November. A trans Tasman flight was scheduled for 18th November which fits with the redirection date of 20th November.



Figure 10.2: Postmarked UK 12th September 1941, redirected New Zealand 20th November.

A cover to Ootacamund in South India and postmarked in Bedford on 26th September has an Ootacamund receiver on 3rd December. That indicates that at least some of the mail on the *Erria* was sent on *NE 141*. The registered cover in Figure 10.3 is postmarked in Yorkshire on 1st October and has a faint Melbourne backstamp on 2nd December. It would be sent on the London dispatch of 4th October and flown Durban – Darwin on *NE 140* on 19th – 30th November and then by *Guinea Airways* to Adelaide and *ANA* to Melbourne. Proud has not allocated a ship to this dispatch, but it must have arrived in Cape Town by 16th November. This is the last dispatch from the UK that arrived in Singapore before Pearl Harbor.

The *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* has very few November 1941 issues on the Singapore newspaper website and the publishing of mail notices ceased once Japan entered the war.

The next reported arrival of a ship in Cape Town was not until 7th December and so is dealt with in the next chapter.

10.5 Lost Mails

The Post Office Circular of 17th September 1941 reported that the *Horseshoe* dispatch of 25th July was lost due to enemy action. This was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 19th September.

Proud list this mail as being sent on the *Mount Holmes* on 26th July, but I cannot find any reference to such a ship. Likely misprint for *Mount Helmos* which left Liverpool for Trinidad in *Convoy ON 3* on 31st July and safely arrived in Cape Town on 18th September.

The only ship for Cape Town that was sunk around this time was the *Saugor* which was sunk on 27th August by a U-boat. It sailed on *OS 4* which left Liverpool on 23rd August

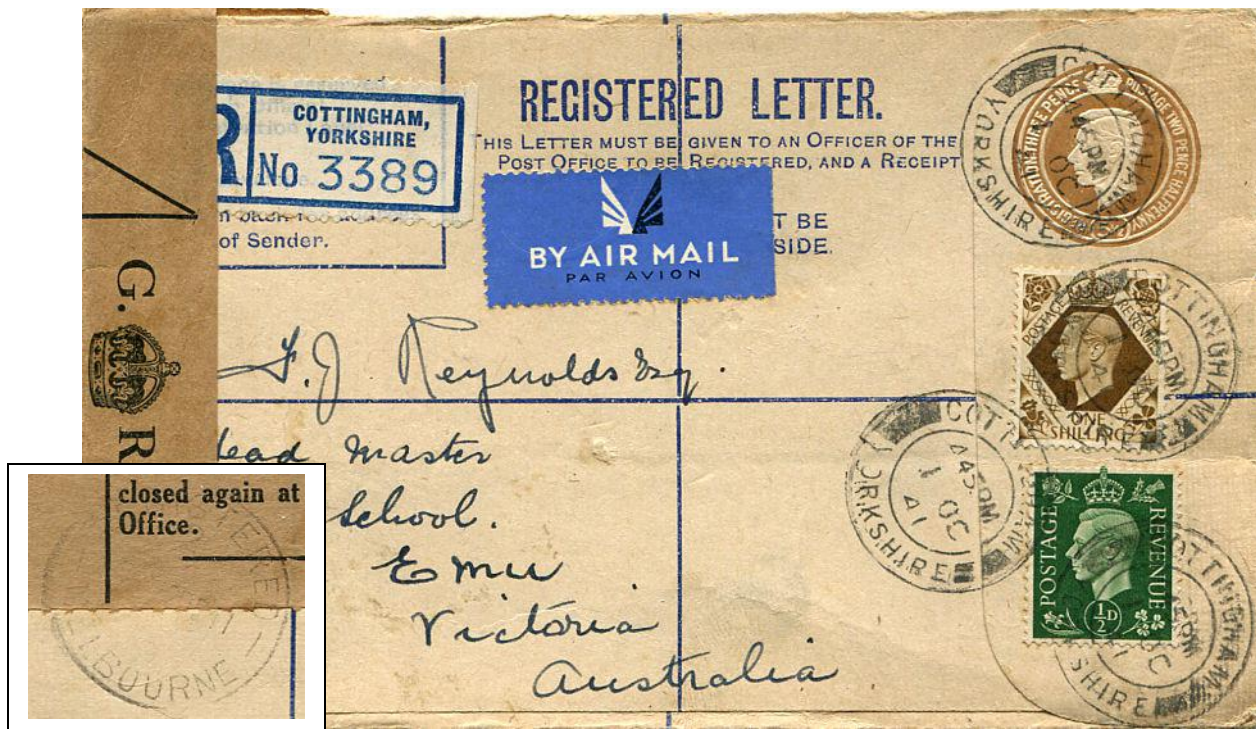


Figure 10.3: Postmarked UK 1st October 1941, arrived Melbourne 2nd December, flown on NE 140.

10.6 Dates for Auckland – Sydney – Durban – London

The Straits Times and *The Singapore Free Press* show delivery dates in London together with the date at which the air mail closed in Singapore which allows the flight number to be determined. Dates are only given by the Singapore press for flights WS 105 – 126 + WS 131 [SN]. As in Chapter 8, the following table uses this data in conjunction with flight times, example covers and information from Convoyweb [CW] and Proud [Pr] to allocate possible mail ships for each London delivery date. An asterisk indicates a ship that does not appear in Proud's list. It must be emphasised that the allocation is only conjecture.

Flights from Sydney 24 th July – 27 th November, 1941					
Trans-Tasman	Flight No	Leave Sydney	Arrive Durban	Ship: Cape Town – UK	London Delivery
23 Jul	WS 107	24 Jul	8 Aug	*City of Capetown 12 th Aug – 11 th Sep (Avonmouth)	13 Sep
-	WS 108	28 Jul	10 Aug		
-	WS 109	31 Jul	13 Aug	?? 15 th Aug – 12 th Sep	12 Sep
1 Aug	WS 110	4 Aug	20 Aug	?? 25 th Aug – 24 th Sep	25 Sep
6 Aug	WS 111	7 Aug	21 Aug		
-	WS 112	11 Aug	25 Aug	City of Wellington 3 rd Sep – 26 th Oct	31 Oct
13 Aug	WS 113	14 Aug	27 Aug		
-	WS 114	18 Aug	3 Sep	?? 11 th Sep – 27 th Oct	28 Oct
-	WS 115	21 Aug	4 Sep		
21 Aug	WS 116	25 Aug	8 Sep	*Llangibby Castle 12 th Sep – 22 nd Oct (Clyde)	26 Oct
-	WS 117	28 Aug	10 Sep	?? 19 th Sep – 23 rd Oct	27 Oct
28 Aug	WS 118	1 Sep	14 Sep		
1 Sep	WS 119	4 Sep	18 Sep	??	23 Oct
4 Sep	WS 120	8 Sep	21 Sep	*Arundel Castle 28 th Sep – 23 rd Oct (Clyde)	30 Oct
-	WS 121	11 Sep	25 Sep		
11 Sep	WS 122	15 Sep	1 Oct	*Rochester Castle 7 th Oct – 3 rd Nov	6 Nov
14,17 Sep	WS 123	18 Sep	2 Oct		

-	WS 124	22 Sep	5 Oct	*Clan MacWhirter 16 th Oct – 28 th Nov (Oban)	2 Dec
-	XWS124	23 Sep	8 Oct		
24 Sep	WS 125	25 Sep	9 Oct		
-	WS 126	29 Sep	12 Oct		
30 Sep	WS 127	2 Oct	16 Oct	*City of Newcastle 30 th Oct – 10 th Dec (Oban)	Not listed By 15 Dec
-	WS 128	6 Oct	20 Oct		
-	WS 129	9 Oct	23 Oct		
12 Oct	WS 130	13 Oct	26 Oct		
-	WS 131	16 Oct	29 Oct	*Britannic 2 nd – 29 th Nov	3 Dec
	WS 132	20 Oct	2 Nov	Clan McInnes 9 th Nov – 28 th Dec	Not listed
22 Oct	WS 133	23 Oct	5 Nov		
25 Oct	WS 134	27 Oct	10 Nov		
	WS 135	30 Oct	12 Nov		
	WS 136	3 Nov	16 Nov		
	WS 137	6 Nov	19 Nov		
9 Nov	WS 138	10 Nov	25 Nov		
12 Nov	WS 139	13 Nov	27 Nov		
	WS 140	17 Nov	1 Dec		
	WS 141	20 Nov	4 Dec		
20 Nov	WS 142	24 Nov	7 Dec	? *Mooltan 10 th Dec – 10 th Jan	Not listed By 26 Jan
26 Nov	WS 143	27 Nov	9 Dec	? *Stratheden 15 th Dec – 19 th Jan (Clyde)	

Different reports [SN] state that the mail on *WS 124* arrived on 6th November and on 2nd December. As it is unlikely to have made the connection with the *Rochester Castle*, it is in the table as arriving on 2nd December.

A cover postmarked in Ootacamund, India on 20th July was redirected in Bournemouth on 30th September. That fits with the dates for *WS 105*. A cover with an APO postmarked on 24th July and with Kenya Uganda and Tanganyika stamps has a London redirection datestamp on 29th September. It would either have been flown on *WS 104* which left Kisumu on 26th July or on *WS 105* which left on 29th July. Another cover postmarked in India on 29th July has an arrival date in Sussex of 15th September in manuscript on the front. *WS 107* left Karachi on 31st July and *NE 108* on 4th August. Both arrived in the UK on the same ship whose mail was delivered in London on 13th September.

The cover in Figure 10.4 is postmarked in Wanganui on 6 August 1941 and was opened there by the censor. (Earlier than the earliest time shown in [SL] for censor number 150.) In April 1941, censor offices in Hamilton, Invercargill, Napier, Nelson, New Plymouth, Palmerston North and Wanganui had been added to the original four offices in Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington [SL].) It was likely flown trans-Tasman on 13th August and then on *WS 113* from Sydney to Durban on 14th – 27th August. That mail was delivered in London on 31st October [SN].

A cover postmarked in Melbourne on 18th September was redirected in the UK on 7th November and so was presumably flown on *WS 123*.

The registered cover in Figure 10.5 is postmarked in Calcutta on 10th October and was redirected in Surrey on 15th December while a cover postmarked Ipoh in Perak, Malaya on 13th October was redirected in Cornwall on the same date. *WS 128* left Calcutta on 13th October and *WS 130* passed through Malaya on 17th October and so may have carried these covers. The mail from *WS 131* was delivered in London on 3rd December, significantly earlier than the *WS 128* and *WS 130* mail, and so was sent on a faster ship from Cape Town.



Figure 10.4: New Zealand – UK, August 1941



Figure 10.5: Calcutta – UK, 10th October 1941, redirected in UK on 15th December

The cover in Figure 10.6 is postmarked in Bombay on 23rd October and is addressed to Istanbul. It was opened by the censor in Bombay and has a Baghdad transit mark on 8th November. Flight *WS 135* left Karachi on 6th November and passed through Lake Habbaniya one day later. That suggests a significant delay at some stage, perhaps by the censors in Bombay. From Baghdad it would be sent on the *Taurus Express* rail service to Istanbul, but there is no indication of when it arrived.



Figure 10.6: Bombay – Istanbul, postmarked 23rd October 1941, flown to Baghdad and then by train

The registered cover in Figure 10.7 is postmarked in Allahabad on 26th November 1941, opened by the censors in Karachi and was redirected in the UK on 26th January 1942. *WS 141* passed through Allahabad on 26th November and *WS 142* on 30th November and so both are candidates. As it was dealt with by the censors in Karachi there is the possibility that it was not flown from Karachi on the same service as the one in which it arrived. Hence it could have been flown from Karachi on *WS 141*, *WS 142* or *WS 143* which arrived in Durban on 4th, 7th and 9th December respectively. The ship from Cape Town is not clear although the *Stratheden* is a possibility.

The last flights to complete their journey before Japan entered the war were *NE 141* and *WS 142* while *NE 142*, *WS 143* and *WS 144* were out of the danger zone and completed their flight normally.

NE 141				WS 142			
Durban	dep	22 Nov	Cambria	Sydney	dep	24 Nov	Clifton
Mozambique	o'n	22-23 Nov	Cambria	Townsville	o'n	24-25 Nov	Clifton
Port Bell	o'n	23-24 Nov	Cambria	Darwin	o'n	25-26 Nov	Clifton
Khartoum	o'n	24-25 Nov	Cambria	Sourabaya	o'n	26-27 Nov	Clifton
Cairo	arr	25 Nov	Cambria	Singapore	o'n	27-28 Nov	Clifton
Cairo	dep	27 Nov	Corio	Rangoon	o'n	28-29 Nov	Clifton
Basra	o'n	27-28 Nov	Corio	Calcutta	o'n	29-30 Nov	Clifton
Karachi	o'n	28-29 Nov	Corio	Karachi	arr	30 Nov	Clifton
Calcutta	o'n	29-30 Nov	Corio	Karachi	dep	1 Dec	Corinthian
Rangoon	o'n	30/11-1/12	Corio	Basra	o'n	1-2 Dec	Corinthian
Singapore	arr	1 Dec	Corio	Cairo	o'n	2-3 Dec	Corinthian
Singapore	dep	2 Dec	Circe	Khartoum	o'n	3-4 Dec	Corinthian
Sourabaya	o'n	2-3 Dec	Circe	Kisumu	o'n	4-5 Dec	Corinthian
Darwin	o'n	3-4 Dec	Circe	Mozambique	o'n	5-6 Dec	Corinthian
Townsville	o'n	4-5 Dec	Circe	Vaalbank	arr	6-7 Dec	Corinthian
Sydney	arr	5 Dec	Circe	Durban	arr	7 Dec	Corinthian

The cover in Figure 10.8 is postmarked in Rangoon on 28th November 1941 and is addressed to Australia. It was opened and passed by the censors in Burma and in Melbourne. It was likely flown from Rangoon on 1st December on *NE 141* and offloaded in Darwin on 3rd December before being flown by internal Australian services to Melbourne via Adelaide.



Figure 10.7: Allahabad – UK, postmarked 26th November 1941, redirected 26th January 1942



Figure 10.8: Burma - Australia, postmarked 28th November 1941

10.7 Forces Mail

The cover in Figure 10.9 is postmarked on 11th August and has a mixed franking of a 3d New Zealand and a 6d UK stamp. The *Egypt Postage Prepaid* postmark had been introduced in April 1941. The number 50 in this example indicates that it was applied at the *Base Post Office* in Ismailia [Lep]. Flight *NE III* left Cairo on 13 August and arrived in Sydney on 22nd August. However, the cover may have been flown from Lydda to Singapore by *KLM* on 14th or 18th August.

I have the scan of a cover sent by a member of the *A.I.F.* and postmarked *FPO 31* (Libya) on 11th August that was redirected in Adelaide on 26th August. It was likely flown by the *KLM* flight that

left Lydda on 18th August and arrived in Singapore on 21st August connecting with *NE 112* which left Singapore on 23rd August and arrived in Darwin on 24th August from where it would be sent on by *Guinea Airways*.



Figure 10.9: NZEF to New Zealand, August 1941



Figure 10.10: NZEF to New Zealand, September 1941

The cover in Figure 10.10 was postmarked in Egypt on 4th September 1941 and is backstamped in Waipaoa in New Zealand on 21st September 1941. It may have been flown on *NE 118* which left Cairo on 7th September and arrived in Sydney on 15th September, but is more likely to have been flown by *KLM* on flight *LB 71* on 8th September. It arrived in Singapore on 11th September and the cover would then have joined *NE 118* which left Singapore on 12th September [AH]. It would then have been flown trans-Tasman on 18th September.

10.8 Air Mail Letter Cards

Air Mail Letter Cards were introduced in early 1941 for mail between forces in the Middle East and the UK. They were much lighter than ordinary air mail letters. From 5th July 1941, they became available for mail between the Middle East and New Zealand. The postage rate was 3d and was payable in New Zealand stamps [Sta].

The letter card in Figure 10.11 is postmarked *Egypt 42 Postage Prepaid* on 8 October 1941. It may have been flown from Cairo on *NE 128* on 12th October arriving in Sydney on 21st October or, more likely, to Singapore by *KLM*. As the paper was very thin, it had an overlay so that it could not be read from the other side. The early letter cards, like this one, had a tartan overlay.



Figure 10.11: Air Mail Letter Card from NZEF to New Zealand, October 1941

10.9 KLM/KNILM Operations

During this period, much of the mail from troops in the Middle East to Australia and New Zealand was flown by *KLM* to Singapore and then by *Qantas* from Singapore to Australia. That is likely to apply to the covers shown in Figures 10.9 – 10.11. There was a *KLM/KNILM* service from Singapore, but the Australian authorities were against this being used for mail from Singapore to Australia.

Mail originating in the Dutch East Indies was flown to Australia by *KNILM*. An example is shown in Figure 10.12. It is postmarked Soerabaja on 25th October 1941 and was opened by the censors

both there and on arrival in Christchurch (censor no 60). The Soerabaja censor tape has a censor mark on both the front and back that is dated 27th October. There was a *KNILM* flight from Sourabaya (Soerabaja) to Sydney on 27th – 29th October and a trans-Tasman flight on 30th October. It must have been flown by these flights and then Auckland – Christchurch on 31st October if the manuscript on the back stating that it was received on 1st November is correct. The franking is 38c. According to Boyle [Boy], the air fee to Australia was 10c per 5g + 15c surface. The extra postage may have been for the trans-Tasman and/or the internal New Zealand flight.



Figure 10.12: Sourabaya to Sydney by *KNILM* on 27th – 29th October then flown trans-Tasman and Auckland – Christchurch

The cover in Figure 10.13 is postmarked in Sabang on 30th September 1941 and is addressed to Scotland. It has a dated *Censuur* mark on 10th October and so was likely first sent to Batavia to be censored (as it was written in Norwegian) and flown from there by *KLM*, likely on 12th October. That flight arrived in Lydda on 16th October. It would then be flown from Tiberias to Durban by *BOAC* on *WS 129* or *WS 130* on 19th – 23rd or 22nd – 26th October.

That mail had arrived in Britain by the middle of December. This cover is addressed to a lieutenant in the Norwegian Forces, c/o an address in Ayrshire. However, it is backstamped in Peterhead on 28th December and ‘Norwegian Forces’ has been scored out. A possible scenario is that, after being delayed by being censored in the UK, it was sent to Peterhead as the *Royal Norwegian Navy Boat Unit* was based there. (Its work in carrying British secret agents to and from the Norwegian coast was classified until the 1980s.) Only then was it sent to the Ayrshire address.



Figure 10.13: Sabang to Scotland, posted on 30th September 1941, transit mark in Peterhead on 28th December.

10.10 UK – Malta – Cairo

On 12th October 1941, *BOAC* started a service from Poole to Cairo through the Mediterranean. The first flight *EE1* was on 12th – 17th October by the *S30* flying boat *Clare* and the route was Poole – Foynes – Lisbon – Gibraltar – Malta – Cairo. The return *EW1* was on 20th – 29th October. Arrivals at Malta were before dawn and departures after dusk.

Early subsequent Poole – Cairo flights were on 26th – 31st October, 29th October – 5th November, 31st October – 5th November, 4th – 8th November, 28th - ?? December and return flights on 5th – 11th November, 9th – 18th November 14th – 18th November, 18th – 23rd November. No commercial mail was carried by these flights.