





## Wartime Air Mail



Airmail services via Rome operated by Ala Littoria continued after the start of WW2, as Italy was neutral until June 1940. Malta GPO airmail rates were also unchanged, with one rate where the air sector finished at Rome and a higher rate for routes with onward air service from Rome.



1939(17NO) Airmail cover from Malta to Holland using the Italian air service to Rome. Franked 4d with two KG.VI definitives, this pays the ½ oz. rate for airmail to Italy. From Rome to Holland, the letter went by surface, probably by train via France. The cover has a Par Avion Jusqu'a ROME handstamp to indicate the end of the airmail sector. Probably flown on a SM.75 landplane of Ala Littoria, departing on 18 Nov 1939.



Savoia-Marchetti SM.75 airliner of Ala Littoria, showing wartime national identification bands.

Ala Littoria's November 1939 timetable shows two routes from Malta to Rome. Each operated three days per week on alternate days, except Sunday.  
On Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays, a seaplane service from Tripoli which landed in Marsaxlokk Bay at Malta. From Malta, this service called at Syracuse and Naples en route to Rome  
On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, a landplane service using Ta Kallit aerodrome. This service originated in Malta and called at Catania, Palermo and Naples en route to Rome.



## Wartime Air Mail



From September 1939, airmail to France could be sent by Imperial Airways to Marseille, or by Ala Littoria via Rome to Marseille and Paris. The Italian service operated six times per week (except Sun), while Imperial Airways was only weekly (Wed). As the postage rates were similar, it is likely that mail would be sent by the Italian service unless specified to the contrary.



1940(MY3) Airmail double rate registered cover from Malta to France. The 1s2d franking matches the Italian airmail rate for a letter under 1oz. (Registration fee 3d + airmail first  $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. 6d + additional  $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. 5d).

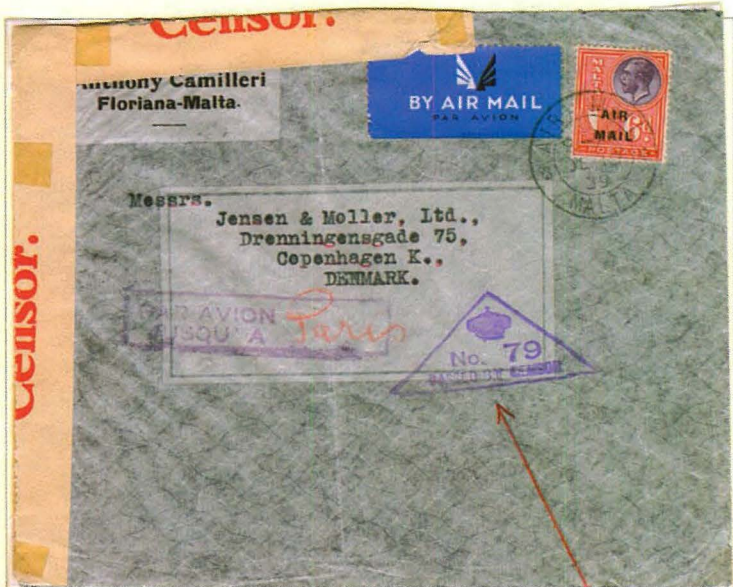




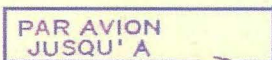
## Wartime Air Mail Malta - Denmark



Government Notice No.195 of May 1934 set the airmail letter rate from Malta to France at 6d (1st half-oz.), with the route to Paris operated via Rome and Marseilles. This rate also applied to mail that continued by surface from Paris, although few examples are recorded with Par Avion Jusqu'a markings. Denmark was one destination served in this manner, with Paris as the Air Mail terminal. The Paris airmail service came to an abrupt end in June 1940, when Italy entered WW2 with the Axis forces.



1939(DE19) Censored 6d rate airmail cover from Malta to Copenhagen via Paris with boxed PAR AVION JUSQU'A Paris & Malta censor No.79. Opened and resealed in Malta with label type CSL-5B. No backstamps.



55x12mm framed handstamp with space for transfer location to be inserted manually. 'Paris' recorded between Aug.39 & Mar.40.



## Wartime Air Mail



Airmail from Malta could be flown throughout to England via Rome at one-third of the cost of the less-frequent Imperial Airways service. The sector from Malta to Turin via Rome was operated by Ala Littoria, with Turin to Paris operated by Avio Linee Italiane. Prior to the outbreak of war, the ALI service continued to London (Croydon).



**1939(DE20) Airmail cover from Malta to UK at the 5d rate via Italy, without any censor markings. Inscribed 'via Ala Littoria'.**

Probable routing for this airmail cover:  
20.12 Cancelled at Sliema Branch Office  
21.12 Ala Littoria landplane service 422 to Rome  
22.12 Ala Littoria service 563 Rome to Turin  
22.12 Avio Linee Italiane service 570 Turin to Paris  
22.12 Paris to Heston Imperial Airways/Air France  
22/23.12 overnight train London-Carlisle.



Avio Linee Italiane (ALI) used the Fiat G18V airliner on its route from Venice to Paris via Milan & Turin.



## Wartime Air Mail



In early 1940, Airmail services using the Italian routes to and from Malta operated normally. At 5d per  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz., this was cheaper than using Imperial Airways. This rate was introduced in May 1934 and used until Feb 1940.



1940(5FE & 13JA) Censored Airmail covers from Malta to England, using the Italian air services and franked at the European rate of 5d per  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.



Multi-purpose triangular Censor marking. No.40 was used from Sep 39 to Feb 43.



RAF Censor marking used from Sept 39 to Sept 40, although there were few RAF units during this time.



## Wartime Air Mail Malta-Switzerland



Mail to and from Switzerland was initially unaffected by the outbreak of WW2 and continued to use routes through Italy, until June 1940.



(Top) 1940(23.V) Incoming cover from Switzerland with 5x 10c Landscapes. Opened and resealed by the Malta censor.  
(Lower) 1940(FE28) Censored Airmail cover to Switzerland via Rome, opened and resealed by the same Malta censor.

PAR AVION  
JUSQU' A ROME.

56 x 12mm boxed cachet, introduced in January 1937 and used until 1940.



## Wartime Air Mail



European services continued to use the Italian routes until June 1940. The rates to central European countries were unchanged at 4d per ½ oz. For destinations beyond Italy, the air sector often terminated at Rome.



(Top) 1940(27JA) Censored Airmail cover from Italy to Malta with 25c & 1L75 stamps, which have been examined by the censor. (Lower) 1940(AP17) Censored Airmail cover to Switzerland, by air to Rome only, as shown by the Par Avion Jusqu'a ROME marking.



Ala Littoria CANT Z.506 floatplane I-GORO. Painted in a red scheme, this aircraft flew the last pre-war service Tripoli-Rome via Malta and Syracuse on 5 June 1940.

**PAR AVION  
JUSQU' A ROME.**

56 x 12mm boxed cachet, introduced in January 1937 and used until 1940. The above cover is the latest recorded use.





## Wartime Air Mail



In May 1939, Pan American started Transatlantic mail services with a southern route from New York to Marseilles via the Azores and Lisbon. This was followed in June 1939 with a northern route from New York to Southampton via Newfoundland and Ireland. The northern route was suspended in October 1939, but the southern route, now using Lisbon as its terminus, continued throughout the war. Route code was FAM18.



19406MR) Airmail cover from Malta to New York via Lisbon, franked at 1s9d per ½oz. rate and carried on the Pan Am Clipper service. Apparently not censored.



Four Boeing 314's were used by Pan American on transatlantic services from 1939. They were called 'Clippers' after the names of the aircraft. Over 1800lb of mail was carried on the first service.



Lisbon backstamps on the above item are dated 12Mar40. Sector from Malta was most likely flown by Ala Littoria via Rome and Mellilla to Lisbon.

Clipper Dixie had arrived at Lisbon on schedule on 11 March 1940, but departure was delayed until 21 March, by which time the next flight operated by Clipper American had arrived. Both Clippers departed for the Azores on 21 March, but it's likely that Clipper Dixie carried this cover.



## Wartime Air Mail



On the outbreak of war in 1939, Pan American's FAM18 Clipper service terminated at Lisbon, instead of Marseille. Similarly, services to Europe from the UK were suspended. For transatlantic airmail from Malta, the only option was an Italian route via Rome, Melilla and Seville to Lisbon connecting with the two times per week PanAm service to New York.



1939(SP24) Censored airmail cover to USA with 1s9½d franking. Two stamps (½d & 1d) on reverse, 'cancelled' by the censor, with a Lisbon air mail transit postmark (1OC39). Overfranked by ½d.



The transatlantic airmail rate from Malta to USA was 1s7½d per ½oz. plus postage (1½d per oz)

The transatlantic sector was flown from Lisbon by Clipper Dixie. The flight was due to depart on 1 October 1939, but was delayed four days, arriving in New York on 6 October 1939.



## Wartime Air Mail



The Pan American FAM18 service provided the transatlantic sector of airmail services from Malta to Canada, via Rome, Lisbon and New York.



1939(NO11) Airmail  $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. rate cover to Canada with 1s9d franking. Sent by Capt. J.S.Symons, Royal Artillery and censored with handstamp no.40.

The transatlantic airmail rate from Malta to Canada was 1s7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d per  $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. plus postage (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d per oz)



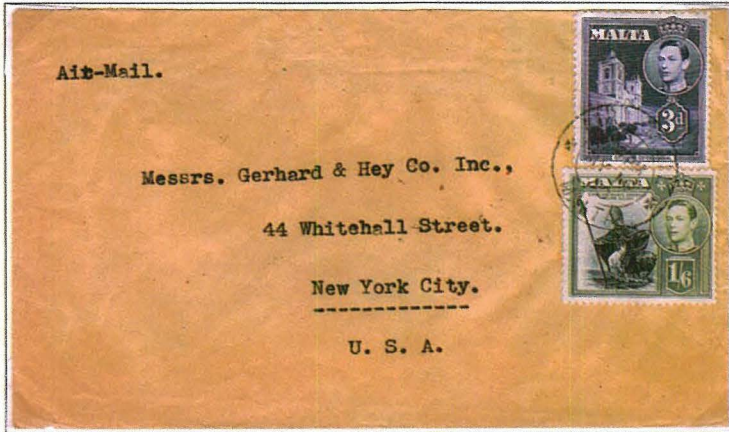
Malta to Rome was flown six days per week by Ala Littoria, alternating between landplane (Tu/Th/Sa) and seaplane (W/W/F) services. From Rome, Ala Littoria flew six days per week to Lisbon via Melilla, with a night-stop in Seville. The transatlantic sector was flown from Lisbon by Pan American, in this instance by Clipper Atlantic. This flight departed on 21 November 1939, arriving in New York the following day. From New York, Canadian Colonial Airways operated daily services to Montreal with DC3 aircraft.



## Wartime Air Mail



The 1940 Ala Littoria summer timetable shows an acceleration of the Rome to Lisbon service. This deleted the stop at Barcelona, allowing Lisbon to be reached in one day and avoiding a night-stop at Seville.



1940(MY14) Airmail cover to USA with 1s9d franking, with no sign of any censorship. The Lisbon transit postmark (23MY40) on reverse shows this cover was delayed between Malta and Lisbon. If all flights were operating to schedule, it should only have taken two days and would then have connected with an earlier Pan Am Clipper flight.

The transatlantic airmail rate from Malta to USA was 1s7½d per ½oz. plus postage (1½d per oz)



The transatlantic sector was flown from Lisbon on 25 May 1940 by Clipper Atlantic. Pan American flight 128 arrived in New York on 26 May 1940.



## Wartime Air Mail



In May 1940, an unusual destination of Buea, British Cameroons for some airmail covers prompted use of a PAR AVION JUSQU'A *Nigeria* handstamp.

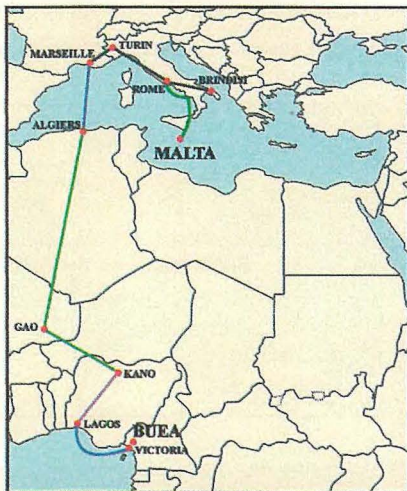


1940(MY11) Registered airmail cover from Malta to Buea, Br. Cameroons with various stamps and PAR AVION JUSQU'A *Nigeria* handstamp. The cover has a manuscript endorsement *Aerea Via Roma* in red crayon.

The probable itinerary for this 1940 cover:

- 11 May Stamps cancelled at Malta GPO
- 13 May Ala Littoria seaplane to Rome
- 13 May AMB Roma-Bari TPO datestamp
- 14 May AMB Roma-Torino TPO cancel
- 15 May Torino Ferrovia/Racc datestamp
- 16 May- Turin-Marseille by train
- 18 May- Marseille-Algiers by Air France
- 24 May Algiers-Kano by Régie Air Afrique
- 27 May Kano Registered datestamp
- 1 June Kano-Lagos by BOAC DH86A Danae on flight KL227
- 1 June Lagos Registered datestamp
- 3 June- Lagos-Victoria by sea
- 6 June Victoria Br.Cameroons cancel
- 8 June Buea Br.Cameroons datestamp

The items in bold are present on the cover, mostly on the reverse. Other dates are from airline information or estimated (-).





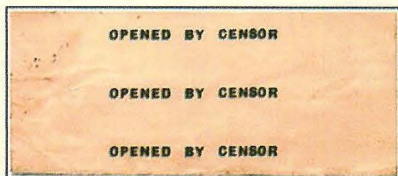
## Wartime Air Mail



Imperial Airways 'Empire' routes were initially not affected by the outbreak of war with Germany in 1939. Airmail to and from Malta for these services connected in Italy, as previously. Censorship of mail was announced on 26 August 1939, allowing all items of mail to be opened for examination.



1939(29AU) Incoming airmail cover from Egypt. This arrived in Malta on 2SP39 (Air Mail BS). It was censored and resealed locally using the first type of label, the day before war with Germany was formally declared.



This type of resealing label was locally produced and used for about two weeks. This is the earliest recorded use.

Probable itinerary for this cover:

- 29 Aug - posted at Sidi Gaber
- 29 Aug - BS Alexandria
- 30 Aug - Imperial flight DN226
- 31 Aug - DN226 arrives Rome
- 1 Sep - Ala Littoria to Malta
- 2 Sep - Air Mail Malta BS
- 2 Sep - Cospicua BS; redirected
- 4 Sep - Valletta BS



## Wartime Air Mail



A new Imperial Airways service between UK and Egypt included Malta as an overnight stop in each direction. The inaugural service arrived on 17th September 1939, with the return departing to the UK on 20th September. The Malta GPO announced new postage rates of 1s3d per half ounce for this service. The service connected with the Empire routes in Egypt and the rate applied to all Empire destinations. The first service was operated by *Frobisher* class DH.91 Albatross G-AFDJ, named *Falcon* by Imperial.



Top: 1939(OC24) Censored airmail cover to UK at 1s3d rate and endorsed Imperial  
 Lower: 1939(SP20) Censored airmail cover to UK at 5d rate. Although posted on the inaugural day of the Imperial Airways service, it probably went on the Italian route.



## Wartime Air Mail



The UK airport for the Egypt service via Malta was Heston, near London, succeeding Shoreham after the first month. The service was operated by Imperial Airways DH.91's and British Airways Lockheed 14's.



1939(28OC and 19NO) Two covers from UK to Malta at the Imperial 1s3d rate. Both were carried by British Airways Lockheed 14's, the upper item on G-AFMR *Leander* operating flight CE165 on 30.10; the lower item on G-AFKE *Lothair* operating flight CE171 on 20.11. They arrived in Malta 1.11 and 22.11 resp.



Photo of British Airways Lockheed 14 G-AFKE *Lothair* taken at Heston Airport in 1939.

*Lothair* was a regular visitor to Malta with twelve return visits recorded on the UK-Malta-Egypt service until it ceased in June 1940.





## Wartime Air Mail



The UK-Egypt service was organised by the National Air Communications, a department of the Air Ministry. Gradually, the DH.91's were replaced by Lockheed 14's, with the transition completed by the end of 1939.



1939(DE12) and 1940(JA2) Two covers from Malta to UK at the 1s3d rate. The top item was carried by Imperial Airways DH.91 *Falcon*, leaving Malta on 15.12.39 operating flight CW173. The lower item was carried by British Airways Lockheed 14 *Lafayette*, operating flight CW180 on 5.1.40. The flights arrived at Heston on 17.12.39 and 8.1.40 respectively.



Imperial Airways DH.91 G-AFDJ Falcon



British Airways L.14 G-AFGR Lafayette



## Wartime Air Mail



The new air service from England to Calcutta via Malta was operating effectively, with DH.91's or Lockheed 14's flying as far as Alexandria, from where HP.42's continued to Karachi and AW.15's took the final sector to Calcutta. However, aircraft shortages on the Mediterranean sector in December 1939 created schedule problems, at a time when mail volumes were increasing for pre-Xmas delivery.



**1939(DE12) Airmail cover from Malta to India at wartime 1s 3d Empire rate, with Par Avion Jusqu'a *Delhi* handstamp. Backstamped Lahore 21 DEC 1939. Note the absence of any censor markings from Malta or India.**

This cover was posted in time to catch the normal weekly departure from Malta on 13 DEC 1939. However, the DH.91 aircraft operating flight CE177 had engine problems in France and returned to England. Two Lockheed 14's operated the delayed flight CE177, arriving at Malta on 15 DEC 1939. The delayed arrival in Alexandria was still in time to connect to the Empire service to India.

**This cover's probable itinerary and mode of transport**

- 16 DE 39 - depart Malta on flight CE177 (Lockheed 14 G-AFKE or G-AFMO)
- 17 DE 39 - depart Alexandria on flight SE203 (S30 Champion G-AFCT)
- 18 DE 39 - aircraft change at Karachi to S23 Cooe VH-ABF
- 19 DE 39 - depart Karachi on flight SE203 (S23 Cooe VH-ABF)
- 19 DE 39 - arrive Gwalior; mail for Delhi transferred to Tata Airlines
- 19 DE 39 - depart Gwalior to Delhi by Tata Airlines (DH.89 or Waco YQC6)
- 19 DE 39 - end of air segment at Delhi - transfer to rail
- 21 DE 39 - arrive Lahore Cantonment.



## Wartime Air Mail



The 6d AIR MAIL overprint stamp was introduced in 1928 and initially was restricted to airmail using the Cairo-Baghdad service. Later on, this was relaxed, but stamps remained available from the GPO until 1940.



1940(MR14) and (MR2) Two covers from Malta to UK at the 1s3d rate, both with pairs of the 6d AIR MAIL overprint. The top item was carried by Lockheed 14 *Lafayette*, operating flight CW199 leaving Malta on 15.3.40. The lower item was carried by Lockheed 14 *Lothair* on 4.3.40 operating flight CW198. The flights arrived at Heston on 16.3.40 and 5.3.40 respectively.



## Wartime Air Mail R.A.F. Censor



The Royal Air Force was not well prepared at the outbreak of war with Italy on 10 June 1940. There were only 5 Swordfish target-towing aircraft and 8 Sea Gladiators, half of which were still in packing cases at RAF Kalafrana - hardly a force to counter potential Italian air raids! Nonetheless, a Fighter Flight was formed at Hal Far on 19 April 1940 and had trained a number of pilots on 4 Sea Gladiators made operational by the start of the conflict.



1940(JA3) Censored airmail cover from Malta to England at the 1s3d Imperial Airways rate, with first type of RAF Censor marking.



RPPC of a Gloster Gladiator, similar to those used by the Fighter Flight from 19 April 1940.



## Wartime Air Mail



As events in 1940 unfolded, airmail through Italy and France became more difficult. As a result, the alternative route via Bordeaux got more use. This route continued until the fall of France in June 1940, when services through the Mediterranean, including Malta, were abandoned.



1940(15FE) Censored Airmail cover from Malta to England, franked at double the 1s3d per ½oz. rate. Has received RAF Censor No.37 marking.



RAF Censor marking used from Sept 39 to Sept 40, although there were few RAF units during this time.



'Tombstone' RN Censor marking. Recorded on Malta covers between April 40 and Dec 44.



1940(5AP) Censored Airmail cover from Malta to England, franked at the 1s3d per ½oz. rate. Sent from an RN ship or shore establishment and has received an unsigned 'Tombstone' censor mark.



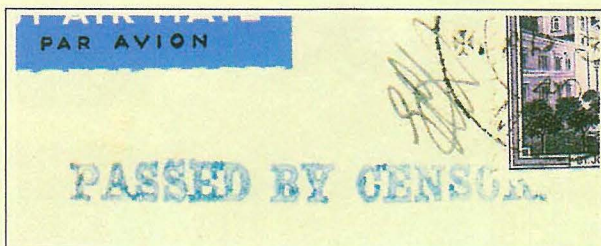
## Wartime Air Mail



Records in the National Archives show concerns about delays to mail, resulting in approval to use Italian mail routes, unless the contents were sensitive. As tensions with Italy rose, more mail was sent using the Imperial Airways service, particularly from military personnel in Malta. Some alleviation to airmail delays was achieved by increasing the frequency to twice-weekly. By 1940, this service was using Heston aerodrome, west of London, replacing Shoreham as the UK terminus.



1940(AP3) 1s3d Imperial rate airmail cover from Malta to England with Naval censor marking, which is initialed E.C.H. This is almost certainly Surgeon Captain Ernest Charles Holton, who was appointed in 1938 to the Royal Naval Hospital at Bighi. The letter was written by his wife and sent to their daughter - notably, it was censored before affixing stamps.



Bighi Naval Censor (2x full size) - recorded from Nov.39 to Nov.40.



## Wartime Air Mail



From February to April 1940, 25% of the twice-weekly BOAC services from the UK to Egypt via Malta were cancelled due to aircraft shortages. A similar situation developed between Egypt and Karachi, resulting in the use of AW.15s on an extended route between Calcutta and Egypt.



1940(MR20) Airmail cover from Malta to India at wartime 1s 3d Empire rate, with Par Avion Jusqu'a *Delhi* handstamp. Backstamped in Secunderabad on 29 MAR 40. Note the absence of any censor markings from Malta or India.



The use of *Delhi* as the air terminal for mail from Malta is scarce, possibly as only the AW.15 landplane services from Karachi operated through Delhi.

This cover's probable itinerary and mode of transport  
 24 MR 40 - depart Malta on flight CE206 (L14 *Lafayette*)  
 25 MR 40 - dep. Alexandria flight AC206 (AW15 *Astraea*)  
 27 MR 40 - aircraft change at Karachi to AW15 *Atalanta*  
 28 MR 40 - end of air segment at Delhi - transfer to rail  
 29 MR 40 - arrive Secunderabad



Armstrong-Whitworth AW.15 *Astraea* at Aboukir. Operated flight AC206 from Egypt to Karachi.



## Wartime Air Mail



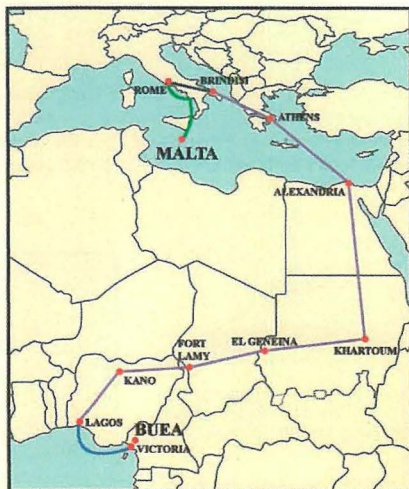
In May 1940, an unusual destination of Buea, British Cameroons for some airmail covers prompted use of a PAR AVION JUSQU'A *Nigeria* handstamp.



1940(MY11) 3d Registered envelope by airmail from Malta to Buea, Br. Cameroons with various stamps and PAR AVION JUSQU'A *Nigeria* handstamp. The cover has a manuscript endorsement *Aerea Via Roma* in red crayon. Note that there is no evidence of postal censorship.

- The probable itinerary for this 1940 cover:
- 11 May Stamps cancelled at Malta GPO
  - 13 May Ala Littoria seaplane to Rome
  - 13 May AMB Roma-Bari TPO datestamp
  - 19 May Brindisi-Khartoum by BOAC flying boat *Circe* on flight DS271
  - 22 May Khartoum-Lagos by BOAC DH86A *Demeter* on flight KL226
  - 24 May Lagos Registered datestamp
  - 26 May- Lagos-Victoria by sea
  - 29 May Victoria Br.Cameroons cancel
  - 29 May Buea Br.Cameroons datestamp

The items in bold are present on the cover, mostly on the reverse. Other dates are from airline information or estimated (-).







## Wartime Air Mail



At the end of April 1940, an additional UK-India flying boat service was introduced, resulting in the reduction of the landplane service via Malta from twice to once per week. During May 1940, a small number of special BOAC flights using C-class flying boats called at Malta, both eastbound and westbound, carrying mails. These were probably investigating routes avoiding Italy, in anticipation of Italy's alliance with the Axis forces.



1940(MY28) Censored cover from Malta to UK at the 1s3d rate, with censor handstamp and resealing label on reverse. Censor signature belongs to Lt. H.F.Clode of The Devonshire Regiment. Probably flown Malta to England on BOAC S.33 flying boat *Clifton* on flight XW221.



Censor No.30 recorded used by 2nd Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment from Dec. 1939 until Apr.1943.

**Opened by  
Censor.**

Resealing label type CSL-5A, used between Feb.40 and Oct.40



# Wartime Air Mail



In the week leading to outbreak of war with Italy, BOAC diverted all its African and Australian Flying Boat services via Malta. This affected 7 flights from the U.K. and 5 flights to the U.K. before hostilities made operations unsafe. The last flights left Marsaxlokk Bay on 10-Jun-1940.



1940(JU3) Airmail cover from U.K. to Sudan, carried on *Cleopatra* (flight DS277), which called at Malta 6-Jun. Backstamped on arrival in Khartoum on 8-Jun-1940.