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End of a Dream: The ill-fated 1935 Trans-Tasman Jubilee Flight.

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USEFUL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND CONTEXT:

In June 1928 Charles Kingsford Smith achieved international fame with the first Trans-Pacific flight in his tri-motor plane, the *Southern Cross*. He subsequently undertook a number of notable flights, including the first flight across the Tasman Sea from Australia to New Zealand in September 1928. Between 1928 and 1934 he undertook six flights between the two countries. He was knighted for his services to aviation in 1932.

In early 1935 a British delegation met with the two governments to discuss the extension of the Imperial Airways All-Empire Air Mail scheme to include the Australia-New Zealand section using flying boats. Lobbying both governments to support an Australian initiative for this leg, Kingsford Smith was able to obtain **permission for a special bi-directional Trans-Tasman flight in recognition of King George V's Silver Jubilee**. Additional arrangements included the sale of the soon to be issued New Zealand air mail stamps at post offices in Australia and the use of postage stamps from either country for prepayment of return postage.

Taking off from Sydney on **15th May 1935**, the *Southern Cross* carried 28,279 mail items (which included some 7,000 items from New Zealand). Over the Tasman Sea the propeller on the starboard engine was damaged and the engine had to be shut down. Kingsford Smith was **forced to turn back and jettison most of the mail** and freight to lighten the load for the overheated engines.

Landing successfully in Sydney, it was discovered that seven small mailbags, with **about 1,100 mail items were still on board**. These items were transported by ship to New Zealand, receiving a special cancel on arrival. Items scheduled to be on the return flight to Australia (return mail and those mailed in New Zealand (approximately 13,000)), were sent to Australia by sea. All of these items except those that went internationally by air from Australia were cancelled on arrival in Sydney.

His untimely death in November 1935 effectively ended Kingsford Smith's dream of Australian control over air mail between the two countries. His death and the failure of the 1935 Trans-Tasman flight resulted ultimately in Imperial Airways obtaining the contract for the Australia-New Zealand leg.

THE PRESENTATION:

The presentation is divided into six sections. The pre-flight and flight sections cover the crew. Both Charles Kingsford Smith and Patrick Gordon ("Bill") Taylor were knighted for their services to aviation. Taylor was awarded the Empire Gallantry Medal (later renamed the George Cross) for his dramatic transfer of oil between

engines while the plane was in flight over the Tasman Sea.

The **special Wellington (23rd May) and Sydney (20th May) receiving cancels** are highlighted. These cancels are considered to be the **gold standard** indicator that the mailed item was part of the proposed Trans-Tasman flight.

The body of the presentation focuses on three areas.

1. Mail from Australia.

Examples of mail saved, from the different mailbags, with the application of the various postal rates available are shown (The bulk of the saved mail originated from the State of Queensland). Of particular interest is an example of the envelope and letter from New Zealand Post that accompanied the mail items delivered to New Zealand addressees (one of only two known examples). This is a **recent discovery** with no previous documentation (most of the New Zealand postal archive information from this period was lost in a fire in 1959).

2. Mail from New Zealand.

Examples of items mailed from the North and South Islands of New Zealand and sent to Australia by ship, and beyond by air, are also shown. Special arrangements were made with the New Zealand High Commissioner in London to send mail back to New Zealand if the sender included an additional 2d to the air mail cover (the one-way air mail rate was 2s 1d).

3. Associated mail.

There are a number of mail items which don't neatly fit into either big group. They include an item addressed to Ernest Crome (one of 10 known) which was probably handed directly to one of the crew members (Crome, a notable Australian aerophilatelist, developed a close relationship with many pilots who would carry letters addressed to him on a '*per favour*' basis). Two other covers are included as they missed the mailing deadline and did not fly on the outward journey. Both items are rarely found. Serious collectors consider them to be part of the Jubilee mail story.

PHILATELIC RELEVANCE OF THE FLIGHT

- This was the first occasion that New Zealand stamps were issued and sold in a foreign country.
- First occasion for prepayment of return mail (in both countries) in either currency.
- Kingsford Smith's death and the failure of the Trans-Tasman Jubilee flight removed the last major obstacle to incorporation of the Australian-New Zealand leg into the Imperial Airways All-Empire Air Mail Scheme.

SUMMARY OF TIMELINES AND POSTAL RATES

29 April (Monday)	1 May (Wednesday)	8 May (Wednesday)	9 May (Thursday)
Planned Trans-Tasman Jubilee flight announced.	<i>SS Maunganui</i> Wellington to Sydney with NZ air mail stamps. Arrives 4 May.	TTM: 1600 Auckland mail closes. Sent to Wellington.	TTM: <i>TSMV Wanganella</i> departs Wellington with NZ mail for flight.
12 May (Saturday)	13 May (Monday)	14 May (Tuesday)	15 May (Wednesday)
TTM: <i>TSMV Wanganella</i> arrives Sydney.	Sydney mail closing at 1645. TTM Mail transferred (14 bags) to RAAF Richmond.	Storm in Tasman Sea. Flight delayed till 15 May. Additional 7 mailbags received.	0020: Depart Richmond 0700: propellor damaged ~1250: mail jettisoned 1610: Land at safely.
17 May (Friday)	18 May (Saturday)	20 May (Monday)	22 May (Wednesday)
NZM: <i>SS Monowai</i> departs Wellington (~2,000 items from South Island). NZM: <i>SS Monterey</i> departs Auckland (~11,000 items from North Island).	TTM: <i>TSMV Wanganella</i> departs Sydney with saved Australian mail from flight for Auckland.	NZM: <i>SS Monowai</i> and <i>SS Monterey</i> arrive in Sydney. Special receiving cancel applied. Note: Through air mail does not receive special Sydney cancel.	OCM: Connects with IA flight IW341. TTM: <i>TSMV Wanganella</i> arrives in Auckland from Sydney. Mail to Wellington by overnight train.
23 May (Thursday)	OCM - IW341		Abbreviations
TTM: Railway Express arrives in Wellington. Special receiving cancel applied.	22 May: Departs Brisbane 27 May: Arrives Calcutta 31 May: Arrives Alexandria 3 June: Arrives London		TTM: Aus-NZ air mail NZM: NZ-Aus air mail OCM: Out of Country (Aus) air mail. Sent per NZM IA: Imperial Airways IW: Imperial Airways Flight number (Aus-GB) TSMV: Twin Screw Motor Vessel.
Postal Rates (Australia and New Zealand)			
Trans-Tasman air mail 7d each way; Air mail within Australia 3d; Registration fee 3d (Both counties); Returning surface mail from New Zealand to Australia 1d; Returning surface mail from Australia to New Zealand 2d; Air mail New Zealand- Britain 1s 6d (+ 7d for Trans-Tasman flight)			

SUMMARY OF MAIL

Posted From	Mail Lost*		Mail Saved (7 bags)**	
	Regular	Registered	Regular	Registered
Sydney	21,927	977	0	0
Melbourne	~2,463	426	~150	1
Brisbane	163	2	635	87
Adelaide	811	218	85	8
Perth	124	18	0	0
Hobart	88	4	0	0
Launceston	0	0	58	34
Total	25,576	1645	928	130

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Anon. "The Jubilee Tasman Flight – Kingsford Smith forced to return." *Australian Stamp Monthly*. 1935;6 (6) (June):162-3.
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 - May 15, 1935. Sir Charles Kingsford Smith: Attempted Silver Jubilee flight in "Southern Cross", Richmond – Mid-Tasman and return to Mascot, Sydney.
 - May 17, 1935. Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, Qantas Empire Airways Ltd., Imperial Airways Ltd.: Interrupted Silver Jubilee Air Mail Connection New Zealand-Australia-England.