# *The Early Airmails of South Africa*

1911 was a historic year in aerophilately with the first flight carrying mail occurring in India. South Africa was one of the few countries that managed the same (just!). The London-Windsor flight to celebrate George V's coronation occurred that year in England and the African Aviation Syndicate (formed in England) arranged the same in South Africa between Kenilworth and Muizenberg as part of an "aviation fortnight" at the Kenilworth Race Course. Special postcards were produced. E F Driver was the pilot in a Bleriot monoplane. There were two flights there and back on 27 and 29 December.

29 Dec 1911 a Second Flight card from the first small batch where the Kenilworth date hadn't been changed from 27 Jan. The flight was delayed and the Muizenberg receipt is 30 Jan. Franked an interprovincial ERI opt Transvaal 1d it has the Muizenberg PO transit 3 Jan and Observatory receipt 4 Jan.'12

The next flights with mail were the "Our Day" Red Cross flights of 1918 organised to raise funds for soldiers injured in the Great War. Special cards were produced and sold for 6d each.

The first service carrying regular mail was a governmental experiment starting in 1925. Mail was airborne between Cape Town and Durban between 2 March and 15 June. A set of 4 stamps was produced which is important to note only paid for the air travel, not normal postage.

The establishment of a regular air mail service was instigated by Union Airways in 1929 and this linked with the Imperial Airways service at the end of 1931. 4d and 1/- stamps were produced for this service. Both were of the de Havilland DH60 Cirrus Mot, the 4d in green and the 1/- in orange.

This exhibit covers the period 1911-32 (with one related 1936 item) showing the stamps with proofs, colour trials, and naked eye varieties. Also the postal rates and history.

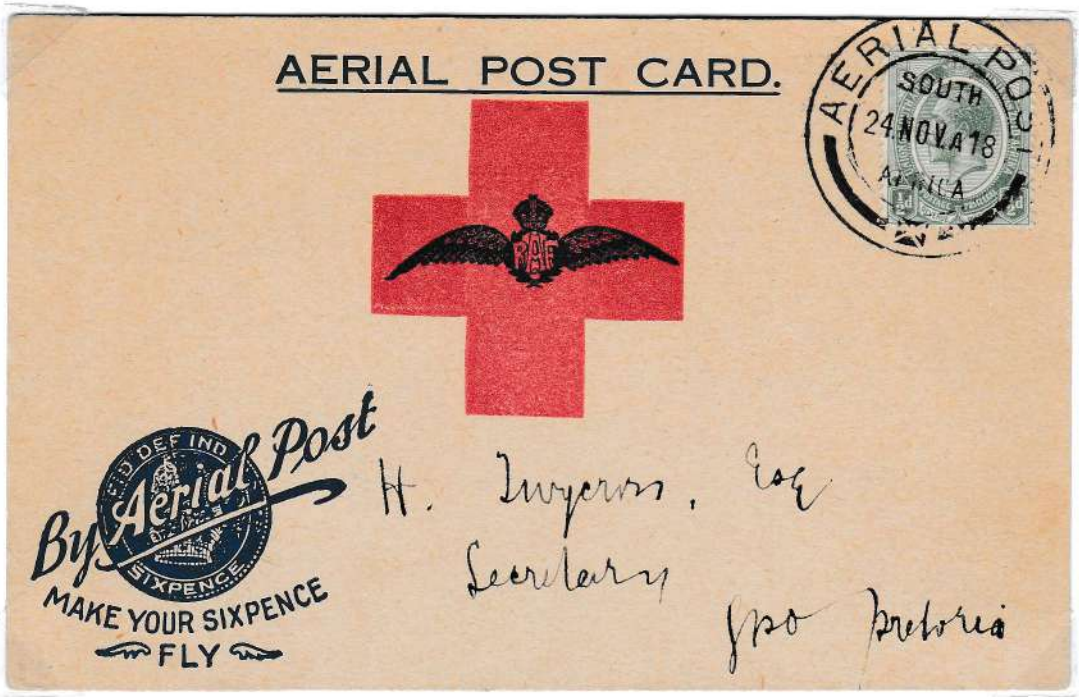
After landing the bags were taken to the local post office for forward delivery

## *The 1918 "Our Day" Red Cross Flights*

In September 1918 charitable efforts were made to raise money for the wounded from WW1. Postcards were produced for the Cape and Transvaal and sold for 6d each with the "Make Your Sixpence Fly" slogan. An aeroplane display and military tournament at Green Point Cycle Track was organised for 7 October but, though this had to be cancelled because of the Spanish flu, Lt Gearing still managed to fly 3 bags of mail from Wynberg to Green Point Common.

7 Oct 1918 Cape (large wings) card with a 3d Red Cross "Our Day" label attached carried on the first flight

24 Nov 1918 Transvaal (small wings) card on the first flight from Turfontein to Germiston. Lt Gearing carried one bag of mail there and another back as well as performing stunts



*March 1925 : the Government Experimental Service*

**THE STAMPS**

4 values all of the same design of the de Havilland DH9 biplane

The plates were misappropriated to Paris and forgeries made. As they are lithographed they have been forged again in more modern times. Forgeries are distinguishable by the colour and perforations being different

**OFFICIAL SOUVENIR CARD**

Supplied to the Minister of Posts and Postmaster General for presentation to the pilots and VIPs

*ex Thys Rall 1992*

**OFFICIAL SOUVENIR CARD**

to members of the UPU as issued

*ex Thys Rall 1992*

Avec les compliments du Postmaster-General de l'Union de l'Afrique du Sud.

Avril, 1925.

The "extended strut" variety

rows 5&11/1

## *Rare Interpanneau Blocks with the Numeral Controls*

Printed by Cape Times Ltd. in 2 panes of 60 (6x10) : soft wove paper with no watermark
Perf 12 by a single line treadle perforator

V2 smudge in "R"
Afrika row 7/9

V2 stroke though
strut rows 3&9/9

## *Rare Interpanneau Blocks with the Numeral Controls*

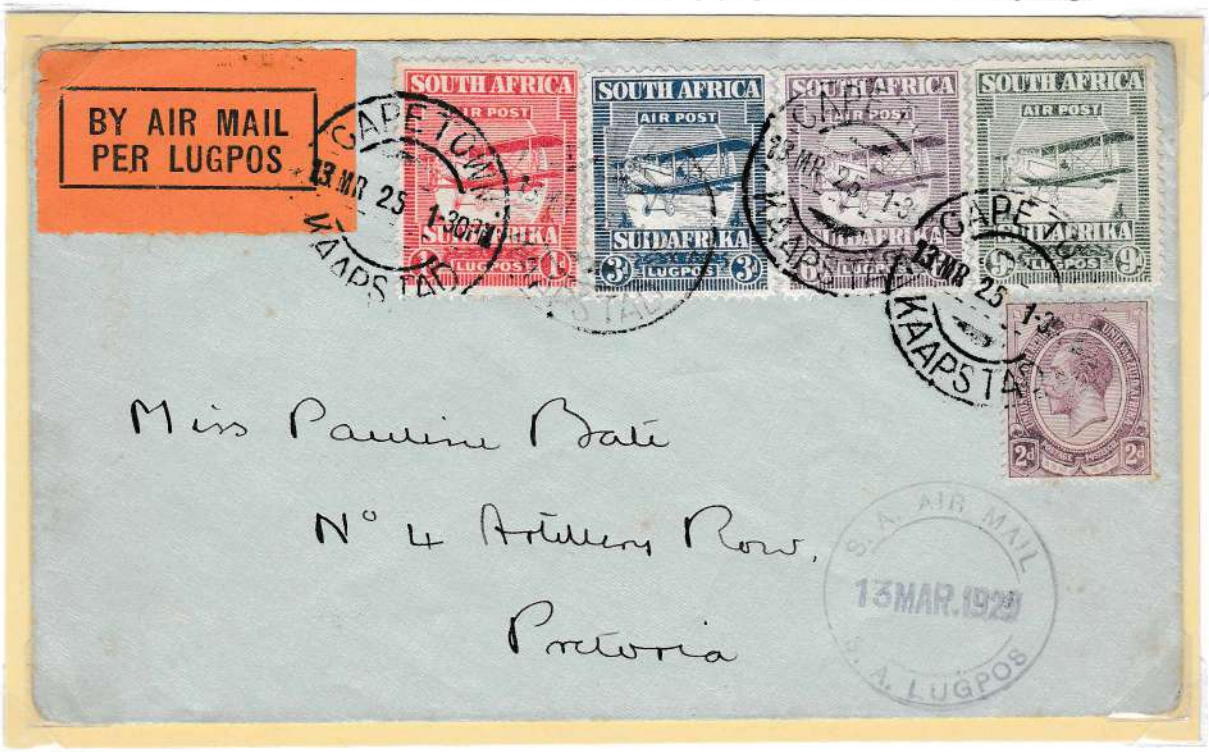
Printed by Cape Times Ltd. in 2 panes of 60 (6x10) : soft wove paper with no watermark
Perf 12 by a single line treadle perforator

V. dot on "I" of Air
row 9/9

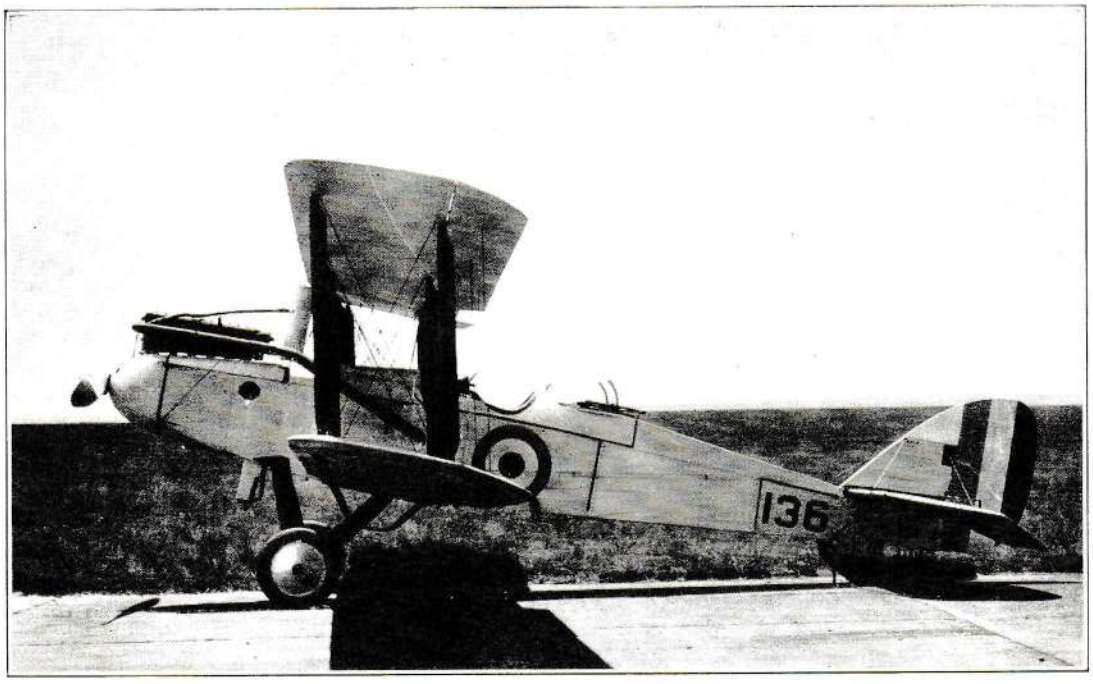
## *The 1925 Government Experimental Service*

Run by the South African Air Force this was a weekly service between Cape Town and Durban and back aiming to get mail to and from the Union Castle Line mail boats. Stop offs were at Oudtshoorn, Port Elizabeth and Eat London. 11 of the 100 DH9s gifted by the British government at the end of the war were used. After a rehearsal on 23 February the first flight left Wynberg Airport, Cape Town, on 2 March. Sixteen flights took place with the last being on 15 June.

13 Mar 1925 a philatelic cover with the whole set overpaying the airmail rate + 2d for postage




The de Havilland aircraft used in the experiment




[Photo: Union Defence Department.

D.H.9 Military Aircraft: Type used on 1925 Experimental Service.

## *The 1925 Government Experimental Service*

The stamps only paid for the "air", not the normal postage

13 Jun 1925 (late in the experiment) again with the whole set overpaying the "air" but no postage so taxed double the 2d deficiency collected by dues

SOUTH AFRICA
AIR POST
SUIDAFRIKA
LUGPOS
BELLVILLE
13JUN25
S.A. AIR MAIL
13 JUN 1925
UNPAID
ONBETAAL
Mr R.J. Sogno,
48 Stiemens Street,
Braamfontein,
Johannesburg,
2d
2d
2d

## *The 1925 Government Experimental Service*

The stamps only paid for the "air", not the normal postage

A Postcard dated 28 Feb 1925 at Somerset West franked the correct 1d Air and 1d postage rates it will have been carried on the 1st Flight from Cape Town to Oudtshoorn

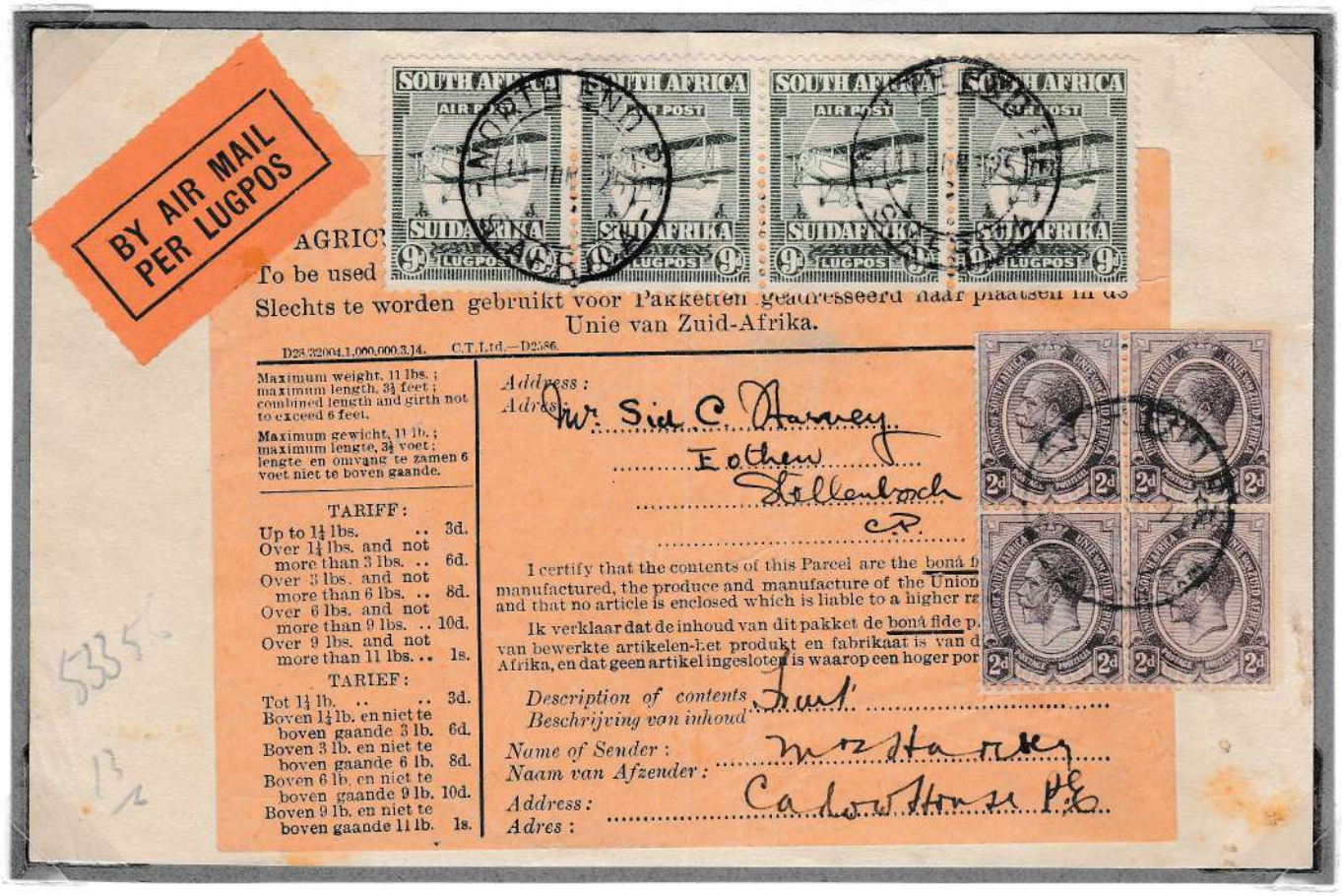
addressed to Mossel Bay which was intended as the stop over place but deemed unsuitable

16 Apr 1925 from Durban to France paying the correct 6d Air fee and 3d postage. Carried to Cape Town to catch the mail boat it's not clear why they felt it reasonable to charge double the air fee

# *The 1925 Government Experimental Service*

The stamps only paid for the "air", not the normal postage

11 Mar 1925 a rare Parcel Piece with label. The parcel air rate was 6d per lb so the fruit weighed 6lb and the postage 8d (as per the tariff shown on the label




8 Mar 1925 envelope from Cape Town to Nigel ("via Durban") with the correct 3d air rate but no 2d postage so taxed 4d

## *The 1925 Government Experimental Service*

The rare imperforate between stamp and left margin varieties

13 Jun 1925 on the last flight out of Cape Town on 14th with the variety on a marginal pair 1d. Further 1d making up the 3d air. Tête-bêche bock of 4 1½d paying the 2d postage plus 4d registration

Only 2 sheets are recorded with this variety so the maximum number of copies is 24. Very few of these are used and this is the only recorded example of it used on cover

13 June 1925 as for the above but with a bottom left corner pair of the 9d showing the variety. Also franked an interprovincial 1/- QV Natal

6 sheets of the 9d are recorded with this variety making a possible total of 72. The vast majority of these are accounted for and mint

## *1929 Union Airways : The Stamps*

Issued 16 Aug. 1929, no watermark, Perf.14x13½. Design is the Gypsy Moth plane
Printed in 2 panes of 60 (6x10), one above the other

Plate Proofs in black on thin glazed card

Colour Trials printed on the back of Government land charts

5 colours were trialled - they should have been destroyed but it is reported that five sheets found their way out of the Government Printing Works and onto the market (not that unusual at the time!)

orange

orange-yellow

orange-vermillion

bright rose

scarlet

The Issued Stamps (were valid for postage as well as air)

V3. the frame flaw of the 1/- has been retouched row 6/5 (bottom pane)

V1. break in frame under U of Lugpos. row 6/5 (bottom pane)

## *The Union Airways Service - 1929-34*

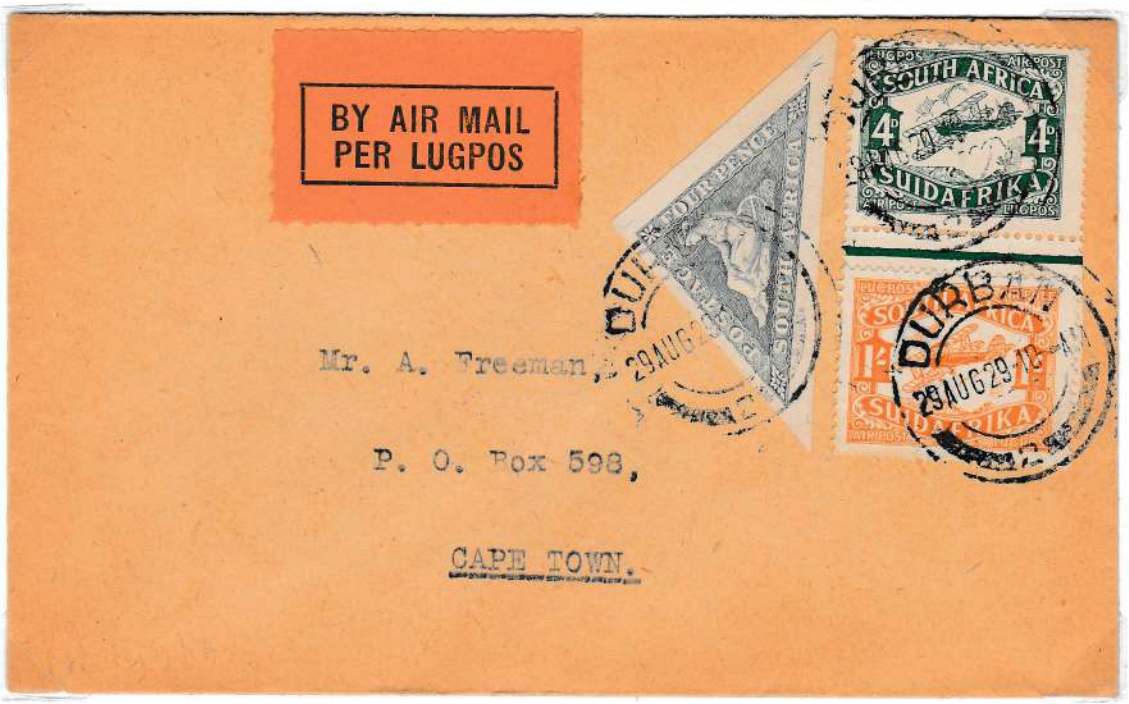
This service was largely a result of the enthusiasm and persistence of Maj A M Miller. Union Airways was registered as a company in Pretoria on 24 July 1929 with capital of £5,000. The government contributed £8,000 to the venture and insisted again on the timing coinciding with the mail boat sailings. 5 Gypsy Moth planes were acquired. The routes again were from Cape Town to Durban with stops at East London or Port Elizabeth. Also from Durban north to Bloemfontein, then Johannesburg and back to Cape Town. A supplementary airmail fee of 4d per ounce was charged. The first flight left Maitland airport Cape Town for Port Elizabeth with 5 bags of mail on 26 Aug 1929 at 7.45am. The mail was separated and the Durban bags forwarded on another plane reaching there 2 hours ahead of time. The northern bags reached Bloemfontein but delayed by headwinds didn't reach Germiston until 27th. The service was successful linking with Imperial Airways in 1932 and continued until 1934 when South African Airways took over.

25 Aug 1929 carried on the northern flight 26 Aug. from Port Elizabeth to Bloemfontein reaching Johannesburg the next day

24 Aug 1929 another cover on the first flight from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth, then Umtata the 4d pays the air fee & though eligible for postage it is still 1d short

# *The Union Airways Service - 1929-34*

29 Aug 1929 from Durban to Cape Town on the first return flight piloted by Lt Capareuthus as far as Port Elizabeth. The cover below arrived there the same day and Maj Miller flew the combined bags to Cape Town on 30th reaching it in time for overseas mail to catch the *Carnarvon Castle*. over-franked by 1/- air fee and 3d postage!




29 Aug 1929 from Germiston Station to Cape Town on the first flight from Johannesburg piloted by Lt Bellin it landed at Port Elizabeth and joined the above cover being taken to Cape Town the following day. (again over-franked 1/-)

*The Union Airways Service - 1929-34*

*Linking with Imperial Airways*

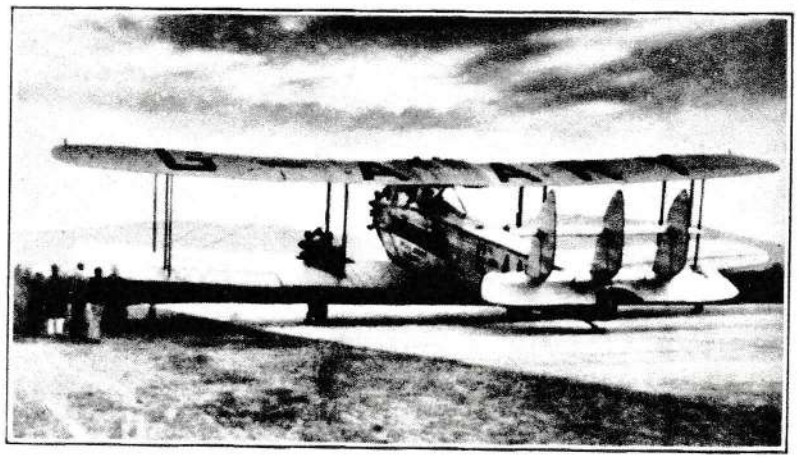
25 Jan 1932 a ridiculous philatelic cover from Johannesburg to Benoni via Athens and Rome! Carried on the 1st Imperial Airways flight. Under-franked and a tax mark but nothing to suggest the tax was collected. Benoni arrival on 16 March

photocopy of the reverse at 100%

*The Union Airways Service - 1929-34*

*Linking with Imperial Airways*

26 Jan 1932 Imperial Airways first flight registered cover from Cape Town to Germany using Union Airways stamps plus 3d postage and 4d registration. "Gare du Nord" transit from Paris on 27th. Forwarded to Germany by train. Hamburg Luftpost cachet in red

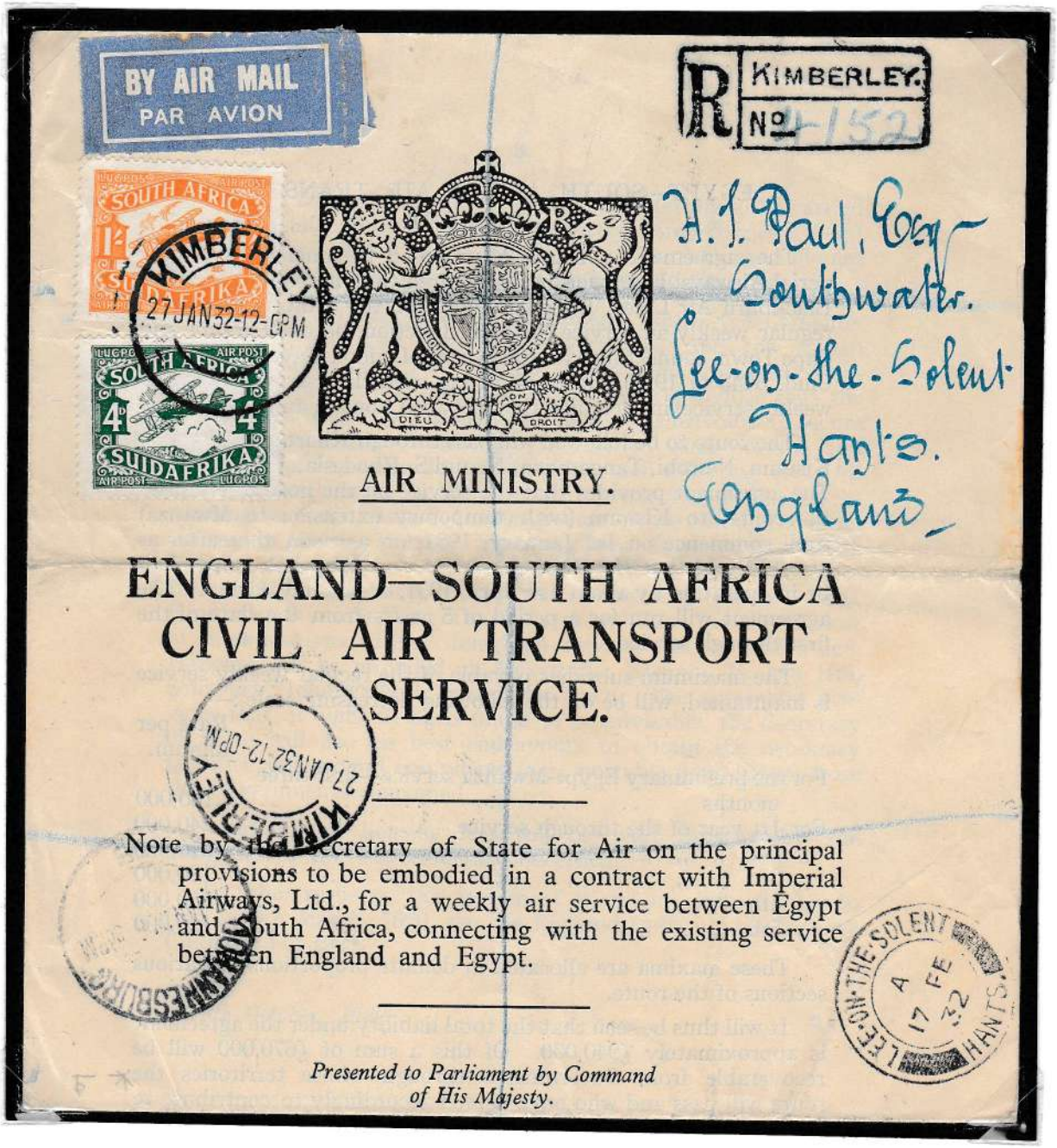


The *City of Karachi* leaving Cape Town on the "first flight" 27 Jan 1932, Capt Caspareuthus piloting

## *The Union Airways Service - 1929-34*

### *Linking with Imperial Airways*

27 Jan 1932 a copy of the contract provisions between the UK government and Imperial Airways registered (4d) and air mail rate (1/-) to England. Now Capt Caspareuthus piloted the *City of Karachi* from Cape Town to Kimberley. Here it picked up this item and mail from South West Africa before heading on to Germiston. The following day it was carried on the *City of Basra* to Salisbury but on 29th the plane was damaged and the relief plane made an emergency landing in a bog. This delayed things until 6 February. Various planes took over for various sections and London was reached on 16 Feb. there is a Lee-on-the-Solent receipt for the next day




Union Airways stopped trading in 1934 and South Africa Airways took over