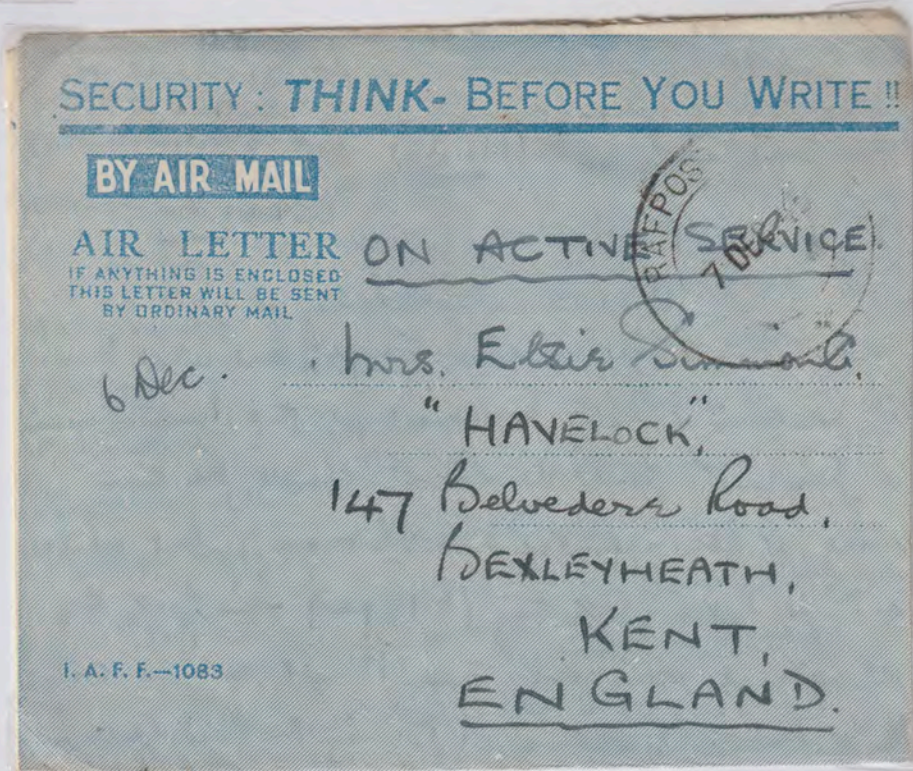
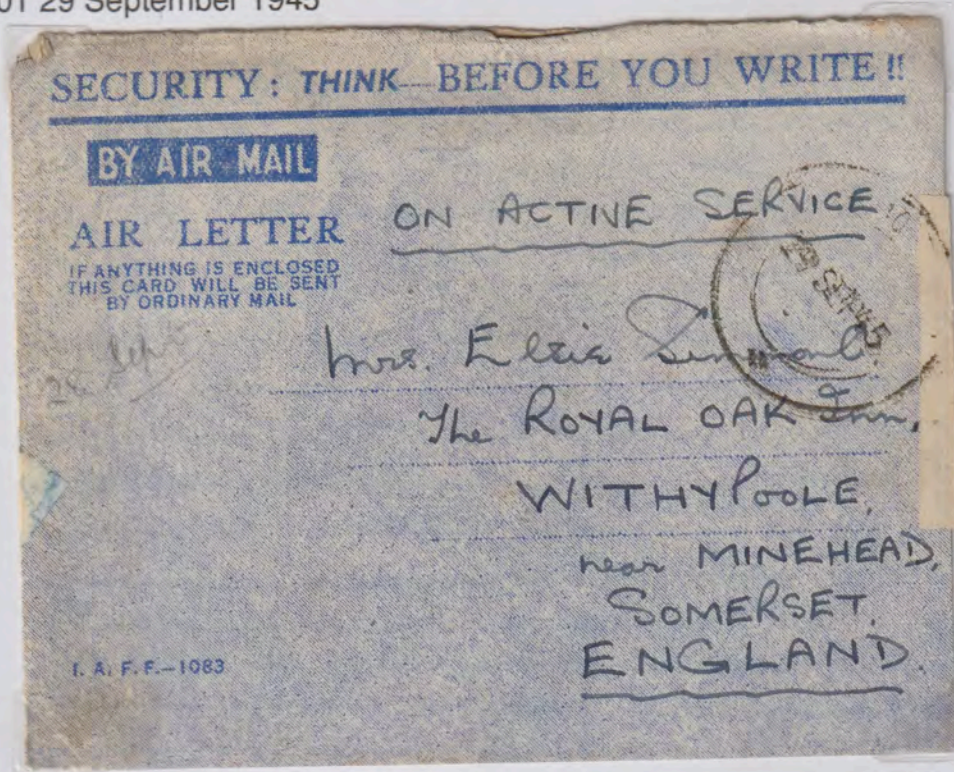


AIR LETTER

A range of different editions of the forces air letter was in use on Cocos.
RAF PO 301 29 September 1945



RAF PO 301 7 December 1945

A GEOGRAPHY LESSON

RAF PO 30 November 1945

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

Elsie Simmons
HAVELOCK
Belvedere Road,
SEXLEYHEATH,
KENT,
ENGLAND



- A = Deep Ocean
- B = Small Lagoon
- C = Real Lagoon
- D = Ship Anchorage with tank landing craft ferry
- E = Smallest Island
- F = Deepest
- = Stroll on beach before dinner

29th. November. 1945 (No. 19)

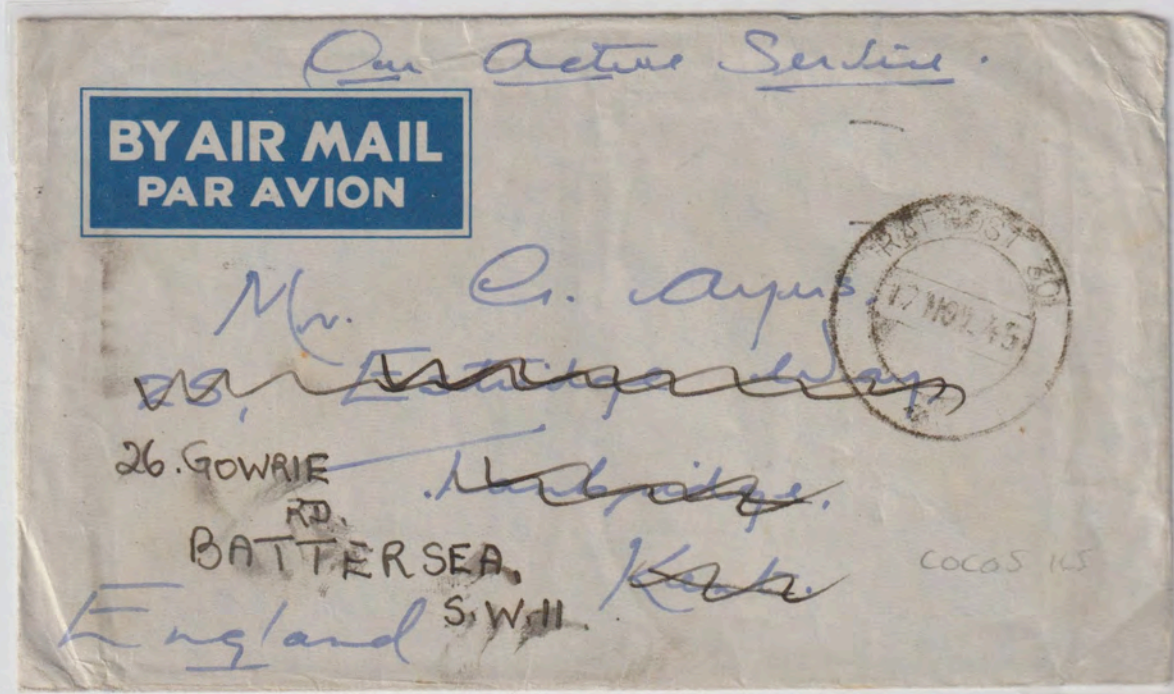
2250881.
ACI, SIMMONS, M.R.,
SECTION B,
RAF. STATION, COCOS,
R.A.F.,
CEYLON AIR FORCES.

My darling Elsie,

Yesterday I wondered what I could write of interest to my sweetheart, and it dawned on me that some of my comments about the Cocos Islands must be rather confusing - because sometimes I refer

RAF PO 301 postmarks are typically weak and blurred indicating a poor standard of maintenance. The airmail service, however, was good whether by RAF aircraft or QANTAS.

RAF PO 301 3 November 1945.



RAF PO 301 17 November 1945, Tonbridge 27 November.

Security was strict during the planning, construction and operational phases of the airfield and several code names were used for Cocos Islands. The Japanese had not attacked the islands since 1942 as they believed they had knocked out the cable station.

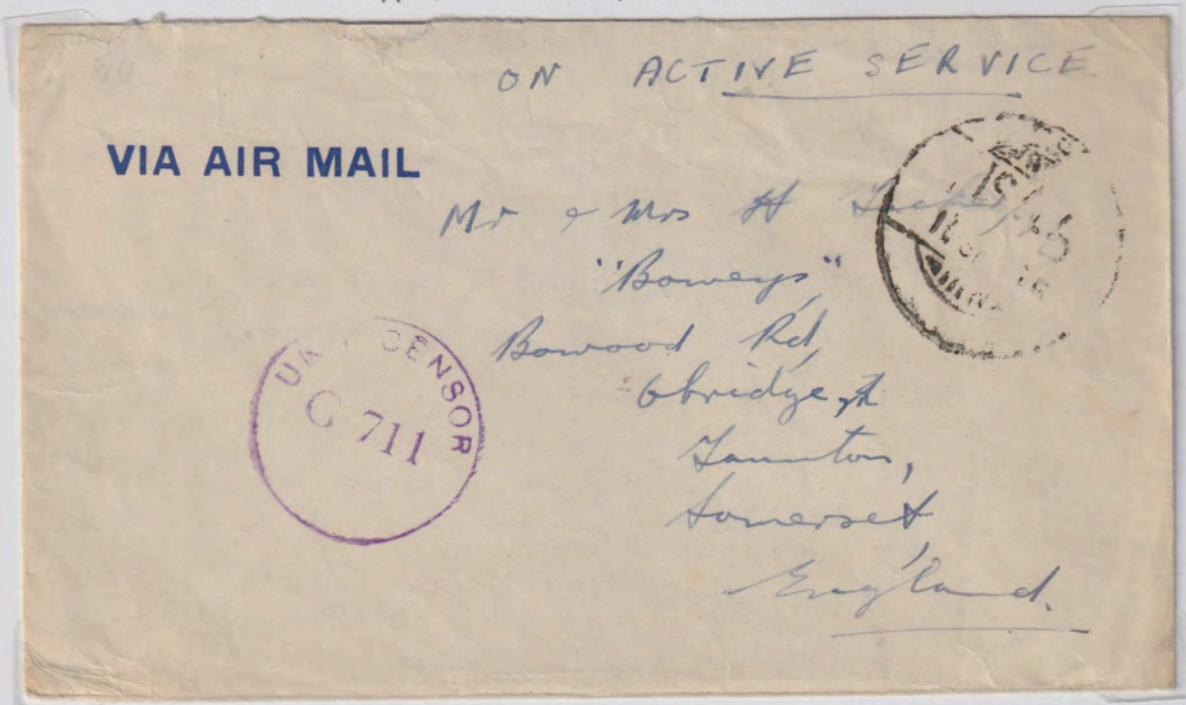
Undated Post Office Maritime Mail cancel from F/O Measures RAF (known to be on Cocos) in 1945.



INDIAN F.P.O. 46

Cocos Islands, Addu Atoll, and Diego Garcia were the responsibility of Ceylon Command during the war. Because the British could not defend Cocos, they left a message at the cable office in Batavia indicating that the Cocos cable station had been destroyed by a Japanese destroyer attack. The Japanese only made occasional reconnaissance flights. Ceylon forces manned the coastal defence guns until removed following a mutiny.

Letter from a sapper, FPO 46 14 September 1945, censor cachet C 711



FPO No 46, 20 October 1945 (not censored)

No mail recorded from Indian garrison troops

FIRST SCHEDULED AIR SERVICE VIA COCOS KLM 1945

Between 10 November 1945 and 18 January 1946, KLM routed its Amsterdam – Batavia flights via Ceylon and Cocos Island. Flight delayed from 7 November.

Back to Sender: According to the Indies Post Administration information may be philatelic requests there for the time being NOT being processed.

Schiedam 31 October 1945



Ex POW cachet, Amsterdam 23 November 1945, received 26 November

Return flight departed Batavia 19 November, arrived 23 November

FIRST RETURN FLIGHT

SECOND SCHEDULED AIR SERVICE VIA COCOS QANTAS 1946

From 15 January to 7 April 1946 QANTAS operated Lancastrians on the Perth-Karachi route, refuelling and delivering mail at Staging Post 129 Cocos. QANTAS G-AGMH was lost near Cocos on 24 March and the route was changed Sydney-Darwin-Singapore.

London 8 February 1946

460208



By Air Mail



H.H. Harman, Esq.,
General Manager,
Qantas Empire Airways Ltd.,
Shell House,
Carrington Street,
Sydney,
Australia.

Test Letter No. 11

BRITISH OVERSEAS AIRWAYS CORPORATION

MEMORANDUM

From: Mail Supt.
Head Office

To: *Sydney.*

CTM.1.1131

TEST LETTER NO. 11

Date of posting in London *8/2/46*

Date of receipt at destination *21.2.46*

Please complete and return together with covering envelope to
E.V. Dolby Esq., Mail Supt., Airways Terminal, London, S.W.1., marked
"Personal - Test Letter."

INWARDS MAIL

This cover is thought to have contained receipts for registered mail posted at Singapore. Cocos had no post office (despite address) and both inwards and outwards mail was posted at Singapore.

Director of Posts Singapore cachet, Singapore 19 June 1950

On His Majesty's Service.

Singapore 41
R 3369

Bulletin de Verification
Pour Bureau de Postes

Cocos Island



**BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION**



*Mr & Mrs C H Vernon
18 Keswick Road
Boscombe
Bournemouth
England*

Singapore 11 December 1950

Writer: E.R. Leigh Parkin, Cable & Wireless Ltd, Cocos Islands

OUTWARD MAIL

SECTION B: 1946 - 1955

QANTAS SURVEY FLIGHT 1948

QANTAS was keen to use Cocos as part of a trans-Indian Ocean route and a RAAF survey party inspected the airstrip in August 1948. 300 signed covers were carried on a QANTAS Lancastrian but the Australian Government were not sufficiently impressed.

Sydney
14 November 1948
Johannesburg
20 November



FIRST DIRECT FLIGHT
AUSTRALIA - SOUTH AFRICA
Sydney - Johannesburg



Mr. Francis J. Field,
C/- Qantas Empire Airways Ltd.,
c/- South African Airways,
Shell House, Carrington St.,
Rand Airport,
SYDNEY. N.S.W.
GERMISTON. SOUTH AFRICA.

Dr. H. H. H. H. H.



FIRST DIRECT FLIGHT
SOUTH AFRICA - AUSTRALIA
Johannesburg - Sydney



Mr. R. L. Weir,
Qantas Empire Airways Ltd.,
C/- Sth. African Airways,
Shell House,
Rand Airport,
Carrington St.,
GERMISTON. STH. AFRICA.
SYDNEY. N.S.W.

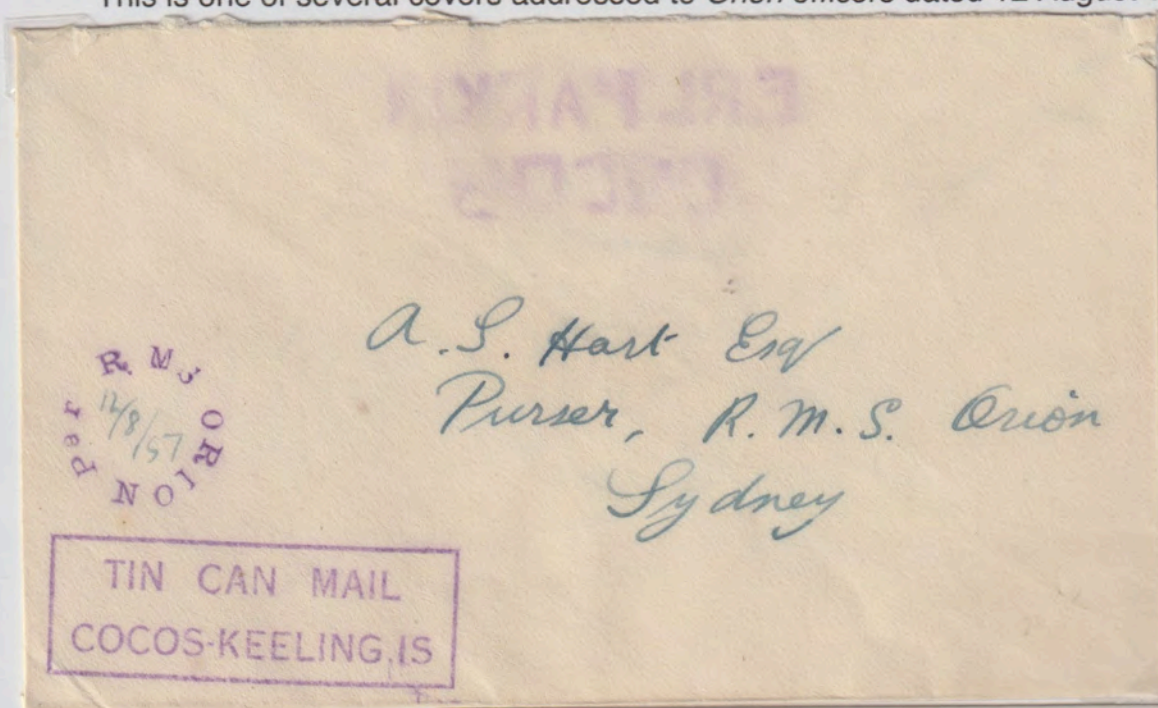
Dr. H. H. H. H. H.

Johannesburg
27 November
Sydney
1 December

CASK MAIL

A barrel with marker flag was dropped from a passing liner in 1909 and so began a practice of dropping and picking up barrels that often contained mail as well as supplies. The islanders referred to these barrels as casks. No examples of pre-war cask mail are recorded. There was no post office on Cocos after the war but E.R.L. Parkin seems to have served as de facto postmaster. He adopted the term Tin Can Mail as popularised by Tonga. He produced various cachets and applied them per favour to his and other mail between 1949 and 1954. There was no postal need for this service once the RAAF Post Office was established on 24 December 1951.

This is one of several covers addressed to *Orion* officers dated 12 August 1951.



P & O *Orion* dropped that last cask mail before the war and was the first to resume the practice after the war.

CASK MAIL 1950

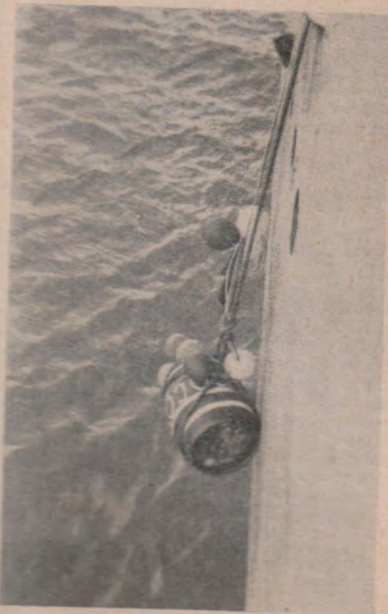
Most onwards airmail Cask Mail (the term used by most locals) bears Australian stamps cancelled at Fremantle because the usual practice was for southbound liners to pass Cocos during the day. Northbound liners usually passed at night so the small boats could not collect the cask. Dropping and picking up the cask was a popular diversion for the liner's passengers.

First day of use of boxed cachet per RMS Orion to Fremantle.

Perth 5 October 1950, received 3 November

Mail for Cocos Islands

The Cocos Islands situated in the Indian Ocean almost midway between Ceylon and Australia cannot be approached by the big liners on account of reefs. Mail for delivery is placed in a cask which is lowered over the side of the ship and collected by a small boat.



Our photograph, kindly sent by Mr. T. W. Pick, shows a cask, accompanied by coloured balloons, being lowered from S.S. *Orcades* and about to be released by withdrawing the spike from the rope loop.

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION



UNITED KINGDOM

24TH OCT 1950



L. B. Armstrong Esq.
to Standard Bank of S Africa
Clifton Crescent
Adelphi Street
Cape Town S Africa
Kent
England.

TIN CAN MAIL
COCOS-KEELING IS

CASK/AIR MAIL 1950

Like the cover on the previous page, this went by cask mail per RMS Orion to Fremantle and thence by air via Singapore and Cairo. The writer clearly expected the Australia – South Africa air service would commence in March 1951 and the cask mail would be discontinued at that time.

GPO Perth 21 November 1950

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

TIN CAN MAIL
COCOS-KEELING IS

NOV 23 1950
S. Africa.

D^r Harry Levin
District Surpous of the
Old Treasury Buildings
Supreme Court Gardens.
Pietermaritzberg Natal.



4 GALLON TIN OF LETTERS

D^r. W. H. WATSON. M.S.

Printed in England

CP CABLE AND WIRELESS LTD

(Incorporated in England)

Cocos. BRANCH

Singapore.

Malaya

REF. _____

MEMORANDUM

Dear D^r Levin
 I am sending this to you for the collector's
 - TIN CAN MAIL - envelope. From the
 Lagoon, we sail out into the Indian
 Ocean & the R.M. Ship Orion - drops a
 barrel of food & papers & which
 we pick up - It has a flag or bunch
 of balloons attached. The steamer
 hauls a long rope - to which we
 tie on our 4 Gallon Tin of Letters

amidst the cheers of the passengers
 lining the decks - The mail is
 handed to C + W. Freeman (Cottsway
 & air mailed from here Australia

This has only been done & stamped
 Cocos a few times & will be doubtless
 discontinued when air service is
 connected here in March 1957.
 Australia - Cocos. Mauritius, S. Africa
 Best wishes Yours sincerely,

W.H. Watson

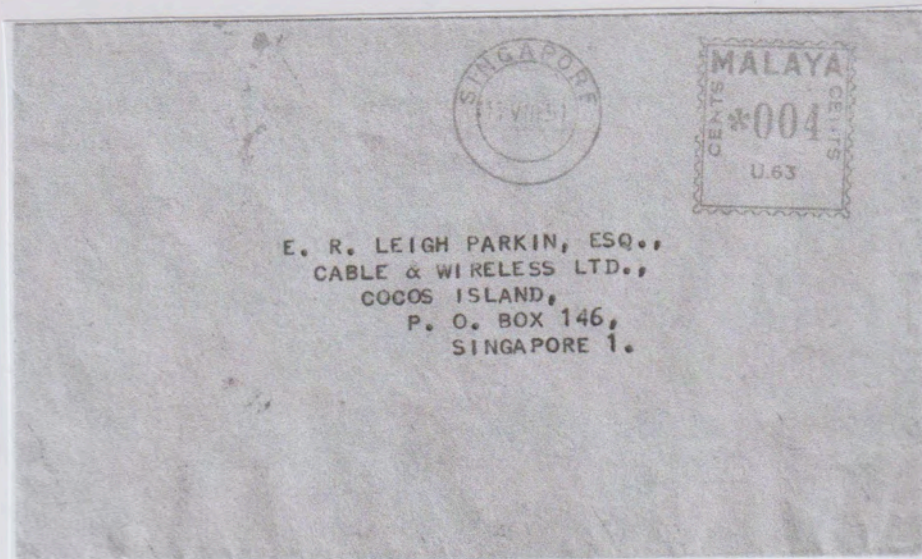
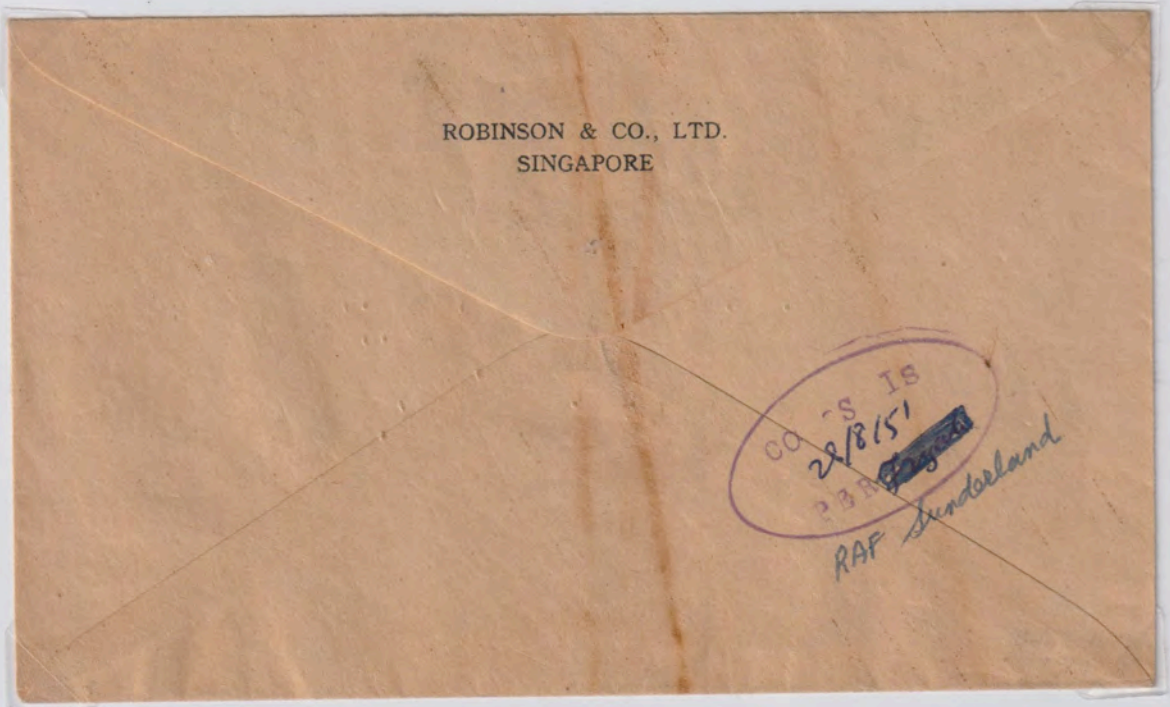
M^{rs} G. M. Borge
 c/o Barclay's Bank
 Mauritius is my daughter

3289

RAF SUNDERLAND: PARKIN CACHET 1951

Leigh Parkin created a cachet inscribed Cocos Is Per to identify carrier of incoming mail. On this occasion a RAF Sunderland brought Sir Franklin Gimson, Governor of Singapore on a Vice-regal visit. A small mail being held at Singapore was carried, in this case despite only being paid for mail in Singapore.

Singapore 17 August 1951, oval cachet Cocos Is Per Tryal (struck out) RAF Sunderland 28 August



VIA COLOMBO

One attempt by RMS Orion in January 1951 to send cask mail was unsuccessful, so RFA Wave Baron carried the mail to Colombo.

Colombo
22 January 1951



Colombo
7 January 1953

Use of Tin Can cachets were thought to have ceased in November 1952 when the Singapore post office was open. This and another 1953 cover may have been carried by a northbound liner or military aircraft.

POST TIN CAN MAIL

An attempt to obtain a Tin Can Mail cover after the service ended was made addressed to the mythical F/O Prune by F/Lt Crisp, RAF Signals Centre, Colombo. May have been transported to and from the island on RAF aircraft or RAN vessels.

Colombo Foreign 5 May 1952, RAAF PO Cocos Island 5 June



The last Tin Can Mail was carried by P&O Orion and posted in Perth 23 November 1951. A Riddell cover posted in Colombo had no identified liner for that date. This cover inscribed Per HM Ship may explain how it was carried from Cocos to Colombo. This cachet is found on 1953 'Tin Can Mail' covers.