

Chapter 11: Reserve Routes 1 & 2: December 1941

11.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the changes that resulted from Japan entering World War II on 7th – 8th December 1941. It contains tables that show the overnight stops on the different routes during December 1941.

Reserve routes had been prepared to deal with the threat from Japan. The original route was Sydney, Brisbane, Gladstone, Townsville, Karumba, Groote Eylandt, Darwin, Koepang, Bima, Sourabaya, Batavia, Klabat Bay, Singapore, Penang, Koh Samui, Bangkok, Rangoon, Akyab, Calcutta, Allahabad, Gwalior, Raj Samand, Karachi, Jiwani, Dubai, Bahrein, Basra, Habbaniya, Tiberias, Cairo, Luxor, Wadi Halfa, Khartoum, Malakal, Juba, Port Bell, Kisumu, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, Lindi, Mozambique, Beira, Lourenco Marques, Durban [Win]. On the Sydney – Durban service there was also a stop at Vaalbank (Johannesburg).

Two reserve routes between Rangoon and Batavia were prepared by *BOAC/QEA* to avoid Bangkok with a third route that also avoided Malaya. Japan entered World War II on 7th – 8th December and Bangkok was occupied on 8th December. The speed of the Japanese advance meant that *Reserve Route 1* which was: Rangoon – Mergui (an island off Burma) – Penang – Singapore – Batavia was only used once.

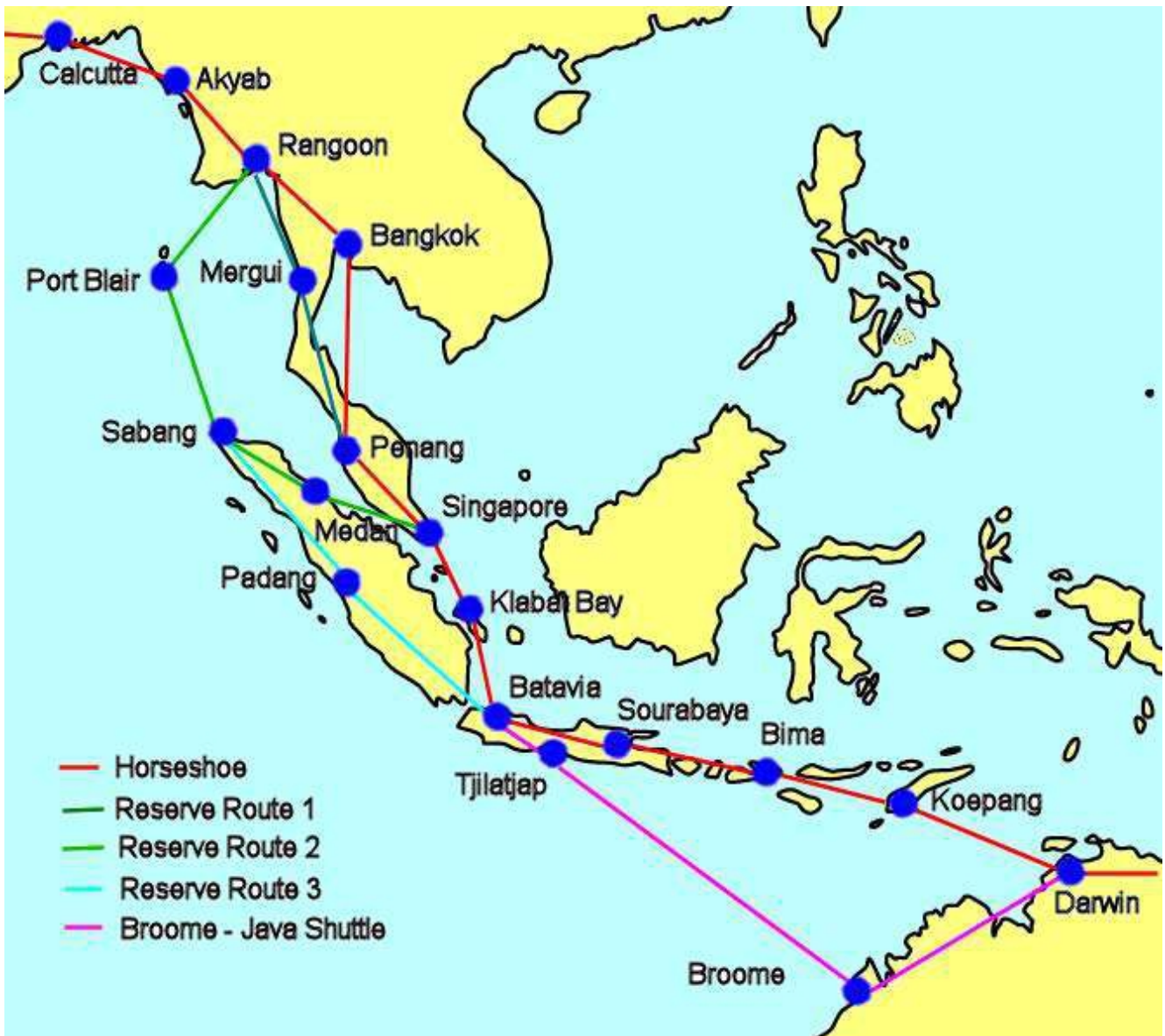
Reserve Route 2 was: Rangoon – Port Blair (in the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal) – Sabang (Sumatra) – Belawan (the port of Medan, Sumatra) – Singapore – Batavia [AH, Pr, Win]. This route had longer stages and so the payload of each flying boat was reduced from 3,800 kg to 2,500 kg [Win].

Reserve Route 3, in which Malaya was also avoided, was used after 30 December. It was Rangoon – Port Blair – Sabang – Padang (West Sumatra) – Batavia [HM].

From October 1941, *Qantas Empire Airways (QEA)* flew the Singapore – Karachi stages in addition to the Sydney – Singapore stages as *BOAC* was short of pilots [HM]. *KLM* flew ‘Troop’ mail between the Middle East and Singapore from late May 1941 [AH]. The *KLM* route was: Lydda, Baghdad, Basra, Bahrein, Karachi, Jodhpur, Allahabad, Calcutta, Rangoon, Bangkok, Penang, Medan, Singapore, Palembang, Batavia, Bandung [Win]. Although *KNILM* had a weekly service between Batavia and Sydney, the ‘Troop’ mail was carried between Singapore and Sydney by *Qantas*. It was not until the middle of December 1941 that *KLM/KNILM* could carry ‘Troop’ mail all the way to Australia [Fys].

KLM set up a reserve route in December that was Rangoon – Sabang – Medan – Batavia [AH, Win].

A description of the different stages of the Japanese advances and its effect on air mail services is given by Watt. His account includes a large number of air mail covers flown in the last few weeks of the *Horseshoe* service [Wat2].



11.2 The Last Normal Services

The last flights to land in Bangkok were *NE 142* on 4th December and *WS 144* on 5th December. The next two flights were due in Bangkok on 8th December, the day that it was occupied by the Japanese army.

In this chapter, the tables are organised so that services in opposite directions are paired off to show similar dates for the stages through Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies.

NE 141

Durban	dep	22 Nov	Cambria
Mozambique	o'n	22-23 Nov	Cambria
Port Bell	o'n	23-24 Nov	Cambria
Khartoum	o'n	24-25 Nov	Cambria
Cairo	arr	25 Nov	Cambria
Cairo	dep	27 Nov	Corio
Basra	o'n	27-28 Nov	Corio

WS 143

Sydney	dep	27 Nov	Cleopatra
Townsville	o'n	27-28 Nov	Cleopatra
Darwin	o'n	28-29 Nov	Cleopatra
Sourabaya	o'n	29-30 Nov	Cleopatra
Singapore	o'n	30/11-1/12	Cleopatra
Rangoon	o'n	1-2 Dec	Cleopatra
Calcutta	o'n	2-3 Dec	Cleopatra

Karachi	o'n	28-29 Nov	Corio	Karachi	arr	3 Dec	Cleopatra
Calcutta	o'n	29-30 Nov	Corio	Karachi	dep	4 Dec	Clifton
Rangoon	o'n	30/11-1/12	Corio	Basra	o'n	4-5 Dec	Clifton
Singapore	arr	1 Dec	Corio	Cairo	o'n	5-6 Dec	Clifton
Singapore	dep	2 Dec	Circe	Khartoum	o'n	6-7 Dec	Clifton
Sourabaya	o'n	2-3 Dec	Circe	Kisumu	o'n	7-8 Dec	Clifton
Darwin	o'n	3-4 Dec	Circe	Mozambique	o'n	8-9 Dec	Clifton
Townsville	o'n	4-5 Dec	Circe	Durban	arr	9 Dec	Clifton
Sydney	arr	5 Dec	Circe				

NE 142

Durban	dep	26 Nov	Castor
Mozambique	o'n	26-27 Nov	Castor
Port Bell	o'n	27-28 Nov	Castor
Khartoum	o'n	28-29 Nov	Castor
Cairo	arr	29 Nov	Castor
Cairo	dep	30 Nov	Cambria
Basra	o'n	30/11-1/12	Cambria
Karachi	o'n	1-2 Dec	Cambria
Calcutta	o'n	2-3 Dec	Cambria
Rangoon	o'n	3-4 Dec	Cambria
Singapore	arr	4 Dec	Cambria
Singapore	dep	5 Dec	Corio
Sourabaya	o'n	5-6 Dec	Corio
Darwin	o'n	6-7 Dec	Corio
Townsville	o'n	7-8 Dec	Corio
Sydney	arr	8 Dec	Corio

WS 144

Sydney	dep	1 Dec	Coorong
Townsville	o'n	1-2 Dec	Coorong
Darwin	o'n	2-3 Dec	Coorong
Sourabaya	o'n	3-4 Dec	Coorong
Singapore	o'n	4-5 Dec	Coorong
Rangoon	o'n	5-6 Dec	Coorong
Calcutta	o'n	6-7 Dec	Coorong
Karachi	arr	7 Dec	Coorong
Karachi	dep	8 Dec	Cleopatra
Basra	o'n	8-9 Dec	Cleopatra
Cairo	o'n	9-10 Dec	Cleopatra
Khartoum	o'n	10-11 Dec	Cleopatra
Kisumu	o'n	11-12 Dec	Cleopatra
Mozambique	o'n	12-13 Dec	Cleopatra
Vaalbank	o'n	13-14 Dec	Cleopatra
Durban	arr	14 Dec	Cleopatra

In addition to the *BOAC/QEA* service, *KLM* had been flying 'Troop' mail between Lydda or Amman and Singapore since May/June 1941 and continued to do so until early December. The flight that left Lydda on 4th December, was overnight in Singapore on 7th – 8th December and arrived in Bandung on 8th December while the flight that left Bandung on 4th December was overnight in Medan on 4th – 5th and arrived in Lydda on 8th December [AH].

After that *KLM* used a reserve route although Aitink and Hovenkamp [AH] show the next service in each direction also going by the normal route with the service from Bandung on 7th December landing in Bangkok on 8th December and the service from Lydda on 8th December landing in Bangkok on 11th December, but due to the invasion of Siam this is not possible.

11.3 Reserve Route 1 via Mergui

Reserve Route 1 was Rangoon – Mergui (an island off Burma) – Penang – Singapore – Batavia. According to [AH], *Reserve Route 1* was operated from 29th November (*NE 143*) and *Reserve Route 2* from 3rd December (*NE 144*) and these dates appear to apply to departures from Durban. However, from the information below, it is clear that the actual decisions were made later while these services were in progress.

The *Director General* and the *Indian Regional Director* of *BOAC* were in Bangkok on 8th December expecting to be flown out that day on service *NE 143*. If they expected *NE 143* in Bangkok on 8th December, that suggests that the decision to divert the flying boats from Bangkok was made very late. The attack on Pearl Harbor was on 7th December 1941 (Hawaii time) which was 8th December west of the International Date Line and the Japanese invaded Siam early in the morning of 8th December. Bangkok was occupied later that day and so could no longer be used as a stop between Rangoon and Singapore.

According to Bennett Bremner [Ben], Captain Adair of the *Castor* on *NE 143* was woken in Rangoon at 11 pm on 7th December and told to fly via Mergui and Penang (*Reserve Route 1*) instead of via Bangkok. On the morning of 8th December, *Castor* left Rangoon for Mergui. After leaving Mergui, Captain Adair was informed that there was an air raid at Penang and so he returned to Mergui and flew from there back to Rangoon [Ben]. Service *NE 143* was resumed on 9th December when *Ceres* (which had a longer range) flew from Rangoon to Sabang via Port Blair while *Castor* flew *WS 145* from Rangoon to Calcutta.

Ceres, which was flying *WS 145*, left Singapore on the morning of 8th December and had also been diverted to *Reserve Route 1*. Having already made the stop at Penang, *Ceres* landed at Mergui just before *Castor* [Pr]. *WS 145* was therefore the only service that completed *Reserve Route 1* while *NE 143* attempted *Reserve Route 1* and was the first service to complete *Reserve Route 2*.

The cover in Figure 11.1 is postmarked in Kuala Lumpur on 5th December 1941 and has a Calcutta transit mark on 10th December. It would be flown on 8th – 9th December from Penang to Calcutta on *WS 145*, the only flight on *Reserve Route 1* and the last service from Penang [Cla8].



Figure 11.1: Tamil Letter flown Penang – Calcutta on *WS 145*

NE 143			WS 145				
Durban	dep	29 Nov	Corinna	Sydney	dep	4 Dec	Ceres
Mozambique	o'n	29-30 Nov	Corinna	Townsville	o'n	4-5 Dec	Ceres
Port Bell	o'n	30/11-1/12	Corinna	Darwin	o'n	5-6 Dec	Ceres
Khartoum	o'n	1-2 Dec	Corinna	Sourabaya	o'n	6-7 Dec	Ceres
Cairo	arr	2 Dec	Corinna	Singapore	o'n	7-8 Dec	Ceres
Cairo	dep	3 Dec	Castor	Penang		8 Dec	Ceres
Habbaniya	o'n	3-4 Dec	Castor	Mergui		8 Dec	Ceres
Basra	o'n	4-5 Dec	Castor	Rangoon	arr	8 Dec	Ceres
Karachi	o'n	5-6 Dec	Castor	Rangoon	dep	9 Dec	Castor
Calcutta	o'n	6-7 Dec	Castor	Calcutta	o'n	9-10 Dec	Castor

Rangoon	o'n	7-8 Dec	Castor	Karachi	o'n	10-11 Dec	Castor
Mergui		8 Dec	Castor	Basra	o'n	11-12 Dec	Castor
Rangoon	rtn	8 Dec	Castor	Cairo	o'n	12-13 Dec	Castor
Rangoon	dep	9 Dec	Ceres	Khartoum	o'n	13-14 Dec	Castor
Port Blair		9 Dec	Ceres	Kisumu	o'n	14-15 Dec	Castor
Sabang	o'n	9-10 Dec	Ceres	Mozambique	o'n	15-16 Dec	Castor
Singapore	arr	10 Dec	Ceres	Vaalbank	o'n	16-17 Dec	Castor
Singapore	dep	10 Dec	Cambria	Durban	arr	17 Dec	Castor
Batavia	o'n	10-11	Cambria				
Sourabaya	o'n	11-12 Dec	Cambria				
Darwin	o'n	12-13 Dec	Cambria				
Townsville	o'n	13-14 Dec	Cambria				
Sydney	arr	14 Dec	Cambria				

Only service to complete Reserve Route 1.

A cover postmarked in London on 26th September and addressed to Bangkok has a 'No Service / Return to Sender' handstamp and a Singapore censor mark. It was returned to the UK and has a London arrival mark on 4th March 1942. That suggests that it was sent on one of the Reserve Routes, *NE 143* onwards, and so did not leave Durban until 29th November or later. The London dispatch of 29th September had arrived in Durban on the *Erria* [Pr] on 12th November and so that mail should have been delivered in Bangkok in late November. As the cover was censored in the UK, it may have been delayed until the dispatch of 1st October and Proud does not list the ship that carried that mail. The cover in Figure 10.3 is postmarked in the UK on 1st October and had arrived in Melbourne by 2nd December and so the London dispatch of 4th October was flown on *NE 140*.

Hence the cover arrived in Cape Town after 22nd November and by 3rd December as mail on *NE 142* would have been delivered in Bangkok while mail on *NE 146* left Durban on 10th December after Bangkok had been occupied by the Japanese and so it was likely that mail for Bangkok would not have been sent. A possible ship is the *City of Barcelona* that left Liverpool on 13th October and arrived in Cape Town on 25th November.

KLM also introduced a *Reserve Route* for their service that was Rangoon – Sabang – Medan – Batavia and there was no longer a stop at Singapore [AH] although they were to introduce a shuttle service between Batavia and Singapore [Win]. The *KLM* contract since the middle of May 1941 had been to carry 'Troop' mail between the Middle East and Singapore, but with the new pressures on air mail services, this was now amended and from the middle of December *KLM/KNILM* were able to carry air mail all the way to Australia [Fys].

11.4 Reserve Route 2 via Port Blair

Reserve Route 2 was Rangoon – Port Blair (in the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal) – Sabang (Sumatra) – Belawan (the port of Medan, Sumatra) – Singapore – Batavia. The first service to complete *Reserve Route 2* was *NE 143*, after it had to turn back from its attempt at *Reserve Route 1*.

The Australian public were informed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 15th and 16th December [Tro] that air mail to the Middle East and the service between Britain and Australia and New Zealand was still available and would go by a new secret route as:

“Many months ago ... Surveys had already been made, and refuelling and mooring facilities for big flying boats had been prepared”.

NE 144

Durban	dep	3 Dec	Caledonia
Mozambique	o'n	3-4 Dec	Caledonia
Port Bell	o'n	4-5 Dec	Caledonia
Khartoum	o'n	5-6 Dec	Caledonia
Cairo	arr	6 Dec	Caledonia
Cairo	dep	8 Dec	Corinna
Basra	o'n	8-9 Dec	Corinna
Karachi	o'n	9-10 Dec	Corinna
Calcutta	o'n	10-11 Dec	Corinna
Rangoon	o'n	11-12 Dec	Corinna
Sabang	o'n	12-13 Dec	Corinna
Singapore	o'n	13-14 Dec	Corinna
Sourabaya	o'n	14-15 Dec	Corinna
Darwin	o'n	15-16 Dec	Corinna
Townsville	o'n	16-17 Dec	Corinna
Sydney	arr	17 Dec	Corinna

WS 146

Sydney	dep	8 Dec	Corsair
Townsville	o'n	8-9 Dec	Corsair
Darwin	o'n	9-10 Dec	Corsair
Sourabaya	o'n	10-11 Dec	Corsair
Singapore	arr	11 Dec	Corsair
Singapore	dep	12 Dec	Ceres
Rangoon	o'n	12-13 Dec	Ceres
Calcutta	o'n	13-14 Dec	Ceres
Karachi	arr	14 Dec	Ceres
Karachi	dep	15 Dec	Coorong
Basra	o'n	15-16 Dec	Coorong
Cairo	arr	16 Dec	Coorong
Cairo	dep	17 Dec	Cooee
Khartoum	o'n	17-18 Dec	Cooee
Kisumu	o'n	18-19 Dec	Cooee
Mozambique	o'n	19-20 Dec	Cooee
Vaalbank	o'n	20-21 Dec	Cooee
Durban	arr	21 Dec	Coee

After arriving in Singapore on *WS 146* on 11th December, *Corsair* flew on an *RAF* charter flight to Sabang on the 12th, to Belawan (near Medan) and back to Sabang on the 13th before returning to Singapore on the 14th.



Figure 11.2: New Zealand – Egypt, flown on *WS 146*

The *Sydney Morning Herald* on 19th December reported on the size of the Christmas mail (2,500,000 letters and 600,000 parcels) delivered to the *A.I.F.* (*Australian Imperial Force*) in the Middle East [Tro]. It reported on 1st January that members of the *R.A.A.F.* in the UK were less fortunate and although headquarters staff had received mail posted around 15th October, operational units would not receive that mail for several weeks as it first went to an *RAF* depot in the West of England for sorting. A report in *The West Australian* on 10th January reported that air mail letters posted on 10th December were delivered in Cairo on 2nd January.

A censored cover posted in Christchurch on 1st December 1941 and addressed to a sergeant in the NZ forces in Egypt is backstamped in Egypt on 18 December and is shown in Figure 11.2. There were trans Tasman flights on 3rd and 6th December [Pr]. As it would have been delayed by being opened by the censors in Christchurch (no 135), it was most likely flown to Sydney on 6th December and then Sydney – Cairo on *WS 146* on 8th – 16th December. The cover has the address scored out and has been handstamped ‘*Prisoner of War*’.

A cover postmarked in Victoria, Australia on 6th December 1941 and addressed to a Pilot Officer in the *R.A.A.F.* in the UK would likely be flown on *WS 146* which arrived in Durban on 21st December. It has a rubber handstamp on the front dated 3rd February 1942 suggesting that it had arrived in the UK by that date. It was redirected to Cleave, Cornwall and has an *R.A.A.F. Base F.O. No 4* redirection mark on 18th February. The *Strathaird* left Cape Town on 24th December and arrived in Liverpool on 28th January. The subsequent delays fit with the report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 1st January.

NE 145

Durban	dep	6 Dec	Camilla	
Mozambique	o'n	6-7 Dec	Camilla	
Port Bell	o'n	7-8 Dec	Camilla	
Khartoum	o'n	8-9 Dec	Camilla	
Cairo	arr	9 Dec	Camilla	
Cairo	dep	11 Dec	Caledonia	
Tiberias	o'n	11-12 Dec	Caledonia	
Basra	o'n	12-13 Dec	Caledonia	
Karachi	o'n	13-14 Dec	Caledonia	
Calcutta	o'n	14-15 Dec	Caledonia	
Rangoon	o'n	15-16 Dec	Caledonia	
Port Blair	o'n	16-18 Dec	Caledonia	W
Singapore	o'n	18-19 Dec	Caledonia	
Sourabaya	o'n	19-21 Dec	Caledonia	MT
Darwin	o'n	21-22 Dec	Caledonia	
Townsville	o'n	22-23 Dec	Caledonia	
Sydney	arr	23 Dec	Caledonia	

WS 147

Sydney	dep	11 Dec	Circe	
Townsville	o'n	11-12 Dec	Circe	
Darwin	o'n	12-13 Dec	Circe	
Sourabaya	o'n	13-14 Dec	Circe	
Singapore	o'n	14-15 Dec	Circe	
Sabang	o'n	15-16 Dec	Circe	
Rangoon	o'n	16-17 Dec	Circe	
Calcutta	o'n	17-18 Dec	Circe	
Karachi	arr	18 Dec	Circe	
Karachi	dep	19 Dec	Ceres	
Basra	o'n	19-20 Dec	Ceres	
Cairo	arr	20 Dec	Ceres	
Cairo	dep	21 Dec	Coriolanus	
Khartoum	o'n	21-22 Dec	Coriolanus	
Kisumu	o'n	22-23 Dec	Coriolanus	
Mozambique	o'n	23-24 Dec	Coriolanus	
Durban	arr	24 Dec	Coriolanus	

NE 146

Durban	dep	10 Dec	Cooee	
Mozambique	o'n	10-11 Dec	Cooee	
Port Bell	o'n	11-12 Dec	Cooee	
Khartoum	o'n	12-13 Dec	Cooee	
Cairo	arr	13 Dec	Cooee	
Cairo	dep	14 Dec	Camilla	
Basra	o'n	14-15 Dec	Camilla	
Karachi	o'n	15-16 Dec	Camilla	
Calcutta	o'n	16-17 Dec	Camilla	
Port Blair	o'n	17-18 Dec	Camilla	
Singapore	arr	18 Dec	Camilla	
Singapore	dep	19	Corsair	
Sourabaya	o'n	19-20 Dec	Corsair	
Darwin	o'n	20-21 Dec	Corsair	
Townsville	o'n	21-22 Dec	Corsair	
Sydney	arr	22 Dec	Corsair	

WS 148

Sydney	dep	15 Dec	Corio	
Townsville	o'n	15-16 Dec	Corio	
Darwin	o'n	16-17 Dec	Corio	
Sourabaya	o'n	17-18 Dec	Corio	
Singapore	o'n	18-19 Dec	Corio	
Sabang	o'n	19-20 Dec	Corio	
Akyab	o'n	20-21 Dec	Corio	
Calcutta	o'n	21-22 Dec	Corio	
Karachi	arr	22 Dec	Corio	
Karachi	dep	23 Dec	Circe	
Basra	o'n	23-24 Dec	Circe	
Habbaniya	o'n	24-26 Dec	Circe	W
Cairo	o'n	26-27 Dec	Circe	
Khartoum	o'n	27-28 Dec	Circe	
Kisumu	o'n	28-29 Dec	Circe	
Beira?	o'n	29-30 Dec	Circe	
Durban	arr	30 Dec	Circe	

The cover in Figure 11.3 is dated 11th December and has an *Egypt 22 Postage Prepaid* postmark which had been allocated to the *No. 1 General Hospital* [Lep]. It would either be flown Lydda – Batavia on 15th – 19th December by *KLM* and 19th – 21st by *KNILM* or on *NE 146* which left Cairo on 14th December and arrived in Sydney on 22nd December. It would then be flown Sydney – Auckland on 24th December [Pr]. It was redirected in Wellington and backstamped there on 29th December.



Figure 11.3: Forces mail to New Zealand on 11th December.

Cassiopeia flew a special charter flight from Cairo to Basra on 15th December, returning on 16th December.

A cover postmarked in Johore on 16th December addressed to Prospect near Adelaide has a Received 22/12/41 in manuscript on the back. It would have been flown from Singapore on *NE 146* and offloaded in Darwin on 20th December and flown from there to Adelaide. A cover postmarked in Rangoon on 15th December 1941 was received in Salisbury, Rhodesia on 30th December. It was likely flown on *WS 148*, offloaded in Beira on 29th December and flown from there to Salisbury.

NE 147

Durban	dep	13 Dec	Cameronian
Mozambique	o'n	13-14 Dec	Cameronian
Port Bell	o'n	14-15 Dec	Cameronian
Khartoum	o'n	15-16 Dec	Cameronian
Cairo	arr	16 Dec	Cameronian
Cairo	dep	17 Dec	Coorong
Basra	o'n	17-18 Dec	Coorong
Karachi	o'n	18-19 Dec	Coorong
Calcutta	o'n	19-21 Dec	Coorong
Port Blair	o'n	21-22 Dec	Coorong
Singapore	arr	22 Dec	Coorong
Singapore	dep	23 Dec	Camilla
Batavia	o'n	23-24 Dec	Camilla
Darwin	o'n	24-25 Dec	Camilla
Townsville	o'n	25-26 Dec	Camilla
Sydney	arr	26 Dec	Camilla

WS 149

Sydney	dep	18 Dec	Cambria
Townsville	o'n	18-19 Dec	Cambria
Darwin	o'n	19-21 Dec	Cambria
Sourabaya	o'n	21-22 Dec	Cambria
Singapore	o'n	22-23 Dec	Cambria
Sabang	o'n	23-24 Dec	Cambria
Akyab	o'n	24-25 Dec	Cambria
Calcutta	o'n	25-26 Dec	Cambria
Karachi	arr	26 Dec	Cambria
Karachi	dep	27 Dec	Corio
Basra	o'n	27-28 Dec	Corio
Habbaniya	o'n	28-29 Dec	Corio
Cairo	o'n	29-30 Dec	Corio
Khartoum	o'n	30-31 Dec	Corio
Kisumu	o'n	31/12-1/1	Corio
Mozambique	o'n	1-2 Jan	Corio
L Marques	o'n	2-3 Jan	Corio
Durban	arr	3 Jan	Corio

W

11.5 Overnight stop now at Batavia with a shuttle service to Singapore

NE 148

Durban	dep	17 Dec	Clifton	
Mozambique	o'n	17-18 Dec	Clifton	
Port Bell	o'n	18-19 Dec	Clifton	
Khartoum	o'n	19-20 Dec	Clifton	
Cairo	arr	20 Dec	Clifton	
Cairo	dep	21 Dec	Cameronian	
Basra	o'n	21-23 Dec	Cameronian	MT
Karachi	o'n	23-24 Dec	Cameronian	
Calcutta	o'n	24-25 Dec	Cameronian	
Akyab	o'n	25-26 Dec	Cameronian	
Sabang	o'n	26-27 Dec	Cameronian	
Batavia	arr	27 Dec	Cameronian	
Batavia	dep	28 Dec	Coorong	
Sourabaya	o'n	28-29 Dec	Coorong	
Darwin	o'n	29-30 Dec	Coorong	
Townsville	o'n	30-31 Dec	Coorong	
Sydney	arr	31 Dec	Coorong	

WS 150

Sydney	dep	22 Dec	Corinna
Townsville	o'n	22-23 Dec	Corinna
Darwin	o'n	23-24 Dec	Corinna
Sourabaya	o'n	24-25 Dec	Corinna
Batavia	o'n	25-26 Dec	Corinna
Sabang	o'n	26-27 Dec	Corinna
Akyab	o'n	27-28 Dec	Corinna
Calcutta	o'n	28-29 Dec	Corinna
Gwalior	o'n	29-30 Dec	Corinna
Karachi	arr	30 Dec	Corinna
Karachi	dep	31 Dec	Cambria
Basra	o'n	31/12-1/1	Cambria
Cairo	o'n	1-2 Jan	Cambria
Khartoum	o'n	2-3 Jan	Cambria
Kisumu	o'n	3-4 Jan	Cambria
Mozambique	o'n	4-5 Jan	Cambria
Durban	arr	5 Jan	Cambria

From *NE 148* and *WS 150* onwards, the overnight stop was at Batavia. There was no longer a stop at Singapore on the Horseshoe Route, but there was a shuttle service between Batavia and Singapore. However in January the shuttle service was usually carried out by the aircraft from the Horseshoe route and so it appeared that a stop in Singapore was often integrated into the Horseshoe service.

The base for the stand-by flying boat was changed from Singapore to Batavia with *Coorong* moving on 25th December. It was replaced by *Cameronian* which arrived in Batavia on the 27th and did not depart until 4th January, *Ceres* was in Batavia from 4th – 6th, *Corinna* from 5th – 11th and *Castor* from 10th – 14th January. They sometimes carried out the Batavia – Singapore shuttle flights.

An *Air Mail Letter Card* from Johore to Australia has a postmark on 24th December and was backstamped in New South Wales on 2nd January 1942 and so was likely flown on the shuttle plus *NE 148*.

The connections at Cape Town with corresponding Sydney – Durban flights are shown in the table below. The ships are taken from Proud unless marked with an asterisk and the dates from Convoyweb unless otherwise stated.

Flights from Sydney 1 st – 22 nd December 1941					
Trans-Tasman	Flight No	Leave Sydney	Arrive Durban	Ship: Cape Town – UK	London Delivery
	WS 144	1 Dec	14 Dec	City of Singapore 24 th Dec – 5 th Feb '42 (Oban) [Pr]	
3 Dec	WS 145	4 Dec	17 Dec		
6 Dec	WS 146	8 Dec	21 Dec	*Strathaird 24 th Dec – 28 th Jan	By 3 rd Feb
9 Dec	WS 147	11 Dec	24 Dec	Themistocles 4 th Jan – 16 th Feb [Pr]	By 19 th Feb
	WS 148	15 Dec	30 Dec		
17 Dec	WS 149	18 Dec	3 Jan	Clan Matheson 11 th Jan – 17 th Feb (Oban)	
19 Dec	WS 150	22 Dec	5 Jan		

The cover in Figure 11.4 is postmarked in Dar es Salaam in Tanganyika on 15th December 1941 and is addressed to Karachi where it was opened by the censors and backstamped on 24th December. It was therefore flown on *NE 148* which was in Dar es Salaam on 18th December and arrived in Karachi on

23rd December. It is correctly franked with 1s 30c. From about this time, *Horseshoe* mail from Durban for destinations east of Cairo was sent to India by sea. This is described in Chapter 13.



Figure 11.4: Dar es Salaam to Karachi, 16th – 24th December 1941, flown on *NE 148*.

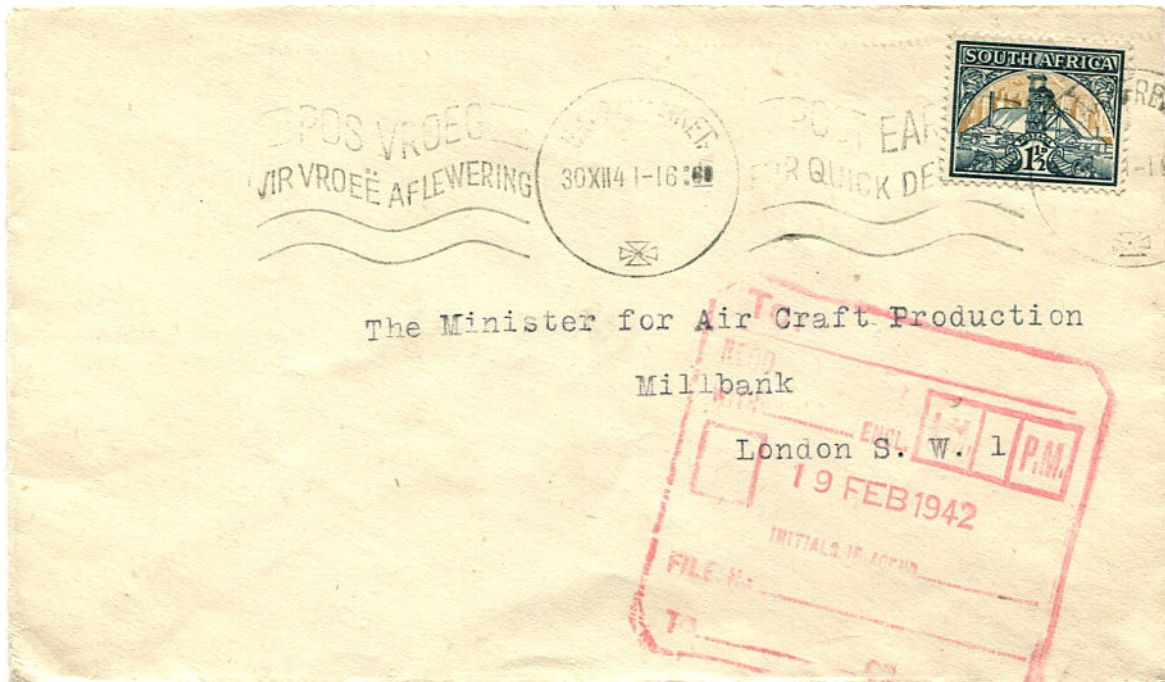


Figure 11.5: Postmarked South Africa 30th December. By sea to UK, arrival in London on 19th February.

A cover postmarked in South Africa on 30th December 1941 that was received in London on 19th February is shown in Figure 11.5. It was likely carried from Cape Town on the *Themistocles*.

11.6 Crash of *Cassiopeia*, 29th December

XNE 148

Cairo	dep	22 Dec	Cassiopeia
Basra	o'n	22-23 Dec	Cassiopeia
Karachi	o'n	23-24 Dec	Cassiopeia
Calcutta	o'n	24-25 Dec	Cassiopeia
Sabang	o'n	25-26 Dec	Cassiopeia
Batavia	o'n	26-27 Dec	Cassiopeia
Sourabaya	arr	27 Dec	Cassiopeia

According to [HM], this flight was carrying ammunition for Singapore.

XWS 150

Sourabaya	dep	27 Dec	Cassiopeia
Batavia	o'n	27-28 Dec	Cassiopeia
Singapore		28 Dec	Cassiopeia
Sabang	o'n	28-29 Dec	Cassiopeia

Cassiopeia crashed on take off from Sabang on 29 Dec.

Cassiopeia flew from Batavia to Sabang on 28th December. On take-off the next morning it hit a submerged object and sank [HM]. The crew and one passenger survived, but the other four passengers were killed [SN].

According to [HM], *Cassiopeia* was the first to use the re-fuelling facilities at Sabang although flights had been using Sabang since 9th December. The 2nd January report from the *Canberra Times* [Tro] shows how little information was given to the public at the time. It only states: "A Qantas flying boat has been lost in one of the ports of Sumatra."

The Civil Aviation Intelligence Summary of 7th January (*CAIS 134*) states that *Cassiopeia* crashed on 28th December while taking off from Sabang. It adds that the aircraft was on a flight from Singapore to India meaning that the Batavia – Sabang flight on the 28th was via Singapore. According to [Cas], *Cassiopeia* took off from Sabang on a flight from Singapore to Karachi at 23.28 GMT which could explain the *CAIS 134* date of 28th rather than 29th December (GMT rather than local time). It also states that it was carrying aircraft parts plus diplomatic mail from Batavia and was on service *XWS 150*.

11.7 KLM / KNILM operations

The *KLM* Lydda – Bandung service continued during December. According to [AH], the last flight from Lydda that stopped in Bangkok and Singapore left Lydda on 8th December and was overnight in Singapore on 11th - 12th December. It is likely that was the scheduled route, but that the *Reserve Route* described below was actually used for that flight. The *KLM Reserve Route* replaced Rangoon – Bangkok – Penang – Medan – Singapore – Palembang – Batavia with Rangoon – Sabang – Medan – Batavia. *KLM* flights on that route left Lydda on 11th, 15th, 18th, 22nd, 25th and 29th December and left Bandung on 11th, 14th, 18th, 21st and 25th December arriving at their destination four days later in each case.

Around this time, *KLM / KNILM* began flying 'Troop Mail' all the way to Australia. *KNILM* flights left Batavia on 15th, 19th, 22nd and 29th December and arrived in Sydney two days later.

The flight by the *DC3 Nandoe* that left Bandung on 28th December was attacked and destroyed on the ground at Medan later that day. It was carrying 'Troop mail'. Two covers, both in burnt condition, salvaged from the plane and addressed to Australian soldiers, are shown in [Pea]. One is postmarked

on 17th December 1941 in Melbourne and addressed to Jerusalem and has the manuscript *Delivered from burnt plane 23.1.42* while the other is postmarked in Perth on 19th December and has a receiving mark in Egypt on 11th January 1942. It would either have been flown by *KLM* from Medan on the flight that left on 6th January and arrived in Lydda on 9th January [AH] or by *WS 152* that was in Medan on 2nd January and arrived in Cairo on 7th January.

The Air Mail Letter Card in Figure 11.6 was likely flown Lydda – Batavia by *KLM* on 22nd – 26th or on 25th – 29th December and Batavia – Sydney by *KNILM* on 29th – 31st. Then flown trans-Tasman on 8th January. If flown by *BOAC* it would have been by *Reserve Route 3*.



Figure 11.6: Postmarked 21st December 1941. Likely flown by *KLM*.

An airmail cover postmarked Tebing Tingii (near Medan) in the Dutch East Indies on 22nd December and addressed to South India has a Censur datestamp on 23rd December and a Calcutta censor mark with a Calcutta datestamp on 3rd January. The *KLM* flight from Medan on 26th December, arrived in Calcutta on 27th December and so it seems quite a delay in Calcutta before it was handled. The next *KLM* flight was destroyed in Medan on 28th December and so if it was salvaged from that, it could have then been flown on *WS 151* that arrived in Calcutta on 31st December.

As a result of the Medan attack, *KLM* reduced the frequency of their Lydda – Bandung service to once a week. Flights left Lydda on 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th January and on 6th, 12th February and left Bandung on 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th January and 2nd, 8th February [AH]. According to *CAIS 135*, *KLM* operated a shuttle service between Batavia and Singapore three times a week [Win] while [Wil] reports it as twice a week from 9th January to 15th February 1942. A cover to England postmarked in Batavia on 10th January has routing instructions *By KLM to Egypte* and would be flown on the flight of 12th January.

According to p172 in [Wil], Rangoon replaced Batavia as the eastern terminal of the *KLM* service on 18th December, but that is contradicted by other statements in [Wil] and by all other accounts.

11.8 Trans-African Services in December 1941

Trans-African services from Takoradi (Gold Coast) and Lagos (Nigeria) to Khartoum and Cairo are described in section 3.7. The literature describes the introduction on 6th December 1941 of a fortnightly *Pan Am FAM 22* Transatlantic service from Miami to Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo via San Juan (Puerto Rico), Port of Spain (Trinidad), Belem (Brazil), Bathurst (Gambia) and Lagos (Nigeria) using *Boeing 314* flying boats [AH]. This connected at Lagos with *BOAC* and *Pan Am* services to Cairo and Khartoum and with *Sabena* services at Leopoldville. However, it is now known that a regular civilian *FAM 22* service never existed and was a cover for the extensive military *Special Mission* flights undertaken by the US to ferry men and equipment across the Atlantic to West Africa and then to Egypt and India. Indeed many flights were not to Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo, but to Calcutta in India! [Wilc1, Wil2, Wilc2, Wil3]



Figure 11.7: Switzerland – Dutch East Indies flown *FAM 18* / *FAM 22*, then to Cairo and by either Horseshoe Route *NE 158* or by *KLM*.

The cover in Figure 11.7 to the Dutch East Indies was postmarked in Switzerland on 12th November 1941 and was initially sent to the USA from Lisbon on service *FAM 18* with the intention of being sent from San Francisco to Singapore on service *FAM 14*. It has an Egyptian censor mark and so was likely sent via a *Special Mission* flight from Miami to Lagos on 16th – 20th January 1942 [Wil3]. It was then

flown from Lagos to Cairo where it received the Egyptian censor mark. From Cairo it was either sent to Batavia on *NE 158* on 26th January – 2nd February or first to Lydda and then by *KLM* on 30th January – 3rd February. It has a Dutch East Indies '*Censuur*' mark dated 5th February 1942 [Cla7].