

## Chapter 2: Interrupted Services

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the *BOAC* air mail services from India, Hong Kong, Malaya, Australia, New Zealand and Africa to the UK that were interrupted by the suspension of the Empire air mail service caused by the entry of Italy in WW II on 10<sup>th</sup> June and the closure of the Mediterranean to allied air mail.

Two services from Durban and four from Sydney still had to cross the Mediterranean after 10<sup>th</sup> June. According to the *Overseas Mail Branch Report* no 40 on 15<sup>th</sup> June [OMB40]:

“... the air mails which were already en route will have been ‘dumped’, as necessary, at certain points for onward conveyance by surface route.”

The two services from Durban were *DN 277* which left Durban on 8<sup>th</sup> June and terminated in Luxor (Egypt) on 11<sup>th</sup> June and *DN 278* which left Durban on 12<sup>th</sup> June and terminated in Kisumu (Kenya) on 13<sup>th</sup> June. The four services from Sydney that were affected were *SW 246* which had left on 1<sup>st</sup> June, *SW 247* which had left on 5<sup>th</sup> June, *SW 248* which had left on 8<sup>th</sup> June and *SW 249* which had left on 12<sup>th</sup> June.

### 2.2 Flights from Australia

On 15<sup>th</sup> June, Australian newspapers reported that:

“The Empire air mail service between Australia and the United Kingdom has been temporarily suspended west of Singapore.”

The position of the mail was described as:

“Despatched from Sydney June 1, mails held in Egypt; June 5, mails held in India; June 8, mails held in Singapore. These mails will be forwarded by surface transport at the first opportunity, but will be delayed in delivery.

Mails for the United Kingdom ... despatched on June 12 were returned from Darwin to the south for shipment by the first available vessel. The remaining mails went on”

The positions tally with those shown below for *SW 246*, *SW 247*, *248* and *SW 249*.

The *West Australian* reported that air mail from Perth connecting with *SW 249* was returned to Perth from Darwin to be sent by surface. *The Mercury* of Hobart reported that mail posted in Tasmania on 14<sup>th</sup> June would be sent by surface.

The four flights from Sydney are shown in the tables and each is then discussed in detail. Mail from New Zealand connected with *SW 247* and *SW 249*, but not with *SW 246* or *SW 248* as the Auckland – Sydney service was weekly.

#### SW 246

Sydney	dep	1 June	Cambria
Townsville	o'n	1-2 Jun	Cambria
Darwin	o'n	2-3 Jun	Cambria
Sourabaya	o'n	3-4 Jun	Cambria
Singapore	o'n	4-5 Jun	Cambria

#### SW 248

Sydney	dep	8 June	Coriolanus
Townsville	o'n	8-9 Jun	Coriolanus
Darwin	o'n	9-10 Jun	Coriolanus
Sourabaya	o'n	10-11 Jun	Coriolanus
Singapore	arr	11 Jun	Coriolanus

Penang	o'n	5-6 Jun	Cambria
Rangoon	o'n	6-7 Jun	Cambria
Calcutta	o'n	7-8 Jun	Cambria
Karachi	o'n	8-9 Jun	Cambria
Basra	o'n	9-10 Jun	Cambria
Alexandria	arr	10 Jun	Cambria

#### SW 247

Sydney	dep	5 June	Canopus
Townsville	o'n	5-6 Jun	Canopus
Darwin	o'n	6-8 Jun	Canopus
Batavia	o'n	8-9 Jun	Canopus
Singapore	o'n	9-10 Jun	Canopus
Bangkok	o'n	10-11 Jun	Canopus
Calcutta	o'n	11-12 Jun	Canopus
Karachi	arr	12 Jun	Canopus

#### SW 249

Sydney	dep	12 June	Coorong
Townsville	o'n	12-13 Jun	Coorong
Darwin	o'n	13-14 Jun	Coorong
Sourabaya	o'n	14-15 Jun	Coorong
Singapore	arr	15 Jun	Coorong
Singapore	dep	16 Jun	Coriolanus
Bangkok	o'n	16-17 Jun	Coriolanus
Calcutta	o'n	17-18 Jun	Coriolanus
Karachi	o'n	18-19 Jun	Coriolanus
Basra	o'n	19-20 Jun	Coriolanus
Tiberias	o'n	20-21 Jun	Coriolanus
Cairo	arr	21 Jun	Coriolanus

**Coriolanus flew Cairo – Durban as a repositioning flight on 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> June**

### SW 246 (1<sup>st</sup> June from Sydney)

The mail from *SW 246* was 'dumped' in Egypt on 10<sup>th</sup> June. The dates on the covers described below indicate that this mail was subsequently flown to South Africa and that mail for Europe was then carried to Liverpool by the *Capetown Castle* on the weekly Cape Town – UK mail service on 29<sup>th</sup> June – 12<sup>th</sup> July. The mail was delivered in Britain a week before the mail from the first *Horseshoe* service and three weeks earlier than the mail 'dumped' from *SW 247, 248* and *249*.

That leaves the question of how the mail got from Egypt to Cape Town by 29<sup>th</sup> June. That is discussed later along with the interrupted air mail that was dispatched from Durban on *DN 277*.

Covers flown on *SW 246*:

- Legg [AMN2] shows a cover postmarked on 31<sup>st</sup> May at 4.30 am in Adelaide and addressed to *B. E. Forces* who had been in France. It was redirected in the UK with a Cornwall datestamp of 22<sup>nd</sup> July which is before the delivery in London of the first *Horseshoe* mail on 24<sup>th</sup> July. On arrival in Britain, it would have been delayed by being sent to an army clearing office to determine where the unit was stationed.
- Crewe describes a cover postmarked in Hong Kong on 4<sup>th</sup> June that was redirected in London on 17<sup>th</sup> July [Cre]. It would have been flown to Bangkok on 5<sup>th</sup> June and connect there with *SW 246* on 6<sup>th</sup> June.
- The cover in Figure 2.1 is postmarked at Belgaum Camp, south of Bombay, on 4<sup>th</sup> June and would have joined *SW 246* in Karachi on 8<sup>th</sup> June. It has a Belgaum censor mark (*G*) and is addressed to Suffolk with a manuscript on the front stating it was received on 16<sup>th</sup> July.
- A cover postmarked in China on 27<sup>th</sup> May with a Hong Kong transit on 1<sup>st</sup> June that was redirected in Bristol on 17<sup>th</sup> July. It has a Hong Kong censor mark and so would have been delayed and not sent to Bangkok on *HB 242* on 2<sup>nd</sup> June as otherwise it would have arrived in the UK on 9<sup>th</sup> June. It was therefore sent on *HB 243*, connecting with *SW 246*.
- A registered cover from Western Australia to Switzerland postmarked on 29<sup>th</sup> May and with a Perth transit on 30<sup>th</sup> May has an arrival backstamp in Campo Cologno on 18<sup>th</sup> July. It was opened by the censors in both Perth and Egypt. As the *SW 246* mail was not delivered in the UK until 16<sup>th</sup> July, the cover must have been held Egypt for some time and then sent via Turkey.



**Figure 2.1: India – UK, 4<sup>th</sup> June – 16<sup>th</sup> July. Sent on *SW 246*.**

### **SW 247 (5<sup>th</sup> June from Sydney)**

The mail on *SW 247* was dumped in Karachi on 12<sup>th</sup> June. Several covers likely flown on *SW 247* and addressed to the UK have been reported. They were unloaded in Karachi on 12<sup>th</sup> June and likely sent to Bombay for dispatch by sea. The *Burdwan* left Bombay on 23<sup>rd</sup> June and arrived in the Clyde on 5<sup>th</sup> August and is a possible candidate [CW].

- The cover in Figure 2.2 is postmarked in New Zealand on 1<sup>st</sup> June. It was flown Auckland – Sydney by *TEAL* on 3<sup>rd</sup> June and redirected in Glasgow on 10<sup>th</sup> August and so was 71 days in transit [Cla1].
- Crewe shows a cover postmarked in Hong Kong on 8<sup>th</sup> June that would have been flown from Hong Kong to Bangkok on *HB 244* on 9<sup>th</sup> June [Cre, Cre3] to connect with *SW 247* that was overnight in Bangkok on 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> June. It has a London transit mark on 9<sup>th</sup> August.
- Halewood shows a cover postmarked in Hong Kong on 8<sup>th</sup> June and addressed to Zurich that was opened by the censors in Egypt [Hal]. After being off-loaded from *SW 247* in Karachi, it must have been flown from there to Cairo, perhaps on the *Atalanta* service from Karachi to Cairo described in Chapter 1. The cover has a purple hand stamp 22 Juli 1940 which could be when it arrived in Switzerland. That supports the notion that it went by surface via Turkey.
- In [AMN1], there is a reference to two covers sent from New Zealand on 28<sup>th</sup> May and 1<sup>st</sup> June that were redirected in Scotland on 10<sup>th</sup> August.
- Cover postmarked in Sydney on 4<sup>th</sup> June and redirected in Sussex on 10<sup>th</sup> August [Kim].



**Figure 2.2: New Zealand – UK, 1<sup>st</sup> June – 10<sup>th</sup> August. Offloaded in Karachi.**

The following covers were sent from India and were likely intended for *SW 247*:

- The cover in Figure 2.3 is postmarked in India on 9<sup>th</sup> June with a Bombay *Not Opened by Censor C 2* handstamp. It was likely flown to Karachi by *Tata Air Lines* to connect with *SW 247* before being returned to Bombay with the mail ‘dumped’ from *SW 247*. It was then sent to the UK by surface and redirected in Guthrie, Angus, Scotland on 10<sup>th</sup> August.
- I have two further covers from India. One is postmarked in Bombay on 10<sup>th</sup> June and redirected in Galway, Ireland on 15<sup>th</sup> August while the other was postmarked in Belgaum Camp, south of Bombay, on 9<sup>th</sup> June and censored in Belgaum (G). It is addressed to Suffolk with a manuscript on the front stating it was received on 9<sup>th</sup> August.

I have a cover postmarked in Singapore on 8<sup>th</sup> June and addressed to Bombay. It was offloaded and censored in Calcutta where it was backstamped on 12<sup>th</sup> June showing that mail on *SW 247* was handled normally for that part of the route. There is a Bombay backstamp on 14<sup>th</sup> June.

### **SW 248 (8<sup>th</sup> June from Sydney)**

The mail was ‘dumped’ in Singapore on 11<sup>th</sup> June. The mail for India, and perhaps the Middle East, was subsequently sent on *SW 249*.

In [AMN2], Legg shows a cover from Perth postmarked on 6<sup>th</sup> June and redirected in London on 9<sup>th</sup> August. It would be flown to Darwin by *MacRobertson Miller Airlines* on 8<sup>th</sup> June to connect with *SW 248* that left Darwin on 10<sup>th</sup> June. A cover postmarked in Hobart on 4<sup>th</sup> June was also redirected in London on 9<sup>th</sup> August [Win3]. The redirection date of 9<sup>th</sup> August fits with the report in *The Straits Times* of 10<sup>th</sup> August that three sea mails dated 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> June had arrived in London in the week ending 9<sup>th</sup> August [SN]. I have not been able to trace a Singapore – UK sailing to fit the dates, but the *Bennevis* left Singapore on 20<sup>th</sup> June and arrived in Durban on 10<sup>th</sup> July and so the mail could have been transferred to the *Arundel Castle* which left Durban on July 13<sup>th</sup> and arrived in the Clyde on 5<sup>th</sup> August with the third *Horseshoe* mail [CW].



The cover in Figure 2.4 is postmarked in Adelaide on 7<sup>th</sup> June. There was an Adelaide – Darwin service by *Guinea Airways* on Wednesday and Saturday to connect at Darwin with the service to UK. This cover would therefore be flown on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June and connect with *SW 248* which left Darwin on 10<sup>th</sup> June. Although it was redirected, it unfortunately has no redirection datestamp.



Figure 2.3: India – UK, 9<sup>th</sup> June – 10<sup>th</sup> August. Intended for *SW 247*.

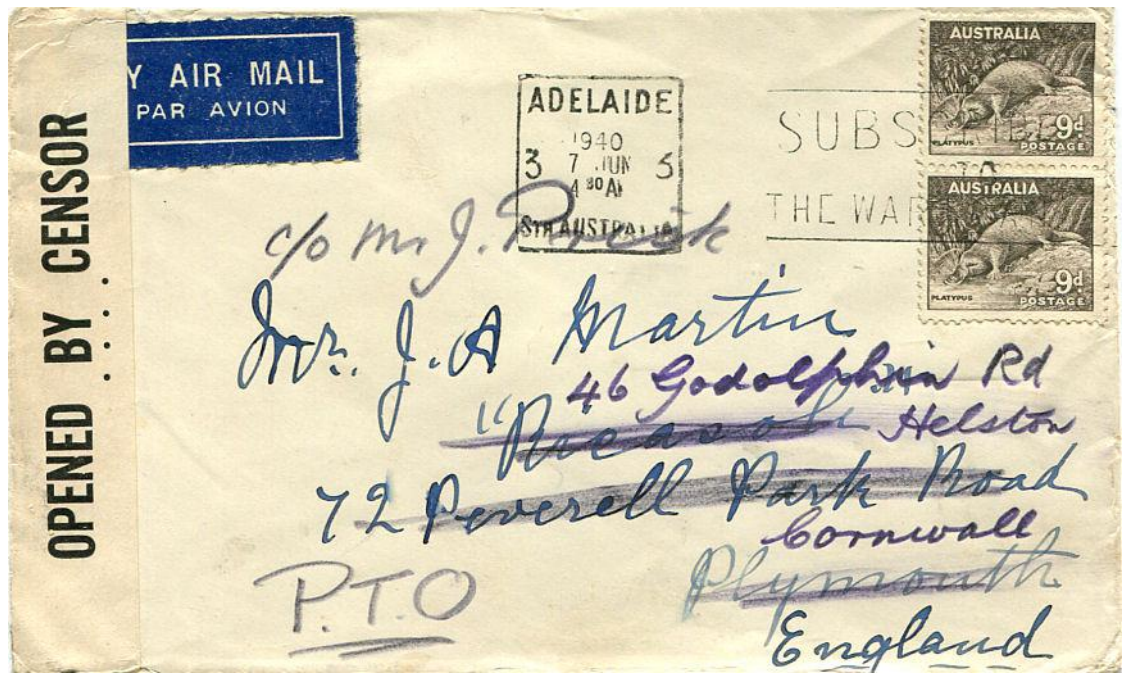


Figure 2.4: Adelaide – UK, postmarked 7<sup>th</sup> June, flown on *SW 248* and offloaded in Singapore.

### SW 249 (12<sup>th</sup> June from Sydney)

The mail for the United Kingdom and Western Europe was unloaded at Darwin on 13<sup>th</sup> June and returned south even though the service continued with the remaining mails and combined with *SW 248* at Singapore arriving in Cairo on 21<sup>st</sup> June.

Air mail for India and the Middle East from Singapore and subsequent stops would be picked up and flown on *SW 249*, but mail for the UK was not picked up as there was no perceived advantage in flying it to Cairo. Figure 2.5 shows a cover to Bombay postmarked in Singapore on 11<sup>th</sup> June with a Calcutta transit mark on 18<sup>th</sup> June. It was intended for *SW 248*, but would be flown Singapore – Calcutta on *SW 249* on 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> June. It was then sent to Bombay arriving on 21<sup>st</sup> June.



**Figure 2.5: Singapore to Bombay, postmarked 11<sup>th</sup> June 1940.**

Lee [Lee] describes a registered cover postmarked at Rose Bay on 10<sup>th</sup> June and backstamped *Sydney Air* on 11<sup>th</sup> June. It would therefore have gone by *SW 249*. It has a further backstamp at Melbourne at 5.30 pm on 18<sup>th</sup> June which indicates that the mail was returned south to Melbourne before being sent on by sea.

The cover from New Zealand shown in Figure 2.6 was also flown on *SW 249* and was redirected in London on 8<sup>th</sup> August. The *P&O* liner *Strathmore* left Melbourne on 23<sup>rd</sup> June (Fremantle on 29<sup>th</sup> June) and arrived in Liverpool on 29<sup>th</sup> July and so after being returned to Melbourne, the mail was sent by sea to the UK perhaps after being sent by rail to Perth. This is supported by a cover postmarked in a



suburb of Sydney on 11<sup>th</sup> June that was received in Exmouth on 1<sup>st</sup> August [Win3]. The next question is what happened to mail that missed *SW 249*. Was it all held back for the first *Horseshoe* service or was some sent on the *Strathmore*?

A registered cover postmarked in Sydney on 8<sup>th</sup> June and addressed to Zurich is shown in [Wat3]. It has several Sydney backstamps on 8<sup>th</sup> June plus one on 10<sup>th</sup> June and was censored in the UK and in Italy. It would have been flown on *SW 249* and offloaded in Darwin with the UK mail. The arrival datestamp in Zurich is 12<sup>th</sup> September which suggests that there was a major delay between the UK and Switzerland. The likely route from the UK is to Lisbon, then by surface or air to Italy.



**Figure 2.6:** Postmarked Auckland 7<sup>th</sup> June. Flown Auckland – Sydney on 10<sup>th</sup> June and then from Sydney on *SW 249* on 12<sup>th</sup> June and unloaded at Darwin. Completed its journey to UK by sea and redirected in London on 8<sup>th</sup> August. 63 days in transit.

To summarise:

- Mail on *SW 246* unloaded at Alexandria 10<sup>th</sup> June and was in Birmingham by 18<sup>th</sup> July.
- The first *Horseshoe* service left Sydney on 19<sup>th</sup> June and the mail was in London by 24<sup>th</sup> July.
- Mail on *SW 247* unloaded in Karachi 12<sup>th</sup> June and was in London by 9<sup>th</sup> August.
- Mail for UK on *SW 248* unloaded in Singapore 11<sup>th</sup> June and was in London by 9<sup>th</sup> August.
- Mail for UK on *SW 249* unloaded in Darwin 13<sup>th</sup> June (even though flight continued) and was in UK by 1<sup>st</sup> August.

## 2.3 Flights from Africa that did not complete

We have seen that mail from *SW 246* arrived in the UK in the middle of July and before the first *Horseshoe* mail. That was also the case with mail from *DN 277* and *DN 278*. Figure 2.7 shows a cover to the UK postmarked in Durban on 7<sup>th</sup> June that would have been flown on *DN 277*. It was redirected in Kent with a postmark on 17<sup>th</sup> July.



Figure 2.7: Durban to Kent, sent on interrupted flight *DN 277*

Hence the mail from *DN 277* ‘dumped’ in Luxor on 11<sup>th</sup> June and the mail from *SW 246* ‘dumped’ in Alexandria on 10<sup>th</sup> June both arrived in the UK on the same mail boat from Cape Town [Cla10]. That would be the *Capetown Castle* which sailed from Cape Town to Liverpool on 29<sup>th</sup> June – 12<sup>th</sup> July [CW].

Further evidence is mail that was posted in Egypt in early June. The cover in Figure 2.8 is postmarked in Heliopolis on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1940 and was redirected in Birmingham on 18<sup>th</sup> July [Cla6]. As it was opened and passed by the Egyptian censors, it would have missed the last flight through the Mediterranean and dealt with in the same way as mail ‘dumped’ from *SW 246*.

That leaves the question of how this mail got from Egypt to South Africa. It certainly was not sent south from Egypt by sea as Eritrea and Italian Somaliland were under Italian control and the Italians had 7 destroyers, 5 motor torpedo boats and 8 submarines, mostly based at the port of Massawa in Eritrea, posing a major threat to allied shipping in the Red Sea which had been closed to shipping since 24<sup>th</sup> May. The first convoy *BS 1* did not leave Suez until 7<sup>th</sup> July [CW]. Contemporary newspapers had announced on 2<sup>nd</sup> May that the British Government was diverting all merchant shipping from the Mediterranean. The mail must therefore have been flown south [Cla10].





Figure 2.8: Egypt – UK, 8<sup>th</sup> June – 18<sup>th</sup> July. Sent to UK along with mail from SW 246 and DN277.

Although there was no scheduled air mail service between Egypt and Durban during this period, the *BOAC Aircraft Movement Charts* [BA] show a series of repositioning flights. Let us first consider the two flights that left Durban and terminated early: *DN 277* in Luxor and *DN 278* in Kisumu.

<b>DN 277</b>				<b>DN 278</b>			
Durban	dep	8 June	Camilla	Durban	dep	12 June	Corsair
Mozambique	o'n	8-9 Jun	Camilla	Mozambique	o'n	12-13 Jun	Corsair
Kisumu	o'n	9-10 Jun	Camilla	Kisumu	arr	13 Jun	Corsair
Khartoum	o'n	10-11 Jun	Camilla				
Luxor	arr	11 June	Camilla				
<b>Camilla returns south</b>				<b>Corsair returns south</b>			
Luxor	dep	12 Jun	Camilla	Kisumu	dep	14 Jun	Corsair
Khartoum	o'n	12-13 Jun	Camilla	Mozambique	o'n	14-15 Jun	Corsair
Kisumu	arr	13 Jun	Camilla	Durban	arr	15 June	Corsair

After arriving in Luxor on 11<sup>th</sup> June with the *DN 277* mail, *Camilla* returned south to Khartoum on 12<sup>th</sup> June and flew on to Kisumu on 13<sup>th</sup> June. (*Camilla* then remained in Kisumu until 21<sup>st</sup> August when it flew to Karachi on *XNE 9*.) *Corsair*, which had arrived in Kisumu on 13<sup>th</sup> June with the *DN 278* mail, flew south from Kisumu to Durban on 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> June.

If the *DN 277* mail for the UK was returned south on *Camilla* to join with the *DN 278* mail at Kisumu on 13<sup>th</sup> June, it would have been returned to Durban by 15<sup>th</sup> June to connect with the *Windsor Castle*

that left Cape Town on 22<sup>nd</sup> June and arrived in Liverpool on 8<sup>th</sup> July on the weekly *Union Castle* mail run [CW]. However, the arrival of the *DN 277* mail in the UK at the same time as the *SW 246* mail means that did not happen. We will return to the *DN 278* mail later.

Two aircraft, *Castor* and *Cambria*, were in Egypt on 11<sup>th</sup> June.

**Repositioning 1 Castor**

Alexandria	dep	11 Jun	Castor
Cairo		11 Jun	Castor
Luxor	o'n	11-12 Jun	Castor
Cairo		12 Jun	Castor
Tiberias	o'n	12-18 Jun	Castor
Cairo		18 Jun	Castor
Khartoum	o'n	18-19 Jun	Castor
Kisumu	o'n	19-20 Jun	Castor
Mozambique	o'n	20-21 Jun	Castor
Durban	arr	21 June	Castor

**Repositioning 2 Cambria**

Alexandria	dep	11 Jun	Cambria
Cairo	o'n	11-12 Jun	Cambria
Luxor	o'n	12-19 Jun	Cambria
Cairo		19 Jun	Cambria
Khartoum	o'n	19-20 Jun	Cambria
Kisumu	o'n	20-21 Jun	Cambria
Mozambique	o'n	21-22 Jun	Cambria
Laurenco Marques	o'n	22-23 June	Cambria
Durban	arr	23 June	Cambria

*Castor* flew from Alexandria to Luxor on 11<sup>th</sup> June, returned to Cairo on 12<sup>th</sup> June and then flew on to Tiberias. That would allow the *DN 277* mail that had arrived in Luxor on 11<sup>th</sup> June to be flown to Egypt on 12<sup>th</sup> June and the mail for Palestine to be flown on to Tiberias.

A cover (of which I have a scan) was postmarked in Beira on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1940 and addressed to Bombay. It has an Egyptian censor mark and a Cairo transit at 2 pm on 12<sup>th</sup> June and a Bombay datestamp on 25<sup>th</sup> June. A similar registered airmail cover to Bombay, but without the Cairo transit mark, is shown in Figure 2.9. It is postmarked Mashaba, Rhodesia on 3<sup>rd</sup> June and has transit marks at Fort Victoria on 4<sup>th</sup> June, Salisbury on 5<sup>th</sup> June and a 'Registration Dept' backstamp at 10.45a.m in Bombay on 26<sup>th</sup> June. It would have missed the flight to Beira that left Salisbury at 6.30am on 5<sup>th</sup> June and so would have missed the connection with *DN 276*.

They would both have been flown from Beira to Luxor on *DN 277* on 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> June and then flown from Luxor to Cairo by *Castor* on 12<sup>th</sup> June and from Cairo to Karachi on the first *Horseshoe* flight on 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> June. It seems likely that all the *DN 277* mail was flown to Cairo on 12<sup>th</sup> June rather than the mail for the UK and Europe remaining in Luxor.

An airmail postcard to Yugoslavia postmarked in South Africa on 4<sup>th</sup> June with *PBC* (Passed by censor) in red pencil, an Egyptian censor mark, an Athens transit on 9<sup>th</sup> July and a Zagreb receiver on 10<sup>th</sup> July is shown in Figure 2.10. There was a thrice weekly service from Johannesburg to Lourenco Marques by *Divisao Exploracao Transportes Aeraeos (DETA)* until August 1940 [Wil, Win] to enable Johannesburg mail to connect with the BOAC service from Durban, but due to being sent to the South African censors, it may have missed *DN 276* on 5<sup>th</sup> June and be flown on *DN 277*. It is likely to have arrived in Cairo on 12<sup>th</sup> June where it remained for some time before being sent by road / rail to Turkey and then being flown by *DLH* from Istanbul to Belgrade and by surface to Zagreb.

After arriving in Alexandria on 10<sup>th</sup> June on *SW 246*, *Cambria* flew south to Luxor via Cairo on 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> June and so could have carried the *SW 246* mail, but *Camilla* left Luxor too early on 12<sup>th</sup> June to connect with *Cambria*. *Cambria* remained in Luxor until 19<sup>th</sup> June when it returned to Cairo and then flew from there to Durban on 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> June. *Castor* had earlier flown from Cairo to Durban on 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> June. Hence the *SW 246* and *DN 277* mail was likely held in Cairo or Luxor and flown south from there on 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> June. Mail from these flights would have connected with the *Capetown Castle*.



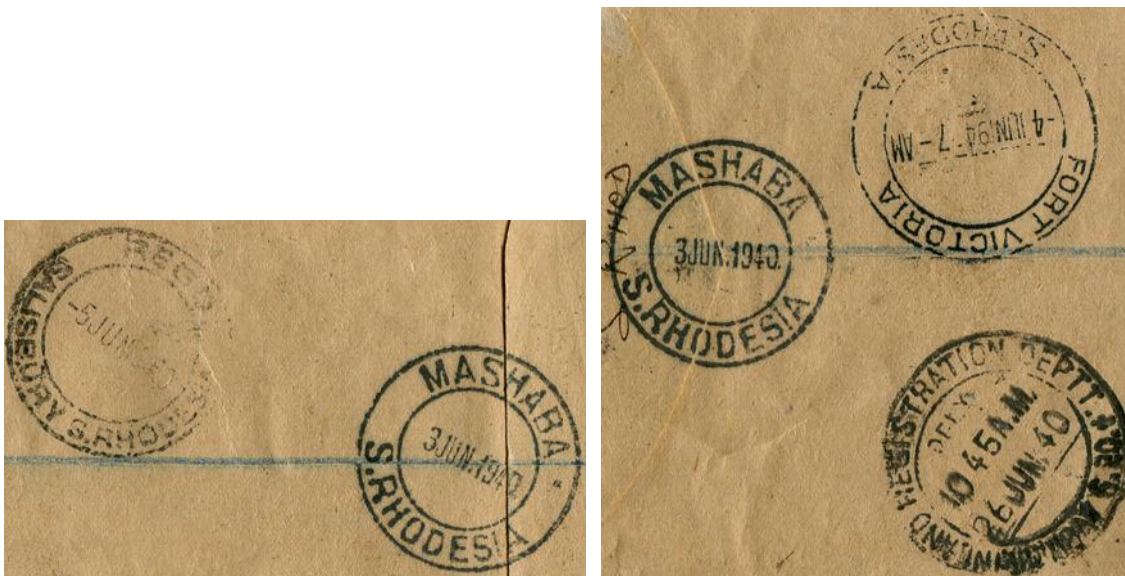


Figure 2.9: Rhodesia to Bombay flown on DN 277 and on first *Horseshoe* flight.

Another repositioning flight was by *Coriolanus*. After arriving in Cairo on 21<sup>st</sup> June on *SW 249*, it immediately flew on to Durban on 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> June as shown below.

**Repositioning 3 Coriolanus**

Cairo	dep	21 Jun	Coriolanus
Khartoum	o'n	21-22 Jun	Coriolanus
Kisumu	o'n	22-23 Jun	Coriolanus
Mozambique	o'n	23-24 Jun	Coriolanus
Durban	arr	24 June	Coriolanus

Although it was a re-positioning flight, this was therefore the first flight on the *route* of the *Horseshoe Service*. It would be interesting to know whether it carried any *SW 248* or *SW 249* mail from Cairo to Durban.





**Figure 2.10: South Africa to Yugoslavia flown on DN 277.**

### Service DN 278

After *Corsair* flew the DN 278 mail from Durban to Kisumu on 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> June, it returned south to Durban on 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> June. That would allow DN 278 mail for the UK to be returned to Durban in time to connect with the *Windsor Castle* that left Cape Town on 22<sup>nd</sup> June and arrived in Liverpool on 8<sup>th</sup> July [Cla10].

Supporting evidence is an internal GPO memo dated July 1940 held in the Royal Mail Archive [Win3] which states:

“Air mails despatched from Mombasa on the 14<sup>th</sup> June and from Tanga and Dar es Salaam on the 13<sup>th</sup> were received on the 9<sup>th</sup> July by a boat which is thought to have left South Africa on the 21<sup>st</sup> June.”

The boat would be the *Windsor Castle*. The mail from Dar es Salaam of 13<sup>th</sup> June referred to in the memo may have been flown from there on DN 278 and dumped later that day at Kisumu. It would have been returned south to join with the Mombasa mail of 14<sup>th</sup> June which had missed DN 278.

Indirect evidence that the DN 278 mail was delivered in Britain a week before the DN 277 mail is provided by the cover in Figure 2.11. It is postmarked in Durban on 11<sup>th</sup> June and would have been sent on DN 278. It is addressed to the same person as the cover in Figure 2.7, but whereas that cover has been redirected, this cover has not, suggesting that it arrived a week earlier when the recipient was still at the address.

The cover to Switzerland in Figure 2.12 is postmarked in Moma, Mozambique on 8<sup>th</sup> June. It was intended to be flown by *BOAC* to Brindisi and from there to Switzerland by surface to Rome and then by *Swissair* to Locarno [SL]. It has a Lumbo transit on 13<sup>th</sup> June and may have been flown on 13<sup>th</sup> June from there to Kisumu on DN 278 before being flown south on *Corsair*. It was opened and passed by the censors on arrival in South Africa. According to the manuscript on the front, it was received in Switzerland on 20<sup>th</sup> August.

That leaves the mail on *DN 278* that was addressed to Egypt and points east. It may either have been flown back to Durban or held at Kisumu. In either case, it would have flown on the first *Horseshoe* flight.



**Figure 2.11: Durban to Kent, sent on interrupted flight DN 278**

### Air mail from Rhodesia

The internal July 1940 GPO memo also gives information on air mail from the Rhodesias:

“The last air mails received from the Rhodesias were despatched on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of June and received on the 29<sup>th</sup>, by a boat which is thought to have left South Africa on the 14<sup>th</sup>.”

There is a note in the margin of the memo referring to the:

“absence of air mail arrival on 9/7”

The *Athlone Castle* left Cape Town on 14<sup>th</sup> June and arrived in Southampton on 29<sup>th</sup> June which corresponds to the dates given in the memo. (A registered surface mail cover postmarked in Rhodesia on 5<sup>th</sup> June has a Scottish backstamp on 1<sup>st</sup> July and so would have been sent on the *Athlone Castle*.) But how did air mail from Rhodesia on 12<sup>th</sup> June manage to connect in Cape Town with the *Union Castle* boat on 14<sup>th</sup> June?

A possible answer is that the Rhodesian authorities realised by 12<sup>th</sup> June that mail to Great Britain could not be flown through the Mediterranean and had to be sent south to Cape Town. So they sent it by *Southern Rhodesian Air Services* on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June from Salisbury (dep 9 am) via Bulawayo (dep 11.30 am) to Johannesburg (arr 3 pm) [ATT]. Johannesburg to Cape Town was then by train. After 12<sup>th</sup> June, as the *Empire Service* was suspended, the Southern Rhodesian authorities no longer accepted air mail for UK which is why no air mail from there arrived in the UK on 9<sup>th</sup> July [Cla10].

From the above, it would seem that:

- the UK air mail from Rhodesia on 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> June left Cape Town on *Athlone Castle* on 14<sup>th</sup> June;
- mail from *DN 278* on the *Windsor Castle* on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1940;



- mail from *DN 277* and *SW 246* on the *Capetown Castle* on 29<sup>th</sup> June and
- the first *Horseshoe* mail on the *Winchester Castle* on 5<sup>th</sup> July.



Figure 2.12: Mozambique to Switzerland, postmarked 8<sup>th</sup> June 1940.

### Air Mail from West Africa

There were two routes for air mail between the Gold Coast and Britain. The shorter route was Accra – Abidjan – Conakry – Dakar – Casablanca by the French carrier *Aeromaritime*, connecting with the Casablanca – Paris and the Paris – London service. The alternative was by the weekly *BOAC* service from Takoradi to Khartoum where it connected with the service from Durban to Poole. The last through service left Takoradi on 31<sup>st</sup> May and was via Accra, Lagos, Kano, El Geneina to Khartoum where it arrived on 3<sup>rd</sup> June and would connect with *DN 275* that was overnight in Khartoum on 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> June and arrived in Poole on 7<sup>th</sup> June.

The next service left Takoradi on 7<sup>th</sup> June and arrived in Khartoum on 10<sup>th</sup> June. It would connect with *DN 277* that was overnight in Khartoum on 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> June with the mail being ‘dumped’ later on the 11<sup>th</sup> in Luxor. The mail would then follow the same progress as described for *DN 277*.

In the opposite direction, the last connecting *BOAC* mail left Poole on *DS 278* on 8<sup>th</sup> June and arrived in Khartoum on 11<sup>th</sup> June. It was then flown from Khartoum to Takoradi on 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> June.

### Surface Mail



It is interesting to note what happened to surface mail from Egypt around this time. I have a cover postmarked in Egypt on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1940 that was sent to the UK by surface and was redirected and postmarked in Dawlish, Devon on 5<sup>th</sup> September. (Another surface cover postmarked in Cairo on 31<sup>st</sup> May was redirected in Coventry also on 5<sup>th</sup> September.) They were likely carried on the first sea mail from Egypt, perhaps on the *Cliftonhall*, which left Suez in *Convoy BS 1* on 7<sup>th</sup> July and dispersed 200 miles east of Aden on 15<sup>th</sup> July. The *Cliftonhall* arrived in Cape Town on 5<sup>th</sup> August. The mail may then have been transferred to the *Windsor Castle* that arrived in the UK on 1<sup>st</sup> September with the 7<sup>th</sup> Horseshoe mail. A registered surface mail cover to New York that was postmarked in Alexandria on 14<sup>th</sup> June has New York backstamps on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> September. It likely was sent to Cape Town on the same convoy and then sent by sea from there directly to USA.

The *Palestine Post* on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1940 reported that there had been a question in the Westminster Parliament in late July that no letters had been received from soldiers serving in Palestine for 6 weeks. The reply was that no mail was expected to arrive in the UK before the middle of August [PP]. I assume that the reference was to surface mail.

Another example of how cut off the Middle East was by surface means at that time was given in the Australian press which reported that the surface mail that arrived in Gaza on 11<sup>th</sup> August was the first for the Australian troops for 2½ months [Tr]. The first inward convoy *BNI* had arrived in Suez on 12<sup>th</sup> July while the second *BN2* arrived on 5<sup>th</sup> August [CW] presumably carrying the Australian troop mail. That is almost exactly 2½ months after the closure of Red Sea to shipping on 24<sup>th</sup> May. A surface cover postmarked in Britain on 22<sup>nd</sup> May and addressed to Alexandria has a Cairo transit on 15<sup>th</sup> July and so would have been sent on *BNI*.