End of a Dream: Kingsford Smith's 1935 Trans-Tasman Flight

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BRIEF OVERVIEW:

This two-part article, covering the Australian and New Zealand aspects of the story, discusses the fate of mail associated with Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's failed May 1935 Trans-Tasman flight honoring the Silver Jubilee of King George V. Its prime focus is mail saved from the flight and mail due to be returned on the return flight from New Zealand to Australia and beyond.

TREATMENT:

Purpose: The objectives of the articles are laid out in the second paragraph of Part 1 i.e., to assist both new and established collectors in identifying both the relevant mail items and numbers mailed from and to specific destinations, to provide a listing of archival sources and to permit a "critical perspective" on marketplace claims of mail item rarity.

Organization: Part 1 covers the historical and political context of the flight before detailing flight preparations, the aborted crossing of the Tasman Sea from Australia to New Zealand with the saving of only 1,277 of the original 28,279 mail items carried on the plane. Detailed information, based on archival data, is provided for the saved mail. Part 2 focuses on the planned originating New Zealand return flight, in particular the first planned all-air New Zealand-United Kingdom service. Biographical information on the air crew and the plane, the *Southern Cross*, is included. The article concludes with the untimely death of Kingsford Smith ending his dream of an Australian run Trans-Tasman air mail service.

Clarity: Technical postal terminology and the distinction between different categories such as mail "lost" and "saved" etc. are maintained throughout the article. Abbreviations are clearly defined before subsequent use.

Quality of writing: The article is written for both the general and specialist collector, allowing both groups to obtain maximum benefit from information provided. There is also a clear distinction as to what is known and what is speculation.

Thoroughness: The article provides detailed information on all identified mail information associated with the flight. It acknowledges and provides the reason for the lack of known numbers of New Zealand initiated mail. Supporting statistical tables accompanied by illustrative covers, a comprehensive summary timeline and a schematic of vessel movements between the two countries (both in Part 2) are included to add coherence to the article.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Audience Appeal: The articles serve a clearly identified audience of philatelists. These include those interested in 1930s aerophilately, Australian and New Zealand postal history, as well as collectors of the 1935 King George V Silver Jubilee issue. The inclusion of the narrative of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's failed dream and the heroic actions taken by Gordon Taylor, extends the article to encompass the general philatelic reader.

Importance to the hobby: 1935 Trans-Tasman Covers are actively bought and sold. Providing a factual framework by introducing recently discovered National Archives of Australia (NAA) archive records, the article allows evaluation of authenticity and scarcity.

Lasting value to readers: The Australian saved mail addressee list, the tables, the vessel schedule and the comprehensive summary table provide permanent reference resources. Of particular significance is the listing of key archival and newspapers sources, thus minimizing detailed searches.

Challenges/Significance: The loss of the New Zealand Post and Telegraph archival files has meant that virtually all of the reconstruction of data and events has come from the National Archives in Australia. Even this was challenging as the Trans-Tasman files are held in the various states, not one site.

The finding of the saved mail addressee list was the culmination of more than 10 years of research from the Australian archives. Combining this information from both New Zealand and Australian newspapers and books written by two of the three *Southern Cross* air crew (not mentioned or listed in the articles – discussed under Research/Study Depth below) permitted a fact-based accumulation of data which both validates the articles and allows future research to be undertaken.

New Information: Although both authors have published previous articles on the subject, this is the first article to comprehensively integrate all the information. Many of these articles included new information e.g., archival numbers, sale of New Zealand stamps in Australia, the circumstances surrounding the saved-mail delivery to New Zealand addressees, the first all-air New Zealand-United Kingdom planned air mail, "Mailed Too Late" items, and the special envelopes used or planned for the various flights. The comprehensive dated summary of events and the ship movements between the two countries only appears in the current articles.

ORIGINALITY:

Unusual subject matter: The uncovering of the saved-mail list of addressees initiated by Australia Post and Telegraph is, to our knowledge, the only such list ever associated with a commemorative flight. This unique feature sets it apart from other comparable flight-cover studies.

Presentation creativity: The inclusion of the summary table, cross referenced to the vessel movement with the recommendation for "*regular use alongside the articles"* highlights a different approach to philatelic literature. Rather than a purely narrative account, the reader is provided a navigable reference tool. The division of the two-part article into an Australian and New Zealand section is used to provide coherence to the publication.

KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH:

Accuracy: All quantitative claims are either supported by identified sources (National Archives of Australia) or cross-referenced to contemporary newspaper articles from both countries. Where numbers cannot be confirmed i.e., New Zealand mail volumes because of record destruction, the articles explicitly state so and provide the estimation methodology.

The differing postal rates listed in Table 1 of Part 1 are consistent with those seen on the illustrated covers and match official published government rates.

Research/Study Depth: Many books and articles were reviewed as part of the authors' background reading and research. Important research sources included the NAA and contemporary newspaper articles from Australia and New Zealand. Two books, written by members of the flight (Taylor, PG. *Call to the Winds.* Sydney: Angus and Robertson. 1939; and Stannage, J. *High Adventure.* Christchurch: John Stannage. 1944) were key in describing events aboard the *Southern Cross* following damage to the propeller. As noted above, they are not listed in the selected bibliographic sources provided in the article. Finally, the authors' extensive collections of 1935 Trans-Tasman mail items were used to provide the illustrative features necessary to bring the story alive.

Conclusions: The principal conclusion, that the saved-mail lists provide an assessment of rarity and marketplace claims is fully supported by the documentation presented. Secondary conclusions such as the "Too Late" covers are supported by specific cancellation evidence on the covers and by documented departure time of the *Southern Cross* or the various vessels.

The speculative conclusion regarding the "relative" rarity of New Zealand-to-New Zealand boomerang covers i.e., mail intended to be flown to, but actually traveled by sea to Australia because the return flight did not occur, is flagged as inference rather than fact. New Zealand Post and Telegraph offered to reimburse postage on any such letters surrendered, possibly resulting in many individuals taking up this offer.

TECHNICAL:

Documentation and Credits: The **f**actual claims drawn directly from archival or newspaper sources are cited in the listed references. General background sources used are not listed in the articles.

Bibliography: The authors have focused on providing a selective bibliographic list involving the NAA and the two national newspaper digitization services as most on-line searches will probably list only articles. We believe these sources to be more relevant and meaningful. A key feature has been the inclusion of NAA ID numbers permitting readers easy access to the material (e.g., National Archives of Australia. Australia to New Zealand – Jubilee Air Mail. NAA: MP273/1, 1935/8581. *Item ID: 10458184*. Melbourne).

Headers/Footers: The articles are consistent with the headers and footers used by *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* (GSM). They provide a standard navigational structure.

Layout: The cover and article layout has been professionally produced to GSM standards. Illustrations and tables are positioned immediately adjacent to their descriptive texts. The summary table and the vessels schematic are easily legible.

Editing: Apart from a date error in Figure 4 (part 2) which should read 1935, no significant text errors were identified. Mail volume numbers quoted in the text match those in the tables.

Illustrations: Each of the 26 figures in the articles is both practical and supports a specific point in the text. Cover captions are detailed.

Internal Headers: Internal headers, including section breaks, are all consistent and hierarchical in their presentation. The net result is readable, sequential articles.