

*Conclusions.*

36. On the evidence available I have arrived at the following conclusions :—

(1) That the immediate cause of the accident was loss of engine power due to the aircraft's supply of fuel becoming exhausted.

(2) That the tankage of these aircraft did not provide an adequate reserve of fuel for this section of the route except in favourable weather conditions. The alterations of the carburettor jet-settings should not have been carried out under any circumstances and were undoubtedly due to a misunderstanding of orders.

(3) That a fault in one or both of the petrol gauges cannot be dismissed as a possible contributory cause of the accident.

(4) That the sudden and complete loss of engine power at a height of only 500 feet created an extremely difficult situation and one which strongly militated against a successful " forced-landing " in darkness. The pilot appears to have done all that could be expected of him in the circumstances.

(5) That it is difficult to attach blame to any individual for the delay which occurred in instituting rescue measures but the fact remains that in all probability the loss of life would have been reduced if there had been efficient communication between flare-path and Airport.

J. P. C. COOPER,

Conclusions of Air Ministry Report dated 30 June 1936  
 Air Ministry,  
 Kingsway, W.C.2.  
 30th June, 1936.

### The Mail

Not all Australasian mail on board Service IE405 was involved in the crash. Letters posted within 18 hours of closing time in London arrived separately at Brindisi where two Short S8 flying boats, *City of Khartoum* and *City of Stonehaven*, were waiting to uplift it to Alexandria due to the heavy load. The mail posted within 18 hours of closing time was placed aboard *City of Stonehaven*, and continued from Alexandria as normal arriving at Darwin on 8 January.

Mail on board the *City of Khartoum* comprised that for Egypt and all points east including Hong Kong,, Australia and New Zealand. When the location of the wreck was discovered shortly before noon on 1 January 1936, it was found to be in about six fathoms, 1¼ miles from the harbour breakwater. Salvage operations were put in hand immediately by the Port Authorities and continued for 3 days as and when weather permitted. Attempts to raise the wreck were unsuccessful, but the divers managed to enter the hull and extract the bodies, mail and luggage. The three engines were recovered before salvage operations were abandoned.

The authorities estimated that two-thirds of the mail was recovered. This is difficult to verify, but we

do know which bags of Australasian mail were recovered, and the dry weight of those bags.

Eleven bags of Australasian mail were recovered as follows:

	Bags	Weight kg	Weight lbs	Articles (approx.)
Munich to Darwin	1	14.40	31.75	900
Brindisi Amb to Darwin	1	2.02	4.45	200
Brindisi Amb to Brisbane	1	1.09	2.40	100
Marseilles to Darwin	1	1.23	2.71	120
London to Darwin	1	1.70	3.75	150
London to Brisbane	1	4.10	9.04	300
London to Sydney	2	39.60	87.32	3,000
London to Melbourne	1	<u>21.20</u>	<u>46.75</u>	<u>1,700</u>
London to Adelaide	1	2.50	<u>5.51</u>	<u>230</u>
London to Perth	1	3.90	8.60	300
		<u>91.74</u>	202.28	7,000 items

Note that a small mail for New Zealand and Papua was included in the Melbourne and Sydney bags.

In total 71 bags weighing 858lbs were on board the *City of Khartoum*, including that for Australasia, at the time she crashed. The recovered mail was placed aboard Service IE407, operated by the HP42E G-AAUC *Horsa* which was running one day late (due to the late train at Brindisi), and left Alexandria on 8 January. At Karachi the mail was transferred to G-ABTK *Athena* which left early on 10 January for Jodhpur, Calcutta, Bangkok and Singapore.

By the time *Athena* had reached Singapore it was realised that the one DH86 aircraft would not be able to carry both the large regular mail for Service IE407, and the Australasian portion of the mail recovered from the *City of Khartoum*, on the long leg over the Timor Sea. QEA therefore despatched pilot Lester Brain in a second DH86, VH-USD *Brisbane*, which left Darwin for Koepang at 0555 on Tuesday 14 January and awaited the arrival of Service IE407 in the shape of the DH86 *Adelaide*, Captain W Crowther, from Rambang. Upon Crowther's landing at Koepang, 800lbs of mail was transferred to Brain's aircraft, and the two took off together, both arriving at Darwin around 1700.



Together with the regular mail, all the mail recovered from the *City of Khartoum* was taken to the Darwin GPO where the salvaged bags for Darwin were opened and found to be completely sodden. Postal officials did not therefore open salvaged bags for other centres, but sent them on untreated. The unopened bags of salvaged mail, together with the regular despatch which had left Croydon on 4 January, were loaded on board the QEA *Brisbane*, pilot Lester Brain, which took off early on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

At Daly Waters a total of 82lb of mail was unloaded for Western Australia. At Charleville a further 1,123lbs was transferred to the southbound aircraft, Pilot C Arthur Butler. This comprised the mail for NSW, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand. Lester Brain reached Brisbane in the afternoon on the 16<sup>th</sup>. At Cootamundra Butler handed over the Sydney mail bags on 16 January.

All other mail was sent to Melbourne by the Sydney

Express arriving about noon on the 17<sup>th</sup>. ]See attached article endorsed by Postal Official.]

Melbourne newspaper 17Jan36

Some confusion has arisen about the quantities of recovered mail delivered to individual mail centres in Australia. This is understandable on two counts:

1. Service IE407, which collected the sodden Australasian mail recovered from the *City of Khartoum*, was also carrying a substantial regular mail which had left Croydon on 4 January. The two despatches were carried together from Alexandria to Koepang, where they were split between the DH86 *Adelaide* and *Brisbane* for the Timor Sea crossing, then re-combined in Darwin. So, for example, the quantity of mail offloaded from VH-USD *Brisbane* at Daly Waters for WA, noted as 82lb, included 8.60lbs of mail (in its dry state) of *City of Khartoum* mail.
2. Various sources state that about 300lbs of Australasian mail was recovered. The actual weight of that mail when it was received, in a dry condition aboard the *City of Khartoum*, was 202lbs. Add 9 or 10 gallons of sea water and it weighed 300lbs. This added sea water represents an additional one fifth of one ounce per letter.

On 18 January 1936 the following advertisement appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on page 23:

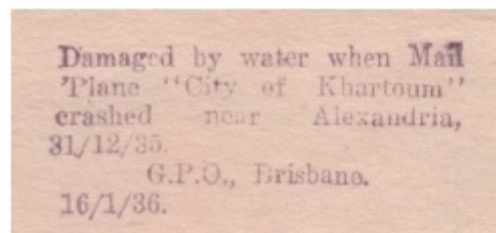
Here was one dealer or crash mail collector who wasted no time in seeking covers.

### Mail Processed at Brisbane GPO

The Brisbane mail had been despatched from Darwin per the QEA DH86 VH-USD *Brisbane* which took off early on the 15<sup>th</sup> for Daly Waters and Charleville. After leaving Charleville, pilot Lester Brain was carrying only the mail which he delivered to Archerfield Aerodrome and which arrived at the Brisbane GPO in the afternoon of the 16<sup>th</sup>. Mr Kilpatrick, the Acting Deputy Director of the Postal Department in Brisbane, stated on 17 January that 400 salvaged letters had been received the previous day, and all but six delivered the same day. His statement was erroneous in that more than six covers are recorded bearing the cachet below, accompanied by the circular date-stamp DEAD LETTER OFFICE 17JA36 BRISBANE. It is clear that most mail was delivered on the 17<sup>th</sup>, not the 16<sup>th</sup>. In fact no Brisbane date-stamps for the 16<sup>th</sup> have been recorded.

One report stated that special drying racks had been used at the Brisbane Dead Letter Office. Another that electric fans and radiators were used. Probably both reports were correct.

The 6-line cachet was applied to covers in purple ink, often accompanied by a PM9 resealing label (using stocks printed 8/1933). This cachet, incorporating the date 16/1/36, was doubtless prepared in anticipation of the mail arriving on the afternoon of the 16<sup>th</sup>.



Cachet 50 x 20mm

In some cases a duplicated explanatory label 208mm wide and average 52mm high (six per sheet) accompanied re-despatched covers.



## FROM THE EDITOR

I cannot avoid mentioning the grim situation arising from the covid-19 pandemic. So first I hope you are all well and remain so. Helen and I are well and were cheered this morning by a kind note from our next door neighbour offering to help with shopping etc. if we have to isolate ourselves. It is this sort of thing which keeps our spirits up.

As you will see in the Forthcoming Meetings section there is an alert saying that all meetings and the convention have had to be cancelled until further notice but that the auction, whose catalogue is enclosed with this edition will be conducted postally.

You are probably aware that I have been looking for a successor as editor for over two years because it is increasingly difficult to cope with my other responsibilities and interests (including philatelic), and maintain the quality of the Bulletin which I try to achieve.

At the last meeting of the Council it was accepted that it could no longer be the responsibility of the editor to find a successor and that the December issue, at the latest, would be my last.

I shall give as much help as possible to my successor. I would hope that I have enough articles in stock to help the new editor so please keep them coming.

GJK

**STEVEN ZIRINSKY**  
MEMBER PTS, APS, NZSDA, APTA  
Stamps - Revenues - Postal History - Commercial Mail

**Australia**

PO BOX 230049, Ansonia Station, New York, NY 10023 USA  
szirinsky@cs.com (t):718-706-0616

[www.zirinskystamps.com](http://www.zirinskystamps.com)  
@ZirinskyStamps

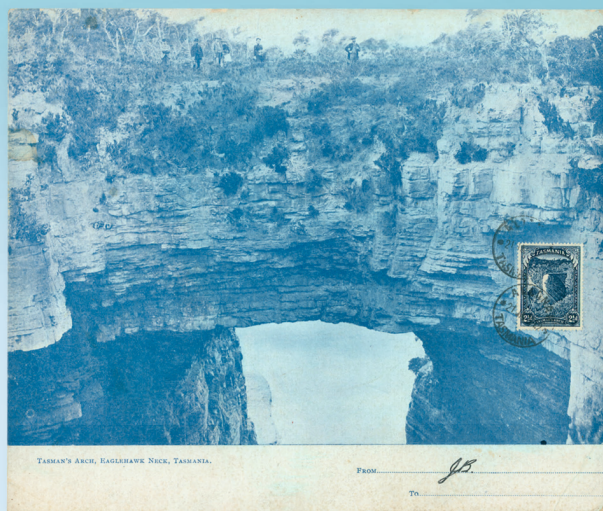
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# Australia

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## GROSVENOR

399-401 Strand Third Floor London WC2R 0LT

T: 020 7379 8789 F: 020 7379 9737 E: [info@grosvenor-auctions.co.uk](mailto:info@grosvenor-auctions.co.uk)

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