

Chapter 8: September 1940 (Winter Timetable) – April 1941

8.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with flights on the new winter timetable (*NE 20* and *WS 21*) at the end of September 1940 up until the disruption caused by the rebellion in Iraq in late April 1941. As the *Horseshoe Route* was well established by this time, the chapter does not go into the same detail as before and only deals with significant events as well as looking at the transit times of example covers. Summary tables of possible sea connections with the UK are also given.

8.2 New Winter Timetable: Durban 25th September 1940, Sydney 27th September

CAIS 67 on 25th September states that the winter timetable came into operation on that date [Win]. Previously, flights from Durban had been on Monday and Thursday and were now on Wednesday and Saturday with the first flight on the new timetable being *NE 20* which left Durban on Wednesday 25th September. Flights from Sydney had been on Saturday and Wednesday and were now on Friday and Tuesday with the first flight on the new timetable being *WS 21* which left Sydney on Friday 27th September. The dates of the overnight stops on the first flights with the new timetable are shown.

NE 20				WS 21			
Durban	dep	25 Sep	Circe	Sydney	dep	27 Sep	Coriolanus
Mozambique	o'n	25-26 Sep	Circe	Townsville	o'n	27-28 Sep	Coriolanus
Kisumu	arr	26 Sep	Circe	Darwin	o'n	28-29 Sep	Coriolanus
Kisumu	dep	27 Sep	Caledonia	Sourabaya	o'n	29-30 Sep	Coriolanus
Khartoum	o'n	27-28 Sep	Caledonia	Singapore	arr	30 Sep	Coriolanus
Luxor	o'n	28-29 Sep	Caledonia	Singapore	dep	1 Oct	Canopus
Habbaniyeh	o'n	29-30 Sep	Caledonia	Bangkok	o'n	1-2 Oct	Canopus
Dubai (Bahrein?)	o'n	30/9-1/10	Caledonia	Calcutta	o'n	2-3 Oct	Canopus
Karachi	arr	1 Oct	Caledonia	Karachi	o'n	3-4 Oct	Canopus
Karachi	dep	2 Oct	Carpentaria	Basra	o'n	4-5 Oct	Canopus
Calcutta	o'n	2-3 Oct	Carpentaria	Cairo	o'n	5-6 Oct	Canopus
Bangkok	o'n	3-4 Oct	Carpentaria	Khartoum	o'n	6-7 Oct	Canopus
Singapore	o'n	4-5 Oct	Carpentaria	Kisumu	o'n	7-8 Oct	Canopus
Sourabaya	o'n	5-6 Oct	Carpentaria	Mozambique	o'n	8-9 Oct	Canopus
Darwin	o'n	6-7 Oct	Carpentaria	Durban	arr	9 Oct	Canopus
Townsville	o'n	7-8 Oct	Carpentaria				
Sydney	arr	8 Oct	Carpentaria				

The September *BOAC* aircraft movement chart shows *NE 20* overnight at Dubai on 30th September – 1st October while the October flowchart shows it leaving Bahrein on 1st October.

a) Varied schedules from Durban

For reasons of security the night stops between Durban and Karachi were varied from early October. From Durban two extra *Schedules (B and C)* were variations from the standard *Schedule A*.

The standard *Schedule A* had night stops at Mozambique, Kisumu, Khartoum, Cairo and Basra; *Schedule B* had night stops at Mozambique, Dar es Salaam, Port Bell, Khartoum, Luxor and Basra while *Schedule C* had night stops at Mozambique, Mombasa, Juba, Wadi Halfa, Tiberias and Bahrein [AH]. There was still a change of aircraft at Kisumu.

The first flight using *Schedule C* was *NE 24* while the first using *Schedule B* was *NE 25*.

NE 24 (Schedule C)

Durban	dep	9 Oct	Corsair
Mozambique	o'n	9-10 Oct	Corsair
Mombasa	o'n	10-11 Oct	Corsair
Kisumu	arr	11 Oct	Corsair
Kisumu	dep	11 Oct	Castor
Juba	o'n	11-12 Oct	Castor
Wadi Halfa	o'n	12-13 Oct	Castor
Tiberias	o'n	13-14 Oct	Castor
Bahrein	o'n	14-15 Oct	Castor
Karachi	arr	15 Oct	Castor
Karachi	dep	16 Oct	Cameronian
Calcutta	o'n	16-17 Oct	Cameronian
Rangoon	o'n	17-18 Oct	Cameronian
Singapore	o'n	18-19 Oct	Cameronian
Sourabaya	o'n	19-20 Oct	Cameronian
Darwin	o'n	20-21 Oct	Cameronian
Townsville	o'n	21-22 Oct	Cameronian
Sydney	arr	22 Oct	Cameronian

NE 25 (Schedule B)

Durban	dep	12 Oct	Camilla
Mozambique	o'n	12-13 Oct	Camilla
Dar es Salaam	o'n	13-14 Oct	Camilla
Kisumu	arr	14 Oct	Camilla
Kisumu	dep	14 Oct	Corsair
Port Bell	o'n	14-15 Oct	Corsair
Khartoum	o'n	15-16 Oct	Corsair
Luxor	o'n	16-17 Oct	Corsair
Basra	o'n	17-18 Oct	Corsair
Karachi	arr	18 Oct	Corsair
Karachi	dep	19 Oct	Castor
Calcutta	o'n	19-20 Oct	Castor
Bangkok	o'n	20-21 Oct	Castor
Singapore	o'n	21-22 Oct	Castor
Sourabaya	o'n	22-23 Oct	Castor
Darwin	o'n	23-24 Oct	Castor
Townsville	o'n	24-25 Oct	Castor
Sydney	arr	25 Oct	Castor

Subsequently *NE 26*, *NE 29* (with an additional stop at Tiberias), *NE 31* (with a stop at Tiberias instead of Basra), *NE 33*, *NE 37* (both with a stop at Cairo instead of Luxor), *NE 39*, *NE 44*, *NE 48*, *NE 52* and *NE 55* used *Schedule B* while *NE 35* used *Schedule C*.

Night stop at Basra

According to *CAIS 73* on 6th November [Win]:

“As the Iraq authorities have recently modified their restrictions on night flying, a re-organisation of the schedules of the ‘horseshoe’ service has taken place. Arrangements have been made for Basra to be the night stop for services operating in each direction between Cairo and Karachi. Previously the night stops were made at Habbaniyeh on the eastbound service and at Bahrein on the westbound service.

This change will effect a reduction of one day in the journey between Durban and Sydney.”

The *BOAC* flowcharts show the last overnight stop at Habbaniyeh being *NE 20* on 29th – 30th September.

Schedule C now had overnight stops at Kisumu, Malakal, Wadi Halfa, Tiberias and Basra and was the schedule for *NE 42* (with a stop at Cairo rather than Tiberias), *NE 45* and *NE 54*. The variations on the flight schedules from Durban were suspended on 18th January. The likely reason that *NE 54* which left Durban on 22nd January followed *Schedule C* was that it had to stop overnight in Malakal due to mechanical problems.

b) Varied schedules from Sydney

Schedule A from Sydney was the reverse of *Schedule A* from Durban. *Schedule B* was Bahrein (later Basra), Tiberias, Luxor, Khartoum, Port Bell, Dar es Salaam, Mozambique. The first flight on *Schedule B* from Sydney was *WS 22* on 1st October while later flights were *WS 24*, *WS 33* and *WS 38*. The night stop at Bahrein was replaced by Basra in early November.

Schedule C was not used. *Schedule D* was Basra, Tiberias, Wadi Halfa (Luxor), Juba, Mombasa, Mozambique and the only flight was *WS 31* that left Sydney on 1st November and arrived in Durban on 14th November.

WS 22 (Schedule B)

Sydney	dep	1 Oct	Coorong
Townsville	o'n	1-2 Oct	Coorong
Darwin	o'n	2-3 Oct	Coorong
Sourabaya	o'n	3-4 Oct	Coorong
Singapore	arr	4 Oct	Coorong
Singapore	dep	5 Oct	Coriolanus
Bangkok	o'n	5-6 Oct	Coriolanus
Calcutta	o'n	6-7 Oct	Coriolanus
Karachi	o'n	7-8 Oct	Coriolanus
Bahrein	o'n	8-9 Oct	Coriolanus
Tiberias	o'n	9-10 Oct	Coriolanus
Luxor	o'n	10-11 Oct	Coriolanus
Khartoum	o'n	11-12 Oct	Coriolanus
Port Bell	o'n	12-13 Oct	Coriolanus
Dar es Salaam	o'n	13-14 Oct	Coriolanus
Mozambique	o'n	14-18 Oct	Coriolanus
Durban	arr	18 Oct	Coriolanus

WS 31 (Schedule D)

Sydney	dep	1 Nov	Castor
Townsville	o'n	1-2 Nov	Castor
Darwin	o'n	2-3 Nov	Castor
Sourabaya	o'n	3-4 Nov	Castor
Singapore	arr	4 Nov	Castor
Singapore	dep	5 Nov	Cameronian
Bangkok	o'n	5-6 Nov	Cameronian
Calcutta	o'n	6-7 Nov	Cameronian
Karachi	o'n	7-8 Nov	Cameronian
Basra	o'n	8-9 Nov	Cameronian
Tiberias	o'n	9-10 Nov	Cameronian
Wadi Halfa	o'n	10-11 Nov	Cameronian
Juba	o'n	11-12 Nov	Cameronian
Mombasa	o'n	12-13 Nov	Cameronian
Mozambique	o'n	13-14 Nov	Cameronian
Durban	arr	14 Nov	Cameronian

Coriolanus on *WS 22* was delayed in Mozambique due to mechanical problems. On 16th October, part of its mail was flown from Mozambique on service *WS 23* and part by the *Cooee* which was on its way to Durban from the UK. The schedule variations from Sydney were suspended on 10th January 1941.

Extra Flying Boats: *Corinthian*, *Cassiopeia* and *Cooee*

CAIS 68 on 2nd October reported that three flying boats *Corinthian*, *Cassiopeia* and *Cooee* were being flown from the UK to Durban to join the *Horseshoe* fleet [Win]. The route was via Lisbon, Las Palmas, Lagos, Leopoldville, Stanleyville and Kisumu [HM]. The *Corinthian* arrived in Kisumu on 4th October and *Cassiopeia* on the 6th. The *Cooee* arrived in Kisumu on 13th October and flew part of the mail from *WS 22* from Mozambique to Durban on 16th October.

Poole	dep	24 Sep	Corinthian	Poole	dep	29 Sep	Cooee
Lisbon	o'n	24-26 Sep	Corinthian	Lisbon	o'n	29-30 Sep	Cooee
Las Palmas	o'n	26-27 Sep	Corinthian	Las Palmas	o'n	30/9-2/10	Cooee
Bathurst	o'n	27-28 Sep	Corinthian	Bathurst	o'n	2-3 Oct	Cooee
Freetown	o'n	28-29 Sep	Corinthian	Freetown	o'n	3-8 Oct	Cooee
Lagos	o'n	29/9-1/10	Corinthian	Lagos	o'n	8-10 Oct	Cooee
Banana	o'n	1-2 Oct	Corinthian	Banana	o'n	10-11 Oct	Cooee
Leopoldville	o'n	2-3 Oct	Corinthian	Leopoldville	o'n	11-12 Oct	Cooee
Stanleyville	o'n	3-4 Oct	Corinthian	Stanleyville	o'n	12-13 Oct	Cooee
Kisumu	o'n	4-6 Oct	Corinthian	Kisumu	o'n	13-15 Oct	Cooee
Mozambique	o'n	6-7 Oct	Corinthian	Mozambique	o'n	15-16 Oct	Cooee
Durban	arr	7 Oct	Corinthian	Durban	arr	16 Oct	Cooee

Poole	dep	27 Sep	Cassiopeia
Lisbon	o'n	27-28 Sep	Cassiopeia
Las Palmas	o'n	28-29 Sep	Cassiopeia
Bathurst	o'n	29-30 Sep	Cassiopeia
Freetown	o'n	30/9-1/10	Cassiopeia
Lagos	o'n	1-4 Oct	Cassiopeia
Leopoldville	o'n	4-5 Oct	Cassiopeia
Stanleyville	o'n	5-6 Oct	Cassiopeia
Kisumu	o'n	6-7 Oct	Cassiopeia
Mozambique	o'n	7-8 Oct	Cassiopeia
Durban	arr	8 Oct	Cassiopeia

Extra stops at Vaaldam and Dilli (Dili, Dilla), Portuguese Timor

In January 1941, on flights *to* Durban, an extra stop was added at Vaaldam (previously called Lake Deneys) which is 45 miles from Johannesburg [SA]. (The *BOAC* flowcharts show the stop as Vaalbank, but my understanding is that Vaalbank is a different dam.) After an experimental flight from Durban to Vaaldam on 30th December by *Canopus*, the first service with the new stop was *WS*

47 which had a stop on the previous night at Dar es Salaam, but from *WS 48* onwards the overnight stop reverted to Mozambique. In the other direction, flights remained direct from Durban to Laurencio Marques.

South African Airways had resumed a weekly Johannesburg – Cape Town service on 17th December 1940, but there is no evidence that *Horseshoe* mail for Britain was off-loaded in Johannesburg and flown to Cape Town.

WS 47				WS 48			
Sydney	dep	27 Dec	Castor	Sydney	dep	31 Dec	Corsair
Townsville	o'n	27-28 Dec	Castor	Townsville	o'n	31/12–1/1	Corsair
Darwin	o'n	28-29 Dec	Castor	Darwin	o'n	1-3 Jan	Corsair
Sourabaya	o'n	29-30 Dec	Castor	Koepang	o'n	3-4 Jan	Corsair
Singapore	o'n	30-31 Dec	Castor	Batavia	o'n	4-5 Jan	Corsair
Bangkok	o'n	31/12–1/1	Castor	Singapore	o'n	5-6 Jan	Corsair
Calcutta	o'n	1-2 Jan	Castor	Bangkok	o'n	6-7 Jan	Corsair
Karachi	o'n	2-3 Jan	Castor	Calcutta	o'n	7-8 Jan	Corsair
Basra	o'n	3-4 Jan	Castor	Karachi	o'n	8-9 Jan	Corsair
Cairo	o'n	4-5 Jan	Castor	Basra	o'n	9-10 Jan	Corsair
Khartoum	o'n	5-6 Jan	Castor	Cairo	o'n	10-11 Jan	Corsair
Kisumu	o'n	6-7 Jan	Castor	Khartoum	o'n	11-12 Jan	Corsair
Dar es Salaam	o'n	7-8 Jan	Castor	Kisumu	o'n	12-13 Jan	Corsair
Vaalbank	o'n	8-9 Jan	Castor	Mozambique	o'n	13-14 Jan	Corsair
Durban	arr	9 Jan	Castor	Vaalbank	o'n	14-15 Jan	Corsair
				Durban	arr	15 Jan	Corsair

A stop at Dilli in Portuguese Timor was added in January 1941. The first stops were by *WS 53* on 19th January and *NE 51* on 21st January and the plan was for there to be a stop once a fortnight in each direction [Tro] as an alternative to Koepang. The reason for its inclusion seemed to be due to the interest being shown in the country by Japan rather than economic.

Mail from Sweden: the Taurus Express

I have scans of several air mail covers from Sweden in late 1940 addressed to South Africa and to New Zealand. Two have Egyptian censor marks and one has a Baghdad transit. The route seems to have been by surface or air to Turkey and then by the *Taurus Express*. On 17th July 1940, the first through rail service of the *Taurus Express* left Haydarpasa (opposite Istanbul on the Bosphorus) for Baghdad. From Aleppo there was a service to Cairo which was by branch line to Tripoli (Lebanon), road from Tripoli to Haifa followed by rail from Haifa to Cairo.

The first cover is postmarked in Sweden on 14th October and is addressed to Cape Town. It has an Egyptian censor mark and was opened by the censors in South Africa. The second, also to Cape Town, was postmarked in Sweden on 14th December and has a December transit in Baghdad. It looks as if the first was off-loaded from the *Taurus Express* in Aleppo and joined a *Horseshoe* flight to Durban in Cairo while the second went all the way to Baghdad on the *Taurus Express* and joined a *Horseshoe* flight in Lake Habbaniya.

The third cover is addressed to New Zealand. It was postmarked in Sweden on 26th October and was opened by the Egyptian censors. It has a Cairo transit on 27th November where it would join a *Horseshoe* flight to Sydney.

8.3 Summary of Departures from Durban and Sydney to December 1940

α) From Sydney

The following table shows the dates for *WS 17* to *WS 40*. The ships used to transport the mails

between UK and Cape Town are listed by Proud [Pr]. It is not clear what his dates refer to: arrival of ships at Cape Town or UK ports, or arrival of mail at Durban or London; it seems to vary. The sailing dates are therefore those given in *Convoy Web* [CW] unless otherwise referenced. The arrival port in UK was Liverpool unless otherwise stated.

The Straits Times and *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* show delivery dates in London together with the date at which the air mail closed in Singapore for the flights *WS 17 – 40* which allows the flight number to be determined [SN] and this data is used in conjunction with information from *Convoyweb* [CW] and Proud [Pr] to attempt 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.

The Singapore data shows that it was common for the mail from several flights to be sent on the same ship from Cape Town. There is a gap in the Singapore data after *WS 40*. The information for ships in the table for *WS 41 – WS 49* is mostly taken from Proud [Pr].

Flights from Sydney 14 th September 1940 – 3 rd January 1941					
Trans-Tasman	Flight No	Leave Sydney	Arrive Durban	Ship: Cape Town – UK	London Delivery
-	WS 20	25 Sep	8 Oct	Windsor Castle 18 th Oct – 5 th Nov (Clyde) (bombed 3 rd or 4 th Nov, little damage) (part of the mails from <i>WS 22</i> had arrived in Durban on 16 th October)	8 Nov
26 Sep	WS 21	27 Sep	9 Oct		
28 Sep	WS 22	1 Oct	16&18 Oct		
3 Oct	WS 23	4 Oct	16 Oct		
-	WS 24	8 Oct	22 Oct	*Capetown Castle 2 nd – 20 th Nov	23 Nov
10 Oct	WS 25	11 Oct	23 Oct		
12 Oct	WS 26	15 Oct	28 Oct		
17 Oct	WS 27	18 Oct	31 Oct	*Durban Castle 5 th – 25 th Nov (Clyde)	?
-	WS 28	22 Oct	6 Nov	Roxburgh Castle 16 th Nov – 10 th Dec [Pr]	12 Dec
24 Oct	WS 29	25 Oct	13 Nov	*Athlone Castle 23 rd Nov – 10 th Dec	13 Dec
27 Oct	WS 30	29 Oct	13 Nov		
31 Oct	WS 31	1 Nov	14 Nov		
-	WS 32	5 Nov	19 Nov	Rochester Castle 2 nd Dec – ?? [Pr]	31 Dec
7 Nov	WS 33	8 Nov	22 Nov		
11 Nov	WS 34	12 Nov	24 Nov		
14 Nov	WS 35	15 Nov	27 Nov		
-	WS 36	19 Nov	2 Dec	*Warwick Castle 13 th – 29 th Dec (Clyde)	4 Jan 41
21 Nov	WS 37	22 Nov	6 Dec		
25 Nov	WS 38	26 Nov	10 Dec		
-	WS 39	29 Nov	11 Dec	Roslin Castle 22 nd Dec – 11 th Jan 1941 [Pr]	18 Jan 41
29 Nov	WS 40	3 Dec	15 Dec	??	by 11 Feb
5 Dec	WS 41	6 Dec	19 Dec		
7 Dec	WS 42	10 Dec	27 Dec		
12 Dec	WS 43	13 Dec	26 Dec		
-	WS 44	17 Dec	30 Dec	City of Singapore 3 rd Jan – 9 th Feb	by 11 Feb
19 Dec	WS 45	20 Dec	2 Jan	Clan Ross 9 th Jan – 21 st Feb (Oban)	by 22 Feb
-	WS 46	24 Dec	6 Jan	*Orion 10 th Jan – 2 nd Feb (Clyde) – 4 th Feb	by 10 Feb
26 Dec	WS 47	27 Dec	9 Jan	Staffordshire 14 th Jan – 12 th Feb (Clyde)	?
28 Dec	WS 48	31 Dec	15 Jan	City of Exeter 21 st Jan – 8 th March	?
-	WS 49	3 Jan	18 Jan		

A cover postmarked in Kisumu on 3rd October 1940 was redirected in London on 9th November. *WS 19* was overnight in Kisumu on 2nd – 3rd October, but this cover would have missed that flight and have been sent on *WS 20* that was overnight on 6th – 7th October. Mail from that flight was sent on

the *Windsor Castle* which was damaged by bombing off the coast of Northern Ireland and put into the Clyde on 5th November. According to the Singapore papers its mail was received in London on 8th November which ties with the redirection date on the cover.

The cover in Figure 8.1 is postmarked in Shillong, India on 5th October 1940, has a Calcutta censor mark and was redirected in the UK on 10th November. *WS 22* was overnight in Calcutta on 6th – 7th October while *WS 23* was overnight on 9th – 10th October. According to the Singapore data, mail from both these flights was carried on the *Windsor Castle*, like the cover from Kisumu that was flown on *WS 20*. Again, the redirection date fits with the mail being in London on 8th November.



Figure 8.1: Flown from Shillong, India on *WS 22* or *WS 23*, redirected in Croydon on 10th November.

A cover postmarked in Australia on 5th October was redirected in London on 25th November while another postmarked in Australia on 15th October was delivered in York on 26th November which suggests that the *WS 24* mail arrived there at the same time as the *WS 25* and *WS 26* mail that the Singapore press says was delivered on 23rd November. Similarly a cover postmarked in India on 10th October and likely flown on *WS 24* was readdressed in Surrey on 26th November.

The cover to USA in Figure 8.2 is postmarked in Australia on 22nd November 1940 and has routing instructions *Australia – England and in U.S.A.* It has franking of 2s 2d to include being flown in the USA. It would be sent on *WS 38* which arrived in Durban on 10th December. The connecting ship to the UK did not arrive there until 29th December while the cover has *Rec'd 12-26-40* in manuscript on the front. Hence, it must have been sent by sea from South Africa to the USA.

The cover in Figure 8.3 is postmarked in Greece on 13th December and is addressed to Britain. It was opened by the censors in Greece and also has an Egyptian censor mark. It was likely sent to Egypt by sea before being flown from Cairo to Durban. Greece had been invaded by Italy in October. I have the scan of a cover from Greece to Britain postmarked on 1st April 1941 with a

Cairo transit mark on 15th April. It was also opened by the censors in Greece, but this gives an indication of the Greece – Egypt transit time.



Figure 8.2: Australia to USA, sent from South Africa to USA by sea.



Figure 8.3: Postmarked Greece on 13th December 1940, sent to UK via Egypt.

The cover in Figure 8.4 is postmarked in New South Wales at 5.30 pm on 19th December. As it was opened by the censors, it likely missed *WS 45* which left Sydney early in the morning of the 20th and so would be flown on *WS 46* which arrived in Durban on 6th January. It was redirected in the UK on

11th February and was possibly carried on the *Orion* which left Cape Town on 10th January and arrived in the UK on 4th February.



Figure 8.4: Postmarked Australia on 19th December 1940, redirected in UK on 11th February 1941. Likely flown on *WS 46*.

The following covers are also known:

- α) to Zagreb postmarked in Melbourne on 1st October 1940 with an Athens transit on 27th October. It would have been sent on *WS 23* and offloaded in Basra on 11th October before being sent on the *Taurus Express* to Istanbul.
- β) postmarked in Rangoon on 9th November was redirected in London on 17th December and so would have been flown on *WS 32*.
- χ) to UK postmarked in Sydney on 18th November with *Received 6th Jany 1941* in manuscript on the front. It would be flown on *WS 36*.
- δ) postmarked in New Zealand on 2nd December 1940 and addressed to the *NZEF* in Egypt that was redirected to the *Camp Commandants' Office* and has '*arrived 23/12/40*' in manuscript. It would have been flown trans-Tasman on 5th December and then on *WS 41* that arrived in Cairo on 15th December.
- ε) registered cover postmarked in Allahabad on 29th November 1940, redirected in Braintree, Essex on 8th January. *WS 37* was in Allahabad on the 29th, but not clear if it was carried on that service or on *WS 38*. The mail from both services was reported to have been delivered in London on 4th January.
- φ) registered cover postmarked in Baghdad on 3rd December 1940 with a Rochester, Kent backstamp on 5th January. *WS 38* left Habbaniyah on 4th December and arrived in Durban on the 10th. Its mail was reported to have been delivered in London on 4th January.
- γ) postmarked in Singapore on 6th December with *Received Monday Jan 20 1941* in Worcestershire on the front. *WS 40* was overnight in Singapore on 6th – 7th December.
- η) postmarked in India on 10th December 1940 and redirected in the UK on 11th February 1941. *WS 41* left Calcutta on 12th December and Karachi on 13th December and arrived in Durban on 19th December. It is not clear which ship carried it to the UK.
- ι) postmarked in Melbourne on 16th December and redirected in London on 11th February 1941. It would connect in Darwin with *WS 44* that had left Sydney on 17th December and carried from Cape Town on the *City of Singapore* that arrived in the UK on 9th February.

β) From Durban 1940

Proud [Pr] lists the ships that carried mail from Britain to South Africa and associates them with the dispatches from London. The table below attempts to associate these dispatches with flights from Durban to Sydney. It takes dates and loads of London dispatches from the *Overseas Mail Branch Reports* [OMB40] and uses information on ship dates from Convoy Web [CW] except where stated. The capacity of mails on each Durban – Sydney flight was around 2,200 lbs [OMB40] and so it was usual for more than one flight to be required to carry the mail.

London dispatch	Ships UK – Cape Town	Flight No	Leave Durban	Arrive Sydney
28/8 3080lbs	Warwick Castle 28/8 – 17/9	NE 19	23 Sep	6 Oct
		NE 20	25 Sep	8 Oct
	? no connection	NE 21	28 Sep	10 Oct
		NE 22	2 Oct	15 Oct
		NE 23	5 Oct	18 Oct
11/9 2365lbs	Roslin Castle 12/9 – 1/10 [Pr]	NE 24	9 Oct	22 Oct
4/9 2319lbs	*Durban Castle 10/9 – 4/10	NE 25	12 Oct	25 Oct
17/9 2270lbs	Windsor Castle 19/9 (Clyde) – 7/10	NE 26	16 Oct	29 Oct
		NE 27	19 Oct	31 Oct
24/9 2904lbs	Richmond Castle 25/9 – ? [Pr]	NE 28	23 Oct	4 Nov
		NE 29	26 Oct	9 Nov
1/10 3061lbs 8/10 2941lbs	Winchester Castle 7/10 – 28/10 Roxburgh Castle 13/10 – 2/11 [Pr]	NE 30	30 Oct	11 Nov
		NE 31	2 Nov	15 Nov
		NE 32	6 Nov	19 Nov
14/10 3289lbs	Arundel Castle 19/10 – 8/11	NE 33	9 Nov	22 Nov
		NE 34	13 Nov	25 Nov
No dispatch on 21/10	No Union Castle sailing	NE 35	16 Nov	29 Nov
		NE 36	20 Nov	3 Dec
29/10 6503lbs	Rochester Castle 31/10 – 19/11	NE 37	23 Nov	6 Dec
		NE 38	27 Nov	9 Dec
		NE 39	30 Nov	13 Dec
?3/11 5039lbs	?ship unknown, met with accident, returned, mail sent on Roslin Castle No connection	NE 40	4 Dec	17 Dec
		NE 41	7 Dec	19 Dec
9/11 2073lbs	Narkunda 12/11 – 6/12	NE 42	11 Dec	24 Dec
12/11 935lbs +6503lbs	Roslin Castle 12/11 – 7/12 [Pr]	NE 43	14 Dec	26 Dec
		NE 44	18 Dec	31 Dec
		NE 45	21 Dec	3 Jan
14/11 1959lbs	*Tribesman 20/11 – 1/12 sunk Mails lost, so no connection	NE 46	25 Dec	2 Jan
		NE 47	28 Dec	6 Jan
21/11 3923lbs	Robert Maersk 1/12 – 26/12	NE 48	1 Jan	11 Jan

A cover postmarked in UK on 23rd August has a Calcutta receiver on 3rd October and would have been sent on the *Warwick Castle* and then on *NE 20* which arrived in Calcutta on 2nd October.

The cover in Figure 8.5 is postmarked in the UK on 29th August 1940 and backstamped in Sydney on 23rd October. The backstamp suggests that it was flown on *NE 24* (the first flight from Durban on *Schedule C*) which left Durban on 9th October and arrived in Sydney on 22nd October.

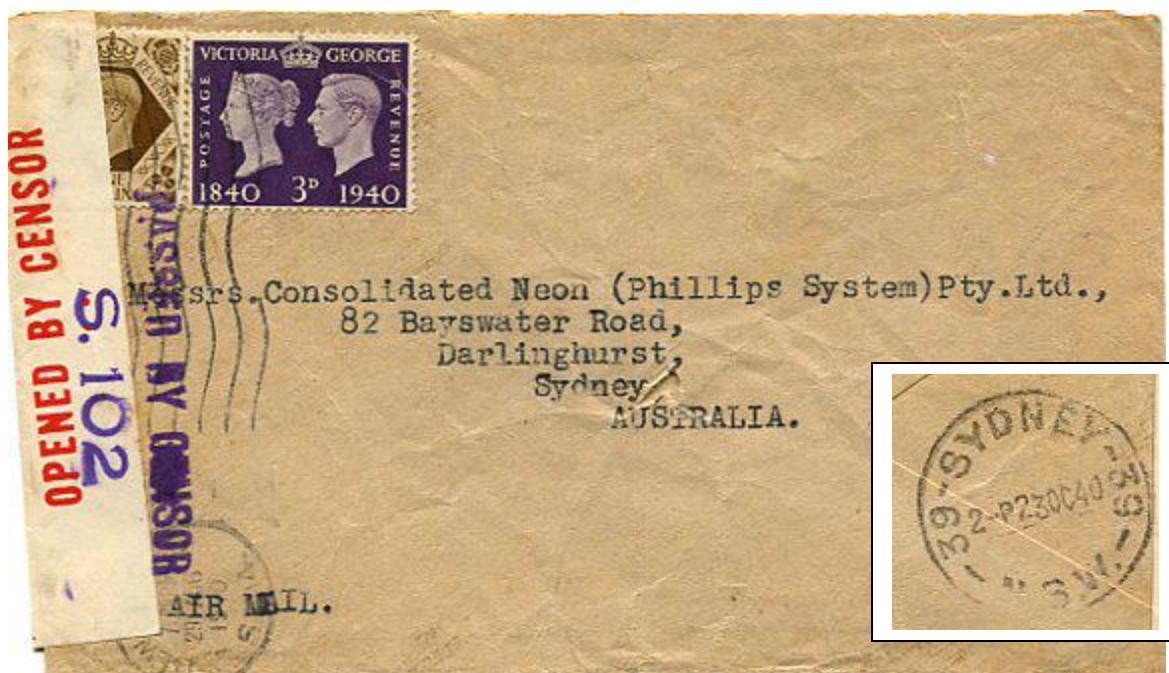


Figure 8.5: UK to Australia, likely flown on NE 24.

There was a dispatch from London on 4th September of 2319 lb [OMB40]. Proud [Pr] does not name the mailship that carried this mail, nor does he give dates. A possibility is the *Durban Castle* which sailed from Liverpool as part of *Convoy AP 3/1* on 10th September, and arrived in Cape Town on 4th October [CW]. If mail was carried it would connect with *NE 24*.

A cover postmarked in London on 7th September and addressed to Alexandria has a Cairo transit on 9th October. It would have been sent on the *Roslin Castle* on the dispatch of 11th September and then flown on *NE 23*. A cover postmarked in Welwyn, Herts on 26 September and addressed to Palestine has Affula backstamps on 13 and 14 November. Likely sent on the *Winchester Castle* and then *NE 33*.

Covers postmarked in Newcastle on 25th October and Torquay on 14th October and addressed to Abadan (Iran) and Calcutta were backstamped there on 11th and 12th December respectively. They would be carried on *NE 40* which arrived in Basra on 9th and Calcutta on 11th December. Due to the lack of a dispatch on 21st October, three flights were required to deal with the next dispatch. A cover postmarked in Stockport on 28th October with an Indian backstamp on 26th December was likely sent on the dispatch of 3rd October whose ship met with an accident. The mail was returned and sent on the *Roslin Castle* before being flown on *NE 44*.

8.4 Mail from Forces in the Middle East

A major use of the *Horseshoe Route* was mail from the forces in the Middle East to Britain, India, Australia and New Zealand. A cover postmarked on 25th September 1940 with an *F.P.O.* and *K.W.* postmark was redirected in Auckland on Monday 14th October. It would have been flown on one of *NE 19*, *NE 20* or *NE 21* that left Cairo on 27th, 29th September and 2nd October respectively and arrived in Sydney on 6th, 8th and 10th October. The next trans Tasman flight was on 11th October.

The cover in Figure 8.6 is postmarked *Ind B.P.O.* on 7th November 1940 and is addressed to Westmorland where it was redirected on 17th December. Flight *WS 30* left Cairo 2 days late on 9th November while *WS 29* (7 days late) and *WS 31* (on time) both left Cairo on 10th November and the arrival dates in Durban were 13th, 13th and 14th December respectively. These flights likely

connected in Cape Town with the *Athlone Castle* which sailed 23rd November – 10th December with the mail being delivered in London on 13th December.

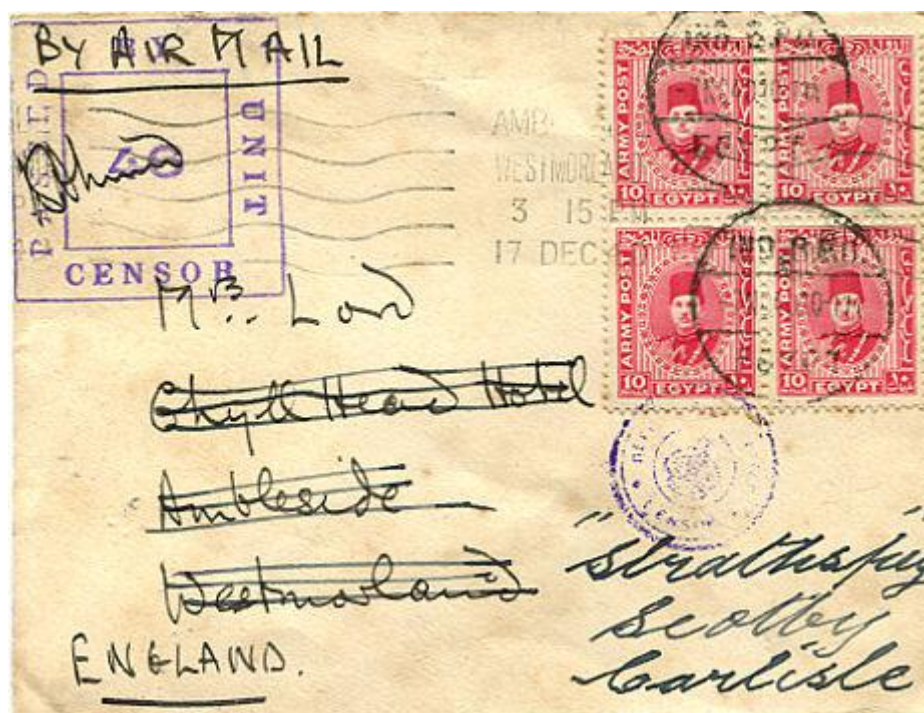


Figure 8.6: Troop mail from Egypt to UK in November 1940.

A cover postmarked at a Field Post Office in Egypt on 20th November that was redirected in Cumberland on 2nd January 1941 would have been flown on one of *WS 33 – 35* and then sent on the *Rochester Castle* whose mail was delivered in London on 31st December. From January 1941, troop mail from Egypt to Britain was no longer sent by the *Horseshoe Route*, but flown instead to West Africa and sent by sea from there as discussed in Section 8.7.

Figure 8.7 shows a cover with a *BPO* (Base Post Office) and *KW* postmark which was introduced in September 1940. It was used by the *New Zealand Divisional Office* in Maadi which was moved to Helwan in December 1940 which is where this letter would have been processed. A description of the *NZEF* Postal Service is given in [NZE]. The cover is postmarked on 26th January and the franking includes an *Army Post* Egyptian stamp at least one of which had to be used to make up the airmail rate to New Zealand of 40 mills. It was flown on flight *NE 55* that left Cairo on 29th January 1941 and arrived in Sydney on 7th February. There was a trans-Tasman flight on 9th February and it would then be flown by internal New Zealand services to Christchurch where it was redirected on 10th February.

Before 26th November 1940, mail from Palestine was franked with Palestinian stamps, but after that forces mail could be franked with Australian or British stamps [Sta]. (New Zealand stamps did not become available until March 1941 and in Egypt, Egyptian stamps had to be used on forces mail until 1st May 1941.)

The cover in Figure 8.8 is an early use of Australian stamps in Palestine. It is postmarked 28th November 1940 at *Base P.O. B.W.I.* in Palestine and was redirected in Footscray (a suburb of Melbourne) at 5.30 pm on Monday 9th December. Flight *NE 38* left Cairo on 1st December and arrived in Darwin on 7th December. Mail for Victoria and South Australia was off-loaded in Darwin and sent by *Guinea Airways* from Darwin to Adelaide on 8th December. Mail for Victoria was then transferred to the connecting *Australia National Airways* service to Melbourne on 9th December.

This use of internal Australian air mail services meant that *Horseshoe* mail arrived in Melbourne the same day as it arrived in Sydney.



Figure 8.7: NZEF cover Egypt – New Zealand, 26th January – 10th February, flown on NE 55.

A registered cover addressed to Tasmania with a *Base P.O. B.W.I.* on 5th March 1941 has a Melbourne registration mark at 11.30 am on 13th March and an untimed Hobart registration mark also on 13th May. *NE 65* left Cairo on 5th May and arrived in Darwin on 11th May and Sydney on 13th May. The cover was off-loaded in Darwin and sent by air to Adelaide and then Melbourne in the same way as the previous cover before being flown to Hobart by *Australia National Airways*.

8.5 KLM Service

There was a meeting at the Air Ministry on 12th March 1941 with the agenda '*Reduction of Frequency of the Empire Flying Boat Service Durban – Sydney*' [EAS]. The plan was to reduce the frequency from twice to once weekly so that more pilots could be transferred to the ferrying of bombers and flying boats to the UK from the USA and Canada. A telegram was sent to the High Commissioners of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa on 13th March to obtain the views of these three governments. There was a further meeting on 7th April. One proposal was for the reduced service to be augmented by *KLM* flying an additional service on which 'Troop Mail' would be carried between Lydda and Singapore.

From July 1940, *KLM* had run a weekly service between Lydda (Palestine) and Bandung (Dutch East Indies) operated by *DC3* aircraft while *KNILM* ran a service from Batavia to Sydney. *KLM* carried mail from Middle East Forces to Singapore when a backlog built up, but *Qantas* were against the *KNILM* service carrying the mail on to Sydney.



Figure 8.8: Palestine to Australia, postmarked 28th November 1940.

The report in the *West Australian* on 6th March 1941 shows that the coordination between *BOAC/Qantas* and *KLM/KNILM* was not without its problems. A *KLM* plane had arrived in Batavia on 3rd March with 40,000 items from Australian troops. Although a flying boat bound for Australia had arrived shortly afterwards, it did not take any of this mail which was instead returned to Singapore. *KNILM* were not allowed to carry the mail to Australia. More details were given in the *Adelaide Advertiser* of 13th March which gives a description of the operation of mail transfer to the flying boats and how tight the schedule was. The launch carrying the mail for the flying boat had already set off before the flying boat had landed. One issue was why the mail had been flown to Batavia rather than being off-loaded in Singapore, but that apparently was because the *BOAC* representative in Lydda had wrongly addressed the mail.

The *West Australian* on 15th April described how negotiations were continuing for the amount of mail carried by *KLM* to be increased and an agreement to carry 'Troop Mail' to Singapore was agreed at the end of May as described in Chapter 9.

A major use of the *KLM* service from the Dutch East Indies was to send mail to the occupied Netherlands. The mail was enclosed in special *Red Cross* envelopes and sent first to Geneva and sent on from there [Ver2]. The route was by *KLM* to Baghdad and from there on the *Taurus Express* (taking 3 days) to Istanbul and then on the *Orient Express* to Switzerland although this ended in March 1941 when the war spread to the Balkans [Van]. The rate was 35c. A commercial cover franked with 55c postmarked on 11th September in Djember (East Java) with routing instructions *KLM to Bagdad* was redirected in Switzerland on 1st October. It was likely flown from Bandung on 15th September, arriving in Baghdad on 19th September before being sent on the *Taurus Express*.

A portion of this mail was censored by the Germans. As the mail had entered German occupied territory on a train from Istanbul, it was censored in Vienna which is where mail from the Balkans, Hungary and Turkey was dealt with. Such a cover, postmarked on 11th November 1940, is shown in Figure 8.9. The German censor tape has a 'g' below the swastika which was the code for Vienna. Some of the mail around this time from the Dutch East Indies to Switzerland via Baghdad has Italian censor marks.



Figure 8.9: Dutch East Indies to Switzerland by KLM, censored in Vienna.

8.6 Loss of mail

According to the *Post Office Circulars* [PO], three despatches of mail on the *Horseshoe Route* were lost, all due to the sinking of ships between UK and Cape Town. Two are discussed here and the third in Section 10.5. A much larger amount of surface mail was lost as it was often sent by sea across the Atlantic which saw the greatest amount of enemy action.

According to the *Post Office Circular* of 22nd January 1941, air mail posted in the UK on 12th – 14th November was lost between London and Cape Town and this was reported in the Australian and New Zealand press a few days later. There was a further report in the *Wellington Evening Post* of 28th February 1941 [EP]. A possible ship is the *Tribesman* which left Liverpool on Convoy OB 246 [CW] on 20th November and was sunk 500 miles west of Cape Verde Islands by the *Admiral Scheer* on 1st December.

According to the *Post Office Circular* of 23rd April, mails posted in the UK for the period 4th – 6th March and sent to Cape Town for dispatch on the *Horseshoe Route* were lost [PO]. This was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 26th April 1941. This mail was dispatched on 7th March and, according to Proud, sailed on the *Britannia* on 8th March. The *Britannia* was sunk on 25th

March, 750 miles west of Freetown.

According to Proud, the dispatch on 9th May went on the *Clan Macdougall*. That ship left Liverpool on 12th May and, according to *Convoyweb* [CW], was sunk by a U-Boat on 31st May near Cape Verde Islands. However, I have not seen any report of mails being lost at this time.

8.7 Forces Air Mail: UK – Middle East via West Africa

According to *OMB 69* on 4th January 1941 [OMB41], air mail from the UK for Palestine, Egypt and the Sudan was dispatched on 2nd January for voyage by sea to West Africa to be dispatched by air from Takoradi, Gold Coast Colony (modern Ghana) to Cairo. The capacity on the trans-African service was limited and so there was only a connection with the *Horseshoe* service beyond the Middle East for official mail. However, from this time air mail to: Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan, Sudan, Cyprus, Syria, Turkey, Aden, Belgian Congo and French Equatorial Africa was sent by sea to West Africa and then by the trans-African air mail services. Routing this air mail via West Africa greatly reduced the load on the *Horseshoe Route* between Durban and Cairo.

According to *OMB 85* on 26th April 1941 [OMB41], the Cairo – Takoradi air service had been extended to Freetown and 880 lb per week of the air mails for the Middle East were sent by sea to Freetown and flown from there in addition to mails being sent by sea to Takoradi.

The cover in Figure 8.10 is postmarked in Palestine on 15th April and was redirected in Scarborough on 20th May and the service compared with the best 1941 transit times on the *Horseshoe Route* and was much better than the average. It would have been flown from Cairo to Takoradi and sent from there by sea. There was an air service from UK to West Africa, but it was primarily used for official purposes and its air mail use was limited to airgraphs and some thin postcards.



Figure 8.10: Palestine – UK flown on trans-African service and by sea from Takoradi.

The Takoradi – Cairo service was quite complex. From August 1940 until March 1941 there was one flight each week using *Lockheed 14* and one using *DH 86* (and after November 1940 *Lockheed 10A Electra*) aircraft. From December 1940 there was an additional *DH 86* service which was

increased to twice a week from February to October 1941. The route for these services was Takoradi – Accra – Lagos – Fort Lamy – El Fasher – Khartoum – Wadi Halfa – Cairo. There were also services on the Takoradi – Khartoum section of this route.

An additional weekly service was operated from October 1940 on charter by *Sabena* on the route: Takoradi – Lagos – Stanleyville – Juba – Khartoum – Wadi Halfa – Cairo. *Junkers Ju 52* were used from Takoradi to Stanleyville and then *Lockheed 14* to Cairo. After May 1941, the Juba – Cairo section was flown by *BOAC* flying boats (extended to Lagos – Cairo in July) and the Takoradi – Juba section by *Sabena* was twice weekly [Da1, Wil]. In November 1941, *Pan American* introduced a thrice-weekly service between Takoradi and Khartoum operated by *Douglas DC-4s* [Wil].

The capacity of the air transport was still limited and various innovations were made to reduce the weight of mail, namely *Airgraphs*, *thin postcards* and *air mail letter cards*.

a) Airgraphs

According to *OMB 88* on 17th May 1941 [OMB41], the first *Airgraph* mail from the Middle East arrived in the UK on 13th May. The first *Airgraph* mail from the UK to the Middle East was made on 17th August 1941 [OMB41]. *Airgraphs* were sent all the way by air between UK and Cairo via West Africa.

There had been special flights between the UK and West Africa from August 1940 and a regular service started in November with the frequency increasing in May 1941 [Win]. This service was not available for civil air mail [Bei]. Startup shows an official cover from New Zealand to the UK in August 1941 which is routed *via Khartoum, Lagos, Bathurst & West African Flying Boat*. The franking was 4s 6d [Sta].

b) Thin Postcards and Air Mail Letter Cards

According to *OMB 84* on 19th April 1941 [OMB41]:

“The first despatch of ‘thin postcards’ by air all the way to the Forces in the Middle East etc., was made on the 12th of April. The weight of the mail was 341 kilogrammes (750 lb), representing about 102,000 postcards.”

According to [Wil]:

- a) Light post cards could be sent from the United Kingdom to H.M. Forces in the Middle east, East Africa and Malta, and to Naval personnel in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- b) Airgraphs could be used for correspondence to H.M. Forces in the Middle East, and for Naval personnel in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- c) Rationed air-letter forms and Airgraphs could be sent home by H.M. Forces in the Middle East, and Naval personnel in the Eastern Mediterranean. The air-letter forms were liable to be sent by sea from Durban or Lagos if air conveyance from there could not be provided.”

The *Air Mail Letter Cards* (*i.e. air-letter forms*) could be sent from the Middle East to the UK from 1st March 1941. From 12th May they became available to all allied forces for mail to the UK. They became available for mail from Middle East forces to Australia and New Zealand on 5th July 1941 [Sta]. The postage rate was 3d.

8.8 Dates for Auckland – Sydney – Durban – London: January – April 1941

The dates from 7th January 1941 until the disruption caused by the revolt in Iraq are given below. There is a clear deterioration in journey times.

There is a gap in the Singapore data on London delivery times until *WS 53*. Ships not listed by Proud are marked with an asterisk.

Flights from Sydney 31st December 1940 – 22nd April, 1941					
Trans-Tasman	Flight No	Leave Sydney	Arrive Durban	Ship: Cape Town – UK	London Delivery
4, 6 Jan	WS 50	7 Jan	21 Jan	Ajax 4 th Feb – 28 th Feb	?
9 Jan	WS 51	10 Jan	23 Jan	City of Rangoon 4 th Feb – 26 th March	
11 Jan	WS 52	14 Jan	28 Jan	City of Kimberley 7 th Feb – 26 th March Clan Macarthur 13 th Feb – 9 th March Clan Lamont 19 th Feb – 17 th March	
16 Jan	WS 53	17 Jan	30 Jan		
18 Jan	WS 54	21 Jan	4 Feb	*??City of Bath 25 th Feb – 17 th April (Oban)	23 Apr
-	WS 55	24 Jan	7 Feb		
25 Jan	WS 56	28 Jan	10 Feb		
30 Jan	WS 57	31 Jan	13 Feb	Rochester Castle 23 rd Feb – 27 th Mar [Pr]	2 Apr
3 Feb	WS 58	4 Feb	18 Feb		
-	WS 59	7 Feb	20 Feb		
8 Feb	WS 60	11 Feb	24 Feb	Clan Chattan 9 th Mar – 3 rd April (Clyde)	5 Apr
13 Feb	WS 61	14 Feb	27 Feb		
-	WS 62	18 Feb	3 Mar		
-	WS 63	21 Feb	9 Mar	Clan MacTaggart 17 th Mar – 3 rd May (Clyde)	9 May
22 Feb	WS 64	25 Feb	10 Mar		
27 Feb	WS 65	28 Feb	13 Mar		
1 Mar	WS 66	4 Mar	17 Mar	??	26 Apr
4 Mar	WS 67	7 Mar	22 Mar	*Ormonde 4 th – 26 th Apr (Clyde)	29 Apr
8 Mar	WS 68	11 Mar	25 Mar		
-	WS 69	14 Mar	28 Mar		
15 Mar	WS 70	18 Mar	1 Apr	*Winchester Castle 10 th – 29 th Apr (Clyde)	2 May
-	WS 71	21 Mar	4 Apr		
22 Mar	WS 72	25 Mar	7 Apr		
-	WS 73	28 Mar	10 Apr	*Capetown Castle 22 nd Apr – 11 th May (Clyde)	14 May
29 Mar	WS 74	1 Apr	15 Apr		
1, 3 Apr	WS 75	4 Apr	17 Apr		
-	WS 76	8 Apr	21 Apr	*Windsor Castle 27 th Apr – 16 th May (Clyde)	19 May
10 Apr	WS 77	11 Apr	24 Apr	??	??
12 Apr	WS 78	15 Apr	29 Apr		
17 Apr	WS 79	18 Apr	2 May		
-	WS 80	22 Apr	5 May	*Athlone Castle 20 th May – 7 th Jun	10 Jun

The cover in Figure 8.11 is postmarked in Wellington, New Zealand on 11th January 1941 and redirected 103 days later in London on 24th April. It was likely flown from Sydney on *WS 53*, arriving in Durban on 30th January. The redirection date fits with the arrival date in London for that mail of 23rd April given in the Singapore Press [SN] and is one of the poorest transit times in the history of the *Horseshoe Route*. A cover sent by surface to the same address and redirected on the same date was postmarked in Wellington on 14th March and so only took 41 days. This is further evidence that the main purpose of having an air mail service between Australia and the UK was to boost morale.

A cover postmarked in Melbourne on 4th February 1941 was redirected in the UK on 3rd April. It was likely flown from Melbourne to Darwin and from there on *WS 58* which arrived in Durban on 18th February. That fits with the Singapore press report that this mail was delivered in London on 2nd April [SN].



Figure 8.11: New Zealand – UK, 11th January – 24th April, 103 days in transit

The next two covers have a less good fit. The cover in Figure 8.12 is postmarked in New Zealand on 31st January 1941, was likely flown Auckland – Sydney on 3rd February and then from Sydney on *WS 58* and redirected 67 days later in Kent on 8th April. A registered cover postmarked in Bangkok on 7th February was backstamped in London on 9th April. *WS 58* left Bangkok on 9th and *WS 59* on 12th February and the mail from both these services arrived in the UK on 2nd April [SN]. That is a significant time before the London backstamp.

According to [SN], mail from *WS 60*, *61* and *62* arrived in the UK on 5th April. The cover in Figure 8.13 is postmarked on 7th February one week later than the previous cover, but redirected in Falmouth on the same day: 8th April. It was possibly flown Auckland – Sydney on 13th February and then on *WS 61* which left Sydney on 14th February and arrived in Durban on 27th February. A cover postmarked in Calcutta on 17th February 1941 and redirected in Hounslow, Middlesex on 7th April fits with it being flown on *WS 60* or *WS 61*. Another cover, postmarked in Sydney on 17th February and likely flown on *WS 62*, was redirected in Bristol on 7th April.

Covers postmarked in Australia on 4th March were redirected in London and Essex on 30th April and 1st May respectively. They would have been sent on *WS 67* on 7th March whose mail was delivered in London on 29th April.

The cover in Figure 8.14 is postmarked in Sydney on 12th March 1941 and has an Egyptian transit mark on 25th March. It is addressed to Port Said and has both Australian and Egyptian censor marks. It would have been flown on *WS 69* that left Sydney on 14th March and arrived in Cairo on 23rd March. It demonstrates that while there were major delays in mail to and from Britain, the Australia – Egypt section was working efficiently.

A cover postmarked in Delhi on 3rd April and redirected several times in the UK, with the only redirection mark on 18th May was likely sent on *WS 74* whose mail was delivered in London on 14th May.



Figure 8.12: New Zealand – UK, 31st January – 8th April, likely flown on *WS 58*.



Figure 8.13: New Zealand – UK, 7th February – 8th April, possibly flown on *WS 61*.

Legg shows a cover postmarked Soerabaia in the Dutch East Indies on 9th April 1941, which has in manuscript on the front that it was received 48 days later in Aberdeenshire on 27th May [Leg4]. It has a *per Imperial Airways* handstamp and was opened by the censors in both Soerabaia and the UK. *WS 76* was overnight in Soerabaia (Sourabaya) on 10th – 11th April and *WS 77* on 13th – 14th April. They arrived in Durban on 21st and 24th April. According to the Singapore papers, mail from both these flights was delivered in London on 19th May. The delay in this cover's delivery could be because it was dealt with by the UK censors.



Figure 8.14: Australia – Egypt flown on *WS 69*

WS 69				WS 76			
Sydney	dep	14 Mar	Cooe	Sydney	dep	8 Ap	Circe
Townsville	o'n	14-15 Mar	Cooe	Townsville	o'n	8-9 Ap	Circe
Darwin	o'n	15-16 Mar	Cooe	Darwin	o'n	9-10 Ap	Circe
Sourabaya	o'n	16-17 Mar	Cooe	Sourabaya	o'n	10-11 Ap	Circe
Singapore	arr	17 Mar	Cooe	Singapore	arr	11 Ap	Circe
Singapore	dep	18 Mar	Corinthian	Singapore	dep	12 Ap	Cleopatra
Bangkok	o'n	18-19 Mar	Corinthian	Bangkok	o'n	12-13 Ap	Cleopatra
Calcutta	o'n	19-20 Mar	Corinthian	Calcutta	o'n	13-14 Ap	Cleopatra
Karachi	o'n	20-21 Mar	Corinthian	Karachi	o'n	14-15 Ap	Cleopatra
Basra	o'n	21-22 Mar	Corinthian	Basra	o'n	15-16 Ap	Cleopatra
Habbaniyeh	o'n	22-23 Mar	Corinthian	W Cairo	o'n	16-17 Ap	Cleopatra
Cairo	o'n	23-24 Mar	Corinthian	Khartoum	o'n	17-18 Ap	Cleopatra
Khartoum	o'n	24-25 Mar	Corinthian	Kisumu	o'n	18-19 Ap	Cleopatra
Kisumu	o'n	25-26 Mar	Corinthian	Mozambique	o'n	19-20 Ap	Cleopatra
Mozambique	o'n	26-27 Mar	Corinthian	Vaalbank	o'n	20-21 Ap	Cleopatra
Vaalbank	o'n	27-28 Mar	Corinthian	Durban	arr	21 Ap	Cleopatra
Durban	arr	28 Mar	Corinthian				

A cover postmarked in Johannesburg on 5th May was received in London on 10th June. Another cover was postmarked in Singapore on 25th April and so would have been flown from there on 26th April on *WS 80*. It was received in Scotland on 11th June. Both fit with the Singapore newspaper data for *WS 80*.

8.9 Mail from UK, December – March 1941

Proud [Pr] lists the ships that carried mail from Britain to South Africa and associates them with the dispatches from London. The table below takes dates and loads on London dispatches from the

Overseas Mail Branch Reports [OMB40, OMB41] and uses information on ship dates from Convoy Web [CW], except where stated.

For the arrivals from 24th January onwards, the Singapore press gives information on whether or not the arriving flying boat carried mail for Singapore from Britain and that is shown in the following table where arrival dates in Singapore are given instead of arrival dates in Sydney. However, the fact that no mail was carried for Singapore does not necessarily mean that no mail from Britain was carried. On occasions, several ships arrived in Cape Town close together and so several flights would be required to clear the mail. Mail was not necessarily forwarded in the order that it arrived in Durban and mail for a given destination could be grouped together and sent on a particular flight.

Arrival or non-arrival of UK Mail in Singapore					
London dispatch	Ships UK – Cape Town	Flight No	Leave Durban	Arrive Singapore	UK mail
21/11 3923lbs	Robert Maersk 1/12 – 26/12	NE 48	1 Jan	11 Jan	?
26/11 2627lbs & 30/11 2847lbs & 1/12 552lbs	All by same ship, date??	NE 49	4 Jan	13 Jan	?
		NE 50	8 Jan	16 Jan	?
3/12 656lbs	Asphalion (Oban) 11/12 – 8/1/41	NE 51	11 Jan	19 Jan	?
-	No connection	NE 52	15 Jan	24 Jan	No
		NE 53	18 Jan	26 Jan	No
7/12 2966lbs & 12/12 2235lbs	Clan Macquarrie 13/12 – 13/1/41	NE 54	22 Jan	31 Jan	Yes
25/12 2031lbs	?? 26/12 -18/1 [Pr]	NE 55	25 Jan	3 Feb	No
15/12 1569lbs	Bhutan 18/12 – 26/1 (Durban)	NE 56	29 Jan	6 Feb	Yes
20/12 2690lbs	??	NE 57	1 Feb	10 Feb	No
		NE 58	5 Feb	14 Feb	??
		NE 59	8 Feb	16 Feb	Yes
1/1/41 2893lbs	Clan MacPherson 9/1 – 8/2	NE 60	12 Feb	20 Feb	Yes
2/1 440lbs	Buteshire 8/1 – 7/2	NE 61	15 Feb	23 Feb	No
& 6/1 1186lbs		NE 62	19 Feb	27Feb	Yes
15/1 3327lbs	Rochester Castle 19/1 – 11/2 [Pr]	NE 63	22 Feb	2 Mar	Yes
		NE 64	26 Feb	7 Mar	Yes
-	No connection	NE 65	1 Mar	9 Mar	No
22/1 2308lbs & 28/1 1815lbs	Roslin Castle 4/2 – 1/3 [Pr]	NE 66	5 Mar	13 Mar	Yes
		NE 67	8 Mar	16 Mar	Yes
3/2 1595lbs	Umtali 5/2 – 2/3 [Pr]	NE 68	12 Mar	21 Mar	No
4/2 384lbs	Roxburgh Castle 8/2 – 3/3 [Pr]	NE 69	15 Mar	24 Mar	?
5/2 485lbs	Sussex 8/2 – 2/3 [Pr]				
11/2 1765lbs	Umgeni 13/2 – 13/3 [Pr]	NE 70	19 Mar	28 Mar	Yes
12/2 627lbs	Coptic 16/2 – 14/3				
-		NE 71	22 Mar	30 Mar	No
18/2 2263lbs	Erria 22/2 – 18/3	NE 72	26 Mar	4 Apr	Yes
19/2 451lbs	Glaucus 22/2 – 22/3	NE 73	29 Mar	6 Apr	??
24/2 1919lbs	Rowallan Castle 25/2 – ? [Pr]	NE 74	2 Apr	10 Apr	Yes
28/2 1754lbs	Marwarri 5/3 – 1/4	NE 75	6 Apr	14 Apr	Yes
4/3 1278 lbs	Richmond Castle 8/3 – 1/4 [Pr]				
10/3 < 893lbs	Clan Buchanan 12/3 – 7/4	NE 76	9 Apr	17 Apr	Yes
7/3 1308lbs	Britannia 8/3 – 25/3 (sunk)	NE 77	12 Apr	20 Apr	No
10/3 < 893lbs	Sarpedon 12/3 – 12/4 [Pr]	NE 78	16 Apr	25 Apr	Yes?
-	No connection	NE 79	19Apr	27 Apr	No
		NE 80	23 Apr	1 May	No
		NE 81	26 Apr	10 May	??

A cover postmarked in UK on 25th November was redirected in India on 14th January and so was

likely flown on *NE 49*, but the ship from UK is unclear.

There were complaints that the air mail service from the UK was at times worse than surface mail. A letter in *The Straits Times* of 3rd March states that an air mail letter posted in the UK on 23rd December was not delivered in Singapore until 28th February (i.e. on *NE 62*) while a surface letter from the UK posted on the same day was delivered on 25th February [SN]. There was a dispatch from the UK on 25th December, but Proud shows the connecting ship arriving in South Africa on 18th January and so the 23rd December letter cannot have been sent then. According to *OMB 69* and *70* [OMB41], there were dispatches from London on 1st, 2nd and 6th January and Proud [Pr] lists that the mail from these dispatches left UK on 9th January on the *Buteshire* and *Clan MacPherson* and arrived in South Africa on 7th and 8th February. A postcard from UK to Pondicherry in French India postmarked on 14th December has a Pondicherry delivery mark on 23rd February. It was delayed by the censors (Crown Passed P 85) and so would be delayed in UK. Perhaps eventually going on *NE 60*. Another cover postmarked in Stockport on 14th December did not arrive in Lansdowne in North India until 1st March.

Two covers to Uganda made better time. The first is postmarked in Dawlish, Devon on 1st January, it would have been sent on the *Buteshire* and then on *NE 60* which arrived in Kisumu on 13th February. The cover is backstamped in Entebbe on 14th February. The second is postmarked in Dawlish on 13th January and backstamped in Entebbe on 18th February and would have been sent on the *Rochester Castle* and then on *NE 61*. However, a third cover to Uganda postmarked in Dawlish on 23rd December is backstamped in Entebbe on 17th February and so took much longer.

The total weight of Horseshoe mail arriving in South Africa between 7th and 11th February was 7846 lb [OMB41] and so it would have taken four flights to clear it (*NE 60* – *NE 63*). *NE 61* did not carry mail from UK to Singapore while *NE 62* left Durban on 19th February and arrived in Singapore on 27th February and so would likely have carried the letter of 23rd December.

A cover caught up in this backlog of mail is in Figure 8.15. It was postmarked in Bath on 31st December 1940 and likely sent on the *Clan Macpherson* or the *Buteshire*. It was backstamped in Waipaoa (near Gisborne) 70 days later on 11th March 1941 and so was likely flown on the trans-Tasman flight from Sydney on 8th March. That would carry the mail from *NE 63* that left Durban on 22nd February and arrived in Sydney on 6th March. Two covers postmarked in UK on 26th December, the first backstamped in Calcutta on 1st March and the other in Sydney on 7th March would have been on the same flight.

Another example of mail delay at this time is the complaint in *The Mercury* (Hobart) of 24th March that a letter sent by air mail from England on 6th January did not arrive in Hobart until 10th March. It would have been sent on the *Rochester Castle* and flown on *NE 63*. Another cover with a similar journey was postmarked in Doncaster on 9th January and backstamped in Karachi on 28th February as *NE 63* arrived in Karachi on 27th February. A cover postmarked in UK on 2nd January and carried on the *Buteshire* made slightly better time. It has an Indian backstamp at Almora on 20th February and so would likely have been flown to Gwalior as *NE 60* arrived there on 18th February.

A cover postmarked in Ireland on 16th January was addressed to India where it was datestamped on 13th March. It was opened by both the Irish censors and the censors in Bombay. It would have been carried on the *Roslin Castle* which arrived in Cape Town on 1st March was then flown on *NE 66* on 5th March arriving in Karachi on 10th March. A registered cover postmarked in Middlesex on 24th January has a registration mark in Greymouth, New Zealand on 26th March was also likely carried on the *Roslin Castle*. It was been flown trans-Tasman on 23rd March and so would have been flown on either *NE 66* or *NE 67* that arrived in Sydney respectively on the 17th and 20th March.



Figure 8.15: UK – New Zealand: 31st December – 11th March, likely flown on NE 63.

NE 63				NE 70			
Durban	dep	22 Feb	Coorong	Durban	dep	19 Mar	Ceres
Mozambique	o'n	22-23 Feb	Coorong	Mozambique	o'n	19-20 Mar	Ceres
Kisumu	arr	23 Feb	Coorong	Kisumu	arr	20 Mar	Ceres
Kisumu	dep	24 Feb	Coriolanus	Kisumu	dep	21 Mar	Castor
Khartoum	o'n	24-25 Feb	Coriolanus	Khartoum	o'n	21-22 Mar	Castor
Cairo	arr	25 Feb	Coriolanus	Wadi Halfa	arr	22-23 Mar	Castor
Cairo	dep	26 Feb	Carpentaria	Cairo	arr	23 Mar	Castor
Basra	o'n	26-27 Feb	Carpentaria	Cairo	dep	24 Mar	Cleopatra
Karachi	arr	27 Feb	Carpentaria	Basra	o'n	24-25 Mar	Cleopatra
Karachi	dep	28 Feb	Cooe	Karachi	o'n	25-26 Mar	Cleopatra
Calcutta	o'n	28/2-1/3	Cooe	Calcutta	o'n	26-27 Mar	Cleopatra
Bangkok	o'n	1-2 Mar	Cooe	Bangkok	o'n	27-28 Mar	Cleopatra
Singapore	o'n	2-3 Mar	Cooe	Singapore	arr	28 Mar	Cleopatra
Sourabaya	o'n	3-4 Mar	Cooe	Singapore	dep	29 Mar	Carpentaria
Darwin	o'n	4-5 Mar	Cooe	Sourabaya	o'n	29-30 Mar	Carpentaria
Townsville	o'n	5-6 Mar	Cooe	Darwin	o'n	30-31 Mar	Carpentaria
Sydney	arr	6 Mar	Cooe	Townsville	o'n	31/3-1/4	Carpentaria
				Sydney	arr	1 Apr	Carpentaria

A cover postmarked in the UK on 10th February has a Bombay backstamp on 27th March. It was likely sent on either the dispatch of 11th or 12th February and then on NE 70 and off-loaded in Karachi on 25th March.

The following four covers were addressed to Batavia, all with Dutch East Indies 'Censuur' datestamps:

- UK postmark on 15th January 1941 and 'Censuur' datestamp on 20th March. Likely carried on the *Roslin Castle* which arrived in Cape Town on 1st March [Pr] carrying a heavy mail that would require both NE 66 and NE 67 to clear. NE 67 arrived in Batavia on 17th March.
- UK postmark on 5th February and 'Censuur' datestamp on 31st March. Likely carried on the *Umgeni* that arrived in Cape Town on 13th March [Pr]. NE 70 left Durban on 19th March and arrived in Batavia on 29th March.

- UK postmark on 21st February 1941 with a ‘*Censuur*’ datestamp on 16th April. Possibly carried to Cape Town on the *Rowallan Castle*. It would have been flown on *NE 75* which arrived in Batavia on 15th April.
- UK postmark on 6th March 1941 with a Dutch East Indies ‘*Censuur*’ datestamp on 28th April. Likely carried on the *Sarpedon* that arrived in Cape Town on 12th April. *NE 78* left Durban on 16th April and arrived in Batavia on 25th April.

The cover in Figure 8.16 is postmarked in Plymouth on 6th February 1941. The next dispatch from London was on 11th February and Proud lists this as being carried on the *Umgeni* leaving UK on 13th February and arriving in Cape Town on 13th March. That would connect with *NE 70* that left Durban on 19th March and arrived in Darwin on 30th March. As the cover is addressed to Melbourne, it would have been sent from Darwin to Adelaide by *Guinea Airways* on 31st March – 1st April and then on the connecting *Australia National Airways* flight arriving in Melbourne on 1st April.



Figure 8.16: UK – Australia 6th February – 1st April 1941. Flown on *NE 70*. Undelivered, returned to UK.

As it was addressed *c/o G.P.O.*, it has a Melbourne receiving mark on 1st April (with a strange squiggle in from of the ‘1’). It was not claimed and there are a series of undelivered and unclaimed cachets. It has further Melbourne handstamps on 7th and 9th May when it was decided to return it to sender. This was at the time that mail was being delayed due to the rebellion in Iraq discussed in Chapter 9. There is a London receiving mark 92 days later on 9th August.

8.10 Rangoon replaces Bangkok as night stop

According to *CAIS 96* on 17th April 1941 [Win]:

“From 15th April, Rangoon will be used instead of Bangkok as a night stop on the east-bound service between Durban and Sydney operated by BOAC.”

NE 78

Durban	dep	16 Ap	Coriolanus
Mozambique	o'n	16-17 Ap	Coriolanus
Kisumu	arr	17 Ap	Coriolanus
Kisumu	dep	18 Ap	Canopus
Khartoum	o'n	18-19 Ap	Canopus
Cairo	o'n	19-20 Ap	Canopus
Tiberias	o'n	20-21 Ap	Canopus
Basra	o'n	20-21 Ap	Canopus
Karachi	arr	21Ap	Canopus
Karachi	dep	22 Ap	Corio
Calcutta	o'n	22-23 Ap	Corio
Akyab	o'n	23-24 Ap	Corio
Bangkok	o'n	24-25 Ap	Corio
Singapore	o'n	25-26 Ap	Corio
Sourabaya	o'n	26-27 Ap	Corio
Darwin	o'n	27-28 Ap	Corio
Townsville	o'n	28-29 Ap	Corio
Sydney	arr	29 Ap	Corio

NE 80

Durban	dep	23 Ap	Clifton
Mozambique	o'n	23-24Ap	Clifton
Kisumu	o'n	24-25Ap	Clifton
Khartoum	o'n	25-26 Ap	Clifton
Cairo	o'n	26-27 Ap	Clifton
Basra	o'n	27-28 Ap	Clifton
Karachi	arr	28Ap	Clifton
Karachi	dep	29 Ap	Coriolanus
Calcutta	o'n	29-30 Ap	Coriolanus
Bangkok	o'n	30/4-1/5	Coriolanus
Singapore	o'n	1-2 May	Coriolanus
Sourabaya	o'n	2-3 May	Coriolanus
Darwin	o'n	3-4 May	Coriolanus
Townsville	o'n	4-5 May	Coriolanus
Sydney	arr	5 May	Coriolanus

However, although *NE 78* which left Durban on 16th April made an extra overnight stop on 23rd – 24th April at Akyab, the first flight that replaced Bangkok by Rangoon as an overnight stop was *NE 81* which left Durban on 26th April, was overnight in Rangoon on 5th – 6th May and arrived in Sydney on 10th May. *NE 81* was the last through flight before the uprising in Iraq and is listed in the next chapter.

8.11 Use of Flying Boats to help in Evacuation from Crete

Between 22nd April and 5th May, the *BOAC* flying boats *Coorong* and *Cambria* were used to help the evacuation of allied troops from Crete to Alexandria and so were not available for use on the *Horseshoe Service*. In total 469 troops were brought out in 13 return journeys [HM].

When a flying boat on the *Horseshoe Route* arrived in Cairo, its crew were taken by car to Alexandria to man the next flying boat to Crete. The crew of the previous evacuation flight were then brought back in the car from Alexandria to Cairo so that they could fly the next *Horseshoe Service*. In this way, the evacuation flights and the *Horseshoe Service* both took place although, of course, it meant that there was little rest for the *BOAC* crews [HM]. Their schedule was as follows:

Alexandria	dep	22 Ap	Coorong	Alexandria	a-d	23 Ap	Cambria
Crete	o'n	22-23 Ap	Coorong	Crete	o'n	23-24 Ap	Cambria
Alexandria	a-d	23 Ap	Coorong	Alexandria	a-d	24 Ap	Cambria
Crete	o'n	23-24 Ap	Coorong	Crete	o'n	24-25 Ap	Cambria
Alexandria	a-d	24 Ap	Coorong	Alexandria	a-d	25 Ap	Cambria
Crete	o'n	24-25 Ap	Coorong	Crete	o'n	25-26 Ap	Cambria
Alexandria	a-d	25 Ap	Coorong	Alexandria	a-d	26 Ap	Cambria
Crete	o'n	25-26 Ap	Coorong	Crete	o'n	26-27 Ap	Cambria
Alexandria	a-d	26 Ap	Coorong	Alexandria	a-d	27 Ap	Cambria
Crete	o'n	26-27 Ap	Coorong	Crete	o'n	27-28 Ap	Cambria
Alexandria	a-d	27 Ap	Coorong	Alexandria	o'n	28-30 Ap	Cambria
Crete	o'n	27-28 Ap	Coorong	Crete	o'n	30/4-1/5	Cambria
Alexandria	o'n	28-30 Ap	Coorong	Alexandria	arr	1 May	Cambria
Crete	o'n	30/4-1/5	Coorong				
Alexandria	arr	1 May	Coorong				

8.12 Connections with trans-Pacific and Asian Services

With the closure of the route through the Mediterranean, the *Pan American* trans-Pacific air mail services became more attractive for mail to and from Europe although they were a lot more expensive. Mail could be carried on the *Horseshoe Route* to connect:

- at Bangkok with the *BOAC* service to Hong Kong and from there via *FAM 14* to San Francisco from June – October 1940,
- at Bangkok with the *Dai Nippon Airways* service to Japan from June 1940,
- at Rangoon with the *CNAC* service to Hong Kong via Chungking from October 1940 – December 1941 and then with the *FAM 14* service,
- at Singapore with the *FAM 14* service from May 1941 – December 1941,
- at Sydney with the *TEAL* service to Auckland and then *FAM 19* to San Francisco from July 1940 – December 1941.

a) Connection at Bangkok

(i) *BOAC*

The *Horseshoe Route* connected with the *BOAC* service to Hong Kong at Bangkok. Flight *HB 248* from Hong Kong on 23rd June connected at Bangkok with the first *Horseshoe* service to Durban. In the opposite direction, *BH 247* from Bangkok to Hong Kong on 24th June carried the first *Horseshoe* mail from Australia while *BH 248* on 27th June carried the first *Horseshoe* mail from Durban [Cre2].

The route was Hong Kong – Fort Bayard (i.e. Zhanjiang in China) – Hanoi (Indo China) – Udorn (Thailand) – Bangkok. Pressure from Japan on the Vichy French Government in Indo China caused the service to be suspended several times. With the last three flights in October, the stop in Hanoi was replaced by a stop in Tourane (now Da Nang). The last flight from Bangkok was *BH 279* on 15th October 1940 [Cre].

The cover in Figure 8.17 from Penang to USA is franked with \$1.90, the air mail rate from Malaya to USA via Hong Kong [Ell]. It is postmarked 11th October 1940 and likely flown Penang – Bangkok on *WS 24* on 12th October, Bangkok – Hong Kong on the last flight on 15th October and then flown from Hong Kong to San Francisco by *Pan American* on *FAM 14*.

(ii) *Dai Nippon Airways*

On 10th June 1940, *Dai Nippon Airways* inaugurated a weekly Tokyo – Bangkok service via Canton with the first return flight being on 14th June [RE]. A stop in Hanoi was added in July.

The availability of this service for mail to Australia was announced in the Australian press on 26th June 1940, but it was suspended in July due to doubts on whether the air mail from Japan would be accepted by *BOAC* in Bangkok. The resumption of a weekly air mail service via Bangkok at a rate of 2s 2d was announced in the Australian press on 17th August 1940 [Tro]. In January 1941, the Calcutta postal authorities announced that an airmail service to Japan and Manchoukuo (Japanese puppet state in China set up in the 1930s, aka Manchuria) via Bangkok was available [RE] as an alternative to *BOAC* to Singapore and then by sea.

Woollam [Wool] describes a cover postmarked on 23rd September 1940 in Harbin, Manchoukuo to London that is routed via Bangkok and Durban that would have been flown by *Dai Nippon Airways* to connect with the *Horseshoe Route*.

The *Dai Nippon* service also provided a connection from Bangkok to Europe via Tokyo using the trans-Siberian railway that was used for mail to Germany, Italy and German occupied Europe [RE].

b) Connection at Rangoon

From 25th October 1940, the connection between Hong Kong and the *Horseshoe Route* was at Rangoon and mail was flown between Rangoon and Hong Kong via Kunming and Chungking by the *Chinese National Aviation Corporation CNAC* [Cre, Cre3]. This service to the USA was more expensive than the one via Auckland.



Figure 8.17: Penang – USA posted 11th October. May have been flown on *WS 24* and then on last Bangkok – Hong Kong service before being flown from Hong Kong to USA on *FAM 14*.

A registered air mail cover postmarked in Cairo on 15th October 1940 has a Hawaii transit on 10th November and New York receivers on 15th and 16th November. Flight *NE 25* left Cairo on 17th November and arrived in Rangoon on 20th November and Singapore on 21st November. It may have been flown from Rangoon to Hong Kong or gone by sea from Singapore to Manila. A *Pan Am* flight left Hong Kong on 30th October, Manila on 7th November and arrived in Hawaii on 10th November and San Francisco on 14th November and so would have carried this cover.

c) Connection at Sydney and Auckland

This service was primarily used for *Horseshoe Route* mail between the closure of the Bangkok – Hong Kong service in October 1940 and the opening of the *FAM 14* route from Singapore in May 1941. Mail was flown through to Sydney and then trans-Tasman to New Zealand and to USA on *FAM 19*.

The cover in Figure 8.18 is postmarked in Cairo on 30th March 1941 and addressed to New York. There is a further Cairo mark dated 2nd April on the back. It is franked with 117 mills (22 mills surface + 95 mills air mail surcharge) which was the air mail rate to be flown from Cairo to Sydney by *BOAC/Qantas*, Sydney – Auckland by *TEAL* and then on *FAM 19* to USA. *NE 73* left Cairo on 2nd April and arrived in Sydney on 10th April.



Figure 8.18: Cairo – New York in April 1941. Likely flown on Horseshoe Route to Sydney.