

SOUTH AFRICAN AIRMAILS

A Chronological Listing
Indicating the History and the Development
of
South Africa and South West Africa

by

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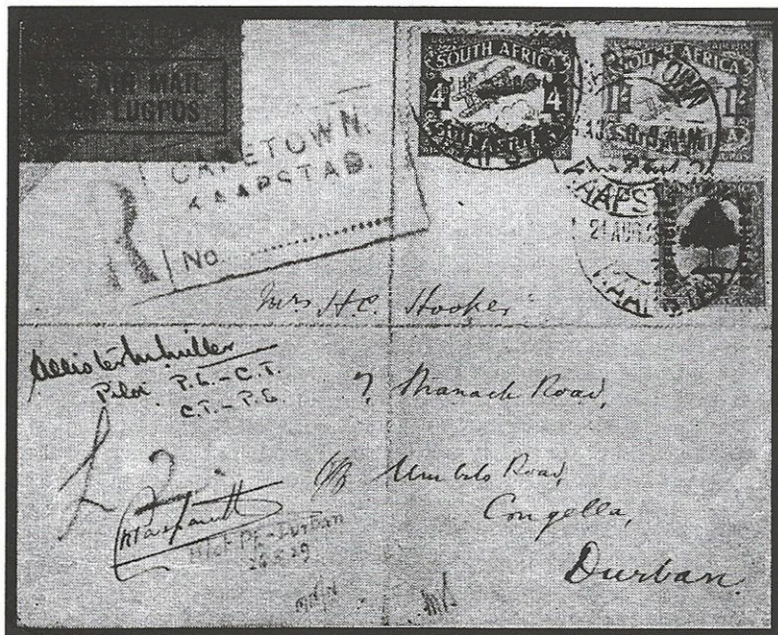


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31. August 26, 1929: Union Airways: First Regular Air Mail Service in South Africa:

Major Miller at last was able to establish an airmail and passenger service between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth with extensions from Port Elizabeth to Durban via East London and to Johannesburg via Bloemfontein. Union Airways was registered in Pretoria on July 24, 1929. Five D.H. Gipsy Moths were imported. These were to run weekly in each direction in conjunction with the Union Castle Mail Steam Ship Co. service between Southampton and Cape Town with subsidy by the Government. There was a supplementary charge of 4d. per oz. on all postal articles (exclusive of parcels). On August 26, Major Miller left Cape Town with five bags of mail. The other pilots on the service were G.W. Bellin, R.F. Caspareuthus and W.F. Davenport. At Port Elizabeth, two relay machines carried mails to Durban and Germiston respectively. Due to high winds the first mail to Germiston arrived late at Bloemfontein and carried mails sent on by the evening train to Johannesburg.



The first through trip from Port Elizabeth to Germiston was on the third flight on September 9. First return flight on August 29 connected with the mail steamer "Carnarvon Castle". The steamer "Saxon" brought the British mails on August 26. The British authorities had accepted mails for the air mail; thus 66 lbs. of mail (approx. 2,500 letters) posted overseas was carried from Cape Town and of these about 200 were 'Paquebot'. No special air mail cachets were used but the special "Air Mail Saves Time" slogan machine was reintroduced. Special airmail stamps were issued in values of 4d and 1/-. The first regular passenger service in South Africa occurred on May 2, 1930 from Port Elizabeth to Cape

Town (Maitland Aerodrome). In 1930 six-passenger Fokker Super Universal aeroplanes were introduced. Their first flight was from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town on January 29. The last flight under the contract was on August 26, 1932.

In 1932 Puss Moths were put into service, as well as Junkers F.13. Later Junkers A.50 were used in S.W.A. In 1933 Junkers W.34 machines operated in the Union in association with the F.13 machines. Towards the end of 1933 Union Airways were not able to carry on due to financial difficulties. On February 1, 1934 the assets and services of Union Airways were taken over by the Government. Major Miller and his pilots had done fine yeoman service and put up a fine record, in that only on seven times in four years did the mail reach Cape Town too late to connect with the outgoing mail steamer. Blue (as distinct from yellow for the 1925 flights) airmail etiquettes were used, after the yellow ones had been exhausted.

32. April 10, 1930: The Duchess of Bedford's Record Flight: London to Cape Town:

The Duchess of Bedford with Capt. C.D. Barnard as pilot and Mr. R. Little as navigator, left Croydon and reached Cape Town on April 19. Return was made April 21 to 30, thus setting up a record in both directions, flying the 19,000 miles in 21 days. She used a Jupiter-engined Fokker monoplane. The same machine and crew established a record in 1929 from England to India and back in under eight days.

33. October 1930: Capt. R.F. Caspareuthus' Record Flight:

This was one of the greatest light plane flights ever made from England to South Africa. Capt. Caspareuthus played a greater part in South Africa's air mail history than any other pilot. He decided to deliver by air a D.H. Puss Moth purchased in England for a friend. On October 5 he left Lympne, reaching Cape Town 8 days 10½ hrs. later, on the 13th. (He was 76½ hrs. flying in the air). This remained the fastest solo flight over the Imperial Airways route for nearly six years. He carried 22 letters and a few London daily newspapers, all of which were autographed and most of which received a rubber stamp impression "Air Post Special". Among the letters were two official documents handed to him by the late Sir Sefton Brancker on the eve of his departure in the ill-fated airship R. 101.

34. March 31, 1931 - Commander Glen Kidston's Record Flight: London to Cape:

Commander Glen Kidston, accompanied by Lieut. O. Cathcart Jones left Netheravon aerodrome on March 31, 1931 in an American Lockheed Vega monoplane for Cape Town, via Naples, Malta, Cairo, Malakal, Kisumu, Bulawayo, Lichtenburg, Pretoria. The flight was completed in 6 days 11 hours (56 flying hours). In addition to a private letter to Bulawayo, there were 20 special covers carried inscribed "The Glen Kidston London-Cape Town Flight - Lockheed Vega G.ABCK" (postmark Netheravon March 30 and b/s Cape Town April 7, 1931. Some covers are autographed. Kidston with Capt. Gladstone of the 1927 Kisumu