

PHILATELIC BULLETIN



Sarasota Philatelic Club

2025

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Stamp Quiz

Welcome to this month's Stamp Quiz. This one really begs the question "How Well Do You Know Your Definitions?" Here's a hint: it was issued in 1940 and printed by photolithography. The person shown was born in 1880 and died in 1962. If you think you know the answer, send your guesses to me at:

centonzevincent@gmail.com.

Good luck!



Returning First Flight & Souvenir Covers to Senders — Part 2

By Vincent Centonze

This two-part article explores ways in which collectors could have first flight or souvenir flight covers postmarked from a destination in which they did not live, sent to a second location in which they did not live, and then returned to them. Last month, in Part 1, the article discussed sending covers, under additional cover, to post offices along flight routes, following instructions issued by the Post Office. In other instances, collectors sent covers to private individuals along the flight routes entreating those individuals to kindly return the covers. This month, Part 2 outlines a few other ways collectors could have first flight and souvenir covers returned to them.

Collectors often learned about foreign flights through announcements that appeared in philatelic journals from organizations that service collector requests. These notices contained instructions on how to have foreign first flight or other souvenir covers serviced similar to the instructions provided by the U.S. Post Office for domestic flights. One such article appeared in 8/5/39 edition of the journal, *STAMPS*. The article notified collectors about Britain's Imperial Airways first flight between Great Britain and the U.S. According to the article:

No philatelic handling will be given at New York of mails dispatched by the first flight. The Canadian Department has announced that cachets will be applied to first flight covers to be carried from Montreal to Botwood, from Montreal to Foynes, and from Montreal to Southampton. Postage must be paid with Canadian stamps at the rates per half ounce of 15 cents on covers for Botwood and 30 cents on covers to be carried to Ireland or England. Collectors may send consignments of covers in an outer envelope addressed to "The District Director of Postal Services, Montreal, P.Q., Canada," in time to reach him not later than August 5. They should be accompanied by a postal money order sufficient for the purchase of stamps and made payable to the Receiver General of Canada, at Montreal. The covers may be addressed to persons in the United States or elsewhere and should be marked in the upper left corner to indicate the dispatch desired, that is, from Montreal to Botwood, to Ireland, or to England.¹

Ironically, the flight occurred on 8/5/39, the same day as the journal issue; therefore, it was too late for readers to prepare any first flight covers — it would be impossible even for return flight covers. At least the journal acknowledged that it was too late to catch the return flight, and states that:

The above information is rather late, but has been given our readers as soon as it reached us. As a matter of fact this issue of STAMPS was already on the press when the news came through, and we stopped the press in order to get it to our readers at once.²

Better late than never... at least it got into the magazine for posterity. However, most such advertisements presumably made it into the journals in a timelier fashion.

Britain's Imperial Airways was very proactive in advertising and encouraging the use of airmail since its inception in 1924 through the amalgamation of four smaller airlines. The airline recognized that carrying mail would be a

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The Prez Sez ...

Hello Club members— first apologies that the March Bulletin didn't get to most of you when I thought I sent it—but later when I found out many of you had not received it. I'll pay better attention this time! Also thanks to those members that heeded my request to pay their dues! Note the new Boosters!

Dan and I attended the stamp show in Boxborough MA (just west of Boston) where we were judges. I am pleased to repost that we saw Mark Isaacs and Judy Rubin there.

NEXT MEETING—Tuesday May 6th

Unitarian Church on Fruitville

Bring something to Show and Tell

We will not be at the May meeting, because we will be in England attending EuroPhilex2025 in Birmingham. This is a European international with FEPA Patronage. Club member Yamil Kouri is the US Commissioner. I'll report at the June meeting!

Our next three meetings (June, July, August) will happen at one or more local restaurants—new member Paul Cassidy located a distinct possibility in downtown

Sarasota—Shakespeare's Craft Beer and Gastro Pub. My cover email has a link; also Paul will be at the May meeting and can fill you in. Please let him know your thoughts. Personally, I think it's worth a try; the deciding factor will be the noise level.

Hope you all had a good Easter/Passover holiday—Pat Walker

Returning First Flight & Souvenir Covers to Senders — Part 2 (cont.)

large part of its business, and the company issued attractive souvenir envelopes for the experimental and regular first flights.³ The company had an airmail department that advertised the first flights and, for a fee, serviced souvenir covers from Britain and the Commonwealth to collectors and dealers. Figure 1 shows a letter dated 9/19/33 from Imperial Airways to Harold D. Phillips, a prominent airmail specialist and dealer who ordered thousands of first flight airmail covers from Imperial. Mr. Phillips used the name "A. Phillips" in his business. In part, the letter reads:

We thank you for your letter of yesterday enclosing a cheque for fifteen shillings.

One thousand souvenir envelopes have just been despatched to you, and we shall debit your account with the further sum of fifteen shillings.

It will be quite in order for you to send letters addressed to yourselves care of our Outstations and if you will let us know the exact number sent we will instruct our station superintendents to return them here. The cost of handling covers will be the same as for the previous first flights.

The covers referred to in the correspondence, which Imperial had just serviced and returned to Phillips, were likely from the most recent first flights in July 1933 from the route across India to Calcutta. Phillips responded with a letter dated 9/20/33 to Imperial with new requests for the upcoming first flights on the extension of the Calcutta route to Akyab and Rangoon, Burma. Figure 2 shows Phillip's letter back to Imperial which states:

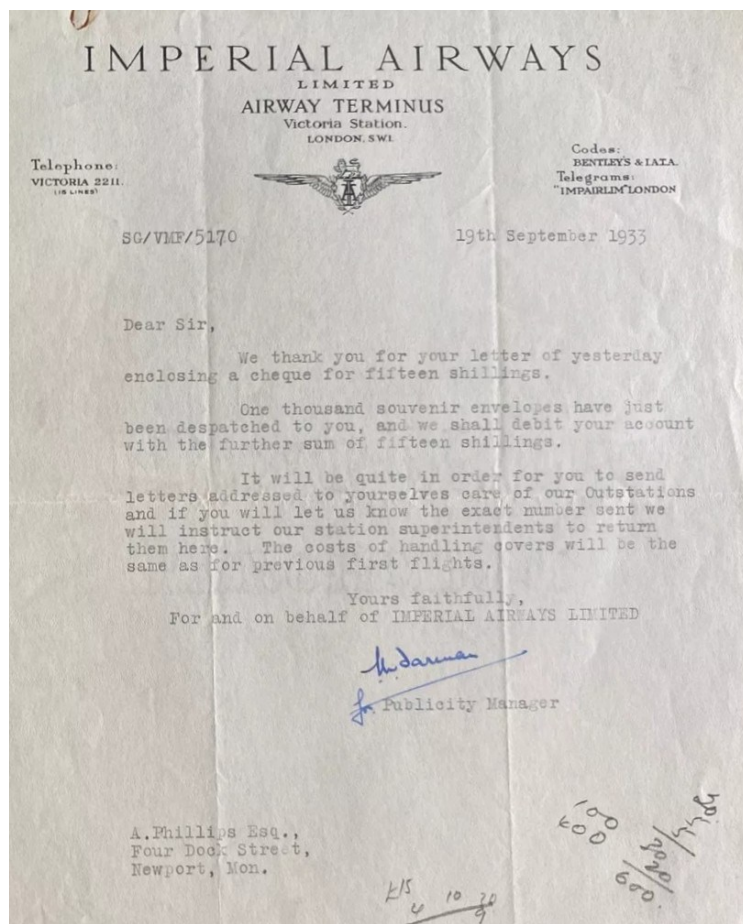
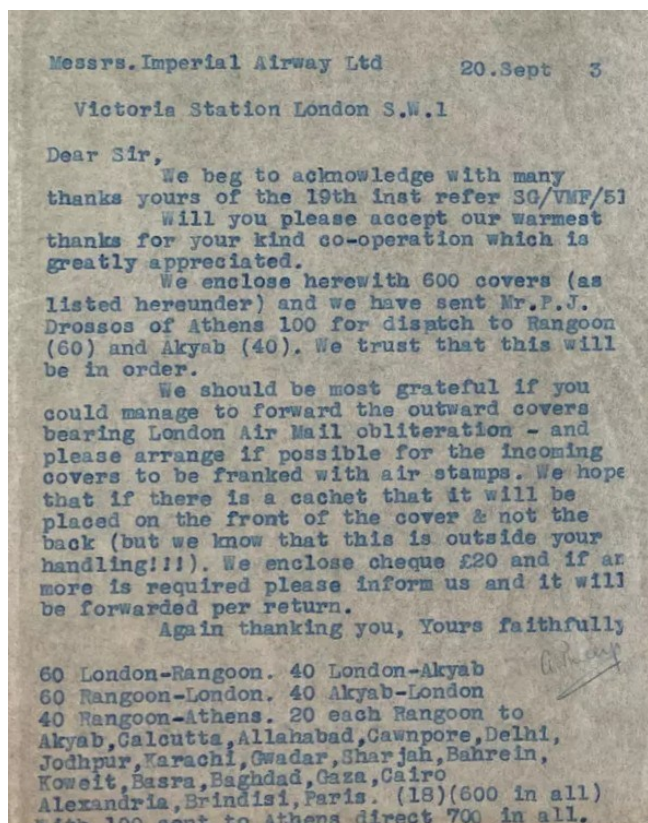


Figure 1. Imperial Airways letter from its Airmail Department to a collector/dealer regarding his first flight covers.

Continued on next page

Returning First Flight & Souvenir Covers to Senders — Part 2 (cont.)

We enclose herewith 600 covers... and we have sent Mr. P.J. Drossos of Athens 100 for dispatch to Rangoon (60) and Akyab (40)... We should be most grateful if you could manage to forward the outward covers bearing London Air Mail obliteration — and please arrange if possible for the incoming covers to be franked with air stamps. We hope that if there is a cachet that it will be placed on the front of the cover & not the back (but we know that this is outside your handling!!!). We enclose cheque £20 and if any more is required please inform us and it will be forwarded per return.



The letter lists the number of consigned covers to be carried from London to Rangoon and London to Akyab portions of the flight along with return covers to be sent from Rangoon to each stop along the return route. Imperial Airways issued a souvenir envelopes bearing a map of India in yellow and the Indian ocean in blue, showing the route from Karachi through Delhi, Calcutta, Akyab and Rangoon. The covers bore the blue wording "OPENING OF THE REGULAR AIR MAIL SERVICE BY IMPERIAL AIRWAYS AND INDIAN TRANS-CONTINENTAL AIRWAYS BETWEEN LONDON AND RANGOON."

Among the return covers that Phillips requested were 20 from Rangoon to Calcutta. Figure 3 shows one of the Phillips return-flight covers from Rangoon to Calcutta. He sent the envelope, unfranked and addressed to himself care of Imperial Airways in Calcutta, under additional cover to Imperial Airways in London. Imperial forwarded this cover, and others like it, on the outbound flight to Rangoon. In Rangoon, it was franked by the Imperial Airways superintendent with an India 1 anna (a) dark brown and an India 2a/6 pies (p) buff George V definitives (Scott 108 and 112, respectively). Burma was part of India until 4/1/1937, and India stamps were used until that time. The franking of 3a/6p (3½a) slightly overpaid the correct rate of 3a/3p (3¼a) which included the surface rate from Rangoon to Calcutta plus airmail surcharge for a letter weighing up to one *tola*. Postage rates for internal mails in India were based on a weight unit known as the *tola*; one *tola* equals 0.4114 ounces or 11.66 grams.⁴



(Top) Figure 2. Airmail specialist A. Phillip's letter to Imperial Airways detailing his order for first flight covers.

(Bottom) Figure 3. Phillip's first flight cover from Rangoon to Calcutta. It was sent unfranked under cover to Imperial Airways who sent it to Rangoon for posting on the first flight return.

Figure 4 shows the front of a cover ordered by Mr. Aaron Jensen, of Flagstaff, Arizona, through the Imperial Airways service. The cover was posted in Kisumu, Kenya, to the Imperial Airways station superintendent in Mirabella, Crete, on 3/10/31. Jensen likely sent the unfranked envelope, under additional cover, to Imperial in London with instructions that it be forwarded to the station superintendent in Kisumu, Kenya, where it was to be duly franked by the superintendent and sent by return flight to Mirabella. William Colley, in *The Airmails of East Africa (second edition)*, lists the first flight from

Returning First Flight & Souvenir Covers to Senders — Part 2 (cont.)

Mwanza, Tanganyika, to Britain on 3/10/31. The route connected through Kisumu; the cover shown is a first flight cover northbound on the Mwanza-Great Britain route.⁵ It is franked with one Kenya and Uganda 10 cent (c) black, and four 15c carmine rose George V definitives (Scott 22 and 24, respectively) correctly paying the 70c per half ounce all-inclusive air-mail and surface rate to Europe. Figure 5 shows the back of the cover with Jensen's return address. There is a Thessalonica - Piraeus mobile post cancel dated 3/22/31 and Heraklion (Crete), arrival postmark dated 3/25/31. There is also a circular violet hand cachet for IMPERIAL AIRWAYS/AIRWAY HOUSE/LONDON. The station superintendent returned the cover to Imperial Airways headquarters in London, presumably along with other philatelic mail handled in this fashion. In London, Imperial backstamped it with their usual undated handstamp and returned it to Jensen in Arizona. There are a pair of parallel red bars over the airmail etiquette on the front. Such markings that obliterate airmail etiquettes are called "Jusqu'a" markings.

Jusqu'a is a French word which means *until* or *up to*. The purpose of this marking was to indicate that air transport for the cover had terminated, and the cover was to be sent onward from that point by surface transportation. The Jusqu'a handstamp on this cover is catalogued in *Jusqu'a Hand Stamps and Other Route Indications*, by Jan C. ter Welle, most likely as type JCW-Fa-4 applied in Great Britain.⁶ This indicated that the airmail ended in Great Britain and the cover was forwarded to the U.S. via surface mail. If the cover had been returned to the collector in Flagstaff enclosed under additional cover, Jusqu'a markings would not have been applied to this cover. Therefore, it was likely placed on an Imperial Airways flight from Mirabella to Imperial's headquarters in London where it was deposited at the post office for surface transport to the U.S. Jensen's return address in the center on the back of the cover would have been used for the addressee at that point.



(Top) Figure 4. Front of a cover that was ordered by Mr. Aaron Jensen, of Flagstaff, Arizona, through the Imperial Airways service. The cover was sent from Kisumu, Kenya, to the Imperial Airways Station Superintendent in Mirabella, Crete, on 3/10/31.

(Bottom) Figure 5. Back of the cover with Jensen's return address. There is a Thessalonica-Piraeus mobile post cancellation dated 3/22/31 and a Heraklion (Crete), arrival postmark dated 3/25/31.

Returning First Flight & Souvenir Covers to Senders — Part 2 (cont.)

Figure 6 shows the front of a cover that was serviced for Mrs. H.B. Jeferson of Novia Scotia, Canada. Contrast the Jensen cover with this one. The cover was posted from Kisumu, Kenya, on the same 3/10/31 return first flight as the Jensen cover in Figure 5. Jeferson addressed the cover to herself, care of the Imperial Airways Advertising Department, in London, England. Unlike the Jensen cover, which was sent as far as Mirabella, this cover was sent from Kisumu all the way through to London. It is franked with three Kenya and Uganda 20c orange George V definitives (Scott 25) correctly paying the 60c per half ounce all-inclusive rate to Great Britain. Like the Jensen cover, this cover has a full return address on the back, along with the Imperial Airways, London, handstamp. However, unlike the Jensen cover, there are no Jusqu'a markings to indicate that airmail terminated in Great Britain. Sometimes, Jusqu'a markings were omitted; nevertheless, this could imply that the item was returned to Jeferson under separate cover. If anyone has other ideas about how these covers may have been handled, please let me know. Send your comments to me at: centonzevincent@gmail.com. Thanks to Nate Fenush at the American Philatelic Research Library for his research assistance. Happy Collecting!



Figure 6. front of a cover that was sent by Mrs. H.B. Jeferson of Novia Scotia, Canada. The cover was posted in Kisumu, Kenya, on the return first flight . Jeferson addressed the cover to herself, care of Imperial Airways.

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